Performance Trends in Postliberation Zimbabwe

Performance Trends in Postliberation Zimbabwe:

Practices, Projections and Trajectories

Edited by

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Introduction

Cultural Practice
in the Zimbabwean Postcolony:
In Search of New Practices

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Performance practice in postliberation Zimbabwe can be conceptualised as a socio-cultural (and physical) site that reflects economic, cultural and epistemological struggles within the bigger scope of Zimbabwean geo-polity. In reading and seeking to understand these struggles, it is imperative to engage with "imperial epistemologies […] institutional structures [and] material struggle" (Huggan 2008: 28, 29) that locate "value as a site of institutional struggle [over] issues of authorship, authenticity and legitimacy" (Huggan 2001: 28) within Zimbabwean performance practice. The chapters that make up this book are located within a disruptive and resistive theoretical perspective that challenges continued and recurring colonial and neo-colonial legacies by proffering a conceptual re-orientation towards the perspectives of (spatial and aesthetic) knowledge (Young 2003: 6) in performance practice. Postliberation Zimbabwean performance practice becomes a hybrid and syncretic location in which spatial and aesthetic practices are remodelled and re-written as a response to the mechanical colonial and residual colonial paradigm.

In most of the chapters that make up this book, hybridity is deployed as a "certain kind of interdisciplinary political, theoretical and historical academic work that sets out to serve as a transitional forum for studies grounded in the historical context of colonialism, as well as in the political context of contemporary problems of globalization" (Young 1998: 4). Hybridity as a theoretical lens enabled the contributors to this book to privilege diversity and subvert the global by engaging in localised and

situated positionings, where dogma is replaced by ambivalence, stability by volatility and purity by hybridity (Young 2003; Bhabha 1999). From a hybrid positionality, the contributors are able to assign new roles and give meaning to emerging and contemporary performance practices. Theoretically and practically, hybridity grants Zimbabwean theatre practitioners (and contributors) agency to refuse binarism, implicit in Zimbabwean history (whether racial, ideological and/ or political), in their articulation of an African performance trajectory.

Concerning performance practice, the hybrid theoretical lens facilitates the relocation of the dynamics of theatre performance, in its holistic view, from a straitjacketed colonial mechanical framework to a fluid, organic and experimental process approach based on the Zimbabwean post-independence socio-political and historical landscape. This relocation of performance practice dynamics to the socio-political and economic level addresses the fundamental relationships of power and assumptions about privilege (Lo and Gilbert 2002) within Zimbabwean theatre practice. The concept of hybridity latent in the varied theoretical perspectives deployed by contributors enable them to interrogate the economic and political influences of the collective and individual powers at play within their case studies, along with a new "conceptual re-orientation towards the perspectives of knowledge, as well as needs, developed outside the west" (Young 2003: 6). Consequently, these new ideas that emerge from the contributors' chapters are characteristic of Third World post-colonies, which assert "not just the right of African, Asian and Latin American peoples to access resources and material well-being, but also the dynamic power of their cultures, cultures that are now intervening in and transforming the societies of the west" (Young 2003: 4). Most, if not all, of the chapters in this book demand a new centre by adopting a counter-discursive strategy that flies in the face of hierarchical residual social structures and homogenous cultural codes in their conceptualisation of the transformation of their relationship to the wider world (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989; Huggan 1997; 2001). This relationship is no longer fixed on binary oppositions (such as centre-margin or coloniser-colonised); rather it is based on a syncretic network of shifting, mutually transforming associations and interconnections that dispenses with the 'centre', leaving the 'marginal' to

become the formative constituent of reality (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989; Huggan 2001).

Linked to the theoretical concept of hybridity is syncretism. However, while the former is presented from the vantage point of residual colonialism, syncretism is deployed in this study from an African perspective (Kerr 1995; wa Thiongo 1983; Kamlongera 1989). Syncretism is invoked to describe the 'fusion' evident in African popular culture (Barber 1999) and characterises a conscious pragmatic strategy to fashion a new form of theatre in the light of colonial or postcolonial experience (Balme 1999: 2). In this book, syncretism frames the state or condition of postliberation performance practice in Zimbabwe and the process by which such conditions occur (Shalaby 2013; Leopold and Jeppe 2004; Claus and Mills 2003). Within a specifically British colonial setup, such as Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, Balme (1999: 23-24) argues that, conceptually, syncretism enables the development of a "theoretical discourse which questions some of the fundamental principles of British theatrical aesthetics". Nchamah (2012: 4) proposes that syncretism enables African theorists to create "discursive stratifications and ephemeral formations [that] produce a new discourse". This new discourse, as shall be seen in the chapters that make up this book, emerges out of an analysis of the practitioner's cultural, political, and economic experience in a postliberation African or Zimbabwean landscape. The main argument that runs through most of the chapters in this book is that, in postcolonial countries, such as Zimbabwe, cultures begin to infuse themselves, sometimes transforming the normalised developmental process and sometimes disrupting it. While this developmental process is often met with contestation from those who have become submerged in colonial ways or desire colonial benefits, it inspires new (spatial and aesthetic) forms that create the conditions in which 'the subaltern' can liberate themselves (Spivak 1990).

The syncretic nature of the Zimbabwean postliberation performance industry, which is located in the needs, challenges and experiences of the ordinary man, provides material for the chapters that make up this book. While in colonial Rhodesia/Zimbabwe and other countries that had been similarly colonised, the residual colonial cultural practice developed to a level where it became common practice and common sense, in contemporary

Zimbabwe, the socio-cultural and political landscape has demanded a new performance narrative (Seda 2004; Ravengai 2011). Contributors to this book engage, interrogate, deconstruct and reconstruct the loci and motivations of the current common sense performance practice and its theoretical underpinnings in contemporary Zimbabwe theatre practice. This process of deconstruction and reconstruction of binary residual colonial and indigenous (pre-colonial) paradigms into a syncretic African theoretical and conceptual position is an acknowledgement of the various mutations through which performance in Zimbabwe has gone.

The postliberation landscape in which the African performance practitioner finds themselves demands that they continuously question the ability of residual colonial models and theoretical positions of representation as adequate depictions of their histories and lives (Spivak 1990; hooks 1994). This demand for the resistive agency in the work of the postliberation practitioner invokes and attaches political value to the aesthetic work created, which should challenge and guard against universal claims of Marxism, national liberation movements or Liberal feminism to speak for the oppressed (Morton 2003). The political value-laden creative activities and products emerging from postliberation Africa, therefore, articulate the deconstruction of residual colonial representative models. The theoretical propositions and perspectives emerging from these deconstruction processes are located in the struggles, materiality, locality and performance paradigms of the people of Africa. This remodelling is carried out with the awareness that postliberation Zimbabwean performance practice is a syncretic blend of performance materials and practices (Balme 1999), wedged between indigenous performing arts and a Rhodesian British-inspired performance model (Ravengai 2011; Seda 2011; 2004). As a syncretic model, postliberation Zimbabwean performance practice is a "transitional concept for describing the relationship between [Zimbabwean] culture and aesthetics" (Balme 1999: 16). Thirty years after Zimbabwe's independence from Britain, performance practitioners have developed strategies for countering the cultural bomb and have reinvented tools to create a 'unique' post-independence Zimbabwean performance culture full of borrowed things, appropriated, reworked and altered which speak for and from a contemporary Zimbabwe perspective. In this process of the re-

invention, repurposing and appropriation of colonial and indigenous paradigms, the call for a strong ideological and epistemological ground that resists the complete marginalisation and drowning of Third World cultural practices remains loud.

The postliberation Zimbabwean performance practitioner is framed as a postcolonial agent; "interpellated, already exist[ing] in a state of translation, imagined and reimagined by colonial ways of seeing" (Niranjana 1992: 6). The argument that runs through the pages of this book advances the idea that the task of the translator (and performance practitioner) is "not to retrace the original – to reproduce the finer lineaments of an unblemished precolonial culture – but rather to intervene as a means of inscribing always-already fissured" cultures (Niranjana 1992: 186). It is at this point that the Zimbabwean performance practitioner is able, as shall be seen in the chapters that follow, to develop a new context specific for the theorisation of practice that does not reproduce either the colonial Rhodesian mechanical approach or the ritualistic indigenous narrative. To this end, the theorisation process of performance practice can be viewed as a schema of moving Africa generally and Zimbabwe specifically from a Third World constituent to an affiliative position with the Second and the First Worlds (Young 1998) – as they existed.

The first four chapters document, conceptualise and theorise how African, and specifically Zimbabwean, practitioners creatively work and perform in their contemporary spaces. In other terms, these chapters theorise how Zimbabwean performance is made and understood by Zimbabwean practitioners and theorists for the world. Owen Seda examines the Zimbabwean postcolonial condition and experience from the perspective of popular theatre practices and spaces. He adopts a metaphorical approach to the communicative act as a form of performance where language is not only constituted by the speech act, but also includes significant elements of masking, transformation and shifting of positions in ways that resonate with the theatre. He views language use as a form of staging and focuses on the communicative dimensions of staging and language use in intercultural theatre practice as sites for negotiation and contestation. To illustrate his point, he draws on some examples from contemporary Zimbabwean drama.

Following this, Nkululeko Sibanda examines and positions performance spaces as key entry points into understanding the practices and theories of African theatre. He explores the resistive strategies and agency embodied in the process of re-organising (performance) space which alters the relationship between people (practitioners) and space. From this perspective, Sibanda attempts to redefine the 'found space' concept by using mainstream purpose-built frames proposed by Kenneth Pickering (2005), albeit from an African perspective. He challenges the framing of Stanley Hall and Theatre-in-the-Park as 'found spaces' by repositioning them as alternative performance spaces that provide an ideal environment that speaks to the Zimbabwean theatre practitioner's socio-politico-economic and cultural landscape. Peace Mukwara and Tatenda Mangosho's chapter extends the spatial argument by demanding, and then providing, a rethinking of the conceptualisation of performance space in Zimbabwe and Africa. They examine and position performance space in Zimbabwe's Street theatre performances as a site for negotiating hegemony and power. They argue that street theatre offers unique performance spatial dimensions which reject dominant stylistic practices and empower the ordinary person to challenge domination. They examine street theatre venues in post-Independence Zimbabwe, highlighting how these performance spaces resist dominant stylistic patterns and become sites through which ordinary Zimbabweans gain traction to contend with domination. Performance spaces are thus understood and appreciated as fluid sites that provide safe zones for all participants (performers and audience alike) in the performance, to challenge domination and undemocratic practices in their society.

What these chapters seek to achieve is to highlight how linguistic performative actions and spatial choices of Zimbabwean theatre practitioners reflect an understanding of both the operations of theatre within an African paradigm (Kamlongera 1988) and the contemporary and colonial influences that have been spatially and aesthetically appropriated and transformed by post-independence theatre practitioners. These chapters also highlight that these artistic interventions are a necessity and emerge out of the socio-political, economic and cultural experience of post-liberation Zimbabwe. Third, these chapters interrogate the socio-political and cultural influences that inform, frame, delineate and produce performance spaces

and practices in Zimbabwe. In line with Manuel Castells' (1976: 260) understanding of 'politics' as a "system of power relations", the various socio-political and cultural spheres of power are considered as having a particular influence on performance practice in Zimbabwe. In critically interrogating this 'system of relations' within postliberation performance practice, these chapters seek to understand how postliberation Zimbabwean performance practice is interwoven with resistive agency.

Upon political independence in 1980, the adoption of these spatial and linguistic performative practices provided township-based theatre groups with an opportunity to experiment with and develop a new performance narrative in Zimbabwe (Seda 2011; Sibanda 2018; Ravengai 2011). This kind of experimentation became a mechanism through which Zimbabwean township practitioners reasserted the contemporary African performance paradigm in terms of spatiality, aesthetic practice and language use in performance (Sibanda 2018). This Africanisation process revolutionised the performance narrative in Zimbabwe, especially from a spatial and aesthetic perspective, by challenging, contaminating and appropriating British-modelled Rhodesian and indigenous performance traditions into a syncretic contemporary Zimbabwean narrative. Chapters 4 to 7 engage and theorise this syncretic performance practice, which is framed as a 'new' performance paradigm from various locational and practice perspectives.

Tenford Chitanana adopts a Boalian approach in order to examine the role of performing arts in the liberation of an oppressed people, by giving them a platform to 'rehearse the revolution'. Following four leading performances and platforms—BustopTV, Zambezi News, *Sabhuku Vharazipi*, and PO Box Reloaded—and considering their history of political activism and agitational propaganda in Zimbabwe's performance tradition, Chitanana probes this emergent form, unpacking its function and how it intersects storytelling, performance, and digital media. From a constructionist ontological stance, emphasizing reality and meaning as a construct of those who live it, rather than as a set standard by which to abide, this interdisciplinary chapter investigates this new phenomenon of social media skits– short performances, whether scripted or unscripted, straight-to-view or edited, and digitally distributed– that have emerged in Zimbabwe's online space. Chitanana's chapter argues that Zimbabwe's restrictive

political environment and growing social media use are key influencers of the increased mediation of performance through the Internet, thus advancing discourses on counter-hegemony for those on the margins of society and power.

Ruth Makumbirofa, Kelvin Chikonzo and Doricah Mhako conceptualise funeral spaces as highly performative and potentially therapeutic spaces for protest. They examine how funerals (as an aesthetic) are being performed in Zimbabwean ghetto spaces, as part of a 'sub-culture', diverting from the normative and conservative culture of funeral performance. In this chapter, they record, problematise and critique these performative funeral acts, highlighting their relevance and function in society. In the following chapter, Kelvin Chikonzo and Patience Manzira-Maforo turn to film and examine how Zimbabwean films as sites of hybrid performances emerge from neo-indigenous and realist approaches, narratology and acting which serve as instruments of cultural resistance and recuperation. The authors of this chapter examine the aesthetic and ideological benefits that emerge through the participation of Africans in donor-funded films. They contend that, through the deployment of strategies of resistance from within, such as appropriation, contamination and repurposing, Africans provide the presence of African realism, narratology and African acting in these hybrid platforms that are co-created by players from different cultural and aesthetic backgrounds.

Following this, Sibanda and Arthur Chikwiri examine the lighting design processes and styles adopted in *Chirorodziva: The Pool of the Fallen* (2015) vis-à-vis the lighting design conventions at the University of Zimbabwe's Alfred Beit Hall. They submit that, while Alfred Beit Hall is used as a performance venue, teaching space and examination hall by the Department of Theatre Arts and the university at large, it is also a performance venue that has largely been used for student productions taken as practical examinations, which are largely experimental. They submit that these experiments have been repetitively done without significant change, such that a lighting design convention emerged, characterised by the idea of available resources. Sibanda and Chikwiri use the production *Chirorodziva: The Pool of the Fallen* to engage and examine how student designers engaged with the Beit Hall design conventions and open up new design

windows that transformed lighting design practice at the University of Zimbabwe. The authors deploy the New Stagecraft theory as a framework to assess how the process of designing lights for *Chirorodziva: The Pool of the Fallen* hosted in the Beit Hall affirmed and challenged established conventions.

Praise Zinhuku and Crispinah Machingura propose a theory of preserving *muchongoyo* dance. They argue that the dynamic, continuously fluctuating performance industry demands that African indigenous performance practices should change to suit changing global, social, economic, political, and cultural realities. In this chapter, they propose re-contextualisation as a preservation strategy of *muchongoyo*. Deploying an ethnographic approach to understanding the recontextualization process of *muchongoyo* dance in public functions, Zinhuku and Machingura submit that re-contextualisation facilitates continuous performances of *muchongoyo* dance. Sandile Mpofu and Cletus Moyo then discuss how the *Nobuntu* ensemble breaks down gender stereotypes and consider the reception of their music in Bulawayo. They submit that Nobuntu challenges the long-held view that the Zimbabwean music industry is male-dominated, male-identified and male-centred by writing, producing and managing their ensemble. The authors examine strategies employed by Nobuntu to challenge exploitation by producers, discrimination, being viewed with less respect in comparison to their male counterparts, being given less exposure and being labelled as prostitutes. The following chapter, by Nokuthula Ndlovu and Progress Dube, analyses the representation of the social history of Bulawayo in selected songs of Lovemore 'Majaivana' Tshuma. Ndlovu and Dube's point of departure is their observation that, while much of the research material has been published and availed, these works have not paid particular attention to how musicians appreciate the experiences and histories of communities. They shine a particular light on how some of Majaivana's songs capture issues to do with marginalization, underdevelopment, poverty, unemployment, and the aspirations and passions of the people of Bulawayo. In the final chapter, Cletus Moyo and Bhekezakhe Ncube use Ndolwane Super Sounds' songs *Ngubaba lona yini mama? Ngigcinelani ingane zami ngisahamba mama lobaba* (*Take care of my family*) and *Mide*

Iminyaka (*It has been long*) to examine and assess struggles associated with fatherhood during the 'decade of crisis' in Zimbabwe.

These 11 chapters voice a central theme and key call within the postliberation Zimbabwean theatre industry; a call for new spectacles. This call demands a liberatory space that enables Zimbabwean performance practitioners to "rule-break and/or rule keep" (Goodman and de Gay 1996: 139) in their contribution to the formation and consolidation of emerging and distinct African-inspired performance practices. It is this act of breaking learnt and received performance practices and knowledge that will make emerging Zimbabwean performance practices part and parcel of the most extensive, and effective, cultural movement to emerge in postliberation Africa. As shall be observed in most of the chapters in this book, postliberation performance practices in Zimbabwe transform performances into acts of reflection, engagement, and discussion between the performer and spectator through various creative performative methods such as interjections, call and response, singing, clapping and use of communally identifiable everyday objects in design, which affirm and fuse the actors and spectators. It is this emerging performance practice, which has been consolidated in postliberation Zimbabwe, that has been engaged with and theorised in the pages that follow.

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CHAPTER 1

STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATIONS: STAGING AND LANGUAGE USE IN INTERCULTURAL CONTEXTS

OWEN SEDA

With expanded communication and intercultural influence, people interpret others, and themselves in a bewildering diversity of idioms – a global condition of what Mikhail Bakhtin called 'heteroglossia'. (James Clifford 1988).

The prospect of the de-Anglicization of the English language has never been more real. The logic behind this prospect is simply that the universalisation of English must surely lead to its de-Anglicisation. ... The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use and alterations. (Ali Mazrui 1975).

Introduction

From the 5th century BC, when the classical Greek philosopher Aristotle published his influential *Poetics*, writers and critics of drama have (and rightly so) always viewed the dramatic form as something that is primarily tied to language and spoken dialogue through the agency of the written text. They have also viewed the transition from drama to theatre as something that is mediated through staging or the physical enactment of the dramatic script.

Because of the primacy of language and the spoken word to the dramatic form, the majority of world drama has been produced by dramatists working with a specific target audience in mind, where both the dramatist and their audience are unified by a common language that is attuned to theatrical communication in mutually intelligible ways. The transition from drama to

theatre through staging has, however, also meant that, in any given context, the dramatist and their audience share more than a specific spoken language. For the communicative act to be beneficial and mutually intelligible, the dramatist and their audience must also share a range of other 'languages' of the stage, which include theatre conventions, acting styles, and physical theatre structures.

In this chapter, I draw my examples from a post-colonial Anglophone African country where English became the language of scholarly erudition, as well as socio-political domination, as a result of the colonial encounter. I draw on examples from Zimbabwe as I focus on negotiations and challenges to the dominance of Standard English as the language of the theatre. I argue that the twin processes of negotiation and contestation have had the net effect of occasioning some of the most exciting nuances and transformations in intercultural drama and theatre of English expression. My analysis operates at both the literal and the metaphorical levels in that I not only analyse transformations in the dramatic form, but I also view these transformations as something akin to the act of staging and performance in which there are strategic masking and shifting of positions in ways that resonate with the theatre. My adoption of performance as a metaphor for analysis is further sustained by my twin focus on dialogue and staging as forms of language in the theatre. To the extent that I analyse the ways through which the English language has been transformed as a result of cultural encounters in post-colonial contexts, I also approach these strategic transformations as a form of resistance in intercultural theatre practices. Over and above this, I also view these transformations as having yielded some of the most profound artistic products to come out of many parts of Africa, including Zimbabwe. My analysis proceeds from the observation that, as a result of its dominance in modern theatre, language has been manipulated in some creative and innovative ways to counter the dominance of colonialist languages in intercultural contexts.

Post-colonial critics have consistently made the point that situations of cultural contact "inevitably entail processes of encounter and negotiation between different cultural sensibilities" (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 31). As man's primary mode of communication, language is a significant aspect of this process of encounter and negotiation. Language has proven to be a veritable

site of cultural confrontation, resistance, and the search for alternatives. Jonathan Dollimore (1991) suggests that intercultural theatre practices have been an interesting site of intervention where linguistic hegemony and its accompanying discursive practices have been altered significantly. It is this process of alteration that has engendered the hybridity that we so often associate with cultural encounters. It is also in this context that the term hybridity assumes a particularly interesting nuance as it suggests the disruptive and transfiguring power of multivocal language situations such as we find in intercultural contexts. Hybridity thus becomes a communicative outcome that challenges the supposed purity, authority and superiority of one language (in this particular case English) and its accompanying staging conventions. Gilbert and Lo (2002) have observed the multi-faceted nature of hybridity in intercultural theatre contexts, saying:

> Most post-colonial theatre is driven by a political imperative to interrogate the cultural hegemony that underlies imperial systems of governance, education, social and economic organisation and representation (2002: 35).

As the language of conquest and domination in Anglophone Africa, the centrality of English in post-colonial contexts has been the subject of analysis by several scholars ranging from Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986), Soyinka (1988), Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989; 1995; 2000), Olaniyan (1995), Gilbert and Tompkins (1996), and Pavis (1996) to Balme (1999) and Innes (2000). The views expressed by these different scholars range from an outright rejection of the English language to a recognition of the global reach of English, through to a celebration of the English language's international purview, which some see as having allowed non-European writers of English expression to propagate their works to a much wider audience. Over and above these different views, scholars have also analysed how the English language has been appropriated, altered and refashioned to address new contexts of enunciation. However, more radical scholars, such as Chinweizu et al. (1985) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986), have argued for an outright abandonment of the English language as the primary carrier of communicative and expressive meaning in post-colonial contexts.

In Zimbabwe, as in other intercultural contexts, the theatre has been accompanied by varying degrees of multilingualism. This has occurred in

various ways, all of which challenge the linguistic dominance of English and its commonly held staging conventions that are rooted in realism. In this chapter, I explore several questions relating to intercultural theatre such as: How does intercultural theatre embody the interaction between indigenous and western linguistic registers? How has staging become a form of language in intercultural theatre practices? How has cultural contact challenged the tendency to exclude, homogenise, and strive for cultural and linguistic purity? In answering these and related questions, my purpose is to demonstrate the strategic transformations and innovations through which post-colonial theatre in Zimbabwe has engaged with, and decentred, normative practices that are often associated with dominant colonial English language theatre practices.

Language as Theatre's 'Dominant'

The centrality of dialogue in the theatre has never been in doubt. Dialogue through language use has been the principal vehicle of communication in most forms of world theatre, from the classical period up to the present. The centrality of dialogue is what persuades Yuri Lotman (1990) to refer to language as the 'dominant' of the theatre as we know it today. In theatre studies, the term 'language' often assumes a two-fold dimension, as it refers to the different communicative elements that are used in drama, both the verbal and the non–verbal. In other words, language in the theatre denotes spoken dialogue and also refers to the various aspects of staging that are used in the theatre. In performance analysis, 'dominant' is a term that is used to refer to any specific aspect which focuses and unifies the work of art in such a way that all the other units of delivery are subordinate to it (see Fischer-Lichte 1988, Balme 1988, Rohmer 1999). According to Roman Jakobson:

> The dominant may be defined as the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines and transforms the remaining components. It is the dominant which guarantees the integrity of the structure (1981, 751).

In intercultural contexts, the choice of language is influenced by several social and cultural factors that may include elements such as theme, location, place of performance, as well as target audience and intention. As

a result, transformations of language as the dominant in intercultural theatre practices have yielded several discursive permutations that are usually subsumed under the umbrella terms of linguistic appropriation and linguistic abrogation. Linguistic appropriation and linguistic abrogation usually manifest as relexification, translation and translation chains, multiple language use, code-mixing and code-switching. Although these terms are borrowed from the field of linguistics, their provenance has gradually spread to the field of post-colonial studies where they have been widely used to refer to the containment of Europhone languages in intercultural contexts (see Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1989, Zabus 1991, Gilbert and Tompkins 1996, Balme 1999, Hiddleston 2009, Chivandikwa 2010). Post-colonial critics have observed that during the time of settler colonialism, European cultural hegemony was propagated and maintained via the pre-eminence of Europhone languages. In the context of theatre practice, Europhone languages became the principal medium of delivery by which national theatres were grouped and classified. Whenever critics referred to national theatres (such as Nigerian, Zimbabwean or Botswanan theatre), they were almost invariably always referring to that country's theatre of English expression. The production of European-style drama in Europhone languages easily played into the corpus of alien cultural hegemonies as a result of such prejudice. This also unwittingly led to the canonisation of English language drama in these different post-colonial contexts. Previously, I have written that, whenever we analyse post-colonial theatre practices, it is of paramount importance not to purvey a binary approach in which 'superior' European discourses were pitted in mortal combat with fragile and 'backward' local forms (Seda and Sirayi 2015). Rather, I have argued for a more nuanced reading in which African forms continue to assert themselves in insidious ways that challenge all attempts at total marginalisation. I view this as the basis of hybrid forms in intercultural contexts, as well as an integral part of the strategic transformations that have enriched post-colonial theatres in some very profound ways. Some of the best drama to have come out of Africa today is constituted by plays that destabilise the dominance of the English language and naturalistic staging conventions, often utilising more than one language. In some instances, these plays inflect the English language with a mixture

of one or more local languages as the drama is performed to cross-cultural publics in intercultural theatre venues and spaces.

In this chapter, I adopt what Richard Schechner (2002) has referred to as the disjunctive approach to intercultural theatre. The disjunctive approach to intercultural theatre is a method that foregrounds strategies of negotiation and containment in situations of cultural encounters. It resists the normative tendency towards cultural homogenisation that we often find in some instances when cultural encounters are subjected to analysis. My adoption of the disjunctive approach to intercultural theatre allows me to demonstrate strategic destabilisations of the English language, as well as some of its dominant accompanying staging conventions in local theatre practices. I, therefore, view theatre in intercultural contexts as a practice that does not only anticipate multilingual societies, but also acknowledges multilingualism as a necessary fact of cultural encounters. In this light, Zimbabwean theatre serves as an example of how there can never be a monolithic language of the theatre, but, rather, that there is a constant admixture of English with local languages, including the slang and colloquialisms that are spoken along the entire length and breadth of the country. The net effect has been to acknowledge the multilingual nature of the various Zimbabwean contexts in which these plays are produced. It has also helped to expand the audience base for whom these plays are performed. Language use has become a strategy through which to acknowledge the country's varied cultural, linguistic and contextual influences.

In the country's various contexts of production, situation and character have been delineated through the idiosyncratic use of language in ways that reflect the language users hybridised intercultural settings. Mikhail Bakhtin puts this point across succinctly when he observes that, "The word in language… becomes one's own only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention" (1981, 293-4). In other words, when characters use words, they begin to 'own' the words and the language that they use as they inflect these words with their very own lexical arrangement, accents and meaning. Soyinka also puts this point across poignantly when he writes:

> When we borrow an alien language to sculpt or paint in, we must begin by co-opting the entire properties in our matrix of thought and expression. We must press such a language, stretch it, impact and compact, fragment and reassemble it with no apology, as required to bear the burden of experiencing and of experiences, be such experiences formulated or not in the conceptual idioms of that language (Quoted in Balme 1999: 106).

Ola Rotimi similarly observes that:

> The real issue should not be why an African [writer] resorts to perpetuating a colonial tongue. Rather for the debate to be worthwhile, it should bear on how the writer uses that tongue [i.e. the colonial tongue] to express the conditions and yearnings of his linguistically diverse peoples (Quoted in Balme: 1999: 108).

From the above, I argue that one of the greatest creative strengths of post-colonial theatre such as we find in contemporary Zimbabwe has been its ability to situate itself within some evidently polyglossic contexts.

Strategic Transformations through Language Use

A common practice in intercultural contexts is the extensive use of translation. In these contexts, translation involves the presentation of spoken dialogue in a language other than the original, even as the dramatist makes an effort to retain the original meaning within a specific cultural context. The polyglossic nature of intercultural contexts often allows writers and dramatists the scope for limitless experimentation with language use. A common form of translation is the use of translation chains.

Translation chains involve the contiguous mediation of one or more languages that are spoken by different characters within the same speech act. This allows stage characters and their audiences to communicate intelligibly between and among themselves using a multiplicity of different languages (Balme 1999). The work of Amakhosi Theatre in south-western Zimbabwe provides a good example in this regard. Amakhosi Theatre is a post-independence Zimbabwean community theatre company that was motivated to professionalise black township theatre even as it embarked on a quest to produce plays with local African cultural and thematic resonance. In translation chains, a character makes a statement in one language and the

same statement is translated spontaneously into another language via the response by a different character. This allows dialogue that has been spoken in a specific language to be mutually intelligible to both speakers and non-speakers of the source language. It also allows diverse languages to complement one another on the stage as languages of cultural propagation. Although English may dominate most of the plays by Amakhosi Theatre, characters are able to intersperse their dialogue with a multiplicity of other languages within a bi-lingual or a multi-lingual context. The use of translation chains such as we find in Cont Mhlanga (Amakhosi Theatre)'s *Workshop Negative* (1986) enables different characters to respond to one another spontaneously using two or more different languages. A translation chain is used shortly after the opening of Act Two of *Workshop Negative* when the cast of three enters centre stage, *'toyi-toyiing'* as they sing a song in isiNdebele. The song satirises primitive accumulation by the country's post-independence ruling class. It is entitled *"Khula ntaba ye mali"* (Trans. "Grow Money Mountain"). Although the song is presented in isiNdebele, the three actors can accommodate non-Ndebele speakers through the use of a translation chain that comes across through call and response. This happens as follows:

> Zuluboy: *Khula ntaba ye mali*
> Ray: Grow money mountain.
> Zuluboy: *Khula ntaba ye mali*
> Ray: Grow money mountain. Grow money mountain (Mhlanga 1986: 19).

Richard Schechner (2002) observes that when theatre that is produced in intercultural contexts adopts these innovative strategies of language use, it can subvert monolingualism and the notion of linguistic purity to come up with works that acknowledge multiple racial and linguistic influences and identities. In plays that display overtly political themes such as we find in *Workshop Negative,* translation chains function to speak to and unite linguistically and ethnically diverse audiences. As Balme rightly observes,

> The act of mediating between these languages… is not just a dramaturgical device but is rather an integral part of the political message of the play that linguistic diversity does not automatically exclude political unity and co-operation (Balme 1989: 114). {Emphasis added}

The use of translation chains enables Cont Mhlanga's socially committed drama to transcend the limits of the country's bilingual and multilingual population to communicate a shared political vision.

Post-colonial critics have observed that colonialist cultural and linguistic hegemony was often propagated through the circulation of western texts in their original languages. One strategy that is often used in intercultural contexts to undermine the authority of such texts is through what Helen Tiffin (1987) has referred to as canonical counter-discourse. This strategy has allowed western literature to be divested of its lofty status and authority through transposition and direct translation. Transposition and direct translation have been used as a strategy to reinvest such texts with a resonance that is both local and relevant. In Zimbabwe, the work of Taura Tinzwe Theatre Consultancy provides a good illustration of language use as strategic transformation through canonical counter-discourse. Taura Tinzwe was a Harare-based theatre consultancy during the early 2000s. In September 2001, Taura Tinzwe Theatre Consultancy translated Dario Fo's *Can't Pay Won't Pay* (1974) from English to Shona under the title *Hatina Mari, Hatibhadhare*. The inspiration to transpose Dario Fo's Italian original into the Zimbabwean context came after post-independence Zimbabwe witnessed its first food riots in January 1998. Taura Tinzwe's direct translation of Dario Fo is a good example of John Martin's (2004) point when he observes that intercultural settings often allow narratives to assume new meanings through mobility and impermanence. Like human beings, stories and narratives can also travel across national, regional, linguistic and cultural boundaries to speak to different circumstances. Taura Tinzwe's *Hatina Mari, Hatibhadhare* illustrates how translation and transposition can become twin strategies that are used in intercultural contexts to dismantle the authority and originality of western literature. This is achieved by presenting 'counter narratives' which nevertheless preserve the basic signifiers of the source text while altering its original structures of language, context and meaning to speak to issues about alternative settings and contexts. Taura Tinzwe's translation is also significant in that, whereas the prevalent practice in post-colonial Africa has been to translate works of art from local languages to English, in this case, the translation is from a Europhone language to an African language. Taura Tinzwe's reversal of the

norm thus assumes something of a subversive function by turning the prevalent practice on its head.

Multilingualism and Relexification

Globalisation and cultural contact have often meant that performance in intercultural contexts takes place against a tapestry of the increasing interconnectedness of the world's economic, social, cultural and ideological systems. The interconnectedness of different parts of the world has brought the polyglossic nature of the globe into sharper relief. Multilingualism has thus become a significant feature of intercultural theatre where, as Richard Schechner (2002) observes, nearly all cultural practices have become hybrids. In an increasingly globalised world in which the Europhone languages of conquest have arrogated a position of pre-eminence to themselves, post-colonial societies often make an effort to recoup the valency of their own languages by foregrounding the importance of indigenous languages as languages of artistic expression and communication. A fascinating example of this is to be found in *Strange Bedfellows* (1998), a play by the prominent Zimbabwean playwright Stephen Chifunyise. In this play, a conflict that is based on language use on the theatre stage arises between two members of a multiracial cast who have just arrived at a rehearsal of August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*. Chifunyise uses a seemingly innocuous argument surrounding the choice of language between a director and his multi-racial cast to delve into issues about racial prejudice, land alienation and racial reconciliation in post-independence Zimbabwe. An apparently simple argument about what language to use during rehearsals soon spirals into a complicated but insightful conversation on issues of identity within a post-colonial setting. In *Strange Bedfellows,* Chifunyise demonstrates the capacity of intercultural theatre to manipulate multilingualism to address contemporary socio-political issues about race and reconciliation.

Multilingualism has also come across through code-switching and code-mixing. Code-switching and code-mixing have been deployed as a strategic transformation that is designed to evoke an atmosphere and create more convincing settings. It is a strategy that has helped to locate characters in more realistic settings even when the dominant language is a Europhone language. Language ceases to be abstract or contrived, but, rather, is

genuine in the way in which it is deployed in these contexts. Linguistic relexification is the process by which the English language is populated with indigenous language markers to suggest that the dialogue is taking place in a language other than English. Linguistic relexification is a technique that enables the playwright or dramatist to use a Europhone language to present situations that would otherwise unfold using indigenous languages. Achebe (1975) has linguistic relexification in mind when he defends his choice of the use of English in his writings, arguing that his use of English adopts a style that challenges normative use to reflect an African cultural context. Achebe's view is corroborated by Chantal Zabus (1995), who presents relexification as a technique that stems from the need to solve an immediate discursive problem by "rendering African concepts, thought patterns and linguistic features in a European language" (1995: 318). Relexification involves the deployment of a Europhone language that is overlaid with indigenous structures, nuances and untranslated words and speech patterns to mark the dialogue as essentially occurring within an African language context. Meridian Theatre Company's *The Rise and Shine of Comrade Fiasco* (1990) is an example of the use of relexification (or transliteration) as a counter-discursive strategy in intercultural theatre. Written and produced by Andrew Whaley, *The Rise and Shine of Comrade Fiasco* was first presented at the Gallery Delta in central Harare. Like Edgar Langeveldt, Andrew Whaley's choice and style of language use is fascinating in the sense that he is a White Zimbabwean, who, operating within an intercultural context and working with a multiracial company, acknowledges the complementarity between languages in situations of encounter and negotiation. Although the play adopts the English language as its dominant linguistic code, the setting and events described suggest that the dialogue takes place in Shona, which is Zimbabwe's main indigenous language. The play's events are set in a small rural district police cell. Two men and one woman have just been locked up in the cell to "cool off" after a weekend beer-hall brawl. The prison cell becomes a laboratory in which the three characters undergo a process of self-introspection vis-à-vis the elusive gains of national independence.

In *The Rise and Shine of Comrade Fiasco,* characterisation and setting mark out the drama as one which unfolds in Shona. The play's *dramatis personae*

consist of four characters. Chidhina and Fiasco are former freedom fighters in Zimbabwe's war of liberation, Jungle is an unemployed man and Febi is a street trader and former war collaborator. As a discursive strategy of resistance, relexification enables the intercultural theatre to overlay normative standards of English usage with rhythms and speech patterns that decidedly echo or suggest the provenance of African languages as demonstrated in the following speech by one of the play's characters;

> Jungle: Excuse me, *shamwari*. Have you got an ID? We like to speak of real names here, held with zinc, zinc, only zinc *chete* (Fiasco does not respond). I think *mujonhi* took it (1991*:* 10).

The deliberate planting of italicised Shona language markers in this and a number of other instances in *The Rise and Shine of Comrade Fiasco* suggests that, although the play's dialogue takes place in English, it is in fact unfolding in a language that is decidedly not Europhone. Relexification or transliteration is deployed throughout the play to present a group of detainees incarcerated in a police cell somewhere in rural Zimbabwe as they dialogue and reminisce about their plight and the dashed hopes of liberation using their own language and speech patterns within a post-colonial rural setting. This is achieved by liberally interspersing the dialogue with Shona language markers such as '*baba', 'muzukuru', 'shamwari', 'mujonhi'*, and '*uri benzi here?'* throughout the play. When presented in this way, language use in intercultural theatre ceases to be contrived, abstract and remote from its real setting. The inflection of indigenous African linguistic codes constitutes a refusal to submit to the dominance of Europhone languages even in situations when they are deployed as linguistic dominants. This research concurs with Gilbert and Tompkins's observation that post-colonial dramatists use English as a "basic linguistic code which is necessarily modified, subverted, or "decentred" when indigenous languages are incorporated into the text" (1996: 170).

The Body as a Purveyor of Language

Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) have observed that, in most forms of theatre, the actor's body serves as the primary repository of language through spoken dialogue. The actor's body has become a major physical symbol and