THE PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION OF DRAMATIC TEXTS WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO DIALOGUE AND DIDASCALIES IN ATHOL FUGARD'S PLAYLAND AND MY CHILDREN! MY AFRICA!

by

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S U M M A R Y

The preceding study has been prompted by the inordinate stress placed on the separation between dramatic texts as literature and stage performances as theatre - an approach still widely adopted in universities and colleges of education throughout the world.

The traditional distinction between the dramatic text and its stage performance is first accounted for and then re-examined in the light of the new insights gained from semiotics. In the discussion of the relationship between the dramatic text and performance, care is exercised not to approach the subject with a bias towards the text as more important than the performance or vice versa. The performance orientation of various elements of a dramatic text is then considered with special emphasis placed on dialogue and didascalies in dramatic texts generally.

The focus of attention is eventually narrowed down to the dialogue and didascalies in Athol Fugard's Playland and My Children! My Africa!

C O N T E N T S

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C H A P T E R 1

SEMIOTICS AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEXT AND PERFORMANCE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

It can be seen as ironic that 'the performance orientation of the dramatic text' should be thought of as a subject of inquiry, especially if it is considered that playwrights are commonly known to write for the performance-stage. The dramatic text is traditionally seen as a means to staging a performance, and is seldom conceived by any dramatist as literature only. In his essay, 'Theatrical Semiosis as Multimedial Communication', Hess-Luttich (1982:7) refers to Friedrich Schiller's argument (in the introduction to his Die Räuber) which indicates that the latter wrote this drama to be read rather than to be performed on stage; for he was really striving for recognition as a writer in the literary sense. Contrary to his wishes, as Hess-Luttich observes, this play has been produced on stage many times. The works of William Shakespeare on the other hand, although they have been universally studied and extolled as literature, were written only with the Globe Theatre and its Elizabethan audiences in mind. To think of a Shakespearean text and its performance therefore, as two separate entities; and to think that one needs to find evidence within the text to prove that it was conceived for the stage; does sound like trying to separate one thing from itself.

But the division between the written dramatic text as "literature" and its stage-performance as "theatre" in colleges and universities throughout the world is a reality that cannot be ignored. As Mouton (1989:4) states, although drama is traditionally regarded as different from the other two literary art forms (prose and poetry) because of its performance orientation, this aspect is normally overlooked in practice

when drama theorists study this genre. It is often studied only as literature while its performance orientation is overlooked.

In cases where this performance dimension is recognized, the tendency is to speak or write of drama as separate from theatre, the word "drama" being used to refer to the written script, and "theatre" to the stage production of that script. Although there is a growing realization that there is a dialectic relationship between the two, the usual tendency is still to reinforce what Beckermen, as quoted by Mouton (1989:5), calls "the chasm between the enduring and thereby superior drama and the dazzling, but transitory theatre", an approach that leads to a misconception of the unique nature of drama. Yet the question remains: what first brought about this division between the text and its performance? In order to answer this, one needs to consider the link between the text and its performance. Attention will be given to this in the first part of this chapter while the second part will be devoted to short introductory notes on the various elements of the dramatic text.

1.1 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DRAMATIC TEXT AND ITS STAGE PERFORMANCE

This subject has been a matter of controversy for a long time, and different views have been put forward by theoreticians. It will be necessary, for purposes of background and a better perspective on this study, to provide a short historical outline of the nature of the problem and the effect the advent of semiotics has had on the polemic.

1.1.1 HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE PROBLEM

Carlson (1985) sheds some historical light on the matter when he outlines the trends of critical thought in the debates on the subject from the Romantic period up to the present day.

The role and status of the theatrical performance of any play during the Romantic era was put under serious scrutiny:

> If the Shakespearean texts (or any other plays) were indeed organic wholes, complete within themselves and with each part related to every other (an assumption that dominated critical consideration of these texts after romanticism), then why was performance necessary at all? Was it not, in fact, inevitably redundant? Conversely, if performance itself were regarded as an organic whole, must not every part of it be incomplete if considered by itself? How then could organic unity be claimed for the text, obviously a part of this larger whole?
>
> (Carlson, 1985:5)

Furthermore, following Samuel Johnson's statement (Carlson, 1985:6) that a great drama offered "just representations of general nature" it could be argued that this general nature could be assumed to be as readily available to the sensitive actor as to the original poet. To compound the matter further, theorists spoke of "individual genius and of the historical, geographical, and cultural relativism of aesthetic creation" so that "the actor of genius would inevitably differ in artistic vision from the genius Shakespeare; and historical and cultural changes would cause further separation" (Carlson, 1985:6).

As a consequence of this dilemma critics since the Romantic period have clung on to the original, written text as the most reliable expression of "original genius" and have either dismissed stage performances altogether or relegated them to a very minor position. As Carlson (1985:6) states, performances were always seen to pose the danger of corrupting the original vision by "interpretation", "making it something other and ... necessarily inferior". Another view which dates back to the Renaissance, and which was first expounded by Lodovico Castelvetro (Carlson, 1985:6) simply reduced stage performances to the level of mere illustration for the benefit of the unlearned masses capable of only being spectators or hearers, and not readers. The one

positive effect of this, however, was that the possibility of using performance as a potentially useful instrument of instruction for the unlettered presented itself for the first time this way. The unfavourable impact of this view, however, was that practitioners of the stage and all those who enjoyed theatre were looked down upon as aesthetically inferior; and this was the state of affairs until Edward Gordon Craig came on to the scene in 1911 with his pioneering work, On the Art of the Theatre.

He argued that since a play like Hamlet was such an organic whole which needed no theatrical additions like gesture, costume or dance, theatre should rather reject the traditional texts of such plays to which it could add nothing significant and concentrate on developing its own independent art of the theatre. In this way, "theatre" would finally be able to free itself from the shackles of the traditional text. A significant number of subsequent pioneers in theatre studies found Craig's approach of radical separation a useful basis upon which to develop a modern art of the theatre.

In the early twentieth century, Stark Young championed a different approach in which the text-performance relation was represented by using the metaphor of "translation" rather than the older notion of "illustration" (Carlson, 1985:7). In his view, not only literature but other arts as well (architecture, music, costume, etc) are recreated and translated into a new medium when represented in the theatre. Carlson (1985:7) observes that this approach in dealing with the written text and its performance has already been widely used in theatre semiotics since many of its critical tools which are derived from linguistics, seem highly appropriate to a view of performance and script as two different communication systems between which certain messages might be "translated". Although the intention here was evidently to elevate performance to a position equal in authenticity to that of the written text, difficulties were encountered: The linguistic analogy, if taken literally, serves only to foreground the script so that the performance still remains in second place. Secondly the model is based on the usual working of theatrical productions where the "translation" has no

option but to move always from script to performance and never vice-versa. It is another way in which the script is priviledged as the determining factor in laying down the parameters of the translation so that the performance is again forced into subservience. Pirandello in his essay, 'Theatre and Literature' (Carlson, 1985:8) also argued that all translations strive towards faithfulness to the original and are necessarily inferior to it.

According to Carlson (1985:8), there has also been the theory of performance as fulfillment which has had many followers this century. In England and America, theorists like Ashley Dukes, Harley Granville-Barker and Brander Matthews rejected the notion of a "completed written text whose 'rigid conception' could only stifle the essential creativity of other theatre artists". They reasoned that the greatness of Shakespeare lies not in the fact that his plays were complete as written, but that they were "incomplete in a particularly imaginative way ... creating characters and situations which would stimulate creative completion by actors, directors and designers" (Carlson, 1985:8). At about the same time, Henri Gheon in France declared that great dramatists only hold out leading "hints" and "fragments" for the actor to make complete on stage; and much more recently, Anne Ubersfeld (Carlson, 1985:9) wrote of the dramatic text as a message deliberately created with "holes" to be filled by another text, viz. that of the stage. While the approach of performance as illustration undermines the status of the performance, this other view, performance as fulfilment, does the opposite: it privileges performance to the detriment of the written text.

Carlson (1985:9) however states that the notion of performance as "supplement" first espoused by Jacques Derrida appears to have been the answer to resolving the tension between the conflicting views of performance as illustration and performance as fulfilment. In keeping with his broader philosophy of deconstruction, according to which uncontaminated Nature is seen as a Myth and a construct of desire, he asserted that the supplement does not appear with performance's repetition, nor does it with the written text, for Nature is itself already involved with the supplement. His view of the supplement

encompassed two apparently contradictory yet essential features of this concept: the supplement as a surplus and the supplement as that which fills a void. Performance is in this view seen as an excellent illustration of this double dynamic. Naturally "illustration" theorists have stressed the first component, viz. performance as something "added on", and "fulfillment" theorists the second, i.e. performance as "supplement", in the sense of filling a void. According to this view, a play when performed on stage is likely to reveal for the first time significant gaps or material lacking in the written text. By revealing these gaps the performance also holds forth the possibility of an infinite number of future performances which could provide further supplementation. The original dramatic text thus triggers off an infinite number of performances all of which are mere "supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself" (Carlson, 1985:10).

In the light of all this one begins to understand not only the uneasiness and sometimes open hostility, literary critics have had for stage performances - the fear that the written dramatic text, which to them is of primary importance, is being undermined - but also the depth of this long-standing controversy of the relationship between the dramatic text and its performance. It does appear that Derrida's view as briefly outlined above gave a positive impetus to the advent and application of semiotics to theatrical performances for in exposing the myth of the organic unity of the written text, he restored to theatre its status of importance in the aesthetic realization of that text. As Rozik (1983:65) observes, although this new insight did not diminish the persistent consciousness of this dualism in theoretical discussions of drama or theatre, it paved the way for the application of the semiotic approach to the art of the theatre and opened up new possibilities for radical change in perceptions of the relationship between the written dramatic text and its stage performance.

1.1.2 THE IMPACT OF THE SEMIOTIC ENTERPRISE

The advent of semiotics in relation to theatre in this century, first marked by the early attempts of the Czech writers and theatre practitioners, Otakar Zich, Jan Mukarovsky, Jiri Veltrusky, Jindrich Honzl and Petr Bogatyrev was bound to bring about significantly great changes in theatre studies. For the first time it became evident that there is much more to a theatrical production than its textual aspects, that theatre is in fact one of the most complex of signification systems because it uses numerous sign systems that, besides being complex as individual systems, all operate together and at the same time in the construction of meaning. The publication in 1970 of the Polish Tadeusz Kowzan's Litterature et Spectacle was heralded as a useful point from which investigations of the current state of theatre semiotics could be conducted. This may be deduced from the numerous theorists who use him as a starting point in their accounts of the evolution of theatre semiotics.

Susan Bassnett-McGuire, in her article 'An Introduction to Theatre Semiotics' (1980) also acknowledges that Kowzan was among the first semioticians to identify the constituent parts of theatre by grouping the signs operative in theatrical performances into different categories: auditory signs, visual signs, those which pertain to the actor and those which are outside the actor, signs which exist in space, and those which exist in time and space. Kowzan proceeded to list thirteen sign systems, viz. word, tone, mime, gesture, movement, make-up, hairstyle, costume, accessory, decor, lighting, music and sound effects as the basic components of theatre. He made a distinction between two kinds of signs: "natural signs" like thunder and lightning which signify a storm; and "artificial signs" created by living beings to communicate one thing or other. He asserted that theatre is made up entirely of artificial signs. Also, of all the arts and areas of human activity, theatre was identified in Litterature et spectacle as the one "wherein the sign appears with the greatest richness, variety and density" (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980:49).

But as Umberto Eco notes in 'Semiotics of Theatrical Performance' (1977:108), although Kowzan and others have stated that the object of theatrical semiotics is the performance and not the literary text,

other theoreticians have identified the text as the deep structure of the performance which bears all the seminal elements of the mise-en-scene. Passing reference might also be made to other semioticians whose contributions helped broaden and deepen existing insights into theatre semiotics. Petr Bogatyrev in his article, 'Les signes du theatre' (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980:47) discusses other features of the theatrical sign like its transformability as well as its capacity to serve multiple functions and assume different values. Jindrich Honzl (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980:49) on the other hand, highlighted the ability of the theatrical sign to denote changes in theatrical conventions as when the theatre of a given time and place brings some components of the general semiotic ensemble into prominence over others. He also drew attention to the audience's ability to read signs as an added dimension of complexity in stage productions as well as the fact that signs in performances frequently compete for the audience's attention as when the audience's focus on spoken dialogue pushes visual components into the background.

The segmentation of the theatrical text or its performance into signifying units has been another important subject of discussion in theatre semiotics, for the first step in any semiotic study of theatre is the identification of the smallest semiotic unit of the text or performance. Central to this discussion is the dialectic between the dramatic text and its performance. The Danish semiotician, Steen Jansen (Bassnett-McGuire 1980:50) noted that it is through the process of rehearsal that the breakdown of a play into signifying units can be determined; and as Bassnett-McGuire (1980:50) also sees it, a potential danger of the semiotic approach is to try and base analysis of theatre on strictly linguistic models. This is tantamount to analysing the written dramatic text only and ignoring its stage performance when the pluridimentionality of theatre warrants a movement away from a systematization following linguistic models. In addition, as Bassnett-McGuire argues, if the signifying units cannot be established from the written text alone, this would imply the presence of a text within a text, an "inner text" that is read intuitively by actors and directors as they begin to build the performance. She further raises other questions that surface from such a possibility: if such an inner text

exists and there are five translations of the same playtext, will there also be five distinct inner texts? Also, in the case of a playtext from a totally different cultural context, would there be any relation between the inner text perceived in the receiving culture and that perceived in the original context?

The Rizzoli group of theatre semioticians sought to identify deictic orientations as the basic semiotic units, so that each change of deictic direction could be seen to mark a new unit. It is an approach which still focusses on the analysis of the written text in its relation to a possible staging. Serpieri (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980:50) for instance, saw the written text as bearing within it an inscribed range of theatrical signs, while Pugliatti (Bassnett-Guire, 1980:50) perceived the written text as a network of latent theatrical signs that are only realized in performance. Other semioticians like Pagnini and Kowzan (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980:50) saw the relation between the written text and the performance text in different terms: for the former the written text was perceived as the deep structure of the performance; and for the latter, it was the invariable of the final staging.

Pavis, a contemporary semiotician, has observed that although theatre semiotics has arisen in reaction against "textual imperialism" (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980:50), the written text is only one system among all the other systems involved in the performance. In his view, what semiotics has to explain is the interaction between the system that operates in the text and those that function in the performance, "the construction they can impose on each other; that which can be made of a text, and what the stage situation can say to it" (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980:51). He rejects both notions of the text as "deep structure" and as invariable as still keeping the written text in a position of special status vis-à-vis the performance. Bassnett-McGuire states here that a more profitable approach might be to apply the theoretical concept of invariance as posited in the translation theory of Popovic. He contends that "the invariant of a text is that which can be discerned from a comparison of all the versions of the original" (Bassnett-McGuire 1980:50), so that the invariant in theatre terms of a play like The Tempest would be that which is constant in the written text, in all

performances based on that written text, and in all of its rehearsals. She further argues that in the same way that it cannot be claimed that either the subject matter or the form are invariants in translation, so it cannot be claimed that the written text or its performance is invariant either. An additional matter which has received the attention of semioticians, and which also leads back to the relationship between the written dramatic text and its performance was raised by Jury Veltrusky. It is about the "problem of the author's notes and comments within the body of the written text, known in English ... as the stage directions" (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980:51). He reasoned that when these notes are eliminated in performance, the resulting gaps in the unity of the text are filled in by other than linguistic signs; and that this process is one where linguistic meanings are transposed into other semiotic systems. The extent of this transposition, however, depends on the importance of the gaps created by their deletion.

It thus becomes evident from the foregoing resumé of the complex nature of the problem that investigations into the link between the written dramatic text and its performance must needs be conducted within a semiotic framework if any meaningful understanding into this field of inquiry is to be gained.

1.2 THE ELEMENTS OF A DRAMATIC TEXT

The investigation of the relationship between the dramatic text and its stage performance can be approached not only from the view that the dramatic text has a bearing on what will be produced on stage, but also from the perspective that the potential and limitations of the stage has a direct influence on the form and content of the dramatic text. For purposes of this inquiry however, focus will be on the former, viz. to find evidence that points to the fact that the dramatic text is performance-orientated. This can be done at the level of the various elements of a play, viz. its dramatic space, time, fictionality and the dramatic world, and its dramatis personae. Short notes on each of these elements will be provided here, first to show their orientation

towards the stage and also because reference will be made to them in the ensuing discussion on the relationship between the text and its performance. This will of necessity be conducted in a semiotic framework. But more detailed attention will be devoted to the performance-orientation of dialogue and didascalies in the two works of Athol Fugard, 'Playland' and 'My Children! My Africa!'.

In any reading of a dramatic text, it is possible to note that there are elements that serve to facilitate the transition from writing to performance and from written verbal signs to spoken verbal signs, gestures, movements, sounds, etc., all of which are executed on the performance stage. These elements demonstrate the performance orientation of the particular dramatic text. It is however necessary to observe that although most plays are obviously meant to be performed on stage, the degree of performability varies from one play to another. Also, while it is necessary, for the sake of lucidity and systematicity, to consider each of the different elements of a play separately, it has to be borne in mind that they overlap and function together as a unified whole in a written text or its performance.

1.2.1 DRAMATIC SPACE

Dramatic space is simply defined by Issacharof (1981:24) as "the study of space as a semiotic system in a given play". Unlike scenographic and architectural space which are studied from a static, diachronic standpoint, dramatic space as a sign system is a synchronic and thus dynamic area of analysis because it specifically excludes from consideration the history or sociology of previous performances. It entails an attempt to study the mechanism of space from one scene to the next as well as the relations linking space to other constituent elements of performance.

The conception of a dramatic text is obviously constricted by spatial considerations, and this was acknowledged even in antiquity by Aristotle in his Classical Unities. It is one of the distinctive

features of drama as a genre that the action takes place at a particular locality, although reference is usually made to other places by the characters. This is notwithstanding the fact that there are some dramatic texts where the action takes place at different localities, and where the stage has to be transformed to represent various places in different acts or scenes. Stage directors are thus frequently faced with practical problems of how to adapt the same stage to represent different places in the course of the same performance. The use of lighting effects is a technique that is commonly used today to suggest changes in space. This is however often inscribed in the stage directions of such texts; and this is already evidence to show that such texts were conceived and shaped for the performance stage.

Issacharoff (1981:215) makes a distinction between two forms of dramatic space, viz. mimetic and diegetic space. These inevitably come into question in any discussion of the relationship between a dramatic text and its performance. Mimetic space is equated to performance- or stage space, that which is made visible to an audience and represented on stage; while diegetic space is space described or referred to by the characters. Mimetic space is transmitted directly while diegetic space is mediated through the discourse of the characters and communicated verbally and not visually. Mouton (1989:122) states that the term "mimetic space" could be equally applicable to the dramatic text where it could refer to the imaginary spaces wherein the fictional characters find themselves, i.e. the "here" of these characters. In the same way "diegetic space", which for Issacharoff indicates the space outside the represented space of the stage, can thus correspondingly indicate in the dramatic text those spatial references which are outside the specific scene described in the text. It is in this sense that Mouton affirms that spatial information in a dramatic text can be read either as information about the fictional world or as information about stage space; and this points to the performance orientation of the dramatic text.

1.2.2 TIME

Although traditional drama theory was for many years dominated by the notion of the Classical Unities in its view of the element of time in the conception of drama, actual theatrical practice has long shown that the classical time limitation of twenty-four hours on the happenings of the fictional world of the drama cannot be valid; for many dramatists, including Shakespeare, have written plays whose actions range over periods which by far exceed a day. As Mouton (1989:109) states, to place a physical temporal restriction on a genre which deals with fictional worlds and thus also fictional time spans is to adopt a naïve approach to the world of drama. Granted that there is an important relationship between the physical time of representation and the fictional time represented, this does not necessarily have to be seen on a one-to-one basis.

A distinction can, however, be made in any theatrical performance between the performance-time which normally ranges between two to three hours and the fictional represented time which can be anything between two hours and years. But irrespective of whether the fictional time represented is two hours or thirty-six years, it still has to be represented or performed in two or three hours, for this is the standard duration of all performances. The length of the dramatic text is therefore determined by this length of the performance time which convention has fixed at about two hours. In this respect then, the representation of time in the dramatic text is influenced by performance-time.

A characteristic feature of drama which sets it apart from narrative is the absence, in most cases, of a mediating narrator in it. The dramatic characters speak for themselves directly as the action takes place in the fictional present. Deictic references in the dialogue of the characters are crucial for, as Elam (1980:139) asserts, it is deixis which allows the dialogue to create an interpersonal dialectic between the actors in drama within the time and location of discourse. But Serpieri et al (1981:167) state that the deictic references in the dramatic use of language are typified by their connection with the

present through their use of the grammatical present, personal pronouns like "I", "you", "we" and a temporal-, spatial orientation like the "here and now" of drama. These deictic features of the dialogic turn-taking of the dramatic characters contribute towards the creation of the illusion that the action in the fictional world takes place in the present, even if it is a fictional present of the stage. Deixis itself is therefore, because of its temporal component which is orientated towards the present time, an indication of the performance orientation of the dramatic text. A similar case can be made out for ostension.

By its very nature and definition, ostension, like deixis, is rooted in the temporal present. Ostension which is the "gesturability" (Elam, 1980:142) of dramatic discourse and a demonstration of its need for physical contextualization refers to the fictional present of the performance stage. Instead of verbally describing or defining a given object, one may simply ostend it, i.e. pick it up, point at it or turn one's head to look in its direction so that the inquirer or addressee may see it for him/herself. Ostension is thus indicative of, and implies, dramatic action in the fictional present of the performance. Therefore, ostension like deixis may be cited as an element of dramatic dialogue that, because of its orientation towards the present, is indicative of the performance orientation of the dramatic text.

1.2.3 FICTIONALITY AND THE DRAMATIC WORLD

Mouton (1989:72-75) points to a distinction between two levels within both the performance and the dramatic text, viz. the fictional level and the representational level. In any reading of a dramatic text, a reader gathers information about the fictional world from the dialogue and the didascalies; and this information enables the reader to construct the fictional world of the drama in order to visualize it in the imagination. This is the imagined representation of the fictional world, and it is a mental construct of the individual reader which does not necessarily have anything to do with any actual representation of this world in any performance.

The second kind of reading is that which is geared towards getting information about how this fictional world and its inhabitants can be represented on the performance stage. This is the imagined representation, not of the fictional world, but of a possible stage performance. This second kind of reading the dramatic text is made possible not only because the didascalies imply such a reading, but also in view of the fact that the language itself indicates it through its deictic expressions like personal pronouns, spatio-temporal references such as "here" and "now", which are all forms of hidden ostension and which characterize a direct dialogic situation. In other words, the particular language usage of the text suggests the possibility of a performance.

Although the reader of a dramatic text gathers knowledge about the fictional world through reading the textual verbal/language signs, the spectator in a performance gets this information directly from the stage through visual and auditive signs; so that where the reader imagines a representation of the fictional world the spectator is presented with an actual representation of this fictional world. The representational level of a performance is entered when the audience sees the performance only for what it is, a mere performance where the individual actor is not seen in his/her role as represented character, but as the actor himself/herself; and the stage, not as a represented fictional space, but as the stage itself. Elam (1980:111) also observes this distinction and appropriately quotes from John Searle: "A fictional story is a pretended representation of a state of affairs; but a play, that is a play as performed, is not a pretended representation of a state of affairs, but the pretended state of affairs itself".

1.2.4 THE DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The two levels as alluded to above, the fictional level and the representational level, are automatically also invoked in a consideration of the dramatis personae for the fictional characters and the actors respectively form part of these levels. It is in the nature of a

dramatic text that a reader may see a character in a text as linked to a potential or real actor playing the role in a theatrical production. Mouton (1989:99), refers to the distinction Passow (1981:240) makes between the five different aspects of interaction in the dialectic between dramatic characters, actors and spectators. These are the scenic interaction within the "make-believe world" (fictitious scenic interaction); the interaction of the audience with this "make-believe world" (audience-stage interaction in the field of fiction); the interaction of the members of the theatre company amongst each other (real interaction on stage); the interaction of the audience with the actors (real audience-stage interaction); and the interaction within the audience. Of these five, two are "fictional scenic interaction", i.e. the fictional interaction between the characters themselves in the fictional world; and "real interaction on stage" which takes place between members of the theatre company amongst themselves, i.e. actors on the performance stage. To ascertain in what ways the fictional interaction between the characters themselves is performance orientated, one needs to consider those features of their description which make a transposition to the performance stage readily attainable.

Firstly it must needs be mentioned that the physical description of the characters normally given by the writer at the beginning of the dramatic text, where the characters' physical constitution, their clothes, gait, quality of voice and general bearing are described; is not strictly speaking, in keeping with the nature of drama whose distinctive characteristic is showing rather than telling. Such written visual descriptions, can however be seen in a positive light as definite indicators of the fact that the text was written to be performed on stage. They form part of the stage directions of the written text; and by virtue of this alone, they belong to that category of signs which are indicative of the texts potential for staging. They serve to facilitate the transposition process that takes place from text to performance.

In order to produce a bruised and battered Lena on stage (she is one of Fugards main characters in Boesman and Lena), which has greater dramatic impact than reading about her description in a text, a stage producer must primarily consider the specifications about her physical appearance as given in the written stage directions. It stands to reason that these details will also influence the choice of actress to play the part. Even in the case of dramatis personae therefore, dramatic texts are essentially oriented towards the performance stage.

1.2.5 DIALOGUE AND DIDASCALIES

The language used in the dramatic text may be classified under two categories, viz dialogue and didascalies. While dialogue includes everything that could be uttered by the characters in a text or the actors in a performance, the didascalies communicate messages in the text that cannot be uttered in a performance. Although both are in the dramatic text written verbal signs, it is only the dialogue that can be translated into auditory verbal signs in a performance. The two are usually typographically differentiated in a text, for the didascalies are indicated by italics and/or the use of brackets while the dialogue is given in the usual typescript.

Alter (1981:113) states that a semiotic approach to theatre identifies two categories of signs which correspond to its two media of expression: text and performance.

> ① As a text, it presents a network of verbal signs which usually appear in the form of plays made of written words, and involve primarily linguistic, but also literary and cultural codes. ② As a performance, it offers a network of many types of signs which, in addition to words, include body language, costumes, sets, lights, colors, props, intonations, etc., each type belonging to a discrete semiotic system with a discrete code, but

> all of them conveniently summarized as staging signs, involving common theatrical and cultural codes.
>
> (Alter, 1981:113)

Although, strictly speaking, verbal signs in a performance operate as staging signs, for purposes of clarity, Alter separates them from other staging signs which are non-verbal. He (1981:116) further makes a distinction between three ways in which the words "text of a play" may be understood: (i) first, as a literary text in which the dramatic text is read purely as literature; as a total text where the reading assumes that the play was written to be performed on stage and is thus seen as a virtual performance; (ii) and as a staged text which is defined as the totality of verbal signs which appear as such both in the text and in the performance. Although the staged text is often postulated to be identical to the total text, this identity cannot be completely realized although it can be approached in some cases. This is because of what happens in the transformation process that takes place when a written text is staged. Some stage directions disappear without a trace because they express authorial comments like social or philosophical observations which cannot be conveyed by means of staging signs. Those which can be transposed into one or several staging signs are indeed transposed, but not in as direct a way as the dialogue is, but as one of the many options in the choice of the staging signs made after the selection of the staged text. In this respect, a clear separation can be made between the functions of the "author" (one or more persons involved in the writing of the text as a "permanent element") and the "director" (one or more persons involved in staging a concrete performance).

Alter (1981:117) asserts that although the two functions, i.e. of author and director may be fulfilled by the same person especially at the first performance of a play, or distributed among many (actors, technicians, even audience) the survival of theatre in its dual form depends on the theoretical autonomy of the two functions. A text supplied with compulsory and exhaustive stage directions would discourage creative revivals on stage and downgrade the functions of stage directors. In the same way, the free assertion of the director's function

requires a downgrading of the role of staging directions which would result in a total negation. But in the same way that textual stage directions are affected in the transformation process from text to performance, where written verbal signs are transposed to visual or auditory signs, textual dialogue is also affected in this process. When verbal signs are transposed from text to stage, they do not change their code but the materiality of their signifiers, as sound substitutes for writing. They become vulnerable to the action of staging signs, especially to the transformations generated by the human voice. As Alter states,

> written words ... provide certain safeguards: they can be read at one's best pace and reread when needed. The spoken word is much more treacherous.
>
> (Alter, 1981:130)

Even with verbal signs (dialogue) then, a stage director has an opportunity of taking advantage of the potential ambiguities and multivalences of written words to make his/her own creative input:

> a so-called poetic text, or a text which indulges in vague terms, avoids explanations and rejects codified grammatical sequences, opens the way for partial transformations by means of voice and other staging signs. Such a text will have a higher theatricality index and, ceteris paribus, a greater appeal for staging.
>
> (Alter, 1981:130)

There is therefore a real tension between text and performance in as far as dialogue and didascalies are concerned in dramatic art, and this will be demonstrated again in the ensuing pages as the two are examined in greater detail. This will further become evident when the notion of dialogue is broadened to refer to more than mere verbal dialogue between the dramatic characters; i.e. when it includes the interactive process that takes place between the actors on the performance stage and the audience in the auditorium.

C H A P T E R 2

THE PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION OF DRAMATIC DIALOGUE

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Being such a central constitutive element of drama, dialogue has held the attention of many scholars through the ages, from Aristotle to contemporary theorists. It has, however, mainly been studied from the point of view of the written dramatic text, and little if any attention has historically been given to its performative features. It stands to reason that this has had a limiting influence on the insights that might be gained into this dynamic area of inquiry. And it has also led to a narrow understanding of the concept of dialogue itself, so that dialogue in the literary sense, i.e. textual dialogue, has come to refer only to the written verbal utterances of the characters. The attendant danger in this approach to dramatic dialogue is the possibility that the essential meaning-creating supra-segmental features of language may be overlooked. And even the non-verbal parts of the communication system are also almost completely disregarded.

If, as Fischer Lichte (1984:138) avers, drama is a literary as well as a theatrical work, a monomedial as well as a multimedial text; and if a proper investigation into the special modes in which dramatic dialogue constitute meaning is to be conducted, then it has to be accepted that the meaning-producing process is executed not with literary signs only, but also with theatrical signs such as linguistic, paralinguistic, mimical, gestic and proxemic signs. Dialogue has thus become, in a semiotic framework, a wider, more inclusive concept than it is in a purely literary sense.

Elam (1980:39), in his theatrical communication model, has drawn a basic distinction between the context of the performer-spectator transaction, i.e. theatrical context, and the fictional-dramatic context where the characters in a play interact with and address one another. If dialogue does not only occur in the internal communication axis between characters/actors, but is also conducted in the external

communication axis between the fictional world of the characters on stage and the members of the audience, then it means a further broadening in the scope of the subject, for this interactive link between the performance stage and the audience also falls within the ambit of this investigation. Mouton (1989:138), observes that this external communication link occurs in different ways and may be represented by making a distinction between different types of play. For instance realistic plays, where the actors maintain the illusion of the fictional world on stage without in any way acknowledging the presence of an audience, can be contrasted with plays where different techniques are employed to acknowledge the presence of such an audience. These techniques could range from verbal utterances like asides, soliloquies, monologues, prologues and epilogues to non-verbal ones like gestures, facial expressions, mime, etc. This vertical link between the stage and the audience in the communication model has introduced a whole new dimension of complexity into dialogue as a subject of inquiry.

Furthermore, and closely interlinked with all the above-mentioned because it underlies every observation that can be made about dialogue, is the point made by Mouton (1989:133) that dramatic dialogue or dramatic language generally cannot be seen separately from other aspects of drama like dramatic character and dramatic action, for these are implied by the language itself; and drama is an integrated whole whose constituent parts cannot be seen in isolation but as parts of this greater whole. To pursue the stated objective of this study then, an investigation into the ways in which dramatic dialogue is performance-orientated will follow.

2.1 THE DEICTIC ORIENTATION OF DRAMATIC DIALOGUE

From the contributions of Keir Elam, Alessandro Serpieri and other drama- and theatre semioticians, it may be asserted that central to any discussion of dramatic language, and of dialogue in particular, is its deictic orientation. Deixis, as Elam (1980:139) points out, is what allows dialogue to create an interpersonal dialectic between speakers/

actors in drama within the time and location of discourse. Whenever a speaker refers to him/herself as speaker (I), to an interlocutor as listener-addressee (you), and to the spatio-temporal co-ordinates ("here" and "now") of the utterances by means of demonstrative pronouns, spatial- and temporal adverbs, the phenomenon of drama takes place. This is because drama consists primarily of an "I" addressing a "you", in a "here" and "now". The importance of the primarily deictic articulation of language in drama was first noted and attributed by Jindrich Honzl (1943:118) to the "supremacy of dialogue over recitation" and the "supremacy of action over narrative" in the development of Greek tragedy.

Deixis is what allows language an "active" and dialogic function rather than a descriptive and choric role. It resides in demonstrative pronouns also called "shifters" or "empty signs", for it does not in itself specify its object, but simply points ostensively to the already constituted contextual elements. An indexical expression such as "Will you give me that, please?" stays ambiguous until it is uttered in a context where the shifters "you", "me", and "that" have evident referents; for words acquire specific values only if they are at once related to corresponding objects. As Elam (1980:140) reasons, dramatic discourse which has dialogue as an essential component, being full of such indexical expressions, is only "disambiguated" when it is appropriately contextualized, i.e. when the speaker, addressee, time and location are provided in a context which is the dramatic performance.

In their article, 'Toward a Segmentation of the Dramatic Text' Serpieri et al (1981) also lend support to this view. According to them, dramatic language is distinguishable from "literary" language because it is analogous to ordinary utterances in everyday language which produce meaning in relation to a pragmatic context. They go on to state however that dramatic language is also distinguishable from everyday discourse because in the latter, the deictic dimension does not need to be inscribed semantically within the verbal fabric of discourse itself, for here it is a simple index. But in the dramatic language,

> the indexical dimension is semanticized, becomes iconic

> (being inscribed, with a surplus of information, within the verbal-pragmatic fabric) and becomes symbolic, centering into the paradigmatic axes of a text-action which, far from retaining the fragmentary or "spontaneous" character of a collection of everyday utterances, appears as an organic and "fictitious" structure.
>
> (Serpieri et al, 1981:165)

Although dramatic language is different from other forms of literary language because of its deictic orientation, it is also not the same as the ordinary discourse of everyday language. It is an artistic language which is inherently shaped for stage performance.

Elam (1980:142) further explains that indices do not all have the same status in drama, and that a central position is occupied by those deictics relating to the context of utterance (I-you-here-now) which serve as an indexical "zero-point " from which the dramatic world is defined. The dramatic dialectic is really constructed around the exchange between the "I" and "you", for these are the only genuinely active roles in drama: the speaker and the addressee are the only participating figures. The third person, on the other hand, indicates "an excluded and non-participant other presented merely as object of discourse" (1980:143). Within the "I" - "you" relationship, it is the first person that is dominant. The speaking subject defines everything (including the you-addressee) in terms of his/her own place in the dramatic world. The "here" and "now" simply mark his/her position as speaker in a given context. The semantically marked "proximal" deictics relating to the speaker's present context and situation of utterance ("here", "this", "those", "now", the present tense, etc) thus have a much more important function than the unmarked distal variety regarding distant or excluded objects, times and places ("there", "that", "those", "then", the past tense etc). This presents the most eloquent argument for the case of the performative nature of dialogue.

Elam (1980:143) goes on to specify that next in importance to the "I" and "you" pronominals which are the only genuinely active roles in the dramatic exchange is the spatial deixis which takes priority over the

temporal. According to him,

> It is above all to the physical here represented by the stage and its vehicles that the utterance must be anchored. The general semantic process which Lyons terms the "spatialization of time" (1977, p 718) is especially powerful in a mode of discourse which must relate the several temporal levels at work to the immediate presence of the speaker within a strictly defined space. The "now" of discourse registers the instant of this spatial presence. The dramatic speaker presents himself in the first instance as I-here: 'Here I am Antony', in, Mark Antony's words, 'Here is my space'.
>
> (Elam, 1980:143)

It is in the nature of dramatic dialogue, particularly because of its deictic orientation, that it can only be truly and fully realized in the theatre.

2.2 OSTENSIVE FEATURES OF DRAMATIC DIALOGUE

Closely related and similar in function to the deictic pointers in a dramatic text are references like "today", "tonight", "the table", etc, which also acquire specific values only if they are at once related to corresponding objects in a context. It is stage performance which provides the kind of contextualization required to clarify such ambiguous references. These references, especially demonstratives, depend upon an accompanying gesture, a specifying kinesic indicator allowing the object of the deixis to be ostended. An utterance like "Look at that beautiful car" may be referentially self-sufficient, but the same cannot be said of the more abrupt and ambiguous "Look at that", which needs to be accompanied by a nod or a sweep of the head, an eye or hand movement. To quote again from Elam,

> In its "incompleteness", its need for physical contextualization, dramatic discourse is invariably marked by a potential gesturability which the language of narrative does not normally possess since its context is described rather than pragmatically pointed to.
>
> (Elam, 1980:142)

In short, dramatic language calls for the intervention of the actor's body in order to have its meaning completed. The spoken words are inseparable from the movements of the actors who speak them. Serpieri et al (1981:175) express the same idea in different words. They state that verbal (textual) deixis has an intimate relationship with gesture; and that this gesture can represent a semantic supplement to the deictic utterance where an indexical gesture like pointing to an otherwise unspecified referent would accompany a request like "give me that". Alternatively it could perform a relatively autonomous function where the same gesture would accompany an utterance like "give me that bottle of brandy over there". In this latter example, the verbal indication is in itself already semantically sufficient.

This gestural or physical component of the language of drama which Elam, Serpieri and fellow semioticians regard as the most primitive form of signification is known in philosophy as "ostension": in order to refer to, to indicate or define a given object, one simply picks it up and shows it to the inquirer or receiver of the message instead of trying to give a verbal definition or description. The concrete object is used as the expression of the class of which it is a member or the thing is de-realized so as to become a sign. This elementary form of signifying is the most basic form of performance, and it is the one aspect of drama which distinguishes it from narrative where people, objects or events are necessarily described or recounted. Ostensive expressions are part of the language of dramatic texts and they clearly serve to facilitate the transition from textual dramatic language to its logical destination - the performance stage.

2.3 NON-VERBAL FEATURES OF DRAMATIC DIALOGUE

A discussion of ostention thus leads to a consideration of the non-verbal features of dialogue. In her essay, 'The Dramatic Dialogue - Oral or Literary Communication', Fischer-Lichte (Schmid and Van Kesteren, 1984:137-173) makes a distinction between two types of dramatic dialogue, viz. literary dramatic dialogue which she divides into the "literary /literary dramatic dialogue" and the "literary/oral dramatic dialogue"; as well as theatrical dramatic dialogue which is in turn divided into the "oral/literary dramatic dialogue" and the "oral/oral dramatic dialogue".

Literary dramatic dialogue is here simply described as a dialogue exclusively performed in linguistic signs and with predominant features either of written or of spoken language. Theatrical dramatic dialogue on the other hand does not only signify a situation of direct communication but simulates it; and it is performed in linguistic as well as in paralinguistic, mimical, gestic and/or proxemic signs. This latter kind of dialogue is really about the relationship between language and acting.

Theatrical dramatic dialogue thus represents, for Fischer-Lichte (1984:149), a special form of transition between the two extreme forms of the combination between language and acting where language can either dominate acting or vice versa. Any theatrical dramatic dialogue can thus be placed anywhere between these two poles depending on which of the two, linguistic or non-verbal signs, are the dominant ones in it. Of interest then in this context are the relations between the linguistic signs on the one hand and the different types of non-verbal signs on the other. According to Rozik,

> the dramatic text is not complete as a work of art, because it is not univocal and because it is non-existent without the realization of at least one interpretation (even if this takes place during the reading process), and that there exists a language, aside from the natural language of the text, that

> conveys these interpretations, this language cannot but be in the element of spectacle, or, more precisely, in the domain of all non-verbal elements of the theatrical production.
>
> (Rozik, 1983:66)

It is also important to mark the ways in which this combination between linguistic and non-verbal signs influences the constitution of meaning in the theatrical communication system. This is because it is only in staging/performance that the non-verbal signs are realized/executed. In the dramatic text it is only possible to have a few of these signs mentioned in the didascalies or periodically inserted in brackets in the middle of the dialogue. But in the main a lot goes unmentioned for it is impossible for the playwright to mention every change in the facial expression of the participants in dialogue, every frown or every movement of their limbs. Most of these non-linguistic features of dialogue are only inscribed in it and can, therefore, never be realized in the same way by different actors.

Fischer-Lichte (Schmid and Van Kesteren, 1984:137-173) observes that because the process of meaning-generating is always performed in the interrelationship of the three semiotic dimensions, viz. the syntactic, the semantic and the pragmatic, non-verbal signs may refer to each of these three dimensions of the linguistic signs. In keeping with these dimensions therefore, non-verbal signs could be seen to fulfil one or all of the parasyntactic-, parasemantic- and parapragmatic functions. These functions will be discussed and illustrated in full in subsequent pages.

2.3.1 GESTIC SIGNS

As it is not possible for any dramatist to specify in the text all the gestures that accompany or should accompany the dialogue of the characters/actors, most of these gestures are simply implied in the dialogue and left to the imagination or common sense of the actors and producers

of plays. It is only in the theatre that the multiplicity of the gestive signs operative in a particular play come to the surface; and it is only here that it can become apparent how incomplete, written dialogue alone can be.

Gestures are capable of performing parasyntactic functions as noted in Fischer-Lichte's essay (Schmid and Van Kesteren, 1984:150). The raising of the eyebrow or a quick direct glance by a speaker may emphasize a sentence or mark the arrival of an important moment in an argument. A nod of the head or some rhythmic gestures of the hands may fulfil a similar function. The movements of a speaker's limbs and his/her facial expression do accent the syntactic course of the speaker's words. Gestive signs also perform numerous parasemantic functions - those "special relations non-verbal signs establish to the possible meanings of the simultaneously realized linguistic signs they refer to" (Schmid and Van Kesteren, 1984:150). Among these can be distinguished the functions of substitution, amplification, modification, neutralization and contradiction. A nod of the head may be used in dialogue to substitute a verbal affirmation and a shaking of the head to stand for a verbal negation if these gestures are accepted to mean these in the cultures concerned. The meaning of a linguistic sign may be amplified by the speaker's gestures to back it up, as when one uses ones hands to illustrate the size or shape of some object. Modification here occurs when a speech act like the expression of hatred or anger (even if strengthened by a corresponding intonation) is weakened or modified by the speaker's reaching out to embrace the addressee despite his/her professed anger or hatred. The function of neutralization, another form of modification, is fulfilled when a speaker for instance, verbally expresses pity to a listener and immediately turns his/her back on him/her to walk away despite his words of sympathy. Such a gesture effectively neutralizes the verbal expression of pity. If the hypothetical speaker does worse than turn his/her back on the listener in the example cited on neutralization, and actually says the words, "I really do pity you" in a gloating tone accompanied by a smile on the face, then the gestic signs here would certainly contradict the meaning of the verbal message. Such instances would normally be indicated in the stage directions. In such cases where the meanings of the

linguistic and non-verbal signs contradict each other, the true meaning of the said part of the dialogue can only be adequately understood against the background of the situation, the relation between the participants in the dialogue or the special conditions that pertain to the speaker.

Finally with respect to the parapragmatic functions of gestic signs, Fischer-Lichte (Schmid and Van Kesteren, 1984:152) distinguishes two different possibilities: the gestic or other non-verbal signs may either refer to the speaker, the hearer and their interaction; or they may function as meaning-carrying elements of the turn-taking system. In the first case the gestures are not linked to single linguistic signs but to the whole body of text uttered by the speaker as when a speaker and/or an addressee expresses through gestures, a general emotional state which is manifestly sustained throughout the course of the dialogue. In the second instance, these non-verbal signs simply prepare or point to the alternation or maintenance of the speaker role. For instance a speaker, after uttering a grammatically complete sentence, may change his/her posture or step back to indicate that he/she has finished and that other participants in the dialogue may have their say. Gestic signs here facilitate the comprehension of the spoken text because they indicate whether the speaker him/herself thinks his/her utterance is completed or whether he/she was interrupted while trying to continue speaking.

2.3.2 PROXEMIC SIGNS

Proxemic signs are closely allied to gestic signs for the two usually co-occur and function together in dramatic art. A distinction could perhaps be made here between body movements (as discussed in the previous section on gestic signs) where the speaker makes meaningful signs by shaking or nodding his/her head, beckoning with his/her hands or showing emotion by using facial expressions without changing position in space; and kinesics which is the study of the syntax and semantics of body motion i.e. from one point to another in space. The latter

thus almost becomes inseparable from proxemics which is about the semantic component of space in the dialogic interaction between actors or groups of actors in theatre. As in all the codes that operate in theatre it will be difficult to divide the three categories mentioned here into watertight compartments for they frequently operate together and at the same time as components of the dramatic/theatrical communication system. And although Kowzan, in his Literature et spectacle (1975) established thirteen sign systems as the basic components of theatre with gesture and movement as separate codes, some semioticians like Segre (1980) have subsumed kinesics and proxemics under body gesture.

Fischer-Lichte's incisive comments on how gestic signs serve to play an essential role in the constitution of meaning in dialogue also embrace proxemic signs, for the proxemic signs also have parasyntactic-, parasemantic- and parapragmatic functions which are very similar to those of the gestic signs in the meaning-generating process of dialogue. When a speaker steps forward to the addressee, it could indicate the importance of the words to be uttered, a technique of foregrounding meant to arrest the attention of both the addressee and the audience; and a speaker's pacing up and down while speaking may trace the logical flow of ideas in his/her dialogic rendition. The actor's movements in space thus become in such cases a key device in the syntactic structuring of ideas. Also, proxemics frequently complement gestic signs in the parasemantic functions they serve. They too may substitute linguistic signs as in the case of a character/actor who, instead of reacting verbally to threats of violence being made by an interlocutor simply shakes his/her head, raises his/her hands as if in defence or surrender, and takes a few steps backwards. Although no words are spoken by the person under threat, the fear of violence or refusal to respond to the aggression of the interlocutor in like manner is in this way clearly communicated. If these gestures and movements by the threatened person are accompanied by words which express his/her reluctance to engage in a physical fight, then the meaning of the linguistic signs is amplified by the proxemics and/or the gestics. The same illustration cited in the previous section to illustrate how the content of verbal signs may be modified can also be used here especial-

ly if the said speaker actually walks up to the person he/she is supposed to hate in order to embrace him/her. Examples similar to the ones already cited for neutralization and contradiction in the previous section can also be used here to exemplify how proxemics can neutralize or contradict linguistic signs as part of their parasemantic function.

Lastly, with reference to the parapragmatic operation of these signs constituted by the characters/actors movements in the space of the stage or of the fictional world, the same two categories referred to in the previous section still apply. Firstly the proxemic signs could serve as expression with regard to the speaker, as reaction with regard to the hearer and as signs establishing interactive relations between speaker and hearer, but the emotional state manifested by these signs is not linked to a single utterance, but to the whole context of the dialogue. A speaker's nervousness during the course of a whole body of dialogue is thus communicated by amongst others his/her restless movements and his/her inability to stay in one place and speak with composure. Such movements, in a given context, are seen to bespeak a mind ill at ease. Secondly, and still very similar to what happens in the parapragmatic operation of gestics, the proxemic signs also serve to prepare and indicate the alternation or maintenance of the speaker role in the turn-taking system, e.g. when a character/actor steps forward from among others as if to claim his/her turn to speak before delivering his/her part of the dialogue.

2.3.3 THE DIALOGIC PAUSE

In her article, 'The Verbal Zero-Sign in Theatre' Teodorescu-Brinzeu (1984) presents the case of the dialogic pause which she simply views as the antithesis of the verbal sign and she appropriately names it the "verbal zero-sign". The fact that it is a zero-sign in the verbal sense does not mean that it is meaningless. On the contrary, it is a meaningful sign that only functions in an order different from that of the verbal sign as it is invested with meaning on both the verbal and non-verbal levels and thus plays a definite and important role in the

overall signification process of the performance. She gives the following as a possible definition of the zero-sign:

> ... voluntary pauses in speech that act as units of sense, invested with meaning as a result of a process of semiosis based on a correlation between expression (non-word) and content (derived from contextual signs) and/or as units of rhythm with a dynamic expression.
>
> (Teodorescu-Brinzeu, 1984:49)

Of importance here are the two distinct phases through which the zero-sign goes in the process of its constitution (Teodorescu-Brinzeu, 1984:50):

(1) The first, is represented by a theoretical existence, i.e. when the pauses are mentioned in the text but are not actually realized; and

(2) the second stage is represented by the movement from the text to the performance where the pauses assume a physical existence and function as real signs.

What this implies is that the dialogic pause can only be realized in its completeness and with its full semantic charge when it is actualized in a stage performance. The text thus depends on stage performance in this instance, for its fulfilment. But another distinction exists within the first dimension mentioned above, namely "... the pause as a verbal zero-sign that exists only in opposition to the words and the pause as a distinct sign of the stage directions that establishes a certain relation between the text and meta-text of the play". (Teodorescu-Brinzen, 1984:50).

With respect to the first, although the alternation of words and pauses in the text forms a rich tissue of signs, the communicative value of the two elements is inverted, especially in the Theatre of the Absurd. Words in such instances become such an unreliable vehicle of communication that they defeat the very ends of the communication they are

supposed to serve; and with this failure of verbal language, the language of silence offers itself up as the only one that permits understanding.

This semantics of silence in modern theatre is based firstly on the relation that is established between words and pauses, and there are three possibilities here: When the pauses reinforce the meaning of the words; when the words reinforce the meaning of the pauses; and when the words and pauses are interrelated. The meanings of the pauses in each of these cases will depend on the immediate contexts where they occur and will be derived from the forward or backward action of the text or metatext concerned. But there are also instances where such dialogic pauses have a meaning which cannot simply be derived from the immediate textual context. In such cases the pause would carry a meaning which is more remote, '... with a more general signification based on a repetitive strategy and build up by accumulation. It may suggest the reduced intellectual capacities of a character, his slowness in thinking, his inability to communicate, etc ..." (Teodorescu-Brinzeu, 1984:51). If, as already seen, the dialogic pause can only be physically realized in performance, then it stands to reason that all these functions of the pause can be better served in the performance stage of the drama, where not only the verbal signs, but even the verbal zero-signs are concretely materialized. This does not, however, discount the fact that the dramatic pause in a text is a definite sign that should not be overlooked, and which should be interpreted by the reader. But it assumes greater dramatic impact in a theatrical setting where there is audience participation.

The second distinction which exists refers to the relationship between the text of the play and the stage directions as established by the pause. Here the concept referring to a possible semantics of silence are linked to the ambiguity of the stage directions which, although deliberately conceived for performance, are still perceived as textual elements. As Teodorescu-Brinzeu (1984:51) states, the pauses here represent a transposition on a purely semantic level, of the potential significations of the text where the apparent discursiveness and lack of meaning of these pauses find justification and clearer meaning in

the stage performance. In this way the text is enriched by the concretization in the performance of the different non-verbal signs implied in the metatext. Teodorescu-Brinzeu (1984:52) further states, "As soon as the text of a play is staged and the pauses become signs with a physical shape, new contents hidden in their manifest identity may be discovered", an operation that Ubersfeld (1978:33) calls "resemantisation".

Some dialogic pauses could be seen as compulsory in a performance because they are mentioned in the corresponding text, but there are also those that could be regarded as optional because they may be added by the director or actor to enrich the text. It is however necessary to state that, depending on the effects achieved in this way the results of such additions will not always be desirable. The opposite situation also frequently occurs, where pauses which were meant to be obligatory are omitted by the directors or even simply misinterpreted by both the actors and the audience in a performance. Sometimes their lengths are not properly observed. In such cases the results of this lack of adherence to the specifications of the dramatic text will vary from a complete change from the envisaged meaning to a simple failure by the audience to identify the intended meaning.

Furthermore, the vertical link between the actors on stage and the audience as expounded by Elam (1980:38) in his theatrical model also comes into play in this discussion of the verbal zero sign, for this kind of sign constitutes an essential element in the construction of the dialogic link between the actors on stage and members of the audience. The reader's activity of "konkretization" as first envisaged by Iser (1974) in his Reception Aesthetics is seriously hampered by the act of staging a text, for then it is no longer possible for the reader to pause at leisure in his/her reading to review and reconsider the action in the process of meaning-construction. The dialogic pause, when properly observed and strategically utilized by the director of the play, effectively makes up for this loss which occurs in the transposition from text to performance stage. Moments of recollection and reflection by the spectators are prompted by the pauses that occur, and

> In moments of textual silence, they can concentrate on a sign of a different code, can accept or reject entanglement, can break the illusion, or, on the contrary, can find the quality of illusion that corresponds to their own projections in the spectacular text. Alone with themselves, the spectators are at ease to think and feel, to discover the deeper structures of the text and to determine its articulatory segments. The pauses exert significant control over all the operations that occur within the referential field of the spectators' viewpoints and permit a complex projection of the self in the spectacular text. (Teodorescu-Brinzeu, 1984:53)

It can be argued that such a pause in the middle of a dialogue, in a climactic moment in the verbal exchange of the actors, or even in-between-scenes, might make a greater dramatic impact on the spectator than the periodic pauses for reflection or mental appraisal taken by the reader of a text. This will be because of the individual's actual presence in the theatre where atmosphere-creating devices like music or lighting effects might be employed for dramatic purposes, and where the presence and sight of fellow spectators enthralled by what has happened or been said on stage would inevitably influence one's thoughts and reactions. In the words she uses,

> silences permit an overlapping of the fictitious scenic interaction and the real interaction on the stage. Boundaries are crossed and the two levels, kept strictly separate by words, are no longer distinct. More than that, interaction within the audience tends to increase in moments of pause, on condition that these pauses are moments of relaxation and not climaxes of tension.
>
> (Teodorescu-Brinzeu, 1984:55)

As a logical conclusion, Teodorescu-Brinzeu (1984:54) finds that the uniqueness of theatrical language does not only lie in its polyphonic structure but also in its "double nature which allows the receiver to distinguish the sign and the zero-sign as two distinct units of the

same code". She also argues that in the same way that words are more explicit than gestures, and gestures are more explicit than sounds, zero signs belonging to verbal language are more explicit than those belonging to gestures or music. The dialogic pause is in this way invested with such value that it must of necessity be seen to be of equal importance to verbal signs.

2.3.4 MIME

Although theatrical mime is up to now a subject that remains largely unexplored save for the few passing comments drama/theatre theorists like States (1985) and others have made in discussing related issues, it is a non-verbal sign that is of great communicative value because it replaces verbal signs. Mime is a theatrical technique used to express a mood or portray a character entirely by gesture and bodily movement without the use of words. It is frequently incorporated in verbal drama to serve particular purposes like the simulation by the actor of situations other than what is already represented on the stage. As States (1985:163) explains, mime is essentially an act of defining an invisible world in terms of the visible body as an actor might scale an imaginary wall, ascend imaginary stairs, or even engage an invisible foe in combat. In the spirit of true theatre, it is used by directors as an alternative to elaborate verbal descriptions of background or explanatory action.

Like the paralinguistic features of language, mime is one of those elements of a stage performance that distinguishes it most noticeably from its corresponding text, for the exact nature of the mime and how it is executed can never be fully specified in a text even if attempts could be made in this direction. It remains in the realm of theatre and acting and constitutes one of those instances where the playwright loses his work to the stage director who finally determines the choice of actors; and the actors will in turn use their natural talent to perform the mime to achieve effects over which the playwright's text has little or no control at all.

2.3.5 FLOOR MANAGEMENT AND INTERACTION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The manner in which the dialogic interaction between characters in a play takes place is also of profound importance in a study of non-verbal dialogue for it places the words of the characters in context and goes a long way towards qualifying the meaning of the verbal dialogue itself. As Herman (1991:119) says, the traditional focus on the verbal content of character speech alone as the only element pertinent to dramatic dialogue has tended to obscure aspects of meaning attendant on floor management and interaction management strategies which dramatists also employ in the interests of their complex art. He goes on to state that

> In drama, not only the identity of participants, and the roles they adopt, but also who speaks to whom, who is not spoken to, the actual path of interaction and its outcome, the relative quantities of speech apportioned to characters, manner and style of speech alignments and groupings of characters in the exercise of speech, and power relations established interactively through the manipulation of the speech resource and its alternation are as significant as what is spoken. Attention to aspects of this kind takes us beyond content alone to the dynamics of speech use and speech alternation which characterizes the dialogic form.
>
> (Herman, 1991:98)

Herman (1991:98) further uses the contributions of conversation analysts like Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson in exploring the relevance of some of the insights gained into the mechanics of speech exchange which research into ordinary conversation has made available for the study of verbal-interaction in drama. These insights into the conventions that govern conversational speech as a meaningful activity in the social world at large are applicable to a study of dramatic dialogue which is embedded in this world, and also because of the levels of interdependence and identity between the two - an affinity without which dramatic dialogue would lose the verisimilitude it needs to have

credibility. It is argued here that if dramatic speech is primarily interactive speech, and if interactive processes, conventions, or rules operative in daily life underlie our understanding of interactions in plays, attention to these should enable us to analyse the resourceful and creative exploitation of such rules, conventions and processes by dramatists to create situations and effect meanings that will contribute towards the overall dramatic designs individual playwrights envisage in the construction of their plays. Furthermore, "... the analysis of the workings of dramatic discourse should be of interest to those interested in performance as well, given that actors must always be aware of what other actors are doing with speech, in response to their own, in the face-to-face situations in which they are involved". (Herman, 1991:99).

Central to the analysis of interaction is the notion of "turn-taking", that mechanism of speech exchange which organizes both the distribution and the flow of speech between at least two poles of interaction, and in this way, keeps speech continuous. When participant A talks and then stops so that participant B may speak, and then responds to what B has said, we have an A-B-A-B distribution of talk between two participants. These turns in speaking can take place between two or even more interlocutors and they generally occur in an orderly fashion with a few exceptions where overlaps might take place.

There are other unwritten conventional rules that govern turn-taking in conversational speech: turn units may be of any length with the end of the unit being the place where the speaker-change occurs, the "transition relevance place" of which both speaker and hearer normally appear to be aware since turn change is mostly effected without a gap or any overlapping. Also, there are two options available in the allocation of turn change, viz. a current speaker can select the next speaker or the next speaker may self select. Furthermore, a turn may lapse, and the current speaker may incorporate the lapse as a pause and continue till the next transition relevance place when the turn can be relinquished by adopting either of the other two options. The turn-taking rules also state that only one speaker may speak at a time, and this ensures that where conflicts and dual starts occur, one speaker must

drop out, and this localizes and restricts the possibility of overlapping or a gap at the transition relevance place.

There are numerous other conventions of the turn-taking process of which the above-mentioned are only a few examples, and they provide different possibilities for structuring interaction between speakers. As Herman (1991:105) states, "The options for exploitation offered by the turn-taking system overall - including turn-change, turn construction, turn order and distribution, turn length, turn sequencing, and topic control - will be regarded as 'resources' used by dramatists when designing specific interactions through dialogue ...". The tensions that exist between characters are revealed not only by the verbal content of their dialogue, but also by the manner in which they interact with others in the turn-taking system. Floor-hogging by a character in a situation where others show their yearning to speak and are denied an opportunity to do so, could be indicative of an overbearing disposition in the speaker, the kind of attitude demonstrated by Shakespeare (1982:833) in King Lear when Lear twice chides the troubled Kent to silence in Act 1, Scene 1 and proceeded to divide his kingdom against the advice of his own faithful councillor. When Kent realizes how desperate the situation is, he throws caution to the wind, turn-grabs and denounces his King's monstrous folly in a long and passionate speech. His turn-grabbing and floor-hogging demonstrate the desperation of the man and his unwavering loyalty to his king even in the face of grave danger to himself. Such turn-taking and interaction strategies are also used in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (1982:763), in the well-known Act III, Scene 1 where Caesar assumes a god-like posture after being irritated and angered by the pleas of the Roman nobility to recall Publius Cimber from banishment. He angrily suppresses and cuts short, first the attempt at entreaty by Metellus Cimber, then by Brutus and then by Casca before he goes off into the long tirade in which he speaks like a titan and compares himself to the northern star

> of whose true-fix'd and resting quality
> There is no fellow in the firmament.
>
> (Act III, Scene 1, 61-62).

It can be argued that these floor- and interaction management strategies can be deduced and correctly interpreted by any perceptive and imaginative reader in a text where they are employed. But it is equally true that a practical demonstration of turn-grabbing, self-selecting or floor-hogging on a theatrical stage is probably more effective than an imaginative reconstruction by an individual reader. This is because the audience is able to see how tensions build up in the other participants in the dialogue when one speaker is rudely interrupted by the next speaker's turn-grabbing. And the responses of the other actors to floor hogging by one of them as might be deduced from their facial expressions, or other signs of irritation may also be observed directly in a performance. If, as Carlson (1985:8) asserts, the genius of Shakespeare lies not in the fact that his plays were complete as written but in the fact that they were incomplete in a particularly imaginative way, with characters and situations that require creative completion by actors, directors or even designers, then it should be accepted that the stage performance of a play is essential to give the text the completion and fulfilment it requires.

2.4 SUPRA SEGMENTAL FEATURES OF DRAMATIC DIALOGUE

Alter (1981:130), in his comprehensive account of the transition that takes place when a dramatic text is performed on stage, states that in the transposition from text to stage, verbal signs do not change their code but only the materiality of their signifiers when sound substitutes writing. In this transformation, verbal signs become vulnerable not only to the action of staging signs generally, but especially to the effects of the human voice, which is the chief medium employed in the performance stage. Written verbal signs themselves, despite being equivocal, have certain safeguards that can prevent confusion, and they can be read at leisure and even be reread if the need arises. But the spoken word, as Alter puts it, is much more unreliable: "Under the best conditions, it is heard less distinctly than the written word is read; and it cannot be retrieved once it is uttered and gone. Its

paradigmatic (and/or connotative) potential is thus much greater, and by the same token, the inevitable voice that profers it has a comparatively greater potential for transforming its referential content". (Alter, 1981:130).

The stage producer thus seizes upon this ambivalence of the spoken word and puts it to creative use, for stage performances transform texts and project new referents so that these texts acquire new meanings. Suprasegmental features of dialogue like stress, intonation, pitch as well as the quality and modulation of the actor's voice in a theatrical performance determine the meaning of words in a way that clearly reveals the ambiguity of written dialogue in a literary text. Although ambiguity is a poetic feature of literary language, it sometimes becomes dispensable in a medium especially like theatre where the stage producer attempts to project a particular interpretation of the dramatic action. Bassnett-McGuire (1980:48) alludes in this instance to Roman Jacobson's reference to the famous example of the actor from the Moscow Art Theatre who was asked to produce some forty variations on the single phrase, "Segodnja veceron" - this evening - by modifying his expressive tone, so that each of the variations brought about a different shade of meaning. Also, the well-known example of semantic ambivalence in William Shakespeare's Macbeth is another case in point.

> Macbeth: If we should fail, -
> Lady Macbeth: We fail!
> But screw your courage to the sticking place,
> And we'll not fail. ...
>
> (Act 1, Scene VII, lines 59-61)

It is the paradigmatic features of the spoken language that introduce the numerous possibilities of meaning that apply in this dialogic exchange. Macbeth's words as read in the text in the quoted fragment show by their punctuation that the idea communicated is incomplete: it could either be that he is interrupted by his wife who grabs the turn to speak, thus preventing him from completing his sentence in one of many possible ways; or it could be that he is only thinking aloud about the pros and cons of the action they are contemplating as one

could think, "If we should fail, what happens then?". In a theatrical performance where this verbal message is spoken the possibilities increase from the above-mentioned two to numerous others, depending on the intonation, the pitch, modulation and quality of the actor's voice as well as the words on which he places his stress. In spoken dialogue, this incomplete fragment could easily come through as a direct question to Lady Macbeth,

If we should fail?,

a question posed either in an assertive manner or in a timid, hesitant or pathetic way, depending on the pitch and quality of voice used. And depending on the stage producers intentions, this short sentence could speak volumes about the power relations between husband and wife here.

Lady Macbeth's response in the written text, "We fail"! is equally ambiguous in the numerous ways it can be articulated by an actor and understood by an audience. The sense of the words could come through in a fatalistic tone, as if to say, "If we should fail we're doomed-come what may", especialy if there is a noticeable drop in the pitch of the speaker's voice from what it has been prior to these words. It could also be said in an ironic tone, that to even contemplate the possibility of failure is laughable, a clear expression of the unwavering resolution of the speaker and her undisguised contempt for the cowardice of the man. And if the stress audibly falls on the pronominal 'we', the message acquires yet another nuance as in: We are together in this, and if we do fail, it will be our failure as a team, which is better than failing alone; for there is comfort in solidarity, whatever the odds. Further than that a producer and his actor might simply deviate from the text and have this short sentence articulated as a question,

We fail?,

posed almost in a mocking tone as if to imply "who thinks of failure at a time like this? It is impossible for us to fail".

On the written page these verbal messages only communicate a vague or general idea of the actual sense of the words, and it is only on the theatrical stage that a more definite meaning could be ascribed to them, for then the human voice lends other qualities to the words, those paralinguistic features that give them a particular colour and meaning. Written words are without doubt frequently inadequate as a communication medium and need to be conveyed through the human voice to effect the unambiguous communication they are meant to achieve. The dramatic text, dialogue in particular, is thus geared towards the performance stage where it can finally achieve the specifics it only approximates while it remains in written form.

2.5 CONCENTRATION OF INFORMATION IN DRAMATIC DIALOGUE

Most of the reasons that can be marshalled to show that the dramatic text is performance orientated are equally valid in an argument to prove the same for dramatic dialogue, for dialogue is the soul of drama and it generally takes up almost all of the written dramatic text with the didascalies usually covering only a small part of such texts. One such argument which holds for both dramatic performance generally and for dialogue in particular is the fact that the dramatist being subjected to serious time constraints, which do not allow him/her more than two to two-and-a-half hours to stage the play, has to express as much as possible within the time limit allowed him/her. This is always reflected in dramatic dialogue (whether in the written text or spoken on the performance stage); and this great concentration of information within the limits of a tight economy of expression is in fact one of the most distinctive features of dramatic dialogue, and it is also valid proof of the performance orientation of such dialogue. As Mouton states,

> Aangesien die dramagenre (anders as byvoorbeeld die romangenre) so gebuk gaan onder 'n sterk tydsbeperking (as gevolg van die grense wat die opvoeringstyd op hom lê) vertoon die karakters se dialoë ook dikwels

> hierdie beperking. In 'n paar sinne of in kort gesprekke word in 'n drama meer informasie oor die gebeure verskaf (byvoorbeeld van die voorgeskiedenis van 'n bepaalde gebeure of van die bestaande tydruimtelike konteks, ensovoorts) en is ook dikwels meer karakteropenbarend as wat gesprekke in die gewone lewe gewoonlik is.
>
> (1989:137)

As a result, and also because of the reader's or audience's familiarity with this aspect of the conventions that apply in the theatre, every statement or utterance by a character/actor acquires greater significance than it would otherwise have in real life, and is consequently considered more seriously by the reader or members of the audience.

In Julius Caesar, Shakespeare could not dwell at length on the physical shortcomings of Caesar, although he evidently regarded this as essential in the reader's understanding of his character and of the petty jealousies that drove the likes of Caius Cassius to plot his downfall. Instead, only passing reference to his lack of physical endurance is made by Cassius himself in Act 1, Scene 2, lines 100-130 as he tries to persuade Brutus and win him over to his side. The short report by Casca that Caesar had fallen at the market-place with his mouth foaming from a fit also serves to illustrate this. Similarly, the "gamesome" nature of Mark Antony is only briefly alluded to in Act 1, Scene II by Brutus and further evidenced by his taking part in the holy chase. Later on, in the same scene, in expressing his displeasure at the sight of "the lean and hungry" looking Cassius, Caesar says of him,

> he loves no plays,
> As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music;
> (Act 1, Scene II, 202-203)

Such oblique hints and passing clues are all one needs in dramatic art to get an idea of the character involved, for it is not in the nature of this genre to give elaborate verbal character sketches as one would find in narrative art. Despite lasting for only about two hours, a

whole body of information about the characters involved and about the action is given which enables the reader or spectator to imaginatively reconstruct the plot and meaning of the play. This terse economy of description in textual dramatic dialogue is thus motivated by its orientation towards the performance stage whose curtain traditionally falls after two or two-and-a-half hours. There are however exceptions to this unwritten rule, i.e. those plays whose performances take a little longer. But it is practically not possible to detain an audience for a protracted period without over-taxing their concentration spell; and this would be disastrous for the play itself.

Code switching, (defined as the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction where the switch may be for only a word or for several minutes of speech) also contributes to the concentration of information in verbal dialogue, for as inherent parts of the verbal interaction, such switches reveal qualities which are unique to a specific situation created in a play. Grobler (1990) cites the example from Boesman and Lena where Boesman speaks Afrikaans when in the presence of the white man. He gratefully picks up the "stompie" thrown to him; and also says "Dankie baas" to the white man for pulling down his shack. In her appraisal of the whole incident where Boesman actually assisted the white "baas" on the bulldozer in pulling down his own shack, Grobler says of Boesman's code switching to Afrikaans,

> By adopting the white man's code he wants to please him and gain his favour, pity and sympathy for their situation. The illusion of solidarity that he wants to create by switching codes is further strengthened by his siding with the white man against his people. Boesman thus wants to indicate that he not only understands the white man's view of the 'coloured' people, but that he also appears to accept it. In his relationship to the white man, the social distance between them and the dominance of the white man regarding place and activity (he is bulldozing their pondoks) not only determine but also demand Boesman's choice of code. (Grobler, 1990:43).

This is an important insight into a situation and the human relationships that typify it, gained through the use of code switching. It is the kind of insight than cannot always be spelt out in words to a reader or audience but is nevertheless as real and as important as all the other information communicated verbally by the dialogue in the text or on the performance stage. Like the use of dialects and sociolects code switches add to the concentration of information in dramatic dialogue, and in this way render dramatic dialogue particularly suitable for the stage.

2.6 CONCLUSION

According to Hauptfleisch (1989:73), the essence of dramatic dialogue is significantly influenced by the following central aim of most serious playwrights: "to transcend the limitations of 'normal' human communication, to somehow say more than words can. Hence the enormous weight given to the non verbal elements of performance ..." (Hauptfleisch, 1989:73). He also states in the same article (1989:72), "the playwright is not the sole creator of his dialogue form; it is also determined by a number of external social and cultural factors". The audience is without doubt an essential component of these factors, and the conventions observed in the particular dialogue form will be those with which the audience is familiar because of the social and cultural background they share with the playwright, the stage director and his actors. The sense of the dramatic dialogue far exceeds the surface meaning of words, and it is also much more than the subtle nuances and special effects obtained through the use of markers which suggest or indicate the use of particular dialects, sociolects or code switches. If the stage-audience relationship is studied from a semiotic viewpoint and considered as a form of dialogue, the subject spills over into the domain of reception-aesthetics as will be evident in subsequent sections.

CHAPTER 3

THE STAGE-AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP AS A FORM OF DIALOGUE

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Any investigation into the ways in which dramatic dialogue is performance orientated would be incomplete if no consideration were to be given to the role of the audience in a theatrical performance. This would especially be the case if such an investigation were to be conducted in a semiotic framework, for there exists, in any theatrical performance, a dialectical relationship between the actors on stage and the audience in the auditorium. Elam (1980:38), in his theatrical communication model draws a distinction between the dramatic context which is the context of the fictional world of the stage in which the actors as characters interact or engage one another in dialogue, and the broader theatrical context which encompasses the stage as well as the auditorium. Dialogue within the dramatic context which represents the horizontal axis in this communication model has been the subject of the previous chapter. Elam (1980:38) argues that even in the theatrical context there is a dialogic link between the actors on stage and the audience in the auditorium, a link which for him forms the vertical axis in the theatrical communication model:

> ... the performance is, rather, made up - in the words of the communication theorist Abraham Moles - of *'multiple messages* in which several channels, or several modes of using a channel in communication, are used simultaneously in an esthetic or perceptual *synthesis'* (1958, p. 171). The spectator will interpret this complex of messages - speech, gesture, the scenic continuum, etc. - as an integrated *text*, according to the theatrical, dramatic and cultural codes at his disposal, and will *in turn* assume the role of transmitter of signals to the performers (laughter, applause, boos, etc.) along visual and acoustic channels, which both the performers and members of the

> audience themselves will interpret in terms of approval, hostility, and so on. This feedback process and the intercommunication between spectators is one of the major distinguishing features of *live* theatre, which can in this sense be seen as a 'cybernetic machine'.
>
> (Elam, 1980:38).

It does appear, however, that the extent to which an audience is engaged in a dialogue with the performance stage varies from one play to another, and possibly from one historical period to another. This is mainly because the conventions that govern theatrical performances undergo changes in time depending on the social and cultural forces that prevail. Although this is not the place for a detailed historical analysis of the technical aspects of theatre architecture or stage design, a brief overview of these matters in the evolution of theatre in the Western world is illuminating, for the kind of stage used for a particular performance impacts directly on the measure and quality of audience involvement in that performance.

Pfister (1988:19), in his account of the relationship between stage and performance gives a comparative resumé of the kinds of stage used from Classical Greek theatre up to the present day. He highlights, throughout this account, the implications each of these stage arrangements had, not only for the type of acting, but also for the quality of audience involvement concerned.

Classical Greek comedies and tragedies were performed in the open air for the entire free male population of a city state on religious holidays, and their amphitheatres were so large that they could accommodate audiences of anything between fourteen and twenty-four thousands, a crowd as huge as that in a modern sports stadium. The audience here was grouped around the stage-area in the form of an extended semicircle, and it stands to reason that because of the great distances between the spectators and actors, certain theatrical devices like subtleties of mime and gesture or even a realistically performed conversa-

tional tone would have been imperceptible and out of place. It is for this reason that verbal performance was characterized by declamation and choral commentary, character-delineation by the use of masks and symbolic costumes, and the actual acting by the use of exaggerated gestures. It could not have been otherwise, for a theatrical performance implies a rapport between the stage act and the audience, and if the audience is too far from the stage to detect subtleties of facial expressions or realistic conversational tones in the dialogue of the actors, alternative devices have to be found. Actors play to audiences, not to themselves; and without audience involvement there is no theatre.

Medieval plays were quite different although they were also performed in the open air on religious holidays. They sometimes took on the form of pageants or were performed on static platform stages which were surrounded by street audiences on all sides; and because of this close contact between the actors and the audiences they had a theatrical style which contrasted ritualistic elements of liturgical origin with burlesque and crudely realistic elements that reflected the everyday reality of the spectators. As the dividing line which separated the audience from the stage was very flexible and occasionally broken by the actors, a realist or illusionist type of theatre was not possible or even intended. In this type of theatre, there was thus greater audience involvement than in Greek theatre.

Close contact between the actors and spectators remained an influential feature even in the Elizabethan era dominated by the works of William Shakespeare although plays here were no longer performed in the street, but in specially built theatres like the Globe. The audience surrounded the stage on three sides, and there was thus very close proximity between the actors and the audience. This set-up demanded sophisticated forms of verbal, mimetic and gestural impersonation from the actors who were unable to ignore the presence of the audience in the same way that actors can in a situation where there is a considerable distance between the auditorium and the stage. Audiences were sufficiently close to the actors on stage to allow for the use of metadramatic techniques like asides, monologues or soliloquies; and

direct contact with the audience which undermined the dramatic illusion was frequently established through the use of these techniques. Although audiences were separated from the stage by a proscenium arch in the English Restoration theatre (which is an example of the European court theatre of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) direct contact between the stage and the audiences was still maintained as the intention was not to produce a realistic imitation of reality, but rather a stylized ideal image of the audience's world.

The proscenium-arch or the modern picture stage of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries represents for Pfister (1988:22), "a decisive step towards the complete separation of audience and stage, and towards the notion of the 'absolute autonomy' of dramatic fiction". The illuminated stage is separated from the darkened auditorium by the proscenium arch and the footlights so that the illusion of an enclosed image is formed. Furthermore, all forms of addressing the audience directly are ruled out since "in its capacity as an inviolable dividing-line, the front of the stage is the scenic manifestation of the absence of a mediating communication system". (Pfister, 1988:22). He further states that

> This particular type of stage and the stage-audience relationship associated with it were influential in determining a particular dramatic form, namely the realist, illusionist theatre of Ibsen and Chekhov...
>
> (Pfister, 1988:22).

It is evident that the architectural design of a theatre, particularly the construction of the stage in relation to the auditorium, has a determining effect on the quality and extent of audience involvement in theatrical performances. It is also clear that irrespective of the distances that separate the performance stage and the area of the auditorium, the actors on stage always find ways of establishing rapport between themselves and their audiences. This kind of contact is essential for any performance to take place. In addition to this, it is today a recognized fact that the manner in which an audience experiences and interprets a play is not solely governed by what

happens on stage. The entire theatre, its audience arrangement, its other public spaces, its physical appearance, even its location within a city, are all important elements of the process by which an audience makes meaning of its experiences. (Carlson, 1989:2).

3.1 THE DIALOGIC NATURE OF THE STAGE/AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP

Theatre semioticians like Elam, Serpieri, Bennett, States and others have made pronouncements on the stage/audience relationship as dialogic in nature, although this should be understood in a metaphoric sense. It is, however, one thing to say that the actors on stage are in dialogue with the audience in the auditorium, and it is something else to explain the nature of this dialogue in more scientific or theatrical terms.

Both Serpieri (1989:19) and Elam (1980:33), in arguing the case of the communication link between the audience and the actors on stage refer to the French linguist, Mounin as a starting point. Mounin had questioned the classification of the performer-spectator bond as a communicative relationship on the grounds that real communication, a genuine example of which is a linguistic exchange between two or more interlocutors, depends on the capacity of the two (or more) parties involved in the exchange to use the same code (e.g. the French language), so that "the sender can become receiver in turn; and the receiver the sender" (Elam, 1980:33). He argued that this is not the case in theatre where the information-giving process is unidirectional and the participants' roles fixed, for in theatre the senders/actors always remain as such, as do the receivers/spectators. In reacting to this view of a "stimulus-response model" of theatre in which one-way signals provoke a number of more or less automatic reflexes which do not communicate in turn along the same axis, Elam points out that this view of the actor-audience transaction

> appears to be based on the weakest forms of bourgeois spectacle where a passive audience may indeed obediently

> provide predetermined and automatic responses to a predictable set of signals ... Not only are the audience's signals, in any vital form of theatre an essential contribution to the formation and reception of the performance text - and indeed various post-war performers and directors such as the Becks and Richard Schechner have extended the bounds of the performance to include the audience explicitly - but the spectator, by virtue of his very patronage of the performance, can be said to initiate the communicative circuit (his arrival and readiness being, as it were the preliminary signals which provoke the performers proper into action; ...). (Elam, 1980:34).

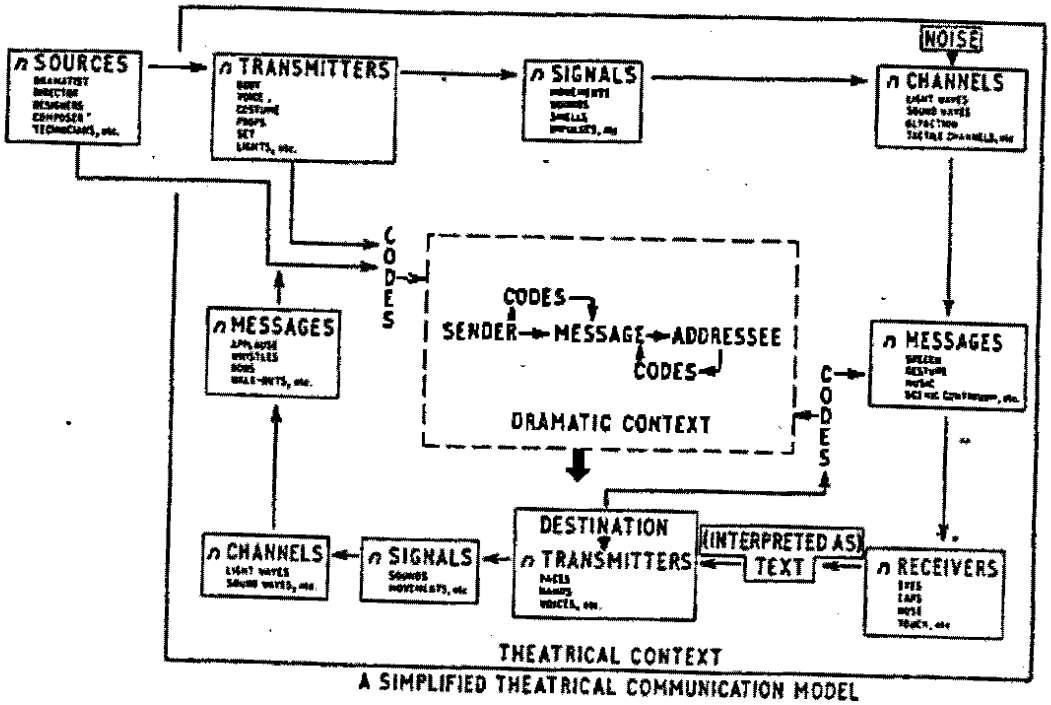
He further points out that Mounin's denial of communicative status to the performance concerns his limited definition of communication and of the codes on which it depends. This is because Mounin insisted, in his view of communication, that the sender and receiver be in a position to employ a single code and a set of physical channels equally so as to transmit similar signals. Elam, however, holds that a more generous conception of the communicative process, (one that is generally accepted today), deems it sufficient that the receiver be acquainted with the sender's code so as to be able to decode the message. In reacting to Mounin's views, Franco Ruffini also states,

> if the sender and receiver know each others code, it is not at all necessary, in order for communication to take place, that the two codes coincide, nor that they translate each others messages exactly, nor that the two way communication occur along the same channel. (Ruffini, 1974a:40).

Elam does, however, acknowledge the difficulty of defining the actor-audience transaction and also the danger of viewing the performance as a "language" directly analogous to speech and thus a suitable object for analytic models taken straight from linguistics. For this reason, he postulates the following simplified theatrical communication model,

which, besides being (by his own admission) reductive and mechanistic, is indicative of the multi-levelled character of the theatrical communicational exchange. (Elam, 1980:38).

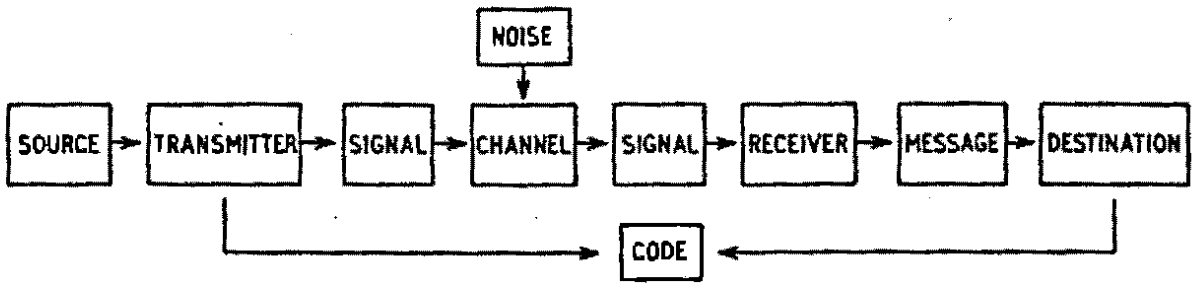
Diagram A



A SIMPLIFIED THEATRICAL COMMUNICATION MODEL

He contrasts it with the following elementary communication model which is operative in any verbal exchange between two interlocutors. (Elam, 1980:36-39).

Diagram B



An elementary communication model.

In a simple verbal exchange between two interlocutors, a good example of elementary communication as envisaged by diagram B, there is a single source of information (an idea or impulse in the mind of the speaker) and a single transmitter (the speaker's voice), which sends a signal along a single channel (sound waves in this instance). It is unlike theatrical communication where a stage-performance brings about a multiplication of communicational factors. At each stage in the process there arises, not one element, but a complex of potential components. Elam (1980:37) states that one can identify as the sources of theatrical information the dramatist (the dramatic text, if it exists, as both a pre-text and a constituent of the performance text); the director, whose decisions and instructions determine to a great extent the choice of transmitters, the form that the signals take and the encoding of the messages; together with other auxiliary influences on the performance like the set designer, the lighting designer, the costume designer, the composer, the stage manager, technicians as well as the actors themselves in their capacity as decision makers, initiative-takers and funds of ideas. Multiple components can be identified all the way along the communicational circuit, where for instance the transmitters, besides being the bodies and voices of the actors also include their metonymic accessories (their costumes and properties), elements of the set, electric lamps, musical instruments, tape recorders, etc. The signals transmitted by these bodies, e.g. movements, sounds, electrical impulses, etc., are selected and arranged syntactically according to a wide range of sign - or signalling systems and travel through any number of the physical channels available for human communication, from light and sound waves to olfactory and tactile means. It is thus not possible to talk of a single theatrical message as the performance is (in the words of the communication theorist, Abraham Moles) made up of "multiple messages in which several channels, or several modes of using a channel in communication, are used simultaneously in an aesthetic or perceptual synthesis". (Elam, 1980:38).

Upon reception of this complex of messages - speech, gesture and the whole scenic continuum - the spectator interprets it as an integrated

text, and this he/she does according to the theatrical, dramatic and cultural codes at his/her disposal. He/she in turn assumes the role of transmitter of signals (like laughter, applause, boos, etc.) to the performers on stage along visual and acoustic channels. Both the performers and the spectators themselves will then interpret these signals in terms of approval, hostility, or whatever other emotion is communicated in this way.

Elam points out, however, that an important complicating factor in this performer - audience communication is that, with the exception of prologues, epilogues, soliloquies, monologues, asides or apostrophes, it does not take on a direct form. As the theatrical communication model (diagram A) shows, the actor-spectator transaction within the theatrical context is mediated by a dramatic context in which a fictional speaker addresses a fictional listener.

It is this dramatic communicational situation which is ostended to the spectator, which affects him/her in a particular way and leads him/her to respond in one way or another; for the spectator is a cultural, social and literate being who brings to the theatre what Wolfgang Iser calls a 'horizon of expectations', and who has cultural prejudices as well as a personal history. As a result he/she readily relates and responds to performances and to parts of performances which are either about familiar situations or situations that are reminiscent of what does or can happen in his/her life-world. The signals sent back from the auditorium to the stage are thus of the utmost importance to the stage director and all his/her crew for they inform them about the manner in which the performance has been received by a particular audience.

A stage performance of a play like Fugard's Boesman and Lena as produced at the Market Theatre between 20 July and 4 September 1993 may be cited as an example. The performance of this play was punctuated by periodic outbreaks of boisterous laughter from the audience, a laughter that belied the pathos and poignant irony of the main characters' tragic situation and the manner in which they in turn related to Outa.

The arrival of the old and decrepid Outa from the darkness of the night to join the couple at their fire and Boesman's reaction to Lena's intended hospitality are a case in point:

> LENA. [sees the violence coming and moves away quickly].
> To hell with you! I want him.
> *[Calling].* Hey, darling! *Kom die kant!*
> *[To Boesman].* Sit in the dark and talk to
> myself because you don't hear me any more?
> No Boesman! I want him! Hey! He's coming.
> *[A moment of mutual uncertainty at the approach*
> *of the stranger. Lena falls back to Boesman's side.*
> *He picks up a stick in readiness for trouble.*
> *They stand together, waiting.*
> *An old African appears slowly.*
> *Hat on his head, the rest of him lost in the*
> *folds of a shabby old overcoat. He is an image*
> *of age and decrepitude].*
> BOESMAN. Kaffer!
> LENA. Ou Kaffer.
> *[Lena almost turns away with disappointment.*
> *Boesman sees this and has a good laugh].*
> BOESMAN. Lena calls out in the dark, and
> what does she get? Look at it.
> LENA *[after a few more seconds of hesitation].*
> Better than nothing.
> BOESMAN. So? Go on. You wanted somebody.
> There's a black one.
>
> (Fugard, 1984:256)

Lena's insistence on having the company of the unknown man and her standing closer to her husband for protection against possible danger, provoked laughter from the audience because she meant to use the stranger to spite the same husband whose protection she needed. But the passion with which Boesman vented his disapproval of what came out of the darkness,

Kaffer!

and Lena's disappointed cry,

Ou Kaffer.

were followed by what appeared to be sadistic laughter from some quarters in the auditorium and audible signs of disappointment as well as sneers from some spectators at the use of the derogatory word by these people whose humanity has been eroded by hardship and trampled upon by oppression. When Boesman, on seeing Lena's disappointment, exploded with laughter, he was joined by some sections of the audience who evidently could not resist his last quoted statement,

... You wanted somebody. There's a black one.

But then the laughter that was prompted here as in other parts of the play was soon perceived in a different way, as a despairing kind of laughter which was consonant with the jeers, the sneers and other sounds of disapproval from the auditorium. This is an instance of what Elam means about the performers on stage engaging the audience in dialogue, where the audience does not only become passive recipients of messages, but responds in visible, audible and understandable ways. More illustrations of this will be provided in Chapter 5 and 6. It is now necessary to reflect upon the different ways in which the audience can be engaged in dialogue.

3.2 TYPES OF ACTOR/AUDIENCE INTERACTION

There are numerous kinds of actor/audience or stage/audience interactions, and these can be broadly classified under two main categories, viz. direct interaction between the actors on stage and the audience in the auditorium, and indirect interaction between the two parties. All of these are arguably instances in which the stage and the auditorium can be said to demonstrate a dialogic relationship.

3.2.1 DIRECT DIALOGIC INTERACTION BETWEEN STAGE AND AUDITORIUM

Direct dialogic interaction between the stage and the auditorium refers to an open verbal exchange between the actor(s) and the audience in a situation where the actor(s) acknowledge(s) the presence of the audience and behaves in such a way as to make this acknowledgement explicit: by talking to them. Beckerman (1990:111) points out that since the actor, in performing drama, assumes a different identity and plays a fictional action, the actor and his act are fundamentally at odds with each other; and the very openness of the dramatic actor is a sham, yet another illusion; but one that proclaims it is what it appears to be. When an actor maintains a fictional identity and yet communicates directly with the audience, he/she poses the difficult question of the overlapping of two worlds: the real world of the audience and the fictive world of the play. This is the case in all metadramatic devices where performers literally break frame and address the audience directly; and these forms of direct address are the most elementary and most obvious forms of interaction between the stage and the audience.

Burns makes a distinction between two levels within the relationship between the actor on stage and the spectator:

> On one level actors and spectators see each other for what they are, disguised or undisguised related to each other according to the demands of the occasion. On another level the spectators see the characters in the play while the actors 'in character' behave as if the spectators were invisible.
>
> (Burns, 1972:31)

She holds the view that audience participation introduces a new dimension in this relationship which is essentially a matter of convention: such participation by an audience "violates this convention and sets up a third type of relationship - that between characters in the play and spectators who are themselves encouraged to act 'outside themselves' - to act fictionalized characters too" (Burns, 1972:31). Such a dissolu-

tion of the line of demarcation between the fictional world of the characters and the real world of the audience has significant implications for the fictional characters of the play; and it also confuses the spectator who is unable to distinguish the two worlds:

> In such a theatre everyone is liable to be 'on stage' so that there is no possibility of escape to a position from which the theatrical world can be viewed objectively as separate from, contrasting with, or even, complementary to the 'real world' outside the theatre. Reality invades the theatre as theatricality invades the real word. There is in fact a blurring of the distinction between reality and illusion, a distinction on which the drama of the theatre has traditionally depended.
>
> (Burns, 1972:88)

It is essential to note that such breaking of the stage illusion does not result in its destruction, but rather in its extension. Burns (1972:19) uses the phrase "to frame a situation" which was used by Goffman for such ad hoc framing of a particular kind of situation and action so that there is a suspension of belief in the reality of the world and events external to the occasion so framed.

Burns is critical about this transgressing of the frame, either by the actor or by the spectator as a means of extending the parameters of the fictional world. She sees such a blurring of the line of separation between the real world of the spectator and the fictive world of the actor as holding the potential danger of leading to the devaluation of the actor as professional and that "once the spectator swallows the bait whole and jumps on to the stage and begins to initiate his own action the actor will become one of the crowd, no longer in control". (Burns, 1972:182). Mouton (1989:81) however holds the view that such a concern is not necessary as the spectator is, in the end, the one who will decide whether or not to participate in this way; and that one can safely assert that the majority of theatre-goers do not want to be so actively involved in performances as to can pose this threat.

Audience participation in this sense will, in the main, be limited to experimental theatre.

Like Burns, Southern (1962:276) is also critical of this whole notion of active audience participation because he sees it as a source of "curious psychological embarrassment" for many spectators. As Mouton (1989:82) says, this embarrassment on the part of the audience may be ascribed to the removal of the distance between the space of the audience and the space of the actor(s). She also observes that this removal of the spatial barriers between the two does not only concern physical distance but also determines the psychological distance between the actor and his audience. According to Beckerman (1970:9), distance in the latter sense is a necessary requirement for theatre: "... this isolation is not merely utilitarian; it is both physical and psychological". It is therefore of no consequence whether the distance that separates the actor from his audience is great or small. What is of importance is that the two should perceive one another as being in two different worlds: the world of make-believe and the real world.

To give a brief summary of the views of the theatre semioticians in this respect, reference can be made to Elam and Passow. The focus of emphasis in Elam's (1980) approach is the fact that any theatrical performance is about a fictional world which is presented to the audience through ostension. The spectator recognizes the world depicted on stage as fictional but nevertheless experiences it as a world that is present in the "here" and "now" of the theatre. Stated differently, the world of the theatrical performance consists of an alternation between a fictional given and the experiencing of this given in real terms. He also uses the term 'framing' from Goffman and refers to the notion of conventions in the following definition:

> The theatrical frame is in effect the product of a set of transactional conventions governing the participants' expectations and their understanding of the kinds of reality involved in the performance.
>
> (Elam, 1980:88)

The distinction between the spectator and the actor as well as that between their two worlds is for him the "crucial axiom in the theatrical frame" (Elam, 1980:88). The two worlds are separated from each other by conventional means (the elevated stage, stage curtains, lights etc.); and if this stage frame is interrupted by "out of frame activity" or other outside noises the audience knows that it simply has to ignore them because they understand the convention that is operative there.

But if this theatrical frame is deliberately broken by the actor(s) through techniques such as the prologue, epilogue, asides, direct address, etc., we have metadramatic or metatheatrical functions at play. These functions "bring attention to bear on the theatrical and dramatic realities in the play, on the fictional status of the characters, on the very theatrical transaction (in soliciting the audience's indulgence, for instance), and so on". (Elam, 1980:90). Even though the frame appears to be broken in such cases, for Elam (1980:90) it is a "licenced means of confirming the frame by pointing out the pure facticity of the representation". He echoes Burn's view that whenever the boundaries between the stage and the auditorium are blurred, the audience becomes theatricalized and the artificial world of the stage is extended to encompass the world of the audience. There is thus agreement between Elam's view and the views of the older semioticians in this respect, especially concerning the role of conventions as expounded by Burns and Goffman's notion of "framing".

Passow's (1981:237) approach to the matter is in essence similar to Elam's. He sees the theatre as consisting of the actor and the spectator, i.e. the A-ensemble who are the creators of the performance and the P-ensemble who are the audience. The message of the performance is the result of the co-operation of both ensembles. He uses the phrase "contrat théâtral" (a term first employed by Lazarowics) to describe their relationship between the A- and P-ensemble: he sees theatre as dependent on a contract/understanding that conventionally exists between actors and spectators that whatever happens on the theatrical stage is fictional and not real at all. Also, this theatrical contract

has to be entered into with every play that is being performed, and on occasion several times within the same play. To illustrate this, Mouton (1989:84) cites an example from P Fourie's Ek, Anna van Wyk, where the stage illusion is broken when the actress who plays the part of Anna moves out of her role to respond to a question posed by her interlocutor; and in the process involves the stage producer of the play who in turn also involves the light-technician. After the stage illusion has been broken in this way, the theatrical contract is re-established so that the episode resumes its fictional nature again. It can be argued that such a case of breaking frame could still pass as fictional as all the persons involved here, (the actor, stage producer and light-technician) still interpret fictional roles, (roles which are written into the dramatic text). (Mouton, 1989:84). The breaking of the theatrical illusion in this way serves to emphasize to the spectator the nature of the theatrical event, and once the interruption is over the theatrical contract and illusion are restored and continue as before.

The subject of the direct interactive link between the stage and the auditorium is therefore essentially a complex one. A few varients of direct interaction between the actors on stage and the audience in the auditorium will now be considered.

3.2.1.1 PROLOGUES AND EPILOGUES

Beckerman (1990:111) states that, although the fashion for prologues and epilogues in the direct vein, i.e. in the form that was traditional, is long past, it is important to note how they were used to draw the audience into the action of the stage. Such direct appeals were often used to put the audience in the proper frame of mind or to strengthen a favourable response.

In the Elizabethan theatre, for instance in Shakespeare's King Henry V, the chorus which gave the prologue, appealed to the audience to play along and accommodate the actors in their feeble attempts to recreate

on the performance stage, the heroic story of 'Warlike Harry'

> But pardon, gentles all,
> The flat unraised spirits that have dar'd
> On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
> So great an object: can this cockpit hold
> The vasty field of France? or may we cram
> Within this wooden O the very casques
> That did affright the air at Agincourt?
>
> (Act 1, lines 8-14)

In this way, the members of the audience were prepared for what was to come: the representation, on a small theatrical stage, of an action that took place over large tracts of land, involving large numbers of soldiers. The prologue here asked them to acquiesce and use their imaginations to see the stage for what it was meant to stand for during the performance. In a similar way, the epilogue in the same play closed off the action by reinforcing in the minds of the spectators the heroism of this king and by giving a short historical explanation about his succession by his infant son and how France was subsequently lost by those who acted on his behalf.

What needs to be borne in mind here is that both the prologue and epilogue in the traditional sense have become techniques which are hardly ever used today. This is understandable because they were usually employed to express the obvious: a plea to the audience to acquiesce and indulge the players by seeing them for what they will be during the course of the play - fictional characters engaged in fictional actions. This is in essence what the theatrical contract between actors and audiences is all about, and it is a convention that is accepted and known to apply in the theatre. It is thus not necessary for theatregoers to be told this every time a dramatic performance of a play is started. The same holds for the epilogue, for it is only meant to reinforce in the minds of the spectators what they have already witnessed and comprehended themselves in the performance.

When the prologue solicits the audience's indulgence, it really highlights the fictional nature of the action that is about to unfold on the performance stage, and in this way, establishes the terms of the contract that the audience by its presence and patronage of the theatre are willing to enter into: that although the world and actions of the drama are fictional, these are about to be portrayed on a real stage so that the audience can experience them as present in the "here" and "now" of the theatre. By its very nature, the prologue can be said to define the lines of demarcation between the real world of the audience and the fictional world of the actors.

In a similar way the epilogue, in announcing the end of the performance, implicitly removes the line of separation between the actors on the performance stage and the audience in the auditorium. It indicates that the audience can once again relate to the actors as real people now that they are no longer role-playing. And the applause or standing ovation given to the actors as they come back on stage and bow to the audience is given on that level of relationship: real spectators applauding actors as real people, not as fictional characters.

3.2.1.2 MONOLOGUES AND SOLILOQUIES

Pfister (1988:127) states that Anglo-American criticism has established a terminological distinction between dramatic monologues and soliloquies. This distinction is based on two criteria, the situational and the structural. As Shipley (1968:272) explains it, "... monologue is distinguished from one side of a dialogue by its length and relative completeness, and from the soliloquiy (except in the case of the interior monologue) by the fact that it is addressed to someone ... A soliloquiy is spoken by one person that is alone or acts as though he were alone".

According to this definition, what makes a monologue is not the absence of other actors on stage, but its length and inner unity. But if a monological speech is not constituted by the absence of other actors on

stage, in what sense can it be seen as a form of direct address to the audience? It is important to consider that the presence of other performers on stage is really immaterial to the formation of a monologue since they are not called upon or expected to respond to it. It therefore stands to reason that the monologue is meant for the information of the audience, and is in this sense a form of direct address of the audience by the speaker.

In his article, "The monologue as dramatic sign" (1984), Teodorescu-Brinzeu distinguishes several characteristics and functions of dramatic monologues. Among these is the monologue's stated ability to effect a direct connection between the actor and the audience with a view to fulfilling different informative functions like filling the audience in on past events, what the speaker's view of other characters are, and what his personal, individual interpretation of events is.

The soliloquiy on the other hand, is constituted by the actual or supposed solitude of the actor on stage; or when he/she ignores the presence of other figures while speaking, as one would, even in the midst of company, withdraw into ones private thoughts. It is a dramatic convention that has been widely used to give the audience direct access to the speaker's intimate inner being, those thoughts and impulses people do not dare express to even their closest confidantes. As a result, unlike the words uttered by speakers about themselves in the course of their dialogue with other actors, where they might want to impress or deceive others, the soliloquiy is a much more reliable pointer to the speaker's true mental and emotional state, for it alone bears the intimate immediacy and undisguised openness that is rarely found in other forms of dialogue. But then it is important to note, as Rozik (1992:18) does, that a character does not deliver a soliloquiy because of his/her own inner need, but for the sake of the audience on the author-audience axis of communication. For this reason, features of this convention such as frankness, insight, honesty or eloquence, cannot be ascribed to the character who performs it. Otherwise one would arrive at the absurd conclusion that in periods where the soliloquiy was the norm, all the characters had these qualities in common.

The soliloquiy as a dramatic convention can further be justified by other functions it performs in a dramatic text or performance. For instance, it is employed to compensate for the absence in drama of the authorial voice which is an essential mediating communication channel in narrative texts. It also "serves several functions of a structural and formal kind: it can form a bridge between two separate scenes, thus preventing the break in the action caused by an empty stage; as an entrance or exit soliloquiy, it can look forward to, or summarize, future developments in the plot; and in all positions it can be used to slow down the action and create an element of reflective distance". (Pfister 1988:132). All these necessary functions are fulfilled by the soliloquiy because of the direct contact it is able to establish between the actor and the audience in a performance. Pfister further makes a distinction between what he calls the conventional- and the motivated soliloquiy: "Whereas the conventional soliloquiy forms part of the secondary code (i.e. the code that regulates the communication process between author and receiver in the external communication system) the motivated or realist soliloquiy has a firm basis in the communicative conditions of the internal communication system". (Pfister, 1988:133).

The latter type of soliloquiy came into greater prominence when, in the context of the rationalist philosophies and aesthetics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, critics began to object to the artificiality of this convention and finally rejected it with the advent of the realist and naturalist aesthetics of the nineteenth century. All soliloquies were thus expected to be realistically motivated, so that a character could speak to him/herself only, under conditions such as intoxication, in his/her sleep, or because of a pathological condition. Therefore, besides the direct communication link which the soliloquiy still maintained with the audience, it assumed greater semiotic value in that an individual who indulged in such speech instead of communicating dialogically might be seen to suffer some form of isolation or psychological disorder. Shakespeare's sleep-walking Lady Macbeth is the most commonly known example that comes to mind. Pfister (1988:134) however emphasizes that the division between the conventionalized and

motivated types of soliloquiy is not absolute as they only present two extreme forms with a whole spectrum of possible intermediary forms.

Irrespective of whether it is conventional or motivated, the soliloquiy is without doubt an important form of direct address of the audience by the stage performer. As Beckerman (1990:16) observes, it is perhaps the single most important type of act that involves direct communication between the stage and the auditorium.

3.2.1.3 THE DRAMATIC ASIDE

The aside is similar to a soliloquy in a number of ways, and this can be observed from the common features that exist between these two forms of direct address. The dramatic aside is usually thought to be an awkward means of letting the audience know what a character is thinking. But initially, and as it often appears throughout dramatic history, it is a means of highlighting an action by allowing a character to pull out of the boundaries of stage events to create a link with the audience. It is not always a means of direct exchange with the audience, but "is often a spoken thought of the character". (Beckerman, 1990:116). There are, however, three types of asides, identified by Pfister (1988:137-140) viz. the monological aside, the aside ad spectatores and the dialogical aside.

The kind that mostly resembles the soliloquiy is the monological aside. Like the soliloquiy, it is not addressed to another figure on stage, but to the audience; and it differs from the soliloquiy in so far as the speaker is neither alone on stage nor does he/she imagine him/herself being alone when the aside is made. Although the audience hears the aside, which is indeed meant for them, whatever other dialogic partners are on stage are presumed not to hear its words. According to the natural laws of acoustics, this is not possible; and in this respect, the monological aside is a theatrical convention that contravenes the expectations that apply in real life situations even

more than the soliloquiy. But like the conventionalized soliloquiy, this kind of aside makes it possible for the writer to present the figures' thoughts directly to the audience, to give the characters frank commentary on a particular situation or to generally give background information to such a situation in an economical way. As Pfister (1988:138) further observes, by analogy with the motivated soliloquiy, there is also a motivated monological aside which can take the form of a short, unpremediated and spontaneous exclamation in reaction to some situation and thus remain within the natural bounds of plausibility.

The aside ad spectatores is imbued with dialogical elements, and like the soliloquiy ad spectatores, it breaks the internal communication system to establish an explicit mediating communication system by addressing the audience. It is commonly used in comedy where it is employed mostly by scheming villains eager to make contact with the audience as in Pfister's (1988:139) example from Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice where Launcelot, instead of telling his blind father who he is, decides to play a trick on him. In an aside directed to the audience, he says

> ... Mark me now; now will I raise the waters.
> (Act 2, Scene 2)

and uses a verbal gesture of pointing as well as an imperative. This aside is thus used by the speaker to give the audience an indication of his intentions to create suspense and to ensure that the audience has an informational advantage over the victims caught up in the intrigue.

Finally, the dialogical aside which is really a special form of dialogue is based on the same conventions that govern all the other forms of aside, the only difference being that it deals with the internal conflict that often takes place in individuals where for instance the voice of reason might say one thing and the emotional part of man, something else. The main factor that separates the aside, whatever kind it is, from the soliloquiy, is the fact that unlike in a

soliloquiy the speaker does not need to be alone on the performance stage to make an aside. In fact, as already illustrated, the dramatic aside frequently constitutes a break from the main drift of the dialogue where the speaker lets the audience in on what is happening or what he/she means to do.

Although the theatrical frame and illusion is broken every time a speaker (actor) addresses the audience directly through an aside, this technique serves to remind the audience of the fictional status of the proceedings on stage. And to the same extent that the aside places the audience in a priviledged position of sharing the fictional character's inner thoughts and intentions (information which the other characters on stage do not have), it draws the audience into the fictional world of the actors on stage. The spectators become theatricalized (Elam, 1980:90), i.e. they are drawn into the fictive world of the dramatic characters and this world is extended to include even the world of the audience in terms of where they are sitting in the auditorium.

3.2.1.4 THE NARRATOR AND OTHER FORMS OF DIRECT ADDRESS

The use of direct presentation as a frame for a production is fairly common in theatre today, and a narrator is often used for this purpose. Such a narrator usually stands outside the action, has a global understanding of what is happening and is thus able to direct the focus of the audience and place things in the correct perspective. Reference here can be made to Mothobi Mutloatse's stage adaptation of Can Themba's short story, 'The Suit' where the script writer was forced to use a narrator to mediate the contents of a work that was not initially conceived with the theatrical stage in mind. In order not to break the continuity of the action on stage the off-stage narrator gave his running commentary about the slum conditions in Sophiatown while the main characters used mime to simulate their daily chores. In this way, the direct address of the audience by the narrator complemented the dialogue of the actors and gave the audience a more rounded picture

of the action unfolding on the stage. Another example of a play where the narrator is not involved in the action of the drama is Pieter Fourie's Ek, Anna van Wyk, where the narrator is placed in the midst of the spectators in the auditorium.

There are also cases of narrators who form an integral part of the action of a play, instances where the narrator features as actor/character. Beckerman (1990:123) cites the example from The Glass Menagerie, a play by Tennessee Williams. Tom is, in this play, a narrator who is deeply involved in the action, who is unable to escape the consequences of previous events, and whose narration is an exorcism for abandoning his mother and sister. Besides being an important link in the internal action of the play, the narrator in such cases, also relates outwardly to the audience in the external communication link between stage and auditorium.

Experimental theatre in recent times has seen the introduction of numerous techniques, including many forms of direct address. Through the use of acoustic devices for sound effect the conventional boundary between stage and auditorium has been subtly dissolved in some musicals and plays so that the audience is not only directly addressed, but what sounds like responsive sounds are manipulated so that they do indeed seem to come from the auditorium itself. States (1985:177) in arguing the case for the role played by direct address of the audience, refers to Offending the Audience, a play by Peter Handke. The four speakers in this play cannot be called actors as they do not act anything; they do not speak to each other and do not even speak for themselves as characters. The "play" lacks all the things that typifies theatre (i.e. plot, scenery, lighting arrangements etc), except for the structure of the actor/audience relationship. States' answer to the question, 'Can this be called a play?', is an unequivocal "yes"; and he asserts that the originality of the play lies in what might be called its "you-ness" or "the particular level on which rapprochement of audience and theatre is effected" (States, 1985:178).

Beckerman (1990:115) sums up the matter well when he states tha although a generation ago direct presentation was an incidental rather

than a central concern in theatre, the breakdown of the self-enclosed system of naturalism and the rising interest in popular and alternative forms have seen the open involvement of audiences in performances increasingly coming into the circle of interest. The virtual disappearance of the stage curtain and the use of variants of the open stage have all enhanced the directness of the actors so that many plays now utilize narrators, commentators or even confidantes to promote an exchange with the audience.

In conclusion, metadramatic devices like prologues, epilogues, monologues, soliloquies, dramatic asides, the use of the narrator and other forms of direct address where actors communicate directly with the audience while maintaining their fictional identity are instances of dialogic interaction between the actors in their fictive roles and the audience. The fact that it is the actors who involve the audience in this way without the audience addressing them from the auditorium does not detract from the dialogic nature of this relationship. It has already been indicated in section 3.1 that the view of the communicative process that is widely accepted today, (and which was also espoused by Elam and Ruffini) is the view that holds it sufficient that the audience understand the code that is used by the actors without having to respond to it.

3.2.2 INDIRECT DIALOGIC INTERACTION BETWEEN STAGE AND AUDITORIUM

Besides all the instances of direct addresss discussed in the preceding section, which constitute a direct and obvious dialogic relationship between the actors and the audience, there is another dimension to the stage/auditorium relationship that is more subtle and more indirect. When the actors in a performance do not break frame, and appear to be confined to the internal communication axis that applies in the fictional world of the stage, there is still a dialectical link between the actors on stage and the audience in the auditorium. It is a form of dialogue that has to be understood in metaphoric terms: in the sense that an audience in a performance forms an indispensable partner

with the actors on stage in the complex meaning-creating process of a performance. Each of the two parties makes an invaluable contribution to the process, a contribution without which theatre would cease to be theatre because it would not communicate.

It is however necessary in this context to reflect upon the difficulties raised by Rayner, Pavis and Mouton in arriving at a satisfactory definition of what an audience is. Rayner (1993:3) mentions, that one of the first problems in trying to understand the word "audience" comes with the assumption that it signifies a collective version of a single consciousness rather than the mere desire for such unity. He goes on to state that

> The word 'audience' often appears to function as an image of unity created out of diversity, as a kind of *e pluribus unum*: an aggregate of individuals that together constitute a larger yet still singular individual, as though "the audience" has a collective consciousness that is analogous to a unified individual subject. Such an assumption disintegrates rather quickly under the pressure of both historical and deconstructive questions. The sign obviously, perhaps necessarily, conceals the differences that make each individual member unique not only by various classifications of race, nation, class or gender, familial, social, educational, linguistic and experiential histories but also by the particular position (literally and figuratively where one sits), in the configuration of events.
>
> (Rayner, 1993:3)

Also, the word does not account for the temporal aspects of history, i.e. that audiences change from moment to moment, day to day and even from epoch to epoch. To complicate the matter further, the word might also be used to refer to an individual or to the divided consciousness where a self is 'audience' to itself, in which case the differences that apply to the audience as a collective still hold.

Mouton (1989:196) also mentions that there are empirical studies on theatre audiences that make use of questionnaires to gather information about matters like the composition of audiences. These do not, however, address the essential questions that may be asked about the theatrical communication process or about how the spectator experiences the theatrical performance. In a similar way, Pavis (1982:72) finds such studies unsatisfactory because the "groups of subjects" which constitute an audience are very difficult to identify:

> In studies made of an audience or a reading public,
> they are either reduced to an undifferentiated,
> amorphous mass or to a theoretical abstraction.
>
> (Pavis, 1982:72)

The crux of the problem is that audiences are made up of different individual spectators who, even when they are part of the same community, are unique in every way; and consequently read different things into a performance. For this reason Rayner proposes a view of the 'audience' that is not ontological in the sense that it seeks to explain what an audience is, but one that looks at the listening function that constitutes the action of an audience, "an action that has historical and unconscious contexts as well as intentions". (Rayner, 1993:5). Therefore, she sees an audience not as a thing, but as "an instance of intersubjective relations with specific reference to the act of listening" (Rayner, 1993:6). As much as an individual spectator forms part of the audience, one should not confuse the spectator and the audience in an investigation of the communication process that takes places between the theatrical stage and its auditorium.

The reactions of spectators to performances have always been regarded as indicators of the success or failure of these performances; and actors themselves have spoken of "cold" or responsive audiences and have acknowledged that the reception of spectators exercises a definite influence on theatrical performances generally. Mouton (1989:198) ascribes this partly to the fact that drama is performed to spectators, and that audiences experience the fictional actions as they unfold before them in the performance time. The present of the performance

time makes a strong impression on the spectators and it frequently leads to their being drawn into the fictional world of the drama. And the theatrical representation itself influences the spectators and prompts certain reactions from them. The visual impression that the represented characters (viz. the actors) and the represented fictional space (viz. the stage) make on spectators especially lead to different audience reactions like admiration, shock, excitement, etc. These two factors, viz. the dynamic progression of the performance within the performance time and the changing visual and auditive aspects of the representation ensure that the spectator remains interested in the action that unfolds before him/her.

Numerous theoreticians have stated that the spectator does not only form part of an audience but is also frequently influenced by the reactions of this audience in any particular performance. Nicoll has made an appropriate observation in this respect:

> There can be no doubt but that the audience, when it has been caught up by a theatrical performance, becomes a unit; the collective term 'audience' is, therefore, much more appropriate than the plural 'spectators'. The individuals ... tend to have their own personalities subsumed by the spirit of the group of which they form part, and ... the very size of the group has a definite bearing on the extent to which the individual reacts, not according to his own nature, but according to the atmosphere around him.
>
> (Nicol, 1962:20)

This group feeling is especially evident in comedy or in dramatic scenes which cause laughter that becomes infectious among the spectators. According to Nicoll (1962:20), although such group identity leads to the weakening of the intellectual awareness of the individual spectators, it makes them more emotionally accessible so that they are more easily involved (emotionally) with the fictional characters and their actions.

The subject of audiences is clearly a complex one which cannot be explained away in simplistic terms. It is multidimensional and still open to research. The fact that it encroaches on to the realms of psychology, anthropology, sociology and even architecture points to the large amount of work that still has to be done in this area. If the notion of audiences itself is so problematic, one can understand the difficulties involved in trying to make definitive statements about the nature of the indirect interaction that takes place between the actors on the performance stage and the individual spectator, as well as the audience of which he/she is a part, in the auditorium. An attempt will be made to give a brief account of this interaction from a semiotic viewpoint.

3.2.2.1 THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE SPECTATOR/AUDIENCE IN THE STAGE-AUDITORIUM INTERACTION

In a semiotic framework, audience involvement in the theatrical transaction may be considered from different aspects, viz. the audience's understanding of, and willingness to submit to, the terms of the conventions that apply in the theatre; their familiarity with topical and popular references made and how the performance as a whole fits into the broad picture of affairs that are current to their times; intertextual relations, as well as the audience's knowledge of the language variants and code-switches used in the performance. All these may be subsumed under the broad heading of the social and cultural background of the spectator or audience; and they all play important roles in the act of decoding a theatrical performance.

3.2.2.1.1 AUDIENCE SIGNALS

Elam (1980:95) states that the "spectator's semiotic initiative" is not limited to his/her role of de-or re-codifying the text. The spectator's act of buying a ticket to the theatre to watch a performance is

an implicit agreement on his/her part to enter into a theatrical contract with the actors to take a place in the auditorium and watch the actors play fictive roles on stage.

Through such an act which is both practical and symbolic, the spectator initiates the theatrical communication process in which it is tacitly understood that he/she will not wilfully interrupt the actors on stage by word or deed. This obviously excludes cases where spectators are overcome by laughter as is commonly the case in comedy; or plays where the producer intentionally draws the audience into the action on stage by prompting certain reactions from them. Elam sees what might be regarded as the audience's relative passivity in the theatrical contract as "an active choice which imposes certain obligations on the elected 'senders'" (Elam 1980:96). As Dodd (1979(a):135) also states, "the audience delegates, so to speak, the communicative initiative to the actors on stage, making a contract whereby the actors are conceded a superior degree of articulation". The simple presence of the audience is therefore noted as the most significant audience signal, which also constitutes the one invariable condition of the performance. Actors need an audience to perform to.

Another important semiotic indicator by audiences is the measure of their patronage of the particular play. A stage production that has a long and successful run, that might even extend its staging period because of public demand will point to its bookings and record ticket sales as evidence of its success. Important to mention too is audience reaction which impacts on both the performance and on its reception. A standing ovation during curtain call may have one of two effects on the actors applauded in this way: it may place them under pressure to maintain the high standard of commitment to their work or it may have the negative effect of making them feel complacent. Audience reactions affect spectator-spectator communication in the sense that stimulation, like laughter, in one part of the auditorium provokes a similar response in another section of the same auditorium. Also spectators usually find re-assurance from seeing their responses reinforced by those of others; and consequently, individuals are encouraged to surrender their individual function in favour of being part of the

larger unit which is the audience. All these audience signals are arguably instances of dialogic interaction between the actors on stage and the audience.

3.2.2.1.2 INTERTEXTUAL RELATIONS AND OTHER TOPICAL REFERENCES

In order to decode any theatrical performance a spectator needs to understand the organizational principles of performances generally. As no one is formally taught this, theatre-goers pick up the operative rules by exposure first to the most elementary forms of theatrical productions like Nativity plays and other children's shows which are universally accepted as part of the cultural upbringing of children everywhere. It is in this way that spectators first pick up the theatrical competence that will provide the basis for their understanding of fictionality as well as the roles of actors and audiences. This process of learning about theatre continues throughout life as one is exposed to different types of performances, different staging-, lighting-, sound- or even dialogic techniques as well as the distinctive styles of particular playwrights. Such knowledge provides an essential textual background which determines any spectator's competence to decode other theatrical productions.

It is especially so because as Elam (1980:93) observes,

> ... the genesis of the performance itself is necessarily intertextual: it cannot but bear the traces of other performances at every level, whether that of the written text (bearing generic, structural and linguistic relations with other plays), the scenery (which will 'quote' its pictorial or proxemic influences), the actor (whose performance refers back, for the cognoscenti, to other displays), directorial style, and so on.

For instance, Fugard's Hello and Goodbye is, by his own admission, in a sense a fusion of elements from two of his earlier plays viz. The Blood

Knot and People are Living There. They are all two-character plays about the human degradation caused by poverty and the struggle to escape an unfavourable lot in life. The Karoo where Fugard was born also comes through with noticeable frequency in his work; and some of his characters echo others in different works of his, as Boesman's Lena is curiously reminiscent of Hester's pain, her desperation and above all, the crudity of her language in Hello and Goodbye. Furthermore, Fugard's works generally fall within the tradition of protest-writing which has been the one common factor in South African literature during the years of repression. The ideal spectator of any of Fugard's works will therefore be one who is no stranger to these and related matters like the playwright's literary and theatrical influences. Familiarily with such textual background enables the spectator to identify all the relevant relations in the play performed and to use them "as a grid for a correspondingly rich decodification". (Elam, 1980:93). In this sense, a theatrical performance communicates more to a spectator who understands the inter-textual relations and influences that are at work.

The same can be said about current affairs and other topical issues of the day that are frequently referred to either directly or obliquely in theatrical productions. As dramatic words are not conceived in a vacuum, they are often reflective of the social and political dynamics that characterize their historical times, and an understanding of these forces helps a spectator to see the play in the correct perspective. Elam (1980:94) states that it is all but impossible for any reasonably literate contemporary spectator to witness a production of Oedipus Rex or Hamlet without applying in some form, however unwittingly, Freudian principles of interpretation, since these have become not only part of our common understanding of behaviour, but still more, part of the play's own history. In a similar way, any spectator who has an idea of South African social and political history and who sees the play Sophiatown by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company will understand the symbolic significance of that name in the struggle against injustice in this country. The influence of critics has also been identified as crucial in the formation of spectators' expectations. After reading a newspaper review of a play, the member of the audience already knows

what to expect from the performance and what his/her response is probably going to be. To a greater or lesser extent, depending on his/her credibility, the critic's review of the performance is very likely to impact on the spectator's decodification of the play.

But in the end, despite the individual spectator's expertise or his/her familiarity with the frames of reference employed by the dramatist and director, it is never possible to have a perfect correspondence between the codes used by the producer/director and those used by the individual spectators who constitute the audience. This is especially the case if the theatrical text is innovative, for then the audience has to make an effort to discover and understand the principles at work. Ultimately, each spectator's interpretation of the theatrical text is in effect a new construction of it according to the cultural and ideological disposition of the individual subject. (Elam, 1980:95). It is he/she who must make sense of the performance for him/herself. The spectator thus fulfils an important role in the creation of meaning. Such a partnership between the audience and the actors on stage vindicates the view that there is a dialogic relationship that exists between the two parties. It also confirms the orientation of the dramatic text towards the stage.

3.2.2.2 THE AUDIENCE'S FAMILIARITY WITH LANGUAGE VARIENTS AS A DETERMINANT OF MEANING

Besides the obvious denotative semantic charge of dialogue like the skilful and economic portrayal of character or the conveyance of the necessary background details to the characters or their actions, there is a whole body of information and meanings which is gleaned by deduction from a dialogic exchange, information about how characters relate to one another, and about the world they live in. Grobler (1990:40) states that in any discussion of the specifics of dialogue variation, it is necessary to place each play in the context of its particular socio-economic and geographic milieu because these have a direct bearing on the nature of the chosen language and the types of variation

involved in each play. These geographically or socio-economically determined varieties of dialogue are described either in terms of dialects or sociolects. While dialects are geographically determined, sociolects are socially prescribed and can be set within dialects or within national languages. Characters thus reveal a lot about themselves, their social status, their geographical positioning, their historical times and even their individual cast of mind through devices such as these dialogue-varieties. But it takes an informed spectator to recognize the use of such devices in the dialogue of the actors, and to place them accordingly.

Grobler (1990:40) observes that in a play like Athol Fugard's Boesman and Lena, there is a mixture of geographic and socio-economic features in the dialogue of the two main characters; in Fatima Dike's The First South African, there are three distinctive sociolects which are characteristic of both township life and the main character's life in particular. There is, in the latter play, the language which reflects the customs and traditions of the Xhosas, a level in which the main character goes by the name Zwelinzima; there is the tsotsi-taal which is used in the social stratum where he is known as Rooi; and there is the language he speaks in his role of would-be-whiteman where he goes by the name of Ruben James. In both plays the informed spectator is able to understand by deduction (from their use of either dialects or sociolects) many things about the characters, their relationships and about the worlds they live in.

In a similar manner, code switching, which is the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or code interaction where the switch may be for only a word or for several minutes of speech, also demands of the spectator an ability to spot such a switch whenever it is made and to understand what its purpose is. The following dialogic exchange (from Fatima Dike's The First South African) between Zwelinzima, also known as Rooi, and an elderly stranger at the then Bantu Administration offices where Rooi is mistaken by the stranger as a white man, illustrates this well.

Exit Max

ELDER: Uxolo baas.
(Excuse me, baas).

ROOI : Uxolo tata, I'm not baas.
(Excuse me, my father, I'm not baas).

ELDER: Oh don't you work here?

ROOI : No. I'm here on business like you.

ELDER: Miskien baas, baas has a job for me at his firm.

ROOI : Andi ngo baas.
(I'm not a baas).

ELDER: Tyhini le you speak Xhosa?
(Jeepers? You speak Xhosa?).

ROOI : Ewe.
(Yes).

ELDER: Tyhini molo mfo wam.
(Jeepers! Greetings to you, my brother).

ROOI : Molo.
(Greetings).

ELDER: Ke mfo wam ungu mfo ka bani?
(Well, dear kinsman, whose son are you?).

ROOI : I'm Jama's son.

ELDER: Where?

ROOI : Here.

ELDER: Heh madoda, where? This town is big.

ROOI : I stay here in the location.

ELDER: Hayi suka maan, where have you seen a white man staying in the location? Okanye are you the son of nkosi, the big chief here at the office?
(Hey, get away from here man, where have you seen a white man staying in the location? Or are you the son of nkosi, the big chief here at the office?)
(Act 1: p. 10).

(Own translation of Xhosa).

The elderly stranger here cautiously approaches Rooi who is clearly mistaken as a white man. Having been addressed by the stranger in English, Rooi replies in English to explain that he is not a white man.

When the elderly man evidently fails to understand this and asks him for a job, he switches to Xhosa to tell him that he is not white, and has no job for him,

Andi ngo baas.

Rooi's interlocutor is pleasantly surprised to hear such fluent Xhosa from what appears to be a white man and he immediately warms up to him. When it finally dawns on him that he is with a fellow Xhosa, he gives Rooi a greeting fitting for a countryman:

Tyhini molo mfo wam.

This is an instance of how an ordinary code-switch subtly communicates human relationships, for the cordial greeting here indicates more than a warming up of the stranger to Rooi, namely also his acceptance of, and identification with him.

Code switches can be made from one language to another, as in the above illustration where the switch is from English to Xhosa and vice versa; or from one dialect or sociolect to another as in Sophiatown, a play by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company, first performed at the Market Theatre in 1986. The latter play abounds with tsotsitaal, the South African urban lingo commonly used by streetwise South African township dwellers, a highly specialized and dynamic language that can truly be said to be indicative of a culture which evolved in the ghettoes during the days of illicit liquor smuggling, gangsters, and a life generally given to defeating the ends of the apartheid laws of the times.

It is representative of the latest trend of multilingual theatre for multilingual audiences in South Africa, where the code-switches not only give local colour to the dialogue, but carry meanings and nuances that cannot be expressed otherwise. When Fahfee, the Congress activist, addresses Ruth, the Jewish girl from Yeoville, and says

> Kom, ons moet Katz en Lourie. Life is 'n boogie.
> Dis singalie. Dis khuset onder die korset.
> I'll show you Kofifi, I'll show you Maklera.
> Ons sal in die main road pedestrie and al die
> moemishes sal stare, en jy sal die matara van
> die dla wees. Jy notch? (Act 1, Scene 4).

(which can be loosely translated as follows,

> Come, we must marry. Life is a gig. It is
> all right. Its fine/cosy under the corset.
> I'll show you Sophiatown, I'll show you
> Newclare. We'll take a stroll in the Main
> road and all the simpletons will stare at
> us, and you will be the lady of the house.
> You see?)

his words recreate for the initiated members of the audience, a milieu and an outlook of a people determined not to be brought down by their depressing lot in life or to wallow in self pity. Katz and Lourie is the name of an old jewellery and diamond shop of repute in Johannesburg where the best and most expensive engagement and wedding rings were purchased from, and for this reason the name became synonymous with marriage in the townships. Fahfee would also like to take Ruth to all the places that matter in Kofifi and in Maklera to entertain her and take her for a stroll to show her off as was expected of a man-about-town and his girl. It is an elaborate way to tell her that he will show her the highest honour if she accepts his proposal. Township dwellers in the audience, especially those who had known Sophiatown, relished this, and as one spectator later said about the play in a local SABC television show on Sophiatown itself

> It spoke to me like no other theatre had done before,
> and I loved it.

Unlike someone who lacks the necessary background knowledge, the spectator who has the capacity to identify and decode the code-switches

and the meanings communicated by the variant linguistic forms used is in a priviledged position. He/she is better equiped to understand more of the interpersonal relations and the social conventions that operate in the said environment. Hauptfleisch states the matter well:

> ... The use of a particular dialectal form (or particular language) carries with it a significant - and very specific-frame of reference, for it "places" the dialogue in an identifiable social, geographical or situational context. The fact that it is used to foster realism, means that it is part of a process whereby the writer is attempting to re-create, on stage, a known world in which certain assumptions are accepted as part of the "reality" sought. And these assumptions have multiple functions: they become an expositional shorthand (placing the play and its characters immediately, obviating the need for certain kinds of establishing scenes), they enable the writer to work far more subtly because they do not require explanation (for they are part of a shared reality), and they at times even acquire a metaphoric function, becoming statements in their own right ... Sociolectal and dialectal choices may be equally important, serving as metaphoric indicators of total value systems, and eliciting varying responses by audiences in terms of their own ideological and social background.
>
> (Hauptfleisch, 1989:76).

He goes on to emphasize that such metaphoric use of dialectal forms and code switches only really work in an environment where there is a shared frame of reference between audience and actors; and that this constitutes a problem in all committed theatre especially in Black theatre "which has for so long needed to communicate in two directions: inward to its own core-community and outward to the uninitiated rest-of-the world, uninformed, and largely uncaring". (Hauptfleisch

1989:77). This role of the audience in the theatrical meaning-creating process is reminiscent of Jauss and Iser's theories of the reading process, for they also posited that the reader's individual realization of the written text is an essential component of the work of art. This does not mean that theatre audiences can be equated with an individual reader. It is only that the operative principle appears to be the same: the spectator, like the reader, brings his/her own background knowledge and this determines his/her own decodification of the performance.

3.3 CONCLUSION

The distinction between direct and indirect interaction between the actors on the performance stage and the audience in the auditorium is, understandably, an arbitrary one, and only convenient for analytic purposes. There is, in actual performances, no sharp separation between direct and indirect presentation. Instead, there is a great deal of overlapping between the two; and all sorts of modifications of both types appear in theatre which communicates on different levels and in an integrated way. But whichever way one looks at it, there is overall consensus among a wide variety of theatre semioticians about the dialogic relationship between the performance stage and the audience in the auditorium.

C H A P T E R 4

THE PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION OF DIDASCALIES

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In any printed dramatic text, there is usually a typographical distinction between two types of text, viz. the spoken dialogue that takes place between the characters in the drama, and the part of the text that refers to the verbal text segments that give information about the characters, the world in which they interact, their actions, and everything else that a reader needs to know that cannot be gleaned from the dialogue of the participants in the drama. Ingarden (1973:208) calls these two parts of the dramatic text the "main text" and the "side text":

> What is most conspicuous in a 'written' drama is the existence, side by side, of two different texts: the 'side text' or stage directions - i.e. information with regard to where, at what time, etc., the given represented story takes place, who exactly is speaking, and perhaps also what he is doing at a given moment, etc. - and the main text itself. The latter consists exclusively of sentences that are 'really' spoken by the represented characters. Because we know which character is speaking, the sentences belonging to the main text acquire, so to speak, 'quotation marks'.
>
> (Ingarden, 1973:208)

Pfister (1988:14) however observes that although Ingarden's concepts of main or primary and side or secondary text have been adopted as the accepted labels for these different layers of text, his definition of what constitutes a secondary text is based on the extent to which it can be translated by the production into a physical presence on stage. In this sense, it is rather a narrow viewpoint since it only refers to stage directions within the "secondary" text and leaves out everything else.

Yet drama and theatre semiotics regards stage directions as only part of the wider, more encompassing concept of "didascalies" which Savona defines as follows:

> everything which comes to us directly from the playwright, everything which is neither dialogue nor soliloquiy; their status is that of both extradiegetic voice, since they are a first-degree instance of discourse, and heterodiegetic voice, since they are of a character not within the fiction or fable.
>
> (Savona, 1982:26).

In her view, this second layer of text would thus inter alia include the title of the play, the inscriptions, dedications and prefaces, the list of dramatis personae, announcements of the beginnings and endings of acts and scenes, entrances and exits of the characters, stage directions that apply either to scenery or to action and the identification of the speakers as they take their turns at speaking.

However, Savona's definition should not be understood to imply that information about the fictional world cannot be communicated through the dramatic dialogue as well. There are numerous examples of plays where information about some characters or their actions is contained in the words of other characters in the drama and not typographically separated at the beginning of a scene or act. It is therefore essential to bear in mind that although the bulk of the information about the dramatic characters and the world in which their actions take place is usually mentioned in brackets at the beginnings of the scenes, there are frequently also cases where such information is gathered from the words of the speakers in the drama. Savona's definition is important for the fact that it broadens the concept of didascalies to include elements other than stage directions.

For analytic purposes and for the sake of clarity, it is necessary to distinguish between the two layers of the dramatic text without equating the secondary text with stage directions only. Subsequent reference to "secondary" text in this essay will thus be to everything in the dramatic text that is neither dialogue nor soliloquiy.

Of all the conceivable subjects in drama theory today, research into didascalies has probably been the most neglected. In contrast to dialogue which has, even from Aristotle's Classical antiquity, been regarded as the soul of drama, research into didascalies is to date almost non-existent - a state of affairs that is indicative of its lack of status in the list of the elements of drama. The fact that even theoreticians like Savona elect to name it "secondary"/"side" text shows that it has not been seen to rank in importance anywhere near other considerations which are perceived as "primary" in the systematic study of drama. As Mouton (1989:167) observes, the didascalies is usually regarded as mere guidelines for the stage performance of the text - guidelines which are frequently ignored by the stage director and his/her cast.

But the didascalies are such essential features of any dramatic text that Pfister (1977:14) asserts that the quantitative and qualitative relationship between the two layers, suggested by the terms "primary" and "secondary", cannot be taken as universal norms. This is because texts such as Samuel Beckett's Acte sans paroles I and II, or Peter Handke's Das Mündel will Vormund Sein do not have any spoken dialogue at all; and the use of the term "secondary text" to describe the entire printed text in such cases would thus be misleading. Also, the extreme variability of the quantitative and qualitative relationships between "primary" and "secondary" texts is further borne out by the fact that inscriptions, dedications and prefaces are recent inventions because dramatic texts were printed long after plays had been performed. During the Elizabethan period, for instance, drama had not yet been accorded the social status of "serious" literature. And the use of stage directions was kept to a minimum because the printed text had no autonomous value and was limited to its function as a reminder of the performance. This was the case until Ben Jonson first published

his own plays in 1616 under the title Works, in which he included a Latin inscription, dedications, prologues and stage directions. His were the first tentative steps towards setting up a convention of the use of the didascalies which was, at that time, unimportant compared to the body of dialogue in the plays.

In contrast to this, there are printed dramatic texts in which the primary text is submerged by the secondary text. Pfister (1988:14) here cites the example of George Bernard Shaw's plays, Androcles and the Lion and Man and Superman. The former play opens with a preface that is more than twice the length of the actual text, with the link between the preface and the actual text being somewhat tenuous. And the latter play has stage directions that are up to four pages long, which can only be partially translated into physical action on stage. In the words Pfister (1988:14) uses: "Such practices reveal a highly developed distrust of the stage, and of producers and actors, and by implication, elevate the printed text to an autonomous entity in itself". What is illustrated here is that the didascalies in dramatic texts are important in their own right and quite deserving of greater attention than they have received up to now. It will therefore be necessary for analytic purposes to identify the different elements of the didascalies in both the secondary and primary texts with a view to demonstrating their performance orientation. But it should be emphasized that such identification of the different elements of didascalies does not suggest that they each operate individually to perform separate functions in the text. All the various elements of didascalies together form an integrated unit and operate collectively in any dramatic text.

4.1 CLASSIFICATION OF THE ELEMENTS OF THE DIDASCALIES

The didascalies are therefore everything in the dramatic text that give information about a particular performance(s) the dramatic characters and the world in which their actions take place. Didascalies will thus include the title of the work, inscriptions, dedications and prefaces,

the list of characters, stage directions that apply either to scenery or to action, prologues and epilogues. Stage directions, which are the most essential part of the didascalies, and the most obvious signs that point to the dramatic text's potential for staging, can in turn be classified into those that appear in the secondary text and those that are implicitly contained in the primary text.

A further means of classification that can be used is the determination of the extent to which these stage directions can be translated into paralinguistic and non-verbal codes in the stage enactment; or whether a purely literary reception (e.g. foreword, notes, etc.) is expected. The former means of classification which separates stage directions that appear in the secondary text from those that are contained in the primary text is particularly relevant in a study of the performance orientation of didascalies.

4.2 THE PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION OF THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF THE DIDASCALIES

The didascalies are the most explicit range of signs in the dramatic text that point to its orientation towards the stage. Granted that some dramatic texts are more obviously performance orientated than others, (because of the theatrical references like dance, song, lighting effects and other specifications made about the stage arrangements in such texts) all texts have didascalies as integral structural features and as indispensable mediating channels between the authorial voice and the reader. The focus of interest here is the manner in which the didascalies in the written text disappears in the transposition from text to performance to be replaced by visual and auditory signs. As Savona (1982:30) states, "the linguistic signs of the didascalies disappear at the level of production where they are transposed either into iconic or voiced signs". The performance orientation of each of the elements of the didascalies, from the title of the drama to its epilogue, will now be considered while bearing in

mind that not all of the didascalies can be converted into visible or audible signs on stage.

4.2.1 THE TITLE

Mouton (1989:170) states that the main function of the title of a dramatic text is to name the fictional world of the drama in such a way as to highlight, for the reader, either a central aspect of this world, an important character involved in the action of the drama, an important set of events, some appropriate symbol related to the action or whatever else the writer deems appropriate to name the work. The title is therefore frequently seen as a key to the meaningful interpretation of the work as it is a first indication for the reader of what the drama is all about.

Although the title of a play is one of those aspects of the didascalies that cannot always be visibly transposed into visible or audibly staged signs, it serves a function in the performance which is akin to what it does in the dramatic text. This is with the exception of dramas that have been named after physical locations or some other visible object, in which case a physical sign could be arranged as part of the stage design to suggest this. To start with, the title is a first indicator to the potential spectator of the performance of what it is likely to be about. For this reason, it helps set the expectations of the viewer at a particular level so that these expectations are either confirmed, exceeded or even disappointed by the stage performance of the dramatic work. The success or failure of the stage performance is thus measured, in the mind of the theatre-goer, against the expectations raised by the title of the play as advertised. The title is in this sense, performance orientated.

Through visual, auditory and all other staging signs at his/her disposal, a stage director is able to direct the thinking of the audience in such a way as to facilitate the particular interpretation that his/her presentation means to put forward. And all the resources of the stage,

body language, costumes, sets, lights, props, paralinguistic features of the language, etc. will be used to highlight the interpretative view that has been adopted by the directors and producers, a view that has already been hinted at by the title of the play, and which is then confirmed on the stage. To this end, the programme and its design also becomes particularly useful. The title of the dramatic text therefore points to the stage performance of the particular text for its surest means of validation, more so than it does in a literary reading of the play where only one communication channel is used.

4.2.2 INSCRIPTIONS, DEDICATIONS AND PREFACES

The words "inscriptions" and "dedications" can be used interchangeably because they both refer to the same thing: the phrase, sentence or short paragraph at the beginning of a dramatic text or any written work where the writer specifically mentions the name of the person or group of people to whom the work is, for one reason or other, dedicated. One might argue that the word "dedication" is more suitable since it contains the sense of making an inscription in a work of art in tribute to a person or cause while inscription is commonly taken as a mere signature, especially if it is engraved.

Many writers dedicate their works to other people, living or dead. The dedication could be made to a personal friend or acquaintance for some private reason not mentioned by the writer; or it could be made to the same person(s) for a reason which the writer briefly mentions in a sentence or a short paragraph. There are also dedications to public figures, mentors, role models or groups of people writers frequently feel obliged to honour for one reason or other.

But dedications only remain incidental pieces of information without any noteworthy bearing on the text or performance, except in cases where the dedication is made to some public figure well known for some activity or cause, whether social or political. The audience might then be able to consider the whole performance against the background

of the knowledge that it was dedicated to such an individual, and in this way, see things in a particular perspective. But this would apply in the few cases where such dedications are either read out at the beginning of a performance or printed in programmes available at such performances. Otherwise dedications cannot be seen to exercise any noteworthy influence on a stage-performance and they must surely rank among those elements of the didascalies that cannot be transposed on to the theatrical stage.

Prefaces or forewords, as they are sometimes also referred to, are not much different from dedications, except for the fact that they are much longer, and cover subjects which range from what inspired the writing of the work to autobiographical details about the author, which might include the socio-political and economic circumstances in which the work was conceived or when and where it was first staged. Prefaces remain part of the written text and cannot find their way into the performance except indirectly through short extracts and adaptations written into programmes. If members of the audience are then able to read the programme before the play begins, it might assist in mentally preparing them to see the performance in a certain perspective. Beyond this, no further purpose can be served by the preface in the transposition of the dramatic text to the stage. In forming an overall view of the role and function of dedications and prefaces therefore, one still cannot unequivocally state that they are not performance orientated. Their role in preparing audiences for performances might be negligible, but is arguably still evidence of their orientation towards the stage.

4.2.3 THE LIST OF CHARACTERS

An essential part of the didascalies in the dramatic text is the list of characters which normally appears at the beginning of the play. Its primary function is the simple identification of the characters who take part in the drama, and it is usually accompanied by a few personal details of the characters like their ages, their relationships, their appearances, what they do in life, etc. The list of characters there-

fore provides essential information about the fictional world of the drama; and it is usually printed in the theatre programmes with the names of the actors playing the different parts. The intention, which is quite obvious to all theatre-goers, is to introduce the actors and the parts they play to the audience in order to facilitate the latter's rapid familiarity with the fictional world which is the subject of the drama.

Carlson (1983:283) states that "In the highly concentrated narrative world of the drama, the names given to characters potentially provide a powerful communicative device for the dramatist, seeking to orient his audience as quickly as possible in his fictive world". It has already been illustrated that economy of expression and concentration of information is one of the most essential distinctive features of the dramatic text which is generally geared towards the performance stage with its conventional time restriction of approximately two hours. In order to effect the communication required "to orient the audience as quickly as possible in his fictive world" drama employs such devices as the list of characters. Hence it is that the list of dramatis personae is, by its very nature and function within the dramatic text, oriented towards the theatrical stage.

It is also important to note the manner in which the names of the characters are arranged in the list of characters. Conventionally, they are hierarchically arranged with the name(s) of the main character(s) at the top; and these are then followed by the rest in order of importance. This is clearly a dramatic convention which was conceived with the theatre in mind. The placing of the names of the main characters at the top of the list is to facilitate recognition and recollection by the audience of the names of the people who stand at the centre of the action in the drama. A theatrical performance being such a fleeting experience under the set conditions that prevail at a given time and place, audiences know that their full understanding and appreciation of the dramatic action depend on their ability not to miss out on some essential piece of information and on their being able to recognize the key players especially, without difficulty. Unlike in a reading of a text where a reader might go over a scene or act twice or thrice to

make sure that the relations of the actantial roles are properly grasped before he/she proceeds, no part of a stage performance is ever repeated except in a rehearsal behind closed doors.

The hierarchical arrangement of the list of characters with the names of the main characters on top, combined with a list of the names of the actors (usually those who acted the parts in the first performance of the play), is therefore meant to somewhat simplify matters for the audience by highlighting the primary role of the players in this way. This is because a heavy demand has already been placed on the spectators who have to keep up with the fast pace of the action on stage or else miss out altogether especially if they have not seen or read the play before. A similar function is fulfilled by the convention according to which the characters in the list of dramatis personae (coupled with the names of the actors) are arranged in the order according to which they make their entrances in the play or on stage. It is also a technique that helps orientate the spectator in a performance. In this respect therefore, the list of characters in a dramatic text can be seen as a convention specifically set up with the theatrical stage in mind.

4.2.4 THE PROLOGUE AND EPILOGUE

The traditional apologetic prologue, already briefly discussed in a different context in section 3.2.1.1, is one of those elements of the didascalies that most explicitly demonstrate its inclination towards the stage. The fact that it is an instance of breaking frame and establishing direct dialogic contact with the audience is in itself evidence of this. The content and aim of different prologues illustrate this.

With further reference to the quoted extract from Shakespeare's King Henry V,

> But pardon, gentles all,

> The flat unraised spirit that have dared
> On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
> So great an object: can this cockpit hold
> The vasty field of France?
>
> (Shakespeare, 1982:443)

the fact that actual reference to the performance stage is made, first as "unworthy scaffold" and then as "cockpit" indicates that the words are meant to be uttered on a theatrical stage. It is proof that the words and the play were conceived and written with an audience and a theatre in mind.

Another instance of how a prologue prepares an audience by guiding their expectations is in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus (Steane, 1969). In this text, the prologue alludes to warlike plays about the "pomp of proud audacious deeds", the exploits of the likes of Hannibal and the Carthaginians in "the fields of Thrasimene". It also refers to courtly plays about the "dalliance of love", evidently implying that these were themes audiences of the day had grown accustomed to. The prologue then states that the subject of this particular play is not about any of these concerns, but about the fortunes of one called Faustus, born of poor parents in Germany, who grew up to be so great and proud a theologian and magician that he offended the heavens which then plotted his downfall. The tone and content of the prologue is both didactic and preparatory, for when it ends with the last line,

> And this the man that in his study sits,
>
> (Gill, 1965,5)

and the curtain opens with him seated there, the audience already knows who and what he is, as well as the general drift of the play.

Such prologues which stand outside the action of the play arm audiences with essential background information about the impending action of the drama and the characters involved in it so as to expediate their assimilation and understanding of the issues involved. The didascalies then, through the use of prologues, perform an information-giving and

preparatory function which is clearly directed towards an audience.

As a logical follow-up to what is given by the prologue, the epilogue usually sums up the dramatic action concluded at the end, and reinforces the pronouncements made in the prologue. Its function is different from that of the prologue, because it is not preparatory, but rather assumes a concluding function in the light of what has gone before it. In Doctor Faustus the short epilogue simply points to the fate of the fallen doctor and issues a sombre warning to the audience not

> To practise more than heavenly power permits
>
> (Gill, 1965:89)

lest they go the same way as Faustus. In a way similar to the prologue, the didascalies thus employs the epilogue to underline the moral of the play and direct the judgement of the audience. Without a stage and an audience, there would be no need for either a prologue or an epilogue.

4.2.5 STAGE DIRECTIONS

Of all the different elements that together form the didascalies, the stage directions may, with a great deal of justification, be regarded as the most important in the transposition from text to performance. And any attempt at understanding the dialectic between the text and the theatrical performance must needs take stock of the role and function of stage directions. As the name itself implies, stage directions in dramatic texts are the most explicit reminders possible that such texts are written with the performance stage in mind.

Savona (1982:26) regards the didascalies, and stage directions, in particular, as instruments of the dual dramatic fiction: the textual fiction and the scenic fiction; by which she refers to the two ways in which a dramatic text may be read, i.e. purely as a work of fiction or

as a potential stage production. She goes on to state that while the didascalies make an important contribution to the creation and coherence of the textual fiction in every play, in the written text,

> ... they are a constant reminder of theatrical mimesis, of the actors, with their disguise and their acting space, of everything that is customarily called the production - a production which is here only in a potential state - the didascalies force the reader to imagine characters to whom actors give substance, to situate them on the stage, with a certain set, among objects which are themselves merely signs of real objects, since the linguistic signs of the didascalies disappear at the level of production where they are transposed either into iconic or voiced signs, or else indexes which emphasize or link together other signs.
>
> (Savona, 1982:30)

In a similar vein, Teodorescu-Brinzeu (1981/82:m1) defines the dramatic text as a permanent set of ordered verbal elements that are in some way related by the mediation of the stage-directions to performance actions and stage devices. Such a text contains a verbal level which forms the syntagmatic axis of the play and which can be segmented into successive units belonging to either the dialogue or the stage directions, and a scenic level which forms the paradigmatic axis of the play and which contains the simultaneous elements belonging to either characters or the scenery. (Teodorescu-Brinzeu, 1981/82:m1). He further asserts that

> Although the stage-directions belong to the verbal level of the play, they determine theoretically the scenic level and establish the codes that will function in a certain performance. They have to be considered as textual elements on the one hand, and as theatrical elements that find their justification in the performance, on the other.
>
> (Teodorescu-Brinzeu, 1981/82:m1)

In the secondary or side text of a written dramatic text, stage directions are customarily separated from the dialogue of the characters (primary/main text) by means of brackets, a distanced placing in the page, or even typographically, through the use of cursive writing. Levitt (1971:36) however makes a distinction between written stage directions in the secondary text and spoken ones in the dramatic dialogue itself. According to him, while the function of written stage directions is the giving of instructions concerning the time and place of the events, actions, movements, entrances and exits, sound effects, stage properties, costumes or setting; spoken stage directions are mainly used to make "announcements" in the dialogue of the characters. Teodorescu-Brinzeu (1981/82:m2) draws a further distinction between stage directions at the beginning or end of certain acts, which refer to the names of the characters, the division into acts and scenes, the rising or falling of the curtain, the scenery and costumes; and those inside the text which refer to the intonation, gestures and movements of the characters and are closely connected to the speech acts they accompany and describe.

But the contribution made by Mouton (1989) in the systematic study and classification of stage directions is perhaps among the most significant to date. In keeping with Teodorescu-Brinzeu's view (1981/82:m2) that stage directions are the only subjective part of the play through which the author can communicate directly with the reader, express his/her opinions freely or make comments, and in this way "enrich the dialogue with elements that could not have been mentioned by the author otherwise", she has identified three aspects of stage directions. These are those that pertain to character, to time and to space. They may be considered either from a visual or auditive perspective; and through them a dramatist may complement the content of the dramatic dialogue in the play. As the focus of interest here is the performance directedness of the different aspects of the stage directions, the classification proposed by Mouton can still be put to good use towards a systematic treatment of the subject. Each of the three aspects of the stage directions in the secondary text, viz. those that pertain to fictional character, fictional space and fictional time will now be considered separately. Brief attention will also be paid to other

important stage directions which do not fall under any of these three categories. These are the beginnings and endings of acts/scenes, the entrances and exits of characters, as well as the identification of the turns they take at speaking. The distinction proposed by Levitt (1971:36) between written- and spoken stage directions will also be observed.

4.2.5.1 WRITTEN STAGE DIRECTIONS

Reference in this section is naturally made to those parts of the written text which are typographically separated from the dialogue of the characters by means of italics, indentation or brackets.

4.2.5.1.1 STAGE DIRECTIONS THAT REFER TO THE FICTIONAL CHARACTER

Mouton (1989:175) states that a wide range and variety of information about the fictional characters can be communicated through verbal signs in the stage directions that give visual or auditory details about these characters in the dramatic text. Most of these verbal signs in the text can be transposed into visual and auditive signs in the stage performance. It is in fact only in the performance that these verbal signs are realized or concretized into real signs that are visually or audibly perceptible to an audience. A brief consideration of each of these signs under the proposed visual and auditory categories will further illuminate the matter.

(a) VISUAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE FICTIONAL CHARACTER

This ranges from the physical stature, appearance and facial expression of the dramatic characters, to their different gestures and movements.

- THE PHYSICAL STATURE AND APPEARANCE OF THE FICTIONAL CHARACTER

The physical description of a character in a dramatic text, which is usually provided just before the character appears to take part in the dialogue and action of the drama, is an integral part of the complex semiotic system that operates in this genre. The physical stature of a character like his/her height, build, complexion, hair colour, bodily defects and other striking features in his/her physical composition are all important semiotic indicators within the complex network of codes that operate in drama. They normally reveal some important attributes in the character of the individual involved, things which frequently have symbolic value, and which the writer wishes to bring to the attention of the reader because they have a cumulative effect in the overall conception of the dramatic character involved. In a similar way, the physical appearance of fictional characters - their clothes, what they wear on their heads or faces and the accessories they carry - also possess, in traditional drama, conventional meanings (e.g. a crown is associated with royalty and a weapon such as a gun if always carried for no apparent reason by an ordinary civilian could be indicative of an inordinate sense of insecurity, an obsession with violence, etc.).

An illustrative example could be cited from Wole Soyinka's (1963) The Lion and the Jewel where the two main characters, who are also the two opposing forces in the play, are described in the stage directions prior to their appearance on the scene. Lakunle the school-teacher is described as follows:

> *The schoolmaster is nearly twenty-three. He is dressed in-an old-style English suit, threadbare but not ragged, clean but not ironed, obviously a size or two too small. His tie is done in a very small knot, disappearing beneath a shiny black waistcoat. He wears twenty-three-inch bottom trousers, and blanco-white tennis shoes.*
>
> (Soyinka, 1963:1)

In contrast, Baroka the "Bale" of Ilunjinle is later simply described

in the following way when he makes his dramatic and symbolic appearance.

> *Everything comes to a sudden stop as Baroka the Bale, wiry, goateed, tougher than his sixty two years, himself emerges at this point from behind the tree.*
>
> (Soyinka, 1963:16)

The description of these two opposed characters in the text is a crucial feature in the structural composition of the play, and it also touches upon the main thematic concerns of the play: while the schoolmaster is like a fossilized relic of the old British conservative, a carricature of rote learning and unquestioning assimilation of foreign values at the expense of his own African identity, the Bale is simply described by reference to his thinness, his goatee and his toughness for a man of his age. He is the African patriarch, whose blend of wisdom, guile and sexuality cannot be matched by the likes of Lakunle. The didascalies goes a long way in contrasting these two characters, their physical stature and appearance which when considered against the background of their roles in the action of the play underline the symbolism employed and foreground the chief concerns of the drama. But a verbal description of these characters as laid out in the didascalies, important as it is in a literary reading of the text, is only a compromise for the real thing - the performance. On the performance stage the appearance of the school-teacher in his old-fashioned, threadbare and small suit, with his tennis shoes to match would have a comical impact greater than that produced by reading the text.

- THE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS OF THE FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

Facial expressions are finely woven into the fabric of interlocking codes that accompany dramatic dialogue which only truly comes alive on the performance stage. This is because the other semiotic systems that operate alongside dialogue can only be mentioned (and not actualized) in the written didascalies. A reading of a text cannot produce the

kind of combined effect of these codes as is produced in a stage performance.

The facial expression of a fictional character is an abstraction that can only be concretized when assumed by an actor on a performance stage, and it gives the dramatic dialogue a depth and dimension of complexity that can only be realized by real actors on a real stage. This becomes especially the case when it is considered that a distinction can be made between two types of facial expressions, viz. those that serve to support the verbal expression of the dialogue and those that negate the actual words of the speaker in the dialogic exchange. (Mouton, 1989:180). It might be easy for a reader to visualize the facial expression in the former case where a fictional character is supposed to smile to indicate the joy or contentment that he/she simultaneously expresses verbally in the dialogue, but it is considerably more difficult for the same reader to recreate in the mind's eye a fictional character's facial expression if it is at odds with the words he/she says. For this reason definite indications on how to interpret the words and facial expressions might need to be given in the written dramatic text. But then in such cases the facial expression determines the interpretation given as action also always determines how we interpret the words of the dialogue.

Stage directors usually have to make difficult choices whenever a written text is to be staged, and this is precisely because not everything is spelt out clearly in the text. Non-verbal communicative codes like the facial expressions, bearing and movements of the fictional characters which remain abstractions in the written text have to be concretized into visible shapes and forms; and this requires creativity on the part of the stage director and actors.

- THE GESTURES AND MOVEMENTS OF THE FICTIONAL CHARACTER

The gestures and movements of fictional characters are also sometimes indicated in the stage directions of the written dramatic text. But as

already indicated in section 2.4.1, under Gestic Signs, a lot is left to the imagination of the reader as playwrights do not normally indicate every gesture and every movement that accompany every utterance by a fictional speaker. It is simply not possible for any dramatist to do it. However any lively dialogue is accompanied by such gestures and such movements which, if not specified in the written didascalies will have to be provided by the producer and his/her actors. To argue that dramatic dialogue in the text is performance orientated partly because it uses gestic and proxemic signs (an argument presented in sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2) is to implicitly state that these signs are in fact part of the theatrical stage.

Although it is possible for a reader to visualize these signs from what is specified by the didascalies, it is once again not the same as seeing these signs executed by a real actor, on the performance stage where they will invariably be complemented by other staging signs to produce in the dialogue, shades and subtleties of meaning that could otherwise not be brought to the surface in an ordinary reading of the text.

Mouton (1989:181-185) makes a distinction between four categories of gestures and movements: those that reveal the individual subject's mental or emotional state as when a character scratches his head to show indecision or uncertainty; those that are directed to others as when one character manhandles or embraces another; those which are executed jointly by a group as in dances, mime, as well as other forms of play; and those that indicate the entrances and exits of the characters. Group gestures and movements especially can be difficult to visualize from a mere reading of the didascalies although the functions they serve may be deduced from the context described in the play. The following example from the didascalies in Soyinka's The Lion and the Jewel should illustrate this: (It is a protracted and complicated dance and mime procedure which is performed to mock the lion of Ilujinle for the supposed loss of his virility).

[Re-enter the mummers, dancing straight through (more centrally this time) as before. Male dancer enters first, pursued by a number of young women and other choral idlers. The man dances in tortured movements. He and about half of his pursuers have already danced off-stage on the opposite side when Sadiku dips her hand briskly in Lakunle's pocket, this time with greater success. Before Lakunle can stop her, she has darted to the drummers and pressed a coin apiece on their foreheads, waving them to possession of the floor. Tilting their heads backwards, they drum her praises. Sadiku denies the credit, points to Lakunle as the generous benefactor. They transfer their attention to him where he stands biting his lips at the trick. The other dancers have now been brought back and the drummers resume the beat of the interrupted dance. The treasurer removes the coins from their foreheads and places them in a pouch. Now begins the dance of virility which is of course none other than the Baroka story. Very athletic movements. Even in his prime, 'Baroka' is made a comic figure, held in a kind of tolerant respect by his women. At his decline and final downfall, they are most unsparing in their taunts and tantalizing motions. Sadiku has never stopped bouncing on her toes through the dance, now she is done the honour of being invited to join at the kill. A dumb show of bashful refusals, then she joins them, reveals surprising agility for her age, to the wild enthusiasm of the rest who surround and spur her on.

With 'Baroka' finally scotched, the crowd dances away to their incoming movement, leaving Sadiku to dance on oblivious of their departure. The drumming becomes more distant and she unwraps her eyelids. Sighs, look around her and walks contentedly towards Lakunle. As usual he has enjoyed the spectacle in spite of himself,

> showing especial relish where 'Baroka' gets the worst of it from his women. Sadiku looks at him for a moment while he tries to replace his obvious enjoyment with disdain. She shouts 'Boo' at him, and breaks into a dance movement, shakes a sudden leg at Lakunle].
>
> (Soyinka, 1963:57)

The playwright in this case has given very elaborate stage directions about what happens on the performance stage. This dance and mime procedure which is here spelled out from beginning to end, and which is an essential thematic component of the play, is outlined for the benefit of the reader who cannot see the stage performance itself. But although the dramatist has been so detailed in his description of this dance routine, and even allowed his authorial voice to come through in giving explicit interpretative clues like informing the reader that it is "a dance of virility, which is of course none other than the Baroka story" this is a verbal account which does not have the same impact as watching the dance live on stage. A reader can only roughly imagine from the hints given in the didascalies that it is a ribald and sensuous kind of dance without knowing exactly what form it took, what gestures, facial expressions and 'tantalizing' motions were used to taunt Baroka in this mock procedure of his final downfall. To add to this, the sound accompaniment for the dance and mime as produced by the mummers is of course absent from even the best visual conception of the spectacle any reader could be capable of.

Yet this quoted extract of stage directions should rank among the most detailed any dramatist could be expected to give in a genre that relies mainly on verbal dialogue; but even this proves to be lacking in providing a reader with an experience comparable to that of a spectator or audience in a theatre. It is precisely because stage directions are meant for the transformation process that takes place from text to performance.

(b) AUDITIVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE FICTIONAL CHARACTER

Mouton (1989:187) identifies two ways in which auditive information pertaining to a fictional character may be given, viz. information which relates to the description of the character's voice and that which refers to other sounds that a character may produce in other ways. Within the information about a fictional character's voice, it is reasonable to make a further distinction between the permanent features of any individual's voice like its modulation, tempo, accent, speech defects etc. and those incidental qualities any voice assumes when agitated, excited, depressed, angry or when it makes an entreaty. The same distinction could be made in the second category of sounds produced by a speaker in other ways. There are sounds a character habitually makes whenever he/she appears on the scene like Shakespeare's Toby Belch in Twelfth Night (whose belching in defiance of all norms of decency became his trademark) and other circumstantial sounds people make like coughing or sneezing because of a cold, stamping their feet or clapping hands.

Although it is possible for a playwright to describe a fictional character's quality of voice and other sounds that such an individual may produce as a matter of habit or in the course of the dramatic action, auditive signs are usually associated with the theatre. It is easier to produce an actor on stage with a particular quality of voice, tempo of speech, accent, speech defects etc. than it is to attempt to describe these in any precise way. The playwright only describes those aspects (like belching) which are specific sounds made by an individual, but the qualities of a character's voice which are impossible to describe are usually ignored. This does not, however, mean that certain auditive aspects of an individual voice cannot be highlighted especially if these are important indicators for the reader on how to interpret the character. The same reasoning employed in the previous section to illustrate the difficulty of conveying verbally what should simply be enacted on a performance stage holds here: if it is difficult to verbally relay information gathered visually, it is even more so with details of an auditive nature.

4.2.5.1.2. STAGE DIRECTIONS THAT REFER TO FICTIONAL SPACE

A standard procedure in the conception of all dramatic texts is the specification of the fictional location where the action of the drama takes place. This is normally done at the beginnings of scenes or acts. Issacharoff (1981:215), in the distinction he draws within dramatic space between mimetic and diegetic space, states that mimetic space is that space which is made visible to an audience and represented on a theatrical stage. In the written dramatic text, information about this space is conveyed in the stage directions. Mouton (1989:190), however, correctly observes that such information about mimetic space can be verbally communicated in the stage directions of a dramatic text in such a way that it can either be visually or aurally imagined by a reader. This is still consistent with the classification used in the previous section on fictional characters, where written verbal signs in a text are transposed into visual or aural signs on the performance stage.

(a) VISUAL INFORMATION ABOUT FICTIONAL SPACE

Such information can be given in one of two ways: as a description of the fictional world in terms of stage arrangements or as a direct physical description of the fictional world itself.

Many dramatic texts employ the former option. In this instance, a visual description of the physical features of the performance stage is given to show how the stage is arranged to represent the fictional world where the action is supposed to take place. The techniques of stage arrangement vary from the basic to the very sophisticated. They include the use of canvass paintings of background scenery, partitions, possibly with doors and/or windows; moveable stairs and pavilions to indicate elevated spots; the use of lighting techniques, items of furniture and other objects. All these are usually described in the stage directions of the written dramatic text to help the reader visualize what the stage might look like in a performance of this

play. Such texts are understandably more overtly oriented towards theatre than those where the didascalies describes the fictional world without making any reference to the stage.

The following lines from the stage directions at the beginning of Soyinka's The Lion and the Jewel illustrate such an instance where the stage is explicitly mentioned:

> *A clearing on the edge of the market, dominated by an immense 'odan' tree. It is the village centre. The wall of the bush school flanks the stage on the right, and a rude window opens on to the stage from the wall. There is a chant of the 'Arithmetic Times' issuing from this window.*
>
> (Soyinka, 1963:1)

It stands to reason that while references to the stage give stage producers an indication of how the stage could be arranged for a particular stage production, it helps the reader who sees him/herself as implicit spectator to imagine what the stage would look like in such a production.

In contrast to the above, there are dramatic texts whose stage directions make no reference to the performance stage. The visual details of the fictional world are directly given without the mediation of the theatrical stage, and the reader is called upon to visualize the fictional world itself as in the narrative arts. An appropriate example may be cited from A dance of the Forest (a play by Soyinka from his Collected Plays I (1973)) which is less obviously meant for the performance stage:

> *An empty clearing in the forest. Suddenly the soil appears to be breaking and the head of the Dead Woman pushes its way up. Some distance from her, another head begins to appear, that of a man. They both come up slowly. The man is fat and bloated, wears a dated warrior's outfit, now mouldy ...*

(Soyinka, 1973:7)

No mention is made about the stage and the only information furnished about the fictional world is simply that it is on "an empty clearing in the forest". The absence of any references to the stage in such stage directions does not necessarily imply that the dramatic texts concerned cannot to be staged. On the contrary, this could be regarded as an advantage by stage producers, technicians and managers in that they are thus challenged to exercise their creativity and consider how best such a text could be produced on stage. But whichever type of stage directions one is looking at, visual information about fictional space is crucial to anyone who considers producing a stage performance of any particular dramatic text.

(b) AUDITIVE INFORMATION ABOUT FICTIONAL SPACE

There are physical limits to what can be portrayed on the performance stage because no stage is unlimited in size. Secondly, the architectural design of a particular stage cannot be suitable for the staging of all plays. The physical size and composition of a stage in a theatre can impose serious constraints on what a stage producer can do. For this reason theatrical stages are frequently partitioned or even extended to encompass space that would normally be used as part of the auditorium, i.e. in cases where it is possible to move chairs and take up part of the sitting accommodation of the audience.

A very common technique employed in theatre today is the use of sound techniques to aurally extend the performance stage in cases where it cannot be physically done. These sounds which are played off-stage in a theatre, (e.g. the sound of thunder and rain, the approaching sound of a train, people singing, shouting or quarreling) in the distance, are indicative of action which takes place in locations other than or adjacent to what is represented by the stage-action which nevertheless impacts on what happens on the particular space being represented on stage. In the dramatic text, such sounds are usually specified in the

stage directions. For instance, in the last quoted extract from the stage directions of Soyinka's The Lion and the Jewel, in section 4.2.5.1.2(a), there is a chant of the "arithmetic times" which can be heard on stage from the open window of a classroom. Although the pupils who make the recital cannot be seen on stage, their presence off-stage is registered in this way. For the reader who cannot see or hear, these things, when mentioned in the stage directions, are a reminder that dramatic texts are conceived for theatre. Although the reader cannot hear these sounds he/she is able to imagine them recreated off the scene on a performance stage. In this sense, the specification (in the stage directions) of sounds off-stage is also indicative of the performance orientation of dramatic texts.

4.2.5.1.3 STAGE DIRECTIONS THAT REFER TO FICTIONAL TIME

Like fictional space, the fictional time when the action of the drama is supposed to take place is usually mentioned in the stage directions of the written dramatic text. This fictional time could either be the time of the day or night, the season of the year or even the historical period when the dramatic action takes place. But rather than merely giving this information in the stage directions playwrights frequently give a written visual or auditive sign to indicate this time in a mimetic way. The visual or auditive signs in the written stage directions are already indicators of how the time of day, historical period or passage of time generally can be represented on stage.

(a) VISUAL INFORMATION ABOUT FICTIONAL TIME

Since action in dramatic texts takes place in time, it is necessary for stage performances to represent this temporal aspect of the dramatic action. But the authorial voice does not need to break the fictional illusion of the stage just to indicate the time of day to the audience. There are other ways of doing this, and visual signs are commonly

employed to inform audiences about the time of day/night, year/season when the action takes place.

A burning candle on a darkened stage could indicate the time of day just as the use of lighting effects could simulate the rising or setting of the sun. In a similar way the participants in the action of the play could also portray, through their warm clothing and gestures that they feel cold (that it is winter). The kind of clothing worn by the actors is also a common sign of the historical time that covers the events of the drama. And the long passage of time between two scenes during which the personages of the drama could be said to age might be shown by the visible signs of aging in the appearances of the actors.

One can refer to the kind of clothing worn by the characters in Sophiatown by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company. This play opened at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg in February 1986. In this production, the characters put on the kind of clothes worn in the 1950's in Sophiatown. All the young men, Jakes, Mingus and Fahfee donned hats which they tilted on the one side of their heads; they wore expensive American clothes with baggy trousers and long shining shoes; and they all walked with a swagger that was typical of the gang members during those days. All these are signs which indicate that it was the 1950's, and anyone who dressed differently was either out of town or not streetwise at all. The clothes used by the actors became in this instance visual, semiotic indicators of a historical period.

(b) **AUDITIVE INFORMATION ABOUT FICTIONAL TIME**

The use of sound systems to transpose the written information about sounds as given in the stage directions of the dramatic text to the stage is also a commonly used technique in the theatre. Sound techniques are commonly used in conjunction with visual indicators to communicate time in stage performances. But it is also possible to use them without the reinforcement of visual signs. A cock crowing in the distance as recreated off-stage or the sound of an alarm clock on stage

is usually indicative of the early morning. The sound of a passing train, if it is heard at fixed times already known by the audience, could also serve the same purpose. In the opening scene of Fugard's The Blood Knot, the stage directions specify that it is

> *Late afternoon.*
> *Lying on his bed, the one with the shelf, and staring up at the ceiling, is Morris. After a few seconds he stands up on the bed, looks at the alarm clock and then lies down again in the same position. Time passes. The alarm rings and Morris jumps purposefully to his feet. He knows exactly what he is going to do ....*
>
> (Fugard, 1980:3)

Morris relies on the alarm clock to inform him of the exact time when he has to start preparing for the arrival of his brother Zachariah, who reaches home from work at exactly the same time every afternoon. The latter's feet are calloused and he needs to have hot water and foot salts all laid out ready for him when he arrives at the end of every working day. The sound of the alarm clock warns Morris about his brother's impending arrival, and he does indeed appear within seconds of the expected time. The written stage directions usually indicate what sound techniques might be used in the staging of a particular scene.

4.2.5.1.4 THE BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS OF ACTS/SCENES

The division into acts and scenes is an important structuring feature of any dramatic text for dramatic action is seldom portrayed in one long continuous succession of events. The action is conventionally broken into acts and scenes; and this division is usually determined by numerous considerations such as the different times and locations where the different actions took place; the dramatic tensions that exist between the characters, the need to have these tensions highlighted; the number of characters involved; as well as the number of

plots that run parallel in the story. Acts and scenes are crucial structuring devices in dramatic art and they serve to compartmentalize the action into separate, identifiable, yet related units that form an integrated whole. In one-act plays, the different scenes serve the purpose of dividing the play into such units so that the story-line has a visible beginning, middle and end.

In the written text the beginning of an act and/or scene and its numerical order are conventionally indicated in bold letters at the top of the page. And it is usually on the page following the one with the list of characters. Also, it is customary to have some short stage directions in brackets and/or in italics following after the indication of the numerical order of the scene. The purpose of these directions is to furnish information about where the action takes place, what characters are involved and perhaps what time of the day or year it is.

In the staged production of a dramatic text the beginnings and endings of acts and scenes were traditionally indicated by the rising and falling of the curtain on the stage. Over the past few years lighting techniques have increasingly been used in modern theatre to black out the stage at the end of a scene and to illuminate it while simultaneously darkening the auditorium at the beginning of a scene. Accompanying music is sometimes also played in the background to mark such a beginning of a scene. The lighting effects and the background music are either used separately or together in different plays. Therefore, whereas the beginnings and endings are indicated in writing in the dramatic text, they are visually or aurally communicated in a stage performance. If the production is long enough to warrant a break, this would first be indicated in the programme. The darkening of the stage as well as the illumination of the space of the auditorium would then signal the arrival of the break at the right time. It thus never becomes necessary to substitute the written "Act 1, Scene 1" in the text for spoken verbal signs in the form of an announcement in the theatre. Audiences are generally familiar with the conventions of the theatre; and they recognize the break when it arrives and act accordingly.

4.2.5.1.5 ENTRANCES, EXITS AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE SPEAKING-TURNS OF THE CHARACTERS

The announcements of the entrances and exits of the dramatic characters as well as the identification of their speaking turns have a structuring function similar to the one fulfilled by the signs that mark the beginnings and endings of acts/scenes in dramatic texts.

In the written text the name of the character is normally written in block letters with a colon (:), to indicate that he/she has taken the floor. It is also not unusual to have some short stage directions inserted in brackets after the colon and before the actual words of the speaker as a character might step forward, raise one or both hands or even shake his/her head to remonstrate or make a point. Indications of such entrances, exits and speaking turns are crucial to the structure of dramatic art for without them there is no way that a reader may know who is speaking, when he/she stops and who takes over the speaking turn. Furthermore these entrances and exits of characters are commonly used by playwrights to coincide with the beginnings and endings of scenes or acts as it is more convenient to begin a scene with the entrance of a particular character and end it with the departure from the stage of one or more individual character.

In the transformation process that takes place from the written text to the stage performance, the names that precede the words of the speakers and the short stage directions that explain their actions and gestures disappear. Instead what happens in the stage production is that the audience see the actors making their entrances and exits, taking turns at speaking and making all the gestures that one would read about in a text. The written verbal messages in the dramatic text are substituted once again by visual and auditory signs when the play assumes a medium different from the written text. And as is commonly the case in drama, the written sign is directed towards facilitating the transformation of the written text to the stage.

4.2.5.2 SPOKEN STAGE DIRECTIONS

Stage directions are also frequently contained within the spoken dialogue of the characters in a written dramatic text. Levitt (1971:36) states the following:

> ... the dialogue serves as a verbal stage direction to announce the arrival of a character (often detailing the personality and history of that character) and serves to indicate the action which is taking place off-stage. In this last sense it is a kind of scene within a scene.
>
> (Levitt, 1971:36)

He (1971:36) goes on to mention that these verbal (spoken) stage directions serve functions which are as important as those fulfilled by the printed stage directions. They can facilitate the smooth flow of one scene to another by having dramatic characters alerting the audience about the imminent arrival or entrance of other characters after having seen or heard them approach.

If such an alert is accompanied by an introduction of the character's history and/or personality, the verbal stage direction serves an expository function, providing background details and characterizations for the audience. The speaker also occasionally speaks about him/herself (his/her past experiences, fears, preferences, or personality traits), thus doing what could have been done by the written stage directions. Also, during those moments when the off-stage action has a direct bearing on the stage action, the verbal stage direction may serve as a description of the absent action, creating as it were, a scene within a scene. Levitt (1971:44) further states that the "scene within the scene" appears to be a characteristic of plays written for theatres known to have limited stage machinery which made stage changes impossible. This was the case with the Elizabethan theatres and the Abbey theatre.

> To indicate a change of place (location) and to give the impression of taking the audience 'out of the playhouse' to other climes and places, and thereby increase the scenic variations in a play, the playwrights who wrote for the Abbey theatre and the Elizabethan theatres were forced to include place information and landscape descriptions in the speeches of their characters.
>
> (Levitt, 1971:45)

He uses, as examples, Pandarus' description of the marching army in Troilus and Cressida and Enobarbus' description of Cleopatra's barge in Antony and Cleopatra. A further example may be cited from Fugard's Boesman and Lena where Lena recalls and reminds Boesman about the incidents of the day after their shack had been pulled down; and in the process she fills the audience in on this important piece of background information:

> LENA: All you knew was to load up our things and take the empties to the bottle store. After that ...!
> *[She shakes her head].*
> 'Where we going, Boesman?' 'Don't ask questions. Walk!' Ja, don't ask questions. Because you didn't know the answers. Where to go, what to do. I remember now. Down this street, up the next one, look down that one, then around and go the other way. Not lost? What way takes you past Berry's Corner twice, then back to where you started from? I'm not a fool, Boesman. The roads are crooked enough without you also being in a *dwaal* ...
>
> (Fugard, 1980:243)

This scene within a scene communicated by Lena illustrates Boesman's confusion when they had to take to the road again after their home had been demolished. He was so disoriented that he literally walked in circles with Lena following in his footsteps.

Since the dialogue in the dramatic text seldom undergoes any major changes when the text is transposed to the stage (with the exception of productions where the director deliberately takes liberties with the text) the spoken stage directions in the textual dialogue are invariably repeated in the stage performance. The only difference, which obviously applies to the rest of the dialogue, will be that in the performance, verbal signs will replace the written dialogue. This constitutes the major difference between spoken stage directions and written ones most of which can be transposed into visual, auditory and sometimes even olfactory signs in a performance.

Otherwise, all the categories mentioned in the discussion conducted in the previous section on written stage directions (i.e. those that pertain to fictional character, fictional space and fictional time) are also valid for spoken stage directions. Furthermore, since spoken stage directions are part of the dramatic dialogue, the argumentation in support of the performance orientation of dialogue as conducted in Chapter 3 will also be valid for spoken stage directions.

4.3 CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made in this chapter to touch upon the main aspects of the didascalies that feature in the transposition of a dramatic text to its theatrical production. It needs to be borne in mind however that not all stage directions can be translated into paralinguistic and non-verbal codes on the theatrical stage. A playwright like George Bernard Shaw is well known for his stage directions which are so detailed that they even communicate the inner thoughts and feelings of the dramatic characters. Although such information sheds greater light on the spoken dialogue of the dramatic text, information about a character's mental and emotional state can ordinarily not be represented on a performance stage. Notwithstanding such exceptions which are rare in dramatic art, the evidence that points to the performance orientation of the didascalies in the written dramatic text is quite overwhelming and conclusive.

S E C T I O N B

THE PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION OF DIALOGUE AND DIDASCALIES IN FUGARD'S PLAYLAND AND MY CHILDREN! MY AFRICA!

INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapters have largely dealt with theoretical argumentation that points to the performance orientation of dialogue and didascalies in dramatic texts generally. It is now necessary to take a more specific view of the works that form part of the subject of this inquiry. A closer examination of the two plays by Athol Fugard, Playland and My Children! My Africa! will now be conducted to illustrate in more specific terms, the extent to which their dialogue and didascalies depend on the theatrical stage for the full realization of their meaning.

The choice of these two dramatic texts does not imply that other works by other writers would not have been equally suitable, for the whole thrust of the argument is that dialogue and didascalies in dramatic texts generally, are orientated towards the performance stage. But Athol Fugard, as a playwright, has dominated the South African English theatrical scene for decades now; and he enjoys such acclaim at home and abroad that he has been regarded as one of the most significant dramatists to come from these shores. He commands the respect of a wide community of readers throughout the world. And to talk or write about his work is to speak a language that is understood by the majority of people who have any interest in theatre or drama.

Besides coming from the pen of the same writer, what the two works, Playland and My Children! My Africa! have in common is that they are both among his more recent works, and both have overtly political concerns. Not that politics has anything to do with what this inquiry means to achieve, but the two plays represent the dilemma which Fugard, by his own admission, always finds himself faced with whenever he has to write about South African life. In an address on 'The Arts and Society' which he delivered at Rhodes University in 1991, he stated that

> Nobody has ever written a good play about a group of happy people who started off happy and who were happy all the way through. Whether its Antigone or Mother Courage or some of those extraordinary disembodied voices which come out of Samuel Beckett's universe, we are talking about human desperation - that is the substance of drama- and in South Africa if you have found a desperate individual, nine times out of ten you have also found a desperate political situation.
>
> (Fugard, 1992:75)

His South African works are never completely apolitical.

It should be evident from the theoretical section that the main difference between the reading of a play and its stage performance is the number of semiotic codes involved in each. Whereas the reading of a dramatic text depends on one communication channel (the written verbal sign), a theatrical production employs numerous semiotic codes which operate together and in unison to express meanings and subtle shades of meaning. It needs to be stated however that the aim of this study is not to carry out an exhaustive analysis of any one of these two selected works. All that is intended here is to highlight the ways in which their dialogue and didascalies were conceived for the performance stage.

Finally, all references that will be made to the stage performances of the two proposed plays in the ensuing pages are based on actual theatrical productions attended at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg. Playland was originally produced by Mannie Manim there on 16 July 1992; and My Children! My Africa! which was first staged on 27 June 1989 at the same venue, was directed by Athol Fugard himself.

CHAPTER 5

THE PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION OF DIALOGUE AND DIDASCALIES IN FUGARD'S PLAYLAND

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Playland is an allegory of South African race relations. It tells the story of a chance meeting between two men from different backgrounds at a travelling amusement park on the outskirts of a town in the Karoo on New Year's Eve, 1989. Gideon le Roux, the young white man recently returned from service on the then South West African border and Martinus Zoeloe, the black nightwatchman engage each other in dialogue at the spot where Gideon sits and watches. It is a dialogue that starts off on a light, humorous note but develops to cut deep into the dark inner lives of the two men and the secret burdens they carry around from their past. It threatens to turn nasty as Martinus is deliberately provoked to violence. But the two men eventually work their way through their differences to a stage where they reach out to each other in friendship, so that there is hope for a better future for their country as symbolized by the dawn of a new day in a new year.

5.1 THE PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION OF DIALOGUE IN PLAYLAND

An attempt has been made in the previous chapter to identify the different components of what constitutes dramatic dialogue; viz. deixis and ostension in verbal dialogue, non-verbal dialogue, floor management and interaction management strategies, supra-segmental features of dialogue, as well as the vertical dimension formed by the stage-audience interaction. Each of these have been discussed separately in a systematic way. An effort was consistently made to show that although all these aspects are inextricably bound to the written verbal dialogue that appears in the text, it is generally not possible for a reader to imaginatively reconstruct them fully in an ordinary reading of that text. As a result, an essential dimension of dramatic dialogue is

simply lost in such a reading.

Also, it has been emphasized that each of the signs constituted by each of these above-mentioned features of dialogue acts in concert with and simultaneously with all the others in any dialogic interaction. To attempt to treat these aspects as if they operate in isolation from the others in a discussion of Playland or any other text would thus not only be very artificial but misleading too. Whatever excerpts are selected for illustrative purposes will therefore be used to demonstrate how aspects of the dialogue and didascalies are oriented towards the performance stage.

5.1.1 DEIXIS AND OSTENSION

Deixis has already been defined in Chapter 2, section 2.2, as what allows language an "active" and dialogic function as opposed to a "descriptive" or choric role. It is marked by the use of personal pronouns where speakers refer to themselves as "I" and to their interlocutors as "you". And it also uses other demonstrative pronouns that indicate space and time, especially the "here" and "now". Deixis is sometimes also referred to as an empty sign because it does not, in itself, specify its object; but uses ostension to point it out within its context. Ostension has also been seen in the subsequent section 2.3 as the gestural or physical component of the language of drama where a speaker, instead of trying to give a verbal message or definition of an object, simply points it out or picks it up to show it to the addressee. Both deixis and ostension depend on their given contexts for their operation, and both usually occur and function together in dramatic dialogue.

The action in Playland begins at the opening scene with Martinus's dramatic entrance that is both unsettling and rivetting of attention:

> *Curtain up on a deserted stage. The angry voice of* MARTINUS ZOELOE *with laughter and heckling from*

other voices, off-stage.

MARTINUS: Ja! Ja! Go on. Laugh as much as you like but I say it again: I'll see all of you down there in Hell. That's right. All of you. In Hell! And when you wake up and see the big fires and you start crying and saying you sorry and asking forgiveness, then it's me who is laughing.

...

MARTINUS: Ja! That day it is Martinus who has a good laugh. You tell lies and cheat and drink and make trouble with the little girls and you think God doesn't know? He knows! He sees everything you do and when the Big Day of Judging comes he will say to you, and you, and specially *you:* Hey! You fucked the little girls in Cradock and gave them babies: you fucked the little girls in Noupoort and gave them babies - what you got to say for yourself? And you got nothing to say because it's true and that's the end of it. And all the times you verneuk the baas with the tickets and put the money in your pockets, he knows about that as well. And also the generator petrol you are stealing and selling in the location. Baas Barney swear at me, but I know it's you. I see you there by the petrol drums when you think nobody is looking. So voetsek to all of you!

He sees the white man for the first time.

GIDEON: That's it my friend. That's what I like to hear. Somebody who is not afraid to speak his mind. So you tell them. You tell them loud and clear.

MARTINUS: Joburg skollies. All of them. All they know is to make trouble for other people.

> GIDEON: Then go make some for them. Ja. Report them to your baas. Don't let them get away with it. You got to speak up in this bloody world. It's the only way to put an end to all the nonsense that is going on. Everywhere you look - bloody nonsense! People think they can get away with anything these days. There's no respect left for nothing no more.
>
> MARTINUS: That one with the skeel oog, he's the one. The first time I see him there in Beaufort West, when he comes looking for work, I knew! Skelm! And I warn Baas Barney. That one is trouble I tell him. But he wouldn't listen. So now we have it.
>
> (Fugard, 1992:8-10)

As it is clearly spelt out in the stage directions at the beginning of the quoted excerp that Martinus speaks to individuals off-stage, they can presumably hear his railing; and the deictic orientation of his words imbues his dialogue with the immediacy that constitutes drama. The pronoun "you", whether subjective or objective, as used in the quoted excerpt gives the words a lively and interactive ring that indicates to the reader that the speaker is engaged in verbal contest with his interlocutors. Like the personal pronouns "I" and "me", it is the essence of direct address which is the distinctive feature of drama as a genre. And such is the power of the personal pronoun "you" in this instance that it evokes the presence of an imaginary second party even when it is known that the speaker is alone on stage. Martinus is obviously incensed by some incident or remark made off-stage, and he bursts onto the scene furiously reacting to this.

When he and Gideon first notice each other, the latter goads him on to "tell them loud and clear", for

> You got to speak up in <u>this bloody world</u> because
> People think they can get away with anything <u>these days</u>.
>
> (Fugard, 1992:9)

The underlined deictic expressions coming from Gideon further consolidate the focus on the spatio-temporal co-ordinates, "here" and "now" of the dramatic moment. The eccentric nightwatchman in his anger accuses his co-workers of numerous sins for which they will be judged and condemned to Hell; and it becomes evident to any reader why there was such boisterous laughter off-stage: his railing is indeed the stuff of which comedy is made. But despite the laughter aroused by his words and the dramatic way in which Martinus enters the stage, these opening lines already introduce the themes of sin, guilt, judgement and damnation which are central to the concerns of this play. A literary reading is thus able to see this opening dialogue against the background of the broader thematic concerns of the play; and through the use of deictic and ostensive expressions it is able to conjure up a presence of the addressee who is in fact not physically present on the scene.

But a full appreciation of the operation of deixis and ostension as it features in this dialogue cannot be realized until the dialogue is produced on a theatrical stage. Both deictic and ostensive expressions consists of demonstrative pronouns which are usually accompanied by a gesture or a kinesic indicator which allows the object of the deixis to be ostended. These can only be actualized on a performance stage.

5.1.2 NON VERBAL FEATURES OF DIALOGUE

In the same way that deixis and ostension are inseparable from dramatic language and acting, so are the non-verbal features of dialogue. And it has already been made clear in Chapter 2, section 2.3 that physical gestures and movements by an actor are an integral part of ostension. Non-verbal features of dialogue like gestic signs, proxemic signs, facial expressions, dialogic pauses and mime thus form an essential feature of dramatic language, even in Playland.

5.1.2.1 GESTIC AND PROXEMIC SIGNS

In the preceding section 5.1.2.1 on deixis and ostension reference was made to Martinus's gestures and his aggressive bearing when he first appeared on the performance stage. He walked and gesticulated like someone who had been involved in a scuffle; and both his gestures and general mood served to reinforce the sense of his words.

In the first four scenes of the written text, from the dramatic entrance of Martinus on stage to the explosive sounds of Playland as the new year is ushered in, the verbal exchange between the two main protagonists is largely devoted to background details about them and the milieu where the action takes place. This is to set the scene for their climactic confrontation in scene 5. When the music and the lights have been switched off, Gideon instead of leaving for home like everybody else, returns to Martinus who is getting ready for his night shift, and he stands there impassively. When he notices that Gideon is not moving, Martinus says,

> MARTINUS: It's finished white man. It's all over for tonight. Time for you to go home now. You heard what the music said, 'Goodnight Sweetheart. Sweet dreams Sweetheart'. *[He laughs]* Ja, everybody is sad when the happiness machine stop and the lights go out. But don't worry. You can come again tomorrow. Your Playland is safe. Martinus will watch it for you. Martinus will watch all your toys and tomorrow you can and play again.
>
> But now it is my time! Now night-watchman Martinus Zoeloe is in charge.
>
> Ja! You want to know about me white man. Okay. I tell you this. I know how to watch the night and wait for trouble. This is my job. While all the sweethearts are lying in bed with their sweet dreams, that is what I am doing - watching the night and waiting for trouble.

> I do it well. A long time ago I learnt how to sit with the ghosts and look and listen and wait - and that time I was waiting for Big trouble white man ... bigger trouble than a few drunk location skollies looking for mischief. So they can come and try their nonsense. I am ready for them!
>
> (Fugard, 1992:44)

Martinus says these words in a cheerful and boastful way; it is now his time when he takes control and becomes solely in charge of Playland. It is evident that he partly mocks and partly sympathizes with Martinus now that his fun has ended. While perhaps implied in the text, it is demonstrated in the performance that Gideon stands there in a stolid way as if he is lost, and it is Martinus who really glows with happiness now that it is over. As Martinus struts about getting his things ready; as he laughs and says the words of the song in a sing-song manner; as he patronizes Gideon and almost pats him on the shoulder; Gideon just stands there with an inscrutable expression on his face - half blank and half menacing. His passive standing and looking at Martinus as he indulges in his light-hearted banter and boasting generates tension in the audience who now expectantly wait to see what next he is going to do or say. Gideon's standing there thus becomes a non-verbal form of dialogue which effectively communicates, at least to the audience that there is something brewing in his mind, and that it is about to come out.

When Martinus is about to leave the scene, it is only then that Gideon finally breaks his silence, and his tone is clearly menacing when he asks Martinus where he is going. The following lines about the altercation between the two men captures the high point of the drama, and it is here that violent confrontation between them really seems imminent.

He brandishes his kierie in traditional style.

GIDEON: Where you going?

MARTINUS: To do my job.

GIDEON: No.

MARTINUS: No what?

GIDEON: You're not going anywhere.

...

MARTINUS [disturbed by GIDEON's violent ramblings]: Haai, haai! You are mad. I'm not talking to you no more.

He makes a determined move to leave. GIDEON *blocks his path.*

GIDEON: I said no.

MARTINUS: Let me go.

GIDEON: No. I told you, you're not going anywhere. I haven't finished with you.

MARTINUS *[rising anger]*: To hell with you. I've finished with you. Get out of my way.

GIDEON: Make me. Go ahead. Make me.

He starts pushing MARTINUS *back.*

MARTINUS: Don't do that.

GIDEON *[another push]*: I'll do any fucking thing I like.

MARTINUS: I warn you white man.

GIDEON *[another push]*: About what, black man? Warn me about what? You trying to scare me? Don't flatter youself. There's fuck-all you can say or do that will scare me. But if you want to try something. go ahead.

[The two men are on the brink of real physical violence.]

So what are you waiting for? Come, let's see what you can do.

MARTINUS *[breaking away]*: No Martinus! Stop! *[He makes a supreme effort to control himself. He returns and confronts* GIDEON.] Gideon le Roux! I say your name. Please now, listen to me. I put down my kierie. I tell you nicely, I don't want to make trouble with you. Don't you make trouble with me. Leave me alone. Because if we make trouble for each other tonight, then I know what happens.

GIDEON: Oh yes?

MARTINUS: Yes! I will do it again. S'true's God. I do it again.

GIDEON: What?

MARTINUS: Number Six.

(Fugard, 1992:45)

Dramatic dialogue is often interspersed with stage directions that denote the actions and gestures that accompany the words of the speakers. Furthermore, the punctuation signs and other paralinguistic features of the dialogue like stress and intonation are meaningful indicators of the tension and energy that characterize the verbal exchange. However, all these need to be aurally and visibly actualized on the stage. The force with which Gideon swears, his desperate

attempts to provoke Martinus to real confrontation and the irrational basis of his verbal onslaught all come through with greater impact when performed on the stage. And this is because of all the non-verbal and paralinguistic features of the spoken words which are realized on the theatrical stage.

Also, Gideon's aggressive and overbearing manner as he walks up to Martinus, points at him, pushes him around and blocks his way when he tries to leave are partly communicated in the text through the stage directions, but the rest of the details about these gestures and kinesic movements are left for the stage producer to add on. The whole process of reading a dramatic text is, in this sense, oriented towards its theatrical performance.

5.1.2.2 FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Physical gestures and movements by a speaker in a dramatic exchange as discussed in the previous section are naturally accompanied by corresponding facial expressions. It is self-evident that the verbal exchange between Martinus and Gideon as quoted in the preceding section is emotionally charged; and the emotions here range from Martinus's light-hearted banter to his patronizing attitude to Gideon's unexpected and provocative actions which push him dangerously close to physical violence.

Although the substance of the dialogue in both quoted excerpts indicate what facial expressions accompany the words of the speakers, these are generally not explicitly stated in the dramatic text. With the exception of the stage direction which states of Martinus

[He laughs]

in the first quoted extract in section 5.1.2.2 (a) no further specifications are given in this regard, and a lot is left to the imagination of the reader. But if such dramatic dialogue is performed on stage the

words are accompanied by a whole range of varying facial expressions and shades of such expressions so that the meaning of the dialogue is reinforced accordingly as in the case of gestic and proxemic signs.

5.1.2.3 THE DIALOGIC PAUSE

The dialogic pause was defined in Chapter 2, section 2.4.3 as a voluntary pause in speech that is meaningful despite operating in an order different from that of the verbal sign. It has two distinct phases, viz. its theoretical existence where it is only mentioned in a text without being actualized; and its assumption of a physical existence and function as a real sign in a stage performance. There are several possible relations that can be established between the spoken parts of dialogue and its accompanying pauses: the dramatic pause can either reinforce the meaning of the words, or the words can reinforce the meaning of the pause, or the words and pauses may impact on one another in such a way that the overall meaning of the dialogue is dependent on the mutual effect the two have on each other. Also, the meaning of a dialogic pause may either be derived from the immediate context of utterance, or it may have a more general signification within the overall context of the play as it might suggest a speaker's characteristic tendency to be reticent or slow in thinking.

Martinus's initial indifference to Gideon is not explicitly spelled out in the dialogue. It can only be deduced from Martinus's short responses and the silences which punctuate their exchanges as the nightwatchman deliberately tries to discourage Gideon from engaging him in light frivolous talk. The following exchange illustrates this

GIDEON: ...

What is your job here?

MARTINUS: Watchman and handyman.

GIDEON: Night-watchman for Playland. That sounds okay.

MARTINUS: Night and day watchman.

GIDEON: All the time?

MARTINUS: All the time. I watch everything all the time.

GIDEON: So when do you sleep?

MARTINUS: I don't sleep.

A silence settles between the two men. GIDEON *tries again.*

(Fugard, 1992:10)

Later on Gideon, who has kept on talking without any encouragement from Martinus, asks the nightwatchman

You got yours ready?

MARTINUS: What?

GIDEON: Your New Year's resolution.

MARTINUS: What is that?

GIDEON: Midnight, man. When 1990 comes. You give up smoking or something like that.

MARTINUS: I don't smoke.

GIDEON: Then something else. Drinking.

MARTINUS: I don't drink.

GIDEON: Well there must be something you want to give up.

MARTINUS: No.

GIDEON: Okay. So you're perfect. Good luck to you. *[A hip flask of brandy appears out of a pocket]* That means I don't have to offer you a dop hey! *[Hollow laugh]*

Last year I gave up drinking. It lasted about ten minutes because then I needed a drink to give up smoking, and then I needed a drink *and* a cigarette to give up fucking! And so it went. Every dop was another resolution ... that lasted ten minutes! Base Camp Oshakati! That was quite a party. Talk about your friends going to Hell - if you had seen me and my buddies that night you would have sent the lot of us there as well.

[Another silence. Both men stare at the horizon where a Karoo sunset is flaring to a dramatic climax].

How about that, hey!

(Fugard, 1992:13)

The pauses or silences mentioned here are meaningful non-verbal signs that qualify the dialogue and inform the reader about the tension that exists between the two interlocutors. Even the act of remembering the flask of brandy and taking a mouthful is really meant to fill in another silence as Martinus resists being drawn into any meaningful discourse.

These silences specified by the stage directions at strategic points of the dialogue are an integral part of the dialogue and contribute substantially to its semantic content. But the actualization of these

pauses/silences on a theatrical stage with a packed auditorium will probably have a more dramatic impact on the spectators.

5.1.3 FLOOR MANAGEMENT AND INTERACTION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

In chapter 2 section 2.4.5, floor- and interaction management strategies were identified as part of the non-verbal features that make an essential contribution to the overall meaning of dramatic dialogue. The above-mentioned strategies refer to the manner in which verbal interaction between characters/actors in a play occurs as well as the rules which govern this interaction. They refer to the different ways in which speakers take turns at speaking: the length of turn units; what happens at the transition relevance place; and whether the next speaker is selected by the current speaker or whether he/she self-selects. It was briefly explained in the above-stated section that numerous options for the exploitation of the turn-taking system exist; viz., how turn-change, turn construction, turn order and distribution, turn length, turn sequencing and topic control can be manipulated in a meaningful way. All these together comprise floor-management and interaction management strategies.

With regard to the above-quoted extract, Gideon stands quietly smoking a cigarette while Martinus delivers one final verbal assault. When he has done, it is only then that Martinus notices him, and it is only then that he takes the floor and speaks. He expresses his approval of the straight talking by Martinus and he prods him on

> So you tell them. You tell them loud and clear.
>
> (Fugard, 1992:9)

As if to catch some breath after his tirade, and almost as if partly speaking to himself and partly to the new-comer, so subdued is his tone after his outburst, Martinus appears to cool down. He has clearly been provoked by the individuals off-stage:

> Joburg skollies ... All they know is to make trouble for other people.

But Gideon stokes him on:

> Then go make some for them ... You got to speak up in this bloody world.

Martinus goes off again, as if in response to Gideon's goading:

> That one with the skeel oog, he's the one.
>
> (Fugard, 1992:9)

Here he has reverted back to the loud confrontative tone with which he started, and he goes on until Gideon interjects and changes the subject.

The floor management and interaction management strategies employed in the construction of this dialogue reveals that it is not only the verbal content of the words that finally determines their meaning. The manner in which turns are taken, the various intentions of the speakers and how amenable or resistant they are to manipulation by others all combine to form the context in which the dialogue takes places. This context in which statements are made is as important as the utterances themselves in the final determination of meaning. And this context is formed by a constellation of semiotic codes which includes floor management and interaction management strategies. Outspoken as he is, Martinus Zoeloe's ability to withstand provocation and emotional manipulation appears suspect even at this early stage. It is Gideon who coaxes him on to further outbursts when he has cooled down, and it is Gideon again who easily stops his continued railing and steers the conversation to something else by simply asking:

> What is your job here?
>
> (Fugard, 1992:10)

5.1.4 SUPRASEGMENTAL FEATURES OF DIALOGUE

As was stated in Chapter 2 section 2.5, in the transformation process that takes place from dramatic text to stage performance, written verbal signs frequently have their meanings modified or changed as a result of the effects of the human voice which is the chief medium employed in theatre. Through the use of paralinguistic features like stress, intonation, pitch as well as the quality and modulation of the actor's voice, stage producers are able to introduce a wide range of meanings and interpretations to the written words of the speakers in a text. When fully utilized in a performance, these features of the spoken word extend the semantic charge of written words.

With reference to Playland, the following quoted words by Gideon,

> Yes! I sit here. I mind my own business and then you come. You come again and again. I didn't call you. I do nothing to you.
>
> (Fugard, 1992:46)

do not indicate to the reader what the speaker's tonal inflections are at the time he says these words. They could be uttered in a loud, confrontative way to assert his innocence, or they could be articulated in a rather pathetic and wailing manner as one would, who pleads his innocence. There is a considerable difference between the two and the interpersonal relations they imply. Only a stage production can reveal which option really applies. And in the 1992 stage production at the Market Theatre, the words were said in an imploring way as Martinus almost prayed to be left alone.

Also, in scene 5 where Gideon finally comes to the point where he has to off-load the burdens of his soul to Martinus, the written dialogue does not reflect the intensity of his emotions as well as it should. In response to Martinus's inquiry about the reason why he went in search of the old woman who had stood on the edge of the bush watching as they dumped the corpses of the dead, Gideon says

> I wanted to tell her about the little boy. I wanted to tell her that he knew what was right and wrong. I don't know what happened to him, what went wrong in his life, but he didn't want to grow up to be a man throwing other men into a hole like rotten cabbages. He didn't want to be me. And when I had told her all that, I was going to ask her for forgiveness ... but she was gone.
>
> (Fugard, 1992:57)

The words could be read as a sober and calculated effort by Gideon to absolve himself from guilt and as a simple expression of regret that he had failed to find her to ask for her forgiveness for the horrendous deed she had watched him execute. They could be interpreted as proceeding from a man who is eager to claim a semblance of dignity for himself by making it known that he still has a conscience and is not bereft of compassion for his fellowmen. Yet in the stage production concerned these words are rendered in a way that is completely shorn of any pretext or conscious design towards justification. The speaker becomes barely audible as his voice breaks and he shamelessly weeps during this delivery.

Prior to the above-quoted words, he has managed to contain himself, but when he resumes speaking at the line

> I wanted to tell her about that little boy ...

he progressively loses control as he pours out his soul in anguish. Despite the rapid tempo of his speech as he gabbles his words, the tonal inflexions of his voice show real and undisguised pain. And at the end, when his outburst is over, the overall impression gained of his words is one of sincere and unpremeditated confession. It provides one of the climactic scenes in the play where both men confront each other in complete honesty and come to the point where they both realize that redemption for each of them lies in their embracing in friendship. The compelling power of these quoted words is only half-realized as long as the lines only remain on the pages of the printed text.

It is only when they assume a human voice with all its paralinguistic swings and subtleties that their full significance in the play is actualized.

5.1.5 DIALOGIC INTERACTION BETWEEN THE STAGE AND THE AUDITORIUM

The theoretical discussion of the whole subject of the stage-audience relationship as a form of dialogue was conducted in chapter 3. The first part of the chapter was devoted to argumentation to support the view that the relationship between the actors on a performance stage and the spectators in the auditorium is dialogic by nature. The second part covered the two main types of actor/audience interaction, viz., the direct and the indirect dialogic interaction between the stage and the auditorium. Several dramatic techniques were identified as falling under the first category (i.e. direct interaction), and these are prologues, epilogues, monologues, soliloquies, dramatic asides and the use of the dramatic narrator. These forms of direct address of the audience by the actors represent the overlapping that takes place between the real world of the audience and the fictive world of the play for the actors on stage break frame when they directly talk to the audience who are not part of their world of make-believe.

Indirect dialogic interaction between the stage and the auditorium occurs when the dialectical link between the two is maintained without the actors having to break out of the internal communication axis that applies in the fictional world of the stage. The spectators here play a more active role together with the actors in the process of meaning - creation for their social and cultural background is called upon to decode the semiotic content of the network of signs used in the theatre. It stands to reason that any one play cannot possibly contain all these different techniques of direct and indirect interaction between the stage and the auditorium. However, one can identify a few of the interaction devices that are operative in Playland.

In the actual performance of this play, the audience is able to see all the gestures that accompany Martinus's words, his bearing, his facial expressions and his gait as he suddenly makes his appearance almost as if from the midst of the audience in the auditorium. The laughter and heckling off-stage, as produced by the sound systems, also momentarily confuse the audience who at first think that there is a squabble among some members of the audience; and when Martinus emerges from somewhere in the auditorium, it is at first not clear whether he is a member of the audience, one of the security people at the theatre, or a member of the expected cast. His bearing and movements as he walks to the place where he sits as nightwatchman on the stage are those of a person who has been involved in some kind of brawl. And he gesticulates wildly with a menacing expression on his face as he addresses himself to those who are the cause of his anger. But as he speaks, he looks and points directly into the packed auditorium from which he has emerged and when he shouts,

> He sees everything you do and when the Big Day of Judging comes he will say to you, and you, and specially you:
> Hey! You f__...
>
> (Fugard, 1992:9)

it is almost as if he is accusing real people in the audience. The force of his deictic utterance is such that it situates his words in the dramatic present in a way that makes the spectators feel personally implicated.

Therefore, besides establishing the dramatic interaction between the speaker and the unseen interlocutors, the deixis and ostension in this opening scene effects a situation where there is direct address of the audience by the speaker on the performance stage. It becomes especially so because there is still some confusion as to who Martinus is as he has just emerged from among the audience. Also, the fact that he lists the sins for which his interlocutors will be damned while gazing and pointing into the audience is unsettling, for many spectators really feel as if they are being personally indicted.

As much as there is humour in what he says and how he says it, his words certainly arouse secret feelings of guilt in the audience. Furthermore, the fact that the whole auditorium ends up laughing at his railing puts the spectators in exactly the same situation as the voices which were laughing off-stage. So complete is the identification between the audience and the voices off-stage that when Martinus rounds off with his

> So voetsek to all of you!
>
> (Fugard, 1992:9)

it is almost certainly meant for both characters off-stage and the audience. In this instance then, the use of deixis and ostension, coupled with other semiotic indicators like the speakers gait, his bearing and facial expression together effect a situation where there is direct address of the spectators in the auditorium by the speaker from his fictional world. It is a demonstration of the dialogic nature of the stage-audience-relationship, and it is an aspect of dramatic dialogue that comes through most eloquently in an actual staging of the play.

5.1.6 CONCLUSION

The dialogue in Playland is primarily written for the performance stage; and it is no accident that the printed text was only published at the time of its premiére showing in July 1992, at the Market theatre in Johannesburg. After having witnessed the performance, one realizes a written text can be complemented by a stage production in order to express a particular meaning. It is for this reason that the text of one dramatic work can have a number of stage productions that differ significantly, for different stage producers make their own creative inputs in the staging of different productions of the same play.

5.2 THE PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION OF DIDASCALIES IN PLAYLAND

It has already been illustrated that the meaning of any dramatic dialogue does not only reside in the words of the participants in the dialogue, but also in the context in which this dialogue takes place. This context is primarily specified by the didascalies. Essential details like where the action and its accompanying verbal exchange takes place, the time of day, season of the year or historical period and other details about the dramatic action not deduced from the dialogue itself are provided by the didascalies. And without such details about the dramatic world and its action, the dialogue cannot be fixed or related to any physical locality or temporal moment, and it cannot have any specific semantic substance.

But then it is also essential to note that the realization of the proper effects of such written textual didascalies depends on the individual reader's ability to imaginatively recreate the context specified by the didascalies, whether it is physical, historical or even emotional. The capacity of the dramatic dialogue to achieve its desired effects rests solely on this ability of the reader to visualize the dramatic context. Such a dependence on the reader is almost completely eliminated in a performance, for in the theatre, most verbal semiotic indicators are transposed to visual and auditory signs on the stage.

Although the didascalies in Playland form a relatively small part of the text, a case where it may justifiably be termed the secondary text, it plays a pivotal role in the transposition of the written text to its stage production. A review of the elements of the didascalies as treated in the previous chapter will be conducted with specific reference to this particular play. But it stands to reason that since not all of these elements feature in every play, only those that have been used in Playland will be referred to. Also, as was the case in the illustration of the different aspects of dialogue, it has to be borne in mind that although the different elements of the didascalies are isolated and discussed separately for analytical purposes, they function together and in unison in a theatrical production.

5.2.1 THE TITLE

As was stated in Chapter 4 section 4.2.1, a play may be named after a character that features in it, a set of events that is its subject, its thematic concerns, the fictional world itself or some important or significant aspect of this world. There is usually a good reason why a play bears the title it does, and this title frequently serves as a key to the subject of the fictional world or the interpretation of its dramatic action.

On one level, the title "Playland" may be interpreted as the stage; i.e. the performance stage as a playland where events are enacted/ played to an audience. On another level, a reading of Playland reveals that it is simply named after the amusement park where the action takes place. The name is appropriate because this is the place Gideon le Roux chooses to visit on New Year's Eve to amuse himself and try to forget the nightmares that haunt him from his days of service at the South West African border. Ironically, it is not in the games, the rides, the music and the forced abandon with which he gives himself to the festivities of the fair that he finds the relief he so desperately needs. It is in his encounter with Martinus Zoeloe to whom he is drawn and in whom he finally gets an opportunity to bare his soul and effect the reconciliation that will finally lay the ghost of his past to rest. Although Gideon sought the answer to his personal problems in playing and wild merrymaking at Playland, he finds it in a very unlikely place - the nightwatchman with whom he turns out to be a kindred spirit. This is the underlying irony of the play.

But this title, 'Playland' does not at first give a reader any clue as to what Playland is except a vague indication that the work is about a place by that name. Naturally, any reader who approaches the drama for the first time is interested to know what place it is, and what happened there. And there is no way that a reader could certainly know beforehand that it is the name of an amusement park until the stage directions at the beginning of the opening scene as quoted below have been read:

*A small travelling amusement park encamped on the outskirts of a Karoo town. A large sign with the name **PLAYLAND** is prominently positioned. There is also an array of other gaudy signs advertising the various sideshows and rides - the Big Wheel, the Wall of Death, the Ghost Train and so on. They are all festooned with coloured lights which will be switched on when the night gets under way. Battered speakers of a PA system at the top of a pole.*

Foreground: the night-watchman's camp. A broken car from one of the rides with a square of canvas stretched over it to provide shelter from sun and rain, and a paraffin tin brazier.

(Fugard, 1992:8)

In the staged performance, however, a viewer is immediately able to recognize the stage for what it stands for when he/she sees the Big Wheel prominently set up in the centre stage with the P.A. system and all the multi-coloured bulbs arranged all around, waiting to be switched on. It is an amusement park that he/she sees, and it is what is called "Playland". The expectations of the theatre-goer are therefore immediately confirmed when he/she matches the title of the play to the stage setting which already has the atmosphere of a fair.

All the visual signs that form part of the stage arrangement combine to portray a picture of an amusement park, and one glance at the stage is enough to show what it stands for, which is not the case in a literary reading where successive verbal signs are first individually conceptualized so that a total picture of the scene can be formed from the reading of such details.

5.2.2 THE PREFACE

In the theoretical discussion of prefaces in Chapter 4 section 4.2.2,

it was pointed out that prefaces or forewords of dramatic texts provide essential background information about the conception of the work, the social, political or even economic circumstances surrounding its writing, when and where it was first staged, and other details like its reception by the audiences and the kinds of reviews it received in the press. It was also stated that although prefaces remain part of written dramatic texts and although they cannot find their way into the performance stage (except if they are written into theatre programmes), they are essentially about circumstances leading to, and about the actual staging of plays. The role of the preface in placing things in perspective for the reader and the potential member of the audience can therefore not be overlooked.

The preface in Playland, published in 1992 was written by Mannie Manim, the stage producer of the play. He states, among others, that for him as lighting designer, Fugard's works provide him with 'the "challenge of creating the atmosphere, the total focus on the actors and the way Fugard uses the time of day and the light to help tell his story". (1992:xiii). Also he observes that one of the distinctive features of Fugard's plays is that they are performed in accents one hears everyday on the streets of the towns and cities of South Africa. They are about ordinary, recognizable people one gets to meet everyday. On reading through this preface, one can hardly miss the fact that it is all about Fugard's past performances and how this particular production of Playland falls into the pattern he has set over the years. Virtually nothing is mentioned about the play as a text, and this is to be expected since the writer of this preface is the stage producer of this particular performance. Although this preface is ancillary to the text of Playland, it is all about the stage production of the said play and it was quite clearly written with only the theatrical production in mind.

5.2.3 THE LIST OF CHARACTERS

In section 4.2.3 of chapter 4, the list of characters in any dramatic text was seen as fulfilling the important function of identifying the

characters who take part in the drama. While the dramatic text provides only the names of the fictional characters, perhaps with some additional information about them, like their relationships, their appearances, ages, etc., in the programmes available at the theatre where the play is staged, one also finds the names, photographs and credentials of the actors who play the parts. Such printed programmes help to orientate the audience with regard to the fictional world and the performance as quickly as possible so that they should not be at a loss as to who plays what part when the performance starts.

The text of this two character/actor play, whose publication co-incided with its prémier stage production, practically served the purpose of a programme because it provided all the necessary information about the production. The text of Playland provides more information than is traditionally included in a list of characters. The names of the two actors who played the two parts as well as the actor whose voice was heard off-stage are all given. John Kani played the role of Martinus Zoeloe and Sean Taylor, that of Gideon le Roux. Bill Flynn provided the off-stage voice of 'Barking Barney' Barkhuizen. Other details pertaining to the stage production are also included: Wesley France served as production manager, Melanie Dobbs as Company Stage Manager, Christo Boshoff as Deputy Stage Manager/Sound Operator, Haccius Mokopakgosi as Deputy Stage Manager, Debbie Falb as Production Assistant and Hazel Maree was responsible for the wardrobe.

5.2.4 STAGE DIRECTIONS

It was pointed out in Chapter 4 section 4.2.5 that stage directions are the most important elements of the didascalies in the transposition process that takes place from text to performance. They are the most obvious indicators that dramatic texts were written for the performance stage. It was also noted in the same section that Levitt (1971:36) made a distinction between written stage directions in the side text and spoken ones which are part of the dramatic dialogue itself. This distinction will also be observed in the following approach to the stage directions in Playland.

5.2.4.1 WRITTEN STAGE DIRECTIONS

In a dramatic text the written stage directions are usually separated from the spoken dialogue of the characters by means of brackets, an indented placing in the page, or typographically, by using italics. Although Teodorescu-Brinzeu (1981.82:m²) has drawn a further distinction between stage directions, i.e. those at the beginnings or ends of certain acts and those inside the text as alluded to in section 4.2.5, preference will be given to the classification proposed by Mouton (1989) because it provides a more systematic method of study. She has separated three aspects of stage directions, viz. those that pertain to the fictional character, those that relate to fictional time and those that indicate fictional space. All of these categories may in turn be considered from a visual or auditive point of view.

5.2.4.1.1 STAGE DIRECTIONS THAT REFER TO FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

To recapitulate what has already been stated in section 4.2.5.1 in the theoretical section, information about fictional characters in a dramatic text can be communicated through verbal signs in the written stage directions; and most of these verbal signs in the text can be transposed into visual and auditive signs on the stage performance.

(a) VISUAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

Aspects of the fictional characters that fall under this category are the physical stature and appearance of the characters, their facial expressions as well as their gestures and movements as they take part in the action of the play. The actions in which they engage in the drama are also included as they are either visibly executed on the stage in a performance or imaginatively visualized in a reading of the text.

- **THE PHYSICAL STATURE AND APPEARANCE OF THE FICTIONAL CHARACTERS**

The text of Playland does not have any noteworthy descriptions of the physical appearance of its characters save for the one sentence with which Gideon le Roux is introduced. He is simply described as

> Casually but neatly dressed for a warm Karoo evening.
>
> (Fugard, 1992:8)

No description of the physical stature or appearance of Martinus Zoeloe is given in the text except that when he appears, he has a balaclava rolled up on his head. His second name, Zoeloe, the balaclava cap he wears and the nightwatchman's camp towards which he walks as mentioned in the scenic stage directions all become semiotic indicators which suggest to the reader that he is a nightwatchman even before he tells Gideon that his job at Playland is that of

> Watchman and handyman.
>
> (Fugard, 1992:10)

A reader with a South African social background is thus able to presume that Gideon is probably a strong, well built-man, wearing an overall and carrying a big stick or knobkierie as is the custom with such nighwatchmen. The text leaves all this to the imagination of the reader who depends on his/her social background and familiarity with this kind of South African security man to complete the picture.

- **THE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS OF THE FICTIONAL CHARACTERS**

As stated in section 4.2.5.1.1 in the theoretical discussion on the facial expressions of fictional characters, such expressions are an integral part of any dramatic dialogue. Any verbal delivery of words in drama must needs be accompanied by some form of facial expression by the speaker. It is however not feasible for any dramatist to specify all the different shades of facial expressions that are assumed by

speakers from the beginning up to the end of any dramatic text. A lot is therefore left to the imagination of the reader.

In the opening scene of Playland, it is not indicated anywhere in the stage directions what Martinus's or Gideon's facial expressions are during their first encounter. The only hint given about the state of mind of Martinus is the one sentence,

> *... The angry voice of MARTINUS ZOELOE with laughter and heckling from other voices off-stage.*
>
> (Fugard, 1992:8)

His subsequent words indicate that he has indeed been provoked, and the reader is left to complete for him/herself the mental picture of Martinus's facial expression at that moment.

In a stage performance however, very little is left to the imagination of the reader as the actor who played the part was there for all to see: he had an animated expression on his face, and although he did look angry, it was a comical, almost neurotic, kind of anger that inspires laughter. The brilliance of John Kani, who played this role in the 1992 production, makes it almost impossible to describe his execution of the part to those who have not seen the performance. It is one of those instances which exemplify how a stage performance actualizes the meaning of a written dramatic text.

THE GESTURES AND MOVEMENTS OF THE FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

Although the gestures, spatial and bodily movements of the participants in the dialogue are frequently stated in the stage directions, it is again not practically possible for every single gesture or movement made by a speaker to be specified in a text. The situation here is very similar to that of facial expressions which are not mentioned in a text but simply left for the stage producer and actor to add on or for the reader to imagine.

In the opening scene already referred to in Playland, the following is stated in the stage directions,

> *GIDEON LE ROUX walks on from the side opposite that of the voices. ... He stands quietly smoking a cigarette and listening to the off-stage harangue. After a few seconds, MARTINUS ZOELOE walks on. Rolled up balaclava on his head. He delivers one final salvo.*
>
> (Fugard, 1992:8)

It is clear that Gideon is walking past the scene of Martinus's confrontation with his unnamed interlocutors when his attention is caught by the latter's "off-stage harangue". He is leisurely smoking a cigarette and he stands listening and watching in a detached, yet curious way. The stage directions are however not as explicit about the entrance of Martinus on to the stage. A reader is simply left to guess this from the words that immediately precede the above-quoted stage directions. No indication is given in the written text about the gestures or bodily movements that accompany these words.

In the stage performance of the play, Martinus's appearance on the stage is quite dramatic as he unexpectedly emerges from the midst of the audience, wildly gesticulating and speaking at the top of his voice. He half-walks, half-stumbles and seems to arrange his clothing like someone who has been in a brawl. When he finally stops in the centre of the stage to deliver the one final salvo, he points into the auditorium as if he is addressing real individuals there. This is especially the case when he says the words

> He sees everything you do and when the Big Day of Judging comes he will say to you, and you and specially you: Hey ...
>
> (Fugard, 1992:9)

for he literally points out individuals in the audience as if they are his interlocutors. This is one instance in which the theatrical performance complements the written dramatic text. To add to this,

although it is stated about Gideon in the text (at the beginning of scene 3) that

> Brandy and desperation give a new, aggressive edge to his behaviour
>
> (Fugard, 1992:28)

the actor who played the part effectively showed how silly Gideon looks with his paper-hat and noise maker, and how forced his attempts at having a good time are. Standing next to Martinus in his sobriety and seriousness, the drunken Gideon as portrayed on stage with his silly love song and mime presents a pathetic image of someone desperately crying out for attention. Stage directions are therefore frequently seen as only guidelines for stage producers and actors who are called upon to include more of their own gestures and movements to make the dialogue come alive. It is all indicative of the performance orientation of stage directions.

(b) AUDITIVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

There are two ways in which auditive information about fictional characters can be given, viz. through description of the sound of their voices or by referring to other sounds that characters may produce. This was the subject of section 4.2.5.1.2 in the theoretical section, chapter 4.

The stage directions in the text of Playland do not carry any significant information pertaining to this area of interest. The only auditive information that is in question about the fictional characters in this play is the sound of their voices, and this can only be known by attending the stage performance of the play.

5.2.4.1.2 STAGE DIRECTIONS THAT REFER TO FICTIONAL SPACE

A distinction was made in Chapter 4, section 4.2.5.2 between visual and auditive information about fictional space. It was also observed that such information about mimetic space is communicated through written verbal signs in the stage directions of a dramatic text in such a way that it can either be visually or aurally imagined by a reader. In keeping with this, details about fictional space in Playland may be briefly considered.

(a) VISUAL INFORMATION ABOUT FICTIONAL SPACE

It has already been pointed out in section 4.2.5.2.1 that such information can be given in the stage directions either by giving a written description of the fictional world or by describing this world in terms of stage arrangements. Dramatic texts like Playland, where information about fictional space is given by referring to the performance stage in the stage directions, are understandably more explicitly geared towards a performance than those where the fictional world is described without making any reference to the stage.

In the stage directions at the beginning of Act 1, Scene 1, a short yet graphic description of Playland is given, but it is done in terms of the performance stage. The sentence,

> *curtains up on a deserted stage.*
>
> (Fugard, 1992:8)

indicates this. The fact that the performance stage is explicitly mentioned indicates that the play is meant to be approached and read as a potential stage production. Even if it is read purely as a work of fiction or a literary text, reference to the stage in this way is a reminder that the play was conceived with a view to staging.

Besides this, the brevity with which the scene is outlined at the beginning of the drama is significant. Only the most essential details are given for these are provided with the performance stage in mind. Although a stage may sometimes be clustered especially in realistic theatre, in the written stage directions of Playland only the most essential objects have been mentioned; and these are objects that can be accommodated on a performance stage without having to extend its area in any significant way. Although stage producers generally exercise a lot of freedom in interpreting stage directions, in this particular play, the stage setting is almost in strict conformity to the specifications of the written text. This is to be expected because the stage performance was produced and directed by the playwright himself. And he wrote the play with the theatrical stage in mind.

(b) **AUDITIVE INFORMATION ABOUT FICTIONAL SPACE**

In section 4.2.5.2.2 reference was made to the limitations that can be placed on a playwright by the physical size and design of a theatrical stage. To overcome this, sound techniques are commonly used in theatre to indicate spaces other than those represented by the performance stage. Playland employs such a technique at the beginning of the opening scene. The following stage directions appear immediately before Martinus says his opening lines.

> *... Curtain up on a deserted stage. The angry voice of MARTINUS ZOELOE with laughter and heckling from other voices, off-stage*
>
> (Fugard, 1992:8)

Through these lines, a reader gets a general idea that Martinus is angry because he has been teased off-stage, and that his subsequent verbal assault has been prompted by this. In this way the reader is given an idea about what happens off-stage. Stage directions therefore serve as semiotic indicators in the written text that will only be actualized on the performance stage.

Secondly although the text states that the sound of a scuffle with objects falling comes off-stage, in the performance of the play these sounds came from somewhere in the auditorium, and they caused some confusion in the audience whose attention was focussed on the empty stage where the action was expected to take place. It sounded as if a fight had broken out among some spectators, and everyone in the audience turned their heads to look in the direction where the sounds of this struggle came from, and some individuals even stood up to get a better view of what was happening. And then suddenly, Martinus emerged from that part of the auditorium, looking angry and shaken. He was on his way to the stage when he said the opening lines of the dialogue; and it was then that the derisive laughter began.

It has been pointed out in section 5.1.2 (in the discussion of dialogue) how this strategy sets up the audience in such a way as to place them in a situation where they seem directly implicated in the action. It is further evidence of the kind of dramatic effect that is usually achieved by the conversion of written verbal signs to staging signs.

5.2.4.1.3 STAGE DIRECTIONS THAT REFER TO FICTIONAL TIME

In section 4.2.5.3 of the theoretical discussion of stage directions it was stated that the fictional time when the action of the drama is supposed to take place can either be mentioned in the stage directions or simply indicated by means of visual or auditory signs in these directions. The use of such signs is the option that is open to practitioners of the theatre where it is sometimes not possible to explicitly tell the audience what time of day, season of the year or historical period it is.

The fictional time of the action of Playland is however simply stated in the opening stage directions of the play as

> *... the late afternoon of New Year's Eve, 1989*
>
> (Fugard, 1992:8)

and this information is later confirmed in the dramatic dialogue when Gideon says

> ... Hour to go, then five more and its hip-hip-hooray time hey! Goodbye 1989, welcome 1990!
> ...
>
> (Fugard, 1992:11)

The lights and the music at Playland are switched on at 7 o'clock pm, and from then on it is five hours of merrymaking for Gideon before the end of 1989. All this is spelt out clearly in the dialogue and in the stage directions for the reader to comprehend. The difference that was brought about by the stage performance in this respect is that, through sound and visual signs, it recreated the festive atmosphere that prevailed at the fair. The spirit and the sounds of celebration that marked the arrival of the midnight hour, with the booming voice of Barking Barney making the final countdown, the hysteria and explosion of singing, cheering, fireworks, etc, as described in the stage directions at Act 1 scene 4 came out well enough in the theatrical performance to recreate the dramatic moment. The sound and lighting effects at the disposal of the stage producer in a theatrical production make it possible for the spectacle and celebratory sounds that are described in the stage directions to be recreated rather than simply reported with Gideon taking full part in the dancing, the shouting and the merrymaking at the fair.

5.2.4.2 SPOKEN STAGE DIRECTIONS

Although the spoken dialogue of the participants in drama is usually typographically separated from the written stage directions, it sometimes also performs the function of stage directions. In such cases, these directions are inscribed in the words of the speakers. All the different categories of stage directions that were discussed in the previous section would therefore also apply here, with the only diffe-

rence being that they are deduced from the dialogue of the dramatic characters rather than given separately. Therefore, visual or auditive information that relates to fictional characters, fictional space or even fictional time in the dramatic text can, and often does, form part of the dialogue of the dramatic characters.

In the stage performance of a dramatic text however, where the written stage directions are transformed to staging signs, it is no longer possible to make a distinction between written and spoken stage directions. This is because in theatre, which is a medium different from the written text, all written signs are converted into either visual or auditory signs. The audience is thus able to see and hear these signs directly.

In scene 1 of Playland, as Gideon engages Martinus in light talk, their attention is suddenly caught by the picturesque twilight that follows the Karoo sunset. This is stated in the written stage directions of the dramatic text:

> *[Another silence. Both men stare at the horizon where a Karoo sunset is flaring to a dramatic climax].*
>
> (Fugard, 1992:13)

Martinus mentions that he watches the sunset every night, and every time he sees different things in it: last night it was like mountains of gold, and tonight it appears to him as the fires of Eternal Damnation. This leads to the two men discussing the Bible, sin and damnation. Later on, when the twilight has faded and darkness has evidently set in, this is not stated in the written stage directions. Instead this is communicated through Gideon's words:

> GIDEON: ...
>
> And finally my friend, just in case you haven't noticed, I would like to point out that the Fires of Eternal Damnation have now gone out, so where the hell is the party?

> [MARTINUS stares at him blankly].
> It's quarter past seven man. Nearly twenty past.
> (Fugard, 1992:19)

Time has elapsed and "the Fires of Eternal Damnation" referred to is the twilight which has held their attention earlier, and which has led to their discussion of damnation. The dialogue itself has here been used to give visual information about the fading of the twilight and consequently, about the passage of fictional time.

In the theatrical performance of Playland referred to earlier, the golden twilight of the descending Karoo sun is portrayed through the lighting effects which give the illusion of a golden tint of light on the upper part of one section of the stage. The audience can also gather from the spoken dialogue of the dramatic characters and from their staring at the western horizon that it is indeed a spectacular sunset they are witnessing. The golden light progressively fades as the dialogue continues until it disappears completely. Hence Gideon's words,

> ... the fires of damnation have now gone out ...
> (Fugard, 1992:19)

It is an instance where the spoken dialogue itself performs the function of visual staging signs in the same way as they fulfill the role of written stage directions in the dramatic text. Even without the use of the lighting effects, the spoken dialogue is in this case enough to indicate to the audience that darkness has finally set in.

5.2.5 CONCLUSION

Dialogue and didascalies together form an intricate semiotic web of communication, especially in the theatre where their constitutive elements clearly become visible and combine to form a complex network of semiotic codes. The fact that these have been isolated and discus-

sed individually should not obscure the fact that all the elements of dialogue and didascalies act together and simultaneously to effect theatrical communication.

It has also been illustrated and argued that reading the text of Playland and seeing this play staged in the theatre are like two distinctly different experiences. Reading the play after having seen it performed, one cannot help constantly matching the written words to how they were articulated on stage and to the circumstances surrounding their delivery there. And this includes even the mood and atmosphere created in the auditorium. Although Playland can certainly be fruitfully studied and analysed as literature, it was primarily written for the stage and it is no surprise that it was published at the same period that it was being staged for the first time at the Market Theatre.

CHAPTER 6

THE PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION OF DIALOGUE AND DIDASCALIES IN FUGARD'S MY CHILDREN! MY AFRICA!

6.0 INTRODUCTION

In this play, first staged on 27 June 1989, Fugard documents and reflects upon the turbulent mid 1980's, a period marked by widespread unrest, especially in South African black township schools. Set in an Eastern Karoo town, it is the story of a dedicated, 'though old-fashioned teacher at Zolile High School, Mr Myalatya; his bright matric protége, Thami Mbikwana; and Isabel Dyson, the girl from the neighbouring Camdeboo Girls High School. Isabel's first encounter with the teacher and his charge on her first visit to the township school is like an important discovery for her, because never before has she been exposed to a world of such cheerfulness in the midst of such obvious poverty. And she is filled with great enthusiasm and hope for a lasting friendship with Thami when Mr M arranges to enter them as a combined team in the inter-school English literature quiz sponsored by the Standard Bank.

But her hopes are dashed when, due to the student uprising against authority and Bantu Education, the growing tension between Thami and his authoritarian teacher leads to open confrontation between the two. Thami cannot continue with the practice sessions when the rest of the students boycott classes. Added to this, his association with Isabel, a white girl, could lead to his being misunderstood as flirting with the enemy. Preparations for the literature competition consequently come to an abrupt end, and Isabel is greatly disappointed. What promised to be a joyful and enriching chapter in her life ends on a tragic note when Mr M is executed by the mob of comrades because he was perceived as a police informer.

6.1 THE PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION OF DIALOGUE IN MY CHILDREN! MY AFRICA!

In section 5.1, the performance orientation of the elements of dialogue in Playland was discussed. The purpose of this section, where a different play is used, is to reinforce what has already been illustrated in the previous section and to focus attention on the stage orientation of those aspects of dialogue that were not revealed in the previous drama.

The use of a second play is also essential to broaden perspective so that the performative features of any particular aspect of dialogue or didascalies can be observed in more than one dramatic text. Repetition will in some instances thus be unavoidable, but it will in such cases be with a view to consolidating the insights that have already been gained.

6.1.1 DEIXIS AND OSTENSION

It has by now become evident from the theoretical discussion on the performance orientation of dialogue in Chapter 2, and from the examples given from Playland, that deixis and ostension are primary aspects of dramatic dialogue. It is deixis that enables dramatic dialogue to establish the interpersonal dialectic between dramatic characters/actors within the time and location of discourse; and this is done through the personal pronouns, "you" and "I" as well as the spatio-temporal co-ordinates "here" and "now". It is through deixis that dramatic language is situated within its spatial and temporal contexts. But because dramatic language is in the main demonstrative language that depends on accompanying physical gestures for its effectiveness, deixis commonly co-occurs with ostension. The latter has already been defined in Chapter 2 (section 2.3) as those linguistic references like demonstratives which require a kinesic indicator by the speaker to point to the object or person spoken about. And like deixis, ostension can only function within a given context because for an object or person to be ostended they must be present in that context of utterance.

In the following excerp from My Children! My Africa, Thami has just told Isabel that he is pulling out of the literary quiz for which they have been preparing because the comrades have called a general stayaway and class-boycott. Isabel wants to know why they cannot go on meeting as friends; and whether the comrades also decide whether they can be friends or not.

> THAMI: I was right. You don't understand what's going on.
> ISABEL: And you're certainly not helping me to.
> THAMI: *[Trying]* Visiting you like this is dangerous. People talk. Your maid has seen me. She could mention, just innocently but to the wrong person, that Thami Mbikwana is visiting and having tea with the white people she works for.
> ISABEL: And of course that is such a big crime!
> THAMI: In the eyes of the location ... yes! My world is also changing, Isabel. I'm breaking the boycott by being here. The Comrades don't want any mixing with whites. They have ordered that contact must be kept at a minimum.
> ISABEL: And you go along with that?
> THAMI: Yes.
> ISABEL: Happily!
> THAMI: *[Goaded by her lack of understanding]* Yes! I go along happily with that !!
> ISABEL: Hell Thami, this great Beginning of yours sounds like ... *[Shakes her head]* ... I don't know. Other people deciding who can and who can't be your friends, what you must do and what you can't do. Is this the Freedom you've been talking to me about? That you were going to fight for?
> *[MR M enters quietly. His stillness is a disturbing contrast to the bustle and energy we have come to associate with him.]*
>
> (Gray, 1990:180)

The first two quoted lines, Thami's sharp accusation of Isabel and her glib counter-charge exemplify the verbal contest between the two characters in the dramatic present. And it is the personal pronoun "you" that refers both ways, first to Isabel and then to Thami, that indicates direct address. The "I" and the "me" as used by Thami and Isabel respectively both indicate involvement by both speakers. The "here" and the "now", spatial and temporal co-ordinates are both implied in the two lines referred to. All these are deictic elements of dialogue for each of the speakers who takes a turn to speak refers to himself/herself as "I" or as "me", and to their interlocutors as listener-addressees, "you". Although the "here" and "now" do not appear as words in the two lines referred to, their sense is nevertheless implied because of the present tenses used in both lines, and the fact that these lines are meant to be said from a performance stage which constitutes the dramatic "here".

Thami's reaction to Isabel's indirect reference to what she sees as his failure to communicate is one of anxiety, almost desperation to reach out to her and make her understand. His facial expression and the gestures he uses when he says the words,

> Visiting you like <u>this</u> is dangerous.
>
> (Gray, 1990:180)

testify to this.

It stands to reason that the word "this" cannot be said without specific reference to a particular object in a specific context. In this instance, it refers to their way of meeting where Thami has to sneak to Isabel's home in town where they have their practice sessions. He cannot openly be seen to associate with her because the Comrades do not approve of any mixing with whites. Therefore when Thami accompanies the phrase, "like this" with a sweeping gesture of his hand or a spreading of both hands, he ostends this situation which he feels is dangerous. This is an example of ostension, not of an object in this case, but of a state of affairs. When Isabel retorts,

And of course <u>that</u> is such a big crime!

She also uses ostension to allude to what to her is an innocent meeting of two pupils to prepare for a contest. Ostension is usually accompanied by some gestic sign, especially a particular kind of movement of the hands as if to point to some object or situation. And the demonstrative article "that", and the phrase "like this", must needs be uttered within a given context in order to refer to something in particular. Other instances where ostension has been used in the above-quoted excerp are the statements,

- Yes! I go along happily with <u>that</u>!,

- Hell Thami, <u>this</u> great Beginning of yours sounds like ...,

and

- Is <u>this</u> the Freedom you've been talking to me about?

(Gray, 1990:180)

The quoted extract reflects the dramatic conflict that has developed between the two protagonists and it reflects one of the highpoints of the drama, for Thami is here prodded to come out clearly and unambiguously about his standpoint with regard to the campaign conducted by the comrades. The use of deixis and ostension as referred to above implies dramatic action which implies performance on a theatrical stage. And it is one of the important features that sets dramatic language apart from narrative reporting.

6.1.2 NON-VERBAL FEATURES OF DIALOGUE

As already pointed out in Chapter 2, section 2.4, any discussion of deixis and ostension inevitably flows into one on non-verbal features of dialogue. Reference was made to the distinction made by Fischer-Lichte between, amongst others, literary dramatic dialogue and theatri-

cal dramatic dialogue. Whereas the former is dialogue exclusively performed in linguistic signs, the latter employs both linguistic as well as paralinguistic, mimical, gestic and/or proxemic signs.

Theatrical dramatic dialogue does not only signify a situation of direct communication, but it also simulates it. Although some non-verbal features of dialogue like gestic and proxemic signs, the dialogic pause, floor management and interaction management strategies as well as paralinguistic features of dialogue have already been discussed with particular reference to Playland, it is still essential to consider all of these with respect to My Children! My Africa. In this way, one is able to gain a broader view of how all these features of dialogue manifest themselves in different contexts.

6.1.2.1 GESTIC AND PROXEMIC SIGNS

In accordance with the distinction made in Chapter 2, section 2.4.1, between the three functions performed by gestic signs, viz., the parasyntatic, the parasemantic and the parapragmatic, it is necessary to refer to at least one example of each of these in the play under scrutiny and to indicate in what way these functions render the dialogue performance orientated.

Gestic signs which serve a parasyntactic purpose are an integral part of any verbal delivery of a speech or dramatic rendition of words. This is because a speaker or participant in dialogue inevitably uses different facial expressions, head- and hand movements to mark the course of his words, e.g. the conclusion of an idea or sentence as well as the arrival of an important moment in an argument. Although it is practically not possible for any dramatist to specify in the written text all the gestic and proxemic signs that accompany the words of a speaker, these inevitably become part of the dialogue in the stage performance of the particular text. These are added on by the stage producer and the individual actors in the performance. An appropriate example here is the opening words of Thami's concluding statement in

the debate in the first scene of the play.

> THAMI: I don't stand here now and speak to you as your friend and schoolmate. That would lessen the seriousness of my final words to you. No! Close your eyes, forget that you know my face and voice, forget that you know anything about Thami Mbikwana. Think of me rather as an oracle, of my words as those of the great ancestors of our traditional African culture which we turn our back on and desert to our great peril! ...
>
> (Gray, 1990:136)

What gives these words the compelling force that holds the attention of his listeners is the manner in which each sentence is delivered. In the 1989 stage performance referred to in section 6.0, the first sentence which is accompanied by the movement of one hand and a nodding of the head is concluded with a short pause that ostensively gives the listeners time to digest the words. And during this pause, Thami has his eye-brows raised and he maintains eye-contact with his audience. The next statement is delivered in a similar way, with a hand movement that accompanies the word "seriousness", obviously to lay emphasis on it.

There is another visible pause before he articulates the "No!" which is accompanied by a deliberate shaking of the head. His gestures and facial expression as well as the rhetorical pauses he uses at the ends of his sentences lend his words considerable weight which they would otherwise not have. The parasyntactic function of gestures serve to gave the written dramatic dialogue a performance orientation.

Thami's shaking of the head when he says the word "No!" is an instance of amplification which is one of the various uses of the parasemantic dimensions of gestic signs. The special relation that the act of shaking the head has to the actual words spoken, is not one of contradiction, neutralization or substitution. The gesture here is in perfect agreement with the spoken word, and it thus amplifies or reinforces its meaning. It is needless to say that such an amplifica-

tion function cannot be performed as long as the play is confined to the pages of the text. The drama has to be performed on stage in order to have such a gestic sign executed. Gestic signs perform parapragmatic functions in cases where a gesture cannot be linked to any single linguistic sign but to the whole text of the speaker's words so that there is a single thread of emotion or attitude that can be traced through these words. A suitable example here is Thami's facial expression, a mixture of seriousness, apprehension and anxiety when he comes to warn Mr M of the danger in which he is, now that the comrades have denounced him as a traitor.

> THAMI: *[Ignoring the offered book]* I've come here to warn you.
> MR M: You've already done that and I've already told you that you are wasting your breath. Now take your stones and go. There are a lot of unbroken windows left.
> THAMI: I'm not talking about the bell now. It's more serious than that.
> MR M: In my life nothing is more serious than ringing the school bell.
> THAMI: There was a meeting last night. Somebody stood up and denounced you as an informer. *[Pause,* THAMI *waits.* MR M *says nothing?]* He said you gave names to the police. [MR M *says nothing*] Everybody is talking about it this morning. You are in big danger.
>
> (Gray, 1990:186)

Thami's bearing, and the expression on his face as he paces up and down during this verbal exchange clearly shows his agitation, as he tries his best to avert the fate that is about to befall his teacher.

As proxemic signs are closely interlinked with gestic signs, they operate in a similar way and can also be classified according to the three functions exemplified above, viz. the parasyntactic, the parasemantic and the parapragmatic. Examples of these functions with respect

to proxemic signs can also be extracted from the two excerpts quoted in this section. Thami's restless movements alluded to in the preceeding paragraph are an instance of the parapragmatic function of proxemics. Also, in the last quoted extract when Mr M extends his hand to offer Thami the book, he takes a meaningful step backwards, a sign of implied rejection of the offer. This movement (which is not specified in the text, but was executed in the performance referred to earlier) replaces the verbal rejection he should be articulating; and it therefore serves the purpose of substitution within the parasemantic functions of proxemic signs. Lastly, in the first quoted excerp in this section, a parasyntactic function of a proxemic sign is revealed when Thami takes a subtle step backwards after making the statement,

> That would lessen the seriousnesss of my final words to you.
>
> (Gray, 1990:136)

as if to physically demonstrate the distance he should be keeping from the audience in assuming the voice and persona of the oracle which he says is the repository of African wisdom. This step backwards from the spot he is occupying on the stage appears to underline the two sentences with which he opened his concluding statement. And although this movement is not mentioned in the written text, it is executed by the actor playing the role in the particular production referred to.

Gestic and proxemic signs are an integral part of dramatic dialogue, and of spoken language generally. But it is not possible for any playwright to specify exactly in a text what all the gestures and movements are that accompany every single statement that is made. A few of these are occasionally stated in the stage directions; but in the main, gestics and proxemics are implied in the words of the dramatic speaker. This is because dramatic dialogue is demonstrative language which is meant to be acted out on the theatrical stage.

5.1.2.2 THE DIALOGIC PAUSE

The dialogic pause, also referred to by Teodorescu-Brinzeu (1984) as the verbal zero sign has been defined by her as a voluntary pause in speech that derives its meaning from the context in which it occurs. It has two distinct phases, viz. its theoretical existence in the text where it is mentioned and not actually realized; and its actualization in the stage performance where it comes through as a real sign. For this reason, it has been argued, the dialogic pause can only be realized in its completeness and with its full meaning in a stage performance.

A distinction has been made in Chapter 2 section 2.4.3, between two kinds of dialogic pauses; viz. those that exist only in relation to the words uttered in the context of the dialogue and those whose meaning cannot simply be derived from such a context, i.e. pauses with a more general signification based on a cumulative strategy, as when a character is revealed as reticent or hesitant by nature from the pauses that usually accompany his/her words. The first category is more applicable to My Children! My Africa, and a few examples should illustrate this.

Prior to the following extract, Isabel had invited Thami and Mr M for afternoon tea at her home so that they could meet her parents. Mr M had immediately accepted even without asking Thami, and Isabel had noticed the latter's resentment of his teacher's conduct. After Mr M has left, Isabel tries to ask Thami separately and it is then that she sees for sure that all is not well between the teacher and his pupil:

> ISABEL: ... Honestly, sometimes dealing with the two of you is like walking on a tight-rope. I'm always scared I'm going to put a foot wrong and ... well, I just *hate* being scared like that. *[A few seconds of truculent silence between the two of them]* What's going on, Thami? There's something very wrong, isn't there?
>
> (Gray, 1990:168)

The few seconds of silence that passes before Isabel asks her question, as specified in the text, indicates a reflective pause. In a reading of the text this pause is grasped as an abstraction, the conceptualization of a moment of silence that precedes her inquiry. And in an imaginative reconstruction of the dialogue, it is understood as a meaningful pause that indicates that the speaker thinks about the matter before she poses the question that should elicit a solution to the puzzle. But a delivery of this part of Isabel's dialogue with its accompanying pause in a stage performance produces a more pronounced effect because of the presence of an audience. A packed auditorium, wrapped in silence and attentively following the conversation, throws such a dramatic pause into relief; and during this moment of silence, brief as it might be, tension builds up in the audience which senses that an important utterance is about to follow the dramatic pause. When Isabel articulates her question

> What's going on Thami?
>
> (Gray, 1990:168)

it is inevitably highlighted by the pause that has gone before it. This is an instance where a dramatic pause foregrounds a particular section of dialogue. But the dramatic pause itself which is the unspoken part of the dialogue has a meaning which is by no means secondary to the spoken words. It indicates that the speaker reflects on the matter, and that the question posed does not necessarily reflect all that goes on in her mind.

Later on in the same scene Thami states that Mr M might be watching him, but that he would be the last person to find out even if he (Thami) had anything to hide.

> THAMI: ... He sees nothing, Isabel.
> ISABEL: I think you are very wrong.
> THAMI: No I'm not. That's his trouble. He's got eyes and ears but he sees and hears nothing.

> ISABEL: Go on. Please. [Pause] I mean it, Thami.
> I want to know what's going on.
>
> (Gray, 1990:169)

Thami clearly does not intend telling Isabel exactly what he means by the statement

> ... he sees and hears nothing.
>
> (Gray, 1990:169)

because he does not want to involve her in what he regards as something between him and the teacher. She therefore politely asks him to go on, but he doesn't, and there is a brief moment of silence. The pause as indicated in the text means tacit refusal (by Thami) to take up the challenge, and it is for this reason that Isabel expresses her resolution to get him to tell her more. Such a pause is therefore a meaningful part of the dialogue. In a proper reading of the dramatic text, the pause as indicated in the stage directions should arrest the attention of the reader and make him/her reflect on its function. This pause, when acted out on the performance stage has a greater and more immediate dramatic impact than its imaginative reconstruction. In a packed auditorium the pause also generates tension as everybody eagerly awaits what the next speaker is going to say. The dialogic pause as executed in the theatrical performance thus becomes a perceptible sign that has its meaning accentuated by audience involvement and the suspense that accompanies it.

6.1.3 FLOOR MANAGEMENT AND INTERACTION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Turn-taking has already been identified in chapter 2 section 2.4.5, as being central to the analysis of verbal interaction in conversational speech as well as in dramatic dialogue. It refers to the unwritten rules which govern the distribution and flow of speech between at least two points of interaction. And it has been argued, even with reference to Playland, that the various ways in which this mechanism of speech

exchange is manipulated is as much a meaningful part of dramatic dialogue as the spoken words themselves. Among the possibilities cited in section 2.4.5 were turn overlapping, lapsed turns incorporated as dramatic pauses, turn grabbing, self-selection and floor hogging.

In the first quoted extract in the previous section 5.2.2.2(b), after Isabel has expressed her fears of unwittingly offending someone in her dealings with Thami and his teacher, the "few seconds of truculent silence" that passes is indicative of a transition relevance place. Isabel's pause here evidently shows her expectations that Thami would respond in one way or another to her confession. It is a tacit invitation to Thami to respond. But he doesn't, and his turn lapses thus compelling her to self-select and continue by asking an explicit question to force a response out of him:

> What's going on, Thami? Between the two of you?
> There's something very wrong, isn't there?
>
> (Gray, 1990:168)

The turn which Thami allowed to lapse in an attempt to steer clear of the subject has only served to confirm Isabel's suspicion that all is not well between the two characters. It is for this reason that her question is posed in such a probing way. This is an appropriate example to illustrate how a turn may lapse thus causing the current speaker to incorporate the lapse as a pause and continue until at the next transition relevance place where the turn might be relinquished.

Furthermore Isabel's calling of Thami by name in

> What's going on, Thami?
>
> (Gray, 1990:168)

is an instance of a current speaker selecting the next speaker. In addition to selecting the next speaker, the direct question to Thami also signals the end of the turn for Isabel; and there is no way that he can avoid giving a direct answer to a direct question. In an analysis of this dialogue between Isabel and Thami, one cannot fail to

notice that Thami is at first not keen to talk about his relations with Mr M and that it is Isabel who persists on following the matter up. These are some of the subtle points that come to the fore in an interpretation of dialogue and their identification depends on an understanding of the functioning of the floor- and interaction management strategies that are operative in it.

The animated verbal exchange between Isabel and Thami in the opening scene of the play provides an appropriate example of turn-grabbing:

> *Classroom of the Zolile High School.*
> MR M *is at a table with* THAMI *and* ISABEL *on either side of him. A lively inter-school debate is in progress. Everybody is speaking at the same time.*
> MR M: Order please!
> ISABEL: I never said anything of the kind.
> THAMI: Yes you did. You said that women were more ...
> MR M: I call you both to order!
> ISABEL: What I said was that women ...
> THAMI: ... were more emotional than men ...
> ISABEL: Correction! That women were more intuitive than men ...
> MR M: Miss Dyson and Mr Mbikwana! Will you both please ...
> ISABEL: You are twisting my words and misquoting me.
> THAMI: I am not. I am simply asking you ...
> MR M: Come to order! *[Grabs the school bell and rings it violently. It works. Silence]*
>
> (Gray, 1990:135)

The two pupils are so locked in heated argument that they do not pay attention to the teacher's call for order. Each time Mr M tries to interject and establish his authority as adjudicator Isabel grabs the turn to make a point to which Thami responds. Mr M twice fails to get their attention. He tries to call them by name, but it also doesn't help. He eventually resorts to ringing the bell to silence them. The turn grabbing as it occurs here is understandably coupled with turn-

overlapping as can be seen from the fact that Thami is not given a chance to complete his statement in the line

> Yes you did. You said that women were more ...

Both Mr M and Isabel jut in, and the latter gainsays him even before he has expressed himself fully. And in the same way, Thami does not allow her the full opportunity to finish her own statement. He completes it for her:

> ISABEL: What I said was that women ...
> THAMI: ... were more emotional than men ...
> (Gray, 1990:135)

Turn-grabbing and turn-overlapping as part of the floor- and interaction management strategies significantly complement the verbal part of dialogue by introducing additional interpretative dimensions to the words. In this particular instance, they demonstrate the zeal of the participants and their eagerness to put their points across. A case might also be made of Isabel coming through as the stronger and more assertive contestant even at this stage. She is the one who grabs the turn to speak from Mr M every time he tries to establish control of the proceedings; and Thami only reacts to her. This view of Isabel's character can be confirmed even by subsequent events like her way of pushing the reluctant Thami to talk about his problem with Mr M, as already alluded to in this section. If floor- and interaction management strategies are such an integral part of dialogue, then it is essential that they be paid the proper attention that they deserve. The ever-present danger that occurs in reading the text of the play is that the importance of such strategies of communication in the determination of meaning may be overlooked. In a stage performance, however, such non-verbal features of the dialogue receive such prominence that it is impossible not to notice them and interpret them accordingly.

6.1.4 THE DIALOGIC LINK BETWEEN THE STAGE AND THE AUDITORIUM

Two main categories of dialogic relationships between the performance stage and the auditorium were identified in Chapter 3; and these are direct and indirect interaction between these two components of the theatre. Direct interaction was explained as alluding to an open verbal exchange between the actor(s) and the audience where the actor acknowledges the presence of the audience by directing his/her words to them. Dramatic techniques like prologues, epilogues, monologues, soliloquies, dramatic asides and the dramatic narrator have been classified under this group of stage/audience relationship. Indirect interaction between stage and audience, on the other hand, has been seen in section 3.2.2 to refer to a more subtle communicative link between actors and spectators in a theatre. The audience here plays a more important role in the complex semiotic process that takes place in the theatre. This is because their socio-cultural background and their familiarity with the language variants used by the actors make an important contribution in the determination of the overall meaning of the play.

6.1.4.1 DIRECT ACTOR-AUDIENCE INTERACTION

The most strikingly obvious form of actor-audience interaction used in My Children! My Africa is that of the narrator which is a variant of direct address. The use of direct presentation by a dramatic narrator is a technique that is commonly used in theatre today. As explained in section 3.2.1.4, such a narrator can function in one of two ways: the dramatic narrator can either be one who is not directly involved in the action of the drama, but is able to interpret things and direct the attention of the audience accordingly because of the universal perspective and understanding he/she enjoys; or it can be a character who, despite being involved in the internal action of the play, directly addresses the audience from within his/her fictional world. The latter case applies in the above mentioned play.

The technique used is to give each one of the three characters who feature in the play an opportunity to fill the audience in on the background details of their lives and experiences. It is evidently used to compensate for the absence of the authorial voice which is characteristic of theatre. And the information communicated in this way is crucial to the overall conception of who the characters are and what motivates them. Isabel is the first to address the audience from the performance stage in Act 1, Scene 2 and the structural importance of her presentation within the play is evident from its content.

She expresses the sentiments that are representative of privileged white South Africans with regard to the black residential areas of the towns and cities in the country: In comparison to the beautiful town of Camdeboo, the location with its squalid living conditions was an embarassment especially since it was conspicuously situated on the edge of town where no visitor could fail to see it. The existence of this location (Brakwater) had until very recently been a distant reality to her, one of those things to which she had never given any serious thought. Her visit to the black school in Brakwater as part of the debating team had, however become an important revelation to her, not only because of the physical condition of the classrooms and the school-buildings in general, but also because of the surprising attitude of the pupils there. To them she was only an outsider who was expected to prove herself in their world, and they had no intention of showing her any gratitude for visiting their school.

The importance of this presentation by Isabel is that it establishes a viewpoint against whose background she interacts with the other characters in the play, and against which her actions and statements in the rest of the play are to be evaluated. In order to determine the measure of her enthusiasm about her newly formed friendships, one needs to know what her past life experiences were and what her present thoughts are. In this way, one can understand the extent to which her perceptions of the reality of South African race relations are dramatically changed by the one fateful visit she undertakes to the location school.

The technique used, where Isabel stands near the edge of the stage, looks straight into the packed auditorium and speaks to the audience about herself and her experiences is certainly the most obvious case of actor-audience interaction. It represents the overlapping of the fictional world of the actors and the real world of the audience. This presentation by Isabel is crucial in the structural composition of the play for without it the audience cannot have a yardstick with which to measure what could be regarded by her conventional English family as an impulsive and adventurous streak in her, demonstrated by her spontaneous formation of a friendship with Thami and his teacher.

The rapport which Kathy-Jo Ross (as Isabel Dyson) was able to establish with the audience in the 1989 presentation of the play was such that it made everyone in the auditorium feel personally involved. The eye-contact which she maintained from the beginning to the end of her speech, the conversational tone of her words and the sustained use of the deictic I-you relationship throughout, ensured that each member of the audience received the words as if he/she were being personally addressed. Also the personality of the speaker is without doubt a determining factor in engaging the audience emotionally. An appropriate example here is her description of Number One Classroom in Mr M's school:

> ... [Shaking her head] Honestly, I would rate it as the most bleak, depressing, dingy classroom I have ever been in. Everything about it was grey - the cement floor, the walls, the ceiling. When I first saw it, I thought to myself, how in God's name does anybody study or learn anything in here ...
>
> (Gray, 1990:147)

The passionate way in which Kathy-Jo Ross communicates these words with the appropriate gestures, facial expressions, intonation and voice modulation conjures up a picture of the depressing classroom in a way that written words cannot do. It underlines once again the importance of staging in the realization of the full semantic potential of the dramatic text. A similar argument can be made out for the other cases

of direct presentation as employed in the text of this play as in Act 1 Scene 4, where Mr M tells the audience about himself and his chosen profession; and in Act 1 scene 6, where Thami relates the story of his own life.

6.1.4.2 INDIRECT ACTOR-AUDIENCE INTERACTION

Besides direct interaction between actors and audiences, there are other forms of dialectic between the two which are indirect and less obvious. The complex meaning-creating process in theatre has already been seen in section 3.2.2.1 as dependent not only on the verbal, visual and auditory signs employed on the performance stage, but also on the social and cultural background of the members of the audience which enable them to decode those signs properly. The audience as a collective consists of individual spectators who are social, cultural and political beings, who also have their own personal store of experiences; and these have a bearing on how they respond to, and interpret, theatrical signs.

With reference to the last quoted extract from My Children! My Africa! in the preceding section, where Isabel gives an emotive description of Number One classroom, her words effectively convey a picture of the unacceptable state in which this particular classroom was. For a reader or theatre-goer who has been exposed to the physical state of secondary schools in most black residential areas in the late 1980's the description conjures up images of other classrooms and school buildings in a condition similar to, if not worse than, what is conveyed in the excerpt referred to: broken doors and windows, classrooms without doors, without writing boards, with burnt out ceilings and strips of corrugated iron stolen from the rooftops, and pupils spending more time outside in the sun than inside the cold classrooms during winter. When words not only communicate their sense but also invoke memories and imaginative pictures this way, they have an emotive and connotative power that carries their meanings far beyond their intended boundaries. This becomes especially the case when the words themselves

reflect the emotions of the speaker as in this case, for then the listener or reader also becomes emotionally involved.

Another appropriate example which involves the decoding of auditory signs by the audience can be cited from this play. It relates to a matinee performance of the play at the Market Theatre in July 1989 where the audience consisted largely of Soweto school pupils and teachers who had come on an educational excursion to the theatre. In Act 2 Scene 3, after Mr M had made his confession to Thami, and after he had spoken lengthily about his passion for teaching as a career and his great devotion to the children of the land, he resigned himself to embrace his fate: he had been condemned as a police informer by the comrades who were coming after him. The threatening approach of the group of comrades as they closed in, and as recreated by the sound technicians and played on tape off-stage during the performance was so compelling that one could literally feel how the atmosphere froze in the auditorium.

The menacing sound of the approaching mob, chanting and toyi-toying, so enthralled the audience, most of whom were quite knowledgeable about such an experience, and the atmosphere became so electrified, that a gripping silence reigned throughout the auditorium. For a spectator without first-hand experience of the cult of the kangaroo courts as practised in the townships in the mid-eighties, the power the comrades wielded over the communities then, the passion and hysteria which drove the mobs in their pursuit of all those branded as sell-outs, the episode might not have quite the same impact as in one in whom the element of identification is present. For an audience which came from a background where many had been traumatized by being directly or indirectly implicated in such events, the episode had a tragic ring to it which was all too familiar and reminiscent of the politics of the day; and how well-meaning individuals like Mr M became victims in their own communities because of their failure to recognize that they were caught up in historical and political forces beyond any influence any individual (even a great teacher) could hope to exercise.

The sound effects so recreated, together with the verbal dialogue, act together to form a complex semiotic network that requires of the audience knowledge and experience in order to be decoded correctly. It is an interpretative approach that is consonant with semiotics and reception-aesthetics where the individual spectator makes an individual input in decoding the visual, auditory and sometimes olfactory signs that accompany the performance. Without the spectators' all-important contribution in such a creation of the meaning of the scenic continuum, there is no communication and no theatre. And if the members of the audience are in such a partnership with the actors on stage and with the stage itself, there cannot be any uncertainty about their dialogic relationship. This indicates that the theatrical staging of a play, which implies the presence of an audience, adds semantic dimensions and possibilities that are not always obvious in the reading of its text.

6.2 PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION OF DIDASCALIES IN MY CHILDREN! MY AFRICA!

It has been stated in Chapter 4 that although the word didascalies refers to everything in the dramatic text that provides information about the dramatic characters as well as the world in which their actions take place, this function is sometimes also performed by the dramatic dialogue which occasionally provides this information. A distinction has thus been made between written stage directions and spoken ones. It has also been argued that the meaning of dramatic dialogue does not only depend on the actual words of the speakers, but also on the context in which the dialogue takes place, and that since the context is specified by the didascalies, the latter is an essential component of the semantic system of any dramatic text.

Furthermore, it has not only been argued that the didascalies is the most explicit range of signs that point to the dramatic text's orientation towards the stage, but this has also been illustrated with particular reference to Playland in the previous chapter. The didascalies are an important mediating channel between the authorial

voice and the reader of a text, but the point of interest here is the manner in which the didascalies in the written text disappears in the transposition process that takes place from text to performance in order to be replaced by visual, auditive and sometimes even olfactory signs. The performance orientation of each of the elements of the didascalies will now be considered with special reference to Fugard's My Children! My Africa!.

6.2.1 THE TITLE

The words, My Children! My Africa! are clearly a cry from the heart of the main character, Mr M whose tragic story is the subject of the play. They are adapted from his actual words in the drama, where he says,

> What is wrong with this world that it wants to waste
> you all like that ... my children ... my Africa!
> (Gray, 1990:191)

Mr M's declamation is prompted by the memory of what he once saw in the news on television, an Ethiopian tribesman carrying the body of a little child carelessly wrapped in a few rags: one of the many victims of famine in that country. He was shuffling his way to a mass grave, and he was himself so weak,

> he didn't have the strength to kneel and lay it down
> gently ... He just opened his arms and let it fall.
> (Gray, 1990:190)

This incident where a child was thrown away without any ceremony filled Mr M with a sense of outrage and it had great symbolic significance for him:

> That tribesman and dead child do duty for all of us,
> Thami: Every African soul is either carrying that

bundle or in it.

(Gray, 1990:191)

And for him his plight, together with that of Thami, has striking similarities with that of the Ethiopian and his burden. The play has thus been appropriately named after the teacher's lament for the wasted children of Africa.

But Mr M's narration as related above is part of a protracted and poignant account in which he bares his soul for the first time to his favourite student, and to the audience, in what should easily be the climactic scene of the play: when his death at the hands of the same children he loves, and for whom he lived, is imminent. This tragic sense of futility and loss comes through especially well in the theatrical performance where the tonal inflections of the teacher's voice, his gestures and general mood as well as the emotional turmoil reflected on Thami's face as he beholds and hears him, all combine to create an atmosphere of silence, deep attention and meditation in the auditorium.

It could easily have been one of the most saddening scenes in South African theatre at that time especially because of the element of identification between the many teachers and pupils in the audience and the actors on stage in the performance referred to earlier. The appropriateness of the lament My Children! My Africa! as title thus comes out strongly in the theatrical performance.

6.2.2 THE PREFACE

Prefaces have already been seen in section 4.2.2 to be representative of those elements of the didascalies which cannot be transposed into staging signs. They remain part of the written dramatic text. However, prefaces usually have special significance for the theatrical performances of their plays as they provide essential background

information which frequently goes a long way towards helping the prospective viewer of the performance to see it in proper perspective.

In his introduction to the collection of plays My Children! My Africa! and Selected Shorter Plays first published in South Africa in 1990, Stephen Gray (1990) states that it was assembled and taken through the printing press while the main theatrical work after which the collection was named was already enjoying its first run in Johannesburg. Although the play, My Children! My Africa! was first staged on the 27th June 1989 at the Market Theatre, it was only made available to the South African reading public a year later through Fugard's active encouragement. This was because he felt that this particular play was like something personal between him and his countrymen (Gray, 1990:9); and overseas readers and audiences could only be let into the matter after South Africans had pondered the issues raised and done some serious soul-searching amongst themselves. Although Gray's introduction to the collection gives a useful literary overview of the collection of plays, it makes no reference to any theatrical performance of My Children! My Africa!. It is purely literary in its orientation. The fact that it was written months after the play had been performed and had run a successful course could have something to do with it. This is the main difference between the preface in Playland and Gray's introduction to the collection, My Children! My Africa! and Selected Shorter Plays.

6.2.3 THE LIST OF CHARACTERS

The function fulfilled by the list of characters has already been identified as an essential one in both the dramatic text and the programme of the theatrical production. In the dramatic text this list is sometimes accompanied by a few details about the dramatic characters - their appearances, ages, their relationships etc.; and it assists in orienting the reader of the text to the fictional world. In the programme at the theatre however, it does more than this: it facilitates the rapid orientation of the audience with respect to the fictional

world of the drama by giving the names and sometimes also photographs of the actors who play the parts of the fictional characters. In this way the audience is enabled to recognize the actors and the parts they play immediately when they appear on stage.

In the stage production of the play which first opened at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg on 27th June 1989, the part of Mr M was played by John Kani; that of Isabel Dyson was played by Kathy-Jo Ross; while Rapulana Seiphemo appeared as Thami Mbikwana. Their photographs appeared in the programme which also gave a short resumé of their careers as actors. A rapid reading of such a programme before the curtain is raised thus sufficiently prepares the audience with regard to which actor plays what part in the performance. In addition to this, other details like the name of the stage director and other members of the crew were given: it was directed by Athol Fugard, designed by Suzan Hilferty with Mannie Manim and Patrick Curtis responsible for lighting and sound respectively. All this information is also provided under the list of characters in the text of the collection My Children! My Africa! and Selected Shorter Plays which was published a few months after its opening performance in Johannesburg. This also clearly indicates that the written text of the play is performance oriented.

6.2.4 STAGE DIRECTIONS

The same approach observed in discussing the performance orientation of the stage directions in Playland will be followed in the ensuing discussion of My Children! My Africa!. And the distinction referred to in sections 4.2.5 and 5.1.3.4 between written stage directions in the secondary text and those that form part of the spoken dialogue of the characters will also be accordingly observed.

6.2.4.1 WRITTEN STAGE DIRECTIONS

The mode of classification proposed and observed by Mouton (1989) will, as in section 5.1.3.4(a), also be adhered to in this context: within written stage directions, those that relate to fictional characters will thus be separated from those that pertain to fictional time and to fictional space. Within these three categories, a further distinction between visual and auditive stage directions will also be observed.

6.2.4.1.1 STAGE DIRECTIONS THAT REFER TO FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

Details about the fictional characters in a dramatic text are usually transmitted through written verbal signs in the stage directions. These are in turn transposed into visual and auditive signs in the theatrical performance.

(a) VISUAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

The physical stature, bearing and appearance of the dramatic characters, their facial expressions, gestures and movements in space as well as all the actions they execute on the performance stage all form part of the visual signs that are in question here.

- **THE PHYSICAL STATURE, BEARING AND APPEARANCE OF THE FICTIONAL CHARACTERS**

In the list of characters at the beginning of the written text of the play, Anela Myalatya the principal of Zolile High School is described as:

> In his early fifties. A bachelor. Bespectacled and passionate about his vocation as a teacher.
>
> (Gray, 1990:134)

No further details are given about his appearance, physical stature or bearing, and the reader is thus left to form an own mental picture of what he should look like. But the reader is obviously hardly able to form this mental picture of the principal until he/she has read through the play at least once, for then he/she will have an idea of the kind of man he is: whether he is conservative in his views or outlook, easygoing, authoritarian, a pragmatist or idealist, etc. Once a reader has formed an opinion about Mr M in this respect, he/she is in a better position to decide what Mr M should look like; for a man's character is frequently reflected by his physical appearance, his dress, the type of spectacles he wears, how his hair and beard are kept, etc.

In a stage performance, however, one is able to see the actor playing the part of Mr M in flesh, and it is possible to form a holistic impression of this character from the time he first appears on stage, and there is no need for speculation. Mr M, as played by John Kani is obviously an old-fashioned man - a traditional school-teacher with a battered three-piece suit and necktie. His spectacles are clearly outdated for the late 1980's and his general bearing is that of the stern schoolmaster with clearly defined principles which he will not have compromised on any account. His appearance on stage is fully consistent with his overall character as depicted throughout the play: a man not given to trifles and with an unrelenting sense of mission. His words, his actions, coupled with his physical appearance, stature and bearing all combine to portray the character of the man. And this illustrates again the fact that a theatrical performance is an intricate semiotic web where the different semiotic codes signify together and at the same time. Whereas the written dramatic text will require of a reader to read it at least twice to form a rounded impression of the characters, one needs to see only one stage production to gain such an impression of any one character. The fact that details like the physical appearance, stature and bearing of characters are made visible to the audience from the stage certainly has a lot to do with it.

THE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS OF THE FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

If the facial expressions of dramatic characters are as important a dimension of dialogue as argued earlier, then it stands to reason that such dialogue will not be complete without the facial expressions that accompany its words. Although it is impossible for any writer to specify in the written text all the various shades of expression that accompany the words of a speaker, the written stage directions do occasionally indicate this especially in instances where such expressions might be deemed particularly important to the meaning of the words.

The meeting between Isabel and Thami at the beginning of Act 2 Scene 4 is full of tension and anger on the side of Isabel for the two are meeting for the first time since the death of Mr M. Isabel's piercing words in response to Thami's thanking her for coming,

> ISABEL: [She is tense. Talking to him is not easy]. I wasn't going to. Let me tell you straight out that there is nothing in this world ... nothing! ... that I want to see less at this moment than anything or anybody from the location. But you said in your note that it was urgent, so here I am. If you've got something to say I'll listen.
>
> (Gray, 1990:191)

reveal her outrage and anger with Thami for what has happened to Mr M. Although this is only implied in the written stage directions, in the stage production of the play Isabel says these quoted words in a cold and accusing manner which is unlike the Isabel the audience has come to know in the earlier parts of the play. The anger and hostility she feels towards Thami are clearly evident from the way she glares at him as she says the words. The cold assertive way in which she says

> Let me tell you straight out ...

reveal that she is indeed ready for a fight and her face is a mirror of all these emotions. It all comes out with greater force and clarity on the theatrical stage than in the dramatic text, and it is an instance where the facial expressions of the speaker reinforce the spoken words.

THE GESTURES AND MOVEMENTS OF THE FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

Like facial expressions, some of the gestures and movements that accompany the words of dramatic speakers are usually stated in the written stage directions of the text. But the rest have of necessity to be left for the reader to deduce from the dialogue itself.

In Act 2 scene 4 as referred to in the previous section, when Thami and Isabel meet for the first time after the death of Mr M, the movements of the two characters in the stage production bespeak the tension that exists between them. When Isabel quietly enters the stage from one end and is spotted by Thami who has been waiting, the latter appears to spontaneously want to move towards her with outsteched arms as he calls her name, 'Isabel'. He is however stopped dead in his tracks when he notices the cold expression on her face, which makes it clear to him that she is not at all glad to see him. And she doesn't advance towards him either. She says the words quoted in the preceding section from the one end of the stage while Thami stands in the centre. She maintains this distance long enough to physically convey her feeling to Thami, and when she does advance towards him, it is when she takes out the rumpled piece of newspaper with which she confronts him. It is the press report of Mr M's death, in which the incident is simply disposed of as an 'unrest-related' incident. Physical movements and gestures of dramatic characters as executed on stage are inseparable from dramatic dialogue; and the fact that they cannot always be specified in a written text shows that the text needs the stage performance to actualize the dramatic experience.

(b) AUDITIVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

As in the previous drama, the stage directions in this particular play do not convey any information that is auditively transmitted about any of the characters. The only area of relevance here would thus be the speakers' distinctive voices which naturally belong to the realm of theatre, and which would vary from one actor to another.

6.2.4.1.2 STAGE DIRECTIONS THAT REFER TO FICTIONAL SPACE

The distinction made earlier between visual and auditive stage directions that pertain to fictional space still holds.

(a) VISUAL INFORMATION ABOUT FICTIONAL SPACE

Unlike in Playland where fictional space is described in terms of the performance stage, in My Children! My Africa!, it is described only as the imaginary world where the action takes place:

> Classroom of the Zolile High School. Mr M is at a table with Thami and Isabel on either side of him ...
>
> (Gray, 1990:135)

This is however the only place in the play where the milieu is explicitly mentioned in the stage directions. In the other scenes, it is only implied in the words of the speakers or not even mentioned by implication at all. In Act 1 Scene 3 for instance, when Mr M visits Isabel at her school, it can only be deduced from the dialogue that their meeting place is Isabel's school. The other scenes, like where the characters narrate their past personal experiences and where the two pupils meet to practise for the competition, could take place anywhere as it is not specifically stated in the stage directions where it all happens. A reading of the quoted stage directions at Act 1

scene 1 would be easy for any reader to visualize as any classroom where a lively interschool debate is in progress. No other details are given in the stage directions. This absence of any further details about the milieu in the written stage directions arguably makes it easy to set the scene on a theatrical stage, for in the stage production referred to earlier, all that appeared on the stage when the curtain was raised was the table at which Mr M was sitting with the two contestants on either side. The ease with which the visual features of the fictional scenes in this play can be portrayed on the stage shows its performance orientation.

(b) **AUDITIVE INFORMATION ABOUT FICTIONAL SPACE**

In the theoretical section 4.2.5.2.2, it was stated that information of an auditory nature is sometimes also specified in the written stage directions of a dramatic text. The description or mere mention of particular sounds that emanate from a fictional scene is part of the description of such a scene; and some of the sounds alluded to in the stage directions are frequently also indicative of actions which take place in scenes other than those directly described by the stage directions. The following is stated at the beginning of the opening scene of My Children! My Africa!:

> ... A lively inter-school debate is in progress.
> Everybody is speaking at the same time.
>
> (Gray, 1990:135)

These words explicitly state that the classroom is full of voices all speaking at the same time, which implicitly mean that the room is full of people. As the reader visualizes the scene as described in the stage directions quoted in the previous paragraph, so will he/she be able to imaginatively reconstruct the sounds that are characteristic of a school debate as described. In the stage performance of the scene,

although Mr M, Thami and Isabel appear on the stage, the presence of the other pupils who laugh, cheer and whistle is registered by making use of sound effects in the background. In this way, the atmosphere of a rowdy and excited class is recreated in an economic way without having to make use of additional actors for the scene. The suggestive power of sound effects with regard to fictional space is thus illustrated here.

6.2.4.1.3 STAGE DIRECTIONS THAT REFER TO FICTIONAL TIME

As stated in the discussion on Playland the fictional time when the action of the play takes place can either be directly mentioned in the written stage directions of the dramatic text or indicated by means of visual or auditory signs in these directions. In cases where such information is only mentioned in the written stage directions it becomes necessary for the producer to use a sign on the performance stage that is indicative of the time of day or historical period when the action is supposed to take place.

The following is stated prior to the opening scene of the text of My Children! My Africa!:

> The action of the play takes place in a small Eastern Cape Karoo town in the autumn of 1984.
>
> (Gray, 1990:134)

This informs the reader about the exact time when the fictive events of the play take place, and if it is a reader who is familiar with the events of the eighties in South Africa, he/she will probably realize that the events portrayed in the play are of historical significance. There is, however, no visual sign in the stage production referred to earlier to indicate this, and it can thus be stated that this is one instance where a stage direction has not been transposed to a staging sign. The exception will be those productions where such information is given in the programmes.

It was evidently not essential for the stage producer to devise any visual sign to portray the period on stage as stated in the written text, as he did it exceptionally well by using auditive signs later on in the play. Towards the end of Act 2 Scene 3, after Mr M has rendered his prolonged narration about his life and the things that touched him most intimately, the following is stated in the stage directions:

> [More breaking glass and stones and the sound of a crowd outside the school ...]
>
> (Gray, 1990:191)

This can be understood by the reader to imply that the mob of students Thami earlier expressed concern about, has arrived at the school to get Mr M. Their presence is thus communicated through written auditory signs. As can be expected, the scene is portrayed in a much more dramatic way in the stage production of the play. The menacing sound of the toyi-toyi is at first faint and barely audible in the distance. It gradually becomes louder and more audible, and suddenly there is the loud sound of breaking glass and a stone which drops right in front of Mr M. The sound of the toyi-toyi is an unmistakeable semiotic indicator of the turbulent mid 1980's in South African modern history, and the sound of breaking glass was not unusual especially in schools where the marchers attended. Through the use of sound effects, the stage producer thus managed in this way to make up for the failure of the production to visually signify the historical period when it all happened. The sounds recreated here are all enough to indicate to any spectator with sufficient social background that the era of student unrest is the context in which the play is placed.

6.2.4.2 SPOKEN STAGE DIRECTIONS

As in the previous work, brief reference can still be made to visual or auditory signs that relate to fictional characters, fictional space and even fictional time; the only difference being that it is all trans-

mitted through the actual words of the speakers, and not through separate stage directions in the text.

Although Number One Classroom is not described in the stage directions of the written text, this classroom is described by Isabel for the benefit of the readers and audience in her direct address:

> [Shaking her head]. Honestly, I would rate it as the most bleak, depressing, dingy classroom I have ever been in. Everything about it was grey - the cement floor, the walls, the ceiling ...
>
> (Gray, 1990:147)

Through the words of the speaker, information about fictional space which could have been conveyed through the written stage directions is given. As this is information through the eyes of an individual, it is understandably couched in emotive terms. A reading of these words in a text arouses feelings of injustice and associations of deprivation; and these are experienced even more strongly when the words are delivered by an actor on a performance stage. This is all because of the compelling power of words when audibly articulated. The emotive description by the speaker in this case also makes up for the absence of any visual signs to depict or suggest the physical state of Number One Classroom. Dramatic dialogue is frequently used to provide essential information about the dramatic world, its characters and the time when its action takes place.

6.3 CONCLUSION

Each of the numerous features of dialogue and different elements of the didascalies in My Children! My Africa! have been considered with particular reference to their performance orientation. To isolate individual components of dialogue and didascalies in this way, and to argue that for the reasons marshalled above, each is especially geared for

the theatrical stage might sound somewhat contrived. And the division observed here might also appear arbitrary since a dramatic work of art is an integrated unit which cannot be conceptualized in parts but as a whole. These divisions were, however, made in order to systematize the study of these aspects in the preceding pages.

It has by now also become clear that the written dramatic text as a medium operates differently from the theatrical experience, and this is mainly because all the visual, auditory, and olfactory signs of the theatre are in a text mediated through the written word and not perceived directly through staging. Also in the reading of texts, signs are visualized or imaginatively perceived individually whereas in a stage production they all make an impact on the consciousness of a spectator at the same time. In this way, their meanings become interlinked and interdependent, thus forming a semantically rich and intricate semiotic tapestry.

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