The Larger Stages: The ‘Becoming Minor’ of South African Theatres

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ABSTRACT

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South Africa is layered with entangled histories that have created a fragile landscape of ambiguities where fractured memories are revealed yet remain concealed. The social architecture of apartheid still persists in a legacy of hostile urban geographies and land inequity, while global capitalism and economic disparity are seen in the dramatic contrast between the developing middle class and the poverty of millions. This research project interrogates the way in which contemporary theatre in South Africa is implicated in the country's complex cultural, economic and social realities. Pursuing rigorous qualitative research in the history, practice and criticism of South African theatre; contemporary studies in theatre spatiality; and philosophy, cultural theory and human geography, I explore precisely whose voices are being heard and which audiences are being reached. What role does – and might – theatre play in addressing South Africa’s socio-economic and artistic challenges, both as a barrier and a bridge to audiences? Drawing on the work of such thinkers as Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Rosi Braidotti and Achille Mbembe, can we anticipate what we might describe as a ‘minor’ theatre that will tell the stories that resonate twenty years after the end of apartheid? The term ‘minor’ refers to the Deleuzian concept of affirmative and dynamic processes to create new political subjects; processes of “becoming” that break from the fixed, proscribed “being,” which in the South African context has been created by centuries of colonialism and decades of state-imposed racial construction. Given the insights afforded by such theorization, I argue that the spaces of performance are potentially dynamic spaces of
intersection within this landscape of layered socio-economic and artistic challenges created by a milieu of rooted physical and mental boundaries that have informed the country’s inherited theatrical practices.

Keywords: Deleuze, minoritarian, immanent, postapartheid, South African theatre
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INTRODUCTION

_The theater, which is in no thing, but makes use of everything – gestures, sounds, words, screams, light, darkness – rediscovers itself at precisely the point where the mind requires a language to express its manifestations._

Antonin Artaud

_Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall._

Gilles Deleuze, _Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation Between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze_, 1972

South Africa is layered with entangled histories that have created a fragile landscape of ambiguities. Fractured memories are revealed, yet remain concealed, and the architecture of apartheid persists in a legacy of hostile urban geographies and dramatic economic and land inequity. I argue that the postapartheid era’s political and social reality is not caught in a specific time (post-apartheid), but is an unfolding space-time of untold, unresolved, hidden, lost memories and histories (postapartheid), overcast with the reality of capitalism, colonization, globalization and the myth of what is described as ‘rainbowism.’ My aim is to interrogate the way in which contemporary theatre is implicated in the complex cultural, economic and social realities of South Africa’s nascent democracy. Pursuing qualitative research in the history, practice and criticism of South African theatre, contemporary studies in theatre spatiality, philosophy, cultural theory and human geography, I explore precisely whose voices are being heard and which audiences are being reached. In short, asking what role does – and might – theatre play in addressing South Africa’s socio-economic and artistic challenges?
My study enters South Africa’s constituted social milieu in a period in which the socio-political-cultural discourse is changing. Nearly thirty years after the end of apartheid, the initial euphoria over South Africa’s first democratic elections and the attendant concept of the “rainbow nation” of inclusion is now seen as political amnesia. In the face of the lack of real progress in dealing with social and economic conditions, and fully aware of political corruption, a new generation of South Africans is becoming engaged in the country’s political debate and examination of its past. Thando Njovane asks: “To what extent has South Africa and have South Africans failed to address the aftermath of apartheid, the resonances of which can be felt to this day? To what extent are we living in a post-traumatic space?” While the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings were celebrated throughout the world as a model of healing, allowing voices to be heard and stories to be told, emotionally played out in communities and on the national radio service, many stories remain untold and reparations remain unfulfilled. The post-apartheid discourse has created the feeling of absences and silences, resulting in a generation of ‘born free’ who don’t know their own stories. Bhekizizwe Peterson, Head of African Literature at the University of the Witwatersrand, contends that the “‘nebulous celebrations’ of the rainbow nation are ‘suffocating the arts,’” through the reluctance to deal with “the complexities of identity” (qtd. in Krueger, Experiments in Freedom 208). For, as it grapples with reconstruction and development, South Africa faces critical issues of cultural hegemony, economic organization and land ownership, as Njovane’s question demonstrates.

The question of cultural hegemony is usefully articulated in Achille Mbembe’s comment that in postapartheid South Africa the rise of ethnic identitarianism
(indigeneity, customary law and ‘tradition’) confronts “the stubborn contradictions between cultural difference, and universal citizenship as laid down in the country’s famously liberal modernist constitution” (“Africa in Theory” 671). Economic disparity is seen in the dramatic contrast between the developing middle class and the poverty of millions. The issue of land reform stems from the colonial legislation of dispossession, legislated under the 1913 Land Act, which granted ownership of 7% of the arable land, increased in 1936 to 13%, to black people, who comprised over 80% of the population. The 1996 South African Constitution provides for reform of property rights, with expropriation for public and other purposes, and the government’s comprehensive land reform program calls for “restitution, redistribution and tenure reform” (South African Government. Land Reform 2019). Despite these goals, there is mounting frustration at the slow pace of reform and the question of expropriation is now being heatedly debated. Added to which are concerns of cronyism, crime and corruption, as well as patriarchy, increasingly disturbing outbursts of xenophobia, the devastatingly high rate of HIV/AIDS, and the deplorable rate of sexual assault. I expand on the socio-economic-political condition of the South African milieu further on in this introduction.

Much has been written over the period of South Africa’s transition into democracy about how to develop “new” modes of cultural expression, while continuing to acknowledge the past. A prevailing problem these writers pose is the complexity of, and the need for, finding a voice or a “new” language in a world that is no longer locked in opposition to the powerful apartheid state.¹ The search began most famously as early as 1986, when Njabulo Ndebele referred to the condition of apartheid as the “spectacle of

¹ “New” is a word that is much used by writers and scholars in referring to the post-apartheid period.
social absurdity” in which artistic expressions are caught up in focusing on the “exterior,” while ignoring the “interiority” (Rediscovery of the Ordinary 42). In reflecting and representing the “larger issues of society” (the ‘spectacular’) caused by the “oppressive South African social formation,” he says, artistic expression ignores the quotidian social and political issues of individuals and their communities (41). Ndebele suggests South African stories might develop away from the spectacular toward these complex social formations (57). “Paying attention to the ordinary and its methods,” he says, “will result in a significant growth of consciousness” (53). Continuing Ndebele’s call five years later on the eve of the fall of apartheid, Albie Sachs, in a controversial address to the ANC, Preparing Ourselves for Freedom, urges a break from the narrow rhetoric of resistance by opening up expression to ambiguity and by embracing the country's diverse traditions and styles. More recently, at a 2017 conference, the elusive search for artistic expression and practice recurs in the observation by Richard Haines, CEO of the South African Cultural Observatory: “We are more interconnected, intertwined, inter-reliant than ever before. Yet social and economic division mars efforts to establish real collaboration and effect real change.” While acknowledging the cause of this tension might be predominantly the economy, he says there are other causes and calls for a “thinking that takes us beyond the creative economy into new spaces where creativity can be in the service of solution.”

In other words, how do you remake the social space? Specific to the interests of this study, is there potential for theatrical performance and spaces to be part of the discourse of destabilizing and reshaping the bounded physical, social and psychological spaces molded by the difficult legacies evoked above and by the current condition of
globalization? Can theatre offer spectators the experience of “how space and place might be structured otherwise,” as the theatre theorist Joanne Tompkins envisions? (3). When thinking of the particular nature of this “otherwise,” I draw on the work of immanentist thinkers, centred on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and argue that contemporary immanentist philosophy offers the conceptual resources to imagine differently about ourselves and spaces than they have allowed previously. I ask: can we anticipate what we might describe as a ‘minor’ theatre that will continue telling the stories that resonate nearly thirty years after the end of apartheid? Can Deleuze’s minoritarian ontology offer a spatial conceptualization to inform this discussion?

1. Conceptual Approach

The concept of the ‘minor’ embraces subjectivity, space, politics and language in the process of negating or challenging the framework of what Deleuze variously refers to as the State apparatus, or capitalism, which can now be extended to globalization and neoliberalism and, for this project, the South African State. In engaging Deleuze’s philosophy, I am attracted by his conceptual “process of continual differentiation” that eschews the application of yet another framework, but rather offers a nexus of thought productive in a variety of ways for this study. The process of continual differentiation, which he develops in *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*, is central to Deleuze’s dynamic mode of thinking. David Fancy sees the notion as a move beyond “a reiterative history of philosophy to an affirmative practice of philosophy” by rejecting the “normative notions of bonded identity and subjectivity in favour of something more expansive, multiple and, ultimately, more playful” (Fancy, “Difference, Bodies, Desire” 93). The minoritarian concepts emerging from Deleuze’s rhizomatic ontology reject what
Franz Fanon points to as a “hierarchy of immutable racial and cultural distinctions” (Nash 109), and deconstruct the centrist, rigid strata of unities prevalent in such a structure, avoiding the counter-entrapment of oppositional reaction. Such a model of thought “allows for a better understanding of the interplay between forces of domination and forces of resistance” (Heynen 349) that decolonial thinkers and geographers seek, providing “a multiplicity of ways of thinking, being, knowing, and sensing that are multiple and tentacular . . . delinking from totalizing discourses and ontologies altogether” (Mundt 3). This approach is particularly germane to South Africa now, where there is impatience with the rate of change in how human emancipation is understood, most notably demonstrated by the 2015 #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall student protests.

Deleuze’s ontology of ‘minority’ conceives affirmative and dynamic processes that contribute to the creation of entities as new political subjectivities in processes of ‘becoming’ that break from the fixed, prescribed ‘being.’ In the South African context one can see the fixed ‘being’ created by centuries of settler colonialism and decades of apartheid state-imposed racial construction, and such an environment of defined identification begs for a new way of subjectification. I suggest Deleuze provides an insurgent approach capable of deviating from the “majority” or from “the dominant social code” (Patton, Deleuze and the Political 7). The importance of minority, Paul Patton argues, is not “its relative exclusion from the majority but in the political potential of its divergence from the norm” (7). Thus, Deleuze creates an assemblage of minoritarian concepts to invest in what he calls “a specific, unforeseen, autonomous being” (A Thousand Plateaus 106). He looks beyond the “constraints and confines of being” and
beyond the “four ‘illusions’ of representation: identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance.” Instead, Elizabeth Grosz argues, he offers an interpretation of “difference in and of itself . . . that is not subordinated to identity or the same” (“A Thousand Tiny Sexes” 170). Simone Bignall sees such a discursive process as an awakening to the capacity of the body toward self-awareness and knowledge of “how to engage the kind of relationships” through developing an understanding of oneself and of others to “form compatible relations” (“Affective Assemblages” 85). Hence, she says, he anticipates an alternative to traditional Western reasoning through what she calls “potentially non-imperial conceptualisations of sociability, motivation and self-comportment” (79).

Claire Colebrook calls Deleuze and Guattari’s collaborative work “a nexus of their spatial thought,” where they perceive the “very possibility of thought – emerges from both the movement of bodies and the images those bodies produce of each other” (“The Space of Man” 191). Where “the thinking brain is the site where the potential of space – the intuition of the inhuman folding of space – can be actualised and counter actualised” and articulated (193). Their concepts commingle in a constant refrain of moving, coding, territorializing and deterritorializing in an immanent activity within places that “become a way of registering and understanding the world” and, I suggest, the South African milieu I have just described (Dewsbury and Thrift 105). The first chapter will identify, define and build on the concepts central to Deleuze’s minoritarian ontological approach, as well as his theory of immanent theatre, in the context of contemporary African thinkers and South African theatre. Throughout this study, I draw on Patton for commentary on Deleuze and the political and postcolonial and Grosz’s examination of his usefulness for feminist theory. Bignall’s work on Deleuze and the postcolonial, as well as her insightful
study of the Australian/Indigenous National Enquiry into the Stolen Generations, offers a demonstration of how Deleuze’s ontology of thought brings important ideas to a postcolonial/postimperial deliberation. As well I turn to Colebrook’s focus on his ontology, Simon O’Sullivan and Arun Saldanha for the enfolding of spatial, political and aesthetic concepts, and Guillermo Sibertin-Blanc and Nicholas Thorburn for a political perspective.

While spatial concerns are central throughout Deleuze’s philosophical writing, his affirmative practice of philosophy coalesces in *A Thousand Plateaus*, written with Guattari, which O’Sullivan describes as “a box of psychic tools, or strategies, to help us construct our lives differently” (*Art Encounters* 12). Similarly, Saldanha calls their spatial philosophy “a quasi-formal ontological framework for studying any spatial organization whatsoever” (*Space After Deleuze* 119; emphasis added). They conceive planes, lines and variations folding back on themselves, as processes and places of “ceaseless, but productive, becoming” of two kinds of space, using “lines of flight to emphasize the power of experimentation and creativity” (Shields and Vallee 100). Striated space, or the encoded space of State, is entered, contested, and enfolded by the “smooth” metamorphic, irregular, space, which is occupied without being counted or encoded (Casey, *The Fate of Place* 302). Smooth space is the space of the exteriority, the nomadic space, the war machine (terms I explore later). The interaction of these two spaces in processes of enfolding and unfolding is one of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization. If the traditional notion of territory is that of a defined, bounded area of shared knowledge and subjectivities, a place of inside and outside (Message), then the Deleuzo-Guattarian aim is to produce a new form of subjectivity, “a non-territorial or
detrimentalised subjectivity able to elude or, at least, to decrease the effects of power it would otherwise originate” (Aurora 10), based on the concepts of difference and transformation. “Territory,” they say, “is the first assemblage, the first thing to constitute an assemblage” (A Thousand Plateaus 323).

In this way of thinking, then, space is not only measurable by geographical forms and tables, but rather is a way of “articulating the space humans make for themselves.” As they conceive it, beings are not static but are continuous becomings that temporarily stabilize in ‘actual’ bodies in an intensive process and “allow one being to affect another, and through such affecting bring about a transformation. Thus, through the work of the intensive, new beings come into being” (Chandler and Neimanis location 149). Their conceptualization of geophilosophy offers a generative way of thinking about how bodies are embedded in space, moving beyond an identitarian grounding of assumed identities, to think about lines and intensities as “a concrete assemblage of heterogeneous elements set to work by the potentials of self ordering and novelty inherent in the virtual singularities, the attractors and bifurcators, of the actual system” (Proveti, “The Geophilosophies”). In other words, they introduce immanence to the exploration of all forms of intertwined grounding – indigenous and Western.

The issue of South African space is inherently politically charged. The transition to a fully participatory democracy did not come without compromise that has left the country addressing the complexity of apartheid geographies entwined with pre-colonial and colonial frameworks and a post-apartheid legacy of still unresolved spatial distribution. While this dissertation does not specifically analyze spatial politics, I contend that the Deleuzo-Guattarian ontological and material approach I propose is inherently political
and allows me to engage the complex socio-economic, spatial and political issues in a critique of theatre praxis. Deleuze does not share the “liberal-democratic tradition in political philosophy in which the only legitimate state power is one constituted by what its entire population wants, as if it were one and has but one desire to calibrate,” Saldanha argues (Space After Deleuze 66). Rather, Deleuze’s concept of the people “subtracts it from place, state, ethos, and even demos. A Deleuzian people is a passage through the earth, not a rooting in the soil. It is the invention of a new collectivity, a revolution, with that difference that it does not ever desire a state” (66). As Fancy points out, Deleuze and Guattari propose “a non-teleological, non deterministic and ‘aparallel’ [A Thousand Plateaus 10] evolutionism that results from the complex interaction of specific ‘milieus and rhythms’ (313) that organize chaos without entirely banishing it” (“Geoperformativity” 66). Deleuze’s idea of minority is at the heart of “the political” as it relates to political thought and methods of intervention, Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc argues. He suggests a materialistic reading of Deleuze’s philosophy as “[a] collective subject of a revolutionary politics of emancipation” (“Politicising Deleuzian Thought” 119) in which the concept of ‘becoming-minoritarian’ forges “the means of another consciousness and another sensibility” (122), creating a new language in a major or dominant language as an “immanent politicising of its enunciation” (123).

In negotiating the entanglement of space and bodies and theatre in South Africa’s organizing and dominating architectures, I adopt the perspective of space as “relational space” in order to engage and enfold intermingling strata of spatial knowledge production “contextualized in human bodies” and emerge with the potentiality of new ideas (Khan et al 289). The theorization of space and embodiment in contemporary feminist and
decolonial geographical discourse provides interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary ways of looking at space and its relationship with the human bodies that dwell in it, eschewing the dualistic logic of traditional Western frameworks that have informed ontological and epistemological understanding and practice. They argue for “the need to examine new ways of developing frameworks and terms for capturing the multiple, diverse and changing ways through which each human embodied subject is formed” (Longhurst, “(Dis)embodied Geographies” 494), breaking from entrenched frameworks that have defined them toward an exploration of what a body “can do” (Moss and Al-Hindi, *Feminism, Geographies Knowledge* 13). Along the same lines, Grosz argues that Deleuze and Guattari’s work provides “experimental, innovative and self-consciously political” modes for feminism and other socio-political forms to analyse and contest traditional “ontological commitments and intellectual frameworks of models of knowledge” (“A Thousand Tiny Sexes” 179).

I explore these ideas in more depth in Chapter 2, advancing the argument that the enfolding of the corporeal and space in Deleuze’s spatial philosophy offers a process through which to examine how South Africa's strata of stories and histories have, and can, become ‘events’ or ‘lines of flight,’ such as those he interprets as “instantaneous productions intrinsic to interactions between various kinds of forces” (Stagoll 89).

Casey’s genealogy of place and space, *The Fate of Place: a Philosophical History*, as well as the works of decolonial and feminist geographers (Hyndman, Massey, Longhurst, Robinson, Moss, Al-Hindi, Noxolo, Heynan, Kobayashi, McKittrick and Peake) and theorists (Grosz and Braidotti) similarly advocate more embodied ways of what Hyndman calls “seeing, theorizing, and practicing the connections between space
and politics” (“Feminist Geopolitics” 569); or, as Jennifer Robinson proposes, looking at “the experiences of mobility, interaction and the dynamism of spaces” (“Im-mobilizing Space” 163). It is in this sense of remaking that cultural critic Carrol Clarkson suggests lines are being “imagined, drawn, crossed, erased, and redrawn in postapartheid South Africa” (2).

I now turn to examine another dynamic of Deleuze’s minoritarian ontology, the concept of ‘multiplicity,’ which is central to his philosophy of difference. Multiplicity in this usage is not defined in the quantitative sense, but refers to processes of reshaping and transformations, that Patton contends is “a concept of individuality which does not conform to the logic of identity” (Deleuze and the Political 10). Instead, Deleuze and Guattari describe a system of contrasting yet intertwined “modes of being,” where molar is described as “extensive, divisible, . . . unifiable, totalizable, organizable; conscious or preconscious” (A Thousand Plateaus 33), creating a unitary order of majoritarian practices (viz. classifications of class, sex, race and so on) that Deleuze calls the state (Deleuze and the Political 43). Molecular, intensive multiplicities, on the other hand, are conceived as “libidinal, unconscious . . . that do not divide without changing in nature . . . that constantly construct and dismantle themselves in the course of their communications, as they cross over into each other” (A Thousand Plateaus 33) as continual flows of becoming, “movements of deterritorialisation” and destratification that challenge the molar toward new beginnings (Patton, Deleuze and the Political 10; 42-45). Deleuze considers these encounters as events that cause the constituent parts of the body to affect each other, and cause the body to affect its relations with “other bodies in the social milieu” (Bignall, “Affective Assemblages” 83-84). He argues that bodies are “not things
or facts but are events . . . they subsist or inhere in the living present” (*Logic of Sense* 5). In the Deleuzian conceptualization, then, the event is co-existent with becoming and, he says, becoming is itself “coextensive with language” (*Logic of Sense* 8). The process of constitution he envisions eludes the established dominant forms of knowledge and power, to precipitate a “new kind of event,” which, no matter how small, arises out of a rebellious spontaneity, creating new forms “vested with duties, power and knowledge” rather than based on given situations (Negri). As Deleuze puts it, what is happening between entities plays out on the surface as “events,” and not as “simulacra which elude the ground and insinuate themselves everywhere” but are “effects which manifest themselves and act in their place” (*Logic of Sense* 7). Thus, space is “not above and beyond nor is it inside or outside but rather self-referential in its time as an event” (*Dewsbury and Thrift* 105). Through such a mode, Deleuze eschews traditional fixed, transcendent, binarized “foundational identities” to advance an immanentist system in which “identities are the result of continuously differentiating matter and processes” (Fancy, “Affective Assemblages” 461), which becomes the schema for his ontology of being, time and space through which he counters the Kantian idea of judgement and final law. He posits the more immanent suggestion that, “[t]he greatness of a philosophy is measured by the nature of the events to which its concepts summon us or that it enables us to release in concepts” (*What is Philosophy* 34).

Asserting that “thinking means something else than what you believe” (*Desert Islands* 139), Deleuze insists that, “[o]nly if we read the entire past with a sense of the

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2 Deleuze’s insistence that ‘identity’ “repeats throughout past, present, and future, yet escapes all coding, is difference, the new, in short: becoming,” is a concept of identity as an “analogy to relate to being” (*Difference and Repetition* 45, 33).
eternal – of potentials for thinking that remain and insist, and are not lived – may we have a future that is not the continuation of the same dull round” (Colebrook, *Meaning of Life* 52). The insights afforded by such theorization offer a powerful potential discourse for a country dominated over centuries by the antithetical thinking of state dominance. South Africa’s past is inherently implicated in the social, economic, psychological and political geography of people’s lives. Its forms continue to shape and haunt the postapartheid spaces, and lie in the untold stories and histories of what Sarah Nuttall calls the “multiplicity of forms of subjugation,” such as “the Mfecane, European colonialism, the Great Trek and labor migrancy” (*Entanglement* 24). Thus, she says, South Africa is a country “borne out of processes of mobility, the boundaries of which have constantly been reinvented over time” (“City Forms” 735). Democratic South Africa is emerging from a static, measured and policed state, where identity is encoded in laws and practices, such as stratified living areas - seen in the townships and Bantustans, and stratified bodies - particularly governed by the notorious pass laws that defined where one could live and work, and whom one could marry, based purely on race. As I demonstrate throughout my study, the implications of the failure to visit and revisit these memories and histories in the period after apartheid is playing out in the current revival of racialist discourse identified by many of the people I interviewed during my research. Against this background, then, I argue the Deleuzian concepts of spatial thinking, the notion of milieus and rhythms in an space of production over orientation, present for the South African socio-spatial-political discourse a rich nexus of ideas through which it should be possible to think about “the way in which different expressions of life unfold different spaces, relations, fields or trajectories” (Colebrook, “The Space of Man” 195), which
Deleuze and Guattari call “the immanent power of corporeality in all matter” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 411).

In turning to Deleuze’s minoritarian philosophy as an approach through which to address the complex condition of the South African milieu, I recognize the imperative of engaging his ideas with those of contemporary South African thinkers and practitioners, and the philosophical, political, juridical and cultural issues being expressed in contemporary discourse. The philosophical framework of African thought implicates the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods, a complexity profoundly important to Africa’s social, educational and constitutional independence. In Chapter 1, I examine the ideas of Achille Mbembe, Mogobe Ramose, Emmanuel Eze, V.Y. Mudimbe, and others, who bring an intellectual, philosophical and political viewpoint to the entanglement of traditional Western philosophy and contemporary African thinking, seeking to retire what Ramose calls “the Line” of binary philosophical thinking toward the “liberation of philosophy from the overwhelming one-sidedness of the history of Western philosophy.” Rather, they call for a more complicated African version of self and history that acknowledges the entanglement of the different forms and types of African philosophy with the Western encounter (“The Struggle for Reason in Africa” 6).

2. **A Space of “epistemic nomadology”**

I write recognizing my positionality as an insider and an outsider; a white, western academic in Canada who was born and grew up in Africa, living in a large land (Kenya, South Africa and what was then called Southern Rhodesia) in a socially confined space protected by the veneer of colonial denial. I bear in mind, therefore, the questions that Deleuze and Foucault raise in their conversation on the intellectual and practice: “Who
exercises power? And in what sphere?” “Who speaks and who acts? Is it always a multiplicity?” (“Intellectuals and Power.” Desert Island 207). Fully aware of the risk of entering the discourse of contemporary African philosophy and epistemology, I propose bringing a interdisciplinary, horizontal approach, privileging the transversality of the different methods of thought, thus avoiding the transcendent notions in some African thinking by recognizing and drawing on the reasoning that goes beyond it. I employ the Guattarian notion of “transversality” as a “materialist concept” that is “non-categorical and non-judgemental” with the potential to cut through imposed disciplinary boundaries, defying “dualistic” categories and hierarchies. He conceives transversality opposes “both verticality (in the sense of hierarchies and leaders) and horizontality in the sense of people organizing themselves within a particular ‘section’ or compartment,” creating a method of overcoming dualism by focusing on the creation of the new (Palmer and Stanimir).

Such a conceptualization offers affirmative modes of thought to engage South Africa’s entangled discourse described earlier, by looking at the contemporary milieus, as well as recognizing the layers of histories that have created the country’s subjectivities. I suggest transversality eschews the traditional practice of oppositional thinking that Mbembe, Ramose, Eze and other contemporary African thinkers seek to escape and opens up the conversation to experimentation and creative, imaginative potentialities. Similarly, Rosi Braidotti proposes “transdisciplinary” movement between diverse discursive and intellectual fields, “creating connections where things were previously disconnected or seem unrelated, where there seemed to be ‘nothing to see.’” In this movement of connection and displacement, she sees a step toward “epistemic nomadism”
as the “invention of new ways of relating, of building footbridges between notions”; of in-betweenness ("Toward a New Nomadism” 1431).

Specifically for the South African context of engagement and positionality, I turn to Robinson, who shares my position as an insider/outsider researcher. She considers her positionality as a “persistent and disabling stumbling block” in the relationship between researcher and researched in postcolonial societies when embarking on ethnographic study, and suggests a possible way forward is to seek “modes of research and representation that disrupt – but do not suspend – the effects of positionality, the ‘outside’ perspectives, which inevitably accompany processes of enquiry and reflection about the lives of others.” Following Spivak’s notion of “[s]peaking with” as a model, Robinson says that “engagement with people from other places and cultures involves an openness to their influence, to their ‘talking back’” ("White Women Researching” 248-249). Her considerations reflect Braidotti’s call for a shift in our “collective imaginings” and “shared desires for transformations” (The Posthuman 89) that underpins my exploration to create a study for theatre practice that is engaged at every level, and embraces the new ways of thinking sought by South African writers and critics in the postapartheid space.

3. Deleuze and Theatrical Spaces: “New ideas of what thinking is”

In its revolutionary nature, Deleuze suggests, a minoritarian theatre’s “antirepresentational function would be to trace, to construct in some way, a figure of the minority consciousness as each one’s potential” (“One Less Manifesto” 253-4). Deleuze rejects mimesis or representational theatre, which he says perpetuates the hegemonic conventional organizational systems of theatre, “its language, gestures, costumes and props” (Cull, Theatres of Immanence 20-1). Immanent theatre, on the other hand, is non-
representational, and “moves beyond what he perceives to be a traditional philosophical reliance on mimesis, privileging instead ‘affect’ and ‘becoming’ as key performative processes” (Fancy, “Geoperformativity” 62). Similarly invested in such immanent performative processes, Mbembe contends, “[i]n the best tradition of African art, music, literature, every moment of human existence is made up of points of intensity that are never stable” (On the Postcolony xvi).

A minoritarian approach, I suggest, offers a study and practice of theatre and performance not by overlaying or applying preconceived philosophical or theoretical frameworks, but by engaging in an immanent process of thinking that implicates Deleuze’s insistence on a creative and responsive process evocative of Antonin Artaud’s notion that “we must believe in a sense of life renewed by theatre.” Artaud’s preoccupation with affective theatrical production of language, body and space refers not to the known surface, but “to that fragile, fluctuating center which forms never reach” (The Theatre and its Double 13). While recognizing there are many other potential critical theatre spatial theories, I contend they continue to gesture toward structural or identitarian models and return to the binary positions that Deleuze, and this study, are trying to escape; for example, Joanne Tompkins’ theorization of theatre’s heterotopias as an approach for “reimagining” spatial aspects of theatre. While she effectively argues for the kind of political awareness and empowerment that I propose for this study, I contend her theoretical model of alternative spaces perpetuates the structuralist provenance that persists within the identitarian or representational framework Deleuze’s generative theatre practice of non-representation eschews, and I explore this idea further in Chapter 2.
Laura Cull suggests Deleuze’s conceptualization of embodied experience advances the encounter of philosophy and performance as a process of thinking and studying a play or performance, using philosophy to bring thinking to the encounter rather than applying a philosophy. She says “conjoining performance and philosophy” aspires to a “mutually transformative” or “a dual process of identity construction” (“Performance as Philosophy” 23) in an embodied encounter with “the resistant materiality of performance’s thinking,” offering the potential of performance to “generate new ideas of what thought is” (25). Similarly, Mbembe advances that in African aesthetics, “[t]o think critically is to work with the fault lines, to feel the chaotic touch of our senses, to bring the compositional logics of our world to language” (xv). In the act of production – art, literature, music and dance – he sees the “sensory experience of our lives” that “objective knowledge” has failed to capture (Postcolonial xvi). Can we look to these acts of production, the “quiet force of African aesthetic process” (xvi), then, as a reflection of Deleuze’s conceptualization of minor theatre?

Does such conceptualization allow for an affirmative inside/outside schema that is informed by the histories and memories of the local in a transnational world of ongoing movement, interconnectedness, and dislocation between boundaries and networks? Might we look to Deleuze’s embrace of “immanent space in order to find our place in a world where there is so much potential for differentiation in so many of the orbits of the social” (Dewsbury and Thrift 91)? I return to expand upon these concepts in my exploration of Deleuze’s minoritarian ontology, on which I focus in detail in Chapter 1, and throughout will draw on the work of Cull and Fancy, who engage extensively and directly with Deleuze’s immanentist thought and theatre practice. I advance Deleuze’s thinking as a
strategy to consider the space of South African theatre in Chapter 2, and his immanent processes will remain a refrain throughout my exploration of the milieu of South African theatre in Chapter 3, and its potentiality for contemporary theatrical praxis in Chapter 4.

Reflecting such thinking throughout this study, I argue that the spaces of theatrical performance are potentially molecular multiplicities of changing spaces becoming minor theatre, evoking a theatre language of emergence and space of immanence within its landscape of layered socio-economic and artistic challenges. Perhaps one can imagine a space for what South African playwright Aubrey Sekhabi calls the “ancient rite of storytelling,” in which to engage playwright Lara Foot’s vision for a “deeper cultural understanding and questioning of humanity” in theatre’s intersection with the milieu of rooted physical and mental boundaries that have informed the country’s inherited theatrical practices (Interviews). As Mark Fleishman writes: “We in South Africa have to learn to re-invent ourselves in a most active way and the theatre has a part to play in this process. Our challenge is to present images of the body in various forms constantly re-invented and transformed” (“Physical Images in South African Theatre” 182).

4. A Milieu of Rooted Physical and Mental Boundaries

As noted earlier, South Africa continues to grapple with its postapartheid world, in which the foundational thinking leading to rainbowism has had enduring implications for South Africa’s constitution, both in the jurisprudential and the social sense. The transition from apartheid to the first democratic elections was celebrated for its “peaceful” resolution, despite outbreaks of internecine violence provoked by the declining apartheid government, and outbursts of Afrikaner ‘bitter ender’ gestures of resistance. “South Africans worked out a negotiated settlement that brought about freedom for everyone
with relatively little bloodshed,” Ndebele notes (“Constituting the Nation”). The compromises made were rewarded with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 for Nelson Mandela and F.W. De Klerk, the then President, "for their work for the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa" (nobelprize.org). In the mood of the emerging democracy, the moving words of Mandela’s inaugural presidential address evoked a new dream of unity after decades of legislated racial division; of a “rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.” As Greg Homann writes: “After all, we were still punch drunk on the euphoria of our newly founded ‘Rainbow Nation.’ We had avoided a civil war and negotiated an unprecedented transition. Our achievements were inviolable. Criticism and pessimism were almost taboo” (At This Stage 6). A further “heady moment” was the creation of the South African Constitution in 1996, which offered the “framework for new relationships among South African citizens” (Ndebele, “Constituting the Nation”). Nicholas Rush Smith, in his review of books written about the dynamics of creating a legal structure for South Africa’s transition to a democracy, observes the establishment of what he sees as “a robust legal system and democratic political order” that has been a source of stability, affording new civil and political rights. However, he notes, “these stable legal institutions . . . have also been consistently challenged both by state leaders from above and by citizens from below” (137). The tension he describes can, perhaps, be seen playing out in the government leaders’ consolidation of power and corruption, and the #FeesMustFall

3 Nelson Mandela, Inaugural Address, 10 May 1994. “Each time one of us touches the soil of this land, we feel a sense of personal renewal. The national mood changes as the seasons change . . . Each of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld - a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.”
student protests, suggestive of Deleuze’s notion of major and minor and processes of territorialization and deterritorialization that I examine in this study.

Rush Smith’s comments underscore the illusion of unity that suppressed the true realities of the social legacy of decades of an apartheid society built on the structure of capitalism and “infringement on an individual’s movement” (Cronin, “A Luta Dis-Continua?” 20). It was, says the writer and poet Jeremy Cronin, who was at the centre of political change as a member of the National Executive Council of the African National Congress, and now is a parliamentarian, “a terrible betrayal of the possibilities for real transformation, real reconciliation and real national unity” (20). In his response to the final TRC report, Cronin observes that the identity formation and myth of the rainbow nation and “its performative intention have served to discursively create a national identity that has been top down in its constitution and implementation” (20). Thus, while the myth of the rainbow nation and the TRC may have presented a tone of healing and transformation at the time, evoking a sense of transcendence from the apartheid era, in reality a chasm remains between the post-apartheid expectations and the social realities. Heather Clancy observes: “The structures of the chasm are defended by white privilege under the real terms such as ‘meritocracy’ and ‘reverse racism’” (“The Fading Rainbow”). In a frank exploration of what he calls “uncomfortable” topics, Eusebius McKaiser writes:

The sooner we abandon the myth of a rainbow nation, a united nation, the better for our democracy. A national identity is neither necessary nor possible: we live in a diverse country with individuals and communities that have profoundly different beliefs, attitudes, habits and ideological convictions. Why insist on a common national identity? (location 1982)
In short, as Deleuze might argue, ignoring the ‘difference’ in its rush to unify the ‘same’ by transition – rather than through revolution – from apartheid to post-apartheid, is a philosophical, political and juridical reterritorialization evinced by neo-liberalism’s presumption of transcendence. Probing what he sees as South African’s inability to examine the deep-seated issues around race and sex, McKaiser seeks to generate a more thoughtful and candid social discourse.

Such a discourse speaks to Mbembe’s contention that “the social policies of postcolonial African regimes have also been conceived on the basis of an imaginary of the state making it the organizer of public happiness” (Postcolony 31). Here Mbembe is referring to the failure of postcolonial states to totally dismantle the capitalist colonial apparatus and bring together people at the local community level. The “exciting and promising beginnings” and potential for renegotiation of economic and political conditions, Deborah Mindry says, was “eclipsed by a transition to neoliberalism” (75). In this sense, she defines neoliberalism as “a hybridizing process meshing with existing ideologies and taking on varied forms, intersecting, for example, with ideologies of racism, with patriarchy and colonialism,” which, in the case of South Africa, is “rearticulated via discourses on freedom and rights in the context of liberation struggles” (76). Perhaps the most notorious, more recent illustration of this molar structure is the predominance of multinational corporations and the weakening power of labour, exhibited in the shooting in 2012 of 34 striking mineworkers at the Marikana platinum mine in South Africa’s northwest province, owned by the international corporation Lonmin. The slaughter by the South African Police force, instigated by mine directors more concerned with the company’s international shareholders, raises the ominous
spectre of the notorious 1960 Sharpeville massacre, and gives new energy to the popular impression that there has been no change in the inherent encoding of hegemonic striated colonial/capitalist spaces.

Speaking to the milieu of disillusionment he sees in the “new cultural temperament . . . gradually engulfing post-apartheid urban South Africa,” Mbembe seeks resistance to the status quo. The notion of “decolonization,” he contends, is “in truth a psychic state more than a political project in the strict sense of the term” (“The State of the South African Political Life”). Not enough meaningful change can be seen, not only for “the black poor,” he says, but more tellingly for the “future aspects of the black middle class.” He writes:

Rainbowism and its most important articles of faith – truth, reconciliation and forgiveness – is fading. Reduced to a totemic commodity figure mostly destined to assuage whites’ fears, Nelson Mandela himself is on trial. Some of the key pillars of the 1994 dispensation – a constitutional democracy, a market society, non-racialism – are also under scrutiny. They are now perceived as disabling devices with no animating potency, at least in the eyes of those who are determined to no longer wait. We are past the time of promises. Now is the time to settle accounts. (“State of the South African Political Life”)

Nuttall sees a similar continuity between apartheid and the present. “Apartheid social engineering did and still does work to fix spaces that are difficult to break down in the present.” Looking at how “to theorize the ‘now’ in South Africa,” she says, calls for new explorations and tools of analogies. We need to “work out what remains of the past, and how we relate to both the past and its remainders, or traces in the present; and second of working out our relationship to that which hasn’t happened yet, the world of aspirations, the fictions with which people fill the future,” (“City Forms” 732), suggestive of the potentiality of Deleuze’s ‘people to come.’
The condition of alienation created by apartheid’s laws and boundaries was a major social barrier, an inhibitor that created a closed-off opportunity for people, not only stripping away physical freedom, but also imposing a legislation of exclusions that created a daily negation of existence. In Athol Fugard’s *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972), SIZWE BANSI says: “When a white man looked at you at the Labour Bureau, what did he see? A man with dignity or a bloody passbook with an N.I. number?” (35). The psychological condition that erased the most basic humanistic expectations and aspirations portrayed in Fugard’s play results in an architecture of disentitlement that persists today. This history is hard to contain and package into a single story. While white people in South Africa during apartheid enjoyed a living standard representing the extraordinary privilege of one face of the country, people of colour, particularly Africans, suffered a brake on their capacity to develop, which is being seen in the social effects decades after the end of apartheid.

Absolute poverty has diminished and people are generally better off than they were thirty years ago, with incomes increasing within the African community; however, levels of inequality have increased and many people have been unable to benefit from the new democracy. (Absolute poverty is measured against the UN threshold, determined by the amount of money a person needs to consume 2100 calories a day, below which people are considered poor. South Africa uses the lower poverty line that includes non-food items to determine poverty for policymaking and monitoring.) South Africa is one of the

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4 The passbook was a registration document issued to Black African men over the age of sixteen, stipulating where they could live, work and travel; thus restricting freedom and movement. Failure to carry a passbook (known by those who had to carry it as ‘Dompas,’ literally ‘dumb pass’) resulted in banishment or imprisonment.
most unequal countries in the world, and the conditions create incredible dynamics, forcing the question: what kind of human being do we want to be? (Krueger, Personal Interview). An editorial in The Guardian newspaper in December 2017 states that “race is still a key determinant of difference in income, education, job opportunities and wealth. The richest 10% of South Africans are largely white,” earning more than 60% of the national income, versus the bottom 90%, “almost all of whom are black, [and] live among the poorest lives in Africa.” Unemployment in 2019 stands at a 15-year high of 29%, with a youth unemployment rate of 56.4% (Trading Economics). Land reform is a huge issue, as is the lack of health services, sanitation, housing, clean water and electricity for millions still without it. The most critical overshadowing social condition is HIV/AIDS, which has had devastating social effect and continues to haunt the country today. Statistics show that South Africa has the highest number of people living with HIV/AIDS in the world – over 7 million – more than half of them (59%) women and girls. The prevalence in 2018 was 18.8%, exceeded only by its neighbours, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (Avert).

Clearly, then, economic and social issues, as well as demand for education and books for students, are all playing out. The ontological questions are immense, and I would argue it is for spaces such as this, that Bruce Janz suggests the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of geophilosophy proves useful as a process to remap the Western modern notion of space, to find that “place, the place we find ourselves in and which has meaning to us precedes the bounded and abstractly defined territory” (“The Territory is not the Map” 393). A rising black nationalism is developing, reflected particularly in a restless young emerging black middle class who read the experience they are going through in a
different way than older people, and who are asking the question: What has happened in the country? Recent elections (2016 and 2019) have resulted in a decline of support for the governing African National Congress (ANC), which is a sign of people, particularly from the urban areas, wanting to see a change from economic inaction and corruption. The urgent development in social consciousness is being demonstrated by “civic mobilization” (Forsyth, Olutola and Strauss 107), of which the most prominent is the #FeesMustFall protests occurring at major South African universities, many of which have resulted in violence and significant property destruction. Black students are articulate and beginning to make up the majority of student bodies, prompting affirmative action in hiring of faculty and a shift in curriculum focus to African histories and African philosophy. The politics is Afrocentric, according to Krueger, theatre theorist, playwright and a professor at Rhodes University, and there is an insistence for a radical change to include African writers and African forms of performance in order to understand “how human emancipation is to be understood today in the twenty-first century by looking at how it has failed, and how to think about it in the emancipatory future.” In Experiments in Freedom, published in 2010, Krueger wrote of syncretism, of letting go of identity. Now, he says, he no longer sees such tendencies and there is a “return to race as a signifier.” As opposed to the move to get rid of race as a socio-political signifier after the end of apartheid, envisioned in the rainbow nation, colour blindness is now seen as negative, as a white attempt to whitewash the past. Influenced by the discourse in the United States, terms such as “white privilege” and “white tears” are being used vocally in protest movements (Personal Interview).
5. South African Theatre Spatialities

Krueger sees theatrical productions as pivotal to a search for lost heritage at a time when people are trying to examine South Africa’s past after the rainbow period of amnesia. There is a strong urge for theatre making of all kinds, and in a variety of spaces, in the search for the rich indigenous knowledge of Africa in the ritual of theatre, he says (Personal Interview). The stage – variously described as the space or place of performance – has played a formative role in various theatrical modes throughout the ages. This is particularly true in the layered geographical and social spaces of the South African milieu examined earlier, in which the space of theatrical performance is entwined. Despite the expectation to move beyond the legacy of protest or oppositional theatre, the fact remains that after apartheid theatrical productions and creative artistic performances grew out of the resistance theatre and continues to operate within the dominance of the Western form and theatre structures, still monopolized by what Brent Meersman calls the alienating “old apartheid cultural bunkers” of the apartheid State theatres (“State of the Arts: Where is the Audience?”).

Exploration of South African stories through theatre has an expansive history. Pre-colonial theatre, Loren Kruger says, is imprinted by “history and geography or boundaries in time and space,” formed by hunting and trade routes, colonization and the complication of the British Boer conflicts and apartheid (“Reassembling” 246). The boundaries of performance range from pre-colonial modes, the influence of the European “bourgeois sense,” to urbanizing Africans who respond by combining pre-colonial

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5 The confluence of people Kruger refers to include: Hunter-gatherers, herders (Khoi) and nomads (San) herder-farmers, black Bantu-speakers, white Dutchmen, European settlers in conflict with Bantu farmers (Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho etc.) (“Reassembling” 248).
performance with modernizing adaptations (246). Temple Hauptfleisch contends the common attitude is that theatre began with colonization, and that theatre “as we know it is simply a European construct, based on the European experience – a concept foisted on the continent of Africa in the colonial period” (Foreword, Trends in Twenty First African Theatre 12). In the same way, Kene Igweonu insists that African theatre does not begin with colonization, although, as Kruger points out, most critics and commentators concentrate their studies on theatre created during apartheid and tend to ignore the rich heritage of theatre in Africa before settlement. The reality, she says, is that during the early 1900s there was a vibrant period of African urban performance, into which folded traditional praise poems and American jazz; a history captured in David Coplan’s In Township Tonight that will provide a further reference for this study that I explore in Chapter 3.

As well, home-grown South African theatre was a vital voice during apartheid as theatre of protest, songs of resistance and theatre for development, which was seen in formal theatres as well as informal street, township and rural community venues. Apartheid demanded theatre that played a strong oppositional role; indeed, as playwright and Baxter Theatre’s Artistic Director Lara Foot recalls, in the period of censorship under apartheid, “theatre was a living newspaper” (Personal Interview). Now, playwright and novelist Zakes Mda says, theatre’s challenge is to move from its inherited and still existing demographic as Eurocentric to one reflecting the community that will be its audience. Thus, he calls for raising community awareness of “social reality and power relations . . . in order to arouse the people’s capacity to participate and decide things for
themselves” and break the pattern of silencing, not only of the apartheid era, but of the present as well (“Marotholi Travelling Theatre” 354).

In the postapartheid era, Homann points out, it was not until the turn of the millennium that “theatre-makers were finally confronting contemporary issues rather than rehashing past preoccupations” (At This Stage 11). Performance is beginning to speak back to socio-political discourse, and histories and memories. As well, current themes are emerging in various forms of theatrical performance and other cultural practices, and the importance of individual remembered stories is a theme that continues to run through the discourse about finding a postapartheid form of expression. For Mda, reconciliation is a major concern and he urges the need for remembering, not as a way of remaining inured as victims of the past, but as a way to better understand the present for, he believes, without memory there is no history, no identity. “True reconciliation will only come when we are big enough to confront what happened yesterday, without bitterness,” he says. “We cannot just sweep it under the carpet and hope that all of a sudden we shall live in brotherly or sisterly love, in a state of blissful amnesia” (“The Role of Culture”). In a similar vein, the poet Ingrid de Kok insists that in the turn from opposition to reconciliation there is a need for an “elegiac imperative” that calls for the individual and social histories of the past not to be erased, but rather to take on a new pattern, to “restore the vocabulary of the past” (61). I propose to explore whether Deleuze’s affirmation of mobility and movement through spaces creates an ‘infinite rehearsal’ – to use Wilson Harris’s term – that allows articulations and subjectivities to emerge by advancing the poetics and fluidity of storytelling evocative of Doreen Massey’s space as “simultaneities of stories-so-far” (For Space 9). For instance, in the dynamic performative modes of
praise poems, in contrast to the static mode of monuments, such as Rhodes’ statue and the Voortrekker Monument as memorials to capitalist capture and settler land possession.

In Chapter 4, I explore contemporary theatre praxis where the challenge for South African theatre, Mda argues, is to move from its inherited and still existing demographic as Eurocentric to one reflecting the community that will be its audience. In postapartheid South Africa, with its complex society dislocated by hegemonic spaces of fixed physical and mental boundaries, these concepts create new theatrical processes in order to shed the inherited framework of theatrical practice built on this troubled history. While Mda recognizes the need for what he calls “theatre of the elites: and other forms of performance that reflect South Africa’s cultural diversity” in city venues, he argues for an engaged theatre that “is rooted with the people in the marginalized rural areas and urban slums.” A truly South African theatre that is not “the sole privilege of the dominant classes,” he says, is “that in which peasants and workers are active participants in its production and enjoyment. A theatre of the majority will not pander to the tastes of the West End and Broadway audiences” (“Politics and the Theatre” 216). In their desire to shift from entrenched oppositional positions and to become engaged at every level, including exploring the country’s quotidian stories, I suggest that Ndebele, Sachs, Dhlomo, Kruger, Mda and others are seeking what O’Sullivan calls an affirmative creation of a “different kind of (political) subjectivity” through productive activity (*Art Encounters* 7); in other words, the ‘minoritarian’ explored in this study, which is radically different than ‘the theatre of the majority’ rightfully criticized by Mda above (Fancy in conversation).
Thus, I return to my seminal question: can what we might describe as a minor theatre continue theatre’s role in contemporary socio-political discourse and bring Deleuze’s philosophy of thinking to explore what John Matshikiza calls, “the Pandora’s box of issues that has flooded us into this uncertain present” (6)? I contend that theatrical performance is potentially a dynamic space of intersection with South Africa’s entangled landscape and, in Chapter 2, I discuss why I believe theatre space is a site for transformation by implicating the minoritarian concepts discussed earlier that echo Artaud’s preoccupation with affective theatrical production of language, body and space. The crux of my exploration will be to engage Deleuze's political spatial ontology that brings the concept of nomadology or smooth space to South Africa’s striated landscape of bonded histories and overlay of coding as a lens from which to read theatre as a political process and space of storytelling that connects to the struggle of its community (Toward a Minor Literature 17-18).

6. Terminology: Theatre, Theatrical Performance, Performance

The interrogation of theatre spaces and the complex mediations between body and space open up a robust investigation of the term ‘theatre,’ which, as it is applied to dramatic arts, has a complex etymology. In Western understanding, theatre tends to describe a live performance that creates “a coherent and significant sense of drama,” which reinforces “the idea that theatre involves live bodies” (Tracy Davis qtd. in Fletcher 1). Turning to the definition of the term ‘theatrical performance,’ I draw on James Thompson’s useful interpretation of “‘performance’ as an inclusive term for all those artistic practices that include the participation of groups and individuals as they present themselves to others” in a variety of performance styles and forms in a variety of places,
not necessarily in formal theatrical spaces or “by people who are not usually permitted to call themselves artists” (7). In other words, he suggests performance covers “a range of cultural forms that might exist in any one ‘staged’ moment,” and does not necessarily use “the spoken word or some linear narrative structure” (7-8). A secondary use of the term performance, he says, applies “when certain social processes are said to perform” that might appeal to audiences, which can be said to be “performative in . . . that they do something beyond their mere existence” (8). Here he echoes Richard Schechner’s description of performance as: “A ‘broad spectrum’ or ‘continuum’ of human actions ranging from ritual, play . . . the enactment of social, professional, gender, race, and class roles, and onto healing (from shamanism to surgery), the media, and the internet” (2).

When looking at African theatre, playwright and academic Hauptfleisch explains the term theatre, in its general definition as the formal practice of theatre (dramatic texts and performances), is problematic because there is no word for theatre in any African language. He identifies “post-colonial” and “post-apartheid” theatre ontology’s complicated spaces of inherited and current physical and imaginary boundaries, examining the binaries between “African performance traditions and Western theatre practices” (Foreword, Trends in Twenty First African Theatre 12-13). By referring to “theatre ontology,” I follow Colin Doty’s meaning to be how we understand theatre in its content and its “domain of knowledge,” and in its connection to other things, such as the space, the performance, the plays; in other words how we think critically about theatre and the way we know about theatre (Doty 1).

6 I use quotation marks here to indicate what Homi Bhabha calls the “disjunctive character” of these terms that Ann McClintock considers “prematurely celebratory” (McClintock 87).
From his perspective, Wole Soyinka contends the distinction so often made between Western and African approaches to theatre is a “cast of mind.” The difference between European and African drama, he advances, represents “the essential differences between two world views. . . one culture whose very artifacts are evidence of a cohesive understanding of irreducible truths and another, whose creative impulses are directed by period dialectics” (Myth, Literature and the African World 38). In his view, the audience is not an individualistic voice, but “an integral part of that arena of conflict; it contributes strength to the protagonist through its choric reality,” conjured up by “offerings” and “incantations,” suggesting an assemblage of the dynamic of body and space extended to the spectator as well. African theatrical “performances are parts of larger social events,” David Graver observes, “because they do not create dominating spectacles that sharply divide spectators from actors.” Instead, “cooperation and exchange, rather than passivity and domination, mark the relationship between audience and spectator” (3).

Inevitably, then, in the South African theatre context, terminology is a pressing issue. Yvette Hutchison says while some critics seek to broaden the notions of theatre in the South African context beyond its specific European meaning, for instance by suggesting inter-cultural, syncretic performances, “there are still profound silences” and failure to incorporate the many “areas of performance that have not been discussed in detail in the many South African theatre histories.” She argues for the need to demonstrate how these diverse forms have defined the nature of contemporary South African theatre, which has seen rehabilitation of indigenous performance that “is both oral and thousands of years old, and thus not easily or reliably accessible,” or “has tended to have been recorded and written for a white western ideological perspective,” making “the reconstruction or
recuperation of oral forms more complicated” (Banham 312-313). Kruger relays that
Sipho Sepamla, the poet, novelist and editor of “the influential black theatre magazine,
Sketch,” reveals this fissure between South African theatre’s theory and its cultural
material reality; on the one hand charging that “‘theatre’ is not part of our [African]
vocabulary,” and on the other acknowledging the fact that “urban and urbanizing
Africans in this century have performed and observed a range of forms from ‘sketches’ to
‘concerts’ to ‘plays’” (qtd. in The Drama of South Africa 14). Correspondingly, in the
Foreword to Kene Igweonu’s study of emerging trends in twenty first-century African
theatre and performance, Hauptfleisch draws attention to the overlay of Western theatre
concepts from the colonial period to oppositional resistance to apartheid, and in what has
been called the “euphoria of optimism” of the rainbow nation. He states African theatre is
not “one coherent and monolithic entity or system (beyond being a single and very large
continent), but a complex, polysystemic amalgam of many political, linguistic, social,
cultural and economic subsystems” (Trends in Twenty First Century African Theatre and
Performance 11). His notion of a “polysystemic amalgam” suggests a way of thinking to
further explore the space of bodies acting and interacting, enfolding in past, present and
future, as the tension that flows throughout the current South African theatre discourse.

7. Complexities: Resonances and Considerations

7.1. Deleuze and Postcolonial Criticism

Some postcolonial theorists have criticized Deleuze for an approach they say is
complicit with Western epistemological and cultural imperialism. They denounce his
refusal to engage expressly with the body of postcolonial thought, considering his neglect
expresses either indifference or affectation of “‘interested’ disinterest” (Bignall and
Patton 2). Others see his concepts, particularly nomadology, as appropriation and intellectualization of indigenous experience and perpetuation of the European tendency toward exoticism that fails to acknowledge the “real historical experience of colonial peoples and their struggles to justice” (2). Specifically, Bignall and Patton refer to Gayatri Spivak’s “influential” and “scathing” criticism along these lines (5). In anticipation of such a potential response to my own argument, in the first chapter I implicate their rebuttal that these critics fail to consider “the ‘sense’ and political effects of both the concepts themselves” and the way in which Deleuze uses them (7).

“Deleuze’s work is so rich and varied,” they argue, and “it traverses various terrains of engagement and shifts form and focus at various stages in his intellectual and political development” (6). I aim to demonstrate this engagement by drawing on Grosz’s embrace of Deleuze’s rhizomatic concepts for feminist theory, as well as Cull’s turn to his immanent philosophy as a “method of thought” (Cull) for creative engagement with theatre. As well, I heed Bignall and Patton’s proposition that Deleuze needs to be employed in a way that is consistent with his way of doing philosophy, where there is no systematic closure and no “overall argumentative or narrative structure” (7).

7.2. Language: Assemblages of Enunciation

The issues of language and race are further considerations for this study, particularly for theatre. Kruger draws attention to the tension between the dominant English and indigenous languages, as well as Afrikaans, with its fraught history as a language of oppression to reinforce Afrikaans narratives of power and control. Speaking of the complexity of language in a country where there are eleven official languages dominated by English and Afrikaans, playwright Maishe Maponya says that theatre is always
changing and always has used various languages, as he has done himself in his plays. He notes that:

Our use of English is filled with the African idiomatic expressions. It is used in a way that inspires us, in that we are inspired basically by our own cultural roots, by our heritage, and our languages are different and the word order is different; we find ourselves using English in that way but it always makes sense. (“I will remain an African” 186)

Afrikaans is similarly complex. While it is the language of the small white elite whom the apartheid policies served, it cannot be reduced to the simple binary function as a major language. It is the mother tongue of a far larger population, and has powerful political resonance because of its enforced use as the medium of education during apartheid, which instigated the 1976 Soweto student uprisings. Afrikaans theatre, playwright Amy Jephta contends, is currently vibrant and well-funded, generating interesting new work vested in keeping the language alive. As well, playwrights are challenging the “official” Afrikaans by writing in their own dialect, such as Cape Malay-Afrikaans; a tendency seen for instance in Kristalvlakte, Jephta’s adaptation of Mother Courage set in the Cape Flats, which I explore in Chapter 4.

Maponya and Jephta gesture toward the creation of a ‘minor language,’ suggested by Deleuze’s concept of ‘minor literature,’ which he says, is a dynamic process – a production – working from within, in tension, which is always political, always connected to the community, yet always constructed within the major literature. He describes minor language as “deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation,” creating a concentrated space of political engagement in the individual (Toward a Minor Literature 18).
7.3. Inherited Racial Spatialities

Equally convoluted is the question of recognizing the divided racial spatialities that have evolved over the centuries of South Africa’s history, imprinted by the Manichaean colonial psyche and the material reality of a slave history that stretches back across the Indian Ocean to such places as Indonesia and Madagascar. As well, there is a strong heritage through the descendants of indentured Indian labour, African migration, and the almost extinct indigenous Khoi-San people. The identitarian term “Coloured” as it is applied to various peoples in the South African context is fraught with complexities, but all share the same experience of “miscegenation” and “non-belonging” (Dineo Gqola 21). The term refers not only to the Cape Malay descendants of Javanese slaves, but as well to a variety of other groups of “slave-European-African-Khoi-San mixed ancestry and culture,” who refer to themselves as “Brown [and] Coloured” (Robins 133), all of whom are beginning to explore their rich histories and stories that have been hidden or overcoded. The apartheid practice of classification and naming – Deleuze would call it “encoding” – established a terminology that bequeaths the question of how to use such established racial terms in contemporary writing. For instance, the Cape Malay people are known by the South African term “Cape Coloured,” which Jephta says is a term implicated in racial politics (“On Familiar Roads” 168-169). The Cape Coloured experiences, she says, “have created identity narratives . . . shaped by the history of the country, as well as being deeply rooted” in their localized social spaces (165). Their culture also has “a long rich history of artistic performances representing and speaking” to this experience (166) and is “a fluid melding and remelding of cultural elements” (171) in an “ongoing narrative pattern of displacement and migration” (165). For this study, I
adopt the prevailing usage for the various terms. These issues of language and identity are inherent in South Africa’s theatre spatialities and in Chapter 3, I examine in more depth their histories and legacies. In Chapter 4, I focus on the way the themes are implicated in contemporary theatre praxis.

8. Refrains of Concepts and Situated Knowledge

In adopting Deleuze’s ontology as my theoretical approach for this project, I heed his caution, expressed in conversation with Foucault on the intellectual and practice, that “[a] theory cannot be developed without encountering a wall, and praxis is necessary to break through this wall” (Desert Islands 206). His argument that practice is not merely “an application of theory,” offers the opportunity to engage for this project his immanent concepts of the refrain, assemblage and rhizome as a set of relays in “a multiplicity of bits and pieces that are both theoretical and practical” (207). The partial and fragmentary nature of the relationship between theory and practice to which he refers, I argue, reflects the ongoing search for renewed cultural expression Ndebele, Sachs and others seek. As Foucault puts it, “theory does not express, translate, or apply a praxis; it is a praxis — but local and regional, as you say: non-totalizing,” prompting such questions as: “Who speaks and acts? It’s always a multiplicity, even in the person that speaks or acts” (207). To this end, Mbembe’s perspective on African philosophy adds an important voice to the larger sphere of the philosophical conversation; particularly his explorations in On the Postcolony, where his concern is to “rethink the theme of the African subject emerging, focusing on him/herself, withdrawing, in the act and context of displacement and entanglement” (15). As playwright and arts administrator Ashraf Johaardien observes, “there is an atavistic sense of who we are” (Personal Interview).
I subject my exploration of cultural and artistic productions to a minor treatment, predicating it synchronically within a series of philosophical concepts and contemporary theatre theories, as well as diachronically within the prevailing social, political and economic conditions, and cultural policies and realities, recognizing the convergence of philosophical thought and material conditions inherent in theatrical performance. Thus, I engage the lens of the traditional cultural materialist approach suggested by Ric Knowles, who recognizes that “meaning is shaped directly, performance by performance, by the local, regional and global events of the moment” (Knowles 11). Also useful is Brian Massumi’s reminder that cultural materialism injects time to pause and think (An Interview with Brian Massumi and Mary Zournazi). As well, I am attracted to Braidotti’s feminist position that sees matter (or material) not as oppositional to culture or technology, but as “the process of their interaction” (The Posthuman 158). Her argument for a material-cultural process that is not binary but rather one that “allows us to better interrogate the boundaries between them,” is an approach that complements the notion of Deleuze’s minor treatment, and results in what she calls “an ethics of knowledge that reflects and respects complexity and also renews the practice of critical reflexivity” (158).

My research follows Cook and Crang’s ethnographic model of Participatory Action Research that focuses on dialogue, storytelling and collective action, using unstructured, qualitative interviews conducted on site to generate ideas and complexities. As the section entitled “epistemic nomadology” above points out, I recognize my positionality as a researcher, and take a reflective approach that includes personal interviews in South Africa (2016 and 2018) with 17 theatremakers and scholars (see Appendix A), who were
chosen for “the quality and positionality of information” they offered on the South African theatrical milieu (11). My examination of theatre practices focuses on the prevailing socio-economic-political realities, for example questioning the accessibility of theatre spaces for audiences, issues of funding and training and opportunities for artists’ to bring their work to audiences. Another underpinning for this study is a rigorous study of cultural and political criticism, historical archives and government documents, such as the government White Paper on Culture (1996 and 2013). Equally as important, during my field research I was immersed in the country, the rhythm of language, and the opportunity to speak to people who are not in the cultural field about the political and social milieu in which the theatre is taking place. I found this immersion to be of tremendous value to my bringing a reflective point of view to my research.

When engaging these philosophical and material explorations with South African theatrical productions and the plays themselves, I remind myself that Deleuze sees theatricality as “an unbalanced, nonrepresentative force that undermines the coherence of the subject through its compelling machineries” (Murray 3). What counts he says is “the becoming, the movement, the speed, the vortex” (Deleuze, “One Less Manifesto” 242). He declares himself in opposition “in every respect” to the theatre of representation and, in “One Less Manifesto,” he seeks to impose “a minor treatment or a treatment of minoration to extract becomings against History, lives against culture, thoughts against doctrine, graces or disgraces against dogma,” arguing for a new interpretation of theatre as an immanent theatre; a minor theatre (243). The question might be raised as to why, given Deleuze’s insistence on immanence, I include play scripts in my research. To this point, I take note of the ambiguity of his deliberation on Carmelo Bene’s text of *Richard*
when he asserts that what Bene invents is “a writing that is neither literary nor theatrical, but truly operational, and whose effect on the reader is very strong, very strange,” and “must be seen, but also read even though the text properly speaking is not essential. This is not contradictory. It’s rather like deciphering a score” (Superpositions 105-6). The nature of South African playwriting might be said to share this challenge of “deciphering,” since it is itself in a process of constant change demanding enormous fortitude. Not only is there tremendous scarcity of published play scripts, but playwrights themselves acknowledge the difficulty of reflecting the material nature of the plays and the complexity of representing the corporeal aspect of South African theatre – dance, movement, symbols, lighting, music, and so on; in addition to which can be added the growing use of multiple languages in new theatrical productions. Might this question be seen as a Deleuzian theoretical wall that needs to be worked around?

Chapter Summaries:

The following brief outline of the dissertation’s architecture provides a guide to the way in which the ideas discussed in this Introduction will unfold.

Chapter 1, I identify, define and build on the concepts I see as the crux of Deleuze and Guattari’s minoritarian ontological approach to subjectivity, space and time, in the context of contemporary African discourse and South Africa’s theatre’s spatiality.

Chapter 2 examines the milieu in which theatre is being practiced and created, and demonstrates why one cannot look at theatre without thinking about space in its relational sense. I explore the way Deleuzo-Guattarian minoritarian ontology and materiality

7 The publishing exception is the sterling effort by the small publishing house Junkets in Cape Town, where for years Robin Milan has published and promoted emerging playwrights.
implicates body, space and theatre, and argue their spatial and theatre philosophy creates an ethico-aesthetic-political conceptualization for a South African theatre critique that eschews traditional oppositional, identitarian, transcendent tendencies. Two postapartheid plays provide case studies for this discussion: Rehane Abraham’s *What the Water Gave Me*, and Jane Taylor, William Kentridge and Handspring Puppet Theatre’s production of *Ubu and the Truth Commission*.

Chapter 3 focuses on enlisting the protean ontological and material processes developed in the foregoing chapters. Examining South Africa’s rich, yet complex, theatrical performance histories and landscapes, I identify three central themes that emerge: movement, identity and language. Zakes Mda’s satirical voice and spirit of humanism in *Our Lady of Benoni* encapsulates the issues the chapter unfolds.

Chapter 4 engages contemporary South African theatre spaces and praxis (based on my interviews) with Deleuze’s concept of becoming, and imagines how a minoritarian approach can help understand and imagine these ethico-aesthetic spaces of potentiality. I also investigate the current epistemological debate on why there is a need for new ways of thinking about knowledge in the postapartheid milieu and what that thinking offers this study. Plays from three contemporary theatremakers illustrate the refrains that run throughout the dissertation: Janni Younge’s *The Firebird*, Amy Jephta’s *Kristalvlakte*, and Neil Coppen’s *NewFoundLand*. 
CHAPTER 1.

A Refrain of ‘Minor’ Spatialities

There are no simple concepts. Every concept has components and is defined by them. It therefore has a combination [chiffre*]. It is a multiplicity, although not every multiplicity is conceptual. There is no concept with only one component.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, What is Philosophy? (15)

The task before us is both personal and collaborative and it is to invent a new system and architectural blueprint of being human. At our disposal are the tools of imagination and language.

Buhle Zuma, “Escape Post-apartheid Nightmare by Going Beyond Limited boxes to post-apartheid”

1. Introduction

Deleuze’s philosophical concepts evolve over the period of his thinking and, in true rhizomatic fashion, diverge in temptingly discursive ways. The crux of his affirmative ontology – and a central focus for this study – is the inseparability of the social and spatial, formed not by any a priori reduction to a fixed formulation, but by the dynamic process of desire of “emergent tendencies, capacities, and properties,” and potentialities “immanent to the material world,” rather than being something transcendent (DeLanda “Space: Extensive and Intensive” 85). Breaking from the traditional hegemonic, transcendental, identitarian framework of Western philosophy, his conceptualization of a minor theatre, I suggest, can tell the stories that continue to resonate nearly thirty years after the end of apartheid, and engage Mbembe’s call for a “new understanding of ontology, epistemology, ethics and politics” by “overcoming anthropocentrism and humanism, the split between nature and culture” (“De-Colonising Knowledge”). Deleuze conceptualizes an “insurgent” minor practice that is “always in process . . . always becoming . . . generating new forms through manipulation of those already in place”
(O’Sullivan, “Notes Towards a Minor Art”), and is always political, working in relation to the community and to the State (and here I think of the South African state). He asks, “Why not think that a new type of revolution is in the course of becoming possible, and that all kinds of mutating, living machines conduct wars, are combined and trace out a plane of consistence which undermines the plane of organization of the World and the States?” (Dialogues II 147). His concept is not one of a literal war, but rather Paul Patton points out, are “the conditions of creative mutation and change” (Deleuze and the Political 110), which Bruce Janz asserts can be seen as “dangerous and violent affronts to thought that are imposed by the outside” in complex assemblages of intersection (“The Territory is not the Map” 402). I argue such an assemblage of geographical and philosophical concepts and immanent refrains creates a dynamic new mode of thinking for South African theatre, which has its own philosophical and material tensions manifested as political reality that are found, for instance, in the city/rural histories as well as in the divisions of apartheid, ethnicities and language; in Rosi Braidotti’s words, it has its own pitch of intensity (“Affirming the Affirmative”).

2. Conceptual Architecture: “A refrain of philosophical, spatial and theatrical concepts”

In this chapter I engage the ‘refrain’ as my conceptual approach, or methodology as the social sciences would consider it, to identify, define and build on the concepts I see as the crux of Deleuze and Guattari’s minoritarian ontological approach to subjectivity, space and time. A refrain, they argue, begins “by considering the roots of the experience of territory” (Janz, “The Territory is not the Map” 392), and they call “a refrain any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes” (A Thousand Plateaus 323). While this unpacking might appear
to unfold a plethora of additional concepts, each will itself provide a way of thinking through Deleuze’s ethico-aesthetic paradigm of creative thought. The focus of my exploration is how Deleuze’s ontology of continual production of difference, which I describe in the introduction, is a compelling concept for considering the ‘overcoded’ strata of South African society, with its attendant tensions created by layers of power and resistance implicated in the codified topology of apartheid strata. Spatial concerns are central throughout Deleuze’s philosophical writing, expressed in his immanent approach to the human subject’s relation with space and in its relation to others, and his emancipating spatial ontology lends itself to South Africa’s spaces of meaning, memories and histories overlaid by the colonial/apartheid project.

As Claire Colebrook points out Deleuze encapsulates the assemblage of bodies, movement and thought in the idea that “the thinking brain is the site where the potential of space . . . can be actualized and counter actualized” (“The Space of Man” 191). He conceives of moving beyond the dualism of “stratification” and “that which is structured” toward a relational “process of differentiation – the dynamic unfolding of difference” where “different expressions of life unfold different spaces, relations, fields or trajectories” (195). In other words, he envisions space as “a set of relations,” an encounter, an event. As will become clear throughout this study of the evolving notions traversing Deleuze’s minoritarian landscape – from his early ontological conceptualizations to his later collaboration with Guattari’s material thought – the repetition, rhythm, and refrain of concepts inevitably entangle my own study in its tendency to refrain and repetition as I weave through the Deleuzo-Guattarian visionary, phantasmic tangles of social and political relations. For, as Deleuze maintains,
“Repetition is . . . better suited to renew a subject” in “more and more ‘forceful and ingenious’ movement” (Difference and Repetition 308n15).

Before engaging diverse spatial terminologies, recognizing the various complexities the term ‘space’ engenders, I should expand on my perspective of space as “relational space,” as engaging and enfold ing intermingling strata of spatial concepts. As well as Braidotti’s and Moss and Al-Hindi’s conceptualizations, I am drawn to geographer Hilde Heynen’s non-deterministic theory of “space as stage.” She contends the two predominant binary notions of space as either “structuration” or receptor – a neutral container; or instrumental or “agency” and organizing, “can be more fully recognized” through a third space, “space as stage.” Her notion of ‘space as stage’ as the conceptual site “for a better understanding of the interplay between forces of domination and forces of resistance,” I suggest, is apropos for the complex ontological and material ‘stage space’ with which this investigation engages (349).

Correspondingly, the guiding notion for Deleuze’s way of thinking for theatre is his insistence on what David Fancy calls an “ontological framework,” which takes “a form of theatre without representation” (“Geoperformativity” 69). His process of creative and responsive thinking, and embrace of the concepts of duration and embodied experience, allows the theatre to manifest itself “as a nonrepresentative encounter with difference that forces new thoughts upon us” (Cull, “How Do You Make a Theatre Without Organs” 245). Laura Cull suggests “philosophically minded performance theorists’ study of a given play or performance must allow new ideas to be created, ideas that the thinkers have not already developed on the basis of some other encounter” (“Performance as Philosophy”” 23). She urges using philosophy to bring thinking to the encounter,
contending it is theatre or “this particular aspect of theatre alone” that allows the idea to emerge (23). In this way, Cull regards “conjoining performance and philosophy might, by contrast, aspire to generate new ideas of both on the basis of a mutually transformative encounter . . . ‘a dual process of identity construction’” (23). Thus, she suggests, fulfilling the Bergsonian notion of allowing philosophy to be “inspired by the artist, who can ‘lead us to a completer perception of reality by means of a certain displacement of our attention’ away from the merely useful” (Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics* 138, qtd. in 23). Arguing for an embodied encounter with “the resistant materiality of performance’s thinking,” she says, perhaps “we need to look to performance itself to produce new ideas of what thinking is” (25). In this way, theatre space becomes more than the stage space, but becomes a space of histories and localities through which to answer the question: What needs to happen to create a minor theatre; a theatre ‘language’ that like a minor literature operates within, yet overturns, theatre’s hierarchical tradition? Her comments are similar to those expressed by the South African playwright Neil Coppen who urges for a process of engagement and exploration *now* in South African theatre to spur the imagination to be affective. I advance these ideas further throughout this study, particularly in depth in Chapter 4 where I examine contemporary South African theatremakers and theatre praxis.

Arguing for the minorization of South African theatre, then, I employ the Deleuzian refrain of concepts implicated in his minoritarian refrain as a creative and responsive understanding and questioning of humanity. Elizabeth Grosz best articulates Deleuze’s immanent process of becoming in “A Thousand Tiny Sexes.” As she sees it:
In Deleuze and Guattari’s work, the subject is not an 'entity' or thing, or a relation between mind (interior) and body (exterior); instead, it must be understood as a series of flows, energies, movements, capacities, a series of fragments or segments capable of being linked together in ways other than those which congeal it into an identity. ‘Production’ consists in those processes which create linkages between fragments, fragments of bodies and fragments of objects; and ‘machines’ are heterogeneous disparate, discontinuous assemblages of fragments brought together in conjunctions (x plus y plus z) or severed through disjunctions and breaks. (173)

Grosz thus identifies in Deleuze’s processes of movement and deterritorialization the linkages of space and time and “fragments of bodies and fragments of objects; and 'machines’” that rejecting the centrist, rigid strata of unities prevalent in Western philosophy, setting forth the guiding notions for this study, which is so invested in spatial ontology (173).

For instance, might we imagine the bounded space of South African theatre as a confluence of forces and interactions creating “lines of flight,” thus constituting potentialities for change? Are theatre spaces, spaces of potentiality for what Guattari, following Deleuze and Spinoza, calls the “new ethico-aesthetic paradigms” (Chaosmosis 10), immanent spaces of “joyful experience” (Bignall, “Affective Assemblages” 91) and expansive “playful[ness]” (Fancy “Difference, Bodies, Desire” 93)? In other words, are they the spaces Simone Bignall and Fancy see as a “pre-requisite for post-colonialism” (91) and “rejection of normative notions of bounded identity and subjectivity” (93)? The project of decolonizing South Africa in light of its history, not only of visible stratifications, but of silences and absences, is problematic. As choreographer Jay Pather points out, “apartheid’s machinations lay in abnegations of all kinds, rendering the clearly visible, invisible,” (“Laws of Recall” 320), and the question now is how to move beyond
the calcified remembrances of memory and rekindling of past divisions to reimagine the social space. The affirmative ways of thinking anew explored here speak to South Africa’s search to enunciate its meaning against its inherent colonized fixity, and complements Mbembe’s similar argument for a fluid, dynamic, and unfolding process in the African postcolony as self movement and self empowerment (Postcolony 15). Thus, I propose Deleuze’s conceptualization of the minor, with its affirmative, creative refrain of philosophical thought, as a political project that advances a way to think differently and question, complement and extend previous and existing modes of South African critical thought and practice. Deleuze explores his own contemporary world, where he regards globalization, social organization and technology place new challenges in the nexus of assemblage of power, with contesting challenges to old forms of exploitation and resistance. He argues “the means of exploitation, control and surveillance become more and more subtle and diffuse, in a certain sense molecular” (Dialogues II 146), while at the same time states face new forms of resistance to issues such as marking out of territories, mechanisms of economic subjugation, basic regulatory frameworks (such as trade unions and so on) and demands for improved “quality of life” (147). All of this, he says, “call[s] once more into question in an entirely immanent manner both the global economy of the machine and the assemblages of national States” (147). What Deleuze asks is, “why not think that a new type of revolution is in the course of becoming possible and that all kinds of mutating, living machines conduct wars, are combined and trace out a plane of consistence which undermines the plane of organization of the World and the States? “(Dialogues II 147).
The ideas of African thinkers are paramount when examining and destabilizing, or decolonizing the racialized spaces I have identified. Mogobe Ramose argues that while decolonization has been a catalyst in the “breaking of the silence about the African,” and offers an opportunity to create “an authentic and truly African discourse about Africa,” it also has upheld Western notions of rationality mired in the colonial framework, and he points out that many African scholars have put forward the argument that in fact it is feminist discourse that broadens the discussion of these concepts (“The Struggle for Reason in Africa” 1). Feminist geographers bring to the discourse the questions to challenge what Sarah de Leeuw and Sarah Hunt call “the inherent limitations of decolonial geographies, which continue to de-colonize through re-centering settler voices” (9). I also turn to the work on decolonization by Audrey Kobayashi and Linda Peake and others, who point out that colonial landscapes have been normalized in whiteness, where “whiteness is defined as power.” They call for a rhizomatic thinking about the way colonial knowledges have been created in order to avoid this re-centering and to reach a deeper understanding of the “silences, exclusions and denials” these spaces have created (Kobayashi and Peake, “Racism out of Place” 167). Further, James Esson et al argue that decolonization needs not only to “unsettle the architecture of privilege,” but also must “involve the decolonization of the mind as well” (387).

Particularly I draw on Mbembe’s *On the Postcolony*, his extensive philosophical examination of the space-time of Africa’s post-colonial condition he calls “the postcolony,” which looks to African models of a “great variety of temporal trajectories and wide range of swings” for the “*time of existence and experience*, the *time of entanglement*” (16). What Western rationality has failed to understand in talking about
African ontology, Mbembe argues, is that “all human societies participate in a complex order, rich in unexpected turns, meanders, and changes of course, without implying their necessary abolition in and absence of centre” (Postcolony 8). He repudiates the hegemony of linear models and speaks instead of “interlocking of presents, pasts, and futures that retain their depths of other presents, pasts, and futures, each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous one” (16), and of “time as lived . . . in its multiplicity and simultaneities, its presence and absences” (8). As can be seen everywhere, fluctuation, nonfulfillment and incompleteness do not all lead to lack of order or descent to “chaos” (8). Rather, recognizing that humans are “part of a very long, deep history that is not simply theirs . . . one of entanglement with multiple other species,” he says, “the dualistic partitions of minds from bodies, meaning and matter or nature from culture can no longer hold” (“De-Colonising Knowledge” 25). In the case of South Africa today, where the goal is to learn once again “to envisage oneself as a universal source of meaning,” he says, “nothing can be reinvented unless one is capable both of glancing backward and of looking forward, because if what began in blood ends in blood the chances of a new beginning are lessened by the haunting presence of the horrors of the past” (Interview, Eurozone). Mbembe’s expression of intersecting, entwined time, space and subjectivity, and Deleuze’s confluence of subjectivity, space and time, as well as his challenge to hegemonic traditional Western philosophy referred to earlier, serve as useful conduits for bringing Deleuzian philosophy and African thought into conversation in this study, and I expand on these ideas in this chapter. First, I explore the current state of African thought and the usefulness of Deleuze’s non-hierarchical and non-signifying philosophy as a strategy for resisting the oppositional practices
contemporary African philosophers seek to escape. After which, I unpack the central and
syncretic concepts of the refrain, the assemblage and the rhizome which are the crux of a
minoritarian approach through which to engage the body, space and time for this study. I
then take the discussion to Deleuze’s thinking for theatre to demonstrate how deeply
body, space and time are implicated – ontologically and materially – in Deleuze’s theatre
philosophy and in the socio-spatial-political environment. As the discussion on his spatial
ontology will unfold, Deleuze’s approach to space is inherently political. Before
concluding the chapter, I also briefly investigate Deleuze in the context of the broader
postcolonial conversation.

3. The Current State of African Philosophy and the Usefulness of Deleuze

Extending the conversation, Didier Kaphagawani urges avoiding speaking
“generally of African philosophy or rationality or religion or traditional lifestyle”
(“Epistemology and the Tradition in Africa” 265), while acknowledging the difficulty of
determining how to look at issues such as the modernist/traditionalist approach, the
debate around African culture as “magico-religious,” and the role of the “‘sages’... the
elders of the tribe, people whose wisdom and knowledge of tradition, the folklore, the
values, customs, history, likes and dislikes,” and so on, are a rich source of knowledge
(268-289). Within these complexities, he proposes African epistemology takes an
approach between that of universality and relativity, recognizing the confluence of
traditional knowledge and new global influences, and acknowledging “there is both some
universality to the phenomenon of knowledge as well as local variations of it with
different cultural contexts generally” (261). Godwin S. Sogolo also argues that African
thinking is social in nature, where primary causes are not “directly explicable in physical
terms,” but are experienced. He says some come in “the form of supernatural entities like deities, spirits, witches,” while others are induced by society, for instance by “contravention of communal morality or . . . strained relationship with other persons within [the] community” (Sogolo 215, qtd. in Teffo 166). In African thinking, he says, it is difficult to distinguish between metaphysics, social theory and morality “because all philosophizing is communitarian in nature” (166). These perspectives, then, address the question of why Mbembe is seeking a new way of thought that moves beyond the hegemonic European framework to engage rationalism in a more complex way than oppositional reason (West) and unreason (Africa).

Along the same lines, questions of African thought (in the fields of epistemology, ontology, anthropology and philosophy) are much discussed by African thinkers and Western observers alike. Under colonisation, Ramose argues, discourse on African thinking was “dominated for centuries by non-Africans” (“Struggle for Reason in Africa” 1), where considerations of the meaning of truth and experience for Africans was reflected through the lens of the Western philosophical framework, based on the Western understanding of what constitutes “a rational man,” and where “the tinctured character of insights” of African thought was ignored (7). Emmanuel Eze writes: “The so-called primitives surely ought to be wary of the Kantian [what Wole Soyinka calls] ‘universalist humanoid abstraction’ which colonizes humanity by grounding the particularity of the European self as centre even as it denies the humanity of others” (Soyinka ix, qtd. in Eze, “Colour of Reason” 450n144). The implications of such an agenda are embedded in African postcolonial societies. For instance, in South Africa, Ramose points out, the bequest of settler colonialism has resulted in “neo-apartheid constitutionalism” based on
Western jurisprudence and constitution, versus an African system. The new South African Constitution (1996) that was heralded as one of the most liberal in the world, is now being re-examined and recognized as driven by colonial capitalist principles that inure the country in that system in the form of neo-liberalism. Concessions were made by the incoming regime in order to bring about a conflict-free transition from apartheid, resulting in a country that is still divided, demonstrated by the issues now coming to the fore mentioned in the introduction.

The overlay of Western philosophical framework, whose spatial connotations served the colonial capitalist project of empowerment by removing Africans from their land, their knowledge systems and, it is argued, their lives, is a persistent thread pervading the neo-colonial thinking that keeps African philosophies embedded in the “European paradigm.” Commenting on the question of loss of land, Janz captures South Africa’s genesis in colonization and apartheid:

There is placelessness - people are either taken or forced out of their places (in the cases of slavery and forced migration), or places are taken from their people (in the case of occupation of land). This sense of placelessness has its roots in a phenomenological sense of belonging or dwelling. We might also speak of the non-place, a different concept not based in phenomenology but in structuralism. Signifiers become unhinged, meaningless, as they all point to something meaningful which is absent. (“Forget Deleuze” 27)

Ramose notes a similar lacuna of African philosophy, stating: “the absence of African philosophy from the history of Western philosophy” includes rejection of “a historical and scientific African philosophy of ancient black Egypt and its subsequent influence on and relations with early Greek philosophy” (“Struggle for Reason in Africa” 5). Such non-Western knowledges have been (and in many instances continue to be) ignored or dismissed in the imposition of the West’s arrogation of its notion of reason. As a result,
post-colonial African thinkers who seek to break from the Western framework with a diverse range of concepts, viewpoints, and approaches – traditional, nationalistic, linguistic and so on – often re-embed the Western structure in a form of neo-colonialism because the dominating framework created over colonial eras still molds the conversation. An example is the dominating narrative of ‘the spectacular’ in South African literature identified by Njabulo Ndebele and Albie Sachs, also referred to in the introduction.

Fundamental to the discussion on African thought is the issue of reason and rationality. As Ramose puts it: “The struggle for reason - and who and who is not a rational animal - is the foundation of racism” (3). Thus, he observes, reason is tied to the idea of who is human and who is sub-human, which therefore means even entitlement to freedom is questioned (3). The philosophical debate on reason centres on Kant’s position as the grounding logic in Western philosophy, with Eze contending that “Kant’s legacy dominates the landscape of twentieth-century philosophy, at least in the Western worlds” (On Reason 12). He advances that Kant’s early lectures on geography and anthropology in the period 1772-1776 define his critical philosophy, as well as his belief that the inherent difference in European and other races is based on his postulation that these other races do not have the ‘talent’ to think rationally. He observes that Kant considers the “human aspect of nature” within ‘man,’ is manifest in two ways: one is the “bodily, physical and external,” the domain of geography, and the other the “psychological, moral and internal,” the domain of anthropology (“The Colour of Reason” 431). Thus, Kant posits that bodies belong to the physical world and its characteristics are perceptible to “the external senses (the eyes, for example),” including racial characteristics; “skin
colour to be precise” (432). In this way of thinking, Eze asserts, Kant claims “the ultimate scientific evidence for racial groups as special-classes is manifest and obtained primarily externally by the outer-sense, from the colour of the skin,” defining Nature as “things under law.” In other words, he is classifying things based on their external attributes, in order to determine “presumed grades of superiority or inferiority of the race to the presence or absence of ‘true talent’ and endowment of ‘nature’ which as well as itself as a marker of race in/as skin colour,” is tied to geographical elements, i.e. sun, soil and so on (433-441). For Kant, skin colour was more than a physical characteristic it was also “an unchanging and unchangeable moral quality” (441). In these terms, then, Kant defines what he sees as the “essence’ of humanity” required in “order to deserve human dignity,” which Eze dryly identifies as “like Kant himself, ‘white,’ European, and male” (450). He argues Kant’s “philosophical anthropology reveals itself as the guardian of Europe’s self-image of itself as superior and the rest of the world as barbaric,” quoting Tsenay Serequeberhan’s assertion that Kant’s beliefs create a “philosophical anthropology” that becomes the “logo-centric articulation of an ahistorical, universal and unchanging essence of man” (Serequeberhan 7, qtd. in Eze 450).

In a post-Kantian, postcolonial world, Eze says, difference and diversity is “the perceived gap in the dynamic relation between objective conditions of truth (things, values, interests, or means-and-ends relations) and subjective cognitive predispositions

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8 Eze observes that Kant’s position “on the importance of skin colour not only as encoding but as proof of this codification of rational superiority or inferiority is evident in a comment he made on the subject of the reasoning capacity of a ‘black’ person . . . with the comment: ‘this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid’” (qtd. in Richard Popkin, ‘Hume’s racism.’ The Philosophical Forum, vol. 9, nos. 2-3, Winter-Spring 1977-1978, p.218; Eze, “Colour of Reason” 441).
(concept, idea, formal procedures of explanation and justification)” (On Reason 13). He seeks in experience a “worldly reason” of “greater freedom and liberty, in each culture and all cultures, for all humankind,” arguing that ethics and morality rooted in social and cultural experiences are necessary consequences of freedom; “they flow from the breach in tongue without which freedom neither exists nor makes epistemological sense” (13). Calling for a break from the traditional philosophical notion of rationality as “something you could abstractly derive from outside of social or everyday experience” (10), he pursues instead a “deeper epistemic and moral significance of these various distinctions themselves” that he believes are “best grasped by inquiries into the spontaneous and reflective origins of thought in ordinary experience” (10). In my examination of South African theatrical productions in the following chapters, I explore this idea of the “breach in tongue” when engaging with Deleuze’s concept of minor language where he talks of the “AND . . . AND . . . AND, stammering . . . which must be broken, each in its own way, to introduce this creative AND” (Dialogues II 59).

Ramose believes that liberation from what he sees as the “overwhelming one-sidedness of the history of Western philosophy,” is only achievable through an “intercultural philosophy.” This saturated insight in which “human experience is time and space bound,” he contends, allows for dialogue between similar experiences “clothed and coloured by different experiences,” without the “dissolution of one experience into another” (7). Eze is similarly invested in diversity as a “necessary condition of thinking in general” (On Reason 22). He derives his ideas from “an Afro-modern postcolonial vernacular tradition, where philosophy is best understood as an evolving critique of abstractions common in one’s society” (12) in order “to reason with purpose: passive,
introspective, contemplative, or active” (20). Without thought, he argues, “there will be nothing to call experience of mind, will, things, values, ideas or the world” (20). In echoes of Ndebele’s similar search, he looks to the recovery of the ordinary and philosophy in the languages of history and in society to create a new approach. For Eze, reasoning is very ordinary because it “requires the individual to engage in the processes of subsuming diversity and difference under actual and possible unities of general experience” (20). He believes “reason grows from experience”; it does not precede experience, thus new forms of reason have to be developed within “the context of our lived world which incudes our ethics and our politics” (Eze 9, qtd. in Janz, “Reason and Rationality” 304), which is a position that speaks to Deleuze’s immanent notion of becoming and relational movement along lines of dynamic change, discussed earlier.

Eze’s concept of reason recognizes there are multiple available forms of reason that “cut across cultural or racial lines” (303) that Janz calls “a new and powerful approach,” productive of “diversity of rationality,” accomplishing “productive dialogue across the borders of forms of reason” (308). What is important to note, Janz says, is that the “debate is about whether the processes of reason are, or must be, the same in all places, or whether they might be shaped by the conditions of a particular place.” He argues the question of rationality should be concerned with “capabilities and properties,” and writes:

Its crudest formulations came at the end of the Enlightenment, when thinkers such as Hume, Kant, and Hegel argued that Africans were not capable of having a philosophical life because they did not possess rationality. It was this conviction that undergirded colonialism. It is seen in incipient form further back than that, when the inhabitants of new lands were compared with children in need of guardians. But in fact, it was worse than that – it was not that they did not yet have a philosophical life, but that it was impossible, apart from some limited forms of mimicry. Nor was it that they did not exhibit reason – the colonial project could not have succeeded to the extent that it did if they believed that Africans could not use the processes of reason, at least some of the
time. Like animals, they could be trained; like computers, they could be programmed. It was that Africans did not, and could not possess rationality.” (301)

Differently put, Mbembe writes bitterly of the colonially conceived “absolute otherness.” What he calls “a signifying identity constructed by the West,” he says, was “that something invented” that, paradoxically, becomes necessary because that something plays a key role, both in the world the West constitutes for itself and in the West’s apologetic concerns and exclusionary and brutal practices towards others” (Postcolony 2).

Deleuze offers an approach that avoids the binaries derived from hegemonic Eurocentric and colonial theories by engaging in philosophical and metaphysical discourses that allow one to recognize and understand the complexities of contemporary cultural, economic, popular/political influences, as well as prevailing concerns of gender, sexuality, ecology and intra-African mobility. Such ethical philosophical perspectives are useful in a transnational and global world when entering contemporary African scholarship, particularly in a field requiring acknowledgement of the indelible legacy of South Africa’s coded past and its current forms of philosophical, political and artistic discourse. The scholars whose ideas are implicated in this discussion argue for a more diverse conversation that listens to and engages communities and beliefs to create a new philosophical thinking, while at the same time recognizing the fact that Western and non-Western philosophical practices share many mutual concepts. At the same time, they contend that Africans regard many metaphysical concepts differently, for instance, in their notions of rationalism, causality and spirituality.
Mudimbe similarly cautions against a generic Africanness, what he calls “Afrocentricity,” or the generalization of African culture as a totalizing characterization. In *The Idea of Africa*, he says philosophy has been defined by Europe as the epitome of European power against which others would be compared and judged, thus nullifying the African as other, different. “Western interpreters as well as African analysts, have been using categories and conceptual systems that depend on a Western epistemological order,” even in the most Afrocentric descriptions and modes of analysis that “explicitly or implicitly, knowingly or unknowingly, refer to the same order” (xv). The creation of the dichotomy of self and other, he contends, has “beaten many African scholars into this mental framework” (qtd. in Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity* 180), while postcolonial and other theoretical paradigms reduce “complex phenomena of the ‘state and power’ to ‘discourses’ and ‘representations’ forgetting that discourses and representations have materiality” (*The Invention of Africa* 5). Kaphagawani also seeks a more complicated African version of self and history, acknowledging the complexities of forms and types of African philosophy, and conceptualizing multiple strategies of theories in order to contest, deflate and reappropriate the inherited oppression and power of philosophical thought. Inherent in such thinking there is a suggestion of the concept of the “war machine,” which is central to Deleuze’s conceptualization of nomadology and the very antithesis of the Kantian formulation, and that I discuss shortly. Similarly, Mudimbe’s contention that what is important in philosophy is recognition of “the means through which ‘the world is constructed and structured’” (Masolo 179), extends a view analogous to Deleuze’s “articulating of the space humans make for themselves” (Dewsbury and Thrift 105); both conceiving of philosophy as “being primarily a form of
discourse, a system of making representations and explanations of history” (Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity* 179).

4. **A Refrain of Spatial Concepts: A refrain is a “prism, a crystal of space-time”**

Inevitably, theories surface to attempt reading and writing in the postcolonial (and apartheid) era in ways that also reject the inherited binary discourse. However, as the discussion on African philosophy reveals, the tendency is to fall back into oppositional identitarian positions, like theoretical spaces of resistance, or liminal (Bhabha) and alternative (heterotopia) spaces. As Mbembe points out, “most of these counter-discourses are always deeply embedded in the conceptual structures of the West (the arche-writing)” (“A Brief Response to Critics” 148). The reason I turn to Deleuze’s ontology is because he eschews a dualistic and identitarian philosophy, or the application of yet another imposed theoretical framework, and instead offers the conceptual resources to imagine differently about ourselves and spaces than they have allowed previously. Resisting the essentializing “absolute otherness” these African philosophers identify, Deleuze’s central and syncretic notions of the ‘refrain,’ the ‘assemblage’ and his non-hierarchical and non-signifying schema of the ‘rhizome’ are the central concepts through which to explore his approach to being, time and space that are the focus of this study.

Janz believes the refrain is a way to “rethink African philosophy” that has been left “forever at the edge of Western thought” (“The Territory is not the Map” 392), arguing that it is a “new opportunity for philosophers, not to expertly wield yet another tool in a society that has seen too much of tools, and of experts, but to create concepts that deterritorialize existing ways, and reterritorialize” (402). More specifically, Arun Saldanha describes the refrain as “activated through its milieu, that is, through flows of
matter and energy into and out of organisms producing the refrain.” In this sense, he says, milieus are more than an “encounter” or “in between,” but instead, they “pass through and inhabit bodies as much as they surround them” (*Space After Deleuze* 116). Deleuze and Guattari describe the milieu that becomes the scaffold of *A Thousand Plateaus*:

> Every milieu is vibratory, in other words, a block of space-time constituted by the periodic repetition of the component. Thus the living thing has an exterior milieu of materials, an interior milieu of composing elements and composed substances, an intermediary milieu of membranes and limits, and an annexed milieu of energy sources and actions-perceptions. (313)

In this way of thinking, territory is “made of decoded fragments of all kinds, which are borrowed from the milieus but then assume the value of ‘properties,’” going on to create new meaning that infects the refrains (*A Thousand Plateaus* 504). Hence, “the refrain is not simply an account of the construction of existing territory, but also a way of creating new concepts that might have an effect, that might ‘create a people’ in the way an artist needs a people” (Janz, “The Territory is not the Map” 402). Janz’s reading of the process as a complex and invested intertwining of “the people and the earth” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 346) complements Sogolo’s similar assertion that philosophizing is communitarian in nature.

In conceiving their notion of the refrain, Deleuze and Guattari are inspired by Pierre Boulez’s description of the musical refrain - *leitmotiv* or *ritournelle* - as one of fragmentation, association, pattern and repetition. In *Chaosmosis* Guattari writes that,

> . . . like Bakhtin, I would say, the refrain is not based on elements of form, material or ordinary signification, but on the detachment of an existential ‘motif’ (or leitmotiv) which installs itself like an ‘attractor’ within a sensible and signification chaos. The different components conserve their heterogeneity, but are nevertheless captured by a refrain which couples them to the existential Territory of my self. (17)
They contend that “every assemblage, every place or body, is constituted by processes of territorialization and stratification, which in turn are guided and undone by lines,” conceived as rigid or segmentary, supple or molar or lines of flight (Saldanha, *Space After Deleuze* 120-122). Therefore, “[e]very assemblage is basically territorial” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 503); a relationship between forces in “a dynamic process of becoming of components in a state of ongoing organization,” in which “complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities and territories . . . come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning” (Livesay, “Assemblage”18). Put simply, assemblages are a “constellation of singularities and traits” selected from “the milieus” and organized and stratified “in such a way as to converge (consistency) artificially and naturally; an assemblage, in this sense, is a veritable invention” (*A Thousand Plateau* 406).

What makes the concept of Deleuze and Guattari’s assemblage distinctive, Fancy says, is “that the territories created are not simply spaces but express qualities of slowness, viscosity, acceleration and rupture” (“Difference, bodies, desire” 99). As I note in the introduction, Deleuze breaks from the traditional notion of territory as a defined, bounded area of shared knowledge and subjectivities, and instead seeks to produce a deterritorialized subjectivity, “a non-territorialized subjectivity of differentiated identities” (Aurora 10). Describing the dynamic of such a space, Grosz describes territory as “the coming together both of spatiotemporal coordinates (and thus the possibilities of measurement, precise location, concreteness, actuality) and qualities (which are immeasurable, indeterminate, virtual, and open-ended), that is, it is the coupling of a milieu and a rhythm” (*Chaos, Cosmos, Territory, Architecture* 19). In considering
territory as a “mobile and shifting centre that is localizable as a specific point in space and time” (Message, “Territory” 280), and the earth as “the overarching container in which territories continuously form and un-form” (Fancy, “Geoperformativity” 70), Deleuze and Guattari are evading the “restrictive parameters of notions of identity” (71). As Grosz defines it, territoriality is not preconditional, but is “the creation of rymhical or vibrational qualities” she describes as “an effect of erotic intensification” (“Sensation: The Earth, A People, Art” 83). Their concept of the “coupling of a milieu and a rhythm” that come together in their schema of the refrain as a dynamic process of conceiving being, time and space, Grosz says, “is the movement by which the qualities of a specific territory or habitat resonate and return to form it as a delimited space, a space contained or bounded but nonetheless always open to the chaos from which it draws its force” (Chaos 19-20). Grosz’s description illuminates Deleuze and Guattari’s dynamic of the “imperceptible processes” of becoming, where he views the territory as a “place of passage” (A Thousand Plateaus 323) in which there is no “deterritorialization without a special reterritorialization,” and where “no becoming-molecular escapes from a molar formation without molar components accompanying it, forming passages or perceptible landmarks for the imperceptible processes” (303). In other words, they contend that “deterritorialization takes place through immanence,” freeing a “power of the earth [an Autochthon] that follows a maritime component that goes under the sea to reestablish the territory,” (What is Philosophy? 86). All territories open onto an elsewhere, they contend, and the process of reterritorialization is inseparable from the earth, which restores the territories. Fancy points out they conceive of complex processes “of the earth’s many territories, assemblages and multiplicities” bringing forth “events” and evading restrictive
“notions of identity” (Fancy, “Geoperformativity” 70-71), affirming immanence over transcendence, which they consider to be “celestial, vertical” and inscribed by imperial unity “on the always-immanent plane of Nature-thought” (Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy? 89).

They expand their theory of the entwining of “molar” and “molecular” in their conceptualization of striated space (molar) and smooth space (molecular) in which they embody the notions of assemblage, subjectivity, the State, nomadism, becoming, multiplicity, territory and deterritorialization this study examines. The connective processes of folding and unfolding when connected to “lines of flight,” they say, “raises them to the power of an abstract vital line, or draws a plane of consistency” (A Thousand Plateaus 510). Their conceptualization presents “the thought of a self-distributing plane, a space that unfolds itself” that Colebrook says “is the immanent pulsation of life that expresses itself infinitely and that can be affirmed in the thought of life” (“The Space of Man” 199). Thus, Deleuze and Guattari offer what Patton describes as “a critical practice of thought,” which is the creation of new concepts that “contribute to the emergence” of what they call “new earth and new people” (Difference and Repetition 108), which unfolds “an assemblage of connection” (Patton, “What is a Deleuzian Philosophy” 119). Their conceptualization of lines and planes is integral to Deleuze’s concepts of immanent artistic expression, and these notions will become a refrain throughout the following chapters and, in Chapter 2, I explore further the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of geophilosophy and the relational process of sensation as “the zone of indeterminacy between subject and object, the bloc that erupts from the encounter of the one with the other” (Grosz, “Sensation” 84-85).
Janz argues for a place-based approach to philosophy by working with Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of thought as a way to establish “a creative tension,” and so reposition philosophy as “a force for distinction and immanence” instead of “a force for unity and transcendence” (“Philosophy-in-Place” 480). He sees African philosophy as an interesting space in which to rethink dialogue, focusing on “differences between traditions” to make it productive instead of being conditional on “prior reason or an abstract liberal ideal” (481). His argument that a concept’s “‘terroir,’ the ground from which it springs and which gives it its unique character,” gestures toward Eze’s search for thinking “experience of mind, will, things, values, ideas or the world” (On Reason 20). These ideas bring to the South African socio-spatial-political environment – to the South African milieu – a rich nexus of ideas through which it should be possible to imagine immanent tendencies as the flux and flow and variation of all matter (materiality) “as a conveyor of singularities and traits of expression” (A Thousand Plateaus 409), or what Deleuze and Guattari call “the immanent power of corporeality in all matter” (411). Added to which is Guattari’s fragmental notion of “existential refrains” that sees “a multiplicity of ways of keeping time,” leading other rhythms “to crystallise existential assemblages, which they embody and singularise” (Chaosmosis 15). In Deleuze’s approach, multiplicity is not a “pluralized notion of identity,” nor its “abiding identity or principle of sameness over time,” Grosz says, but instead is a mutable collectivity with the “capacity to undergo permutations and transformations, that is, its dimensionality” (“A Thousand Tiny Sexes” 170), corresponding with Mbembe’s notions of collectivity and entanglement described earlier. I expand on these theories of space and time in more depth later in this chapter because
spatial conceptualizations are central to the discussion of the South African milieu in Chapter 2.

Ian Buchanan brings together the concepts of refrain and assemblage in his description of the assemblage as a rhizomatic structure, which articulates the slide of one mode of thought “into oblivion . . . together with the rise to dominance of another,” not as negation or succession, but instead as “co-adaption” (*Deleuzism: A Metacommentary* 118). Unlike the “arboreal” structure of defined and bounded points and positions, the rhizome is made only of linear multiplicities without subject or object, or points or positions, or binary relations. It does not vary its dimensions without changing its own nature and metamorphosing itself in “dimensions, or . . . shifting directions,” without “beginning nor end, but always a middle, through which it pushes and overflows” (*On the Line* 47). Deleuze and Guattari’s description of the concept of the rhizome bears quoting in full because the rhizomic strategy of lines maps their conceptualization of the body and notion of multiplicity that upturns the “universalist humanist abstraction” decried by Soyinka.

Unlike the tree, the rhizome is not an object of reproduction: neither external reproduction like the image-tree, nor internal reproduction like the tree-structure. The rhizome is an anti-genealogy. It is a short-term memory, or an anti-memory. The rhizome proceeds by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, stitching. Unlike graphics, drawing, or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome refers to a map that must be produced or constructed, is always detachable, connectable, reversible, and modifiable, with multiple entrances and exits, with its lines of flight. (48-49)

Together, these concepts create an ontology that is a protean and multi-layered process that has been described as a “leakage of escape” or “translation” (Eloff), which anticipates a process of becoming in the continual production of difference; a concept adopted by decolonial geographers, for instance Kobayashi and Peake (discussed in
Chapter 2), and South African theatre theorist Anton Krueger (Chapter 3). Grosz says the rhizomatic process eschews the oppositional, “linguistic/literary/semiological models” (“A Thousand Tiny Sexes” 173) to challenge the privileging of the subject so ingrained “in regimes of oppression and social subordination,” which, as I have already noted, is indelibly ingrained in the case of South Africa. Not by ignoring the binarized thinking that generates them, she says, but instead by developing new systems of inter-relational processes working together that are no longer based on the “privileged or causal terms” of the linear, ordered, arboreal structure (169). The Deleuze-Guattarian project is to decentre and dismantle “the dualisms we had no wish to construct but through which we pass” (A Thousand Plateaus 20); not through reproduction, but by “creating Deleuze’s possibility of other” through connecting, mapping and “experimentation” in an immanent process “where things are produced by forces operating from within” (Grosz, “A Thousand Tiny Sexes” 174). Thus, these refrains of concepts – the refrain, the assemblage and the rhizome – become the lines of investigation of body, space and time that follow.

5. An Assemblage of Body, Space and Time

Bignall sees in Deleuze’s discursive process an awakening to the capacity of the body for self-awareness toward developing an understanding of oneself and others to “form compatible relations” (“Affective Assemblages” 85). Deleuze views the process as a “path of mutation precipitated through the actualization of connections among bodies that were previously only implicit (or ‘virtual’) that releases new powers in the capacities of

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9 Where, as Elizabeth Grosz puts it, “Becoming is the operation of self-differentiation” (“Becoming of Un-Becoming” 4), and difference is a “methodology of life, and indeed of the universe itself” (6).
those bodies to act and respond” (Lorraine 147), advancing a dynamic process of continual production that entails the “univocity of being,” with “the sensible and the intelligible” working together to becoming minor (Adkin, *A Critical Introduction* location 70). Univocity does not imply grouping, subordinating, or opposing multiplicities, but rather is the expression and “recurrence of difference” (Foucault, “Theatricum Philosophicum” 230), which is a powerful concept to bring to Mbembe’s postcolony of “proliferation and multiplicity” and intersecting, entwined time and space considered earlier.

As discussed in the introduction, Deleuze and Guattari construe a multiplicity as “neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 8). Michel Foucault contends the paradox of Deleuze’s concept of univocity is that all entities are individually composed of the same conceptual elements and expressed in the same way; thus, not being reduced to categories or by their sameness, they avoid being reduced to “the domination of identity” or “the law of the same.” In his reading of Deleuze’s development of this concept in *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*, Foucault notes:

The univocity of being, its singleness of expression, is paradoxically the principal condition which permits difference to escape the domination of identity, which frees it from the law of the Same as a simple opposition within conceptual elements. Being can express itself in the same way, because difference is no longer submitted to the prior reduction of categories; because it is not distributed inside a diversity that can always be perceived; because it is not organized in a conceptual hierarchy of species and genus. Being is that which is always said of difference, it is the *Recurrence* of difference. ("Theatrum Philosophicum" 234)
This affirmative process of the “power of self-movement or self-organization” is not the nullification or stripping of all identity or subjectification, but rather rejection of a dominant imposed subjectivity, thereby avoiding “anchoring life in a transcendent principle” in pursuit of “purely immanent principles” in a process of intensity and multiplicity of becoming (Adkin location 70-80). Saldanha explains that “what univocity means for thinking space is that every being posits itself in the same way, utterly contingently and singularly” (Space After Deleuze 29).

In contrast to the traditional Western notion of discontinuity of matter and form as “ontologically different,” these multiplicities and temporary alliances, Deleuze and Guattari argue, “do not represent the real; they are the real. They constitution without distinction, individual, collective and social reality” (Grosz, “A Thousand Tiny Sexes” 173). As Deleuze insists:

All individuals are in Nature as though on a plane of consistence whose whole figure they form, a plane which is variable at each moment. They affect each other in so far as the relationship which constitutes each one forms a degree of power, a capacity to be affected. Everything is simply an encounter in the universe, a good or bad encounter. (Dialogues II 59-60)

Deleuze sees such encounter as an event of “immanent and creative production” of non-transcendent, continual constitution in the potent relational movement among bodies along a line of dynamic change (Adkin location 172). As Foucault writes, for Deleuze the pure event is:

a wound – a victory-defeat, death – is always an effect produced entirely by bodies, colliding, mingling or separating, but this effect is never of a corporeal nature; it is the intangible inaccessible battle that turns and repeats itself a thousand times . . . at the limit of dense bodies, an event is incorporeal (a metaphysical surface); on the surface of words and things, an incorporeal event is the meaning of a proposition (its logical dimension); in the thread of discourse, an incorporeal meaning-event is fastened to the verb (the infinite point of the present). (“Theatricum Philosophicum” 221-222)
Thus, each change has its own duration that Deleuze considers “a composition of relations between parts” and a relationship between forces at work in defining it (Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy* 218–9). To understand his conceptualization of the event, Bignall contends, is to recognize the complex confluence and interrelations of his concepts of the immanent creativity of thinking that cause the body to be affected, between parts of the body itself, as well as in “its relations with ‘other bodies in the social milieu’” (“Affective Assemblages” 84), which challenges us “to think differently and think anew” about ourselves and our experience with the world (Stagoll 90–91). These are the pivotal conceptualizations implicated in the minoritarian approach I engage in my exploration of South African theatre in this chapter, and the rest of my study.

6. **Deleuze’s Thinking for Theatre**

Deleuze develops his notion of minor theatre in “One Less Manifesto,” his study of Carmelo Bene’s theatre, which Cull considers a “call to arms for theatre practitioners and audience alike.” She goes on to describe his conceptualization as “the articulation of an ethico-aesthetic problem, and the laying out of an imperative yet experimental theatrical program that constitutes one potential course of action in retaliation” to the theatre of mimesis and representation (Introduction, *Deleuze and Performance* 5). Deleuze argues minor literature and minor language are always political, always connected to the community, yet always constructed within the major literature or language. He derives from this idea a minor-theatre that is a theatre built on the framework of traditional theatre, but which subverts it to connect to the political struggle of its community. Not as representation, mimesis, or opposition, but rather as an immanent production, a process of storytelling that follows the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of “deterritorialization of
language, the connection of the individual to political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation,” creating a concentrated space of political engagement in the individual? (Toward a Minor Literature 18).

Deleuze’s theatre is an immanent theatre of repetition. His concept of repetition is repetition not through reproduction or tracing of the “same Self” as a “form of identity” (Difference and Repetition 56). Rather, he articulates, “Re-petition opposes re-presentation . . . [and] is the formless being of all differences, the formless power of the ground which carries every object to that extreme ‘form’ in which its representation comes undone” (57), in which each difference becomes an element, or “ultimate unity” in a series of variable relationships “constituting other series devoid of centre and convergence” (56). Fancy advances that “the movement and force inherent within Deleuze’s ‘dramatization’ be understood to permit or indeed perform the incarnation of Ideas out of the spatio-temporal relations that he suggests constitute them.” In other words, Deleuze suggests “an affirming and immanent performativity can be understood to be integral to the genesis of subject, thought, representation and even to ontology itself” (“A Sacred Affirmation” 75). Simon O’Sullivan sees Deleuze as offering a role for art that goes beyond the representational to open up the molecular by activating and transforming the aesthetic. In this immanent conceptualization then, he says, art in its “ritualistic sense, might be said to reconnect us with the world, opening us up to the non-human universe that we are part of but typically estranged from” (Art Encounters 50). The guiding notion for Deleuze’s immanent thought, his insistence on a processual creative and responsive ontology that privileges affect and becoming, and his rejection of mimesis or the representational theatre he maintains perpetuates dominant systems and
divests the spectator of power, is an ontology, I suggest, through which to think South African theatre.

The notion that immanence draws on layers of stories and challenges fixed subjectivities is germane for this study of a place where spaces and subjectivities have been physically, psychologically and politically contained and constructed along racialized lines, and resistance has been polarized into a war of resistance. With the end of apartheid and first democratic elections, theatremakers have had to face the shifting ground in South Africa brought about by political change, new government cultural policies that have affected performance spaces and practices, as well as economic realities that affect theatremakers and audiences alike. Similarly, with the removal of apartheid as the antagonist, playwrights and other creative artists are faced with new complexities and ambiguities. As Johann van Heerden puts it: “they suddenly found themselves like a boxer in the ring without an opponent” (93). In addition, he says, removal of years of entrenched cultural differences makes theatre available to more diverse audiences. I investigate these theatre practices and spatialities, as well as examine African concepts of ritual, space and community through Deleuze’s spatial ontology of the minor in order to illustrate how theatre’s spatial processes have the potential to explore people's experiences and to reflect them in creative and artistic productions. In Chapter 3, I engage South Africa’s rich theatre histories, and identify and articulate key modalities through which to examine the space of theatrical performance as potentially a dynamic space of intersection with South Africa’s storied landscape.

For instance, in the South African context, co-artistic director Mark Fleishman describes Magnet Theatre’s performance practice in terms that implicate these Deleuzian
notions. He suggests Magnet’s practice “might be understood as quite consciously making a space for ideas or generating a particular way of thinking, both about itself as performance and about aspects of the world beyond the theatre.” What is going on, he says, is “a multitude of individual moments and the flow of our processes . . . a way of thinking the world and the work” (“Making Space for Ideas “55). Magnet has been engaged in the “playing phenomena” for thirty years, and is particularly invested in the incorporation of the body in performance as a theatre practice that enacts “bringing something into being in the world through doing and making.” Its process of “concepts, ideas and speculative projection that might change attitudes and beliefs,” he sees as a “project of active and creative citizenship in a transitional social context” (55-56).

Advancing similar processes of engagement, Hauptfleisch argues that in their practice of viewing the distinctions between African and Western theatre “as a set of binary opposites,” theatre studies have tended to overlook the “diversity of cultures, peoples and language on the continent” (Foreword, Trends in Twenty First Century African Theatre and Performance 11). If such binaries exist, he suggests thinking of them instead as “linked points on a continuum of meaning” (13). In his Foreword to Kene Igweonu’s study of emerging trends in African theatre by a Performance Working Group of the International Federation of Theatre Research (2016), Hauptfleisch suggests the difference lies “not in the elements, events, theories or methods themselves, but rather in the culturally shaped and value-driven interpretations of such particular issues and the institutions and systems that have been created to drive and maintain them” (14). Awo Mana Ashiedu echoes the need to re-examine how we study theatre, calling for “indigenous theorising and valorisation of contemporary theatre practices in African
terms with reference to African culture,” drawing on traditional modes of storytelling entwined with Western theatre influences (367). By engaging these concepts, as well as surveying South African theatrical productions, I implicate the Deleuzian conceptualizations of bodies, movement and events, which turns to Deleuze’s notion of desire, influenced by Baruch Spinoza.

A foundational influence on Deleuze’s notion of becoming is Spinoza’s concept of *conatus*, which Genevieve Lloyd describes as “the striving or endeavour to persist in being, which he equates with the actual essence of a thing” (74). Spinoza’s view holds “freedom as the coming into possession of our ‘power of acting . . . determined by adequate ideas from which active affects follow’” (Deleuze, *Spinoza: A Practical Philosophy* 70-71, qtd. in Lloyd 99). In other words, “the more the mind . . . has adequate ideas, the more it is active” (Lloyd 73). The desires that arise from this activity, from reason, Spinoza considers “are our very essence,” and “arise in us ‘insofar as we act,’” and that “[t]he desires that arise in the mind from reason, arise from a joy . . . which relate to what we know to be most important in life” (99). The Spinozean idea of “the power of acting,” of desires arising from activity of the mind because they are related to “what we know to be most important in life,” rather than from dogmatism or judgement (99), underlies Deleuze’s ontology. This notion of the power of acting is an emancipating one for a country with a brake on its capacity to develop, referred to by Pather, and adds an affirmative and urgent new dynamic to the debate on reason that Eze so powerfully challenges, explored earlier. Unlike the psychoanalytic notion of desire as *lack* in the urge for the “self-identical” or “hidden depth underneath a manifest surface,” for Deleuze and Guattari desire is the *affirmative* process of producing ever-new alignments, linkages
and connections to other objects and the outside; “connections” and “interrelations that are never hidden” (Grosz, *A Thousand Tiny Sexes* 173). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they say it “has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come” (4).

Braidotti extends this idea, advancing that focusing on material-cultural processes rather than binaries “allows us to better interrogate the boundaries between them. This results in emphasising an ethics of knowledge that reflects and respects complexity and also renews the practice of critical reflexivity” (*The Posthuman* 158). In her proposition, the material, including human embodiment, “is intelligent and self-organizing . . . not dialectically opposed to culture, nor to technical mediation, but continuous with them” (35). The resulting “different scheme of emancipation and a non-dialectical politics of human liberation” (35), she says, sees the posthuman subject as “materialist and vitalist, embodied and embedded” (51). Braidotti reflects Deleuze and Guattari’s ethical way of rethinking relations between the mainstream and the margins, between dominant and subordinated groups, oppressor and oppressed, self and other, as well as between and within subjects. Similarly, Grosz observes that Deleuze and Guattari in “no way privilege the human, autonomous sovereign subject, or the independent other, and the bonds of communication and representation between them” (*A Thousand Tiny Sexes* 172). As discussed earlier, Deleuze, drawing on Spinoza, believes that “ethics is conceived of as the capacity for action and passion. Activity and passivity, good and bad refer to the ability to increase or decrease one’s capacities and strengths and abilities” (172). Deleuze and Guattari’s is no abstract system of moral rules and obligations, such as Kantian or Christian morality, nor does it work in opposition to political conceptions, as it does for
instance in Marxist theory. Rather, the notion of ethics they propose rethinks the relations between opposing groups, by “simply describing interrelations and connections without subordinating them to an over-ordering order, system and totality.” In this way of thinking, Grosz points out, Deleuze considers “[e]thics is the sphere of judgements regarding the possibilities and actuality of connections, arrangements, linkages, machines” (172).

Guattari’s ontology of ethico-aesthetic production that explores a new material expression of subjectivity, I suggest, has the potential to speak directly to Mbembe, Ndebele et al and their search for a “restoration of narrative” of lived experience in post-apartheid South Africa. Instead of encoding of the apartheid subjectivity, Guattari’s concept of subjectivity is “plural and polyphonic,” recognizing “no dominant or determinant instance guiding all other forms according to a univocal causality” (Chaosmosis 1). Writing in his own fraught period of change and resistance in France and Italy in the 1960s and 1970s, he seeks to broaden the traditional concept of subjectivity prompted by the “irruption of subjective factors at the forefront of current events, the massive development of machinic productions of subjectivity, and . . . the recent prominence of ethological and ecological perspectives on human subjectivity” (2). He also responds to the demands for subjective singularity caused by rising nationalistic and “autonomist” demands (3). One can bring this urgency to the South African context where, in a similar search for change, the move is to “return to race as a signifier” (in theatre as well as academia) as opposed to the attempt to get rid of race after the end of apartheid in order to create the rainbow nation, outlined in my introduction (Krueger
interview). In viewing the violent protests and destruction of university properties after the #RhodesMustFall protests, Ndebele writes:

> It remains to be seen whether total erasure is possible. Human memory exists independently of its physical representations. You will find it in the realms of mind and imagination. In my book, total erasure is not possible. But what people do with such commemorative representations, setting them up, removing them, or destroying them, is part of the story of human history that from time to time will occur. (“Burning Memory”)

While the student protests attracted the most awareness, Forsyth, Olutola and Strauss point out that other, “[l]ess prominent articulations of contemporary political desire are also percolating through the diffuse experiences of the African everyday and its cultural registers, as differential access to global capitalism and its promises is folded into modes of subjection – and escape – that are hard to predict” (108). Similarly, such processes of protest, dramatic or ordinary, Hauptfleisch contends, can be defined as a theatrical event that he sees as “forever changing, and shifting, fluid and unpredictable” (“Eventification” 282) to create “a specialized form of societal (social and cultural) event,” which is a reflection of Deleuze’s notion of the event as affected relationships, already explored (281).

As a strategy of critical intervention, then, I suggest Guattari’s formulation of “complexes of subjectivation: multiple exchanges between individual-group-machine” offers the South African search expansive and “diverse possibilities for recomposing their existential corporeality, to get out of their repetitive impasses and, in a certain way to resingularise themselves” (Chaosmosis 7). Not by adopting what Guattari calls “ready-made dimensions of singularity crystallised into structural complexes,” but by creating new modalities in the artists (7). Guattari’s ethico-aesthetic paradigm suggests a “production of subjectivity . . . composed of cognitive references as well as mythical,
ritual and symptomatological references – with which it positions itself in relation to its affects and anguishes, and attempts to manage its inhibitions and drives” (11). And here he proposes a paradigm, I posit, that inheres in all models of subjectivity and particularly speaks to how theatre and theatrical performance might interact with the African philosophies’ search for new currents of thought. He looks at the notion of “a certain type of fragmentation of content that ‘takes possession of the author’ to engender a certain mode of esthetic enunciation” (14), which are fragments in the Bakhtinian sense of sound, gesture, music and “the feeling of a movement in which the whole organism together with the activity and soul of the word are swept along in their concrete unity,” leading to autopoeisis (15).

Mbembe also argues for an ethical ontology to “rethink the human not from the perspective of its mastery of the Creation as we used to, but from the perspective of its finitude and its possible extinction . . . that can only be achieved by overcoming anthropocentrism and humanism, the split between nature and culture” (“Decolonizing the University” 42). It is impossible not to see in this idea resonances of Guattari’s aesthetic enunciation, Braidotti’s “ethics of knowledge” (The Posthuman 158), and Deleuze’s conceptualization of thinking and difference in the acting body enfolding in space and time as a process of rhythms, milieus and events. Colebrook describes Deleuze’s idea of unfolding:

By confronting all those events from which thought emerges, by thinking how there can be perceptions of spaces, we no longer presuppose an infinity to be represented; nor a finite being who constitutes ‘his’ human world (as in phenomenology) but an ‘unlimited finity.’ Each located observer is the opening of a fold, a world folded around its contemplations and rhythms. There are as many spaces or folds as there are styles of perception.” (“The Space of Man” 190)
In the final chapter of *Foucault*, Deleuze implicates Foucault’s idea of folding outside with co-extensive inside to develop his own concept of the fold that enters the discourse of his ontology for theatre.\(^\text{10}\) He employs Foucault’s illustration of the fold as the enfolding of a passenger in the interior of a ship in the fold of the sea, to reflect the complexity of the “modalities of the folds” in which subjectivity is a “topology” of our material selves, bodies, time and memory; in other words, “the effect of the self *on* the self” (O’Sullivan “Fold” 107).

Through his engagement with these ideas, Deleuze points to what O’Sullivan describes as “the possibility of a new kind of harmony, or fold,” through the “concomitant affirmation of difference, contact and communication” between the inside and the outside (108), envisioning “a deterritorialized subjectivity” based on the concepts of difference and transformation (Aurora 10). The imbrication of the four folds he conceives as, “the fold of the body,” the “fold of the relation between forces,” the “fold of knowledge” and the fold of “the outside itself, the ultimate” (Conley, “Foucault + the Fold” 115), producing a philosophy that is not a concept but an event. Thus, his approach to immanence works against the dialectic; it is not some “fundamental identity that unites all things,” nor is it oppositional grouping, subordinating, or opposing multiplicities (Cull, *Theatres of Immanence* 7). Instead, the core of his concept of univocity is the expression and recurrence of difference, in which, he says, Being is not “said in a single and same sense, but that it is said, in a single and same sense, of all its individuating

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\(^\text{10}\) “According to Foucault, heterotopias are spaces that operate to make existing orders legible. By so doing they unsettle received knowledge – i.e. common sense – both revealing and destabilizing the foundation of knowledge” (Beckett et al. 4)
differences or intrinsic modalities.” Thus, “Being is . . . everything of which it is said, but that of which it is said differs: it is said of difference itself” (*Difference and Repetition* 36). In these folds and curves, Deleuze says, the acting, oriented body “produces a life that can think not just its own human world – the space of man – but the sense of space as such” (Colebrook, “The Space of Man” 190).

Similarly, I suggest, in addressing Africa’s “entanglements” with the West, Mbembe brings a philosophy of thought that gestures toward the Deleuzian processes of continual differentiation. His concept of postcolony is that Africa is *not* uniform, but is a period that cannot be reduced to a succession of moments and events, but [is one] in which instances, moments and events are . . . on top of one another, inside one another . . . the postcolony is a period of embedding, a space of proliferation that is not solely disorder, chance and madness, but emerges from a sort of violent gust, with its language, its beauty and ugliness, it ways of summing up the world.” (*Postcolony* 242)

His rich and complex order of thinking in search of the abolition of a centre without the negation of the self is imbued with the Deleuzian ontology I have been exploring. Perhaps in Deleuze’s declaration that “The Idea knows nothing of negation” (*Difference and Repetition* 207), lies an approach to understand Mbembe’s rejection of the negative oppositional African thought of nativism and Afro-radicalism. Mbembe posits:

> It is not that . . . it is impossible to imagine rigorously conceiving the negative or founding a specific body of knowledge that would be the knowledge of non-being, of nothingness (*the ecceity of non-being*)—but because it is not true, as either starting point or conclusion, that Africa is an incomparable monster, a silent shadow and mute place of darkness, amounting to no more than a lacuna. (*Postcolony* 9)

In his essay “On the Postcolony: A Response to Critics,” Mbembe argues for a process of reciprocal dependence that subscribes neither to Africanism, nor to Afro-radicalism. He
sees current postcolonial theory as directed at “describing and explaining the mechanisms of oppression and domination along with finding ways out of such oppression,” with the result that this oppositional discourse reinforces the essentialism inure
ded in capitalist and labour flows and narratives, what he calls “the cul-de-sac of the many discourses on Africa” (156), and fails to provide the “mechanisms to achieve true racial equality and, ultimately, real freedom” (“Passages to Freedom” 18). Faced with such a cul-de-sac, Mbembe calls for “experimenting with the de-constitutive and propitiatory force of language . . . through an attempt to explode language altogether” (“A Response to Critics” 157). His criticism and search for expression is one shared by Mudimbe, Ramose and the other African thinkers explored earlier.

Nicholas Thoburn identifies in Deleuze’s conceptualizations the kind of deeper exploration of located aesthetic, social and political concerns that are demonstrated above by Mbembe’s resistance to the essentialist African nationalism of some theorists. Recognizing that capitalist dynamics are central to Deleuze’s project, Thoburn posits that Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization that “‘life’ has no primary forms or identities but is a perpetual process of configuration and variation,” refers to the coding and decoding of “the entanglement of capitalism” (Thoburn 5-6). Thus, their concept of “the power of minority” aligned with the proletariat specifically engaging “with capitalist relations,” Thoburn says, is “Marx’s figure of the overcoming of capital” (6).

Similarly, pointing out that Deleuze’s idea of minorities lies at the heart of political thought, Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc notes Deleuze’s reflection on his own milieu of political and social upheaval when he posits that “the power of minority, of particularity, finds its figure or its universal consciousness in the proletariat” (A Thousand Plateaus
472). He speaks in terms that might provide a response to Mbembe’s search for a rethinking of the postcolonial quagmire of oppositional thinking, suggesting a materialistic reading of Deleuze’s philosophy as “the collective subject of a revolutionary politics of emancipation” (“Politicising Deleuzian Thought” 119), in which the concept of ‘becoming-minoritarian’ forges “the means of another consciousness and another sensibility” (122). Deleuze’s notion of multiplicities, the “multiplication of minoritarian,” Sibertin-Blanc argues, “creates a re-emergence of a global revolutionary movement” that “extends the horizon of modern thought” (123-124). His hypothesis is that Deleuze’s conceptualization of minoritarian “takes over from class struggle,” redrawing the “demarcating line of the base of Marxist communism and utopian communism” in the process, and insisting on reading the “socioeconomic structure’s forces of rupture” synchronically with the “contradictory dynamics by which the structure sustains these forces within itself” (124).

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri share this reading of the minoritarian as a non-oppositional, dynamic political process, finding in Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the multitude a form of intervention in the formation of “social affect” and “cognitive mechanism” (x) in “the interaction of subjectivities and the composition of singularities in a common world,” (184). They claim, “[w]e need to intervene in the circuits of subjectivity, flee from the apparatuses of control, and construct the bases for autonomous production” (172), arguing Deleuze and Guattari’s approach goes beyond freedom to emancipation, “overturning the phenomenology of nihilism and opening up the multitude’s processes of productivity and creativity that can revolutionize our world and institute a shared common wealth” (xiv). Hardt and Negri’s belief that “we all share in
the common wealth of the material world” (viii) are ideas that speak powerfully to an investigation where the social, political, philosophical and theatrical are inherently vested in the country’s milieu; which brings us to Deleuze’s spatial ontology.

7. Spatial Ontology: “the intuition of the inhuman foldings of space”

Inevitably, Deleuze’s approach to space is political. His conceptualization of striated space (molar) and smooth space (molecular), explored earlier, embodies his notions of the State, becoming, multiplicity, nomadism and the war machine. The process of interaction between these two spaces is the enfolding and unfolding of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The State (stare), or State-form, he defines as “the abstract machine of overcoding” that he projects as striated space, a static, closed in, regularized spatiality, counted in order to be occupied. It is an interior, geopolitical place of capture and of capital that Patton calls the “milieu of interiority” (Deleuze and the Political 113), one of whose fundamental tasks is “to striate the space over which it reigns” (A Thousand Plateaus 385). In other words, striated space is a homogeneous, measured space with boundaries that “freezes movement and disembodies location, leaving no places for dwelling” (Casey, The Fate of Place 307). His description of bounded space is a condition that will be well recognized by South Africans whose movement was encoded and controlled by the incarcerating laws of the colonial and apartheid regimes, the space of non-being or the mute place of darkness that Mbembe evokes.

Striated space is entered, contested, and enfolded by ‘smooth’ (exterior) space, ‘the heterogeneous space of qualitative multiplicity”; a rhizomatic space that “is a fluid space of continuous variation, characterized by a plurality of local directions,” which “gives
priority to the line and treats points simply as relays between successive lines” (Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* 112). Smooth space is the space of the exteriority, the nomadic space, the war machine. Nomadic space is the smooth space of power, a captured entity occupied without being counted that eludes and escapes State capture (Casey, *The Fate of Place* 305). It is the crucial “other space” for Deleuze and Guattari, which rejects the “classical image of thought” that aspires to two universals they call “striated mental space, from the double point of view of Being and the Subject, under the direction of a ‘universal method.’” They advance:

> It is now easy for us to characterize the nomad thought that rejects this image and does things differently. It does not ally itself with a universal thinking subject but, on the contrary, with a singular race; and it does not ground itself in an all-encompassing totality but is on the contrary deployed in a horizonless milieu that is a smooth space, steppe, desert, or sea. (*A Thousand Plateaus* 379)

Thus, nomadic space is a rejection of a hierarchy of beings and limitations, but rather differences and intensities and extensions. It is a space of multiplied narratives of “semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously” in a “collective assemblage of enunciation,” where “sentences space themselves out and disperse, or else jostle together and co-exist” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 22-23). Deleuze draws on modes of nomadic and rhizomatic writing to abandon the stratified, static histories of the State apparatus written to present a unifying point of view, for a history of becoming “outside any fixed order or determined sequence” (347), a notion that Mudimbe seems to be calling for in his search for a more complicated notion of history as the way the world is “constructed and structured,” discussed earlier. For Deleuze, there is no beginning or end, but always a middle between things where things pick up speed; “coming and going rather than starting and finishing,” an intervening *intermezzo* of “and . . . and . . . and”
What is important, he says, is that there are “machinic assemblages of desire and
collective assemblages of enunciation one inside the other and both plugged into an
immense outside that is a multiplicity in any case” (23).

In such an expansive assemblage of space Deleuze sees spaces of encounter where
“the powers that be carry out their experiments.” But, it is also where other forms of lines
arise, “thwarting predictions, tracing out active lines of flight, looking for the
combination of these lines, increasing their speed or slowing it down, creating the plane
of consistence fragment by fragment, with a war-machine which would weigh the
dangers that it encountered at each step” (Dialogues II 146). In other words, he conceives
what O’Sullivan describes as a “form of organization that opposes the dominant State-
form (or simply the major)” (Art Encounters 80). Thus, Patton says the real object of the
“war-machine concept is not war but the conditions of creative mutation and change”
(Deleuze and the Political 110). Complicating the notion of what is at stake in these
processes of emerging relationships, Janz sees the concept of the war machine as
potentially “dangerous and violent affronts to thought that are imposed by the outside” in
complex assemblages of intersection (“The Territory is not the Map” 402).

These conceptualizations of nomadism and the war machine open up Deleuze and
Guattari to accusations of making “anthropological references” and statements. In
response, Patton argues they are adopting a philosophical concept of nomadism in their
attempt to “to define a novel type of abstract machine which exists only in its multiple
variations,” rather than addressing the conditions of “social life” (Deleuze and the
Political 118). While he acknowledges the term war machine might be “betrayed by its
name” (119), Patton suggests that despite its inherent resistance, “it might be preferable
to think of this type of assemblage not as a war-machine but as a machine of metamorphosis . . . one that does not simply support the repetition of the same but rather engenders the production of something altogether different” (110). He similarly rebuts the further criticism by Christopher Miller that by the use of “war-machine” and “smooth space” Deleuze and Guattari “betray a European primitivism and a fascination for the Other” (119). Patton points out Deleuze’s notion of nomadology is rather an attempt to provide another perspective to the “sedentary’s relation with the earth,” which is “mediatized by something else, a property regime, a State apparatus” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 381). The organization of a nomadic group, however, “is not imposed from above by a transcendent command,” but is “immanent to the relations composing them” (Holland, “Nomadism” 188).

It is this philosophical concept of nomadism, Patton contends, that is integral to Deleuze and Guattari’s expression of “smooth space” as “vectors of deterritorialization” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 382, qtd. in Patton 117). Along the same lines, Braidotti also views nomadism as an experimental space that is “neither a rhetorical gesture nor a mere figure of speech, but a political and epistemological necessity for critical theory at the end of this century” (“Toward a New Nomadism” 1436), thus capturing Deleuze’s conceptualization of a space “escaping the codes” (*Desert Islands* 260).

A similarly subversive space of experimentation is Deleuze’s theory of planes, or “planar thought,” which Saldanha argues, develops an “anti-evolutionist, rhizomatic, radically constructionist approach to the history of collective creativity” (*Space After Deleuze* 146). Deleuze and Guattari see these planes as “merging, being transformed, confronting each other, and alternating,” but which must ultimately be “taken apart in
order to relate them to their intervals rather than to one another and in order to create new affects” ([*What is Philosophy?*] 187). Deleuze’s understanding of immanence as *planar*, or *plane of immanence* (or plane of consistency), he sees as “a continuum of intensities . . . a combination of fluxes” ([*Dialogues II*] 111) that, Saldanha contends, “allows him to stay clear from grounding thought in a pregiven transcendental subject as Kant does” ([*Space After Deleuze*] 144). If the plane of immanence is the domain of the philosopher, he says, then the *plane of composition* is the corresponding achievement of artists, which is reached “[w]hen an artist succeeds in extracting a consistent affect or sensation from a particular assembling and transformation of materials” (145). In other words, he says, “[b]y materializing the plane of composition in its affective corporeality, art creates a refrain, a territory, a *house* that filters the universe” (145).

Saldanha’s reading of the planar concepts underscores Deleuze and Guattari’s “topological approach to creativity” that envisions “the planes of consistency and of organization as intersecting” (149). The tension between planes is similar to the dynamics of spaces and lines. The plane of *organization*, which Deleuze calls “a kind of design, in the mind of man or in the mind of a god” ([*Dialogues II*] 68), “is always incipient in the creative act” and “attempts to become transcendent, to become actualized as separate representation or law” (Saldanha, [*Deleuze After Space*] 146). Deleuze and Guattari describe the process in [*A Thousand Plateaus*]:

The plane of organization is constantly working away at the plane of consistency, always trying to plug the lines of flight, stop or interrupt the movements of deterritorialization, weight them down, restratefify them, reconstitute forms and subjects in a dimension of depth. Conversely, the plane of consistency is constantly extricating itself from the plane of organization, causing particles to pin off the strata, scrambling forms by dint of speed or slowness, breaking down functions by means of assemblages or microassemblages. (270)
Deleuze contends that the conditions of globalization, social organization and technology, and demand for improved quality of life challenge the nexus of the assemblage of power. This challenge and resistance, he says:

. . . constitutes what can be called a right to desire. It is not surprising that all kinds of minority questions – linguistic, ethnic, regional, about sex, or youth – resurge not only as archaisms, but in up-to-date revolutionary forms which call once more into question in an entirely immanent manner both the global economy of the machine and the assemblages of national States. (Dialogues II 147)

Thus, Deleuze’s question, referred to in the introduction (and that I put to this idea of a new critical practice), asks, “why not think that a new type of revolution is in the course of becoming possible, and that all kinds of mutating, living machines conduct wars, are combined and trace out a plane of consistence which undermines the plane of organization of the World and the States?” (147).

His concepts of the body and the process of becoming, with its relations to being, space and time, brings us to the notion of haecceity, which is another term that will recur throughout the coming chapters. The concept of haecceity falls into the interrelated epistemologies of experience, individuation, and event, and introduces to the discussion a temporal dimension that is distinct from other forms of temporality. More explicitly, Deleuze and Guattari define haecceity as a “mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance” (A Thousand Plateaus 261).11 Simply put, Buchanan says, “it is a non-personal mode of individuation” (A Deleuzian Century? 6).

11 For instance: “a season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have a perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or a subject. They are haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and to be affected” (A Thousand Plateaus 261).
They draw on the OED definition of ‘haecceity’ as “a quality implied in the use of this, as this man; thisness; hereness and nowness; that quality or mode of being in virtue of which a thing is or becomes a definite individual: individuality” (On the Line 115n6). In this way of thinking, their notion is a “mode of individuation,” which extends beyond formed and perceived things (“a person, subject, thing, or substance”), or simple emplacements. It is a space of affects more than properties, in which concrete individuations “have a status of their own and direct the metamorphosis of things and subjects” (A Thousand Plateaus 261), and where there is a spatial sensation of time, the “individuality of a day, a season, a year, a life (regardless of its duration)” (262).

In such a generative smooth space of difference-in-itself, of aspects more than properties, difference is “conceptually prior to the construction of identity categories” as a new method “of creation and escape that can evade political capture and deterritorialize hierarchies” (Cockayne et al 582). Deleuze’s construction of the body as a dynamic encounter or event, where events do not have specific duration and are not divisible, but are boundless, unstratified and deterritorialized, gives rise to the concept of the “plane of consistency” or plane of immanence in a process of connection, continuity and multiplicity. It is a process of connection, he says, where time must be grasped “in two complementary though mutually exclusive fashions.” First as “the living present, in bodies which act and are acted upon,” and second, as “an entity infinitely divisible into past and future, and into the incorporeal effects which result from bodies, their actions and their passions” (Logic of Sense 5). The opposing concepts of time are Chronos, which is the “temporal series of corporeal mixtures,” divisible or measurable time and the single direction series of stable identities, chronological, sequential, quantitative time.
Aion is the time of haecceities, and represents the continuous time of the unlimited past and future; “the temporal series of incorporeal meanings” continually reintroducing becoming events into Chronos (Adkin location 3039). In haecceities, Deleuze and Guattari see immanent encounters and relations that are “the striving of powers to become”; in other words, affirmation of “the affective or material over the formal,” the “production of space” over “its orienting sense.” Such an immanent relational process of bodies acting and interacting, enfolding in past, present and future as a “plane of consistency” (A Thousand Plateaus 260-264), exemplifies Deleuze’s ontology of the continual process of differentiation, apposite for an exploration of the theatrical event immersed in the memories, histories and realities of South Africa’s enshrouded bodies, time and space.

Mbembe argues that African societies are rooted in multiplicities of times, trajectories and rationalities that are particular and sometimes local, evocative of the Deleuzian rhizomic processes of movement, of “retreat and advance,” deterritorialization and reterritorialization and subverting of stable identities, discussed earlier. With Western contact, the societies’ complex temporal lines no longer have a “distinctive historicity” (Postcolony 9), Mbembe says, but become embedded in times and rhythms encoded by European domination upheld by Western notions of rationalism and modernity. Analogous is Deleuze’s non-chronological concept of time that is reflected in his schema of the “three syntheses of time,” or timespace, that James Williams contends is a powerful way to uncover the core of his philosophical thinking, “which is at the heart of his early philosophy” (Gilles Deleuze’s Philosophy of Time 2). Williams offers a useful encapsulation of Deleuze’s more complex engagement with these ideas, developed in
particular in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, which effectuate a shift from the universalist humanist abstraction continuum of “subject, time and determination” that has dominated the eras from Descartes to Kant (80). His philosophy of time “is not about subject – or time as such,” Williams says, but about the philosophical process or a philosophical method and “the consequences it implies for the end of the subject as philosophical foundation of any kind (logical, intuitive, phenomenological)” (80). Deleuze conceives multiple processes that “make beings” (16), where the “subject is fractured,” presupposing “fault lines,” thus denying “priority to either a subject as a philosophical foundation or to a specific form of time independent of prior processes” (80).

The three syntheses of time Deleuze conceptualizes are past, present and future; not as independent temporal periods, but “as dimensions of one another,” where the dimensions “operate on a series of events” (9). He argues, “Only the present exists in time and gathers together or absorbs the past and future. But only the past and future inhere in time and divide each present infinitely” (*Logic of Sense* 5). Williams says that this notion runs counter to the idea of a past that is only represented in forms such as “memories, descriptions, archives and media such as film and photography.” Instead, Deleuze’s interpretation draws on Bergson’s notion that: “This past is pure, in the sense that it does not contain entities open to representation” or subject to fixed foundations (*Philosophy of Time* 12). The future (the third synthesis) also has its “own prior processes and includes the past and the present as dimensions.” It is through this process of actualisation of new dimensions constituted by difference “determined through singularities” that they become “differentiated” to “produce the new,” to produce “pure
difference” (14-15). Deleuze’s synthesis of time envisions an entanglement, or “a many-dimensioned web with many different kinds of processes operating for it and interacting with one another,” where time unfolds; that is, where past and future events meet in the “living present,” rather than remaining separate entities (9). These ideas, I suggest, speak to Mbembe’s multiplicities of times, trajectories and rationalities, and to Ramose’s idea that human experience is space and time bound.

At the core of Deleuze’s philosophy of difference is a reworking of Nietzsche’s concept of the ‘eternal return,’ which Deleuze conceives as an intensive world of differences, “fluctuations or intensities that come back and flow through all their modifications” (Desert Islands 123). For him, the eternal return holds that “nothing escapes the return of difference and there is no transcendent realm of the same” (Williams, Philosophy of Time 115). Not the tired “return of the same,” he says, “but rather the returning itself that constitutes being insofar as it is affirmed of becoming and of that which passes” (Nietzsche and Philosophy 48). Deleuze sees the process as an event, and considers every event as “necessarily novel . . . in itself” (50). Thus, future events are a “passive form of possibilities,” not as an unconscious proposition, but rather as a contemplation where the active mind “is itself operated on by greater retentions and generalities” (Williams, Philosophy of Time 27). While I unpack these ideas of time and event further in Chapter 3, it is useful to note at this juncture the relationality of Deleuze’s concept of event, which corresponds with Vicki Ann Cremona’s articulation of “theatrical events” as “playing phenomena,” extending “beyond the margins of theatre” through their “position in the theatrical, cultural and social world at large” (“In Search of the Theatrical Event” 29). The basis of the theatrical event, she suggests, is “the
encounter between different participants, where the boundaries between performer and spectator are in a state of flux” (29) in a dynamic process of engagement and involvement toward the creation of a “work of art” (30). This confluence suggests a postapartheid approach toward philosophy and theatre for this study of South African theatrical productions and spaces, not by application of philosophical ideas, but by engaging their process of thought in the encounter. Deleuze’s spatial-temporal concepts, for example, lines and planes, nomadology, syntheses of time and the eternal, will recur as a refrain in the following chapter that focuses on the South African milieu and the space of South African theatre, where I expand on, and engage with, these theories.

8. Deleuze and the Postcolonial

I argue, the Deleuzo-Guattarian ontology brings an ethico-aesthetic approach to contemporary discourse on decolonization, which, as I referred to earlier, is a contentious field of study. Therefore, I also am aware of potential resistance to my argument for a Deleuzian ontology for a South African study, which might share the criticism of Deleuze by some feminist theorists of his concepts for feminism, asking whether there is risk of once more of appropriating the struggle for “survival and self-definition of women,” and here I would add, postcolonial subjects. Or, as others contend, “taking back from women those as yet unterritorialized spaces where her desire might come into being?” (Irigaray, This Sex which is not One 140-41, qtd. in Grosz, “A Thousand Tiny Sexes” 168). Grosz’s response to these feminist critics, I suggest, provides an appropriate argument for any potential criticism of Deleuze for this study. She suggests there are elements of the rhizomatic concept that “may provide a powerful ally and theoretical resource for feminist [or postcolonial] challenges to the domination of philosophical paradigms,
methods and presumptions that have governed the history of Western thought” and have legislated the erasure of women’s contributions in all spheres of “cultural, sexual and theoretical life” (169). Implicating Deleuze in her exploration of body, desire and ethics, Grosz suggests, offers possible “conjunctions and interactions,” as well as “possible points of disjunction, of disruption, of mutual questioning, that may prove as fruitful as any set of alignments or a coalition of interests” (172). Similarly, Braidotti says that feminist theory argues for a “new vision of subjectivity” against a monolithic essence by recognizing the body as “the complex interplay of highly constructed social and symbolic forces” invested in Deleuze’s notion of “the activity of thinking differently” as a theoretical process (“Toward a New Nomadism” 1418). She argues that Deleuze’s proposition is a political process that takes into account exclusion and marginality and offers a way of reaching those who are “exploited and excluded” (1419). For Deleuze, Braidotti says, “thought is made of sense and value: it is the force, or level of intensity, that fixes the value of an idea, not its adequation to a pre-established normative model” (1420). To those who contend his way of thinking is a generalized sense of “becoming” that undermines the feminists’ redefinition of the female subject, she responds, “one cannot deconstruct a subjectivity one has never been fully granted control over; one cannot diffuse a sexuality that has historically been defined as dark and mysterious” (1423), which is an argument that would be sympathetically recognized by South Africans defined by Manichean construction. Thus, she contends, the rhizomatic mode “as a thinking process” is crucial to “bridging the dualism that is one of the marks of the phallo-logocentric mode” (1430).
In *Deleuze and the Postcolonial*, an edited collection of essays, Bignall and Patton identify the criticism some postcolonial critics level at Deleuze’s philosophy as it relates to postcolonialism, particularly for his lack of “explicit engagement with the body of postcolonial thought and with colonialism as a problematic site of analysis” (1), as well as “indifference to the real historical experiences of colonized peoples and their struggles for justice” (2) or with their experiences of resistance. His response to colonisation, such critics argue, is one of “cultivated or ‘interested’ disinterest; rather than enabling the authentic expression of the subjective agency of formerly colonized peoples.” Thus, they say, his concepts are perceived “to contribute to the demolition of consistent expression of selfhood and structures of common identification” (2). Of note, Spivak accuses Deleuzian thought of ignoring the real “experience of the colonial or postcolonial subject,” and Christopher Miller claims the concepts of “nomad and becoming minoritarian” make Deleuze and Guattari “part of a ‘politics of disappearance of local or indigenous knowledge systems’” (Wuthnow 5, qtd. in Pisters 202). Their fear is that the concept of “‘becoming-minoritarian’ might lead to a literal becoming-imperceptible, a condition too familiar for minorities of all sorts, and something they would like to overcome” (202), particularly, as I point out earlier, in postapartheid South Africa. Bignall and Patton make a vigorous argument in favour of Deleuze for postcolonial discourse by countering that Deleuzian scholarship offers “a form of active engagement” to bring about transformation (8). In Spivak’s “influential” and “scathing” criticism they see a “stratified set of assumptions and understandings” or a “doxa” that tends to “take his approach as naturally complicit with the sort of Western epistemological and cultural imperialism that postcolonial philosophy commonly takes as its focus of critique” (8).
Thus, Bignall and Patton argue these critics use Deleuze’s ideas in a reductive way that fails to consider their full import or the way in which Deleuze uses them (7).

Many other scholars also consider their criticisms misguided, pointing to specific texts and views in different works by Deleuze (notably in *Desert Islands*, *Two Regimes of Madness* and *Negotiations*). For instance, to those who argue Deleuze’s philosophy and abstract notions lack political accountability, Patricia Pisters counters that Deleuze and Guattari indeed address political issues, and she specifically refers to Deleuze’s commentary on the emptying of the Palestinians from Arab lands (in “Stones” and “The Indians of Palestine”). Similarly, in their introduction, Bignall and Patton point to his interview with Elias Sanbar on the inauguration of the Arab journal, *La Revue d’Etudes Palestiniennes*, where Deleuze applauds the political expression in writing by Palestinians about Palestinian problems, and by extension the Arab world, which he sees as mobilizing “a specifically Arab literacy, historical or sociological ‘corpus’ which is very rich and little known,” thereby allowing an expression of “a new consciousness. A state which allows them to speak in a new way: that is equal not defensive.” Referring to the journal’s manifesto, “we are ‘a people like others,’” Deleuze observes it is a “cry whose meaning is multiple,” a multiplicity of possibilities (“The Indians of Palestine” 29). As Sibertin-Blanc notes, Deleuze sees the idea of a new language in a major or dominant language as an “immanent politicising of its enunciation” (“Politicising Deleuzian Thought” 121), thus “substituting a relationship of co-constitution and co-production of historical reality” through processes of social and desiring formations of exchanges of internal and external relations (*State and Politics* 22).
Bignall and Patton aim to unsettle the *doxa* they identify by thinking and engaging with the field of postcolonialism and Deleuze more broadly. In their introduction to *Deleuze and the Postcolonial*, they argue that “Deleuze’s work is so rich and varied; it traverses various terrains of engagement and shifts form and focus at various stages in his intellectual and political development” (6). These arguments, as well as Grosz’s interpretation of Deleuze for a feminist reading, together with Cull’s engagement with his philosophy of thought and immanence for theatre, addressed earlier, demonstrate the potentiality of his work. Bignall and Patton identify Deleuze’s “method of thought as creative assemblage, which ‘opens up the way to a general logic,’” and needs to be employed in a way that is consistent with his way of doing philosophy, where there is no closure, no systematic “overall argumentative or narrative structure” (Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness* 177, qtd. in Bignall and Patton 6). Rather, they see in Deleuze’s thinking constant movement and discontinuity, shifting from one set of problems to another, engaging other networks in processes of affecting “the identity of the concepts themselves” (7). Such a practice, they suggest, produces a “mutual and creative process of becoming because the participants have something in common – a mutual concern, a mutual interest, a mutual antagonism or conflict of opinion – that draws them together, causing them to combine and enter into discussion” (8-9). In this way of thinking of the encounter of Deleuze with the postcolonial, then, Bignall and Patton argue that Deleuze offers “lines of escape from forms of capture and containment,” as well as ways in which “these lines of escape might come together, mutually reinforcing one another” (9). In particular, Patton suggests, Deleuze’s thinking about events and the role of language
offers a useful approach to this conversation, and I advance his ideas on language further when I explore the concept of minor literature in Chapter 2.

Deleuze’s ontology of thought eschews rigid concepts and “a stultifying image of thought that interrupts and blocks the creative flow of the new that he insists is the task of philosophy” (9). Rather, it is a refrain of “‘conceptual politics’ of resistance and liberation, which responds to the problem of conceptual capture by constructing ‘intellectually mobile concepts’” (Negotiations 122). Such an assemblage of active thinking delivers an affirmative mode of thought I see as a paradigm for encountering African aesthetics, whose philosophy Mbembe says, comes from “a tradition in which ‘to think’ (penser) is the same as ‘to weigh’ (peser) and ‘to expose.’ To think critically is to work with the fault lines, to feel the chaotic touch of our senses, to bring the compositional logics of our world to language” (“The Value of Africa’s Aesthetics”). It is in the act of production – and here he refers to art, literature, music and dance – that he sees the “sensory experience of our lives” that “objective knowledge” has failed to capture. In these moments of intensity that are never stable, he argues:

The language of these genres communicates how ordinary people laugh and weep, work, play, pray, bless, love and curse, make a space to stand forth and walk, fall and die. Literature, and music in particular, are also practices of desecration and profanation. Each in its own way involves a paradoxical and at times risky play with limits – both the limits set by moral or political orders and those that shape language and style, thought and meaning. (“Preface to African edition,” Postcolony xvi)

Can we look to African literature, what Mbembe calls “the quiet force of African aesthetic practices” (xvi), then, joining with Deleuze’s minoritarian ontology to allow for a similar inside/outside framework informed by the histories and memories of the local in a transnational world of ongoing movement, interconnectedness, deterritorialization and
dislocation between boundaries and networks? Which returns me to my exploration of Deleuze’s minoritarian as intervention in the critical examination of the South African theatre’s space. In Chapter 2, the ideas explored earlier will re-emerge, particularly by engaging with two postapartheid plays. Rehane Abrahams’s *What the Water Gave Me*, for the buried histories of South Africa’s Malaysian slave past and their inheritors’ contemporary milieu to capture their personal stories. Jane Taylor and William Kentridge’s production of *Ubu and the Truth Commission* created in collaboration with the Handspring Puppet Theatre, where shifting boundaries penetrate spaces of desire and peripheries of possibility. The plays’ affective manifestation of institutionalized violence, dislocated voices, translations and bodies gesture to Deleuze’s idea of "becoming-minor," evoking a theatre language of emergence and creating a space of immanence.
CHAPTER 2

Spatialities, Assemblages: South African Theatre’s Milieu - The Case of What the Water Gave Me and Ubu and the Truth Commission

Between the cries of physical pain and the songs of metaphysical suffering, how is one to trace out one’s narrow, Stoical way, which consists in being worthy of what happens, extracting something gay and loving in what happens, a light, an encounter, an event, a speed, a becoming?

Gilles Deleuze, Dialogues II 66.

1. Introduction

As I outline in the Introduction and Chapter 1, South Africa’s racialized identity – its body – is the site of centuries of historicized colonial and apartheid coding and capture; the location of its signifiers and silences. The country’s indelible histories are reflected in its geographical, social and political spaces, and in its theatre space (and here I mean the stage, the gestural, the dramatic and the diegetic spaces of theatre). In this way of thinking, the South African landscape – its land – resonates in social, political and cultural discourses, revealing complex layers of belonging and alienation. This, then, is the milieu of South African theatre theory and practice. Given the complicated entanglement of space, body and theatre, I argue there is a need for a robust ontological and material practice that recognizes the embeddedness of subjectivity (body) in the historical and geographical strata. The aim of this chapter is to examine the milieu in which theatre is being practiced and created and demonstrate why one cannot look at theatre without thinking about space, using the term ‘space’ in its sense of ‘relational space.’ I lay out how Deleuze’s minoritarian ontology and materiality implicates body, space and theatre, and argue that his spatial and theatre philosophies create an ethico-aesthetic-political conceptualization for a South African theatre critique that eschews
traditional oppositional, identitarian, transcendent tendencies. Identitarian practices recapitulate oppositional strategies formed on Western ideologies of colonialism, capitalism and globalisation, thus leaving stories untold and unresolved, divesting spectators of power. Minor theatre, on the other hand, offers an immanent creative responsive thinking through intersecting, contesting and operating on all levels of differences on the body politic. South African theatre has always responded to societal and political conditions, as I discuss in Chapter 3 when I look at South African theatre history and practices. In fact, it was resistance to apartheid that created the dynamic theatre of the apartheid era. I suggest the minoritarian concepts I explore here contribute to divesting further the inherited framework of its oppositional, sometimes polemical, and representational theatrical practice to fulfill the strong urge for theatre making of all kinds and in a variety of spaces in search of theatremakers’ rich knowledge of Africa.

2. Conceptual Architecture: Minoritarian Spatiality

This chapter will extend the introductory phase of my examination of Deleuze’s minoritarian ontology to identify and articulate several recurring conceptual modalities in order to engage with, and investigate, South Africa’s theatrical landscape. I envision this exploration as a conceptual container through which to examine spatial and philosophical concepts that concern space and bodies – particularly striated and encoded bodies – and the entanglement of space, body and time. Deleuze and Guattari’s affirmative notion of the assemblage, with its dynamics of content and enunciation, is a confluence of philosophical and geographical thought that advances a non-hierarchical, relational way of thinking and enunciating (or telling) histories and stories, and escapes the systemic dualities that have not only indelibly fractured the country, but have structured its
traditional epistemic and ontological thinking and practice. Their immanent ontology and concept of geophilosophy envisions a generative way of thinking how “complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities and territories” come together at various times in a dynamic process of becoming (Livesey 18). Following Nietzsche, they view the body in tension as the intellectual body “thinking, sensing, and willing” (Deleuze, “Active and Reactive” 82), which is a potentially dynamic interstice to produce a new critical and political praxis to rethink, reshape and destabilize South Africa’s bounded physical, psychological, social and cultural milieu (*A Thousand Plateaus* 346).

Also constructive for examining a space organized by such dominating architectures is the work of feminist geographers (for instance Al-Hindi, Longhurst, McKittrick, Moss, and Noxolo), who are exploring new non-dualistic, non-essentialist, non-transformative strategies to capture “the multiple, diverse and changing way through which each human embodied subject is formed” (Gibson-Graham 235). Implicated in their approach is a search to rethink geographical knowledge in order to respond to a traditional practice that privileges European/Western political and intellectual thinking along lines that “perpetuate notions of racial difference and, implicitly, or explicitly [as in apartheid], racial hierarchy” (Kobayashi and Peake, “Unnatural Discourse” 226-7). Particularly germane is their examination of the uneven development of colonization, and the strategies of “decolonization” they propose as “a radical challenge to ‘unsettle’ the architecture of privilege” (de Leeuw and Hunt 10). Also productive is the work of feminist theorists, such as Elizabeth Grosz and Rosi Braidotti who regard Deleuze useful as well for developing similar new “unsettling” feminist strategies. Such an interdisciplinary approach, I argue, offers a creative and generative way of thinking and
writing to move beyond the impasse identified by the writers, theatremakers, and academics I investigate in this study.

Along these lines, I continue to turn to Achille Mbembe’s examination of the ‘postcolony’ and Bruce Janz’s work on African philosophy to explore their engagement with spatial issues. As I have explored in Chapter 1, Janz considers African philosophy as “an especially rich site for examining the emergence and development of concepts” (“Free Space in the Academy” 4), and he further offers an ontological and epistemological approach to decolonized space. Philosophy must “not only understand a place and its activated concepts,” he says, “but also push to the edges of understanding in order to create new concepts which can show forth new versions of a place” (“The Geography of African Philosophy” 163). He insists geography has similarly always had to “face up to questions of how particular places relate to those who dwell in them, or have dwelt, or in some cases . . . do not dwell in them” (Philosophy in an African Place 11). Thus, he suggests, platial philosophy “is motivated by the forms of (intellectual and other) life that exist in a place.” His hypothesis is that “the power of attachment, bonding and containing, environmental transformation, and motion” of place and regions is implicated in the same way in ontological and epistemological conceptualizations of space and embodiment. His theorization offers a potent opportunity to think about place as a means to abandon the “metaphysical presumptions” he considers “both Western and most African philosophy finds itself encumbered with” (“The Territory is not the Map” 394).

Two plays produced after the first democratic elections in 1994 offer case studies for the concepts I am exploring. Both illustrate a way to shed the binarized strategies of
apartheid’s oppositional theatre by exploring the complexities and ambiguities of their pasts and presents; not by retelling or representing the stories, but by offering a medium through which the audience “can think,” through which “the testimony can be heard” (Kentrilege, xi). Rehane Abrahams’ *What the Water Gave Me*, which premiered in 2000, turns to the sprawling Indian Ocean for the buried histories of South Africa’s Malaysian slave past and to their inheritors’ contemporary milieu to capture their personal stories. She adopts water as the “fluid melding and remelding of cultural elements” that flows throughout her Malay history with its heritage of slavery, rape and violence, and evokes spaces of wide open land and the flow of river and sea to release her environment’s violated bodies (Jephta, “On Familiar Roads” 171). By implicating the Indian Ocean in her narrative’s space of liminality, Abrahams offers what Isabel Hofmeyr calls “a more complex narrative of slavery than the middle passage of the Atlantic Ocean,” toward a more blurred boundary. Hofmeyr contends that in the Indian Ocean, “race and slavery were not associated in any marked form,” instead complicating “binaries, moving us away from the simplicities of the resistant local and the dominating global and toward a historically deep archive of competing universalisms” (“Universalizing the Indian Ocean” 722). The notion of “blurring” offers a similar strategy for unfolding the racial boundaries of various peoples in South Africa, not only the Cape Malay descendants of Javanese slaves that Abrahams explores in her play. A variety of other groups who are of “slave-European-African-Khoi-San mixed ancestry and culture” refer to themselves as “Brown and Coloured” (Robins 133) and, as Pumla Dineo Gqola points out, all share the same experience of being “inscribed in terms of ‘miscegenation’ and ‘racial mixing,’ and of being marginalized (21). They too share complex pasts and are beginning to explore
their rich histories. I propose Abrahams’ theatre space speaks to the Deleuzian smooth space of multiplicity, immanence and deterritorialization – in other words, the unconstructed spaces that challenge the striated spaces of State and power in order to tell their stories.

The other play is Jane Taylor, William Kentridge and the Handspring Puppet Company’s production of *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1998). The intent of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), created in the spirit of reconciliation after the end of apartheid, was to tell stories in search of amnesty, allow victims the opportunity to hear these stories, and for relatives to find out what had happened to those whom they had lost. It was a process intended to re-empower victims by bringing them face to face with what happened in order to mourn and heal. While the process has been much admired (and emulated) internationally, in South Africa it is the subject of major dispute. Ingrid de Kok succinctly articulates the debate, writing: “For some it represents the cornerstone of the new dispensation, for others, it is the fatal compromise” (Cracked Heirlooms” 57). The question remains whether processes such as the TRC perpetuate cultural and social amnesia by continuing to ground the “acts of a limited group of perpetrators only?” Or, does it “purge the perpetrators and restore the dignity of the victims?” (59). I suggest Taylor and Kentridge’s approach to these stories differs both from the TRC, which itself was a form of theatre in the hearings themselves and their broadcast on national radio, as well as from other conventional theatrical productions based on the testimonies. Kentridge suggests that while other styles of theatre “telling” the testimonies have had an impact on their audiences, they are a “reperformance” of “‘real’ people’s performance of the evidence” (xiii). Rather than representing, Taylor
says, *Ubu* illustrates the consequences of UBU’s acts, shifting the focus of the victim’s stories to the perpetrator and the system he enforces (Taylor iv). In their approach, voices are disrupted, entangled and multi-layered; an idea that is particularly pertinent to Deleuze’s call for a new language that shapes a new consciousness. The production’s assemblage of actors, puppets, documentary film clips and drawings imbricates the true stories being played out in public by perpetrators and victims of apartheid at the TRC, wrenching the stories from its formal structure and challenging assumptions and appearances. Here, the stories are told not in an oppositional sense, but through a process of production, an embodiment that suggests Deleuze’s immanence, and what Laura Cull calls Antonin Artaud’s “destratisfied voice” (“How Do You Make a Theatre Without Organs” 249).

2.1 Chapter Architecture

The architecture of this chapter will be, first, to briefly review South Africa’s social, political and cultural landscape in order to understand the milieu in which theatre is being created and practised. Second, to enter the spatial discussion, I problematize the terms space, place and landscape, and introduce the seminal spatial concepts Deleuze offers this study. I draw on Edward Casey and feminist geographers to engage with Deleuze’s conceptualization of the interweaving issues of body, space and theatre in “the ebb and flow of life” (Janz , “The Territory is not the Map” 393). Third, I propose to examine notions of the body in an interactive, generative relationship with its environment in “the processual and metamorphic nature of materiality,” which Cull suggests are the tensions that have shaped the way we think about place in relation to time and space and human
Central to this process of connectivity, its very structure of power, is the assemblage’s plane of expression or enunciation, which organizes the assemblage into semiotic order. Deleuze and Guattari extend these ideas in their conceptualization of geophilosophy that takes spatial philosophy to a more generative way of thinking about how bodies are embedded in space rather than simply contained by space. Geophilosophy advances beyond identitarian grounding of assumed identities and brings a deeper meaning of immanence to the exploration of all forms of intertwined grounding – indigenous and Western. Finally, I demonstrate how Deleuze’s minor ontology brings together his spatial ontology and theatre philosophy, and why I propose Deleuze and Guattari’s ontological and material thought for South African theatre.

Concluding the chapter, as a way of defining Deleuze’s approach to the spatiality of theatre in relation to other similar theories, I contrast it with Joanne Tompkins’ theorization of theatre’s heterotopias, which is her search for “reimagining” spatial aspects of theatre. In this way, I establish why I propose a minor theatre conceptualization for the exploration of South African theatre that follows in Chapters 3 and 4.

3. The South African Landscape: “embedded memories and histories; absences and silences.”

The question of how art can play a role in social-political discourse is, of course, not new. For instance, in his “Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech” made in 1987, just before the fall of apartheid, the novelist J.M Coetzee questions what prevents the South African

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12 The Deleuzo-Guattarian explication of ‘material’ has three principal characteristics: “it is a molecularized matter; it has a relation to forces to be harnessed: and it is defined by the operations of consistency applied to it” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 345).
writer from escaping what he calls “a literature in bondage” (*Doubling the Point* 98-99). In answer, he points to the “deformed and stunted relations between human beings that were created under colonialism and exacerbated under . . . apartheid who have their psychic representation in a deformed and stunted inner life.” It is a condition he regards is caused by “the power of the world his [sic] body lives in to impose itself on him and ultimately on his imagination, which whether he likes it or not, has its residence in his body” (98-99). At the heart of this stuntedness, he argues, is the “failure of love”; not the settlers’ expressed love of the country’s physical beauty, “*the land,*” which Coetzee considers is not love enough, but is the result of the failure of human relations, or the failure to give in to “a wholly human and understandable yearning for fraternity with the people among whom he lives” that comes with “liberty and equality” (97). In a talk at Wits University twenty-one years after apartheid, Mbembe asserts these “old” issues remain, while “new antagonisms emerge” in a collision of what he calls “inchoate, fractured, fragmented” contradictory forces, whose outcome is uncertain. He argues for the need to think differently about “the human” than has been the practice until recently, and to respond to what he sees as a “geological epoch characterized by human-induced massive and accelerated changes to the Earth’s climate, land, oceans and biosphere” that threatens humanity’s very existence (“De-Colonising Knowledge”). Thus, Mbembe gestures toward an ethical reflection that is the crux for a generative new way of thinking in the milieu I am exploring. Expanding on his idea, he writes:

‘humans are part of a very long, deep history that is not simply theirs’; that history is vastly older than the very existence of the human race, which, in fact, is very recent. And they share this deep history with various forms of other living entities and species. Our history is therefore one of entanglement with multiple other species. And this being the case, ‘*the dualistic partitions of minds from bodies, meaning and matter or nature from culture can no longer hold* . . .
the concept of agency and power must be extended to non-human nature and conventional understandings of life must be called into question . . . to be a subject is no longer to act autonomously in front of an objective background, but to share agency with other subjects that have also lost their autonomy.’ (“De-Colonizing Knowledge”)

Both Coetzee and Mbembe recognize the need to think and write about ‘the human’ by avoiding the danger of being trapped in the traditional discourse, which tends to remain inured in the burden of Abdul JanMohamed’s Manichean allegory – the enduring “Western notion of Africa as an evil place bereft of social order, where the darker side of human nature could be played out” – which permits or enables stereotypes to function in both overt and more subtle ways, and in the counter entrapment of oppositional reaction (3).

Sarah Nuttall posits that South Africa has “for a long time, been over-determined by the reality of apartheid,” and contends that the country’s past is rooted deeply in the social, economic, psychological and political geography of people’s lives, creating a milieu that continues to shape its postapartheid space and cultural expression (“City Forms” 731). The strata of its histories formed by the complex interaction between Europe and Africa, with its attendant cartography, universal maps, naming, spatial technologies, juridical and economic frameworks, and colonizing language, is typical of postcolonial histories – in this case exacerbated by apartheid’s claustrophobic laws of exclusion – and creates “an anxious and contested site of the link between language and identity” (Ashcroft et al 179). Thus, when discussing a space that has experienced the uneven development of colonization and apartheid, I suggest it is important to challenge the tendency to think about the postapartheid era as the period after apartheid, a past-apartheid condition, in the way postcolonial is often considered as “no more.” As Sarah
de Leeuw and Sarah Hunt point out, the need is to acknowledge that decolonization – and I would add postapartheid – is “uneven in its geography and history” and is in “its duration, depth and nature different across different spaces and different times” (Watts 145, qtd. in de Leeuw and Hunt 4), echoing Deleuze’s notion of the “complex and invested intertwining of ‘the people and the earth’” (A Thousand Plateaus 346).

Antjie Krog evokes this corporeal and metaphysical sense of the land in South Africa’s social fabric (rural and urban), when she writes in Country of My Skull: “This is my landscape. The marrow of my bones. The plains. The sweeping veld . . . The land belongs to the voices, all the voices of the land. The land belongs to the voices of those who live in it” (210). The rich sense of belonging Krog expresses as a white, Afrikaner woman, contrasts poet and critic Gqola’s perspective as a black woman that evokes the absence of voices, the silences, in her view of the landscape’s fractured nature as a “gendered landscape,” characterized by a “fraught range of silences and disruptions” (7). Their views vividly demonstrate South Africa’s deep-seated history of division.

Reflecting the thrust of this paradoxical sense of belonging and alienation, the South African-born geographer Glen Elder observes that “South African apartheid was a geographical process,” with people moving over spaces and inventing places, writing racial categories “on the landscape in the shape of bounded racialized spaces occupied by racialized subjects.” He argues, such a spatial process was also an exercise in controlling sexual-social relations (“The South African Body Politic” 114). The “phenomenon of

13 Glen Elder “was a pioneer in the application of queer theory to human geography and, inversely, in the insertion of space and spatiality into the study of sexuality.” (Belinda Dobson, “Reconfiguring space, reimagining place” 6).
movement and flow” he reveals was formed by what Mark Fleishman calls the encoding “accretions of slavery, colonialism, apartheid and neo-liberal forms of democracy” (“Cargo: Staging Slavery at the Cape” 8), which, he contends, continues in the present where the “reintegration of South Africa into the global economy” at the end of apartheid has forced new migratory flows across different regions (Performing Migrancy 12).

All of the above observations illuminate how the notion of land as related and intersecting space, place and landscape has a resonance in South African social and political thought, as well as its cultural expression. Inherited tensions continue to resonate in the complexity of the political architecture of postapartheid cities, rural communities and towns, with their manifold political, historical and contemporary geographies of belonging and alienation. Of course, such resonance is true of landscapes everywhere; as Foucault reminds us, “space itself has a history in Western experience and it is not possible to disregard the fatal intersection of time with space” in the hierarchic organizing of space (“Of Other Spaces” 1). Similarly, as observed in Mbembe’s remarks above, and as Janz points out in his study of African philosophy examined in Chapter 1, for the African, place is “the site on which the fundamental tensions of life and thought are played out,” (Philosophy in an African Place 11). What emerges in the years following the abolition of apartheid, though, is the recognition that in South Africa apartheid overcoding and absences have left a landscape where many of its inheritors are asking of themselves, “‘If this is your land, where are your stories?’” (Brown 1). For, as Yvette Hutchison observes, “any claim to belonging in a country is profoundly linked with narrative and storytelling.” She argues that,
Throughout its history, South Africa has been dogged by the issue of belonging, which has profoundly informed claims to various rights: to land, to citizenship and to particular kinds of representation. As apartheid was primarily concerned with defining racial borders, and degrees of belonging and rights, these issues continue to haunt South Africa. ("Embodied Practice." 177)

With this perspective, landscape is envisioned as a connector of all assemblages; its indelible histories as well as its absences and silences, hence it is deeply social as well.

As Njabulo Ndebele and Albie Sachs have done before her, Jennifer Robinson asks whether, in order to transform our thinking about the apartheid legacy, it is possible to "begin to shift our experience and our visions to capture and understand the world of always moving spaces." She queries: what do "spaces of change and dynamism look like?" For instance, could the apartheid city, "a city of division," be thought of as "a place of movement, of change, of crossings?" (Robinson, Blank D7 163).

In other words, the South African landscape clearly reveals territorial spaces carrying out territorialization and deterritorialization in the Deleuzo-Guattarian sense, with the "imperial spatium of the State" juxtaposing, comparing and appropriating the local territories. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, imperial states deterritorialize through transcendence, developing "vertically from on high, according to a celestial component of the earth . . . a celestial Stranger. . . to reterritorialize the earth" (What is Philosophy? 86). It is an image that acutely captures the religious/capitalist underpinning of colonization that continues to stain the South African milieu. Similarly pertinent is their notion of the "political extensio of the city" that "adapts the territory to a geometrical extensiveness that can be continued in commercial circuits," turning "its back on the hinterland," and deterritorializing "through immanence," through the power of the earth, "to reestablish the territory" (86). Histories of the imperial strata of the State and the
tension of resistant power in the city are revealed in any visit to memorials such as the Constitution Hill, Hector Peterson and Apartheid museums in Johannesburg, and the Slave Lodge and wasteland of District Six in Cape Town, as examples. The layers of power and control they record are inherent in the postapartheid milieu, and become a refrain in contemporary parlance. For example, “state capture” has become the term for the political corruption embedded in globalization that threatens the country’s efforts to break from these strata of power. The power dynamics of rural communities, townships and cities, and the issues of land ownership and state power, run as themes in theatrical performance and dramatic production throughout the country’s history, as Loren Kruger establishes in her penetrating genealogy of South African theatre, and David Coplan captures in his seminal study of music in *In Township Tonight*. In his tracing of indigenous musical performance over the period of intersection with colonial land settlement laws and religion, labour migration, urbanization and apartheid, Coplan demonstrates the way that performance style has been influenced by the role performance played in this struggle. He says: “Stylistic development is strongly influenced by participants’ attempts to use performances to articulate their identities, aspirations and interpretations of experience” (27-28). I explore Kruger’s and Coplan’s work in greater detail in Chapter 3 to bring their foregrounding together with the Deleuzian conceptualization of minor theatre.

This, then, is the milieu of South African theatre theory and practice in which to engage Deleuze’s minoritarian ontology. To theorize the present, the contemporary, the now, is to raise the question of how to define and engage the thrust of newness that Robinson et al are seeking. In the face of inherited colonial and liberal democratic
frameworks, and the neo-liberalism and global capitalism that continues unabashed, Mbembe asks how, “especially in Africa,” to account for “the manifold ways in which people inhabit the world and make sense of it – the question of worldliness, the being-in-the-world”? It is a task he finds in the context of writing Africa “compelling, exhilarating, and, most of the time, perplexing” (“Africa in Theory” 656), maintaining the social in Africa was always defined as ‘custom’ and ‘tradition’ – the routine logic of difference (they are not like us; we are not the same) and repetition (they have been and will always remain the same) and the foreclosure of the present as such. In short, the belief that when it comes to Africa, there is, strictly speaking nothing to theorize. (657)

He and other South African writers and artists, then, are already talking about multiple phenomena, and are reflecting such intersecting realities in their poetry, theatre and other writing. As well, practitioners in various other disciplines and contexts also are engaging in complex ways to think about subjectivities in order to challenge the frameworks that have been created by traditional Western practices, and they are illuminating the difficulty of shedding entrenched knowledges in ways which are illustrative for this study. For example, in the discipline of geography, Audrey Kobayashi and Linda Peake observe that despite the best intentions of current scholars to reject “absolutism and nominalism” and the trend to “debunk the Enlightenment, it was during this period that

14 Here I use the term ‘liberal’ in the classical understanding of liberal democracy operating under the principles of laws and constitutions created under the framework of Lockean Western democracy. While liberal democracy advocates universal suffrage, property ownership and limited government authority, the reality for colonized countries is that the transfer to democracy, under this understanding, brings the transfer of structures framed under Western rules, however focused towards notions of freedom and fairness. Ruti Teitel’s analysis of transitional narratives points to what she sees as the tension of “a ‘redemptive,’ ‘liberalizing’ project” that tends toward a narrative in which “The country’s past suffering is somehow reversed, leading to a happy ending of peace and reconciliation” (Teitel, “Liberal Narrative” 252, qtd. in Rothberg location 1826).
some of the most enduring aspects of dominant discourse were developed” (“Unnatural Discourse” 227). Expressly, Mbembe points out, “most of these counter-discourses are always deeply embedded in the conceptual structures of the West (the arche-writing)” (“A Brief Response to Critics” 148).

4. **A Deleuzian Ontological and Materialist Assemblage of Spatial and Theatre Philosophy**

With this awareness, I engage in Mbembe’s call for a “new understanding of ontology, epistemology, ethics and politics” for “overcoming anthropocentrism and humanism, the split between nature and culture,” by employing the assemblage as a conceptual container for a confluence of spatial concepts (“De-Colonising Knowledge”). The Deleuzo-Guattarian spatial ontology of a constant refrain of moving, coding, territorializing and deterritorializing of immanent activity within places, is integral to the minoritarian conceptualization of affirmative and dynamic processes of ‘becoming’ that break from the fixed, prescribed ‘being.’ Deleuze turns toward pre-Socratic notions of nature and physics to conceive heterogeneous individual units rather than material singularities; a concept he explores in *Logic of Sense* and broadens in his ontological reasoning, working with Guattari’s machinic theorization. Thinking, he suggests, is not between subject and object, but rather “takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth” (*What is Philosophy?* 85). Such dynamic and emancipating strategies through which to escape what Deleuze describes as the closed-in regulated State space of overcoding, are notions particularly germane to the South African condition of apartheid geography explored earlier. For example, they bring a nuanced approach to what Gabeba Baderoon, in her study of the Malay slave legacy, refers to as the “charged silence . . . coded trauma” of its fraught history (50), and speak to what Gqola calls South Africa’s
milieu of “complexity, creative inflection, play and newness” (2). In this sense, perhaps, one can think of the assemblage here as Hilde Heynen’s “space as stage” for exploration (described in Chapter 1). For example, in the spirit of the Deleuzian notion of assemblage as “a multiplicity, which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures” (DeLanda, Deleuze: History and Science 6-7).

Such spatial and temporal conceptualization proffers a perfect way of thinking about South Africa’s chronicles of the complex intersection of people moving through and dwelling in the land in various distributions and striations; such as the African people’s historical internal migrations, colonial treks and settlements, slave importation, indentured immigrations, and the movement of labour forces between rural and urban settlements, not to mention the violent removal of Africans from their land become designated as “white only” to be resettled in racially designed striated spaces. Deleuze’s notion of past and future unfolding in the present in an immanent vision of potentiality, suggests a protean approach to map these “layers and moving targets” of a condition that Carol Boyce Davies refers to as “migratory subjectivities” (qtd. in Gqola 2). I attest that his conceptualization affords the political dimensions to ground an ontological dynamic in my investigation of the highly political milieu in which my exploration of theatre takes place; this is where philosophy is implicated in the question of capture and liberation, which includes the theatrical imaginary. Without the ontological model, it is impossible to talk in a new way about liberation.

Janz maintains that philosophy is “not only materially sustained by the institutions of . . . societies,” but is a source of reflection in the many communities, nationalities and
ethnicities, as well as in genders and oral and written languages (Philosophy in an African Place 205). He argues that for philosophy to “think from a place,” it needs to engage in the political world, not in an abstract sense, but through ideas that “are significantly different within their places.” Advancing that philosophy is tied to places and needs to take into account their cultures that have been shaped by other cultures and dialogues, he argues, “politics is about relations.” The question of who gets to speak he sees as “[a] central political issue for any philosophical tradition,” fundamental to which is the question: “Whose voices can be taken as representative, and who can be included in the conversation?” (234-235). Patricia Noxolo reinforces this notion of decentering “the power relations of knowledge,” and in her study of space in relation to literary theory she argues for the importance of broadening the power of theorizing beyond the West to non-Western places as well, not only as “case studies of spatial practice but also centres of generative knowledge” (Noxolo, Raghuram, and Madge 165). In a like manner, Khan et al advance that epistemologies of knowledge production about space are “closely intertwined with ontology of space,” and are also “contextualized in human bodies” (289). They point out that in such an “embedded knowledge,” it is difficult to separate what we know from how we get to know it.” Along the lines of Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of ontological and material practice, Khan et al also bring “a pragmatic frame of reference” to their notion of “a relational epistemology of space.” Invoking Doreen Massey’s observation that “abstract spatial form in itself can guarantee nothing about the social, political or ethical content of the relations which construct that form” (Massey, For Space 101), they argue that “space is an integral part of social processes,” focusing
on “problems and their consequences and practical integration of knowledge” (Khan et al 290).

Following Cull, I suggest the Deleuzo-Guattarian assemblage of geophilosophical concepts, where the body is in an interactive, generative relationship with its environment in “the processual and metamorphic nature of materiality,” can calibrate the tensions that have shaped the way we think about place in relation to time and space and human. In other words, they afford the conceptualization of an unfolding, not of the ideational, but expressly of the politics of the lived social (Cull, Theatres of Immanence 28). When considering these tensions, I bear in mind de Leeuw and Hunt’s charge that decolonization “demands acknowledging multiple ways of knowing and being, especially those of Indigenous peoples and systems,” by “undoing the privileging of non-Indigenous settler ways of knowing above those of Indigenous peoples.” In this way, they say, decolonization “is a more cerebral and reflective effort, a more introspective (to the discipline) call to re-think geographic knowledge, to ask what space is open (or not) in our discipline for Indigenous voices and ways of knowing” (6). Their observations and study urge the importance of critically interrogating existing scholarship by considering the literatures and voices of different Indigenous peoples and communities, and they provide a strong challenge for this discussion. Advancing their ideas further, I look toward Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of nomadology for a move toward what Mbembe considers the “entanglement” of the human “with multiple other species” in a posthuman world (“Decolonizing Knowledge”). Expressly, Braidotti argues nomadic subjects “enact a multilayered consciousness of complexity” (Nomadic Subjects 38) that resonates Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization of nomadology as “multiple narratives like so
many plateaus with variable numbers of dimensions” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 23), thus “opening up new possibilities of life and thought” (*Nomadic Subjects* 29). In such a world, Braidotti suggests, “[b]io-centred posthumanism and non-western neo-humanism can be travelling companions along productive axes of transposition,” aligning “diverse positions along the same access . . . to facilitate the transposition of the respective political affects that activate them,” which she describes as “a musical variation that leaps across scales and compositions to find a pitch or a sharable level of intensity” (“Affirming the Affirmative.” Introduction). In the next section, I expand on the Deleuzian assemblage of dynamic concepts to examine the inherent intertwining of spatial discourse with the individual and social and political. As well, I implicate the spatial theorization of Casey and feminist geographers who also draw on Deleuze in their search for concepts that escape traditional theorization of space and subjectivity.

4.1. Space . . . “the intertwining of ‘people and earth’”

The aforementioned rhythmic processes Braidotti envisions echo the Deleuzo-Guattarian “*melodic landscapes* of deterritorialization and reterritorialization,” noted earlier. Ronald Bogue points out that Deleuze and Guattari discover the “musical aspect of the landscape” in “the process of their theorization of the rhythmic co-imbrication of organisms and their surroundings” (“The Landscape of Sensation” 12). For Deleuze, landscape is a “‘conceptual motif,’ a recurring element” in several key concepts and sets of dualities, or dyads, centred in the contradictions of faciality – viz. organization and coding – and sensation. As Grosz points out, with Guattari he advances the notion of ‘sensation’ as a “zone of indeterminacy between subject and object, the bloc that erupts from the encounter of the one with the other” (Grosz, “Sensation” 84); a
conceptualization he imbues in his approach to theatre explored here later. Even absent Deleuze’s complication of the term, ‘landscape’ is a slippery one with multiple definitions. I interpret landscape in the complex sense Casey calls “the intertangled skein” of the context and attribute of places; in other words, what it means to be in a place (“Between Geography and Philosophy” 689). He makes the distinction between space, which he defines as “the encompassing volumetric void in which things (including human beings) are positioned,” and “place . . . the immediate environment of my lived body – an arena of action that is at once physical and historical, social and cultural” (“Between Geography and Philosophy” 683). Arguing that “[p]laces come into us lastingly,” he says:

[O]nce having been in a particular place for any considerable time – or even briefly, if our experience there has been intense – we are forever marked by that place, which lingers in us indefinitely and in a thousand ways, many too subtle for us to name. The inscription is not of edges or outlines, as if place were some kind of object; it is of the whole brute presence of the place. (688)

Landscape, Casey says, is what distinguishes place and space by situating the human subject, whose nature is to be “oriented and situated in place,” as the constitutive “co-ingredience” of body, self and place. He asserts the self, the body, “is what links this self to lived place in its sensible and perceptible features; and landscape is the presented layout of a set of places, not their mere accumulation but their sensuous self-presentation as a whole” (683). Thus, he says, the geographical self is “deepened by the body – drawn into it” as the “enactive vehicle of being-in-place,” both incorporating the world and acting on it as “a point of departure and as destination” (689), while place is broadened in landscape in an “intertangled skein” of places, which “widens out our vista of the place world – all the way to the horizon” (689-690). In other words, he proffers, place has an
enclosure, “a perimeter,” and it is only when place is situated in a landscape that the boundaries “open up to the horizon for further exploration, that is, for bodily ingression and exploration.” His concept of relational spatiality is suggestive of Deleuze’s notion of social and political entanglement; the milieu of flows and encounters in processes of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, explored in Chapter 1. As Casey’s concept of landscape suggests, “a place and self alike are enriched and sustained” (690), and he argues, “we are not the masters of place but prey to it; we are the subjects of place or, more exactly, subject to place” (688). Jon Anderson suggests Casey’s “‘constitutive co-ingredientie’ of people and place . . . can be harnessed to access deeper insights into these human constructions of the world” (254), which is a concept that breaks from Kant’s transcendent ideality of space that puts the body at the centre of things and, I suggest, presents a pertinent thought for complicating Nuttall’s “over-determined” sites referred to earlier.

Similarly, Casey’s conceptualization of the “fusion or meshing of place and identity” (Anderson 256) is in accord with the several immanentist feminist theorists and geographers I examine here, who argue against identity-formation; instead, they propose “‘thinking in terms of relations’” as a way of “rethinking the concepts of space and place” (Massey, Space, Place and Gender 7). Especially germane is their study of spaces formed by hierarchical traditions of philosophical, psychological and geographical practices that have upheld the material social structures I am exploring. For instance, seeking how to think of our sense of place without resorting to “romanticised escapism” or “reactionary nationalisms,” – which is a dominant concern in integrating precolonial and postcolonial thought – Massey looks to the power dynamics of what she calls “the
different experiences of time-space-compression” (“A Global Sense of Place” 28). Each has its own power and “internal structures of domination and subordination,” sketched out over different levels and scales, she argues. Thus, it is not “some long internalized history” that gives place it specificity, but rather its “particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus” (28). Her idea of place as not static, but as processes, without boundaries or unique identities and “full of internal conflicts” enmeshing the social and political, mirrors Deleuze’s notion of place as an event (29). Along similar lines, from her perspective as a black geographer, Katherine McKittrick regards “geography as space, place, and location in their physical materiality and imaginative configurations – [that] allows us to engage with a narrative that locates and draws on black histories and black subjects in order to make visible social lives which are often displaced, rendered ungeographic” (x). Rather than having Black subjects theorized in abstract spaces, she emphasizes there is need to look at how the “self, as a body, emerges in a spatial and temporal world” (25). Therefore, she asks how “identity, place and the self are mutually constituted through colonial violence.” Using these schemas, she says, brings into focus “the perspective of the terrain of political struggle” (Demonic Grounds 6).

The concept of scale is central to African philosophy, Janz points out, observing that “‘African’ is a construct and yet an ever-present reality. It was constructed from European interests,” yet has “deep indigenous roots” that become “almost fractal in the re-inscriptions of concerns at higher and lower levels” (Philosophy in an African Place 15). In other words, he says, issues of identity are written at the different levels as if they were the same. He makes a similar observation to McKittrick’s when he insists that
Africans are articulating “a life-world” and, therefore, it is important to answer questions about levels of place; such as what level is significant, how they inscribe themselves on each other, and how they respond to different forces. “Being African at the local level may become inscribed on a national or international level,” he observes, “but the philosophical concepts that arise from those levels will mutate based on the differing forms of intensity that can be found” (16).

Similarly, feminist and relational geographers seek for new ways to capture “the multiple diverse and changing ways through which each human embodied subject is formed.” They ask such questions as, “how might a respatialization of the body (a body, they argue, that can be conceived as surface, as active, as full and changing, as many, as depth, as random and indeterminate, as process) afford new geographies?” (Gibson-Graham, qtd. in Longhurst 494-495). The notion of thinking of space as a “co-product” or an “integral part of social processes,” rather than an abstract concept, was described by Khan et al earlier where they emphasized the need for combining a relational ontology “with a pragmatic frame of reference” in order to avoid “collapsing into total relativism” (290). Perhaps Braidotti best encapsulates the feminist immanentist approach to the idea of reconciling the geographical self with her observation of the nomadic subject moving across “established categories and levels of experience,” while “blurring boundaries without burning bridges,” mentioned earlier (Nomadic Subjects 26). Her notion of ‘nomadic consciousness’ offers a “creative, nonreactive project, emancipated from the oppressive force of the traditional theoretical approach,” envisioned as a “differentiated subjectivity” (64). Maintaining the key to feminist nomadic politics is “to account for one’s location in terms of both space (the geopolitical, social, and ecophilosophical
dimension) and time (the historical and genealogical dimension)” (4), she conceives an “intense, multiple subject . . . endowed with multiple capacities for interconnectedness” (“Toward a New Nomadism “1416). She argues for a way of thinking about the subject “in the process of becoming” (Nomadic Subjects 212), who is only passing through, making “those necessary situated connections that can help her/him to survive,” but never taking on “fully the limits of one national fixed identity” (64). Addressing the need to “destabilize and activate the center” (5), she echoes Casey’s upending of the Kantian notion noted earlier, and challenges the mainstream. Of particular note is her insistence on thinking about the body’s “materialist but also vitalist groundings of human subjectivity,” and the “specifically human capacity to be both grounded and to flow and then to transcend the very variables – class, race, sex, gender, age, disability – that structure us” (25). In sum, these ideas bespeak the intensities, flux and vibrations of minoritarian thought that create the overall governing orientation through which to explore a theatre entangled in the body-space-time of the postapartheid milieu I have explored.

The generative notion of force, or power, Braidotti evokes is the Deleuzo-Guattarian conceptualization of assemblages being traversed by lines of stratification toward the plane of organization (A Thousand Plateaus 174-5); to wit, encoding and stratifying. The “line of escape,” or deterritorialization, is the process by which the assemblage of desire “escapes itself and makes its enunciations or its expressions take flight and disarticulate” (Toward a Minor Literature 86). In this way, Deleuze and Guattari envision the “line of escape” extending over or penetrating “an unlimited field of immanence that makes the segments melt and that liberates desire from all its concretizations and abstractions” (86).
Specifically, they conceive a rhizomatic new way of thinking that moves “away from organized structures . . . toward innovative ideas and unusual notions” (“Feminism, Geographies, Knowledges” 13), which Moss and Al-Hindi suggest is useful for feminist geographers’ strategies of engaging, rejecting, reworking, contesting, and transforming of ideas (12). In the ontological process of “pull[ing] away from defining entities,” they see a creative “generative process whereby specific activities produce something, whether that is an identity, a body, a knowledge claim, or something” (12). The important implication in Deleuze’s line of thinking, therefore, is this potentiality to open up the unlived or the subjects who are trapped in binary positions, into new processes of sociality that escape the traditional concepts of subjectivity, and commit to an ontology of thinking that leads to a new way of exploring his question: “‘What a body can do?’, of what affects is it capable?” (Deleuze, Dialogues II 60).

4.2. Bodies . . . “How can one be in a place except through one’s own body?”

As is evident from this discussion, the question of subjectivity is inherent in the interweaving of body, social and space in Deleuze’s anti-identitarian notion of subjectivity; conceived of as the subject in tension. Grosz describes his concept as forces, “both specific and a multiplicity,” each with its own characteristic, “its own will or goal,” competing and affecting one another (Time Travels 188). Operating “at a range of scales and intensities” and “always as a ‘relation of intensity,’” these are processes of “constitution” (Coll 439). Her conjuring of the body with its “energies and capacities” reflects Deleuze’s description of the assemblage where, he articulates, “you find states of things, bodies, various combinations of bodies, hodgepodes; but you also find utterances, modes of expression, and whole regimes of signs” (Two Regimes of Madness
His notion of the rhizome’s principle of ‘multiplicity,’ which I described in Chapter 1, perceives the world as a “plane of immanent connectivity and complexity” (O’Sullivan, *Art Encounters*, 28). By allowing us to see the world differently, “without the spectacles of representation,” Simon O’Sullivan points out, Deleuze and Guattari offer “escape routes,” or “‘lines of flight’ from our representational and often over stratified sense of self” (28-29).

This thought carries over into the arena of South African theatre. For example, Deleuze’s notion anticipates Mark Fleishman’s description of Magnet Theatre as “a machine for thinking the future, even when . . . it works with material from a past that will not easily pass” (“Making Space for Ideas” 72). Fleishman and Jennie Reznek are artistic directors of Magnet Theatre, and they employ the power of body and movement in their theatrical performance – particularly through interrogation of historical and contemporary migration – arguing that the body as a subject has “performative power” (Reznek, “The Moving Body” 154). I return to discuss Magnet’s approach to the power of the body in more detail in Chapter 3. The company’s productions gesture toward Braidotti’s local and global “geography of embodied crossings” (*Nomadic Subjects* 54) that root the “spatial frame of the body” in the reality of “one’s own embodiment” (“Embodiment, Sexual Difference, and the Nomadic Subject” 7), as well as toward Mbembe’s contention that African societies should be examined over the *longue durée* of African history; thus, they offer a means to eschew the generalizing tendency of the broad sweep of the “spectacular” of apartheid identified by Ndebele. Instead, they move toward Ndebele’s call for the personal, quotidian stories, and provide a rethinking of what South African playwright Amy Jephta calls an “agency of identity creation” that
does not negate the sense of self from “the people who have claimed the description and absorbed it as part of a distinct community” (“On Familiar Roads” 168-169).

As a case study of theatre that embraces the histories and the small stories of such a distinct milieu, Rehane Abrahams’ *What the Water Gave Me* illuminates why Deleuze’s spatial ontology and feminist geographical theory is useful for this discussion. Abrahams is a theatremaker, actor and director from Cape Town, whose background growing up in a Cape Malay Muslim community informs her work. With theatremaker Sara Matchett, she is co-founder of the Mothertongue Project, a collective of performing and visual artists, writers and arts educators, “who explore keys to the empowerment of women and practical processes of healing and transformation through creative methodologies” (Matchett, “Collaborative Conversations”). She situates *What the Water Gave Me* in an enigmatic, individual, multiple and complex historical narrative of transnational and translocal dislocation, set in unidentified places clearly localized in the historicized Cape Flats. The latter are settled on “reclaimed land,” which had earlier existed “under the sea,” and continues to be “intermittently steeped in flood water or scourged by the notorious winds of the Cape of Storms” (Barnes and Mbothwe, 58). Abrahams draws her stories from those told to her as a child by her grandmother Gawa Abrahams, and by her father’s family who, during apartheid, were displaced from the home they had lived in since the 1700s in Cape Town’s District Six and moved to the Cape Flats. Adopting water as the narrative thread that flows throughout her Malay history, with its heritage of

slavery, rape and violence, she evokes spaces of wide open land and the flow of river and sea to release her environment’s violated bodies; emblematic perhaps of Deleuze’s assemblages of potentiality, with their generative tensions of territorialization and deterritorialization. The displacement she traces, Abrahams says, created an “unspoken sadness” and “sense of homelessness and rootlessness” in her family; it was as though “my roots were in shifting water, not soil” (“Making Waves” 5). In her Playwright’s Note, Abrahams remarks that the Indian Ocean is meaningful because it carries “stories of where we came from” (What the Water Gave Me 16). In a similar observation, in Regarding Muslims: from Slavery to Post-apartheid, Baderoon calls the seas “a protean theme that observes neither national nor temporal boundaries,” but are the site of “cosmology, memory and desire, traced in the movement, language and culture of enslaved and dominated people” contained on the land reclaimed from the sea (66-67).

Capturing the resonance of capitalism and capture of the South African heritage I am exploring in this study, Abrahams conflates these complex narratives in a single narrator in a telling that is poetic, edgy and violent. The play’s themes embrace the Indian Ocean, Abrahams’ grandmother, oral storytelling, Cape Town and slavery, set against global power as the central power embodied in the form of a monster that appears in manifest forms. Her allegory is a series of disjointed stories set in fragmented temporal spaces, told through four characters categorized under the rubrics of air, fire, earth and water, whose voices spill out in an interrogation of the deep connections between Indonesian and Cape Malay culture. The storyteller weaves together the stories of the hip-hop head from Heideveld who is living on the Cape Flats, an urban taxi time traveler “whose body is the city she lives in,” and a child who is entrapped by the monster paedophile
Abrahams implicates this notion of morphology in her geographical staging of locations – north, south, east and west – as a mapping or placing for characters that are evoked as the elements of air, fire, earth and water. In her director’s notes, she says, “The action moves in all directions simultaneously interwoven” (What the Water Gave Me 17). This is theatre with emphasis on transformation and the corporeal. It is “speaking the body/the body speaking” (17), and Abrahams uses the performer’s body as the connection “outward to the audience and community and inward to cellular memory and ancestral line” (16), reflective of the racialized African, Indian, Coloured community of forced removals that fractured her traditional extended family. She observes: “The geography inhabited was one of fissures, fractures, cracks like my grandmother’s body, scarred with the many keloids of open-heart surgery.” It was her grandmother, Gawa Arend, who held the stories of Cape Town and about her people who “had come from the East, non-specific, mythic Java, Indian Ocean and ships” (16). And, it was her grandmother who told her the story of Bawa Mera and Bawa Puti, based on an old Javanese story that Abrahams threads into her play, where the four interspersed, fractured, interrupted stories thread the fairy tale with the nightmares, and the magical with the material. Her conflation of her grandmother’s damaged body with the fractured landscape suggests a bridge to consider the multiple struggles of body and space I discuss in the next section.

For example, Robyn Longhurst contends traditional geography has avoided talking about “the messiness of bodies” – their flows and forces – that is often feminised and Othered. Interrupting that avoidance, she says, “[m]aking the body explicit unsettles the production of geographical knowledge reorienting it to the concerns of a variety of
marginalized groups” (“(Dis)embodied Geographies” 496). Grosz offers a more affirmative position on identity “in terms of bodily practice,” or forces where a subject is “not based upon identification, imagination, projection” (*Time Travels* 88), but on the “constitutive and mutually defining relation between people” and the environments in which they produce each other (Grosz, “Bodies-Cities” 242). By giving up the “effective subject,” she argues, drawing on Nietzsche, we give up “the object upon which the effects are produced” (*Time Travels* 189). Instead, she proposes thinking of how inhuman forces “that are both living and non living, macroscopic and microscopic, above and below the level of the human are acknowledged and allowed to displace the centrality of both consciousness and unconsciousness” (190). Her critical engagement with Deleuze’s conceptualizations speaks to the immanentist feminist geographers’ growing attention to “embodiment, paying careful attention to space” (“Longhurst 496). She considers his approach raises “a number of crucial questions about the political investment of specific positions within feminism, liberal, Marxist and socialist forms,” which she argues, “participate in a molarization, a process of reterritorialization, a sedimentation of women’s possibilities of becoming” (Grosz, “A Thousand Tiny Sexes” 179). In the next section I continue to draw on Grosz’s argument, which is an exemplar of how to engage the questions of bodies and space I have been exploring with Deleuze and Guattari’s experimental, innovative and political challenge to hierarchical “ontological and intellectual frameworks of models of knowledge” (179).
4.3. Bodies and Spaces: “sites of multiple struggles”

I suggest Abrahams’ play articulates Deleuze’s notion of “flattening out of the relations between the psychical and the social,” that supposes “individuals, subjects, microintensities, blend with, connect to” their spatial and social environments, or through the organization of “the state or the economic order” (Grosz, *Volatile Bodies* 180). From this standpoint, Grosz argues female bodies (and I suggest postcolonial and postapartheid bodies as well) are understood not as the product of a patriarchal culture or hierarchical control, but as “sites of multiple struggles, ambiguously positioned in the reproduction of social habits, requirements, and regulations and in all sorts of production of unexpected and unpredictable linkages” (*Volatile Bodies* 181).

In projecting the potential of the female sexed subjectivity as “deliberately unstable and not fixed”; as “forces or intensities . . . not the unified ‘subject’” (Colls 435), Grosz engages with Deleuze and Guattari’s emphasis on “alternative notions of corporeality and materiality” (*Volatile Bodies* 165), which resonates with her interest in developing frameworks other than “those provided by dichotomous thought, capable of outstripping, overturning, or exceeding binary logics” (161). Instead of reading meaning “onto bodies and their behaviour,” she says, “one can survey the linkages between bodies of different kinds.” Instead of signification, or tracing, which she regards “links the subject’s psyche to signifying chains, to the order of the signifier, that is, in which the body is the medium of signification,” she turns to Deleuze’s project of mapping, interpreting, and reading the body’s meaning (*Volatile Bodies* 121). Grosz finds in the Deleuzo-Guattarian *plane of immanence* a “new concept, to be found nowhere else” that offers a new kind of “ontoethics, an ethics immanent in life”; a notion I attest is relevant to the entangled
postapartheid subject (*The Incorporeal* 136). As I have already argued for by employing Deleuze for my own study, this does not mean fully endorsing a set of ideas or theories. Rather, as this discussion illustrates, Grosz, Colls and Braidotti turn to Deleuze and Guattari’s work for what Grosz refers to as, “the kind of abstraction that is needed to bring about new frames of reference and new kinds of question” (*Grosz, Time Travels*, 173).

The questions she asks, I maintain, are related to the questions I extend to my South African investigation. In a similar discussion of geo-historical dynamics and entanglements in the South African context, Gillian Hart writes, “we have to attend closely to the complex and uneven reverberations and articulations in the present of much longer historical geographies of colonization and imperialism, along with their specifically racialized – as well as gendered, sexualized, and ethicized – forms” (“Contesting the Nation” 694). Along the same lines, academic and novelist Elleke Boehmer examines key issues in postcolonial literary production to reveal the darkness of the sedimentation of colonial representation, where she sees “exclusion or suppression” as literally “embodied,” expressing the colonizer’s “fears and curiosities and sublimated fascinations with the strange or the ‘primitive’” in the form of “concrete physical and anatomical images.” In these images,

[T]he Other is cast as corporeal, carnal, untamed, instinctual, raw, and therefore also open to mastery, available for use, for husbandry, for numbering, branding, cataloging, description or possession. Images of the body of the Other are conflated with those of the land, unexplored land being seen as amorphous, wild, seductive, dark, open to possession. (Boehmer 270)

Or, as Mbembe more plainly states it: “Colonialism was, to a large extent, a way of disciplining bodies with the aim of making better use of them, docility and productivity
going hand in hand” (*Postcolony* 113). The tension Boehmer reveals between the body and the land as embedded *and* resistant, suggests Grosz’s argument that the body “is never simply a passive object upon which regimes of power are played out” (Gilbert 204), but rather is a site of knowledge as well as a site of resistance and “counter-strategic reinscription . . . capable of being self-marked, self-represented in alternative ways,” and capable of exerting “an uncontrollable unpredictable threat to a regular, systematic mode of social organization” (Grosz “Inscriptions and Body-Maps” 64).

Congruently African philosophers and decolonial geographers articulate their notions of thinking about the body as the tension of forces in relation to others in their process of eschewing the oppositional for a more affirmative way of thought. As James Esson et al point out, “Decolonisation . . . must involve the decolonisation of the mind” (387). In the same manner of thinking, Mbembe considers the “multiple struggles” of the subject in Africa today “who lives and espouses his/her contemporaneousness,” or “what is ‘distinctive’ or ‘particular’ to his/her present real world – is first a subject who has an *experience* of ‘living in the concrete world’” (*Postcolony* 17). He points out: “One characteristic of African societies over the *longue durée* has been that they follow a great variety of temporal trajectories and a wide range of swings” in the convergence and divergence of colonialism’s forms of “living in the concrete world,” and “the subjective forms that make possible any validation of its contents – that objectify it”; to wit the tensions of territorialization and deterritorialization (17).

Mbembe draws on Jean Comaroff’s study *Body of Power*, whose observations on the connection of body, time and space evince the core of the Deleuzian minor ontology, and which Mbembe says helps him to understand “that historical cultural structures are not
necessarily mechanical reflections of underlying social and economic structures. In fact, they are equal to them in ‘ontological’ standing.” With this frame of reference, then, he regards “social and economic structures are as much objective facts . . . as products of the interpretive work of human actors” that need to be taken as seriously as “the reality of the long-term sedimentation of experience—la longue durée” (“Africa in Theory” 655-56). Here, he eschews the tradition in philosophy to reify the past by notions of “immemorial past” and “messianic future” (Boundas, “Virtual/Virtuality” 301), gesturing instead toward Deleuze’s notion of temporality drawn from Bergson’s notion of durée as an “immanently differentiated dynamic process of the real whose nature is always to actualize itself in novel differenciations” (301). In other words, much in the way the feminist geographers are doing, Mbembe is questioning “how we know what we know” and what that “knowledge is grounded upon,” seeking a way to avoid the normative “one-way causal models” of difference (as different from other) and repetition (as repetition of the Same), to “open a space for broader comparative undertakings” (“Africa in Theory” 654). He echoes Deleuze’s system of difference as generative, and repetition as “the eternal return” of the “new” in its challenge of the identity position, and its potential for going beyond as an affirmative process of becoming (Deleuze, Desert Islands 121-128).

Reflecting on the complexity of the “perplexing task” of writing Africa and “how to account for the multiplicity of the pathways and trajectories of change,” Mbembe argues, ‘the social’ is less a matter of order and contract than a matter of composition and experiment; that what ultimately binds societies might be some kind of artifice they have come to believe in; the realization that societies’ capacity to continually produce something new and singular, as yet unthought, which is yet to be accommodated within established conceptual systems and languages—this
Thus, he alludes to the question of bodies in relation to space and time when he states that central to South African discourse is recognition of the African subject as relational, advancing the notion of the “African self as a reflexive subject . . . doing, seeing, hearing, tasting, feeling and touching” in constituting what he calls “meaningful human expressions,” which rejects basic thinking about “African societies and their histories” (*Postcolony* 6), which I referred to earlier. The resonance of meaningful expression he advocates, speaks to Kobayashi and Peake’s search to enter the “discursive projection of place” for a greater understanding of the “recursivity of place,” particularly in considering place not only as a place of “specific location of events,” and a “home for specific people,” but also an idea “satellite-flung into the homes of millions of media viewers whose engagement with that idea transforms the places and people that find themselves thus represented” (“Racism in Place” 172). Similar to the feminists’ and decolonizing geographers’ project to unsettle traditional production of knowledge by examining the ways bodies are produced and how they reflect their sociocultural environment, just discussed (“Bodies-Cities” 242), Mbembe argues we tend to overlook how much Africa can teach us, warning that “we underestimate the power of Africa to renew contemporary social theory at our expense” (“Africa in Theory” 655). He points out that African states, societies and economies have been portrayed not as they are, but as what they are not; what he calls the “knowledge of non-being, of nothingness (*the ecceity of non-being*)” (*Postcolony* 9). Rather, he advances the concept of a “‘life world’ [that] is not only the field where individuals’ existence unfolds in practice; it is where they exercise existence—that is, live their lives out and confront the very forms of their
death” (15). In other words, Mbembe argues that “African social formations are not necessarily converging toward a single point, trend or cycle,” but are the potentiality of “a variety of trajectories” mixed together in “the present as experience of a time” (16). The notion that there are ontological implications in contesting the singular histories and stories of the land and the bodies in them, I consider a seminal question for theatre, with its figurative “space as stage” for the playing out of ideas. As an example, I return to What the Water Gave Me.

4.4. Case Study: What the Water Gave Me.16

If the play’s mise-en-scène demonstrates an entanglement of space and time (explored earlier), the “messiness” and tension of the body in space and time also plays out on a set that is a fusion of the material in the form of the directional space of the stage and the elements that identify the characters, interwoven with the mystical in the symbols of the medicine wheel, each combining to create a station with its own character and its own props. In a similar interweaving, at different points throughout the play, the “props are interchanged between characters, thus creating a sense that the characters embody aspects of one another” (What the Water Gave Me 18). The morphing, or entangling, of the scenic elements is a device that continues throughout the dialogue in the refrain of such words as, “walls,” “flesh,” “rape” and “devil” or “monster,” “the pit” and “the tunnel” and “the taxi,” and in the repetition of “Long ago. Yesterday. Round the corner. Far away.” Abrahams’ direction for entanglement of the characters, most notably

reflected in their convergence in the single narrator, brings the South African body to Deleuze’s notion of the body not as “a discrete entity defined by stable boundaries and a set of fixed characteristics,” but rather as a multiplicity, an “assemblage of components bound into coherent form” that is “ever temporary and always shifting” (Bignall 83), undergoing Grosz’s “permutations and transformations” (“A Thousand Tiny Sexes,” 170). The action is transformative and corporeal, which Abrahams describes as moving in all “directions simultaneously interwoven” (17), evocative of Artaud’s “fragile, fluctuating centre” (The Theatre and its Double, 13). In the production I attended at the University of Johannesburg’s Con Cowan Theatre in April 2014, directed by Jade Bowers, Cheraé Halley embodied the characters. She reaches out to the audience with gracious gestures as the welcoming storyteller, retreating into the memories and nightmare journeys that take her to the four quadrants of the stage and hold her poignantly, and literally, crouching in a galvanized bath of water as a potential gestational place of cleansing, yet also as a place of retreat and withdrawal. Abrahams enfolds the play’s assemblage of components with the elements.

AIR [is the storyteller] – (East) is represented by a yellow circle (approx 1 meter in diameter)

WATER [the Little Girl] – (West) by a blue circle with an empty enamel bowl

EARTH [the Hip-Hop Head from Heideveld] – (North) by a white circle

FIRE [the Taxi Timetraveller] – (South) by a red circle (18)

Each character encounters the fragments of her histories, the monster of her memory, in various guises through the elements given to her character that gesture toward the striations that have shaped the histories that show up in these historized geographies. For AIR, “The stranger” becomes “the man with a dazzling smile” until he is reflected in the
water, when he becomes a monster, with “A face like wormy leather, huge red eyes rolling in hollow sockets. Sharp pointy teeth and a long black tongue. A hideous monster face” (22). For EARTH it is “a man-made mad Mars mission in crafts of dire purpose. In a mechanised electrosised phallus” raping the purity of the night sky she calls “her Egyptian Goddess mother” (22). For FIRE, the monster figure is the centipede, “Flaming . . . It’s massive. Segmented. Transparent. Made of heat. It eats people and purifies them in its digestive juices” (26). WATER’s monster is her teacher who molests her, “the only Christian Teacher in the school” (30). The narrator is variously the storyteller, the savvy rapper, the explorer through time, and the small girl.

AIR (Story Teller) begins with deceptively innocent fairy tale lightness: “Once there was and once there wasn’t. Long ago and yesterday. Round the corner far away.” She tells the story of Bowa Mera, “the prettiest,” Bowa Puti, “the cleverest,” and Taki Taki, “the baby and so cute” (18); three little girls who are playing by a pool and are pushed into the water by a mysterious, monstrous figure who changes them into fishes.

Trapped in their watery world. Each day and each night the monster came and watched them. Disappearing as suddenly as he appeared. And he drank from them. Taking in large gulps of their laughter, their songs, even their little squabbles. (29)

Slowly, their identities slip away in the sphere of his control, clearly symbolic of what Deleuze calls the overcoding of “the state-form as an abstract machine of capture” (Patton, Deleuze and the Political 102). “Mera’s shimmering tail began to wilt. Her shining scales grew dull. Puti’s lightning mind became sluggish and turgid and Taki Taki – she ate insects.” The monster “got drunk on their sweet young flesh and soft skin and sucked the light from their dreams” (What the Water Gave Me 29).
In her role as Taxi time-traveller, FIRE keeps running, always hailing the ubiquitous taxi, and yet she seems static – seems to be captured in the nightmare of historical memory, bound in by the repeating imagery of walls that take on the persona of the monster.

FIRE: The walls are here. They are pulsating and wet. Singing like drunk men dreaming of running away. It is dark. The walls threaten me. They say violation is my historical condition being as I am five generations out of slavery and a woman. . . . They are looking for a hole. A hole to put their violence in. Force entry into soft flesh with a word, blow, knife, cock, bullet. It is dark. I am not afraid. Porous, I am already full of holes. (20-21)

The narratives are a refrain of emergent memories and hidden absences in the inherited stories and contemporary realities. Abrahams’ use of “taxi,” in the name of FIRE’s character and in the word’s refrain throughout the play, refers to the often over-loaded minibus taxis that are the dominant mode of transport for those living on the margins of cities and towns making their way to work each day. She uses the word as a device to “heighten and reinforce the true nature of the dislocation” of this “ambiguous landscape of liminality,” and embed the dream-like stories in the consciousness of a country where taxis connote the real-life, in-between experience of waiting and departure (Matchett and Okech, “Uhambo” 123). The sense of speed and stasis, or in Deleuzian terms “speed and slowness,” of FIRE’s journey amidst encounters with the fragmented stories of AIR, EARTH and WATER, manifests Deleuze’s processes of becoming, discussed above, which Simone Bignall considers is a discursive process of “awakening to the capacity of the body toward awareness of oneself and others” in order “to form compatible relations” (Bignall, “Affective Assemblages” 84-85); a process that Brian Massumi insists renders form “dynamically (so very different from representing it)” (Architectures of the Unforeseen 17).
Interweaving the darkness of FIRE’s nightmare journey through history is the corporeal defiance of EARTH, the Hip-Hop Head from Heideveld – an area in the Cape Flats – who is the most overtly political of the four characters. Her body is an immanent site of potentiality, her voice a way of thinking and “divine intent” (*What the Water Gave Me* 30). The enunciation switches from the elegiac to the rebellion of rap:

> EARTH: In my heart there is a flower of sedition. I am cool electrical being. Uncorruptable. My flesh is sensational. Retrieving the power to feel. Retrieving the power to heal. My body displaces the priest. My body replaces the Imam. My femininity becoming its own divinity. I carry my pride inside. And outside I won’t hide. The beast of shame, don’t know my name, or even where to find me. In the positive-connectivity of my life I still feel the knife changing shape. I feel the rapist and the rape. One birth, one earth, one breath, one death. And still I flower with divine intent. To the full extent. Petals soft. Open. And resilient. It’s cool nè? I did that. Do you want to hear it again? (29-30)

Her provocation of the privileging of State power, symbolized by the colonizing Mars space-craft in search of “dire purpose,” is entwined with the mystical “Egyptian Goddess mother” and “Gaia, Earth, my mother,” as she addresses NASA which is raping the “purity of space,” taunting, “You won’t even get there on the Starship Enterprise” (22). By evoking her “mother, Gaia,” EARTH gestures toward Deleuze and Guattari’s generative conceptualization of geophilosophy that escapes “instrumental science” by bringing philosophy down to earth, with its “flows and forces” in the processes of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Chisholm, “Rhizomes”). I look at the idea of geophilosophy in more depth further on in this chapter.

There is nothing fairy tale-like or mystical, or even defiant, about WATER’s description of power and abuse. Of the four narratives, the most prosaic, yet perhaps the most touching and the most universal, is her story of the small girl who is abused by the sanctimonious schoolteacher, Mr. Waters, who chases her, and catches her. Baderoon
says “[e]tymology reveals the hidden geography of sexual subjection in the Cape” 
(Regarding Muslims 84), where there is a “long history” (90) of marking the bodies of 
female slaves for violence and abuse “with impunity” (84). The subjection of WATER’s 
body to sexual abuse by Mr. Waters, whom she describes as “the only Christian teacher in the school,” and who secretly preys on her when the older girls are away at the 
mosque, is a refrain of this long history that runs through the play in the different dreams 
and memories. Her friend “Celeste says adults and children don’t mix,” but WATER
remembers that story, she knows that “sometimes adults and children do mix” (30).

AIR closes the play when the narrative returns to the three fishes, which are saved by 
the sea and restored as children in an event that reflects Mielle Chandler and Astrida 
Neimanis’ notion of leaking and siphoning of entities (in their study on the gestational 
character of water that I refer to further on). “That night when not a soul on earth or sea, 
not even the monster, was stirring, the moon looked down and called to the sea,” moved 
by the sorrow of the girls’ mother and father (What the Water Gave Me 30).

The sea knew exactly what had happened to the girls, having witnessed the entire affair from the start. So the moon, using all her strength, tugged at the sea 
and together they made huge crashing waves that washed the fish girls right out 
of the rock pools into the open ocean. They were terrified, but the sea made little 
currents that kept them together all through the night. (30-31)

Returned home restored, at least nearly so, their slightly faded prettiness, smartness and 
cuteness are now enfolded in the layers of their enslavement. And, the monster man? He 
is found “drowned, half-eaten by a school of little fishes and everything was as before” 
(31). The intermingling of the sea, the striating forces of the monster man, and the girls 
changed by their experience evoke the Deleuzo-Guattarian constant refrain of moving, 
coding, territorializing and deterritorializing of immanent activity within places. These


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are the processes which are integral to the minoritarian conceptualization of affirmative and dynamic processes of ‘becoming’ that break from the fixed, prescribed ‘being.’

The play ends as the narrator/actress engages in the ritual of cleansing with water at each of the quadrants of the stage. While the ambiguous narrative fails to provide a complete, teleological, or fairy tale ending, it embraces stories of renewed empowerment and the will to remember and to repeat the stories again and again in Abrahams’ performance space of embarkation and deterritorialization – the Cape Flats, escaping what Deleuze describes as the closed-in, regulated spatiality of the State space of overcoding; notions particularly germane to the South African condition of apartheid geography explored earlier. Matchett and Okech interpret the Cape Flats as the Cape’s “ambiguous liminality” and “internal psycho-emotional landscapes”; a site of “personal stories/embodied memories, communities, home, domestic spaces, waiting, dreams, hopes, disappointment, and disillusionment” (“Uhambo” 113). In situating What the Water Gave Me in such a site, I argue, Abrahams reflects Mbembe’s, Longhurst’s and others’ calls for “[m]aking the body explicit” to unsettle “the production of geographical knowledge by reorienting it to the concerns of a variety of marginalized groups” (Longhurst, “(Dis)Embodied Geographies” 496), and to challenge the embeddedness of the body in place – Casey’s “whole brute presence of the place.” The play powerfully speaks to the indelibility of the colonial and apartheid experience in the geographical subject, and Abrahams implicates Grosz’s “‘complex feedback relation’ between bodies and environments in which each produced the other” by examining the ways bodies are produced and, in turn, how they affect their sociocultural environment (“Bodies-Cities” 242).
In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that “the material or machinic aspect of the assemblage relates not to the production of goods, but the precise intermingling of bodies in a society” (90). They concentrate their vision of the body as a viscous “pure surface of intensity” in their origination of the body without organs, about which they say: “Divested of that arrangement of organs which makes of it an organism the body remains as a pure surface of intensity . . . the point of departure, or precondition for any subsequent function of desire” (Patton, “Notes for a Glossary” 1092). They derive the notion of body without organs from Antonin Artaud’s edict: “The body is the body. Alone it stands. And in no need of organs. Organism it never is. Organisms are the enemy of the body” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 158). Paul Patton describes it as “the plane of immanence, consistence or composition of desire” that can be constructed in two ways, or two different conceptions of planes, that although different, “cannot be regarded as completely external to one another” (Patton, “Notes for a Glossary” 1093). The one is “the plane of organization . . . or apparatuses of power,” to which the body without organs is opposed. The second plane is the *plane of consistence* that Deleuze and Guattari define as Spinoza’s notion of ‘material reality,’ or “the true schizomatic plane of desire” inhabited by objects, such as “multiplicities, collective assemblages, individualizations without subjects,” which are “distinguished, not by their form or their kind of subjectivity, but by the particles of which they are composed and hence their corresponding power to affect or to be affected” (1093). In other words, they determine “how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 257).
Through such a “pure surface of intensity,” I argue, Abrahams enters into the potentiality of Deleuze’s minor theatre, which Cull says he conceives as “one that subjects the different elements of theatre – its language, gestures, costumes and props – to the greatest degree of variation, rather than fixing them into the conventional organizational forms” (Cull, *Theatres of Immanence* 20). In its revolutionary nature, Deleuze suggests, such a minoritarian theatre’s “antirepresentational function would be to . . . construct in some way, a figure of the minority consciousness as each one’s potential” (Deleuze, “One Less Manifesto” 253-4). The collective assemblages Abrahams generates in *What the Water Gave Me* reflect the pivotal concept of Deleuze’s materialist ontology, which is to understand the “social whole” as not only a historically produced identity, but also as “the processes that maintain that identity” at different scales and times. As this discussion has demonstrated, Deleuze and Guattari afford generative processes of conceptual differentiation, multiplicity, virtuality and intensity to question the way in which the body (subjectivity and identity) has been ignored or signified by hegemonic discourse – in philosophical, anthropological, historical, geographical practice and artistic representation – even in works that are oppositional. They view the body in tension as the intellectual body “thinking, sensing, and willing” (Deleuze, “Active and Reactive” 82), and they expand these notions in their conceptualization of geophilosophy, which Janz refers to as a “philosophy of the earth, one that recognizes the ebb and flow of life” (“The Territory is not the Map” 393). I will move later on to explore further how Deleuze uses theatre to understand and articulate his immanent ontology of spatiality and sociality (DeLanda, “Deleuzian Social Ontology and Social Theory” 5). First, however, I examine the way in which the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of geophilosophy takes spatial thought
beyond an identitarian grounding of assumed identities to bring a deeper meaning of immanence to all forms of intertwined grounding – indigenous and Western.

5. Geophilosophy: “thinking, sensing, and willing”

Deleuze’s concept of ‘“emergent systems’ . . . that solve problems in a bottom-up rather than top-down manner, or immanently rather than transcendently” (Cull, *Theatres of Immanence* 28), conjoins Guattari’s theorization of “chaosmosis”; that life, whether in organic or inorganic form, emerges from “an unfixed and ontologically unstable” ground and accompanies whatever forms that emerge as what O’Sullivan calls “simply . . . subjectivities” (“Guattari’s Aesthetic Paradigm” 257). According to John Proveti, they extend their ontology of self-organizing materials and systems of “determinitorialization” and “stratification” to “geological concepts of material systems, i.e. physical, chemical, biological, neural and social,” and seek to experiment with “the flows of energy and matter, ideas and action – and the attendant attempts at binding them” (“Geophilosophies of Deleuze and Guattari” 2). Articulating their conceptualization of the plane of immanence in the chapter “Geophilosophy,” in *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari write:

‘The atom will traverse space with the speed of thought’ (qtd. Epicurus 22). The plane of immanence has two facets as Thought and as Nature, as *Nous* and *Physis*. That is why there are always many infinite movements caught within each other, each folded in the others, so that the return of one instantaneously relaunches another in such a way that the plane of immanence is ceaselessly being woven, like a gigantic shuttle. (38)

In other words, they envision “moving matter of a continuous variation,” not as a conceptualization of the transhuman, but as an ontology that is a connector of all assemblages, therefore deeply social as well (*A Thousand Plateaus* 340). Advancing that “corporeality” or “materiality” is inseparable from the “processes of deformation or
transformation that operate in a space-time” acting “in the manner of events,” they conceive of materiality as the movement and flow of “matter in variation that enters assemblages and leaves them” (407). Deleuze and Guattari’s “emphasis on the processual and metamorphic nature of materiality” determines immanence as the “generative process of ‘material bodies’ organizing themselves, creating new forms rather than by being molded into an organized form by an external force” (Cull, *Theatres of Immanence* 28-29). In the same way, they engage the geological (the earth) with the philosophical (society) in a proposition in which social fields are caught up as refrains that “are not only physical and mental but spiritual – not only relative but absolute in a sense yet to be determined” (*What is Philosophy?* 68). Thinking, then, is a processual relationship of what they describe as “two components with two zones of indiscernibility – deterritorialisation (from territory to the earth) and reterritorialisation (from earth to the territory). We cannot say which comes first” (*What is Philosophy?* 86).

The political issue of state power, discussed earlier, is inherent in Deleuze and Guattari’s analogy of the earth “constantly carr[y]ing out a movement of deterritorialization on the spot, by which it goes beyond any territory: it is deterritorializing and deterritorialized” (85). The earth, or what they call the body without organs, “constantly . . . flees and becomes destratified, decoded, deterritorialized” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 40), bringing all the elements together, and they gesture toward the process in the title of their chapter in *A Thousand Plateaus*, “The Geology of Morals,” where they ask, “Who Does the Earth Think It Is?” (39). Describing deterritorialization, they write:
Whether physical, psychological, or social, deterritorialization is relative insofar as it concerns the historical relationship of the earth with the territories that take shape and pass away on it, its geological relationship with eras and catastrophes, its astronomical relationship with the cosmos and the stellar system of which it is a part. But deterritorialization is absolute when the earth passes into the pure plane of immanence of a Being-thought, of a Nature-thought of infinite diagrammatic movements. Thinking consists in stretching out a plane of immanence that absorbs the earth (or rather ‘adsorbs’ it). Deterritorialization of such a plane does not preclude reterritorialization but posits it as the creation of a future new earth. (*What is Philosophy?* 88)

Going on to unfold their concepts of the three assemblages of immanence and escape – territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization – of “matter” [“unformed, unorganized, non-stratified”], “content” [“formed matters”] and “expression” [“functional structures”], forming compounds “form and substance” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 43), they argue the earth is a process of flows and forces that give rise to divergent molar and molecular forces, or strata, multiple phenomena (40-43), and “disparate earth processes” (Chisholm, “Rhizome”).

Their dramatization of capture and escape, I argue, depicts state capitalism in its various forms such as colonization, apartheid, postapartheid reconstruction and the current political corruption inherent in global capitalism that forms South Africa. For example, their conceptualization of processual organization characterizes strata as “instances of subjection” and “acts of capture” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 40) they call “phenomenon of accumulation, coagulation and sedimentation that, in order to extract useful labour from the BwO, imposes upon it forms, functions, bonds, dominant and hierarchized organised transcendencies” (159). The Deleuzo-Guattarian characterization of these acts of capture conjures up Boehmer’s notion of “numbering, branding” of the racially based striation that makes up the South African stratas of subjection, which I have discussed earlier. Geophilosophy is Deleuze’s affirmation that a “people is a
passage through the earth, not a rooting in the soil. It is the invention of a new collective, a revolution, with that difference that it does not ever desire a state” (Saldanha, *Space After Deleuze* 66). In other words, geophilosophy is not merely a brand or branch of philosophy, Deleuze contends, but an affirmative “placeholder for things we cannot yet do, things we hope to do, things that we have failed to do so far” (Hickey-Moody 1).

Thus, the theorization of geophilosophy offers an alternative space of thinking; a *minor* way of thinking that embraces such concepts as thought, the virtual, the refrain, deterritorialization and reterritorialization and haecceity. Deleuze and Guattari see the “subject” as one of “the three great strata,” alongside, “the organism” and “signifiance,” each one of which attaches to a different aspect of life: “the organism clings to the body” and “signifiance clings to the soul” (or unconscious), and subjectification to the conscious” as the judgement of God (*A Thousand Plateaus* 160). Hence, the subject is in tension with the coding and stratification of strata, with earth at the centre. About such organization, they warn:

> You will be organized, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body – otherwise you’re just depraved. You will be signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted – otherwise you’re just a deviant. You will be a subject, nailed down as one . . . otherwise you’re just a tramp. (159)

Instead, they urge tearing “the conscious away from the subject in order to make it a means of exploration, tearing the unconscious away from significance and interpretation in order to make it a veritable production” (160). Decolonizing geographers similarly argue for such a “tearing away,” contending decolonizing geography requires more than language or signification; it is about seeking “to reshape decolonial and postcolonial
imaginaries through constructions of race and gender which unfold across settler colonial, postcolonial, and other spaces” (de Leeuw and Hunt 5).

The Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of the virtual affords such an “immanent process for a non-hylomorphic (or self-organizing) thinking of matter” and “a force of creation and difference.” The reciprocal relationship between the virtual and the actual, and the infinite and the finite, is not a binary one, nor a transcendent realm above the actual, “but its very ground” from which “the actual is actualized.” Here, “objective entities,” or strata, such as “geological, biological and even social strata,” are always being composed of other objects in a process of selection or withdrawal in a process of evolution and development (DeLanda, History and Science 32). In other words, strata of all kinds “are caught up in each other” in the “dual movement of territorialities and deterritorialization” (Deleuze, Dialogues II 73). The non-discursive territorialization they call the “plane of content,” in relationship with deterritorialization, or “expressions, contents, states of things and utterances.” It is this processual movement, they argue, that forms the expression of qualities or “the plane of expression” or enunciation (Deleuze, Dialogues II 73). By enunciation, Deleuze does not refer to what he calls the “pseudoconstants of language” or “signifying content,” but the “variables of expression” that pertains to an assemblage in its entirety (A Thousand Plateaus 91). Such a flux of power, with its congruent processes of escape and capture, coding and overcoding, and constant tension with the molecular lines of flight toward assumption of an identitarian thinking body and social space, is the political project integral to Deleuze’s immanent concept of minorization. Enunciation is his idea of language not as signifier of control,
but as expression of creativity, immanence and deterritorialization (and I address the question of language further in this chapter and in Chapter 3).

What is important, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, is that there is “a collective assemblage of enunciation, a machinic assemblage of desire, one inside the other and both plugged into an immense outside that is a multiplicity in any case” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 23), which gestures toward the decentring that South African writers and theorists seem to be pursuing. As a strategy for establishing new concepts for African philosophy, for things *it* hopes to do, then, geophilosophy offers what Anna Hickey-Moody calls a philosophy that is “placeless and timeless, as without a people, even if some of the alternatives . . . are as flawed as the models they seek to replace” (1). As Mbembe has pointed out, “[r]ethinking Africa is at once a political, an ethico-moral, and an intellectual project,” which he sees as “a complex, irritating, and exhilarating enterprise” (“Africa in Theory” 660) of taking seriously “the task of historicizing institutions, practices and cultural repertoires,” as well as its “long-term sedimentation of experience” over time (656). Along lines of Fanon’s argument that “not only the land but also the mind must be decolonized” (Janz, “The Territory is Not the Map” 402), McKittrick points to the need to look at events that underline “the relativity of terrestrial space, the space of everyday life in all its scales from the global to the local and the architectural” (15). Echoing Massey, she says, “different layers of life and social landscape are sedimented onto and into each other,” and she draws on Neil Smith’s concept of “Deep space” to identify the immediacy, materiality and the power of space that is “crushingly real.” He says, deep space is “the *production* of space intensified and writ large, ideological and political shifts that impact upon and organize the everyday in
multiple contexts and scales,” that is from homes to factories and streets and
multinationals and military invasions, and so on (qtd. in McKittrick, Demonic Grounds
14-15).

Deleuze and Guattari’s insistence that thinking takes place in the relationship of
territory and earth that is not tied to a framework of inherited histories, but acknowledges
the enfolding of past, present and future in all dimensions of strata, presents a response to
McKittrick, as well as to Mbembe’s observation in his Wits speech that “humans are part
of a long, deep history that is simply not theirs.” Similarly, this thinking speaks to Janz’s
contention that “attending to the kind of refrains that typify African territories may yield
new forms of access to those refrains.” By generating the term ‘refrains’ here, Janz
insinuates the resonance of the African “oral tradition, the wisdom of the sages, proverbs
and sayings” (“The Territory is Not the Map” 402), reinforcing Mbembe’s statement that
Africa has much to teach the Western intellectual tradition. Such a protean assemblage of
relations reflects Deleuze’s notion of the body not as “a discrete entity defined by stable
boundaries and a set of fixed characteristics” (Bignall, “Affective Assemblages” 83), but
as a part of “the composition of its relation” (Deleuze, Expressionism in Philosophy 218-9)
that is ever “temporary and always shifting” in its encounters and interactions with
other parts in “its existential milieu” (Bignall 83). As well, geophilosophy’s generative
relational processes reflect what Colls describes as a nomadic feminist perception of life
that no longer perceives subject and object as “discrete entities,” but rather develops “an
account of a differentiated subject that is multiple in its constitution and location” (Colls
434); processes where sentences “space themselves out and disperse, or else jostle
together and co-exist” in narratives operating as a refrain (A Thousand Plateaus 23-24).
Geophilosophy also brings into greater perspective Janz’s discussion of African philosophical questions and concepts of philosophy and place, and similarly serves to illuminate Abrahams’s narratives of bodies in tension with the codifying monster of her legend. I suggest, it is in this sense Janz proposes in his concept of philosophy-in-place: “Freedom means to bring something new into reality . . . to actualize a virtuality” (“Free Space in the Academy” 6). These ideas with respect to the entanglement of bodies (subjectivities) and space bring an immanent spatial political dimension to Deleuze’s ontology for theatre in South Africa, where, as Coetzee points out, subjectivities and literatures have been stunted by the frameworks South Africa is trying to escape.

The foregoing consideration of the assemblage’s dynamic of content and enunciation reveals how language plays a co-functioning role in the symbiotic processes of the Deleuzian ontological paradigm and provides a conceptual bridge that endows liaisons and relations to minoritarian theatre. Given its investment in the issue of identity and power dynamics, then, language is a seminal issue in South African theatre discourse from one perspective or another, extending beyond indigenous performance and European theatrical forms. For, as Richa Nagar contends, “language resides at the core of any struggle that seeks to decolonize and reconfigure the agendas, mechanics, and purposes of knowledge production” (“Languages of Collaboration” 120). Therefore, I discuss the notion of linguistic production of knowledge before moving on to explore the other ways that meaning is made in minor theatre.
6. **Language: the “collective assemblage of enunciation.”**

Deleuze and Guattari argue the “interpretation of language and the social field and political problems lies at the deepest level of the abstract machine, not at the surface” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 91). In other words, the language-function itself is “neither informational nor communicational,” but is the “transmission of order-words,” in coextensive relation to “the linguistic-system” and “to language as a whole” (85); “majority” assumes “a state of power and domination” in its “constant, of expression or content” (105). The enunciation of the collective assemblage, with its “variables of expression, immanent acts, or incorporeal transformations,” confronts the constancy of language (85), echoing the tension of power (the process of overcoding) raised earlier in the discussion of body and society. Thus, they say, language becomes a new form of expression or the “temporal linearity of language expression” (62). Asking whether a distinction should be “made between two kinds of languages,” ‘high’ or ‘major’ [“the power (*pouvoir*) of constants”] and ‘low’ or ‘minor’ [“the power (*puissance*) of variation”], they abandon the opposition between the majority language and the minority. Instead, they consider each language to be a multiplicity of dialects, each dialect with “a zone of transition and variation; or better, each minor language has a properly dialectical zone of variation” (101). What is tedious, even “exhausting,” about the current “language of words,” Deleuze says, “is the way it is burdened with calculations, memories and stories: it can’t help itself,” and he proposes a new language, “which is neither that of names or of voices, but that of images, sounding, coloring” (“The Exhausted” 9). In this way, he conceives “minor languages as languages of continuous variability” (“One Less Manifesto” 244). The “becoming-minor of the major language” is a language “of
becoming” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 104), where “[e]verything remains, but under a new light with new sounds and new gestures” (“One Less Manifesto” 245). In other words, instead of “structural constancy and homogeneity,” a minor language “finds its *rules* in the construction of a continuum” (244).

The “deterritorialization of language,” or the “connection of the individual to a political immediacy” in a “collective assemblage of enunciation,” Deleuze says, produces a concentrated space of political engagement in which the individual is able to find “his own point of underdevelopment, his own *patois*, his own third world, his own desert” (*Toward a Minor Literature* 18). The urge for a new language that shapes a new consciousness is an idea particularly pertinent to *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, where voices are disrupted and multi-layered. The play recalibrates the TRC narratives that are “burdened with calculations, memories and stories,” using puppets to provide the multivocal effect of translation during the hearings (English and Zulu), creating “a medium through which the testimony can be heard” (xi). PA and MA UBU, played by human actors, contrast the puppet witnesses whose stories are complex, with over-layering of languages and disembodied narratives as the puppeteers both speak and translate the stories for their puppets. Taylor adds that the puppets “provide an extraordinary dimension to a theatrical project of this kind,” drawing attention to “its own artifice” (vii) and dramatizing “the ruptures and displacements of the testimonies” (Graham 16). The production’s cacophony of actors, puppets, and a large video screen at the back of the stage as the site for projections of the TRC judge and montages of Kentridge’s

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17 My analysis of *Ubu and the Truth Commission* throughout is drawn in part from my earlier article, “A Community of Storytellers” published in *The Journal of Contemporary Drama in English*, vol. 4, no.2, November 2016, pp.335-353. doi: [10.1515/jcde-2016-0026](https://doi.org/10.1515/jcde-2016-0026)
illustrations, cartoon characters, and true photographs of the horrific historical incidents of apartheid brutality, produce a further fracturing of narrative, evocative of Deleuze’s “images, sounding and colouring” (Deleuze, “The Exhausted” 9).

Their disrupted and multi-layered voices epitomize Deleuze’s new language that he calls *langue III*, which he describes as having

immanent limits that never cease to move about—hiatuses, holes or tears you couldn't account for, attributing them to simple tiredness, if they didn't expand suddenly to welcome something coming from outside or elsewhere . . . This something seen or heard is called Image, visual or aural, provided it is liberated from the chains it was kept in by the other two languages. (“The Exhausted” 8)

Hence, minor languages are not oppositional or negative, or diminished in relation to the major, or “standard” language or by “reterritorializing oneself on a dialect or patois” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 104). In *Ubu*, Taylor says they chose to tell these stories with UBU as the protagonist because “Ubu’s story is, at one level, a singular story of individual pathology; yet it is at the same time an exemplary account of the relationships between capitalist ideology, imperialism, race, class and gender, religion and modernisation in the southern African sub-region” (vi). Thus, Taylor and Kentridge enlist and release positive processes to transform the major language “into their own language” suggestive of *langue III*.

Language with its inherent power, Janz points out, is a central concern in African philosophy; as “not simply a repository of concepts,” or languages that are “interchangeable,” but as deserving of the question: “What difference a different language makes?” (*Philosophy in an African Place* 159). The important issue, he says, is “what is done with the language, who spoke it, was it used for critique?” thus, “what language makes possible” (158). Further, he refers to a debate between varying views on
how to open up the potential of discussing language, not as an object in the Western sense, but “as a way of being,” with some African philosophers calling for a “close analysis of African languages,” while others seek to transcend the “specificity of various theories of metaphysics or epistemology” they consider this theory represents (159). Janz suggests there is a third way of thinking about language at the topemic level, defining “topemic” as “a place constructed from questions that range over a wide geographical and cultural range rather than a more narrow range,” signaling Deleuze’s “expressivity of a stratum.” However, he also acknowledges the difficulty of this strategy due to the demand for translation, given the number of African languages operating at all levels, and the importance placed on “the link between language and thought” (160-161). As noted in Chapter 1, Mbembe likewise identifies this sense of what he calls the inherent communion of the African world and language. In African traditions, he says, “the general process of communication, the making of public statements, thinking, were performed in a context where the language was not written.” Rather, “the writings of things and the world” were conveyed through masks, carvings, and the spoken word in particular. “It was from language acts that a critical tradition was constituted,” he points out, which “was transmitted over time and space, recited in public and pondered in private” (*Postcolony* 144). I return to the question of language in the context of South African theatre further in Chapters 3 and 4.

I turn now to the theatre by extending beyond language to other ways of making meaning to investigate how Deleuze’s affirmative minoritarian ontological and material conceptualizations can galvanize the imagination and practice of South African theatre, whose milieu, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, is overlaid with the binary practices of
western philosophy and theatre criticism that Deleuze renounces. As a new way of
approaching theatre practice and criticism, I propose minor theatre as a source of power
of thought; as a dynamic process of production to create an immanent theatre that is non-
representational and non-transcendental in order to “rethink ethico-political concerns on
the level of difference and process.”

7. Theatres of “flux and flow and variation of all matter”

The assemblage of concepts examined heretofore converge in Deleuze’s proposition
of minor theatre. By eschewing the transcendental, representational theatre he considers
equates moralizing judgement, he proposes instead the ethics of immanence by “do[ing]
away with *moralizing* codes of conduct, in favour of an *ethics* able to affirm the
experimental nature of real encounter between particular bodies” (Cull, “Philosophy as
Drama” 505). Cull defines immanence etymologically as “to dwell within” or “inherent”
(*Theatres of Immanence* 6), and her description of Deleuze’s conceptualization of
immanence captures the dynamic relationship of “participation, multiplication and
extension of the human body” as processes of production in “relations of force and
encounters with the affects of other bodies” (10). As will be recognized, these relational
processes have been the refrain throughout the concepts I have been exploring. By
thinking through the processes of the two concepts of ethics and politics intersecting,
contesting and operating “on the molecular level of affect as well as on the molar level of
organizations, political bodies and so forth” (19), Deleuze is engaging his philosophical
concept of repetition, creating a theatre of repetition, which he argues is “our true theatre”
(*Difference and Repetition* 10). He is not suggesting “losing sight of ‘the human’ as it
disappears into ‘a world of intensity flows,’” Cull clarifies, but instead proposes an
affirmative and ethical “sense of humanness as an open quality: as an alterable and perpetually altering set of powers to act and be acted upon by other nonhuman bodies” (Theatres of Immanence 10). The Deleuzian conceptualization of immanence, or as he calls it “Pure immanence,” David Fancy says, is influenced by Spinoza’s question about the potentiality of the body, “What can a body do?” advancing that immanence “requires as a principle the equality of being . . . seen to be equally present in all things” (Deleuze, Expressionism in Philosophy 173, qtd. in “Geoperformativity” 65).

This understanding of an embodied experience is the crux of the Deleuzian notion that the encounter of philosophy and performance is a process of thinking, which Cull believes allows new ideas not yet encountered to be created to provide “materialist philosophies” for theatre and performance practice. It allows us to “rethink performance itself as a kind of philosophy,” with its own “kind of thinking,” she says (“Performance as Philosophy” 21), instead of applying philosophy to performance as a “philosophy of drama” which tends to reproduce hierarchical structuring of thought and knowledge (“Philosophy as Drama” 501). Drama is philosophical not only because of its texts or the philosophical ideas expressed in their narratives and plots, she maintains, but because “of its performative dimensions,” which “include the performative force of its language but also its gestures, affects, spatio-temporal properties, the creative work of the actor, and so forth” (503). By defining “thought as creation,” Cull points out, Deleuze “allows us to suggest that everything thinks – including the nonhuman aspects of performance – because every ‘thing’ is immanent to the creativity of life, an expression of how life

18 Deleuze expands on the notion in Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life, writing, “immanence is a life rather than my life or the life of Deleuze; it is life as preceded by the indefinite article as an index of the transcendental but not of transcendence” (28).
thinks itself in and as the creation of different ‘things’” (Theatres of Immanence 4). In other words, by “conjoining performance and philosophy,” Deleuze envisions a “mutually transformative” embodied encounter to generate new ideas of identity construction (“Performance as Philosophy” 25). In Cull’s argument for the Deleuzian process for thinking, rather than applying, explored in Chapter 1, I see echoes of the feminists’ argument for employing Deleuze as an approach to subjectivity in order to avoid oppositional or representational paradigms, which I referred to earlier. Similarly, there is an accordance with Mbembe’s observation that in African aesthetics, “to think critically is to work with the fault lines, to feel the chaotic touch of our senses, to bring the compositional logics of our world to language” (“The Value of Africa’s Aesthetics”), which gestures toward Deleuze’s notion of a “place where intuition, instead of constraining itself to language, can experiment in expression” (Deleuze, The New Nietzsche 143-44).

Although Deleuze is not considered to have written as extensively about theatre as he does about other art forms, for example art, film and literature, he situates theatre at the centre of his philosophical thinking. Foucault referred to his philosophy as a “theatrum philosophicum,” and Flore Garcin-Marrou points out theatre is everywhere present in his writing, despite the fact that in L’Abécédaire he expresses little patience for theatre. He protests, “Theatre is too long, and too disciplined . . . an art that remains entrenched in the present and in daily issues, while never advancing beyond dimensions of the present.” He further advances this sense of stasis, grumbling, “To stay for hours sitting in an uncomfortable armchair, I cannot do this anymore. That alone destroys theatre for me” (Garcin-Marrou 1). Cull goes even further to state that in Cinema 2,
Deleuze “claimed not to enjoy the actual experience of going to the theatre (nor to find it as likely to provide the ‘shock to thought,’ he experienced more readily in relation to painting, literature, and music)” (“Philosophy as Drama” 506). On the other hand, she notes, while “Deleuze does not give dramas and dramatists the same degree of extended attention as he gives to other art forms,” he nonetheless touches on a wide range of drama from Ancient Greece to contemporary drama (504).

In recognizing theatre as a source of power of thought, Deleuze views “dramatization” as “the movement from the virtual to the actual, or the intensive to the extensive,” where “things” emerge as distinct entities, as an event prior to things. Or, as he puts it in his essay “Method of Dramatization,” drama involves processes of “dynamic spatiotemporal determinations, that are pre-qualitative and pre-extensive” (108). Thus, Cull emphasizes, what is critical for Deleuze is “the absolute condition of non-resemblance” (100). Namely, he argues that we can account for how things (“difference specifies or types”) come into being without being grounded in a given identity, which “would limit dramatization to a system of representation” (Cull, “Philosophy as Drama” 513). Indeed, in Anti-Oedipus Deleuze points to representational theatre’s tendency to signification, proclaiming, “Shit on your whole mortifying, imaginary, and symbolic theater” (334). On the other hand, Fancy notes, for Deleuze, theatre of repetition – or immanent theatre – is non-representation, and “moves beyond what he perceives to be a traditional philosophical reliance on mimesis, privileging instead ‘affect’ and ‘becoming’ as key performative processes” (“Geoperformativity” 62). Thus, in denouncing “any form of mimesis, or imitation,” Deleuze determines it is the process that is important; a topology of transformation, a process of continuity, variation, bounded by static forms at
its beginning and end, and stopping at various points along the way that Massumi describes as “the dynamic unity of movement and sensation” (Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual* 16). Again, I see a corresponding alignment with Mbembe’s critique of representation, or as he puts it “image,” that he sees as “never an exact copy of reality, but “a visible code that becomes, in turn, a manner of speaking of the world and inhabiting it” (*Postcolon* 142).

Also fundamental to Deleuze’s approach to art is the notion of sensation as the “melodic landscapes” (explored earlier) that run as a refrain throughout his ontology in counterpoint to the forms of “territorial motifs” of “rhythmic faces or characters” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 318). Deleuze develops his logic of sensation in *Francis Bacon: the Logic of Sensation*, and, like many of his philosophical concepts as already observed, he draws on biology. Tom Conley explains that sensation consists of the two constituents of ‘percept’ and ‘affect’ (247); percepts are the “*nonhuman landscapes of nature,*” which are inseparable from affects, the “*nonhuman becomings of man*” (*What is Philosophy?* 169). Deleuze describes the process as a “relay,” which takes place at “the threshold of sense,” before cognition and significance. It is never fixed in time and space, but is “something that inheres in its being and its duration” (Conley, “Sensation” 248), and when complete “always has effects that go beyond it” (*Bacon* 111, qtd. in Slack 139). In the body’s encounter with other bodies and the becomings they bring about, Deleuze anticipates a rhythm that gives rise to “new areas of sensation – new colours, noises, rhythms, odours, textures, longings, desires, practices, feelings, beliefs, gestures and knowledges.” In other words, he envisions “new ways to appreciate life and new ways to live” (140). In contrast to the notion of the landscape amplifying the process of coding
and decoding through facialization’s signifying and subjectivation, sensation lies between subject and object in the process of becomings, interacting with the landscape as a “dyad of rhythmic characters and melodic landscapes” (Bogue, “The Landscape of Sensation” 16). Inherent in this immanent approach is Deleuze’s preoccupation with the “intensive’ qualities of space” (Conley, “Space” 262), explored earlier, in relation to our self and others in “the self-production of one’s subjectivity” (O’Sullivan, “Fold” 107). He argues that “the outside is not a fixed limit but a moving matter animated by peristaltic movement, folds and foldings that together make up an inside: they are not something other than the outside, but precisely the inside of the outside” (Foucault 96-96).

The embodied narrative of Abrahams’ *What the Water Gave Me* is suggestive of just such a Deleuzian process. For Deleuze and Guattari, water is smooth space, and the sea, they say, is “a smooth space par excellence, [which] . . . was the first to encounter the demands of [the] increasingly strict striation” of the colonial project (*A Thousand Plateaus* 480). In this smooth space, Abrahams’ enunciations and subjectivities emerge with the refrain of water as a matter of relation and connection between the narratives and their spaces. Along the same line of thinking, in “Water and Gestationality: What Flows beneath Ethics,” Chandler and Neimanis suggest “the substance and the semiotics of water are deeply entangled” (location 366). We are all comprised of water, they say, “and [w]e, like all other entities, leak into and siphon from one another in response to our environment – that is, in response to all the other bodies that affect us” (loc. 1559). They propose that “thinking along with Deleuze allows us to conceptualize material sociality as a mode of relation and response in both the human and more-than-human realms.” I am drawn to their argument for water as a gestational milieu, particularly the proposition that
water provides the creative and connective capacity to create the visceral experience of transformation placed or “embodied in specific materialities and space times” (loc. 371). In line with their hypothesis, Abrahams’ theatre space speaks to the Deleuzian smooth space of multiplicity, immanence and deterritorialization – in other words, the unconstructed spaces that challenge the striated spaces of the State and power.

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze continues to develop his thinking on the origins of the theatre without representation within philosophy, exemplified by Nietzsche and Kierkegaard whom he regards, “invent an incredible equivalent of theatre within philosophy, thereby founding simultaneously this theatre of the future and a new philosophy” (8). By their so doing, Deleuze asserts, citing Artaud, they not only found a new philosophy, but a “‘restless space’ or movement of turning and wounding gravitation capable of directly affecting the organism, a pure staging without author, without actors and without subjects.” Of course, there are authors, actors and audience, he acknowledges, but he asserts “these are larvae, since they alone are capable of sustaining the lines, the slippages and the rotations” (219), and in the process of becoming larvae they allow the theatre to manifest itself as a non-representational movement that forces thought. He says Nietzsche and Kierkegaard insist that “movement is at issue.”

They want to put metaphysics in motion, in action. They want to make it act, and make it carry out immediate acts. It is not enough, therefore, for them to propose a new representation of movement; representation is already mediation. Rather, it is a question of producing within the work a movement capable of affecting the mind outside of all representation; it is a question of making movement itself a work, without interposition; of substituting direct signs for mediate representations; of inventing vibrations, rotations, whirlings, gravitations, dances or leaps which directly touch the mind. (8)

Theatre, then, he posits, is “real movement, and it extracts real movement from all the arts it employs . . . this movement, the essence and the interiority of movement, is not
opposition, not mediation, but repetition” (10), where every concept and its potentialities is the result of what Deleuze calls the “spatio-temporal dynamisms that dramatize and actualise the Idea” (Abdulla 20). He contends, pace Nietzsche: “Only contemplation or the mind which contemplates from without ‘extracts’” in a manner of acting, liberating “the will from everything which binds it by making repetition the very object of willing.” He goes on to criticize Kant, Husserl and Hegel for creating a “false theatre, a false drama, a false movement” of repetition,” arguing their approach results in a restrictive, false foundationalism (Difference and Repetition 10).

Hence, he elaborates “a theatre of problems and always open questions which draw spectator, setting and character into the real movement of an apprenticeship of the entire unconscious” (192). Such processes Deleuze considers essential to avoid lapsing into transcendental idealism and unquestioned assumptions that “block potential new arrangements of subjectivities . . . from being thought and lived” (Fancy, “A Sacred Affirmation” 77). Fancy points out that Deleuze considers true transcendental empiricism comes from commitment to “reaching into the ‘outside’ of the materials comprising the sensible with a view to understanding how consciousness and representation emerge from them via a kind of action” (77). Thus for Deleuze, affirmation is “the perpetually generative aspect of immanent systems that affirms difference in the face of transcendence and its reliance on supposed metaphysical fixities.” He calls for a performance philosophy that “directly affects the body,” (74) presenting “the brutal form of the immediate, that of the universal and the singular reunited, which dethrones every general law, dissolves the mediations and annihilates the particulars subjected to the law” (Difference and Repetition 7).
Advancing these ideas further in *The Logic of Sense* and in *Anti-Oedipus*, in collaboration with Guattari, Deleuze draws on Artaud’s vision of “theatre and its double, of philosophic theatre, of the theatre of the future, of the theatre of worship (a term borrowed from Kierkegaard),” advancing Artaud’s notion that “the unconscious does not constitute a theatre, like antique tragedy, but rather a factory – a production machine” (Garcin-Marrou 2). In his much cited *The Theatre and its Double*, Artaud also searches for a way to “break through language in order to touch life . . . to create or recreate the theatre,” through a nonrepresentational theatre. He seeks a “language to express its manifestations” and subvert the hierarchy of conventional theatre that is “confined to a fixed language and form” (13). I have already discussed the issue of language in this chapter, and it is a refrain that recurs in Chapter 3 where I expand on the notion of generative theatre I have been discussing. Artaud’s concept of language and body, the body without organs, originates in his 1947 radio play, *To Have Done with the Judgment of God*, in which he envisions what Cull calls a “nonrepresentative force” or “differential presence” (“How Do You Make a Theatre Without Organs” 244):

> When you will have made him a body without organs, then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions and restored him to his true freedom. Then you will teach him again to dance wrong side out as in the frenzy of dance halls and this wrong side out will be his real place. (Artaud, *To Have Done with the Judgement of God*, conclusion)

Cull remarks that in conceptualizing the process of the desiring machine and deterritorialization and enunciation Artaud gestures toward, Deleuze joins Nietzsche and Kierkegaard as “m[e]n of the theatre” (*Difference and Repetition* 9), because “he too
dedicated himself (as a director might) to the highest theatrical problem of how to create ‘a movement which would directly touch the soul’” (*Deleuze and Performance* 6-7).

7.1. A Case Study: *Ubu and the Truth Commission*\(^{19}\)

I would like to inject *Ubu and the Truth Commission* as a case study for the foregoing discussion. With *Ubu*, I argue, Taylor and Kentridge create a theatre space in which to engage the ethico-political concerns of the contesting molecular and molar of minor theatre by complicating the TRC testimonies that I explored earlier. Set in a clearly determined time and space of the present, yet which constantly seems to be slipping into past and uncertain future spaces, the montage of actors, puppets and multimedia fragments are reminders of the reality underpinning the narratives, juxtaposed with the remembered stories told by the perpetrators and victims of apartheid at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Taylor and Kentridge seek to disrupt the telling of their stories, creating new assemblages that implicate Deleuzian ‘lines of flight,’ where layers of histories, memories, and retellings penetrate into spaces of desire and peripheries or planes of consistency (viz. plane of immanence or BwO), emerging with imagined vocabularies of meaning that create in the audience – in the listener and thinker – a critical understanding; perhaps evoking Wolfgang Iser’s notion of “entanglement” of the past we know and the unfamiliar that provokes our imaginations and challenges our previous experiences (132).

\(^{19}\) *Ubu and the Truth Commission*. Handspring Puppet Theatre production video. 
As Janni Younge, a former director of Handspring who worked on the *Ubu* production, contends: “Spatial relationships between objects and between objects and performers on stage, create powerful visual indicators of dynamics and therefore meanings. The live relationship between performers, objects or puppets and perceivers within space and time, distinguishes puppet theatre from other forms of artistic expressions” (*Hanspring Puppet Company Book 7*). Handspring’s articulation of the history and practice of puppetry, Younge says, “easily allows the theatre maker to create dynamics between people and aspects of themselves.” She argues this is not just a question of “the complexity of emotional and intellectual response to circumstances but rather the complex response to the ‘self’ as a conceptual construct” (5). Kentridge considers it is easier to break away “from naturalism . . . with puppets than with fancy costumes or actors” (Davis and Fuchs 148). Artaud describes a similar response to the artifice of puppets; in his case, his experience of puppets in Balinese theatre, of which he says: “the sudden appearance of a fabricated Being, made of wood and cloth, entirely invented, corresponding to nothing, yet disquieting by nature, capable of reintroducing on the stage a little breath of that great metaphysical fear which is at the root of all ancient theater” (44). Whilst he might be criticized for falling in with the practice of exoticizing other practices, I suggest he speaks to the consciousness that Mda seeks and embraces in the potentiality of engagement with pre-colonial theatre practices. In fact, South African puppetry has a long tradition that predates colonialism, with religious and spiritual contexts, which Adrian Kohler of Handspring sees as tremendous potential for “social transformation.”
Contrasting the puppets, are the human bodies of the actors who play PA and MA UBU. PA UBU is depicted by using a burlesque style; his presence onstage is corporeal. Dressed throughout the play in his underwear, he lays bare his venality, hypocrisy, absurdity – as well as his vulnerability. His actions are extravagant, dominating the stage. His deeds are re-lived at night and he washes off the blood and bones in the shower and shreds the incriminating evidence. In portraying the washing away of deeds, Kentridge applies the palimpsest strategy he has developed for his charcoal drawings; in the play erasing and redrawing the lines in a theatrical layering and over-layering and re-layering of the stories, memories and actions by using competing media. As the puppet witnesses appear on the stage, their carved wooden faces and gracefully moving forms create dignified persona, “metaphors for humanity,” whose gravity is etched into their faces (Jones and Kohler xvii). Their stories are recited by the puppeteers, with the translator brightly lit up in the translation booth/UBU’s shower stall, in which we later see him desperately washing away the traces of his deeds of the previous night in an ironic juxtaposition of the deeds and memories, past and present. For all their presence on stage at the same time, PA and MA UBU don’t appear to see the puppets, conjuring up the colonizers’ failure to recognize the depth and breadth of colonized bodies and spaces. Rather, in their ignorance of the witness figures, the two characters become the foils for the testimonies. For Kentridge, the body of PA UBU “became an undulating landscape, a small rise in the ground behind which the witness spoke,” which created, he says, a “series of wholly unexpected meanings” (xii). In contrast to PA UBU’s corporeality, the secondary characters in the play (in addition to the witnesses) seem disembodied, appearing as animal puppet characters, such as the three headed dog BRUTUS who is PA
UBU ’s henchman; or perhaps henchmen, given that the three heads – named HEAD 1, 2 and 3 – each talk and each head has its own puppeteer. Then, there is a crocodile named NILES, created from a large canvas bag, whom his puppeteer calls UBU’s “pet advisor and cover-up man, using his big mouth as the shredder of UBU’s evidence” (xvi); evidence that only surfaces again, remade to bear witness against him.

The most farcical scenes are between PA UBU and MA UBU, who suspects that PA’s nights are being spent with other women. His interaction with MA UBU is lewd and bawdy. The scenes of her increasing suspicion and PA UBU’s vehement denial become a satirical discourse on guilt and truth, coinciding with PA UBU’s increasing paranoia about the TRC. As the play progresses, he appears diminished, while MA UBU takes on an omnipotent presence on a large video screen revealing his secrets. Terrified of having to admit to his crimes, he says to NILES: “O, Niles, such a vision I had. I saw the Great Truth approaching, a rope in its hand. It demanded I speak of the truth of our land” (17). Throughout the action, a vulture puppet, symbol of death, sits watching, acting as the chorus and strategically squawking out what his puppeteer describes as “sardonic commentary […] interpreted on the screen as proverbs” (xvi). The sense of disembodiment created by the puppets and actors, is emphasized by Kentridge’s illustrations, cartoon characters, and news photographs of apartheid brutality. For Taylor, the figure of UBU demonstrates the shocking “failure of moral imagination” revealed in the stories at the TRC. While she sees the character as universally representing “an aspect, a tendency, an excuse” (iv), his actions, and self-pitying justifications for them, can be recognized easily as representations of actual individual perpetrators: for instance,
Eugene de Kock and Dirk Coetzee who were tried at the TRC.\textsuperscript{20} As PA UBU gives his testimony in Afrikaans, he successfully deflects his actions on to BRUTUS, who is condemned by the judge to a sentence that echoes the one handed down to deKock:

\begin{quote}
JUDGE: In the matter of the state versus Brutus, Brutus, and Brutus […] Finally, to the dog who allowed himself to become the agent of these ghastly deeds: you have been identified by the families of the victims; you have left traces of your activities everywhere. We thus sentence you to two hundred and twelve years imprisonment. (63)
\end{quote}

Both de Kock and BRUTUS become the scapegoat for the collective responsibility of the apartheid culture, while PA and MA UBU sail off at the end of the play, in a sense of oblivion, into a new future.

Subverting the TRC’s formal legal framework, \textit{Ubu and the Truth Commission’s} affective manifestation of institutionalized violence dislocates the voices, translations and bodies of the witnesses and the perpetrators, casting them across multiple levels, enfolding and disrupting the strata of histories and memories. Thus, I argue they evoke a theatre of emergence and a space of immanence, eschewing mimesis or imitation or form, and above all, is not transcendent. Overturning the potential of transcendence, in the final scene as they are sailing away, PA says: “We are moving at an almost miraculous speed, I say, our mother, the wind is rather refreshing. I hope we don’t capsize” (71), while NILES, the crocodile, comes swimming up to the boat. As he gets on board, he brings a reminder of his bag-full of secrets and lies – UBU cannot escape. To which the vulture squawks, accompanied by the nonsensical words on screen that capture the absurdity of the situation: “My slice of old cheese and your loaf of fresh bread will make a tolerable

\textsuperscript{20} Eugene de Kock is the subject of the book by Pumla Gobodo Madikizela, \textit{A Human Being Died That Night}, and Dirk Coetzee’s testimony is told in Antje Krog’s \textit{Country of my Skull}. Krog is credited with TRC research for \textit{Ubu and the Truth Commission}. 

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meal” (73). Through *Ubu*, I suggest, Taylor and Kentridge create in the legacy of apartheid’s spatial and corporeal structures (and striations), a Deleuzian “restless space”; an immanent process indicative of Massumi’s ‘dynamic’ process of transformation, continuity and variation, and of minoritarian potentiality.

8. **A Conversation: “a set of relays from one theoretical point to another”**

   Before moving into the next chapter, I would like to regroup and briefly critique the conceptualization of minor theatre explored here. I engage a relay of principles that reassert and illustrate the way in which Deleuze’s immanentist approach distinguishes itself from other theoretical approaches to the space of theatre as the site to think differently and break from traditional identitarian discourses. In particular, in her search for a “braver theatre” that resists the status quo, recognizes our, and theatre’s, inherent emplacement in space, and has a political outcome, Tompkins’ theory of theatre’s heterotopias, raises many attractive concepts for a study such as this one. She shares Cull’s pursuit to avoid the hierarchical structuring of thought and knowledge in theatre critical practice, and argues a heterotopic theorization is a means to identify the gaps and absences that emerge in many theatre studies, and to understand, change and foster an “audience’s understanding of the relationship between the theatre and the world outside its walls” (*Theatre’s Heterotopias* 27). Focusing on “the often subliminal spatial ways in which theatre can make us think, rather than on plot, corporeality, or other elements of performance” (3), an approach she considers lacking, she suggests spatial aspects provide a more fundamental basis for “reimagining” than other elements, such as language. She builds her theory on Foucault’s concept of heterotopia, which stems from his preoccupation with the spatial ordering of power and knowledge, and her proposition is
worthy of substantive exploration for the way she illustrates the importance of implicating the role of theatre space in theatre criticism. Her study also affords an investigation of the intellectual exchanges between Deleuze and Foucault, through which persists the pertinent question: “Who exercises power?” (Deleuze, “Intellectuals and Power”).

In “Of Other Spaces,” Foucault conceives heterotopias as contesting “the space in which we live” (4), destabilizing or unsettling received knowledge by juxtaposing in a single real place “several spaces that are in themselves incompatible” and changeable (6). He considers theatre space as the ideal heterotopic space of the differing site positions he envisions, insofar as it “brings into the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another” (6). Tompkins regards his concept as offering a means for “a deeper exploration of the structures of power and knowledge” (Theatre’s Heterotopias 5) to better understand “the concrete space(s) of both theatre and its social context, not to mention the performative relationship between them” (38); expressly, as an alternative way of engaging with “the actual and imaginary landscapes of performance” (2). In this way, she sees heterotopia offering a potential site of resistance that “capitalizes on the socio-cultural instabilities that an awareness of spatiality reveals,” (180) not by providing answers, but by rehearsing “the possibilities of something else, something beyond that which the theatrical art form generates” (emphasis mine, 3). She extends Foucault’s initial framing, building on Kevin Hetherington’s notion that heterotopias’ unsettling spaces are not only sites of “‘ambivalence and uncertainty’” (180), but are also “‘thresholds that symbolically mark not only the boundaries of a society but its values and beliefs as well’” (Hetherington, Badlands 49 qtd. 180). His
understanding of unsettling “as not quite oppositional,” she suggests, offers a more metaphorical and complex exploration of an alternative dimension to spatiality than Foucault’s “more categorical examples” (Theatre’s Heterotopias 24). Rather, he brings a more effective reflection of heterotopia’s “precariousness and impermanence” (180), whose power is derived from “being read against a context of a real or actual world” (25).

Tompkins’ methodology is to define the elements of a production that contribute to a heterotopic reading of theatre, for example the physical location, the company and venues, the community, and the “fictional space(s)/place(s) of selected theatre productions which attempt to elicit a response from an audience that encompasses more than ‘mere’ applause at their conclusion” (11). Her approach recognizes that we are heavily implicated in space (7), and offers the capacity to reveal structures of power and knowledge by drawing attention in the staging “to the possibility of simultaneous occupation of the land, since both parties take up space on the same stage” (2). Here I should point out that the notion of the literal, physical, spatiality of theatre stages raises crucial questions for how South African audiences see and participate in the spaces of theatre, which I examine in Chapters 3 and 4 where I explore the material logistics of theatrical spaces, as well as consider the concept of a nomadic theatre of “traversed images and stories . . . as minor and major performances transmute into one another” (Kuppers 1).

While Tompkins raises valuable issues around spatial questions, there are areas of theatre critique that are not included in her proposed heterotopic theory. Noting Foucault’s observation that “heterotopias are most often linked to slices of time” and that
“it is not possible to disregard the fatal intersection of time with space” ("Of Other Spaces” 6), she acknowledges that to be heterotopic, a production needs to be able not only to look back, but to experiment with the present and future as well, thereby raising issues not just of space but also of temporality. Admitting there is scope for giving more attention to “the communicating capacity of time in relation to spatiality” (Theatre’s Heterotopias 178), she nonetheless deliberately focuses on the spatial aspects of performance over the temporal; not to discount the significant matter of time, she says, but simply to narrow a large project. Along the same lines, she allows that the theatre is equally concerned with the body, noting Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s insistence “that there would be no space without body”; however, again, she offers that “the connections between space and time and corporeality” would be fruitful for another discussion (13).

Tompkins similarly recognizes her study’s concentration on western theatre and performance, suggesting that while the heterotopic “concept extends beyond the western framework,” (13), it demands further study that goes beyond the scope of her current analysis. And here it should be noted that Hetherington centres his own study in England and France (Saldanha 2091). Her exclusive western focus is problematic when considering theatre space (as I do in this study) in a milieu in which theatre theory and practice has been dominated by Soyinka’s western “cast of mind” and “superstructure of analytical modes,” referred to earlier (38). In searching for a theory to eschew the hierarchical frameworks, as Tompkins aims to do, it would seem essential to consider such a western cast as being implicated in those frameworks, and also to engage the decolonizing geographies, explored earlier.
While Tompkins develops the notion of heterotopia further than Foucault’s initial concept, I ask whether, to echo Deleuze’s comment about representational theatre, her ideas “push the ‘critique’ far enough” to shed the structuralism that he sees as inherent in Foucault’s heterotopia? (“One Less Manifesto” 252). I argue that central to the difference between an immanent intensive process and Tompkins’ theatre of heterotopia is Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the overlapping of physical, symbolic and material and the relations of body, time and space, which rethinks subjectivity and spatiality to escape the framework of existing traditional structures (such as those identified by Mbembe and Grosz). Two differing observations on the usefulness of heterotopography as a form of critique or intervention amplify this discussion. Angharad Beckett et al share Tompkins’ reading of heterotopia as “spaces where norms are transgressed,” suggesting Deleuze and Guattari might support such a concept (172).²¹ They argue that if heterotopias are spaces of resistance practices and transformative spaces producing new subjectivity, then Deleuze and Guattari’s spatial logic of smooth spaces filled by “event and haecceities” and striated, situated spaces of organized matter (A Thousand Plateaus 479), aligns with Foucault’s notion of transforming space “spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definite way,” (Beckett et al 174). Further, they argue that Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization of nomadic spaces, “unconstrained by systems of organization” (174), is close to what Foucault had in mind “as just such transgressive spaces where it is possible to think differently, be differently, and thus engage in the work of freedom” (174). My argument with this reading of

²¹ Foucault’s proposition is that heterotopia is a tool for understanding “how a tear, or a rupture in this order of things emerges, how resistance towards the normalizing rationales” of these structures occurs (Beckett et al 172).
Deleuze and Guattari is that it fails to capture the protean nature of the power relations that lie at the centre of the assemblage, which, as examined earlier, is not conceived of as an arrangement or organization, but as multiplicities of lines and speed, intensities and flows, and different levels of stratum; where the body is not a discrete “entity” defined by stable boundaries and fixed characteristics, but defined by relations between the parts. Instead of heterotopia’s “alternate” and “juxtaposed” places and spaces that are to be read against, the Deleuzo-Guattarian intensive quality of space is a folding of inside and outside in a process of relations in a process of overlapping.

Arun Saldanha shares this criticism of heterotopography, drawing attention to some of the conceptual problems he sees with its systems. Despite Foucault’s nomadic thought, he argues, the concept is built on a form of structuralism that is antithetical to Deleuze’s notion of immanence. He points to what he sees as heterotopia’s “underlying binary structure to change (this is heterotopic, this is not)” (“Heterotopia and Structuralism” 2093), suggesting that “geographical structuralism or even functionalism” provides insufficient power to analyse spatial difference, missing “what change (such as colonising) is all about: interaction, gradients, emergence” (2084; 2093). Saldanha also refers to Deleuze’s essay, “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?” in which he expresses his view of structuralism as an “insufficiently dynamic conception of space and time” that runs counter to his spatial ontology, explored earlier in this chapter (2081). Further, Saldanha observes, Foucault’s conceptualization of heterotopia as “[s]licing time is logically absurd,” since “temporality exists only through geographical heterogeneities which are irreducible to any one perspective” (2093); Thus, the problem with Foucault’s positioning of heterotopology as a reflection and representation of the “wholeness and
simultaneity” of the structure of society, Saldanha contends (2088). How can space can be treated as fixed structures that can be divided “unproblematically into spaces of domination and spaces of transgression,” he asks, contending that “heterotopology, however full of differentiation and transgression, seems fixed by an essence allocating relative value to various sites of ‘a society’” (2087).

The most important argument Saldanha makes pertinent to my study of theatre in the South African context, and to my critique of Tompkins’ proposed heterotopic approach as identitarian, is his view of Foucault’s assumption that “he can pinpoint ‘other space’” (2088). He says that “Foucault seems to believe he has access to the hidden structures of society, which designate some space as absolutely other” (2088). Saldanha’s questions are ones that resound in postcolonial/postapartheid discourse: “other to whom? Different from what? Different from all the rest of society” (2088). I suggest the Deleuzo-Guattarian writings explored in this study offer an affirmative way of thinking our experience with the world. Their conceptualization of the potentiality of thought emerging from immanent “movement of bodies and the images these bodies produce of each other,” allows us to avoid such “pinpointing” and escape the lacuna Tompkins notes in her heterotopic theorization’s exclusion of time and body and non-western productions (Colebrook “The Space of Man” 191).

9. Conclusion

Deleuze and Foucault, themselves, articulate a way to come together with their proposition that “philosophy’s relation to itself, [is] a repetition that reveals the maximum difference within identity: a non-identity” as an escape from “the system of Law-and-
Sovereign” (Hand ix). In his introduction to *Foucault*, Seán Hand nicely defines their ontology of thought.

> Once thought is no longer devoted to the building of concepts in this way, difference is seen as a pure event. Thought can then be perceived as ‘the vertical dimension of intensities because intensity, well before its gradation by representation is in itself pure difference.’ *(Foucault, *Theatricum Philosophicum* 183)*

Such thinking of decentrings and “pure difference,” Hand argues, abandons dialectics and moves toward “an affirmative thought of disjunction and multiplicity” (x) I bring to this investigation of South African theatre spaces. In the next two chapters, I examine more specifically the practice and potentiality of theatre in South Africa, encompassing the foregoing ontological and material concepts in my conversations and interviews with contemporary theatremakers and critics, thus bringing them into the broader assemblage of what Deleuze proposes as an affirmative and immanent theatre; perhaps, to address the “failure of human relations” that Coetzee identifies in his Jerusalem Prize speech referred to at the beginning of this chapter.
CHAPTER 3.


The mystery of the subjective imagination lies, I believe, in an intuitive . . . grasp of a play of values as the flux of authentic change through and beyond what is given to it and what we accept, without further thought, as objective appearances. It is not a question of rootlessness but of the miracle of roots, the miracle of a dialogue with eclipsed selves which appearances may deny us or into which they may lead us.

Wilson Harris, “A Talk on the Subjective Imagination” (47)

I'm just going to lay myself bare and open, you know, talk about the side of me that usually I would not have shown. And now I have that opportunity.

Fatima Dike, Interview with Miki Flockemann, 1999.

1. Introduction: “being at a threshold”

Over the last few chapters I have been exploring the central concepts of Deleuze’s minoritarian ontology in order to pursue a destabilizing way of thought through which to approach South African theatrical performance and its role in the country’s striated socio-economic and political milieu. My aim has been to take on what cultural critic Ashraf Jamal defines as “the recurring theme and question,” which is “how to bypass, overwhelm, and ignore oppression and, in so doing, create an other space for thought and creativity” (Predicament in Culture xii). The focus of this chapter will be to enlist the Deleuzo-Guattarian protean ontological and material processes developed in the foregoing chapters in order now to examine this rich, yet complex, theatrical performance landscape.

22 And here I mean the South African space of social and political space, cultural material conditions, complex layers of history and memory – and of potentiality.
Wole Soyinka argues that theatre is one of the earliest arenas we know of “in which man has attempted to come to terms with the spatial phenomenon of his being” (*Myth, Literature and the African World* 60). His notion of drama as “a ritualistic sense of space . . . intimately linked with the comprehensive world-view of the society that gave it birth” (39) is what he calls “this basic adventure of man’s metaphysical self” (40). Similarly, South African playwright Zakes Mda speaks of a theatre-making that “heightens the community’s critical social and political reflection” (“Marotholi” 354). While Templar Hauptfleisch suggests the process of protest as a theatrical event, “forever changing, and shifting fluid and unpredictable” (“Eventification” 282). Their perspectives bespeak theatre’s capacity to create affective assemblages of relations to bring a critical ontological, social and political intervention to South African subjectivities. They gesture toward Guattari’s formulation of “diverse possibilities for recomposing their existential corporality, to get out of their repetitive impasses and, in a certain way, to resingularise themselves”; not by adopting a “ready-made dimension of singularity,” but by creating “new modalities of subjectivity” and processes of “autopoeisis” (*Chaosmosis* 7). Thus, he conceptualizes processes enabling a “relational selfhood” that, as Simone Bignall puts forward, “incorporates a positive and creative role for ontological difference and gives rise to an ethic of joyful sociability based on material practices of self-awareness, listening respect and attentiveness to the other” (“Affective Assemblage” 100). In this chapter, I expand further on Bignall’s concept of what she calls “caring sociability,” which she develops through her insightful study of the Australian/Indigenous National Enquiry into the Stolen Generation and Deleuzian ontology of thought, which brings important ideas to a postcolonial/post imperial deliberation.
These notions are a refrain of the “ethico-aesthetic paradigms” in Deleuze and Guattari’s affirmative conceptualization of minor (Chaosmosis 10), and reach toward the Deleuzian notion of Spinozan joy as the “mutually compatible, affirming and empowering affective relation between bodies connected in concrete relations of engagement” (Bignall 82). In sum, I argue Soyinka, Mda, Hauptfleisch and Bignall amplify my research and allow me to return to the questions I posed in the Introduction, which ask: Whose voices are being heard? Which audiences are being reached? What role does theatre play in addressing South Africa’s socio-economic and artistic challenges? And, who gets to create?

Mda remarks that “a dominant trend in the types of theatre that exist in South Africa has been based on a unidimensional and prevaricated depiction of the South African reality” (“Politics and Theatre” 196). As noted by Geoffrey Davis and Ann Fuchs, with the “intrusion of colonialist culture and the destruction of the pre-colonial social structures . . . the remnants of the precolonial culture lose their all-embracing validity and become ‘traditional’ or ‘folk’ culture in opposition to an ‘elite’ or ‘ruling class’ culture” (Horn 115). Their observations recognize South Africa’s encoded and entangled cultural and spatial nature, explored throughout the earlier chapters of this study, and draw attention to the way its landscape holds different meanings for white South Africans, for whom the privileging of race was “supported by cultural systems at every level,” and those who were racialized and displaced over the country’s history (Lewis, Whitely 9).23

23 For example, Coetzee’s argument (referred to in Chapter 2) that “the deformed and stunted relations between human beings that were created under colonialism and exacerbated under what is loosely called apartheid have their psychic representation in a deformed and stunted inner life” (98).
South African theatre’s infrastructure is equally territorialized and deterritorialized by physical, social and psychological boundaries, government policies (and politics) and inherited European theatre frameworks, which continue to striate the postapartheid forms and performance strategies that engage and resist them. Before penetrating this milieu, I would like to provide first a brief conceptual justification for the concepts I implicate, to be followed by an overview of the architecture of this chapter in order to better map its conceptual refrains.

2. Conceptual Approach: Theatre Histories, Themes and Minor Theatre Practice

As I have pointed out, Deleuze’s immanentist approach introduces to the South African theatre milieu the concept of theatre as non-representation, moving beyond mimesis and privileging instead ‘affect’ and ‘becoming’ as a dynamic process of continuity and variation. His suggestion that theatre might discover an effective “antirepresentational function” and construct in some way “a figure of the minority consciousness as each one’s potential” is valuable for approaching a theatre landscape rife with identitarianism and oppositional resistance (“One Less Manifesto” 253). He postulates that “rendering a potentiality present and actual is a completely different matter from representing a conflict” (254), since conflicts are “already normalized, codified and institutionalized” (252). In this way of thinking, minor theatre not only eliminates the power of representation, but eliminates “every occurrence of power,” even “the power of theatre itself” (251). Rather, he sees theatre’s political function coming to the fore “as something representing nothing but what presents and creates a minority consciousness as a universal-becoming” (256). His conceptualization offers a conduit to approach the study and practice of theatre and performance, not by overlaying or
applying preconceived philosophical and theoretical frameworks, but by engaging in what Deleuze describes as immanent processes through “continuous variation as on a creative vanishing line that constitutes a minor tongue in language, a minor character on the stage, a set of minor transformation in relation to dominant forms and subjects” (“One Less Manifesto” 251-252). By implicating the refrain of minoritarian concepts for “thinking through spaces humans make for themselves,” Deleuze suggests a political space, in the Deleuzian sense, for the postapartheid space-time – and stage space – in context with the material realities of the embodied temporal and spatial conditions of the theatre (Deleuze and Space 9). He suggests a space that I argue gestures toward Anton Krueger’s observation that in postapartheid South Africa, “the shift from the realm of public politics may have resulted in a move toward an interest in the politics of the self” (Experiments in Freedom 35); in other words, shifting from the grand narratives (or major narratives) to Ndebele’s ordinary stories (or the minoritarian notion of “collective enunciation”) (Toward a Minor Literature 17). Similarly, Yvette Hutchison argues that the notion of theatre as non-representation is important in South African theatre practice. She identifies the challenge for theatre of addressing leading political issues, and of interrogating the ideology and aesthetics of how to negotiate narratives that have excluded and subjugated so many “marginalized people who are unwilling or unable to speak for themselves,” without falling into what she regards as the trap of “constituting a new grand narrative” (“Embodied Practice” 178).

Expanding my exploration of Deleuze’s relational process of sensation in Chapter 2, I turn to his notion of “spatio-temporal dynamisms,” or the power dynamics and relations of the body with the outside, to demonstrate how duration affects the encounter by
liberating the imagination. Deleuze draws his concept of duration from Bergson, arguing: “[t]ime should be thought of not in a homogeneous and linear way, as a succession of similar quantities, but as multiple structures in which all layers of time (past, present and future) co-exist with one another” (Deleuze and Beckett 11). Where multiplicity in space is “the extensive properties of moving bodies” (as explored in Chapters 1 and 2), multiplicity in duration is intensity, or “intensive characteristics of temporal connections,” which is a form of virtual sociality, without individuals, thus replacing individuality with multiplicity (12). In short, the concept of the minor envisions generative and dynamic processes creating new political subjects in the relational process of becoming.

With the same lens through which I explored African philosophical concerns in Chapter 1 and their notions of spatial issues in Chapter 2, in this chapter on South African theatre and the potentiality of minor theatre concepts, I bear in mind the epistemological considerations raised, for instance, by Kobayashi and Peake and Noxolo in Chapter 2. As my exploration of African ontology and epistemology in the Introduction identified, African philosophers, writers and scholars advocate for an “African ontological status” that rejects the tendency of the West toward the “homogenization” of Africa and Africans, which Handel Kashope Wright refers to as a historical and political “strategic essentialising.” Arguing for multi-disciplinary forms of African cultural studies and literary practices that go beyond conforming to hegemonic paradigms, he proposes instead “transnationalism” or “mingling of cultures”; an “outer-national” practice that moves away from the binary of the “West and the Rest” (Keynote speech, Contemporary Orientation in African Cultural Studies Conference). Wright calls for “the re-orientation
of intellectual and historical perspectives of cultural studies in terms of African cultural trajectories and history” (Africa, Cultural Studies and Difference 3). He recognizes that such legitimate calls for the opening up of curriculum and literature – and, as is discussed in this chapter, of theatre – carry a tendency to become entrapped in creating a discourse in which signification is reintroduced and positions becomes polarized. Similarly, Chielozona Eze notes that sometimes such calls move beyond discussion through frustration at failures of accountability and structural inequalities; for example as seen in the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall protests with their retreat into mobilization of oppositional strategies. Despite lingering “vestiges of apartheid and instances of racism,” Eze contends, inequality is now no longer “an exclusively white versus black dichotomy” (“Transcultural affinity” 216). Thus he argues that in South Africa there is a “reshaping of identity” whose goal is to “force affinities based on choice rather than blind adherence to ideology or mythology of origin and belonging.” Here, he refers to ideas such as Nuttall’s notion of “entanglement” and Krog’s call for “interconnectedness,” each of whom he sees arguing for a less cynical and more engaged spirit of openness with one another “to go beyond the legacies of the past” (C. Eze 218). This way of thinking imagines “new collectivities and connections are being forged that are shifting the terms within access to economic opportunity, social belonging, and political agency that have historically been understood” (Forsyth, Olutola and Strauss 107). These “reshaping[s]” of identities reflect Deleuze’s insistence that finding agreement lies not by “eliminating actual difference and privileging identity, but in the actual diversity of bodies that express Being in infinitely multiple ways.” His concept, according to Bignall, recognizes “a permanent and primary ontological difference . . . essential in postcolonial thinking about
the social” (“Affected Assemblages” 89). In this chapter, I extend these ideas to South African theatrical events, where all the forces I have explored heretofore converge, as I map out below.

2.1 The Architecture of the Chapter

I first review a selection of critical writings on South African theatre that set the scene of its dense and complex genealogy and influence this study. While necessarily I only touch briefly on these texts, my purpose is not to be reductive, but to identify a relevant compendium of the movement and stasis, intermingling and separation, absences and emergences, and the silences and voices that have influenced the development of the country’s theatrical performance. Specifically, I investigate in more depth the three major themes that I see emerging; viz. mobility/movement, identity and language. A rich source for this exploration is Magnet Theatre’s performance practice that generates a way of thinking “both about itself as performance and about aspects of the world beyond the theatre” (Fleishman, “Making Space for Ideas” 55).

Second, I extend the exploration of theatrical terms examined in the Introduction. As addressed in earlier chapters, much has been written since the end of apartheid about how to develop new forms of expression to deal with “change,” building on Albie Sachs’ foundational question, which asked whether South Africa would have “sufficient cultural imagination to grasp the rich texture of the free united South Africa that we have done so much to bring about,” or would remain “trapped in the multiple ghettos of the apartheid imagination” (187). His call for a more complex engagement with creative expression similarly preoccupies the critics, playwrights and academics exploring theatrical forms that move beyond “the narrow concerns of anti-apartheid struggle to more abiding
cultural realities” (Graver 1). Yvette Hutchison perceptively captures this convoluted discourse when she writes that “[t]heatre in South Africa has been simultaneously entertaining and didactic, as well as at times, profoundly metaphysical” (“Post-1990s Verbatim Theatre” 61). I pursue this “convoluted discourse” further to establish a frame of reference for discussing South African theatre and theatrical performance, in order to penetrate the terms customarily associated with theatre, such as “theatre,” “performance,” “dramatization” and so on.

Third, I demonstrate what the notion of minor theatre brings to this conversation by looking at its generative and expansive conceptualization in the context of Soyinka’s notion of ritual theatre and its geophilosophical grounding, and Mbembe’s enmeshing of lived experiences and “the quiet force of African aesthetic practices.” Further, I move on to suggest that Cremona and Hauptfleisch’s proposition to expand the definition of “event” to theatrical event as dynamic relational processes speaks to the Deleuzian conception of the event as boundless, unstratified and deterritorialized processes of connection.

Having explored the theatre milieu, I then interrogate questions of space and bodies in the context of these theatre spaces. In Chapter 2, I problematized the spatial terms, “space,” “landscape” and “place,” particularly in relation to decolonized spaces. Spatial terms dealing with theatre are equally ambiguous, particularly since “space” is the general term used in theatre studies. Dean Wilcox asks whether it is possible to turn from traditional theatrical space, which he sees grounded in text and endowed “with narrative content,” toward an approach to spatiality that begins “not with a presumed placeness created by the performer’s body, not the realization of place, but the idea of a potential
place held at bay by theatrical space.” In essence, he envisions a theatre space “unconstrained by dramatic superimposition,” where the body is situated in a space that is “defined by social and physical parameters independent of a locating narrative” (Wilcox, “Ambient Space” 546). In this chapter I look at the diverse approaches to these spatial terms in relation to South African theatre, exploring these intertwining elements of space, body and theatre.

Borrowing from Gay Morris’s idea of a space of incarnate and transformative creative discovery (“Making Space for Community” 226), I demonstrate how Deleuze’s philosophy of theatre space and theatre bodies creates a minor theatre; a space of bodies acting and interacting, enfolding in past, present and future, drawing on layers of stories, and challenging fixed subjectivities. A case study of such an affective practice is Mda’s 2012 play, *Our Lady of Benoni*. Mda has always brought a provocative voice to major political and social issues, particularly through his work in theatre, which played an important role during apartheid as theatre of resistance. His plays and novels are known for their satirical voice and flights into magic realism, underlying which is his great spirit of humanism as it reveals the realities of his times in the Deleuzian sense of joy. Mda intends *Our Lady of Benoni* to be read as well as performed, and he writes in English with multiple phrases in isiZulu, Sesotho and Township slang, supported by an extensive glossary. The play is set in the singular scene of a Johannesburg park as a stage space that is fluid, social and political, evocative of Deleuze’s philosophy of “unmediated qualities

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24 Wilcox argues for “extricating space from theatrical place, largely because space, as defined by . . . Casey, has rarely held a position of prominence in theatrical writing” (546), which echoes Tompkins’ assertion in Chapter 2.
of interpersonal relationships” that the conceptualizations in this chapter reveal (Bignall 79).

3. Histories of Territorialization, Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization of South African Theatre and Performance

As I stated earlier, a rich collection of writing on South African theatre exists. I have turned to the following writers to identify the critical questions that need to be considered in the context of creating a new potentiality. After a brief overview of their work, I go on to discuss what I identify as the three themes I see running as a refrain throughout them: movement, identity and language.

Loren Kruger’s comprehensive genealogy, *The Drama of South Africa: Plays, Pageants and Publics since 1910* (1999), covers a “spectrum from plays to social gatherings,” focusing attention on the transition of pre-colonial performance practices to the post-apartheid period of the 1990s. Her study is useful in order to recognize the various forms of cultural expression – including of course the theatre – in a way that resists romanticizing them, but rather recognizes the strata of histories and stories within their lived spaces. She emphasizes the importance of taking into account pre-colonial African theatrical practice – Nuttall’s world of “moving spaces” – to enunciate the stories and silences of the landscape’s “entangled skein” through emerging creative and artistic productions (Ubersfield 85). Kruger traces the development of African performance and music associated with ritual and other celebrations through the relational processes of urbanization, “imperial Eisteddfodau models and the missionary church choir to rural modes of storytelling . . . as well as the ambiguous representation of race in minstrelsy, ‘tribal sketches’ and other vaudeville gags,” to reach the people in between tradition and modernity (14). She also examines the musicals of the townships between the 1960s to
1980s, and identifies other influences, such as theatre in the British colonial curriculum (for example Shakespeare and Shaw) in elite mission schools that informed, influenced and educated men like the playwright H.I.E. Dhlomo and Nelson Mandela (15). Moving through the oppositional period of protest and resistance theatre during apartheid, to the post-colonial era, she emphasizes “the asymmetrical and asynchronic enactments of South African modernity and maturity” (11), revealing the way in which South African theatre working with “languages and conventions from European, American, and African practices . . . has performed the syncretizing character of South African culture, even at historical moments when the ruling class and race insisted on racial purity and cultural separation” (13).

David Coplan’s *In Township Tonight!* takes Kruger’s examination of pre-colonial performance further by tracing in more detail the stylistic transformation of musical styles over three centuries of black experience with colonization, urbanization and apartheid development, exploring how “the forms and processes of change have been embodied in performance culture” and are embedded in the social and political milieu. His description of the period is a succinct encapsulation of the environment in which it developed:

We first explore the roots of a distinctively South African performance culture in the early relations of Europeans, slaves and Khoisan people of the Western Cape, . . . we trek to nineteenth century Kimberley, where Africans were exposed to performance traditions from all over the subcontinent and the world beyond. Some brought their rural culture to life in the diamond camps. Others, mission school-educated, became a black elite and adopted European and Afro-American culture to their social needs. A third group of people, a proletarian majority among the permanent black townsmen, lived by their wits in the shadows and shanties of the mushrooming locations, creating hybrid styles of cultural survival that permanently shaped black music and drama. (5)
Coplan looks at tradition not as “simply the reified emblems of authority but the immanence of the past in the cultural certainties of the present” (*In the Time of the Cannibals* 19). He avoids a historical “overview,” but instead reveals the resonating social, political and gestural forces that are suggestive of the ontological/materialist dynamic of Deleuzian immanent encounters and relations. The intersection of rural (older) styles that have remained alive with urbanisation is an exemplar of the territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization of performance materials that “express, celebrate, and comment upon their experience, needs and aspiration in a world of insecurity and change” (*In Township Tonight* 3). Indicating the importance of noting the role performance has played in “black social dynamics as well as cultural change,” and their effect on performance itself, Coplan maintains the “impossibility of separating performance from social action helps in understanding how successive forms of expression arise out of South African history” (4).

He eschews Western categorizations, such as “music, dance or drama,” that he argues fail to capture the integration of “song, lyric, tone, rhythm, movement, rhetoric and drama in African performance,” preferring the term “performance culture” to reflect the confluence of performance and everything that supports it. “What we are looking at,” he remarks, “is a whole complex of different resources, experiences, motivations, and actions belonging to the full range of people involved in performance” (4-5). Mda’s writing on theatre is similarly conscious of style; for example with essays such as “When People Play People” and “Politics and the Theatre: Current Trends in South Africa” that recognize the important conjunction of

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25 Coplan writes: “Tradition consists more in the processual modes than in the products of action, forming a dynamic of persistence, a set of structures continuously emerging in history” (*In the Time of the Cannibals* 19).
aesthetics and function, and the ongoing tension between identitarian and immanent theatre praxis over the layers of theatre history. His observations suggest an ethico-aesthetic space of thinking discussed earlier, and I engage with his ideas further in this chapter by exploring *Our Lady of Benoni*.

*Drama in the New South Africa* (1999), David Graver’s anthology of seven plays, broadens this history to include “playwrights coming from Afrikaner, Anglo, African and Indian communities” (19) whom he considers represent a move beyond the intensified range of resistance theatre into which the 1970s and 1980s apartheid theatre had shrunk (1). He briefly reviews the influence of colonial values, education and urbanization, as well as the influence of African-American cultural forms that included jazz and musical theatre (5). Looking at the divergent theatre styles that emerged during apartheid, he identifies forms such as township theatre, “which combined song, dance, melodrama, and clowning in extravagant displays of talent and energy”; “small performances” of one or two performers of satire and farce; and black resistance theatre that arose because of dissatisfaction with the sentimental theatre and avoidance of politics of some black theatre, and non-commercial theatre forms. For example, he points to theatre that “arose in trade unions,” which offered “organization, education and motivation” in order to give “oppressed communities a sense of their worth and a place to develop their skills and find shelter from the grim realities of township life etc.” (6).

While I do not engage Athol Fugard in this study, it would be an omission not to acknowledge the playwright, actor, director and novelist who is extensively referred to in theatre critical writing and is perhaps the South African playwright most recognized world-wide for protest theatre during apartheid. Although Graver considers Fugard’s
theatre style is dominated by “concerns of European dramatic realism,” he notes at the same time that it gives “some indication of the rich variety of theatrical forms,” exploring what Denis Walder describes as “characters caught within a relationship of shifting power and dependency that simultaneously embodies the tensions, fears and hopes of their society” (Homann and Minekke 125). Kruger notes his work creates situations and characters that engage with “the experiences of South African audiences,” capturing the desire to “speak and be heard”; some protesting apartheid, particularly those in collaboration with John Kani and Winston Ntshona (for example Sizwe Banzi is Dead and The Island), and some dealing with poverty (Boesman and Lena) and identity (Blood Knot) (The Drama of South Africa 157-161).

Several excellent anthologies and studies speak to the subject of post-apartheid theatre. I focus on two that trace the progression of theatre from the initial stage to the period twenty years later. Early on in the era, Davis and Fuchs in their collection of essays, Theatre and Change in South Africa (1996), were raising questions about theatre’s role in social transformation, asking many of the same questions about theatre practice in South Africa that are still being asked today, and which I raise in this study. “Can one rethink form and find new content? Can a concept of post-protest literature be developed? Can theatre involve itself in the process of societal transformation? How might theatre contribute to a post-apartheid society?” (3). The essays bring the diverse concerns of theatre practitioners (writers, directors, actors and cultural activists) who wrestle with whether theatre can continue to maintain its autonomy and to exercise its critical role after apartheid. The overriding question they face (as Sachs articulates) is whether South African theatre can rise to “the considerable challenges posed by the rapid
political transformation we are currently witnessing” (3). In one of the essays, academic and director Malcolm Purkey conveys the vertiginous climate during the early years of the period, recalling Gramsci and lamenting: “we live ‘in the bitter times between the old and the new’ and new morbid symptoms still appear daily. Now more than ever” (162). In failing “to maintain its responsive and critical role,” he fears the South African theatre movement “was in danger of losing its central dynamo” (155).

Writing more than a decade later, critic, academic and director Greg Homann’s 2009 anthology of new South African plays, At This Stage: Plays from Post-Apartheid South Africa, similarly examines the “shifting trends” over the ten years after apartheid was formally terminated, which he describes as a “new period,” with new themes and challenges. He writes: “The mode of representation has shifted and the monological form we came both to loath and to love has dissipated to match a democratic society grappling with multiple points of view” (2). He divides this era into three periods. The pre-post-apartheid period (1990-1996), the era Purkey refers to above, is “defined by the absence of new plays” in relation to the wealth of local and international plays produced during apartheid. It is a period, he explains, when writers were questioning the role of theatre in the new society and searching for new stories and new subject matter other “than that of the protest and agitprop that had come to define what Temple Hauptfleisch has called ‘our unique theatre system’” (3). The next period is the early-post-apartheid period (1996-2002) that coincides with the start of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and is “dominated by the discourse inculcated by the TRC” (7). Homann remarks he finds it ironic that the “once mighty chorus of black popular theatre in South Africa at first fell to faint whistling (in the dark) in the post-apartheid theatre,” because the issues
which these writers had previously addressed (and which I pointed to in the Introduction) were not only still present, but “augmented by a range of equally serious but far more ambiguous forms of social and political crisis” (Homann 9). Similarly, Jamal considers the early post-apartheid environment encouraged a subjective position, stating: “In short, the TRC propelled us in to a state that implored us to question who we are,” in a process that “validated our individualistic standpoint, our personal ‘truth,’ thus seeking to challenge previously accepted notions of ourselves.” His suggestion of a state that results in a tension between the “national imaginary and a personal standpoint,” echoes that of Krueger referred to earlier, and I discuss the notion later in my discussion on identity (Predicaments of Culture in South Africa 124, qtd. in Homann 10).

Finally, by the turn of the century, Homann says theatremakers were “finally confronting contemporary issues rather than rehashing past pre-occupations” (At This Stage 11). The result was the emergence of playwrights who “embrace a more dialogic position,” slowly producing plays “speaking back to apartheid but looking forward to a new set of debates and struggles” that “offered multiple points of view; a theatre that provoked and questioned the identity of our nation” (10-11). Thus, the third post-apartheid period (2002-2008) saw a “rich and diverse mix of new plays” that dealt with personal stories instead of “exclusively social and political conditions” (13). Homann’s overall assessment is that South Africa’s “current theatre is rich in affirmation, criticism, celebration, and questioning. The main thematic and stylistic trends that began to germinate in the works in the 1990s and early 2000s,” he says, are “further being cultivated” (14). His is a sense of optimism that most of the people I interviewed during
my South African field research in 2016 expressed, despite the many concerns and challenges they identify theatremakers are facing.

Two additional recent studies provide further perspectives: Homann and Marc Maufort’s *New Territories: Theatre, Drama, and Performance in Post-apartheid South Africa* (2015) and *The Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary South African Theatre*, edited by Homann and Martin Minekke (2015). In particular, I find their examination of the TRC and its seminal role in reconstituting the way “South Africans think about their country and their individual and communal identities” of value for my analysis of *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (in Chapter 2). Homann and Maufort argue that the TRC “has arguably become the most significant single contributor to the themes evident in contemporary indigenous drama, theatre, and performance, to the point that TRC related performance is abundant enough that it could be considered a legitimate post-apartheid genre of theatre” (16). Similarly, Homann and Minekke regard the TRC as a pivotal moment for people to tell their personal stories, and observe a similar post-TRC shift in “playwrighting and play making” from the singular, usually anti-apartheid, “monological argument,” to the more personal “dialogic debate where characters argue their differing positions and perspectives” (5). In fact, Krueger goes further to call the TRC “a kind of epilogue to anti-apartheid theatre,” advancing, “[t]he process was also a vital part in the search for a national identity, a search which has become a crucial part of much post-apartheid literature” (*Experiments in Freedom* 96).

In his examination of plays and productions since apartheid, Krueger focuses on identity and transformation, exploring play texts from the perspective of “identity (as theory), the theatre (as practice), and selected play texts (as demonstrations of the
practice of theory).” He selects plays he considers not only “depict transformation but . . . are also transformative . . . which do not simply seek to represent identities but to create them, plays which not only read culture but write it” (5). Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome opens up for him “the multiplicity of possible interpretative schemas” that fit “a heterogeneous society” (40), and he conjectures that South Africa “might be considered a giant rhizome, a vast unity impossible to quantify accurately since it is in constant movement, in various stages of flux defined by flights of fear and the attractions of desire.” In this way of thinking, following Deleuze’s rhizomic structure, he avoids fixed definitions of identity – the categories and binaries of apartheid – in favour of approaches from “multiple entry points” and an “eclectic array of interdisciplinary tools” and “creative devices” (40). And here, perhaps, he might also implicate the concept of the refrain, with its “various vibrations, or decompositions, projections, or transformations” (A Thousand Plateaus 348), for his exploration of individual and social identity as “experiments in selfhood, experiments in freedom, as the posting of nodal points through which the messages and the energy of a South African culture can be forged” (Experiments in Freedom 42).

What is clearly evident when reviewing this South African theatre history, is that women writers are underrepresented in apartheid publishing as well as in theatre. For example, it was not until the 1970s that Fatima Dike was “one of the first black playwrights to be commissioned by a theatre, and her second play, The First South African (The Space, 1977), was the first by a woman to be published” (Kruger, The Drama of South Africa 162). Hutchison notes the lack of women’s theatre work during apartheid, and draws attention to the contemporary South African female visual and
performance artists who now are “challenging the dominant expectations regarding women’s roles and representations.” She writes:

A new generation of South African female visual and performance artists have emerged . . . and they are engaging overtly with disavowed gender issues and the legacies of colonialism and apartheid by situating their work in their corporeality. They use their bodies, skin, and clothing as sites to contextualise histories and challenge racial and patriarchal narratives, largely outside of language. (“Aesthetics of South African Women’s Embodied Activism” 356)

More recently, in the introduction to a 2019 anthology of African women playwrights, editors Hutchison and playwright Amy Jephta draw attention to the major themes these women are negotiating in expressing “their desires and aspirations in a world where male control is often reinforced through physical and or sexual desire” (1). What the Water Gave Me, which I explored in Chapter 2, is illustrative of just such an embodied investigation of these issues, particularly through Abrahams’ investment in the issue of rape. In Chapter 4, which looks at contemporary and emerging theatremakers and theatrical practices, I examine further the way women’s voices now are being heard as playwrights, directors, performers and critics who speak to the multiple issues from their position in South Africa’s histories, and who are exemplars of a minor theatre ontology and practice.

3.1. Themes and Threads: Mobility, Identity and Language

The authors and texts I have reviewed reveal the practice, over centuries, of dynamic modes of theatrical performance that seek to avoid being subsumed by the striated State coded subjectivities and racialized and political strictures identified by Mda. They advance Krueger's contention that drama is uniquely suited not only to represent, but to transform identity in a generative process evocative of minor theatre (Experiments in Freedom 5). Predominant themes and threads run as a refrain throughout and come to the
fore in the postapartheid discourse. Three themes implicate Deleuze’s notion of
immanent theatre as “the participation, multiplication and extension of the human body
. . . produced by relations of force and encounter with the affects of other bodies” (Cull,
*Theatres of Immanence* 10-11). While I address each of these threads – movement,
identity and language – separately, de facto they are entangled in different theatrical
forms and critical analyses, bringing to mind Deleuze’s notion that “theatre always is an
immersive multisensory experience (11-12)” Therefore, Cull points out, he says “it is less
a matter of trying to show what immanence looks like and more a matter of figuring out
how to be inside it and then seeing what comes out of that experience of immanence
itself,” which is the approach I take in the following exploration (13).

3.1.1. Movement, Mobility, Migration

Journeys are a powerful trope of the theatre and literary histories, with memories of
home and passage running as a pivotal thread through Kruger and Coplan (in particular),
as well as surfacing as a preoccupation in several of the other commentators. The refrain
of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization of South African life, with
all its connotations of journey, displacement and migration, and of settlement and
movement “determined by the environment, the land and natural conditions and the
people,” is reflected in theatre and performance (Planche, *Large Landscape* 53). Liz
Gunner describes the movement and migration in South African history as “layers of
sediment in a long memory. . . histories of settlement, migration and conquest” (Gunner,
*Theory, Text and Space* 120).\(^\text{26}\) For the indigenous and Nguni peoples, trading and

\(^{26}\) The ideas on pre-colonial movement draw on my earlier (2007) dissertation, *In a Large Landscape.*
exploring, neighbouring cultures clashing and inter-mingling, and forced migrations had
taken place over centuries; boundaries were established by means of oral narration, as
opposed to the European notion of fixed boundaries. “Oral memory,” Isobel Hofmeyr
points out, “has a close mnemonic relationship with place and location” (We Spend Our
Years as a Tale that is Told 160), while colonization brought about land expropriation
and resettlement, with the assumption the countryside was “a blank sheet on which they
must write their authority.” This “political literacy,” she says, “has a range of
consequences” (14).27 As explored earlier, apartheid intensified the striation, with a
multitude of laws resulting in removals and racially imposed locations and townships that
further restricted and segregated the majority of people living in the land, demonstrating
the literal meaning of apartheid as ‘living apart,’ and creating an architecture of urban
and rural spaces that are far removed from the fluid boundaries of pre-colonial times.

As well, the Cape Malay roots in slave history are leading writers and playwrights to
think about how South Africa interprets itself in this time of transition and how slavery is
evoked. Pumla Dineo Gqola laments “the absence of slave memory among ordinary
people” (5), while Gabeba Baderoon points to “the silences and complexities of South
African history” resulting from erasures of “charged silence” and “coded trauma” (50).
Writers, then, are seeking new beginnings, ways to imagine anew and to bring together
complex and always moving layers of meaning. Gqola views “slavery, colonialism and
apartheid . . . as moments along a continuum, and not as separate, completely distinct

27 For further reading on this issue see Liz Gunner, “Names and the Land: Poetry of Belonging and
Unbelonging, a Comparative Approach,” in Text, Theory, Space, edited by Kate Darian-Smith, Liz Gunner
and Sarah Nuttall, Routledge 1996, pp. 115-130, and Isobel Hofmeyr, We Spend Our Lives as a Tale that is
Told.
and mutually exclusive periods,” (6). In *What is Slavery to Me?* she asks “how a sense of self is shaped from dealing with abstraction and remnants in the psyche which ensure that yesterday lives in tomorrow, while the fantasy of the future shapes what is possible today” (2). Her project of self-definition to overturn the constructed histories of slavery is not oppositional, but a political material engagement with “the textures of the imaginative project of claiming slave ancestry in an era long after slavery’s end” (6). In order to reimagine anew, she remarks, requires “a multilayered approach to the fragments that survive” (4). As I demonstrated in Chapter 2, these fragments of material and inherited histories are imagined in Abrahams’ play by tracing their inheritances, “even if,” as Gqola points out, “such traces reside in ‘modes that do not easily give up the story’” (qtd. Nzegwa in Gqola 4).

The trope of these historical entanglements becomes more complex in the postapartheid era, complicated by the intersection of expectation of change after the first democratic elections and the new constitution, and the reality of the external influence of global capitalism; added to which are the social implications of contemporary intra-Africa immigration and its corresponding condition of xenophobia. Evident as well is a growing frustration over land ownership, which has yet to be resolved and has resulted in a renewed call for land reformation for the common good.28 Magnet Theatre’s work powerfully reveals the entanglement of the body and space – the landscape – that “begins

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28 The issue of land reformation is a sensitive one in South Africa given the systematic displacement of people from their land. Section 25 (in Chapter 2, Bill of Rights) was added to the new South African Constitution providing for reparation with compensation or expropriation for public purpose or in the public interest. The question of expropriation is now sparking debate. At issue in considering expropriation or reparation is not only the displacement caused by colonialism, but the question of historic claims about belonging. [http://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/SAConstitution-web-eng-02.pdf](http://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/SAConstitution-web-eng-02.pdf)
with bodies in space rather than pre-written texts,” and engages with “South African realities” (*Performing Migrancy* 2). Its performance practice engages with issues of mobility in “embodied ways” that, co-artistic director Mark Fleishman suggests, gets to “grips with what it feels like to be on the move and in the spaces in-between that characterize the lives, now and for centuries before” (3). Fleishman is conscious of the systems of power operating within “the migrations of people and performances, cultural forms and practices, sounds and music, ideas and things: material goods, human goods, etc.” (1). Echoing the observations by Kruger and Coplan explored earlier, he describes these movements as “a relay or nodal point in multiple circuits of exchange . . . that have operated differently at different times over centuries” (1). He contends that dramaturgy has to capture “the ‘unspeakability’ of the experience of displacement; the sense of ‘being-on-the-move’ at the heart of the experience; the haunting presence of those, and that, left behind; and all with the minimum of means.” In other words, he says, it has to seek “for alternative modes of engagement, performance being one of them,” to reveal the “silence imposed on the migrant by others” (*Performing Migrations* 23). Referring to Cull’s call to bring processes of thinking to performance, Fleishman says what is going on in Magnet’s work is “a multitude of individual moments and flow of our processes . . . a way of thinking the world and the work,” implicating the notions of thinking and conceptual elasticity discussed in Chapter 2. In this way, he proposes an immanent theatre practice that enacts “bringing something into being” through “a process of

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29 Magnet Theatre’s philosophy of performance and their body of innovative and embodied performance work over thirty years has been examined extensively as a source of performance research, most recently in Megan Lewis and Anton Krueger’s *Magnet Theatre: Three Decades of Making Theatre.*
concepts, ideas and speculative projection that might change attitudes and beliefs” (“Making Space for Ideas” 55-56). A demonstration of their ‘thinking work’ and immersion in the world of South Africa’s spatial realities is Magnet’s concentration on migration, addressing both internal and external displacements, observable, for instance, in the productions Onnest’bo (2000), dealing with forced removals from District Six, Cargo (2007), addressing the “archive of slaves” at the Cape, and Every Year, Every Day I am Walking (2006-present), a story of the refugee experience, which is a predominant contemporary preoccupation. Magnet’s “synchronous texts that are visual, aural, spatial and textual” are a rich source of research to explore the issues inherent in my investigation because they engage the themes I am exploring here, “inviting us to enter the spaces between the ‘fields of possibility’ in performance” to become “co-creators of meaning” and, I would suggest, of potentiality (Hutchison, “Embodied Practices” 192). In other words, their work evokes Deleuze’s rhythmic, durational forces of “blocks of materiality, becoming sensation” (Grosz, Chaos, Territory, Art 71).

3.1.2. Identity

Krueger pinpoints a similar reiteration of bodies of encounter in the entanglement of identity in theatre and in every-day life, remarking that, “dramatic performances can also be seen as an analogy of ways in which new identity structures are created” (Experiments in Freedom 17-18). His idea gestures toward the Deleuzian ontology of art as “ethics and as bio-politics,” which Stephen Zepke describes as the politics of lived experience. For Deleuze, “[a]rt is the freedom to experiment on our condition of existence, and is the ethical condition of any revolution” (Zepke, Art as Abstract Machine 9). In his study, Krueger focuses on theatre that offers texts in which “there is not only the freedom to
play within a multiplicity, but also the freedom to engage with paradox” (*Experiments in Freedom* 185). In the interplay of experimentation and experience, he advances, “[t]he theatre can be seen as a representation of a public imagination, as a forum in which a private, subjective enunciation is made communal” (34), whereas during apartheid, theatre was the “realm of public politics”; thus, I suggest, invoking the minoritarian assemblage of multiplicities as lines of flight from the strata of the state (35).

Another important issue for a theatre that is “experimenting with identity constructions” and “transgressions of stable identity structures” is syncretism (151), which Krueger observes “has been occurring, not only in South Africa, but in Europe as well, over the course of the twentieth century” (149). Drawing attention to the concept’s complexity, he notes the “syncretic encounter” assumes “a distinct difference between races,” although he cautions against assuming “inter-racial encounters between black and white as only between Europe and Africa.” Rather, the syncretic encounter is “also between different aspects of African society” (212). While Krueger considers the notion of syncretism is useful in a country with “an endless variety of identities,” and for “finding out where these identities intersect” (211), he echoes Eze’s observation on identity, discussed earlier, that in the context of the ideal of the rainbow nation the tendency is to simplify differences and complexities, thus potentially returning to identitarianism. Krueger notes Jamal’s similar caution that rainbowism “bears all the hallmarks of a new master narrative,” noting master narratives can never achieve change. He also points to Purkey’s warning that “lumping transformation together with concepts such as national unity . . . could rob one of a necessary objectivity” (209). Instead, he
suggests the rhizome “is the answer for those looking for roots, because the rhizome consists exclusively of roots, like grass, growing in every conceivable direction” (213).

Advancing Krueger’s turn to the rhizome as a minor practice in this context, I take up O’Sullivan’s suggestion that “although the minor cannot be equated directly with syncretism, it might be understood as a parallel concept inasmuch as it names a form of cultural production from within a dominant culture; a kind of ‘becoming a stranger’ in one’s own tongue.” But in its search for escape, or deterritorialization from identitarian forms, he notes, “[t]he minor, . . . also names the production of a specifically collective enunciation; the calling forth of a people-yet-to-come who in some senses are already here, albeit masked by typical representational models (precisely the major)” (“Notes Towards a Minor Art Practice”). Thus, he seems to propose a way forward for Krueger’s aim to seek plays that “explore identities being forged within the new African experience, without necessarily being founded on myths of African, European or even global (least of all universal) identities,” in which I would also place Magnet’s stage as “space for ideas,” as I have already pointed out. Krueger concludes with the observation that this ongoing struggle with identity does not necessarily “require specific resolutions,” but rather the “failure of identities” may in fact be their strength (*Experiments in Freedom* 213).

3.1.3. Language

Along with mobility and identity, the power dynamic of language is inherent in the minoritarian concept and is a similarly recurring theme in the South African theatre and literature discourse. As the discussion in Chapter 2 and the theatre studies I have reviewed here reveal, the question of language is complex and contentious. Of the encoding of the country’s stories, Hutchison notes, “some were written; some were oral; some were
trapped in neglected mother tongues” (“Embodied Practices” 179). Kruger similarly draws attention to the contentions around language; such as the argument for “indigenous authenticity” in the face of what she sees as the “global reach of capitalist social relations and international languages” that threatens to marginalize “those who speak only local languages,” or those “who prefer to perform in the home languages of their target audiences.” As well, she identifies the need for theatre criticism to examine the power structures created by questions of authenticity “between European and African, imported and indigenous, literary and oral” that, she says, “threatens to repeat the neocolonial essentialism that it purports to critique” (The Drama of South Africa 19). Homann and Minekke usefully encapsulate the convolution of language for a post-apartheid theatre, observing: “Again and again, perspicuously, South African drama presents the construction of what we are or of how we construct ourselves as a matter of language” (8). They say during apartheid “language was implicated hegemonically and aligned with policies of segregation and racism,” although they note certain landmark plays (such as Fugard’s The Island, and Sizwe Bansi is Dead, as well as Woza Albert! and Asimali), “expressed a multilingual emphasis rather than remaining constrained to the official languages under apartheid, Afrikaans and English” (8-9). In other words, they consider there is now an urge to “reclaim what has been lost culturally,” yet recognizing English is “an avenue to opportunity on a national as well as international basis, while simultaneously standing as a symbol of colonial oppression” (9).

Magnet’s work with indigenous cultures illustrates the difficulties Hutchison identifies and gestures toward Deleuze’s association of consciousness and language. Fleishman expresses similar concerns to those identified by Janz (in Chapter 2) about the
complexities of translating oral texts that “tend to be halting, discontinuous and include much repetition” (Fleishman, “Stories Like the Wind” 47), noting that serious ethical and political issues arise “from attempting to translate narratives from a culture that has been exterminated into forms alien to that culture” (46). Oral cultures have been relayed in two dominant ways, he explains: one excludes the “social, cultural and economic conditions of the source material . . . to make the content intelligible for its intended audience,” while the other formulates and conveys representations of the San world-view through “representations of time, space and oral narrative” that misrepresents the culture (Hutchison “Embodied Practices” 181). Resisting such a single narrative, searching for a minor language, Magnet’s productions juxtapose “image, movement and music against fragmented oral narratives so as to trouble the dominance of the written text and linear narrative, [. . .] in favour of something more fragmented, more somatically and emotively layered, than the original Bleek-Lloyd transcriptions” (185). Along the same lines, South African director Mandla Mbothwe wants to reclaim the African idiom (in his case Xhosa), insisting the inclusion of many voices, especially in languages other than English, is vitally important. Mbothwe reveals that he “was always interested in language” in drama where he feels it is misused, remarking: “I wanted people to find their own blood within them, to know the connections to their own lines. They need to connect to their own language, so that it can become part of their literature” (Mbothwe

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30 For Magnet Theatre’s engagement with the San culture, Fleishman has worked with the South African artist Pippa Skotnes, who has extensively researched and written about San rock art. Additionally, scholars, writers and artists use as a valuable reference the San transcriptions by William Bleek and Lucy Lloyd (and later by Dorothea Bleek) of “the fragmented oral narratives of the San that have been preserved in textual form” (Hutchison 181). The Bleek/Lloyd Archives are housed at the University of Cape Town.
interview 131-132). In this sense, I would argue, Fleishman and Mbothwe gesture toward Deleuze’s “images, sounding, colour” of a minor language.

Kruger observes that forms, such as dialogue, character and plot, “are less determinative than theatre’s capacity for subjunctive enactment,” where “their power depends on their convincing representation of an unmediated, authentic, indicative link between performers and the roles they enact” (*The Drama of South Africa* 18). Pointing out that African theatre in text form bears “little relation to the African experience and is considered sterile and lacking the dramatic elements of impersonator, props, costume and interaction among characters of oral theatre” (16), her discussion illuminates Deleuze’s notion of the tension between speaking and seeing, between texts and images, and his “non-linguistic” conception of literature (Bogue, “The Landscape of Sensation” 9). She sees language as a “key site and medium for this contestation” and, as an example, relates the “range of local transformations undergone by the English language and dramatic conventions in South Africa.” As well, she draws attention to the troubled history of Afrikaans explored earlier, which is recognized “as a creolized descendant of Cape Dutch influenced . . . by (Asian) slaves and indigenous Khoisan,” and itself was originally a minor language within the dominant English before it became the major language of oppression during apartheid (*The Drama of South Africa* 18-19).31

Germane to the observations made by Hutchison, Fleishman, Mbothwe and Kruger is the notion that language is “a site of continual (re)construction,” suggestive of a minor language, which eschews the idea of “universality of language” or a “homogeneous

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31 In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge Afrikaans, as a “counter-major language” along with English. Drawing on South African poet Breyten Breytenbach, they note, “Afrikaans attained homogeneity when it was a local language struggling against the English” (102).
linguistic community” (Gilbert 200). Deleuze and Guattari’s provocation of the
deterritorialization of the dominant language argues, “[t]here is no mother tongue, only a
power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity” (*A Thousand
Plateaus* 7); a notion that addresses the post-colonial search to accommodate “the other
‘tongues’” of South African theatre (Gilbert 201). In other words, the immanent
tendencies as “the flux and flow and variation of all matter” that is central to the
Deleuzian minoritarian ontology coalesces the ideas I have been exploring through the
assemblage of content and enunciation, as an immanent entwining of body, as time-
space.

While the works I explore in this study focus on theatre in English, it should also be
noted that Afrikaans theatre looms large in the South African theatre discourse and in its
political rhetoric, with Kruger commenting that the Afrikaner nationalist “commitment to
Afrikaans language and (white) identity” is demonstrated in the Afrikaans theatre that
endorsed “the ideology of Afrikaner primacy in Africa” (*The Drama of South Africa* 15).
Megan Lewis extends Kruger’s point, noting that Afrikaans politicians “have long
engaged in the ‘dramatic political rhetoric’ of their political and social power and
whiteness” (*Whitely* 14). Investigating how ‘whiteness’ (that she centres in Afrikaans
personification) “‘plays out’ . . . within culture,” she asks, “what are the possibilities for
whiteness, and white subjects, performing in the postcolony?” Afrikaner performance
history includes Afrikaans-language plays performed in formal theatre and festival
spaces, films celebrating their history, and epic re-enactments and pageants playing out
narratives of the Afrikaner’s struggles and heroic episodes to thousands, about which she
writes:
More often than not, these performances – which spanned the nation-building era – follow a common narrative arc and remain faithful to stock character types. Afrikaner national scripts are predicated on the notion of a small or outnumbered volk fighting to bring the light of (white/Western) civilization to darkest (black/savage) Africa and finding protection against the uncivilized hordes within the safety of their laager, or circle of wagons. (15).

Now, at a time when “whiteness as a category is being called to answer for its historical sins . . . and when our understandings of whiteness are moving out of the confines of the academy and into public discourse,” she questions, “what can the Afrikaner scenario offer us?” (18). Also complicating any discussion of Afrikaans-language theatre is the fact that Afrikaans is the intrinsic language of the Cape Malay population, which, Jephta remarks, reflects an “ongoing narrative pattern of displacement and migration . . . shaped by the history of the country” (165).

Correspondingly, as one of the two official languages of South Africa during apartheid and the language of instruction for black South African students, Afrikaans is spoken by millions of black South Africans, despite being the language of the oppressor. “How could it be otherwise?” Jacob Dlamini declares, given that “Afrikaans was all around me when I was growing up. It was the language of power that gave words . . . their menace” (Native Nostalgia 136). In this way of thinking, he speaks to Deleuze’s notion of major language as the “constants and homogeneity” of languages of power. At the time, according to Coplan, English was the only “lingua franca understood in townships throughout the country, but the preference for it as a medium of communication has a deeper significance” (In Township Tonight! 214). He points out that the use of English overcame the sense of separate development an “African” language suggested, helping to overcome the black musicians’ and playwrights’ “sense of cultural isolation,” and bringing their message to a wider audience (214).
As the discussion of language in Chapter 2 suggests, Deleuze’s notion of minor language and minor theatre takes on the issues of power and the “‘burden’ of calculations, memories and stories.” He offers the potentiality of deterritorialization, not as a negative force, but as positive processes of potentiality as a collective enunciation of “languages of continuous variability” (“One Less Manifesto” 244). O’Sullivan observes:

Asignification here takes on an explicitly political function, in so far as it disrupts any given signifying regime. In fact the relationship between asignification and signification, and between literary-linguistic systems in general, is itself a ‘political situation’, expressing as it does relations of power, (relations of domination and resistance). (“Notes towards a Minor Art Practice”)

In other words, Deleuze suggests, these languages of continuous variability can be seen as “lines of variation” in a system that is not homogeneous but “that has yet to be shaped by an immanent, continuous, and constant variation” (“One Less Manifesto” 244-245).

The embeddedness of these themes of movement, identity and language in theatre discourse run as a refrain throughout theatre terms such as theatre, performance, dramatization, and so on. Bearing in mind Kruger’s reference to the limits of the “generic specificity of aesthetic forms” for South African theatre, with its “multiple modes of performances, whether identified as theatre or not” (The Drama of South Africa 11), I suggest these terms and forms need deterritorialization from their former codification to enter through the smooth space of Deleuze’s immanent place of potentiality; to become minor. I also adopt Cull’s declared practice to assimilate the terms theatre and performance by using them interchangeably. She explains that she deliberately uses the term theatre in “‘theatres of immanence’ in order to ward off any potential impression that a Deleuzian practice must necessarily take the form of performance art, or performance at its avowedly least representational, rather than drama” (Theatres of
As examined in the Introduction, terminology in the South African theatre context is a pressing issue, with some critics seeking to broaden the notions of theatre beyond its specific European meaning, thus, I argue, problematizing the terminology of theatre is more than a semantic exercise. Wrapped up in these terms, is the complicated signifying, structuring and “organizing” that will return us to the “asignifying” O’Sullivan suggests Deleuze brings to art.

4. **An Intersection of Thinking: “a dialogue of irreducible pluralities of imagined communities”**

   It is useful for this discussion to consider the German theatre theorist Max Herrmann’s position that it is in “the physical, architectural and . . . social spaces” that the “‘performing arts’ . . . unfold and reveal their most essential qualities in real space” (Fischer-Lichte 1). According to Cull, “the theatre came to be conceived of as a Cartesian space in which the passive spectator could view the on-stage reality at a remove” (*Theatres of Immanence* 11), through “the focalizing lens created by a proscenium arch” (Wiles 8, qtd. in *Theatres of Immanence* 11), thus positioning “the spectator as the transcendent observer of the performance as object” (11). Probing this distinction between locus and platea, Ric Knowles, drawing on Weimann’s definitions, describes *locus* as the representational place, theatre’s function within the dramatic fable; *platea* is the presentational space, or place where the performer and audience meet, reflective of the dualities of theatre (such as “author/actor, pen/voice, writing/playing, locus/platea, representation/presentation” and so on). In this way he positions locus vs platea as “the
fixed ‘strategies’ of the powerful (statement, position, history, text) and the shifting spatial ‘tactics’ (pun, shape-shifting, memory, voice) of the disempowered: locus vs platea” (Knowles, Review of Weimann). These various observations on the traditional definitions of theatre spaces raise such questions of power as, “whose theatre” and “who is speaking and watching”?

The paucity of aesthetic theatrical terms for South African theatre can be attributed to the practical level of reality for performance in South Africa, which is similarly determined by power relations. Kruger argues,

> If popular producers and audiences have not made ‘theatre’ part of an African vocabulary . . . it is in large part because these entertainments and their impresarios have had little access (economic, legal, cultural) to the prestige of theatre and theatres, even if their shows may have included the performance of dramatic texts. (*The Drama of South Africa* 14)

Further, she contends, “[I]egitimate definitions of theatre . . . do not rest on invariable formal features or aesthetic value,” but are shaped by their response to the social, economic and cultural conditions which determine theatre practices and audiences. (Kruger 12). As this discussion goes on, I further implicate the importance of material conditions for theatre and, in Chapter 4, I turn to my research on theatrical performance practice, spaces and audience in contemporary South African theatre praxis.

To negotiate my way through this complexity, I asked Krueger how to look at the notion of African, pre-colonial theatre without essentialising it, and he offered the idea that in fact *all* theatre is ritual, creating a sense of continuity through the layers of history (a notion that has emerged in earlier discussion in this paper) (Personal Interview). His thought gestures toward the understanding of theatre ontology referred to above as “theatre in its content and its domain, and in its connection to other things,” and evokes
Soyinka’s notion that ritualistic theatre uses all the instruments of theatre “to control and render concrete, to parallel . . . the experience or intuitions of man in that far more disturbing environment which he defines variously as void, emptiness or infinity” (Myth, Literature and the African World 39-40). Further, Soyinka considers

the spatial medium not merely as a physical area for simulated events but as a manageable contraction of the cosmic envelope within which man – no matter how deeply buried such a consciousness has latterly become – fearfully exists. And this attempt to manage the immensity of his spatial awareness makes every manifestation in ritual theatre a paradigm for the cosmic human condition. (41)

I suggest Soyinka’s “cosmic envelope” connotes Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of organic or inorganic forms emerging from “an unfixed and ontologically unstable” ground, explored in the discussion on geophilosophy in Chapter 2. In A Thousand Plateaus, they describe their ‘Cosmic’ philosophy as “no longer forms and matters, or themes, but forces, densities, intensities” (343), which no longer speaks of matters of expression, but rather, “Matters of expression are superceded by a material of capture.

The forces to be captured are no longer those of the earth, which still constitute a great expressive Form, but the forces of an immaterial, nonformal, and energetic Cosmos.” The Cosmos not as metaphorical, but as material, “molecularized matter,” they consider, “has a relation to forces to be harnessed . . . defined by the operations of consistency applied to it” (342-343). Such conceptualization harkens back to Mbembe’s proposition to “rethink the human . . . overcoming anthropocentrism and humanism” as a process of forces, relations and connections (“Decolonizing the University”). He finds in African art “the sensory experiences of our lives”; the histories and stories in an ongoing movement of connectedness and dislocation between boundaries and networks (Postcolony xvi). What both Mbembe and Soyinka articulate, I argue, is a Deleuzian aesthetic that Zepke defines
as “always a question about ‘what happens?’ about the process of composition that is expressed in a work” (*Art as Abstract Machine* 65). In his interrogation of Spinoza’s “assemblage of affects,” or “critique of representation,” Deleuze evinces art can only be understood if we ask “what the artwork does, what joys it brings and what essences it expresses” (64). He says, “[e]verything in Nature is just composition” (*Expressionism in Philosophy* 237;216 qtd. in *Art as an Abstract Machine* 65), arguing art is a process that is “always under construction”; as “affects emerging from its encounter” on the one hand, and remaining “open to connections yet to come” on the other (65).

These generative and expansive theorizations furnish new ways for theatre to eschew the tendency to view African/Western theatrical forms as binary opposites, the trap identified by Wright and Eze, which Hauptfleisch maintains persists in theatre, despite the fact that European theatre has long employed multiple forms to create what they call inter-cultural or cross-cultural theatre. To this point, Patrice Pavis observes,

> Theatrical performance has always mixed traditions and diverse styles, translated from one language or discourse into another, covered space and time in every direction: *new*, because Western *mise-en-scène*, itself a recent notion, has made use of these meetings of performances and traditions in a conscious, deliberate and aesthetic manner. (*Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* 7)

Along these lines, recalling Soyinka’s diagnosis of “a cast of mind,” Hauptfleisch suggests, “perhaps the difference lies not in the elements, events, theories or methods themselves, but rather in the culturally shaped and value-driven interpretations of such particular issues and the institutions and systems that have been created to drive and maintain them” (Foreword, *Trends in Twenty First African Theatre* 14).

The tendency toward a binary approach with its neocolonial essentialism that Soyinka and Hauptfleisch diagnose, Kruger believes, “diminishes African theatrical
practices by finding them incompatible with European ideas of the theatre” and provokes “in some Africanist circles an equally tenacious ‘ontologization’ of an essential Africanness,” (The Drama of South Africa 17); using Biodun Jeyifo’s term ontologization to mean that “only Africans can give a ‘true’ evaluation of African literature” (Jeyifo 37). Some dismiss “‘theatre’ as a colonial import,” while others argue ‘theatre’ should “apply not to colonial dramatic literature but to precolonial oral performance practice,” reversing but not radically challenging neocolonial essentialism (The Drama of South Africa 17).

Kruger suggests Sepamla’s argument is more productive, because it draws attention to the conditions of performance practices rather than definitions. To insist on “aesthetics – form, fictionality, autonomy – as the distinguishing term of theatre, in this context,” she says, “threatens to reintroduce surreptitiously the nominalist attachment to an a priori idea of ‘theatre’ against which actual practices are measured and, by implication, found wanting”; thus, leading to a return to “Eurocentric tastes” as the standard against which to be measured, and reducing South African theatre to be considered “impure” (17). What is at issue is not a difference in terms of aesthetics of theatrical performance, she argues, “but how it is judged to have aesthetic and social legitimacy” (18). Theatre in South Africa “is not essentially European or African,” but rather, for Kruger, “it takes place between and within practices, forms, and institutions variously and contentiously associated with Europe, Africa, America, and – to complicate the standard oppositions – African America” (17).

The complexity and creative tension between the “traditional performance context and the new function in the Western dramaturgical framework” Kruger identifies resonates throughout the current South African cultural discourse, which, as has been
noted, is additionally complicated by the dimension of voices that make up South African life – and its theatre (*The Edgy City* 252). Recognizing these intricacies, and attempting to move beyond the constraints of traditional theatrical terms and hegemonic frameworks, Vicki Ann Cremona proposes radically expanding the term theatre to the “theatrical event,” which “extends playing phenomena beyond the margins of theatre” (“In Search of the Theatrical Event” 29). I will explore this proposition further, because I believe it affords a compelling conceptual bridge toward my exploration of minor theatre in the context of South African theatre that follows.

4.1. The Event: “a genuine place of performance”

By blending “the creative process with the experience of that process,” Cremona elaborates, “the focus of interest becomes the cultural and social contexts that generate the event, intervene in it, tamper with it, and may even ultimately suppress it, transform it or allow the event to survive in time” (31). Her notion of a theatre event that steps out of itself, “implies a different way of being in a social event which may not necessarily be defined *a priori* as ‘theatre,’” but a shift “from the elements that define a stage play [for example the text] to the characteristics of a theatrical situation per se.” This framework, Cremona suggests, distances “the concept of playing” from that of performance, setting up a distinction “between playing and displaying a role” (30). In other words, she articulates a move toward a potent relational movement among bodies along a line of change advanced in the Deleuzian conceptualization of the ‘event’ (*Logic of Sense* 5) that inhere in “wholly immanent, original and creative productions,” centred in time (Stagoll 91). For Cremona, “In a theatrical event, all participants become potential artists – their presence is infused with a dynamic process where the participant can shift role from actor
to spectator and vice-versa,” giving rise to “a series of implicit or explicit transactions among participants that give an event its particular quality” (“In Search of the Theatrical Event” 29-30).

The notion of event as sense and space-time and language is central to Deleuze’s logic of sensation, which he conceives as a relay that “inheres in its being and its durations” (Conley, “Sensation” 248). O’Sullivan describes the process as something that happens when events materialise in sensation, widening horizons of thought, feeling and expectation, which is a notion shared by Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink (whose notion of nomadic theatre I explore further on), who writes:

The widening of the horizon itself is an event, as it produces the sensation of ‘widening’ itself; it is a portal to an infinity of ‘widenings’ and opens up to potentiality. Such events rearrange existing conceptions of what can be known, imagined, thought, or done: they are true redistributions of the sensible (Rancière), no matter how minute. (177)

Her description emphasizes the usefulness of Deleuze’s aesthetic thought for South African theatre now. Similarly, Zepke calls for art, in the Deleuzo-Guattarian sense, “to take up its political role of creating a new future” (Sublime Art 3). Art according to their conceptualization, is a “sensation,” which “does nothing if it does not restore us to our constitutive infinity by creating the world anew” (Art as Abstract Machine 4). Exploring the aesthetics of sublime art, Zepke views “sublime art’s sensual excess as a ‘ruptural futurity’ that disrupts its contemporary spatio-temporal conditions of emergence, but nevertheless exists immanent to those conditions.” In other words, “an undetermined

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33 “The minor event finds its place offstage and finds its time in Aion, which is the time of event. The states of affairs always refer to the chronological notion of time (Chronos), whereas the event relates to Aion, which is the pure, empty form of time, dividing the present into the past and future at every instant. In this sense the theatrical and performative event is never present in chronological time but awaits its time in the future” (Wilmer and Žukauskaitė 17).
‘event’ that carries with it the possibility of a new future, and so embodies everything within its historical conditions that escape them” (*Sublime Art* 9).

As the more extensive discussion on temporality in Chapter 1 examined, Deleuze regards temporal periods as dimensions of one another, operating on a series of events in an entanglement of time, where multiple processes of stable identities and chronological sequential time (*Chronos*), working in relation with continuous time of unlimited past and future and temporal series of incorporeal meanings, become immanent encounters and relations (haecceities) or the striving of powers to become (*Logic of Sense* 5-7), which I examined in Chapter 1. Such a notion of immanence in relation to sensation speaks to Mbembe’s call to “account for time as lived, not synchronically or diachronically, but in its multiplicity and simultaneities, its presences and its absences, beyond the lazy categories of permanence and change beloved by so many historians” (*Postcolony* 8). For Mbembe, Africa is not uniform and, therefore, “cannot be reduced to a succession of movements and events, but [one] in which instances, moments, and events are . . . on top of one another, inside one another . . . a period of embedding” (242). To contextualize Mbembe’s place of “movement and events” in this discussion of theatre, I contend he gestures toward Deleuze’s stage of perpetual collision of movements where bodies actually and virtually intersect, explored earlier. In other words, he is linking temporality and spatiality – and bodies.

Advancing this idea, I return to the Deleuzian conceptualization of ‘thinking,’ which engages bodies, space and time and, I suggest, speaks to what Schechner regards as a shift of focus, “from thinking in terms of discrete objects and subjects, toward a concern with processes, relations and happenings” (Schechner 1-2). Along the same lines, Cull
proposes an embodied encounter with “the resistant materiality of performance’s thinking,” where performance itself produces “new ideas of what thinking is” (“Performance as Philosophy” 25). Earlier I have explored Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization of the two competing planes, the plane of organization (the form of organized body) and the plane of immanence, which is also the plane of the imagination. They propose the planes’ roles as signification and subjectivity, “of reconnections and reorganizations, where the basic elements of organization – organism, signification and subjectivity – are transformed into intensities and affects” (Wilmer and Žukauskaitė 7).

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they propose

> there are no longer any forms or developments of forms; nor are there subjects or the formation of subjects . . . only relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements . . . Nothing subjectifies, but haecceities form according to compositions of nonsubjectified powers or affects. (293-294)

In other words – sensation and event. Or, as O’Sullivan advances, how “a notion of affect (along with a notion of percept) might be deployed in thinking about the actual work of art itself understood as a specific form of thought” (39).

Taking the proposition further, Brian Massumi draws a connection between thought and affect, drawing on C.S. Pierce’s notion that “Affect” is the “word for thought . . . that is still couched in bodily feeling that is still fully bound up with unfolding sensation as it goes into action but before it has been able to articulate itself in conscious reflection and guarded language” (An Interview with Brian Massumi with Mary Zournazi 4). The notion of thought as a form of capture, or what Pierce calls “abduction,” Massumi says, is to be “drawn into the situation, captured by its eventfulness, rather than you capturing it.” In other words, he suggests not processes of opposition, but “perhaps a sense of freedom, a sense of vitality or vivacity, a sense of being alive” (6).
The concepts unfolded in this study have explored the thoughts central to Deleuze’s conceptualization of immanence, which Cull asserts affords a way of “thinking” a theatre philosophy to allow new ideas to be created (“Performance as Philosophy” 23). The following two sections will implicate this “thinking” in South African theatre spaces. First through Braidotti’s and Groot Nibbelink’s approach to nomadic theatre, where I link the concept to Kruger’s comment about the practical reality of theatre spaces. Second, I return to bodies in theatre as they relate to the physical space of theatre spaces, examined through Magnet Theatre’s practice.

5. South African Theatre Spaces: “dynamic spaces of intersection”

Two theorists manifest the potentiality of Deleuze’s new ways of thinking to transpose “us beyond the confines of bound identities.” Braidotti says:

[A]rt becomes necessarily inhuman in the sense of non-human in that it connects to the animal, the vegetable, earthy and planetary forces that surround us. Art is also, moreover, cosmic in its resonance and hence posthuman by structure, as it carries us to the limits of what our embodied selves can do or endure. In so far as art stretches the boundaries of representation to the utmost, it reaches the limits of life itself and thus confronts the horizon of death. (The Posthuman 107)

Groot Nibbelink sees in such conceptualization the potential of a nomadic theatre, which she regards as “a product of invention and creation . . . that manifests itself as movement and thinks performance through mobility” (13). Theatre spaces, or “the space in which theatre takes place,” she views as “temporary and changing coordinates; contrary to the usual conflation with a theatre building,” emerging “in and as the process of performance and as temporary situations” (12). In this way of thinking, “the ‘stage’ becomes a smooth space . . . a flexible threefold constellation of performers, spectators, and spaces” overturning “the striated version of the performer-spectator relationship,” with the potential for it to be “distributed throughout every possible realm of society.” In other
words, Groot Nibbelink says, the nomadic stage “gives witness to the performative turn in society” (163). Or, as Deleuze and Guattari describe it, nomadic space achieves the intuitive speed that “constitutes the absolute character of a body whose irreducible parts (atoms) occupy in or fill a smooth space in the manner of a vortex” (A Thousand Plateaus 381).

In answer to Petra Kuppers’ enquiry as to how these “extensive relations and intensive capacities become visible and tactile in the theatre” (1), one can look to Fleishman who construes that being in the world from a dramaturgical aspect, is to adopt a view from within this landscape, paying close attention and involving myself, and others I work with, in an active, participatory, embodied way. I don’t build a structure in order that the performance might dwell therein, I dwell in the landscape over time in order to learn how to build there. It is not a case of building a container in the mind and then filling it. It is a case of allowing the living itself to reveal the right container. (“Cargo” 13)

By eschewing what Deleuze calls the “dramatic composition” of major theatre framed by history, dogma and doctrine (“One Less Manifesto” 243), Gay Morris suggests Magnet Theatre’s physical theatre creates an incarnate and transformative space of creative discovery (“Making Space for Community” 226). Its engagement with “space, with space-time and with spatial practices.” Morris points out, is to “rewrite, reinvent, re-mythologize and represent the symbolic and physical space of theatrical production” (233). Krueger correspondingly sees theatre as a more reciprocal, or rhizomic, place of what he describes as “numerous relations: between audience and performer; performer and writer; director and performer; advertiser and audience, and so on”; as a fluid

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34 Morris focuses on Magnet’s work in Khayelitsha township. She writes: “Theatrical event theory suggests that considering theatre as a ‘thing’ is missing the point; theatre is in fact something that occurs . . . a theatrical event is lifted out of its surroundings so that it is noticed, and becomes wholly theatrical when it is ‘eventified’” (233).
multiplicity in theatre (*Expressions in Freedom* 39). Adopting Deleuze’s notion of multiplicity as transmutable (discussed in Chapter 1), he avoids the “sameness” of binary oppositions Knowles describes, but rather proposes the Deleuzian processual territorialization and deterritorialization of striated and smooth spaces; Fleishman’s spaces of participatory embodied creativity. As Janz points out, for Deleuze, “heterogeneity is creative” (*Philosophy in an African Place* 236). Thus, the avoidance of opposing European and African forms allows for an equally open approach toward their own essentialized forms.

Janz’s discussion on African philosophy brings together the two perspectives of ontological and material, which offers a way forward for thinking of such a reciprocal theatre space. He asks whether creativity might come from the distance between African space (solid) and place (ephemeral). In other words, “from the distance between the solidified spatial territory of essentialist African philosophy and the very place which that essentialism fails to describe, but in which the philosophers themselves dwell” (236). Thus he articulates a spatialization of difference as per Deleuze’s notion of continual processes of differentiation, discussed in this chapter, arguing it is important not just to recognize “resistance to European thought,” but to recognize and resist African philosophies’ own “spatialized and essentialized forms,” as well to recognize “the difference within itself” (*Philosophy in an African Place* 236-237). His engagement with resistance to any identitarian forms echoes Deleuze’s notion of a theatre, “in which hindrances to movement on stage are not circumvented; instead, they merely negotiate with the constituent elements at the disposal of a movement’s speed, that is, its ‘fastness’ or ‘slowness’” (Deleuze, *Superpositions* 113, qtd. in Kowsar 23). Thus, Deleuze’s stage
is “always a perpetual collision of movements where bodies actually and virtually intersect” (Kowsar 23). In the following section, I bring his concept of the relational body into the South African theatre discussion, using Magnet Theatre’s body space practice as an ontological and material example. Before I do that, I briefly turn to Bignall’s argument that Deleuze’s idea of the body brings a powerful way to think about the colonized body in order to continually problematize his theories in this context.


Chapters 1 and 2 have explored Deleuze’s notion of the body as “a composition of relation between parts” that is “constituted and defined by its relations,” *(Expressionisms in Practical Philosophy* 218-9). Bignall argues that his conceptualization, developed from the Spinozan “theory of the mind as an idea of the body,” is crucial for understanding how an ethics of selfhood and subject agency emerges from Deleuze’s philosophy. As she interprets it in “Affective Assemblages,”

In striving to understand bodily composition, the mind ‘thinks the body’ in terms of its affective relations, and so transforms the body into a self-aware being that is increasingly capable of discerning which relations are compatible and enhance active capacities, thus bringing about joy, and which relations are experienced passively by the body . . . thus occasioning a feeling of sadness. (85)

The feeling of sadness, or passive affection, prevents the body from fully exercising “its active and joyful creative powers.” Thus, he conceives a process that evinces an ethics of self-conduct, which, Bignall suggests, “involves developing understanding of oneself and others” in order to seek out “bodies that one can form compatible relations with” (85). In any encounter, then, Deleuze says, “whether I destroy or be destroyed, there takes place a combining of relations that is, as such, good” *(Expressionism in Philosophy* 249; Bignall 86).
Recognizing the potential for criticism of his notion in the context of colonial encounters where one’s body’s power is diminished and largely destroyed by the encounter, Bignall counters that it is important to consider Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza, from which he develops his conceptualization of embodiment as a process of complex affective assemblages. In the Deleuzian conceptualization, a body is affected in different ways, characterized by “the multifarious relations it forms with the great number of neighbouring bodies comprising its contextualising social milieu.” Thus, encounters are not simply “the meeting of whole bodies as they come into contact, “but rather, they “involve a multitude of engagements taking place at the many particular sites of the affections that describe a body” (86). As explored in Chapter 2, Deleuze’s notion of encounters considers parts of the body are affected differently by its different encounters. However, these are partial, incomplete, and the entire body is “never affected all at once in one’s entirety” (88). On the other hand, Bignall argues, in the case of colonialism, which she calls a “perverse encounter,” violence was inflicted on a whole community, thus intending “wholesale destruction of a community” – all the parts (88). Along the same lines as Janz’s reading of Deleuze’s notion of difference as creative heterogeneity, Bignall sees in the Spinozan/Deleuzian idea of “affective compatibility,” or “common notion,” an “ontological agreement” that she suggests might be “a prerequisite for postcolonialism.” Deleuze defines the positive idea of common notion as the mind’s ability to understand the agreement, as well as the “difference and oppositions” of things (Expressionism in Philosophy 276, qtd. in Bignall 89). Thus, each of the opposing bodies are “very disparate from one another, and opposed to one another” (Expressionism in Philosophy 281), but have qualities in common that preclude them from being totally
opposed to one another. Although, Bignall notes, Deleuze does not “disavow significant differences between bodies and eliminate sites of disagreement, in favour of a smooth and bland social harmony”; an idea that is apposite in light of the earlier discussion on syncretism (Bignall 91). Rather, she observes that “‘joy’ results from the ways in which the new combination creates new ways of being affected and increases capacity for adequate understanding and active self-assembly” (93). Massumi observes that for Spinoza, ethics does not “attach positive or negative values to actions based on characterization or classification of them according to a pre-set system of judgment” (Massumi interview 4). Nor is it a form of happiness and, in fact, he points out, it can be very disruptive and painful. Rather, he posits “joy as affirmation, an assuming by the body of its potentials, its assuming of existence. The moment of joy is the co-presence of those potentials in the context of bodily becoming” (14).

Bearing in mind Spinoza’s conceptualization of joy, then, I argue such an affirmative notion extends to South African theatre, performance theatre, performance art, creative arts, theatrical events and festivals, an approach that addresses the lacuna identified by Coetzee and Hutchison, and embraces the ethico-political theatre envisioned by minor theatre, central to which is the concept of immanence. The Foucauldian sense of “bodies, colliding, mingling and separating” (Foucault, Theatrum Philosophicum 221) as an event, with Deleuze’s attendant consideration of temporality, privileging “affect” and “becoming” (Fancy, “Geoperformativity” 62), constructs “in some way, a figure of the minority consciousness as each one’s potential” (Deleuze “One Less Manifesto” 254). Fancy advances that this process of “becoming-minor” by “veering away” from the stultifying stratification of “bodies, institutions, affects” that inhibit “the emergence of
new possibilities for living,” and foreclose the “possibilities for future change,” is the process of “becoming-imperceptible,” or the process of accessing “the pre-individual (asubjective) and pre-representational (asignifying) affective substrate that constitutes it” (“Becoming-Imperceptible in the Studio” 64). The idea implicates what Deleuze describes as “processes of interactions in the contraction of repetitions where past and future events meet, and future events are a passive form of possibilities . . . a contemplation where the active mind is operated on by greater retentions and generalities” (Williams, *Philosophy of Time* 27).

The crux of this conceptualization is the Spinozan ethical notion of ‘thought’ as the form of creativity in which ‘desire’ is not lack, but the affirmative process of producing ever-new alliances, linkages and connections to other objects and to the outside. These ideas give rise to Guattari’s ethico-aesthetic paradigm that produces a subjectivity composed of cognitive references, as well as mythical, ritual and symptomatological references, with which “it positions itself in relation to its affects and anguishes and attempts to manage its inhibitions and drives” (*Chaosmosis* 11). Reiterating the notion of the relational interaction of different concepts and forms proposed by Krueger, Janz and Bignall that I have just examined, Cull insists that the notion of immanent theatre is not the dematerialization of the body in favour of “pure and abstract thought,” or the dissolution of other forms of “drama and proscenium arch-theatre.” Rather, she regards “Deleuze’s immanence precisely concerns the participation, multiplication and extension of the human body – understood as that which is produced by relations of force and encounter with the affects of other bodies” (*Theatres of Immanence* 10).
Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins add to the notion of the acting body when they write about the postcolonial body in their study on postcolonial theatre, remarking: “Representations of the body in South African art, fiction, and certainly drama are deeply influenced by apartheid’s violations of human rights and the human spirit” (222). They argue it is not surprising that “the body functions as one of the most charged sites of theatrical representation” (203), where the body interacts with the other stage symbols and the audience through narrative and action “to offer a multifarious complex of meanings” (203). They point to the way in which the theatre, through the body and “its signifying practices,” expands postcolonial cultural discourse beyond the “verbal/textual counter-discourse” (204) by physicalizing the inherited injustices of a racialized system, and “frequently foreground[ing] the degraded and/or maimed body as a protest against apartheid” (222). Along the same lines as the Deleuzian process of encounter, they contemplate the potential for postcolonial theatre’s role to break through the profound silences that Hutchison has diagnosed. As they envision it:

The powerful presence of the theatricalized post-colonial body, despite (and sometimes even because of) its derogations, suggests that foregrounding corporeality can be a highly positive, active strategy for staging resistance to imperialism. Traditional enactments such as ritual and carnival demonstrate that the performing body can help to regenerate and unify communities despite the disabilities, disintegrations, and specific disconnections of the individual bodies involved. (231)

Perhaps Mbongeni Ngema conveys it more succinctly, when he remarks: “the body tells the story much more than words” (Ngema 103). Similarly, Jennie Reznek, actress, teacher, director, and Magnet Theatre’s co-director, considers “the sense of motion is at the heart of descriptions of the living body.” She says, as a subject, the corporeal being is
not configured as a fixed, unchanging thing . . . [but] is constantly changing: moving,
resisting, accepting and growing” (“The Moving Body” 154).

Advancing the idea, Fleishman sees the “body as a language of communication” that
extends beyond the barrier of language and culture, and he points to the way that the
theatre in a society reflects the “social drama of that society . . . the characteristic
dynamics of everyday life.” Speaking to Boehmer’s observation on the conflation of the
colonial body and land as social organization and power, referred to in Chapter 2,
Fleishman says: “Life in South Africa, filled as it is with desperate struggles for change,
for power and for simple survival, has a physically dynamic nature which feeds
physically dynamic images on the stage” (“Physical Images in the South African
Theatre” 176). Some of the origins for the importance of the physical in South African
theatre, Fleishman suggests, embrace:

formal choreographed dance sequences: tribal dances, gumboot dances, pantsula
dance or toyi-toyi [a dance of protest] sequences; to elaborate physical gesture
existing alongside and interwoven with the words of the text; to more
consciously conceived physical images . . . to replace words completely where
words have become simply insufficient. (175)

Similarly, Gilbert and Tompkins state that “[d]ance is a form of spatial inscription and
thus a productive way of illustrating – and countering – the territorial aspects of western
imperialism.” The “dancing body,” they elaborate, not only concentrates “the audience’s
gaze on the performing body/bodies, but it also draws attention to proxemic relations
between characters, spectators, and features of the set . . . reinforcing the actor’s
corporeality particularly when it is culturally laden” (239). A recent example of what
Jamal calls a “mash-up of dance styles, a mixed-media extravaganza” (“To a Deeper
Truth”), can be seen in Jay Pather’s choreography for Janni Younge’s production of The
Firebird, which uses a diverse layering of voices and classical African dances and ballet to create a performance that, Pather says, aims to “wriggle out of [the] claustrophobia of heritage and legacy” (“Laws of Recall” 324). I explore Younge’s production of The Firebird further in Chapter 4.

Another impetus towards physical theatre, Fleishman suggests, was the move to workshopped, rather than written, performances after 1976, where gesture was interspersed with text. Also critical was the influence of oral consciousness, which engaged bodily activity beyond verbalization. For Fleishman, what is important is, one, the transformation of the body of the performer “in front of the spectator into a multiplicity of characters and images”; the other, “a physical action or gesture which begins as one thing and metamorphoses into something else passing through a range of possibilities in between” (“Physical Imagines in the South African Theatre” 176-177).

The richness of these physical transformations, he believes, “affects the spectator on a more subliminal level than a simple slogan or verbal statement might” and, in the Bakhtinian sense, refashions and re-invents “the material body” into forms that “unsettle ‘given’ social positions and interrogate the rules of inclusion, exclusion and domination which structure the social body” (179).

To further interrogate Magnet’s performance practice and focus on the body as central to all their work, I ask whether it might in fact be considered an identitarian one; for instance in its transformation of the body of the performer “in front of the spectator into a multiplicity of characters and images.” Or, is it an immanent “theatre that manifests itself as movement and thinks performance through mobility” that Deleuze calls for? As an affirmative response, I turn to Fleishman’s observation that Magnet considers “the
body in space is the starting point of the creative process, and the body is the primary agent of exploration and expression, with a concurrent devaluation of the ‘text’ as point of origin and authority” (“Cargo” 14). He draws his body-centred approach from “Artaud’s theatre of the phenomenal body in which the function of the body ‘is not to identify layers of signification within operative cultures (i.e. the domain of semiotics) but to aim to discover language beyond words, a metaphysics of the theatre via an immersion in the physical’” (Sanchez-Colberg, “Altered States and Subliminal Spaces” 43, qtd. in Cargo 14). The body, Ana Sanchez-Colberg holds, “has orientation, dimensions, inclination, that by virtue of just existing occupies and produces space. Movement follows from this first principle” (qtd. in “Cargo” 14n51). Thus, Fleishman points out, for Magnet the body in South African theatre is not “‘simply a vehicle for the embodiment of the text; it serves as part of the text in its own right” and “challenges the hegemony of the written word in the meaning-making system” (“Physical Images in the South African Theatre” 175). Writing at the time of the interregnum, Fleishman contends, as many critics have, that South Africans have to “re-invent ourselves in a most active way,” arguing that theatre has a part to play in that process (175). Lewis and Krueger, in their introduction to the book on Magnet Theatre, describe the company’s work in Fleishman’s words as “a process of continual invention and reinvention of strings or series of forms,” which he describes, after Bergson, as a ‘creative evolution’ (“Plotting the Magnet Field” 24).

Fleishman’s belief in the potentiality of theatre, I argue, shares Deleuze’s concern with “processes of participation, multiplication and extension of the human body – understood as that which is produced by relations of force and encounters with the affects
of other bodies” (Cull, *Theatres of Immanence* 10). In other words, he puts forward the immanent notion of “liberating energies and pathways of expression”; Fancy’s “becoming imperceptible” referred to earlier (“Becoming-Imperceptible in the Studio” 63). In such an immanent conceptualization, Deleuze offers a role for art that goes beyond representation – activating the aesthetic and transforming art in the ritualistic sense suggested by Soyinka, “to connect us with the world, opening us up to the non-human universe that we are part of but typically estranged from” (Simon O’Sullivan 50). Fancy advances that “dramatization plays a key function . . . in both thought and creative practice, focusing on thinking and performance that insists on demonstrating its own genealogy in process rather than resting on inherited and restrictive fixities” (“Sacred Affirmation” 76). As promised earlier, I bring these concepts together in the case study of Mda’s postapartheid play, *Our Lady of Benoni*, which premiered in 2012 at the Baxter Theatre. In an earlier study, I have said that Mda used theatre to bring a sense of drama to his novels (*In a Large Landscape*). Here I rehearse the idea that he is able to “restore the image of the man-of-ritual and the maker-of-culture” in his plays (Attwell 30).

7. Pushing out the “Womb of Space” in Zakes Mda’s *Our Lady of Benoni*

*Our Lady of Benoni* (2002) captures the key themes explored in this chapter; the issue of bodies-space-time, Deleuze’s inside/outside, affect and the practical issues of rootlessness, testimony, memories, tensions between tradition and modernism, rural and urban, and sets of personal stories. He intends his play to be read, as well as performed, and he writes in English, with multiple phrases in isiZulu, Sesotho and Township slang,

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35 “Pushing out the ‘Womb of Space” is developed in part from my presentation to the Northeast Modern Language Association Annual Convention, 30 Apr. - 3 May, 2015, Toronto.
supported by an extensive glossary. Mda has always brought a provocative voice to major political and social issues, particularly through his work in theatre, which played an important role during apartheid as theatre of protest. He has been called a modernist writer who operates in the real and the supernatural (Attwell), and his plays and novels are known for their satirical voice and flights into magic realism, underlying which is a sense of pathos and a spirit of humanism as it reveals the realities of his times. He creates, I argue, the Deleuzian sense of joy as affirmation and potentiality in the relations of different encounters (explored earlier). While some critics like Carolyn Duggan consider Mda’s plays written in the period 1990-1993 (for example, *I Sing for the Fatherland, The Road* and *Joys of War*) as being Brechtian in their political call to the audience to take action, I suggest that in his postapartheid plays, of which *Our Lady of Benoni* is one, his fabulist, satirical approach adopts a minoritarian practice as a way to heighten critical awareness – to make his audience think (“The Plays of Zakes Mda” 3). In fact, Mda contends that “instead of saying African theatre is Brechtian it would be just as appropriate to say Brechtian theatre is African” (Interview with Denis Salter 285).

While he agrees the two share many of the same elements, he argues that Brecht’s change takes place outside the theatre, whereas in Mda’s concept of theatre for development, “change – or, at the very least, proposed practical solutions to ongoing problems – is the ideal goal during the actual performance itself, as well as afterwards, of course” (286).

The play is set in the singular scene of a Johannesburg park evocative of Wilson Harris’s “womb of space”; a place of memory. Harris sees the work of the imagination “as an intuitive capacity to secrete parallels into infinity, backward and forward, outward and inward, as it were, in the womb of space” (*The Womb of Space* 116). I advance
Mda’s theatre is such a social space, such a womb, composed of material and mental images in a blurring of boundaries between the social and the imagined – in other words, fluid, social and political. In this way, Mda’s space evokes Janz’s “place where the philosophers dwell” (referred to earlier), bringing together the ontological and material perspectives to create a ‘space as stage’ for thinking.

The bounded place of the park, where the action and encounters centre, is set against the layered worlds the characters encounter outside the park. Its metaphysical ‘periphery’ can be read etymologically either as its spatial boundary, or the superficial or outer part of the body or organ; appropriate for a play where Mda centres his concerns in the contrasting idea of virginity as something very personal, very private - the interior, in relation with the political patriarchal hegemony and those beyond the periphery - the exterior, evoking Deleuze’s notion of the enfolding of the inside and the outside.

Formerly the park in apartheid South Africa was a pristine, claustrophobic, forbidden space of order and exclusion resonant of the removals of Africans from cities to artificially created peripheries. As LORD STEWART, in nostalgic reminiscence about his nanny pushing him on the swing in the park, reminds PROFESSOR (a black man): “You wouldn’t have been allowed in this park, Professor. None of you would sit on these benches” (Benoni 74). Now, the park becomes a disintegrating place of chaos and confusion that reflects the anxieties of the outside world. Despite its sense of anarchy and dilapidation, the park Mda creates is a womb-like place inhabited by the confluence of characters invested with Kruger’s “embodied spatial practices and imaginations” of the postapartheid era. They are a disparate group of people displaced by the new dispensation who live or work in the park, sharing the same bench. Here they withdraw into...
themselves and try to escape the world beyond in a false sense of amnesia and illusion. However, it is also the place of Krueger’s “politics of the self” where they tell their stories that ultimately bring the outer world inside.

There is PROFESSOR who lives in self-exile from his rural village, tormented with guilt for his inaction to stand up for his wife who was the victim of virginity testing, and for protecting his brother who committed an unspeakable crime. He now lives in the park on swindled government disability money because he tests positive for TB by substituting sputum purchased from an actual TB patient. In an allusion to the corruption that is rife in South Africa and a major theme for Mda, PROFESSOR says, after all, “it is his share of the national cake. Why should it only be politicians and civil servants who loot the national coffers?” (28). LORD STEWART is a white man down on his luck since he lost his job because of affirmative action. He mourns the disappearance of his love, the virginal, perhaps imaginary, Danni who sees the Virgin Mary and hears voices, and who vanishes one day into a car with strangers. Perhaps Danni’s disembodied presence in the play, “the beautiful Afrikaner princess” (14), could even be a figment of LORD STEWART’s illusionary disappeared world. He seeks to find her through the intervention of the Virgin of Benoni, a mystic who claims to see the Virgin Mary. THE SELLER OF LAUGHTER is Mda’s joker figure, a young man who dreams of making his fortune by franchising the “Mother of All Jokes” (an allusion to the signs that beggars hold up at traffic lights to draw the attention of drivers). In the meantime he keeps his illusions alive by eating the magic mushrooms he finds in the park, and by amusing himself tormenting PROFESSOR, whose education alienates him. Each character establishes an almost domestic presence in the park: PROFESSOR’s newspapers and books – not to be
touched; LORD STEWART’s swing – that no one else can sit on; SELLER’s fiercely protected magic mushrooms.

Into this space, the outside of the real world intrudes. On the periphery, the offstage action – beyond the boundaries – circles around three stories that ultimately infiltrate the park and its inhabitants. In a courthouse just outside the park a religious leader is being tried for rape (suggestive of the former South African President Jacob Zuma’s actual rape trial) supported by a group of women who are loyal to him because he endorses the reintroduction of virginity testing. In the peri-urban town of the play’s title “Benoni,” an East Rand town outside of Johannesburg described as mine dumps and urban sprawl, seventeen-year-old Francesca Zackey claims to have seen the Virgin Mary and blinds the followers and believers who flock to her by urging them to look right into the sun to see the Virgin. And, in the rural village of KwaVimba, the home village of PROFESSOR, the reintroduction of the past practice of virginity testing divides the community. From outside the courthouse float the chants of the women protesting the trial of their leader. LORD STEWART’s visit to the site of the fantastical, fanaticized sighting of the Virgin of Benoni is an excursion in frustration, and results in him losing his sight. SELLER’s journeys into the reality of poverty in Johannesburg, where he unsuccessfully tests his signs, force him to return to the park, more determined than ever to escape.

It is the women who pass through the park and force the stories to surface who turn the park into a nomadic space-time of encounters. Mda’s theme of virginity that runs throughout the play, he says, is a result of his reflection that the notion of virginity was an issue of control by men. Here, it is the women who through the encounters in the park strive to shift what Mda calls the “constituencies of social formation” (interview with
Karabo Kgoleng). While the Virgin of Benoni and Danni, who hover outside the park, are a refrain of the patriarchal illusion of virginity, THABISILE and MADLOMO bring the dimensions of the real world to the question. THABISILE is a modern young black woman, a teacher who visits the park to see PROFESSOR, and we learn it is her failure to pass the virginity test in KwaVimba that led to the breakup of their marriage. The darkest story, though, is tied to the old woman, the park cleaner MADLOMO, whose three-month old baby had been raped by a man who believed that “if you have AIDS and you have sex with a virgin you get cured. A baby possesses assured virginity” (Benoni 57). Despite her own devastating experience with rape, though, MADLOMO, a proponent of virginity testing, is a leader in the group of women who are protesting outside the courthouse.

Through the women’s stories of the past and present, Mda interrogates the idea of judging: in the trial – in what MADLOMO calls “the white man’s” court – of a leader for rape, which is protested by women because of tradition; and in the village, where the trial of young women is carried out by women with self-proclaimed “expertise” (based on tradition) who carry out the virginity testing – or judging – despite scientific proof of its fallacy. Thus, he exposes the hypocrisy of those who use official and superstitious traditions for power. He takes on the voices of power, superstition, sex and ethics, derived from the colonial/apartheid past, as well as customary patriarchal taboos and customs centred on a woman’s body; perhaps on the most private and singularly female part – “the womb”; coalescing men’s obsession with virginity and the very real issue of rape, with patriarchal power. PROFESSOR’s shocking confession – because of THABISILE’s insistence – that it was his brother who had raped MADLOMO’s baby,
and that he had helped conceal the fact, reveals the source of his guilt and self-imposed exile. His painful revelation of the truth gestures toward, and problematizes, the TRC testimonials and tension of guilt, forgiveness and forgetting. While PROFESSOR faces the consequences of his confession, and potential for redemption, MADLOMO says to him, “I don’t think you should have made this confession . . . Now I have one more person to hate. You have given me an extra burden of hate to carry with me to my grave” (103), a sentiment that gestures toward the TRC’s burden of forgiveness discussed in Chapter 2.

In the nuance of the blurring of the inside and the outside, and in the reverberations of old and new in his poetry of storytelling, lies Mda’s suggestion of potentiality, an aura of openness; to embrace tradition or modern urbanism – or a blend of the two; to look backwards or forward; to remember or to forget; to forgive or to seek retribution; to root oneself in the real world or to imagine another one. In this space of performance Mda creates, he captures and satirizes the mood of his times by moving between spaces of remembering and encountering – the clash between rural and urban; the debate over cronyism and corruption, and the dreams of wealth in the new global capitalism or salvation in the blessings of the Virgin; or perhaps hope lies in the fantasies fed by the wild “magic” mushrooms growing in the park. His sense of the ridiculous, yet the play’s underlying haunting melancholy thread, evokes Deleuze’s notion that “the essence of art is a kind of joy, and this is the very point of art. There can be no tragic work because there is a necessary joy in creation: art is necessarily a liberation that explodes everything, first and foremost the tragic” (“Mysticism and Masochism” 133). In Mda’s encounters of understanding, of multitude of engagement, and of solid and ephemeral
spaces, I see what Bignall calls “a kind of restorative love” (“Affective Assemblages” 82). As THABISILE demonstrates at the end of Our Lady of Benoni, after PROFESSOR has confessed, she is not yet ready to “walk hand-in-hand into the sunset” with him until he has reported his crime to the police and paid his debt. But, she says, “I will visit you in prison and bring you delicious goodies . . . We may even remarry while you’re serving your sentence, so that you know what when you’re done you have someone to come back to” (103-104). While the SELLER takes the blind LORD STEWARD under his wing as a prop for his new “Mother of all Jokes”: “SLAVE MASTER FALLEN ON HARD TIMES, NEEDS MONEY TO FEED SLAVE” (104).

Bignall’s engagement with the formal process of the Australian/Indigenous National Enquiry into the Stolen Generation further demonstrates how Deleuze’s ontology of thought brings important ideas to the postcolonial/postimperial milieu and the problematic notion of judging Mda reveals. The process of the Enquiry, she says, was something that went beyond forgiveness “into a form of concern and genuine sorrow” (qtd. HREOC 1997 14, qtd. in “Affective Assemblages” 82). The something beyond she describes is “a kind of satisfaction not reducible to enjoyment.” Rather, she affirms, it is a “‘kind of restorative love,’ an immediate form of communion that corresponds with care and results in a form of satisfaction that is suggestive of Spinozan joy” (82). Thus, she proposes an ethical approach, not just for an apology, or a kind of formal justice, “but for a less mediated, more intimate kind of ethical assessment and commitment” that can “best be thought of as a kind of care, an attentive quality of comportment one ought to practise in one’s social relationships, in order to act in accordance with a postcolonial sensibility” that is not based on a self-other relationship, or “the paternalistic care” which
upholds the practice and continues it” (78-79). Instead, she writes of the need for mutual care in postcolonial relationships that recognize “indigenous and non-indigenous traditions are conceptually diverse, and one need not be privileged over the other.” Thus, she advances, “a variety of approaches can combine to reach an agreeable outcome” (79).

I am drawn to her proposition because it offers a new way to approach the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which, as noted earlier and in Chapter 2, has been a preoccupation of post-apartheid theatre. I see in her notion of Spinozan joy the “mutually compatible, affirming and empowering affective relation between bodies connected in concrete relations of engagement,” the “restorative love” that speaks to the lacuna Coetzee identifies in the relationship between the settler and indigenous people discussed in Chapter 2. In this sense of a ‘something beyond,’ Bignall posits an “ethic of joyful sociability” (100) that clearly breaks from “the ambivalent and implicitly suspicious attitude towards difference” of Western liberalism and communitarian philosophical traditions reflected in the oppositional practices Deleuze rejects (82). She suggests that Deleuzian philosophy is an alternative to the tradition of Western thought and offers a “potentially non-imperial,” diverse practice with aspects that “privilege a certain idea of careful sociability” and expand on “practical ethics to include unmediated qualities of interpersonal relationships as defining aspects of political and ethical life” (79).

8. Conclusion: “a dialogue of irreducible pluralities of imagined communities”

Deleuze’s commitment to a philosophical practice of processes that avoid identitarianism or essentialising proffers an immanent engagement with the post-apartheid period – looking at what is being held over from past structures, what new
pressures are being faced, and what new explorations are taking place. Minor theatre’s ontology of “determinitorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation” (18, Deleuze and Beckett, Introduction 1), are affirmative ways of thinking about the cultural practices and artistic productions (including plays), not only against their dense history, but in context with prevailing social and political situations (Knowles). Bearing in mind the notion that everything in minor practice is political, O’Sullivan points out that it is “Political in the sense that the lives and individual concerns of the characters are always linked to the larger social milieu,” with the political as a line of escape – a determinitorialization – as a break from “the habits of representation” (Notes 2); Fancy’s generative asignifying escape from the strata. Krueger holds a similar view of theatre’s affirmative practice, suggesting theatre is more than the production itself. “The process of making theatre can have a positive effect when people are working together intensely affecting one another,” he says. “That is why theatre worked so well during apartheid, when people working together understood the work” (Personal Interview).

In Chapter 4, I take up the spirit of optimism expressed by the theatremakers I have spoken to and explore the ideas of emerging young playwrights and directors, new and different places of theatre development, training and performance, the dawning voices of previously marginalized sectors, and the innovative work of independent theatremakers and theatre companies, such as Magnet Theatre and Handspring Puppet Company, in these theatrical spaces. By entering such an “aesthetico-political” process through the Deleuzian assemblage of content and enunciation, I explore the structure of South African theatre praxis itself, investigating such issues as the significance for artists of
access to training, theatre spaces, and funding, languages of performance, and exposure to audiences in order to create and enunciate.
CHAPTER 4

Spaces of Future Potentialities

In recent months the slow, insistent thrumming of discontent, the steady sounds of defiance have rumbled loudly with an increasing urgency, demanding to be heard. Pleas for recognition, acknowledgement of past injustices and the exaction of a reckoning are no longer polite enquiries but fierce clamours of demand. The global collective cry for justice has not escaped South Africa and the thin veneer of respectability politics with which we attempted to cover the post-’94 cracks has become more tenuous with visible signs of wear and tear. Voices are demanding restitution, and horrors perpetrated in dark corners are being brought to light.

Curators’ Statement, National Arts Festival Programme 2018.

It’s all about the stories and how you create them; what are you looking for; what do you want to say? We have to seek out what those stories are; the stories behind the stories; where do they come from.

Aubrey Sekhabi, playwright and Artistic Director, The State Playhouse

1. Introduction

Each year, a small town in the Eastern Cape becomes home to the ten-day National Arts Festival and turns into South Africa’s larger stage; the centre of the energy and potential of more than 2000 theatrical performances from all over South Africa set against histories and memories of the past and the challenges and realities and debates of the present. The town’s colonial settler history, its site of brutal settlement, its reminder of apartheid division and its current socio-economic challenges create a ‘space as stage’ for storytelling that becomes the ethical creative joyfulness of the “Idea” that Zakes Mda and Simone Bignall articulate. I propose the Festival as the bridge into an encounter with contemporary South African theatre discussion, and a way toward engaging Deleuze’s vision of a “new type of revolution in the course of becoming possible” (Dialogues II 147). In capturing the elements that compose it, the Festival is a space of vibrations and
affective engagement; space of social encounter sparking a flow of voices from personal to community and rural to urban, subverting or working around the State, as well as sometimes working within it. Assemblages of stories, voices, bodies, histories and memories buried in the landscape are a refrain in the Deleuzo-Guattarian sense of an “aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes,” (A Thousand Plateaus 323). It is a good place to start this chapter.

In the foregoing chapters I have examined the Deleuzian concept of the minor in the context of bodies (subject), space and time, inherent in which is the recurring shifting of power through the dynamic processes of bodies in relation to other bodies as ongoing movements and interactions that have the potential to challenge the dominant position. I have further argued that theatre space, which embraces the ancient rite of storytelling, allows a complex understanding and questioning of humanity; a space of immanence that echoes these processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Added to which is the Deleuzo-Guattarian-Bergsonian correlative notion of time as intensities that “oscillate between or spill into each other” (Young 316), no longer in the “empirical progression of time,” but operating as a relay that “inheres in its being and its foundations” (Deleuze, Francis Bacon 111).

My exploration thus far has probed the key questions I posed at the beginning of this study: How can the Deleuzian immanentist ontology encounter the striated postapartheid milieu and contribute to a new discourse with which to engage South African theatre praxis and spatialities? How can theatre continue to offer the experience of “how space and place might be structured otherwise”? For Anton Krueger, theatre’s role is “to
cultivate a growing sensitisation to other people, other subjectivity, other people’s lives,”
as well as creating awareness of “our own inner mechanisms and our place in the world.”
He distinguishes this approach from what he calls "political consciousness," which he
considers “a narrowing down to more abstract ‘issues’; a kind of numbing instead of
sensitisation” (Personal email, 11 Oct. 2019). In his notion of affective relations, I
suggest, Krueger speaks to Bignall’s notion of “relational selfhood” and the “something
beyond,” (the political) discussed in Chapter 3 (“Affective Assemblages” 79). The
Deleuzo-Guattarian minoritarian processes of creative production I have explored
heretofore offer an opening up of such awareness. In this chapter, I engage the specific
context of theatrical production in South Africa with Deleuze’s concept of becoming
(deterritorialization) through “events . . . that provoke the questions that History and
historians have sought to answer: What happened? What is going to happen?” (Patton,
Deleuzian Concepts 91). Thus, I argue, minor theatre’s affirmative and dynamic
processes of bodies comingling in a constant refrain of moving, coding, territorializing
and deterritorializing, offer a way to move beyond identitarian strategies of representation
and opposition toward new potentialities of imagining the world.

2. Conceptual Approach: The Minor Applied to Theatre

To examine the contemporary space of South African theatre praxis, I reprise the
concepts of minorization to explore the source of new voices within old traditions.
Chapters 2 and 3 investigated Deleuze’s notion of theatre as immanent, not as
representational, where affect and becoming are the key performative processes and
where minorization, extended to theatre, creates ethico-aesthetic spaces of potentiality,
joyfulness and playfulness. The different expressions unfolding in different spaces,
relations and trajectories, Deleuze suggests, are spaces of political engagement for a new beginning of ‘people to come’ in an invention of a new collectivity. The minoritarian conceptualization is one of bodies in relation to other bodies in the event (virtual and actual) and sensation (imagination and immanence), where the event is “explosive,” unsettling “what appears to be given” (Doel and Clarke 3, qtd. in Long and Travis 80). In the Spinozan sense, the intermingling of bodies with other bodies, with “more movement, greater speeds, less certainty, and greater capacities to become transformed” (80), bounds bodies into other bodies, from which “it follows that everybody; insofar as it exists modified in a certain way, must be considered as a part of the whole universe” (Allison 84, qtd. in 80). As Nigel Thrift, in describing non-representation, posits: “I do not count the body as separate from the thing world. Indeed, I think it could be argued that the human body is what it is because of its unparalleled ability to evolve with things” (Thrift, Non-Representational Theory 10, qtd. in Long and Travis 84).

In this way of thinking, then, I propose that in theatre the body becomes reinvented and transformed in its Deleuzo-Guattarian conceptualization of “corporeality” or materiality not as “intelligible, formalessentiality,” or fixed, essential forms, or “perceived thinghood.” Nor is it separate from the “expressive or intensive qualities” and processes of “deformation or transformation that operate in a space-time itself anexact and that act in the manner of events” (A Thousand Plateaus 407). Rather, they suggest corporeality, its immanent power, is the “ambulant coupling, events-affects, which constitutes the vague corporeal essence” that is distinct from the “fixed essence-properties of the thing deriving from the essence” (408). Thus, “lines of escape from forms of capture and containment” come together as molecular multiplicities, “mutually
reinforcing one another” (Bignall and Patton 9). Languages of emergence and spaces of immanence emanate from the “deteriorialization of language, connection of the individual to political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation” (Toward a Minor Literature 18). In other words, with their conceptualization of imagination and creativity, Deleuze and Guattari propose processes of “immanent, original and creative productions” (Stagoll 91) in “the dynamic unfolding of difference” engendering “immanent tendencies” and “different expressions of life unfold[ing] different spaces, relations, fields or trajectories” (Colebrook, “The Space of Man” 195). I bring these ideas to this chapter’s exploration of the artists, the theatrical spaces and the works themselves, drawing on the Deleuzo-Guattarian immanent ontology of becoming and territoriality in its sense of a refrain of melodic landscapes. To wit, the plane of immanence as “the reality of the virtual in which physical processes bathe and are nourished” (Saldanha, Space After Deleuze 144). As Saldanha posits: “When an artist succeeds in extracting a consistent affect or sensation from a particular assembling and transformation of materials, the resulting artwork ‘ascends’ into an aesthetic plane of composition . . . which is fully immanent” (145). In A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari conceive the poet “is one who lets loose molecular populations in hopes that this will sow the seeds of, or even engender, the people to come, that these populations will pass into a people to come, open a cosmos” (345).

Minor theatre’s ontology is an affirmative way of thinking about the cultural practices and artistic productions (including plays), along with Brian Massumi’s notion that cultural materialism injects moments of interruption or fixed identity in order to pause – to think – and to more clearly differentiate the conceptualization of minor and its
ramifications. Massumi considers the practice of “doing politics and . . . doing art are all integrally aesthetico-political,” arguing:

> It is here that the constructive questioning begins. It consists in finding ways to understand any given mode of activity in these experiential terms, starting from an ontological primacy of the relational-qualitative and respecting the singularity of the activity’s unfolding — although the word ‘ontological’ no longer fits. Process is only perishingly about being. But it is everywhere and always about powers of existence in becoming. (Simondon 2005, 24-26 and passim, qtd. in *Semblance and Event* 12-13)

As I pointed out in chapter 3, the notion that everything in minor practice is political, in the sense that lives and individual concerns are linked in the larger social milieu with the political, offers a line of escape from the signifying strata of forms of representation.

### 3. Conceptual Architecture

Before engaging these concepts with the theatrical spaces and practices, I first review the current epistemological debate on why there is need for a new way of thinking about knowledge in relation to postapartheid South African intellectual thought and theatre praxis, as well as examining what that thinking offers this study. Specifically, I draw on the ideas of Premesh Lalu, Achille Mbembe and Njabulo Ndebele on decolonizing knowledge in the academy, and Mark Fleishman and other theatremakers and academics on theatrical performance. I also argue that the South African government’s cultural policy’s priorities, affecting the investment in arts education and practice, falls into this area of debate, where the state apparatus is challenged by the practices and energies and voices of the community of artists, arts administrators and arts commentators. To explore this issue further, I refer to the South African government’s original White Paper 1996, and its subsequent redrafts, together with Mike van Graan’s insightful response from the perspective of this community. Second, I examine the National Arts Festival (NAF) in
the town of Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown) as a stage for these ideas and the
“practices we call doing politics and practices” and “doing art” (Massumi, Semblance
and Event 12), because NAF encapsulates the historical and cultural embeddedness,
social issues and cultural debates that unfold in the broader contemporary South African
theatrical spaces and practice. Third, drawing on my interviews and field research in
2016, I look at three key areas of theatre praxis: the theatrical spaces, the audiences and
the theatremakers, from the point of view that the material cannot be separated from the
discussion of ontological thought and decolonizing approaches. Exploring the new
generation of theatremakers and spatialities, I examine theatre spaces and how they can
be structured otherwise, and the theatremakers, theatre modes and plays that embrace
language, space, politics and subjectivity as affirmative and dynamic processes of
‘becoming’ that create new political subjects and challenge the dominant position. In
turning to the plays and productions themselves as case studies, I look at three plays that
speak to the concepts I have been exploring. The work of Handspring Puppet Company
(assemblage) and Jannie Younge Productions are rich sources of innovative work, as I
have already demonstrated with Ubu and the Truth Commission in Chapter 2. Here, I
explore Younge’s production of The Firebird, which like Ubu, unsettles the
contemporary political debate through the encounter of social reality and creative
imagination toward art in its ritualistic sense of connecting with the world. Amy Jephta’s
Kristalvlakte is an Afrikaans adaptation of Brecht’s Mother Courage written in Cape
‘Coloured’ dialect to challenge the official Afrikaans language. Set in the Cape Flats, a
space of generational buried histories and slave memories (explored in What the Water
Gave Me in Chapter 2), her play reveals a schism she sees “as a metaphor for the
country.” Neil Coppen’s *NewFoundLand* takes a spiritual approach to reach memories through the fraught entanglement in, yet the potential release from, old stereotypes and traditions played against a contemporary reality. What I aim for in this chapter is to explore theatre as a space for the joyfulness and playfulness that Deleuze’s minor theatre ontology conceptualizes as the event: explosive and unsettling.

### 4. Knowledges and Ways of Knowing: “ambivalence, contestation, and ‘entangled meanings’”

The event enters into a relationship to both “bodies and states of affairs . . . and to language” in the process of major and minor (Patton, *Deleuzian Concepts* 102). Here, I would like to briefly review the central concepts of major, minor and event before bringing them into this exploration of postapartheid tensions, where they are clearly being played out in majoritarian structures and minoritarian lines of flight; both from territorialization by past systems, as well as reterritorialization by the current State and global capital systems. As I have explored in Chapters 1 and 2, the Deleuzo-Guattarian conceptualization of major and minor is a system of signification and subjectification in the encounter of bodies, time and language in processes of territorialization, deterриториализация and reterritorialization; what Deleuze and Guattari call “multiplicities of escape and flux” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 470). This “synthesis of forces,” they conceive, creates an event as “the potential immanent within a particular confluence of forces” (Stagoll 90). Thus, an event is not “a structure, fixed position, temporality or

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36 Neil Coppen and Amy Jephta are among twelve South African playwrights who have been selected to become members of PlayRiots, a collective created by The Royal Court Theatre (UK) that provides mentorship for developing playwrights. The project focuses on getting the draft to the stage; providing what is missing, and allowing for breathing room, where ideas can settle and get feedback. (Coppen. Personal Interview)

property, and without beginning or end,” but instead is “a sign or indicator of its genesis and an expression of the productive potential of the forces from which it arose” (90). In other words, as I have already drawn attention to, Temple Hauptfleisch’s notion of the event-ness of performance as political.

Deleuze and Guattari’s interest is not in the control of State power, “but rather the forms of social change which take place alongside or beneath any given form of State, and the manner in which these changes impact upon political institutions themselves” (Patton 8). They view the State as “an apparatus of power and a trans-individual position of desire, a complex institutional system and a system of collective subjectivation” (Sibertin-Blanc 22). Encapsulating an image of the State that is resonant for South Africa, Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc argues the State “needs . . . invariable markers (striations) to immobilize space, a fundamental condition enabling not only to take the land but within the taken territory to identify and control the people and the things according to their positions and movements in this space, to delimit it, segment it, and make it appropriable,” legally and economically (108). In other words, he describes the majoritarian, arborescent, structural system of territorialization and reterritorialization through which “subjects are sorted and significations make sense” (A Thousand Plateaus 295). It is in the Deleuzo-Guattarian way of thinking that I suggest the postapartheid as an event, where the event “is not a disruption of some continuous state, but rather the state is constituted by events ‘underlying’ it that, when actualised, mark every moment of the state as a transformation” (Stagoll 90).

In Chapter 2, I examined the question of how to develop new ways of thinking, being and knowing that avoid the trap of being oppositional by exploring decolonizing
geographies that seek to unsettle hegemonic ways of thinking. As that discussion revealed, the notion of unsettling suggests that rather than assuming an absence of colonialism (which Kirsten Mundt contends may never disappear), or an alternative “state solution,” decoloniality as a practice offers “not simply a negative act of critique; instead, thinking is doing, doing is thinking, in a relational praxis where scholarship is not divorced from lived embodiments and spiritual worlds” (Mundt 1). The question is also one that South African writers, academics and theatremakers are exploring. The debate recognizes that while apartheid might be “past” it has not disappeared, despite the illusions of the intervening rainbowism. Thinking subjectivities in this country of striated and encoded identities is still charged with tension; voices and silences continue to be framed by the foundational Western way of thinking, and responses still react in an oppositional way to the arguments and institutions through which they were formed, as Chielozona Eze points out in Chapter 3. The student actions of the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall protests that started in 2015 were a catalyst for a recharged debate on ‘what we know’ and ‘how we know it.’ In Chapter 3, I noted Hauptfleisch’s suggestion that viewing the protest movement to challenge the contemporary social order as theatrical "eventification" creates new ways of thinking and perceiving, and his idea is germane to this discussion. Ismail Mahomed, CEO of the Market Theatre, argues it is important for the arts to have voices driven by “our voices – therefore our own identity.” He points out that Section 16 (the Bill of Rights) of the Constitution calls for freedom of expression and creativity, and he contends artists have yet to understand the power invested with that Constitution and the need to take responsibility for bringing their own voices to the conversation (Personal Interview). In the same way of thinking, Lara Foot,
Artistic Director of the Baxter Theatre, observes that “theatre adds to the consciousness pool of morality and ideology that is positive; holding understanding and respect for one another as a key focus” (Personal Interview).

As an example of the intellectual debate playing out now, Premesh Lalu, Director of the Centre for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape, is leading a search to shift the way the humanities engage with the sciences and technology away from “apartheid’s constructions of difference,” advocating for collaboration to “re-imagine a future beyond the race, class, and gender cleavages that continue to bedevil South African Society” (“UWC, Statement on the DST-NRF Flagship). Referring to the discourse on decolonization of the academy, he argues there is a tendency to conflate content (viz. texts that have been omitted from curricula and debates on resistance to colonial inheritance and nationalist shortcomings) and form (the institutional form of the university in Africa), leading to an impasse in the search for change. Instead, he contends, one can only rework the institutional place of the university if its content exceeds its form. To run content and form together is to evacuate the scene of aesthetics and style that are fundamental to the question of knowledge and its performance. The result of conflating content and form in an argument about decolonization ignores the perils of the pitfall of nationalism that Fanon once warned about when he argued that you can never make colonialism blush for shame by spreading out little-known cultural treasures under its eyes. (Fanon, Wretched of the Earth 179-180; Lalu, “Thinking Across Hemispheres” 19)

Fanon’s characterization of nationalism shares Deleuze’s notion that nations, or “nation-state[s],” are not only engaged in an “active struggle against the imperial or evolved systems,” but “they crush their own ‘minorities,’ in other words, minoritarian phenomena that could be termed ‘nationalitarian,’ which work from within and if need be turn to the old codes to find a greater degree of freedom” (A Thousand Plateaus 456). Rather than avoiding Fanon’s pitfall, Lalu says, the impasse in the search for change keeps the
“subject of the post colony . . . in its place, as a subject indelibly marked by its
disindividuation, making the routes of exit and escape increasingly precarious and
difficult to imagine and enact” (“Thinking Across Hemispheres” 20). As a result, he
argues, “we seem to have been dropped into the pit latrine of history,” as the student
protesters so viscerally demonstrate with their signature gesture of “dump[ing] human
excrement on the statue of Cecil John Rhodes” (20). At the same time, he contends, “the
symbolic and structural conditions of an inherited past will not de
liver us from the aporia
in which the postcolonial subject appears to be trapped” (20). Along the same lines,
Suren Pillay explores ways of recruiting new knowledge in universities to break from
what he calls “geographical and linguistic apartheid,” and question forms of knowledge
that “reinforce unequal power relations or inhibit our thinking about certain objects of
knowledge in particular ways.” In a critique of what he calls modern liberalism, he says:
“The teleological assumption of colonial modernity was that freedom, equality,
modernity and the market would result in the dissolution and loosening of the hold of
particular attachments, whether these be religious or ethnic or racial on the individual,
other than the national,” and he points to the need “to take the question of how we think
the problem very seriously” (“Decolonizing the University”).

Lalu’s research enquires into what he sees as “the potentiality that resides in the
sadness that surrounds subaltern subjects and its relation to the academic discourse of
African anti-colonial nationalism.” Rather than maintaining “the attachment to the
foundational fiction of nationalism, which . . . is resonantly debilitating,” he argues for
another way of dealing with the “question of subalternity, and sadness.” This sadness, the
sense of impasse, he says, limits political subjectivity and treats the subaltern as subject
to “be conscripted to the cause of creating communities of affect” (“Where Does Sadness Come From?” 549). In the notion of impasse and in the idea of sadness, Lalu sees the “derealization of potential.” He draws the idea from Agamben’s “concept of potentiality that ‘maintains itself in relation to actuality in the form of suspension; it is capable of the act in not realizing it, it is sovereignty capable of its own im-potentiality’” (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 45, qtd. in Lalu 551). In other words, in Agamben’s thinking, sadness is the “potentiality of im-potentiality” (551). The solution, Lalu argues, lies in opening up “the face of sadness to the meaning of politics rather than the thought of negativity” (553). His theorization of sadness as impasse or impotence, I suggest, gestures toward the Deleuzo-Spinozan notion that the feeling of sadness, or passive affection, prevents the body from exercising what Bignall describes as “caring sociability,” discussed in Chapter 3 (“Affective Assemblages” 85). Deleuze equates the majoritarian thinking of sadness and impasse with the arboreal conceptualization of the tree’s hierarchical system and privileged status. The tree, he says, is a “sad image of thought that is forever initiating the multiple on the basis of a centred or segmented higher unity” (Massumi, Introduction, *A Thousand Plateaus* 16). In contrast to what he calls these “pseudomultiplicities” (8), he proffers the rhizome, with its multiplicities, “ceaselessly establish[ing] connections between semiotic chains, organization of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles” (7).

The Deleuzian concept of thinking, I suggest, responds to Lalu’s question of whether the humanities can offer an opening to break with “this impasse that issues from nationalism’s ‘magical exaggeration of the difficulties of the world,’” and articulate a future memory of apartheid that does not slide into the apocalypse (“Where Does Sadness
Come From?” 551). He captures the Deleuzian notion with the epigraph to his article that quotes Deleuze’s statement: “Inspiring sad passions is necessary for the exercise of power” (Deleuze, *Cours Vincennes*, qtd. 548). Rather than changes in the content and form of the academy, Lalu proposes the re-articulation of “not only what is absent from our discourse, but rather the latent content that remains stubbornly unseen in what we see. The name of that gesture is postcolonialism, and the condition for it is a practice of postapartheid freedom” (“Thinking Across Hemispheres” 22). His notion that loss of appreciation of what exists in that context creates an impasse, I suggest, is one shared by the theatremakers and critics who similarly call for recognition of what exists in theatre and what it has to offer.

In a lecture based on his article “Between History and Apocalypse ‘Stumbling,’” Lalu evinces the way we remember apartheid today is not the way we will remember it twenty years from now. The critique of apartheid has dissipated, he says, and there needs to be a break from the old debates toward a new way of thinking about aesthetic education and public arts. He proposes that the humanities might be able to offer an opportunity not to be caught in the history and the apocalypse, but to think ahead about how the relations between the human and technology might be better, and what the critique of apartheid might look like when you put the two together. In other words, he wants to think about apartheid as less formed, less solidified, and more unstable as a category, contending the contested question in the 70s and 80s (during apartheid) “arrived at a feeling of what you would call the post-apartheid” that post-apartheid critique has not taken up (transcribed from “Stumbling” Podcast). How is it, he asks, that the concept of apartheid in this critique of apartheid seems to have dissipated with the
juridical and chronological arrival of post-apartheid? The present might be a matter of
debate as a source for thinking knowledge and its project again, he suggests: “We know
in advance what apartheid was and how it functions in the public imaginary. I think we
need to revisit what we mean by it.” Thus, instead of ending up with “an apartheid
scripting of the post-apartheid,” he argues for a more affirmative way of thinking what he
calls “bio-politics, which lies not in the concept of death, but as another lease on life,
another set of possibilities” (“Stumbling” Podcast).

The energy Lalu finds lacking, Jephta sees in the theatre students she teaches at the
University of Cape Town. In my 2016 interview with her, she observes there is a new
wave of Black political awareness and energy and “conscientizing from student protests.”
Students are aware of the protest theatre of the 1960s, she argues, and they want to, or
feel they can, do the same about the issues they are facing now; for them, the answer lies
in theatre. The plays of the 60s also contributed to changing of a regime, she says, and
young people are eager to do the same. Graduating students are talking about how the
“heat’s been turned up,” and there is impatience with the slow pace of change. She notes
“artists feel they have a place to articulate this frustration” through writing and social
media, and she is excited by the wave of post-apartheid protest plays, and new writing
that engages with urgent issues. “You don’t have to live in a bubble outside of context
and place; it is an exciting time to be a young playmaker” (Personal Interview). I suggest
this new set of possibilities might lie in the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of the event as
philosophy, developed in the “Geophilosophy” chapter in *What is Philosophy?* The event
in its becoming, they say, offers a generative and creative way of thinking differently and
theorising anew, thus escaping History, which they contend is genealogy, structure and
causality. “While History tells us what actually happens and why, the task of Philosophy is to give expression to the pure event in what happens” (Patton, Deleuzian Concepts 96).

“To think is to experiment,” they say, and “experimentation is always that which is in the process of coming about.” History, on the other hand, they contend “is not experimentation, it is only the set of almost negative conditions that make possible the experimentation of something that escapes history.” Thus, “experimentation is not historical. It is philosophical” (What is Philosophy?111).

Lalu argues in his lecture for the need also to “bring in technology as part of the assemblage of consciousness” as a way of thinking toward a different future. “We need to think again about aesthetic education in respect to the category of public arts,” he says, and “to think the cinematic more carefully in relation to the older debates on consciousness . . . that being conscious is either given by political experience or consciousness pits primary and secondary imagination against one another”38 (transcribed from “Stumbling” Podcast). Rather, he suggests rethinking the levels of consciousness by merging the primary and the secondary and bringing them into relation with the technological. His vision of a potential assemblage to arrive at a different consciousness, I suggest, reaches toward the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of sensation (explored in Chapter 3). Its minoritarian relational processes of affect and affecting offers the potentiality of creating the new political subjects Lalu seeks, by bringing institutions, artists, universities and technology together to craft ways of relating in new ways; as events in an essential relationship between both “bodies and states of affairs, on the one

38 Gerald Edelman’s notion defines primary consciousness as perception and emotion, and secondary consciousness as self-reflective awareness and abstract thinking.
hand, and to language on the other” (Patton, *Deleuzian Concepts* 102). Ndebele brings a further point of view to these issues that he sees as the “great South African post-apartheid search for change.” He similarly describes as a limitation, the fundamental disconnect between the humanistic, democratic aspirations embodied in the South African constitution on the one hand, and on the other, the historic foundations of the South African economy on invasive and extractive, initially mercantile, and then industrial capitalism, whose extractive habits for natural resources and human labour, are still fundamentally orientated towards Europe to this day. (“Constituting the Nation, Beyond the Constitution”)

To what extent, he asks, “did the new Mandela government and subsequent ones, despite their best intentions, function in an agency relationship with western economies?”

To resist such limitations, Fleishman suggests performance provides a challenge to orthodox assumptions of knowledge in its oppositional sense that the idea is not open to contemplation (Plato), that the mind is the location of knowledge, set against the body (Descartes), and that “ephemeral sensation” is set against “durable representation” (Durkheim). This way of thinking that sets up flux versus “fixed and crystalized,” he contends, creates distances between different “separate and enclosed sites of knowledge” (“Knowing Performance” 118-120). Instead, along Lalu’s lines of thinking, he argues for a rhizomatic mapping across knowledges in what he describes as an “interactive, embodied process of relating to the world by moving through it” as a “kind of ‘retrospective storytelling . . . the retellings of journeys made (or possibly the rehearsal of journeys to be made)’” (Ingold 232, qtd. in Fleishman 121).

Fleishman’s discussion gestures to the Spinozan sense of performance as “forms of extension (res extensa),” as opposed to “thought - the thinking thing (res cogitans),” reflecting Spinoza’s idea of sense (referred to in Chapter 3). Spinoza argues: “the human
mind does not perceive any external body as actually existing except through the ideas of
the modification (affections) of his own body” (Spinoza, *Epics part II*, qtd. in Fleishman
126). Along these lines, Fleishman proposes “a relationship between the body, the mind
and the material world outside the body” (127), which as I have explored, infuses Magnet
Theatre’s work. Here he gives as an example the San (/Xam) storyteller, whose stories he
says, “do not reside in his head but in the landscape of his place,” not as representations
that cover the landscape with meaning, but in a “fundamental sense of the landscape
imbued with meaning” (127-128). Fleishman does not suggest performance as a
replacement for other forms of knowledge in the academy, or as an oppositional position,
but as “an ongoing interruption that disturbs any easy assumption about what knowledge
is and how it should be practiced” (133). He draws on Malegapuru Makgoba’s
suggestion, which echoes the ideas expressed by Lalu, that South Africa’s strength in
knowledge production lies in the humanities, and that the humanities should be “‘our
priority national knowledge project for which we have an unparalleled history, icons and
a social laboratory of unique values that should be exploited by scholars’” (Makgoba qtd.
in Fleishman 116).

Mbembe similarly shares with Lalu the need to do more in the humanities, social
sciences and the arts, asking “How do we try and counter the narrow ethnocentric,
ideological and technocratic understanding of knowledge futures . . . and replace them by
alternative interpretations of transnational flows of higher education?” (Decolonizing the
University” 41). Along the lines of Deleuze and Guattari’s characterization of the State as
major, he says, the State with state bureaucracies creates a “master code,” about which he
writes:
I am concerned with the ways in which state power (1) creates, through its administrative and bureaucratic practices, a world of meanings all its own, a master code which, in the process of becoming the society's primary central code, ends by governing – perhaps paradoxically – the various logics that underlie all other meanings within that society; (2) attempts to institutionalise its world of meanings as a 'socio-historical world' and to make that world fully real, turning it into a part of people's common sense not only by instilling it in the minds of the cibles 39 or 'target population', but also by integrating it into the consciousness of the period. (“Provisional Notes on the Postcolony” 1)

Thus, he argues for deterritorialization to go beyond the binaries that he sees “cloud our understanding of postcolonial relations” (2).

Equally challenging the domination of a pure past (untainted by Western concepts and institutions), or the “reification of culture and its separation from the actual meaning held by the participants” as a way to “regain lost purity,” Bruce Janz calls for resistance to adopting yet another Western agenda such as structuralism, functionalism (in anthropology), and logical analysis in philosophy when applied to the study of culture, thereby returning to an oppositional way of thinking (Philosophy in an African Place 127). He contends taking apart “culture and subjectivity . . . results in arid definitions that cannot capture the meaning that the individual places on a practice within the culture.” Instead, he says, it is more fruitful to take experience within a culture as a starting point of investigation,” then to try and “address questions of the significance of that experience and its anomalies as the object of study.” In this way of thinking, he shares with Lalu an argument for the humanities’ role as a potential break from the impasse (128).

I turn now to examine the South African government’s arts and culture policies and funding principles, which have evolved over the years into the tension of arts for

39 Mbembe defines “cibles” (building on Foucault’s idea) as “people who live in a postcolony” (“Provisional Notes” 29n4).
economic reasons versus art for art’s sake. In other words, processes of territorialization, 
deterritorialization and reterritorialization echo – albeit in a different context – Lalu’s 
concern about the conflation of content and form and its resulting impasse.


The White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage (1996), created by the Department of 
Arts and Culture, was developed over the two years following the first democratic 
elections in 1994. Its original goal was “to promote the arts, culture, heritage and 
literature in their own right, as significant and valuable areas of social and human 
endeavour in themselves.” The government saw the document as “a fledgling democratic 
cultural policy which is both powerful in the potential which it contains, and 
vulnerabilities in its newness.” Since then, there have been three draft revisions published 
on 17 March 2015, 14 Nov 2016, 1 June 2017 respectively, with a fourth draft on 27 

Mike van Graan, a successful playwright and a leading voice in arts and cultural 
organization and political and policy discourse,\(^{40}\) provides an astute critique of the 
policies and processes of the government’s role in the country’s arts and culture. In 1994, 
he was Special Adviser to the first minister responsible for arts and culture, and played an 
influential role shaping post-apartheid cultural policies, of which the 1996 White Paper 
was one. During an interview with me in 2016, van Graan pointed out that the issue of 
arts policies needs to be looked at in the context of country’s broader societal and

\(^{40}\) Van Graan has served as Director of the Community Arts Project, Projects Officer for the Congress of 
South African Writers and General Secretary of the National Arts Coalition and is the recipient of the 2018 
Hiroshima Foundation for Peace and Culture (van Graan website).
economic conditions, and he raised the three fundamental issues of poverty, inequality and unemployment that I referred to in my Introduction. The 1996 White Paper, envisioned the right to freely practice arts and culture based on Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which declares “everyone shall have the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts.” In the South African context, this now meant everyone, not just whites, he points out. At that time, the new African National Congress (ANC) government considered its role as government was to open doors to learning and culture. Since then, he says, the government has reneged on that notion; no education has been provided, and while there has been democratization as to who is funded, access is politicized. Now the policy focus is on the arts as a driver for the economic situation. In responding to the new version of the White paper in 2019, van Graan refers to the current economic statistics that show little change from the economic challenges he cited in 2016. Therefore, he says, the government’s cultural policies are shifting from the premise of human rights to “need for inclusive economic growth, which might explain the emphasis on the creative and cultural industries as contributors to the country’s GDP” (“Critique of the Revised White Paper”). Van Graan’s analysis of the government’s shift in focus, and his mapping of its evolving focus, serves to illustrate the State “as a complex institutional system and a system of collective subjectification” (Sibertin-Blanc 22). In particular, he implicates the notion of the state-form’s “aims to identify its modes of efficacy and efficiency simultaneously in social production and unconscious production” (22) that suggests the impasse of change referred to by Lalu, Ndebele and Mbembe in the foregoing discussion.
The 2019 Revision of the White Paper (which has apparently had several drafts, and about whose implementation there is still uncertainty) builds on the 2013 revision. In that revision, van Graan saw the government wanting to implement a cultural industries fund with set criteria as to who can apply, none of which have to do with aesthetics, but focus instead on social issues, thus demonstrating the government’s lack of arts understanding. He says, people do not buy art for an end, but for enjoyment and engagement; if there are no aesthetic criteria, then it becomes part of using art as a means to the end in disguise. Therefore, artists are finding other ways to create through festivals, corporate funding, or “taking huge passionate risks themselves.” He contends, people are creating theatre, despite the government not because of it (Personal Interview). Emma Durden works with community theatres in KwaZulu Natal about three hours outside the urban centre Durban, and she agrees with van Graan’s point that aesthetics is an important issue to address. In her work with smaller communities she says, “some community theatre artists see themselves as artists with the responsibility to address issues that the local community is experiencing, but they want to do it in an artistic way. There is little that is didactic, no underlying objective; rather they want people to think about the issues through theatre that tells their stories” (Personal Interview). In this sense, she gestures toward the Deleuzian notion of minority that “denotes the strength of a becoming” in the face of “the power or weakness of a state, of a situation” (“One Less Manifesto” 255). Deleuze says it is “[h]ere where theater or art can surge forward with a specific, political function.” However, he cautions, “[t]his is on the condition that minority represents nothing regionalist, nor anything aristocratic, aesthetic, or mystical. Theater will surge forward as something representing nothing but what presents and creates a minority consciousness
as a universal-becoming” (255-256). In this sense, then, I suggest Deleuze is eschewing an essentializing, identitarian, oppositional theatre, but is instead proposing one in which, as Durden suggests, people think. In the Deleuzian hypothesis, thinking, or consciousness-raising, is intended not to find “solutions nor interpretations” in the Brechtian sense, but rather moves toward what I consider to be Mda’s conception of theatre as “a simple loving potentiality, an element for a new becoming of consciousness” (256).

Van Graan’s close analyses of the fourth revision of the White Paper (2019) identifies many issues he sees diverging from the original White Paper. He finds there is lack of coordination between the different levels of government and the various arts, culture and heritage policies, uneven distribution of infrastructure, facilities, material and resource outside the metropolitan areas, and inadequate monitoring and evaluations of institutions, programs and events. In addition, he notes inadequate education and training opportunities for the arts, culture and heritage, and lack of attention to private sector funding in order to develop the sector (“Critique of the Revised White Paper”). He sums up by saying:

Rather than be driven by political imperatives to address poverty, unemployment and inequality – even though they are worthy imperatives – I am of the opinion that if we created policies and strategies based on the premises of the 1996 White Paper i.e. “the doors of learning and culture shall be open” and “everyone shall have the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts”, we would not only have a hugely vibrant arts and culture sector, but we will, more organically and sustainably, address the poverty, unemployment, inequality and issues such as social cohesion.

Thus, he contends, the creative and cultural industries cannot be “the answer, or even an answer to African challenges of human and social development.” While the arts may be part of a country’s broader arts, culture and heritage policy, he says these policies need to
reflect the African citizens’ “values and beliefs, rather than simply adopt those created in different conditions and which may be inappropriate to African conditions.” Ultimately, he says, “the case for the creative and cultural industries in Africa is less an economic one,” and more an argument for “cultural content, and the potential . . . to globalise and affirm African values, ideas, beliefs and perspectives” (“Culture, the Economy and the Creative and Cultural Industries” 14-15).41

The majoritarian representation and striated co-option of the government policies van Graan is challenging has significant implications for theatre practice and theatremakers. As Ismail Mahomed, CEO of the Market Theatre, observes, while the Department of Arts and Culture’s arts policy was developed to be inclusive, the reality is that there is still a grappling with theatre as a significant part of the economy and part of the social fabric of society. Very little funding is going to creating theatre, and Mahomed says a large part of what does go to theatre is given because of social benefits – such as gender activism, healing, and social cohesion, although there is little monitoring of the impact of the real value of this investment. Thus public arts funding is driving arts content, which is problematic, he argues, because “it forces artists to be activists without providing them with the skills or training in the content of their activism” (Personal Interview and Personal communication by email).

To bring the wider question of government policy to a more specific theatre situation, and recognizing that government funding is largely given to the State Theatres

41 As well as the Department of Arts and Culture, arts and cultural organizations are also supported by the National Arts Council (which is government funded), the Arts and Culture Trust (ACT) whose role is to provide professional development grants for literature, publications of a play, research, arts and crafts. The National Lotteries Corporation also funds arts and culture from the proceeds of the national lottery.
and the National Arts Council, I asked Aubrey Sekhabi a well-known playwright and Artistic Director of the State Theatre in Pretoria, which is heavily financed by the government, whether there was government pressure on what was programmed. He responded that he does not feel control or meddling of the State because their funding takes an arms-length policy. However, he acknowledges there is the sense that people in charge of theatres with this funding might put on things to please the party (the ANC), and there is discussion of nepotism and partisanship toward pleasing the State with music and productions celebrating the government. For example, Sekhabi asks, would the government fund plays celebrating the stories of resistance fighters now? Would it fund a play about corruption in the ANC? (Personal Interview).

Greg Homann similarly resists the idea that the arts should celebrate “social cohesion” according to government policies. The government has a big say in how certain events happen in theatres, he says, and will spend money on lavish events that please politicians. Government sees art and culture as heritage, as opposed to art which stimulates debate and challenges the status quo. In other words, he says, the biggest failing stems from binary and polarising rhetoric, bowing to the political, which shuts down discussion. His statement that “there is no clear path” to a solution, I suggest, reflects Lalu’s conceptualization of the “sadness” of impasse explored earlier (Personal Interview 2018). Potentiality lies in Homann’s suggestion that these dollars should be invested in artist development, in the multiplicities of the voices of minorization. At the local level, Durden relates that the government invests in rural community arts infrastructure in outlying areas – with little success. Equipment is stolen, and performances are few, and all the money tends to go toward paying for a security guard.
instead of programming. Rather than spending the money on infrastructure, she says, it would be better to fund the artists who need it. Thus, the debate about government policy becomes important when it filters down to the actual practice of theatre, demonstrating the implication of the State’s encoding and the importance of the deterritorialization of creative practices.

As van Graan pointed out to me, the issue is not lack of money assigned to culture, it is how it is allocated that is the question (Personal Interview). Thus, the ontological and epistemological complexity of thinking past apartheid toward a new potentiality that thinkers like Lalu, Ndebele, Mbembe and others raise, I suggest, similarly recurs in the theatrical milieu that van Graan, Mahomed, Homann and Durden define. One can perhaps contrast Adorno’s notion of art “as the possible, as promised by its impossibility” to Deleuze’s affirmative notion of aesthetic impulse (Aesthetic Theory 196, qtd. in O’Sullivan, “The Aesthetics of Affect” 129). As Simon O’Sullivan points out, Adorno presents a despairing world where he abandons the existent, and “art is inevitably doomed to frustration” because the “promise (of reconciliation) is constantly being broken.” In this way of thinking, O’Sullivan sees in Adorno a “melancholy tenor” in the same way that Lalu sees in Agamben a sadness (129). On the other hand, he finds in Deleuze the more positive approach that art’s function is “to switch our intensive register, to reconnect us with the world. Art opens us up to the non-human universe that we are part of.” While all art might have “a representational function,” he argues, “art also operates as a fissure in representation” in which “the molecular is opened up, the aesthetic is activated.” Thus, he argues, art’s main function is to transform “if only for a
moment, our sense of our ‘selves’ and our notion of our world” (128). Further, O’Sullivan points out that in *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari describe art as “a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility, as if things, beasts, and persons … endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation. This is what is called an *affect* … Life alone creates such zones where living beings whirl around, and only art can reach and penetrate them in its enterprise of co-creation” (173). In this conceptualization of art, I suggest they capture the Spinozan affirmative notion of joy in the “whirling” of selves and worlds, the opening up that molecular art creates, and that van Graan and Durden seek, in contrast to the sadness and impasse of representation.

My exploration of the National Arts Festival in Makhanda I propose as the stage, or zone of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, as a concentrated space on which the arts, in this case performing arts, are inherently implicated in the social, economic and political and aesthetic realities, interlocking temporalities and political engagement of collective assemblages of enunciation, of becoming and potentiality that Lalu and Fleishman et al pursue.

5. **The National Arts Festival, Makhanda**

Grahamstown, renamed Makhanda in 2018 in memory of the Xhosa warrior and prophet Makhanda ka Nxele, is situated in the hills between the Indian Ocean and the plains that lead into the Karoo Desert. The town originally had been named after its founder Colonel John Graham, who was sent from Britain in 1811 to “clear the land for English settlement,” displacing 20,000 amaXhosa, “burning down their farms and killing women and children” (Krueger, “Spectacles of Participation” 289). The town of 80,000 people is resonant with reminders of its British settler origins and place of violent conflict.
with the Xhosa people the settlers encountered. Not surprisingly, its renaming was met with great enthusiasm from some, and indignation from others. Memories of past histories are evident everywhere; the 1820 Settlers’ Monument, the Fort, the statues in the town and the names of the streets and schools (St. Andrews, Victoria Girls High School), and in the name of the prestigious Rhodes University. The town is also the location of the National English Literary Museum, a rich repository of archives of South African literature written in English. A counter memorial to the formal monuments resides in the tree-toppled hill known as “Makhanda’s Kop,” across town from the Monument on Gunfire Hill, where Makhanda and his troops gathered for the final battle against the British (Grahamstown/Makhanda). The majoritarian and minoritarian social and racial strata is clearly delineated by the town’s architectural markers, between the genteel homes and gardens of the former “whites only” neighbourhoods, and the African townships on the periphery. In the town, in what might be seen as an act of deterritorialization, the market sellers release their donkeys to roam the streets, chewing the grass in the parks and boulevards of the neighbourhoods and town. Potholes are everywhere, although they are significantly worse in the township. Thus, Makhanda’s inherited spaces are ingrained with its colonial histories and apartheid racism in formal and informal spaces (molar and molecular). Operated by the Grahamstown Foundation, the 1820 Settlers Monument has been the long-time hub of the National Arts Festival, as well as Scifest Africa, and other events.42 After the original building was destroyed by fire in 1995, the new facility of theatres, art galleries and other smaller spaces was

42 The Foundation’s commitment to the arts, science and education is an example of building relationships across disciplines that Lalu seeks.
dedicated in 1996 by Nelson Mandela. In his remarks he acknowledged the Monument’s settler history, which he said is now a place of hope where the arts and science might “illuminate” the past, “merging the tradition from which they emerged with the rich diversity of South Africa’s cultures. . . . That all might have life and have it more abundantly.” This is Hilde Heynen’s ‘space as stage’ writ large.

It is on this site of “different spaces, relations, fields or trajectories” that every year the town hosts the largest annual celebration of the arts on the African continent, which is considered economically important for the town (Colebrook, “The Space of Man” 195). Ever since the Festival began in 1974 as a traditional Shakespeare Festival it has been a reflection of the country’s social and political conditions. It always has been open to all, regardless of race, colour, sex or creed, which is an important factor that allowed it to serve as an forum for political and protest theatre during the apartheid period. Now (and here I use 2018 as my example), NAF and its host town Makhanda is a nucleus for South African performance. The eleven-day, multi-arts festival takes place all over the town in 90 venues, presenting more than 700 events, 2000 performances, attracting over 200,000 visitors. There are mainstage curated and fringe programs, as well as a creative digital arts festival. Programs include dance, performance art, visual art, theatre, comedy, street theatre, music, jazz, film, lectures and workshops, with artists from all over South Africa, other countries in Africa (Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi) and overseas (Switzerland, Germany, Denmark and Canada). Venues range from formal theatres, to churches, libraries, schools, halls and museums, as well as other informal spaces, such as township backyards. In the old settler square in the centre of town, the Village Green Fair features traders who come from all over the country selling arts, crafts, books and textiles, while
buskers from all over the world entertain. The streets are similarly the site of encounters and performance, with music pounding out of various types of bars and cafes, informal businesses cropping up, young kids trying out mime or getting together to sing, as well as begging and other innovative efforts to earn money.

The theme of the 2018 Festival (June 28-July 8) was “Voices and Silences.” The curators’ statement in the Festival’s Programme speaks to the issue of voices and silences that I have been exploring, writing: “the thin veneer of respectability politics with which we attempted to cover the post-‘94 cracks has become more tenuous with visible signs of wear and tear. Voices are demanding restitution, and horrors perpetrated in dark corners are being brought to light.” Thus, they say, their theme is to uncover forgotten narratives and highlight the silencing of voices, particularly women’s voices. Their aim is to “unpack and showcase how South African artists have chosen to actively highlight and disrupt the prevailing prejudicial narratives of the past that continue to impact on how we as (South) Africans relate to each other today.” As well as the themes noted by the curators, issues in 2018 included memories of lost traditions and apartheid history, and contemporary issues such as land reparation (Justice Albie Sachs’ lecture, “Expropriation Without Compensation”) and rape (for example, Mothertongue’s production Walk).

5.1. An Ethnographic Interjection: an Event.

As an event for Deleuze’s “theorizing the immanent creativity of thinking” (Stagoll 91) I attended the 2018 Festival, and found that to fully do justice to all it offered is not for the faint of heart, with its challenging number of events and morning to night performances in venues spread out all over the town. Shuttle buses and taxi driver Iggy ferried me from the hub of the festival at the Monument on the hill overlooking the town,
to the various venues all over town, including a township backyard, where I sat on a wooden bench for a performance of Backyard Theatre’s *Is He Mad?* Women theatremakers presented some powerful work. Jade Bowers (whose production of *What the Water Gave Me* I discussed in Chapter 2) staged two productions, *Mary Watson’s Jungfrau*, adapted from Mary Watson’s short story by Ameera Patel, and *Black*, adapted by Penelope Youngleson from *The Blacks of Cape Town* by Carol-Ann Davids. Both plays explore the Cape Coloured tensions of the apartheid years in Cape Town, which Davids describes as “the sort of place that falls between the cracks of neat definitions. Lodged as it is between the mountain and the ocean, it cannot be described in easy sentences or with a common consensus” (qtd. in Lauren Buekes). Both plays reveal the contradictions between the Cape Town that is the beautiful land beloved by white South Africans, referred to by J.M. Coetzee (Chapter 2), and the lived spaces that these plays and Rehane Abrahams’ *What the Water Gave Me* describe, and I go deeper into the darkness of this history later when I discuss Jephta’s *Kristalvlakte*. The Mothertongue Project *Walk*, curated by Sara Matchette and Genna Gardini, took us through a series of performance installations set in an intimate park half-way up Gunners Hill, where the audience and performers walk through the pieces together – a process of movement and encounter – each a reminder of the culture of rape over the centuries. The project was inspired by the rape and murder of Jyoti Singh Pandey by six men on a Delhi bus in December 2012 and the gang-rape and murder of Anene Booysen, a South African teenager, a few months later.

Critical current political issues recurred in many of the exhibitions, films and performances during the festival. The film *Metalepsis in Black* deals with the student
protests about “whiteness” and academia, challenging “both conservative and liberal viewers to rethink their understanding of the current political moment,” an issue pertinent to my discussion earlier (NAF 2018 Programme 134). Another is the question of land and land reparation, which extended beyond the performance stage, with a lecture by Justice Albie Sachs, an activist and a former judge on the Constitutional Court of South Africa, and a panel debate on a specific case dealing with land reparations, both of which revealed the complexity of ownership in a land where layers of people have lived over centuries.

My most memorable theatre moment, though, is one I view as an immanent encounter of life and performance at a 4:30 p.m. performance of *Pieces of an African Drum* in a venue aptly named The Hangar on the site of Rhodes University. The space was converted into a theatre with bleachers, and the windows were covered in black plastic to create a black box. The door to the entrance at the side of the hall (close to the stage area) was firmly closed for the performance. The play, presented by Jo Kinda, written by Xolisa Ngubelanga, directed by Simpiwe Kaya, and played by Xolani Ngesi and Fiks Mahola, deals with the tensions of capitalism, traditionalism, as well as the disturbing issue of xenophobia. Two Zimbabweans (considered *makwerekwere*, the derogatory name for foreigners) have crossed the border to join a gang of illegal miners working in the Johannesburg gold mine dumps. One is driven by the search for gold, while the other, named Prophet, is overtaken by the ancestral spirit who brings another perspective to the mine where so many have died over the years. Halfway through the
performance, the lights went out, whether because of what is known as “load shedding,” or for some other reason. Unperturbed, a couple of young men in the audience jumped up and started to pull down the black plastic covering the window, while someone else opened the door. The sun shone through the door directly on to the stage as a well-cued natural spotlight, and the play went on. It was an event “embracing the rich chaos of life and the uniqueness of each moment” (Stagoll 91), prompting the two questions Deleuze proposes for an event: “What is going to happen? What just happened?” (Logic of Sense 63). In the immanent creativity of the response, I argue, the event went beyond the gap in the mechanics of theatre to provoke a communal sense of deterritorialization from the structures of majoritarian forms – in this case the deficiency of the electrical system – awakening resonances that reached beyond the theatre. During apartheid, most black South Africans lived without electricity. Since democratic government, 90% of the population has access to electricity. However, because of corruption, or ‘state capture,’ and mismanagement, the national company Eskom, which produces about 95% of South Africa’s electricity, is over R22 billion in debt causing dramatic price hikes, breakdown in service and load-shedding to conserve power. As a result, the more than 50% of the population living in poverty resorts to innovative use of alternative fuels and informally rigged electricity lines (de Greef). Thus, that brief duration in the theatre was a refrain of past, present and future that echoed the play’s equally complex temporalities.

The real physical challenges for the following year’s festival took on a more serious note; the question of water. As a result of drought, damage to the treatment plant, poor

43 The electrical company describes the term “Load shedding, or load reduction,” as a countrywide “controlled option to respond to unplanned events to protect the electricity power system from a total blackout” (Eskom website. www.loadshedding.eskom.co.za/LoadShedding/Description
infrastructure and mismanagement, water levels have been drastically reduced and water was “having to be brought in” from outside (Ra’eesa Pather). According to a report in the Mail and Guardian in May 2019, just a month before the 2019 Festival, the town was operating at less than half its water capacity, and residents were having to “incorporate waiting for the municipality to deliver water that often isn’t enough into their morning routines” (Hlalethwa). The dilemma was whether to cancel the festival, which would have had tremendous implications for the artists and the town, and the decision was made to go on. To deal with the demand of the festival’s visitors and artists and to ensure the festival didn’t impact the town’s supply, organizers promised to ensure festival venues and the various accommodations would be supplied with water stations and tanks by bringing in water from outside Makhanda in partnership with the Standard Bank; as well water capacity would be increased in townships, mainly at schools. The NGO Gift of the Givers also agreed to provide the Monument with a borehole and provide water stations and tanks to the fringe festival venues in the Joza and Fingo townships. The Gift of the Givers also offered to supply the town administrators with short-term assistance, although subsequently their relationship fell apart when the NGO discovered that private companies were allegedly being remunerated for interventions that Gift of the Givers had put in place.

The Festival itself has not been immune from criticism over the decades. Since its beginning in 1966 as a celebration of the English settlers and their culture, and continuing through the period after the arts festival added National to its name in 1980, Krueger observes “the programmes were hardly representative of the cultural richness and diversity of South Africa” (“Performing amaXhosa Authenticity” 289). With the end of
apartheid in 1994, former Artistic Director Ismail Mahomed says the NAF has tried to drive a more diverse audience by diversifying its productions and increasing accessibility for artists and audiences, with affordable ticket prices and free tickets to encourage greater participation (Personal Interview). Some of the audience development initiatives include street theatre, public art, music and visual arts; and art is created in taxi ranks, the townships and other non-traditional spaces. As well, big productions provide spectacle for new audiences, and there is family fare. Questions still emerge, however, about how performances are prioritized for performance space, marketing and underwriting, and who benefits from the funding investment in the festival. These questions are a refrain of those being asked about theatre in general in South Africa and reiterate the enduring interrogation of whose voices are being heard, who is telling the stories and how are they being told. For example, referring to the 2009 Festival, Krueger explores the issue of taking cultures without a prior history of performance and turning them into entertainment for “cultural tourists,” thus bringing up the question of entertainment versus authenticity, addressed by Fleishman and Kruger in Chapter 3 (“Performing amaXhosa Authenticity” 305-307). He examines three dance performances presented at the festival that he describes as deliberately setting out “to recreate and sustain indigenous forms,” trying to “remain faithful to tradition” (293). Of the three, Krueger points to two he considers to be authentic. In one case, the dancers allow the spiritual meaning to inform the performance and create a communal experience. In the other, the dancers reveal heterogeneity in the meeting of the distinct forms, illustrating the “dissimilarity between the contributing cultures, instead of the ways in which they are the same” (299). The third, he describes as “the impossible task of attempting to restore a lost
innocence” by encouraging the local amaXhosa to re-enact their traditional music, dance and rituals (290), a practice Deleuze would call representation. In this case, Krueger considers the attempt to create the spectacular of entertainment stultifies and commodifies the dances. While he acknowledges there is the potential for building knowledge about and sharing these practices, he suggests that in culture there is “a need for community” through the experience not of spectacle or representation, but through the experience of belonging and sharing the presence of others (312). His conclusion that “It would have been more rewarding to take part in the dance” (314), I suggest, speaks to Groot Nibbelink’s sense of the “stage turned into a verb, a process, a speech-act” (163), which I discussed in Chapter 3.

On the issue of the lack of women in theatre, playwright and storyteller Gcina Mhlophe in a 1999 interview with Thuli Mazibuko observes that for years the festival didn’t appeal to her and she wasn’t invited to it. When she went to it for the first time, during apartheid, at the time of the debate about the cultural boycott (which occurred worldwide against apartheid), she says: “I went over before the festival actually started and looked around, and at once I was very much aware of the separation of the town, and the festival, by race. What I found was a black township that had nothing to do with the festival, nothing at all” (Flockemann and Mazibuko 43). Pointing out that although the township was only a few kilometers away, within walking distance, she says it was as if “invisible” (43). Her feeling of exclusion echoes the observations made in Chapter 3 by Hutchison and Jephta that women theatremakers and playwrights have been underrepresented until recently. Now, nearly twenty years after Mhlophe’s interview, Tracey Saunders reflects on the 2018 programs in the NAF guide, drawing attention to
what she sees as “theatre, performance art, dance and music . . . not clearly defined” and genres that “are as messy and muddled as the human experience.” I suggest she describes the “synthesis of forces” Deleuze seeks in the event, rather than the “signification and subjectification . . . that render ‘minor’ fluctuations derivative or invisible” that Krueger and Mhlophe relate. Evoking the fluctuating and “shifting lines of flight and metamorphoses of the assemblages,” and the “multiplicities of escape and flux” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 470), Saunders writes:

> The ancient dust of silence stirred by the impatient choreography of young dancers is rising up and finding purchase in every possible rent and crevice in society. Silence is no longer an option. This year the festival goes beyond the clearly scripted conventional text to listen to the tonal intonations of women lamenting the loss of life and dignity in *Elegy* (Gabrielle Goliath). The air is torn asunder by the echoes of screams of survivors from the streets of Delhi to the back-yards of Bredasdorp in *Walk* (Mohterntongue). Women are silent no more and there is an urgency in their breaking of the silence. (*Official National Arts Festival Guide*)

Thus, she gestures toward a new way of telling stories, all mirrored in the larger space of theatre in the national landscape, and in the gaps and fuzziness of lines of flight from the fixed status. These issues, along with those of space and social and economic structures, are germane to the following exploration of theatre space and practices. The tensions played out at the festival in Makhanda are only too familiar for those practicing theatre in South Africa. Material conditions, including governmental overcoding, fundamentally affect the way theatre is made, where it is presented, how it attempts to develop audiences and artists’ access to space (Sekhabi, Personal Interview). Encapsulated in the NAF’s history are the tensions endemic in the South African theatre discussion – representation and immanence, majoritarian and minoritarian, and sadness of impasse and creative joy – in the search for Deleuze’s “deterritorialization of language, the connection
of the individual to political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation,”
creating a concentrated space of political engagement in the individual (“What is a Minor
Language” 18).

6. **Theatre Spaces and Theatre Practice**

Despite the overt legislation and censorship of apartheid, Foot observes theatre
during that period had a more critical and more direct effect, putting pressure on South
Africa by working past censorship laws. Now, she observes, theatre adds to political
debate and provides a positive side of life and living and humanity, and a space for
stories and opinions. South Africa is dealing with a very wide, hugely diverse community
where, she says, there are few safe spaces to discuss different issues and taboos. Theatre
is a place where audiences can get different perspectives on their own and other lives,
thus seeing they are not isolated in dealing with such issues as domestic abuse, sexual
disorder, and morality, and in this way enhancing the idea of community (Personal
Interview). “The power of theatre is that we can rewrite the plots of our lives and
biographies; we can find healing of our country. This can happen in the safe environment
of the theatre, sitting in the dark, being part of that community that an audience is,
engaging together with life on stage” (Twijnstra and Durden, *Theatre Directing* 30).
While audiences tend to lean toward the culture and language they know, Foot maintains
a small percentage are curious about performances that might be different to what they
usually see (Personal Interview). She argues the way to integrate audiences is with a

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44 For a further, more comprehensive look at theatre practice in South Africa, I recommend Roel Twijnstra
and Emma Durden’s two well-researched guides for theatre producers and directors in South Africa, which
I have drawn on to supplement my own interviews: *Theatre Production in South Africa* and *Theatre
Directing in South Africa.*
mixture of storytellers, which is suggestive of the Deleuzian notion of a “collective enunciation,” perhaps sometimes an “even revolutionary, enunciation . . . to forge another consciousness and another sensibility” (Toward a Minor Literature 17).

Similarly, Pieter Jacobs, former CEO of the Arts and Culture Trust, and now Department Head at the University of Johannesburg Arts & Culture, believes that theatre is a powerful tool to educate and disrupt entrenched ideas, yet questions being asked about who manages and who the audiences are reveal the overall feeling that the previous Euro-centric systems are still in place. The current government and corporate systems haven’t changed and are still manipulating (Deleuze might say overcoding) as does global capitalism. He says South Africa has to acknowledge “being part of a global world, Afro-futurism, and the US who are shaping our identity.” However, he insists, “we must create our own flavour and design.” Jacobs believes South Africa is not creating demand for the arts at the early childhood level, arguing the arts need to be in the syllabus and theatre-going needs to be cultivated (Personal Interview). One of the biggest issues he and the other theatre practitioners and commentators point to is that of access, and he maintains theatre needs to be funded to be affordable, which is difficult when the issue is presented against the funding need for running water, for instance, as van Graan’s critique of the government White Paper has identified.

Despite their optimism about the work, then, many theaetremakers talk of their concerns about theatre’s conditions. Yvette Hardie is a theatre director, producer and educator, as well as President of ASSITEJ (Association of Theatre for Children and Young People). She encapsulates the challenges for producing in South Africa, remarking:
The system for theatre in South Africa is dysfunctional. Very few initiatives will have a long life. We have lost the ensembles and the repertoire system, due to the government white paper in 1998 that created a more project-based system where the responsibility is on artists to generate projects. We jump from project to project. The fundraising is uncertain, you never know if and when you will get it. Many people are passionate about doing something: they don’t wait, they work and while working try to find the money. That means you invest out of your own pocket. (Twijnstra and Durden, *Theatre Directing* 31)

Durden says that while she is optimistic about the continued creation of emerging creative and imaginative theatre, she is less positive about the ability of groups to sustain themselves. As van Graan and Hardie note, funding is difficult to navigate and it is hard to get support, therefore artists are creating work with no funding. Durden remarks, “People get involved in theatre when they are young, but as they get older and start to have families they find they have to earn a living to provide for them, which forces them to give up the theatre to find work.” The unemployment rate in South Africa, particularly in their communities, is very high, and she says “when people leave the community and go to the city they don’t take theatre with them; they need to find new activities, new groups of friends. They leave the ‘playtime’ behind” (Personal Interview).

For Ismail Mahomed, now CEO of The Market Theatre, the emergence of smaller theatres, community theatres and festivals is where the work comes from the artists themselves, and he looks to decentralized festivals (other than, say, the large NAF) all over the country to build local audiences. After the 1990s, he notes, “there was paralysis, where artists were crippled by their own voices because of pandering and political correctness. Now, we are beginning to find our voices” (Personal Interview). Small

Durden adds, these are usually rural or peri-urban communities, which are historically disadvantaged (Personal email communication, 11 Oct. 2019).
independent theatre companies are emerging (which I explore shortly) and theatre is also beginning to employ technology to grow new audiences and engage with their audiences (Personal Interview). Jacobs agrees some of the most important and exciting theatre is coming out of the townships. He says he does not see a lot of drama (i.e. traditional theatre). New works tend to deal with social issues, such as corrective rape, theatre of racism, interracial sex, which are opening up conversations and generating political activism. It is a trend he sees in the visual arts as well. The most popular theatre, which also makes the most money, he says, is comedy. As well, there are a lot of plays with different languages embedded in the show, and literature is turning to indigenous storytelling, documenting and archiving traditional or indigenous knowledge systems, histories and their development toward the modern world. He notes as an example, the work being done with the Khoisan that looks at performative aspects to preserve and archive these histories, taking into account local, global and regional experiences, and seeking in theatre the *melodic refrains* of their landscapes. Jacobs believes this work is important because younger people have no accurate knowledge about the past; there is a gap in their knowledge about their own history (Personal Interview).

6.1. Theatre Spaces: “Art can happen in any space, not just theatre bricks and mortar”46

In my interview with Homann in Johannesburg in 2016, he provided an overview of the pockets of different kinds of cultural institutions and theatre productions, thus opening up the discussion on space and the demographics of audiences. As I have already noted, material conditions affect the way theatre is made, the ability to develop audiences

46 Rosemary Mangope, CEO, National Arts Council (Personal Interview).
and artists’ access to space. There are significant issues. Theatre funding is still largely directed to keeping open the large State Theatres held over from the apartheid era that some refer to as “white elephants,” and I was told repeatedly by theatre practitioners and commentators how much money is tied up in these formal spaces, many of which are under-utilized. The former opera, dance and drama resident companies in each of the theatres, which were seen as elite, were disbanded after apartheid, and funding for artists and repertory companies was reassigned to the National Arts Council, which is open for all kinds of artists to request funding by proposal. As Homann, Hardie and others point out, the system is not working and the funding freed up has not been reapplied sufficiently to help artists. I look more specifically at just some of the theatre spaces to illustrate the enfolding of major and minor spaces and practices that illustrate the cultural policies and funding I have explored earlier.


The State theatres are the State Theatre in Pretoria, Artscape in Cape Town, PACOFS in Bloemfontein – each of them in South Africa’s capital cities\(^47\) – and the Playhouse in Durban. These large formal theatres, cast in the ontological and geographical space of the colonial/apartheid past, are expensive to run, hard for the broader audiences to get to, and difficult to program, provoking similar questions to those posed in the academic debate on content and form. Twijnstra and Durden note that while some of the funded theatres struggle for audiences, others such as the State Theatre are “recognized for presenting quality work rooted in South African stories, and for collaborating with other

\(^{47}\) South Africa has three capitals: Pretoria, Cape Town and the juridical capital Bloemfontein.
stakeholders.” It also offers unused spaces in the building free to “creative groups working in the performing arts” (Theatre Producers 113). I interviewed Sekhabi, who runs the State Theatre, which comprises a 1200-seat Opera House, 640-seat Drama Theatre, 304-seat Arena Theatre, smaller 120-seat Momentum Theatre, and the 266-seat Rendezvous theatre for jazz, music, comedy and school set works. The complex is funded in large part by the government, of which close to 80% is used for administration and operations, with the balance coming from ticket sales, facilities rentals and fundraising. Only 15% of its total budget is used for artists. Thus, Sekhabi says, the question many ask is how to return to funding artists in these spaces. Of the theatres funded by the government, only the independent Market Theatre (which has recently begun to receive approximately 70% of its funding from the Department of Arts and Culture) and the State Theatre are actively offering drama and providing incubator programs for development of playwrights, technicians and administrators, along with the municipally-funded Joburg Theatre, which works with the University of Witwatersrand on artists training. Another issue Sekhabi points to is that theatre practice is not always inclusive, with some earmarked directors and voices being championed. While they are deserving, he says, access to theatre spaces becomes elite and the arts community insular, as well as giving rise to questions of how other theatremakers can get access. Many feel marginalized, and there is pressure on institutions to show the arts community that some development has been made in response to this need (Personal Interview).

The Joburg City Theatres

Xoliswa Nduneni-Ngema is the CEO of the Joburg City Theatres, an entity of the Municipality of Johannesburg that includes the Joburg City Theatre, the Soweto Theatre
in Jabulani precinct, Soweto, and the Roodepoort Theatre whose vision is to build social cohesion through youth development. The Joburg City Theatre, a formal structure in the middle of Johannesburg’s central district, comprises a large 1069-seat theatre, three smaller theatres, as well as two dance studios and a restaurant. A very different space is the Soweto Theatre, which has drawn attention for its innovative architecture, 22 kilometers away in Jabulani district, in the historical Soweto township. The complex has three theatre venues and an outdoor public space for performance or social events combining food and music, Nduneni-Ngema is a firm believer that education at an early age is important, not just to build audiences, but also to participate and see what it is like to be on a stage and to be creative. She echoes Sekhabi’s observation that bringing in audiences is challenging, recognizing the difficulties many audiences have in getting to the theatre because of transportation (that I discuss further later on). She says there is amazing infrastructure in the theatres, however, they can’t be inward looking. The work must be diverse and relevant to the community and they need to be innovative and find partners in all sectors, including funding partners. Her view of South Africa’s theatre structures suggests a more affirmative view of their potentiality than the criticism of them as ‘white elephants.’ Perhaps, as Lalu suggests, the question is not the conflation of content and form, but perhaps a recognition of the latent content and recalculation of these forms. The question might be, then, whether there is the potential for a new theatre practice built on the framework of traditional theatre that subverts it to the struggle of the community – in other words, creating a minor theatre. In this way, perhaps Nduneni-Ngema gestures toward the dynamic unfolding of differences for different expressions of life. “Theatre needs to tell the stories that come from their communities, such as abuse,
love, social ills and interracial ills,” she says, “as well as providing entertainment that is uplifting” (Personal Interview).

*Independent Theatres: The Baxter Theatre and Market Theatres*

*The Baxter Theatre*

The Baxter Theatre, of which Foot is the Artistic Director, was founded in 1977 and is situated in a suburb of Cape Town, at the foot of the University of Cape Town (which helps to fund it). The theatre complex is made up of a theatre, concert hall, audio stage, rehearsal rooms, bars and a spacious foyer. Foot likes the idea that on any one night the audiences in these theatres are very different, watching different styles of performance under the same roof; for instance, a symphony performance might be in one theatre, while a play like her *Karoo Moose* plays in another. She sees the opportunity for people to mingle in the foyer during intermission and talk to one another about what they are seeing, creating a collective space of political engagement.

The plays garner a mixed audience, and the theatre works hard to develop a black audience of younger people who have curiosity and are extremely interested in debate, thought, ethics, values, and politics. The Baxter supports directing, writing, and professional development in the communities, and each year hosts the Zabalaza Festival, which is a festival of theatre from diverse communities with the majority in isiXhosa and Afrikaans. Foot says the work is very good; it is “exciting, alive, crucial,” and she sees festivals as a forum for communities because they tend to focus on issues that concern them. She observes a huge feminist movement in the black culture, tending to issues of domestic violence, questioning their fathers’ absences, their mothers’ values, and rituals.
They are deeply concerned with morality, she says, but above all they project hope (Personal Interview).

*The Market Theatre*

Mahomed had just become CEO of the Market Theatre in Johannesburg when I spoke to him in 2016. The Market was founded in 1976 and its four theatres celebrate distinguished theatre directors who have made a seminal contribution to theatre in South Africa. The 387-seat John Kani Theatre recognizes the actor director, who was also the co-founder with Barney Simon of the Market Theatre Laboratory, a training program for young actors and theatremakers. The 120-seat Barney Simon theatre and the Mannie Manin theatre are each named for the theatre’s founders. The Ramolao Makhene Theatre celebrates the late renowned theatre and television actor who was instrumental in the early curriculum development of the Market Theatre Laboratory. Mahomed points out that the 70s and 80s were an important time for the arts, and the Market was a strong voice against censorship, becoming known as “Theatre of the Struggle.” As Foot has observed, stories that should have been on the news channel, Mahomed says, were censored and therefore they were told through the arts.

As the many theatre practitioners and writers I have discussed also ask, Mahomed raises the question: “After 1994, what are the stories of a new nation?” When the international theatre boycott ended post-apartheid, he says, there was an influx of international West End and Broadway musicals that went to the big theatres, while independent theatres (like the Baxter and Market) took an economic knock. Also, audiences were changing as they struggled to shift to institutions to whom they owed their loyalty (their pain, their stories). The rainbow nation resulted in superficial
productions and there was a hiatus in creativity, which left struggling artists and
audiences frustrated. Mahomed points to The Market Theatre Laboratory as a way to
address this challenge, and says his goal is to bring in new resources in order to develop
new work. Given the lack of government funding for innovative theatrical production, he
says, theatres are seeking other sources of funding. Corporate funding is now beginning
to support the arts and BASA (Business and the Arts South Africa, which advocates for
corporate funding of the arts) aims not to drive content, but to help build audiences;
especially people aged 18-40, which is the demographic the arts wants to attract. He sees
theatre as part of the city by supporting what is happening, fostering creativity, and
shaping conversations in order to maintain a position as a leader in creativity both
nationally and internationally. As well, theatre needs to be telling stories that are not just
white and black stories. At the moment, he says, theatre is nowhere near telling stories of
*neither* black nor white (Personal Interview).

6.1.2. Alternative Spaces of Theatrical Performance

What makes up for the challenge faced by the State theatres is the vibrant theatre
emerging in a multitude of spaces which can be considered, in the Deleuzian sense, as a
form of minor theatre deterritorializing from the inherited major structures. Rosemary
Mangope, CEO of the National Arts Council (which funds theatre as well as other arts
projects) argues we need to move away from thinking we are limited because we don’t
have formal theatre buildings, pointing out that South Africa is both a first and a third
world country and structure is developed in some areas and not in others. She suggests
theatre can happen anywhere – under a tree, in a school, church, tribal authority, halls –
all can be spaces of theatre, evocative of Colebrook’s unfolding “different expressions of
life” (“The Space of Man” 195). “No stage or theatre building does not mean there is no theatre or creativity or talent,” Mangope contends, arguing highly talented people shouldn’t be limited by access. “It is problematic to think you need a stage space only.” The way that generally opera, orchestra and theatre have been put across in the Western notion of audiences dressing up, in formal buildings, and so on, she suggests, creates the image of theatre as privileged and allows the excuse for not providing funding for arts and culture (Personal Interview).

In movements of deterritorialization from these traditional spaces, then, as Jacobs and Mahomed point out, there has been an increase in experimental theatre and independent spaces that have been driven by theatremakers under 35 years-old who, as Sekhabi notes, are frustrated by the lack of access to mainstream theatre spaces caused by their gatekeepers and lack of funding. In addition to lack of access to performance space, there is the difficulty of showcasing their work and having their voices heard. Responding to this need, other venues are opening up; informal urban spaces, such as PopART and Plat4orm in Johannesburg and Alexander Bar in Cape Town, community and township theatres, and a variety of site theatres. For example, in 2016, theatremakers, such as Ntshieng Mokgoro, were boldly opening theatres such as the Olive Tree Theatre situated in a “nondescript shopping mall amid the din and bustle of Alexandra,” a township in Johannesburg, with the concept that theatre is coming to where people live. As well, festivals, such as the National Arts Festival as I have described, are working in different communities and languages, and are increasingly a venue for emerging – and even established – playwrights to present their work. In Cape Town, the Cape Town Fringe Festival holds performances in a variety of accessible locations across the city and
in the townships, and tries to keep its ticket prices accessible to encourage diverse audiences. Also, since 2016, the Twist Theatre Project in Durban has successfully run a free open-air festival on the Durban beachfront where the people are (Durden. Personal Interview). Similarly, van Graan points to theatre initiatives in the townships on the outskirts of Cape Town. For example, the Makukhanye Art Room in Khayelitsha, an extension of the Makukhanye Centre, which provides educational support for students and runs classes in disciplines across the creative sector, and the Guga S’Tshebe Arts & Cultural Centre in Langa (Personal Interview).

An example of a township theatre that is successfully extending its style of performance to a larger audience through the National Arts Festival is Theatre in the Backyard, an initiative started by Mhlanguli George in 2013 as a new way of “envisioning theatre production.” As George describes it: “Theatre in the Backyard has developed as a creative response to untapped resources of backyard life. It uses actual backyards as the site for intimate theatrical productions; working closely and powerfully with available light, space and other scenographic elements” (Twijnstra and Durden, Theatre Production 23). A specific backyard itself becomes an immanent stage for every show that George finds “pushes the actor to a very realistic integrity. The actor comes much closer to what artistic truth means for me. It creates a form of realism that is difficult to achieve in the safe environment of a theatre.” With no auditorium, George adds: “the audience members entering the yard are taken more out of their comfort zone and open up more to the work, in a way they become part of it. For me it goes beyond the word ‘acting’ and becomes more realistic” (24).
6.1.3. Community Theatre: “In our poverty status we fail to see how rich we are”

If there is potential for shifting the centre of the territorialised South African space through protean and multi-layered processes, I propose it might be found in community theatre, which suggests the movement of performance expression from the inside/outside and outside/inside that Coplan explores in *Township Tonight!* For Bowers, it is community theatre where “our voice as artists come from in our history” (Personal Interview). There is a vast amount of community theatre, some of which ends up moving beyond the local to the mainstream through festivals such as the National Arts Festival, and informal spaces, and sometimes to the larger theatres. I spoke with Durden, a researcher at the University of KwaZulu Natal who, with Roel Twinstra runs Twist Theatre and works with community theatres in the province. She provides a useful observation about the difference between Western community theatre, which she considers tends to reflect special interest groups, and South African community theatre (a euphemism for township theatre), which she says is non-formal and reflects the life experiences in the area. Community theatre takes place in communities where people live and perform, she says, not community wanting to get out. I asked her whether community theatre is focused on social issues or aesthetics, and she replied that in the six or seven years she had been involved, she has found that a lot of groups, while they are interested simply in their community, still want to be professional, and some groups and individuals growing out of community theatre want to be on the professional stage. The difficulty they face is that it is challenging to get into the industry because of where they are

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48 Rosemary Mangope (Personal Interview).
situated, and the question for them is how to stay in their community, while starting to develop a professional way of working. She notes that older people thought of theatre as a way to keep young people occupied. However, “once bitten by the bug they want a career even though the economics make it difficult to have a career in theatre” (Personal Interview). She says a few, usually older artists, want to stay in the community to make life better. But, many under 35 year-olds see community theatre as a steppingstone for their careers. Once they have the skills so that they can compete, they begin to audition to get parts in soap operas and international productions.

Community theatre emerges in communities in response to having something to talk about, suggestive of Deleuze’s “collective assemblage of enunciation,” creating a concentrated space of political engagement in the individual” (“What is a Minor Language” 18). For example, Durden has seen work in the last couple of years about corruption, not only in the government, but in the churches where ministers start churches and then fleece their followers. There has been a great response to these critiques, and enormous potential for theatre to resonate with young people to keep them critical of those in power. However, it is also important to have catalysts, such as educators, who inspire groups to create community theatre groups. She sees Twist Theatre as a catalyst for advancement, working with groups to provide them with far better tools to survive, find funding, and develop marketing and audience development tools. In turn, these groups become self-organizing and themselves become influencers when they go to festivals or other theatre opportunities. Twist invites community groups to see other groups and attend the National Arts Festival to expose themselves to different styles.
They come back with ideas and influences inspired by what they have encountered, and by the theatre they have seen (Personal Interview).

In comparison to the large State theatres, where the staff quotient is overloaded with little to show for it (Mbembe’s notion of the State and its bureaucracies referred to earlier), Durden contends smaller venues and communities don’t cost a lot of money. “Community groups are performing in houses in the township – that’s really where the excitement is” (Personal Interview). This type of theatre where the people are, she notes, has been happening in schools, community halls, clinics and so on for a long time. Now non-formal, “special” “purposive” space – theatre space - is cropping up, creating for them a space that changes how people see theatre; in a sense a deterritorialization of performance space. She points out it is very important for community theatremakers to feel ownership of the space and the work, and there is still suspicion in the encounter of inside and outside that presents Deleuze’s “theoretical wall to be got over.” They are suspicious and resentful of outsiders and resistant to what they see as professionals “taking their stories,” Durden says. When outsiders come in to drive the work it dies once they leave. The local theatremakers feel the stories are truly a sense of their community and that the stories reside with them. She observes, “it is difficult to try to explain to them that stories are universal and that other people have different stories to tell about the basic story; you can’t own it” (Personal Interview).

6.2. Audiences

The issue of audiences comes up in all my discussions with theatre administrators and theatremakers, whose observations on the difficulty of building audiences centre on several key points. Mahomed says the traditional arts audience is white and middle-aged
(which is a concern not confined to South Africa, I would suggest, albeit the demographic balance is far more skewed in South Africa where the majority of the population is black and younger\footnote{According to Index Mundi, “South Africa Demographics 2018,” 45.88\% are under 25 years-of-age., and 41.79\% under 54. \url{www.indexmundi.com/south_africa/demographics_profile.html}}) (Personal Interview). For Durden, “theatre is still very exclusive and exclusionary” and the struggle for audiences is a very real one. The reasons for not having mixed audiences are ticket prices and the location of venues, which are just not accessible. (Personal Interview). She also considers it is a lack of education about what theatre is, and competition from the growing film culture. Coppen concurs, stating “we have to compete with the relentless visual realisms of film and television,” which is why, he says, he often “employ[s] and reference[s] cinematic devices” in his plays in order to work in “a storytelling vernacular the younger generations have access to” (Twijnstra and Durden, \textit{Theatre Directing} 14). As these comments indicate, there is a need to develop young audiences. Lack of inherited experience of attending theatre, failure to include arts in the educational syllabus, and failure for arts to be inclusive have led to the marginalization of black theatre. Thus, theatres are trying now to diversify audiences and to bring in black audiences, although Sekhabi points out the tendency is for audiences to remain segregated, attracted by what is relevant to them. The challenge, Durden says, is how to get racially integrated audiences when the big theatres in cities like Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg are located downtown where it is impossible to attract audiences who live out of town, thus excluding a whole community of people. Sekhabi puts it succinctly when he says audiences continue to be very segmented by relevance of content and demographics, which arises from several issues, including: lack of disposable
income, not enough audience development and education, and the fact that people are living in the townships on the outskirts of the cities and have to travel too far to and from the city for work. The reality of distance and lack of independent transportation makes it untenable for them to turn around and return to the city for theatre, complicated by the fact that in most places, public transportation shuts down at 8:00 p.m. in the evening. The territorialization of the apartheid state, then, remains a prevailing striating factor for theatre, in the way it is for the social, economic, intellectual and political realities for South Africa, thus inhering the theatrical discourse in Lalu’s search for an interdisciplinary, relational collaboration, and innovative ways to create processes of unfolding of differences.

Producer Nobulali Dangazele observes: “We need to go where our audience is with what the audience wants.” Asking why thousands of people flock to the churches in the townships every Sunday, she says: “We must create theatre magic that makes it possible to escape. We must bring theatre with all its magic from the big houses into the township” (Twinstra and Durden, *Theatre Production* 5). Ultimately, Jay Pather, choreographer and director of the Gordon Institute for the Performing and Creative Arts at the University of Cape Town, returns the discussion to the art itself, contending theatre “must all be linked to the reality in which people in South Africa are living.” He argues, “art should be innovative, linked to our social issues and challenges, and also be of high quality and happen where the people are, live and work. Then the magic of art can happen” (*Theatre Production* 97). Pather argues that South African theatre “lacks creativity,” repeating the old models over and over again. What we need, he says, is
“fearless, reckless art that is edgy and controversial.” He also believes that theatre should be “free and accessible” (97)

6.3. Artists and Producers: “How do you reimagine the social space?”

Homann maintains that the health of theatre depends on skilled well-trained passionate theatremakers who currently do theatre despite the odds, through love of theatre, very often living on income from other sources, as Durden has also observed. He says, “There is excitement now and energy amongst makers to find platforms. The scary thing is how sustainable that is. The status quo must change. We need training programs to bring up new theatremakers, otherwise there is the danger of disillusionment. They will fall by the wayside” (Personal Interview). It is important, he says, for theatremakers to be a part of the conversation. Jephta is a bilingual Cape Town-based playwright, director and columnist who lectures in the UCT Drama Department, where the “theatre-making” course encompasses an all-round program including: writing, producing, technical, lighting, props, and so on. There is no specialization “equipped to the challenge of the industry and economy,” she says, which dilutes specialties. “Skilled playwrights do not really exist in the South African industry,” she advances, adding that while training helps playwrights adjust to directing and building props, and so on, to help them get their plays produced, the downside is that “you can’t get the rigorous specialized training that will lead the country” (Personal Interview). The understanding and support for playwrights as a primary job does not really exist in South Africa in the way that dramaturgy, for instance, is recognized in Canada. As a result, playwrights and artists also have to do other things as a primary source of income.
Sekhabi argues artists need to take a plunge and provide the dialogue for critique.

“It’s all about the stories and how you create them; what are you looking for, what do you want to say?” He believes that it is in community theatre where discussions about social issues and identity take place. He also notes that the issue of identity remains difficult, he describes it as “still in the workshop.” During apartheid, he points out, the news was censored, but now, you can read about the stories in the newspaper, so you have to find new ways to tell them. Artists need to tell these stories: We have to seek out what those stories are, what are the stories behind the stories, where do they come from? “We must liberate the artists who can make a contribution to our democracy; not only by being cheerleaders, but by pointing to what is not right.” At the same time, he says, there is not enough work for artists; not enough touring, and not a lot of black directors working in the main theatres. There is also still a climate of domination (in the majoritarian sense) in theatre and media. He is a strong proponent of directors, and a believer in mentoring, saying that when young directors graduate they need to know there is an experienced director to work with; “green grass” collaborations and relationships help artists to create. (Personal Interview).

Afrikaans theatre is also doing interesting new work and the writing is vested in keeping the language alive. Production spaces are especially vibrant in high profile festivals, such as the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunsterfees (KKNK) in the Karoo town of Oudtshoorn, a small historical farming town, the Aardklop National Arts Festival, in the North West Province, and Suidoosterfest in Cape Town. Producer Jaco (Kosie) Smith, defines the Afrikaans audiences as usually older, “who love good quality, high art.” He says the festivals have tended to neglect the young generation, and “[t]here is a gap with
the younger generation of theatre goers,” which, echoing Mangope, Jacobs et al, he puts
down to the lack of good Afrikaans children’s shows (Twijnstra and Durden, *Theatre
Production* 52). Playwrights like Coppen and Jephta note also the strong financial
investment in new works in Afrikaans. The community is protective of its culture and
language, Jephta tells me, therefore it has only recently opened its doors to dialects of
Afrikaans to allow different voices and disruptions of old testimonies of the major
language; for instance the Cape Coloured phonetic Afrikaans dialect (Personal
Interview). In subsequent pages I discuss Jephta’s Afrikaans adaptation of Brecht’s
*Mother Courage* as an example of her move toward a minor language.

*Mentoring and Education*

Homann and Jephta identify the way in which artists are expected to have multiple
competencies. As noted earlier, they believe the artists’ only hope of sustaining a career
is to have extensive capability: playwright; performer; director; designer, and marketer –
in other words to become “theatremakers.” Jephta points out, the University of Cape
Town designs programs to be practical and work across mediums, as do the
Witwatersrand University and the University of Johannesburg, all of whom offer an
important platform for theatre and arts training as well as creating vibrant theatre
performance programs. All three university programs also take productions to the
National Arts Festival. An example of another festival that combines mentorship with
performance is the *Zabalaza Theatre Festival* at Baxter Theatre, which, as I have
mentioned, “develops theatre practitioners from in and around the Western Cape by
providing them with performance platforms so that they can realize their creative
concepts” (Foot, Personal Interview). This is done through mini-festivals in target
communities, script readings, showcases and a theatre festival held at the Baxter annually in March. It is in the universities that I see the deterritorialization and lively engagement of intellectual and artistic performance that Lalu suggests will bring new ways of thinking for the future. In the event of this thinking, there is the potential for “affirmative and immanent performativity” that can be “integral to the genesis of subject, thought, representation and even to ontology itself” (Fancy, “A Sacred Affirmation” 75).

The Theatre Arts Admin Collective (TAAC) is another project whose work is considered important. Formed by Caroline Calburn, Lara Foot and Pauline King as a space for training and a venue for rehearsal and performance, TAAC’s director Calburn describes it as a flexible space to free people up to think creatively; one in which to dream. The physical space is an empty Methodist church hall (with no fixed seating) so people renting the hall can make their own creative decision on configuration. She celebrates the hall as a site for young voices that are culturally diverse, with black and white artists working together regardless of background and race and with an audience that is equally diverse. “It is an intimate space to meet together and engage in dialogue.” The space is also an incubator space, she says: “There is a vulnerability in the Hall; it feels tight in the space, tenuous – you don’t feel a hundred percent safe” (Personal Interview). Program initiatives include a two-year start up residency in professional development (including administration) and bursaries for directors, who are assigned to a seasoned director to gain experience. As well as performances in the hall, TAAC pursues innovative projects in many on-site locations.

The foregoing overview of South Africa’s theatrical space and practice, which is immersed in a convoluted discourse despite the nearly thirty years since the end of
official apartheid, suggests a paradoxical space of stasis and change. The tensions of
major (the State and apartheid’s legacy), seen in its structure, political structuration and
inherited colonial and apartheid frameworks, and minor (the artists and their creativity)
who are deterritorializing these striated spaces to bring processes of encounters and
enfolding of inside and outside that might be seen as the vibrations and affective
engagement of theatrical expression in its many forms. As I argue for in NAF’s space as
stage, South Africa’s stage space is a flux and interruption, the flow of voices from
personal to community and rural to urban, subverting or working around the State, as
well as sometimes times working within it; the dynamics of the major and minor as event,
explored earlier. I suggest such an event might be grasped as a refrain of the “aggregate
of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and
landscapes” (A Thousand Plateaus 323). In this way of thinking, the event here is a
complex assemblage of stories, voices, bodies, histories and memories buried in the
landscape that, as I have outlined, for too long have been subjugated, homogenized and
overcoded. As Homann enunciates “there is no clear path” but the messiness of the
exploration (Personal Interview 2018). A good place to end the chapter is to implicate
three productions that I have selected because they engage the ontological and
epistemological questions around identity and space I have explored throughout this
study. The Firebird is inspired by the student protests, Kristalvlake is set amongst the
corruption and the racialization of the apartheid legacy of the Cape Flats, and
Newfoundland is a shared consciousness of memory and forgetting.
7. Three Case Studies: The Firebird, Kristalvlakte and NewFoundLand

Janni Younge's production of The Firebird is based on the 1910 ballet and opera score by Stravinsky, produced and directed by Younge, who was formerly a director with Handspring, and is now director of Janni Younge Productions. She draws on the roots of the traditional Russian quest folktale, which is the story of a young prince’s encounter with forbidden spaces and resistant forces, reinterpreting the story by using puppets, music and dance to reveal the encounter of forces, which she says responds to the #FeesMustFall student protests. She asserts that universities are questioning whether – or how – they can continue to be “the interlocutors in this period of disorientation” (Younge, Director’s Note). To engage these questions, The Firebird traces a young woman, THE SEEKER, who is “on a quest to liberate her internal power on the societal level; she is the new nation seeking maturity and growth,” accompanied by an assortment of characters representing her ancestral intuition and wisdom, the demons of self-doubt, creativity and imagination, and the FIREBIRD as hope and inspiration. At first, as she enters the journey, she is uplifted and inspired, stirred by her sense of potential and “a spirit of optimism about South Africa’s transformation.” Her journey to liberate “her internal powers” is one of hope and inspiration. But, as she encounters the inequities and suffering of an angry world, Younge writes, her “fragile sense of confidence seems to dissolve,” and the forces of her creativity take her through conflict toward a new integrated and balanced power (Director’s Note).

The tension Younge evokes reflects the conflicts that Eze and Lalu describe in the earlier discussion on universities, which is similarly revealed in a production created

50 http://janniyounge.com/the-firebird-show/
by Nwabisa Plaatjie as part of Magnet Theatre’s Theatremaking Internship Program (which I saw performed at NAF 2018). *23 Years, a Month and 7 Days* uses the visceral physical gestures and voices of the actors’ bodies to portray the protests, and explore issues of identity and environment as the young girl travels from her hometown, Potters Field, to university where she encounters the 2015 students protests. The girl, NONTYATYAMBO, illuminates the conflict between the thrill and anticipation of attending university and the pressure from the other students to join the protests, to which she brings a more complex look, taking the discussion beyond the oppositional portrayal by the media of protests as violence, toward Hauptfleisch’s notion of protest as event in its creative sense. Echoing THE SEEKER’s anxiety at being immersed in the social and political movements that become increasingly violent, *23 Years* sets up the tension of university institutions against “Potters Field, a poverty-stricken place where the citizens have lost all hope and anxiously await their deaths” (Magnet Theatre Website).51 NONTYATYAMBO becomes caught up in the same quest as THE SEEKER. While pursuing forms of social change to escape the entrapment of illusion and “disorientation,” both seekers share Deleuze’s awareness that “revolutionary processes can turn out badly,” and sense the danger of being reinscripted into what Patton describes as “non-coercive and non-hierarchical organization into a blue-print for society as a whole” (*Deleuze and the Political* 8). NONTYATYAMBO’s awakening comes when she finds her voice as her own form of protest that silences the taunts of her bullying classmates. “I am not going to join your protest,” she declares. “Protesting is not normal.” Instead, she

51 Nwabisa Plaatjie. *23 years, a month and 7 days*. Created with support of Magnet Theatre. YouTube, 12 Jan. 2017. [https://youtu.be/EecGBLC0IXc](https://youtu.be/EecGBLC0IXc)
chooses to be a storyteller. The protests have taught her to recognize the power of the ordinary voice, and she leaves the university to return to her people in Potters Field, to help them find their own voices too (transcribed from video of 23 months).

*The Firebird* correspondingly suggests a combination of social reality and creative imagination, evocative of Pillay’s call to theorize “our political modernity in the positive rather than the negative, with all its messiness,” discussed earlier. His concept of decolonizing the university in a way that “addresses the epistemic violence of colonial knowledge and colonial thought,” is a force captured by the dance and puppetry to Stravinsky’s score (“Decolonizing the University”). Ashraf Jamal, in his review of the production’s “mash-up of dance styles . . . mixed-media extravaganza,” observes that “*Firebird* does not guide the audience so much as immerse and plunge it into a wretched, torn, yet nurturing realm . . . The strength of the production lies in its trust in the imagination above all else” (“To a Deeper Truth”). The choreography by Pather complements, while it also departs, from the narrative, seeking “to work with the tangential quality of dance to provide fluidity – when meaning is created and then disappears in flux.” Using a diverse laying of voices and style of dance, he integrates classical African dances (the *toyi-toyi*) and ballet (“classical *pas de deux*”) to reveal the “complexities of South Africa: challenge, resistance, resilience, fear, and hope” (Pather). Younge says she was drawn to the choreography and folklore of *The Firebird* because she saw the mythic story elements of construction and deconstruction playing themselves out in post-apartheid South Africa. In the event of the postapartheid, she sees “the miracle of democracy beginning to show its cracks and the racial tensions we once imagined were gone forever have re-asserted themselves.” Thus, in the processes of deterritorialization
and reterritorialization, in the refrain of becoming, she suggests: “We as a society are waking up to the realisation that a nation is never ‘done.’ As with ourselves, it is not the first draft that works but rather a many-layered reworking. Inevitably the creative and destructive come into conflict but from this conflict a newly powerful identity can arise” (Director’s Note). The oppositional struggle of good and evil for her fails to reach a satisfactory – or teleological – conclusion. Rather, Younge believes, it is only when that battle is exhausted that “a new deeper knowing arises,” an idea that gestures toward the knowledge NONTYATYAMBO portrays in her powerful declaration. In her quest for a story of layering and regeneration, Younge sees “a way of expressing both the cyclical nature of progress and the potential for new life to spring from the ashes” (Director’s Note).

Puppets add an extraordinary dimension to theatrical production, as I have already noted in the discussion on Ubu and the Truth Commission in Chapter 2. Combining “illusion with glimpses of realism,” Younge says the puppets create a medium for communicating: “they put imagination out there – illusions of life, ourselves and others that we have and think is reality, but it is not.” She maintains South Africans need to confront the reality of racial division and “move on from it and come to a new place” (“Creating Resonance in Emptiness” 7). In other words, the technology of the puppetry and the humans merge and become something new, suggestive of Artaud’s belief in “life renewed by theatre” that gives expression to Deleuze’s idea of “becoming-minor.” In this way, I suggest, The Firebird’s immanent conceptualization of such a life offers a role for art that goes beyond representation toward the Deleuzian notion of activating the aesthetic and transforming art in its “ritualistic sense,” as O’Sullivan puts it, “to
reconnect us with the world,” and open us up to “the non-human universe that we are part of but typically estranged from” ("Aesthetics of Affect” 128).

Kristalvlakte

*Kristalvlakte* is an Afrikaans adaptation of Brecht’s *Mother Courage and her Children* set in the drug culture of the Cape Flats. Situated 35 km outside the city of Cape Town along the N2 highway, the Cape Flats is a space Jephta sees as a site of generational memories of histories and slavery; a schism “as a metaphor for the country.” Her situating of the story offers an answer to Ndebele’s call for the ordinary stories, acknowledging what Jacob Dlamini calls “the role that townships must play in the constitution of the public sphere, the evolution of nationhood, citizenship and identity in post-apartheid South Africa” (112).

Jephta conflates her storytelling voice with the political. She considers her work to be “driven by the idea that my politics and my history is inseparable from the work I create” (Jephta, 48 Hours). Her focus is on land ownership, especially relating to District Six, which is a seminal space for Cape Malay writers, as *What the Water Gave Me* so passionately explored. The “legacy of land in South Africa has eluded us,” Jephta says, and land reparation is a very slow ongoing process, mired in bureaucracy, and has almost ground to a halt.” For her, politics is about “who has a right to the land” (Personal Interview). An earlier play, *All Who Pass* (2013-2014), developed as part of the International Playwriting Residency with the Royal Court Theatre, revolves around a journey to a landscape of memories past and present, and speaks to young people in the postapartheid who she feels are disconnected from their history.
In *Kristalvlakte*, Jephta addresses this ignorance of the Cape Coloured history and the “tensions of our identity,” as Abrahams, Bowers and others do. Even South Africans don’t really know the heritage of their stories, she says, which tends to be the work of academic and historical researchers. Jephta considers plays about these issues are not seen on mainstream stages because of lack of commercial viability. She is the first woman of colour to write in Afrikaans, and writes *Kristalvlakte* almost phonetically in the Afrikaans Cape Flats dialect. As the discussion on language in Chapters 2 and 3 have revealed, Afrikaans is known as the language of the oppressor, but is also the first language of many of the people they oppressed. Jephta’s Afrikaans becomes “a subversive language, not Afrikaans as a dominant, traditional language”; in other words, a minor language in the Deleuzian sense (Muyanga 2013, qtd. in *Magnet* 27). In an interview with Naomi Meyer, she comments that she always writes for the audience she represents, for the “brown people from the Cape Flats,” to portray “our language, our existence.” These are the people she would like to see in the audience, she says, although she also writes for “the people who do not confront the reality of life on the Flats daily . . . who can sometimes walk around Cape Town with blindfolds,” and she hopes her words “force people to consider those lives. Even if it’s only for two hours” (Meyer).

Thus, Jephta explores the generational memory that is the refrain of the three plays, referred to earlier, by women who are dealing with this history: *What the Water Gave Me*, discussed in Chapter 2, and *Mary Watson’s Jungfrau* and *Black* at NAF 2018. Bowers directed all three of these productions, and I spoke with her at the Festival. She told me she is drawn to women’s stories and Coloured identity believing, along the same lines as Jephta, that “Coloured is a culture not a classification,” which is a view that
inflects her work. She turns to the small stories about family and individuals that evoke the sense of molecular multiplicities in their refrain, looking at “the threads that bind marginalized women” who are shedding oppression to take power. The effect of removals from District Six, with the loss of a space of cultural memories, Bowers says, still resonates in the resulting social and political issues they engendered (Personal Interview). It is this entwining of personal and political that I suggest Jephta’s play reveals.

Time and space are pertinent issues in *Mother Courage*. Written in 1938-39 as representation of Nazi Germany, the play is set in barren wasteland in the middle of the seventeenth-century hundred years war. In the introduction to his translation of the play, Tony Kushner says that *Mother Courage* reveals war in the timeless image “as the human nemesis” that “devours life.” Jephta has transplanted her adaptation *Kristalvlakte*, which is translated as *Crystal Plain*, onto her own warzone, her own contemporary wasteland, and she paints a devastating portrait of the way in which the social conditions of apartheid architecture devour life. The Cape Flats were created when the vibrant mixed race community of District Six, in the centre of Cape Town, was declared a white area under the Group Areas Act in 1966. The area was bulldozed, and the community of more than 60,000 comprising “freed slaves, merchants, artisans, labourers and immigrants” were moved to the barren outlying area miles from where they worked (District Six Museum).

The plot of *Kristalvlakte* revolves around a journey to this landscape of memories past and present. The space becomes the site of investigation, bearing out Janz’s idea that “culture and subjectivity cannot be taken apart” (*Philosophy in an African Place* 128).
Instead, it is as he suggests the starting point. Of the play, Jephta says “the nature of war is my process, and the time period,” and she makes “gang warfare around the drug trade the central conflict” (Theresa Smith). The ‘crystal’ of the *Crystal Plain* is the crystal meth at the centre of the story’s war (which is also a gesture, she says, to the Crystal Night of Nazi Germany of the original play); “the controlling war of drugs, violence and social issues that is already raging when the play opens” (Smith). The two men at the beginning of the first scene reveal that it was after the apartheid removals from District Six to racially designated sections that the crystal plain was born. Street gangs were first formed to provide paid protection in the face of perceived absence of policing; their primary source of income was drug running, prostitution trade and grand auto theft. Their legacy is that Cape Town is now ranked among the top cities in the world for gang related murders, with an estimated 100 gangs and over 100,000 gang members (Standing). War here is shown as a slow violence underlying the striated lives of the people. This is a society formed from the capture and encoding by the apartheid state apparatus, and throughout the play the characters expose the daily lives of real people caught up in the legacy of its majoritarian system. In her review of the play, Theresa Smith notes, “Brecht’s play spans centuries and continents, Jephta centres her work in the local and the now, thus localizing the realities of boundaries and power.” *Kristalvlakte*’s realism might echo its Brechtian source in its brutal reality, but the space and place of the Cape Flats, with its memories and frustrated lives, creates the play’s allegorical conversation for its own audiences, taking on a particular dimension of past, present and future in the durational and “interpenetration of states . . . as a kind of flowing experience” (Stagoll 82-83).
The story revolves around the main character, PRISCILLA. She is a smous (a peddler) who calls herself the last of the karretjiemense (people of a rural origin, originally the nomadic /Xam people). The notion of karretjiemense itself is rooted in a deeper history reaching back to the intersection of major and minor of colonial settlement when the /Xam, who were nomads, were forced with colonization to become farm labourers working for money or food. They maintained their independence by using donkeys and carts to keep mobile (de Jongh). PRISCILLA finds herself on the Cape Flats, where she and her three children (EPHRAIM, CHEESE and TRIEN) try to create a life together by selling second-hand goods. Priscilla peddles anything she can in order to make a living for herself and her three children, keeping them constantly on the move as she buys and sells goods from thieves and drug addicts who sell them cheaply to her for money to pay for their next crystal meth fix. Her position, as in the original play, is ambivalent. Although she constantly warns her children not to become involved with the gangs, in the guise of protecting them, she becomes caught up in the drug trade by enabling the junkies, and keeping the system going. The community is refracted in its archetypal characters: the policeman, the dominee (the priest), the gang leader and the prostitute, all of whom are implicated in what Smith describes as “allowing each other’s hands to wash.” In her review she writes:

There is a strong thread of anti-establishment thinking running through the work, with the gangsters who open the play establishing their belief that without crime the law would not even exist and that coloured folk are the unwanted step-children in this country, needed for work purposes by government, but unwanted for anything else. (Kristalvlake Review)

As another disruptive element, Jephta contrasts the realism of the play with music that she says should feel misplaced in the context of what is happening on the stage. It must
create the historical feel (big band, jazz, opera, etc.), or very modern (rock, hip-hop, etc.)
(my translation, Kristalvlakte location 98).

If PRISICILLA, as the mother, reveals the oppressive system by adapting to protect her children by working within it, her daughter TRIEN, “who communicates in her own unique gestures that only PRISCILLA can wholly understand” (Kristalvlakte location 70; my translation), provides PRISCILLA/ Jephta’s stammer – in the Deleuzian notion of “a line as constant variation” as a “foreigner in her own tongue” – as a mode of escape from her entrapment in the striated time and place of her world (“One Less Manifesto” 246).

In his foreword to the play, Tertius Kapp writes that “Kristalvlakte is real and recognizable. It asks the viewer to approach with a larger look that loosens the imagination to the here and now, and with a new perspective on reality” (my translation, location 35). The play’s role as an ethical mirror to society and rejection of the majoritarian systems of power suggested by Jephta’s phonetic Afrikaans as minor language, I submit, creates in Kristalvlakte’s relations of bodies and language the multiple layers of duration and space, and the cracks and breaks of the event that escapes history as “lived experience” and the “state of affairs” of the postapartheid (102-3).

NewFoundLand

Theatremaker Neil Coppen, who is a researcher, playwright, designer and director, argues theatre is not used enough in contemporary discourse, given its history as a mode of protest during the period of theatre’s energy at the Market Theatre under Barney Simon, whom he sees as a mentor and source of inspiration (Personal Interview). It is that kind of energy that is needed now in South Africa’s period of “a terrible divisive history,” he says; “we are still indoctrinated to see and dwell on only what separates us. I don’t
want to perpetuate this in the things I write or put on stage when there are much more interesting nuances out there to focus on’’ (Interview with Dylan McGarry, NewFoundLand 108). Coppen observes that he has always been more interested in the ‘‘commonality in our experience,’’ rather than focusing on the differences, thus suggesting the processes of ‘‘joyful’’ encounter explored in this study. He believes, ‘‘[t]heatre allows us to contrive such imaginary meetings and, while cultural clashes and misunderstandings are inevitable, the same dynamics can show us that listening and empathising with one another is key to forming new and more meaningful relationships with one another’’ (107). In my discussion with him in 2016, Coppen observed that the theatre creating interest at that time was about people; about issues involving sexuality, interracial relations, and traditional medicine versus Western practice, which are the themes underlying NewFoundLand. When creating a play, he says, ‘‘research is what makes it matter, as well as how we enforce the narrative, challenging norms and stereotypes, not reinforcing them, in order to bring out the complexities,’’ and he sees his research as a way of ‘‘opening up an empathetic reserve’’ (Personal Interview). Coppen considers his research for NewFoundLand the most intense he has ever undertaken for a play (McGarry 109).

NewFoundLand, which translates into the Afrikaans Buite Land, meaning ‘‘beyond, on the outside, abroad,’’ premiered at the Afrikaans festival Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees in 2017. The play deals with the relationship between two gay men. JACQUES, an anaesthetist, lives in his world of anaesthesia and science, trapped in memories of his cruel upbringing with a dominating Afrikaner father, planning to leave it all for Newfoundland. SIZWE balances his creative role as a choreographer of conceptual
dance with his period of ukuthwasa (the initiation that one undergoes in order to become a sangoma, a highly respected faith healer in the Zulu culture), and the complexities of the ancestral calling. Both men “have been raised in conservative communities and are trying to develop lives for themselves beyond the cultural, historical and religious forces of the past.” They meet for a “casual sex hook-up,” and “what is meant to be a brief exchange turns into a profound journey into shared consciousness” and an exploration of the complexities of science and religion, medicine and faith, and memory and forgetting. It becomes evident that SIZWE has been attacked on the street and critically injured, and is lying in a coma as one of JACQUES’ patients in the hospital. It is tempting to describe this as a parallel story, but the play’s temporality confuses this notion, creating a sense of blurring of past, present and future, both of the stage space and the ontological space of thinking. Coppen researched extensively into “the lives, childhoods, world-views and innermost thoughts” of his two main characters, who are caught up in their merging realities, memories, dreams and nightmares (Newfoundland, Junkets blurb). It was his residency in the Royal Court Theatre’s PlayRiots program that gave him the “time, space and courage” to weave together the different threads for NewFoundLand, Coppen relates, and allowed him to experiment with structure and narrative in a non-linear fashion. In fact, he says, the structure was created by the generative act of “hacking up” the pages of his playscript and throwing it into the air to see what evolved (Kretzmann).

The resulting episodic scenes, interruptions and repetitions are centred on a stage with two beds as the focus. One is the hospital bed on which the SIZWE actor’s body-double lies in a coma for the duration of the play. It is JACQUES’ workplace, and the bed is surrounded by anesthetic machines, lit by a large surgical light. The other bed is
JACQUES’ bedroom, “a temporary unlived-in space,” cluttered with unpacked boxes and a lamp. An over-arching image that is unseen, is JACQUES’ vision of a Durban beach in the aftermath of its flooding by the rivers that pour into the ocean after heavy rains, sweeping “the province’s junk into the sea . . . [leaving] the beach looking like a wasteland with everyone’s shit and rubbish exposed” (Author’s notes. NewFoundLand 9). Coppen writes, “It is my intention that the play’s structure and design somehow resemble this beach. It might help for the reader to imagine that the tide has retreated, revealing dislocated parts of each man’s memories and dreams jumbled up among the memories and dreams of the other man” (9).

He considers the choreography is essential to ensure the pace of the play that he sees as “surreal and free-flowing,” with SIZWE’s choreographic sequences developing as “a narrative of their own”; an idea that echoes Pather’s approach to choreography in The Firebird. Coppen’s approach to music is similar to the role music plays in Jephta’s Kristalvlakte, envisioning “nuanced shifts in sound design, score and lighting as further narrative-tools that enable the story to transition from the private to the public, the intimate to the operatic” (10). JACQUES’ guitar, which he hasn’t played since high school but still carries with him, becomes a symbol of the new awakening SIZWE brings him. Also important to the narrative flow is the language, Coppen says, which is English, Afrikaans and Zulu. The latter two are particularly important when JACQUES’ mother HETTIE prays in Afrikaans, and SIZWE’s mother GRACE prays in Zulu, illustrating the investment of language in their history and spirituality (10). The languages play off against each other, and Coppen considers “the dialects are so important to the play” to
show “how closely they are linked to South African identity . . . to create a truly multicultural experience” (MatieMedia).

Images of the beach Coppen describes repeat throughout the play. SIZWE is drawn through his memory and the call of his ANCESTOR to the “dunes which sloped to the sea . . . with the waves singing to him his histories,” symbolized on stage with the red sand GRACE brings from his homeland. “This is the ground you will return to when you wake,” she says (NewFoundLand 74). JACQUES’ image of the beach of his childhood returns him to his Afrikaner past, where HETTIE desperately tries to keep him. He dreams of the beach as the wasteland of his nightmares, riddled with the flotsam of his world after the tide goes out after a heavy rainfall: “You ever been down there on days like that? Well, that mess, that’s what my nightmares look like” (84). The wasteland of his memory echoes his earlier discussion with HETTIE, when he reveals the brutality of his upbringing by a strict dominee father (pastor in the Afrikaans church). Remembering the camps he was sent to as a child, he says “I was forced to watch church leaders – grown men – put cigarettes out on Albie Marais for not being manly enough” (82).

Coppen’s concept of the flows of rivers into the sea creates a complex space that echoes Abraham’s notion of water in What the Water Gave Me; a contradictory site of memories of the past and potential healing. The homosexuality of both men is the tension of the play. JACQUES is fleeing from both his father’s judgement and his guilt, because he knows the suicide death of his schoolboy friend Albie Marais, whose funeral he could not bring himself to attend, was because of the way his society stigmatized homosexuality. HETTIE pleads for JACQUES to change, because “Sin is a choice. It is a choice because God offers us the ability to be free from it” (97), while SIZWE’s mother
GRACE, who has converted to Christianity, pleads over SIZWE’s unconscious body: “In Christ there is salvation for people that stumble along the path to the truth” (98). In a scene with JACQUES and SIZWE, JACQUES clings to the idea that “God is supposed to be looking out for my best interest.” SIZWE retorts: “Sounds to me like he’s torturing you and you’ll let a big tyrant in the sky rule over you, like this . . . make you feel like a leper because you fuck men. At least my ancestors speak with clarity and purpose” (92). Sizwe’s image of God as controlling resonates with Deleuze and Guattari’s warning against the “coding and stratification of strata” that “bind us,” explored in Chapter 2: “You will be organized, you will be an organiser, you will articulate your body – otherwise you’re just depraved” (A Thousand Plateaus 159), and is a reminder of apartheid’s control of identity and sexuality and the colour bar against interracial sex.

Instead, SIZWE brings a more affirmative message, as he tries to convince JACQUES to play the guitar, to look at “what the tide washed up on the beach.” He says, “I come from the deep, bearing a very important message for you. . . . (Sweetly.) To wake up, Jacques. Wake the fuck up” (95). Only in his final scene with SIZWE as friend and lover, does JACQUES acknowledge what Coppen describes as the “messy, complicated and often painful process” of discovery and healing, when he says: “Everything is out of order now and nothing makes sense. The tide’s going out and it’s taking you with. Everything’s out of place. I can’t . . . I can’t order things” (102). As SIZWE slips away, GRACE prays to God against the intonation of his Ancestor’s praise poem, as the ANCESTOR begins to “ritualistically smear the white clay across [SIZWE’s] body” (104), while JACQUES, “sitting on the bed, muttering something (a prayer?) [turns back to the drugs that have sustained him] shuts his eyes and injects the substance before sinking backwards,” as if
to accompany SIZWE on the journey (105). In the final scene, again sitting on the bed in his room, JACQUES appears ready to leave for Newfoundland. Newly conscious of his inability to make order of things in the certainty of his science alone, he opens the guitar case and “contemplates the instrument” (105).

In his belief that “listening and empathising with one another is key to forming new and more meaningful relationships with one another,” Coppen conjures up the caring sociability of minor theatre’s affirmative and creative engagement. *NewFoundLand* moves away from what Deleuze describes as morality’s “constraining rules of a special sort” toward an ethical “set of optional rules that assess what we do, what we say, in relation to the ways of existing involved” (*Negotiations* 100). I argue each of these three plays in their own way are moving toward the Deleuzian notion of a minor theatre of ethico-aesthetical and political creativity. *The Firebird*’s ritualistic connection to the world and the non-human universe; *Kristalvlakte*’s inherent alienating space of apartheid architecture challenging the amnesia of the rainbow illusion of the past; and *NewFoundLand*’s ancient rite of storytelling allowing a space of questioning and understanding – each is invested in the South African landscape and the theatre stage as space of potentiality to move beyond identititarian strategies of representation and opposition, as an event “inventing new ‘possibilities of life’” (98).
CONCLUSION

The artist or the philosopher is quite incapable of creating a people, each can only summon it with all his strength.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, What is Philosophy? 110.

Theatre making is an extended, iterative and collective encounter with uncertainty, instability and temporality. These elements in the context of making theatre and performance in South Africa create a lattice of ideas that lie at the practice of becoming. A becoming that I would like to argue leans heavily towards an acknowledgment and validation of transience as a defining characteristic of humanity and one that would serve to be foregrounded in thinking about the thorny terrain of African Diasporas.

Mwenya B. Kabwe, “SUN: Composition, Continuum, Choreopoem.”

I began this research study by stating that the postapartheid era’s political and social reality is not caught in a specific time (post-apartheid), but is an unfolding space-time of untold, unresolved, hidden, lost memories and histories (postapartheid) rooted deeply in the social, economic, psychological and political conditions of people’s lives, which continue to be “over-determined by the reality of apartheid,” alongside global capitalism and governmental failures (Nuttall, “City Forms” 731). The optimistic period after the end of apartheid that embraced ‘rainbowism’ celebrated a liberal modernist new constitution, Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings that attempted healing and transformation, and cultural policies promoting “the arts, culture, heritage and literature . . . as significant and valuable areas of social and human endeavour in themselves” (White Paper 1996). Now, almost thirty years later, old frameworks prevail, perpetuating economic inequality and the poverty of millions; rainbowism is seen as amnesia, widespread corruption exists at every level of power and there is a tendency to return to ethnic nationalism. Against this milieu, then, Njabulo Ndebele’s search for a move away from writing about apartheid as the “spectacle of social absurdity” (Rediscovery of the
Ordinary 42) and Albie Sachs’ cry for “the right to express our humanity in all its forms, including our sense of fun and our capacity for love and tenderness” (“Preparing Ourselves for Freedom” 188), expressed at the waning of apartheid, continue to inflect the post-apartheid discourse. Political, philosophical and cultural debates still revolve around the question of how to escape the claustrophobic discourse fashioned by apartheid’s negation of existence that erased the most basic humanistic expectations and aspirations of the majority of disenfranchised people. As Mogobe Ramose points out, the oppressive racialized social formation caused by colonization and apartheid led to “loss of ‘a vital resource to life’ in the close connection between land and life” (“The Struggle for Reason in Africa” 2). These residual issues include not only the still visible and encoded stratifications of the apartheid landscape, but also the inherent silences and absences, precipitating what Jay Pather describes as “abnegations of all kinds” (“Laws of Recall” 320). As I have illustrated in this study, such investigations can be found in Ramose’s call for “an authentic and truly African discourse about Africa” (1), Ashraf Jamal’s question of “how to bypass, overwhelm, and ignore oppression and, in so doing, create an other space for thought and creativity” (Predicament in Culture xii), and Premesh Lalu’s enquiry into “the potentiality that resides in the sadness that surrounds subaltern subjects and its relation to the academic discourse of African anti-colonial nationalism” (“Where Does Sadness Come From?” 549).

These commentators and the foregoing chapters articulate clearly that there is a need to change the way of thinking, practicing and critiquing in postapartheid South Africa. The thinkers and theatremakers I have explored seek to eschew the Western frameworks that have upheld colonialism in order to find new ontological and epistemological
practices, new ways of relating, “building footbridges between notions” to interrogate what Rosi Braidotti calls an “epistemic nomadism” in the interregnum of a postapartheid South Africa forged in rooted physical and mental boundaries at every level (“Toward a New Nomadism” 1431). Similarly, they repudiate oppositional strategies that only serve to inure the discourse in those frameworks, which they regard as retreating to identitarian models of neo-liberalism, as well as leading to more visceral demonstrations, such as student protests. As Achille Mbembe points out, to reduce everything to resistance “is to ignore the qualitative variety of the ends of human action in Africa” (Postcolon 20n20).

Along the same lines of thinking, in the field of feminist decolonizing geographies, Audrey Kobayashi and Linda Peake argue for rhizomatic thinking in order not to “become as authoritarian as those knowledges they seek to destabilize” (“Racism in Place” 153). These notions also play out in theatre, where Zakes Mda calls for a move from theatre’s inherited and still existing Eurocentric, largely representational, framework to create theatre that arouses “the people’s capacity to participate and decide things for themselves” (Theatre and Reconciliation 354).

The questions I posed at the beginning of this study contribute to this pursuit, asking: How can we remake the social space after colonisation and apartheid? Whose voices are being heard and which audiences are being reached? In short, what role does – and might – theatre play in addressing South Africa’s socio-economic and artistic challenges? I bear in mind, therefore, the questions that Deleuze and Foucault raise in their conversation on the intellectual and practice: “Who exercises power? And in what sphere?” “Who speaks and who acts? Is it always a multiplicity?” (Desert Island 207). My research has investigated whether there is potential for theatrical performance and spaces to be a part
of the discourse of destabilizing and reshaping the bounded physical, social and psychological spaces molded by what Neil Coppen describes, “as the complex and contradictory contexts of contemporary South Africa” (NewFoundLand 111). Can theatre offer spectators the experience of “how space and place might be structured otherwise?” (Tompkins 3).

As has become evident from this study, the entanglement of the postapartheid discourse demands an approach that is not merely, as Deleuze puts it, “an application of theory,” or the imposition of yet another Western theoretical/philosophical framework that reinforces the binary, identitarian trap these thinkers are seeking to escape. With this in mind, I have turned to Deleuze’s minoritarian ontology “to think in differential rather than identitarian terms” as a way through which to enter this geographical and psychological space encoded by race, class and gender (Smith and Proveti). The ontology of minority breaks from dominant conditions through affirmative and dynamic continual processes of intensity and multiplicity that are always political, and always in relationship to the community and to the State. Thus, minor theatre affords new ways of thinking spatial considerations in all forms to operate socially and politically and in theatre performance. Deleuze’s affirmative notion of the assemblage with its dynamics of content and enunciation, the relational heterogeneity of the rhizome, and the vibratory space-time of the refrain, are conceptualizations that bring tantalizing potentialities and, I contend, speak to the three key themes of movement, identity and language that echo in South African theatre praxis. Residual in these concepts and themes is the notion of the stories yet to come, in the sense of Katherine McKittrick’s strategies not only of mapping domination and subordination, and absence of places and voices, but of calling “for
words that outline the ways in which this place is an unfinished and therefore transformative” space to create a “human geography story” (*Demonic Ground* xxvi).

The aim of this study, then, is to propose that the Deleuzo-Guattarian affirmative processes of becoming break from the fixed, prescribed ‘being’ of the striated and encoded South African milieu. I argue, they offer processes that move beyond the “condition of stasis” Lalu identifies (“Stumbling” 46) toward Mbembe’s call to critically seek the “sensory experience of our lives” that “objective knowledge” has failed to capture, and open up the space of inquiry to the multiplicity of voices Ndebele, Sachs, Mbembe and Coppen evoke (*Postcolony* xvi). Deleuze proposes minor theatre “will surge forward as something representing nothing but what presents and creates a minority consciousness as a universal-becoming,” not toward seeking “solutions or interpretations”; rather, it “acquires its light, its gestures and its sounds, its decisive transformation” (“One Less Manifesto” 256). Thus, he offers theatre as a process of creative and responsive thinking through his conceptualization of immanent theatre that is non-representational and non-transcendent, moving beyond identitarian strategies of representation and opposition toward new potentialities of imagining the world. His notion of minor theatre, I contend, speaks to the South African theatremakers’ vision of potentially dynamic ethico-aesthetic theatre spaces of creativity and imagination emerging from its landscape of layered socio-economic and artistic challenges. Ideas expressed, for example, by Aubrey Sekhabi’s turn to the “ancient rite of storytelling,” Lara Foot’s vision for a “deeper cultural understanding and questioning of humanity” (Interviews) and Mark Fleishman’s challenge to “re-invent ourselves in a most active way” (“Physical Images in South African Theatre” 182).
As I have examined in some detail, space, place and landscape resonate in South African social and political thought, as well as in cultural expression. For instance, I draw attention to Bruce Janz’s observation that for the African, “place is the site on which the fundamental tensions of life and thought are played out,” and from which a refrain of new concepts emerge (*Philosophy in an African Place* 11). In place of apartheid’s architecture of racialized spaces with its layers of power and control, the quest is to unveil the histories of bodies moving through the land over periods of slavery, colonization, labour migration, urbanization and apartheid, in order to tell their stories in new ways that remove them from the imposed metaphysical assumptions encumbered by colonial thought. Given the country’s complicated entanglement of space, body and theatre, then, I have argued for a robust ontologically oriented and simultaneously material practice that considers the embeddedness of subjectivity (body) in the historical and geographical strata. To this end, I propose Deleuze’s relational spatial ontology offers a conceptualization of power dynamics in the relations of the bodies moving and enfolding; deterritorializing, territorializing and reterritorializing. The creativity of his metaphysical conceptualization of differentiated virtual Ideas or multiplicities in “counter-effectuation in each individuating event” is inherent in the process of lines and intensities, creating new political subjects through the relational process of bodies in relation to other bodies, affecting and being affected, and liberating the imagination (Smith and Proveti). In this way, Deleuze offers a kind of metaphysical thinking that is “an immanent metaphysics” (Lalonde). Hence, the concept of the minor abandons the application of yet another framework, and rejects what David Fancy calls the “normative notions of bonded identity
and subjectivity.” Rather, Deleuze offers “something more expansive, multiple and, ultimately, more playful” (“Difference, Bodies, Desire” 93).

Contingent to his dynamics of bodies and space, is time. Deleuze considers “philosophy has an essential relation to time,” contending that “[t]o think actively the philosopher is acting in a non-present fashion therefore against time and even on time, in favor (I hope) of a time to come” (Nietzsche and Philosophy 107). Along the same lines, Mbembe argues for a critical approach that recognizes the present as the moment “when different forms of absence become mixed together” in an entanglement of past, present and future that repudiates linear models of time that uphold the violent models of the past (Postcolony 16). Calling for a practice that investigates Africa’s wide swings in temporality, he says, scholars need to examine “the paths taken by different societies . . . to account for contradictory contemporary phenomena,” and acknowledge their “rich and complex consciousness” (6). Deleuze contends that “only if we read the entire past with a sense of the eternal – of potentials for thinking that remain and insist, and are not lived – may we have a future that is not the continuation of the same dull round” (Colebrook, Deleuze and the Meaning of Life 52).

Deleuze’s insistence that “the very possibility of thought” emerges from the movement of bodies in immanent processes of affecting and being affected is at the centre of his approach to imagination and creativity, and leads to my conclusion that the most valuable contribution the Deleuzo-Guattarian ontology can make to the South African discourse now is their way of differential thinking in immanent terms through the encounter making something new. Deleuze contends: “Only contemplation or the mind which contemplates from without ‘extracts.’ It is rather a manner of acting, of making
repetition as such a novelty; that is a freedom and a task of freedom” (*Difference and Repetition* 6). Similarly, I am attracted to geophilosophy’s generative way of thinking about how bodies are embedded in space, moving beyond an identitarian grounding of assumed identities, as continuous becomings in intensive “passages of intensity” (O’Sullivan, *Art Encounters* 41). I propose that Deleuze’s ontology of creative and responsive thinking, embracing the concepts of space, duration and embodied experience I have explored throughout this study, allows theatre “to manifest itself as a non-representational movement that forces thought”; as an affirmative aesthetic impulse (Cull, *Deleuze and Performance* 7). Conjoining performance and philosophy, Laura Cull points out, aspires to “generate new ideas of both on the basis of a mutually transformative encounter . . . ‘a dual process of identity construction,’” allowing for new ideas to be created that are not based on ideas previously encountered (“Performance as Philosophy” 23). Here, I would suggest, she envisions releasing the new voices of those who for centuries have been silenced by the imposed narratives and practices of colonization and apartheid. As I have demonstrated through my research and case studies, these ideas are already being explored in South Africa performance practice. For example, in Magnet Theatre’s challenge to orthodox assumptions of “separate and enclosed sites of knowledge,” Fleishman argues for a rhizomatic mapping across knowledges in what he describes as an “interactive, embodied process of relating to the world by moving through it” (“Knowing Performance” 121). As Mwenya Kabwe illustrates in the epigraph to this conclusion, theatremakers are already instinctually reaching for what Wole Soyinka has expressed as “this basic adventure of man’s metaphysical self” (*Myth, Literature and the African World* 40). While Soyinka has been
criticized by some commentators as taking a romanticised or identitarian viewpoint, I adopt Mark DiGiacomo’s perspective that by “experimenting with language,” Soyinka seeks to “capture the power of the creative arts both to encompass the social totality that produces it and to produce new social worlds in its turn” (165), which speaks to Deleuze’s metaphysical way of thinking. Braidotti points out that Deleuze’s “assertive process of inventing new imagines of thought” and “multiplicity of differences” (“Towards a New Nomadism” 100), affords a way of “thinking [that] is about change and transformation” (165). She argues Deleuze’s “rhizomatic style brings to the fore the affective foundations of the thinking process,” emphasising “becoming,” against the “static nature of the exploited and excluded” (165). Simon O’Sullivan correspondingly suggests, “a rhizomatic thinking for art can only be mapped out by appreciating its more philosophic aspect, as an image of thought at odds with representation,” challenging “traditional philosophical assumptions and procedures such as hierarchy and interpretation” (Art Encounters 14).

On the question of thought in the South African context, Mbembe says, “To think is also to recover and rescue the figurative power of allegory as it applies to specific realms of human experience, of which it is the adequate form of expression . . . To think is finally to embark on a voyage of the mind, and to write is a form of enjoyment” (Postcolony xv). Borrowing Deleuze’s question that asks not what things mean, but how they work, in my exploration I have taken note of Mbembe’s critique of strategies that fail to recognize why people act, “what makes their action intelligible to themselves” (7). He argues for freeing thinking from the top down approach, to consider “time as lived, not synchronically or diachronically, but in its multiplicity and simultaneities” with all
their “turns, meanders and changes of course” (8). As well, I have heeded Brian Massumi’s reminder that cultural materialism injects time to pause and think, and Braidotti’s argument for a “process of . . . interaction” to interrogate the boundaries between the different modes of thought in order to “emphasize an ethics of knowledge that reflects and respects complexity and also renews the practice of critical reflexivity” (The Posthuman 158).

The crux of my reading of Deleuzo-Guattarian ontology and materiality, is the potentiality to bring a sense of joy – even love – to the project. Not in a naïve sense of overlooking the difficulties, as in rainbowism, nor as a sense of triumph in the oppositional or nationalistic sense, but rather in the Spinozan sense of thinking engagement. The Deleuzo-Spinozan related notion of joy and sadness, I suggest, offers a powerful approach for an interdisciplinary investigation of the nature Lalu proposes. Deleuze and Guattari’s generative way of thinking about how bodies are embedded in space, moving in lines and intensities beyond identitarian grounding of assumed identities, is central to the notion of an ethical relational process of thinking, recognizing differences, and the need for what Simone Bignall calls “common notion.” The encounter of bodies in varying and shifting powers and contexts, in multiple sites and situations, creates “new ways of being affected and increases capacity for adequate understanding and active self-assembly” (“Affective Assemblages” 93). Deleuze conceives “creation as tracing a path between impossibilities” (Negotiations 133), suggesting the process of “human forces” combining with “other forces” gives rise to an “overall form,” bearing in mind that “everything depends on the nature of the other forces with which the human
forces become linked, “which he says need not be human (117). Thus, he recognizes that bodies become affected in different ways, some resulting in joy and some sadness.

Most important to this project, is the notion that these relationships allow listening and thinking about differences in ways that change the discourse from the pre-conceived notions that entrap the discussion and ground it in the very thinking it seeks to escape. Thus, joy is experienced as the “intensity and complex compatibility” of a mutual encounter, and the decision made “to participate in a caring and attentive kind of association. . . . in a way that mutually enhances them, when they create a complex union that increases their power to understand each other; to empathise, and care; to exist well together” (Bignall, “Affective Assemblages” 95). For example, Krueger sees in theatre practice more than the production itself. “What happens,” he says, “is people intensively affecting one another. The process of making theatre can be a positive affect, with people working together, understanding the work – which is why theatre worked so well during apartheid” (Personal Interview). Conversely, Deleuze believes sadness results when there is “loss of identity that occurs with the destruction of an existing relation that defines bodily consistency” (Bignall, “Affective Assemblages” 93). Recognizing the inevitability of “multi-faceted, internally unstable, conflicted and complex assemblages” intermingling (96), Deleuze conceives ‘common notion’ as the “core structure or consistency” for “‘thinking the body’ and the nature of the relations it forms with others” (99); joining with others “in a way that ensures neither will be ‘overcome by sadness’” (Deleuze, Expressionism in Philosophy 243, qtd. in 94). He writes: “We need both creativity and a people.” Thus, he argues for new ways of thinking that precipitate events, elude control, and “engender new space-times, however small their surface or volume”
(Negotiations 176) that, I propose here, create the new voices for South Africa’s postapartheid discourse, which prompted my seminal question, “who speaks?”

Earlier I quoted J.M. Coetzee’s observation that “at the heart of the unfreedom of the hereditary masters of South Africa is a failure of love,” which he sees as not enough for the project of shedding the “deformed and stunted relations between humans” that were created under colonialism and apartheid. In concluding his “Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech,” he pessimistically contends that in South Africa “there is now too much truth for art to hold . . . that overwhelms and swamps every act of the imagination” (99). Here he echoes Bignall’s observation that the condition of colonization created an aberration of the normal relationship between bodies that can be seen in Pather’s abnegation and the loss of mutually affirming connection. In the postapartheid discourse, I contend, it is time to remold these relationships in new ways through a philosophy of thinking, stimulated by the creativity of a minor theatre in order to create joy’s “caring and attentive kind of association” (Bignall, “Affective Assemblages” 95). In other words, I propose the Deleuzo-Guattarian ontology of thought and the refrain of minoritarian concepts I have explored, with all their meandering and changes, advance the way of thinking for South African theatre praxis and the intellectual debate, working with theatre as a space for the joyfulness and playfulness that Deleuze’s minor theatre ontology conceptualizes as the event: explosive and unsettling. Deleuze takes us beyond what we understand the human subject to be, overturning the Western colonial identitarian framing toward the potentiality of becoming that he speaks of as “people yet to come.”

I argue the plays explored in these chapters suggest such ways of imagining, drawing on the refrain of bodies, enunciation and space that runs throughout his minoritarian
concepts, and speaking to his notion that theatre might discover an effective, antirepresentational function “to trace, to construct in some way, a figure of the minority consciousness as each one’s potential” (“One Less Manifesto” 253). For example, in *What the Water Gave Me*, Abrahams’ confluence of narratives flows through shifting bodies and spaces evoking the power struggle with the monsters that have framed them. The visual and emotional dynamics of the injection of puppets into the narratives of *Ubu and the Truth Commission* and *The Firebird* extends the notion of what a human might be, speaking to Mbembe’s proposition to “rethink the human . . . overcoming anthropocentrism and humanism” (“Decolonizing the University” 42), and Lalu’s call for collaboration of the humanities with technology. Zakes Mda’s satirical voice in *Our Lady of Benoni* situates the traditional and the contemporary in the entanglement of characters in the real site of the stage encountering the mystical and tragical resonances of the outside. Amy Jephta’s *Kristalvlakte* embeds her “ordinary” story of the realities of a Cape Flats family in the troubled historical landscape of apartheid’s brutal past, challenging the enunciation of the “spectacular” with her minorization of the hegemonic Afrikaans language. And, in *NewFoundLand*, Neil Coppen’s moving encounter between science and spirituality, different beliefs, ethnicities and histories, provides a glimmer of the potentiality for breaking from the singular voices of constraining identities to imagine new non-racial, non-gendered, immanent epistemological imaginaries. I believe that by escaping identitarian practices and yet another striated framework, their immanent theatre advances Lalu’s and Mbembe’s argument for the humanities as the site of Deleuzian multiplicities for an interdisciplinary exchange and enunciation of philosophical and epistemological ideas for people living in what Mbembe calls “the concrete world.”
The theorization explored in this study has the potential to dynamically engage with, and open up, the contemporary discourses that are taking place in academia, culture and theatre in South Africa and elsewhere. Conjoining Deleuze with South African immanent theatre provides a lens to explore decolonial, theatre and posthumanist discussions already taking place; for example at the University of Western Cape’s Humanities Institute, as well as the organizations they are partnering with, such as the Jackman Humanities Institute at the University of Toronto. I also see an opportunity to participate in the critical debate of many forums exploring theatre and to engage in the larger conversation; for example of the type held at the National Arts Festival.

Further, I would like to suggest there is potential to take this concept beyond the South African milieu into engagement with other postcolonial discourses. The interrelationship of different arenas of investigation into indigenous and postcolonial questions is already taking place, such as Bignall’s work implicating Deleuze in the Australian Inquiry into The Stolen Generations. Particularly, I have drawn for this study on her notion that the Inquiry involves “a spontaneous ethical practice, where participants willingly choose to behave with care for others,” rather than because they feel it is their social or legal duty (“Affirmative Assemblages” 95). Her exploration raises concerns and questions similarly being raised in South Africa about how to interpret and empower the narratives emerging from South Africa’s TRC.

Along these lines of investigation, then, turning to the immediate context in which I am writing, might this model contribute a creative, more generative, immanent, approach to move beyond Canada’s impasse in its discussion with its First Nations in order to break from the political and juridical, toward a way of engaging epistemological and
cultural discourse? After all, it should not be forgotten that in the early twentieth century, South Africa modelled its policy toward black South Africans on the Canadian policies of residential schools (Bantu education), reservations (Bantustans, euphemistically called “Homelands”), and status cards (passes). “South African officials regularly came to Canada to examine reserves set aside for First Nations, following colleagues who had studied residential schools in earlier parts of the century” (Engler). Brian Giesbrecht, a retired judge and senior fellow with the Frontier Centre for Public Policy notes: “Canadians were among the most vocal opponents of the South African apartheid system. What’s not so well known is that the South African apartheid system was based, in large part, on the Canadian Indigenous apartheid system.”

I suggest the minorization of South African theatre contributes a philosophy of thought that reaches beyond the stages to create a “space as stage” for a political and cultural conversation about how space – in its broadest sense explored here – can be structured otherwise. Lalu ties the trope of sadness to the violence of apartheid, and Bignall draws on Deleuze’s notion of joy and sadness for her study of the Australian Inquiry. If this conceptualization of Deleuzian minoritarian ontology and his notion of minor theatre can offer a new approach to break the impasse in post-apartheid discourse and move beyond apartheid, I ask whether it is possible to extend this “kind of thinking immanence” through theatre to similarly complex debates elsewhere (14).


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APPENDIX A

Formal Interviews, South Africa – July 20–August 30, 2016

Johannesburg:


**Pieter Jacobs**, Head of Arts and Culture, University of Johannesburg, former CEO, Arts and Culture Trust; playwright and actor. (26 July, 2016)

**Ashraf Johaardien**, CEO, Business and the Arts South Africa, former Executive Producer, National Arts Festival, former Head of Arts & Culture, University of Johannesburg, and former General Manager of The Arts & Culture Trust; playwright. Plays include *Salaam*, and adaptation of K. Sello Duiker’s *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*. (4 August, 2016)

**Ismail Mahomed**, CEO, Market Theatre, Johannesburg, former Executive Producer, National Arts Festival. (4 August, 2016; Personal communication by e-mail 23 October, 2019)

**Rosemary Mangope**, CEO of the National Arts Council (NAC). (4 August, 2016)

**Xoliswa Nduneni-Ngema**, CEO of Jo’burg City Theatres, a consortium of theatres of which the Soweto Theatre is part; also manages the Youth Development Project run by the Jo’burg Theatre in collaboration with The University of Witwatersrand. (1 August, 2016)

Pretoria:

**Aubrey Sekhabi**, Artistic Director of the South African State Theatre, Pretoria; playwright and director. Plays include *Not With My Gun, Rivonia Trial* and *Hungry*. (29 July, 2016)

Durban:

**Neil Coppen**, playwright, director, designer, including *Abnormal Loads, Tin Bucket Drum, NewFoundLand*. Member of the Royal Court playwright project, PlayRiots. (11 August, 2016).
Emma Durden, Program Manager of Twist Theatre Development Projects and lecturer at the University of Kwazulu-Natal. Recognized with the Leadership in Community Based Theatre and Civic Engagement Award by the International Association of Theatre in Higher Education. (Interview by Skype – 20 September, 2016; Personal e-mail communication by e-mail 11 October, 2019)

Grahamstown:

Anton Krueger, Professor in the Drama Department, Rhodes University, Grahamstown; author and playwright. Author of *Experiments in Freedom: Explorations of Identity in New South African Drama*. (15 August, 2016; Personal communication by email 11 October 2019)

Cape Town:

Caroline Calburn, CEO, Theatre Arts Admin Collective, Observatory, Cape Town; director, educator. (25 August, 2016)

Lara Foot, CEO and Artistic Director, Baxter Theatre, Cape Town; director and playwright. Plays include *Hear and Now, Tshepang* and *Karoo Moose*. (22 August, 2016).

Daniel Galloway, Managing Director, Fugard Theatre, Cape Town. (24 August, 2016)

Amy Jephta, playwright, director, lecturer at University of Cape Town (in the drama department headed up by Geoffrey Hyland and Jay Pather). Member of the Royal Court playwright project, PlayRiots. Plays include *All Who Pass* and *Kristalvlakte*. (26 August, 2016)

Maurice Podbrey, director, producer, and activist in student projects in Khayelitsha Township, Cape Town. (25 August, 2016)

Mike Van Graan, has served in leadership capacities in various cultural non-government organizations including General Secretary of the National Arts Coalition and most recently as the General Secretary of the Performing Arts Network of South Africa (PANSA). Playwright, including *Green Man Flashing, Some Mothers’ Sons, Iago’s Last Dance* and *Payback the Curry*. (23 August, 2016).

National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, July, 2018

Jade Bowers, playwright, producer, director: *What the Water Gave Me, Mary Watson’s Jungfrau, Black*, and others.