



**IDENTITY AND DEMOCRACY IN PRO-DEMOCRACY PROTEST THEATRE IN
ZIMBABWE: 1999-2012**

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates a brand of theatre that is oppositional to oppression. This theatre, which this study calls protest theatre, predicates its practice upon democratic intentions and values. In Zimbabwe, some scholars valorise protest theatre's oppositional and adversarial stance to the state as an indicator of how it imbues democratic values. Some scholars also celebrate the manner in which it provides counter hegemonic space to enhance citizenship as a reinforcement of pro-democracy's protest theatre's democratic affinity. This, in my view, creates a problem in the sense that, these scholars pay scant attention to subtle processes of exclusion, paternalism and domination that are, unfortunately, inherent in protest theatre. Whilst there can be little doubt to the fact that protest theatre provides democratic space that enhances citizenship through theatre, there is also a need to interrogate the manner in which it accords subaltern voices agency or authority over their intellectual and physical actions in designing, implementing and modifying the discourse of social and political reform that pro-democracy protest theatre espouse during and after the Zimbabwean crisis. To this effect, this study investigates the harmony, dissonance and tension between democratic intentions and practice in prodemocracy protest theatre. It interrogates how selected performances of protest theatre represent the agency and interests of marginalised sections of society. It examines relations of power that obtain in protest theatre with the intention of exploring how protest theatre accords subaltern citizens the ability to design, modify, implement and lead, at an intellectual level, the struggle for democratic reform in Zimbabwe. This study, therefore, investigates practices that undermine the democratic intentions of protest theatre such as exclusion, paternalism and construction of derogatory identities through biased representation of the agency of various social groups in various performances. Consequently, the study analyses how various performances mediate on the identities of various social groups in order to legitimise the moral and intellectual control of the struggle for democratic change by certain social groups at the expense of others. The study also explores how selected productions liberated or undermined the semiotic autonomy of the spectators. It looks at the relationship between style and democracy with the intention of analysing how selected performances enabled or undermined the audience's right to create their own meanings from various performances. Hence, this study also extends its democratic thrust by way of analysing directorial endeavours to create open performances as opposed to enclosed performance that lock meaning and interpretation to directorial intention. Thus the efficacy of style to democratic commitment is a key aspect of inquiry in this study. This study employs post-linear performance theory to examine issues of power between the performance and their spectator in as far as the generation of meaning is concerned. It also deploys theories of democracy, particularly those of the public sphere and counter public sphere in order to ascertain the extent to which selected productions created citizen forums that were in keeping with democratic expectations. Theories of power have been useful as they help to track issues of domination and strategies of domination that normally undermine democratic intentions. The study uses techniques of performance reconstruction in addition to those of analysing live performances. It also makes use of semiotic theory. The data gathered through these methods is interrogated through the theoretical framework thereby linking theory to methodology.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the actors, actresses, directors and producers who participated in the protest theatre movement in Zimbabwe. Without your conviction and dedication to the advancement of democratic ideals, there would be no protest theatre to write about. This thesis celebrates your gallantry in the face of overwhelming odds. This work serves as an acknowledgement of the trials and tribulations you encountered in the line of duty. It is also a critique of your efforts. I hope that this study provides some reflexive space to ponder on your achievements and failures.

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To God who made this possible; I will forever believe in You.

ABBREVIATIONS

AIPPA	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (2002)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CIO	Central Intelligence Organisation
COPAC	Constitutional Parliamentary Committee
HIFA	Harare International Festival of the Arts
GBH	Grievous Bodily Harm
GPA	Global Political Agreement
GNU	Government of National Unity
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDC (T)	Movement for Democratic Change Tsvangirai
MP	Member of Parliament
NACZ	National Arts Council of Zimbabwe
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ONHRE	Organ for National Healing and Reconciliation
PAIF	Protest Arts International Festival
POSA	Public Order and Security Act (2002)
TFD	Theatre for Development
TIE	Theatre in Education
UZ	University of Zimbabwe
UK	United Kingdom
WUP	Witwatersrand University Press
ZACT	Zimbabwe Association of Community-based Theatre
ZANU (PF)	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Research Problem

Zimbabwe plunges into a political and economic crisis between 1999 and 2009. This decade in crisis witnesses a boom in a form of theatre that questions the authority and legitimacy of the state. This theatre is highly adversarial and oppositional to state hegemony. This brand of theatre, known as protest theatre, refers to a theatre that directs its efforts towards the subversion of an existing dominant ideology. In Zimbabwe, just like elsewhere, protest theatre develops as an alternative platform through which citizens challenge and engage the state on issues of democratic reforms. Protest theatre, thus, aims to provide alternative democratic space (public sphere) where voices that the state controlled media had silenced can deliberate on issues of social and political transformation. Hence, from its inception, protest theatre predicates its practice upon democratic intentions.

Researchers (Makumbirofa 2010, Sambo 2009, Manyeza 2006, Zenenga 2008, Wrolson 2009, Ravengai 2010, Chivandikwa 2012, Chiyindiko 2011, Glostard 2011, and Masora 2011) celebrate the democratic intentions of protest theatre as a guarantee of its adherence to democratic values. They concentrate on the counter hegemonic function of protest theatre without scrutinising the extent to which protest theatre, as a counter hegemonic public sphere that advance the cause of democratic reform, articulate the interests and needs of marginalised and subaltern voices in Zimbabwe. They do not interrogate whether protest theatre, despite providing space for counter-hegemonic voices, is not exclusionary, paternalistic, and oppressive. In brief, they do not analyse how less powerful groups and subaltern sections of society could still be marginalised within the counter-hegemonic public sphere inherent in protest theatre. They do not analyse how protest theatre construct and represent the agency and input of subaltern groups in the struggle for social and political reform in Zimbabwe.

1.2 Area of Investigation

1.2.1 Delineation of Study

This study, therefore, reconciles intention with practice in order to examine how protest theatre adheres to democratic values. It unveils the harmony, tension, and disparities between democratic intentions and democratic practice in protest theatre in Zimbabwe. It scrutinises alternative theatre of protest through a democratic lens. Democracy in this study goes beyond considering political protest theatre merely as a counter hegemonic public sphere. It examines how the counter-hegemonic public sphere, in practice, provides space for subaltern voices to articulate their interests and aspirations in the struggle for democratic reform in Zimbabwe. Consequently, this study explores how protest theatre uses verbal and non-verbal aspects of performance to construct and represent the agency of subaltern groups alongside powerful and elite groups. Thus, this inquiry interrogates how protest theatre reflects on the intellectual capabilities of various classes and groups in designing, implementing, modifying, and providing moral and intellectual leadership in the struggle for reform in Zimbabwe. Hence, this study analyses relations of power that obtain in political protest theatre with a view of unveiling how this theatre cordon itself from peddling values and systems it purports to oppose.

Another critical issue that this study investigates is the relationship between style and democracy in protest theatre. The study analyses the relationship between style and democratic commitment at two levels. The first level explores how style enhances or undermines audiences' semiotic and intellectual autonomy. Thus at this level, the study examines how acting style, character formations, costume, makeup and plot mechanisms enable the audiences to retain their intellectual autonomy and generate their own meanings of performance. To this effect, this study examines how style provides environments that undermine or empower indoctrination and suppression of audience's intellectual autonomy.

The second level explores how stylistic setting of the play enhances or undermines the participation, hence agency, of individuals that deliberate on issues of social and political change in counter-hegemonic public spheres inherent in various productions. To this effect, this study investigates the significance of space, that is, where the public sphere takes place; in enhancing the agency and autonomy of diverse voices in as far as they articulate their concerns and interests

in the struggle for democratic reform in Zimbabwe. By so doing, this study explores ways by which one can construe protest theatre as a public sphere.

1.2.2 Area of Investigation: Protest Theatre

Protest theatre, which this study investigates, refers to a type of theatre that subverts the authority of a power structure that generates oppression. In most instances, this power structure is usually the state. (Peterson 1990, Wakashe 1986, Zenenga 2008, Loots 1997, Dawson 2012, Hauptfleisch 2007, Padma 2007, Sundar 1989, Wrolson 2009.) The state is however not the only institution that generates oppression. The state can be a victim of unfair relations of power created by other dominant forces such as neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism. For example, the decade in crisis also witnessed the development of a parallel brand of protest theatre that supported the state against forces, which the state deemed as threats to national security. This pro-state theatre is, however, not the subject of this inquiry.

Sarah Freeman (2006:370) argues that protest theatre covers a broad territory of a theatrical practice which:

Emphasises the theatrical representation of marginalised groups within the larger goal of advancing progressive analysis concerned with social justice problems and the possibility of change.

Freeman (2006:370) adds that protest theatre entails:

Content oriented innovation, where the drama concerns subjects, particularly working class life, not usually represented by mainstream drama... with viewpoints concerning social justice which question the status quo.

In some circles, protest theatre is also known as radical theatre (Kershaw 1992, Merriman 2010.) Victor Merriman (2010:43) proposes that radical can be conscripted as a synonym or disguise for ‘subversive, ‘political,’ ideologically driven,’ ‘communitarian,’ ‘vanguard, avant garde, self-indulgence.’ Protest theatre is, therefore, subversive and incredulous to authority.

Jan Cohen Cruz as quoted by V. Padma (2000:218) argues that:

Protest theatre disapprovingly depicts a situation of oppression, but does not go beyond that. It addresses itself to an oppressor with a view of appealing to his or her own conscience...

Cruz adds that one should not confuse protest theatre with resistance theatre. He adds that although the two are forms of political theatre, resistance theatre differs from protest theatre because ‘theatre of resistance addresses itself to the oppressed with the overt aim of rallying and mobilising the oppressed to fight oppression.’ (Padma, 2000:218.) Cruz’s submission is problematic. It suggests that, to the oppressor, activists and practitioners make protest theatre, whilst for the oppressed, they make resistance theatre. The story of protest theatre in Zimbabwe suggests the contrary.

The anti-state protest plays in Zimbabwe contain both facets of protest and resistance so much that they are as much a site for protest as they are a site of resistance.¹ Resistance, in my view, goes beyond mobilising people to take up arms. This study argues that the mere fact of creating alternative public spheres or counter publics is an act of resistance given a context in which the state had outright control on the nature of voices that participate in the public sphere. It is significant to note that the need to create platforms through which citizens engage authority is a significant motivation to the development of protest theatre. Thus, when Daves Guzha of Rooftop Promotions says that the idea is to break the burdensome albatross of silence through the staging of such plays as *Super Patriots and Morons* (2004) and *Rags and Garbage* (2003) among others, he is clearly engaging and undoing state hegemony. In this respect, the protest plays are resistive and counter-hegemonic.

The act of protesting itself is resistance. From Antonio Gramsci (1971) and Michael Foucault (1994) one understands that every structure of power wants to conceal the reality of oppression so that citizens do not even talk about oppression. It, therefore, follows that when citizens begin to talk about oppression, they are making theatre relevant to the burning issues of the day, thereby making protest theatre a breeding ground for all sorts of anti-state activities. It is quite difficult to concur with the assertion that protest theatre confines its energies to merely appeal to

¹There is no space here to discuss in detail the resistive dimensions of protest theatre. This counter-hegemonic dimension is the subject of chapter five where I outline the contextual basis of protest theatre.

the oppressor's conscience. This, in my view, is to underestimate the subversive and insurrectional capabilities of protest theatre. What is suggested by appeal to oppressor conscience thesis is that the practitioners were working from within, trying to oil the state machine rather than to change it. The state of affairs in Zimbabwe reaches a stage where the plays advocate for regime change rather than to oil existing structures. Plays such as Silvanos Mudzvova's *Final Push* (2008) and Cont Mhlanga's *The Good president* (2007) among others actually call for the removal of the government in power.² They do not just aim to appeal to conscience. They are explicit in their content, conveying dissident messages and advocating for the removal of the ruling party. Chivandikwa (2010: 3) argues that protest theatre constitutes acts of 'insurrection against the state.' Freeman (2006: 374) concludes that the oppositional and resistive character of protest theatre lies in the term alternative theatre because alternative 'calls to mind both the counterculture and the notion of progressive social movements (alternative status quo.)' Protest theatre is, therefore, resistance theatre.

Pushpar Sundar (1989: 123) submits that:

The term protest theatre is often used as a synonym for political theatre, but it has a wider scope. Socially concerned theatre may raise consciousness about social ills for which individuals and the state may be collectively responsible but it may not be aimed at authority at all.

Freeman (2006:365) buttresses the generic broadness of protest theatre by observing that the following terms describe protest theatre: 'Fringe, underground, political, avant-garde, people, worker, feminist, and radical, alternative and other.' Freeman (2006:370) adds that protest theatre signifies theatre made by and for specific identity groups, for example, feminist theatre, gay theatre and black theatre. Relating to the South African context, Max Reyneard as quoted by Mike van Graan (2006:277) reinforces the generic broadness of protest theatre:

Protest Theatre has struggled to come to terms with itself after 1994. The didactic agitprop forms of the 80s and 90s have clung for dear life despite the fact that the traditional object of their scorn, oppressive Christian Nationalism, is virtually extinct. Typically then protest theatre has directed itself to new scourges: poverty, crime and HIV/AIDS. And despite the fact that none of these enemies have ears in and of

² For more information on protest theatre as subversive refer to chapter five where I discuss the contextual environment of protest theatre during the crisis years.

themselves, too many actors in too many productions have pointed accusing fingers and given them a jolly good telling off.

The state is, therefore, not the only enemy that protest theatre focuses its attention, hence, protest theatre is not always political theatre, assuming that political is concerned more with state-civilian relations at a political level. Lliane Loots (2007) adds that within anti-apartheid protest plays in South Africa; there exists a different kind of protest theatre made by women. This theatre does not just deal with issues of racial segregation, whiteness or blackness but also deals with issues of sexual oppression. Loots (2007:144) argues that while most of anti-apartheid plays dealt with discrimination and racial issues, they did so:

At the expense of an understanding of the interconnectedness of power struggles, more specifically the struggle of (Black) women to find a theatrical voice within oppositional protest theatre. Thus while protest theatre of the eighties (in South Africa) was operating as a counter discourse to a racist apartheid system within its own force field of power operations, it subsumed gender issues into a constructed hierarchy which foregrounded concerns with race and racism.

Thus, in the Zimbabwean context, feminist protest productions such as *365* and *Loupe* constitute protest theatre not in the exact political sense as *Final Push* or *The Good President*. These feminist protest productions direct their energies to patriarchy rather than the state. However, this researcher is not investigating these other forms of protest theatre in this study. Thus, what this study analyses is the politically motivated protest theatre that directs its attention on the state as a structure of power.

Protest theatre generically goes beyond stage performances in the conventional sense. Scholars such as Hauptfleisch (2007) Dawson (2012), Chivandikwa (2012) argue that there is a lot of political protest theatre in political rallies, marches and demonstrations. Cont Mhlanga (2012) in his talk made at the third Protest Arts International Festival (PAIF) reiterates that protest theatre in the conventional sense has actually borrowed a lot from style of staging and activism evident in marches, rallies and demonstrations. He adds that conventional protest theatre is a fusion of theatre and street activism that characterise rallies and marches. In brief, Mhlanga alerts one to the fact that there is quite a lot of protest theatre beyond conventional political protest theatre. The focus of my study is, however, not on this form of political protest theatre.

The political protest theatre, which this study interrogates, protests against the executive wing of the state and highlights the manner in which state uses repressive and ideological apparatuses to undermine citizens' rights in Zimbabwe between from 1999-2012. In Zimbabwe what we regarded as protest theatre covers an array of theatre that are all subversive even though they display different stylistic approaches in terms of staging and levels of being radical. These varieties are, panic theatre/urgent theatre, agit prop, hit and run and transformative protest theatre. In the early days of the crisis, protest theatre carries the label of panic theatre. (Wrolson 2009, Zenenga 2008) As the crisis deepens, practitioners become more candid rather than satirical. Protest theatre becomes more insurrectional so much that it becomes agit prop. Authorities do not respond kindly to this development. They make it quite difficult for artists to produce protest theatre. Artists then adopt guerrilla methods of staging which lead to the creation of Hit and Run Protest theatre (Zenenga 2011). After the crisis, protest theatre redefines its mandate especially given the new context of healing and reconciliation that dominate the post crisis political landscape. Protest theatre then becomes transformative/ conciliatory protest theatre.³

Panic theatre is not nakedly confrontational. It comes into being in the early crisis years. Zenenga (2011: 181) observes that:

These political satires came to be known as Panic Theatre or Urgent Theatre because, in attacking the establishment, they not only called attention to the regime's vices and follies, but also highlighted the urgent need for international help and intervention to redress the crisis. It borrows from the traditional notions of *kurova bembera* and *Nhimbe*, which were intended not only to appeal for help but also use circumspection to name and shame perpetrators of any social ills.

³ I derive the term 'Transformative protest theatre' from many scholars. In performance theory, scholars such as Fischer-Lichte (2004), Lehman (2006), Esslin (1959), Willet (1977), Domingo (2000), Aboubakar (2009), Castagno (2001), and Boal (1985) who use it to refer to theatre that can transform the spectator from being the passive recipient of a performance into an active component of the performance. It is also used in applied theatre by scholars such as Boal (1988) to refer to theatre that provokes society into putting its destiny in its own hands. It is used to refer to theatre that transforms society positively. The applied theatre sense syncs well with my preferences of transformative theatre. I therefore use the term to create a distinction between forms of protest produced during the crisis such as panic/ urgent, agit prop, hit and run. Transformative protest theatre is in many ways different from its antecedents thus it provides impetus to explore how protest theatre was conceived and conceptualised in the aftermath of the crisis, that is after 2009.

Plays within this category include *All systems out of Order* (2004), *Ivhu vs. The state* (2003), *Rags and Garbages* (2003), *Super Patriot and Morons* (2004), *Ganyau Express* (2001), and *Heaven's Diary* (2005).

Artists realised that they had to be more candid and more confrontational. Panic theatre did not really attract the state's attention because it was satirical and not openly subversive. Thus, the period between 2006 and 2008 witnesses the production of agit prop plays that are more subversive (Chivandikwa 2012). Such plays include *Final Push* (2007), *The Good President* (2007), *Decades of Terror* (2007), *Pregnant with Emotion* (2006), and *Two Leaders I Know* (2008). These plays are more candid and openly confrontational. They concentrate more on bashing, not just the system, but individuals within the system.

Hit and Run theatre, as Zenenga (2011: 183) observes 'aptly describes the combative aesthetic and pedagogical philosophies behind this new theatrical form.' Zenenga (2011:183) adds that:

Hit and run theatre artists perform in the face of unjust and totalitarian authority, their shows often disguised and embedded in everyday life, taking place in crowd public spaces such as streets, store fronts, flea markets, public commuter buses and shopping malls. It is not publicized to avoid drawing any attention from local authorities. In some cases, it takes a while for both audiences and authorities to realise that a show is going on.

Transformative/ Conciliatory protest theatre refers to protest theatre that does not parochially ridicule or challenge the establishment. Rather, it interrogates social and political ills in a balanced manner. It does not blindly blame those who are in power, without revealing the pitfalls inherent in subjects of power, which perpetuate exclusion and oppression. It celebrates in practice, the importance of according diverse voices the opportunity to speak against oppression and injustice. It allows subaltern characters to intercourse with elites in a manner that empowers the agency and participation of these voices in diagnosing the ills of society as well as designing the course of action to take to arrest these ills. It treats the common person not just as an innocent victim without blemish. Transformative Protest theatre premises its practice not on confrontational and adversarial values but on values that promote peace, healing, tolerance, dialogue, agency, empowerment and participation. In brief, transformative theatre is interested in

building structures of democracy that curtail the recurrence of oppression, marginalisation and dictatorship in society. This theatre becomes more evident after GNU with such productions as *Heal the Wounds* (2009), *Rituals* (2010), *Indigenous Indigenous* (2012), *Waiting for Constitution* (2010) and *Protest Revolutionaries* (2012) and *No Voice No Choice* (2011).

Protest theatre has democratic intentions. It challenges the authority and of the state. It is because of protest theatre's democratic objectives/ intentions that this study investigates the extent to which it provides a platform (public sphere) through which marginalised voices articulate their interests and needs in the struggle for social and political reform in Zimbabwe. Hence, the study interrogates the extent to which protest theatre in Zimbabwe liberate subaltern agency and voices so that the change and transformation that the plays clamour for reflect subaltern intellectual contribution in shaping and modifying the struggle for change. It is also due to the democratic context, that this study also investigates how the choice of style advances or undermines the semiotic and intellectual autonomy of its spectators. In brief, the study investigates how the choice of style in selected plays celebrates intellectual engagement rather than indoctrination of audiences. The study borrows case studies from Panic theatre/Urgent (*Madame Speaker Sir 2* (2007), *Heaven's Diary* (2005), *Decades of Terror* (2007), Agit prop Theatre (*Final Push*) and Transformative Protest Theatre (*No voice No Choice* (2011), *Waiting for Constitution* (2010), *Protest Revolutionaries* (2012), *Rituals* (2010) to investigate its questions and objectives.⁴

1.3 Objectives

The study intends to:

- ❖ Examine the harmony, tension, and dissonance between democratic intentions and democratic practice in protest theatre.
- ❖ Explore how protest theatre constructed the agency of various categories of people in designing and implementing change.
- ❖ Interrogate the ideological implications of such constructions.

⁴ Unfortunately, the study does not investigate Hit and Run Theatre because it was difficult to get records of performance owing to the guerrilla nature of the theatre.

- ❖ Analyse the relationship between style and democratic function/ commitment in protest theatre

1.4 Research Questions

This study answers the following questions:

To what extent is protest theatre faithful to its democratic intentions? What are the relations of power inherent in protest theatre? To what extent does protest theatre accord subaltern sections of society the ability to design, implement, and modify change. How does protest theatre construct the agency of various categories of people? What is the link between style and democratic function/ commitment in protest theatre? In what ways can one construe protest theatre as a public sphere?

1.5 Justification/ Rationale

A number of factors motivate this inquiry. First, there has been a realisation that although progressive social and political movements predicate their practice upon democratic intentions, they tend to replicate systems of oppression which they purport to oppose (Fraser 1990, Philips 1992, 1988, Young 1988). Nancy Fraser (1990: 67) points out that some counter publics:

Alas, are explicitly anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian, and even those with democratic and egalitarian intentions are not always above practising their own modes of informal exclusion and marginalisation.

Sunil Bastian and Robinson Luckham (1988: 21) add that:

Democracy is Janus faced. As well as empowering citizens, overcoming exclusion and contributing to good governance, it can also become a tool of powerful economic interests, reinforce society's inequalities, penalise minorities, awaken dormant conflicts, and fail in practise to broaden participation.

It is due to these observations that the need to interrogate the harmony and dissonance between democratic intentions and practice in protest theatre has arisen. An approach of this nature, has to my knowledge, not been done by existing works on protest theatre in Zimbabwe.

This study is by no means the first one to analyse the relationship between democracy and protest in Zimbabwe during the crisis decade. There are some forerunners (Ravengai 2010, Ravengai 2008, Zenenga 2008, Zenenga 2010, Zenenga 2011a, Zenenga 2011b, Wrolson 2009, Chivandikwa 2012, Chiyindiko 2011, Glostard 2011, Mukwara 2010, Masora 2011, Hwindiri 2012, and Moyo 2012). However, I have realised that my forerunners explicate this relationship mainly in terms of the oppositional and counter hegemonic role of protest theatre. They point out that protest theatre creates alternative democratic space in a context in which that space is shrinking owing to the regulatory regime that the media operates in during the crisis. This study agrees with these submissions but stresses that my forerunners valorise the counter hegemonic and oppositional role of protest without analysing how that counter hegemonic alternative space gives room to subaltern voices and interests.

Whilst my forerunners stress the bias of state media towards state elites, they do not check whether elites and intellectuals that oppose state hegemony do also not dominate the alternative democratic space. They do not interrogate whether the alternative counter hegemonic and democratic space does not also marginalise voices of ordinary people that state media had already marginalised. They did not investigate the representation of subaltern agency in protest theatre. It is because of these observations that this study insists on a paradigm shift from merely glorifying oppositionality to checking for anti-democratic tendencies of exclusion, universalism, paternalism, otherness and ostracisation that may be inherent in protest theatre. This, in my view, helps practitioners and civic society to realise the disparities between democratic intentions and democratic practice in protest theatre. This approach, in my view, helps to ensure that progressive movements and forces that society creates in order to promote democracy, do not replicate the very dictatorship they purport to oppose.

There is hardly any analysis of ways in which protest theatre constructs identities, consciousness, and intellectual potentialities of ordinary people during moments of political transition. Goran Hyden and Christopher Okigbo (2002:30) reiterate this point:

The extent to which the media (protest theatre) represents particular groups or communities in society, or how well grounded in society they are... is an aspect of the media that is often overlooked but is of special significance in times of political transition.

There is a need, in my view, to analyse how protest theatre represents the agency of particular groups as vehicles for social and political reform. To my knowledge, such an analysis has received scant attention in the context of political protest theatre in Zimbabwe. This study hopes to fill this gap.

Moreover, the bulk of the work by my forerunners analyses content without paying much attention to issues of style. To my knowledge, Isheunesu Moyo, Peace Mukwara, Areyou Matiza, and Nikki Hwindiri contribute to the issue of style at undergraduate level. This study wishes to interrogate style by engendering frames of analysis that Zimbabwean scholars have hardly employed in the study of protest theatre. One believes that by employing theories of democracy in performance, such as post dramatic theatre and post linearity, this study can help to explain the significance of style in liberating audiences' semiotic autonomy and intellectual freedom. By using these theories of performance, the study hopes to indicate how style oppresses or liberates intellectual engagement. This theoretical approach is, to my knowledge, quite new in Zimbabwean theatre hence the need to undertake this study.⁵

The focus on protest theatre is by no means accidental. It is the dominant form of theatre during the decade in crisis (1999-2009) in Zimbabwe. During this period, protest theatre gives impetus to the development of Production Companies across Zimbabwe. These include Rooftop Promotions, Amakhosi Productions, Vhitori Entertainment, Edzai Isu Productions, and Savanna Trust. Protest theatre also stimulates a boom in script writing. Notable scriptwriters include Stephen Chifunyise, Cont Mhlanga, Tafadzwa Muzondo, Raisedon Baya, Daniel Maposa, Silvanos Mudzvova, Leonard Matsa, Noel Marerwa, Patrick Chasaya, Elton Mujanana, and Charles Matare. It employs many people who participate as actors, directors, arts administrators, designers, and stage managers. These people produce a theatre, which, in their view, advances the cause of democracy, human rights, and good governance. Authorities ban some of the plays and they arrest some artists. It is extremely befitting that one undertakes an analysis of this theatre.

⁵ Apart from Samuel Ravengai's (2002) Masters dissertation from the University of Cape Town, one is yet to see a study that applies post dramatic, post linear theories of performance in Zimbabwe, more so, in protest theatre.

The choice of the period under scrutiny is also not accidental. The period 1999-2012 contains significant phases in the history of protest theatre in Zimbabwe. 1999-2007 represents the days of panic/ urgent theatre. 2007-2009 represents the years of hit and run theatre as well as agit prop theatre. 2009- 2012 represents the years of transformative protest theatre. The study ends in 2012, not because that is when protest theatre died down, but because of reasons of manageability and meeting submission deadlines. This period enables one to understand protest theatre from its formative years up to its post crisis years. This period enables one to compare the nature of protest theatre during and after the crisis with a view of demonstrating the democratic function and relevance of protest theatre beyond periods of social and political instability.

To the state, admittedly, protest theatre may have threatened its hegemony. However, a study of this nature is crucial to the state because it enables state intellectuals to understand what protest theatre is, the factors that promoted its rise, its characteristics and form. This study offers an opportunity to understand the aspirations, hopes, and intentions of the protest theatre movement in Zimbabwe. This study also provides reflexive space through which both artists and the state can revisit the crisis days with a view of reviewing their actions and excesses. This study enables the state to understand the necessity of having protest theatre especially in as far as the broadening of democratic spaces is concerned. It enables both the state and artist to improve their relationship through an understanding of the needs and desires of each group, now that the crisis is gone and reconciliation/ healing is now a topical theme in Zimbabwe. This inquiry is, therefore, necessary and important.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an analysis of the state of research in protest theatre in Zimbabwe. It identifies, thematises and reviews literature on protest theatre, democracy and identity in Zimbabwe. By organising this literature, this chapter identifies seven types of literature. There is literature that merely documents and historicises protest theatre in Zimbabwe from the early eighties up to the mid-nineties. There is also literature that analyses socialist and Marxist approaches to democracy in protest theatre from the early eighties to the mid-nineties. Revisionist scholars who comment on Marxist approaches also create a huge amount of literature. Another group of scholars write on the relationship between protest theatre, censorship, repression, and surveillance. Some scholars explore issues related to style in protest theatre. There is significant amount of literature on theatre and democracy in other fields of theatre beyond protest theatre. Literature on theatre and identity constitutes the last theme.

This chapter concentrates on Zimbabwe in order to site the gap that scholars who have written on protest theatre in Zimbabwe have left out. The researcher does not see the need to review literature that does not appraise Zimbabwean protest theatre as a site of investigation. By concentrating on Zimbabwe, one justifies this study by highlighting critical issues that scholars on Zimbabwean theatre have left unattended. However, the researcher reviews works written by Zimbabweans and scholars from other countries who write on protest theatre in Zimbabwe. A review of works written on Zimbabwe, in my view, is convincingly exhaustive, as it problematises limitations evident in these works as well as how they are useful in tackling the topic under scrutiny. It provides a narrowed and more focused analysis of Zimbabwean protest theatre rather than an approach that jumps and hops from country to country without helping in locating the research problem and research gap in Zimbabwe. One believes that whilst there is literature on protest theatre in other countries, such literature does not help to reveal the problem inherent in research on protest theatre in Zimbabwe.

2.2 The Historicist School

Jane Plastow (1996) belongs to this school. Her book is not entirely on protest theatre in Zimbabwe. Rather, she offers a survey of the evolution of theatre in three countries, namely Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania. She analyses the development of theatre in these countries from the colonial to the postcolonial period. She recreates the history of theatre and it is in the historical analysis that she devotes space to the analysis of political protest theatre in Zimbabwe from the pre-independence period to the post-independence era. As a performance historian, Plastow captures the sentimentalities and views of theatre practitioners who were involved in the production of protest theatre. Her work is significant because it provides a historical survey that establishes trends and practices in protest theatre prior to my period of inquiry. She helps this study, to sift from her documentation, how practitioners envisage the marriage between democracy and protest theatre. The information that she provides is crucial in the formulation of the background chapters of this study.

Dale L. Byam (1999) provides literature that traces the history and development of community theatre in Zimbabwe. She outlines the objectives, aims and various activities that took place under the auspices of the Zimbabwe Association of Community-based Theatre (ZACT). From her book, one can discern some of the democratic intentions of ZACT, which helps the researcher to analyse some of the protest plays produced by ZACT through the democratic lens. Byam's book provides a historical and contextual understanding of community theatre in Zimbabwe. However, the book is a general study of various activities of ZACT and it covers a wide array of community theatre activities, such as campaign theatre, theatre for development and educational theatre among others, which lie outside the orbit of protest political theatre. Moreover, this study offers an interrogation of ZACT through a democratic lens

Ennert Masora (2011) traces the rise and fall of protest theatre during the crisis decade in Zimbabwe (1998-2008). She argues that Zimbabwean protest theatre has gone through a rise and fall curve. She then accounts for why there was a boom in protest theatre and the subsequent fall in 2009. Her study represents recent works that try to make sense of protest theatre during the crisis. Her work is useful in moulding the contextual environment of protest theatre as it unveils social, political and economic factors that fuel the boom of protest theatre during the crisis. This study appreciates and incorporates Masora's connection between the crisis and protest theatre.

However, this study offers a reinterpretation of that same history using a democratic lens. Whereas Masora offers an account of the rise and fall, this study looks into that history with the intention of understanding the implications to democracy that arise out of the historicisation of protest theatre during the crisis of 1998-2008. What is also absent in Masora's historical analysis is the examination of specific performances and plays as basis for understanding the crisis in Zimbabwe. Rather than reading the crisis through theatre, Masora tends to understand the crisis through other historical material on the Zimbabwean crisis. This study offers an understanding of the Zimbabwean crisis through the eyes and experiences of Zimbabwean theatre during the crisis and it adopts the idea of democracy as central to understanding the crisis through protest theatre. It is for this reason that this study is being undertaken.

Chifunyise (1997) provides an examination of the major trends in Zimbabwean theatre since independence up to the mid-90s. The paper begins by establishing the continuities and influences borrowed from theatre staged during the liberation struggle. The paper traces the ideological and aesthetic practices that shape Black theatre after independence. The article does not entirely commit its analysis to protest theatre. However, within that paper, one can sift material that is of relevance to this inquiry. First, from Chifunyise, one realises that the protest movement is not entirely political per se. Protest theatre can manifest itself in the form of workers theatre or by domestic servants protesting against unfair relations of production.

One also understands that even the disabled can stage protest theatre, so too can women and the youth. Thus, protest theatre is not just political theatre. By reading through a number of activities by ZACT, one can delineate the generic construction of protest theatre beyond the political. This paper is, therefore, helpful in conceptualising protest theatre. Moreover, the paper's historical approach provides valuable information that helps to establish the evolution of protest theatre after 1980. However, the fact that the paper ends in mid-90s naturally reveals the gap of this inquiry as this study examines not all forms of protest theatre, but political protest theatre from 1999-2012. It would be interesting to see whether some of Chifunyise's findings have continued or changed in the practice of political protest theatre during and after the decade in crisis in Zimbabwe.

Peter Ukpokodu (1988) provides a historical survey of political theatre in Africa. The survey covers the experiences of political theatre groups in Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The article explores the antagonistic relationship between the state and political theatre in Africa. The article also unveils how political theatre provides a platform for resisting oppression in colonial and postcolonial Africa. By comparing the experiences of Zambuko/Izibuko with other groups from Africa, Ukpokodu reveals how a study of Zimbabwean political theatre helps to reveal shared experiences within the continent. It remains for one to point out that owing to the fact that the article provides a continental survey; it pays scant attention to dynamics of political theatre in Zimbabwe. Moreover, while Ukpokodu analyses political theatre as a site of resistance, this study analyses how that resistance conforms and deviates from democratic principles. This study argues that resistance or oppositionality alone is inadequate in making political theatre to have democratic relevance. Rather, one has to scrutinise political theatre to ensure that the liberation that it purports to wield does not replicate structures of oppression it seeks to subvert. This is the point of departure of this study from Ukpokodu's valuable work.

Scholars in this section provide foundational material that enables this study to establish the trajectory of protest theatre prior to 1999. They provide valuable material, which this study uses to understand the historical context and the sociological environment of plays produced prior to my period of inquiry. However, owing to the fact that they provide a generalised analysis of community plays, these studies do not interrogate issues of identity and agency, thereby providing a gap for this study.

2.3 Socialist, Marxist and Pro-state Approaches to Democracy in Protest Theatre

This school of thought emerges in the embryonic years of Zimbabwean independence up to the early nineties. This school maintains that the link between democracy and protest theatre lies in theatre's ability to decolonize colonialist approaches to theatre. Exponents of this view add that protest theatre must act as a cordon against capitalist, neo-imperialist and western cultural values. They also argue that protest theatre should be a purveyor of African cultural values in order for it to be people centred. The idea of a people's popular theatre, according to this school, stems from the fact that the majority of the marginalised people are Africans of Black origin. The

aspect of marginalisation and oppression creates a link between African interests and Marxist/socialist aesthetics.

Robert Kavanagh (1988), Ngugi wa Mirii (1988) and Stephen Chifunyise (1986, 1988) reiterate this conceptual approach to democracy through cultural and ideological resistance. They argue that people's theatre cannot yield a platform for democracy and liberation if it follows the stylistic approach of the Aristotelian drama. They say that this drama is for the elites since it wants sophistication of staging in terms of venue, lighting, costume, makeup and set. In brief, it has budgetary constraints. Moreover, the Aristotelian play projects the values of the ruling class as the drivers of change in society. This, in their view undermines the liberation of the voice of the people. They then argue that people's theatre must have its own aesthetic that is anti-bourgeoisie. It is anti-bourgeoisie because its themes deal with burning issues of the day that it narrates from a subaltern point of view. It is not expensive to produce and reflects the poor as protagonists. In so doing, it claims lost dramatic space, which has made dramatic space a preserve of the elite.

Obviously, they were borrowing from the Marxist aesthetics of subaltern theatre that Augusto Boal (1985) propounded. They, therefore, see the mission of the ZACT as one of making a statement of difference from symbols of colonial and neocolonial dramatic practice. They reiterate that art has to have a social function and not just entertainment without analysing the ideological underpinnings of the theatre event. This fact of oppositionality to white dramatic practice is then the cornerstone of their vision of democratic theatre, augmented by a hatred of sponsorship, which they believe, dilutes the thrust of people's theatre in openly advancing the concerns of the people. They offer a socialist model of democracy as an alternative way of realising democracy through theatre.

Gumisai Nyoni (2004) researches on how pro-state protest⁶ theatre creates a platform for protesting against values and institutions that pro-democracy protest theatre protects. Nyoni alerts the researcher to the fact that not all protest is oppositional to the state. There is also

⁶ The researcher's usage of the term 'pro-state' does not necessarily mean that they are undemocratic. They are driven by the desire to protect the nation against universalist voices of globalization and internationalism. They clamour for the right to be different.

another protest, which ridicules enemies of the state. However, Nyoni does not examine how the nationalist voice in these plays lacks fragmentation and pluralism so much that the plays close democratic spaces upon the very people they sought to protect from western universalism.

The Marxist/ Socialist school is critical to this study. First, this school does not simply document what obtains in protest theatre during the first decades of independence, but provides valuable insight into the development of the discourse of theatre democracy at both academic and practitioner level. This research benefits immensely from the framework of democracy predicated upon anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, pro-black activism among other factors. From the wealth of evidence in these works, this study is then able to interrogate the weaknesses and strengths of the democratic framework that is fashionable during the days of ZACT. Hence, when this study explores protest theatre during the eighties, particularly for ZACT, it will simply apply this democratic lens/ theoretical framework in a bid to establish ideas that students in theatre democracy could benefit from the Marxist school. For example, this study appreciates the pro-subaltern approach and intentions of the Marxist socialist school, especially its attempts to provide vocal space to voices that colonialism had marginalised and suppressed. This study appreciates the way in which protest theatre was becomes a platform for recuperating African aesthetic and stylistic approaches in creating a theatre that is liberating, both in terms of its content and form/style. There is no way in which one can deny that the provision of dramatic space for purposes of protest by domestic house cleaners, the disabled, the youth, and the industrial workers is a significant factor in aligning protest theatre towards democratic intentions.

However, there are a number of practices that mar the fidelity of theatre to democratic values. For example, this school assumes that the mere fact of being opposed to a hegemonic power structure is ample guarantee of democratic practice in the medium. The euphoric self-appraisal done by Chifunyise, Kavanagh, and wa Mirii on their works mitigate the examination of the limits of the democracy they espouse. There is hardly any analysis of how the elite controlled protest theatre during the eighties. There is hardly any analysis of issues of elitism, paternalism and universalism and agency in protest theatre in the eighties. Thus, while the object of inquiry is not to study protest theatre in the eighties per se, this study feels that in foregrounding its analysis, it must revisit some of the actual texts produced using a different democratic lens. This

is the contribution of this study to the study of theatre in the eighties, but it should be borne in mind that the scope of this study extends up to as late as 2012.

2.4 The Revisionist Non- Marxist approach to Theatre and Democracy

Foreign scholars who research on Zimbabwean theatre constitute this group. They scrutinise the works of Chifunyise, Kavanagh and wa Mirii. These scholars such as Martin Rohmer (1997), Prebren Kaarsholm (1994), and Vibeke Glostard (2011) analyse performance from a different democratic lens. Martin Rohmer's analysis of community theatre advances the fact that some of the styles employed for purposes of conscientisation and critical awareness do not fit in the schema of deliberation, discussion and interrogation. He notes that the agit prop style employed in community theatre by Zambuko/Izibuko does not provide room for alternative ways of interpreting the world. He questions the independence of community theatre given its close association to the state as well as socialism. In his view, these styles do not allow individuals to exercise intellectual freedom and to have authority over their actions.

Prebren Kaarsholm also maintains the same stance. Rather than sticking to populist notions of democracy, he agrees with Rohmer and adds that the nature of heavy didacticism in the community theatre plays, in spite of their protest, makes one reluctant to regard such plays as democratic. He adds that the purpose of plays such as *Mavambo* is not to raise an argument, but rather to indoctrinate the audience with a clear ideological point. The manner in which they celebrate the new dispensation as well as the history of the liberation struggle also tends to make such plays uncritical of the excesses and abuses of the state. *Mavambo*, argues Kaarsholm, valorises nationalist rhetoric without interrogating its pitfalls. Moreover, it creates a theatre of good people and bad people, which heavily ostracises those that are deemed counter-revolutionary.

More importantly, Kaarsholm alerts the researcher to the fact that political theatre within the end of the eighties ceased just to be partisan, but also began to question the state. Cont Mhlanga's *Workshop Negative* is one of the productions that began to engage the state on issues of reconciliation and national healing. Ranga Zinyemba (1986) also documents this brand of theatre, which interrogates the state. Zinyemba notes that within the socialist canon, some writers

question the sincerity of the state to the socialist ethos. Gonzo Msengezi's *Honourable MP* and T.K. Tsodzo's *Shanduko* are some of the plays that remind the leadership of how it has lost commitment to socialism. He adds that the plays of Dambudzo Marechera also stand out as protest. He notes that Marechera's protest theatre is not just against the state but also society, particularly the way society generates knowledge.

Evie Globberman (1994) offers an interesting case study of how the Marxist aesthetics inherent in community theatre provide a platform for democratic theatre making. She analyses the activities of a community theatre group in Bulawayo, Illuba Elimnyama. Aspects of democratic theatre making include: the use of multiple languages as opposed to using English, the staging of shows almost anywhere and in places not necessarily designed for theatre, minimum sets, costume and props, the use of traditional songs and dances, the prevalence of common township problems, the balanced gender dynamics of the group, and the direct involvement of audiences in the performances. The group wrote plays in response to existing policies with a view to suggest ways of improving them. Thus, although the play serves as protest against white or dominant dramatic practice, it also serves as a platform for interrogating the state. This makes the group able not just to disrupt the authority of bourgeois aesthetics, but also the logos of the state, although not in an openly confrontational manner. It reminds one that protest theatre or political theatre does not necessarily have to be agitational, it can gain ground through mild combat that allows interrogation rather than indoctrination.

Vibeke Glostard (2011) provides an insightful analysis into the relationship between protest theatre and democracy. She explores how protest theatre plays a democratic function by providing discursive space through which people can engage in a process of citizenship. Glostard is crucial to this study because she confirms, alongside Zenenga (2008), Wrolson (2009), Makumbirofa (2010), the fact that protest theatre predicates its practice on democratic intentions. She also proves how protest theatre achieves its democratic intentions by analysing characters in plays such as *Super Patriot and Morons* and *The Waiting*. She valorizes the oppositional and counter-hegemonic function of protest theatre, which she presents as evidence of democratic protest theatre. This study concurs with Glostard, but posits the need to interrogate the democratic practice of protest theatre beyond mere oppositionality. This study emphasises the

need to check for processes of exclusion and marginalisation that mar the democratic appeal of protest theatre. It stresses the need to interrogate tendencies in protest theatre that mar the very process of citizenship that it purports to support.

2.5 Censorship, Repression and Advocacy

Scholars in this section analyse the relationship between protest theatre and the state since independence. They document how the state has undermined artistic freedoms through the Censorship act and other repressive measures that the state put in place in order to undermine the democratic function of theatre. Some of the scholars point out how theatre has opposed a system of repression in Zimbabwe. Some point out to how state repression and censorship actually affects the practice of theatre in terms of style and staging approaches. Others submit that state surveillance has engendered new forms of protest theatre.

Samuel Ravengai (2010) provides a historical survey into the construction of censorship in post-colonial Zimbabwe. He traces the construction of the culture of censoring and suppressing theatre from the colonial days and insinuates that censorship in postcolonial Zimbabwe is as oppressive as the colonial system that drafted the act. Ravengai (2008) comes closer to the researcher's area of inquiry when he analyses how a series of draconian laws passed by the state during the crisis years negatively affects the practice of theatre in general in Zimbabwe. His article explores laws that the state passed to inhibit freedom of assembly and freedom of speech and expression. These laws, argues Ravengai, have a crippling effect on the freedom of the media. Ravengai's article is crucial because it enables this researcher to have a detailed understanding on the nature of relations that obtain between the state and independent media. The article provides valuable material that the researcher will use to establish the sociological context of protest theatre.

Nevertheless, Ravengai tends to generalise state-theatre relations without actually pointing out exact instances in which the state charged artists for violating laws such as POSA and AIPPA. Moreover, the voices of the artist that state represses are also lacking in his paper. This study, therefore, approaches the story of repression using a different methodology that prioritises the

voices of practitioners and artists in weaving the narrative of state repression in this period. Moreover, Ravengai's paper ends in 2008. This study, on the contrary, analyses state-protest theatre relations up to 2012 with a view of establishing how this relationship obtain during a Government of National Unity. An inquiry of political theatre after the G.N.U is now due, hence providing a strong gap that this study intends to fill.

While Ravengai deals with censorship and repression at the legislative level, Zenenga (2008) goes a step further in demonstrating forms of control and surveillance that the state engender outside legal and legislative parameters. He devotes time to analyse how and why the state repressed certain productions, and exposes how in most instances these bannings are not supported by the Censorship Act. He points out how police and other repressive apparatuses of the state operate without any legal backing by simply banning and stopping performances and tours. Zenenga (2010) observes that censorship and repression does not totally inhibit the development of protest theatre. Rather than seeing repression and censorship as entirely destructive, he views them as forces that incentivise the development of alternative models of theatre practice in Zimbabwe. He applauds strategies of survival that artist developed in order to evade authorities and makes specific analysis of how hit and run theatre practitioners create a new aesthetic and style of staging that is novel to Zimbabwe.

Zenenga (2011a) maintains the same analysis by exploring survival techniques that artist adopted. Zenenga (2011b) then expands our knowledge of protest theatre by devoting attention to the study of hit and run theatre. He argues that Hit and Run is a response to state repression of protest theatre. He points out that Panic theatre develops out of the need to create alternative forums for discussing national problems. Such forums were shrinking in both the print and electronic media. There is no way in which anyone can conceptualise what protest theatre is without referring to Zenenga. However, what is lacking in Zenenga's works is a detailed analysis of case studies. Moreover, he is more concerned in pointing out how protest plays are opposed to state hegemony and largely views this oppositionality as the core democratic function of political protest theatre.

However, Zenenga and, indeed, Ravengai discuss censorship and surveillance from an official viewpoint. What is more evident in their writings are the voices of authorities. Even though Zenenga points out survival strategies, there is hardly the voice of the artists/ practitioner in the whole debate on censorship and repression. It is at this point that I detect some methodological weaknesses in their narratives. Although the focus of this study is not devoted specifically to censorship, the researcher prioritises the voice of the artist in this debate and really let these voices construct an alternative narrative of censorship in Zimbabwe. The researcher submits that the practitioner has no presence in articles and papers discussing his/her experiences, thus, in analysing the context of political protest plays, where issues of censorship inevitably pop-up, the researcher prioritises the voice of the artist. The researcher, therefore, offers a subaltern approach by reading issues of censorship from below as opposed to a dominant ideology approach evident in Zenenga and Ravengai's works.

Joy Wrolson (2009) analyses the development of panic or urgent theatre. She accounts for the emergence of panic theatre, describes its stylistic and ideological tenets and points out the way in which, like any other form, of protest theatre, it was antagonistic to the state. Although her thesis is not directly devoted to the study of democracy in protest theatre, one can discern that, like many scholars on protest theatre in Zimbabwe, she regards the counter-hegemonic nature of panic theatre as key to democratic practice in protest theatre. She also believes that since panic theatre subverts a government that artists deem to be autocratic, that in its own reveals the democratic function of panic theatre. Wrolson's findings are crucial because they help to establish the sociological environment of protest theatre. Like Zenenga, she helps this study to offer insight into local understanding and definition of protest theatre. She helps this study in conceptualising and defining protest theatre from a Zimbabwean contextual experience. However, she is more concerned in revealing how protest theatre challenged state hegemony. Her attention on the state as the only source of oppression makes her work fail to see how oppression replicates itself in projects that have democratic intentions. This study hopes to fill this gap.

The construction of protest theatre as alternative, oppositional, counter-hegemonic and, therefore, democratic is also evident in Nehemiah Chivandikwa (2012) who submits that protest theatre in Zimbabwe offers an alternative avenue for democratic engagement outside the structures of state media. He notes that it ushers positive propaganda, which act as a counter discursive stratagem against state propaganda. He agrees with Zenenga that theatre becomes protest when it is a platform for insurrection. It is critical to observe that the works of Chivandikwa, Zenenga and Wrolson fall into the populist trap of simply blasting the state and valorising the opposition. This flaw is also present in the works of Manyeza (2006) and Makumbirofa (2010). The researcher impresses the need for a scholarship that does not simply valorise the protest theatre movement in Zimbabwe. The researcher insists on the need for a scholarship that assesses the successes and failures of the protest theatre movement, in terms of creating an alternative public sphere that empowers diverse citizen voices so that they deliberate on their vision of Zimbabwe.

This study argues that whilst it is important to expose structures of institutional autocracy and despotism, it is equally critical to scrutinise voices that protest against dictatorship and oppression. This study differs from the above works because it offers an identity based analysis into the nature of agency that is empowered in political protest theatre. It is not simply interested in revealing how the plays opposed the state and how the state responded to insurrection. Rather, it is interested in examining how protest plays empower the agency of marginalised voices to reveal their aspirations on the story of change and transformation in Zimbabwe. This study is interested in examining how these plays bestow agency on categories of people and the extent to which they allow marginalised people to influence and modify the moral and intellectual leadership of the usual hegemonic classes in society. The researcher is also interested in interrogating how protest theatre disrupt the replication of unfair power relations that always invent subaltern people as incapable of producing transformation in society. This reading, it is hoped, will reveal the strengths and shortcomings of the conceptual approaches to democracy in protest theatre with a view of making protest theatre more aligned to democratic values and practices.

Scholars in this section point out the antagonistic positioning of political protest theatre with the state as key markers of democratic theatre. They celebrate the adversarial role of protest theatre to the state. They identify the state as the only obstacle to the democratic function of political protest theatre. They are blind to other centres of control that are inherent in political protest theatre. This study argues that power is not concentrated within one center. It advances that the story of democracy should extend beyond mere opposition and insurrection. The study reiterates the need to check for strategies of exclusion, universalism, paternalism, othering within opposing voices. It submits that voices of opposition must celebrate pluralism, difference and diversity of identities in order for such voices to capture the wishes and aspirations of marginalised sections of society.

2.6 Style and Democratic Function in Protest Theatre

The capability of protest plays in creating such a framework of democracy lies in the manner in which it chooses style. Scholars who write on the relationship between style and democracy observe that some styles do not liberate agency. Nikki Hwindiri (2012) explores how the agit prop style in some of the plays creates indoctrination and propaganda. Isheunesu Moyo (2012) questions the efficacy of tragic and comic effects in Chifunyise's works in a context in which protest should enhance critical engagement. Peace Mukwara (2010) questions the sincerity of some of Chifunyise's plays as vehicles for transformation. Chikonzo (2011) interrogates the pitfalls of Chifunyise's realist style in liberating agency. Chikonzo's argument borrows from the theoretical formulations of Brecht, but goes beyond them to create a paper that establishes the politics of space in enhancing multi-vocalism and participation of differing voices.

Sambo (2009) notes that the desire to protest made most artists cease to be artist, but to become politicians masquerading as artist. He notes that some of the works lacked artistic ingenuity and ended up being mere diatribes based on unfounded evidence and lacking balance in terms of execution. Sambo adds that artist got carried away with political polarisation of the day to the extent that rather than critically examining the problems of Zimbabwe in a balanced manner; they ended up being one sided. Indeed, a close examination of most of these works would reveal that rather than creating a critical citizen and artists, the plays peddle mob emotions by providing solidarity for like-minded individuals.

The views of these scholars are significant because they alert this scholar to pay special attention to the relationship between style and democracy. However, these scholars concentrate on the negative impact of style and have not cared to analyse how certain styles actually enhanced pluralism and multi-vocalism thereby liberating agency of various people as actors in the destiny of the country. This study differs from these scholars because it explores the link between style and the concept of public sphere. It looks at how style enables various plays to create a platform that empowers voices to deliberate on issues of common interest. It analyses how style enhances or undermines the semiotic autonomy of the spectator. It looks on the impact of style on the intellectual faculties of spectators.

2.7 Theatre and Democracy outside the Field of protest theatre in Zimbabwe

Owing to the fact that democratic processes have marginalised the poor, many scholars on Zimbabwean theatre have adopted a subaltern approach to democracy where democracy intentionally serves the interests of marginalised sections of society. This scholarship borrows immensely from the theories of Augusto Boal (1985) who advocates for theatre as a weapon of liberation of the oppressed. He notes that theatre geared for transformative processes must be able to transfer the means of dramatic production to the people so that they may utilise them as a weapon against dominant ideology. More importantly is the manner in which he defines the people as proletarians and peasants. Boal goes on to propose various forms of theatre, all geared towards subversion of authority.

Boal's view of the people as constituting the workers and peasants and the poor finds expression in Zimbabwean theatre in the works of Robert McLaren (1990) and Stephen Chifunyise (2001). They transfer grassroots approaches to democracy as proposed by Boal, especially the concept of Theatre for Development (TfD). The core argument of the scholars is how theatre, through TfD, can enhance the participation of marginalised people in development projects. They believed that if a community makes a play with the help of experts, that play can result in the creation of a forum for dialogue and deliberation in which various voices can air their concerns.. Chenai Kandenga (2004) argues that TfD can offer an alternative forum of platform through which communities can articulate their concerns to structures of power. Linda Masendeke (2012)

analyses how TfD can foster personal and collective empowerment within disabled communities. Her concern is on how TfD can transfer power and agency to disabled communities so that they define parameters of empowerment and emancipation in their own terms. Moira Marangwanda (2012) examines how TfD contains dialogical elements that enhance participation. Chipso Marunda (2009) expands the framework of TfD by exploring its efficacy in bringing about pluralism and grassroots participation in issues of reconciliation and national healing. Julia Yule (2010) and Ngonidzashe Muonwa (2004) reveal the role of theatre in promoting participation and grassroots democracy. These works have demonstrated the positive side of the concept of TfD in creating a public sphere that allows differing voices to express their aspirations and interests in developmental projects. To this end, TfD serves a democratic purpose.

There has been an outcry within Zimbabwean academia as to whether TfD, despite its pro-subaltern stance actually promotes communicative democracy, empowerment, participation and agency of the marginalised. Nathaniel Kujenga (2009), Wiseman Chibhememe (2010) Wendy Zvakavapano (2010), and Tenford Chitanana (2007) all submit that, although TfD has been an alternative model of power transfer in development communication, it is flawed by a recurrence of processes of exclusion and elitism. Chitanana argues that TfD concentrates more on democratising the process of making the TfD project without analysing how the final development project incorporates grassroots view in its execution. He notes that whereas communication channels are democratic, the actual implementation of TfD projects has not yielded the same democratic effect.

Kujenga adds that there has been a replication of oppressive power relations as influential members of communities maintain their grip and control on TfD projects. Zvakavapano and Chibhememe also make the same observation. They submit that TfD projects have failed to make great strides due to influences of donors who want their interests to prevail over those of communities. However, Lyneth Mtemeri (2012) argues that donor funding has also brought about some positive effects on development communication. She notes that without funding these projects would fail to take off. The funding dimension that Mtemeri provides is crucial, but this study does not delve into this issue owing to scepticism of organisations and artists who were not keen on sharing data concerning the funding and sponsorship of protest theatre.

The discourse of democracy is also evident in another model of applied theatre called Theatre in Education (TIE). This model seeks to democratise learning methods and ways of transferring knowledge within learning institutions. This model advances that the usual learning methods in schools use a technique of banking where students are just loaded with information with no room for interrogation and analysing that knowledge. Freire argues that learning must be experiential and participatory, allowing people to question structures of power, rather than simply maintaining the status quo. He adds that critical engagement is crucial in liberating the agency of students in escaping from a knowledge system that replicates oppression. Robert McLaren (1989), Kuda Chitambire (2001) and Ruth Makumbirofa (2006) point out how TIE is a model of democratic learning in contrast to conventional learning.

The engagement of these scholars with the field of democracy, albeit in the context of TIE and TfD is crucial to this study in the sense that it helps to reveal aspects and notions of democracy applicable to other fields of theatre. These works reveal that a framework of democracy should liberate the intellectual agency of marginalised members of society so that they become active members of society. Democracy, within a theatrical context entails allowing multivocalism and creating public spheres that empower participation. The story of TfD and TIE brings about key values, agency, pluralism, participation, diversity, and ownership. However, there is an absence of the same kind of attention on the relationship between democratic theories. This study argues that there is a story contained in protest theatre after 1999, which needs documentation. The observations made with regard to TfD and TIE are crucial because they help to reveal the challenges inherent in attempting to create public spheres through theatre. The challenge of this study then is to analyse such issues of democracy and public spheres, not in TfD, but in protest theatre.

The application of subaltern democratic theories to Theatre for Development is useful to this study because it helps to reveal how the subject of democracy is evident in other fields of theatre, which are not necessarily and exactly protest theatre. They provide the opportunity to scrutinise the weaknesses inherent in their conception of democracy within other fields of theatre in general. For example, by merely defining democracy through numbers, scholars in this section

fail to realise that they are proposing a tyranny of the majority where the will of many was supposed to prevail. They regard the oppressed as a monolithic entity with homogenous aspirations against authority. What then happens is that the interests of a few elites who lead grassroots movements dominate these movements. They fail to note that emerging elite could still marginalise the people by using persuasive means. This is the reason why this project debates issues of democracy at length and conjures up a framework of democratic analysis, applicable to theatre geared for transformative processes. This is necessary to ensure that projects geared towards social transformation do not legitimate systems of exclusion and marginalisation that they purport to oppose.

2.8 Theatre and Identity

Most works on identity in Zimbabwean the construction of cultural identities. Kelvin Chikondo (2005) and Linda Musariri (2007) analyse not only how identities are constructed, but also how they legitimise systems of oppression. Chikondo in particular extends his analysis to explore how power structures use film to legitimise stereotypes based on race, class and gender. Shyleth Mthetwa (2008), Lungile Manda (2004), Plackcdia Magudze (2010), Patience Manzira (2006) interrogate how representations of women in theatre and film tend to undermine the agency of women as active members of society. They all bemoan the unfair representation of women, which they argue, perpetuates the myth that men are superior to women.

Some of the recent works have ceased to bemoan the unequal relations of power proffered in films and theatre. Rather, they explore how inequalities in society have affected both men and women. Borrowing from post-feminist understanding of social relations, these scholars argue that it is also important to analyse how both female and male film/theatre makers negatively portray male performers. Kelvin Chikondo (2010) adopts an Africana womanism perspective and argues that identities of otherness are not peculiar to female performers. Chikondo adds that the relationship between performance space and respectability in colonial Zimbabwe is such that both male and female performers are victims of social denigration owing to the nature in which performance space and the African middle class in colonial Zimbabwe socially and ideologically construct venues of performance. Nonsikelelo Mgumira (2012) argues along the same lines and suggests that the problem in feminist scholarship has been that it tends to treat men as the enemy

without attempting to incorporate men in the broader discourse of empowerment. Borrowing from Africana womanism's concept of 'together with men,' Mgumira argues that notions of liberation espoused in feminist plays such as *She No Longer Weeps* seem to advocate for the creation of an utopia or society which has no men. For this reason, she argues that orthodox feminist empowerment is fallacious and myopic.

Nyaradzo Nhongonhema (2012) argues that feminist scholarship has forced women to believe that oppression only comes from men. In her analysis of identities of men and women in films made by female filmmakers, she has observed that being female does not immediately result in a positive depiction of women. Princess Sibanda (2012) adds that those scholars that moan about negative images of women do so because they always read texts along the grain. She argues that oppositional readership of these texts reveals that there is a lot of feminine agency and resistance in acts that are seemingly passive and docile. Kelvin Chikonzor (2013) advances the notions of identity as resistance and resistance as liberation in his analysis of the resistance displayed by white dramatist against state hegemony in colonial Zimbabwe.

Recent doctoral theses by Samuel Ravengai (2012) and Owen Seda (2012) explore factors that influenced the evolution of theatre identities in Zimbabwe. These works concentrate not on how theatre has constructed the identities of individuals but rather on how social and political forces since colonial days have modified the faces of Zimbabwean theatre. Ravengai analyses, in detail, forces that shaped the emergence and evolution of alternative theatre, which he also calls subaltern theatre. Seda explores the sociological construction of Zimbabwean theatre. He argues that transculturalism, or the relationship between the local and the exotic, plays a great role in shaping the syncretic and hybridist face of Zimbabwean theatre. Ravengai differs from Seda because he problematises this hybrid theatre as site of resistance and recuperation against dominant hegemonic discourses that invent subaltern theatre as inferior.

The predication of these works on equality is a major weakness in the sense that they envision a just society when, for example, women become equal to men. They do not realise that by advocating for equality, they are undermining their specific needs as women (Young 1988, Philips 1988). Rather than basing their liberation of specific needs of women, they are using men

as the benchmark. Equality has, therefore, become oppressive because it mainstreams women into a model where they cannot go beyond men. As such, there is more emphasis in undermining dominant hegemonic structures (patriarchy, colonialism and the state) without recourse to how the process of liberation might also undermine the visibility of differing voices. Blindness to difference inadvertently creates some form of dictatorship which universalises interests and needs that are, in fact, peculiar. (Young, 1988)

This study differs from gender and feminist based works on identity because it acknowledges that women are not the only marginalised sector of society. It advances an analysis that looks at oppression from a multi-sectoral approach. Moreover, these works have not looked at relations of power as they become manifest in narratives that document and record the struggle for social transformation during the decade in crisis. They do not analyse the extent to which protest theatre uses identities to undermine and empower the agency of ordinary people in the struggle for transformation in Zimbabwe. Moreover, they do not explore how protest theatre ideologically constructs identities of categories of people in order to legitimise and engender exclusion, paternalism and elitism. This is a significant intrication between identity and democracy (power) which is lacking in available literature on theatre and identity in Zimbabwean theatre.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed literature on Zimbabwean protest theatre since 1980. It has acknowledged the significance of various works towards the understanding of issues of identity, democracy, censorship and repression in protest theatre in Zimbabwe. The chapter has produced a thematic based literature review. This review has pointed out research gaps which justify the necessity of this study. Existing works celebrate the oppositional and adversarial function of protest theatre without interrogating how protest theatre provides discursive space through which subaltern and marginalised members of society can articulate their needs and aspirations to authorities. Current scholarship hardly interrogates issues of agency and power and subtle processes of exclusion and paternalism inherent in protest theatre. Existing works also pay scant attention to the relationship between style and democracy in protest theatre and there is not much of performance analysis in existing works. These are gaps that this study intends to fill.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes a theoretical frame of analysis for this study. There is not a single theory that sufficiently addresses the needs of this inquiry, neither is there a single theoretician who sufficiently addresses all the facets of this inquiry. To this effect, this theoretical framework borrows from diverse but related fields of knowledge. Because of this interdisciplinarity, this theoretical framework borrows from different theorists from different parts of the global village. Since this inquiry is located in the realm of democratic thought, it uses of the theory of the public sphere. This theory, popularised by German Theorist Jurgen Habermas, went through critical transformation through the work of Diana Fraser whose views the researcher applies alongside those of Habermas.

Owing to the fact that democracy relates to the manner in which individuals share and diffuse power, there is no way in which this study can escape borrowing from theories of power. Michael Foucault's analysis of power becomes pivotal as it enables the researcher to interrogate manifestations of power and the way in which, at the level of intention, structures of power relate to their intended subjects by mediating on the intellectual capabilities and agency of their subjects. This study is clearly aware of the fact that the subaltern groups in society suffer the most in relations of power. To this effect, Antonio Gramsci and Ranajit Guha's theories, which interrogate power from a subaltern perspective, compliment the postulations of Foucault. These theories, in brief, unveil how power structures mediate on the semiotic resistance of subjects in a bid to legitimise their moral and intellectual leadership (hegemony) over subaltern groups. Gramsci (1971, 1999) notes that through the creation of a special category of intellectuals who inform the general production of meaning in society, elites in society deny visibility to subaltern intellectual consciousness. This process of marginalising subaltern intelligence and agency, argues Ranajit Guha (1997), dominates narratives that document processes of struggle and change in society. Thus, the subaltern gaze to power certainly helps to locate relations of power that inform democratic practice.

3.2 Theories of Democracy: The Public Sphere, Counter public Sphere

The connection between democracy and media found expression in the works of Jurgen Habermas, a German theorist. The media is a 'public sphere' which Habermas (1988:509) defines as 'a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed.' Fraser (1994:57) complements this view when she submits that the public sphere:

Designates a theatre in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk. It is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, hence an institutionalised arena of discursive interaction... it is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state... it is a theatre for debating and deliberating rather than buying and selling.

Habermas argues that a public sphere conceived along democratic parameters should create a platform or a forum that provides citizens with 'the freedom to express and publish their opinions about matters of general interest.' In this view, the media has to provide space for dialogue whereby citizens can modify, critique and interrogate policies and other issues of interest.⁷

Habermas also brings in the principle of plurality and multivocalism. He adds that the media should also become a market place of ideas. The public sphere should become a contested terrain where various ideas and opinions compete for attention. Of great concern is that the media should create a critical citizen, who has exposure to a variety of sources of information. The media, in this view, should provide citizens with information that allows them to make informed choices and decisions. His concern was that the media should not become the site of brainwashing or indoctrination. Thus, Geoff Eley, as quoted by Fraser (1994:61) observes that: The emergence of a bourgeoisie public sphere was never defined solely by the struggle against absolutism and traditional authority, but.... addressed the problem of popular containment. The public sphere was always constituted by conflict.

⁷ This study is by no means the first one to explore how performance can be used to empower or undermine agency of individuals for purposes of bringing about transformation in society. This study is delving in an area where scholars on performance and democracy such as Augusto Boal (1979, 1988), Bertolt Brecht (through Esslin, Willet) and Jillian Dolan (2001) have written about. This is not the place to discuss these scholars but reference shall be made to their works in the writing of this study.

Habermas theory is crucial because it explores how forums that citizens create in order to deliberate on issues of common interest can imbue democratic values. His theory advances that such forums are sites of struggle between varying and differing opinions. Public spheres, in his view, should be participatory forums that celebrate multivocalism. He notes that the principle of fairness and difference should prevail in the public spheres. Habermas, as quoted by Paola Botham (2008:318) remarks that the public sphere is ‘every encounter in which actors do not just observe each other, but take a second person attitude, reciprocally attributing communicative freedom to each other.’ Individuals, in this view, express their needs and interests without any otherness. Public spheres, in his view, are places for reasserting identity, of advancing identity based needs and not places of wiping difference in favour for universalism. Fraser (1994:68) complements this view when she remarks that:

Public spheres are not only arenas for the formation of discursive opinion, they are arenas for the formation and enactment of social identities.... participation means being able to speak in one’s own voice, thereby simultaneously constructing and expressing one’s cultural identity.

The concept of the public sphere is crucial as it enables this study to analyse protest theatre as forums for deliberating. Thus, one becomes keen to analyse how protest theatre, from a public sphere approach, celebrates the agency of different voices in the deliberation of the story of social and political change in Zimbabwe. The public sphere concept also provides this study with the impetus to interrogate how protest theatre public sphere imbues democratic values through the manner in which it uses agency to construct identities of categories of people. This is because protest plays offer more than just public spheres. They become counter public spheres because they create alternative platforms for political dialogue outside the confines of organised control, be it the control of the state or any power structure that wishes to control how citizens engage in political debate and dialogue. To this effect, the study is engendered to analyse how protest plays, as counter public spheres, empower or undermine the agency of different voices in participating in the dialogue for change in Zimbabwe. Moreover, since they are alternative forums, the study becomes interesting by analysing how they deviate from practices that undermine democratic deliberation. In brief, the public sphere theory enables this study to

analyse representations of identities of categories of people through the manner in which protest theatre constructs their agency.

However, Habermas' public sphere has conceptual limitations. He is writing within the classical liberal canon where access to the public sphere is limited to a few rich and powerful members of society. His public sphere excludes vulnerable and poor members of the social strata like women, workers, and peasants (Curran 1996, Keane 1996). Habermas fails to realise that although the public sphere is independent from the state, it is not free from the market. Only those who have the wherewithal to produce, publish, and own the media have access to the public sphere. Thus, the market place of ideas only markets ideas from the bourgeoisie class who then universalise their ideas, as if they represent the interests of everyone in society. The media, therefore, acts as a purveyor of dominant interests.⁸

Nancy Fraser suggests ways of overcoming barriers to access and participation evident in the bourgeoisie public sphere, which Habermas analyses. She proposes that one can undermine barriers to participation by enabling subaltern members of society create their own public spheres. These public spheres, known as Subaltern counter-publics, are:

parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interest and needs (Fraser, 1994:67).

Fraser's submission helps this study to focus its attention on the extent to which then protest theatre becomes a counter public that engenders participation of voices that the dominant media controlled by the state deny participatory space.⁹ She adds that subaltern counter-public spheres play a critical democratic function as they make public sphere sites of struggle and terrains in which ideas are contested and modified. Fraser (1994:67) points out that 'these counter publics emerge in response to exclusion within dominant publics, they help to expand discursive space.'

⁸ This idea has been captured by many scholars who have noted limitations in Harbemas' analysis of the public sphere. These include James Curran (1996), John Keane (1996) among others.

⁹ As will become evident in the contextual framework of protest theatre (1999-2013), theatre practitioners such as Cont Mhlanga, Daves Guzha, Tafadzwa Muzondo and Daniel Maposa all cited the exclusion of citizen voices in mainstream media. At an academic level, Praise Zenenga (2008, 2011) and Vibeke Glostard (2010) have also highlighted the suppression of citizen's voices as one of the reason that gives impetus to the development of protest theatre in this period.

In my view, it is in this ‘contestatory function’ that counter publics (protest theatre) become vehicles of democracy.

However, she is quick to point out that despite their widening of democratic spaces, counter public sphere need thoroughly examination, as there is a tendency to foster non-democratic values. Fraser (1994:67) remarks:

Some of them, alas, are explicitly anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian and even those with democratic and egalitarian intentions are not always above practising their own modes of informal exclusion and marginalisation.

It is on this remark that Fraser makes the most valuable connection with this study. She reminds one that the mere fact of being oppositional to a dominant discourse is inadequate to guarantee fidelity to the principles of democracy. The mere intention of creating an alternative and indeed a counter public must not blind one to practices in protest theatre that are oppositional to democratic values. She points out there is always a need to interrogate such purportedly democratic spaces in order to reconcile them with democratic motives and intentions. One should, therefore, check the extent to which such alternative spaces do not engender marginalisation, exclusion, paternalism, universalism, and elitism.

A reading of Fraser fosters the fact that democratic interrogation cannot be confined to dominant publics only but also to subordinate publics. What this implies is that democracy is a formula or method of interrogation with principles that are applicable even in situations where one thinks that the participants are obviously adhering to them. Without such interrogation, one risks creating and replicating the very oppression and marginalisation that we are trying to circumvent when we create counter-discursive democratic spaces. This study, therefore, is a monitor of protest theatre as an alternative democratic space and subaltern public sphere. This theoretical reading helps this study to explore the extent to which protest theatre enables marginalised voices in their plurality to deliberate on their vision of Zimbabwe. Hence, when the researcher conceives protest plays in the context of democracy/ public sphere, he analyses how these plays construct the agency of citizens that participate in these forums. The researcher is concerned with the way in which protest theatre enables subaltern voices to exercise intellectual authority and

autonomy over their thought processes. He is also interested in exploring how voices of marginalised groups in society design and influence change because:

there is still a great deal to object in our own ‘actually existing democracy and the project of critical social theory of the limits of democracy... remains as relevant as ever. In fact, this project seems... to have acquired a new urgency at a time when liberal democracy is being touted as the *nes plus ultra* of social systems (Fraser, 1994:56).

Fraser, therefore, helps one to interrogate forums and platform that purport to be democratic using a method of democracy that celebrates pluralism, agency, and fairness.

3.3 Theories of Power: Foucault, Gramsci, and Guha

An analysis of democracy would be incomplete without interrogating how protest theatre constructs relations of power. One need to have a clear understanding of what power is and how it operates. For this reason, this study deploys Foucault’s postulations on power.

Power, as Foucault (1994: 137) observes, ‘is a mode of action which does not act directly or immediately on others. Instead it works on their actions.’ From Foucault, one understands that power works by modulating human agency and capacities as well as the logic by which they bestow authority over their actions. The function of texts, from this reading, is to mediate the manner in which people construe themselves as instruments of change and transformation. Foucault (1994: 138) adds that power:

Operates on the field of possibilities in which the behaviour of acting subjects is able to inscribe itself. It is a set of actions on possible actions...it is always a way of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon actions.

One can note that power is interchangeable with control. Thus, in order for one to investigate relations of power, one should first examine the set of actions that a power structure puts in place in order to control its subjects. One should also interrogate the process through which a power structure mediates and invents the agency of individuals that it seeks to control.

Foucault submits that power works through mind games, which have an effect on the consciousness of its subjects. This leads one to closely follow how he explained subjectivity. Foucault (1994: 126) defines subjectification as the process by 'which... human beings are made subjects.' Power structures transform individuals into subjects through the process of objectification, which according to Foucault (1994: 126) occurs in three ways. The first level occurs through the sciences. The purpose of sciences is to produce a corpus of knowledge, which distances individuals from a clear understanding of power relations. (Foucault, 1994:126). This knowledge provides an imaginary understanding of power as deemed by the power structure. When individuals think that they are making informed decisions, they will be making choices out of the limited knowledge provided to them. The power structure claims to know the needs and interests of the people thus it gives them knowledge that makes it easier to govern them. The power structure regulates what they are supposed to know, screens and ostracises knowledge that does not create a governable subject. The purpose of providing knowledge hinges on the idea of knowing the subject.

Power structures, as Foucault (1994: 131) add, use an old technique of control that the Church developed in the Middle Ages. He regarded this technique of control as 'pastoral power.' This power works based on knowing the needs of the people. Pastoral Power is paternalistic, in the sense that, it invents its subjects as incapable controlling themselves, as childlike individuals who need control from above. This has a bearing on the identities of the subjects. From this reading, Foucault becomes useful in creating the link between power and identity. By constructing the agency of categories of people, protest theatre simultaneously invents the identities of these people. This had a bearing on their efficacy as agents of social and political transformation. The construction of identities and agency becomes a means of controlling what these categories of people or individuals know, thereby turning these individuals into subjects of the power structure. This observation is crucial because it provides the impetus to investigate how power structures use the logic of knowing other people as an alibi for prescribing to the people how they should make sense of their struggle for social and political change.

The second level of objectification is through the creation of differences where categories of people are othered based on difference. This difference works through binaries that in Foucault's

(1994: 126) vision create 'dividing practices' which relegate categories of people from belonging to the mainstream. Dividing practices create identities of inferiority and otherness, which remove the sense of self-esteem within the affected individual. The individual splits him/herself between expressing what s/ he really is and expressing what those who invent him/her really want him/her to become. The individual 'is divided inside himself' (Foucault, 1994: 127) thus, s/he loses the confidence to unlock his/her potential as an agent of change.

Dividing practices are useful to this study because they establish imaginary lines of difference that power structures legitimise as real and normal. Dividing practices help to reveal why grand narratives create a grammar of difference, which those in power use as an alibi to allow a power structure to exercise moral and intellectual leadership on individuals. An awareness of the presence of dividing practices engenders one to analyse texts by interrogating opposites. These opposites help one to understand power not just from the intentions of the power structure, but also from the experiences of its subjects. Foucault (1994: 129) observes that 'to find out what society means by 'sanity' perhaps we should investigate what is happening in the field of insanity. And what we mean by 'legality' in the field of illegality.' Thus, Foucault helps this study to analyse protest theatre not simply in terms of the democratic intentions of the protest theatre movement. Rather, the study seeks for an understanding of this movement from the actual discursive practice of protest theatre. Foucault helps one to look deep into the sociological context of the plays in order to historicise the power struggles inherent in these plays. The plays are not sufficient; they are not complete or exhaustive. Thus, one has to look at what is not being said by the plays in order to understand what is being said by the plays.

The third level of objectification is through 'the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject.' (Foucault, 1994: 126) The process of creating the subject is not a one-way transaction where a power structure forces subaltern individuals into subjects. There is some kind of a will by the individual to become a subject. In this process, the individual internalises the fact that s/he is a subject. This submission is important because it demonstrates that individuals are not blameless when power structures objectify them. If objectification is a mental game, if it is ideological, then individuals have the capacity to resist objectification. The power that those in control wield is not total or unbreakable. Foucault, in this way, gives this study the impetus to

look at how individuals deliberately undermine their intellectual independence and adhere to dogmas from the power structure. This helps one to look for paradox and contradiction.

Foucault concludes his analysis of power by submitting that to understand it, one should look at how individuals resist control. In Foucault's words, one should examine:

The forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists in using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, find out their point of application and methods used. Rather than analysing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analysing power relations through the antagonism of strategies (Foucault 1994: 128).

From this reading, one gathers that a balanced analysis of power relations should interrogate both dominant and marginalised voices. One should not just look at the representation of dominant voices but also concentrate on how the representation of dominant voices marginalises other voices.

Foucault is crucial in elucidating the generalised operation of power and the way in which human beings become subjects of power in any given context. The researcher argues that there is a need for an approach that pays specific attention to the actual manifestation of relations of power within subaltern communities. To complement Foucault's analysis of power, the researcher borrows from Antonio Gramsci's postulation of power in order to make sense of how power actually becomes manifest in subaltern and marginalised members of society. Gramsci (1999:140) notes that each person:

carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a philosopher, an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, he has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or modify it, that is to bring into being new modes of thought.

However, despite the fact that all people possess intellectual capabilities, not everyone has the freedom to exercise intellectual autonomy. Rather, a special group of people monopolises the function of developing the intellectual base of a social group, which it spreads across members of

a social group. Gramsci (1999:140) further notes that ‘all men are intellectuals...but not all men have the function of intellectuals.’ This is because of the fact that every social group has ‘its own specialised category of intellectuals’ whose function is to give a social group a sense of ‘homogeneity and awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields as well.’ (Gramsci, 1999:135). This Gramscian understanding of social relations is crucial because it alerts one to the fact that it is not only within the state that intellectuals emerge with a desire to influence the production of meaning in society. Rather, within movements opposed to the state, there also emerges a group of intellectuals or elites who wish to control the thought processes of that movement. Gramsci (1999: 142) reiterates this idea when he notes that:

One of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and conquer ‘ideologically’ the traditional intellectuals, thus the assimilation and conquest is made quicker.

Like state intellectuals, these anti-state intellectuals also seek to exercise moral and intellectual leadership over members of subaltern groups. In other words, these intellectuals also seek to extend their hegemony over subaltern people. Thus, both state and anti-state intellectuals use ideological apparatuses in the same manner. This conceptualisation of intellectuals helps this study to analyse ways in which protest theatre, construed in opposition to the state, conveys and legitimises the intellectual and moral leadership (hegemony) of elites or intellectuals who seek to undo the state. To this effect, the study is empowered to analyse ways by which protest theatre sought to manufacture spontaneous consent towards the intellectual authority of these intellectuals. Similarly, one becomes keen to explore instances in which subalterns are denied the function of being intellectuals who can modify the discourse of change and transformation as espoused by protest theatre in the period under inquiry.

Gramsci (1999:135) adds that:

The mass of the peasantry, although it performs an essential function in the world of production, does not elaborate its own ‘organic’ intellectuals, although it is from the peasantry that other social groups draw many of their intellectuals and a high proportion of traditional intellectuals are from the peasantry.

Gramsci, therefore, acknowledges that lower classes have the capacity to organise social and political struggles. A reading of Gramsci helps this study to examine the implications of undermining subaltern agency or intellectual authority to the discourse of democracy. It provides a window to analyse movements that aim to empower subaltern voices. Indeed, through Gramsci, the researcher is able to unveil non-democratic tendencies inherent in movements created to subvert the state as a structure of power. Gramsci (1970) adds that the agency of ordinary people is so strong that intellectuals have to provide room to the interests of ordinary people so as to create a sense of compromise between the interests of the elites and those of the ordinary people. Gramsci (1971:161) points out that:

The fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed.

These compromises do not occur between social groups, but also transpire within the same social group since social groups are not homogenous and monolithic. The fear of emerging intellectuals of an opposing movement is not the counter-discursive thoughts of the state peddled by state intellectuals. Rather, there is also fear of counter-discursive intellectual thoughts radiating from subaltern individuals, which both state intellectuals and emerging anti-state intellectuals seek to circumvent.

However, the important question that then arises is; what are the ideological implications of this compromise? To Gramsci, the compromise is a manifestation of resistance inherent in subaltern classes. This resistive agency is used in this study to examine how subaltern classes challenge elite hegemony in organising the struggle for democratic change. At another level, the compromise creates a false sense of inclusion and participation. This false consciousness contains the resistance of subaltern classes, because it does not shift the balance of power, it merely realigns it. Tony Bennet (1996:351) observes that:

If the Gramscian concept of hegemony refers to the process through which the ruling class seeks to negotiate opposing class cultures onto a cultural and ideological terrain, which wins for it a

position of leadership, it is also true that what is thereby consented to is a negotiated version of ruling class culture and ideology

In this regard, one becomes keen to analyse instances in which protest plays create an imaginary understanding and false consciousness of participation, inclusion, empowerment when, in fact, all these processes reinforce elite desires rather than subaltern interests and aspirations. Thus, the researcher is not just satisfied with seeing the subaltern speaking in these plays. Rather he is keen on exploring whether what he/she speaks empowers him/her and reveals his/her intellectual freedom. When the subaltern speaks, does s/he reveal a liberated consciousness or s/he parrots ideas and desires exogenous to his consciousness. It is, therefore, in the mediation of subaltern consciousness that Gramsci becomes pivotal to this study.

The researcher finally borrows from Ranajit Guha (1997) because he exposes elitist exclusionary practices inherent in narratives that document people's struggles for social and political reform. I submit that protest plays serve as a record of society's story on the struggle for change in Zimbabwe. Guha argued that the way elites write narratives that document social and political struggles belittle the intellectual processes of subaltern groups. He submitted that the historiography of transformative forces in society has largely undermined the agency of subaltern people as vehicles of change. His theory is an attempt to show the significance of the activities of subaltern people in the nationalist transformation of India. However, one can repurpose it to comment on subaltern experiences outside India. Guha notes that accounts of the 'Indian story' which are written by the elite neglect the contribution of non-elite members, despite the fact that these neglected classes borne much of the burden of the struggle against oppressive forces. Guha (1997: xiv) observes that:

The historiography of ... nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism... bourgeois-nationalist elitism ...sharing the prejudice that the making of the ... nation and the development of the consciousness-nationalism which confirmed this process were exclusively or predominantly elite.

Guha (1997: xiv) adds that:

What is clearly left out of this un-historical (elitist) historiography is the politics of the people. For parallel to the domain of elite politics, there existed... another domain of ... politics in which the principal actors were not the dominant groups of the indigenous society... but the subaltern classes and constituting the mass the laboring population and intermediate strata of town and country- that is the people.

Guha's approach is important because it makes it imperative to investigate how protest theatre narrates and documents the contribution of the masses in the struggle for change in selected protest plays. To understand this contribution, the study relates to the actual historical documentation of the role that labourers and peasants play in the struggle for change in Zimbabwe. This sociological base provides a platform for comparing narrations in the plays and narrations of history.. Above all, Guha's approach enables one to give time to elite interests in protest theatre and the manner in which they narrate the Zimbabwe's struggle for social and political change during and after the crisis of 1999-2009. This helps to confirm or dispute whether narrations of the Zimbabwean story in protest plays are in fact elite or subaltern. Although it reduces analysis to binaries, it helps this study to tackle one of the greatest debate on social and historical transformation, the debate between elitism and the rest of society. Guha (1997: xvi) reinforces this fact by submitting that:

We recognize, of course, that subordination cannot be understood except as one of the constitutive terms in a binary relationship of which the other is dominance, for subaltern groups are always subject to the activities of the ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up... Indeed, it will be very much a part of our endeavour to make sure that our emphasis on the subaltern functions both as a measure of objective assessment of the role of the elite and as a critique of elitist interpretations of that role.

Thus, Guha's approach helps to review power relations obtaining in protest theatre by assessing both the elite and the subaltern, hence:

It would no longer suffice to regard politics merely as the sum of transactions between the masters themselves. For every transaction of that sort would henceforth require a reference to 'the other domain' for an understanding of its implications, and the presence of the subaltern

would make itself felt even in a scenario where its name has been dropped from the list of actors by oversight or design. (Guha, 1997: xvi)

This subaltern analysis reveals the fact that this study is not a mere documentation of theatre, but also a study of theatre as an entry point into the history of democratic struggle in Zimbabwe. It is in this sense that the historical subaltern approach is of immense importance to this study.

3.4 Post-linear Performance Theory

In its quest to interrogate issues of democracy in performance, this study borrows from post-linear performance theory. Post-linearity posits itself as the antithesis of the linear narratives which in the words of Heuvel (1992:48) are ‘scriptible and writerly, monological and logocentric (as distinguished from dialogic and playful) oedipal and oppressive in contrast to luminal and ludic.’ Heuvel adds that linear texts are enclosed works while post-linear texts are open texts. Linear narratives are scriptible and writerly implying that they celebrate authorial intentions rather than allowing actors to use the script just as a raw material. This makes the text convey one meaning propagated by the author through characters in the play. In contrast, post-linear texts disrupt the construction of dramatic characters so much that the meanings that the audience generates from a text become plural. In Roland Barthes view, post linearity is democratic in the sense that it kills the author. The death of the author creates independence for both actors and spectators. Heuvel (1992: 49) notes that through its opposition to the dramatic script or writerly text, the post-linear performance:

Can be ludic, luminal liberating... it can infiltrate the oedipal text, dispossess it, and create its own higher form of ratiocination built upon plurality and non-hierarchical discourses and non-dominant relationships to the spectator.

Goodman and De Gay (2000: 259) reiterate this point:

Adopting an embodied perspective to understand post-linear performance recognises that the bedrock of live performances is the body, more specifically, the bodies of the audience in the act of deciphering, assimilating, or enjoying the experience provided by the alchemy of bodies and technologies on stage

Post-linearity creates 'writerly' and open texts, which, according to Hans-Thies Lehman (2006:6):

Require the spectators to become active co-writers of the (performance) text. The spectators are no longer just filling in predictable gaps as in a dramatic narrative, but are asked to become active witnesses who reflect on their own meaning making and who are also willing to tolerate gaps and suspend the assignment of meaning.

To achieve this, the spectator and performer are always aware of the fact that they are in a performance; they are part of a presentation. They are not colonised by character and do not allow the character to create a fated reality before their eyes. The post-linear performance theory breaks up mechanism that makes the actor and spectator victims of character. The main obstacle comes from the enclosed linear and dramatic text. Thus, the post-linear performance theory offers various techniques of reversing the effects of the dramatic text. These techniques include dialogism, polyvocality, hybridity, dematrixing, the half actor, carnivalesque, interruption, detachment, and multiple casting.

Catherine Bouko (2009:32) notes that the post linearity involves the 'disintegration of the dramatic character' as the actor is 'defined both as a character and an individual.' Schechner (1990:37) adds that the actor becomes a half actor 'who does not forget himself.' Schechner (1990: 36) continues by arguing that, 'while acting, half of the actor is the role he does and half will be himself.' The half actor produces detachment, which, according to Bouko (2009:32) implies that 'the actors are constantly aware of the theatrical illusion and never seem to be fully involved in the drama: their presence damages the illusion.' For the half actor, as Bouko (2009:33) observes:

The characters they embody is a fragile construction that uncovers their real personality. Instead of hiding their personality behind a character, the performers highlight universal features that are part of their identity as individuals

Detachment creates bifurcated or split identities, which are products of what Victor Turner (1990:11) calls 'androgenic' character, which is 'at once male and female.' She is also a

theriomorphic character in the sense that she is both human and spirit. Split identities are enhanced through the technique of ‘interruption’ which:

Breaks continuity, impede the easy access of form and content. A character changes into another character, interrupting the previous characters’ through line. Interruption causes the audience to refocus attention, to work at ‘getting it’ in a sense (Turner 1990:11).

Post-linearity also relies on polyvocality which Castagno (2001: 9) defines as:

Multiple language strategies and sources co-exist in the play. Characters and narratives within the script may contain diverse interests or objectives, expressed in different speech forms.

Polyvocality plays a democratic function because it ‘resists the notion of a single or dominant point of view in a narrative thereby supplanting the single, privileged authorial voice.’ (Castagno, 2001: 9).

Post-linearity also employs dialogism which according to Castagno (2001: 35) occurs when:

The play is ‘fundamentally polyphonic or dialogical rather than monological (single voiced). The essence of the play is its staging of different voices or discourses, and the clash of social perspectives and points of view.

The play presents different views without bias to a particular belief or idea. The play presents an array of views with the intention of enabling the spectator to take a position in full knowledge of diverse opinions influencing the matter that the play will be presenting. The play does not present the conflict as unchangeable, but rather reveals that, through reasoning, the action is reversible. Goodman and De Gay (2000:261) propose that:

Through post-linearity, gaps are provided for us to insert our views, our experiences, or for us to self-consciously chart our own course through material based on our likes, dislikes, or habits. These habits become clear through the process of active engagement. In this sense, post-linear performance can be called ‘generative performance’. If a dystopia is presented (for example, racial prejudice or sexual abuse) it is rarely presented as fatalistic or unchangeable. Instead it is presented as a strident revelation: look at this- did you know this is happening?! Followed by an implicit: Do something about this.

Wright (2007: 83) regards the element of non-bias leading to critical engagement as the process of de-representation:

Which promotes a continual confusion of cohesive representation. De-representation maintains a specific level of presentation, yet deliberately eschews a clear reading in order to create a fluctuating multiplicity of interpretation.

The carnivalesque technique, according to Castagno (2000:10):

Has to do with strange combinations, the overturning of expected norms and the grotesque. Usually featured are abrupt shifts from high and low diction, whether slang, specific speech regionalisms, colloquialisms, or profanities. Carnivalesque characters conflate bestial and human traits or exhibit other oddities.

Carnivalesque disintegrates the rigidity of the dramatic character. The character ceases to have a stable psychological frame, which the spectator can empathise and identify with. The given circumstances of a character mutate so much that they break emotional bonds. Consequently, the spectator concentrates on the content and ideas presented by an actor. The spectator does not become a slave of the character's judgements because he/she is not bonded to a particular character/ actor. The character/actor ceases to demonstrate a fixed likeable or resentful persona. The character ceases to be a role model and he is not a total villain. He/she is unstable. Thus, when spectators attempt to construct a character's identity, they fail. To this end, the play ceases to tie social problems to people of a particular class or social orientation. The problem, and not the person who presents the problem, becomes the focus of the spectators. Lehman (2006:3) observes that post-linearity:

Has the power to question and destabilise the spectator's construction of identity and the 'other' more so than in realist mimetic drama, which remains caught in representation and thus often reproduce dominant ideology.

Castagno (2001:35) remarks that:

The hybrid play is a literary and theatrical crossbreed, a blending of genres and disparate sources both textual and performative. The hybrid play may take on a myriad of forms and combinations; from literary pastiche to collage-like performance pieces.

The hybrid text prevents the cumulative climax of the linear narrative. It undermines the purity of the dramatic linear text hence preventing the spectator from going through the stages and processes of the dramatic texts that appeal to emotions to the extent of undermining critical engagement and judgement.

Dematrixing is the process by which actors destroy the distance between the stage and the auditorium. They destroy the social distance between them and spectators. Like interruption or half acting, the actor makes the audience aware of the fact that this is a theatrical presentation; it is only a version of reality. They destroy depth of realism in order to curtail emotional attachment, which makes the reality of the play fated. Hence in dematrixing, as Lehmann (2006:6) argues:

There is also a deliberate blurring between the characters of the actors and disabled performers themselves as they address the spectators and let them know they are being starred at and are returning the gaze.

Boal's (1985) concept of the spec-actor also comes into play. Though it does not necessarily follow some form of training, actors who 'force' spectators to assume temporary roles create the spec-actor. They can be part of the crowd that an actor addresses or the actors ask them to come on stage and be part of the action. There are no full actors and there are no full spectators. The spectator is a half spectator and a half actor who can also participate in the action on stage. This, in the words of Bouko (2009:33), disintegrates the integral or dramatic character. Boal adds that the spec-actor disrupts the power of the character in determining the destiny of the story. He does not watch helplessly but has the agency to influence at least some of the aspects of the narrative. Augusto Boal (1985:3) calls this spectator 'the liberated spectator'

These techniques destroy empathy, which Boal (1985: 102) defines as:

The emotional relationship between the character and the spectator and which provokes, fundamentally, a delegation of power on the part of the spectator, who becomes an object in relation to the character: whatever happens to the latter, happens vicariously to the spectator.

They also undermine identification and emotional orgies. Pieter J. Fourie (1988:79) observes that:

In simplistic terms, identification is the human ability to pick up another person's vibes, to empathise with others. Such feeling is based on shared values, a common background, education, culture and the like- in fact anything that makes intersubjective fellowship possible.

Identification and empathy undermine the liberation of the spectator because they lock him/her in an emotional regime, which makes independent reasoning difficult. Through identification, the spectator suspends reasoning and becomes the victim of the character that the actor portrays. Boal (1985) and Brecht (see Esslin 1959) suggested that when this happens, the spectator delegates judgement to the character.. These techniques also destroy the linear progression of the closed linear style thereby preventing the spectator from exposure to what Michael Heuvel (1992), Susan Redondo (1996, 1997), Jill Dolan (1988), Sheila Stowell (1992), and Catherine Belsey (1980) regard as the oppressive mechanisms of linearity. Martin Esslin (1959:127) rightly concludes that:

By keeping the spectator in a critical frame of mind it prevents him from seeing the conflict entirely from the view of the characters involved in it and from accepting their passions and motives as being conditioned by 'eternal human nature.' Such a theatre will make the audience see the contradictions in the existing state of society; it might even make them ask themselves how it might be changed.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has revealed theories that inform this study. The theories include the public sphere theory, which this study uses as a window of understanding democracy. Theories of power complemented the public sphere theory. While the public sphere theory highlighted principles of democracy such (pluralism, fragmentation, difference, fairness and agency) and principles that mitigate democracy (exclusion, universalism, paternalism, otherness), it does not actually reveal how oppression and exclusion actually operate from a philosophical point of view. To this effect, I borrow from theories of power, specifically those written by Foucault, Gramsci and Guha. While Foucault outlines how power turned individuals into its subject, Guha and Gramsci point out how institutions of power systematically undermine the intellectual agency of common

people in society. Their views are significant as they help this study to explore and make sense of this exclusion from a democratic point of view. Obviously, a theory that interrogates democracy in performance is mandatory. To this effect, to analyse how style enhances or undermines democracy, this study applies the post-linear theory. This theory offers techniques that liberate the spectator by enhancing his semiotic autonomy during performance. It now remains for one to see how this study actually applies these theories in the main body of its analysis.

Chapter Four

Methodological Framework

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and reviews how the researcher undertook this study. It justifies and explicates the choice of case studies, how the researcher gathered data in order to reconstruct and analyse performance. It unveils the sequence of stages and processes that the researcher undertook in order to realise this study. It demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of the methods that the researcher used in writing this research by revealing what actually happened during fieldwork and data gathering. More importantly, this chapter demonstrates the connection between methodology and theoretical framework in the sense that it reveals how the researcher interrogated the data of performance through a lens of democracy, power, and agency.

Performance analysis entails the following aspects: performers and actors, audiences and spectators, space and places, dialogue, and mise-en-scene (Pavis 2003, Balme 2008, De Marinis 2011, Schechner 1968, De Marinis and Dwyer 1987). In order to assemble and reconstruct these elements for analysis, one needs to have ‘tools of analyses’ (Pavis, 2003:222, Balme, 2008:136). ‘Tools of analyses’ refer to the sources of information that a researcher examines in order to obtain information about a performance. Tools of analysis are in the researcher’s view, records of performance, which a researcher examines during and after a performance. According to Christopher Balme, (2008:136) tools of performance have two categories. There are tools that provide production data and those which provide reception data. Tools of production data include promptbooks, programmes, and outreach materials, interviews with artists, set and costume designs and rehearsal observations. Tools of reception data include performance notes, theatre reviews, video recordings, questionnaires, and photographs (Balme, 2008).

4.2 Historical Reconstruction of *Mavambo* (1984)

Patrice Pavis (2003: 10) observes that performance analysis by historical reconstruction is ‘inclined to conserve and store documents and to maintain historical monuments [...] it relates to historical reconstruction of past productions.’ Historical reconstruction of performance does not simply recreate what happened during performance, but also reveals the context in which the performance was constructed. Pavis (2003: 11) adds that ‘analysis by reconstruction is

particularly concerned with the study of a performance context; its aim is to understand the extent and nature of these contexts.’

In historical reconstruction, one gathers data from remnants of a performance. In analysing *Mavambo*, the researcher relied on remnants (tools) of performance to construct what transpired in the actual performance of this production. In *Mavambo*, the researcher relied intensively on the script itself. The University Of Zimbabwe’s Faculty of Arts Drama¹⁰ produced the complete script of *Mavambo* in 1986, yet the actual performance was in 1984. This script is a post-performance script. Faculty of Arts Drama produced the script through improvisations. Actors in *Mavambo*, Thompson Tsodzo (2010: Interview) and Tsitsi Dangarembga (Interview: 2012), informed the researcher that the play was a product of a playmaking process where the whole group improvised scenarios. The overall director in charge, Robert McLaren, wrote down aspects of dialogue and action that he found useful during the improvisations. From these improvisations, dialogue was developed. Tsodzo indicated that the dialogue and action of the play changed and improved in every rehearsal. Tsitsi Dangarembga (2012: Interview) informed the researcher that Faculty of Arts Drama performed *Mavambo* without a solid script. The performers kept the script in their memories. To this effect, the script on which the researcher’s analysis rests was a post-performance script.

The post-performance script had many advantages. It was a strong record of performance. It was, in fact, a performance script or a directorial script. It contained the directorial concept employed in the performance. McLaren aka Robert Kavanagh Mshengu (1997) provided detailed data of production and directorial concept. In addition, he provided sketches of floor plans, set drawings, lighting plan, lighting chart, lighting plot, list of sounds, sound chart, and sound plot. In addition to this, the post-performance script provided information on where exactly the action in the play took place on stage by referring to the set drawings and lighting chart. The lighting chart indicated that the production had fourteen lighting areas. The set drawings indicated that there were six main acting areas on the set. The set drawings also revealed how the audience sat around the set. The greatest advantage that the researcher had is that Faculty of Arts Drama

¹⁰The department of Theatre Arts became a fully-fledged unit in 1993. Before that the unit was called Drama, run under the auspices of the Faculty of Arts, but housed in the English department.

staged *Mavambo* in 1984 in the Beithall at the University of Zimbabwe. The researcher was able to test the floor plan and set drawings on the actual venue of performance. This gave the researcher more insight concerning the nature of staging adopted in *Mavambo*.

The post-performance script also indicated how actors delivered lines. The script had comments of action and business that an actor was supposed to perform. It also showed the level of conflict and emotions that a performer was supposed to show. The script also indicated tempo, mood, and blocking of various acts as well as how the audience was also involved in the actual show. The researcher learnt that the floor plan encouraged audience involvement in the play. Tsodzo (2010: Interview) noted that the songs and dances in the performance were so popular with the audiences that they sang together with the actors. The post-performance script gave the researcher insight into the nature of the cast. The cast comprised university lecturers, students, secondary school teachers, and members of the public outside these categories.

To reinforce the construction of performance, the researcher also relied on what people who saw the production commented on the play. Stephen Chifunyise (1986) was extremely resourceful. He commented on the staging of *Mavambo* in 1984. His comments were contained in the original post-performance script produced by the Faculty of Arts Drama in 1986. Moreover, through a joint collaboration project, Chifunyise and McLaren (1988) produced the *Zimbabwe Theatre Report* where Chifunyise reviewed *Mavambo*. McLaren commented on the production beyond the directorial sketches contained in *Mavambo*. In both *Mavambo* and *Zimbabwe Theatre Report*, McLaren commented on the production.

From these methods of reconstructing performance, the researcher gathered that *Mavambo* used a multiple level stage, and the audience sat on three sides of the stage where they were actively involved in the performance. The researcher also gathered that the actors spoke in Ndebele, Shona, and English. The researcher also learnt that the play used contemporary songs, dances, storytelling techniques and mime, traditional and modern choreography. The researcher realised that the play used a mixture of agit-prop and epic theatre in the actual staging. The researcher did a background check on McLaren and realised that he believed in socialism, decolonisation, and empowering indigenous methods of theatre. In his various academic writings, McLaren

(1993, 1992, and 1988) reiterated his beliefs. The researcher made great use of these articles. Armed with this knowledge, the researcher was able to understand McLaren and Faculty of Arts Drama's conceptualisation of performance democracy through their voices. The researcher then analysed the nature of the democracy with a view to review its strengths and weaknesses.

Since a great chunk of this project is devoted to the issue of agency, the researcher also analysed the characters portrayed by the actors. The researcher sampled them in terms of elite and subaltern orientations and interrogated identities that the story constructed with regard to the agency of various groups as agents of resistance and change. Because McLaren and his team rearranged Wilson Katiyo's *A Son of the Soil*, the novel did not force them to duplicate the story verbatim. In addition, the improvisations that actors tried during the making of the production, gave them the liberty to recreate the meaning of Katiyo's original story. To this effect, given the way in which McLaren posited himself as a champion of subaltern interests, the researcher keenly analysed how the production empowered subaltern intellectual leadership. Given the context of decolonisation and socialist ideas that prevailed at that time, an interrogation of Faculty of Arts Drama's gaze of subaltern agency became critical and necessary.

4.3 The Reconstruction of *Workshop Negative*

Given the fact that Amakhosi had staged *Workshop Negative* in 1987, the only way the researcher could gather data about the production was through historical reconstruction. The researcher searched for the evidence of *Workshop Negative* through tools of analysis that include reviews by arts critics, interview with the director, the performance script¹¹ and newspaper articles concerning the production.

The researcher read newspapers that documented *Workshop Negative*. From my findings, the reviews made by Dennis Granger (1988: Zimbabwe Theatre Report) were quite useful. In addition, Chifunyise and McLaren (1988) also commented and reviewed *Workshop Negative*. These reviews did not necessarily provide performance data. Rather, they provided data about the context of the production. They connected the production to the socio-political environment

¹¹ The researcher used a copy of *Workshop Negative* contained in Banham, Martin, Gibbs, James and Osofisan, Femi (eds.) 2004 *African Theatre: Southern Africa*. Oxford: James Currey. pp. 111-39.

of the mid-eighties. In so doing, the researcher learnt a lot about how the production posited itself in the broader struggles of power and hegemony between the status quo and its citizens. The reviews revealed democratic intentions and vision, which Amakhosi envisaged in the staging of *Workshop Negative*. The skirmishes that developed between the state and Amakhosi over the way in which the performance interpreted and presented sensitive issues in Zimbabwe's recent past indicated to me the tensions and post-performance debates that the play stimulated.¹² One notable post performance tension was the debate between Granger, on one side, and Chifunyise and Makusha Mugabe, on the other side, over the way in which the play had presented class and race relations in post- independence Zimbabwe. This context of production provided the researcher with the historical understanding of what *Workshop Negative* represented in the history of performance and democracy in Zimbabwe.

The director-writer, Cont Mhlanga was very useful in providing data about staging and his intentions about the production. Mhlanga (2012: Interview) indicated that he did not bring a finished script for rehearsals. He noted that he would bring a sketch of a scene into the rehearsal room and ask his cast, comprising of Mackey Tickeyes, Christopher Hurst, and Thokozani Masha to stage the scene. They would stage the scene while Mhlanga directed it until they found bits and lines that he preserved for the performance. Mhlanga would then go home and scribble another sketch of a scene in order to incentivise creativity in the rehearsal room. From the choices that the director and his cast made during rehearsals, Mhlanga was able to produce the final script, which was a record of the production. Thus, the production script indicated relevant staging data in terms of design of performance space, actors' transformations on set, the manner in which actors delivered their lines as well as interactions between the performers and the auditorium.

Act two of *Workshop Negative* clearly demonstrated that the script was a record of a performance. The script showed how the actors related with the audience. The mere mentioning of the audience gave one an indication of how Cont Mhlanga directed *Workshop Negative*. For

¹² Chifunyise and McLaren (1988: 14) indicated that, although the Censorship Board did not ban the play, the National Arts Foundation, which had pledged support for the play, withdrew its support after the parent Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture indicated that the play was inflammatory and subversive. Consequently, the National Arts Foundation did not give Amakhosi the permission to stage the play outside Zimbabwe.

example in the first scene when Ray exited the stage, his movement was described as follows, ‘laughs and walks towards the exit, pauses and turns towards the audience’ (*Workshop Negative*, 2004:113). The post-performance script indicated blocking and patterns of movement. Act Two represented the actions of the actors on stage more in comparison to what they said. As the act opened, the actors sang a song *Ilizwe*. The director’s notes indicated that, ‘the actors danced a mixture of *itshikitsha*, *isikokotshi*, *imbube*, and *irabi*’ (*Workshop Negative*, 2004: 117). The actors staged a political rally. When Mkhize transformed into the guest for the rally, Ray and Zulu also transformed into supporters. The script indicated how the two assumed subordinate status. It said, ‘they sink down on their knees.’ The directorial notes continued to describe the action on stage by commenting that, ‘Actors demonstrate Mkhize arriving in style. Actor 1 and Actor 3 drive in style to the far corner of the stage. Actor 2 follows them and parks in the centre. All mime driving with car sounds coming from their mouths’ (*Workshop Negative*, 2004: 117).

Immediately, the action shifted to show the protest of village folks who had walked for many kilometres to attend the rally. Therefore, the actors shifted from performing Mkhize’s arrival to perform the villagers protest. The directorial script remarked that, ‘the actors walk towards stage centre and suddenly stamp hard with their right feet pointing to the audience and asking the question’ (*Workshop Negative*, 2004: 117). They asked who Mkhize was; Mkhize replied that he was an ex-freedom fighter and member of high command. The action moved into a flashback of what Mkhize being a member of high command did during the war. The intention was to show the audience through action what it means to be a member of high command. The directorial post-performance script narrated that, ‘Ray and Zulu move to attention shouting ‘*Hawu*’ and then all other actors demonstrate *toyi toyi* with Mkhize calling the command words’ (*Workshop Negative*, 2004: 117). The script narrated how this bit ends. It observed that, ‘All actors come to a sudden stop stamping hard on the ground with their feet’ (*Workshop Negative*, 2004:118).

The next bit was that of performing to the audience the titles and positions that Mkhize held in various organisations. By now, the audience were also part of the crowd for the rally. As the actors announced Mkhize’s positions, they complemented their utterances with the following actions: ‘Zulu jumps over to pick up a chair and places it in the centre of the stage. He is the first to sit on it as they all rotate to sit, each shouting the name of the organisation in which Mkhize is

the Chairman' (*Workshop Negative*, 2004: 118). The next bit entailed performing organisations that Mkhize had shares. The performance was as follows:

Ray moves off stage to the back with the chair, making the three actors form a triangle on stage. Another bit of mime here. Actors carry shovels and are heaping money as they shout the names of the organisations, which Mkhize is shareholder (*Workshop Negative*, 2004: 118).

Each time Mkhize announced organisations in which he owns shares the actors 'thrust the shovels down and load.' Zulu indicated that Mkhize was swelling with wealth. The actors 'all demonstrate the swelling bellies as they get closer' (*Workshop Negative*, 118). The following bit is that of Mkhize addressing the rally. The directorial notes observed that, 'Ray and Zulu run into the audience. Mkhize remains on stage to address the rally' (*Workshop Negative*, 119). The fact that they sat among the audiences indicated how the performers related with the audience. The audience became part of the performance as they suddenly realise that they are the crowd that have attended Mkhize's rally.

The foregoing evidence indicates the precise way in which the script was a post- performance directorial script. From it, the researcher saw how Amakhosi performed the act from bit to bit. The post-performance script outlines the actors blocking and movement patterns during the performance. The researcher actually drew the blocking pattern for the script. Moreover, the script also indicated instances in which the actors assumed multiple identities during the performance. The script also showed the sounds that accompanied the action on stage as well as how the actors produced them. The script contained entrances, exits, and the manner in which the actors performed them during the show. The script was, therefore, a record of actions/performance and not just a documentation of words with no life.

4.4 Historical Reconstruction: *Heaven's Diary* (2005), *Decades of Terror* (2007), *Madame Speaker Sir* (2007) and *No Voice, No Choice* (2011)

Frankly, when the researcher attended some of these shows, he had no clue to the fact that one day they would become material for this project. The period covered is over twelve years. The

researcher had to reconstruct the performance. Fortunately, videos of the performances are available. In some instances, the producers no longer had the videos. The researcher had to ask friends through social media if anyone had videos of some of the performances.

Videos were reliable records of performance in the sense that the researcher actually read the directors *mise- en-scene*, blocking, and picturisation, which the researcher used extensively to make my analysis. However, the performances themselves did not give the context of production. The researcher reconstructed that context by visiting websites of production houses. Savannah Trust, Rooftop Promotions, and Amakhosi provided their mission statements and vision on their websites. Banners, posters, and brochures also revealed democratic intentions behind the plays. The researcher also relied on newspapers and internet archives to acquire information and to get their impressions of protest theatre. Most practitioners felt safer talking to international media such as the BBC and anti-government press such as, *Daily News*, *Newsday*, *The Standard*, and *The Independent*. Some were happy to have interviews with international journalists, as was Cont Mhlanga's interview with Carla Williams. Interviews between Zimbabwean artists and oppositional press were very useful to me. Firstly, producers, journalists, and reviewers posted those pages during the actual time of production of these performances. They gave the researcher insight as to what they thought at that time.

4.6 Problems Encountered With Historical Reconstruction

The researcher encountered problems with historical reconstruction. Historical reconstruction methods failed to provide holistic and complete records of performance. The method indicated to the researcher how Amakhosi and Faculty of Arts Drama staged their plays, but it did not reveal how the audiences watched the shows. Thus, the analysis of performance became limited to how the audience were involved and how the performers wanted the audience to see the show rather than an analysis of what happened on the audience side of the performance. The researcher tried to locate some people who watched the show in 1987, but again, that had its own problems. Audiences tended to glorify the past. Their memories were subjective, selective, and sometimes they faded.

To understand how audiences watched the show, the researcher was supposed to do an audience analysis through reconstruction. Marinis and Dwyer (1987: 101) observe that:

Dramaturgy of the spectator refers to the various receptive operations/ actions that an audience carries out: perception, interpretation, aesthetic appreciation, memorisation, emotive and intellectual responses.

The dominant readership of performance by audiences became problematic, especially when the researcher failed to locate those with the potential of reading the performance against the grain. Moreover, questions of audience relationship with the stage needed someone more knowledgeable about theatre and not just an ordinary spectator. Furthermore, one's memory could not record the whole performance, as that memory was selective. Trying to ask questions about intellectual engagement during performance was problematic especially when the performance was long gone.

Marinis and Dwyer (1987: 101) submit that:

In order to speak of the active dramaturgy of the spectator, we must see her/ his understanding of performance not as some mechanical operation, which has been strictly predetermined- by the performance and its producers- but rather a task, which the spectator carries out in conditions of relative independence.

Whilst an ideal performance analysis of spectatorship would aim to reveal the independence of spectator, owing to challenges already mentioned, this analysis concentrated on how the performance was a closed or open rather than how audience generated meaning. The researcher's absence on the actual staging field made it possible to analyse how performance wanted audience to read the performance rather than how they actually read the performance. Thus, Pavis (1997:206) observes that the weakness of the historical reconstruction method was the difficulty of using all these documents in a way that could wholly restore some of the audiences' aesthetic appreciation.

4.7 Justification for the Choice of Case Studies

The researcher chose *Mavambo* because it represented the early agit prop performances done in the 80s. *Mavambo* was representative of such productions as *Katshaa*, *Samora Continua*, and *Mandela: The Spirit of No Surrender*. These protested against apartheid, neo-imperialism, and neo-colonialism whilst glorifying the new dispensation that came after Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. On the other hand, *Workshop Negative* represented productions that protested against the abuse of power by the state after independence. Such plays included *Honourable MP* (1987) and *The Wretched Ones* (1989). It also represented protest plays produced through collaboration between black and white theatre practitioners such *The Rise and Shine of Cde Fiasco* (1991) and *Platform Five* (1992). These productions commented on the abuse of power after independence in Zimbabwe. The researcher also realised that five major theatre houses drove the anti-state protest theatre movement. These were Rooftop Promotions led by Daves Guzha, Savannah Trust led by Daniel Maposa, Edzai Isu Theatre Arts Project from Highfield led by Tafadzwa Muzondo, Vhitori Entertainment led by Silvanos Mudzvova and Amakhosi Theatre Led by Cont Mhlanga. The researcher realised that out of the dominant five theatre houses, four operated in Harare and one, Amakhosi, in Bulawayo. The researcher also realised that all these houses staged their major plays at Theatre- in- the- Park in Harare. This venue, was quite close to the University of Zimbabwe, thus the researcher chose productions that took place at this venue, for purposes of accessibility. The researcher felt that by capturing the experiences of these theatre houses, he would capture experiences that would be representational of the theatre experience in Zimbabwe.

After locating the theatre houses, the next hurdle was that of selecting plays for analysis. The researcher did a sampling of the plays these theatre houses produced and attended most of the theatre shows that they staged at Theatre-in-the- Park. Various theatre houses invited the researcher to the premieres of most of their shows. Rooftop promotions, in particular, invited University of Zimbabwe lecturers to their shows. It also employed some of the UZ graduates, Amina Ayamu, Tambudzai Nyakudya, and Yvonne Zisengwe, who provided information about performances and other archival data.

The same also applied for Savanna Trust. The University of Zimbabwe's department of Theatre Arts always had a close association with these production companies in terms of consultancy and

employment opportunities. Tafadzwa Muzondo had always been a friend of the researcher. We did quite a number of productions together and the researcher helped him secure rehearsal space at the University of Zimbabwe's Alfred Beit Hall. The researcher even co-directed one of his political satires, *Upcoming Playwrights' Interview* (2007), with Samuel Ravengai, a colleague at the University of Zimbabwe. Some of the production houses, especially Rooftop Promotions, Edzai Isu, and Savanna Trust also requested permission to stage their productions at the University of Zimbabwe's Beit Hall as part of their national tours. The researcher was in charge of lunchtime productions, so the researcher facilitated the staging of many plays at the University of Zimbabwe. Such productions included *Rituals* (2010), *Waiting for Constitution* (2010), *Heaven's Diary* (2005), *Rights of Admission Reserved* (2007), and *Upcoming Playwright's Interview* (2007).

The genre of protest theatre espoused by a play also guided the researcher's selection. There were four brands of protest theatre. These were panic/ urgent theatre, agit prop, hit and run and transformative/conciliatory protest theatre. The researcher had to find an example of each of these categories. Thus for panic/urgent theatre, the researcher chose *Decades of Terror*, *Madame Speaker Sir Two* and *Heaven's Diary*. The researcher chose *Rituals*, *Waiting for Constitution*, *Protest Revolutionaries* and *No Voice, No Choice* for Transformative theatre. The researcher did not find any performances of hit and run theatre. Owing to the guerrilla style of performance, it was difficult to record one. The producers were also not keen on releasing material.

The researcher also distributed my case studies across major production Houses. From Rooftop Promotions, the researcher chose *Waiting for Constitution* and *Rituals*. From Whitori Entertainment, the researcher chose *Protest Revolutionaries* and *Madame Speaker Sir 2*. From Savanna Trust, I chose *Heaven's Diary* and *Decades of Terror*. From Edzai Isu, the researcher chose *No Voice, No Choice*. The researcher did not do justice to Amakhosi. The researcher chose *Workshop Negative*, but for protest theatre during the crisis, the researcher did not use any play from Amakhosi. The first reason is that it was difficult to obtain records of performance for *The Good President*, which I wanted to analyse. However, the researcher referred to Cont Mhlanga in the contextual framework, as he was among the pioneering fathers of protest theatre in Zimbabwe.

As to why the researcher actually chose specific plays from media houses at the expense of others, the researcher is not sure. The ultimate choices were random, based on which plays the production houses had material on. For the researcher, there was no better play or less effective play. The theoretical framework which the researcher had chosen could be deployed to analyse any play, without any bias. The researcher noticed that there was not much difference between these plays. Plays produced by a production house during a specific period displayed similar characteristics. What, the researcher was sure about was the fact that any play significantly represented those that the researcher did not actually analyse in this study. However, owing to the fact that the researcher did not analyse all protest plays, the researcher submit that my findings and conclusions do not necessarily cover the entirety of protest theatre. The researcher does not deny the fact that, perhaps, someone who reads different plays may challenge my conclusions. Those were weaknesses inherent in the case study approach. The researcher was not keen on using intertextuality, as the researcher felt that, it would force me to look for similarities across various productions, without paying attention to the uniqueness and complications of each particular play. The case study approach enabled me to deal with specific and unique characters. It gave the researcher room to explore contradictions in individual performances. The researcher, therefore, confined his conclusions and findings to the case studies that the researcher analysed. This study is, therefore, an analysis of selected productions and not of the entirety of protest theatre in Zimbabwe.

4.8 Obtaining Data from Live Performances: *Rituals* (2010), *Waiting for Constitution* (2010), and *Protest Revolutionaries* (2012)

Pavis (2003:2) argues that there is a difference between obtaining information from relics and records of a performance and obtaining information during a live performance. Ideally, performance analysis yields maximum results when one employs it in the actual field of the live performance. Many scholars (Pavis 2003, Heuvel 1992, Dolan 1988) agree that the analysis of live performance is the excellent way of obtaining both production and receptive data of a performance. Pavis (2003:3) adds that:

Analysis in the strictest sense can only occur if the analyst has personally witnessed a live performance in real time and in real place, unaffected by the distorting mediations of recordings and secondary sources.

The researcher applied the ideal version of performance analysis, in the Pavisian sense, on *Rituals* and *Waiting for Constitution*. The researcher attended the premieres of these shows at Theatre-in-the-park. The researcher also administered the University of Zimbabwe Theatre Arts departments' lunchtime productions project, thus, the researcher used this opportunity to invite Rooftop Promotions. Rooftop Promotions performed at the university during one of their national tours. The researcher watched the performances twice.

Audiences have become a key aspect of performance analysis. During the shows, the researcher jotted down notes pertaining to audience involvement in the plays and the manner in which the style used in the plays influenced audiences' reading of the plays. Through participant observation, the researcher also observed audience's responses to actions on stage, especially when the plays displayed sensitive and emotionally engaging circumstances such as rape, murder, and political violence. The researcher also treated himself as a spectator and recorded his own impressions of directorial intentions. The researcher also jotted responses made by the audiences and the production team during the post-performance discussions. The researcher also participated in the post-performance discussions with the intention of asking questions related to my study. The researcher asked production teams issues related to agency and identity. The researcher did not reveal that he was a researcher, thus the researcher had faith that audience and production teams responses did not exaggerate their responses. The researcher also wrote notes on lights, costumes, acting style, set design, music, and dance, space. During the shows, the researcher would identify the concepts employed in executing these aspects of performance, with the aim of interrogating my research questions with these conceptual approaches in mind.

4.9 Problems Encountered in Analysing Live Performances

It was difficult to record the dialogue during performance, yet verbal aesthetics were critical to this study in establishing agency. The actual performance gave the researcher insight into critical areas of analysis that the researcher jotted down. The researcher, however, had to go back to

videos and relive those experiences. In the moment of performance, the researcher was also a spectator; hence, the researcher was susceptible to the emotions radiating from the stage. Complete detachment from the performance was impossible. To this effect, the researcher had to rely on secondary recordings to circumvent shortcomings that came because of the dual role of spectator-researcher. Even after watching a performance twice, there was detail that the researcher established after watching videos. Videos had the advantage that the researcher would compare notes with a video of the same performance. The researcher learnt that two performances of the same play were not necessarily identical.

4.10 Theatre Semiotics

Owing to the fact that the researcher explored how various elements of performance created meaning, there is no way in which the reading of performance could escape a semiotic approach. Gestures, movements, costumes, set design and makeup all constitute signs that produce meanings of power and victimhood. Balme (2008: 78) remarks that ‘theatre semiotics concerns itself with the study of how meaning is produced on stage by means of signs.’ Keir Elam (1980:1) asserts that:

Semiotics can best be defined as a science dedicated to the study of the production of meaning in society. As such, it is equally concerned with processes of signification and with those of communication, i.e. the means whereby meanings are both generated and exchanged. Its objects are thus at once the different sign-systems and codes at work in society and the actual messages and texts produced thereby.

Semiotics implies the structuring performance to reproduce and construct certain meanings. Semiotics segments the performance text into units of analysis. Thus, the researcher fragmented various elements of *mise-en-scene* such as lighting, costume, makeup, set, space, movement, and dialogue and analysed how they constructed meaning. The meanings had links with the performances’ context of production. In this regard, as Jean Alter (1991) and Passow and Strauss (1981) observe, semiotic reading is not limited to the action on stage alone, because that action has links with the greater reality and context that performers reconstruct during performance.

Semiotics was useful in this study because the researcher looked at how a performance composed various signs that the spectator decoded and attached meanings. Following the proposition by Jiri Veltrusky (in Elam, 1980: 6) that ‘everything that is on stage is a sign,’ the researcher construed elements of *mise-en-scene*, such as set, costume, (vestimentary codes), makeup, properties, movements and actions of actors (proxemic relations, gesturality, and kinesic imagery) and the voice of actors, as signs that convey meanings about a performance. These elements, as Jean Alter (1991: 246) asserts became ‘ideologemes’ – textual units with an ideological meaning.’ They became signifiers of ideologically loaded meanings. They were not just signs of a performance, they were indicators of a broader social and political reality, which these plays reflected and reinvented (Roziki 1999, Fortier 1997). To this effect, an actor ceased to represent him/herself. Her body became loaded with connotations of class, gender, and political beliefs. An actor, in this vein, became an embodiment and representative of either subaltern or elite values. His/ her actions became a reflection of the capabilities of his/her category of people as vehicles of change and transformation. The words spoken by an actor became signs that pointed towards how the category of people represented by that actor possessed or did not possess the intellectual and moral leadership to influence the discourse of transformation and recuperation from oppression that these performances articulated.

Elam (1980: 10) argues that:

Even in the most determinedly realistic of dramatic representations, the role of the sign vehicle in standing for a class of object by no means exhausts its semiotic range. Beyond this basic denotation, the theatrical sign inevitably acquires secondary meanings for the audience, relating it to the social, moral, and ideological values operative in this community of which performers and spectators are part.

Thus, the manner in which a performance constructed the agency and consciousness of an actor became a semiotic reflection of how that performance represented and, consequently, created identities about the categories of people in that performance. Hence, the ability of an actor/ess to modify the thoughts of other actors, the ability of an actor/ess to resist the imposed meanings of the struggle for change by other actors all became signs that reflected on a performance’s

representation of the real people in society that an actor/ess portrayed during performance. The gestures, body movements and usage of space all became signs that conveyed messages of power and authority ingrained in an actor/ess during performance. The researcher, therefore, looked at how the actor/ess demonstrated manifestations of intellectual autonomy, authority over his/her actions, resistive capabilities, and ability to modify and influence the flow of ideas during deliberation with other actors. In brief, the actor became a sign that stood for the views, ideology, and political consciousness of the people of his/her category in the public sphere. The actor/ess' actions were, therefore, representative of a wider reality from which a particular performance had its roots.

Marinis and Dwyer (1987: 101) observe that:

The relation of performance to spectator comprises a manipulation of the audience by the performance. Through its actors, by putting together a range of definite semiotic strategies, the performance seeks to induce in each spectator a range of definitive transformations, both intellectual, cognitive and affective (ideas, beliefs, emotions, fantasies, values, etc.). The performance may urge its audience to adopt particular forms of behaviour such as in political theatre.

In this respect, the manner in which a production team structured a performance in order to articulate certain meanings was crucial to this study's semiotic analysis. The researcher examined not only how the actions and words spoken by actors articulated relations of power between different actors, but also how particular performances manipulated these signs (voice, actions, and *mise-en-scene*) to legitimise the producers/production teams' conception of particular categories of people. To this end, the manner in which a performance attempted to create a monolithic reading of events was also crucial. In other words, the manner in which the spectator was compelled to suspend her own reading and adopt a dominant readership of a performance was also central in analysing the relationship between the performance and its reception by its intended audiences. Thus, the relations of power did not just occur among performers themselves, but also between the performance and its audiences. However, in analysing the relationship between performance and audience, the researcher also checked whether stylistic preferences encouraged or undermined the semiotic freedom of the spectator.

Pavis (1981, 1997, 2008) notes that semiotics is problematic. Pavis (1997: 209) writes that:

Semiology has often been accused of having compromised too much with ideologists and ‘masters of meaning.’ Such criticism is all the more valid now that we are no longer interested in denouncing false consciousness and generally condemn any established system, discipline, or theatre, which claims to represent reality.

The problem is that protest theatre is such a type of theatre where issues of false consciousness and representation and reinvention of reality are quite central. Pavis (1997: 210) adds that ‘theatre performances cannot be segmented, like natural language into a limited series of signs, into a particular series of units or phonemes where rules of combination could demonstrate all possibilities. The researcher agrees that we cannot reduce performance analysis to specific iconic symbolic and indexical signs, that performance is capable of producing broader signs. Rather than creating hierarchy of signs or confining one to signs, the researcher looked at how everything in the performance was a representation of reality or how directors used it in performance to influence the audience’s understanding of reality.

However, the great question that remained is; can one analyse performance without segmenting it? Pavis (1997: 219) agrees that:

Segmentation remains the main issue for performance analysis. If it is agreed that that nothing would be gained by an atomisation of the performance into minimal units, one does not yet know what the dimension of the macro-units of the performance should be.

The researcher’s take was that both the micro units of performance that segmentation of performance produces as well as the macro-unit were critical in unveiling how the performance represents reality. Whilst the semiotic approach underestimated ‘the spectator’s subjective gaze which was never neutral,’ one cannot also deny that the oppositional readership that a spectator derived from performance was a result of decoding units and signs created in performance. Moreover, de Marinis and Dwyer (1987: 104) point out that, one cannot underestimate the ‘manipulation of the theatrical space and of the physical performance/ spectator relationships on

the way in which the performance also conditions the meanings that a spectator generates. Repetition of a point earlier made using the same scholar Pavis.

4.10 Linking Theory and Methodology

In this section, the researcher wants to prove how he processed the data that he sourced from reconstructing performances and observing live performances. The question the researcher answers is; after collecting data, how did that data provide information relevant to the researcher's area of inquiry? After reading *the mise-en scene*, and dialogue, the researcher applied the post-linear theory with a view of establishing how aspects of performance helped to create open or closed readings of the performance. The researcher applied the post-linear theory to explore how directors used lighting, costume, makeup, song, dance, and acting style to empower audiences' autonomous reading of performance and critical engagement. The researcher subjected the interactions between different classes through a lens that explored relations of power, how they create identities that legitimate dominance. The researcher applied Foucault and Gramsci's postulations of power and social relations in such instances. The researcher also applied Guha's subaltern theory in order to reveal the relations of power that inform how performances construct subaltern and elite agency. The public sphere theory by Habermas and Fraser provided a framework upon which a fair, democratic model of agency was based upon.

4.10.1 *Mise-en-scene*

In terms of *mise-en-scene* Pavis (2003: 2) remarks that:

Mise-en-scene is no longer conceived here as the transposition of a text from page to stage, but rather a stage production in which author (the director) has had complete authority and authorisation to give form and meaning to the performance as a whole.

The researcher looked at the directors' construction of *mise-en-scene*. Elements of *mise-en-scene* included the set, the properties in the set, costume, and make up. The *mise-en-scene* provided material into understanding the social standing of a character, class, occupation, age in life. For example, in *Decades of Terror*, the sharp contrast in costumes, set properties, size of the room and cleanliness between Brian and Father's environment on one hand and Mutongi and

Garamombe established that the former were subaltern characters while the later were elites. Brian and Father's environment represented poverty while Mutongi and Garamombe represented prosperity. The director also cast Anthony Tongani (Father) and Gwinyai (Brian) who had a small built in contrast to Silvanos Mudzvova (Garamombe) and Priscilla Mutendera (Mutongi) who had big bodies. In a context of crisis, poverty, and starvation, the differences in bodies represented the difference between the suffering poor subaltern classes and the well-fed politicians. Father's occupational costume, which was the tattered uniform of a security company in contrast to the suits that Mutongi and Garamombe wore, helped to establish what these characters represented in Zimbabwe during the crisis.

Mise-en-scene established the space in which the play's action took place. When the researcher established that space, he applied Habermas and Fraser's postulations of the public sphere in order to establish how that space enhanced/ undermined characters vocal and deliberative capabilities. The researcher conceived the spaces provided by the plays as locations of counter-public spheres where characters deliberated on issues of common interest. Thus, the researcher interrogated how the transformation of the workshop or the home enhanced deliberative capabilities of various characters from different social groups in these plays.

4.10.2 Dialogue

Dialogue in the play was critical. However, the actions of the actors complemented the dialogue. Pavis (2003:22) argues that:

The words spoken by an actor or any other kind of stage utterance must be analysed in terms of the ways in which they are inscribed and concretely produced on stage, coloured by the voice of the actor and their interpretation of the scene and not in the ways in which we would analyse them if we had read them in a published text.

The researcher did not only concentrate on what they said, but how the actors performed that dialogue. The way in which the director gave meaning to the words through actions was very important. The researcher interrogated whether the actors delivered lines with conviction and determination.

On dialogue, the researcher looked for the agency of a character. The researcher searched for a performer's ability to display authority over his actions. I also searched for a performer's ability to modify and challenge the intellectual leadership and hegemony of other characters. After, establishing the class and social standing of a performer, the researcher used Foucault, Gramsci and Guha's theories of power, to interrogate processes of intellectual domination that the dialogue between characters espoused. The researcher applied Gramsci to reveal that all men possess intellectual authority. The researcher applied Foucault to demonstrate how power structures deny other men the opportunity to exercise intellectual autonomy. Hence, by applying theories of power, the researcher revealed how the plays constructed the agency and consequently, identities of various individuals in these plays. Through dialogue, the researcher also established how particular plays enabled different social groups to advance their interest and aspirations in the struggle for change that these plays dramatised. The researcher subjected dialogue through public sphere theories in order to analyse how these plays advanced subaltern and elite interests in the struggle for reform in Zimbabwe.

4.10.3 Gesture and Movement

With theories of power in mind, the researcher acknowledged that class and gender contestations in these plays were just not intellectual. They were also physical. Hence, on gesture and movement, the researcher analysed how directors established relations of power between classes and genders through gestures and movement. Movement was very critical in circumstances in which the oppressed challenged the oppressor. For instance, they revealed how a subaltern woman like Mother in *Protest Revolutionaries* ceased to be the powerless victims of repression. She organised armed resistance and played a significant role in the defeat of the police and army. Thus, the researcher looked at how subaltern characters used body postures, gestures, and facial expressions to assert their physical domination over figures of authority such as the police, militias and representatives of the state. For example in *Heaven's Diary*, Laiza expressed her freedom more through action than dialogue. She urinated in public, fought with Zacks, pulled his balls, and used space in a manner that demonstrated dominance and freedom. Such directorial

constructions of Laiza complemented the spoken words. Thus, the researcher used gesture and movement to reinforce Foucault (1994) assertion that power is everywhere.

The actors' use of space also had a bearing on how they controlled the flow of power within a performance. Pavis (2003: 234) remarks that '[s]pace is conceived as invisible, unlimited, linked to its users, determined by their coordinates, movements, and trajectory.' Pavis regards the space that actors create on stage as gestural space. In gestural space, the researcher explored how the ground a performer possesses during performance; the size of the territory that s/he claims indicated dominance, subversion of dominance and status. The use of gestural space suggested to me whether an actor construed himself as a helpless victim of a power structure or whether an actor construed him/ herself as possessing the agency to modify relations of power in particular performances.

4.10.4 Staging Dynamics

Using the post- linear theory, the researcher examined staging dynamics such as acting style, spectator-actor relationships, stage auditorium transactions, dramatic text-performance text relationship, and actor-character dimensions. The researcher checked whether directors used staging dynamics to promote open readings or closed readings of the performance. Post- linear theory suggests that a play that promotes open reading should disintegrate the dramatic text and characters through the following aspects: dematrixing, interruptions, carnivalesque, polyvocality, dialogism, detachment, de-representation, and hybridity (Castagno 2001, Bouko 2006, Wright 2007, and Ravengai 2001). In contrast, a play that enforces a closed reading has the following traits: absence of spectator-actor interaction, monolithic and rigid character proposals, integral characters, protagonist centred, linear, emotional/psychological identification, matrixing, and domination of dramatic text and authorial intentions (Castagno 2001, Ravengai 2001). When the researcher analysed staging dynamics, the researcher looked for these elements, especially on sections that the researcher interrogated the relationship between style and democracy in protest theatre. The researcher's analysis of *Rituals* and *Waiting for Constitution* bears testimony to how the researcher applied the post-linear theory to explore how the two productions undermined or enhanced critical engagement and spectators' semiotic autonomy.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter has revealed the tools of analysis used in gathering production and reception data of live and archived performances. In retrieving archived performances, the researcher adopted a historical reconstruction of such performances using tools of analysis such as videos, interviews, reviews, posters, banners, and post-performance scripts. For live performances, the researcher relied on participant-observation, jotting down notes, and descriptive analysis of live performance. The researcher has already pointed out challenges he encountered in using these tools of analysis. After gathering data, the researcher filtered it through semiotic methods. The researcher segmented various aspects of performance, such as voice of the actor, kinesic imagery, proxemic relations, vestimentary codes, and set design. After fragmenting these aspects of performance, the researcher examined them through the post-linear theory in a bid to explore how they created either enclosed or open performances. The researcher searched for techniques of post-linearity and linearity in order to establish the extent to which particular productions enhanced critical engagement and the semiotic autonomy of the spectator. The researcher also interrogated these fragmented aspects of performance using theories of power (Foucault, Gramsci, Guha) and democracy/ public sphere (Habermas, Fraser) in order to reveal how these performances framed relations of power and agency between social groups. From the plays' display of agency and relations of power, the researcher established how these plays created identities for various individuals and the ideological rationale behind the construction of identities that the researcher identified.

Chapter Five

Protest Theatre and Democracy in Zimbabwe: 1980 - 1998

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a historical survey of the relationship between protest theatre and the state in the post-independence period. The idea is to provide a general understanding of notions of democracy, within the medium of protest theatre, which various practitioners adopted. The researcher outlines the pros and cons of their perception of media democracy within the context of theatre with a view of establishing their contribution to the debate on parameters of democracy within the context of protest theatre. This chapter informs the reader as to what obtained prior to the delineated period of analysis in this study, which is 1999-2009.

There were two main categories of protest theatre. There was protest theatre directed against neo-colonial and neo-imperial tendencies within Zimbabwe. Such theatre was under the aegis of the Zimbabwe Association of Community Theatre (ZACT). Prior to the formation of ZACT there had been movement towards this type of theatre in bits and pieces but it was after the formation of ZACT that this brand of protest theatre gathered significant momentum as to become the most dominant form of protest as from the mid-80s onwards. However, this protest sought to preserve the state against international and exogenous forces that were threatening the growth of a new nation.

Another category of protest theatre analysed relations of power between communities and government officials. This theatre exposed how people at the top were derailing the socialist ethos. It protested against corruption, negligence, and lack of mutual respect for ordinary people by government officials. This theatre also preserved the state by playing a watchdog role for the new nation. In this category, there are examples of plays such as *Honourable MP* (1984) and *Shanduko* (1983). Some individual writers became disinterested in official state ideology and sought to interrogate issues of the liberation war, and Black – White relations from a different angle. They differed in their treatment of Zimbabwe's recent history and sought to point out alternative ways of interpreting the past. A key feature of this theatre was collaborative

productions between black and white practitioners. It sought to protest against incendiary and partisan readings of the past. In this category lie plays such as *Workshop Negative* (1987) and *The Rise and Shine of Cde Fiasco* (1991).

5.2 An Interrogation of ZACT Through A Democratic Lens

This section interrogates the activities of ZACT that have a bearing on protest theatre and democracy. The information that the researcher provide does not, therefore, sum up the activities of the organisation. The researcher does not engage other styles of theatre done under ZACT such as Campaign theatre that promoted social responsibility and awareness in areas of health, education, and social welfare. The researcher does not discuss Theatre for development (TfD) which was a refined version of campaign theatre but with more emphasis on grassroots participation. These do not fit well within this research's schema of protest theatre.

Besides being workers' theatre, ZACT empowered communities to speak out and to celebrate the fact of their existence. The community theatre movement enabled communities to own the means of producing theatre. Thus, so many community theatre groups were established. These include the Harare Theatre company, Fambidzanai Theatre Group, Peoples Theatre Company, Zvido Zvenyu Production Unit, Chidembo Theatre Productions, Shingayi United Theatre Productions, Sunrise theatre productions. These groups were from Harare. In Bulawayo, there were theatre groups such as Amakhosi, MAWA, Tose/Sonke, and Illuba Elimnyama among others.

Of great significance is the manner in which protest theatre allowed marginalised and subaltern members of society to speak through theatre. This saw the development of the workers' theatre clubs. These include Vashandi Theatre Productions, Kuwirirana Drama Club, and Kodzero Dzavashandi (Workers Theatre Group.) Such groups were not only located within the high-density locations but also even in low-density suburbs. The Avondale Domestic workers Group and the Kuwiriwira Drama Club based in Hillside Bulawayo are a case in point. These groups also allowed women to speak out since the greater chunk of domestic workers were women.

Community theatre groups also provided space for the disabled members of the community. In April 1986, there was the formation of the Zimbabwe Integration Through the Arts (ZITA). McLaren and Chifunyise (1988: 15) note that ZITA was:

A democratic and mass oriented cultural movement whose aim was to use the performing arts to integrate disabled people with fellow members of their community.

Sixteen disabled and ten able-bodied actors formed the group Sonke/ Tose. ZACT also recognised the youth as significant members of the social fabric. Youth groups that came into being include the Tafara Catholic Youth Association, Zvido Zvenyu Youth Theatre, and Drama Force from Bulawayo. Women also formed their own theatre groups. The most outstanding was the Just For Women Theatre Group. ZACT also acknowledged the ethnic diversity of communities. Although most of the productions were in Shona, isiNdebele, and English, ZACT also accorded space to minority languages and cultures. For example in areas where people of Malawian origin settled such as Mabvuku and Tafara in Harare, community theatre groups staged plays that dealt with Chinyanja themes. *'Mazaguda'* and *Tikiti Wanga Bwana'* by Fambidzanai Theatre Group are examples of such productions.

ZACT created a platform for protest against power structures. Through protest theatre, communities voiced their immediate concerns as workers; disabled, as youth and echoed how institutions of power within their locality adversely affected their lives. They talked about their immediate concerns. They talked about the need to have their rights respected and to have social justice within their communities. In 1986, Vashandi Theatre productions staged *Madzimai Pabasa*, *Legal Age of Majority*; *We shall Strike Harder* and *Destroyer /Mharadzi*. (McLaren and Chifunyise, 1988). By merely looking at the names of the plays one can deduce how such plays protested against capitalist bosses, both black and white, who they perceived as less concerned with the granting of rights to employees. Even the rights of women were worth protesting about, deservedly so, given how industrial relations were quite unfavourable to women in those days.

Zimbabwe Theatre Works also staged *Upfumi Nevashandi Muzimbabwe* and another protest play called *Mr Polera* which unveiled bad relations of production within the various industries in Zimbabwe. Zvido Zvenyu Production also conveyed this protest idiom in their play *Enough is*

Enough. Kuwirirana Drama Club also staged a protest play entitled *Akusimlanda Wani*. Godfrey Moyo (1988:21) reports that ‘basically the play... naturally portrays the relationship between domestic workers and their employers’. Moyo (1988: 21) notes that ‘the boss being played by Moses Hove shows an employer who stands out as an extremely harsh employer.’ Moyo (1988: 21) adds that the play provides ‘an opportunity to see people who believed in the dignity of labour.’

It is quite evident that the bulk of these plays functioned as protest against some industrialists who harboured colonial notions of labour relations. The discourse of human rights that these plays advanced sought to check the excesses of power or even its abuse by the hegemonic capitalist powers of those days. The adversarial role of media as a key ingredient to its democratic function was realised as the plays offered a window through which unfair relations of production were exposed and challenged. In so doing, the plays invented theatre as a watchdog for human rights during the eighties. That was indeed a powerful democratic function of community protest.

Unlike Martin Rohmer (1997) who suggests that the plays did not offer self-interrogation, one would submit that the protests over labour also sought to unveil practices within the oppressed lot that enabled structures of oppression to continue. They revealed how the common person perpetuated his suffering through irresponsible behaviours and mannerisms. For example Shingayi United productions staged a play entitled *Little Boy Who Went To Jail*, The Tafara Youth Association also staged *Mazvokuda/ Selfishness*. Zvido Zvenyu added *Mukanwa Munobaisa* whilst Kuwirirana Drama Club revealed the negative aspects of prostitution through *Akusimlanda* where the role of the prostitute Madiliza was played by Grace George. They, therefore, offered some measure of self-interrogation.

The sense of community extended beyond permanent residential locations, but also incorporated temporary communities. This is evident in college and university communities. The Zambuko Izibuko Group is perhaps a case in point. Formed at the University of Zimbabwe in 1985, it provided an avenue for vocality on national and regional issues from a university community

perspective. Robert McLaren, a lecturer in drama who had vast experience in this area from his escapades in South Africa and Ethiopia, headed it.

Although the socialist approach provided a framework for pluralism, fragmentation, ownership, and accessibility, it had its own limitations. It directed its oppositional energies towards whites, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. The protest voices within ZACT committed themselves to this objective. There was heavy state patronage of the activities of these groups so much that community theatre then became an extension of dominant state ideology. In dismantling neo-colonial logos, the practitioners found themselves locked in the logos of the state. The directors of ZACT told their members issues to stage. They set the agenda for various community groups.

It is important to note that intellectuals who did not necessarily reside in communities that practised community theatre spearheaded the practice of community theatre. Ngugi wa Mirii, Robert McLaren, Stephen Chifunyise who led the movement, were academics who were responsible for the provision of the course of action that affiliate members of ZACT pursued. Ngugi, having fled from Kenya in self-exile had no option but to exude political correctness towards the government that had granted him asylum. McLaren was a socialist by heart who sought to promote socialism as an alternative to a capitalist neo-imperial project. Chifunyise was in the same ideological camp. Their intentions of creating a cordon against colonialism and capitalism, was in keeping with the new ideological framework of the state, which also sought to pursue socialist policies. With regard to the cultural reproduction of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, then prime minister, remarked the following:

In our efforts to revive our culture, we must be aware that our art must promote those values and attitudes that are consistent with our socialist goals. (Cited by McLaren and Chifunyise, 1988: 10)

McLaren and Chifunyise (1988: 11) responded to this statement by remarking that:

These and other statements on national policy would seem to suggest a need for cultural action based on the people, i.e., the vast majority's lives and culture directed ultimately towards the development of socialist art and culture

Thus, the ZACT project valorised the state so much that the organisation participated on national events. For example, after the assassination of the Mozambican president Samora Machel,

himself a close ally of the Zimbabwean government, ZACT instructed its membership to produce plays that celebrated the life of Samora Machel. In a Press Statement sent to The Herald, ZACT remarked:

Theatre groups are being asked to create artistic pieces to be presented on the occasion. The event is in support of activities organised by the Zimbabwe Mozambique Friendship Association. The artistic work should emphasise the need for solidarity between the people of Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The art should also illustrate Cde Machel's contribution to the liberation of the southern African people and the entire African Continent. Poetry, Drama and songs should reflect on the history of cultural resistance in Southern Africa, and the resolve to continue the struggle for liberation of South Africa and Namibia. (Maclaren and Chifunyise, 1988: 22).

In preparation for the eighth Non Aligned Movement Summit, ZACT also organised a festival on the sidelines of the summit. According to McLaren and Chifunyise (1988: 23), the spokesperson of ZACT reported that:

Most of the plays to be presented at the festival will be around the theme of anti-apartheid and anti-imperialist solidarity and the concept of non-alignment.

There was a high level of paternalism by the leaders of ZACT, who sought to think on behalf of their affiliates, so that the consciousness with which they explained their theatre came within intellectuals who had close ties to the state. Thus, although ZACT helped to stage protest plays against apartheid, colonialism and neo-imperialism, the operational consciousness came from the logocentric vision of a few bureaucrats.

In keeping with anti-imperialism and regional solidarity, many groups staged conforming plays. The University of Zimbabwe's Zambuko/ Izibuko group staged *Samora* and *Katshaa* in solidarity with anti-apartheid themes. They also staged *Mavambo*, which sought to reinforce anti-colonial sensibilities. What is worrisome in these productions is that they sought to lock the focus of these groups into the past without a firm interrogation of critical issues of governance that were obtaining at that time. It is an irony that a movement that sought to champion the cause of democracy and freedom of the people did not challenge the one party system that the state was proposing. The plays did not deal with burning issues of the day governing state civilian relations in those days.

The exponents of the community theatre model claimed that it liberated them from the non-democratic structures of the elites. Nevertheless, they locked their people in the logocentric vision of socialism and state patronage. Chifunyise, in Kaarsholm (1994:243) states that:

Community based theatre should contribute to the political orientation of our people, to fight against cultural imperialism as well as against elitist cultural attitudes, so you could say that it has a lot to do with the politicisation of the masses.

ZACT also projected a homogenous and monolithic construction of community – as a grouping based on shared interests. Rohmer (1997: 54) observes that:

The weakness of CT ideology is its lack of specification and distinction. Communal identities, it has been claimed, are generated through homogeneity. However homogeneity is never total and a community of any kind should not be considered as one monolithic block, a conception promoted through such terms as ‘the people’, ‘the masses’, ‘the majority’, ‘the workers’, ‘the peasants’, but as an entity with its own subdivisions and contradictions. Therefore, the unity between community and artists in the CT movement as a static phenomenon does not exist.

Rohmer (1997:54) adds that:

While Ngugi wa Miriii’s vision of the povo is essentially heroic, putting all blame solely on the system and political environment, I believe that a real CT requires self-criticism and the courage to constructively criticise other members of the community.

The hero-based approach that these plays hinged upon sought to deify certain individuals who were mainly men. This approach explicated the liberation of the region in terms of great men, Samora, Nyerere, and Mugabe. Rather than treating anti-colonial struggles as generational struggles, the performances presented them as struggles of a few great individuals without adequately reflecting the contribution of ordinary people to these struggles.

Even as the plays protested outside political circles, they sought to analyse the enemy without reviewing those that purported to be allies. They laid the blame on capitalism, on rich people without interrogating how some common people also perpetuate their own oppression. They

sought to expose without providing practical solutions to the problems. The workers protest exposed unfair industrial relations and the prescribed solution was the removal of rich people in society. The solution lay in the obliteration of the oppressor. Those industrial relations would be fair if the oppressed takes over the position of the oppressor. The plays did not create room for dialogue, they exposed problems, but left society unhealed and unreconciled. The absence of tolerance of difference and the desire for compromise equilibrium of interests is indeed a weakness of these plays.

The foregoing discussion has provided an analysis of ZACT. However, it will be interesting to isolate two productions produced in the eighties and interrogate them using a democratic lens. This is the mission of the following sections. Two productions, one from Harare (*Mavambo*) and another one from Bulawayo (*Workshop Negative*) are analysed in the following sections.

5.3 Background Information to *Mavambo* (1986)

Faculty of Arts Drama scripted and performed *Mavambo* in 1984. The cast was as follows: Sharai Mukonoweshuro, Francis Matovanyika, Ozias Tungwarara, Charles Lewis, Thomposon K. Tsodzo, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Titus Moetsabi, Alison Chengeta, Vimbai Chivaura, Pepsi Chibanda, Rosemary Jackson, Robert Maclaren, Elen Zanza, Joao Salbany, Petronilla Tavangwa, Maurice Chakawa, John Towse, Agrippa Sora, Angela Gubba, Chirikure Chiri- kure, Jamisa Ndlovu, Claver Chigariro, Ray Brown, Andrew Morris, Ephraim Mugugu, Felicitous Mbanga, Alfred Dube and Rosewitha Chikwati. Verona Mostyn designed costumes while Kate Begley designed sound. (Faculty of Arts Drama, 1986: v).

5.3.1 *Mavambo* as a Democratic Performance

The purpose of this section is to explore the extent to which *Mavambo*'s style liberates the audience's intellectual capabilities and semiotic autonomy. Thus, this section explores ways by which *Mavambo* enables audiences to make their meanings of the performance as opposed to a performance that locks meaning to the directorial/authorial intention. Hence, an investigation of aspects of post linearity provides the thrust of this section.

5.3.2 Staging

In staging *Mavambo*, the Faculty of Arts Drama adopted a method of staging in which the spectator is involved in the creation of the story. It imbues post-linear theatre's democratic notion of dismantling the crippling effects of dramatic theatre. McLaren observes that:

The main point of the staging of *Mavambo* is to establish a relationship with the audience, which is more in keeping with performance in Zimbabwe and in Africa general. It is also designed to handle a continuous flow of action without any break and with as much variety as possible, in other words, movement from upstage to down stage, high to low and in, around and through the audience (Mavambo, 1986; iv).

The production sketches indicate that *Mavambo* uses a thrust stage with audiences seated on three sides of the stage. This arrangement enables the audience to be as close as possible to the action on stage. Actors emerge and disappear into the audience which encourages interaction between the actors and spectators. The actors do not just deliver the lines between themselves. Rather, they address some of the lines directly to the audience. The storyteller makes the audience aware that he is not just telling his story to the children in the play but to the audience as well. In fact, as the play goes on, the audience becomes the people gathered to hear the storyteller's story. There are quite a lot of directorial comments that show when an actor is supposed to talk to the audience. These include, 'He comes slowly towards the audience and speaks with great dignity and understanding.' (Mavambo, 1986: 1) The directorial script is also full of the comment, 'to the audience' indicating how the audience were involved in the actual staging of the play. Stephen Chifunyise (1986: i) remarks that 'This technique draws the audience much closer into the play.' Tsitsi Dangarembga (Interview: 2012), an actress in the 1986 production of *Mavambo*, notes that the actors and actresses indicate to the audience that they are acting a piece of theatre with them. By so doing, *Mavambo* disrupts the dramatic theatre idea of the fourth wall, where actors assume that they are performing in a vacuum. The audience, in this respect, do not become what Augusto Boal (1985: 102) regards as the helpless spectators that watch the action unfold without their input.

5.3.3 Song and Dance

In *Mavambo*, song and dance helps to disrupt the separation between the audience and the performers. The audiences are familiar with songs in *Mavambo* as they are traditional songs. They are protest/war songs associated with the Shona. As the actors sing coming from the audience, they invite the audience to sing. For example in the opening of the play, Sekuru bursts into a song. The children who join in to sing with him on stage come from within the audiences. The director notes accompanying this sequence observe that, ‘Sekuru begins the song. The actors who are waiting for their entrance behind the audience take it up entering the area in front of the steps...’ (Mavambo, 1986: 1) Song and dance serve a post linear function as they disintegrate the development of the dramatic character. Song and dance help to diffuse emotional climaxes. When the tension gets intense, song and dance diffuse the tension as both actors and spectators sing and dance their sorrows away. Tsitsi Dangarembga notes that the issue of oppression that the play discussed is very sensitive. Racial tension engulfs it. She notes that the scene in which white colonisers fight and defeat Chuma’s people is very sensitive. Yet song and dance undermine the emotional tensions that the scene generates, which makes the sad part of Zimbabwe’s history tolerable. The performance uses song and dance to restore audiences’ capacity for critical engagement by warding off crippling emotions.

5.3.4 Casting

A cast of diverse of people performs the play. According to Chifunyise (1986:1)

The choice of cast of different social classes, racial, and ethnic backgrounds which included university lecturers and students, secondary school teachers and students and other people from outside the university and from as far as Kambuzuma demonstrates how irrelevant those advocates of vernacular theatre are. From the cast of *Mavambo*, we see the true composition of the community capable of developing a truly Zimbabwean theatre and not the perpetuation of antagonistic sentiments brewed by the culture of racist and colonial policies of the pre-independence regime.

In this diversity lies the ambivalence of the nature of democracy espoused in the staging of *Mavambo*. On one hand, the diverse cast represents the attempt to blur imaginary lines of difference that separate black theatre, township from white theatre in Zimbabwe. The presence of white actors namely Charles Lewis, Robert McLaren, Ray Brown, Andrew Morris, John Towse,

and Louise Colvin together with the black actors demonstrates that both parties are equally competent, hence destroying the inferiority complex in which black actors were by and large accorded during colonialism. However, on the other hand the diverse cast wipes difference rather than celebrate it. *Mavambo* deals with historical themes, not the prevailing reality of Zimbabwe in the eighties. For this reason, the multi diverse cast is necessary because the play is some kind of escape into the past. Moreover, it is a play in which the cast should portray the negatives of colonialism. It scrutinises the negatives of a period long gone without extending its analysis to the negatives prevailing in that society.

5.3.5 Story-telling

Mavambo employs a storytelling technique. This technique serves a democratic function in the sense that it reinstates the agency of indigenous methods of doing theatre. Chifunyise (1986) argues that the incorporation of African story-telling techniques reinstates the respectability of African arts that colonialism had suppressed. Chifunyise (1986: i) observes that:

Mavambo is an example of how Zimbabwean performing artists can exploit the nation's rich and diverse cultural heritage and all the traditional and contemporary communication skills and techniques to create a uniquely Zimbabwe idiom. Traditional and contemporary songs, dances, mime, story-telling techniques, modern choreography and acting techniques were effectively used to weave a captivating and most visual performance whose overall technique can be called 'cinematic'.

However, the telling mode makes the play a closed text. It puts pedagogical authority on the teller who makes it inconceivable to dispute the semiotic context of the performance. The listener cannot offer an oppositional readership of a narrative when s/he is not privy to the content generated by the story. Only Sekuru who sees the occupation of the village can tell the story of occupation. Others must just listen. The adoption of the African folktale approach reinforces the crippling effect of the storyteller in fixing the audience's semiotic reading of *Mavambo*. The use of Agit prop style compounded the liberation of audiences' semiotic autonomy. This is because, agitprop techniques, even from Erwin Piscator himself, have never tolerated multiple readings of performance. C. D. Innes, (1972:31) who analyses Piscator's works, remarks that:

In spite of his intellectual claims, Piscator's agitprop techniques are clearly irrational. The speeches... achieved ideological clarity at the expense of logic, and were comprehensible because they were crude. The ideal of simplicity became simplification. Character emotions and ideas were sacrificed for tempo... Piscator's simplicity of style was not aimed at lucid exposition, but a clear and unmistakable effect on the feelings of the worker-audience. In practice, the overt appeal to reason was merely a disguise for the attack on the emotions.

Kaarsholm (1994: 48) arrives at the same decision concerning *Mavambo*:

Mavambo is characterised by a heavy didacticism... The action is continually interrupted to let the actors address and lecture to the audience, and the 'bad' characters in particular are drawn so crudely in order to provide a lesson that they become close to being caricatures. The message in *Mavambo* is not meant to be argued with. The audience is expected to join in a celebration of the righteousness of the struggle against evil.

Kaarsholm (1994) notes that the celebrationistic ending creates one understanding of the text or performance so much that 'the play confirms rather than tests attitudes that may be taken for granted' (Kaarsholm, 1994:48). This technique undermines the semiotic resistance of the audiences in as far as the creation of alternative meanings was concerned. *Mavambo* certainly legitimises a unilateral meaning and make it insensible and inconceivable to imagine the contrary. *Mavambo* demonstrates that it is not always the case that post-linear techniques necessarily yield democracy in performance. To be post-dramatic is not automatically to be democratic, as the text can engender monolithic reading and appeal to emotions in order to undermine the intellectual composure of the spectators.

5.3.6 The Construction of Subaltern and Elite Agency in *Mavambo*

The purpose of this section is to analyse how *Mavambo* constructs the agency of different members of society. It scrutinises *Mavambo* with the intention of revealing how protest theatre, guided by socialist principles in the eighties, displays the capabilities of ordinary people as change agents. This purpose comes into being following Guha's (1997: xiv) submission that:

The historiography of ... nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism... bourgeois-nationalist elitism ...sharing the prejudice that the making of the ... nation and the development of the consciousness-nationalism, which confirmed this process were exclusively or predominantly elite.... What is clearly left out of this un-historical (elitist) historiography is the politics of the people. For parallel to the domain of elite politics, there existed... another domain of ... politics in which the principal actors were not the dominant groups of the indigenous society... but the subaltern classes and constituting the mass the laboring population and intermediate strata of town and country- that is the people.

Thus, this section explores how *Mavambo*, as a protest theatre performance of the eighties, constructs the agency of elite and subaltern members of society as agents of social and political reform. This section also interrogates the extent to which *Mavambo* accords subaltern characters the ability to design, stimulate and modify the discourse of resistance that that *Mavambo* espoused. In brief, the section investigates how *Mavambo* provides discursive space to subaltern and elite members of society. *Mavambo*, therefore, provides an opportunity to interrogate the democratic thrust of ZACT's protest theatre in the eighties.

Mavambo empowers a subaltern gaze towards the struggle for resistance against colonialism. Alexio, the protagonist in the play reiterates this point when he remarks that 'History is not made by heroes alone. Even ordinary people play their part.' (Mavambo, 1986: 1) This statement demonstrates the democratic thrust of the play, which undermines the great men syndrome in terms of historical agency. Faculty of Arts Drama tells the story through the eyes of an ordinary boy who shares his thoughts and experiences about the narrative of colonial resistance. Alexio has the opportunity to tell his story, a clear demonstration of how he appropriates vocal spaces that enable his voice and indeed agency to be visible. His story, does not claim to be universal, it is personal:

I want to tell you my story, the story of an ordinary person. To begin with, I want to take you back to my childhood and beyond... to a story within a story- what Sekuru told us children... in the village of Makosa, where I was born and began life (Mavambo, 1986: 1).

It is critical to note that Alexio does not claim to know everything. He could have easily narrated the events that happened before him. Instead, he allows another story told by a person who witnesses the early days of contact to intervene. He allows Sekuru's voice to tell its experiences

when Sekuru remarks that, 'The story you are going to hear tonight I know will not amuse or entertain you much.' The play immediately acknowledges that stories are different; they are not grand narratives. Secondly, no one speaks on behalf of anyone.. This is a clear testimony of democratic commitment in this play.

As Sekuru narrates the story of settler occupation, it is very significant to note that the person who organises the first act of resistance against settlers, that is Jackson and company, is not the headmen himself. Here the play is careful not to accord resistance in terms of organised leadership. Everyone is capable of fighting a system of oppression. In the play while headmen Chuma talks to Jackson, a young man, Shonga realises that war was imminent and he secretly mobilises other warriors to prepare for an attack. Ordinary villagers stage the very first act of resistance to occupation. The performance reveals that ordinary people as capable of organising acts of resistance outside the framework of local leadership and authority. Even Headmen Chuma is surprised as his people launch into acts of resistance without his approval. This is a clear example of how *Mavambo* uses positive construction of subaltern identity to empower the subaltern as agents of social and political reform in society.

Moreover, *Mavambo* presents Chief Chuma as someone who values communal ethos and values consultation concerning issues that affected the community. At no point does he make unilateral decisions. When Jackson approaches Chuma's village with a request for young men who can work for him in exchange for twenty-four heads of cattle, Chuma replies, 'I said I must first consult my elders. I am done with you.' After the brief but bitter battle between Jackson's army and Chuma and his people, Jackson abducts some of Chuma's warriors as prisoners of war. Chuma does not make a unilateral decision concerning whether the boys should be followed. Sekuru, the narrator remarks that, 'It was debated whether to pursue them or not. Eventually it was decided to leave it up to the young men to liberate themselves' When Mills, the missionary, comes with a request for permission to build a mission, the chief allows elders to discuss the issue. Sekuru narrates that 'Chief Chuma discussed with his elders what to do with the Whiteman. Some felt he should be killed... but the n'angas tossed the hakatas and foretold great misfortune if he were killed.' The fact of debating as opposed to prescriptive commands does certainly project a democratic ethos within the corridors of power in this village. *Mavambo*,

therefore, construes liberation as an act of individual agency. It advances that people who do not take measures against oppression do not realise liberation.

The play carefully arranges the phase of the liberation struggle so much that what is evident are the encounters of ordinary people with colonialism. The play accords space to the grievances of the common people and women, the very grievances that make to launch into action against colonial authority. It is clear that Rudo becomes conscious of oppression purely from her experiences as a domestic worker. Her grievances also emanate from general conditions in the township and immediately affect her daily existence as a person in the township. She remarks, 'How many times have we asked, petitioned, demanded a **better life** – an end to racial discrimination, the right to vote, participation in government, realistic wages, more schools, hospitals.' She explicates her discontent to the system from a subaltern- house cleaner–township dweller black woman. It is significant that as a woman she develops a political consciousness on her own. The grievances, which she articulates, stem from her own experiences. She, therefore, owns the political agency with which she justifies her deeds of resistance. The play is, therefore, inclusive, hence democratic, as it tolerates gender diversity and difference.

When Sam narrates the demonstration, there is evidence to suggest that it is a spontaneous response of the people to a system of oppression. Sam narrates that during the demonstration, people throw stones, petrol bombs, and shot catapults. This shows that people respond to police brutality with locally available means of warfare. The response is spontaneous and utilised immediately available resources. In the main, it is indicative of the fact that ordinary people in Highfield are already involved in acts of active resistance against the system long before the actual war of liberation takes place. One could say that the war merely capitalises on a momentum of defiance and resistance that has been developing in the townships long before the firing of the first bullet by the liberation fighters. Sam tells Alexio that, '*Vanhu hatichada zvekuswera takadvanyirirwa* (We have had enough of oppression).' Alexio also decides to take up arms against the system because of his brutal experiences in the hands of the police, notably officer Freeman who notoriously kills Africans. The involvement is explained by an internal consciousness that tells him that he has to take measures in order to liberate himself from oppression. He has authority over his actions. It is in this capacity that local people like Sam,

Alexio, and Rudo contribute to the liberation of the country. They act because their consciousness tells them that the social relations are unfair and take measures not because some great leader had led them into acts of resistance. *Mavambo*, therefore, celebrates the agency of ordinary people, in stimulating, designing, and executing resistance against colonial oppression. *Mavambo* is, without doubt, multi-vocal and inclusive. It provides an arena through which different voices articulate their concerns and act on them in order to dismantle oppression.

5.3 Interrogating *Workshop Negative*: A Democratic Gaze

5.3.1 Background Information

Amakhosi, from Bulawayo produced *Workshop Negative* in 1987. Christopher Hurst and Cont Mhlanga co-direct the performance, which they produce through a series of workshops. Mackey Tickey's plays Zulu-boy; Chris Hurst plays Ray Graham while Thokozani Masha featured as Mkhize. This production represents performances produced through collaborations between black and white dramatists in post-independence Zimbabwe. Co-workshopped by Cont Mhlanga and Christopher Hurst, it stands to represent similar productions such as *The Rise and Shine of Cde Fiasco* and *Platform Five* by Andrew Whaley. Moreover, it also represents protest performances that interrogate the pitfalls of African socialism and abuse of power by African leaders. It becomes interesting to analyse how such collaborations envisage the notion of democracy within protest media.

5.3.2 Synopsis

Workshop Negative is a protest performance that exposes how attitudes of various people from differing historical and racial backgrounds have affected negatively the realisation of a society that tolerates pluralism, diversity, and difference. It is set in a workshop immediately after independence. Mkhize, a former liberation commissar, buys a tools manufacturing workshop from its former owner, Mr Rowland, who resides in South Africa. Mkhize has already employed two white artisans, Ray Graham and David Grey. David perishes in a car accident. Zulu replaces David. Zulu and Ray do not associate well because they have served in opposite camps during the liberation war and have fought in battle in Operation Zambezi. Mkhize does little to lighten the crisis because he also becomes an exploiting capitalist, much to the dismay of both Ray and

Zulu, who envisage in him, the ideals of a true socialist leader. These polar attitudes lead to a discussion on the path of the new nation.

5.3.3 The Workshop as a Subaltern Counter Public Sphere in *Workshop Negative*

This section is inspired by Fraser's (1994:62) submission that subaltern counter publics are:

Parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn, permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interest and needs.

Hence, this section explores how subaltern invent and transform the workplace into a space for oppositional politics. It also explores how the transformation of the workshop into a discursive arena liberates the agency of subaltern voices. Thus, while acknowledging that 'Counter publics emerge in response to exclusion within dominant publics, they help to expand to discursive space,' this section interrogates the intellectual autonomy of the voices that deliberate on oppositional politics in the workshop. This, section, therefore, explores the significance of space in the construction of a democratic subaltern counter public sphere.

Workshop Negative is significant in the sense that it transforms a workshop into a counter public sphere. The workshop is a place associated with subaltern members of society, the have-nots. It is a place for sweat and pain. Amakhosi however transform this space into a platform for dialogue and debate. In this way, the play shows that citizens can debate on issues of common interest anywhere. Such spaces are free from the control of forces that want to prevent multivocality and freedom of deliberation. This is the reason why Ray, Mkhize, and Zulu talk at length about their problems and their visions of a new nation without any disturbances from authorities or repressive arms of the state. Creating dialogical forums outside the knowledge of the authorities, in my view, empowers even those that are afraid to speak, to speak without fear. The issues that these three men discuss are quite sensitive as they draw from Zimbabwe's sensitive past.

Under normal circumstances, Zulu cannot openly challenge his superior Mkhize. Both Zulu and Mkhize are former liberation cadres but the later remains his superior within party structures. It

is unheard of for subordinates to challenge their superiors in public. Even if such a forum is available, free speech cannot be realised owing to constraining issues of hierarchy and protocol. However, when the workshop becomes a public sphere, Zulu is empowered to challenge his superior and he has no option but to participate in the debate about the future of the workshop and the country in general. Simultaneously, Ray would not have had the opportunity to challenge cadres of the ruling party in a post war scenario. The general sentiment is that since they lost the war, they also lost their deliberative responsibilities and rights as citizens of a new nation. Zulu notes that the major reason why the likes of Mkhize employ the likes of Ray is that whites did not have the right to complain about unfairness because, before independence, they were the oppressors. This sentiment is evident in the dialogue between Zulu and Ray:

Zulu: Right Ray, you are working until ten pm today. Me no! After five i go womanising and drinking

Ray: Ayia-a-a, is that a boycott or a strike? Mkhize will sack you

Zulu: So then he can employ a white guy this time (laughs)

Ray: (As if talking to himself, Zulu and the audience) employ a white guy. What does he mean employ a white guy? Why a white guy?

Zulu: Because you white guys cannot say anything in this country. You lost the war. If you speak, you will be reminded eleven times of that, and you will quickly be reminded of what your ancestors did to our ancestors. If you don't zip lo mouth kawena, you will be quickly reminded that you are free to follow the rest down south. (Workshop Negative, 127)

It is evident that had it not been in the workshop, the white voice, manifest in Ray would not have been empowered to participate in dialogue about the new nation. For this reason, the play points out that it is through the creation of alternative public spheres in subaltern spaces that people can talk about burning issues of the day without fear of previous history or repression. This is a significant factor in the development of democratic thought through theatre.

Just as much as the Habermasian public sphere is hijacked by the bourgeoisie neoliberals, those in power can set the agenda and create conditions that ensure that their needs and interests prevail. (Curran 1996, Fraser 1994) Thus, the transformation of the workplace into a public sphere then ensures that issues that what the workers deliberate upon are issues of immediate concern to them. They are issues emanating from the politics of the everyday. The grievances are

so open that the worker can account and speak about them from his immediate consciousness. When Ray and Zulu talk about low wages, long working hours and slave-like relations of production, they are drawing from their experiences in the workshop. Ray and Zulu set the agenda of the forum; no one imposes it. Issues that they discuss are spontaneous; they come out naturally, as people feel free to deliberate on matters of concern. When workers are given the opportunity to speak, they therefore speak as workers and advance their interests as workers. They debate about their rights as workers. They deliberate on immediate bread and butter issues.

This is the reason why Zulu and Ray are able to talk about relations of production in the workshop without exogenous influences. Counter public spheres created in workshops and factories are so open that Zulu and Ray even speak as individuals and not just as workers. They articulate points of difference among other workers and cease to homogenise their interests just because they were all workers. Although Ray and Zulu are workers, they are also cognisant of the fact that there are many differences between them. They both clamour for tolerance and the right to be different. They do not universalise peculiar experiences. In contrast, Mkhize wants to universalise interest and needs and forces Ray to call him 'comrade'. This term makes Ray uncomfortable just as much as the word 'terrorist' makes Zulu uncomfortable. Ray makes it clear that both Mkhize and Zulu must appreciate that he views the world differently. He remarks that, 'Can I not have freedom of thought? Freedom of action. Can I not preserve my culture? Can I not go back to my roots?' (Workshop Negative, 128) The play points out that an efficient public sphere does not just homogenise individuals but allows heterogeneity of voices so that people also speak as individuals and not just as groups of people. This allows fragmentation of voices to the lowest possible level.

Workshop Negative points out that dialogue on democracy must not simply blame those at the top for the problems of society. Unlike *Mavambo*, that blames colonialism, capitalism, and new leadership for all problems, *Workshop Negative* points out that before people complain about systems of power, they must first interrogate themselves because constraints to democracy are inherent in any individual and at every level. Ray and Zulu realise that the problem to a healthy democracy is not simply that Mkhize is anti-revolutionary. They realise that the problem is that they themselves lack tolerance. They realise that they do not want to put their past aside. Mkhize,

through divide and rule, then exploits the cleavages between them. They realise that they spend time concentrating on historical differences rather than focus attention on the now and the future. The grudge between Zulu and Ray is mainly because of what one's ancestors did to another's ancestors. They maintain a grudge over colonialism and liberation war and ancestral conflicts. This is clear when Ray echoes that:

Why must it be my generation that gets the boot? Yes, we fought a war and lost. Were we there when our ancestors came here and shot the natives? We were born in a land at war, given a gun and told to defend it. We did not choose to see things as we see them. We were taught how to see them. We were taught to live in Africa and see African and Africans as we do. We were taught to see the world as black and white. (Workshop Negative, 127)

Zulu replies that, 'If all that means doing here what your ancestors did in Rhodesia then you better start changing, because the society will always boot you.' (Workshop Negative, 128) As they continue this dialogue they both realise that what is of great concern to them is not how their ancestors lived but rather, how they can live peacefully unlike their ancestors. They realise that they cannot lock their focus on a past they cannot change, but rather on a future that they could mediate and change. It is here that *Workshop Negative* makes another significant stride in democratic thought. Amakhosi alerts one to the fact that ordinary workers have a role to play in the narrative of change and political transformation. The fact that Ray and Zulu debate on which path the future should follow unveils that workers have the agency, both intellectual and physical to influence the destiny of their country. The play then bestows transformative power and indeed, transformative agency, to the common people.

Workshop Negative also advances that participation in civic activities is not optional but mandatory to all citizens. It is as much a right as it is a responsibility. Thus, while Ray think that historical guilt and public esteem renders him an outcast in the debate on reform, Zulu and Mkhize remind him that the debate is incomplete without his voice. This is evident in the following passage:

Ray: Change! Change! What's wrong with me? Where do I belong? In Europe because my skin is white, or here because I was born here and I grew up here? And my deeds must they be of a man who stays here or who stays in Europe?

Zulu: If you live here because of this country's wealth, then you will always be afraid. But if you live here because you were born here and grew here, then it's your home. Get involved in national problems and celebrations of this place. Be at home with everyone and everything. Starting right here in this workshop with fighting these working conditions (Workshop Negative, 128).

The foregoing dialogue points to the fact that a democratic society cannot be realised if there is a serial replication of exclusion through denial of belonging.

Amakhosi do not confine the agency for formulating ideas and within one character. It is significant that Zulu has the capacity to influence the thoughts of Ray and vice versa. It was customary for whites to influence blacks. Even black elites like Mkhize do think that ordinary black people had the capacity to think and have control over their actions. Each time Zulu and Mkhize have a confrontation, the latter asks if Ray has told Zulu to act in that manner. The belief that ordinary people cannot defy power structures without elite influence becomes manifest in the following dialogue:

Zulu: We work long hours. And many government regulations are not observed to this...

Mkhize: You shut up! Who do you think you are under the sun to come and tell me about conditions in my workshop.

Zulu: Mkhize!

Mkhize: Mkhize ukuthini?(what) We work for long hours we... we... we... Who is this We, Zuluboy

Zulu: I mean Ray and I

Mkhize: So it is Ray who sent you to come and tell me this rubbish?

Zulu: How can you say its rubbish Mkhize when...

Mkhize: Hei man. I said did ray sent you here

Zulu: No

(Workshop Negative, 122)

At this point Mkhize realises that Zulu resists oppression not because Ray has told him to do so but because conditions of existence necessarily condition him to think as he does. Mkhize says that:

Mkhize: That big obstinate head of yours is misleading you young man. I have worked with Ray for so many years and he has never come to me

puffing up like this. You have been here for only two months, and you come vomiting about working conditions and government regulations. What do you know about government business you? (Workshop Negative, 122)

Workshop Negative, therefore, bestows the capacity to influence and modify thought processes of others in a constructive manner that does not reveal either Zulu or Ray as superior or inferior.

5.4 Conclusion

The foregoing chapter has reviewed protest theatre staged in the eighties through a democratic lens. It has unveiled the pros and limitations in the manner in which various productions imbued democratic values. The chapter has analysed two productions, *Mavambo* and *Workshop Negative* in a bid to reveal the relationship between style and democratic commitment during the eighties. Relations of power and the distribution of resistive agency between subaltern and elite characters in the two productions have been analysed in order to reveal how the productions construct identities of these categories of people. The chapter has provided a detailed reading of the forces that shaped the practice of protest theatre in the eighties. However, this chapter is not holistic. It has not analysed the actual context of the crisis, which shape protest theatre after the eighties and nineties. This is the purpose of the next chapter.

Chapter Six

The Contextual Environment of Political Protest Theatre: 1999-2012

6.1 Introduction

The concern in this chapter is to establish and understand what influences the development of protest theatre in this period. The researcher examines the contextual and sociological environment that shapes the evolution of protest theatre during the crisis decade and its aftermath. The Zimbabwean crisis has generated considerable academic attention on many fronts. The researcher is not interested in analysing the causes of the crisis. That debate has been well documented by historians who point out local and foreign causes of the crisis (Raftopolous and Savage 2004, Raftopolous 2003, Raftopolous and Compagnon 2003, Muzondidya 2004, Muponde 2004, Alexander 2004, Barnes 2007, Vambe 2008, Raftopolous 2006, Gatsheni Ndlovu 2009, Raftopoulos 2009, Patrick Bond and Masimba Manyanya 2009, Sachikonye 2011.) Rather, the researcher's concern is to reveal how the crisis affects the trajectory of protest theatre. The researcher keenly explores how the signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and the subsequent Government of National Unity (GNU) affect political protest theatre. The GPA and GNU era helps this study to frame contexts in which the state and artists conceive protest theatre in the post crisis era. It offers new ways of thinking about protest theatre outside obvious crises.

6.2 Protest Theatre during the Crisis Years 1999-2008

Zimbabwe plunges into an economic and political crisis. Naturally, citizens rise against those whom they deem responsible for the crisis. Citizens identify the state as the chief culprit. The hostility and resentment grows so much that the situation becomes conducive for the formation of new political parties that have the potential to remove the government from power. Since the greatest opposition comes from labour, students, farmers and trade unions, it becomes natural that the labour movement forms a political party. The leadership of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) then forms the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). This party becomes the most formidable force in challenging the ruling party. It narrowly loses the harmonised elections of 2000.

The need to blame someone for the crisis creates a media war. The state explicates the crisis as a product of hostile nations and insiders who are unhappy with the land reform programme. On the other hand, independent media argues that the lack of good governance and corruption causes the demise of the Zimbabwean economy (Chuma 2004, Chari 2010, and Chari 2008). Hence, the independent media offers a counter narrative that seeks to expose the sole responsibility of the state in the fall of Zimbabwe. The state then uses national media to peddle exclusively pro-state propaganda. (Mano 2005).

In the face of state monopoly on national media, alternative avenues of disseminating anti-state propaganda have to be developed. (Chuma 2004)) Protest theatre becomes an option. Political protest theatre then develops as an alternative form of media meant to create new democratic spaces in an environment where the state has total control and monopoly of state media. (Zenenga 2008, Zenenga 2011, Chivandikwa 2012, Wrolson 2009). Artists and civic society generally feel that the bias of state media is failing to express the views of other sections of society. They feel that state media is propagating propaganda constituted in a monolithic and imposed understanding of the Zimbabwean situation. The state media is no longer giving space to the views of ordinary people. Rather, according to state detractors, it is brainwashing citizens with jingles, slogans, and political messages. (Chuma 2004, Chari 2008)

State monopoly on national media becomes a cause of disagreement. The disapproval of state monopoly of the media is registered by Cont Mhlanga (2000: webpage), director of Amakhosi Theatre, who says that:

Only the government and their political party and those that agree with it have the right to access radio, television and the daily press, while everyone else is shut down. Not only do they use it to promote their policies that have created very difficult conditions for the people, but also use it to embarrass and spread lies and propaganda against those that speak out and have different views than themselves. They call it scoring political points against their opponents while their opponents are tied around a tree and have no media to score points. It can never be a fair fight. Never. Zimbabwe, unlike other countries, has very limited functional broadcasting frequencies. Only four radio stations and two for television and with some section 38 of the Broadcasting Act, all these have been given to the government controlled ZBC living (wrong spelling) nothing for other independent

players in broadcasting. Need I explain more? The only thing I can say is that it is a sad thing that in our democracy that our government protects so much, it monopolises all the available airwaves.

The major concern of artists is that state media has failed to create a critical citizen who participates in the debate about the nation, its present and future prospects. Protest theatre is created to offer an alternative deliberative forum that can enhance the agency of citizens of various lifestyles in the determination of the destiny of the nation. Artists see an opportunity to use theatre to break the silence of the people. This leads to the revival of old production houses which were involved in protest theatre prior to the crisis of 1999 namely Amakhosi in Bulawayo led by Cont Mhlanga, Rooftop Promotions headed by Daves Guzha and Savannah Trust led by Daniel Maposa in Harare. However, new players come into being, especially in Harare. These include Edzai Isu Theatre Project led by Tafadzwa Muzondo, Vhitori Entertainment led by Silvanos Mudzvova. These houses produce various productions. Rooftop Promotions, by far, facilitates the production of many plays. These Media Houses play an intermediary role between artist and donors who support the initiative of theatre as alternative media for democratic deliberation.

The affinity for alternative democratic media through theatre is evident in the mission statements of some of these organisations. Rooftop Promotions mission statement remarks that ‘We prestigiously promote and develop artistic initiatives. We influence policy through community mobilisation and strive for freedom of expression’ (Rooftop Promotions, 2004: webpage). Savanna Trust (2003: webpage) insists that their vision is to build ‘a just society in which all citizens actively and freely participate in its development.’ Their mission is contained in ‘the building of a Zimbabwean citizenry committed to a democratic development of their community’ (Savanna Trust, 2003: webpage). It is evident that these Houses conceive their protest with a framework and context of democracy that remodels protest theatre into a transformative platform within a Zimbabwean context. It is because of this desire to transform society within a democratic framework that this study insists on examining the nature of the democracy they espouse.

Rooftop Promotions (2004: webpage) maintain that:

The most popular theatre genre in Zimbabwe today is Protest Theatre in which the communities are able to scrutinize themselves and endeavour to live according to targeted goals sought by a people who aspire to be a democracy. Protest theatre relays messages to docile societies urging them to embark on new ideals that would eventually remove the burdensome albatross of silence.

Daves Guzha, the Director of Rooftop notes that by creating platforms in which citizens engage in dialogue on issues of national importance, protest theatre allows citizens to freely deliberate on issues. State media has denied citizens such liberated space by closing platforms by which people could freely talk about national issues. He retorts that:

In my view, using the theatre as a vehicle for communicating my mission is only logical in a country where the freedom of speech is under pressure. Theatre is an excellent way to mobilise people. I do that with my own plays and with Rooftop Promotions. We produce our own performances and invite other theatre companies to Theatre in the Park in Harare. It is always packed and triggers many discussions among the audience. We also make films, DVDs and television productions that can be seen everywhere. This enables us to reach about a half a million people in Zimbabwe each year. (The Power of Culture, 2009: webpage)

At first, protest theatre is largely concentrated in urban spaces. The production houses are mainly located in big cities of Bulawayo and Harare. Protest theatre seems to cater for urban audiences in Harare and Bulawayo. The state does not worry about it because protest theatre is preaching to the converted urban dwellers who were mostly supporters of the MDC. (Ravengai: 2009).

What makes the state not worried at first is the fact that the plays protest artists initially produce are not bluntly political in the sense of advocating regime change. In the beginning, the plays are just political satires that laugh at people in higher offices. It is more of creating jokes and humour about the state.¹³ The state can afford a little humour. After all even oppositional papers carry cartoons that tend to laugh and mock state figures. In these early stages, protest theatre is in the form of panic theatre. (Wrolson, 2009) The state does not take

¹³ Some of the humorous panic theatre plays include *Ganyau Express* (2000), *Ivhu vs. the state* (2000), *Rags and Garbages* (2003) and *All Systems Out of Order* (2004)

Panic theatre seriously. The state construes it as an avenue by which a small group of urban audiences gather together and make jokes about the state. This does not pose a serious threat.

Moreover, artists stage most of the plays in Harare. In Harare, the state can monitor protest theatre and offer the requisite surveillance (Ravengai 2009). The state, as Ravengai (2009) argues, actually allows panic protest theatre to flourish in Harare because it uses it as a gesture of how tolerant it is to dissent. However, that accommodating gesture faces a number of challenges. Artists become more militant, although artistically and aesthetically engaging. The plays begin to move out of satire into a hybrid of propaganda and comedy. They mix comedy and agit prop. They begin to perform clear representations of state figures.¹⁴ The plays begin to concentrate more on what is happening at the top and clearly construct characters that are reminiscent of known leaders of competing political parties in Zimbabwe. What also changes the complexion of the game is that artists create such caricatures of political figures in the context of general elections. Towards the elections of 2005, protest theatre actually becomes campaign theatre where it becomes an extension of the campaign strategy of the opposition. It is not clear whether the artists knew that advocates of regime change are using them for electoral purposes. What is clear is that the content of the plays begin to suggest that there should be regime change in Zimbabwe. The plays attack the president and his cabinet whilst placing wisdom and intelligence on oppositional figures.¹⁵

This development, in an environment of elections constitutes a threat to the state. The context of elections and the desire to reach out to other places with such propagandist plays leads to severe repression and banning of the plays. The state becomes more aggressive in its engagement with protest theatre. Yamikai Mwando (2007: webpage) a journalist with the Institute of Peace and War Reporting (IPWR) remarks that ‘as the country approaches a watershed election next year amid growing disgruntlement among the people, protest theatre

¹⁴ Such plays include *Super Patriot and Morons*, *Heaven’s Diary*, *Decades of Terror*, *Final Push*, *The Good President*, *Crocodile of the Zambezi*, *Madame Speaker Sir*.

¹⁵ For example in *Super patriot and Morons*, Super Patriot represents the head of state, apparently an old dictator that is surrounded by very stupid advisors and cronies. In *Decades of Terror*, Mutongi is the embodiment of President Mugabe (head of state and government in Zimbabwe) while Garamombe represents a former late vice president, Joshua Nkomo. In *Final Push*, Chiwara is a caricature of President Mugabe while Tombe represents the leader of the opposition Morgan Tsvangirai.

appears to have provided the sole platform for the probing of Zimbabwe's leadership, albeit on a scale outside active political opposition.' He adds that:

The authorities are attempting to squash a resurgence of political or protest theatre, which is providing biting criticism of Zimbabwe's leadership ahead of crucial elections early next year. With the political and economic crisis in full swing, amid controversial concessions made by the opposition Movement for Democratic Change, MDC, to the ruling party to amend the constitution for the 18th time, theatre aficionados appear to have been provided with more than enough fodder. However, this is increasingly proving to be an occupation of virtual daredevils. Arrests and bans are coming fast and furious as state-sponsored repression in this battered nation of more than 13 million people is ratcheted up ahead of what are seen as watershed parliamentary and presidential elections in 2008 (Mwando, 2007: webpage).

The state does not take kindly to an open attack on its institutions especially in the context of elections. The Police Board bar *The Good President* from public performance in Bulawayo.. Just before leaving for California on a tour with a play entitled *Members*, Cont expresses dissatisfaction with the manner in which the police are handling his play, *The Good President*. Mhlanga narrates the situation as follows:

I cannot alter the truth. What *The Good President* says, is what would be shown in Bulawayo. Police want us to give them the script and that is not acceptable. We believe that the decisions by the courts should not stop us from showing our play, especially when one considers that the police and the High Court are not the Censorship Board (Smith, 2009: webpage),

The police and not the Censorship Board eventually stop the play. Cont Mhlanga tells the BBC that 'we have been banned.'¹⁶ We have been beaten. We are under surveillance 24 hours a day' (Gordon Glyn-Jones, 2004: Webpage). After the 'banning' of *The Good President*, Deputy Information Minister Bright Matonga echoes that that political theatre is the "work of

¹⁶Ravengai (2009) argues that artists used the term banned loosely. The Censorship board which has the powers and mandate of banning plays, in Mhlanga's case did not ban the Good President. In this respect, according to Ravengai, artists seem not to know the difference between banning and other forms of political control. The police do not ban plays; that is not within their mandate. They can only suppress plays. However, despite the confusion between banning and political control, it is clear that protest theatre was under siege from the authorities.

political activists masquerading as artists” (Kubatana.net 2007: webpage). This clearly shows how protest theatre actually subverts and irks the status quo.

What irks the state more is the fact that the plays are touring. David Smith, a journalist with *The Guardian* reports on his encounter with Cont Mhlanga. Mhlanga narrates how authorities treat *The Good President*. Amakhosi Theatre stages *The Good President* in Harare but when they stage it in Bulawayo, skirmishes erupt. David Smith (2009: webpage) reports that:

Remarkably, it played in Harare under the president's nose. After each performance, Mhlanga would sit down and discuss it with his audience. Each night, he noticed a series of secret policemen taking a seat, each more senior than the one before, all equally stony-faced. But when he took the play to Matabeleland something snapped. The actors were in their dressing rooms, the audiences were in their seats, when police arrived and ordered Mhlanga to cancel. He refused. They went away but came back in the cars and garb of traffic cops, making it appear that he would be arrested for speeding. "Go on stage now and tell them there is no play tonight," they told him. He replied: "I will not tell them. You must tell them." So the show did not go on. But the following night, Mhlanga decided to try again. The first scene played without incident. Then, uproar. Armed police stormed the auditorium, descending from the balcony and shouting at people to leave or face the consequences. The audience fled in panic. At that point, Mhlanga called the production off, realising that someone could get hurt.

What makes Mhlanga's situation more sour is the fact apart from being an artist, he is involved in politics, not just an artist but as a politician. He is part of the revival of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) in Matabeleland. The authorities are, therefore, quite worried about his influence in Matabeleland. Thus, they make it difficult for Amakhosi to stage *The Good President* in Bulawayo. In Mashonaland, they figure out that he does not have as much influence as he did in Bulawayo.' In the harmonised elections of March 2008 Cont contests for a councilor's seat in his rural home in Lupane. He wins it. In an article written by journalist John Mkwetsi, Cont echoes that, 'I chose to be a councilor because that brought me nearer the community. I am marrying politics with arts because I am saying I am going back home to start afresh and be with my people' (Mkwetsi, 2007: webpage). Working with the locals, he goes

on to direct a play entitled *Kudliwa Sitsotsi*, which protests against the use of food as a way of wooing the electorate.

The state also suppresses Raisedon Baya and Leonard Matsa's *Super Patriot and Morons*. The Censorship Board approves the play but there is a sudden U-turn when the board decides to stop it in unclear circumstances. The BBC (2004: webpage) reports that:

The play's producer Daves Guzha told the BBC that he planned to appeal and might also go to the courts against the Zimbabwe Censorship Board. The censorship board has not explained why it banned the play.

Shepherd Mutamba, the spokesperson for Rooftop Promotions, which produce the play adds, "It's a sad development. It's all about freedom of expression in what is supposed to be a democracy, which is being frustrated" (BBC, 2004: webpage).

Arguably, the worst case involving the state and protest theatre practitioners is the *Final Push* encounter in 2008. Whitori Entertainment produces the play. Prior to the staging of the play, the opposition calls for a mass protest entitled 'final push.' The police crush the demonstration heavily. Silvanos Mudzvova takes the opportunity of these disturbances and directs a play that has the same title as the mass protest. The police arrest and detain him. Kubatana. net (2007: webpage) narrates Mudzvova's ordeal as follows:

A journalist and two actors in a play entitled *Final Push* were arrested in Harare during a performance. The actors, Silvanos Mudzvova, who wrote the play, and Anthony Tongani, were forced to perform it a dozen times while in custody in front of police and intelligence officers.

Raisedon Baya, a prominent playwright, in response to the banning remarks that:

Because we are seeing the arrests and the bans, it means we are saying something. Nevertheless, it has to be understood we are merely artists, not activists of any sort. Yet, this is a point that has yet to make sense to the police, who accuse us of dabbling in politics (Kubatana, 2007: webpage)

It would be an injustice if the researcher simply paints one simple picture of an oppressive state and completely innocent artists. Some of the artists engaged in paid activism. They were deliberately seeking a head on with the state so that they could be paid money set aside for arts activism. It is no coincidence that Cont Mhlanga stages *The Good President* in 2007. He is eyeing the Freedom to Create Award at a time when the Zimbabwean question is very topical in western media. The newzimbabwe.com reports that:

Mhlanga has won the inaugural \$50,000 (£33,000) Art venture Freedom to Create Prize for his politically-charged satirical play *The Good President*. The prize was created to honour artists who defend their freedom of expression at great personal sacrifice. The Bulawayo-based Mhlanga was one of several people and groups honoured at the London ceremony. He was described by the philanthropic organisation as a "fierce opponent" of the Mugabe regime (Newzimbabwe.com, 2008: webpage).

Enert Masora (2010) observes that the bannings do not just work against the artists or protest theatre. In fact, the bannings make it to grow. Most of the people whose productions the state suppress actually grow to become strong players in the industry. There is no doubt that the noise generated by the suppression of *The Good President* makes Cont receive *The Freedom to Create* award. Those organisations that did not have a production banned did not grow quite well.

Artists respond to these banning and surveillance by designing a disguised form of theatre called invisible theatre¹⁷. David Smith, a reporter for *The Guardian* reports that

Mhlanga turned the idea against him with what he calls "invisible theatre". He took unknown actors into shopping malls to act out scenes and interact with the public. Sometimes, after the actors had moved on, the public were still debating. But eventually, even these guerrilla performances came under the scrutiny of spies in the crowd (David Smith, 2009: webpage).

Savanna Trust s also involved in the guerilla performances that they perform in beer halls, streets and other crowded places. The actual shows that they stage are hard to record since they

¹⁷ For a better reading of artists response to state repression see Zenenga (2008, 2011) and Ravengai (2011)

performed them under disguise and secrecy. Zenenga (2011) regards this guerilla theatre as Hit and Run theatre. Zenenga (2011: 182) notes that:

Abandoning the trickster aesthetic of panic theatre, it has emerged as an alternative medium to openly and provocatively address the most volatile and pressing issues of the day following the banning of independent and impartial media in Zimbabwe.

Protest theatre adopts a hit and run style around 2007, when it becomes evident that theatre has to be more blunt and militant against the state. Arts activists realise that the comedy type of approach is, perhaps, leaving people with laughter than with views of taking action against the state. Those who do not adopt the hit and run style also make their theatre very candid and militant despite the fact that they perform at traditional venues. Such candid plays include *The Good President* (2007) *Final Push* (2008) by Silvanos Mudzvova, *Pregnant with Emotion* (2008) by Raisedon Baya and *The Two Leaders I Know* 2008 by Stephen Chifunyise and Raisedon Baya. One should view this militancy in the context of elections. The year 2008 witnesses one of the most contested and violent elections in the history of elections in Zimbabwe. Art activists literally transform protest theatre as an extension of electoral politics by other means. In 2007, Cont Mhlanga writes:

A few months before the next combined Parliamentary and Presidential elections, some artists in Zimbabwe and their friends across the world have launched a new non-political movement called Voices For Change (VFC). This is a fast growing movement that supports creative artists from all disciplines to produce, perform, distribute and amplify the voices of the majority who live in difficult times while exposing the trickery and hypocrisy of the minority who live in good times while they claim to be acting on behalf of the people.... Why a movement for voices? To break two conditions and situations that are currently on the rise in the country and more so as the *2008 election days get closer*. These two are: (1) Fear and (2) Access to media.... The voices of the suffering majority have been effectively shut down and they cannot listen to each other more as we *go towards the 2008 elections* (Mhlanga, 2007: webpage).

Electoral politics, therefore, give great impetus to the development of protest theatre during the crisis days.

6.3 Protest Theatre in The Era of the Global Political Agreement: 2009-2012

Zimbabwe holds Presidential Elections in March 2008. There is no winner. A run off is then held in June 2008. This run off is very violent. The country goes on the brink of a civil war. By this time, the Zimbabwean dollar has now become useless. People stop going to banks to collect salaries. It is more expensive to board a bus to collect one's salary. To make matters worse, there is an outbreak of cholera. The state has no resources to combat the disease. There is also a severe drought. There is no food. The country becomes a hell on earth. The people suffer severely. The polarisation of political parties has brought more suffering than salvation. The average person wonders as to what is the essence of political parties when they continue to disagree on elections when the very people whom they want to govern are dying *en masse*.¹⁸ The state of things reaches a stage where even the hardliners in opposing political parties agreed on a truce, for the sake of the people. Political Parties (ZANU PF and MDC and its formations) agreed upon a power sharing agreement, brokered by the South African president, Thabo Mbeki. This agreement, the Global Political Agreement (GPA) leads to the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU).

The unity between the MDC and ZANU PF creates confusion among protest artists. Prior to GPA, their theatre encourages polarisation and regime change. The GPA renders such type of theatre inappropriate. The MDC is now part of government. Protest theatre, for a moment, becomes quiet. It is unsure of which course of action to pursue given that the MDC is now part of government. Hubs of protest theatre began to stage all sorts of theatre. Theatre in the park resorts to social protest. The plays concentrate on the rights of women, as is the case with *365* or on the rights of prostitutes, for example *Sinners*.

The calm situation does not last long. The GPA also brings with it new developments that have implications in the development of political protest theatre. The GPA has many sections but there are four sections, which influence the development of protest theatre after 2008. These read as follows

¹⁸ I rely on my experience as a Zimbabwean who lived through the crisis. I have vivid and fresh memories of the crisis. Despite the fact that I was a university lecturer, my salary could not buy at least one United States dollar from August 2008 to February 2009.

DEDICATING ourselves to putting an end to the polarisation, divisions, conflict and intolerance that has characterised Zimbabwean politics and society in recent times.

RECOGNISING, accepting and acknowledging that the values of justice, fairness, openness, tolerance, equality, non-discrimination and respect of all persons without regard to race, class, gender, ethnicity, language, religion, political opinion, place of origin or birth are the bedrock of our democracy and good governance.

DETERMINED to build a society free of violence, fear, intimidation, hatred, patronage, corruption and founded on justice, fairness, openness, transparency, dignity and equality.

DETERMINED to act in a manner that demonstrates respect for the democratic values of justice, fairness, openness, tolerance, equality, respect of all persons and human rights.

Recognising the centrality and importance of African institutions in dealing with African problems, we agreed to seek solutions to our differences, challenges and problems through dialogue (Global Political Agreement, 2009: webpage).

These four points are aided by Article (vii) which concentrates on the ‘promotion of equality, national healing, cohesion and unity.’ These four aspects of the agreement lead to the creation of a theatre that is geared towards national healing, reconciliation, peace building, social justice and tolerance. Protest artists envisage their role as that of offering alternative approaches to healing and reconciliation that are different to those that the state is proffering. In my view, artists realise that the state is unwilling to allow people to talk about the violence of 2008 as a starting step towards truth and justice. The state is afraid of discussions of violence because it is involved in the violence. (Mbire 2011, Makwerere and Mandonga 2012, Bratton 2011.) Instead, they want a healing in which people would simply forget about the violence and proceed to forgive one another.

Communities want those who have participated in the violence to come out in the open, renounce their violence and ask for forgiveness from communities (Mashingaidze 2010). Other sections of the community want perpetrators of violence to come and pay back what they have taken from their victims during the violence (Mbire 2011). They want a system of restorative justice that replenished the victim. They also want community models and approaches to healing, approaches that accept the differences and diversities of interests within people and communities (Makwerere and Mandonga 2012, Muwati, Gambahaya and Mangena, 2006).

They do not want the Organ for National Healing, headed by Vice president, John Nkomo to control the healing and reconciliation process (Bratton 2011, Mbire 2011, Thomson and Jazdowska 2012).

The plays written by Stephen Chifunyise and produced under the aegis of Rooftop Promotions express the debates around healing and reconciliation. *Heal the Wounds* exposes the atrocities committed during the violence of 2008. Chifunyise's view is that coming to terms with the fact that violence occurred, and it left great scars on the affected people has to precede a process of recuperation from the savagery of violence.

Rituals, a play that explores how community based models of healing and reconciliation can be utilised as opposed to following one model which does not incorporate the views of the locals, follows *Heal the Wounds*. *Rituals* conveys the memory of violence at a time the state wants to control what citizens should remember and forget. It is actually quite interesting that the state is accusing groups from Harare of exporting their own notions of healing yet the state itself is reinforcing its model of healing on communities. What aggravates the situation is the fact that after the GNU, elections are due. The state is, therefore, not keen on having groups tour the country as that is tantamount to a campaign of some sort against the state.

Even after the formation of the Government of National Unity, state agencies maintain their reluctance on allowing plays to go on national tours. Edzai Isu creates a play that encouraged tolerance and peace building. The state allows Edzai Isu to stage the play, *No voice No choice* in Harare. The play is the main show at the 2011 Protest Arts International Festival (PAIF). However, when the play goes on tour, the police disrupt it. Tafadzwa takes the play to Masvingo. Skirmishes develop with the authorities. Tinashe Sibanda, an entertainment reporter with the *Newsday* narrates the whole saga:

The National Arts Merits Awards 2011 nominee for Outstanding Theatrical Production and regionally acclaimed play *No Voice, No Choice*, which is currently touring the country's provinces until September 22, had its performances disrupted at Nyika and Jerera growth points. According to a letter from the Officer Commanding Masvingo Central District Superintendent J Nyapfuri, the public performance was not approved due to security reasons. However, the

situation was averted by the intervention of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), who filed an ex-parte application against police refusal to grant them permission to stage the play. ZLHR lawyer Collen Maboke cited Home Affairs co-Ministers, Police Commissioner-General Augustine Chihuri and Nyapfuri as first, second, third and fourth respondents respectively. A provisional order was granted by Masvingo Civil Court Provincial Magistrate in which “respondents were ordered to allow the applicant to perform their theatre play without any disturbances at the scheduled places and times (Mucheke Terminus at 1pm on August 2, Charles Austin Theatre at 8pm on August 2 and Rujeko Hall at 1pm on August 3)”, according to court papers. (Sibanda, 2012: webpage)

In the same article, Tafadzwa Muzondo complains that:

This attempt to temper with our freedom of artistic expression is worrying considering that we are bona fide Zimbabwean artists, who are trying to make a living out of their talents, as we advance noble objectives such as community peace building and reconciliation, which is the core theme of the play. (Sibanda, 2012: webpage)

The state also bars Edzai Isu from performing the play at the Chimanimani festival.

Commenting on the barring, Tafadzwa Muzondo remarks that:

After hearing the news I compromised with Musasiwa that the afternoon show be closed, as it was supposed to be an open air show and the show was now meant to have those that thought it was not fit for the public, and the final position from a certain Sibanda who is CIO head in Chimanimani, according to Musasiwa, was that the play could no longer be staged at all. (Sibanda, 2012: webpage).

The play is eventually banned as it is about to be staged at the Intwasa festival in Bulawayo. In a Press Statement, Tafadzwa Muzondo indicates that:

Human rights lawyers are now fighting to overturn the ban of “No Voice, No Choice” by the Board of Censors of Zimbabwe who last week “prohibited and banned” the play, alleging that its contents were “inciteful and against the spirit of national healing and reconciliation”
(Muzondo, 2012:1).

Two letters from the censorship Board, posted to Tafadzwa Muzondo on 21 August 2012, precede the press statement. H.J. Malaba, the secretary for the Board of Censors indicates that:

Please be advised that the Board of Censors read your play script and observed that the play is about discouraging youths participating in political violence in particular and against political violence in general. The play is too direct and people can easily read into the insinuation of the words and messages and associate them with certain individuals and institutions and the vulgar and obscene language used. The play is inciteful and against the spirit of national healing and reconciliation. The board therefore recommended that the play be banned and prohibited. (Malaba, 2012: 1)

The irony of the matter is that how can a play that discourages ‘youths participation in political violence and against political violence’ (Muzondo, 20:1) be regarded as ‘inciteful and against the spirit of national healing and reconciliation.’ (Malaba, 2012: 1). The letter from the Censorship Board raises more questions than answers. Is the play inciting youths to be peaceful? If so how Is it acting against the interest of healing and reconciliation? Can it be that the play is offering an alternative avenue to healing and reconciliation that is outside the confines of the state? Can it be that citizens are making more noise on healing and reconciliation outside the framework of the Organ for Healing and Reconciliation?

On that same day, August 21, 2012, Tafadzwa receives a Notice of Rejection from I.S.S. Chiranganyika, Secretary for the Board of Censors, who reiterates that:

In the context of the prevailing political climate, it would be unwise to release this script for public consumption in Zimbabwe. Prohibited and banned in Zimbabwe. (Chiranganyika, 2012: 1)

The same scenario also transpires when Rooftop Promotions goes on national tour with their play *Rituals*. The play runs uninterrupted at Theatre in the park in Harare. However, when they try to stage it in Chimanimani they face serious challenges. The *Rituals*’ Encounter with authorities is as follows:

The Rooftop artistes namely, Sylvanos Mudzvova, Chipso Bizure, Joice Mpofu, Zenzo Nyathi, Mandla Moyo, Rutendo Chigudu, Amina Lloyd Ayamu, Joshua Mwase, Norman Kamema and the driver Shingirai Muto were arrested on January 5, 2011 at Nhedziwa Growth Point in Chimanimani, Manicaland Province and were detained at Cashel Valley Police Station. They were charged with contravening Section 46 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act as read with Section 2 (a) (ii) of the third schedule to Section 46 of the

said Act that is criminal nuisance. The police accused them of unlawfully holding a public performance, where they performed a drama reminiscent of the political disturbances of June 2008 that incited the affected members of the public to revive their differences. (Reporter, Daily News, 2012: webpage)

The detention of the cast makes the play *Rituals* and indeed Rooftop promotions receive special mention at the 2011 Freedom to Create Awards. The special mention message reads as follows:

Rooftop is one of the iconic Zimbabwean theatre companies spearheading the theatre protest movement, who represent a confluence of activism, performance and politics. In the face of constant censorship and unwelcome attention from the state, they continue to tirelessly address contemporary political and social issues in a hostile environment. They see themselves as an alternative means for people to educate themselves about social justice. Through plays such as 'Rituals', Rooftop not only express dissent, but also promote open exchange of ideas, and the free flow of information vital to a well-informed nation. They intervene to propose alternative forms of social existence – and with their open forum events following their performances, previously taboo issues are open for discussion and viewers feel empowered to stand up for their rights. (Freedom to Create, 2012: Webpage)

At one level, the researcher admits that the foregoing demonstrates the case of a state that does not tolerate freedom of expression. However, on the other level there are interesting issues of power and democracy that one can reveal. In my view, the argument of the state is that groups from Harare are coming to other places to come and impose their views on other people. The State argues that whilst issues of healing and peace are good, why is it that local theatre groups and community organisations are not empowered to create similar projects of healing and democracy? (Maposa, 2012)

However, the researcher acknowledges the fact that even if someone sponsors their activism, these artists are expressing their rights to free expression and protest. By alerting authorities and the world about the suffering of Zimbabweans, they are carrying out their civic duty and responsibility as citizens. After the arrest of the rituals team, Daves Guzha remarks:

It is funny that the state says what was portrayed was not in line with what was expected and the million dollar question is: expected by who? We are artists who reflect the challenges and triumphs of our society and it is an indisputable fact that there was political violence in June 2008 and that needs to be addressed as article VII of the [GPA](#) stipulates. (Kubatana.net, 2012: Webpage).

Tafadzwa Muzondo remarks the same after the state bars his play at the Chimanimani festival:

It's unfortunate when certain authorities do not understand that as artists our aim is to promote community peace building, healing and reconciliation, which is in sync with the festival theme for this year 'One Love One Nation-Peace' and is also promoting objectives of the organ on National Healing Reconciliation and Integration, which falls under the Office of the President and Cabinet(Sibanda, 2012: webpage).

Artists are certainly carrying out their duty as active citizens-cum artist who want to play a role in addressing and revealing the ills of society. The issues of national healing, peace and reconciliation are not figments of artists' imaginations. They are issues to which the state was devoting resources to arrest. The state itself has established an Organ for National Healing as stipulated in GPA. Artists, like any other citizen have a right to air out their views and aspirations on such issues of national significance. They are airing out their views about the future of their country. Indeed, many artists send out solidarity messages to the *Rituals* team emphasising that they have to be strong as they are playing out a crucial civic responsibility. Chirikure Chirikure, a poet of fame in Zimbabwe consoles the *Rituals* team as follows: "As this nuisance continues, always remember that we are together as this is much more than artistic expression, but the moulding of the future of our nation" (The Zimbabwean, 2012: Webpage).

Another prominent poet, Musaemura Zimunya writes his solidarity message as follows:

Accept my commitment to freedom of artistic expression and convey my unflinching support for the "Rituals Ten" crew. To some misguided and ignorant idiots they may be villains of the peace, but to us they are heroes of the Cultural Revolution. Weep not, therefore (The Zimbabwean, 2012: Webpage)

The general feeling is that an artist has the right to express himself or herself as enshrined in the constitution of Zimbabwe. Stanley Kwenda (2011: webpage) summarises the state of protest theatre in the years of the GPA:

In September 2008, the Global Political Agreement (GPA) was greeted with hope by many Zimbabweans. Along with a host of critical reforms, they thought it would bring an end to years of media and artistic censorship and lead to greater freedom of expression. However, more than two years down the line, that particular hope seems to be fading away – illustrated by the continued arrest, harassment and intimidation of journalists and artists.

Whether the actions of the artists are right or wrong is a matter of opinion, but one cannot take away the fact that they are exercising their duty and right as citizens in a sovereign nation.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that what shapes the development of protest theatre prior to 2008 is the political and economic crisis that leads to the formation of a formidable opposition party since 1980. In addition, independent media explicates the crisis in terms of state incompetence. This stance seems to propel the opposition into power. The state then tightens its grip on state media and independent media. This monopoly and banning of independent media creates the need to invent alternative avenues of media that can offer alternative readings of the Zimbabwean story beyond the grand narrative that the state peddles. Protest theatre then became an alternative for many reasons. It is not capital intensive, it can be invisible, the laws of the state do not have anything to stop protest theatre and it can reach to remote areas

Chapter Seven

The Construction of Voices and Agency of the People in Selected Performances of Protest Theatre during the Crisis Years: 1999-2008

7.1 Introduction

Chapter six has established how practitioners of protest theatre conceived it as an alternative public sphere designed to provide democratic space to citizens, particularly marginalised voices, so that they could air their interests, at an intellectual level, on the struggle for political change in Zimbabwe. Chapter six has also established that the protest theatre movement was driven by democratic intentions. This chapter, therefore, seeks to analyse ways in which selected performances of protest theatre commit themselves to serve the interests of subaltern citizens. The chapter investigates how performances of *Heaven's Diary* (2005), *Decades of Terror* (2007), and *Madame Speaker Sir 2* (2007) deviate from non-democratic tendencies such as elitism, paternalism, and universalism that the researcher identified, in chapter five, as serving the interests of political elites in Zimbabwe. The researcher also examines how these plays create an accessible public sphere that encourages the participation of marginalised voices. The researcher also explores whether these plays fit into Bertolt Brecht's conception of elitism, which he, as John Willet (1964:39) quotes, defined as 'progress ... which does not spring from new requirements but satisfies the old ones with new titillations, thus furthering a purely conservative role.'

7.2 The Construction of Subaltern Agency and Consciousness in *Heaven's Diary* (2005)

This section analyses how the performance of *Heaven's Diary* constructs the consciousness of marginalised members of society within the struggle for transformation in Zimbabwe. The researcher explores, by way of performance, the extent to which subaltern characters (Zacks, Tom, and Laiza) display independent intellectual agency over their thought processes. The researcher also analyses how subaltern characters exercised authority over their actions as well as how they explicate the struggle for change in terms of their own consciousness. The researcher admits that whilst the play provides discursive space to subaltern citizens, it remains crucial to explore how it bestows upon them, the capacity to exercise moral and intellectual control on the struggle for social and political reform.

7.2.1 Background Information and Synopsis

Daniel Maposa scripted, directed, and produced *Heaven's Diary*. Performed by Savanna Trust, the cast was as follows; Daniel Maposa (Tom), Charles Matare (Zack) and Eunice Tava (Laiza). It is a three hander. Two drifters, Zacks and Tom rob a stranger and leave him for dead. After taking valuables from the man, they flee the scene. Moments later, a prostitute, Laiza, passes through the scene of the robbery. She picks up a souvenir that Tom has dropped during the encounter with the stranger. After picking the souvenir, she takes the man to hospital. When Laiza meets Tom and Zacks, the two are unaware of the fate of the man they have robbed. They talk about social issues that affect Zimbabwe. In this dialogue, Laiza then solves the puzzle of the man whom Tom and Zacks have left for dead.

7.2.2 An analysis of Laiza's Consciousness and Agency

Laiza is a character played by Eunice Tava. Laiza is a prostitute. Apparently, even prostitution is no longer paying that much in Zimbabwe, so she decides to migrate to South Africa. Like a refugee, she carries all her belongings with her, an old blanket, some food, and anything she finds on her way to South Africa. Her clothes are tattered and oversized. She has multiple layers of clothes to warm herself. She has no shoes and her face indicates that she has not bathed in quite a long while. Because of poverty, she looks quite older than what she claims to be and her face tells a story of a suffering spirit. There is no doubt that she is a subaltern.

The manner in which *Heaven's Diary* invents Laiza's subaltern agency or consciousness is worrisome. When Zacks asks Laiza why she was urinating in public, she replies that it was because she was living in a society with no decency. As she urinates, Zacks asks, 'Can't you have some decency?' Laiza replies, 'which country do you live in? There is no more decency here. Even those at the highest echelons are the most indecent ones. *Ini zvangu ndiri kutoweta chete*. (My indecency is no big deal.) It's worse than this.' (*Heaven's Diary*, 2005) Laiza does not attempt to find somewhere secluded. She just lifts up her skirt, in full view of Zacks and Tom, opens her legs, and urinates. Zacks and Tom look sideways in order to avoid seeing such a horrible act.

Laiza's answer clearly indicates how *Heaven's Diary* invents her as having lost the intellectual agency to account for her actions in terms of her own consciousness. The consciousness of the elite conditions Laiza's actions rather than an autonomous thought. She explicates her actions in terms of what the elite are doing, thereby implying that the subaltern has no thinking capabilities. The explication of her actions through elite consciousness undermines the visibility of her own intellectual agency. This shows that the provision of discursive space without empowering the intellectual agency of these voices replicates oppression.

Although Laiza's statement indicates that even those at the top are also indecent, an oppositional reading of that statement reveals the desire of the subaltern to have those at the top as determinants of the destiny of society. Her consciousness seems to have internalised the fact that those in the lower strata of society cannot be a force for change. At another level, Laiza seems to be the beacon of reason and hope for change. One can construe the fact of urinating in public as an expression of freedom and the desire to go beyond the norm. Ideally, in Shona culture being nude in front of men or acting inappropriately like urinating in public is a strong form of protest. In fact, Laiza's expression of freedom through violating normative values of decency becomes an idiom of resistance that she carries throughout the play. She has the freedom to discuss openly issues related to sexual intercourse and brags about her escapades as a prostitute. She views sex and prostitution as the very means by which she claims her freedom from an oppressive society, not in terms of patriarchal relations, but rather in terms of social relations that treat the poor harshly.

Heaven's Diary also unveils Laiza's ability to challenge authority when she became blasphemous. She had the guts to challenge the authority of God and Jesus. She even questions the necessity of Jesus' celibacy. She boastfully said that a woman's bottom is so sweet that if Jesus had tasted it, He would have abandoned His mission. Such a statement can only be made by an individual who claims to be a free spirit and fearless. In this respect, when she dances erotically in the play, when she invites Tom for a lesson on sexual intercourse, when she talks about all forms of vulgar without censorship, she is expressing her agency and liberty as an oppressed woman. In fact, she has the audacity to pull Zacks' balls in a fight. She pulls the balls so hard that Zacks succumbs to her will. Laiza, therefore, uses the sexual idiom to assert her

authority over Zacks. It was interesting to note that in Laiza's eyes, Zacks is the embodiment of state oppression. Hence, fighting Zacks is more than just fighting against any man. It is a fight, in Laiza's view, against a social and political system that has rendered her homeless, destitute and miserable.

Through her skewed conception of heroism, Laiza emblematises an intellectual volition to indict the whole construction of heroism in Zimbabwe. She displays the intellect that questions the absence of subaltern personalities from the national shrine. Like Gramsci who believes that every man is philosopher, Laiza advances that there is a hero in everyone. In her analysis, those buried at the heroes acre seem not deserve the honours. She thinks that her own struggles for survival against overwhelming odds makes her more deserving to be a heroine.

Yet this agency and resistance is limited to her encounters with other poor people. The performance text does not accord her the same resistive agency on issues that are directly and nakedly political. When issues under discussion become nakedly political, the performance text resorts to the telling mode rather than the showing mode. When she talks, she talks of how she became a victim of the state oppression. The performance text does not show her fighting against the state, the police, or the army. If the same kind of energy that she fights Zacks and Tom is the one with which she fights the state, then her agency would have been more effective. Off course, this is the result of a scriptwriting error, which the director diachronically carried over to the performance text. However, by according her more visual actions on the social front and then denying her an opportunity to do the same on the political front, the performance text denies Laiza the capacity to change the political state of affairs.

This is not to say that she does not make political statements. The researcher's query is that she makes them whilst confronting Zacks and Tom, who happen to be poor people like her. She could have made more impact, if she had directed her anger and violent actions to a figure of authority. The fact that when she confronts figures of authority, she becomes jocular and humorous and loses her radical consciousness, compounds this oversight. For example, in a scenario in which she regards herself to be a hero of the people, she transforms into the character that heavily resembles the president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe. Apparently, Mugabe presides

over Laiza's funeral as a legendary prostitute and not as a champion of human rights and democracy. She invites the president to declare her a hero because of her outstanding sexual service to the nation. Mugabe eulogises her as a selfless spring of joy that brings happiness to many people. This scenario undermines Laiza's image of a liberator in the sense that she wants the face of the very system she protests about to accredit her as a sexual hero. Admittedly, the audience laugh at the caricature of the president and laughter becomes a means of ridiculing the social and political system that she accused of generating hardships. Yet, by associating herself with the face of the system, she points out how she cannot escape the moral and intellectual control of the system. Laiza's experience demonstrates how the performance text of *Heaven's Diary* by Savanna Trust undermines her agency as a vehicle for change hence tilting transformative capacity heavily in favour of the elite.

7.2.3 Zack and Tom as a Reflection of the Consciousness and Agency of Subaltern Men

The tendency of self-denial of intellectual agency by subaltern characters is also expressed by Zacks and Tom. Tom and Zacks represent the marginalised youth whose dreams of a better life have been shattered by a social and political system that has become, in their view, dysfunctional. Having failed to secure employment, they also decide to migrate to South Africa. The only possessions they have are their clothes. Unlike Laiza, they have no blankets or food backpacks. They sleep in the open and eat whatever comes their way. Like Laiza, Zacks displays intellectual independence on issues that are not nakedly political. This is evident in a scenario where Zacks wants to smoke. Instead of moving away from Laiza and Tom, Zacks smokes in their presence. He puffs out smoke directly to Laiza's face, which forces her to protest against Zacks unsociable behaviour. Zacks, like Laiza, uses indecent mannerisms as a way of revealing his assertiveness as an individual. He tells Laiza that, 'I need to smoke, and no-one should stop me from smoking this. This is a free country' (*Heaven's Diary*, 2005). This is a powerful statement, expressing freedom of thought and rights with regard to a social issue - smoking. Sensing that there is an opportunity to discuss politics, Laiza pokes Zacks. She replies, 'Iwe, what did you say? You said this is a free what? A free what? Tell me if your stomach is full. Honestly tell me if you really cannot see the suffering in the eyes of your people.' Zacks panics. He does not expect such a kind of interrogation from a woman. Zacks suddenly loses the intellect to apply the rights discourse to issues of social and political power and he

becomes escapist. He replies with a loud voice, ‘Woman, just leave me alone’ (*Heaven’s Diary*, 2005).

The use of the term “woman” in Zacks’ speech is significant because it indicates the shock that grips Zacks when Laiza forces him to express individuality of thought. All along, they talk without using each other’s names. The use of “woman,” in this instance, is a change of operational register caused by shock. He is shocked because it is not customary for him to express freedom of thought on national issues. His perception of the right to free expression is that such a right should be on issues that lie outside the scope of national politics. In his view, the national level is for the elite, not for wretched souls like himself and Tom or a prostitute like Laiza. This is indeed an elitist construction of subaltern consciousness and agency, which undermines the significance of the subaltern as a force for transformation in society.

Laiza asks the question again:

Zacks, that is your name, isn’t it? Can you honestly tell me that you do not see the tears of the people in their eyes? The suffering of your mother, father, brother, sister, uncle, and aunt. Honestly, tell me if your stomach is not complaining (*Heaven’s Diary*, 2005).

Laiza attempts to open up a subaltern counter public sphere that questions conditions of existence. However, the dialogue does not go anywhere because Zacks and Tom are not interested. There is not enough will and intellect within Zacks to sustain a healthy debate on national issues. Rather than looking straight in Laiza’s face, Zacks gives Laiza a quarter profile. Laiza invades Zacks’ space thereby forcing Zacks to give her a full profile. Zacks cowardly walks away from Laiza. Zacks’ use of space and pattern of movement clearly indicates how he opts to retreat and assumes subordinate status when they discussed issues about Zimbabwe. He has lost the intellectual agency to debate and deliberate, thus he maintains his answer: ‘Woman, I told you to leave me alone.’ Zacks answer demonstrates Foucault’s idea that sometimes, human beings turn themselves into subjects of a power structure. Zacks desire to be quiet indicates how he silences his voice despite the fact that the forum for deliberation has been availed to him.

It is actually ironical that Zacks loses deliberative power on issues that concern his country, but expresses it when he discusses issues that shift the discussion of governance issues in Zimbabwe

to elsewhere. Having failed to answer Laiza on issues of the relationship between hunger, human rights, and social justice in Zimbabwe, Zacks becomes more vocal in exonerating the government of Zimbabwe from belonging to the stable of dictators. For him everyone is a dictator. Rather than deliberating whether there is state dictatorship in Zimbabwe, he shifts the discussion to Mandela, as is evident in the following dialogue:

Zacks: For the record I do not sing praise for anyone. However, who is not a dictator?

Tom: Mandela was not a dictator

Zacks: Give me a break. Why do you talk of that spineless hypocrite? He absolutely did nothing for post independent South Africa. How can you have the oppressor continue to boast and run almost everything yet you claim to be independent (*Heaven's Diary*, 2005).

Zacks makes nasty comments about leaders in the region. His mind opens up as he criticises other regional leaders but when the call to comment on his own leaders using the same analytical lens came, he chooses the escapist route. He becomes daft and goes into the “leave me alone” mode. He is comfortable when he criticises the weaknesses of other regional and world leaders, but does not wish to interrogate institutions in his own country.

The foregoing is the researcher's attempt to unveil *Heaven's Diary's* elitist display of subaltern consciousness and agency as manifest in Zacks and Tom. This display does not reflect the nature of subaltern consciousness in a real-life situation. The researcher is not suggesting, at all, that subaltern consciousness is pristine and seamless. The researcher concurs with Guantam Bhadra's (1997:94) submission that “there is, prima facie, no reason to assume that classes, like scholars are deaf to each other; that ideas cannot travel across the boundaries of class.” Nevertheless, the interaction between antagonistic forces in a power relation does not obliterate the fact that each group is entitled to an autonomous consciousness. As Guha (1997: xvi) observes:

It follows from the notion of a structural split that the domains... are always inevitably in touch with each other. This does not take away from their autonomy any more than the contiguity of two states sharing a boarder takes away from the sovereignty of either.

Savanna Trust's performance of *Heaven's Diary* does not celebrate the diversity of consciousness, neither does it point to the fact that the subaltern also has an autonomous

consciousness through which he/ she explicates his/ her involvement in the struggle for change. When the subaltern appreciates the interests of the elite, it is not because he or she is merely mimicking elite interests. He or she will be appropriating part of the elite consciousness because of a somewhat common interest -- the desire to change. However, the subaltern has the capacity to modify the influence of the elite so that their interests do not override his or hers (Guha, 1997: xvi.) Moreover, the subaltern also has the ability to influence the thought processes of the elites so that there is a mutual overlapping of interest and ideas. Gramsci (1999:135): reinforces this argument when he submits that ‘it is from the peasantry that other social groups draw many of their intellectuals and a high proportion of traditional intellectuals are from the peasantry.’

Ideas flow in both directions. *Heaven's Diary* negates this exchange. Instead, ideas only flow from the elite to the subaltern. Because of this, the subaltern (Laiza and Zacks) become debased and intellectually challenged. In so doing, the performance text of *Heaven's Diary* distances the spectators from the real power relations that obtain in a real-life situation. It creates an imaginary understanding of this relationship and tries to legitimise this falsehood by focusing on the consciousness and identity of the subaltern through textual engineering.

7.2.4 The Subaltern as Alibi for Domination

The play's reinvention of subaltern consciousness and intellectual agency has ideological functions. First, Zacks, Tom, and Laiza serve as a motivation for the continual domination of the struggle for change by elite voices. Instead of these three citizens deliberating on how they as citizens could find solutions to problems of governance in Zimbabwe, they deny themselves the opportunity of participating in the discussion on the Zimbabwean question. Exponents of the public sphere theory observe that the poor do not adequately participate in the dialogue on their country because powerful sections of society dominate that dialogue (Keane 1996, Curran 1996, Fraser 1994.) However, the experiences of Laiza, Zacks, and Tom in *Heaven's Diary* strongly suggest that when the poor discuss among themselves, they do not necessarily create a public sphere that displays their capacity for autonomous thinking. They fight, insult each other and engage in all sorts of indecent behaviours rather than deliberate on issues of national interest. They create chaos and disorder when they have the opportunity to create a public sphere through which they can make sense of the forces that shape their destiny.

Laiza, Tom, and Zacks justify the fact that without the moral and intellectual leadership of the elites, the subaltern, if left alone would create chaos and mayhem. They are actually a danger unto themselves.

Zacks and Tom perpetuate the myth that the subaltern cannot lead. They make utterances that do not persuade the spectator to consider them as possessing an alternative worthy moral and intellectual leadership that is in any way useful in the struggle for democratic change in Zimbabwe. Given the opportunity to air their views, they prefer to keep quiet, to go into the “leave me alone” mode. When they finally speak, they go off the topic. They talk about Mandela and Annan at the expense of the crisis. They direct their anger at people who are not responsible for the Zimbabwean crisis. Rather than talking about Mandela and Annan, they should have talked about local leaders, be they from the opposition or the ruling party. Zacks and Tom divert the focus from Zimbabwe and engage in a helpless debate on Mandela, Kofi Annan, Iraq and Afghanistan. The worst case of diversion in *Heaven’s Diary* is when the Tom becomes spiritual. Rather than confronting the problems in Zimbabwe, Tom decides to use his Christian belief as a way of escaping from the problems in Zimbabwe. He kneels and breaks into a song, ‘Lord, I am coming home.’ Tom, by way of this song, admits failure and rather than keeping the hope of success alive, he finds solace and pleasure in death and going to Heaven. A great chunk of the performance of *Heaven’s Diary* is devoted to what might happen be in heaven should these three eventually go there. Humorous as it is, the mixing of the physical and the metaphysical world only serve to divert attention from problems of the physical world that are obtaining in Zimbabwe. This scenario reveals how the construction of feeble versions of subaltern agency justifies elite’s moral and intellectual leadership of the struggle for change, and by so doing, greatly undermines subaltern agency in designing the parametres of this struggle.

The level of arrogance or ignorance in Zacks’ rhetoric became so clear that it becomes evident that it is not coming from within himself. Laiza realises this and comments, ‘You speak like a government apologist.’ When he keeps on talking, Laiza openly identifies the voice that speaks in Zacks. She says, ‘Go on PROFESSOR’ (*Heaven’s Diary*, 2005). When Savanna Trust staged this play, the Minister of Information and Publicity was Professor Jonathan Moyo. He was responsible for the propaganda department of the ruling party. Laiza’s recognition of the voice

that possesses Zacks is a reinforcement of the fact that when ordinary people speak, they cease to express individual consciousness that explicate the struggle for change from their own point of view. Rather, all they say are statements that propaganda departments of opposing camps in Zimbabwean politics continuously dish out.

The way in which an elitist thought contaminates the speech of the subaltern in Zacks, Tom, and Laiza, therefore, legitimises the domination of the subaltern by the elites. It is in its reflection of the subaltern consciousness that the play projects the interests of the elite as the main driver of change in society. Although Savanna Trust performed *Heaven's Diary* as a text that supports democracy, one observes that the way it invents subaltern consciousness undermines the liberation of the intellectual agency of subaltern members of society. This then affects their image as individuals who possess the intellectual agency to deliberate on the nature of political change and reform that he/she desires to have in Zimbabwe.

7.3 The Treatment of Subaltern Grievances in *Decades of Terror* (2007)

7.3.1 Synopsis and Background Information

Daniel Maposa of Savanna Trust scripted and produced *Decades of Terror*. Directed by Samuel Ravengai, the cast was made up of Priscilla Mutendera (Mutongi), Silvanos Mudzvova (Garamombe/ Army Commander), Tichaona Mutore (Brian/ Soldier), Antony Tongani (Father/Chimhashu/ Soldier) and Eunice Tava (Journalist/ Soldier/ Gwinyai). It chronicles the history of human rights in an unnamed state. *Decades of Terror* premiered at Theatre-in-the-Park on 27 June 2007. It had a run that ended on the 6th of July 2007. The researcher attended the premiere but this analysis obtains from a video recording of the play.

The play begins with Brian and Father arguing over the general deterioration of the standard of life. Brian, who has a bandaged head owing to injuries sustained at a peaceful demonstration, is convinced that the people must stand up against the alleged violation of human rights. Father is sceptical and believes that what Brian is suggesting would plunge the country into more mayhem and pandemonium. The play then searches for historical causes of the crisis. In a flashback, the play treks back to the eighties where two leaders are in a standoff following the outbreak of a civil war. In one episode, Mutongi accuses Garamombe of inciting his people to fight in a tribal

war. Mutongi attempts to kill Garamombe, but Garamombe escapes. In the other scenario, Mutongi fights against Gwinyai over the referendum of a draft constitution. Under the instruction of Mutongi, the police beat and torture Gwinyai. The flashback ends, and after this revelation, both Brian and Father are convinced that fighting back is the only way to end human rights violations.

Father and Brian are subaltern characters. They live in a single small room in the ghetto. They own a single bed, with extremely dirty and old blankets. There is no pillow on the bed. On the extreme left of the room, there is a push tray, with a rusty primus paraffin stove, an onion, some tomatoes and an almost empty bag of mealie-meal. Father works as a security guard and his uniform and shoes have seen better days. Brian is also shabbily dressed. The mise-en scene in this room clearly indicates that Brian and Father are poor people. The Zimbabwean crisis has reduced them to paupers.

7.3.2 The Analysis

There is, however, a strategic bias on elitist political interest at the expense of subaltern social and economic grievances that is evident in the dialogue between Father and Brian in *Decades of Terror*. Father has just arrived from work. He is extremely tired and hungry. He goes straight to the pushing tray in search of food. Brian had not cooked. The state of affairs in this room stresses Father so much that he begins to walk up and down the room, talking to himself. The crisis has put him in a state of madness. Brian arrives a little bit later and Father explodes with anger:

Father: Don't sorry me. That will not fill my stomach. Do you really know that I walk to and from work?

Brian: You told me.

Father: Walking to work for you.

Brian: Yes baba

Father: Spend the whole afternoon on an empty stomach

Brian: Yes father

Father: Insulted day in, day out (*Silence*) *Ndichifirei? Ndiudze*. For what? (*Decades of Terror*, 2007)

From what Father says, the major problems that he faces in his life are economic; he faces hardships owing to irreconcilable disparities between his salary and the cost of living. However,

the play constructs Father as ideologically weak because he tries to express his grievances in terms of his immediate experiences as a poor worker in a country going through a crisis. On the other hand, *Decades of Terror* reveals Brian's explication of the grievances of the common person as ideologically strong. Brian, despite the fact that he is unemployed, does not articulate his own immediate problems about food, unemployment, and decent accommodation. Instead, he cites the lack of freedom of expression assembly and association as his immediate grievances. What Brian says demonstrated that the conscientisation at the demonstration had influenced his consciousness. His grievances are not economic and immediate; they are political and historical. Brian goes to a demonstration to protest against three decades of terror, torture and killings, not against unemployment, hunger, starvation.

While Brian had every right to protest about anything, the deviation from the consciousness of economic existence to political existence gave me the room to argue that an exterior consciousness contaminated his consciousness. It made him forget his interest and needs into supporting the aspirations of other classes has. He then spoke about political rhetoric that he had no full knowledge. He had been enlightened. Enlightenment is another elitist term of justifying brainwash, which entails enlightening those in the dark. Enlightenment assumes that the subalterns are empty vessels that elite hegemony must fill. Therefore, *Decades of Terror* does not allow the poor to realise the significance of their grievances in driving the struggle for change. In such a scenario, as Guha (1997: xiv) observes:

What is clearly left out of this un-historical (elitist) historiography is the politics of the people. For parallel to the domain of elite politics, there existed... another domain of ... politics in which the principal actors were not the dominant groups of the indigenous society... but the subaltern classes and constituting the mass the laboring population and intermediate strata of town and country- that is the people.

The play should have combined the protest against human rights and good governance with the protest against economic hardships. By so doing, the demonstration would have revealed both subaltern and elite grievances.

The fact that an elite consciousness has hijacked his Brian's mind is evident in the following passage where he speaks like a political commissar:

Brian: As a nation we have a long history of violence. As a nation we have never tasted freedom to express ourselves freely without risking being labelled, tortured or even killed.

Father: That's ridiculous. Almost three decades of peace and stability!

Brian: Three decades of violence and terror. Looking at the past 26 years, there is enough evidence that the people have not only lost their voices, freedom, security and sense of belonging but they have also been cowed into living in perpetual fear and terror by a dictatorial institution built over years. Father, a bit of a revision will do us good (*Decades of Terror*, 2007).

The play uses Father's response as an alibi to justify that those who were not by the elites are in the dark. Father's outright denial of human rights violations is an example of why he needs awareness. In *Father*, the play deliberately constructs an ignorant subaltern, when the facts in the story are part of everyday street talk. The play consequently uses Father's ignorance to justify a process of re-education and enlightenment. *Decades of Terror* then creates a binary between the unknowing and ignorant Father who is in sharp contrast with the knowing and informed Brian. The play turns Father into an arrogant apologist of the government while Brian became the voice of reason. Yet as Brian unleashes his informed thoughts, the intellectual basis of his argument displays enormous exogenous influence from the elite. Hence, while Brian makes a lot of sense, the elite voice in him is the one that is sensible thereby justifying the necessity of re-educating the subaltern. This re-education undermines the intellectual input of the subaltern in as far as designing the struggle for reform is concerned.

Decades of Terror not only reveals Father as ignorant and arrogant. He is also a coward. When Brian tells him that he has bandaged his head because the police have beaten him up during peaceful demonstration, Father almost runs out of breath with fear. When Brian mentions the word 'demonstration,' there is a visual pause followed by a brief moment of silence. Father, then shivers and walks up and down the room, from window to door, from door to window, closing them and checking whether no one has heard that Brian was involved in a demonstration. To reinforce his ignorance, Father fails to understand why Brian engages in the demonstration. He actually accuses Brian of provoking the police. Admittedly, Father's behaviour reveals how the

state has subjected his generation into a culture of fear. But this fear is worrisome because anyone who lives through the crisis knows that police brutality is at an all-time high in Zimbabwe. The fear although real, should not have undermined his semiotic autonomy. By displaying fear, Father perpetuates an identity of victimhood. This identity, whilst critical in unveiling state brutality, does not give the subaltern the capacity to change circumstances of oppression. It makes Father bemoan oppression rather than strategise on how he can effect change as a citizen.

Father is not so old as to be completely out of touch with the reality on the ground. He is a man in his mid-forties. He is a worker who is still strong enough to work to and from work.. When he walks on set, he has a gait that reveals that he is still in the prime of life. He is not an octogenarian. He is neither bold headed nor grey haired. Despite the poverty around him, he is actually a healthy and fit individual. It is, therefore, surprising that a man of his calibre is completely ignorant and out of touch with the realities of the crisis.

One could argue that the idea of having knowing and unknowing characters is a basic story making technique. However, common that technique might be, it is loaded with ideological implications in that those who know because of elite enlightenment (Brian) are heroes while those who do not know because they do not embrace elite ideas (Father) are villains in *Decades of Terror*. Those who know (Brian) ended up knowing what is best for the unknowing (Father). Two processes of power become operational. The first process is that of paternalism. The unknowing are, in this process, treated like little children who do not know what is right for them. Someone has to think for them. The other process that comes into being is that of universalism. Owing to the fact that Father is unknowing, Brian, who is the knowing, has to persuade Father to abandon his line of reasoning and adopt Brian's way of thinking. In so doing, *Decades of Terror* makes it inconceivable to have any other way of looking at the crisis other than Brian's way. This one way of looking becomes a homogenous and oppressive reading because it denigrates Father's right to be different. Anne Phillips (1992:24) substantiates this view by submitting that:

In a society where some groups are privileged while some are oppressed, insisting that as citizens, persons should leave behind their particular affiliations and experiences to adopt a general point

of view serves only to reinforce that privilege: for the perspectives and interests of the privileged will tend to dominate this unified public, marginalizing or silencing those of other groups.

While *Decades of Terror* demonstrates the importance of citizenship, as individuals perform their civic duties by challenging the abuse of power by the state, there are subtle and hidden forms of oppression that denigrate the agency of the subaltern as bearers of democratic change.

7.3.3 The Fall of Zimbabwe

As *Decades of Terror* chronicles the historical causes of the crisis in Zimbabwe, it reveals this fall as caused by the actions of those above. In fact, Mutongi is the sole architect of Zimbabwe's fall. The reflection of Mutongi and his cronies as responsible for the fall is Janus faced. On one level, this reflection mobilises the people against an institution that they deem responsible for dictatorship. On the other hand, it leaves the destiny of the nation in the hands of Mutongi and his elites. It gives a few individuals so much power that what they think alone determines the destiny of the nation. *Decades of Terror*, again, denies the agency of ordinary people in contributing towards the fall. The soldiers who kill people in the middle province do not necessarily fit within the category of ordinary people because they are working on instructions and they are doing their job. Consequently, the play used ordinary people to reveal the brutality of Mutongi, as was the case of the army's massacre of innocent villagers in Middle province. Despite Brian's eloquence, he simply serves to demonstrate police brutality. He comes with a bandage in his head after the demonstration. The police also beat Father during a riot. They also kill Gwinyai. At no point does the play give ordinary people the agency and capability to fight back and inflict damage on either the soldiers or the police. The ordinary people in *Decades of Terror* are incapable of fighting back. There are no reports or instances of people being victorious over the institution. The play does not see hope in the acts of resistance that the likes of Brian are doing. Hence, while the play unveils institutional violence and the fact that people must do something, the actual actions of the people are ineffective. The play greatly undermines the agency of ordinary people in the actual struggle for democracy.

7.4 Relations of Power and Strategies of Exclusion in *Madame Speaker Sir 2* (2007)

7.4.1 Synopsis

Silvanos Mudzvova wrote *Madame Speaker Sir 2*. Daniel Maposa produced it under the auspices of Savanna Trust while Elton Mujanana directed it. The cast comprised Priscilla Mutendera (Madame Speaker), Anthony Tongani (Meda), Blessing Hungwe (Chinamira), Silvanos Mudzvova (Madhau), and Judith Tsoka (Musi). *Madame Speaker Sir 2* was a play that simulated a parliamentary session. A woman, Madame Speaker, chairs this session. *Madame Speaker Sir 2* had a two week run at Theatre-in-the-Park. Regrettably, the researcher did not watch it then, thus he relies on a video recording for this analysis.

7.4.2 The Analysis

At face value, the play serves majority interests because it exposes the incompetency of elected officials who are self-serving. Folu Folarin Ogundimu (2002: 209) notes that the relationship between media (theatre) and democracy lies in the abbreviation A.W.A. that stands for Adversarial, Watchdog, and Agenda Setting. Ogundimu adds that the expository and watchdog come into play if the theatre ‘maintains a steady watch on leadership.’ (Ogundimu, 2002:209). Ogundimu (2002:209) also submits that theatre becomes adversarial if it ‘sets itself against political and economic leadership.’ The unveiling of how people elected into public office are not adequately serving their constituencies certainly undermines the image of the political leadership. The play reveals that opposition parliamentarians are obsessed with regime change and getting into power at all costs while parliamentarians of the ruling party are concerned with staying in power forever. Parliamentary debates are, in essence, an extension of the electoral battle, a battle that makes the parliament aloof to the needs of society. This is evident when the minister of agriculture, Honourable Meda, is asked by Honourable Madhau, ‘the country is faced with another food shortage again as the newly resettled farmers are not ploughing anything. What measures are being put in place to avert maize shortages?’ (*Madame Speaker Sir 2*, 2007) Meda replies that with a bossy voice that shows anger and disappointment:

Let me first start by saying that Honourable Madhau is a liar. We have maize everywhere! The newly resettled farmers have done a good job and this year we won’t import any food. The shortage is only the imaginations of independent papers and their British and American pay masters... (*Madame Speaker Sir 2*, 2007)

In exposing the hypocrisy of parliamentarians, *Madame Speaker Sir 2* unveils how officials whom people elected into office do not execute their responsibilities by serving partisan interests

rather than the interest of the people. The play reveals that parliamentarians are more obsessed with propaganda wars rather than developing policies that can improve the lives of the people. It is in this watchdog capacity that this play serves a democratic function as it unveils how the system of governance in Zimbabwe has become dysfunctional.

However, one doubts the credibility of the fact that if a play is adversarial, expository and setting an agenda, then it automatically serves democratic interests. In my view, setting the agenda to a people is a paternalistic way of undermining the possibility of them setting their own agendas. It is assumed that the people are not intelligent enough to set their own agendas about issues that affect their lives. Agenda setting universalises the aspirations of a particular group of people who have the means and apparatus to set agendas for others. It undermines the realisation of a multi-vocal public sphere where the agenda deliberated upon is a compromise outcome of diverse voices and interests. Foucault's (1994) notions of power indicate that operational form of power in a set-up such as the one in this play is pastoral power. This power assumes that the people alone do not know what is good for them. The power structure makes this decision owing to the knowledge that it has about the needs of the people. Pastoral power sets the agenda that is necessary to bring salvation to the people. It legitimates the fact that only a few must oversee the process of human transformation. If the intention of staging *Madame Speaker 2* was to bring about democratic transformation, then the presence of pastoral power legitimises the notion that the power to change society is inherent in a few individuals. Foucault (1994: 132) notes that 'pastoral power is not merely a form of power that commands; it must also be willing to sacrifice itself for the life and salvation of the flock.' A power structure is, therefore, prepared to sacrifice part of its body politic so as to create the image that it is together with the flock, the people. The expository role may well serve to inflict some deliberate damage on the elite. This damage is necessary to give credibility to the agenda being set, but it will not be so inimical as to destroy the existence of that power structure.

One believes that the expository function of this play is a strategy of creating a false sense of a critique of the top so as to ward off charges that the play overwhelmingly protects elite interests. Strategy, in the eyes of Foucault (1994: 142) has three functions:

First, to designate the means employed to attain a certain end; it is a question of rationality functioning to arrive at an objective. Second to designate the way in which a partner in a certain game acts with regard to what he thinks should be the action of the others and what he considers the others think to be his own; it is the way in which one seeks to have advantage over others. Third, to designate the procedures used in a situation of confrontation to deprive the opponent of his means of combat and reduce him to giving up the struggle; it is a question, therefore, of the means destined to obtain victory.

The researcher argues that as part of the ‘sacrifice’ needed as a strategy of sustaining pastoral power, the power structure invents itself as double-faced. The self is doubly implied. The exposition of the wrongs by the elite invents two categories of the self, that is, the bad ‘self’ (Chinamira and Meda) and good ‘self’ (Madhau and Musi). Alternatively, this relationship works as the ‘good elite’ and the ‘bad elite.’ The bad self-elite are the one whose actions are a disgrace, not only to the elite but also to the rest of society (such as Meda and Chinamira). This way of self-interrogation from within oils the elite as a group. This process of self-interrogation, as displayed in this play, reveals changes within the structure of the elite as motivated by internal dynamics and not as a product of exogenous pressure from the ‘other.’ The play, therefore, denies the existence of exterior subaltern pressure in the transformation of the ‘self’ who happened to be the elite.

The foregoing scenario is clearly indicative of how *Madame Speaker Sir 2* reinvents elitism in order to control the intellectual and moral leadership of progressive forces that challenge the state. Gramsci (1971) submits that while all men are intellectuals, not all men have the freedom to demonstrate their intellectual capabilities in society. While citizens who are in need of political and economic reforms possess intellectual capabilities, they are persuaded, by this play, to follow the moral and intellectual leadership of an emerging opposing elite (as represented by Madhau and Musi), that wishes to dictate the meaning of reform and democratic change. These opposing elite directed the attention of the people towards the ills of the state by attacking ministers of the ruling party, their policies, and their representatives in parliament such as Meda and Chinamira. The ‘good and bad elite’ becomes the play’s strategy of denying the subaltern the

opportunity to define the parameters of their struggle for change and political reform in Zimbabwe.

7.5 Conclusion

If democracy is a system of sharing power and agency, then *Heaven's Diary*, *Decades of Terror*, and *Madame Speaker Sir 2* do little to dismantle structures that confine power to the elites whilst neglecting the interests of subaltern groups in transformative processes. Although democratic intentions guide these plays, the actual performances do little to dismantle hegemonic discourses and relations of power that favour the elite. What is evident are smoke screen changes, illusionary changes that create the impression of change and not real change. The narratives of these plays undermine the credibility subaltern intellectual and moral leadership in designing the struggle for social and political reform. These narratives mediate on the identities of contesting camps with a view to invent the elite as ultimately superior. They portray subaltern characters as incapable of thinking. The elite hijack their consciousness as a way of belittling their intellectual contribution to the struggle for change in Zimbabwe. They implement ideas crafted by the elite in order to legitimise the fact that subaltern do not possess the moral and intellectual leadership to determine the destiny of their country. Thus, while the plays expand deliberative space, they do not bestow upon subaltern characters, authority over their thought processes and actions. To this effect, there are tendencies of exclusion, elitism, and paternalism that undermine the democratic thrust of these plays.

Chapter Eight

Towards the Creation of a Democratic Protest Theatre After The Crisis: An analysis of Selected Productions (2009 to 2012)

8.1 Introduction

Chapter seven has established how selected performances of protest theatre construct the agency of various sections of society during the crisis period. This chapter builds on the foregoing analysis by examining how protest plays, in the post crisis period, also construct and reflect on the agency of various individuals as agents of change and democracy. The post crisis period witnesses a significant shift in the nature of protest theatre performances. There is a shift from a militant and radical protest theatre to a conciliatory theatre. The formation of the GNU removes the necessity of radical theatre because the opposition that most plays support becomes part of government. Artists who had created a theatre that widened polarisation suddenly find themselves irrelevant. The spectre of unity between rival political functions makes them realise that they can become worthless until they redefine their role within the democratic transition of the country. As most groups contemplate the future, they find themselves in the very same quagmire of irrelevance that their predecessors faced when South Africa got independent. In the mid-90s most protest groups struggled since South Africa achieved its independence that protest theatre clamoured for. Some artists realise that as long as they continue to play a subservient role to political institutions they can become extinct. Most begin to question the democratic function of theatre. They realise that their role is to offer commentary to political institutions and to offer community driven approaches to community theatre. This approach restores the power of the communities and citizens over political institutions. They begin to advance the rights of the minorities and the marginalised. They point out that such subaltern groups have the mandate and agency to redefine the destiny of the country.

This chapter, therefore, analyses how conciliatory protest theatre, produced after the crisis, embraces democratic values. It examines whether the shift from a radical protest theatre to a conciliatory protest theatre enhances the democratic appeal of protest theatre in the post crisis period. This chapter also explores whether a context of relative political and economic stability reverses some of the traits that undermine the fidelity of protest theatre, during the crisis, in

achieving its democratic intentions. The plays that this chapter analyses are *Rituals* (2010), *No Voice No Choice* (2011), and *Protest Revolutionaries* (2012).

8.2 *Protest Revolutionaries* as Democratic Protest Theatre

8.2.1 Synopsis and Background Information

Protest Revolutionaries (2012) is a Whitori Production. Scripted and Directed by Silvanos Mudzvova, the play had a run at Theatre in the Park. It had the following cast; Tafadzwa Bob Mutumbi as Chikaka, Julius Julius as Mr George, Francis Nyakuhwa as Artist, Gideon Jeff Wabvuta as Cde Rebel and Olivia Chipindu as Mother. *Protest Revolutionaries* premiered at Theatre-in-the- Park on 13 March 2012, at around 17.30 hours. It had a run that ended on 31 March 2012. The researcher attended this premiere with his jotter. He also attended the last show. The researcher relies on the notes that he made to write this analysis.

In this play, residents of an unnamed community organise a protest march against an inclusive government that has come into power after a political stalemate. The inclusive government has not lived up to the expectations of the poor. As they march, the state sends its operatives to gather information and to persuade the residents to desist from the march. The locals, who encompass vendors, disgruntled war veterans, students and artists, do not take kindly attempts by the state to stop the march. The state thinks that the march has been organised by civic organisations only to realise that it is a grassroots protest march. The interaction between the state and the residents questions the intellectual legitimacy of the state and the intellectual autonomy of the locals.

This play is a protest against the Government of National Unity (GNU), which comprises members of ZANU PF and MDC as well as a few independent candidates. Citizens, in this play, realise that the government of national unity does not automatically translate to a better life for the governed. They realised that they still have to fight for necessities of life. For this reason, *Protest Revolutionaries*, reiterates that the governed alone are responsible for their destiny, not the governors.

This play is significant because it offers the researcher an opportunity to make a comparative analysis of the works of Vhitori Productions before and after the GNU. The researcher eagerly explores whether there are shifts in the manner in which the play constructs subaltern consciousness. These shifts enable the researcher to analyse the differences inherent in the projection of this consciousness between plays like *Heaven's Diary*, *Decades of Terror*, and *Madame Speaker Sir 2* that the researcher has already analysed in the last chapter.

8.2.2 Character Diversity as Democracy in *Protest Revolutionaries*

Vhitori Productions' paradigm shift is evident in the nature of the main characters in *Protest Revolutionaries*. The characters this time are not presidential candidates (Chiwara and Tombe) as in *Final Push* or members of parliament (Madhau, Musi, Meda, and Chinamira) as in *Madame Speaker Sir 2*. The dramatis personae are Chikaka, Mother, Mr George, Cde Rebel, and Artist. Chikaka is a rural farmer in his forties and a former liberation struggle man who has decided to join the real Zimbabweans in their fight for freedom.. He represented the rural folk in this production. Mother is a popular vegetable vendor. She represents the poor urban folk and women of Zimbabwe. Cde Rebel represents the youths' vision and thinking. Artist is a subaltern idealist. It is evident that from the inception of the play, Vhitori Entertainment elevates the common people to the same pedestal of transformative power as they do with the elites in their previous offerings such as *Final Push* and *Madame Speaker Sir.2*. This emphasis enables the play to reveal subaltern interpretations of change and transformation and enables the subaltern to comment on their consciousness through their own voices.

Vhitori Productions do not reverse the derogatory construction of subaltern agency by simply allotting all the deliberative power in this play to subaltern characters. They are sensitive to diversity and fragmentation, not just among the poor, but a diversity that allows voices of the elite to interact with the poor. For Vhitori Productions, the need to provide vocal space for the poor does not result in the obliteration of the voice of the rich. Indeed, Vhitori Productions is aware of the fact that replacing the dictatorship of the elite with the dictatorship of the subaltern is not democratic. *Protest Revolutionaries* creates a forum for dialogue that allows both poor and privileged members of society to speak. This is the reason why the play allows the character of Mr George to exist. Mr George is an intelligence operative of the state. There are a number of

characters that Vhitori Productions create through the style of ‘a play within a play’ and multiple casting. These directorial preferences create more characters that represent the voice of the state. These are the Police Chief, the Reporter, The Professor and Newsmen. The voice of the state represents the voice of political elites. True to the spirit of the public sphere, the poor air out their opinions in full knowledge of the interests of the elites. This public sphere enables vocality without inhibition and restrictions.

The researcher is aware of the fact that diversity of characters, in itself, is not an adequate guarantee of the play’s fidelity to democratic practice. For example, in Savanna Trust’s *Decades of Terror*, a diversity of characters is evident in Brian and Father (subaltern) as well as Mutongi and Garamombe (elite). However, this diversity does not automatically result in the emancipation of subaltern agency. Even in plays such as *Heaven’s Diary* where there are subaltern characters only, there are constraints in the manner in which the play portrays subaltern agency. In *Final Push* Vhitori Productions reveals how the agency of political elites drives the transformative process in Zimbabwe. The researcher has already argued that while it is true that political elites certainly have a role to play in the struggle for change in Zimbabwe, Vhitori Productions, through *Madame Speaker Sir 2*, presents an ahistorical scenario because they negate the agency and contribution of ordinary people in the struggle for change in Zimbabwe. To this effect, the researcher interrogates the characters in *Protest Revolutionaries* through a more rigorous test that determines whether subaltern characters, for example Mother and Cde Rebel possess resistive agency. This agency implies the ability of subaltern characters to resist and modify the intellectual leadership of the elite. It also encompasses their ability to use their intellectual capabilities to redefine and change the course of events in this play.

8.2.3 Mother as a Resistive Subaltern

Gramsci (1999:140) argues that each person:

Carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a philosopher, an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, he has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or modify it, that is to bring into being new modes of thought.

Gramsci (1999:140) adds that ‘all men are intellectuals... but not all men have the function of intellectuals.’ This is because of the fact that every social group has ‘its own specialised category of intellectuals’ whose function is to give a social group a sense of ‘homogeneity and awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields as well’ (Gramsci, 1999:135). Thus, according to Gramsci, all men possess intellectual capabilities which inform their political consciousness and it is because of their intellectual capabilities that subaltern classes are able to resist the intellectual and moral leadership of elitist groups in society. It is, therefore, crucial that this section investigates how Mother displays intellectual autonomy and resistive agency. Such an investigation reveals whether *Protest Revolutionaries* empowers the agency of subaltern characters.

Foucault’ (1994: 128) advances that an analysis of agency should entail an examination of:

The forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists in using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, find out their point of application and methods used. Rather than analysing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analysing power relations through the antagonism of strategies.

Hence, by analysing resistance, one also examines subaltern capacity to organise and lead the struggle for change.

Mother (played by Olivia Chipindu) is a subaltern character. She is a vendor. She carries a big basket full of vegetables and fruits. She only stops vending when she goes to sleep. Throughout the play she wears an old and oversized apron, a doek and torn shoes. She speaks on top of her voice owing to the fact that she always markets her wares to passers-by. As Reporter, who is a dramatic embodiment of the elite, interacts with Mother, one notices how Mother modifies the intellectual processes of Reporter. In one scenario, Mother challenges Reporter word for word. She shows Reporter that she protests against authorities, not because someone has influenced her to do so, but because of reasons of her own based on her encounters with the repressive state agents, as the following dialogue indicates:

Reporter: Who forced you to attend this protest?

Mother: Who forced you on a propaganda rollercoaster?

Reporter: How much were you paid by the American government to destabilise sovereign and peaceful nation of ours

Mother: Thanks to the barbaric and insincere police who abuse energy crushing the innocent instead of conserving that energy for the bed. Three protesters were killed by the police, look at those fresh graves, why are they provoking us (*Protest Revolutionaries*, 2012).

Mother demonstrates that she has the intellectual ability to challenge the propaganda that Reporter unleashes on her. She makes it clear to Reporter than she has her own agenda, which has nothing to do with the Americans.

As she interacts with Reporter, her movements and use of space complements her display of resistive agency. She is not the docile mother who is afraid of authorities. Her gestures are not in any way submissive. She assumes a macho posture, raises her breasts to indicate that she is ready for combat. She invades Reporter's space and forces Reporter to retreat, as it is evident that she can beat up Reporter. In another scenario, Mr George, an intelligence operative, tries to convince Mother to go home as, in Mr George's view, she is being 'used' by engaging in the protest. This is clear in the following conversation:

Mr George: Look guys, we should just go home and enjoy life with our families than risk it for some politicians benefit.

Mother: Which politicians are you talking about? I am doing this so that my family can have a better future, a better life for our kids (*Protest Revolutionaries*, 2012).

As she speaks with Mr George, she moves around him just to show that she has dominant status. She walks with the gait of a master and she speaks on top of her voice to send the signal that she is not the passive and feeble woman whom Mr George thinks she is. She deliberately conjures up images of power and victimisation that are normally associated with state operatives. By so doing, she appropriates the very images that Mr George uses to invoke fear. Through the appropriation of Mr George's images of power, Mother became what Homi Bhabha (1994:88) calls the 'mimic man'. The mimic man/ woman is important because s/he disrupted imaginary lines of difference which elite class use an alibi to justify their domination of subaltern groups. Foucault (1994:126) notes that a dominant social group employs 'dividing practices' that invent derogatory identities of inferiority for other social groups in order to

legitimise its domination. Foucault (1994:131) also submits that a dominant social group exercises control through 'pastoral power.' Pastoral power allows members of dominant social group (Reporter and Mr George) to lead subordinate groups. Gramsci's equivalent of pastoral power is hegemony, which he defines as moral and intellectual leadership that a dominant social group exercises on its subjects.

In order for hegemony or pastoral power to be effective, the dominant social group invents differences. These differences are not real but are imaginary. Thus, when Mother appropriates Mr George's images of power, she disrupts imaginary lines of difference that Mr George attempts to use to legitimise pastoral power and hegemony over Mother. Mother proves that she is not different from Mr George, that she is capable of leading the struggle just as Mr George and Reporter. Through the destruction of imaginary lines of difference, Mother makes 'visible the contradictions of authority' (Sharpe, 1995:99).

Sharpe (1995:99) also notes that 'the mimic man (woman) is a contradictory figure who simultaneously reinforces the authority and disturbs it.' At one level, appropriation suggests that she conjures up her resistance in the image of the oppressor. This paradigm is of little significance if one realises that she does not blindly mimic Mr George. She displays intellectual autonomy by mimicking in order to contaminate and undermine the ideological basis of Mr George's superiority. The contradictory and ambivalent behaviour of Mother actually indicates her ability to invent herself beyond the ideological boundaries that Mr George creates for her. Mother, therefore, becomes a problem to authority. Bhabha (1994:88) complements this fact when he submits that 'the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of the colonial (state) discourse also disrupts its authority.' Mother, in Bhabha's (1994: 88) context, is indeed:

the figure(s) of a doubling, the partial objects of a metonym of a desire which alienates the modality and normality of the dominant discourse in which (she) emerge(s) as (an) 'inappropriate'... subject (Brackets mine).

Appropriation and the subsequent ambivalence and mutation of identity are, therefore, forms of resistance that display Mother's intellectual authority and control. Thus, mimicry becomes a

‘complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline which appropriates the other as it visualises power’ (Bhabha, 1994:86).

The dominant role of Mother in conceptualising and organising the protest is significant because it highlights the agency of poor mothers as transformative agents. Whilst elite narratives of struggle side-lined the contribution of the poor, they side-line women’s agency even more severely (Young 1988, Brooks 1997, Philips 1992, Walby 1992, Gunew 1990, Barrat and Phillips 1992). To this effect, Mother represents the marginalised among the marginalised, the most neglected section of the subaltern community. One cannot deny that gender politics and patriarchal control are also prevalent among the subaltern. Hence, Mother’s story is dually constructed. She fights two wars, a war within a war. Her conviction for participating in the struggle reveals the fact that the common people do realise that change will not come if they leave it to be done by a few elites. Mother realises that there is power in numbers and that although some would perish in the process of protesting, their numbers would ultimately win the war. She also engages in the protest demonstration because she wants to register her agency as a force for change. In fact, the focus on the activities of the common people during protest marches, in this play, reveals the significance of subaltern agency in bringing about progressive change in society. It clearly shows that the story of struggle cannot be complete without revealing the role played by the likes of Mother in bringing about social and political reform.

8.2.4 Subaltern Semiotic Resistance: Chikaka and Cde Rebel

Gramsci (1999) elaborates that intellectual autonomy generates semiotic resistance, which has a bearing on what Raymond Williams (1977:35) calls ‘the general production of meaning in society.’ Chikaka (played by Bob Mutumbi) and Cde Rebel (played by Gideon Wabvuta) redefine what struggle and *Chimurenga* imply in the new Zimbabwe. They modify the memory of *Chimurenga*¹⁹ and proffered counter-discursive readings of Chimurenga. The status quo, in this play, refers to chimurenga wars as instances of gallantry of the people (the elites) against

¹⁹ Chimurenga refers to uprising. It is a term that was coined by Africans when they fought European settlers in the 1890s. There have been three Chimurengas in Zimbabwe, which are the First Chimurenga (1896-7), second Chimurenga (1966-80) and the third Chimurenga (2000-2009). T. O. Ranger submits that the state’s patriotic history project insisted that Chimurenga implies war against Whites. Chikaka and Cde Rebel who argued that Chimurenga implied, not a racial war, but a war against oppression, in all its ramifications, challenged this understanding. Chikaka and Cde Rebel advanced that the official understanding of Chimurenga masked corruption, poor governance, and accumulation by state elites.

Whites. Chikaka and Cde Rebel refer to Chimurenga as an instance of people's (the subaltern) gallantry against systems of oppression. There is a world of difference between these two interpretations. Chikaka, a veteran of the second Chimurenga, argues that the war did little to remove oppression, as the new rulers replicate systems of oppression they purport to remove. He argues that he did not fight the war to usher black on black oppression.

The semiotic battle over the meaning of chimurenga is also evident in the psychosis of Cde Rebel. Cde Rebel believes that the protest march represents the fourth Chimurenga. The fourth Chimurenga, according to Cde Rebel, is the war that his community launches in order to fight black on black oppression. It is the war to fight the oppression by blacks on any other creed of humanity. Cde Rebel, therefore, modifies the memory of chimurenga and redirecting it to have implications beyond state control. When Mother and Chikaka seem intimidated by Mr George, Cde Rebel clearly reminds them that the protest against the status quo is part of the trope of the *Chimurenga* wars launched by people against oppression. He remarks:

Cde Rebel: Comrades, you cannot abandon the cause. It is now or never. During the liberation struggle, the first shots were fired in Chinhoyi. All the six comrades who started the war died. Today, they are heroes and we talk about them. The guerrillas never gave up. It actually strengthened them. We have begun, so let us finish. We are so close. We can do it comrades (*Protest Revolutionaries*, 2012).

Cde Rebel also redefines the title of 'comrade.' This title is the title that people who support the status quo in Zimbabwe use. However, Cde Rebel appropriates this title as a way of disrupting the idea of the title as a preserve of pro-state activists. This indicates the depth of semiotic resistance inherent in him. The play is, therefore, inclusive as it embraces the intellectual contribution of subordinate groups in the struggle for change.

8.2.5 The Reversal of Identities of Victimhood

Mother, Chikaka, and Cde Rebel refuse to be the helpless victims of police brutality. Unlike Brian and Father who play the role of victims in *Decades of Terror*, Mother, Chikaka, and Cde Rebel actually organise resistance and inflict pain on the police. Unlike Laiza, Tom, and Zacks who bemoaned state violence, Mother and company make the state have a taste of its own medicine. They do not run away from the police during the protest that they organise without the

help of the elites. They are so brave that Mr George implores them not to fight against the police. They do not mourn. They organise. They demystify the power of the state. They refuse to believe that their actions are fruitless. Unlike in *Heaven's Diary* where Tom, Zacks, and Laiza discuss issues without taking action, Mother, Chikaka, and Cde Rebel design and implement change. They reverse relations of power between state intellectuals and themselves. Their protest creates a revolution hence the title, *Protest Revolutionaries*.

The change in the balance of power is significant. Jill Dolan (1995) argues that, at times, performances that advocate for subaltern independence, such as protest theatre, leave the status quo intact, as they do not significantly realign relations of power. She argues that while the subalterns engage in resistance, they only ruffle the feathers of power structures without dismantling them. This conclusion befits plays like *Decades of Terror* and *Heaven's Diary*. However, the actions of Mother, Chikaka, and Cde Rebel strongly refute Dolan's conclusion because they reverse and undermine the authority of the state, at both the hegemonic and repressive level. They not only discard the moral and intellectual control of Mr George and Reporter, they also defeat the police. In Gramsci's (1971) understanding of state civilian relations, there are two forms of power used by the state to control citizens. The first is 'rule' which in Gramsci's (1971:12) view, is:

The apparatus of state coercive power which 'legally' enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed.

The state enforces control by the use of physical force that coerces citizens to consent to the authority of the state. The police and the army are the agents of coercion in this play. The second form of control is 'hegemony', which Gramsci (1971:12) describes as:

The 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group, this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

State intellectuals try to naturalise the moral and intellectual leadership of the status quo so that citizens spontaneously agree to be under the authority of the state. Mother, Chikaka, and Cde Rebel defeat the state in both these manifestations of power.

Gramsci (1971) also argues that state administers its hegemony by taking cognisance of the interests of the subaltern, which makes state hegemony a hybrid of both subaltern and elite influence. Tony Bennett (1996) suggests that the state designs the compromise equilibrium between it and subaltern in such a way that, in the end, the state prevails. Like Dolan (1995), Bennett (1996) argues that the state retains its dominant status. Bennet (1996:351) observes that:

If the Gramscian concept of hegemony refers to the processes by which the ruling class seeks to negotiate opposing class cultures onto a cultural and ideological terrain, which wins a position of leadership, it is also true that what is thereby consented to is a negotiated version of ruling class culture and ideology.

The escapades of Mother, Chikaka, and Cde Rebel contest Bennett's submission because, at the end of the play, the state (Mr George) begs the three to accommodate him in the new dispensation. The play demonstrates that it is conceivable to effect change from below.

8.3 Issues of Democracy in *No Voice, No Choice* (2011)

8.3.1 Background Information and Synopsis

Performed by Edzai Isu Theatre Arts Project and Zvido Zvevanhu Arts Ensemble, *No Voice No Choice* (2011) is a protest play that protests against the exploitation of the youth in political violence. Edzai Isu and Zvido Zvevanhu premiered this play, on 27 October 2011 as part of the festivities for PAIF, at Theatre-in-the Park. The performance had the following cast; Gibson Sarari as GBH, Everson Ndlovu as Tellmore, Livius Chitsungu as Gondo, Tafadzwa Muzondo as Preacher, Gabriel Akupa as Counsellor, Beauty Majira as Mai B, Charles Biniweri and Charlotte Munyanyi as Youths. Tafadzwa Muzondo directed the production while Kudakwashe Sambo designed the set, lights, and costumes. The researcher watched the performance of 27 October. However, he relies on the video recording of the show to execute this analysis.

The play acknowledges that during political violence that took place in Zimbabwe during the elections of 2008, dominant political parties used the youth to execute acts of violence. The play submits that rather than becoming political proxies, the youth must demand vocal space in the governance of the country. The conviction of this play is that although an inclusive government is in power, the new political environment has not liberated the youth who, in the view of this play, have no voice. Tafadzwa Muzondo (2011) who directed, scripted, and acted in this play, remarks that:

If you are intimidated not to have your voice in democratic processes like elections, then you have no choice but to be led by irresponsible and unaccountable politicians who have rooted violence in our politics

If you cannot associate with political ideas of your choice and do not add your voice against political violence, then you will have no choice but to bear the rage whenever there are elections

If you cannot freely voice your concerns, grievances, and aspirations in the healing and reconciliation process, then you have no choice but to live with the trauma of what happened to you or what you did to others

If the youth cannot denounce political violence and shun being used as political weapons, they will have no choice but to continue being misgoverned, unemployed disenfranchised and used as political condoms.

8.3.2 Self Interrogation as liberated agency: GBH and Tellmore.

Foucault (1994) argues that subjectification is not a one way process in which an oppressive power structure turns individuals into subjects. He notes that there is also willingness by individuals to 'turns him- or herself into a subject' (Foucault, 1994: 126). To this effect, although the subaltern is a victim, s/he is not without blemish. The youth in *No Voice No Choice* display the ability, not just to comment on how they are oppressed, but to realise how they perpetuate their own oppression. Unlike in *Decades of Terror*, which exonerates the ordinary people from contributing towards the demise of democracy, GBH and Tellmore fully acknowledge their contribution towards political violence. GBH and Tellmore realise that political violence flourishes, not because Gondo forces them to do it, but rather because they allow Gondo to use them. These youths do not need any exogenous influence to realise that they have the capacity to stop political violence. Thus, Tellmore tells Gondo that:

The blood that was spilt is enough. Why are we spilling blood? To prevent people from exercising One Person One Vote? This was one of

the principles of the struggle that spilled the blood of our fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers (*No Voice, No Choice*, 2011)

Similarly, GBH tells Gondo that, 'I don't need that. You do not stay in this village. You only come to use us like condoms and then leave us to face the scars we caused in our community every day.' GBH does not simply blame Gondo for the violence; he admits that he also committed violence. This self-interrogation is crucial because it demonstrates another level of intellectual awareness that characters like Brian and Father, in *Decades of Terror*, do not possess. The 'blame it all on the leaders' approach does not gather momentum in *No Voice, No Choice*.

GBH's personal transformation is remarkable. Against all odds, he displays the capacity to reform from within. GBH is an acronym for Grievous Bodily Harm. GBH kills and rapes supporters of opposing political parties. He kills in order to please Gondo, who is the leader of the party's youth. He sheepishly executes orders that Gondo give him. He suffers from violent encounters that he almost loses his sanity. Owing to the fact that he participates in the violence of 2008, he is actually haunted. The avenging spirits (*ngozi*) of his victims torment him. To make matters worse, he has no source of income. He is so poor that he asks for cigarettes from Mai B, who is a cigarette vendor. These conditions, physical and spiritual put him on the brink of insanity. Mai B indicates that GBH has reached a point of no return by uttering that 'I cannot sponsor your madness with cigarettes as if I caused it, you need to appease the spirits of those people you killed and return the things you took from the people.'

GBH's costume elaborates his deplorable existence. The director costumes him in the image of mad people in the streets. GBH wears an oversized overall, different pair of shoes. He has multiple layers of clothes that are dirty. His physical movements are that of a mad person. He is a man of contrasts, he moves quickly then slowly. He has ceased to be human. Yet against this overwhelming pressure on his life, GBH transforms himself from being a conduit of violence into an ambassador of peace. He overcomes mob psychology and peer pressure. This is evident when he meets other youths. At the meeting, one youth urges everyone to be violent. GBH tells him that 'I am a changed man. I am not following anyone; I have followed people enough in my life' (*No Voice, No Choice*, 2011). GBH's transformation inspires other youths in his community

to advocate for peace. GBH's transformation even inspires Mai B, who had castigated him as insane. He transforms from villainy into a role model. It is important to realise that the play creates role models among and within the lower classes, rather than exclusively creating them from dominant classes. Self-interrogation and self-transformation, therefore, demonstrates another dimension of intellectual authority that the researcher does not find in *Mother*, Chikaka, and Cde Rebel, despite their resistive agency. By so doing, the play serves a democratic function because it does not only accord vocal space to the subaltern voice, but also demonstrates the independency and freedom of thought inherent in the consciousness of that voice.

8.4 *Rituals* (2010) as Democratic Protest Theatre

8.4.1 Background Information

Rituals (2010) is a Rooftop Promotions production. Daves Guzha directed the play and Stephen Chifunyise scripted it. Rooftop staged *Rituals* at Theatre-in-the-park. The cast of *Rituals* had the following actors, Rutendo Chigudu, Silvanos Mudzvova, Chipso Bizure, Zenzo Nyathi, and Mandla Moyo. The play premiered at Theatre-in-the-Park on 15 October 2010. The researcher attended this premiere and jotted notes. Rooftop Promotions recorded the inaugural show, which the researcher uses together with my notes to make this analysis. *Rituals* protests against the state's monopoly of the process of healing and transformation. Grassroots models of healing and reconciliation clash with state because they see the state as ineffective in healing communities at family, spiritual, and individual level.

8.4.2 The 'Dissident Elite': Ndaba, Buhle, and Sarudzai.

Admittedly, the foregoing analysis on *Protest Revolutionaries* and *No Voice, No Choice* has created the impression that all elites desire to oppress subaltern members of society. The researcher wishes to correct that anomaly by analysing a special group of elites, who, besides their privileged social standing, disrupt elite hegemony from within. *Rituals*, unlike other plays, displays this category of the elite, which, despite the benefits and privileges they enjoy, liberated themselves from the intellectual control of the intellectuals of their social group.

Gramsci (1999:135) argues that every social group has 'its own specialised category of intellectuals' whose function is to give a social group a sense of 'homogeneity and awareness of

its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields as well.’ This implies that within the elites, there are intellectuals who create a set of ethics, which all other elites must follow. Thus the dictum that ‘all men are intellectuals... but not all men have the function of intellectuals’ (Gramsci,1999:140) does not imply that all elites enjoy intellectual privileges. The same intellectuals that deny subordinate classes’ intellectual autonomy also deny other elites intellectual autonomy. Terry Eagleton (1978) submits that the intellectual leadership within the elite class do not only conceal the reality of oppression among subordinate groups, but also the reality of domination among dominant groups. The foregoing reading points out that those who enjoy intellectual privileges do not want the elite to realise that they oppress subordinate social groups.

However, owing to the fact that ‘all men are intellectuals,’ some members of the elite rebel against the moral and intellectual leadership generated by the privileged members of their group. This development leads to the creation of what the researcher call the ‘dissident elite’ or the ‘bad self.’ Whereas subordinate groups defy elite hegemony from without, the ‘dissident elite’ defy elite hegemony from within. The dissident elite disrupt the sense of homogeneity that their intellectual leaders presume to exist. As they do so, these rogue elements liberate themselves from the intellectual oppression inherent in their class. Sarudzai, Buhle, and Ndaba are ‘dissident elites’ because they acknowledge and celebrate grassroots models of healing and reconciliation. They are MPs who hold high-ranking positions in their parties. They, however, defy the pride of class and attend healing rituals, which the leadership of their parties do not embrace. Sarudzai attends the *kutanda botso* ceremony. It is a cleansing ceremony where she requests forgiveness from her parents whom she had insulted in the violence of June 2008. She wears sacks and tattered clothes and walks from household to household begging for forgiveness. She rolls on the ground as a sign of humility and acceptance of guilty.

As the *kutanda botso* ceremony began, Sarudzai wears a designer dress, expensive earrings, and high-heeled shoes commensurate to the classy appearance of a Member of Parliament. A village elder asks her to remove her clothes and put on regalia for the ritual. She comes back wearing a brown sack and torn dirty clothes. The elders of Nyazema village then lead her in dance and song. The song is entitled ‘*rombe*’, which means vagabond or outcast. She dances *Mbakumba*

and *Shangara* dances with great determination. It is important to observe that the villagers that lead the ceremony are her political and social subordinates. Sarudzai's attendance of the ceremony is an acknowledgment of the fact that government approach to healing does not address forms of healing that are spiritual. It is recognition of the fact that the Organ for Healing and National Reconciliation cannot address the entirety of problems related to healing.

For the same reason, when Ndaba and Buhle allow the healer to take control of their cleansing session, they celebrate community models of healing. Ndaba and Buhle are brother and sister but they do not see eye to eye, because they have contested for the same parliamentary seat. A ritual in which the family slaughters a beast in order to appease the ancestors becomes mandatory. Ndaba faces humiliating treatment during the ritual. For example, the healer repeatedly spits water onto his face. Ndaba has the liberty to walk out but he allows the ritual to proceed. By attending traditional rituals that do not conform to elite cultural and ideological boundaries, the trio liberates itself from the seemingly overwhelming hegemony of their social group. They are not blind to intra-class oppression. They demonstrate that both the elite and the subaltern can mutually share and exchange intellectual leadership depending on the needs of the situation. By so doing, they defy the ideological and cultural construction and homogeneity of the elite as a social class.

Sarudzai's political advisor is not happy with her participation in the ritual. She informs Sarudzai that her taking part in the ritual is admittance to the people that their party is wrong, and that their party regrets its action. The advisor informs her that the party would never accept a situation in which it begs for forgiveness from villagers. Villagers, in her view or the party position, should always see the party as right, as evident in the following dialogue:

Chipo: You cannot want to do what you want to do without the approval of the party

Sarudzai: I am not doing this on behalf of the party Chipo. I am doing this for my family, my community and myself

Chipo: But you are a member of parliament and of a political party

Sarudzai: Chipo, can't you see that I want peace? I want reconciliation

Chipo: Our party want peace. Our party wants reconciliation. But what you want to do, the party will never agree to it.

Sarudzai: Look Chipu, it is not the provincial leadership of the party that came here in 2008 and caused me to do harm to my family and community. Look, I must bring peace to myself and reconciliation to my community

Chipu: Sarudzai ... the part's security committee never allow this to go ahead. Just think, what will senior members of other political parties say when they hear that our very own senior member went about villagers, begging them saying she was sorry, she was crazy, she was foolish. Which of these villagers is going to vote for you next year? Who wants to vote for a foolish member of parliament?

Sarudzai: I am just saying that the actions I took in June 2008 were foolish

Chipu: No, what you are saying is that our party was foolish, our party was insane, our party was misguided, our party was wrong! That's exactly what you will be saying if you carry out this ritual. Besides, who is going to believe in this ritual anyway? (*Rituals*, 2010).

The conflict that ensues between Sarudzai and her advisor indicates that there is oppression within the elite as a social class. Sarudzai, Buhle, and Ndaba, despite their elite status, are 'the dominated fraction of the dominant classes, the ruled among the rulers' (Comaroff, 1997:166). They are not at the helm of the elite class; hence, they are subjects of the intellectual and moral leadership that their leadership generates. When they disrupt the will the leadership, they become free. The 'dissident elite' are, therefore, liberated elites as they rise above the oppressive control of the leadership of the elite class. In this respect, *Rituals* reveals that the liberation of agency is not just of subaltern disrupting elite hegemony from without, but also of dissident elites disrupting elite hegemony from within. *Rituals*, therefore, liberates both subaltern and elite consciousness from intellectual oppression.

8.4.3 Towards a balanced Protest Theatre

Rituals explores the problems of healing and reconciliation from a multi sectoral level. These are the grassroots subaltern level but also at an elite level. The play demonstrates the collective contributions of diverse members of society in creating the violence of 2008. Murambiwa, who rapes Chipu and John who kills people in 2008 serve as examples of subalterns' contribution to violence. Sarudzai, who insults her parents, and Ndaba and Buhle, who sponsor factional violence, demonstrate how the elite also contribute to the violence. Both elite and subaltern classes collectively share the responsibility of designing the discourse of healing and

reconciliation. The play interrogates grassroots models of healing in the form of *Kutanda botso* ceremony and the elite model in the form of the Organ for National Healing and Reconciliation.

The play is not biased or selective in terms of who needs healing just as much as it is not selective of who should bring healing and reconciliation. The perpetrators of violence do not come from one social group. They vary from high-ranking ministers and Members of Parliament such as Sarudzai, Ndaba, and Buhle up to small village boys such as Murambiwa and John. They neither come from one political party. They come from diverse political parties as is the case with Ndaba and Buhle, brother and sister, who belong to different political parties. Whilst the communities engage in the ritualised healing and reconciliation process, the play does not omit the fact that those in government are also addressing the same problem. Although there is tension between communities and the state as to the actual modalities of the healing process, the play shows that the nation collectively shares the blame for bringing about the violence of 2008. The elite and subordinate members of society, men and women, all undermined peace and democracy.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the call for democratisation of protest theatre is not an attempt to achieve the impossible. It is possible to create protest theatre that does not undermine the agency of other social groups as agents of change. It is possible to democratise political protest theatre so that it ceases to construct citizens as victims of political patronage but rather as individuals who have the intellect to determine the destiny of their country. This is crucial because people engage in struggle not because the elite have told them to do so but because they have reasons of their own.

Protest Revolutionaries, *No Voice No Choice*, and *Rituals* reveal how protest theatre can imbue democratic values by affording diverse voices the platform to articulate their views on national problems. More significantly, the plays provide vocal space to subalterns and revealed the agency inherent in subaltern voices like Mother, GBH, Chikaka, Tellmore, and Cde Rebel. They resist and modify elite moral and intellectual leadership of the struggle for change

Chapter Nine

The Post- linear Style as/ and Democratic Commitment in *Rituals* (2010).

9.1 Introduction

The last two chapters have interrogated the extent to which protest theatre imbues democratic values by examining how it constructs the agency of various voices in the struggle for change in Zimbabwe. This chapter explores the significance of style in revealing how style liberates or oppresses the spectator. At another level, it explores how style affects the agency of various people in selected plays. It reveals the role of style in enhancing or undermining the democratic intentions of protest theatre. Hence, this chapter interrogates the relationship between style and democratic commitment. Democratic commitment manifests itself in two ways in this chapter. The first is the efficacy of stylistic preferences in the creation of a theatre (public sphere) that is inclusive, celebrates diversity and plurality of voices and recognises the intellectual agency and autonomy of these voices. The second understanding follows the way in which the performances engage and stimulate critical engagement within spectators rather than mere indoctrination. By style, the researcher refers to the techniques of staging and performing which range from acting style, music, dance, setting of the play, actor-spectator transactions, plot, and generic belonging of the production. Hence, this chapter answers two questions: how does style enhance or undermine the agency of voices that participate in public spheres staged by actors before the spectators? Secondly, how do techniques of style/ staging bear on the intellectual liberation of spectators?

Rituals fits into the stylistic construction of post-linear theatre. To demonstrate how it fits into the post-linear schema and the implications of the post-linear style to democratic engagement, the researcher applies Roland Barthes (1977) concepts of the open and closed text. The researcher also borrows from other exponents of post-linearity such as Lizbeth Goodman and Jane de Gay (2000), Paul Castagno (2001), Raman Selden (1985), Catherine Bouko (2009), Steven Wright (2007), Hans-Thies Leman (2006), Richard Schechner and Mike Appel (1990), and Victor Turner (1990). Roland Barthes as quoted by Raman Selden (1985:76) argues that the 'lisible' is the closed text 'which allows the reader to be a consumer of fixed meaning. The 'scriptable' is the open text that allows the reader to generate his own meanings. The reader becomes a producer; the text gives the reader the liberty to produce his/her own meanings. Lizbeth

Goodman and Jane De Gay (2000) have expanded the meaning of Barthesian concepts of 'lisible' and 'scriptible.' To them, the lisible refers to linearity in performance whilst the scriptible resonates well with post-linearity.

Hans-Thies Lehman (2006:6) notes that:

The writerly texts, 'open texts' are texts which require the spectators to become active co-writers of the (performance) text. The spectators are no longer just filling in predictable gaps as in a dramatic narrative, but are asked to become active witnesses who reflect on their own meaning making and who are also willing to tolerate gaps and suspend the assignment of meaning.

In Barthes' (1977: 43) view, the 'death of the author' characterises writerly, post-linear texts because these texts do not confine meaning to the intentions of the author and the director. They defy the monolithic and homogenous construction of the world that the author/playwright proposes. They celebrate diversity and plurality of interpretations and as such, they are incredulous to authorial universalist tendencies.

While Barthes coined the concepts of the 'lisible' and 'scriptible', their actual application to performance is indeed the contribution of Goodman and De Gay (2000). The linear style is the lisible, the 'readerly', and the closed text while post-linear style is the open, the 'scriptible', writerly text that provides the spectator with the liberty to create his own meanings of the performance. Goodman and De Gay (2000: 258) observe that:

Linearity and clear narrative structures have ... politically ... been associated with totalitarianism, or on the softer side, conservatism. The performance invited by linearity (as either an actor or a citizen) is one following the line, whether this be dictated by tradition, a political party or a playwright.

The post-linear style recognises the significance of the audience as producers of plural meanings. It celebrates the provision of interpretive liberty to the spectator. Goodman and De Gay (2000: 259) reiterate this point by observing that:

Adopting an embodied perspective to understand post-linear performance recognises that the bedrock of live performances is the body, more specifically, the bodies of the audience in the act of deciphering, assimilating, or enjoying the experience provided by the alchemy of bodies and technologies on stage.

Post-linear performances celebrate intellectual engagement. The performance is not a site of indoctrination and brainwashing the audience. It is not a site of preaching to the audience and undermining their semiotic resistance.

9.2 Interrogating *Rituals*

In this section, the researcher focuses on how the post-linear style liberates the spectator. By this, the researcher implies how the post-linear performance, such as *Rituals*, provides mechanisms that allow the audience to create their own readings of the performance. These plural and diverse readings restore the power of the audience to make their own meanings of performance and of the political reality that performers present on stage. The performance does not seek to provide the audience with monolithic, imposed understanding of political reality. The post-linear performance thrives on ‘suspended meaning’ where performers create images ‘which have no precise signification and which leave the spectator free in his/ her sensory interpretation.’ (Bouko, 2009:33). Wright (2007: 83) adds that post-linear performance entails a process of de-representation:

Which promotes a continual confusion of cohesive representation. De-representation maintains a specific level of presentation, yet deliberately eschews a clear reading in order to create a fluctuating multiplicity of interpretation.

The plurality of interpretation and dismantling of authorial logos comes into being because, as Leman (2006:3) observes, the post-linear performance:

Has the power to question and destabilise the spectator’s construction of identity and the ‘other’ more so than in realist mimetic drama, which remains caught in representation and thus often reproduce dominant ideology.

Thus, the pre-occupation of the post-linear project is to create democracy in performance by liberating the spectator's intellectual agency and semiotic capabilities.

One of the key aspects of liberating the spectator is the way in which performance deals with the idea of identification and emotional orgies (Boal 1985, Esslin, 1959, Willet 1977). Pieter J. Fourie (1988:79) observes that:

In simplistic terms, identification is the human ability to pick up another person's vibes, to empathise with others. Such feeling is based on shared values, a common background, education, culture and the like, in fact anything that makes intersubjective fellowship possible.

Fourie (1988: 79) adds that identification is a two-pronged process:

Identification proceeds in two ways: those of introjection and projection. Introjection means that the recipient assumes or adopts the feelings of the other party (e.g. of fictional characters); projection means that the recipient projects his feelings onto the other party (characters).

When identification and empathetic attachment run without disruptions, they lead to what Brecht as cited in Boal (1985:103) calls 'emotional orgies'. 'Emotional orgies' are products of empathy, which Boal (1985: 102) defines as:

The emotional relationship between the character and the spectator and which provokes, fundamentally, a delegation of power on the part of the spectator, who becomes an object in relation to the character: whatever happens to the latter happens vicariously to the spectator.

The spectator, in Boal and Brecht's views, becomes a victim of character, so much that he attaches himself emotionally to the character. He identifies with a character so much that he abides by its decisions. In protest theatre, such a development is not welcome, as it undermines the semiotic autonomy of the spectator in making sense of the ideas generated by a character. Emotional orgies, therefore, undermine the intellectual agency of the spectator to read the

performance and indeed the world ‘by means of performance’, beyond the eyes of the character. Emotional orgies, therefore, lead to a logo-centric reading of performance that undermines plurality of interpretations.

The researcher is not implying that the process of viewing performance must be devoid of emotional engagement or identification. Like Boal and Brecht, the researcher submits that such emotional attachment must not drown the intellectual capabilities of the spectator so much that he/she fails to interrogate ideas generated by characters in a performance. Boal (1985: 102) clarifies this point:

At no point does Brecht speak against emotion, though he speaks against the emotional orgy. He says that it would be absurd to deny emotion to modern science... his position is entirely favourable to the emotion born of pure knowledge, as opposed to the emotion born out of ignorance.

Boal (1985: 103) adds that there are good and bad empathies:

A good empathy does not prevent understanding, on the contrary, needs understanding in order to avoid the spectacle turning into an emotional orgy and the spectators purging of social sin. What Brecht does, fundamentally, is to place the emphasis on understanding (enlightenment).

The researcher therefore, reveals how post-linear techniques empower the spectator by destroying ‘emotional orgies,’ identification and restoring audiences’ semiotic autonomy. The researcher’s mission in this section is to interrogate how this model of theatre catalyses or undermines the creation of a theatre that empowers the intellectual agency of the audiences. It must be borne in mind that, for this study democracy lies inherently in a theatre that ‘stimulates the critical faculties’ of the spectator so that he is transformed into a critical citizen who participates in the intellectual evolution of processes of change and transformation.

9.3 Stylised Acting

9.3.1 Carnavalesque

Post-linearity manifests itself through stylised acting. Stylised acting uses the carnivalesque technique which according to Castagno (2000:10):

Has to do with strange combinations, the overturning of expected norms and the grotesque. Usually featured are abrupt shifts from high and low diction, whether slang, specific speech regionalisms, colloquialisms, or profanities. Carnavalesque characters conflate bestial and human traits or exhibit other oddities.

The actors do not control their voices in order for us to feel emotions through delivery of lines. Rather, their voices are highly pitched with remarkable projection. It seems as if the actors are in some kind of competition to make the loudest noise. The actors in John's Healing scene, namely Joyce Mpofu (Healer), Chipu Bizure (Mavis), Silvanos Mudzvova (John), Rutendo Chigudu (Ester Ndoro), and Zenzo Nyathi (Muchoro) all speak on top of their voices. In Ndaba and Buhle's healing episode, these actors deliver lines at high speed without pausing to breath and allowing one to feel emotions. The police officer (Silvanos Mudzvova) whom the Organ for National Healing has sent to inform Ndaba and Buhle to come to a meeting rushed through his lines. To someone who trained using the Stanislavskian psycho technique, such rushed deliveries would be an indicator of poor acting. Yet in *Rituals*, the rushed deliveries effectively detach emotion from voice. The performance clearly alerts the spectators to the fact that these actors are merely presenting scenarios of life. The performance directs the spectators' attention on facts rather than emotion.

9.3.2 Multiple Casting

As is the norm with post-linear theatre, there is multiple casting. A cast of five people play as many as thirty characters in this play. The cast is composed of Rutendo Chigudu, Silvanos Mudzvova, Zenzo Nyathi, Joyce, Chipu Bizure, and Mandla Moyo. In episode one, the *Kutanda Botso* ceremony, Chipu Bizure plays Sarudzai the Member of Parliament, Rutendo plays Chipu (Personal assistant to Sarudzai), Silvanos is the village head, Mandla Moyo is Chief Nyazema. In the following episode, John's healing episode, Chipu Bizure plays Mavis (John's sister), Rutendo becomes Ester Ndoro (family relative), Silvanos plays John (the teacher who killed people in 2008), Zenzo Nyathi is John's uncle and Joyce Mpofu is the traditional healer while Mandla Moyo plays personal assistant (*makumbi*) to the healer. In the next episode- the Rape episode, Rutendo plays Charity who is an elder sister to the rape victim, Chipu Bizure plays Rudo, Silvanos becomes the local Councillor calls to mediate over the rape issue. Zenzo Nyathi plays

the rapists while Joyce Mpofu and Mandla Moyo now play father and mother to the rapists. Multiple casting is, therefore, significant because it prevents any single character and actor from dominating the struggle for change. It prevents the audience from identifying a particular character from any background as the champion or enemy of the people's struggle for change. For this reason, it evenly distributes transformative power and agency across various members of society.

Multiple casting also enables the play to be inclusive. Inclusivity in turn makes *Rituals* dialogical. Castagno (2001: 35) observes that dialogism occurs when:

The play is 'fundamentally polyphonic or dialogical rather than monologic (single voiced). The essence of the play is its staging of different voices or discourses, and the clash of social perspectives and points of view.

Actors present different people from diverse social, political, and economic backgrounds. Through multiple casting, the play glides through various communities in Zimbabwe. These diverse communities reveal diverse and different stories related to people struggle against violence and their vision of healing and reconciliation. Thus, through multiple acting, the play moves from Nyazema in Manicaland Province, to Mashonaland Province and finally to Matabeleland. In this journey, the play takes the audience through different communities.

9.3.3 Polyvocality

When multiple casting enables diverse voices to articulate their interests and values, it consequently makes the play polyvocal, which Castagno (2001: 9) defines as:

Polyvocality - multiple language strategies and sources co-exist in the play. Characters and narratives within the script may contain diverse interests or objectives, expressed in different speech forms. Polyvocality resists the notion of a single or dominant point of view in a narrative thereby supplanting the single, privileged authorial voice.

The actors in this play are able to switch from speaking fluent Manyika dialect, to Karanga dialect, Zezuru dialect, and Ndebele language. In addition to this, they also speak English. They defy rigidity and fixation of character because they do not allow a fixed regime of given circumstances to govern them. They refuse to be fixed and possessed by character. They are ‘split or bifurcated characters.’ (Castagno, 2001:9) They prevent the audience from identifying with a single character. The split identities use the technique of ‘interruption’ that is:

Used to break continuity, impede the easy access of form and content. A character changes into another character, interrupting the previous characters’ through line. Interruption causes the audience to refocus attention, to work at ‘getting it’ in a sense. (Castagno, 2001:9)

The play creates ‘interruptions’ by rotating status in different episodes. For example, in the first episode, Silvanos Mudzvova plays the character of the village chief who presides over Sarudzai’s *Kutanda Botso* Ritual. He has dominant Status. However, when Silvanos plays John (the mad teacher) he loses that dominant status. In addition to status, the actors change roles in terms of being good ‘guys’ and bad ‘guys.’ In the first episode, Chipo Bizure plays the role of Sarudzai who is a villain because she has insulted her parents and the community. However, in the following episode, Chipo Bizure then plays Chipo, who is a rape victim in this play. In the third episode, Chipo Bizure is sister to John where she seeks to help his brother cleansed from the spirits of the people he killed. The shifts of status and likeability, in my view, prevent audiences’ sustained identification with any actor or character because of the systematic interruptions that the actors perform.

Moreover, the actors express different character proposals. The cast devotes a lot of time to physiological characterisation so much that the contrasts of character between episodes is so sharp. The gaits, gestures, and facial expressions and actors postures create diverse characters. There is however, a slight problem with their voices, as actors cannot really create different voices for different roles. For example, Chipo Bizure ‘s voice remains the same when she plays the characters of Sarudzai in the *Kutanda Botso* Scene, Rudo in the Rape scene and Mavis in John’s Healing scene. Similarly, for the respective scenes mentioned above, Silvanos Mudzvova’s voice as Chief, Village head and John remains the same. Likewise, Rutendo

Chigudu's voice as Chipu, Charity, and Esther Ngoro does not change. However, they compensate for that weakness with effective physiological characterisation. The emphasis on physiological variations demonstrates how the actors form their characters externally rather than internally. The cast does not seek to play the psychological characters that actors create internally. They rather concentrate on the external physiological construction of character. Because of this, the actors present roles rather than represent them. They present characters; they do not become the characters.

9.3.4 Dematrixing

When actors show that they are acting a role rather than becoming the role, they become dematrixed. Castagno (2001: 62) observes that an actor/ character is dematrixed:

When he (1) fractures the mould of a specific character (2) directly acknowledges or addresses the presence of the audience or 3) foregrounds the presence of the actor over character.

In dematrixing, as Lehmann (2006:6) points out:

There is also a deliberate blurring between the characters of the actors and disabled performers themselves as they address the spectators and let them know they are being starred at and are returning the gaze.

Dematrixing is evident when Joyce Mporu, who acted as a healer in John's healing episode, treats the audience as part of the community that has come to attend the ritual. After dealing with John's madness, she walks around the stage talking directly to audiences. She identifies one woman and tells that '*Iwe, chibereko chako chinoda kugezwa* (Your uterus is dirty, it needs to be cleaned.' The Healer (Joyce Mporu) tells another spectator that '*Iwe, siyana nembanje dzako*' (stop smoking marijuana.) It is customary for healers to deliberate on someone's problems without his/ her consent because they would be in trance. The audiences laugh their lungs out but the two spectators are shocked and surprised that they are also participants in the play. When *Rituals* begin, Silvanos Mudzvova makes the audience aware that that they are members of the Nyazema, Beta and Mutasa ethnic groups that have granted him permission for the rituals in the play to proceed. Thus, audiences clearly see that they are in theatre; they need not identify with the action on the stage, but rather focus on the situations on stage. In this way, 'dematrixing'

‘and ‘interruptions’ always rejuvenate audiences critical and intellectual engagement rather than emotional attachment and identification.

9.3.5 Spirit Possession as Character Dematrixing

Catherine Bouko (2009:32) reiterates that the post-linear performance celebrates the ‘disintegration of the dramatic character’ because the actor is ‘defined both as a character and an individual.’ Spirit possession serves such a dematrixing function in *Rituals*. For example, Silvanos Mudzvova plays the character of John who is possessed by the spirits of the people he killed during the political violence of 2008. Thus, Silvanos Mudzvova plays both John and John’s spirit simultaneously. When Mudzvova plays John, there are two manifestations of characterisation. There is John as well as the spirit that possess him. Hence, Mudzvova at certain times plays John, and at other times, plays the spirit that John possesses. Similarly, Joyce Mpofu plays the healer, but the healer is also possessed by a spirit; the healer’s spirit. There is double presentation in that instance, of the healer and of the spirit in the healer. Spirit possession in *Rituals* creates bifurcated identities that dismantle integral characterisation. Hence, by playing healers and playing the spirits of the healers, the actors are simultaneously bifurcated.

Joyce Mpofu is a female; she plays the role of a female healer, yet a male spirit possesses her. That destroys illusion of reality. The healers are young but the spirits in them make them old. Possession distorts age configurations, which disrupt the normal construction of integral characters. They, therefore, split the psychological basis of these characters. Mpofu becomes what Victor Turner (1990:11) calls ‘androgenic’ character, which is ‘at once male and female.’ She also displays what Victor Turner (1990: 11) calls ‘theriomorphic character’ in the sense that she is both human and spirit.

Chipso Bizure as Sarudzai also displays double identity due to possession. Bizure plays the Member of Parliament character of Sarudzai. However, she simultaneously plays the *rombe* spirit that possesses Sarudzai. There is actually a conflict between the two characters as they fight to control Bizure. Either of the character has to prevail in order for her to display a single character profile. However, throughout the *Kutanda Botso* ritual, the characters clash so much that Bizure suffers from schizophrenia or split personality. When it seems that the *rombe*

dimension is dominating, her assistant reminds her that she is an MP. When the MP personality takes shape, the community reminds that she is a *rombe* in dire need of spiritual cleansing. She is both Member of Parliament and *rombe*, contrasting and conflicting psychologies that makes her character less rigid and integral.

It is difficult, in the researcher's view, to identify with characters that are not human. Fourie (1988) writes that identification is a product of connectedness and homology between character and the self that the spectator sees in a character. In the absence of that homology, identification is difficult. Spirits are beyond supernatural, human beings look at them from a distance because the spirit world is a world that humans do not know much about in this three dimensional form. Thus, characters with spirits are always detached from the spectator. He/ she looks at them from a distance. Moreover, spirit possessions are ephemeral; they cannot run for the entire duration of a play. The spirit comes, unleashes its insight, and returns to spiritdom, leaving mortals to continue with their lives. The ephemerality of possession necessitates the development of other character proposals and psychologies in order to sustain the play. For this reason, the play becomes episodic rather than linear.

Yet as these actors play possessed characters, they themselves do not become possessed. Spirit possession, therefore, disturbs the process of identification. It produces detachment, which, according to Bouko (2009:32) implies that 'the actors are constantly aware of the theatrical illusion and never seem to be fully involved in the drama: their presence damages the illusion.' In this development, as Bouko (2009:33) observes:

The characters they embody is a fragile construction that uncovers their real personality. Instead of hiding their personality behind a character, the performers highlight universal features that are part of their identity as individuals.

The actors always remind and indicate to the audience that they are presenting possessed characters. They do not lose their self in the process of playing characters and the spirits that these characters possess. They fit into Richard Schechner's (1990: 36) concept of the 'half actor' who himself is the one observing, manipulating, and enjoying the actions of the other half (the character). Padmanathan Nair as quoted by Schechner (1990: 36) remarks that, 'while acting,

half of the actor is the role he does and half will be himself.' Mudzvova, Bizure and Mpofu indicate when they are about to be possessed and when they are playing the unpossessed characters. After her role as a traditional healer, Mpofu, as stated before, talks to the audience in a way that suggests that she is merely presenting a role. She is, therefore, a half actor 'who does not forget himself/ (herself)' (Schechner, 1990:37). This ambivalence undermines identification of audiences with character or actor, which in turn limits the hypnotic effect on audience's emotions. The audience focuses on the story and make a judgement on what is happening. The audiences' intellectual presence remains active as the performance does not exploit or appeal to emotions in order to lock the semantic and semiotic environment of the performance. The audience remains what Augusto Boal (1985:3) calls 'the liberated spectator' that is not a victim of locked authorial and monolithic readings of performance. Although the audiences in *Rituals* do not fully fit into Boal's idea of the 'spec-actor' since that is not the intention of the play, they however possess semiotic autonomy as the style of performance encourages them to read the performance in their own terms.

9.3.6 Actors' Mannerisms

Actors' mannerisms augment the destruction of identification. The *Rituals* cast proposes 'disgusting' mannerisms to their roles. Some prick their noses, others cough every now and then, some play with saliva, some spit saliva as they talk, and some are playing with mucus in their nose rather than blowing it out. Some speak like cartoons. Knowing that farcical expressions convey emotions, this cast proposes farcical expressions that make it disgusting but funny to watch. Some make faces and they all compete to make zombie faces. They behave as if they are wearing masks by merely rearranging their faces. In fact, in the last episode, the cast wears zombie faces and do the most unthinkable. John always farts loudly. That is disgusting, but funny. These mannerisms disrupt emotional attachment and sometimes those not used to the style wonder as to what this cast is presenting. The horrible mannerisms dilute the depth of realism, as there is no relationship between these mannerisms and internalisation of character.

The cast exaggerates these mannerisms, especially in the last scene, so much that the audiences burst into laughter while other audiences looked as if they are on the brink of vomiting because of the horrible and disgusting mannerisms. The mannerisms, therefore, undermine the build-up

of emotions; hence, the spectator focuses on the facts delivered by the performance. Even when the lights turn off in preparation for a new scene, the audiences keep on laughing and commenting on the action of the previous scene without being emotional.

9.4 Costume

The costumes help to destroy the fixed integral character symptomatic of linear performances. The cast looked for some of the funniest costumes. The intention is to make someone laugh. They are either too big or too small. John, the teacher, puts on a red school uniform that belongs to children doing infant level. He has a small short and shirt in a bright red colour. The material itself is not for school uniforms. The spectre of a teacher wearing an infant school uniform heightens laughter. Rutendo, who plays Ester Ndoro in this scene, has a small built, yet she wears this big oversize skirt made of crimpling. It is crucial to observe that the costume is anachronistic to the period of 2008 in which the play is set. Rather, the costumes belongs to the eighties going back to the fifties. The crimpling just makes one laugh just as the safari suits bring back memories of years gone by. The intention, in the researcher's view, was to prevent costume from playing a psychological role in the Stanislavskian sense.²⁰

9.5 Song and Dance

Song and dance help *Rituals* to imbue democratic values in a number of ways. Song and dance undermine the development of rigid and integral characterisation, which promotes identification. True to post-linearity, when an actor sings or dances on stage s/he quickly moves out of character and becomes her/himself. Moreover, song and dance make *Rituals* a hybrid performance text. Castagno (2001:35) remarks that:

The hybrid play is a literary and theatrical crossbreed, a blending of genres and disparate sources both textual and performative. The hybrid play may take on a myriad of forms and combinations; from literary patsche to collage-like performance pieces.

²⁰ Constatin Stanislavsky developed a method of acting in psychological realism called the psycho technique. In this, method, the actor becomes the character and loses consciousness of himself as an individual.

The hybrid text serves a democratic function as it prevents the cumulative climax of the linear narrative. Moreover, it creates characters from a variety of sources that are largely gestural meta-dramatic. Thus, when the *Rituals* cast dances and sing *mbakumba*, *mbende* and *isitshikitsa*, they disrupt the linear construction of performance through hybridity. Dance also enhances ‘external gestural progression’ of character because the stimulant to character is not internal and psychological. Bouko (2009:33) observes that:

The musical dimension tends to accentuate the scenic presence of the actors. When they are singing or when the grain of their voice is highlighted, their authenticity and sincerity increases and counterbalance the fictional role. In such cases, the actor on stage is defined through his/her double identity, which contrasts with dramatic conventions and deprives the spectator of his/her conventional marks. What he/she encounters is not a theatrical character, but an individual type’ that is constructed on a specific post-dramatic hybridity.

It is in this capacity that dance and song undermine identification, hence helping to engage the critical faculties of the spectators.

Moreover, the cast takes the opportunity of dance and song to destroy the divide between the audiences and the performers. The dances and songs are common traditional Shona and Ndebele dances and songs. As they sing, the audiences are persuaded to clap, whistle, ululate, and chant. Although no spectator actually dances on the set, the researcher saw audiences moving their legs, head and arms rhythmically which strongly suggest that the audiences also dances as the cast dances on set. Sometimes the cast does not finish all the lyrics of the songs, which gives the audience the room to fill in the missing lyrics. This is evident in all the dances and songs. The intercourse between the performers and audiences is of great significance in democratic terms because it makes the audiences part of the performance. This makes the performance quite experiential for the spectators. Audience involvement certainly destroys the imaginary lines of division between performers and audiences, which consequently destroy the potential of identification and emotional escapism.

As performers relate with audiences, the process of ‘dematrixing’ comes into effect. Through song and dance, they move out of character, which reminds the audience that the cast is presenting a theatrical piece whose message deserves their interrogation. Dematrixing, through song and dance helps to curb emotional built up because they act as *narrativus interruptus* or agents of anti-climax. Dance presents an opportunity of substituting the spoken word with verbs of movement. This is evident in the rape scene. Rooftop stages the scenario of rape between Sarudzai and Murambiwa through movement and physical theatre. Daves Guzha, the director, uses *Mbende/ Jerusarema* dance that is historically known for its pro-creation movements to stage the rape scene. The dance is highly erotic and involves movements around the waist. This presentation is crucial because the savagery, barbarity and violence of rape is withdrawn from the scenario so much that spectators emotions do not focus either on crying about the rape or being furious about the rape. The experience of rape is quite disturbing, but the dance curtails the disturbing violence of rape. Consequently, audiences watches rape on stage, but they do not drown in tears of sorrow.

The rape scenario serves its purpose of presenting rape as a crime against humanity and it leaves a question in the conscience of the audiences; how can we deal with perpetrators and victims for them to heal and reconcile? Rather than mourning or being shocked by the horror of rape; song and dance enable the audiences confront the dark side of society. Rather than crying, the largely African spectators laugh during and after the rape scene. This laughter raises a number of questions during the post-performance discussion. One white spectator, a visitor to Zimbabwe, notes how she is surprised to see people so many spectators laugh after the rape scene. In her view, spectators should be sorrowful and sad.²¹ Ideally, if it were a realist play, then audiences would have empathised with Rudo and cry with her. However, song and dance neutralise the horror of rape so much that many spectators do not go through that horror. Song and dance cushion the audience from the negative emotions of rape. This is an example of how the post-linear style, through song and dance, encourages the audience to reason rather to be lost in emotions.

²¹I am aware of experiments that point to the fact that Africans do not empathise. Rather, they are always inclined to laugh. William Sellers and Julian Huxley did such experiments (see James Burns 2000, 2002) It would be wrong to advance that African audiences do not empathise. The structure of African theatre prevents empathy and emotional orgies as dance and song disrupt the building up of emotions to an empathetic climax.

The researcher realised that the laughter of the audiences has many undercurrents. First, some are relieved to realise that the rape encounter is just a theatrical presentation. The emotional detachment has revealed that the proceedings on stage are not real; they are just inventions of reality albeit being based on what obtains in the real world. The realisation that it is just theatre creates a sense of relief and emotional detonation. So, rather than crying and furious, the audience laugh. They laugh at the shocking revelation of the dark sides of society. They laugh at themselves, perhaps being afraid of weeping uncontrollably. The scene has realised its objective of presenting horror and violence without evoking obvious emotions that are stimulated by such circumstances. Thus, Goodman and De Gay (2000:261) conclude that:

Post-linear performance... often operates contrary to the belief that performance exists as escapists, feel good environment. Post-linear can be hard work for the audience. Effort is required to dispel confusion and understand what is going on, and discomfort can be the result of being presented with a dystopian picture of a particular slice of life of our social and political reality.

The idea of enabling the audience to confront the ugly side of humanity, therefore, helps in stimulating the minds of the audience thereby making performance a site of intellectual engagement rather than indoctrination. By forcing the audience to confront the horror of rape, *Rituals* demonstrates that society, 'by means of performance' can confront its dark side whose fate and destiny it can alter. Goodman and De Gay (2000:261) reiterate this point:

Through post-linearity, gaps are provided for us to insert our views, our experiences, or for us to self-consciously chart our own course through material based on our likes, dislikes, or habits. These habits become clear through the process of active engagement. In this sense, post-linear performance can be called 'generative performance'. If a dystopia is presented (for example, racial prejudice or sexual abuse) it is rarely presented as fatalistic or unchangeable. Instead it is presented as a strident revelation: look at this- did you know this is happening?! Followed by an implicit: Do something about this.

Martin Esslin (1959:127) advances the same opinion:

By keeping the spectator in a critical frame of mind it prevents him from seeing the conflict entirely from the view of the characters involved in it and from accepting their passions and motives as being conditioned by 'eternal human nature.' Such a theatre will make the audience see the contradictions in the existing state of society; it might even make them ask themselves how it might be changed.

Thus, by probing the audience to think about change without prescribing to them how that change must come to be, the post-linear style certainly acknowledges the intellectual and semiotic autonomy of audiences, which, is the essence of democratic theatre.

Indeed, in *Rituals*, one does not identify with any main character. The play does not allow spectators to identify heroes or villains. The diversity of characters and the episodic nature of the play, make each episode independent. What we see are clips, snippets of life and not one story that covers the lives of a few individuals. No one is punished or deified. The play does not celebrate any party. It does not take sides within Zimbabwean politics. It does not suggest any solutions to the problems on stage. One is not sure whether Sarudzai actually goes back to complete the *kutanda botso* Ceremony. The play simply ends without suggesting whether the *kutanda botso* is good or bad. It just points out to neglected notions of spiritual healing ingrained in the cosmic views of Africans. The openness of the play opens one's eyes to the broader picture that compels one to decide on his own at his own time. Indeed, *Rituals* demonstrates how the 'scriptible', post linear style helps in liberating intellectual agency of audiences by undermining identification, emotional attachment, and prescribing solutions. It does not compel or persuade anyone to adopt a course of action but leaves it to an individual to pontificate by himself. When a play frees one from the albatross of emotions, it frees his capacity to think and modify the destiny of his country. Indeed, style does have a bearing on democratic commitment.

9.6 The Ritual as a Forum (public sphere) for Diffusing Power.

Rituals conceives the traditional ritual as an avenue by which power diffuses from its concentration within elite members of society, especially political elites. A ritual has a set of procedures and rules of engagement that, in the moment of the ritual, strip political heavyweights of their power. The ritual context forces the person who wants to go through the ritual to follow

the process regardless of class, gender, age, or economic position. Despite the fact that Sarudzai is a member of a parliament (MP), the *kutanda botso* ritual forces her to wear tattered clothes and sacks as a way of showing her humbleness to the community that she harmed. The rules of the ritual force a MP to beg for rapoko or sorghum from the houses of villagers, the rural poor in order to brew beer for the healing ceremony. She has the money to buy all the sorghum and *rapoko* that she needs for the ritual, but the rules of the ritual dictate that the grain should come from villagers through a process of begging. When villagers give her grain, they mock her and tell that she was stupid when she scolded and insulted her parents. She rolls on the ground as a way of showing humility. The ritual takes away the ego from arrogant individuals who disrespect the rights of other people in society. The ritual reduces hubristic arrogance to humility and humbleness. The ritual context demystifies the power of those in authority. Those who preside over the ceremonies are individuals whom political elites look down upon. For example, the traditional healers become powerful figures during healing processes involving deceased spirits. When John's family visits the healer, the healer is amused to realise that the *Ngozi*/ avenging spirit has humbled a well-known member of the school development authority to come and intercourse with a lowly esteemed person like her. She is amused by the fact that John, who used to kill people and regarding himself as a god, has been humbled by madness caused by the spirits of the people he killed in June 2008. John's family wants the healer to make the *Ngozi* disappear and make John forget what he did in 2008. The healer tells them that the ritual procedures do not permit such an option. John has to announce the names of the people he killed followed by a public healing cleansing ceremony. The shifting power relations are clear in the ensuing dialogue.

Healer: I can help you but what i want to ask him questions about what he saw, what he did, what he heard, what happened to him and what he did in May 2008 to June 2008

Muchoro: Mhukahuru, shouldn't you give him medicine that would make him forget what he saw and just forget everything.

Mavis: Let us follow what the healer is saying

Muchoro: Wait Mavis, Forgetting is healing

Healer: *Muri kundishora*(You are belittling me) You cannot decide in my presence. Let me and my assistant go outside so that you can decide and reach a conclusion. Is that clear.

Healer: *Imi vana imi muri kurevesa nezvamuri kutaurea...* What about the people he is talking about. How many people suffered

because of his actions? To heal him needs him participating in the process. He might forget, but his enemies will never forget. I think you should go home, decide, and come back here, so that I can heal him completely (*Rituals*, 2010).

The healer commands authority in the ritual space she possesses supernatural powers which John's family, despite their social and political footing, do not have. The ritual context, therefore, strips the dominance out of the elites, as they become ordinary members of society. This reversal of power relations is also evident during the healing ritual of Ndaba and Buhle. The healer in that ritual actually leads the two in the healing process despite the fact that the two wielded more political power than the healer did. They perform traditional dances as part of the ritual. The ritual forces them to dispense with modernity and economic power. The healer spits water on Ndaba. He also spits water on the police officer sent to inform them that they have to attend a meeting organised by the organ for healing and reconciliation. Outside the healing context that is unthinkable. The healing context removes political and economic power that enables the healing process to take place. The foregoing indicates that, as Fraser (1994:67) points:

Subaltern counter publics are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn, permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their own identities, interests, and needs.

The stripping of powers of elite members of society is crucial because it removes barriers that undermine the freedom of participation in the healing process. When elite members bring their powers unto the ritual environment, they want the rituals to reveal some measure of political correctness in line with their party manifestos. It is evident that whenever issues related to political parties come into the ritual, the ritual adjourns. For example, when Chipo tells Sarudzai to prioritise party interests over individual interest in the healing process, Sarudzai immediately walks out of the ritual leaving the villagers of Nyazema puzzled about her behaviour. Similarly, when a police officer comes to collect Ndaba and Buhle to meet officials from the Organ for National Healing and Reconciliation, the two immediately abandoned the ritual. Political power always favours the interest of the party. Thus, the ritual context strips these powers to enable the healing to proceed without inhibitions.

9.7 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the effectiveness of the post-linear style in creating democracy in performance. It has noted how this style liberates the spectator as it allows him/her to make her own decisions pertaining issues raised in *Rituals*. The chapter has identified various techniques, which makes post-linear theatre democratic. It has also pointed out how the context of the healing rituals creates a public sphere where subaltern characters also wield the power to effect change. In brief, this chapter has indicated the significance of style in enhancing the democratic commitment of *Rituals*.

Chapter Ten

Dramatic Realism and Democratic Commitment: *Waiting for Constitution* (2010)

10.1 Introduction

Chapter nine has launched an analysis of the relationship between style and democratic function. It has explored how the post-linear style enhances the democratic objectives of protest theatre by liberating the actor and the spectator, thereby allowing the spectator to exercise autonomy in creating meaning and making sense of a performance. However, not all styles advance such democratic intentions. Thus, this chapter analyses another style in a bid to reveal how style undermines democratic commitment. Hence, this chapter interrogates (through the Zimbabwean experience) a concern that was raised by scholars such as Augusto Boal (1985), Bertolt Brecht as cited in Martin Esslin (1959), Susan Redondo (1996, 1997), Jill Dolan (1988), Sheila Stowell (1992), and Catherine Belsey (1980). These works question the efficacy of dramatic realism in liberating subaltern agency and audience's intellectual autonomy. This chapter explores the possibility of using the linear style to subvert dominant, hence oppressive, ideology. Thus, if dramatic realism serves a subversive function, to what extent can it escape the oppressive dynamics of dominant ideology? This question comes into being owing to the fact that some of the protest plays, for example, *Waiting for Constitution* (2010) and *Indigenous Indigenous* (2012), imbue dramatic realism. The intention of these plays is certainly not to reproduce dominant ideology. The researcher's mission is to analyse the efficacy of dramatic realism in advancing the objectives of subversion and liberation. Forerunners in this area concentrate more on issues of plot construction, character development, and acting style. In addition to these variables, the researcher wishes to add the significance of space in creating a liberated public sphere.

Thus, the researcher devotes a significant portion of this chapter to explore the significance of the home and the living room²² as the dramatic setting of the public sphere and the impact of the home/ living room environment to the democratic objectives of protest theatre. These include the provision of discursive space to marginalised subaltern voices, empowering the agency of these voices, as well as liberating the semiotic autonomy of spectators. This chapter addresses the

²² An analysis of dramatic realist texts has revealed an affinity for the living room and the home as a favourable dramatic space/ setting. Such is the case with *Waiting for Constitution* and *Indigenous Indigenous*.

issues raised above by making reference to *Waiting for constitution* which is an example of a text that, in Heuvel's (1992: 48) words, 'though not perfectly analogous to what we precisely term dramatic realism, nevertheless defines many of the practices of textually encoding the predicates of dramatic realism.'²³

The researcher employs the public sphere theory to examine how the fusion of dramatic realism engenders a public sphere that empowers vocality and liberation of the intellectual agency of those voices. Actors in this play reincarnate voices of citizens in public spheres that citizens rely on to deliberate on issues of common interests. Fraser (1994:57) argues that a public sphere:

Designates a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk. It is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, hence an institutionalised arena of discursive interaction... it is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can, in principle, be critical of the state... It is a theater for debating and deliberating rather than buying and selling.

Habermas, as quoted by Paola Botham (2008:318) remarks that the public sphere is 'every encounter in which actors do not just observe each other, but take a second person attitude, reciprocally attributing communicative freedom to each other.' *Waiting for Constitution*, in this vein, becomes not just a dramatisation or theatrical presentation of citizens in public spheres; it is actually a public sphere, in its own right, as citizens (represented by actors) deliberate on issues of common interests. Actors on stage do not simply perform a public sphere; they are a public sphere among themselves. The actors give each other communicative power to deliberate on issues of common interests. A performance, in my view is a public sphere in action. These spontaneous citizen forums occur as long as there are two citizens and they take place anywhere. This is the first version of the public sphere.

²³ The question that immediately arises is; what is the merit inherent in analysing *Waiting for Constitution*? It has close resemblance to dramatic theatre or dramatic realism hence it is an example an enclosed, lisible text that is the opposite of the performance text analysed in the previous chapter.

The second version is the post-performance discussion where citizens' debate on issues raised in the play, not just at the venue of production but in cars, streets, and buses as they go to their homes. One, therefore, sees the similarity between the primary public sphere, which is the world of the play, and the secondary public sphere, which is the theatre public debating on issues that the play raises. In my opinion, the primary public sphere, should celebrate democratic values in order to empower the secondary public sphere to be a powerful public sphere in the real world of the theatre public. Hence, the researcher maintains that *Waiting for Constitution* represents citizens performing citizenship as they deliberate on the constitution.

10.2 Understanding Dramatic Realism

Dramatic realism has many names that include linear, enclosed and lisible theatre. This understanding of equating dramatic realism to lisible and enclosed, linear theatre is derived from scholars such as Castagno (2001), Ravengai (2001), Barthes (1960), Lehman (2006) Goodman and De Gay (2000) and Heuvel (1992). Heuvel (1992:48) notes that:

Plays that earlier critics had admired as 'classically constructed' or 'well made' are marked today... as 'enclosed works' (as opposed to 'open texts') which are 'lisible and readerly' (as opposed to 'scriptible and writerly') 'monological and logocentric' (as distinguished from 'dialogic and playful', 'oedipal and oppressive' (in contrast to 'luminal and ludic.'

Lehman (2006:3) notes that the following aspects characterise dramatic theatre/ realist theatre:

The dominance of dialogue and interpersonal communication, the exclusion of anything external to the dramatic world (including the dramatists and spectators who are condemned to silent observation), the unfolding of time as a linear sequence in the present and adherence to the three unities of time, place and action.

Ravengai (2001) submits that realism has the following generic aspects: adherence to the neo-classical unities of time and place, one unified and consistent setting and linear progression of a limited time span, a structure which follows a linear pattern where events unfold following cause to effect principle, action rise to a climax; a closed ending, characters that remain consistent, and a mimetic relationship with the world. It engenders a method of acting, called the psycho-technique, which prescribes that the actor must display a monolithic character proposal. The

actor should convince the audiences that his make-believe world is real, fated, and unchangeable. In brief, these are the generic characteristics of dramatic realism.

10.3 Background to *Waiting for Constitution*

Waiting for Constitution is a Rooftop Promotions production. Stephen Chifunyise, one of Zimbabwe's prolific playwrights, wrote the play. Daves Guzha and Tafadzwa Muzondo directed it. The cast includes Silvanos Mudzvova as Cde Babamunini, Sebastian Maramba as Sekuru Matamba, Tafadzwa Muzondo as Titus, Priscilla Mutendera as Mother and Privilege Mutendera as Constance. The play begins with a marriage consultative meeting, which fails to take off, leading into a heated debate on the constitution. Different beliefs, affiliations, ambitions and interests divide the family. The play raises awareness on the constitution based on the following questions:

Why is a new constitution necessary? What is wrong with the current one? Why was the 2000 draft rejected? How achievable is a people driven constitution? Who are the people? What are the dynamics of constitution making? Who are the custodians, enforcers, and watchdogs of the constitution? (Rooftop Promotions Poster: 2010)

The play has a clear objective of transforming the way people approach the constitutional debate. It, however, remains debatable whether the choice of style creates a framework that enables the play to serve its democratic function.

10.4 Acting Style: The Psycho-technique

The acting style in *Waiting for Constitution* derives from a method of psychological realism known as the psycho-technique. It is an acting style developed by the Russian director, Konstantin Stanislavsky. Shomit Mitter (1992:11) sums up the actor's mission in one phrase – 'to be' the character. In order for one to be the character, s/he has to know more about the character. Mitter (1992:15) notes that 'to know more about a character is to experience it more fully and eventually and seamlessly to become it.' The technique dictates that the consciousness of a character should totally control an actor/ess. The actor 'loses' his consciousness and totally becomes the character s/he is playing. The character determines an actor's gait, speech, movements, gestures and mannerism, social, political and economic standing. The actor loses his/her own identity and the acting style insists on a character identity that the actor must reveal

from the start to the end of the play. The acting style does not give room for half actors or hybrid characters. It also does not provide space for multiple casting and bifurcated or schizophrenic identities (Ravengai 2001, Castagno 2001).

The nature of acting in *Waiting for Constitution* is such that an actor/ess stick to a monolithic character proposal. An actor becomes a victim of a monolithic character psychology and given circumstances. There is an absence of character transformation and multiple identities. In this play, there is fixed characterisation: Comrade Babamunini played by Silvanos, Sekuru Matamba played by Sebastian Maramba, Constance played by Priviledge Mutendera, Titus played by Tafadzwa Muzondo and Mother played by Priscilla Mutendera. The play employs what Castagno (2001: 11) 'matrixed characters' who display a monolithic set of mannerisms, likes, dislikes, social standing, and character psychology. Castagno (2001:11) notes that:

The goal in traditional character development is to achieve character specific language for each character. Character specific dialogue has become a canonised term for play developers, surrounding the formation of a character like a hawk, swooping down to eliminate digression and anomalies in an attempt to neaten the character arc or progression across the play. Character specific as a descriptor suggests that the writer has found a voice or sounds to each character in a play-one that simulates real life and promotes exploration of subtext

Such characters have bearing on the nature of acting that is in this play. The actors (Silvanos Mudzvova, Chipso Bizure, and Sebastian Maramba among others) do not just play their characters; they actually became the characters.

The actors in this play present their play in an imaginary fourth wall. Although Rooftop staged the play in the round at Theatre-in-the-Park, the actors create a bubble or cordon around themselves, which militate against any form of dialogical processes between them and the spectators. Despite the fact that the actors are physically close to the audiences, they pretend that they exist in what Mitter (1992: 14) calls 'public solitude.' The actors clearly intend to hypnotise the audiences into the imaginary world of the play. To borrow from Esslin (1959), the actors are not just representing a world; they are creating a world, which they want

the audience to escape into. They are not just doing theatre, they want the audience not to realise that what they are watching is, in fact, a piece of theatre.

To this effect, the actor/ess eliminates any aspect of acting that would create ambiguities of the role that s/he presents. Movements of the actors play an emphatic role of revealing the inner emotions of character. The desire to reveal and heighten the depth of psychological realism motivates actors' movements and other gestural behaviours in this play. The actors do not use movement to create counterpoints between character and action. The movements are appropriate. For example, Cde Babamunini's movements (played by Silvanos Mudzvova) throughout the play assert him as the alpha male in the play. He stamps on the ground and moves with authority in the play. When he moves, all emphasis is on him. He moves around the lounge when he answers his phones in a manner that reveals his desire to dominate all other characters in the play. He is Mr Right, non-compromising and unwavering.

Costume, likewise, plays a similar role of creating a monolithic character. It does not play a conflicting or ambiguous function. Mother is a homemaker thus she dresses accordingly. She is the passive and docile housewife who has been pacified by patriarchy. Her costume contains cultural indicators of docility. The doek, the tennis shoes, the lack of makeup, the big dress that does not reveal body contours, the lack of make-up or jewellery all contribute into making the image of a typical Shona housewife who is submissive. This submissive image is an extension of her role. Throughout the play Mother, played by Priviledge Mutendera, is submissive. She does not create any conflict or tension with any character. She is even more submissive when she talks to Cde Babamunini and Titus. Thus, Mother costume is an extension of character and facilitates the production of a clear image of submission and docility. She maintains both the same character and same costume throughout the play.

10.5 Implications of Psychological Realism on Democratic Commitment

This style of acting has implications on democratic commitment. This monolithic construction of character identity and psychology encourages identification of audiences with characters. The 'make-believe' world creates the impression that what obtains on the stage is real life, thus the audiences began to like and dislike certain characters. Because the play sustains these characters,

audiences identify with them. Although *Waiting for Constitution* does not necessarily use terror and pity to create emotional attachment of spectator to actor/character, it still relies on other emotions to achieve the same effect. Boal (1985) notes that empathy is a product of other emotions beyond pity and fear. Esslin (1959: 110) observes that dramatic realism creates emotional attachment and identification:

By conjuring up before the public eyes an illusion of real events, drawing each individual member of the audience into the action by causing him to identify himself with the hero (Cde Babamunini or anti-hero- Sekuru Matamba) to the point of complete self-oblivion. The magical effect of the stage illusion hypnotises the audience into a state of trance, which Brecht regarded as physically disgusting and downright obscene.

Stereotypical characters augment identification. Castagno (2001:74) observes that:

The stereotypical character functions as a thematic extension of the playwright's bias. It may conform to a standardised mental picture shared by a specific interests group. Characters are quickly identified as victims, villains, persecutors, or saviours.

Cde Babamunini is a stereotypical character of a ZANU PF apologist while Sekuru Matamba was a caricature of a Rhodesian apologist and an activist of the MDC. When these two appear on stage, audiences easily recognise who they are. Spectators who belong to different political camps immediately take sides. They side with either Cde Babamunini or Sekuru Matamba. Thus, rather than interrogating the validity of what the two are saying, spectators simply comply with what their likeable character says, thereby undermining the possibility of thinking beyond the character in the debate over the new constitution in Zimbabwe. Cde Babamunini and Sekuru Matamba discuss very sensitive issues in Zimbabwean politics and the rift between them make spectators take sides. When Cde Babamunini says a point that ZANU PF supporters in the auditorium like, one hears sounds of approval from the spectators. When Sekuru Matamba makes a counter argument, some voices in the auditorium also make sounds of approval. They reduce the play to some kind of a political rally.. The spectators become polarised as they identify with these characters. The play stimulates emotions of hatred without providing an avenue for diffusing the tension. The play leaves the rift between the two wide apart so much that it reinforces the notion that democratic change is impossible.

The fact that the play sustains one major conflict from beginning to end heightens identification and empathy. The play does not centre its conflict on Constance's marriage. Rather, it is a conflict between the neo-liberal Rhodesian, anti-state players and the nationalist, anti-colonial voices. Consequently, it becomes struggle between ZANU PF (Cde Babamunini) and MDC (Sekuru Matamba). This battle between colonial past and liberation movement takes its toll when there is a confrontation between Comrade Babamunini and Sekuru Matamba. Comrade Babamunini becomes vulgar; hit his butt, and spits on the carpet in a manner that equates Sekuru Matamba to some kind of human waste. As Cde Babamunini displays such indicative gestures, he remarks that, 'we do not need the views of the 'Rhodies' in the writing of the new constitution...sic...sic the stinking Rhodesian' (*Waiting for Constitution*, 2010).

Sekuru Matamba then invades Cde Babamunini's space, breathing heavily and ready to fight. He replies that, 'I am a Zimbabwean who has every right to speak like a Zimbabwean' Matamba is also very insulting in his speech. He uses such terminology as '*Bloody ZANU*' and '*Bloody Kaffir*.' Comrade Babamunini's speech becomes a direct attack on the opposition Movement for Democratic Change. He remarks that, 'No, no, no, I do not change' (*Waiting for Constitution*, 2010). This bi-polar presentation of conflict also creates bi-polar reactions in the audiences who, out of identifying with either Sekuru Matamba or Cde Babamunini, become fanatic and emotional. However, unlike Brecht's observation that the audiences becomes hypnotised, the audiences of this play become agitated. Rather than becoming the audience that stares at the stage as if spell bound, the audiences become fanatical. However, the effect of being spell bound is similar to that of being fanatical and agitated in the sense that it makes the audience suspend reasoning and become less critical.

The bi-polar tension between Sekuru Matamba and Cde Babamunini makes the audience dread to confront the dark side of life. Rather than allowing the audience to laugh and interrogate the bi-polar attitudes in politics, the performance makes it inconceivable to escape the context of hate speech and political intolerance. In this way, the performance appeals to spectators' emotions rather than stimulating critical engagement. This emotional regime makes it inconceivable to think of the constitution beyond Sekuru Matamba or Cde

Babamunini. The audiences are enticed into an emotional trap, which makes it difficult to escape the emotional appeal of the two. Esslin (1959:110) observes that:

But identification with characters of the play makes thinking almost impossible: the audience whose souls have been crept into that of the hero will see the action entirely from his point of view, as they are breathlessly following a course of events which, in suspension of belief, they accept as really before their very eyes, they have neither the time nor the detachment to sit back and reflect in a truly critical spirit on the social and moral implications of the play. And all this because the author (Chifunyise), the producer (Rooftop Promotions) and the actors have conspired to create so powerful an illusion of reality.

The nationalist voice (Cde Babamunini) and the neo-liberal, neo-colonial Rhodesian voice (Sekuru Matamba) produce heightened identification so much that it becomes difficult, during the show, to think about Zimbabwe's future beyond these voices. These voices advance the fact that there can be no future beyond them. They subdue other characters that have differing opinions on the issue. Titus does not see the essence of the nationalist project because, for him, it is just as crippling as the colonial experience. So he tells Cde Babamunini that "*Endai munoisungirira nyika apo makanoisunungura*" (Return the country back to the colonialists so that the youths can initiate another process of liberating it) (*Waiting for Constitution*, 2010). Titus is radical, but his view represents the voice of subaltern youth who see no hope in what Patrick Bond and Masimba Manyanya (1999: i) regard as 'exhausted nationalism and neoliberalism.' Thus, the conflict between Cde Babamunini and Sekuru Matamba divides the audiences through emotions so that they fail to interrogate the relevance of these two forces in contemporary Zimbabwe. By so doing, *Waiting for Constitution* undermines the semiotic autonomy of the spectators.

Boal (1985) maintains the same stance as Brecht. He reiterates that the spectator's identification with character and actor is inimical to the liberation of spectator consciousness. Boal (1985) observes that plays like *Waiting for Constitution* force the spectator to believe in the struggles of the hero/ character. The spectator then delegates destiny into the hands of the

character. This development incapacitates the spectator to think beyond a character's fate. It creates a coercive system, which engenders an enclosed reading of the play. Heuvel (1992: 47) observes there is a 'coercive system' that has 'shaped the development of not only realist drama but also the positivist theatrical practices and spectator habits that accompany it.' Heuvel (1992: 48) adds that:

And so realism, once hailed as a forceful catalyst for moral polemic and social change, is now regularly defined in terms of the suspect coincidence between its own representations of reality, on one hand and a network of discourses, that is the existing norms that create and then govern the stance of human beings towards a particular historic environment- that the dominant culture already proposes and assumes as its reality.

Jacques Derrida as cited by Heuvel (1992:47) notes that dramatic theatre functions through the 'theological stage' which in Heuvel's (1992:47) words 'translates, through speech, the 'primary logos' of the author creator who controls and keeps watch over language and meaning, and who guides representation into the stable and determinate superstructure of the text.' Mitter (1992:11) adds that 'to appraise the facts is to take all alien life created by the playwright.' Thus, the Derridan 'theological' stage necessitates the practice of Foucault's (1994) pastoral power. The character becomes an all-knowing individual who had the mandate of instructing the spectator on which course of action to follow on issues raised in the play. Thus, Sekuru Matamba and Cde Babamunini are figures of pastoral power because they wield pedagogical advantage over the spectators owing to empathetic and identification mechanisms that *Waiting for Constitution* engenders. Consequently, the two make the play logocentric as the vision of the author has an overriding effect on both actor and spectator. Hence, the emotional orgies that this play produce, serve to universalise nationalists and neoliberal sentiments, which are, in fact, peculiar to Sekuru Matamba and Cde Babamunini. The semiotic autonomy and semiotic resistance of the spectator is greatly undermined. It is, therefore, conceivable to assert that *Waiting for Constitution's* style greatly undermines its democratic intentions of provoking dialogue on the new constitution in post-crisis Zimbabwe.

10.6 The Pitfalls of the Dramatic Realist Plot to Democratic Commitment

Catherine Belsey as cited by Maria Redondo (1997:477) notes that the dramatic realist plot entails:

The creation of an enigma through the precipitation of disorder, which throws into disarray the conventional cultural and signifying systems... But the story moves inevitably towards closure which is also disclosure, the dissolution of enigma through the re-establishment of order, recognisable as the reinstatement or a development of the order which is understood to have preceded the events of the story itself.

Belsey's observation is evident as the actors discuss everything but nothing changes. The play goes in circles simply to express the hopelessness of change within the constitution. Nothing really changes; the state of affairs remained unchanged despite the bickering and debating that characterises the play. Dominant voices of Cde Babamunini and Sekuru Matamba prevail over other voices in the play. The disorder that Titus, Constance, and Sekuru Matamba attempt to create does not yield any fruits. Cde Babamunini manages to restore his authority and by so doing, he dramatically embodies the old order, which other characters attempt to disrupt in vain. Cde Babamunini's nationalistic voice emerges victorious and more dominant than at the beginning of the play. Hence, attempts to challenge the status quo and dominant ideology are fruitless. The realist plot makes it convenient for the play to project its idea of hopelessness over the writing of the new constitution. The play then presents the actors as living in a world of fate, which has overwhelming challenges that actors cannot change. The inability of the actors to effect change on the outcome of the constitution reinforces, in the spectator, the notion that change is impossible. Just as the actors do not affect the fate of the constitution, so too does the spectator who is forced to live with that reality. Stowell (1992:83) notes that:

From the perspective of the Brechtian orthodoxy, the theatre of illusionism is that which shows the structure of society represented on stage as incapable of change by society represented by spectators, the maintenance of an on-stage illusion (that which is something other than itself) lulling a passive audience into social and political quiescence?

The failure of Constance, Titus, Mother, and Sekuru Matamba to effect change persuades the spectator to accept the fated reality of the constitution. Ravengai (2001:11) reinforces this point when he submits that, the linear structure, intrinsic to all forms of realism, was created to curtail dissent. The structure soothes the audience by siphoning off ill feeling.’ In this regard, the researcher agrees with Heuvel (1992: 47) when he argues that:

Realism simply replicates existing and, therefore, arguably bourgeois, patriarchal, racist, oppressive and oedipal discourses, and functions as a mode of conciliation, assimilation, adaptation, and resignation to those discourses.

Rather than providing the audiences with an avenue of escaping the crippling Rhodesian and nationalist ideologies, the play simply leaves these forces intact. It does not even provide the spectator with any hope of changing the state of things. Piga Domingo (2000: 1546) notes that:

A theater that limits itself only to analysing and interpreting daily realities lacks a sense of vitality. What do we mean when we say create a new future? Basically, transform mankind, transform history. Theater that simply criticizes humankind is a theater rooted in the past. Most of the plays that I have come into contact with are works by individuals who think that that they are writing popular theater, but who are just writing about mundane aspects of human existence. They find the world to be too corrupt, so they criticize it. What should the writer’s mission really be? To provoke a complete transformation, not just by revealing the follies of society, nor weeping about them, but by building a new and different future.

The failure to provide hope in the spectator by revealing the constitutional stalemate as unchangeable greatly undermines the plays’ intention of liberating the intellectual capabilities of the spectator over the constitutional debate in Zimbabwe. Whilst one agrees with Dolan’s (1988) submission that spectators are capable of oppositional readership of the performance and that they are capable of resisting the follies of realist representation; one still insists that even in the absence of resistive spectatorship, the performance must deliberately promote democratic engagement.

Fourie (1988) suggests a counter argument to the foregoing analysis. Fourie (1988:86) submits that ‘it has to be remembered that the viewer identifies with an imaginary world, so that emotions experienced are not genuine but surrogates. Consequently he is able to maintain emotional distance.’ Fourie (1988: 84) adds that:

it should however be borne in mind that the emotions experienced by viewers are directed to a fictional object and can therefore not be regarded as genuine emotion. Even though the viewers become emotionally involved, they realise that it is an ephemeral experience from which they could dissociate themselves if they so wish. They know that the experience of these emotions cannot do them permanent harm (e.g. lasting sorrow) or afford abiding pleasure or joy. The crux of the experience is the distance, which the viewer maintains despite possible emotional involvement.

Stowell (1992:83) is of the same view as Fourie. She notes that those who point out the hypnotic and crippling effect of the dramatic realist style on the spectators’ consciousness assume that the spectators are a monolithic entity who produces homogenous response to the realist text. My response to Stowell and Fourie is that whether the emotional orgies produced by the dramatic realist text are ephemeral, or whether the spectators are capable of resisting the hypnosis of the realist performance, the fact remains that the discursive practice of the dramatic realist style does not, at the level of intention and that of practice, provide room for the liberation of spectators’ intellectual agency. By intention, the play seeks to lock it. The spectators resist the onslaught on their emotions and remind themselves that they are watching a show. Even if the emotions are ephemeral, the fact that for an hour, the spectators go through emotional orgies points out to the limitation of *Waiting for Constitution* in embracing democracy.

Stowell also argues dramatic realism has the potential to reveal social inequalities, critique structures of oppression. She argues that ‘it is not that useless.’ She adds that her view is ‘merely to insist that realist theatre does not necessarily present a coherent and unassailable view of society. It is, rather, a tool or variety of tools, for shaping social perception’ (Stowell, 1992: 81). Whilst it is true that the dramatic realist text can serve a democratic function by revealing oppression, injustice, social inequalities and give voice to marginalised members of society, these ‘progressive’ qualities are tainted and marred by realism’s failure to equip marginalised

members of society with the ability to effectively reverse the balance of power in the hegemonic equation. Hence, dramatic realism, as evident in *Waiting for Constitution*, serves a conservative function.

10.7 The Home as a Public Sphere

In an environment with shrinking spaces for deliberation, citizens transform their homes into counter-public spheres. *Waiting for Constitution* demonstrates that ‘counter-publics emerge in response to exclusion within dominant publics; they help to expand discursive space (Fraser, 1994:67) The play certainly attempts to transform the home into a forum for deliberation on constitutional issues. The home, as a counter public sphere, should ideally become an unmediated public sphere where access to deliberation is not constrained by ownership of property, class, or gender. The question that this section seeks to answer is to what extent is the home a liberated counter- public sphere that actually expands discursive space?

Waiting for Constitution takes place in the living room. Historically, this space has been the prime space of the dramatic realist text, which has constructed the living room as patriarchal and in most instances bourgeoisie territory (Dolan 1988, Redondo 1996, Belsey 1980). When the play presents the home as dramatic space, one becomes keen to analyse whether the production team is aware of the limitations of using such a space in pro-democracy protest theatre. The question that came to mind is can the play use patriarchal space without becoming a victim of the exclusionary practices that this space has historically engendered? Can the play use patriarchal space without becoming a victim of its exclusionary ideology?

In my view, when a performance seeks to empower subaltern voices, it should shift away from spaces associated with control and authority. This is why plays whose stories happen in open spaces or in the street easily incorporate subaltern characters. For example, *Heaven's Diary* happens in the open space. In *Decades of Terror*, the action between Brian and Father takes place in a single township shack in order to enable subaltern characters to be part of the production. *Workshop Negative* takes place in a bus and *Protest Revolutionaries* transpired in a street because such spaces naturally invite the presence of subaltern characters. It is their space. In contrast, the living room, constructed with patriarchal and bourgeois ideology, fails

to include such characters. Thus, the choice of the setting of the play has a bearing on the voices that participate in that space.

In my view, the home cannot be a space for transformation because it has rules and regulations of how proceedings in that space must take place. It lacks deliberative fairness because, by its nature, it is space owned by someone. The elders usually own that space and among the elders, men have more control of that space, thus, it is full of patriarchal power. This space becomes antithetical to democratic deliberation because it takes stock of hierarchy and social respectability that undermines the freedom of expression and transference of social power that is necessary in deliberative platforms. The existence of relations of power in a home set up disrupts the realisation of fair procedure in deliberations on the constitution.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the youth in this play have limited speech. As much as Titus wants to contest views submitted by the Cde Babamunini, her mother always restrains him. The mother does not encourage Titus to oppose Comrade Babamunini because that is not in accordance with the registers of a home. There is great shock in the room when Titus steps on the sofa in order to assert dominant status over Cde Babamunini. The rest of the family is shocked that Titus challenges Cde Babamunini at home and in the family lounge. They see Titus' behaviour as a violation of registers. The irony of the matter is that when Cde Babamunini stands on a sofa to reinforce his dominant status, no one in the family is shocked. Whether this is an oversight of the director is another issue altogether. One interprets the lack of shocking response from the rest of the family because of the fact that Cde Babamunini, being the father of the house, is merely stamping his authority. Titus has to go through his uncle, Sekuru Matamba so that the uncle articulates the young man's interests. In the end, spatial registers only allow elders to deliberate on the constitution and make meaningful dialogue because of territorial advantage.

The home becomes a controlled territory where individuals earn deliberative power based on the conventions of home. This space then engendered the ostracisation of values and beliefs that are outside the patriarchal home. The sense of home enables Comrade Babamunini to deny Constance the right to participate on national issues. The main reason is that being away

from home; he is not certain whether her views are in conformity to the values of home. Comrade Babamunini remarks that:

Why should we waste our hard-earned dollar money to collect views from America? How do we ensure that those views are not the views of Obama and George Bush (*Waiting for Constitution*, 2010).

The patriarchs castigate Constance, who had gone into the diaspora, as loose because she married without the consent of home. Home did not receive lobola. Ironically, Titus, in particular, lambasts her for having children out of wedlock. In the scheme of things, Titus, despite being inferior to the patriarchal heads, has more power over her sisters because he is a man. Titus is a patriarch in waiting. Thus, patriarchal power makes Titus to fail to realise the greater picture of oppression. Instead of siding with other oppressed members of the family, he fails to see that he is a conduit of the very system of oppression that has, earlier on, denied him deliberative power. Sekuru Matamba insists that Constance should go to America and collect lobola from one of the Swedish boyfriend who fathered her child. The men in the house make a barrage of insults on her. She is unable to defend herself. She only looks down on the floor in submission. She is so humiliated that she cannot not lift her head and show her face to the rest of the family. She becomes a misfit. Jill Dolan (1988: xvi) concludes that:

Realism's... conservative moralising against outsiders who threaten the normative social order demonised those who did not fit conventional models of ... male, middle class, heterosexual decorum.

Stowell (1992:81) notes that the realist text becomes 'tainted and counterproductive, of use only to those who would endorse bourgeoisie hegemony with its consequent enshrinements of domus, family, and patriarchy.' Owing to the fact that home is patriarchal territory; the hero of the play naturally becomes a man in the form of Cde Babamunini. Cde Babamunini becomes the protagonists whilst his main rival, the antagonist, is also a man in the form of Sekuru Matamba. These two drive the plot of the play whilst Mother, Constance and Titus come in and out of the field of action, just to spice the play. Thus, the play promoted a male gaze. Dolan (1988:2) reiterates this point when she submits that the dramatic realist text:

Addresses the male spectator as an active subject and encourages him to identify with the male hero in the narrative. The same representations tend to objectify women performers and female spectators as passive, invisible and unspoken subjects.

The idea of home that comes with dramatic realism makes it permissible to ban any engagement with gay rights because, according to the patriarchs (Cde Babamunini, Sekuru Matamba and Titus), that practice is alien to home. Comrade Babamunini uses the home to defend tradition and deny the existence of such practices at home. Home then allows the play to engender exclusionary tendencies based on their origin. The home is, therefore, not a space for transformation because it brings notions of appropriate registers, ownership and control, which create filters and censorious mechanisms that determine the focus of the ensuing constitutional debate. Thus Fraser (1994:67) is correct when she concludes that ‘even those (public spheres) with democratic and egalitarian intentions are not always above practicing their own modes of informal exclusion and marginalisation.’

Home provides a fixed set of spatial given circumstances that imply that the constitutional debate cannot extend to themes that lie outside the home or which members of home do not engage with in their daily existence. Issues that the family discuss are those that affect members of home in their daily activities. The family excludes issues that are not homely and respectable. It would have been a different scenario if the play transpires in the open space that no one claims to own. The open space, in my view, allows reversal and interrogation of power relations because it is liberated space. It defies confinement as bourgeoisie or patriarchal, even, for that matter, feminine or matriarchal territory. It has no registers; anything is acceptable. This is why Laiza, in *Heaven's Diary*, has the freedom to speak out her, and urinate in public. The open space borrows its being from the carnival, the dithyrambia, where the participants have the freedom to speak and behave as they see fit. The open space as carnival would then allow the debate on the constitution to be varied and diverse without fixed power relations that determines rules of engagement as is the case with realism.

10.8 Conclusion

Dramatic realism, as a style, greatly undermines *Waiting for Constitution's* democratic commitment. Its methods do not celebrate diversity, pluralism, and liberation of subaltern agency. The use of the home, which is the favourable dramatic space of dramatic realism, engenders patriarchal ideology, which oppresses other men, women, and outsiders. That interpretation undermines the agency of the common other sections of society as vehicles for change. Dramatic Realism is, therefore, exclusionary. *Waiting for Constitution* proves that attempts to repurpose dramatic realism for purposes of liberation produces a stillbirth, since it still carries over its residual function of conservatism and exclusion. Despite the fact that Rooftop Promotions uses this style to promote constitutional debate, the lack of attention to oppressive and homogenising vectors of the dramatic realist style greatly undermines the democratic potency of *Waiting for Constitution*. The fact that this style also oppresses the spectator in terms of his intellectual capabilities also demonstrates the pitfalls of the dramatic realist style for purposes of liberation and critical engagement. This style encourages identification and empathy without providing any interruptions that help the audiences to regain their intellectual composure. It also presents the world as fated and unchangeable as conservative and dominant forces prevail over progressive and subaltern forces. The actors and the spectators do not have the power to change this fated illusion since the style of presentation does not promote audience's participation.

Chapter Eleven

Conclusion

11.1 Introduction

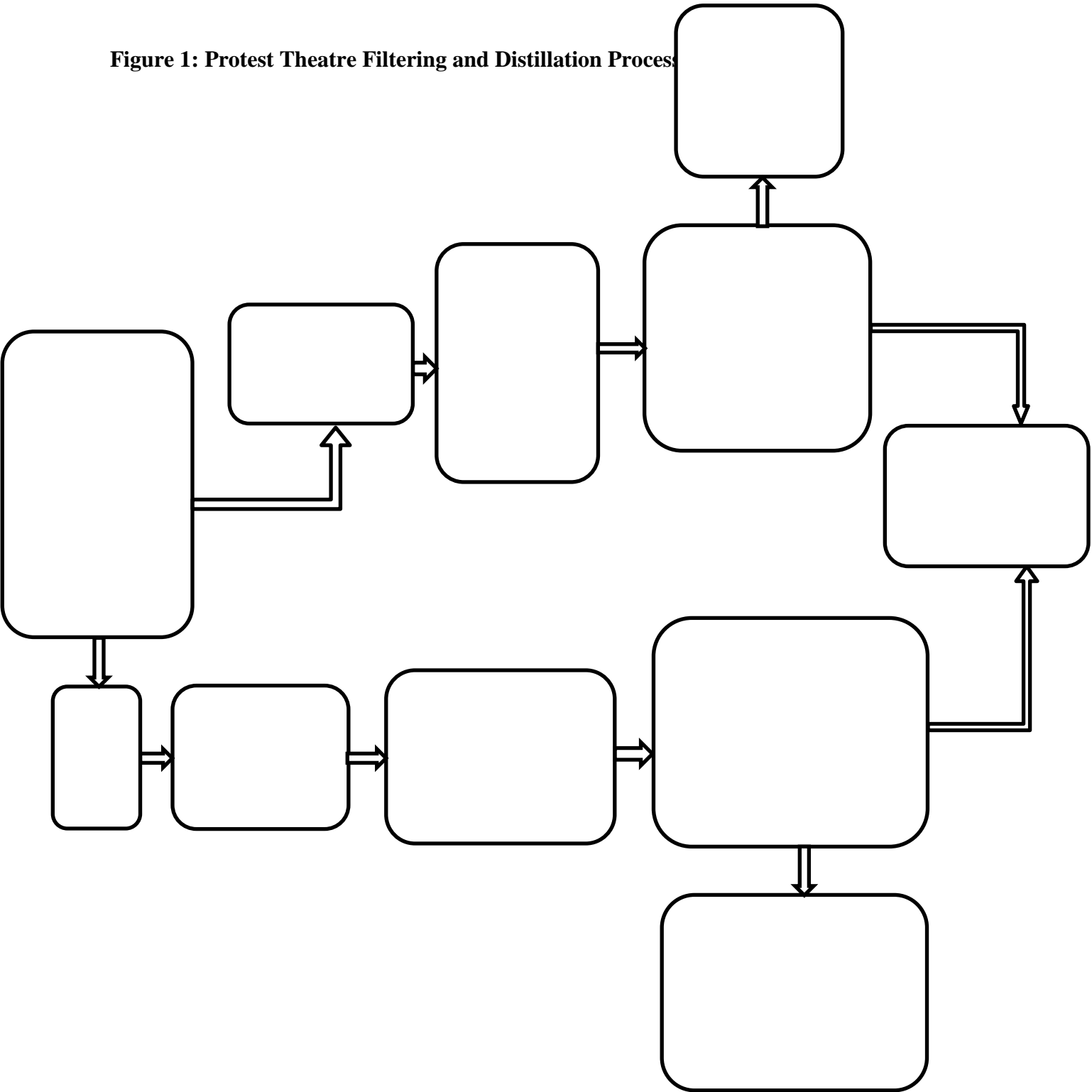
This study has explored the fidelity of selected performances of protest theatre to the democratic intentions that informed its practice. The study has explored the relationship between democracy and protest theatre at various levels, first at the level at which protest theatre provides alternative counter public sphere that helps various individuals to articulate their needs and interests in the struggle for democratic reform in Zimbabwe. In this first level, the study has also examined how selected performances accord various individuals, especially those from subaltern orientation, authority over their actions. Consequently, the study has also investigated how various performances mediate on the agency of various individuals in order to construct identities that legitimise/ delegitimise the moral and intellectual leadership of certain social groups over others in the struggle for social and political reform.

At another level, the study has also interrogated the relationship between style and democratic commitment in selected performances. At this level, the study has explored the efficacy of style in liberating audience/ spectators' semiotic and intellectual autonomy. The study also interrogated how the choice of particular spaces, in terms of setting, influence deliberation and participation of voices in the counter public spheres that are manifest in selected productions.

11.2 Towards a Theory of Democracy for Protest Theatre

Because of this study's interaction with various theorists and scholars, the feasibility to promulgate a theory of democracy by merging existing theories is possible. It is the view of this study that one can merge the tenets of various theories of democracy, power and performance to create a filter system that guarantees an outcome of a democratic theatre as illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1: Protest Theatre Filtering and Distillation Process



This process first isolates two key components of a theatrical production, namely the component that deals with issues of identity and representation, and the component that deals with style.

Issues of identity and representation go through a two-chamber purification process. The first chamber interrogates how a particular production constructs and mediates on the agency of various individuals/ characters or social groups. This chamber analyses the extent to which individuals within a production exercise authority over their actions. It also examines how individuals display the intellectual autonomy and the capacity to lead, modify, and implement change. This chamber borrows immensely from the works of Habermas, Fraser, Young, Philips and Barrat among many others. Their emphasis on identity and agency helps to interrogate how a particular production mediates on the agency of individuals

The second chamber then examines relations of power in a particular production. In order to flush out tendencies of oppression, issues of identity and representation go through a chamber that interrogates manifestations of power and ideological engineering within a particular production. This chamber unveils strategies of veiling oppression within a production. Thus, this chamber explores subtle forms of oppression such as paternalism, universalism, and elitism. It looks at how a production attempts to legitimise the hegemony of a chosen social group at the expense of others. It looks at how a performance undermines the moral and intellectual leadership. In essence, this chamber explores strategies of power imbedded within a particular production. The theories of Foucault, Gramsci and Guha inform this chamber.

The two chambers enable a performance to become a platform for counterhegemonic politics that respect the diversity, difference and identity of voices in deliberating on issues of national interest. A protest production, in this sense, accords various groups intellectual authority and autonomy as they deliberate on national issues. The performance becomes a platform for competing hegemonies rather than one for reinforcing dominance of a particular social group. Consequently, the system flushes out impurities that include universalism, paternalism, exclusion, elitism, objectification and otherness.

The filtration and distillation process also purifies aesthetic and stylistic aspects of a performance in order to commit them to democracy. The filtration system interrogates the nature of characterisation in a production. Owing to the fact that protest theatre is an alternative public sphere, it is imperative that marginalised voices occupy that space in order for them to articulate

on their vision and needs. Characterisation should provide a framework for diversity and pluralism by ensuring that a production gives room to as many fragmented voices as possible. A style that favours multiple casting is ideal for this purpose, because that style enables an actor to embody voices of various individuals and in so doing, allows voices of these individuals to have a say in national issues. Productions with rigid character proposals undermine diversity of representation as an actor only embodies one voice throughout the production.

Ideally, a performance should give space to the poor among the poor, or the marginalised among the marginalised. Productions rarely give room to voices of street kids, prostitutes, inmates, the disabled, children, vendors, hooligans and other personalities that mainstream society regard as outcast. Yet these individuals are also citizens. They deserve as much space to articulate their interests and needs to authorities just like their respectable counterparts. In addition to this, productions must give them agency. It would be unfair for a performance to incorporate such characters so that they parade their ignorance and stupidity. Constructing ‘outcast’ voices with ignorance and arrogance only serves to reinforce stereotypes that legitimise and perpetuate their exclusion and marginalisation as citizens. They may have weaknesses in terms of their behaviour and mannerism, but that should not translate to political impotency. This paradigm shift will enable citizen stories to cease to glorify the respectable and elite members of society, but also, side by side in the Guhan sense, show the contribution of the entire society towards democratic change.

The staging dynamics of a production are crucial. A director must be aware of elements that undermine the semiotic autonomy of the spectator. The director should be aware of elements that engender indoctrination and brainwashing. The best performance is one in which both the actors and spectators retain their autonomy as individuals. Following the tenets of the post-linear theory, it becomes crucial that the acting style does not make actors ‘prisoners’ of character. They should be able to walk in and out of character psychology. They should become the half actors that Richard Schechner and Brecht popularised. The production should be open ended rather than enclosed. This study has demonstrated the essence of post linear techniques such as dematrixing, polyvocality, dialogism, half acting, detachment, interruption, carnivalesque, and hybridity towards the empowerment of audiences and actors individuality and autonomy in

reading the performance. Directors can experiment and create new techniques of liberating intellectual autonomy during the process of reading a production. The filtering process enables the director to know aspects of production that undermine the liberation of the spectator in the Boalian sense. These elements include emotional orgies, oppressive identification and empathy (after Brecht), linearity, rigid character profiles, fixed and monolithic readings (after Lehman, Castagno).

Spatial dynamics are also important, hence the need for the director to refine them. I have argued that when a production intends to empower voices of the marginalised, it should take place in the world of the marginalised. Most social outcasts seldom live in respectable environments. Thus, in order for a production to capture the imaginations of these people, it should be set in their environments such as the streets, the open space, the squatter camps, the prison, the ghetto, the slum, the railway station, or in the bus. Space can create barriers of entry and participation. The open space is the best space, because no one owns it. It is no man's land. It has no barriers of class, gender, ideology, patriarchy, religion, race or political beliefs. The open space has no registers. The open space enables the director to escape registers that come with environments such as the home or the parliament. These spaces engender certain behaviours that are peculiar to a certain category of people. The power of ownership mars these spaces. They create insiders and outsiders leading to exclusion of other social groups or at worst, they undermine their agency by revealing their inappropriateness and inadequacy. The 'alien' can never have equal deliberative power with the owner. Choice of the environment in which the play is set, therefore, plays a great role in committing a production to democratic intentions.

11.3 Recommendations and Conclusions

This study has observed that democracy is both a goal and methodology. Assessing the manner in which a project or movement adheres to democracy cannot be sufficed by merely looking at the intentions of a movement. The study has stressed the essence of treating democracy as a methodology that informs the practice of a movement. This helps in unveiling subtle forms of oppression that become manifest despite the overall noble intentions of a movement.

This study has pointed out the limitations of valorising the oppositional and counter discursive function of an alternative public sphere without interrogating relations of power in that forum. To this effect, it is critical to observe how counter public spheres not only provide discursive space, but also how they liberate the agency of various individuals so that they articulate their interests and aspirations without being othered or marginalised. This identity driven approach is crucial to the public sphere because identity enables various individuals to advance their interests that are specific and unique to them. The analysis of various performances has stressed the importance of interrogating the representation of subaltern interests alongside those of the elite in a bid to undermine tendencies to recreate oppression through blindness to difference. Thus, the democratic views of Diana Fraser, Iris Marion Young, and Anne Philips among other have been crucial in pointing out subtle forms of oppressions that undermine democratic intentions.

From the foregoing observation, the study has concluded that selected performances of protest theatre produced during the crisis largely perpetuated the oppression of subaltern social groups that they purported to liberate. This observation came after a rigorous examination through filters that searched for issues of agency, exclusion, paternalism and unfair relations of power. This four-filter process yielded that although subaltern characters deliberate on their needs in the struggle for change, they lack the agency to convince one that they possessed the moral and intellectual capacity to lead, design, implement and modify the struggle for reform. The productions reflected them as ideological alibi that legitimise and confer the role of leading the struggle to the elites. The actions of Zack, Tom and Laiza in *Heaven's Diary*, Brian and Father in *Decades of Terror* point out to subalterns with no capacity to effect change. Hence, their contribution to the struggle for change is limited and ineffective. Some productions construct them as helpless victims who are at the mercy of authorities.

Performances that various groups stage after the crisis imbue democratic values convincingly. Individuals that mainstream society usually sideline, acquire deliberative power that reflects the potency of their intellectual efforts in modifying the struggle for democratic reform. Subaltern characters, in transformative/ reconciliatory protest theatre display autonomy of intellectual thought. The productions that the researcher analysed celebrate their input as vehicles of change. They possess semiotic resistance; they challenge authority at both the hegemonic and repressive

levels. The celebration of agency, diversity and difference is evident in performances such as *Protest Revolutionaries*, *Rituals*, and *No Voice, No Choice*. These plays have been interrogated using the same lens as *Heaven's Diary*, *Madame Speaker Sir 2* and *Decades of Terror*. By way of comparative analysis, the study has established the conceivability of creating protest theatre that imbues democratic values, not just at the level of intention, but also at the level of practice.

The difference in terms of democratic thrust emanates from the fact that during the crisis; protest theatre was more concerned with the agenda of regime change so much that it directed most of its energies towards bashing the system and exposing the state's abuse of power. Subsequently, protest theatre became a forum for spreading anti-state propaganda. Practitioners and artists justified this stance by citing the way in which state media had biases towards the ruling party and the status quo. They also pointed out that the state was also commissioning protest plays that supported its hegemony. In their view, protest theatre had to peddle pro-opposition and civic society propaganda. It was mainly in this counterhegemonic function that protest theatre operated. Yet, in trying to undo state dictatorship, practitioners, artists and civic society recreated oppression by failing to attend to issues of power, paternalism, universalism, subtle exclusion and ostracisation of subaltern members of Zimbabwe's social fabric. The new protest theatre reinforced the notion of the elite as vehicles of change while paying scant attention to the contribution of subaltern social groups. It undermined the very process of citizenship it sought to engender.

After the crisis, practitioners and artists realised that the ushering in of a new dispensation in the form of the GNU did not immediately translate to democratic reforms that they clamoured for in the previous decade. They realised, just like any other citizen, that even members of the MDC who became part of government were equally capable of undermining democratic reform. They realised that they had to create theatre that accorded even the smallest of voices the opportunity to modify and implement change. They revised their mistakes of celebrating a few great men at the expense of the majority. Thus, transformative protest theatre restored the power of the demos/ the people as agents of change. Vendors, students, rural folks, mothers, poor workers suddenly found themselves having more representation in this theatre. Even prostitutes, thieves and street kids had a voice in this theatre. These voices, which had previously been marginalised,

began to influence democratic processes mainly in the area of national healing, reconciliation and writing the new constitution. These voices articulated their dismay over attempts by elites in the inclusive government to undermine their power as citizens.

This study has also concluded on the importance of style to democratic commitment. Because theatre is a form of media, it cannot escape examination of the means by which it postulates its messages to its consumers. The choice of style should enable audiences and spectators alike to retain their intellectual and semiotic autonomy during the performance. The study has stressed the essence of engendering performance structures that intentionally liberate the spectator in terms of generating meaning out a performance. Thus using the post-linear performance theory, the study has reiterated the significance of open performances in liberating the semiotic processes of a performance. This study has used *Rituals* to demonstrate this idea. This study has also explored the limits of closed performances, manifest in dramatic realism, using *Waiting for Constitution*. The study noted that although audiences are capable of oppositional readership in the face of a style that locks meaning, there should be a deliberate democratic intent to liberate the spectator.

This study has also observed that the space in which a forum for deliberation (public sphere) takes place has a bearing on how that forum unlocks agency of subaltern members. The study has observed that in a crisis characterised by shrinking democratic space, the shift from customary deliberative forums to alternative ones becomes necessary. For example, performances that were in areas where most people live displayed a high level of participation of subaltern characters. The workshop in *Workshop Negative* is one such space. Workers stood up against authority owing to the workshop environment, which made them, feel at home. The context of the ritual in *Rituals* also empowered the vocality of rural folks because it was familiar territory. The study noted that spaces that have few barriers of entry and ownership promote vocality. However, the study noted that attempts to convert the home into a public sphere as in *Waiting for Constitution* had adverse results owing to barriers to participation inherent in the home. The home is controlled territory, patriarchal space; hence, it undermines the agency of outsiders, women and the youth.

11.4 Prospects for Further Research

This study has opened up one of the many fronts of research that scholars can undertake on protest theatre in Zimbabwe. It still needs academic attention. A single thesis cannot contain the scope of its achievements and failures. This study has only touched a mere fraction. There is a possibility of writing a thesis on style alone, perhaps expanding and incorporating many plays. There is the possibility of examining the efficacy of humour. There is also the possibility of interrogating the counter hegemonic function of protest theatre not just against authorities but also against other forms of oppression inherent in society. As Van Graan (2006) notes, protest theatre can direct its energies in the fields of HIV/AIDS, unemployment, domestic violence and corruption. As long as there are people, there is something worth protesting about. There is room to explore the contribution of social protest as a tool for behavioural change in society. There is also the possibility of making sense of protest theatre beyond crisis and political dimensions. One can also investigate the representation of white voices in protest plays. It is an irony that despite the fact that the third *Chimurenga* was a war against white farmers, protest theatre has been ‘silent’ on the plight of this community despite the way in which this problem has gathered international attention. Questions as to why there has not been protest theatre within white dramatic associations such as Reps Theatre and Theory X are questions that some scholars may want to ponder. The other issue is that of the land question in protest theatre. Despite its centrality to the crisis, the land question has not received academic attention in terms of its portrayal in protest theatre. Obviously, one is keen to know what obtained in pro-state protest theatre during the crisis. One can explore comparisons by analysing how different it is from the Agit props of the eighties and nineties such as *Mavambo*, *Katshaa*, *Samora* and *Mandela, The Spirit of No Surrender*. There, is therefore, a lot that researchers can write about protest theatre in Zimbabwe.

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