

**Refusal and Rupture as a Postdramatic Revolt:
An analysis of selected South African Contemporary Devised Performances with particular
focus on works by First Physical Theatre Company and The Rhodes University Drama
Department.**

A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN DRAMA

of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

by

ROBERT HAXTON

Supervisor

PROF. J. FINESTONE-PRAEG

January 2014

Abstract

This mini-thesis investigates the concepts of refusal and rupture as a postdramatic revolt and how these terms can be applied and read within the context of analysing contemporary devised performance in South Africa. The argument focuses on the efficacy of Hans-Thies Lehmann's postdramatic terminology and the potential of its use in an appreciation of contemporary performance analysis. I investigate the potential in South African contemporary devised performance practice to challenge prevailing modes of traditional dramatic expectation in order to restore the experience of discovery and questioning in the spectator. This research is approached through a qualitative process which entails a reading and application of selected critical texts to the analysis with an application of Lehmann's terminology. This reading/application is engaged in a dialogue with the interpretative and experiential aspects of selected South African devised performances with particular focus on four cross-disciplinary works selected for analysis.

Chapter One functions as an introduction to the concept of postdramatic theatre and the application of the terms *refusal* and *rupture* as deconstructive keywords in the process of a devised performance. Chapter Two is an analysis of several South African contemporary performances with particular focus on *Body of Evidence* (2009) by Siwela Sonke Dance Company, *Wreckage* (2011) a collaboration by Ubom! Eastern Cape Drama Company and First Physical Theatre Company, *Discharge* (2012) by First Physical Theatre Company, and *Drifting* (2013) by The Rhodes University Drama Department.

This mini-thesis concludes with the idea that with an understanding of refusal and rupture in a postdramatic revolt, contemporary devised performance achieves an awakening in its spectators by deconstructing the expectation of understanding and the need for resolve; the assumption and need for traditional dramatic structures and rules are challenged. Instead, it awakes an experience of discovery and questioning.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor, Juanita Finestone-Praeg for her passion and guidance throughout. Emma de Wet and Sonja Smit for their able assistance with editing. Pumelela Nqelenga, Nomcebisi Moyikwa, Siya Ngcobo and Genna Gardini for their assistance. My mother and family. Liz and Chris de Wet, as well as Hannah and Fabio Diaz for their very kind support. The Rhodes University Drama Department.

Contents

Contents	00
Introduction	01
Chapter One Postdramatic Revolt: Towards a Postdramatic Devised Performance	
1.1 The Postdramatic	11
1.2 Refusal and Rupture in Representation	21
1.3 Refusal and Rupture in Time	27
1.4 Conclusion: Cross-disciplinarity and Crystallization	30
Chapter Two A Postdramatic Analysis of selected South African Contemporary Devised Performances	35
Conclusion	85
Bibliography	88
Appendices	93

Introduction

Wreckage (2011), the much anticipated collaboration between two renowned Eastern Cape theatre companies (Ubom! Eastern Cape Drama Company and First Physical Theatre Company) was initially panned in its first review by Cue reviewer Theresa Edlmann. Edlmann disclaimed the work as ‘disappointing’, elaborating that “the conceptualisation of the piece (is) puzzling... the title invites so many historical and contemporary links, very few of which were clearly realised... History needs to be given a firm historiographical frame, rather than a series of vague and confusing allusions...”.¹ In one of many counter reviews, Mike Loewe argues that *Wreckage* is a “rather large multi-dimensional artistic exploration of [these] historic themes... to be looking for a connect-the-dot, find-Donald-the-duck narrative is ludicrous. Indeed, more than a little insulting”.² The crux of the heated online debate provoked by Edlmann and Loewe seems to be located in the difficulty of articulating and evaluating experimental forms of performance. Edlmann’s immediate reaction appears to be one of apprehension, confusion and rejection whereas Loewe’s reaction was one of wonder, interrogation and intrigue. In his seminal book, *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006), Hans-Thies Lehmann outlines his postdramatic concept, a primary theatrical discourse through which a work like *Wreckage* could be appreciated. Theatre critics often mistakenly understand contemporary performance to be a series of theatrical responses slapped together with little coherent conceptual thought put into the framing of its form. I posit that the conceptualisation and construction of *Wreckage* was in no way confused, but rather postdramatic.

¹ Edlmann, T. Cited on: <http://cue.ru.ac.za/?p=3978> Date accessed: January 25, 2013.

² Loewe, M. Cited on: <http://www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/show/scue/> Date accessed: January 25, 2013.

A month after *Wreckage* had premiered at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, I was approached by a group of second year drama students who had a number of questions surrounding the deconstructed style of *Wreckage*. The students were in the midst of a lecture series on post-modernism and intertextuality in theatre, and had been tasked with writing an analysis on a current production engaging with notions of dramatic deconstruction. The production of choice that year was *Wreckage*. One question posed to me sparked both intrigue and frustration for me; *does theatre have to be appropriate or logical and sound, in order to be considered valuable? Valuable?*

I deliberated for nearly a week before trying to formulate an answer that could explain the ‘value’ of theatre that does not adhere to traditional (appropriate) forms of representation and logical structure. A knee-jerk post-modern response - ‘What is theatre? Does it need to have value?’ seemed superficial and insufficient. Perhaps we needed an expanded and more inclusive definition of the term, one that went beyond the bounds of the well-made play. I struggled to help the student to locate this ‘value’ that she sought. My response to her was as follows:

We [theatre makers] are busy moving beyond a post-modern era into something new – this is yet to be termed but is under much debate. In that sense, entertainment in theatre has moved far beyond the need for comfort and closure and has moved towards a theatre of experience.

My frustrated response, naively referring to ‘*something new that is yet to be termed*’ clearly demonstrated that I was not equipped with the appropriate terminology to describe these new forms of experimental performance. I turned to the multitude of ‘post’ prefixed terms in order to

find suitable discourses in which to frame my explanations; post-modern, post-subjectivity, post-colonial, post-human... the list goes on. It is from this frustration that my investigation for this mini-thesis begins.

There were two reasons for the student(s) approaching me with this question and the same two reasons for my choice of topic in this mini-thesis; a.) My own work as a theatre maker and, b.) My connection with Ubom! during the making of *Wreckage*.

a.) In 2010, I was given the opportunity to create and direct the Rhodes University student production for the National Arts Festival. The production, entitled *Rubber* (2010), told the fragmented tale of a family living in isolation in the Karoo. A father's dead wife haunts him in the form of a crow, while his children refuse to run the farm. Jemina, the daughter, is a drunk who is bound from leaving by a mysterious happening in her past. The son, Stefan, spends his time in his rubber factory. The factory's real produce, poison being passed off as medication, infects the land's inhabitants and sickens the crops. When everything begins to die, the farmworkers, hungry and angry, hold the family under house arrest. Ravina, the family's domestic, tries to protect them from necklacing, but she cannot stop the unfolding of secrets which tear at this family of desperate survivors.

The exercise I had set out for the cast and myself was to create a contemporary work through a process of fragmentation. I would use anti-plot as an element, which I experimentally referred to as 'wrongness'. I wanted to refuse traditional formats of storytelling, combine different

disciplines, whilst keeping a coherent sense of style throughout the performance. In my directors' note I wrote,

I have been interested in working with 'wrongness'. What happens when incorrect or alien features are made a component of a system that has already defined its characteristics? For example, adding a drop of morphine into a Thai curry, or injecting air into a person's bloodstream... What about placing a rubber factory in the middle of the Karoo?

My aim was clear to me – I wanted to rupture traditional dramatic structures in which 'form' simply reflects or is dictated by content. I was interested in exploring form for its own sake. The hypothesis was that by deliberately inserting an anomaly or 'wrongness' into a system, that system would be altered in response, its form changed. The form was indeed disrupted and audience members, perplexed by the fragmented plot structure and multiplex of simultaneous dramatic signs, struggled to interpret this disruption. A multiplicity of genres (dramatic acting, live music, physical theatre, mime) ran simultaneously, disrupting each other as in a game of tag. Theresa Edlmann, the reviewer that had slammed *Wreckage*, similarly dismissed *Rubber* as "directorially incoherent and conceptually confused".³ My creative involvement in *Rubber* placed me in a difficult position - how to respond objectively to the work's critical reception? How to defend the 'value' of the work's process and theatrical style, when its very making had set out to question such concepts of theatrical form and its 'value'?

³ Edlmann, T. Cue Newspaper, July 4, 2010.

⁴ De Swart, M. Cited on www.artslink.co.za/.

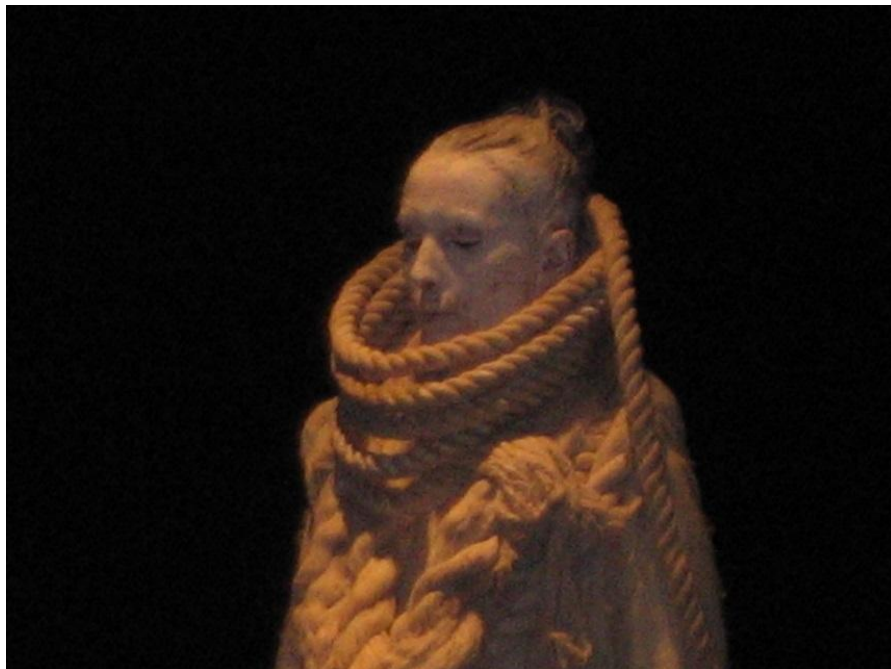
b.) The following year, I began working for Ubom! Eastern Cape Drama Company, and was obliged to help where I could with gathering information on *Wreckage*. Although a very different production to *Rubber*, *Wreckage* also rejected traditional narrative structures. *Wreckage* covers nearly three hundred years of Wild Coast history; a group of European sailors set out to sea in search of land - on the shores of Eastern Cape, South Africa, they crash, meet and collide with the country's native inhabitants. *Wreckage* presents us with a historiography of these events rather than a 'History'; it discloses the subjective nature of historical discourse by deconstructing the very idea of a stable objective history – one that suggests 'a truth'. In *Wreckage*, the very 'truth' of history is called into question.

Like *Rubber*, *Wreckage* was accused of being incoherent and stylistically confused. Both left key plot points deliberately unresolved; their meta-genre presentation appeared to perplex and appall some theatre critics and spectators. As I was not a part of *Wreckage*'s creative process, I was able to appreciate its deconstructed style from a 'distance'; I could appreciate it as a spectator. Although 'Practice as Research' is a common practice in the performance studies discipline, I have opted to not analyse my own work for this dissertation. In the interest of this analytic 'distance', I will focus my investigation predominantly on works which I have viewed or researched, rather than works in which I have been creatively involved.

There is growing debate around the breakdown of traditional dramatic forms. I have been surprised by the tone of outrage which sometimes characterises this debate, and by the angry reactions of spectators and critics. I had an alarming experience of this outrage at the 2008 National Arts Festival, after watching *Intiem etc.* (2008), a work by South African theatre maker,

Tossie van Tonder. *Intiem etc.* is a difficult work to describe. Van Tonder stands wrapped in hemp rope which covers her chest, neck and face, coiling its way up to her eyes. A blind and partially deaf man, Jacques Coetzee, sits in the center, singing. Throughout the fifty minute performance, van Tonder and Coetzee interact on a completely improvised score with the aim of finding ‘new’ experiences of the body; new vocal sounds, new ways of communicating and fresh physical movements. In her Artslink review, Moira de Swart describes *Intiem etc.*:

The sounds to which the dance is performed are created by van Tonder and Coetzee. Coetzee is a singer, but the sounds are a series of human and eerie animal-like emissions rather than music... none of the movements are hurried, and the projection of water adds to the feelings of being flotsam and jetsam, or taking a leisurely voyage of discovery... the programme invites us to explore our intuition to break through the resistance which stops us from participating in the vastness of ‘everything’.⁴



Tossie van Tonder in *Intiem etc.* National Arts Festival, Grahamstown. 2008.
(See Appendix D for video footage)
Photograph by Melissa Parkin

⁴ De Swart, M. Cited on www.artslink.co.za/.

Spectators were only handed the programme after leaving the performance, whereupon I was approached by an outraged audience member. She asked me whether I would have understood anything about the work had I not been given the programme as a contextualisation of the intimate performance we had just witnessed. At the time I did not see a need to understand, but rather felt that I had gazed at a moving painting for fifty minutes. Like de Swart, I wanted to appreciate the work as it was handed to me – for the experience, for what I took from it. I did not have an answer for her.

In retrospect, *Intiem etc* offered me a glimpse into a world of performance as an experience, devoid of dramatic rules such as plot, character development and ‘logical reason’. I was drawn to the characteristics of the human body; of van Tonder and Coetzee’s live bodies. Coetzee’s blindness and partial deafness drew my attention away from one of seeing but rather one of sensing. Van Tonder’s bird-like movements and seagull cries became a text in which I, as a spectator had to interpret. *Intiem etc.* shifted my knowledge of the dramatic theatre I had come to understand. I was witnessing a breakdown of traditional theatrical means and became privy to the presence of two bodies that refused to adhere to modes of theatrical representation. I was experiencing a theatre that is in itself, ruptured.

In a key-note address (Confluences 6, July 2011, UCT) “Difference is Revolting”, Professor Juanita Finestone-Praeg interrogates the notion of the body in contemporary physical theatre, proposing that it is *revolting* to spectators who are used to more classical and traditional forms of dance. She details her experience as a performer in the seminal dance work by Gary Gordon for First Physical Theatre Company, *Shattered Windows* (1989). Where *Intiem etc* is slow and

delicate, *Shattered Windows* is “a corrosive, disintegrated landscape [that] is ruptured by the anarchic mumblings and shrieks of the performers as they fling their bodies with violent abandon through barbed wire doorways”.⁵ Finestone-Praeg addresses the notion of confronting audiences with an experience of the body by rupturing the modes of knowledge with which these audiences are familiar. She says,

To watch a performance like [*Shattered Windows*] means opening oneself up to the experience that becomes possible only when modes of knowledge break down; it shatters ideas about mastery over the body through artistic representation and expresses a body that refuses to be domesticated, pinned down or contained: a body of questions, permanently in revolt. A body that is revolting.⁶

This concept of revolt struck a chord with my investigation for appropriate terminology. It not only described the style of rupture inherent in contemporary performances such as *Intiem etc.* and *Shattered Windows*, but also engaged with audience outrage towards these performances. Finestone-Praeg speaks of spectators often asking her such ‘trite’ questions as “But is it dance”? or “What does it mean”?⁷ with regard to a work like *Shattered Windows*. These questions, like the one posed to me by the *Intiem etc.* audience member, and like Edlmann’s dismissive reviews of *Rubber* and *Wreckage*, reveal the revolt at play in the deconstruction of the traditional theatrical forms that these works offer.

Although ‘revolt’ aptly described audience attitudes towards contemporary performance, it was not descriptive of the scope of new performance in the larger context which I sought. Another term used in Finestone-Praeg’s key-note address, ‘postdramatic’ was more promising. She cites

⁵ Finestone-Praeg, J. Pg 1.

⁶ Finestone-Praeg, J. Pg 3.

⁷ Finestone-Praeg, J. Pg 4.

Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006). In *Postdramatic Theatre*, Lehmann argues that contemporary performance practice is "often met with little understanding. But even spectators who are convinced of the artistic integrity and the quality of such theatre often lack the conceptual tools to articulate their perception".⁸ In this term, 'postdramatic', I had finally encountered a term that would open the discourse and allow me the tools for my analysis of contemporary performance work.

In this mini-thesis, I will analyse a selection of South African contemporary performances in relation to the notion of the postdramatic in order to reveal and argue for the value of 'new' or emerging forms of theatre which reject or destabilise traditional forms of theatre.

Lehmann's influential study of the postdramatic focuses mainly on performers and directors located in the Western hemisphere. The theatrical sensibilities which Lehmann describes, despite sharing commonalities with contemporary performance in South Africa are not applied to any South African contemporary performance examples. I believe that the application and adaptation of this framework to a South African setting is an extremely valuable project, as it provides us with a means in which to understand and appreciate experimental work being made in South Africa - work that finds the constraints of traditional drama too limiting a space in which to articulate a South African experience. The postdramatic, with its questions of audience complicity and disjointed narratives, provides a challenging platform for South African artists. This mini-thesis will consider how Lehmann's ideas can be applied to contemporary

⁸ Lehmann, H. Pg 19.

performances occurring predominantly in South Africa and will be analysing a selection of South African contemporary devised theatre performances.

Although a variety of South African performances will be utilised, I have come to identify an extensive practice of experimentation in theatre making, through my experience as a student and colleague at the Rhodes University Drama Department over a period of nine years. As such, many of the examples I reference speak to the lineage of contemporary devised performance practice fostered by the Rhodes University Drama Department – the predominance of which include works by post-graduate performance practices and First Physical Theatre Company.

Particular focus will be given to *Wreckage* (2011) a collaboration between Ubom! Eastern Cape Drama Company and First Physical Theatre Company, *Discharge* (2012) by First Physical Theatre Company, and *Drifting* (2013) by The Rhodes University Drama Department and *Body of Evidence* (2009) by Siwela Sonke Dance Company. Further information (Production credits, reviews and video footage) on each of these works are attached as appendices and will serve the reader positively in their appreciation of the analysis to follow.

However, before continuing with the analysis, it is important to first outline what Lehmann means by using the term ‘postdramatic’ and how I will be utilising it in the context of this mini-thesis.

Chapter One

1.1 The Postdramatic

Lehmann's text has become a key reference in the study of new theatre forms. His text outlines, in detail, a long neglected branch of theatre studies that no longer focuses on the dramatic text as the primary aspect of theatre analysis. Instead, Lehmann offers a fresh study that resonates with the innovations that theatre and performance practice has seen in the last fifty years.

Prior to the concept of the 'postdramatic', theatre scholars applied frameworks external to performance studies with the aim of theorising new performance forms. However, terms such as 'post-modern', 'post-colonial', 'minimal', 'neo-avant-garde' and 'experimental' are often so general as to be superficial, serving only to describe the most palpable surface structure of contemporary theatre productions. In their attempts to conceptualise, analyse and categorise new contemporary forms of performance, critics, scholars and theatre practitioners often struggle for terms that could describe these deconstructive aesthetics. As Karen Jürs-Munby discusses in the introduction to Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre*, new forms of theatre have often, if not exclusively, been analysed and interrogated in terms of postmodern theories and discourses originating outside of theatre and performance. What Lehmann sets out to achieve in *Postdramatic Theatre* is the creation of a discourse which "trac(es) a trajectory from within theatre aesthetics"⁹ itself. Theatre theorist Mark Wessendorf succinctly describes these differences:

Even though the concept of postdramatic theatre is in many ways analogous to the notion of postmodern theatre, it is not based on the application of a general cultural concept to the specific domain of theatre, but derives and unfolds from within a long-established

⁹ Jürs-Munby, K. Pg 14.

discourse on theatre aesthetics itself, as a deconstruction of one of its major premises.¹⁰

By allowing the specific discourse of theatre aesthetics to formulate his research, Lehmann offers a term that has allowed theatre scholars and practitioners a “theoretical vocabulary for reflecting on this work and for articulating its aesthetics and politics”.¹¹ We need no longer apply general cultural concept terminologies to articulate the aesthetic politics of performance, but can rather use a vocabulary that bases itself within the domain of theatre. The focus is theatre aesthetics, or as I will refer to in this mini-thesis – performance aesthetics. Why performance as opposed to theatre?

In a key-note address (August 1992, Atlanta), “A New Paradigm of Theatre in the Academy”, Richard Schechner elucidates the distinction between ‘performance’ and ‘theatre’. He calls for a paradigm shift which might elevate the practice and research of theatre and performance to new heights of academic and economic contribution. He writes:

The new paradigm is "performance," not theatre. Theatre departments should become "performance departments." Performance is about more than the enactment of Eurocentric drama. Performance engages intellectual, social, cultural, historical, and artistic life in a broad sense. Performance combines theory and practice.¹²

Finestone-Praeg supports this distinction between a theatrical paradigm and a performance paradigm in her keynote address,

¹⁰ Wessendorf, M. Pg 1.

¹¹ Jürs-Munby, K. Pg 14.

¹² Schechner, R. Pg 9.

...a *theatrical* paradigm – where, mostly, things have a linear beginning, middle and end which, once understood would reveal the meaning of that theatrical event. Instead of this theatrical paradigm we have moved towards a *performance* paradigm. This shift has transformed how performance studies both informs and performs its teaching pedagogies.¹³

The use of the word ‘theatrical’ carries with it lingering associations of the traditional dramatic model. It is difficult to completely eradicate the use of the word ‘theatre’ as it does not exclusively refer to a ‘drama’ *per se*. Although Lehmann often refers to ‘the new theatre’, in this thesis I will employ the phrase ‘contemporary performance’ in order to locate this shift towards a performance paradigm. Accordingly, the terms ‘theatre’ and ‘performance’ will be employed contextually throughout my analysis, while the prescriptive term ‘drama’ will be carefully avoided. In an analysis of postdramatic theatre, ‘drama’ is used in reference to an older paradigm and as such lacks the scope in which to describe the newer performance paradigm. Lehmann points this stance out as problematic:

This is demonstrated by the predominance of purely negative criteria. The new theatre, one hears and reads, is not this and not that and not the other, but there is a lack of categories and words to define or even describe what it is in any positive terms. This study aims to go some way towards correcting this situation.¹⁴

Similarly, the analysis in this mini-thesis aims to contribute towards this correction that Lehmann refers to. Postdramatic theatre, according to Lehman, refers to a theatre ‘after’ drama or as Rachel Fensham states in her essay “Postdramatic Spectatorship: Participate or Else” (2013), a

¹³ Finestone-Praeg, J. Pg 4.

¹⁴ Lehmann, H. Pg 19.

theatre “no longer requiring a fixed relationship between the text and the stage”.¹⁵ This does not imply that performance would no longer use texts or that written plays would no longer be relevant but, as Wessendorf points out, “it only implies that the other components of the *mise en scène* are no longer subservient to the text”.¹⁶ A vast number of contemporary playwrights can be considered postdramatic because their dramaturgy exists and responds to the fundamental paradigm shifts that have occurred since the early 1960’s. Such playwrights include Heiner Müller, Susan Lori-Parks, Sarah Kane, Howard Barker and South African playwrights, Penny Youngleson and Genna Gardini, to name a few.

Sarah Kane’s *4.48 Psychosis* (2000), a play dealing with issues of clinical depression and pain, is an example of a play text that can be considered postdramatic. In his postdramatic analysis of *4.48 Psychosis*, Barnett writes that “the play offers a wide variety of textures whilst never attaching text directly to a speaker... there are Crimp-style dashes to signify a change in speaker in six of its twenty-four scenes, the rest present text in a variety of forms”.¹⁷ *4.48 Psychosis* not only has no character attributions, but also lacks stage direction. The result is that the text itself is open to performative interpretation. It could be performed by one, three or even seven performers, depending on the dramaturg/directors’ choice. Despite the sporadic use of ‘I’, which indicates a “representation of identity”¹⁸, the text remains for most part characterless. The postdramatic, therefore does not reject the dramatic text but rather remains in an ongoing relationship of conflict and rupture with the performance text. To quote Antonin Artaud,

¹⁵ Fensham, R. Pg 1.

¹⁶ Wessendorf, M. Pg 2.

¹⁷ Barnett, D. Pg 19.

¹⁸ Ibid. Pg 19.

...although we may admit that there is a difference between the text as performed on a stage and the text as we read it, although we may confine theater within the limits of what goes on between the lines, we cannot succeed in separating theatre from the idea of a performed text.¹⁹

That is to say that the ‘dramatic’ cannot be simply dropped from the ‘postdramatic’ in the same way that theatre cannot be separated from the idea of the performed text. It is in the prefix ‘post’ that a distinction is created. The prefix “post” can be confusing, as it can be understood in two different ways. If ‘post’ is understood to mean ‘after drama’, then it is suggested that postdramatic theatre rejects the authored dramatic text which has gone before it. This sets up a binary relationship between dramatic text and postdramatic text. Liz Tomlin alludes to the ‘inevitability’ of the authored dramatic text’s eventual rejection, as new forms of visual and physical theatre begin to develop. In her paper, “‘And their stories fell apart even as I was telling them’: Poststructuralist performance and the no-longer-dramatic text” (2010), she writes

Inevitably theatre studies, and at a later date, performance studies, was always going to seek to bolster its independence as a discipline by re-directing its focus away from the dramatic text, as studied in English Literature departments, towards a rewritten history of theatre and performance, and a contemporary practice that rejected the forms and conventions of the authored written text, in favor of collaborative practice with an emphasis on the live, the physical and the visual aspects of theatre.²⁰

Attempting to distinguish between a ‘dramatic text’ and a ‘postdramatic text’ might suggest that the postdramatic begins where the dramatic ends – but this statement is too simple. Instead, the prefix ‘post’ should have second meaning, one which suggests that the postdramatic continues an

¹⁹ Artaud, A. in Sontag, S. Pg 267.

²⁰ Tomlin, L. Pg 1.

on-going relationship with the authored dramatic text, rather than a total departure from it. In her paper “The Musicality of Postdramatic Theatre: Hans-Thies Lehmann’s Theory of Independent Auditory Semiotics” (2010), Catherine Buoko eloquently defines these two understandings of ‘post’, allowing that the prefix can function

...either as an approach that does not take the dramatic advances into account and wants to make a fresh start or as a spectacular form that does not deny the possibilities of dramatic renewals but directs its research towards non-dramatic modes of expression.²¹

Lehman’s theory employs the latter definition. The foundations laid by dramatic texts can be entertained within a conflicting relationship with the postdramatic; a relationship of rupture. In the introduction to *Postdramatic Theatre*, Karen Jürs-Munby aptly outlines this rapport,

‘Post’ here is to be understood neither as an epochal category, nor simply as a chronological ‘after’ drama, a ‘forgetting’ of the dramatic ‘past’, but rather as a rupture and a beyond that continue to entertain relationships with drama and are in many ways an analysis and ‘anamnesis’ of drama.²²

Thus, the ‘post’ in postdramatic does not suggest a complete departure from the dramatic text but rather a rupture and interrogation of the dramatic. Many dramaturgies have opted to revisit dramatic texts within a postdramatic aesthetic. Postdramatic performance is concerned with more than just the written text; the text (whether considered dramatic or not) should not be isolated from the broader spectrum of performance. South African choreographer, PJ Sabbagha’s *Macbeth* (2008), for example, interprets Shakespeare’s tragedy in the form of contemporary

²¹ Buoko, C. Pg 26.

²² Jürs-Munby, K. Pg 2.

dance, switching the perspective of the narrative from Macbeth to Lady Macbeth, as performed by Dada Masilo. The following year, 2009, Masilo presented a contemporary ballet version of *Romeo & Juliet* – once again, the original Shakespeare text was transformed into the language of contemporary dance. The perspective of the romantic tragedy is skewed toward Juliet's point of view, with Romeo playing only a supporting role. These two works exist in relation to the traditional Shakespeare canon, but transform and rupture the original dramatic texts.

In 2007 I was cast in a production of German playwright Heiner Müller's *Hamletmaschine* (1977), directed by South African director Wesley Deintje.²³ *Hamletmaschine* is a deconstruction of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In Müller's interpretation the characters are alienated from a personal sense of self, existing rather as historical archetypes. For example, in *Hamletmaschine*, Ophelia functions not simply as Shakespeare's singular wronged woman; she embodies and rejects the state of victimhood prescribed to her in the original. Müller's Ophelia serves as a symbol, blown beyond the contexts of history and gender. As such, she is able to muse and reflect on her archetypal disposition. Furthermore, the structure of *Hamlet* is exploded and pieced together into *Hamletmaschine* with a logic unrecognisable to the original. Whilst visiting Taiwan I was fortunate to witness Mobius Strip Theatre's production *Hamletmaschine – Hamlet b.* (2010), which interprets Müller's own version of *Hamlet*, further deconstructing the original by making Müller himself a character. In *Hamlet b.* Hamlet deliberates in a dressing room, preparing for the centenary performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, disheartened by the fact that no audience has arrived to watch it. Meanwhile, Ophelia makes her way to the performance through a snowstorm that eventually consumes her, freezing her in a block of ice. Müller, the character, is consistently criticised by those characters he is attempting to deconstruct and at one point is literally drawn

²³ CueTV Clip. Appendix D.

into his own text, stripped naked and forced to wear Ophelia's sultry underwear. The text is predominantly Mandarin Chinese, spoken in sporadic German accent. This leap from Shakespearian English prose to German accented Mandarin Chinese represents an interrogating rupture and breakdown of written and spoken language. The 'post' of postdramatic therefore serves as 'a result of' or 'a relationship with' rather than a departure from and or a rejection of the traditional dramatic text. All aspects of text fall prey, perhaps not to the director *per se*, but rather to the dramaturg.

Simply put, dramaturgy is the art of composition for various elements of interdisciplinary stage and performance practices. A dramaturg often selects, combines, structures and composes all features of a given performance, which includes aspects of directing and playwriting. According to Bojana Kunst's "The Economy of Proximity: Dramaturgical Work in Contemporary Dance" (2009), the dramaturg is "someone who is trained in the poststructuralist critical manner and familiar with the postdramatic expansion of performance practice; she is a guarantor of interdisciplinarity".²⁴ Thus, within a postdramatic discourse, the role of the dramaturg becomes paramount in deciphering the eventual form through which a given contemporary performance is realised. Without the comfort and rules of the dramatic *mise-en-scene* guiding directors and performers towards an easily recognised formula, the devised contemporary performance is, as Patrick Primavesi and Lehmann suggest, on constantly 'shifting grounds'²⁵ – there exists the ever present potential for chaos, yet at the same time, a constant potential for innovation. The art of dramaturgy aims to build moving monuments upon this unstable foundation; a mode of performance that aims to rupture and refuse traditional representation and narrative processes.

²⁴ Kunst, B. Pg 1.

²⁵ Lehmann, H and Primavesi, P. Pg 1.

This rupture is embodied through a process of devising, where the textual hierarchy is destabilised.

This is a clear departure from the manner in which the dramatic text is traditionally approached and thus necessitates a more suitable form of analysis. I have identified two key deconstructive terms from which I will frame my analysis, namely *refusal* and *rupture*. These two terms will be referred to interchangeably with reference to a) the creative process of devising and b) the products of this creative process. I have opted to allow each term to cross reference throughout the analysis in an interdisciplinary manner, reflecting the style and nature of the selected works. However, prior to analysis, it is important to contextualise the use of the terms *refusal* and *rupture* in the context of this mini-thesis.

The use of the term 'refusal' in this context operates on two levels. Firstly, refusal does not simply imply the rejection of traditional theatrical 'norms', rather it refuses the terminology that defines traditional theatrical expectation. In order for a postdramatic discourse to evolve with an identity of its own, it cannot be described simply as a rejection or negation of existing dramatic structures. Instead, the refusal to apply dramatic structural rules is suggested as a process in the realisation of possible new performance structures. Lehmann makes it quite clear in the prologue to *Postdramatic Theatre* that negation of classical norms alone cannot allow for contemporary performance to create an identity of its own. He writes,

What is actually hard to shake off is the classical *terminology* that turns the power of tradition into aesthetic norms. It is true that new theatre practice often establishes itself in the public consciousness through polemical differentiation from customary practice and thus creates the appearance that it owes its identity to the classical norms. Provocation alone, however, does not make a form; even provocative, negating art has to create something new under its

own steam. Through this alone, and not through the negation of classical norms, can it obtain its own identity.²⁶

Through my analysis it will become clear that the endeavour to create a performative identity that is enriched by and at the same time refutes classical theatrical norms is an important element of postdramatic theatre. It is, as Lehmann points out, the issue of *terminology* that lends traditional forms of theatre the power of accepted theatrical theory and expectation. That is to say, it is difficult to describe new performative aesthetics when the only terminology available to do so has been created for traditional theatre. *Postdramatic Theatre* offers us a discourse and terminology in which this issue can be elucidated, which in practice is ultimately the aim of this mini-thesis – the application of these terms to a selection of South African devised performances.

Secondly, refusal will be employed as a term that describes the process of conflict inherent in a postdramatic devised theatre process; the deconstruction of dramatic representation. Unlike traditional dramatic play texts, devised theatre does not rely on an omnipotent playwright who decides on most, if not all, performative structures before the active process of theatre making begins. These structures are often entrenched within the tradition of classical theatre characteristics such as character development, plot and dialogue based storytelling. These characteristics, Lehmann points out, are associated with the term ‘drama’ and have hence “informed not only its [new theatre] theory but also the expectations of theatre”.²⁷

Throughout *Postdramatic Theatre*, Lehmann frequently uses the term *rupture*. This term is paramount in understanding the discourse from which the postdramatic aesthetic has defined

²⁶ Lehmann, H. Pg 28.

²⁷ Lehmann, H. Pg 31.

itself. New performance, as will be discussed through the selected works, thrives on breaking the rules of classical dramatic structures which have informed our understanding and expectations of theatre and performance. The problem lies in these new performance forms finding an identity of their own. That is to say, an identity that exists independently, rather than being critiqued in reference to its ‘failure’ to achieve the classical dramatic form. I will refer to this identity as one of rupture.

1.2 Refusal and Rupture in Representation

In his article “When is a Play not a Drama? Two Examples of Postdramatic Theatre Texts” (2008), David Barnett clearly outlines two key processes that define classical theatre: “it represents and it structures time”.²⁸ Representation, as Barnett explains, corresponds with “Aristotle’s definition of mimesis, the imitation of an action”.²⁹ That is to say, actors, props and set represent characters, objects and locations respectively which are either represented metaphorically or literally. Barnett illustrates the dilemmas that representation creates:

...representation is never neutral: it is both selective and subjective, and both qualifiers reduce whatever is being represented in some shape or form because the referend will always be more complex than that which is distilled into a representation.³⁰

²⁸ Barnett, D. Pg 14.

²⁹ Ibid. Pg 14.

³⁰ Ibid. Pg 14.

It is the politics of assumed neutrality that encourages critics and spectators to bring expectations of a representational performance. This assumption of neutrality in representation, when in reality, representation is anything but, transposes an unavoidable hierarchy and normativity onto theatre expectations. In postdramatic performance, these hierarchies are challenged. Barnett points out in his paper that, despite their characters remaining representational, various dramatists have attempted to go beyond representation. Bertolt Brecht, for example, employed the device of *alienation* or the *distancing effect*³¹ that allowed performers to step outside of their characters in order to, as Barnett states, “reveal ideological structures that inform the process”.³¹ The distancing effect is achieved by allowing the actors to break the ‘fourth wall’ by addressing the audience directly. Audience members are unable to feel unseen or remain passive spectators. The spectators are thus made aware of being in a theatrical space. Similarly, many works employ the use of meta-theatre whereby the action of the narrative is spoken directly towards the audience, disclosing the representational structures of the theatrical construction. Often these meta-theatrical characters comment on the process of being in a play themselves. A good example of this device is a play I directed for my final Honours examination in 2008; Margaret Edson’s Pulitzer Prize winning play *W;t* (1999). In *W;t*, the protagonist Dr. Vivian Bearing addresses the audience directly throughout. Dr. Bearing is a professor of English literature who, throughout the duration of the play, is diagnosed with and dying of stage five metastatic ovarian cancer. She indicates to the audience that she will die by the end of the hour and half she has been given to dramatise her story. As the cancer progresses, her interaction with the audience becomes laboured. The play text’s eloquent language begins to break down, until the audience is left without a narrator, abandoned to witness the ironic theatrical death forewarned to them. *W;t*

³¹ Barnett, D. Pg 14.

makes reference to the restrictions of representation and as Barnett points out they “implicate their own plays in the limitations of representation at the same time”.³²

Plays like *W;t* begin to rupture and deconstruct the represented dramatic character. By creating a direct dialogue with the spectators, the audience is reminded of the theatrical space they occupy. At the same time, the transformation of performer to character is maintained, and the performance remains one of representation. The notion of ‘post’ as a “rupture and a beyond that continue to entertain relationships with drama”³³ is reinforced in that postdramatic elements coexist with more traditional dramatic elements. Yet in postdramatic theatre, the rupture and deconstruction of representation is challenged further, with the very idea of representation being fragmented.

In this way, postdramatic theatre aims to rupture representation. It aims to present rather than “posit a direct, representational relationship between the stage and the outside world”.³⁴ Performance art, for example, is characterised by the exposition of a visceral “liveness”³⁵ or immediate presence. Due to its immediacy, performance art successfully engages the audience’s attention to what is happening ‘here and now’ rather than suggesting a time and context outside of the performance space. According to Adrian Heathfield, performance art aims to “shock, to destroy pretence, to break apart traditions of representation, to foreground the experimental, to open different kinds of engagement with meaning, [and] to activate audiences”.³⁶

³² Barnett, D. Pg 14.

³³ Jürs-Munby, K. Pg 2.

³⁴ Barnett, D. Pg 15.

³⁵ Balt, C. Pg 1.

³⁶ Heathfield, A. Pg 7.

This use of presence is displayed in a work, *Bain Brise*³⁷ (2010), which I witnessed at the National Arts Festival 2013 (Thursday 3rd at 14:00). Swiss performance artist Yann Marussich is submerged in a bathtub filled with broken glass. The audience is invited to witness Marussich slowly liberate himself from the bathtub over a duration of ninety minutes. The threat of tissue damage to his person is real, live and in the moment. His body is constantly under threat of suffocation, of being cut, and of being crushed. As his naked body reveals itself, small streams of blood can be seen running from his thighs and shoulders, confirming the potential danger posed by the shards of glass. Throughout, Marussich stares at audience members. As a spectator, this elicited in me an uncomfortable awareness of my voyeuristic gaze on a naked man ‘taking a bath’. Apart from the minimal interaction with his eyes, Marussich does not interact, saying nothing and making no sound himself. As a spectator, one is obliged to experience the immediacy of the performance. I do not mean to suggest that postdramatic theatre *is* performance art, but rather that it bears a relationship to the achievement of presence in performance art. Barnett remarks that,

The postdramatic proposes a theatre beyond representation, in which the limitations of representation is held in check by dramaturgies and performance practices that seek to *present* material rather than to posit a direct, representational relationship between the stage and the outside world.³⁸

The presenting rather than representing of material in the postdramatic and performance art remains one of the most provocative aspects of contemporary performance. Spectators are invited to question their own agency while witnessing, and are thus implicated in any possible

³⁷ CueTV Clip. Appendix D.

³⁸ Barnett, D. Pg 15.

moral and/or ethical issue that may arise in the performance. Audience responses to this suggested complicity and refusal to fulfill expectations of traditional representation vary. As example, I turn to Christine Balt's visceral description of South African performance artist Peter van Heerden's provocative piece, *6 minutes* (2006) in her mini-thesis "A Dark Revolt of Being: Abjection, sacrifice and the Real in performance art, with reference to the works of Peter van Heerden and Steven Cohen" (2009). She writes,

I am standing at the end of a dirt road, at midnight, waiting for the performance to begin. Suddenly a car pulls up, and a man and woman are inside. I identify the man as South African performance artist Peter van Heerden. I initially think that the woman in the car with him is his girlfriend, giving him a farewell kiss. I am wrong. He steps out of the car and pulls the woman out on the other side. She screams as he pins her to the bonnet of the car and rips off her skirt and rapes her. He then runs away... In the dark, I confusedly follow the crowd and the path of the rapist to a nearby tree. Suspended from the tree is the performer, submerged in a bag that contains red liquid and other strange, fleshy objects that float around his body as he moves inside the bag. The bag breaks, and the first thing I notice is the strong smell of blood, and raw meat.³⁹

Van Heerden's performance of *6 Minutes* caused outrage among unwilling spectators and critics alike. The work was lauded for its provocative and relevant content, yet was also interrogated for the brutality of the performance. In her "2006 in Review" on Artthrob, Sue Williamson writes, "*6 minutes* is one of the most powerful and gut wrenching performances that I have witnessed to date. The performance was so incredibly brutal, that unwilling onlookers were left nauseated and disturbed after witnessing a naked Van Heerden performing simulated intercourse on an infant (a doll) and the real whipping of the artist orchestrated by the butcher (Andre Laubscher)".⁴⁰ The

³⁹ Balt, C. Pg 1.

⁴⁰ Williamson, S. Cited on www.artthrob.co.za.

spectators are confronted with the happening taking place in front of them – should they intervene?

It is an intention of performance art to shock and to provoke. In this endeavor, Van Heerden is successful. The performance jolts the viewer with visceral imagery of the violent and deplorable acts of brutality occurring in a post-apartheid South Africa (i.e. the title ‘6 minutes’ refers to the statistic that a woman is raped every six minutes in South Africa). Such blatant political relevance is less apparent in *Bain Brisé*, in which spectators are faced with the choice of either witnessing a body liberate itself or actively helping it. In both cases, spectators were challenged and revolted by the experience of brutality as well as the apparent lack of dramatic representation. In both works, the use of representation would imply a *suggestion of* the real, rather than an *experience of* the real – this distinction is similarly a fundamental aspect of postdramatic performance. Both Marussich and Van Heerden successfully refuse representation as a form of performance, making their work not only powerful, but postdramatic.

1.3 Refusal and Rupture in Time

The rise of technological advances such as the internet, cellular telephones, and Skype has, as Barnett suggests, “radically compressed time and space”.⁴¹ The result is that our experiences of time, space and distance have radically shifted. Barnett says,

...the internet, and mobile phones have all radically affected the way we view distance and the time required to cover it. Information technology and the mass media have connected the world in ways that engender profoundly different ways of experiencing it.⁴²

This view is supported by theorist Paul Virilio who wrote the seminal text *Speed and Politics* (1977). In an interview with John Armitage, Virilio talks about the effect of technological advancements and globalisation:

Today, almost all technologies put the speed of light to work. And, as you know, here we are not only talking about information at a distance but also operation at a distance, or, the possibility to act instantaneously, from afar... the speed of light does not merely transform the world. It becomes the world. Globalization is the speed of light.⁴³

Although Virilio theorises predominantly on the politics of warfare in relation to the notion of speed, the above quote resonates strongly with Barnett’s claim that technologies have resulted in “a world that is constantly shrinking”.⁴⁴ Our perceptions of the world have changed radically, but accordingly. This includes a saturation of information, as well as the way the mass media has allowed us to experience the world in a plethora of information. That is to say that our

⁴¹ Ibid. Pg 15.

⁴² Barnett, D. Pg 15.

⁴³ Virilio, P. Cited at <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=132>.

⁴⁴ Barnett, D. Pg 15.

experience of time is less ‘moment to moment’ (A to B to C) and more a series of seemingly unrelated moments happening simultaneously (A and C and F). In dramatic theatre, moments are ordered into a logical sequence of events constrained by the drama’s time-logic linearity. Postdramatic theatre, however, ruptures the structure of time and sequences in order to present a plenitude of moments at the same time. Lehmann writes:

...simultaneous and multi-perspectival modes of perception replace linear and successive ones. A more superficial and at the same time, more encompassing sensibility takes the place of the more centralized and deeper one.⁴⁵

Barnett points out that the linearity imposed on a drama will inevitably be at odds with postdramatic theatre in its endeavour to present a plenitude of experiences. Lehmann writes that “drama is the flow of time that is controlled and made manageable”.⁴⁶ Following the Aristotelian precedent (which will be discussed further in Chapter Two), action in a drama is the ordering of represented moments and inevitably constitutes the appearance of tensions, developments, climaxes, and dénouements arising in its structure. Barnett points out that postdramatic theatre:

...looks at the paradigm of the dream as a formal means of suspending the thematic flow of time. Dreams are episodic and non-linear: meaning is dispersed throughout their structures, so that, for example, knowledge of a dream’s conclusion may not shed any undue revelatory light on the dream’s possible significance.⁴⁷

Much like the theatre of American Avant-garde director Robert Wilson which gives way to what he describes as the *interior screen* (also to be discussed further in Chapter Two), moments are

⁴⁵ Lehmann, H. As cited and translated by Barnett, D. Pg 15.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Pg 15.

⁴⁷ Barnett, D. Pg 15.

placed episodically. Within these episodes and/or vignettes, images, sound and movement may or may not suggest a logic of connections. Barnett writes that “language and images are presented and passed over to the audience to experience and only perhaps to interpret itself”.⁴⁸ The ordering and rupture of the dramatic structure, like representation, has been challenged in order to reveal the limitations of such rigid structures in postdramatic performances.

For example, Sarah Kane’s *Blasted* (1995), a play exploring violence in the wake of the Bosnian war in 1992, begins as a standard dialogue between a woman (Cate) and a man (Ian) set in “a very expensive hotel room in Leeds – the kind that is so expensive it could be anywhere in the world”.⁴⁹ The play deceptively appears to be following a logical sequence of events. This is disrupted when the second scene reveals that the entire room has been blasted by a bomb. Cate has disappeared and a nameless soldier enters the space, eventually raping Ian and shooting himself. By the third and final scene, the dialogue and structure are ruptured, giving way to a dream-like purgatory of tableaux’s. The audience is left unaware of whether the events taking place in the world of the play are ‘real’ or not. Although *Blasted* maintains an ordered ‘moment to moment’ sequence of events, it too begins to expose the limitations of the dramatic structure of time. The third scene in *Blasted* ruptures the linear progression set up in scene one. Barnett points out that:

...the postdramatic aims to suspend linearity or at least to make it highly problematic in performance so as to mediate a rich and unprivileged flow of material that is concerned not with action but with a circumstance or a condition”.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid. Pg 15.

⁴⁹ Kane, S. Pg 3.

⁵⁰ Barnett, D. Pg 16.

Conclusion: Cross-disciplinarity and Crystallization

Throughout *Postdramatic Theatre*, Lehmann aims to “assemble heterogeneous performances that share the abandon of the dramatic representation as common feature”.⁵¹ Although the various artists investigated by Lehmann do not belong to a strict aesthetic category, Bouko insists that “their work, totally or partially, can be all considered as postdramatic because the dramatic action is abandoned at various degrees”.⁵² The works I have selected, similarly do not share common genres or disciplines, but rather each work crosses disciplinary and genre boundaries evoking aspects of fragmentation and stylistic deconstruction; they serve as examples of works demonstrating aspects of the postdramatic.

Due to the cross-disciplinary nature of the selected works, the analysis will not follow a chronological logic but rather a ‘postdramatic logic’ reflective of a trans/cross-disciplinary mindset. *Transdisciplinary* connotes a strategy of research or practice that crosses many disciplinary frontiers with the aim of creating a holistic approach. The term, transdisciplinarity has been endorsed by Romanian theorist Basarab Nicolescu who wrote the seminal text, *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity* (2002). He writes that transdisciplinarity “concerns that which is at once between the disciplines, across the different disciplines, and beyond all discipline... its goal is the understanding of the present world, of which one of the imperatives is the unity of knowledge”.⁵³

⁵¹ Bouko, C. Pg 27.

⁵² Bouko, C. Pg 27.

⁵³ Nicolescu, B. Pg 44.

In a “Review Essay of Basarab Nicolescu’s Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity”, Karen-Claire Voss writes,

He (Nicolescu) seeks to address head on the problem of fragmentation that plagues contemporary life. Nicolescu maintains that binary logic, the logic underlying most all of our social, economic, and political institutions, is not sufficient to encompass or address all human situations.⁵⁴

Nicolescu’s understanding of a multi-perspective and ‘cross-disciplinarity’ in contemporary life resonates strongly with Lehmann’s description of the postdramatic. I have chosen to use the term ‘cross-disciplinary’ as opposed to ‘transdisciplinary’ as it more accurately describes the nature and form of the contemporary performances chosen for analysis in this dissertation. The transdisciplinary involves a collision of seemingly unrelated disciplines, whereas the cross-disciplinary (a branch term of transdisciplinarity) concerns disciplines cross-referencing within a broader field – in this case, theatre and performance. Cross-disciplinarity also aptly resonates with the nature of devised performance practices in that a devised practice dares to deconstruct and challenge disciplines by interchanging and colliding one (or many) with another (or others).

In devised theatre, the ordering of moments is evolved by the dramaturg, in collaboration with the cast and creators. The constraints and/or dictation of a playwright are waived, giving way to a space of experimentation and lessened textual directive. In her paper, “‘Master’ versus ‘Servant’: Contradictions in Drama and Theatre Education” (2005), Shifra Schonmann writes:

Devised theatre refers to any theatre-making process, where the starting point is any other than a written play text ... the starting point of the

⁵⁴ Voss, K. Pg 1.

performance is fact material on the theme-research, newspaper articles, interviews, TV programs, the Internet, etc. This material finds its dramatic form through a creative group process.⁵⁵

Although Schonmann's definition is valid, I do not completely agree with her stringent "other than a written play text". As with the abovementioned examples such as PJ Sabbagha's *Macbeth* and Dada Masilo's *Romeo and Juliet*, many devised theatre works use, as their starting point, a written play text. With that said, these two examples do still adhere to the basic dramatic plot and thematic structures of their respective source texts, whereas the other performances focused on in this analysis boast a devised process that aims to further rupture and fragment their source material.

The process of devising performance is a varied and complex one. Theatre makers and performers are invited to be active agents in creating the performative aesthetics eventually present in the product. In a devised performance, usually a concept is decided on, researched and ultimately proposed as a point of departure from whence the creative process begins and proceeds. This process is often arduous; it refuses creative hierarchies and so ruptures the power relations between the collaborators. Furthermore, it is not obliged to maintain a traditional dramatic discipline, instead a devised process opens the spectrum for a cross-disciplinarity to evolve; various disciplines can be addressed and utilised in the creation of a performance. The structuring and ordering of the devised material does not necessarily have to follow a linear logic and instead becomes a central part of the performance experience.

⁵⁵ Schonmann, S. Pg 34.

Similarly, as discussed earlier, Barnett also writes about how the postdramatic refuses linear dramatic structures. Instead, fragmentation or a dream-like logic is employed allowing for the multitude of genres, disciplines and connections to cross and collide. The experience is one of simultaneity; connections and multi-meaning is dispersed and experienced on parallel planes rather than a chronological one. As such, I will be employing a method of analysis described as *Crystallization* by American sociologist Laurel Richardson in her article “Writing: A Method of Inquiry” (1994). Richardson argues that in “postmodernist mixed-genre texts, we do not triangulate; we *crystallize*”.⁵⁶ That is to say, we ‘postmodernist mixed-genre’ writers identify that there are more than ‘three ways’ from which to approach the world.⁵⁷ Richardson outlines this method:

I propose that the central imaginary for ‘validity’ for postmodernist texts is not the triangle – a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather, the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach.⁵⁸

Following this concept of the crystal, interpretation and analysis in this mini-thesis will allow for a variety of cross-disciplinarity, thus reflecting the multidimensionality of the postdramatic and its performance practices of refusal and rupture. Throughout the following analysis I will not be following a linear logic of connections (A to B to C) but instead will be finding parallel connections from a transdisciplinary, crystalline or postdramatic logic (A and C and F to B etc.) I have chosen to proceed this way as crystallization resonates with my own experience of

⁵⁶ Richardson, L. Pg 934.

⁵⁷ Ibid. Pg 934.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Pg 934.

meaning making with regards to contemporary performance practices. Where necessary, I have used a different font in order to help the reader distinguish between my 1. [interpretative commentaries] and 2. [interpretative descriptions].

By applying this method of enquiry and considering multiple performances, aspects and genres concurrently in my analysis, I will attempt to reveal the inter/cross-disciplinarity of a postdramatic experience. A variety of South African performances will be introduced and analysed, however to further support an aspect or concept of the postdramatic, I will make use of ancillary non-South African performers and works where necessary.

As pointed out in the introduction, I have chosen to give particular focus to four works which demonstrate cross-disciplinary qualities. In this study I will approach cross-disciplinarity as a meta-genre of the postdramatic. I have two reasons for doing this: a) each of the four works demonstrate, for me, a postdramatic aesthetic that has aided me considerably in my growing understanding of the term, and b) despite aesthetic and multi-genre differences, each work shares a devised cross-disciplinary approach.

Chapter Two

A Postdramatic Analysis of selected South African Contemporary Devised Performances

Lehmann cites Bernhard Dort as describing the “unification of text and stage never really taking place,” and that it “always remained a relationship of oppression and of compromise”.⁵⁹ This observation arises from the distant relation between the written dramatic text and the secondary practice of ‘dramatising’ it. Unlike the process in devised performance, the staging of the dramatic text comes after it is written; the dramatic realisation is an afterthought to the fictive literary component. In a devised process, if there is a relationship with an existing dramatic text, it is one of reinvention and rupture, taking place as part of an interrogative or deconstructive logic.

For example, in 2012, Standard Bank Young Artist Award Winner for Dance, Bailey Snyman choreographed a dance work entitled and based on *Moffie*⁶⁰ (2006), a novel by a South African, Andre Carls van der Merwe. Although the literary text follows a dramatic narrative about a young Afrikaans white gay man who is conscripted into the South African army under Apartheid leadership, Snyman opted to approach the narrative through physical interpretation. In the event that an audience member knew the original text, the core of the narrative remained present. At points, voice overs are heard as intertexts referencing other related dramatic texts on the incarceration of homosexuals. For example, during an athletic duet in *Moffie*, the dialogue between Max and Horst simulating intercourse (Act 2, Scene 2) from *Bent* (1979) by Martin Sherman is simultaneously heard. Furthermore, the choreography itself referenced various popular modes of dance (Lady Gaga) and contemporary physical theatre. The quirky ‘campness’

⁵⁹ Dort, B cited in Lehmann, H. Pg. 145.

⁶⁰ CueTV Clip. Appendix D.

of contemporary popular dance is juxtaposed with the raw, dark fluidity of grounded physical movement, suggesting a jarring juxtaposition between a homosexual pride in the present and the brutality against homosexuality in an Apartheid past. In this instance, the original literary text's plot structure remains present but by reimagining the written text in physical language, basic narrative signifiers are left up to the interpretation of the audience. Audience members who are not familiar with the original narrative are invited to interpret gesture, breath, physical language and visuals in place of the dramatic text; the body's visceral presence overrides the spoken word. However, by allowing the original text to dictate the plot and structure of the work, *Moffie* remains 'dramatically' tied to its source.

In contemporary performance, the conflicting relationship between dramatic text and the realisation of scene becomes a central device in the creation and staging of performance. Plot structure is refused and textual language is further deconstructed into various other mediums of expression (mime, mask work, physical performance). The 'sense' apparent in the original narrative's content is abandoned and spectators are instead left to interpret meaning through breath, rhythm, tone, tempo, and visual stimuli. Spectators are offered the chance to interpret signs, creating a dreamlike, liminal space between the signifier (performance) and the signified (spectator). Lehmann writes that "in postdramatic theatre, breath, rhythm and the present actuality of the body's visceral presence take precedence over the logos".⁶¹ Meaning, he posits, is instead a "specifically theatrical, 'magical' transmission and connection [that] happens by means of language".⁶² This transmission and connection is frequently lost to the spectator that enters with an expectation of a traditional dramatic logic that is governed by reason.

⁶¹ Lehmann, H. Pg. 145.

⁶² Lehmann, H. Pg. 145.

That is not to say that this ‘magical’ transmission is one of deliberate abstraction and confusion, but rather one that evokes in its audience, an intrigue - an experience; a way of challenging what the spectator knows.

I recently administered and marketed a production by the Rhodes University Drama Department titled *Drifting*. *Drifting* is billed as curated by Rob Murray, Andrew Buckland and Illka Louw with dramaturgy by Murray and choreography by Juanita Finestone-Praeg and Athina Vahla. Source material for the work includes a selection of texts by Reza de Wet including *Mis (Missing)* (1993), *Drif (Crossing)*, *Diepe Grond* (1982), *Dialogue* (1994) and *The Unspeakable Story* (1996) (Appendix A). The former three works are from De Wet’s own signatory oeuvre whilst the latter two are texts de Wet wrote for First Physical Theatre Company. Also included are texts that were close to De Wet such as *A Piece of Monologue* (1979) by Samuel Beckett. All texts are chosen, interpreted and responded to with the purpose of manifesting the theme of nostalgia embroidered throughout the episodic journey.

Drifting was created as a homage to the celebrated late South African playwright Reza de Wet and as such, her dramatic texts play a fundamental role. To ignore the use of text in homage to a playwright would be absurd. Dramatic text therefore is used as a catalyst in creating the overall ‘logic’ of the product. However, rather than simply curating a selection of the playwright’s work, or following a plot, *Drifting* presents a postdramatic visual journey in a dream-like structure, which centers on the overall theme of nostalgia. Although some vignettes display the magical-realist genre and macabre style of De Wet’s dramatic texts, it is the visceral presence of the

bodies on stage paying homage to the playwright, through performance, that generates the ‘meaning’ or layering of a postdramatic aesthetic. The visceral presence of the performer(s) also contribute to the total experience of homage; homage in content, homage in style and homage in performance. To illustrate this idea of the visceral performing body, I will provide an interpretative description of the opening sequence of *Drifting*:

The prologue:

Drifting opens with an unnamed academic professor, played by Buckland, introducing a renowned theatre practitioner and playwright to the audience for a valedictory address. The performance is embodied through clowning. Buckland, as a Chaplin-esque character stumbles his way through a speech which gradually deteriorates into comedic buffoonery. Throughout the comedic sketch the sound of canned applause bolsters the stature of the Professor. The paper on which this absurdly long speech is written collapses and unfurls into a disastrous mess leaving Buckland, the Professor, to improvise. The clown’s delivery is unsuccessful, stumbling through key words and phrases used to describe and identify her oeuvre such as “macabre”, “fantastical”, “gothic” and “bucket of excrement”. As the unfurling abundance of paper collects around him, he attempts to put the speech back together with tape which he suspiciously happens to have in his attire.



Andrew Buckland in *Drifting*. (See Appendix D for video footage)
Photograph by Mia Van Der Merwe

Improvisation, in this sequence, is employed as a means of introducing a ‘liveness’; the presence of the performer. Buckland’s approach to the speech is altered each performance keeping him ‘in the moment’. This device is used to amplify the presence of the ‘performing body’ on stage; the presence of the actor having to deliver ‘in the moment’, instead of the character representing it.

As discussed in the introduction, postdramatic theatre ruptures representation. Improvisation complicates the pre-rehearsed crafting of the performance. Instead, the performer evokes an immediate presence and as such contributes to rupturing representation. This immediacy invites the spectators closer to the experience of a visceral ‘liveness’.⁶³ Improvisation, like ‘the real’ in performance art, diminishes the distance created by representation; it diminishes the space between performer and spectator resulting in what Lehmann refers to as a *shared space*.

This experience of a shared space was, for instance, demonstrated in Thalia Laric’s final Masters practical examination at Rhodes University Drama Department, *An Intimate Performance* (2013). The performance took place in a small house whereby the spectators were instructed to change their locale from room to room and engage directly in improvisation tasks facilitated by Laric. The spectators were invited to become participators. Lehmann remarks on this concept of a shared space,

...improvisation, the simple and intensive physical presence of performers in a situation where the difference between stage and auditorium does not exist at all... the audience can come and go as they see fit. What is important is the *shared space*: it is experienced, used and, in this sense, shared equally by performers and visitors.⁶⁴

The rupturing of representation is further amplified in the prologue of *Drifting* through Buckland’s physical struggle with the paper. Because the paper is an unpredictable prop, Buckland is forced to deal with the device in the moment. Again, the space between performer and spectator condenses due to the ‘liveness’ of the performance; the audience watches Buckland

⁶³ Balt, C. Pg. 1.

⁶⁴ Lehmann, H. Pg. 122.

struggle with the paper in real time, he is not pretending to. Another example of this ‘live’ struggle is demonstrated in First Physical Theatre Company’s *The Unspeakable Story*. The dancers balance on bricks which are standing upright in a domino-like line. At any moment a brick could fall and the dancer would have to, through improvisation, deal with it in the moment. Similarly, in Sarah Kane’s *Blasted*, Ian eats two full breakfasts in the opening scene. The eating of the breakfast is instructed to actually happen which could take up to thirty minutes to complete. The result of which is almost sickening for the spectator to witness as they observe the performer’s (not character’s) experience of eating that much food. Lehmann refers to the space functioning *chronometrically*; the event taking place is happening in real time forcing the “time to become denser”.⁶⁵ It becomes apparent to the spectator that the action is not being faked; it is not being represented. Instead the spectator is invited to acknowledge the performing body on stage; the actuality of Buckland’s visceral presence as demonstrated with the paper in *Drifting*.

As it becomes clear that “Fredericka” (De Wet’s second name) is not available to address the audience, the clowning professor departs with his humiliating clutter of paper, to pursue her. A voice over of an actual recording of De Wet during an interview (all in Afrikaans) is played as an elaborate baroque cupboard wheels its way through the curtains to center stage. We are then introduced to a woman (Fredericka) residing in this ornate cupboard which opens to reveal a quaint study. The ticking of a metronome is heard conveying a sense of time passing by or time that has already passed. This scene is played out with mask work, no spoken text and sound tracked by “Guilty” written by Gus Kahn with composition by Richard A. Whiting and Harry Akst

⁶⁵ Lehmann, H. Pg. 152.

[a stylistic reference to Murray's FTH:K works such as *Pictures of You* (2008) and *Benchmarks* (2011)]. A projection created by Bianca Binneman displaying a formation of a de Wet portrait made with ink on a blank page is seen in the back of the cupboard, floating above the contemplative Fredericka's head. Fredericka is met by a masked stranger who playfully teases her into a dance. After this brief romantic encounter, Fredericka sits back comfortably and takes to opening a book of her work (or perhaps an empty book in which to write).

As described in the above passage, a clear narrative (mini-story) is set up, a moment of depth occurs, reminding the audience of De Wet's dramatic oeuvre as well as the inherent playfulness and beauty that exists in the *transformation* from performer to character. Like an infant playing dress-up and enjoying the experience of transforming into someone else, a superhero or an icon, *Drifting's* use of masks reminds the spectator of what the dramatic has offered, in the form of a nostalgic sense of innocence and play. Dramatic representation has not been refused in this instance. This description highlights the continued relationship entertained between the dramatic and postdramatic. In terms of a process of refusal and rupture, *Drifting* begins to expose the limitations of representation while using them to further the experience of depth inherent in De Wet's play texts; the overall product of *Drifting* demonstrates aspects of the postdramatic whilst maintaining elements of the dramatic such as character transformation. Lehmann offers an affirming description of this transformation, he writes

At the heart of acting is perhaps not so much the transmission of meanings but the archaic *pleasure/fear (Angstlust) of play*, of metamorphosis as such. Children enjoy dressing up. The pleasure in dissimulating oneself under the mask is paired with another, no less uncanny pleasure: how the world changes under one's gaze looking out of the mask, how it suddenly becomes strange when

seen from 'elsewhere'... Theatre is transformation at all levels, *metamorphosis*, and it is worth taking to heart the insight of theatre anthropology that under the conventional scheme of *action* there is the more general structure of *transformation*. This explains why abandoning the model of 'mimesis of action' by no means leads to the end of theatre.⁶⁶

The voice over of De Wet returns which, at this point, appears to become a motif indicating a change in sequence or vignette. Fredericka begins to reminisce, and the audience is taken on her journey of nostalgia, drifting through her thought process and left to make sense of the idiosyncratic leaps her mind makes in remembering and jumping from vignette to vignette, genre to genre, language to language, and text to text.

Murray, Buckland and Louw's influence, in *Drifting*, manifests an overwhelming density of visual and physical performances alongside the infiltration of excerpts from various De Wet texts. Unlike *Moffie*, *Drifting* deconstructs the classical dramatic logic of De Wet's previous plays by selecting concepts and themes which are realised through a transdisciplinary cross-reference of visual, physical and aural genres. The vignettes create a mural that is at once detailed and varied; to comprehend all theatrical signifiers at once is near impossible. One can say the production itself is about discovering Reza de Wet; a visceral journey through the mind of a playwright made manifest – which is clearly the objective of the clumsy Professor in his endeavour to find Fredericka. The discovery is of an eclectic world of genre and style colliding rather than simply a variety show of De Wet's oeuvre. *Drifting* is an example of a postdramatic work which continues the relationship with the dramatic. It manages to break free of traditional

⁶⁶ Lehmann, H. Pg. 77.

rules whilst making homage to the dramatic text; its literariness, its visual possibilities, its lingual flexibility and the power of the performer in transformation.



Fredericka, played by Liezl de Kock, reminisces in *Drifting*. (See Appendix D for video footage)
 Photograph by Mia Van Der Merwe

As De Wet wrote most of her texts in Afrikaans and later translated them to English for international appeal, the approach to the use of De Wet's texts in *Drifting* plays towards this bilingual genre. This principle of *polyglossia*, as Lehmann refers to, has proven to be “omnipresent in postdramatic theatre. Multi-lingual [theatre] texts dismantle the unity of national languages”.⁶⁷ An example of this use of polyglossia is in my production of *Rubber* mentioned in the introduction whereby characters converse in English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa and Sign

⁶⁷ Lehmann, H. Pg. 147.

Language. The employment of polyglossia in this instance is to create distance, not only within the cast but also between a performer's mother tongue and the new language he/she has to communicate with. As a device, the use of polyglossia in a devising process creates a space of obscurity; a breakdown of communication and a rupture of certainty.

In the collaborative work between Ubom! Eastern Cape Drama Company and First Physical Theatre Company, *Wreckage*, many languages are employed including English, Afrikaans, Xhosa and Zulu. This multi-lingual principle plays a significant role throughout the creation and intention of *Wreckage*. It was created and conceptualised by Brink Scholtz in collaboration with a large cast of twelve, with choreography by Athina Vahla. The text is billed as written by Scholtz with contributions by performers Ilana Cilliers, Tshego Khutsoane and Andrew Buckland.

Wreckage is not based on one single text but rather makes use of various texts that formulate a performance of intertexts displaying multiple perspectives, point of views and experiences of history on the shores of the Eastern Cape. Among these texts are *The Sunburnt Queen* (2006) by Hazel Crampton, *The Wind Makes Dust* (2003) by Ben Maclellan and *Frontiers* (1992) by Noel Mostert (Appendix A). A through line apparent in all texts is the meeting and confrontation of cultures, races and ethnicities on the shores of South Africa and more specifically the Wild Coast of the Eastern Cape.

Not only is the history of the Eastern Cape saturated in the conflict and meeting points of these languages and cultures, it is also present in the cast which is made up of English, Afrikaans,

Xhosa and Zulu speakers all from vastly different backgrounds with differing educational and cultural experiences. The collision of this diversity, instead of being resolved, becomes a device used in *Wreckage*; resolving conflict between the actual performers is refused in a postdramatic devising process. Confusion arising from the lingual misunderstandings, instead of being resolved or translated between the individual performers, results in a wealth of material that effectively displays the misunderstanding and conflict present throughout the Wild Coast history. In a rather comical scene of *Wreckage*, Cilliers' character is struggling to speak as a result of, literally, choking on paper. Buckland, who plays her husband gestures to Tami Baba, supposedly a native slave girl, for water and says "water, get water". Baba returns with a shoe. Buckland, completely gob smacked, reprimands Baba, he says, "Excuse me. I asked for water and you bring me a shoe. Since when does shoe sound like water"?!⁶⁸ Baba stares at him confused, scared and alarmed. The moment comes across as funny in Buckland's gross assumption that non English speakers will automatically understand him – a jab at the highly egocentric arrogance of the colonialists.

The beauty residing in each of the language's tonal dialect begin to tip over each other creating sound levels of rage; a staccato stutter of desperate articulation and dissonance. Lehmann writes that "theatre asserts a polyglossia on several levels, playfully showing gaps, abruptions and unsolved conflicts, even clumsiness and loss of control".⁶⁹ These conflicts, the release from purpose and the break from catharsis within the creative theatrical space, allow for an infinity of inter-genre and multi-genre possibilities. The sheer force of various differing creative minds will undoubtedly result in a multiplex of interpretations and realisations depending on individual

⁶⁸ Scholtz, B, Buckland, A, Cilliers and I, Khutsoane, T. *Wreckage Script*. Appendix B.

⁶⁹ Lehmann, H. Pg. 147.

stylistic and idiosyncratic genre preference. In the postdramatic, each genre bares meaning on an equal basis which makes it difficult for the viewer to fully comprehend the density of theatrical signs in one given moment. It becomes the “rule to violate the conventionalised rule and the more or less established *norm of sign density*. There is either too much or too little”.⁷⁰ Lehmann talks about *plethora and deprivation*, plenitude and emptiness⁷¹ of images and space. In the case of *Wreckage*, a plethora or abundance of images and signs are delivered simultaneously which online reviewer Mike Loewe says “was like millions of shards, hard bright bits of our life, flashing past, grains of sand whistling on that beach, stinging the ankles, coming in waves, mouths as dry as paper”.⁷²

Similarly, on the macro level of *Wreckage* (the entire production) a plenitude of genres are utilised in performance, including dramatic acting, chorus, score theatre, physical theatre and dance. Combinations of these genres are mixed and matched through the seemingly illogical structure of the work as well as in each ‘scene’ which leads to a disappearance of a naturally, physically perceived world.⁷³ Lehmann refers to “the *parataxis* and de-hierarchy of theatrical means as a universal principle of postdramatic theatre”⁷⁴,

...different genres are combined in a performance (dance, narrative theatre, performance, etc.); all means are employed with equal weighting; play, object and language point simultaneously in different directions of meaning and thus encourage a contemplation that is at once relaxed and rapid.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Lehmann, H. Pg. 89.

⁷¹ Lehmann, H. Pg. 89.

⁷² Loewe, M. Cited on: <http://www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/show/scue/> Date accessed: January 25, 2013.

⁷³ Lehmann, H. Pg. 89.

⁷⁴ Lehmann, H. Pg. 87.

⁷⁵ Lehmann, H. Pg. 87.

Probably the most contested aspect of contemporary performance is the departure from what Lehmann describes as “a hypotactical way of connection that governs the super and subordination of elements, in order to avoid confusion and to produce harmony and comprehensibility”.⁷⁶ That is to say, emphasis is not given to one particular sign so the spectators may comfortably follow the narrative. Instead the ‘narrative’ is ruptured through the use of parataxis and the obtuse connections of one scene to another. In a work like *Wreckage* which interrogates over three hundred years of history, connections between scenes are governed by genre and sign relation instead of a narrative plot with a beginning, middle and end. The source texts, *The Sunburnt Queen*, *The Wind Makes Dust* and *Frontiers* create a blueprint of events, accounts and happenings that are, through storytelling, open for interpretation and display. Scholtz remarks that,

The fucking problem is with the Western need to order and capture the world, and all the accounts of the first ship wreckages were written down by Europeans. I felt it was important to deal deeply with the multiplicity of meanings (which are associated with ships being wrecked on the Wild Coast). There is not just one account. I asked the cast and we interacted with the written sources and accounts, so our wreckages are there too, in relation to the (Eastern Cape) area.⁷⁷

These, among other chosen texts, therefore do not dictate or create the narrative of the work; instead they are used as source material that is responded to during the process and creation of the performance. This is done in order to revolt against the “Western need to order and capture the world”.⁷⁸ Lehmann argues that contemporary performance, as demonstrated in *Wreckage*,

⁷⁶ Lehmann, H. Pg. 87.

⁷⁷ Scholtz, B. Cited on: <http://www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/show/slam-interview-with-wreckage-director-brink-scholtz/> Date accessed: July 05, 2011.

⁷⁸ Scholtz, B. Cited on: <http://www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/show/slam-interview-with-wreckage-director-brink-scholtz/> Date accessed: July 05, 2011.

continues to move from an Aristotelian dramaturgy to a more diverse practice that ruptures and challenges “the idea of theatre as a representation of a *fictive* cosmos”.⁷⁹

Before its premiere at the National Arts Festival 2011, *Wreckage* was billed as a collaborative work exploring the history of the Eastern Cape, South Africa. ‘History’ as a theme appeared popular that year with many theatre makers offering works dramatising South African history. Among these works were *The Death of a Colonialist* (2011) written by Greg Latter, *Abnormal Loads* (2011) written by Neil Coppen and *The Castaway* (2011) written by Amanda Bothma. *The Death of a Colonialist* dramatises the story of a high school history teacher based in Grahamstown. He is so intensely passionate about South African History and more specifically the amaXhosa that he fails to notice the deteriorating health of his wife who is diagnosed with terminal cancer. The play makes reference to the popularity of the younger generations of South Africans moving to other countries such as Australia and Canada while at the same time displaying the desperation of an older white man trying to overcome his colonial identity. This colonial disposition results in his teachings becoming erratic and controversial. Standard Bank Award Winner for Theatre in 2011 was Neil Coppen who presented *Abnormal Loads*. It is set in a fictional battlefield town in northern KwaZulu-Natal and dramatises the story of a young loner, Vincent Liversage and his unusual relationship with the rebellious Katrien Joubert. They devise a plan to leave the town together when, during a re-enactment of the Anglo-Boer war, they are cast in the roles of their ancestors which brings to the surface the divides and ill-fated truths of their respective family histories. *The Castaway* dramatises the story of the young orphaned

⁷⁹ Willcoxon, J. Cited on: <http://muse.jhu.edu> Date accessed: July 29, 2013.

Bessie found on the shores of the Wild Coast through a musical style and is based on Hazel Crampton's *The Sunburnt Queen* (which serves as a major source for *Wreckage* as well). Unlike *Wreckage*, the above mentioned works framed themselves as narratives; they are ordered, representational and dramatised. That is to say that the retelling of history in these particular works is caught in a fictive cosmos; a story with a beginning following a climax and *denouement*. Both *The Castaway* and *Wreckage* centered on eighteenth century European shipwreck survivors on the Wild Coast but were approached very differently. Steve Kretzmann wrote in a review of *The Castaway* that "if...you're looking for 'a firm historiographical frame' and a 'cohesive narrative thread' to [this] chapter of the past; you'll find it in *Castaway*".⁸⁰ On the other hand, as Scholtz points out, *Wreckage* is "definitely not a history play... The work has a logic of its own, and there is space for multiple meanings".⁸¹

Dramatic representation is constructed on a linear framework. Aristotle refers to *mimesis praxeos* or 'the imitation of action'.⁸² Although specific to tragedy in drama, the *mimesis praxeos* outlines the logic that an effect is caused by an action. Lehmann says of *mimesis praxeos* that "if one thinks of theatre as drama and as imitation, then action presents itself automatically as the actual object and kernel of this imitation".⁸³ Dramas predominantly, like stories, develop a logic that is linear; they aim to create closure. Thus, when dealing with the broad spectrum of history, a drama needs to organise historical events into a coherent whole that has a progressive logic so as to avoid the gaps glaringly evident in the concept of 'history'. Lehmann writes,

⁸⁰Kretzmann, S. Cited on: <http://www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/show/formulaic-but-fun/> Date accessed: June 22, 2013.

⁸¹ Scholtz, B. Cited on: <http://www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/show/slam-interview-with-wreckage-director-brink-scholtz/> Date accessed: July 05, 2011.

⁸² Belfiore, E. *Aristotle's Concept of Praxis in the Poetics*. Pg. 110.

⁸³ Lehmann, H. Pg. 36.

Drama brings logic and structure into the confusing plethora and chaos of being – this is why, for Aristotle, it has a higher status than historiography, which only reports the chaotic events. It is essentially the unity of time that has to support the unity of this logic that is meant to manage without confusion, digression and rupture.⁸⁴

This approach is what the majority of Western theatre goers, as suggested by Scholtz, have come to understand as the expected experience of theatre; a narrative dramatised on stage. In this particular instance, ‘history’ is treated as a theme underlying the specific narratives in which the performances are framed. *Wreckage* deconstructs the notion of ‘history’, bringing into question the ‘historiography’ of events instead of manipulating these events into an ordered fictive cosmos.

Scholtz did not construct a fictive cosmos based on the texts chosen as source material. The performers are asked to write/improvise their own responses to the source material instead, which serves as groundwork material for the primary writers; Cilliers, Khutsoane and Buckland. Furthermore, excerpts from the source texts are borrowed and interpreted by performers on a task based level and realised in monologues delivering moments of depth. The texts themselves become references from which the performers can create material Scholtz and Vahla may or may not use in staging their dramaturgy. Thus, one can say, *Wreckage* is created through a process of collision; through creating actual wreckage. In an interview with Andrew Buckland, he comments on the process of creating *Wreckage* considering the relevance of its title to the form and not only it’s content. He says,

⁸⁴ Lehmann, H. Pg. 160.

I think what it [wreckage] invited to the participants, to the actors who are invited to improvise around certain ideas and situations, was the potential of chaos, of mess. You know, of not trying to tell history accurately for instance but working with what happens when out of conflicting situations; that often after conflict there is wreckage; when the boat hits the shore there is wreckage thrown up on the shore as well. And the sense of discovering things, by making a mistake (by having an accident) is the invitation to the performers that you [they] don't try and create the form and then rehearse; you use the form as a way of exploring what's developed.⁸⁵

Buckland points out the importance of discovery in a devised process. In this example the process is discovery through conflict, the result of which is 'wreckage'. Various disciplines such as dance, performance, technology and music begin colliding both harmoniously and dissonantly and as a result, a cross-disciplinarity evolves. The cross-disciplinarity of a devised process necessitates a strong dramaturgical foundation or the process could succumb to an unstable practice (and product) that is confused and seemingly incoherent. Although billed as the director, Scholtz takes on the role of the dramaturg, ensuring that the process of creating *Wreckage* does not override the experience of the product. This process is not necessarily treated as a means to an end; instead the product is as much an experiment as the process is, yet at the same time there is a desired product imminent. In an interview, Scholtz comments on the experimental style of *Wreckage*,

Stylistically it's tricky. We are dealing with shards. There are moments and some stories are told, especially about relationships, but these are merely moments of depth. Don't worry if you feel lost or fragmented. You are invited to absolutely take what you want from the work. It is a total experience of wreckage. We did

⁸⁵ Buckland, A. *A Brief Interview with Andrew Buckland*. Appendix C.

not use the word ‘wreck’ because the ship becomes unrecognisable; the form changes.⁸⁶

Scholtz reassures spectators that they are invited to embrace the experience of fragmentation and disintegration. The aim in postdramatic work is not to intimidate through fragmentation but to intrigue through alteration; a change of perception. Lehmann and Primavesi note that “dramaturgy needs to reflect upon and respond to altered ways of perception and participation, to rethink the position and the possible functions of the spectator”.⁸⁷

As dramaturg, Scholtz labours with the task of developing a visual dramaturgy that effectively invites the spectators to experience ‘wreckage’ without having to rely on the narrative of the literary texts to develop its performative logic. Lehmann talks about the visual dramaturgy of a postdramatic work disembarking itself from the limitation of the text, he says “visual dramaturgy here does not mean an exclusively visually organised dramaturgy but rather one that is not subordinated to the text and can therefore freely develop its own logic”.⁸⁸

The visual dramaturgy in *Wreckage* is realised by allowing the theatrical space to become ground-zero for performative discovery; all performative material is discovered *in the space* rather than conceptualised and then *placed into* the space. This process allows the space and source material to work off each other in conflict and harmony, eluding dramatic narrative

⁸⁶ Scholtz, B. Cited on: <http://www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/show/slam-interview-with-wreckage-director-brink-scholtz/>.

⁸⁷ Lehmann, H & Primavesi, P. Pg. 4.

⁸⁸ Lehmann, H. Pg. 93.

purpose and hierarchy, developing a visual dramaturgy that eventually becomes the signature of *Wreckage*. Lehmann writes about *chora-graphy*⁸⁹,

What is emerging in the new theatre, as much as in the radical attempts of the modernist ‘language poetique’, can therefore be understood as attempts towards a *restitution of chora*: of a space and speech/discourse without telos, hierarchy and causality, without fixable meaning and unity... In this sense, we can say theatre is turned into *chora-graphy*: the deconstruction of a discourse oriented towards meaning and the invention of a space that eludes the laws of telos and unity.⁹⁰

As an example in exploring this idea of *chora-graphy* and the developing visual dramaturgy, I will continue with a description and analysis of the first five minutes of *Wreckage*:

The performance opens in darkness; a small light created by a performer wondering on stage is seen flickering on and off accompanied by an ominous sound score of howling wind out at sea. Two performers, Andrew Buckland and Ilana Cilliers, sit directly in front of the audience, with their backs turned to the audience. They face the stage as if to witness what is about to unfold with the spectators. A voice over by Tshego Khutsoane accompanies this ‘search in the dark’:

In the late 15th century, Europeans discover a sea route to the East around the tip of Africa. The journey is long and fraught with danger, and those who set sail do so with the knowledge that they may not return. In the centuries that follow an unusual number of vessels are claimed by the coastline of Southern Africa. One stretch, a distance of no longer than 300 kilometers along the Eastern coast, exacts a particularly high price. One day this coastline will be named for a wildness that some will find beautiful and others will find cruel, and it

⁸⁹ Lehmann, H. Pg. 145.

⁹⁰ Lehmann, H. Pg. 145-146.

will protect the secrets of the skeletons that have been buried in its watery, sandy graves.⁹¹

Rather than setting the scene, the opening description sets a historical context which suggests a possible story of epic proportions. Its simplicity is deceptive in that it gives one the sense of safety in a ‘narrative’, yet the open-endedness of the description offsets the reality of what is to follow. This opening voice over is important in understanding the form that is to follow. There is little to watch, drawing focus to the voice over which clearly outlines the time and context in which the work locates itself, yet very little detail is given to any impending action. However, “in the *parataxis* of postdramatic theatre the elements are not linked in unambiguous ways”.⁹² That is to say we, as the audience, shouldn’t underestimate the significance of the ‘opsis’⁹³ (visual representation) which in this case is the ‘small light’. The tension between the light and the voice over creates a distance and proximity which the spectator is expected to cross. Lehmann cites Heiner Goebbels remarking on the rupturing of conventional hierarchy of means. He says,

I am interested in inventing a theatre where all the means that make up theatre do not just illustrate and duplicate each other but instead all maintain their own forces but act together, and where one does not just rely on the conventional hierarchy of means. That means, for example, where a light can be so strong that you suddenly only watch the light and forget the text, where a costume speaks its own language or where there is a distance between speaker and text and a tension between music and text. I experience theatre as exciting whenever you can sense distances on stage that I as a spectator can then cross.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Scholtz, B, Buckland, A, Cilliers and I, Khutsoane, T. *Wreckage Script*. Appendix B.

⁹² Lehmann, H. Pg. 86.

⁹³ Lehmann, H. Pg. 146.

⁹⁴ Lehmann, H. Pg. 86.

In postdramatic theatre, this hierarchy of signs needs to be abandoned for a 'total' experience of meaning. Instead one's "perception has to remain open for connections, correspondence and clues at completely unexpected moments... Thus, meaning remains in principle postponed".⁹⁵

Lights come up on a bare stage with only a scattering of papers hanging at the back of the stage, approximately two meters above ground level. Nine more performers enter the stage wearing distinctively vintage European attire indicative of the 1820 Settlers of the Eastern Cape, South Africa. They are each holding one shoe. Buckland becomes captain of the ship and instructs the crew to "Steer! Course! Zero-four-zero degrees".⁹⁶ The crew begins a ritual of pouring water out of their respective shoes; semi circle motion on their own circumferences much like protractors aiming for a three-sixty degree close. They make it to one-eighty degrees before new instructions are belted at them describing how to tie knots whilst manning the lifeboats. Buckland drags Cilliers onto stage by her hair, a fierce image of the caveman displaying masculine and misogynistic power. He yells, "THERE WILL BE NO DESERTERS ON THIS SHIP!"⁹⁷ The tying of the knots is manifested through non-figurative gestures by the cast done in unison. The texture of the movement although choreographed by Vahla to be sharply between slow-continuous and impactful gesturing is not in pristine unison but rather awkwardly staggered.

⁹⁵ Lehmann, H. Pg. 87.

⁹⁶ Scholtz, B, Buckland, A, Cilliers and I, Khutsoane, T. *Wreckage Script*. Appendix B.

⁹⁷ Scholtz, B, Buckland, A, Cilliers and I, Khutsoane, T. *Wreckage Script*. Appendix B.



Sailors cleaning the ship during the opening scene of *Wreckage*. (See Appendix D for video footage)
 Photograph by Jennifer Bruce

Attention could be brought to the idiosyncratic movement of the performers which could suggest disparate objectives and fatigue among the crew. At this point I think it important to point out that I use the word ‘could’ with the aim of opening up interpretation of the visual dramaturgy employed in the first five minutes. There are multiple theatrical signs happening simultaneously throughout, and attention on one or a number of signs is left up to the spectator.

The simultaneity of signs makes it almost impossible to confirm meaning to one collective understanding as it “overstrains the perceptive apparatus”.⁹⁸ That is to say, different spectators will give focus to the different combination of simultaneous signs delivered at any given moment. They are not forced to focus on an emphasised happening but are rather bombarded

⁹⁸ Lehman, H. Pg. 87.

with many. Lehmann states that “while dramatic theatre proceeds in such a way that of all the signals communicated at any one moment of the performance only a particular one is usually emphasised and placed at the center, the paratactical valency and ordering of postdramatic theatre lead to the experience of simultaneity”.⁹⁹ This is to say the spectators are expected to suspend their need for closure and to embrace disconnectedness and illogical combinations and/or sequence of events. Lehmann writes, “The human sensory apparatus does not easily tolerate disconnectedness. When deprived of connections, it seeks out its own, becomes ‘active’, its imagination going ‘wild’ – and what then ‘occurs to it’ are similarities, correlations and correspondences, however far-fetched these may be”.¹⁰⁰

Jay Pather’s *Body of Evidence* is an effective example of a contemporary performance that thrives on the experience of *synaesthesia*, whereby so much is loaded onto the spectators that it is impossible to process everything at the same time. In contrast to *Drifting* and *Wreckage*, *Body of Evidence* boasts a predominance of visual and physical work with little spoken text throughout. Terri Davidoff remarks, “In Pather’s work we see how he lets go of the literary tradition and focuses acutely on gesture, sound and the bodies in space”.¹⁰¹ This only serves the seemingly lack of identifiable figurative connections to amplify whilst experiencing the piece. The visual dramaturgy is so abundant, one is left wanting to see it again three more times to even begin comprehending its total ‘purpose’. The music, performing text, movement and multimedia all play predominant roles to the ninety minute installation of visual and aural excess; the experience is possibly one of overload.

⁹⁹ Lehmann, H. Pg. 87.

¹⁰⁰ Lehmann, H. Pg. 84.

¹⁰¹ Davidoff, T. Pg. 133.

Davidoff suggests that the use of a wide variety of theatrical practices enables Pather's work to speak to "South Africa[s]...wide range of languages and...cultural traditions".¹⁰² Leading theatre maker and director, Mark Fleishman supports this by suggesting that, for most people making theatre in South Africa, "the written word is woefully inadequate to portray and explain the complexity of the reality they face".¹⁰³ Conversely the complexity of multilayered works like *Body of Evidence* and *Wreckage* also reflect the complex social, political and cultural issues South Africa has faced over the last century. However, it is through the style of fragmentation, parataxis and overabundance that *Body of Evidence* reveals the broken trauma carried by these layers. In this way, *Body of Evidence* reveals a complex post-apartheid relevance through its postdramatic nature.

Body of Evidence does not simply draw from what the spectators *know* of South African history but rather what they, as individuals experience in the present, as a result of their history; within each body lies a somatic memory of the pain, guilt and anguish experienced from their ancestors. The actual body, according to Pather, remembers more than the mind and cannot necessarily be communicated through description or articulation. In "The Driveby...Interview with Jay Pather: *Body of Evidence*", Pather describes how the sensation of pain, in an individual, is "almost indescribable" and that "no one *really* can identify with it... they don't *really* understand it and you can't actually explain it".¹⁰⁴ Therefore, the body itself becomes the evidence for its history, its environment and its experience. The body itself becomes a casket for memory and the evidence is revealed in the way the body moves, the way it recoils and the way it shudders.

¹⁰² Davidoff, T. Pg. 134.

¹⁰³ Fleishman, M. in Davidoff, T. Pg. 2.

¹⁰⁴ Pather, J. *Drive-by Interview*. July 9, 2009.

The term “body of evidence” has become part of today’s phraseology dealing with anything that represents “an extensive and wide-ranging research into subjects such as medical, political, legal or social issues”.¹⁰⁵ The term is used mostly in the health field and this, no doubt bears relevance in the conceptualisation of *Body of Evidence*. The term ‘body’ in this work carries multiple meanings stemming to the ‘body’ of work, the ‘body’ of history, the ‘body’ of performance practices, the ‘body’ of media, and notably the corporeal human ‘body’. The term ‘evidence’ also inherits this multi-referential meaning. To quote the programme notes: “But the body instead stores relentlessly, file upon file, bottomless cabinets of memory, individual and collective”.¹⁰⁶ The question is asked “What does the body do with this ebb and flow of knowledge? What does a collective nation’s memory do with history?” In an unpublished review called “Exquisite Torture”, Steve Kretzmann wrote:

The performance takes the body as metaphor for the nation, the “rainbow nation” that supposedly healed itself through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. But the bones remember their breaks, the muscles remember their bruises, the tendons remember their sprains. And they remind us, they remind us, they remind us, as we drag this body of evidence along, pretending we don’t feel the weight, refusing to give in to the pull.¹⁰⁷

In a similar yet glaringly provocative metaphor, Pather addresses this idea of harbouring and pulling on the weight of past trauma. In his paper “A response: African contemporary dance? Questioning issues of a performance aesthetic for a developing continent” (2007), the metaphor of rape is used to describe colonial onslaughts on Africa. The effect of colonial powers on the African body is subtly described through the metaphorical reference to and theatricalisation of

¹⁰⁵ Cited on http://news.artsmart.co.za/2009/10/body-of-evidence_17.html. Date accessed: October 23, 2009.

¹⁰⁶ Pather, J. cited by Smart, C. *Body of Evidence Review*. Date accessed: October 17, 2009.

¹⁰⁷ Kretzmann, S. Cited on: <http://www.artsblog.co.za/?tag=jay-pather>. Date accessed: November 3, 2009.

the geranium and its origins. The geranium, as described in *Body of Evidence*, is a beautiful flower that is often thought to be of European origin but is actually indigenous to South Africa. The metaphor is quite clear in that it reveals what South Africa has been raped of – its nationality. Pather claims that through the experience of ‘rape’ comes an inevitable change. *Body of Evidence* culminates in a work that displays exactly what Pather wrote three years before its birth. Pather writes “Like the imprint and memory long after the wound has healed in the body of a rape victim, the way we view the world is a lens that we can hardly call our own”.¹⁰⁸ In a broader sense, the body refers to more than simply the human body – it also refers to the body of plants (geraniums), the body of history and society and the body of work culminating in *Body of Evidence*.

I saw *Body of Evidence* at the National Arts Festival 2009. One of the most striking images that stuck with me since is of an elderly Xhosa woman dressed in an overabundance of material designed in African traditional attire. She travels through the piece at a super slow speed with many bread loaves trailing behind her, attached to her, weighing her down. Considered the staple diet in South Africa (bread), I thought it striking to witness the metaphor of this woman’s staple diet, her past, her livelihood act as the evidence of weight keeping her from actively engaging with the vast number of bodies on stage. The slowness of her travelling increasingly became hypnotic as the piece progressed.

¹⁰⁸ Pather, J. Pg. 11.



Body of Evidence.

Photograph by Amy Francis Atenborough

I was reminded of the work of avant-garde American theatre maker and director, Robert Wilson. Although entirely different stylistically, *Body of Evidence* demanded I open my gaze, it demanded I let go of rational interpretation, I was obliged to experience the piece as if I were in a daydream; a state of limbo between my conscious attention and my subconscious experience. Wilson refers to this sort of experience as tapping into one's *interior screen*. How this term came about bears a striking similarity to the concept 'body of evidence', in that Wilson was able to identify this mode of expression through overcoming a traumatic personal experience.

As a child, Wilson was diagnosed with a speaking disorder until, at 17, it was discovered by his school drama teacher Byrd Hoffman that it was a simple stutter. Thus, he spent the first 17 years

of his life detached and estranged from his peers; his ‘disability’ rendering him as “other”. Consequently, Wilson learnt to conquer his stutter and could recognise the difference in how individuals see and experience the world. He differentiated between experiencing the world as a ‘normal’ person as opposed to an ‘other’. That is to say,

‘normal’ – a person without physical and/or mental disability/difference, he or she experiences the world as an accepted part of the larger community.

‘other’ – a person different from the masses in that they feel marginalised; alienated and apart from the larger community and are thus cut off from the communal experience.

Accordingly, he came up with the distinction of two possible ways in which the experience of the world can be registered; two possible ways in which we register and make sense of signs, sound, smell, taste and expression. He referred to these distinctions as the *exterior screen* and the *interior screen*.¹⁰⁹

The exterior screen “is the basis for most of our visual and audial impressions of the people and situations we encounter”.¹¹⁰ For Wilson, the exterior screen portrays a perception of life that is learnt or socialised. It refers to what individuals can experience and agree upon as a collective whole. Wilson believes that this is what spectators are used to experiencing when going to watch traditional dramatic theatre. The exterior screen accepts unity, symmetry and catharsis.

¹⁰⁹ Simmer, B. Pg. 101.

¹¹⁰ Simmer, B. Pg. 101.

On the other hand, Wilson posits that we also experience on an interior screen. This we perceive subjectively, through our subconscious. This way of experiencing manifests itself when we are “asleep and dreaming”.¹¹¹ Wilson believes that our subconscious imaginations create personal meanings; idiosyncratic perceptions which form the basis of our interior screens. He maintains that this interior screen is operating all the time, when we are awake and conscious but that the exterior screen dominates due to our unwillingness to experience fragmentation and disconnectedness; the dream logic.

Therefore I posit that postdramatic theatre invites a level of open perceptiveness from its spectators; it invites its spectators to experience through an ‘interior screen’. It asks that the spectator accept the blindfold placed over their eyes and to trust that the audial score will guide them safely; like a blind person trusts his/her guide dog will lead them across the street unharmed. Postdramatic theatre allows its spectators to embrace the risk and discomfort of unstable and unfamiliar ground.

Wilson suggests that “disabled people have no choice but to register through their interior screens as they cannot see the world in the same objectivity as ‘normal’ people do”.¹¹² Blind people see things only on an interior visual screen and deaf people hear things almost entirely on an interior audial screen.¹¹³ It is of no surprise then that Wilson has sporadically remarked that the ideal theatre he would like to achieve is a union of radio play and silent film. Lehmann describes this ideal of Wilson’s in *Postdramatic Theatre*, he writes

¹¹¹ Ibid. Pg. 101.

¹¹² Wilson, R. in Counsell, C. Pg. 192.

¹¹³ Simmer, B. Pg. 101.

This, [Wilson] said, was a matter of opening the frame. For the respective other sense – the imaginary seeing in the radio play, the imaginary hearing in silent film – a boundless space opens up. When we are watching (a silent film), the auditive space is boundless, when we are listening (to a radio play) the visual space is boundless. While watching a silent movie, we imagine voices of which we can only see the physical realisation: mouths, faces, the facial expressions of the people listening, etc. When listening to a radio play we imagine faces, figures and shapes for the disembodied voices. What we are talking about here is that the space of the stage and the more comprehensive sound space together create a third space that comprises the scene *and* the theatron.

This ‘third boundless space’ is the experience of the interior screen. It is the dream-like state I referred to earlier in my experience of witnessing *Body of Evidence*. Similar to the theatre of Wilson, *Body of Evidence* embodies the structural logic of this boundless dream space. Dreams, as Lehmann puts it, “form a texture that resembles collage, montage and fragment rather than a logically structured course of events. The dream constitutes the model *par excellence* of a non-hierarchical theatre aesthetic – an inheritance of Surrealism”.¹¹⁴ The spectators are invited to exhaust their need to connect everything and instead choose what to watch, what to listen to and how to make ‘sense’ of it. Cue reviewer Peter Frost aptly describes this experience in his review of *Body of Evidence*,

As you walk in, five dancers, “growing” in pots, are wilting, with a concerned mother figure in heels, garter belt and mangy fur rushing between them, propping them up as they fade. It’s a fittingly arresting but, frankly, obscure start to what is unquestionably Pather’s most complex, challenging and dense production to date.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Lehmann, H. Pg. 84.

¹¹⁵ Frost, P. Cited on <http://cue.ru.ac.za/dance/2009/welcome-circus.html>. Date accessed: October 13, 2009.



Body of Evidence.

Photograph by Val Adamson

Like *Wreckage*, *Body of Evidence* aims to provide the audience with an immediate experience, visually and corporeally. Critic Adrienne Sichel wrote that *Body of Evidence* is “an expertly curated display of conceptual forensics which rips into conscience and consciousness”.¹¹⁶ The multi-layered excess of images, movements, sounds and media culminate in an almost chaotic assault on the senses. Peter Frost writes,

Even before you walk into Siwela Sonke Dance Company’s *Body of Evidence* you realise you’re in for something entirely different – James Webb’s discordant bass vibrates through your All Stars,

¹¹⁶ Sichel, A. Cited on www.artlink.co.za/news_article.htm?contentID=8666. Date accessed: October 13, 2009.

setting the scene for an otherworldly trip through Jay Pather's particularly well-endowed imagination.¹¹⁷

The sound score in *Body of Evidence*, provided by James Webb, makes use of the actual sound of the inner workings of the human body. The deep bass vibrato rumbling through the space physically penetrates the audience who are unaware that they are listening to the sound of blood streaming through an actual body's veins. Although, in this case, these sounds were pre-recorded for *Body of Evidence*, this effect is often used in contemporary performance as a way of "bringing the space alive".¹¹⁸ Lehmann refers to 'spatialising' as the process of amplifying energy and activating a presence in the performance space. He says,

...'spatialising' the physical actions with the help of a sonic space created with microphones and loud speakers. For example, the heartbeat of the dancers becomes audible by means of a heart sound amplifier, or their heavy exhalation and inhalation are amplified through a microphone and fill the space.¹¹⁹

This concept of bringing the space to life with the use of *sonic sound* is notably used by contemporary experimental musicians during their live acts. A good example would be Imogen Heap, a British based musician. I was fortunate enough to witness her show while she was touring in South Africa during 2011. I refer to this example because the interrogation into the use of sound in a given space is a foregrounding aspect of her show; it is a performance. She boasts a vast array of instruments on stage with no band members, only herself. She is equipped

¹¹⁷ Frost, P. Cited on <http://cue.ru.ac.za/dance/2009/welcome-circus.html>. Date accessed: October 13, 2009.

¹¹⁸ Lehmann, H. Pg. 152.

¹¹⁹ Lehmann, H. Pg. 152.

with microphones attached to her wrists as well as her chest in order to capture sounds efficiently throughout her performance. The creation of the music is done in front of us as she performs and records. Thereafter, she plays back the individual sounds in a tightly amalgamated composed work. Heap consistently interacts with the audience, informing us of how certain sounds are achieved through her music. At one point during the show, Heap stops and stares at her feet. She informs us that a bug has landed on her stage and as such the bug 'sought' to be a part of the show. She then proceeds to record the sound the bug produces and uses it as an atmospherical sound scape during her next song.

Another, more performative example of this use of sonic sound is currently being experimented with in a piece developed by Ilana Cilliers for her final Masters practical examination at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa. The piece is titled *Hertz* (2014). *Hertz* is performed in a squash court and as such can be considered a site specific work. Microphones are attached to the squash player's chests which are then used to pick up the heart rate of the performers. Cilliers also uses micro sensitive microphones to capture the sound of the air in the space i.e. the proximity of the wall to the floor or the bang of the squash ball against a wall. These sounds are all amplified through speakers creating a sonic space.

In *Wreckage*, the sporadic use of a microphone prevails as the most effective device that contradicts the 'time period' as well as the overall look of the work. This very industrial feature warps the historically dressed performers into a contemporary multimedia time zone, instantly reminding the audience that these are *told* stories; memoirs and recollections of history. Thami Baba stands squarely in front of the audience reciting an inventory on the effects of dehydration

on the body, using a microphone. The scene is scored by Philip Glass' solemn track, "The Poet Acts", from *The Hours OST* (2003). While Baba recites, the remaining cast members engage in a series of contemporary pop styled dance movements such as twerking, gumboot dancing and pantsula. Each component of the scene is contradictory in genre yet at moments weaves together in disparate harmony and the audience is challenged to rethink their visual and auidial links. Once again that third boundless space Wilson speaks about is manifest. Wilson says,

In many of my pieces, what you see and what you hear do not go together. The video and audio are meant to stand on their own. If you closed your eyes you would still be able to appreciate the program, and the same would be true if you turned off the sound and just looked. What I am trying to do is give individual lives to both sound and picture.¹²⁰

Similarly, the auditory sound created by Webb for *Body of Evidence* is pitched so loud that you can feel the vibration in your feet. The deep evasive bass rumbles so thunderously, the sensation of the sound physically meeting your ears is felt. This onslaught of 'noise' demands attention. This often prompts the spectators to shift position in the space in search of a less invasive audial atmosphere. This effect is supported and enhanced through the use of the performance space in *Body of Evidence*.

Spectators are taken through three different locales during the ninety minutes. During the first thirty minutes the spectators are situated above the performance space on scaffolding – the viewpoint indicative to that of an Operation Theatre in a hospital. The spectators gaze down on

¹²⁰ Shambu, G. Cited at: <http://mubi.com/notebook/posts/post-dramatic-theatre-torn-spaces-area>.

the naked bodies as if they are being dissected. The experience is voyeuristic, distant and medical. In the second thirty minutes the spectators are ushered down from the scaffolding to an enclosed space unseen beforehand. The space is small with performers in close proximity to the spectators. The breathing of the dancers is heard; the sweat flicking off their bodies is felt and smelt. This experience of intimate proximity creates a space of shared energies that is no longer governed by the dramatic fourth wall. Lehmann remarks that a tense *centripetal* dynamic develops,

If one reduces the distance between performers and spectators to such an extent that the physical and physiological proximity (breath, sweat, panting, movement of the musculature, cramp, gaze) masks the mental signification, then a space of a tense *centripetal* dynamic develops, in which theatre becomes a moment of *shared energies* instead of transmitted signs.¹²¹

For the final thirty minutes, the audience is ushered to the space they witnessed from the scaffolding in the first thirty minutes. Here the space opens up substantially from the previous one. The scaffolding the spectators found themselves on in the first thirty minutes is now empty, towering over them. The spectators are now positioned where the performing bodies were. One is made to feel small in a large auditorium and gazed upon by an emptiness of massive dimensions.

The experience of a vast, gigantic space is the first and most captivating feature of entering First Physical Theatre Company's *Discharge*. It is a cross-disciplinary dystopian work created by Gavin Krastin with choreography by Alan Parker and installations by Rat Western. *Discharge*

¹²¹ Lehmann, H. Pg. 150.

was performed in the enormous Hangar of the Military Base in Grahamstown and fell under the banner “Performance Art” on the main programme of the National Arts Festival in 2012 (a category that previously did not exist on the main programme). The space is so enormous, the spectators are made to feel insignificant, emphasising a sense of an epic space. Lehmann suggests this type of *centrifugal space* is a threat to dramatic theatre. He says, “this can be a space that outweighs or over determines the perception of all other elements simply through its enormous dimensions... or a space that eludes being mastered by perception because actions simultaneously take place in different locations, as in ‘integrated’ theatre”.¹²² The spectators enter this overwhelming vastness and are invited to integrate their need to fill the void. As with my experience, I felt small with a need to remain close to the group of spectators as a safe guard – as a way of integrating myself into the experience.

Before even reaching the Hangar in *Discharge*, the audience is placed in an uncertain position. Meeting outside the Rhodes Drama Department, spectators are instructed to load into a large military truck by a performer dressed as a soldier, Wesley Deintje (however this is mostly unknown to most spectators who unmistakably would assume a real soldier is ushering them). The spectators are asked to remain as silent as possible throughout the trip to the Hangar which sits almost fifteen kilometers outside of town. The trip feels long, arduous and scary. Through choosing to adhere to Deintje’s instructions and through this experience, the spectators become participators and in doing so become involuntarily responsible for the unfolding of the dramaturgical events about to take place; they are taken on a journey, however it is up to them how the journey is experienced.

¹²² Lehmann, H. Pg. 150.

The spectators are invited to wander through the landscape in which the work is situated. Attention is brought to the subtle aesthetic contours of the surroundings which enhance the experience of the spectator as they are invited into this space of intervention. Situationist pioneer, Guy Debord theorised the idea of *dérive* (to drift, to stroll, to journey through), which he describes as “a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances”.¹²³ This concept of the *dérive* has been used as a critical tool in understanding the theory of ‘psychogeography’ which is defined as the “specific effects of the geographical environment (whether consciously organized or not) on the emotions and behavior of individuals”.¹²⁴ This concept resonates with the process of devising in a site outside of traditional theatrical spaces. In a site-specific work, such as *Discharge*, the specific effects of the space and its environment become central to the process of creation undertaken by the conceptualisers as well as the experience of the work for the spectator. The result is an actual physical and mental journey, a *dérive*, for the spectator. They are invited to walk, gaze, and explore the space of the performance whilst engaging with and/or watching it; they are invited to disengage from habitual modes of perception.

This device of journey or *dérive* is employed in Nadine Joseph’s *dis.clo.sure*, Gavin Krastin’s *Sub-* and Jen Schneeberger’s *Antigone* which, together make up the Rhodes Masters Examination Programme, *inTranceit* (2011). As the title suggests, *inTranceit* takes its audiences on various modes of transportation to three differing contemporary site specific works. For all three works, like *Discharge*, the audience meets outside the Rhodes University Drama Department. Each piece happened on different nights, so one’s experience of all three works spanned a period of

¹²³ Debord, G. Pg. 1.

¹²⁴ Debord, G. Translated by Knabb, K. Cited on <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/definitions.html>.

three days in total. For *inTranceit*, the role of the dramaturg becomes paramount in creating the success and stability of the programme running as a whole and not just the three performances thriving as singular isolated components. The three creators, Krastin, Joseph and Schneeberger become a collective of dramaturgs, creating a programme of cross referencing projects. For *Sub-*, the audience is taken on school buses out to a Joza Township school where they are confronted with one of Krastin's cross-disciplinary installation works which will be discussed further in this chapter through *Discharge*. The use of durational time is most effectively employed in Krastin's *Sub-* whereby the audience are given the freedom to choose what to watch and for how long. For *Antigone*, the audience are also transported in mini buses, however, this time they are confronted by mysterious business suit characters travelling with them. They find themselves walking through muddy gravel roads towards a farm ruin where they will witness the tragedy of Antigone as a ghostly fragmented nostalgic figure. In *dis.clo.sure*, the audience, similar to *Discharge*, are transported in military vehicles and are instructed that they have been summoned to help find a young girl lost in the midst of a bloody war. The spectators (or rescuers) find themselves seeking an already forgotten figure on the periphery of a church. Here, similar to *Discharge*, the everyday space such as a school, a farm ruin and a church is modified into a space of performative intervention. Lehmann calls this a *heterogeneous space*. He writes

A theatre that has long found its center elsewhere than in the staging of a fictive dramatic world also includes the *heterogeneous space*, the space of the everyday, the wide field that opens up between framed theatre and 'unframed' everyday reality as soon as parts of the latter are in some way scenically marked, accentuated, alienated or newly defined.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Lehmann, H. Pg. 152.

Both *inTranceit* and *Discharge*, in this regard, differ from *Drifting*, *Wreckage* and even the three perspectives orienting *Body of Evidence* in that they prescribe a sense of alienation to everyday spaces that otherwise would be familiar to the spectators in everyday life. That is to say, the comfort of a familiar space is ruptured and a visceral performative body gives the space new defining qualities through performative intervention.

To further comment on this idea of performance intervention in a site specific space, I will continue with a description of *Discharge*.

Upon entering the Hangar, the spectators are drawn to a circus-like ring lit up by small birdy lights, highlighting three dancing bodies wearing orange jump suits. Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" blares out loudly, accompanying the vast darkness, and setting the epic feel of the work. The three performers, Alan Parker (choreographer), Nomcebisi Moyikwa and Siya Mbambaza perform with an acute awareness of the spectators watching them; the close proximity of the audience surrounds them and shrinks the distance between performer and spectator – the performers lock eyes with and watch the spectators observing them.

The choreography is slick, danced with an almost ironic sense of theatricality. A set of popular dance genres are rhythmically deconstructed to the roar of the Stravinsky. Borrowed choreography includes Los Del Rio's "Macarena" (1996), Britney Spears' "Hold it Against Me" (2011) and The Village People's "Y.M.C.A." (1978). The performers move through the choreography exhaustively, gazing at the audience with a glint of sarcasm as if to say "look at what I'm doing now. I'm being sexy. Now look, this is funny." They perform until exhaustion hits

in and eventually land on their backs with legs and arms elevated like beetles unable to get back on upright.



“Rite of Spring” in *Discharge*. (See Appendix D for video footage)
Photograph by Andrew Brukman

The choreography in *Discharge*, although crafted tightly becomes part of the wasteland of a post-civilisation. One almost gets the sense that one is witnessing a visual library of performance(s) reflecting our current cultural legacy; pop culture, classical music, art, science, the homestead are all depicted in a post-apocalyptic wasteland – the discharge of humanity.

Silence.

We are under the impression that we are here to witness, but we are wrong. Participation is inevitable. The work takes a 180 degree turnabout to a series of installations.

The distant sound of a radio begins to play further into the Hangar where it is dark. Lights begin to emerge in what appears to be a small village of broken shacks and houses. More than one radio plays from each house, party horns are blown, and a woman sings Frank Sinatra songs at the top of her voice. This all happens simultaneously creating a carnivalesque atmosphere. The spectators are now free to explore the various installations depicting images of bodies in a traumatic aftermath, post-apocalyptic community, icons resonating cultures, art, science and commercialism:

A still deadpan performer in front of his crimson dramatic curtains,
 a disheveled housewife, blinded and drunk in her kitchen,
 a woman in a childlike bear suit stuck in a plastic vitrine,
 four female African dancers performing with disdainful apathy,
 a birthday party no one has attended,
 a naked muscle man contorting as the Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man*.

All installations run simultaneously and the spectators are allowed to create their own visual and experiential journey through choice of what to see and when to see it. One begins to feel a sense of missing out; by watching the housewife for too long, am I missing the poignant moment of the Vitruvian Man's vignette? Instead of following a linear progression of chronological events, *Discharge* ruptures the historical time inherent in dramatic representation. That is to say, the

journey to the Hangar and the move from the “Rite of Spring” to the post-civilisation installations does not suggest a metaphorical passing of time – instead, by emphasising the agency of the spectator during the performance, the spectators are kept in the now – the real time of the performance. The concept of time in *Discharge* is thus one of what Richard Schechner calls the ‘performance text’. Lehmann writes,

Compared to the historical time represented in the drama, the time of drama (story and plot) and the temporal structure of the staging, we have to emphasize the *time of the performance text*. Following Schechner, we designate the total real and staged situation of the performance as ‘performance text’ in order to emphasize the impulse of presence always inherent to it, an impulse that also motivates Performance Art in the narrower sense. Included in this are so-called ‘external factors’ (which in fact they are not) such as long journeys to get to the performance”.¹²⁶

A siren sounds and we are ushered to “the dormitory’. Spectators are encouraged, by a deranged bride (played by Candace Gawler), to sit on one of several mattress-less beds. She then attempts to tell us a bedtime story. Her words are distorted and disrupted. The plot of the story is consistently interrupted at any point it may hold together as a narrative – an anti-plot. She speaks:

Once upon a

Once upon a tiiiiiiiiii.....

Once upon a, I saw the lab break open the next seal

There was a violent earthquake

The sky became black like a course black cloth and the moon turned red like blood

The stars, stars stars stars stars stars stars eyes arse eyes arse

Fell down to earth....

¹²⁶ Lehmann, H. Pg. 154.

And as Chicken Lickin' was walking through the woods one day he felt something fall on his head

"OUCH!" said Chicken Lickin', "The sky is falling down! We're going to find the King!"

Throughout this act, the remaining performers from the installations join the spectators, interacting with them, sniffing them. A sense of urgency and frustration begins to develop as the search for the king (a leader, a president?) is nowhere to be found. The deranged bride has no choice but to usher us to 'The Maze'.

It is in this maze that the spectators are taken on a journey of isolation, allowing a moment to contemplate and process the abundance of visual, aural, audial and physical signs being thrown at them.

Walking on bubble wrap creating a crackling sound; a sense of unstable grounds, disabled bodies on crutches

militant figures in gas masks holding weapons

an infant handing out decorations for spectators to place on a Christmas tree

piles of waste scattered on the floor

plastic bags with body limbs and bricks of cocaine inside them

Walking into this maze made of large sheets of sterile plastic (which distorts the figures of other spectators making their way through); the spectators are made to feel quarantined as they come across the discharge of mankind's neglect, the discharge of capitalism, the discharge of war and the discharge of innocence, evoking George Orwell's concept of "Room 101" in his dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949).ⁱⁱ

After facing the grim walk through the maze of post-civilisation excrement, we finally find an exit and are met by a large pile of garbage – constructed and conceptualized by South African artist Francois Knoetze. The spectators gather around the garbage pile, looking to each other for solace, clarity and catharsis. Is this the end? Is this the discharge of mankind? Is this our legacy? The garbage pile begins to move. It comes alive; a visceral body of rubbish and excrement.

This visceral performative body is explored throughout *Discharge*. As the title suggests, the body is a body of potential, a body capable of abjection, a body experiencing decay. *Discharge* not only refers to a post-apocalyptic landscape, but also the damaged and traumatised human body reminiscent of Pather's *Body of Evidence*. Unlike dramatic theatre, where the body is treated as a signifier for transformation and representation, in postdramatic theatre attention is brought to the body itself as the signifier – it's breath, it's sweat, and it's limits. Lehmann writes,

The dramatic process occurred *between* the bodies; the postdramatic process occurs *with/on/to* the body... While the dramatic body was the carrier of the agon, the postdramatic body offers the image of its *agony*. This prevents all representation, illustration and interpretation with the help of the body as a mere medium.¹²⁷

The final 'act' in *Discharge* is a duet performed by Andrew Buckland and Alan Parker. Parker is dressed in feminine attire and sits with an ironing board protruding out from his abdomen. Buckland, possibly playing the husband, sits at the other end of the ironing board, keeping it level so as if to create the image of the 'gentleman and lady' dining at a dinner table. The

¹²⁷ Lehmann, H. Pg. 163.

choreography is minimal and gestural, predominantly in the arms and hands as the performers struggle to stray away from the awkward tension between them – a couple dehydrated of conversation. Parker’s Victorian dress stretches over the board as a table cloth and with difficulty tries to keep poise and sobriety without allowing the perfectly placed cutlery and plates to slip and fall off the table. The image evokes the ‘kept woman’, the housewife; her purpose is to keep her husband happy by providing a clean house (ironing board), to produce dinner whilst maintaining her class and temperance.



Alan Parker and Andrew Buckland in *Discharge*. (See Appendix D for video footage)
 Photograph by Andrew Brukman

Parker’s brush cut is exposed throughout the performance. No wigs or head gear are used to signify the idea of womanhood. Parker’s ‘maleness’ is left apparent while the traditional notions of the masculine gender are challenged and deconstructed. This ‘genderfuck’ has become a

prominent feature in contemporary dance forms whereby the assigned roles given to masculine and feminine, seen mainly in ballet, are mocked. Traditionally, in ballet (mainstream dance representations), the men serve predominantly as pillars for the *ballerinas* who are manipulated into extraordinary choreographical stances by the *ballerinos*. In contemporary dance, these roles are often reversed or balanced whereby the women are also invited to lift men and manipulate them during contact physical performance. Thus, one can say, ballet serves as the traditional and more dramatic form of physical performance. It aims to elevate the body, to ‘fly’, to hide the fundamental gravitas of the body in favour of elegance. In contemporary performance, such as *Discharge*, the ‘ugliness’ of the body is exposed, used and interrogated as part of the performative aesthetic. This interrogation was addressed in Juanita Finestone-Praeg’s key note address (Confluences 6, July 2011, UCT) “Difference is Revolting”. Finestone-Praeg recounts her experience of dancing in *Shattered Windows*, she says

...I was involved in staging this revolt, I was also still in revolt against the question that haunted this piece from its inception, the banal question that responded to the gender confusion of dancers in decomposing dresses worn by both male and female performers... long hair, bald heads and exposed body parts smeared with wet clay which gradually flaked off leaving in its wake an ashen trail of dust on the nice clean floors of the theatres we performed in, the question that has and continues to haunt the world of creative performance, the question: is this dancing?¹²⁸

Finestone-Praeg’s experience resonates with the performative concerns in *Discharge*. The aesthetics of mainstream dance and performance is challenged, broken down and ruptured which begs the question whether it should be considered ‘dance’ if ‘dance’ is to be understood as ballet

¹²⁸ Finestone-Praeg, J. Pg. 3.

or mainstream with its rules on gender distinctions and societal familiarities. This is probably why *Discharge* was conveniently placed under the banner “Performance Art” as opposed to “Dance” in the National Arts Festival programme. Is *Discharge* a performance art piece? Does it obliterate modes of representation and refuse traditional dramatic narrative formats? The answer is yes and no. *Discharge* is cross-disciplinary; it draws from dance (contemporary, pop and ethnic), it draws from theatre (characters, transformation and narrative), and it draws from performance art (the live, the real and installation). *Discharge* is a transdisciplinary devised performance which makes reference to all the above mentioned disciplines in the form of repulsion; each ‘act’ is regurgitated like an overwhelmed creative mind vomiting all its thoughts one after the other, each with a particular combination of decomposed waste – all of which is kept dramaturgically intact by the concept of bile. This conceptualisation is explored in *Discharge* without ‘real’ danger to the performing bodies as is commonly practiced in performance art works.

It is in the works of performance artists such as Peter van Heerden and Steven Cohen that the physical body is explored beyond representation in a similar yet more ‘revolting’ extremity than in *Discharge*. In chapter one, I refer to Van Heerden’s *6 minutes* where he, naked, breaks free from a plastic bag filled with meat and blood in a grimy enactment of birth. The image is filthy, it is abject, and it is revolting. Similarly in *Discharge*, the spectators are faced with decrepit characters, disabled bodies on crutches and a heap of garbage coming alive. Upon witnessing audience reaction to such characters approaching them, they appear to become apprehensive and draw back. For instance, when the spectators are confronted with the garbage heap, quickly realising that by antagonising the heap by prodding and laughing at it, the heap begins to move

and entertain. Without fail, spectators take to throwing more garbage at the heap forcing it to recoil in what appears to be shame. The heap is thus ‘othered’ and identified as filthy, revolting and alien. The aesthetic of this kind of performance becomes interrogative; it is not the idea of filth, it is filthy. I use the word ‘filth’ as highlighted by William A. Cohen in his book *Filth: dirt, disgust, and modern life*. Cohen argues the implications of the term ‘filth’ as

...that which instantly repudiates a threatening thing, person or idea by ascribing alterity to it. Ordinarily, that which is filthy is so fundamentally alien that it must be rejected; labelling something filthy is a viscerally powerful means of excluding it”.¹²⁹

Although I cannot claim that any reviewers have used the word ‘filth’ in describing any of the above mentioned works, it is intriguing that Cohen’s definition of the term resonates with the overall reaction of revolt many reviewers and spectators have to contemporary performance in South Africa. Without interrogation, without an informed context, without understanding, many of these works are simply brushed aside. They are labelled incoherent, confusing and disappointing. These works are identified for their unfamiliarity; they are labelled alien. As such, they are revolting. This however, is part and parcel of the world of the postdramatic – it demands interrogation, not apathy, it is difficult, not easy; it *is* revolting. In her key note address, “Difference is Revolting” (Confluences 6, July 2011, UCT), Professor Finestone-Praeg describes an epiphany she had whilst creating her work *Inner Piece* (2009). This epiphany is fitting in the context of this analysis and serves as a suitable close to this chapter. She writes,

¹²⁹ Cohen, W. Pg. ix.

I possibly understood for myself what Artaud meant in his call for a “Theatre of Cruelty” – that a cruel theatre is not necessarily defined by the use of excessive violence, blood or the limits of pain – but one that becomes that which is cruel in the sense of being difficult – difficult to create, to perform, and also difficult to witness/watch. Difficult, that is, because it ruptures modes of knowledge to return us to an experience of the revolting...”¹³⁰

Difficult, in that contemporary performance, as analysed in this mini-thesis, ruptures its spectator’s expectations of the dramatic; it asks its audience to engage, to suspend the need to understand and make sense of. Instead, it is difficult because it challenges its spectator to rediscover; to embrace a postdramatic revolt.

¹³⁰ Finestone-Praeg, J. Pg. 7.

Conclusion

This mini-thesis has explored the idea that contemporary performance in South Africa locates its appreciation in a postdramatic discourse rather than traditional modes of dramatic interpretation; that these performance practices are engaged in a process of refusal and rupture which amounts to a postdramatic revolt. It is through a process towards rupturing representation and a refusal to adhere to expected dramatic formats of structure that a postdramatic aesthetic begins to realise itself. Due to the deconstructive nature of these cross-disciplinary performances, the form is rendered unstable, free of structural and dramatic rules, which in turn challenges the security of the spectator within a performance sphere. Lehmann cites Pierre Corneille, who suggests that it is not only the Aristotelian theory of *mimesis praxeos* that governs the spectators need for the dramatic logic of linearity and representation, but also due to “natural reason”.¹³¹ It is, as Corneille suggests, the fear of falling into a state of chaos that this revolt and apprehension towards the rupture of dramatic logic is found and the aching need for a dramatic identity of unity is sought. Lehmann writes,

Corneille gives one special reason why we aspire to this identity: namely, for fear of falling into a state without rules. The pragmatic and technical identity of represented time and time of representation is not the real motivation for the unity of time but rather the *fear of deregulation* and confusion. The reason for the rule is - the assertion of the rule itself. What is at stake is the prevention of confusion, the prevention of a free-roaming imagination uncontrolled by the dramatic process, the prevention of the outbreak of the imagined reception in Lord knows what other spatial and temporal spheres.¹³²

¹³¹ Lehmann, H. Pg. 160.

¹³² Lehmann, H. Pg. 160 – 161.

It is in the embrace of confusion and of ‘a free-roaming imagination’ that the postdramatic locates its life force; a performance practice that seeks to ‘unframe’ expectation, a return to a state of wonder without closure and catharsis without explanation.

The contemporary performances discussed here are all resistant towards explanation in the form of dramatic or literary analysis. Throughout I have sought to demonstrate how these performances are “not against interpretation” but are rather, as Sonja Smit writes, “invested in a process of questioning (revolt). Performance(s) of this nature reflects a different kind of knowledge that cannot be subjected to the dominance assumed by textual modes of knowledge...”¹³³ Instead they are, as Lehmann suggests, postdramatic and should be analysed as a form of inquiry and discovery with and beyond the textual.

This investigation is by no means exhaustive. Although some aspects of the performances, as well as the postdramatic discourse, have received attention; other aspects have been left out of the analysis. As noted by Philip Auslander in *Theory for Performance Studies* (2008), “Every theory frames and focuses our attention on some things while leaving other things outside the frame of focus”.¹³⁴ Instead, focus has been given to the aspects of deconstruction within a variety of South African contemporary performances in order to demonstrate a means of critically analysing new performance through a postdramatic discourse.

In doing so, my hope is to contribute to the appreciation and analysis of contemporary performance in South Africa; that this contribution will further open the spectrum of

¹³³ Smit, S. Pg. 86.

¹³⁴ Auslander, P. Pg. 1.

performance analysis and diminish the expectations governed by the dramatic tradition. Rather than, the experience of such performances can be appreciated for their practice of refusal, rupture and revolt. To conclude I turn to a fitting quote by Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Anna Sanchez-Colberg who write,

A theatre sets up expectations that meaning will be present somewhere since the theatre operates in a situation conducive to message sending; namely, one set of people watching and listening to another set of people who are doing something knowing that they are being observed and listened to. Both parties are aware of this situation and one party, the performers, spend a great deal of effort getting the performance right, that is, in state to be watched. The question is; is it created and rehearsed in order that the watching generates understanding (...) or, is it created to achieve something else..?¹³⁵

I posit that contemporary performance, as analysed in this mini-thesis, is created to achieve an awakening in its spectators by deconstructing the expectation of understanding; by asking questions rather than simply answering them. Like a breath taken before a line spoken, there is a moment of questioning; (breath) ‘What is going to be said?’ ‘How is it going to be said?’ ‘Is anything going to be said?’ It is the breath before that very line that invites the moment of questioning – postdramatic theatre returns to that moment, to the breath before the line without claiming to resolve it, but rather to invest in an experience of discovering and ‘questioning’.

¹³⁵ Preston-Dunlop, V and Sanchez-Colberg, A. Pg. 260.

Bibliography

Artaud, Antonin. *The Theatre and it's Double*. In Sontag, Susan. (1979) Berkley: University of California Press.

Auslander, Philip. (2008) *Theory for Performance Studies: a student's guide*. London and New York: Routledge.

Balt, Christine. (2009) "*A Dark Revolt of Being:*" *Abjection, sacrifice and the Real in performance art, with reference to the works of Peter van Heerden and Steven Cohen*. Mini-Thesis, Rhodes University.

Barnett, David. (2008) "*When is a Play not a Drama? Two Examples of Postdramatic Theatre Texts*". *New Theatre Quartely*, Volume 24, Issue 1. Pg 14 – 23. Date accessed: February 27, 2013. Accessed from <http://journals.cambridge.org>.

Belfiore, E. (1984) *Aristotle's Concept of Praxis in the Poetics*. *The Classic journal*, Vol. 79. No. 2.

Bouko, Catherine. (2010) *The Musicality of Postdramatic Theatre: Hans-Thies Lehmann's Theory of Independent Auditory Semiotics*. Date accessed: April 22, 2013. Accessed from <http://www.enl.auth.gr/gramma/gramma09/bouko.pdf>.

Buckland, Andrew. (2013) *Interview with Andrew Buckland*. (Appendix D).

Cohen, William A. and Johnson, R. (ed) (2005) *Filth: dirt, disgust, and modern life*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Counsell, Colin. (1996) *Signs of Performance: an Introduction to twentieth-century Theatre*. Robert Wilson and the Theatre of Visions. London: Routledge.

Davidoff, Terri. (2006) "*Deconstructing Jay Pather's location-specific theatre: creating space for transformative dialogue*". *South African Theatre Journal*, Volume 20.

Debord, Guy. (1958) *Theory of Dérive*. Accessed from <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/2.derive.htm>

De Swart, Moira. (2008) *Intiem etc Review*. Date accessed: January 20, 2014. Accessed from http://www.artlink.co.za/news_article.htm?contentID=5850.

Defraeye, Piet. (2007) *Postdramatic Theatre (Review)*. *Modern Drama*. Vol.50. No. 4. Date accessed: June 23, 2013. Accessed from <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/mdr/summary/v050/50.4.defraeye.html>.

Edlmann, Theresa. (2011) *Wreckage: A Difficult, Complex Collaboration*. *Cue Online*. Date accessed: January 25, 2013. Accessed from <http://cue.ru.ac.za/?p=3978>.

Fensham, Rachel. (2013) *Postdramatic Spectatorship: Participate or Else*. *The IATC Journal: Critical Stages*. Date accessed: January 21, 2013. Accessed from <http://www.criticalstages.org/criticalstages7/entry/Postdramatic-Spectatorship-Participate-or-Else?category=2#sthash.KZivOurM.Bxp06wsY.dpuf>.

Finestone-Praeg, Juanita. (2011) *Difference is Revolting*. *Confluences 6: Physicality and Performance*. Date accessed: February 23, 2013. Accessed from <http://www.dance.uct.ac.za/confluen/confluences6.pdf>.

Fleishman, Mark. (1996) *Physical Images in the South African Theatre*. Seminar presented at UCT Drama Department. Sourced in Davidoff, Terri.

Frost, Peter. (2009) *Welcome to the Circus*. Date accessed: October 13, 2009. Accessed from <http://cue.ru.ac.za/dance/2009/welcome-circus.html>.

Heathfield, Adrian. (2004). *Alive. Live: Art and Performance*. London: Tate.

Holmberg, A. (1996) *The Theatre of Robert Wilson*. Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.

Jürs-Munby, Karen. (2006). 'Introduction', Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*. London: Routledge.

Kane, Sarah. (2001). *Complete Plays*. Bloomsbury: Methuen Drama.

Kretzmann, Steve. *Formulaic but Fun*. Date accessed: June 22, 2013. Accessed from <http://www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/show/formulaic-but-fun/>.

Kunst, Bojana. (2009). 'The Economy of Proximity: Dramaturgical Work in Contemporary Dance'. First published in *Performance Research*, UK, 14 (3), pp. 80 – 87. Date accessed: January 16, 2014. Accessed from <http://wp.me/p1iVyi-1K>.

Lehmann, Hans-Thies. (2006). *Postdramatic Theatre*. London: Routledge.

Lehmann, Hans-Thies and Primavesi, Patrick. (2009) *Dramaturgy on Shifting Grounds*. *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, 14:3, 3-6, DOI: 10.1080/13528160903519468.

Loewe, Mike. *sCue*. Date accessed: January 25, 2013. Accessed from <http://www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/show/scue/>.

Nicolescu, Basarab. (2002) *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Pather, J. (2006) *A response: African contemporary dance? Questioning of a performance aesthetic for a devising continent*. *Critical Arts*, 20:2, 9 – 15. Date accessed: November 4, 2009. Accessed from [Critical Arts](#) A Journal of South-North Cultural Studies, Volume 20 Issue 2 2006.

Pather, J. (2009) *Interview with Guglethu Mhlungu*. Rhodes Music Radio Station, Grahamstown. Date accessed: July 9, 2009. Unpublished interview. (Appendix E).

Pather, J. (2005) *Shifting Spaces Tilting Time*. Unpublished paper presented at UCT Drama Department.

Preston-Dunlop, V and Sanchez-Colberg.(eds). (2002) *Dance and the Performative*. London: Verve Publishing.

Richardson, Laurel. (1994) *Writing: A Method of Inquiry*. Handbook of Qualitative Research. Date accessed: November 26, 2013. Accessed from <http://depthpsychotherapy.pbworks.com/f/Writing+A+Method+of+Inquiry.pdf>.

Shambu, Girish. (2009) *Post-Dramatic Theatre: Torn Space's "Area"*. Accessed from <http://mubi.com/notebook/posts/post-dramatic-theatre-torn-spaces-area>.

Schechner, Richard. (2002) *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

Schechner, Richard. (1992) *A New Paradigm for Theatre in the Academy*. TDR. The MIT Press. Vol. 36, No. 4 (Winter, 1992), pp. 7-10.

Scholtz, Brink. (2011) *Slam interview with "Wreckage" director Brink Scholtz*. Accessed from <http://www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/show/slam-interview-with-wreckage-director-brink-scholtz/>.

Scholtz, Brink. Buckland, Andrew. Cillier, Ilana & Khutsoane, Tshego. (2011) *Wreckage Script*. (Appendix B).

Schonmann, Shifra. (2005). 'Master' versus 'Servant': Contradictions in Drama and Theatre Education. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 39, No. 4, Special Issue: Aesthetics in Drama and Theatre Education. Pp. 31-39.

Sichel, Adrienne. (2009) *Body of Evidence: Review*. Date accessed: October 13, 2009. Accessed from www.artlink.co.za/news_article.htm?contentID=8666.

Simmer, Bill. (1976) *Robert Wilson and Therapy*. In *The Drama Review*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Theatre and Therapy.

Smit, Sonja. (2010) *Revolt as a strategy of de-reification in contemporary performance practice*. Mini-Thesis, Rhodes University.

Tomlin, Liz. (2010) 'And their stories fell apart even as I was telling them': Poststructuralist performance and the no-longer-dramatic text. *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, 14:1, 57-64, DOI: 10.1080/13528160903113205.

Virilio, Paul interview with John Armitage. (2000) *The Kosovo War Took Place In Orbital Space: Paul Virilio in Conversation*. Date accessed: November 26, 2013. Accessed from <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=132>.

Voss, Karen Claire. (2001) *Review Essay of Basarab Nicolescu's Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity*. Albany: State University of New York Press. ISBN 0-7914-5261-1. Date accessed: February 16, 2014. Accessed from <http://www.istanbul-yes-istanbul.co.uk/>

Wessendorf, Markus. (2003). *The Postdramatic Theatre of Richard Maxwell*. Unpublished manuscript available online. Accessed from <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~wessendo/Maxwell.htm>.

Willcoxon, Jeanne. (2008). *Postdramatic Theatre* (review). *Theatre Topics*. Pg 248. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Date accessed: July 24, 2013. Accessed from [Project MUSE database](#).

Williamson, Sue. (2007) *2006 in Review*. Date accessed: January 20, 2013. Accessed from <http://www.artthrob.co.za/07feb/reviews/bestof.html>.

i Alienating Effect: is a performing arts concept coined by German playwright Bertolt Brecht. Brecht first used the term in an essay on "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting" published in 1936, in which he described it as "playing in such a way that the audience was hindered from simply identifying itself with the characters in the play. Acceptance or rejection of their actions and utterances was meant to take place on a conscious plane, instead of, as hitherto, in the audience's subconscious" -John Willett, ed. and trans., *Brecht on Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 91.

ii In Orwell's novel, the character O'Brien describes what is in Room 101. He says, "You asked me once, what was in Room 101. I told you that you knew the answer already. Everyone knows it. The thing that is in Room 101 is the worst thing in the world". Orwell, G. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Pg. 165

Appendix A – Production Credits

Wreckage

Director:	Brink Scholtz
Choreography:	Athina Vahla
Text:	Brink Scholtz Ilana Cilliers Tshego Khutsoane Andrew Buckland
Designer & Stage Manager:	Barati Montshiwa
Assistant Stage Manager:	Matthew Short
Production Assistant:	Dion van Niekerk
Soundscapes creation:	Luke Clayton
Production & Marketing Manager:	Sarah Roberson
Company Administrator:	Nosiphiwo Fihlani
Ubom! Artistic Director:	Janet Buckland
First Physical Artistic Director:	Juanita Finestone-Praeg
Cast:	Andrew Buckland Thami Baba Ilana Cilliers Ntomboxolo Donyeli Tshego Khutsoane Thalia Laric Siyabulela Mbambaza Themba Mchunu Ntombizandile Nonyati Alan Parker Ikalafeng Tigelo Sisonke Yafele

Before *Wreckage*, Scholtz's previous work as Resident Director of Ubom! favoured a dramatic text in its form with the secondary use of physical theatre and visual dramaturgy to hyper theatricalise the narrative being told. Scholtz's work as a director outside of the style of Ubom! is varied with a clean balance between directing published and original play texts such as *Marat/Sade* (1963) by Pieter Weiss in 2005, as well as *Gevalle Engel* by Mike van Graan in 2013, all with a strong sense of devising employed by Scholtz in collaboration with her casts. Greek choreographer, Athina Vahla sits between dance, theatre and visual arts endeavoring to create imaginary displays in collaboration with multi-disciplinary artists and teams. Currently Vahla focuses on a series of what she calls *Interdisciplinary Events*. These events combine the idea of research, theatre and interrogation into disciplines outside of traditional theatre discourses such as boxing, costume design, geography, karate and pole dancing. These disciplines are

presented in traditional theatrical spaces in the form of practice lead lectures with audiences invited to ask questions and interrogate the form after the presentation. The meeting between Scholtz and Vahla considering their styles as well as nationalities is both discordant and harmonious – the result of which is *Wreckage*.

Drifting

Dramaturg:	Rob Murray
Curators:	Rob Murray Andrew Buckland Illka Louw
Cast:	Andrew Buckland Juanita Finestone-Praeg Ilana Cilliers Pumelela Nqelenga Liezl de Kock Hannah Lax Sifiso Sikhakhane Tristan Jacobs Levern Botha Gerhard De Lange Jesika Kilian
Stage Manager:	Matt Short
Lighting Design:	Tersia Du Plessis
Video:	Bianca Binneman
Marketing Design:	Robert Haxton

Rob Murray's style is most notably identified in his work with FTH:K (From The Hip: Khulumakhale Theatre Company) and The Conspiracy of Clowns Collective with the former focusing on a visual theatre for the deaf. His work is predominantly silent, working mainly with puppetry, visual and physical theatre in works such as *Pictures of You* (2008) and *Womb Tide* (2010).

Andrew Buckland is famously known in South Africa for his high energy performance styled, minimalist physical theatre, notable demonstrated in works such as *The Ugly Noo-Noo* (1985) and *The Wellbeing* (1988), collaboration with Lionel Newton. Buckland's performance style is also deeply influenced by clowning and 'new circus' indicative, one can say of Charlie Chaplin. Buckland spent a year working and performing for Cirque du Soleil in a show called *Love* (2008) and as such has been influence by high octane commercial theatre as well as cutting edge experimental theatre such as his collaborative work with Ubom! Eastern Cape Drama Company.

The third credited curator, Illka Louw is a costume and set designer and took careful attention in creating a visual logic throughout the various seemingly incoherent vignettes in *Drifting*. Consequently the use of masks, puppetry, text, live instrumentation, choreography, voice over and clowning are all employed in the homage as a result of the collaboration set up by the curators.

Discharge

Created by: Gavin Krastin
 Choreography: Alan Parker
 Installations: Rat Western

Cast: Andrew Buckland
 Alan Parker
 Gavin Krastin
 Rat Western
 Pumelela Nqelenga
 Siya Mbambaza
 Nomcebisi Moyikwa
 Candace Gawler
 Mike Von Bardeleben
 Kimberly Mkhushulwa
 Sandy Vlandir
 Inga Sibiyi
 Lulama Live Qongqo
 Karabo Ramalibana
 Luke Calder
 Tim Able
 Cameron Cordell

Production Manager: Wesley Deintje

The creator, Gavin Krastin has gradually developed a widespread reputation for his highly visual and provocative work. His verbose sense of design envelopes his productions like wrapping paper draping a Christmas present. He is most aptly described by Genna Gardini as the brain-child of Steven Cohen and Lady Gaga. In 2013, Krastin premiered *Rough Musick* at the National Arts Festival. *Rough Musick* was met with high critical acclaim and was later performed at The World Stage Design Conference in Wales that same year. Alan Parker's choreography is of a distinctive nature; never without quirk and always with depth. Parker worked, performed and choreographed for the First Physical Theatre Company for several years. His conceptualisation

is clean, neat and often minimalist in comparison to Krastin's work. The third collaborator, Rat Western can be considered a digital artist. She lectures on neo-forms of avant-garde and digital art at the Rhodes University Art Department. Western's involvement in *Discharge* is the creation of the striking multimedia installations.

Body of Evidence

Choreography:	Jay Pather
Dancers:	Mxolisi Nkomonde Nkanyiso Kunene Sandile Mkhize Ntombi Gasa Neliswa Rushualang Sibusiso Gantsa Shaun Oelf Siyanda Duma John Cartwright Siyabonga Mhlongo
Technician:	Themba Stewart Dominique Jossie
Video:	Storm Janse Van Rensberg
Lighting:	Vaughn Sadie
Sound:	James Webb

Pather is largely known for his large, site-specific performance pieces created together with various groups, such as the Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre in Durban. In her paper "Deconstructing Jay Pather's location-specific theatre: creating space for transformative dialogue", Terri Davidoff says that Pather's performance pieces are "multi-layered in that they are not exclusively narrative tales, nor simply physical dance pieces, nor demonstrations of political commentary, but rather all these aspects intricately built into a final product".¹ The final product is often described as site-specific installation[s]. They are predominantly visually based. The intricate interweaving of performance styles, modes and multi-media result in what appear to be illogical journeys. These journeys emphasize aspects of community, history (such as apartheid), as well as the personal made political. For example in his work *City Scapes*

¹ Davidoff, Pg128

(2002), the performers are displayed along the exterior walls of a popular middle-class shopping centre building in Durban.

Collaboration is key in Pather's oeuvre. Storm Janse van Rensburg writes as a part of Pather's 'Modis Operandi', "through the development of script and performance frameworks with performers, or working closely with video, sound and installation artists, mall managers and curators [Pather] realises often ambitious projects".² Traditional and classical forms, and how contemporary life dissects and reinterprets these forms are a main point of interest in Pather's work.

²Janse van Rensburg, S. Cited on: <http://www.artthrob.co.za/04nov/artbio.html>. Date accessed: November 3, 2009

Appendix B - Script

Wreckage

[PLEASE NOTE: The following script is the most updated version sourced for this dissertation and by no means reflects the full theatrical scope of the final product as performed in 2011]

Fade to black.

Tshego enters with lighter, into position on stage.

Framing voice over. When voice over ends, others enter and lights come up on stage.

Shoe sequence. Andrew and Ilana seated between audience and stage, facing stage. Andrew speaks over microphone.

Andrew drags on Ilana.

Andrew: *There will be no deserters aboard this ship!*

Survivors shake to Siya's instruction.

Nox and Sisonke gather the shoes. They check for things inside them. When they find them empty, they throw them off stage. Finally they find bones in a shoe. Nox throws the bones out of a shoe and sees a terrible prophecy. Sound fades out quickly.

Nox: *Hayi man, how did this happen, brother? We've come so far now. Does this mean we have to go back and begin again?*

Slowly she and Sisonke creep out of the space.

Ilana finds the bones and Nox wails with grief.

The individual waltz begins. Ilana breaks out and speaks over the microphone:

Ilana: *We travel without company. Without the banter hurled between vessels; the sense of association with others, however remote. We spot another early on, but it is fast moving and soon overtakes us. Anything is welcome which may break this long monotony, a sail, a shark, an albatross, a man overboard. But the great devices for killing time are quarrelling and flirting.*

Ilana sings and wild fighting erupts. This is interrupted when Ika jumps on Siya's shoulders:

Ika: *Land ho! Bring her about, bring her about, bring her about you dumb fuck!*

Nox: *Hayi wena It happened a long time ago.*

Thami: *Exactly, and I never wanted to travel by sea in the first place. You gain a lot of weight.*

Themba orders them back to work in Setswana.

Hitting cloth sequence. Thami gives instructions. Ika remains distressed about the prospect of hitting land. Andrew tries to engage someone to explain the map to him.

Ika calls land again: very loudly.

Everyone is unmoving on stage while Andrew describes the moment just before impact. He ends mid sentence on the word 'before'.

Siya runs to Ika, drags him to the bucket and pushes his head under water, everyone takes a deep breath in and holds it. One at a time the cast members leave the stage as Ika performs his drowning solo. Thami enters and sings 'no air'.

Ika's solo ends. Siya takes him off stage. Thami starts cleaning up the stage, and others join her.

Thalia lies down and Thami tries to sweep her off stage. Alan takes the broom away from her. Stage is populated.

Themba moves 'dead' Thalia's body as others watch. Ilana sings 'Johnny is nie dood nie.'

Themba is pulled away from Thalia:

Themba: *That is not how I want this scene to end!*

Ilana goes to Thalia and copies her position. Andrew pulls her away and while they narrate she explores the territory, whilst he tries to contain her – packing papers on her, etc. Themba helps Andrew to clear the space of papers and Andrew exits following Ntombi, who has picked up a paper of her own.

Themba sets up furniture for Collett scene. Andrew, Ilana & Ika confer about a new way to play Themba's scene. They turn towards technical desk and indicate that sound be cut.

Collett scene is played out. It ends with Andrew saying, 'Your wife, in fact.' Again Themba responds:

Themba: *No, this is not how I want this scene to end!*

Pairs enter to perform formal waltz. Andrew gives instructions to prepare, Themba echoes him. At first frantic, later desperate, Themba moves between the bodies, asking for directions to his wife. The waltz disintegrates and Themba exits, searching for the footprints of his wife.

By the end of the waltz, Thalia lies unmoving in the floor. As Andrew addresses the audience, he moves her body into rigor mortis:

Andrew: *You have been stunned into an irreversible stillness. It cannot be changed. It is tightening. You have been locked in place. You are in a state of semi consciousness and will therefore not be able to make use of thought and logic to shift your internal energies and activate your internal muscular groupings in order to consciously undo the state in which you are in. Although you may wish to move, this is impossible. Your position does not lend itself to it. In fact it is not conducive. You are stuck. You will remain in a state of non-performance for the next 72 hours. Before they come to you to take you away, they will enjoy various libations and engage in life-confirming activities. Do not be insulted. Nothing can be done. You will not relax.*

Thami starts to eat one of the papers that she has in her hand.

Themba enters, still searching for the footprints of his wife. It leads him to Thalia's body. When he finds her he repeats:

Themba: No, this is not how I want it to end either.

Thami approaches Themba, and he asks her what the map says. Andrew points out that she is eating the map. Thami denies this, then offers a sheet to Themba as well. Others step forward to get sheets as well. Everybody begins to eat paper frantically:

Nox: *After three weeks we eat crabs that hang onto our lips and bite our tongues.*

Thami: *After six weeks we eat my shoes. Just half of each shoe, so I can still walk.*

Alan: *And then eventually we eat her. (Pointing at Ilana)*

Andrew: *That's my fucking wife!*

Performers exit, while Andrew runs to Ilana, asking her to speak. At first she speaks gibberish, then she begins to narrate another diary entry. He notes what she says.

As she speaks, he calls a waiter (Thami) and asks her for a glass of water. She returns with a shoe. While he berates her for this, performers enter and begin to shake to Siya's instruction on the floor. Andrew asks Thami to take him to the manager and they exit.

Thami re-enters carrying Nox. Performers on stage start to approach Nox, as if wanting to eat her. Thami fights them off. They exit. Thami follows, still carrying Nox. Ilana remains alone on stage.

Andrew re-enters with a shoe with water. He lets Ilana drink from it.

Performers enter and 'figure-head' sequence is performed.

The relay begins and ends in conflict. Thami recites 'dehydration list' over microphone.' Andrew snatches Alan's water bottle and takes it to Ilana. Alan asks Thalia for some of her water. This develops into Alan & Thalia's water bottle duet.

When Alan & Thalia's duet ends, Ilana moves downstage singing 'I want to sink to the bottom with you.' Thami completes 'dehydration list'. The final three points on the list are 'coma.'

Stage is populated for 'fighting death dance'.

At the end of the death dance, Nox recites 'Ntombazana changes.' As she does this Ntombi enters upstage. Nox ends by repeating the phrase 'Ntombazana changes'. As she moves towards stage left, performers exit.

Siya repeatedly tries to place Ntombi in a decent position. Nox begins the chant about traditional Xhosa home & body care.

Andrew and Themba enter and read each others' clan praises. Sisonke, Nox and Thami close their eyes and hold out their hands as though waiting for gifts, while still chanting.

Andrew and Themba exit. Ilana, Thalia & Alan enter with hand mirrors and place these in Nox, Sisonke & Thami's hands. As they receive these gifts, they stop chanting. They examine themselves in the

mirrors. At first they find their images very funny, but gradually a sense of dismay and doom sets in. Sisonke leaves, taking Nox's mirror with him. A sound of crying is heard backstage. Thami starts to search for where the sound is coming from, all the time calling out, 'Madam?' Eventually she finds the source of the sound upstage right. She asks, 'Madam, are you decent?'

Singing begins backstage. Nox tells the story of the woman who buried herself alive in the sand.

Nox: *I saw an animal with two legs and two arms, like me. It had white skin and hair that the air could lift and move lightly and it covered itself in strange things that shone brightly in the sun. It was like a wind pushing me forward and backwards, this animal. I asked myself if it was a curse from my ancestors. I knelt down to ask them, what sort of animal it was.*

They told me not to be scared. They told me strip its cover.

Thami: Madam, are you okay?

Soon after, Siya enters in a grand dress made out of paper.

One of them, a strong crazy female, fought me. I was about to burn her, when the male spoke: We are all born naked, he said. And if it is God's will that you be naked again now, you should not refuse it. Then the strong crazy female let me take its cover off.

Ika and Alan enter and remove Siya's dress. Thami brings the hair covering to him, and covers him with it.

Andrew enters, covering Ilana:

Andrew: *I want to swaddle you in the leaves of the poison plant that grows next to the side of the road to PE that will stop the insects and larvae from laying their eggs in your body so that one day when the leaves are so thin, so similar in colour to you, it will be hard to distinguish between you and the leaves of the plant in which I have wrapped you. I want to preserve you for aeons upon aeons. I want you to wear your skin again.*

Chaos erupts on stage with people running on and off, attempting to communicate their message to the audience. Finally the performers are lined up downstage, addressing the audience in a line. They turn and sit down. Ilana begins a story in several languages, and settles on French. Themba enters and translates her story. Themba's story ends and Andrew delivers 'I'm holding you' while Alan performs his solo.

All observers except exit. Finally, Alan exits and Andrew falls to the ground.

Andrew maps out a place for himself to die.

He prepares to lie down, then notices Thami. A brief erotic encounter transpires between them, while Ilana delivers a final diary entry about the waltz.

Ilana and Thami exit, Andrew remains on stage. Nox enters and sees Andrew's 'map'. She calls others to see it: Sisonke and Siya enter, followed later by Themba, Ika, Ntombi and Thami.

After they all perform a slow motion kick together, Nox and Ika shift position and Nox begins to recite 'Ntombazana changes' in Xhosa'. Andrew undresses and lies under the paper. All exit except Andrew

and Sisonke. Sound begins backstage. Group moves backwards from upstage left to upstage right. Andrew weaves through them. Sisonke moves to and fro in the foreground.

Siya, Ika and Sisonke step into the space, closing their eyes. Thalia, Ilana & Alan approach them and kiss away their tears, throwing salt over their shoulders.

Andrew walks in whistling, interrupting the sound and action. He describes the events before collision with land again. This time, it is intercut with Thami's description of events from land. Again, the narration stops abruptly.

Cut to black.

All enter in darkness, Tshego with lighter. Ilana and Themba prepare to operate pin spots.

Tshego begins monologue in very low light. When bodies start to drop, Ilana & Themba step in between them and shine pin spots on them.

Tshego: When the impact comes it is not as you expected and you think about the fact that it is not as you expected, and you ask yourself if that was it, (start music and light on Tshego's face) and you don't know yet which part of you has snapped and how it is that you are still standing or if you are standing or if you are just balanced upright for a moment before you will no longer be standing because certainly you should not be standing certainly you are on your way down or up or both and then you think that maybe that wasn't it, maybe it is still coming and you might still be bending because it certainly sounds like something is bending and you wonder how much can bend and how much can crack and how much can tear and snap and change shape, how much of his face will crack and tear and snap and change shape when the shovel hits my father's head one morning as he walks along Joza street and how long will it change shape just a few days or maybe forever because did you know or shall I tell you now that we are no longer recognisable as what we were before and so we will not have this shape we are not on this ship and he will no longer buy me presents because he lives in Algoa hospital in PE now and when he has walked a few steps he is tired and sits again and while he was thin like me before, now he is getting fat, because the shovels changed the shape of his brain. And I'd like you to tell me if that is me that is snapping and I'd like you to tell me if there will be any sign to recognise me by when this is over? Like when we thought we were on our way to King Williams Town and the venture made no attempt to stop for the stop sign at the Pedi turn off and it struck our right side. And I would like to know if after all these collisions there will be anything to recognise us by? After the first time when we met when you borrowed my fields and my cattle and I borrowed them back and neither of us had permission, and the boundary between you and me was drawn between the Fish and the Sundays, after the second time that we met and the boundary was moved west, after the third time that we met and the boundary was confirmed, after the fourth time that we met when you spilt no more blood than was necessary to impress on my savage mind a proper degree of terror and respect, after the fifth time that we met when I promised to turn bullets into water, after the sixth time that we met and you and I were both left homeless, after the seventh time that we met, and the eighth time that we met, and the time in between when I was only sixteen and I sacrificed everything to avoid another meeting, but my dead never came to kill you and my prophecy brought nothing but starvation and the beginnings of madness for both of us and the ninth time that we met that was the ninth of the cape frontier xhosa kaffir collisions that had kept us far too busy for far too long and the tenth and the eleventh and 78th time that we met when I was wearing your shirt and the 123rd time that we met when you were singing my song. And the 300th time that we met and the 400th time that we met and that time that we didn't meet, but we spoke on the phone and the 600th time when we spoke on the phone and you thought that I was your sister so I looked in the mirror

to make sure I wasn't. And I'd like to know how many times we can meet, before there will be nothing to recognise us by. And I'd like to know how many times we'll meet, before the plates of the earth will have lifted again and shifted again, and new seas have formed, and others have retreated, and the rivers have changed their courses again and we are worn away by the impact of the water, like the plains between Grahamstown and Kenton, fissured like the cracks in a heel and we are worn away by the persistent collision that washes and brushes away over aeons so that only our hardest parts remain. And I'd like to know how much can bend and crack and tear and snap and change shape. And I'd like you to tell me if that is me in the mirror or if that is your sister. And I'd like you to tell me if after all these collisions to have lived will be enough for us and if that will be the last time that we meet.

Ilana & Themba shine the lights on each other. Black out.

Appendix C – Interviews

1. Slam interview with “Wreckage” director Brink Scholtz

Posted by Mike Loew

Tuesday Jul 5, 2011

<http://www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/show/slam-interview-with-wreckage-director-brink-scholtz/>

I got hold of the self-described “young director” of “Wreckage”, Brink Scholtz, 34, to find out what was going on in her head.

I loved “Wreckage”, and after three packed showings, so did two full houses who gave it standing ovations.

But others find it disjointed and hard to understand.

She says it’s a post-modern piece and has no linear or sequential narrative.

It is “definitely not a history play”.

So that’s out the way.

What we have are “incidents” which “work at the level of metaphor”.

“Stylistically it’s tricky. We are dealing with shards. There are moments and some stories are told, especially about relationships, but these are merely moments of depth. “Don’t worry if you feel lost or fragmented. You are invited to absolutely take what you want from the work. It is a total experience of wreckage. We did not use the word ‘wreck’ because the ship becomes unrecognisable. The form changes.”

Yes, the work is about a “grassroots” theatre company (Ubom!) “meets an elite” theatre company (First Physical) and there are “huge clashes and deep understandings” which result from this collaboration.

It was a “massive production” with many elements to manage.

The piece is about “collisions” and many of the central elements emerged out of her work with different groups and individuals.

“I excavated the piece. I know the different worlds (of uBom! and First Physical). The last stories in Wreckage are the casts’ own stories.”

These were “personal and authentic experiences” and often about the “impact between different bodies and different worlds”.

Wreckage does deal with the clash of cultures where Africa and Europe “bump”, but the piece quickly moves into a series of “constant collisions”.

Who is Mr Collett? “He is a character mentioned in history, and his wife did die, but (in the piece) the story is of him discovering a dead woman, and from there it becomes metaphorical”.

She says the actors “occasionally break through the fourth wall”.

This wall, I’m told by reviewer Jane Stone is the gap between actors and audience, where the actors discuss their character with the audience.

Brink again asks viewers to ditch the linear, sequential narrative approach.

“It’s about incidents where the links are associative, where one moment morphs into another, so for example, the death of an individual becomes the death of a culture.”

“I wanted it to be multi-layered and always shifting.”

Not for a moment did she make the work with audience response in mind.

“I try to find the truth in this group (of performers), on this stage, in this place. What is our wreckage?”

But she hopes fervently that this process will resonate with the audience.

“I have no idea about authorial intention. The work has a logic of its own, and there is space for multiple meanings.”

“The (bleep!) problem is with the Western need to order and capture the world, and all the accounts of the first ship wreckages were written down by Europeans. I felt it was important to deal deeply with the multiplicity of meanings (which are associated with ships being wrecked on the Wild Coast). There is not just one account. I asked the cast and we interacted with the written sources and accounts, so our wreckages are there too, in relation to the (Eastern Cape) area.

The one historical book she used (mainly) was by journalist Ben McLennan (“A Proper Degree of Terror”).

Is she happy with the show? “Yes, I am, but it’s not perfect. Thank god for that.

Although the opening night had been “shaky” technically, she felt that the essence of the piece was brave and honest.

“We are getting there now.”

“There is something really valuable in the collaboration. I can feel it and it is enough for me. The actors are growing.”

She herself works with “every single bit of my being, my mind...”

Works like “Wreckage” can be slightly “sadistic in the direction. You are looking for the points of pain and vulnerability – in yourself and the people you are working with. This is what it means to be intimately human. I’m not a happy-go-lucky person. If I was I would be an accountant and have made some money.”

Now that the work is done, she attends the shows – and “watches the audience. They are deeply engaged.”

She agrees, it’s unusual for the student to be directing the master. She was taught at Rhodes by Andrew Buckland who appears as a performer in the large cast of “Wreckage”.

2. 'Body of Evidence' - Jay Pather at The Playhouse

By Peter Machen

17 October 2009

Dance me to the edge of art

[http://www.artthrob.co.za/Reviews/Review of Body of Evidence by Peter Machen at The Playhouse.aspx](http://www.artthrob.co.za/Reviews/Review_of_Body_of_Evidence_by_Peter_Machen_at_The_Playhouse.aspx)

Peter Machen talks to Jay Pather

Jay Pather is one of South Africa's most eclectic creative talents. Ostensibly a choreographer, he has taken his discipline to the very edge of expression, often blurring the division between dance and fine art in productions – both in traditional performance environments and in public spaces – which are invariably visually stunning, deeply thought provoking and emotionally honest. To this end, Pather has been involved in countless collaborations with the country's fine artists as well as other dance and performing companies, and often makes exquisite use of multimedia,

costumes and props in his performances with his Durban based company Siwela Sonke. Although Pather currently lives in Cape Town and travels around the world with his productions, he remains an archetypal Durban talent. I spoke to him about his work, the impact of the past and his relationship to eThekweni.

Peter Machen: Hi Jay. Thanks for talking to me. Nearly all of the work I've seen of yours seem to be a fusion of dance and various forms of fine art. This is true, regardless of whether you have collaborated with artists on a work or not. Do you see dance and fine art as a continuum or do they remain discretely separate disciplines for you?

Jay Pather: Fusion is a double-edged sword – keeping the integrity of the original forms while bringing together different disciplines to create something new and layered is always a challenge. It's a fine line to walk, but I ultimately see them on a continuum, one complementing the other, while retaining their integrity as individual forms.

PM: Your work is usually accessible but seldom easy to interpret. Is it important that audiences are brought straight into a work, regardless of whether they understand it at the time? And how important is it that your audience take away a sense of meaning with them, rather than simply the pleasure of experience?

JP: You know, one wishes that an audience gets everything you put in. But I also have to accept that I might make a work over six weeks and an audience encounters it over sixty minutes, so much may get lost. All art requires a certain degree of patience and openness in order to allow meaning to be made. I try to work in certain key narrative elements, little islands that one can hang onto if one needs to. I also don't want to talk down to an audience and make meaning so readily available that it simplifies the issue I am talking about.

Ultimately, I have to trust that the work will make an impact of some kind and linger in memory. Meaning is also something that the body processes over time, and if making art is about accessing a subconscious field, meaning may not be immediate but it might occur later, perhaps in one's dreams.

PM: Dance, like film and theatre, is nearly always a collaborative art form, and you have pushed the notion of collaboration to the edge. How important is collaboration to you, and to what extent do you think that have you been influenced by the collaborative spirit of Durban?

JP: I think so much of the art-making of my generation has its roots in the response to apartheid. In response to the terrible separation, there was a strong need to collaborate, to

create strategies to counter the divides. These divides that were not just about race and class, but also divides in cultural forms: what was 'classical', what was 'good' art and 'bad' art, what was so-called 'community' art, and what was professional.

I think we are still only beginning to find out what is possible in our communities, since so much has been negated and lost, and we have to be very conscious that we do not continue the legacy of apartheid in subtle forms. Art and culture reflect the unfinished business of redress prevalent in other aspects of our society. Working collaboratively engenders healing, dialogue and a way of developing, more than just a superficial understanding of diverse points of view.

PM: I haven't seen any of the productions you have done outside of Durban but from the photographs I have seen, it seems as if you are taking the spirit of eThekweni with you around the country and the world. Is there any truth to this? And how does your experience of the cultural life of Cape Town compare to that of Durban?

JP: My company, Siwela Sonke is based in Durban and I seldom do work without them, whether in Cape Town or Copenhagen. The 'spirit of eThekweni', as you call it, is a very strong, intoxicating, intense thing. You grow up with it, imbibe it, and it never leaves you, ever. It definitely pervades my work wherever I go.

I also think that people from other parts of the country, as well as abroad, want to have a sense of where you come from, a kind of signature in your work. For me that signature is unmistakably crafted in Durban. Cultural life in Durban is on the street, in the arcades, all around one. This is less true in a place like Cape Town, which in many respects was an ideal apartheid city in that the different communities are so far away from each other. However, audiences in Cape Town are more developed in their capacity and do have a yearning for new work, especially work that takes risks. So the theatres tend to be fuller and more supported.

PM: You and your various dancers have appeared in productions all around the world. How important to you is it to produce work beyond the borders of South Africa? And how much of your experiences in your travels do you incorporate into your work? Is it important for you to retain a feeling of internationalism, even as you embrace local culture and idiom?

JP: For a long time I preferred to do most of my work in South Africa. I was big on audience development and developing a theatre literacy, hence productions in public spaces such as CityScapes. I still do a great deal of this kind of work but it has been gratifying to have the global interaction. It keeps me in tune with what is contemporary, with the 'state of the art' in a broad range of contexts. Additionally, you are challenged and pushed to discover your own limits and relook at your work in a more critical way because you are swimming in a much larger pond. I think one also needs to travel because one values 'home' that much more. You come to understand the ties that keep you in this country, and that these ties are not just sentimental

but that they are meaningful, and run deep. My work does draw from this internationalism yes, but it remains rooted here.

PM: Something that is also a common motif in your work is the amalgam of rural and urban cultures, together with the fusion and intersection of tradition and modernity. This is one of the most wonderful things about Durban for me: seeing sangomas and inyangas in their traditional dress walking down the same streets as snappily dressed lawyers, Indian and African Moslems wearing kurtas and burkas, Zionists, Shembes and, of course, young people wearing South Africa's own sharply flamboyant interpretations of Western fashion. All of this comes through in your work. And while for you and I it represents our reality, for many South Africans who live in more compartmentalised realities, it is a foreign world. Is it part of your mission to bring the full diversity of South Africa into your work, and into the public spaces in which you intervene?

JP: Absolutely. It's not about something artificial. It is something real, palpable, as you describe it so vividly. I have also understood more and more the importance of both the 'mix' as well as the place of tradition - indigenous traditions for example, have been so disrespected in the past that they cannot just be played around with. One has to be quite careful how they are represented. The experience can be powerful and uplifting but, if not done with care, it can also be alienating and superficial. It is one of my missions to represent this rich diversity. But it has to have integrity, some kind of truth. And truth in a matrix of such diversity is hard work.

PM: Do you miss Durban? And do you think you will ever return to live here?

JP: Yes, I miss Durban when I am not here. As I mentioned earlier, the Siwela Sonke Company, who are essentially my extended family, live in Durban, as do much of my biological family. So I spend fairly large chunks of time here. I have a home here which I use every excuse to come and live in. And besides, in those moments when I do miss it, that intoxicating spirit of eThekweni you talked about, runs deep and very strong.

PM: Thanks so much for speaking to me Jay. See you in Durban.

3. A Brief Interview with Andrew Buckland

Date of Interview: 16 June 2013

Robert Haxton: First Question. If I threw the words 'postdramatic', 'contemporary' or 'new' performance at you, what comes to mind?

Andrew Buckland: I suppose contemporary and new speak of the operating mechanism of collaboration; finding new form as well as new content through devising and through collaborative creative things. To rather break the formula of making, the mechanisms of making which used to be producer, director and script, and more into the making of things that are immediate and in the moment. That speaks to the postdramatic as well that it's less about representing a story that someone has imagined than discovering what immediately takes place between these emotional, physical and intellectual energies.

RH: Great. I'd like you to comment on the significance of the title of *Wreckage*.

AB: Purely because I love word play I first began with idea of play with the word 'Wreckage', hence we began with WreckAGE to sort of suggest the sequences of collision through the ages. But I often fall into the thing of 'cutsie' titles – so it appeared to clever. Just the word itself was much more authentic. Although, from many of the collaborators I was given major caution in that the title was inviting, well, exactly the review that it got "Wreckage on the Rocks" – using wreckage as a 'disaster' of a work.

RH: Now, we know that titles always give us an idea of the content in a work. Did the title for *Wreckage* dictate or inform the structure and form of the piece stylistically?

AB: I think what it invited to the participants, to the actors who are invited to improvise around certain ideas and situations, was the potential of chaos, of mess. You know, of not trying to tell history accurately for instance but working with what happens when out of conflicting situations. That often after conflict there is wreckage; when the boat hits the shore there is wreckage thrown up on the shore as well. And the sense of discovering things, by making a mistake (by having an accident) is the invitation to the performers that you don't try and create the form and then rehearse, you use the form as a way of exploring what's developed.

RH: Following from that, do you think that a process of refusing what we 'know' as in traditional practices of theatre making, do you think a process of refusing those forms in order to find new ways into a devising process is necessary for this style of work?

AB: I guess so yes. In terms of what you hope the result will be, no, in fact I suppose ones eye is not necessarily on the result. If the 'normal' way of approaching it is this, it often because we are used to that as a methodology, produces a recognisable result. That's if you start with 'knowing' what the result will be. What if you abandon that and say "have I got any other methods?" People have said that that is a big mistake. But what could be more tempting than to make a mistake, and to see if something evolves?

RH: Thank you Andrew.
