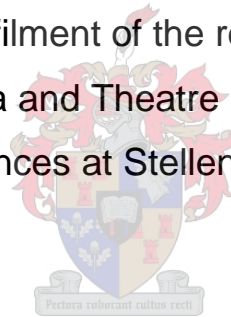


Within between: an investigation on intermediality in the Malawian and South African theatre context

By

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the state of African theatre in the age of new media and digital technology. Through the engagement with current literature, the researcher found that the concept of intermediality provided suitable theoretical and methodological tools for this investigation. Intermediality in this study is defined as the interrelations between media. The study therefore, investigated the interrelations between theatre and other media through the performance analysis of four theatrical performances from festivals in Malawi and South Africa in 2014, in order to unearth how intermediality manifests in these contexts.

Specifically, the study investigated the nature of interaction between theatre and other media, how intermediality shapes the conceptualisation of theatre and theatrical presence, and how the creative team creates a *mise en scène* that incorporates other media. The study formulated a model for the analysis of intermediality theatre. This model was drawn from a variety of semiotic and phenomenological theoretical and methodological frameworks. The resulting model was used in the analysis of the four cases in the study. This model has the capacity to be used for the analysis of other cases of theatrical intermediality.

The cases in this study present compelling evidence that theatre practice in these contexts is far more experimental in transcending the boundaries between theatre and other media, in contrast with the picture painted by African theatre scholarship. Of the four performances, two performances incorporated digital and electronic media (and puppetry). One performance resulted from the appropriation of music, while another evoked the experience of other media through its own media-specific means.

The study found that the cases reconfigured conventional conceptualisations of and expectations from theatre in their attempts to augment how the audiences experienced theatrical presence, time and space. The study also found that the creation of *mise en scène* that incorporates other media restructured traditional theatre roles, because it involved working with more than one system of aesthetic conventions, principles of structure, and stylistic procedures, often requiring the collaboration of skills from other media. The study argues that the field of theatre studies in these contexts can no longer afford to be rigid while theatre practice experiments with other media, continually changing how theatre is created, conceptualised and experienced. The four cases should be considered as a starting point in understanding how intermediality manifests in the theatrical performances in the Malawian and South African contexts.

ABSTRAK

Hierdie studie verken die toestand van Afrika-teater in die tyd van nuwe en digitale media. Deur die studie van resente literatuur, het die navorser gevind dat die konsep van intermedialiteit 'n gepaste teoretiese en metodologiese instrument is om hierdie ondersoek mee uit te voer. Intermedialiteit in hierdie studie word gedefinieër as die verhoudings tussen verskillende media. Hierdie studie het daarom die verhoudings tussen teater en ander media deur middel van performance ontleding van vier teatrale performances by feeste in Malawi en Suid-Afrika gedurende 2014 ondersoek om die verhoudings tussen die verskillende media en hoe dit manifesteer, aan te dui.

Hierdie studie het meer spesifiek die aard van die verhoudings tussen teater en ander media ondersoek en hoe intermedialiteit die konsepsualisering van teater en teatrale teenwoordigheid hervorm, sowel as hoe die kreatiewe span 'n mise en scène ontwikkel wat die verskillende media inkorporeer. Die studie formuleer 'n analitiese model vir die analise van intermedialiteit in die teater. Die model trek uit 'n verskeidenheid semiotiese en fenomenologiese teoretiese en metodologiese raamwerke. Die gevolglike model is gebruik in die analise van die vier gevallestudies en hierdie model is ook geskik vir die studie van intermedialiteit in die teater.

Die gevallestudies bied bewyse dat teaterpraktyk in die betrokke kontekste baie meer eksperimenteel omgaan met die verskuiwing van grense tussen teater en ander media. Dit staan in kontras met die prentjie wat oor die algemeen geteken word deur skryfwerk oor Afrika-teater. Twee uit die vier performances het digitale en elektroniese media (sowel as toneelpoppe) ingesluit. Een performance is geskep deur elemente van musiek in te sluit, terwyl die ander stuk die ervaringsvelde van ander media binne die raamwerk van sy eie performance, gekombineer het. Die studie het bevind dat hierdie gevalle die verwagtinge en konvensionele konsepsualisering verskuif het in 'n poging om die manier hoe die gehoor teatrale teenwoordigheid, tyd en ruimte ervaar, te verander.

Daar is ook bevind dat die skepping van 'n mise en scène wat ander media inkorporeer die tradisionele teatrale rolle herstruktureer, omdat dit die gebruik van meer as een estetiese, konvensionele sisteem en die reëls van struktuur en stilistiese gebruike inkorporeer wat dikwels die vaardighede van ander media kombineer. Die studie argumenteer dat die veld van teaterstudies nie meer kan bekostig om te regied na teatrale praktyke te kyk binne hierdie kontekste nie, terwyl daar met ander media ge-eksperimenteer word en konstant die manier verander hoe teater geskep, gekonsepsualiseer en mee ge-eksperimenteer word. Die vier gevallestudies moet as 'n wegspringplek gebruik word om te verstaan hoe intermedialiteit manifesteer in die teatrale performances in die Malawiese en Suid-Afrikaanse kontekste.

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Chapter One

General introduction

1.1. Introduction

The proliferation of media and its related technologies has radically altered the arts in Africa in terms of how they are produced, made available on the marketplace and consumed. In the past century alone, film, radio and video technologies have given rise to new forms of dramatic expression and a global entertainment industry (Kumar, Chaturvedi & Merhotra, 2013:3). Furthermore, the advent of digital technologies presents the public with products of mass replication, to such an extent that local communities have become acclimatised to the new choices in methods of consumption (Tuohy, 2011:3).

These developments have had a tremendous impact on older art forms such as theatre, displacing them as dominant cultural forms. However, grounded in the supposition that old and new media are always interrelated, recent studies in intermediality have shown that the proliferation of media technologies has also led to interaction among old and new media. This study investigates intermediality in contemporary Malawian and South African theatre. Intermediality in this study is defined as the interrelations between theatre and other media¹. The phrase “within between” used in the title of the thesis serves to underscore the interrelated-ness emphasised in the concept of intermediality: “Inter-” means in between and “mediality” also connotes middle or in between. The use of the phrase was inspired by Christy Adair’s title, “Within between: Engaging communities in contemporary dance practice in East Africa” (in Kerr, 2011a).

1.1.1. The theatre studies context

The relations between theatre and other media has become a major issue of concern in African theatre scholarship. Many scholars are apprehensive of the impact of media technologies on theatre and other live performance genres (Udengwu, 2011:342; Inyang, 2008:2; Nwankwo, 2010:34; Rantimi, 2010:129). Others have gone further to strategize ways of keeping live performances

¹ “Intermediality” is explored further in sections 1.1.2 and 1.1.3 of this chapter and section 2.4 of chapter 2.

relevant and competitive in the marketplace². Their thinking is largely based on the fact that mass media forms are currently dominant at the cultural economy level, at the expense of theatre. This point of view can be critiqued for ignoring other dimensions of the relations between theatre and other media.

Key scholarly texts on theatre and media in Africa have also overlooked the multifaceted dimensions of the relations between theatre and other media. Ironically, the inclusion of other artistic media forms in key theatre texts is a trend in African theatre scholarship³. This inclusion is an indication that key scholars in African theatre recognise that theatre and other media belong to the same conceptual realm. However, grounded in a context of restrictive disciplines, these key texts have maintained an emphasis on boundaries between genres, disciplines and categories, and have since perpetuated the tendency to view African arts as monolithic. For example, Susan Arndt, Eckhard Breiting and Marek Spitzcok von Brisinski's (2007) *Theatre, Performance and New Media in Africa* discuss theatre, music, video, film and popular print media as separate and distinct genres. Similarly, David Kerr's (2011a) *African theatre 10: Media & performance* discusses more examples of media-specific genres than those that interrelate. Another key text, Kenechukwu Igweonu's (2011) *Trends in twenty-first century African theatre and performance* does not discuss interrelations between theatre and other media, even though it purports to provide an overview of trends in contemporary theatre practice.

However, contemporary African theatre practice has been much more experimental in exploring the relations between theatre and other media. African theatre artists are increasingly incorporating new media technologies, expressive means and aesthetic concepts from other media in their performances in ways that surpass medium specificity⁴. Kerr, (2011b:xviii) for example, reports that, because of its well-equipped theatres, South Africa has taken the lead in mixed-media stage

² For example, Ngozi Udengwu (2011:341-366) presents Stella Odeyepo's "Theatre-on-demand" (commissioned theatre, tailor-made to serve the aesthetic needs of a specific audience) as a response to the "worrysome" situation with live theatre. Her paper, in *Trends in twenty-first century African theatre and performance* (Igweonu, 2011) appraises Odeyepo's model for its efficacy. It also suggests that such an approach to theatre has the power to restore live theatre to its former glory against the threat from television and movies (Udengwu, 2011:349,364).

³ This is reflected in book titles such as Susan Arndt's *et al.* (2007) *Theatre, performance and new media in Africa* and David Kerr's (2011a) *African theatre 10: Media & performance*. Such books are characterised by a wider understanding of theatre and performance that includes other media.

⁴ Medium specificity is the emphasis of certain qualities that distinguish a medium as distinctive from other art forms (Balme, 2008a:85).

techniques. Perhaps this explains why there have been a number of drama theses from South African universities that have investigated the incorporation of media technologies in South African theatre in the last two decades. Examples of these are Gaerin Hauptfleisch (1999), Moratiwa Molema (2008) and Dominik Lukasz Pater (2011). Kerr (2011b:xviii) also notes that the practice of mixing live and electronic performance is beginning to take root outside South Africa. His edited volume, *African theatre 10: Media & performance* (Kerr, 2011a), introduces two examples of such contemporary practices by artists from Botswana and Kenya.

The incorporation of electronic media into theatrical performances, introduced in Kerr's edited volume, is an example of the nature of interrelations (between theatre and other media) that are investigated through the concept of intermediality – interrelations that blur the boundaries between media (and subsequently genres, disciplines and categories) in theatre performance. Kerr's approach towards “mixed media stage techniques”, while a useful point of departure for this study, could be critiqued for assuming that interrelations between theatre and other media always involves technology. However, other literature discusses examples of interaction between theatre and other media that are not induced by digital or electronic media technology (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:11-12). These examples, together with experiments with electronic and digital media, are both crucial to the understanding of intermediality in African theatre.

The relations between theatre and other media has also been a major topic of interest in Western theatre scholarship. Most discussions are in response to the “Auslander vs. Phelan” debate (Balme, 2008a:84) on the status of live and *mediatized* performances. In 1993, Peggy Phelan (1993:146) argued that performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations. On the other hand, Philip Auslander argued that there is no ontological difference between the live and the *mediatized*: that in fact, live events are becoming more identical with *mediatized* ones (Auslander, 1999; 2008:184). In reaction to Auslander, and in Phelan's defence, Western theatre scholars have re-asserted theatre's media specificity. For example, just as Jerzy Grotowski (1968) and Peter Brook (1972) before them, Erika Fischer-Lichte (2008b:32) and Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt (2006b:20) single out the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators in a specific time and place as the essential requirement for a theatrical performance to occur.

An alternative dimension to this scholarly debate is ushered in by Christopher Balme, who critiques both the theatre essentialists like Fischer-Lichte and the *mediatization* school of thought of scholars like Auslander. Balme (2008a:85) argues that contemporary theatre practice strongly suggests that the relations between “the live and the mediated” is far less confrontational in artistic practice than it is in academic discourse. Balme’s position may well be true for the African theatre context. African theatre practice is increasingly experimenting with other media, at the same time that African theatre scholars are anxious about the impact of media technologies on theatre.

This study prefers Balme’s approach to understanding the relations between theatre and other media: an approach that is grounded in the analysis of theatre praxis. This is contrasted with theoretical approaches that limit their discussion to a singular and confrontational dimension of the relations between theatre and other media. Most importantly, the study also prefers to discuss the relations between theatre and other media in terms of “intermediality” on the basis that the concept offers “new instruments and notions to analyse contemporary theatre productions” (Röttger, 2013⁵). The next section, therefore, discusses intermediality as a concept in theatre discourse.

1.1.2. Intermediality in theatre

The term intermediality has a long history of usage in a wide array of disciplines, such as literature, visual arts and media studies. In theatre studies, intermediality draws from media, performance and perception theories (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:12; Röttger, 2013). There are numerous ways of defining intermediality. As an alternative to providing one formulaic, clear-cut definition of intermediality, this section points towards several aspects of the concept of intermediality that are useful to this study. Thereafter, the section traces the recent literature in the field of intermediality in theatre.

Scholars have defined intermediality in terms of the type of “medial relations” that are involved when media co-relate. Some have used the prefixes *trans-* (across), *inter-* (between), *multi-* (many)

⁵ Kati Röttger’s (2013) “The mystery of the in-between: A methodological approach to ‘Intermedial Performance Analysis’” is an unpublished manuscript accessible on the internet. Page numbers therefore are not available for this reason. The article is accessible through this link:

<http://www.uva.nl/binaries/content/documents/personalpages/r/o/k.e.rotter/en/tab-four/tab-four/cpitem%5B3%5D/asset?1360852800459> [2015, August 27].

and *intra-* (within) as distinguishing markers for the nature of medial relations that occur when media correlate. Kattenbelt (2009:20), for example, prefers to define intermediality as distinct from two other forms of mediality. *Multimediality*, according to Kattenbelt, refers to the manifestation of many media in the same entity. *Transmediality* refers to the transfer from one medium to another medium. His preferred definition, *intermediality*, refers to the co-relation of media in the sense of reciprocated influences between media⁶.

The danger with the prefix-oriented definitions is that they are far from clarifying the specifics of the relations between media, even though they suggest the nature of medial relations involved in the interaction between media. Using Kattenbelt's example as discussed in the previous paragraph, intermediality, while concerning the "reciprocated influences between media", very often involves *multimediality*⁷, the manifestation of many media in the same entity and may also involve *transmediality*, transfers from one medium to another, the very concepts from which it seeks to distinguish itself from. The definition of intermediality as "that which takes place *between* media" implicit in Kattenbelt's definition, is therefore a broad and ambiguous distinction that does not necessarily specify the exact "influences" entailed, nor does it entirely distinguish intermediality from the other types of interrelations evoked by the other prefixes.

Nevertheless, this broad definition of intermediality is useful insofar as it implies an assumption of perceptible media borders, a critical assumption in the study of intermediality. Using borders as a key signifier to intermediality, Lars Elleström (2010c:27) defines intermediality as the trespassing of media borders. Elleström (2010c:28) insists that there are no natural media borders, "but we need borders to talk about intermediality". Using this approach, Elleström (2010c:27-29) identifies dissimilar kinds of media borders, but also dissimilar manners of the border crossing. These are discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

The notion of media borders and their conventionality also plays a crucial role in how Irina Rajewsky theorises and categorises intermediality:

⁶ Intermediality seems to be closely related to multimediality as defined by Kattenbelt. Balme (2004:8) clarifies that the borders between the two are fluid. "Multi-media theatre may pursue an intermedial strategy".

⁷ In Kattenbelt's (2009:20) own definition, any relations involving more than one medium are multimedial.

It is due to our construction of borders that we are able to become aware of ways of transcending or subverting those borders or of ways of highlighting their presence, or probing them, or even of dissolving them entirely. At the same time, it is precisely also through these acts of transcending, subverting, probing or highlighting which draws attention to the conventionality and the (relative) constructedness of these boundaries (Rajewsky, 2010:64).

For Rajewsky and Elleström, therefore, the notion of borders is important in any theoretical or practical undertaking in the field of intermediality, because it is through the engagement with the borders that media conventions are highlighted, probed, dissolved or subverted.

In addition to the notions of media borders and their conventionality, this study prefers definitions of intermediality that look beyond the technological aspects of media. This is because approaches that emphasise the technological aspects of intermediality tend to assume that intermediality is reliant on the technologies. Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006b:11) avoid such an assumption by recognising both the “incorporation of digital technology” and the “presence of other media” as starting points in defining intermediality. Throughout their conceptual framework, Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006b:12, 21) emphasise that intermediality is a phenomenon that is not reliant on technology. This study adopts Chapple and Kattenbelt’s approach and investigates the two typologies of media interrelations in the cases it explores.

The study also prefers approaches to intermediality that clarify what “medium” and “mediality” entail before undertaking the task of defining “intermediality”. One major problem found in definitions of intermediality is the assumption that one can understand intermediality without clarifying the concepts of medium and mediality. Such an assumption often leads to an oversimplified understanding of “medium” as a container consisting of clearly distinguishable surfaces that “separate the outside and the inside” (Elleström, 2014:8). This oversimplification subsequently affects the understanding of intermediality because it does not probe the actual processes that take place when media interrelate. In contrast, Elleström is an example of a scholar who draws from the definitions of medium and mediality to define intermediality. His definition of the medium and mediality covers the material, the perceptual and the social aspects of the concept (Elleström 2010c:33). His approach towards understanding intermediality, therefore, propositions that all media are both different and similar (Elleström, 2010c:33) – in so far as they do or do not share medial properties and aspects of mediality. According to Elleström (2010c:12),

intermediality must be understood as a bridge between media differences that are founded on similarities.

Lastly, the study prefers definitions of intermediality (in the theatre context) that acknowledge that what is conventionally understood to be “theatre” is a dynamic medium that undergoes constant change and evolution as opposed to those definitions that assume it to be a fixed or stable entity. Peter Boenisch (2003:34), for example, dismisses several definitions of intermediality on the grounds that they “cling to the banal formula ‘theatre + media = intermedial theatre’”, thereby reinforcing the notion of medial specificity – the emphasis of certain qualities that make theatre distinctive from other art forms. As far as he is concerned, theatre’s genuine “mediality” already implies its “intermediality” (Boenisch, 2003:34), and is thereby not reliant on the presence of technology to justify the use of the term (Balme, 2004:8). Boenisch (2003:35) therefore argues that, whereas the discourse on intermediality originally set out to challenge media specificity, those rejected concepts eventually sneak in through the backdoor, as the underlying claim of a specific mediality of each medium is still unchallenged⁸. Nevertheless, other scholars, like Balme, defend the use of historically verified properties of the source media to analyse the ways in which they take on different dimensions in a new media context. Balme argues that this does not mean that the notion of media specificity is re-introduced through the back door as Boenisch claims (Balme, 2004:8).

To sum up, in looking to define intermediality, this section has critiqued definitions that are based on the prefixes attached to the term “mediality” as being insufficient. Instead, the section has identified the assumption of perceptible media borders and their conventionality as a key assumption in defining intermediality. The study also prefers definitions of intermediality that look beyond the technological aspects and materiality of media in general to include other, non-technological aspects of mediality. Lastly, the study prefers definitions of intermediality that acknowledge that theatre is a medium that is not fixed, but has always had the capacity to change and incorporate other media.

⁸ Arguing in the same vein, Röttger (2013) opens up the definition of theatre to include some conventional and unconventional aspects. She argues that “a theatrical performance relies both on the production as well as on the reception end on the presence of the human body and its specific sensorium, while it is basically open to integrate all other media, including technical media (Röttger, 2013).

1.1.3. Tracing theatrical intermediality

The publication of *Intermediality in theatre and performance* (2006a), edited by Chapple and Kattenbelt, marked a critical step in delineating the field of theatrical intermediality. Consisting of essays that discuss intermedial relations created when theatre and the performing arts intersect with cinema, puppetry and television, digital technology, the publication presents a strong argument for reconstituting theatre as an intermedial phenomenon. *Intermediality in theatre and performance* (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006a) is the first official publication to result from the Intermediality in Theatre and Performance Working Group of the International Federation for Theatre Research, which was founded in 1998. The book is known to have explored the centrality of the concept of the *in-between* in its conceptualisation of intermediality.

The second publication from the members of the working group, *Mapping intermediality in performance*, edited by Sarah Bay-Cheng, Chiel Kattenbelt, Andy Lavender and Robin Nelson (2010), exemplifies the shift, towards a particularly vested interest in digital culture in theatrical intermediality. The editors underscore this shift in their introduction to the book.

Building then upon the earlier volume and subsequent publications by IFTR [Intermediality in Theatre and Performance Working] group members, this book affords a tighter focus than the last publication on digital culture and the implications for theatre of what has been called the “intermedial turn” (Nelson, 2010:15).

In another departure from its predecessor, *Mapping intermediality* (Bay-Cheng *et al.*, 2010) also presents a response to and an adaptation of Elleström’s (2010b) edited volume, *Media borders, multimodality and intermediality*. The book (Bay-Cheng *et al.*, 2010) adopts Elleström’s *both-and*⁹ approach towards intermediality, in place of the previous *in-between* focus of the first publication, using the new approach to re-position claims for the distinctiveness of intermediality in digital

⁹ Using this approach, the discussion shifts from the fixation with *locating* the in-between to the understanding of factors that make theatre and other media interrelate.

culture (Bay-Cheng *et al.*, 2010:15). These publications and the many others on the same topic¹⁰ demonstrate how vast the field of intermediality is in the theatre context. Following recent trends in intermedial theatre practices, theatre studies as a discipline is continuously redefining theatre as a qualified medium whose basic disposition is intermedial: that is, open to exchange rather than a closed, essentialist discipline.

1.1.4. Intermediality in African theatre

Conversations about the interrelations among the arts are not a new phenomenon in African theatre discourse. There is a long history of scholars who have conceptualised these relations. For instance, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2007:4) posits that there is an interconnectedness of art forms in the African context and a fluidity among drama, story, song, discourse and performance, whereby the wholeness of all is bigger than the individual parts that contribute to it. Similarly, Steve Chimombo (1988) advances a comparable framework in his conceptualisation of Malawian arts and aesthetics. Chimombo argues that there is no linguistic discrimination among the arts in Malawian cultures, since all the arts are united under the – mb – principle in the Chichewa-speaking group. In this argument, Chimombo implies that there are correlations among the art forms in the Malawian arts context. These conversations should be regarded as precursors to the intermediality debate. When considered this way, the current focus on the interrelations between theatre and electronic or digital media are merely newer discussion points in the same conversation. The study of intermediality in African theatre, therefore, builds from these conversations.

Regarding the incorporation of digital media in African theatre, a review of recent literature on contemporary theatre practices in Africa reveals that scholars are starting to discuss the incorporation of media technologies under the topics “mixed media techniques” and “multimedia performance” (see Hauptfleisch, 1999; Kerr, 2011b; Molema, 2008; Pater, 2011). Nevertheless, these studies do not focus on the *interrelations* between theatre and other media, as described

¹⁰ There are many publications outside the IFTR framework on the subject of intermediality in theatre. The list below presents some of them: Greg Giesekam's (2007) *Staging the screen: the use of film and video in theatre*, Claudia Georgi's (2014) *Liveness on stage: Intermedial challenges in contemporary British theatre and performance*, Aneta Mancewicz's (2014) *Intermedial Shakespeares on European stages*, Hālid Amīn and George F. Roberson's (2014), *Intermediality, performance and the public sphere: Selected papers from recent meetings of the Tangier international conferences* and Mary Simonson's (2013) *Body knowledge: Performance, intermediality, and American entertainment at the turn of the twentieth century*.

above. Instead, being primarily practice-led projects, the scholar/artist theorises their experiences in working with multiple *mediatized* media and live media forms at the same time.

It is important to note, however, that unlike the overall enthusiasm with the concept of intermediality in Western theatre, African theatre scholars have been apathetic towards discussing the interrelations between theatre and other media as “intermedial”¹¹. This might be because, in Western theatre, the concept of intermediality has been conceptualised narrowly to mean the relations between theatre and digital technologies¹². Because of this overly specific digital focus, African scholars may have been drawn away from the conversation¹³.

The attitude by African scholars towards the perceived (narrow) Western conceptualisation of intermediality can be exemplified by Christopher Odhiambo and Christopher Warnes’ (2004) review of Robin Nelson’s techno-centric approach towards theatre. Commenting on Nelson’s general approach to theatre, Odhiambo and Warnes (2004:284) consider the “intrusion” of technology as a “mediatising” agent for theatre as a “worrying” phenomenon, because it negates the idea of theatre as the meeting of audiences and actors. Additionally, Odhiambo and Warnes (2004:284) argue that the influence of technology should not be such a grave matter, because “the theatrical events that still predominate in Africa, the Caribbean and most parts of the Indian sub-continent are in their ‘pure’ forms”.

That Odhiambo and Warnes put “pure” in quotes expresses that they are aware that the concept of purity in African theatre is unfounded. Odhiambo and Warnes may have been accurate to note that the theatre in their context is not identical to the type of theatre described by Nelson. However,

¹¹ This apathy can be construed from Kerr’s (2011b:xiv) critique of the “narrowly techno-centric interpretation of media”. It can also be deduced from the limited application of the concept in recent African theatre scholarship. It is also explicitly expressed attitudes such as Odhiambo and Warnes’, which have been discussed below.

¹² The shift towards a vested interest in digital culture by scholars in theatrical intermediality has been highlighted in section 1.1.3. The literature listed below is only a sample of Western theatre scholars’ interest in the digital culture in their approaches to intermediality: Steve Dixon’s (2007) *Digital Performance: A history of new media in theater, dance, performance art, and installation*, Greg Gieseckam’s (2007) *Staging the screen: the use of film and video in theater*, Nick Kaye’s (2007) *Multi-media: Video–installation–performance*, Parker-Starbuck’s (2011) *Cyborg theatre: Corporeal/technological intersections in multimedia performance* and Klich and Scheer’s (2011) *Multimedia performance*.

¹³ Kerr (2011b:xiv), for example, argues that a techno-centric focus tends to situate innovation within a paradigm dominated by technology, ignoring the influence of African indigenous oral performative media. He further points out that electronic media was introduced to Africa through colonial importation and therefore, discussions on it are bound to carry aesthetic and ideological baggage. These are important considerations for understanding attitudes towards media technologies in African theatre scholarship.

from their description of technology as “intruding” and “a worrisome phenomenon”, Odhiambo and Warnes also demonstrate that they not only hold the view that technology has no place in African theatre, but also that they hold a prescribed and somewhat fixed view of what African theatre should and should not be. These sentiments are not compatible with the supposition that African theatre is not fixed.

Kerr’s (2011a) *African theatre 10: Media & performance* is the most recent publication that investigates the interconnectedness between African theatre and performance and various forms of media. Even though intermediality is not the focal point of this publication, the juxtaposition of theatre, performance and other media¹⁴, explicit in the title of the volume and its discussion of mixed media stage techniques, indicates a shifting approach towards understanding medial interrelations in African theatre studies.

1.2. Problem statement and focus

The ubiquity of media and their related technologies in African theatre cannot be overemphasised. However, while contemporary theatre practice is increasingly experimenting with media and their related technologies, scholarship has not kept up with these trends and continues to reinforce unchallenged notions of medium specificity and a confrontational relationship between African theatre and other media.

This study investigates the interrelations between theatre and other media through the performance analysis of four theatrical performances from major arts festivals in Malawi and South Africa in 2014. The study analyses the four performances in order to uncover how intermediality manifests in these contexts. The study served as a follow up to the already existing discussions regarding the interrelations between theatre and other media.

1.3. Research questions

How do theatre and other media interrelate in the Malawian and South African theatre context?

1.3.1. Specific questions

1. What is the nature of interaction between theatre and other media?

¹⁴ Such as video films, television and mixed media stage techniques.

2. How has intermediality shaped the conceptualisation and perception of theatre and theatrical presence?
3. How does a theatre-making team create a *mise en scène* that incorporates other media?

1.4. Rationale

It can be stated that African theatre has always combined and integrated various media in its manifestations, to the extent that, contrary to popular apprehensions in African theatre scholarship, the incorporation of 21st century forms of media is a logical step. This study posits that investigating how theatre and media interact in contemporary theatre is crucial in understanding the nature of theatre in Malawi and South Africa in this age of ubiquitous technologies.

There are both practical and theoretical reasons for conducting this research. From a practical perspective, the study aims to be informative to theatre makers as it deconstructs the spectre of “oppressive new media”, continually oppressing older media¹⁵, by discussing the various ways in which old and new media interact.

On a theoretical level, unlike studies that posit generalised conceptualisations of intermediality deduced from area studies in theatre and performance studies¹⁶, this contextual study broadens the conceptualisation of African theatre beyond media specificity. The study focuses on technologically driven intermediality in South African theatre and non-technologically driven intermediality in Malawi, taking the peculiarities of the contexts into account. These two contexts were selected to highlight the dynamism of intermediality in the region.

¹⁵ See apprehensions by African theatre scholars in section 1.1.1. The phrase “oppressive new media” is borrowed from Marshall McLuhan (1994:174), who argued that a new medium never ceases to oppress the older media until it finds new shapes and positions for them.

¹⁶ Balme (2004, 2006, 2008a), Fischer-Lichte (2008b), Röttger (2013) and Dapp (2013) base their analysis of intermediality on the German theatre context. Writing from the American context, Auslander (1999) and Bolter and Grusin (2000) posit television as the medial norm from which all other media deviate. However, radio drama is still considered to be the most widely consumed form of electronic media in Africa (Kerr, 2011b:xiv). This would suggest the unreliability of generalisations and the possibility of differences in theoretical and methodological ways of looking at medial relations in different contexts.

1.5. Theoretical framework

This study is framed by semiotic and phenomenological approaches to intermediality on the grounds that semiotics and phenomenological approaches remain the two major interventions for conceptualising how audiences process what they see and hear on stage (McConachie, 2007:561).

Bert O. States (1985:8) advocates for this mixed approach, claiming that it gives complementary perspectives of the art:

If we think of semiotics and phenomenology as modes of seeing, we might say that they constitute a kind of binocular vision: one eye enables us to see the world phenomenally, the other enables us to see it significantly (States, 1985:8).

1.5.1. Semiotics

Theatre semiotics is a field that emerged in the 1970s and was popularised in the 1980s and 1990s. It is the study of how meaning is produced on stage by means of signs (Balme, 2008b:78). Chapple and Kattenbelt's semiotic conceptual framework informed this study. Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006b:21) employ a semiotic code to define theatre on the sign systems of sound, image and word. Their two-levelled framework accounts for the incorporation of digital media and the presence of other media in the theatrical configuration. The second level adds the concepts of live performance and *mediatized* representation (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:23). Theatre in this sense is considered to be a hypermedium¹⁷: It provides a space where theatrical art forms interact and integrate with the media of cinema, television, video and the new technologies, creating profusions of texts, inter-texts, inter-media and spaces in-between. Chapple and Kattenbelt's (2006b:23) conceptual framework also acknowledges that digital technologies provide another coding system, changing theatre into a modular, non-hierarchical, interactive, non-linear process in which there is a layering of meanings present in the same space, and at the same time.

The model is summarised in the diagram below. The diagram depicts Chapple and Kattenbelt's conceptualisation of theatre as a hypermedium for all arts and media:

¹⁷ The concept of theatre as hypermedium is critiqued in chapters 2 and 3. Nevertheless, Chapple and Kattenbelt's (2006b, 20-24) framework informs the theoretical underpinnings of the study.

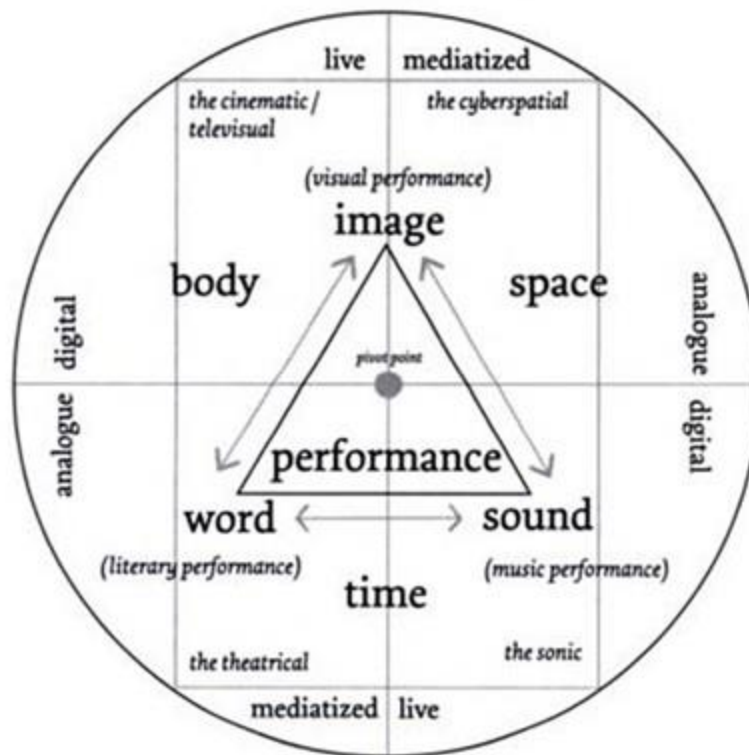


Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework (Source: Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:25)

Chapple and Kattenbelt's conceptual framework is not without its limitations. One major limitation is its narrow focus on the semiotic potential of the materiality of media at the expense of other dimensions of media. To counter the shortcomings of this framework, the study also adopts Elleström's conceptual framework for understanding the medium and intermediality. Elleström (2010a:4) posits that all kinds of sign systems must be seen as parts of a very wide field, including not least the material, sensorial, spatiotemporal and semiotic aspects of media. His investigation of these aspects demonstrates that all forms of art, media, languages, communication and messages have some characteristics in common – the essential cornerstones of all media without which mediality cannot be comprehended (Elleström, 2010c:15). Together, the cornerstones build a medial complex that integrates materiality, perception and cognition. In Elleström's framework, intermediality is located in modal dissimilarities between media and in divergences concerning the qualifying (conventional and aesthetic) aspects of media.

In summary, the semiotic model is crucial for this study, as it accounts for the generation of meaning from theatrical performances. Following Balme (2008b:118), the study argues that

semiotics still provides a working vocabulary and an approach for performance analysis, especially for the study of the *mise en scène*¹⁸ which could be described accurately in the language of signs.

1.5.2. Phenomenology

The study also adopted a phenomenological conceptual framework for understanding intermediality. In her critique of semiotic approaches to intermediality, Kati Röttger (2013) argues that the medium is a figure of mediation that cannot be measured adequately in pure semiotic or technical terms. Röttger (2013) claims that her phenomenological model “takes into consideration the whole ensemble of relations between media and between those phenomena that are brought to light by media: the interplay of seeing and speaking, of sounds and images, of words and things, the visible and the audible”.

In Röttger’s model, the perspective of the beholder plays a decisive role in the mode of theatricality. It is the beholder’s perspective that shifts between medium and mediated and decides to identify pictures, words and music as referring to the discourses, histories and cultures in which the event is embedded (Röttger, 2013). The theatre performance as an intermedial event, in turn, not only appears to be identical with the media that constitute it, but also opens up and stages perspectives on the media by way of cutting through their *aisthetic*¹⁹ neutrality (Röttger, 2013). Röttger’s phenomenological model is adopted to address the shortcomings of the semiotic approach described above.

Röttger’s model is summarised in this diagram that depicts the transformation and transmission process of media from one into the other:

¹⁸ The *mise en scène* is the aesthetic structure of production resulting from the artistic input of the theatre-making team (Balme, 2008b:127,133).

¹⁹ Aisthetic (and not aesthetic) is the right spelling for this concept. Röttger (2013) argues that, while media intervenes in our perception of the world, they remain *aisthetically* neutral: that is, they are devoid of perception with all the senses. “We are able to observe a medium only when it appears in a visible or audible figure (e.g. image or sound) that is constituted by another medium” (Röttger, 2013).

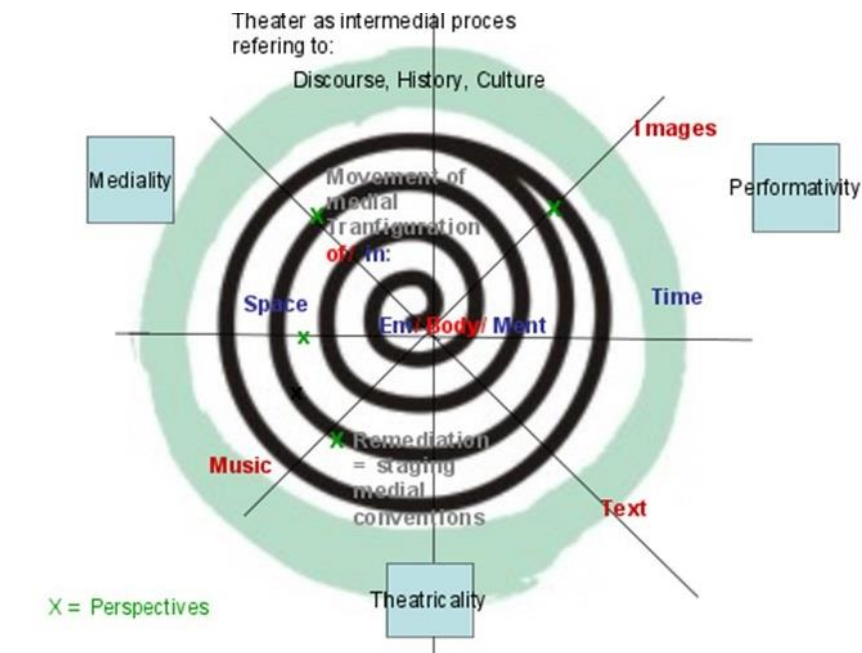


Figure 1.2 The vortex effect (Source: Röttger, 2013)

Röttger (2013) defines a theatre performance as an intermedial event marked by the interplay of mediality, theatricality and performativity. She argues that the decisive impact of this intermedial transmission lies in the permanent transformation process of media from one into the other by embodiment (Röttger, 2013). She describes this movement in the meta-picture of a vortex as seen in figure 1.2. This vortex is the visualization of the spiral movement that presents the intermedial transfiguration process in the time of the theatrical event (Röttger, 2013).

1.6. Research design and methods

The selected research design and methods in this study are rooted in qualitative research. Qualitative research is a field of enquiry that focuses on making sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:3). Merriam (2002:3) argues that a key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. This is in contrast with positivist and qualitative approaches which are rooted in the understanding of the world as fixed, agreed upon or measurable phenomenon.

Rooted in the study of theatre practice, this study utilises performance analysis²⁰ as its preferred research design and method. The aim of performance analysis is to “uncover the principles that explain theatre meaning” (Rozik, 2010:268).

The study integrated two approaches to performance analysis: the *event-oriented* analysis (Balme, 2008b:142), which focuses on the performance event alone, and the *process-oriented* analysis (Balme, 2008b:142), which focuses on the creation of the *mise en scène*. Balme (2008b:127) defines the *mise en scène* as an arrangement with a high degree of stability. The performance, on the other hand, is defined as a version of the *mise en scène* that is unrepeatable and often includes audience involvement (Balme, 2008b:127, 132). Because intermedial performance analysis is a relatively young and developing field, the study proposes a model for it in Chapter 3.

1.6.1. Study context, study population and sampling

1.6.1.1. Study context

The desire to situate the study outside the dominant European context – where most scholarship on theatrical intermediality comes from – was the main reason for the choice of a contextual study. The underlying assumption was that the study of intermediality is inevitably contextual in nature because intermediality is strongly linked to the social-political and economic situation. Jens Schröter (2010) begins to explore the links between intermediality and ideology, and politico-economic make-up of society in his article, “The politics of intermediality”. He argues that questions concerning intermediality are by no means purely theoretical or aesthetic questions. Rather, they have already been laden with massive political connotations for some time (Schröter, 2010:108). Schröter (2010:121) advocates for approaches that consider how different cultures understand the differences between media and their interaction in a given historical phase. This study adopts such an approach.

In addition to the desire to situate the study outside the dominant European context, the researcher was attracted to the new scholarly interest in the study of how African theatre and performance

²⁰ This study design is distinguishable from other ways of studying theatre, for example approaches that focus on written texts only, or those that look to the archive for their main source of material, or those that focus on the *mise en scène* alone, rather than on the performance events. The bulk of the discussion in this study comes from the researcher’s encounters with specific performance events.

relate to various kinds of media. Naturally, as a Malawian theatre scholar, well-versed in the conventions of its theatre but also intrigued at the alarmist nature of theatre criticism in response to the proliferation of electronic and digital media, the researcher was drawn towards investigating how intermediality manifests in the Malawian theatre context. The inclusion of the South Africa was also influenced by contemporary literature that located South Africa as a central hub for the experimentation of media technologies and live performance²¹. The impulse towards investigating these two theatre contexts was not to have a comparative study between the two countries, but to gain an understanding of theatrical intermediality away from its most studied domain, into the larger African context.

1.6.1.2. Study population

The target population was theatrical performances showcased at major theatre festivals in Malawi and South Africa. The current nature of the problem that is interrogated in the thesis required an approach which focused on contemporary theatre practice. This is why all sampled cases consisted of performances that were staged in 2014, at the beginning of the study. In Malawi, two performances were identified from two festivals, the Mwezi Wawala International Arts Festival, held from 29 to 31 August 2014, and the Blantyre Arts, held from 2 to 5 October 2014. In South Africa, two performances were identified from the National Arts Festival held in Grahamstown from 3 to 13 July 2014. Where possible, the researcher conducted a process-oriented analysis, which included observation of the rehearsal process.

1.6.1.3. Sampling

The study adopted purposive sampling to identify both the theatre festivals and the theatrical productions in its study population. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria that may include specialist knowledge of the research issue (Oliver, 2006:245).

The selection of the theatre festival as a research site was based on Temple Hauptfleisch's (2007b:39) conceptualisation of the arts festival as representative of the theatrical "season".

²¹ See (Kerr, 2011b:xvii).

Hauptfleisch (2007:39) argues that festivals are more than just locations for artistic output: that they are where the artistic output is turned into a significant cultural event, and framed and made meaningful by the presence of an audience and reviewers who respond to the celebrated event. Following Hauptfleisch (2007b:39), the study identified major arts festivals in Malawi and South Africa that are not only sites for performances, but are also where the artistic output of artists is eventified: that is, “to make an event into an EVENT” (Hauptfleisch, 2004:241)²².

The selection of the theatrical productions was based on the criteria set by Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006b:12) as the starting point in defining intermediality. Chapple and Kattenbelt identify the “incorporation of digital technology into theatre practice” and the “presence of other media within theatre productions” as key signifiers of intermediality. Based on this criterion, four performances that incorporate new media technologies and/or expressive means and aesthetic concepts from other media in ways that surpassed medium specificity were selected. The number four was arrived at to allow for comprehensive discussion of the cases in keeping with the proposed conceptual and methodological framework of the thesis.

1.6.2. Data collection techniques

1.6.2.1. Performance notes

In viewing the performances, the researcher took notes to reproduce the detail and impact of the events. The practice of notation during or after the performance is still an important art of performance analysis (Balme, 2008b:135) because it offers the personal experience of a trained scholar (Rozik, 2010:269). Erika Fisher-Lichte, noting that the problem of the performance text is its ephemeral nature, recommends the use of different tools of verifying the conclusions of any analysis (Rozik, 2010:269). This condition is met with the use of a combination of other tools.

1.6.2.2. Video

The research utilised video footage of all four performances, as well as from the rehearsals (in some cases). Video constitutes the most complete medium in bringing together the greatest amount of information in terms of the correspondence between systems of signs and between images and

²² The concept of eventification, captures Hauptfleisch’s (2007b:39) understanding of festivals as a site where events become significant cultural events which is the core premise of his edited book *Festivalising! Theatrical events, politics and culture* (Hauptfleisch, 2007a).

sound (Pavis, 2003:43). However, Balme (2008b:135) warns that video recordings are problematic sources: The camera always produces only a partial view of the action, which can be further manipulated by post-production editing. Nevertheless, for most aspects of staging, video recordings remain the best approximation of the live event and certainly enable analysis of many aspects of the staging (Balme, 2008b:135).

1.6.2.3. Personal interviews

Using semi-structured interview guides, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with individual theatre makers. These interviews targeted theatre makers to investigate their vision and strategies for their performances. From the study population, four principal creative artists (directors or designers) were identified, one from each production. Other information-rich informants from the productions (actors, technical designers, etc.) were also identified and interviewed. Where interviews were not possible, as was the case with *Ubu and the truth commission*, the study relied on other interviews or production notes from the creators of the performances.

1.6.2.4. Rehearsal observation

Of the four productions, some performances, such as *Mwana wanga*, were purposefully identified for a *process-oriented* analysis. This approach concentrates on the rehearsal process, focusing on the way a production is created: the interaction of the team as they create *mise en scène* that incorporates other media. Where rehearsal observation was not possible (as was the case with *Barbe bleue* and *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* (Encounters), the researcher used the interview tool to solicit information about the rehearsal process from the creative team. In other instances, such as in *Ubu*, the researcher made use of rehearsal notes and reports to construe the creative process.

1.6.3. Data analysis

Through the use of semiotic and phenomenological performance analysis, the researcher developed a model framework for the analysis of intermediality in the theatre context. This framework is described in detail in Chapter 3. Using this framework, the study formulated conceptual categories, themes, patterns, trends and relations that emerged from the four productions. These are discussed in detail in the conclusion in Chapter 8.

1.6.4. Ethical considerations

Given the nature of the methods of data collection and their implications for persons, copyrighted material and institutions, the researcher abided by Stellenbosch University's ethical guidelines for conducting research at every stage of the research process. The researcher sought clearance from the festival organisers and theatre companies. Consent was also sought from the individual interview respondents. The interviews were not conducted with individuals from high-risk populations as defined by Stellenbosch University's ethical guidelines for research.

1.7. Chapter layout

The next chapter discusses three main concepts of this study – “medium”, “mediality” and “intermediality” – as it traces their theoretical conceptualisation in theatre. The aim of the chapter is to map out an understanding of the specific usage of these related concepts in the cases under discussion in this thesis. The chapter is informed by the supposition that one cannot understand intermediality without grasping what a medium and what mediality mean. While acknowledging the challenges of defining these widely appropriated concepts, the chapter works through wide-ranging discourses in order to clarify how the concepts have been adapted for use in this study.

Chapter 3 formulates a methodological design for the analysis of intermediality in the theatre by synthesising several semiotic and phenomenological approaches. Building from a variety of conceptual/theoretical frameworks and existing methodological designs, the chapter puts together a model for the analysis of intermediality in the theatrical cases presented in this study. This mixed analytical design is based on the supposition that signification and experience are complementary.

Chapter 4 is the first chapter that discusses a particular theatre case. The chapter discusses intermediality in *Ubu and the truth commission*. The chapter examines the combination and integration of wide-ranging media in *Ubu*, such as puppetry, live actors and video projection. The central argument in this chapter is that the creative team chose media that best mediated the traumatic experiences of apartheid horror and witnessing and testimony. The chapter argues that, on one hand, the creative team made thoughtful choices with regard to the media to communicate their chosen themes and, on the other hand, the creative team actively explored meaningful discoveries resulting from the employment of and experimentation with media in *Ubu*.

Chapter 5 explores Gopala Davies's *Barbe bleue: A story of madness*, a theatrical production that incorporates digital media and projection mapping in a theatre space. The chapter argues that *Barbe blue* thematises the tale of Bluebeard's capacity for transmediation: the ability to be realised across a variety of media, to experiment with multiple narration strategies that recreate, interrogate and revise the tale through the use of the verbal, corporeal and digital media.

Chapter 6 discusses Catherine Makhumula's *Mwana wanga*, a theatrical performance derived from a recorded song, *Dearest child*, by Kimba Mutanda. The main focus of the chapter is the transpositioning of media characteristics from the recorded song to theatre. The chapter argues that there is a complex process of transfer and transformation of media characteristics/traits in the relations between *Dearest child*, the song, and *Mwana wanga*, the play: that the inspiration from *Dearest child* in *Mwana wanga* goes beyond the appropriation of themes and motifs, but also includes the transfer and transformation of principles of structure, aesthetic conventions and stylistic procedures.

Chapter 7 discusses *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw*, a cross-cultural theatrical performance by Solomon Peacocks from Blantyre, Malawi and Fräuleinwunder AG, Hannover, Germany. The chapter focuses on how the performance uses its theatre-specific means to refer to electronic media such as documentary film and photography. The chapter argues that the referred media is "invented" to enable the switching of media-specific frames between factual and fictional representation, in order to explore the otherwise uneventful and somewhat sensitive subject of cultural exchange.

The final chapter, Chapter 8, draws themes, patterns, trends and relations that emerge from the four case study chapters and synthesise them in relation to the projected aims of the study. This final chapter therefore evaluates the interrelations between theatre and other media in the cases, which are situated in the Malawian and South African theatre context. It also acknowledges the key limitations of study and suggests areas for further studies in the field.

Chapter Two

Conceptualising the medium, mediality and intermediality

2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses three main concepts in this study: “medium”, “mediality” and “intermediality” as it traces their theoretical conceptualisation in theatre. The aim of the discussion is to map out an understanding of the specific usage of these related concepts in the cases under discussion in this thesis. The chapter is informed by the supposition that one cannot understand intermediality without comprehending what a medium is and what mediality entails. While acknowledging the challenges of defining these widely appropriated concepts, the study works through wide ranging discourses in order to clarify how the concepts have been adapted for use in this study.

The first part of the chapter is an exploration and critique of Western discourse on the concept “media”. The main task of the section is to find a suitable conceptualisation of “medium” that is applicable to the context of intermediality in theatre. Grounded in media theory by Lars Elleström (2010a and b, 2014), Peter Boenisch (2003, 2006) and Kati Röttger (2013), the section moves from preliminary reflections on media theory, to media theory in relation to theatre. The second section of the chapter takes from this conversation and discusses the ways in which the concept of mediality adds a different perspective to the discussion. The third section of the chapter discusses the various ways in which scholars have approached, and conceptualised intermediality as a broad term that encompasses wide-ranging phenomena. It thereafter explores the specific typologies of intermediality that are analysed in the study.

2.2. The medium

The “medium” as a concept proves to be too broad to define. Generally, dictionary and etymological sources emphasise the notions of the “middle” and “channel”. This definition is only helpful in this study insofar as it allows for the inclusion of arts as media once the arts are defined as a complex blend of information and entertainment²³ (Elleström, 2010c:13). It should be noted

²³ As Elleström (2010c:11) points out, the arts are dependent on mediating substances therefore there is a point in not isolating the arts as something ephemeral but rather in seeing them as aesthetically developed forms of media.

from the very beginning, therefore, that this study regards theatre and all other arts as media. In taking this stance, the study is influenced by a shift in recent art and media theoretical discourses whereby there is a recognition that the arts and media should not be studied in their own historical developments and with their own rules and specifications, but rather in the broader context of their differences and co-relations (Kattenbelt 2007:1). This shift is summarised by Boenisch in the following quote:

We have to accept that there simply has never been a separate history of theatre and media in the first place. Theatre itself is a media technology that utilizes, at its very heart, other media to transmit and store, while it highlights, at the same time, the process of processing information (Boenisch, 2006:113).

The shift in recent art and media theoretical discourses is a response to the approaches that emphasise medial specificity and essentialism which pits various arts and other media against each other, as if “they all presided over their own distinctly defined aesthetic realms” (Boenisch 2006:103). In this latter approach, theatre, “if it is regarded as media at all, is seen as an ancient one that has had its day while media experiences of film, television and the computer are regarded as inauthentic and vicarious” (Balme, 2006:117).

Not all approaches regard the arts as media, however, and the next section discusses the ways in which the “medium” has been conceptualised in Western discourse. Media have been considered to be synonymous with technology, as containers of content and as channels of communication, among other definitions. Opinions regarding media are also divergent, ranging from a celebration of new means and possibilities, and more critical approaches to outright media-phobia (Dapp, 2013:19). While there are many approaches towards the concept of media, this section will focus on three. The first is the techno-centric approach which tends to equate media with technology. The second approach focuses on media historicity, which traces the historical actuality of media through media archaeology and genealogy. The third and final approach is more theoretical in nature, focusing on the constitutive aspects of any medial constellation.

There has been a tendency to use the terms “technologies” and “media” synonymously in media theoretical discourses: which implies a close relationship between media and technology, if not an identical one. Auslander is an example of a scholar that takes a techno-centric view of media,

which tends to negate theatre as media. In fact, Auslander envisages theatre and other live performance in an antagonistic relationship with “media” whereby theatre and the mass media are unequal competitors. He bases this argument on observing that the current cultural formation is dominated by mass media representations (Auslander, 2008:1). Auslander’s concept of “mediatization” gives a clearer indication of what he regards as media. *Mediatized*²⁴, is a term he borrows from Jean Baudrillard. Auslander (2008:4) employs it to indicate that a particular cultural object is “a product of the mass media or of media technology”. To Auslander, a “*mediatized* performance” is a performance that is circulated on television, as audio or video recordings, and in other forms based in technologies of reproduction. “As soon as electric amplification is used, one might say that an event is *mediatized*” (Auslander, 1999:24). Auslander’s conceptualisation of the medium is in direct contrast with Boenisch’s conceptualisation. Boenisch (2006:110) argues that theatre qualifies as a medium because it “processes”, “stores” and “transmits” information. Ultimately, techno-centric approaches towards understanding the medium, summarised as “medium as *mediatized*”, tends to be less helpful for the theatre context because these approaches deny theatre the status of medium and often lead to unproductive comparisons between theatre and what they consider to be the “real” media.

Another common approach of understanding media has been to look at its historicity by tracing the historical actuality of media and the various roles and functions it has embodied throughout history. In this approach (often taken up by media historians, archaeologists and theorists) media is conceptualised as being in a continuous dynamic relationship involving old and new media. Media archaeologists who seek to ground media phenomena in both material and historical artefacts have championed this approach. The German scholar Friedrich Kittler is regarded as a key theorist in the archaeological approach to media (Parikka, 2012:6). Kittler is known to have conceptualised media using this approach by deriving from two antecedents, the French philosopher, Michel Foucault, and the Canadian philosopher, Marshall McLuhan. Media archaeology understood this way is an approach, which excavates how “we came to the media cultural situation of our current world” (Parikka, 2012:6).

²⁴ The thesis maintains the American spelling of *mediatized/mediatization* (which is also italicized), to demonstrate that the concept is used as Auslander uses it.

From McLuhan, Kittler reiterates the value placed on the medium as opposed to the message. McLuhan is known for his famous pronouncement in *Understanding Media* (1964:7): “The medium is the message”. He believed that the knowledge and understanding of the way media work as environments is crucial in any understanding of social and cultural change (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967:26). McLuhan hence argued that societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than by the content of the communication. He gave a series of concrete analyses proceeding from orality and writing to electric lighting and automobiles, to demonstrate that content is secondary to the structures of media: structures that shape human consciousness in profound ways. In essence, McLuhan meant to effect a conceptual shift from the content of a message to its technical form, such that the content simply became the technical form (Hansen, 2006:298).

Continuing from McLuhan, Kittler argued that the technological standard of his time may still be described in the terms McLuhan provided. According to Kittler (1997:2), the contents of one medium are always other media: film and radio constitute the content of television, record and tape the content of radio, silent movie and magnetic sound that of cinema, text, telephone, and telegram that of the semi-media monopoly of the postal service. Although Kittler himself does not engage the etymology of media, his arguments in *Gramophone, film, typewriter* (1999) are crucial as they map out the emergence of the term “media” (Chun & Keenan, 2006:3). Boenisch (2006:106) also credits Kittler with having proposed a very functional understanding of media which identifies the “processing”, “transmission” and “storing” of information as the three ends to which media are the means.

Kittler is also inspired by Foucault’s usage of the term “archaeology” (in *The Archaeology of knowledge*, 1972) which is understood as digging into the conditions, relations and systems of dispersion that allow a certain entity or concept to be picked up, gain power and sustain itself in a cultural situation (Parikka 2012:6).

The use of the term archaeology [...] does not imply the search for a beginning: it does not relate analysis to geological excavation. It designates the general theme of a description that questions the already-said at the level of its existence: of the enunciative function that operates within it, of the discursive formation, and the general archive system to which it belongs. Archaeology describes discourses as practices specified in the element of the archive (Foucault, 2012:148).

Kittler builds on Foucault's archaeology and demands a more media technological understanding of such archaeological work. Kittler therefore, looks at technical media in the way Foucault looked at archives of books and written documents: to analyse how they were born and made possible in certain settings (Parikka 2012:6). This archaeology is closely related to what Foucault later called "genealogy" where questions of descent, origins and historical analysis are put forward. Kittler's archaeology of his present accounted for data storage, transmission and calculation in the technological media of his time which he explores in *Gramophone, film, typewriter* (1997) and *Discourse networks 1800/1900* (1992).

Of the more recent examples in this media-historical approach, Bolter and Grusin's (2000) concept of "remediation" in their seminal book *Remediation: Understanding New Media* is one of the most elaborate studies. Bolter and Grusin have argued that throughout media history, the new media have introduced themselves as improved versions of already existing technology in a strategy they term "remediation". In "remediation", new media build in (to) their new format some existent features of old media, which continue to survive very well in their updated versions. Bolter and Grusin linked all media from the renaissance to virtual reality through "remediation", "immediacy", and "hypermediacy" in *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Chun & Keenan, 2006:2). Their understanding of media is therefore solely hinged on the process of remediation. In their understanding of *mediality as remediation* (Boenisch, 2006:107), a medium is that which remediates: That is, appropriates the techniques, forms and social significance of other media and attempts to rival or refashion them (Bolter & Grusin, 2000:65).

A crucial aspect of Bolter and Grusin's work is their understanding of mediation as a multidimensional and continuous process rather than a "linear line of revolutionary progress" (Boenisch, 2006:108). According to them, media history resembles an ever-extending spiral: each seemingly radical progress in media technology turning out to be yet another remediation (Boenisch, 2006:108). Instead of a revolution of technological features and performance data in causal and linear manner, media history presents itself as an interlinked field, disclosing genealogies where media, old and new, are mutually dependent and reciprocally related over various planes of the twisting spiral (Boenisch, 2006:108).

Boenisch summarises this complex process of change in the following quote:

(...) Any medium will always remain in-between the various layers and never arrive. Even what seems like the most radical departure in media-technological development inevitably turns out to be another remediation rather than the ultimate, perfect Uber-medium (Boenisch, 2006:108).

Even Auslander²⁵ (2008) acknowledges this continuous process of change in his second edition of *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture* when he acknowledges that some of the ideas from his first edition needed to be updated in his second edition due to “a highly volatile cultural scene”. In the preface to his second edition of *Liveness* (2008:xii), Auslander explains that when he started the work that led to *Liveness* (1999), it seemed plausible to insist that television was the dominant medium at that time. However, at the time of his second edition in 2008, there was a strong reason to make a case that the honour belongs to the computer. He therefore argued that it seems more accurate to say that there is an on-going, unresolved struggle for dominance among television, telecommunications, and the internet. This “unresolved struggle” would therefore continue to unfold in his writing if there were further editions to his book. His acknowledgement of the historical dimension in media interrelations can be read as a revision of his techno-centric conceptualisation of media and mediality. However, even though Auslander acknowledges mediation as a continuous process, *Liveness* (1999, 2008) does very little to highlight the continued relations between older and newer media, thereby ignoring the symbiotic relations them and inadvertently negating the continuing importance of live performance to new media and *vice versa*.

Ultimately, the conceptualisation of the medium implicit in the media historicity approach (especially Bolter and Grusin’s “mediality as remediation” approach) is relevant to this study for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it demystifies the divide between old media such as theatre and new media such as digital media by situating them in the same conceptual realm as entities or phenomena that “process”, “store” and “transmit” information. It also clarifies the nature of relations between old and new media and accounts for the complex and continued relations between them. “New media build into the new format some of the existent features of the old and in doing this they redefine the old media [...]” (Boenisch, 2006:107).

So far, two approaches towards understanding the medium have been discussed. The techno-centric approach has been critiqued as limiting and the historicity approach is preferred for

²⁵ Discussed in the first approach towards understanding the medium, the techno-centric approach.

justifying the continued relations between old media and new media. Even though the media historicity approach as discussed in this section provides hints at the nature of the medium as a “material” and “historical artefact” that “processes, transmits and stores” information, the question of what actually constitutes a medium in its entirety has not been addressed yet.

This points out the need for further elaboration on the concept of “medium” that is applicable to the subject of intermediality in specific individual medial configurations. For this purpose, the section discusses yet another approach to the medium, which focuses on the constitutive elements of medial configurations. Two questions guide this quest: The first is what constitutes a medium and the second, what differentiates the medium from other widely used concepts in the discourse around media?

To answer the first question, the study adopts Elleström’s conceptualisation of the medium and intermediality. According to Elleström,

Intermediality cannot fully be understood without grasping the fundamental conditions of every single medium and these conditions constitute a complex network of both tangible qualities of media and various perceptual and interpretive operations performed by the recipients of media (Elleström, 2010c:13).

In this conceptualisation, Elleström implies that understanding the medium is a complex endeavour involving the analysis of qualities from the medium itself and also processes involving the perceiver of the medium. Elleström expresses discontent with media definitions that only deal with the physical aspects of mediality. He observes that intermediality has tended to be discussed without clarification of what a medium actually is. For this reason, he considers such definitions and other definitions that strongly emphasize the social construction of media conceptions as too narrow (Elleström, 2010c:13). Indeed, most discussions on intermediality start by dismembering inter- from -mediality (see the sections on defining intermediality in the introductory chapter – 1.1.2) even though the understanding of “the medium” goes beyond terminology.

Elleström (2010c:13) divides the concept of “medium” into subcategories to cover the many interrelated aspects of the multifaceted concept of medium and mediality. His understanding is that the concept of medium generally includes several levels of mediality that have to be correlated with each other. To further this proposition, Elleström (2010c:13) distinguishes between “basic

media”²⁶, “qualified media”²⁷ and “technical media”. Basic and qualified media are abstract categories that help in understanding how media types are formed by very different sorts of qualities, whereas technical media are the very tangible devices needed to materialize instances of media types. Consequently, when talking about a medium without specifications, the term can refer to both a media category (abstract) and a specific media realization (tangible). Evidently, it is important to note that qualified, basic and technical media are not three separate types of media. Instead, they are three complementary, theoretical aspects that exist in all media and that constitute the notion of media and mediality (Elleström, 2010c:12).

Elleström (2010c:17-22) identifies four modalities of a medium: the material²⁸, the sensorial²⁹, the spatiotemporal³⁰ and the semiotic modality³¹. The modalities of media are defined as the basic categories, features, qualities and aspects which are essential cornerstones of all media without which mediality cannot be comprehended (Elleström 2010c:15). Together, they build a medial complex integrating materiality, perception and cognition. These modalities are to be found on a scale ranging from the tangible to the perceptual and the conceptual. Elleström’s (2010c:16) understanding is that all media can be described as constituted by varying modes of these modalities. Hence, it is not enough to consider only one or a few of them if one wants to grasp the character of a particular medium. The modes and modalities are therefore entangled with each other in many different ways, depending on the character of the medium. Nevertheless, they can be rather clearly separated theoretically (Elleström, 2010c:16).

²⁶ Basic media are simply defined by their modal properties (Elleström 2010c:27). These will be discussed in detail in the in this section.

²⁷ Qualified media are aspects of a medium characterized by historical, cultural, social, aesthetic and communicative facets (Elleström 2010c:33).

²⁸ The material modality of a medium is defined as the *latent* corporeal interface of the medium. The material interface of theatre, for example, is understood as a combination of several interfaces: sound waves, surfaces that are both flat and not flat and that have both a changing and static character, and also the very specific corporeal interface of human bodies (Elleström 2010c:17).

²⁹ The sensorial modality comprises the physical and mental acts of perceiving the present interface of the medium through the sense faculties. Media cannot be realized unless they are grasped by one or more of our senses (Elleström 2010c:17).

³⁰ The spatiotemporal modality of media covers the structuring of the sensorial perception of sense-data of the material interface into experiences and conceptions of space and time. Elleström argues that all media in some respect necessarily receive both spatial and temporal qualities (Elleström 2010c:18).

³¹ As the name suggests, the semiotic modality concerns meaning. In this modality, meaning is understood as the product of a perceiving and conceiving subject situated in social circumstances. The moment we become aware of a visual sensation, for instance, the sensation is already meaningful at a basic level (Elleström 2010c:18).

In addition to the modalities of media, Elleström adds two other aspects that are fundamental in defining a medium. He calls them “qualified media” and they are comprised of the contextual qualifying aspect and the operational qualifying aspect. The latter are the historically determined practices, discourses and conventions that delimit the scope of a medium. In other words, what is called a medium today is something that had begun to be used in a certain way, or gained certain qualities, at a certain time and in a certain cultural and social context (Elleström, 2010c:16). The former are aesthetic and communicative characteristics that define a medium. Elleström gives an example of “cinema” which, it has been argued, did not become “cinema” the day the technique was invented. Cinema, like other new media, borrowed aesthetic and communicative characteristics belonging to old media, and although the first films also had distinct communicative and aesthetic characteristics, it took a while before the many qualifying characteristics of the mediated content developed into a recognisable media form. Eventually, there came to be two notions attached to the same term: cinema as a set of techniques and cinema as a multifaceted qualified medium developed within the frames of, but not determined by, the technical aspects. What is known as cinema today was called cinema, only when these qualitative aspects began to be identified (Elleström, 2010c:16).

Applying a similar conceptualisation of Elleström’s qualified medium, Rajewsky also highlights the importance of qualifying aspects of media in defining a medium when she argues:

When we talk of “individual media” we are talking about media that are *conventionally* perceived as distinct. ...Individual media (at any given point in time) are *conventionally perceived as distinct* and of medially bound *frames*. These frames if marked appropriately can be called up in a recipient and are as such available for partaking in the constitution of a medial configuration’s overall signification³² (Rajewsky, 2010:62, 64).

Here, Rajewsky points to the centrality of convention in any conceptualisation of a “medium”³³. In addition to this, Rajewsky (2010:54) also points to the fact that conventionally defined frames do change: “Drawing borders of this kind clearly cannot be a matter of 'fixed' and 'stable' borders

³² The italics are used by Rajewsky to mark up her concept of a “media frame” which comes about with the qualifying aspects of media.

³³ Rajewsky (2010) argues that we only encounter medial configurations not the medium in its entirety. For Rajewsky this means that any conception of “medium” is a theoretical abstraction, a construct. — That is to say that it is our interaction/analysis of the medial configurations that helps us theorise ideas about the medium in its entirety.

between ‘fixed’ and ‘stable’ entities”. Elleström (2010c:26) is in agreeance with the idea of historically changing frames when he argues that none of the qualifying aspects of media are truly stable. Like all art forms and other qualified media, the nature of any qualified medium can only be circumscribed *ad hoc*. Rajewsky also points to the fact that qualified media play an important role in how the audience perceives the medial configuration. The close relationship between media and perception is also highlighted in Elleström’s theoretical conceptualisation of the semiotic modality and qualified media. Other media theoretical scholars like Kati Röttger (2013), Sybille Krämer and Peter Boenisch (2006) also discuss the link between perception and the understanding of the medium in their use of term *aisthesis*, etymologically derived from a Greek word meaning “to perceive”. Aisthesis is discussed in detail below.

Ultimately, Elleström’s conceptualisation of the medium puts forward an approach that accounts for media constitution: the minute features of every medium and how they may be interpreted. His understanding of the medium as a complex network of both tangible qualities of media and various perceptual and interpretive operations performed by the recipients of media allows for a more informed understanding of the three concepts: medium, mediality, and intermediality, as can be seen in the next sections. In other words, Elleström’s approach demystifies “the medium”, which can no longer be “talked around” in terms of its functioning: as a container, a channel of communication or tangible piece of technology. Instead, Elleström presents a theory of how media types are formed by various kinds of qualities. It therefore demonstrates how functions of media (as a container, storage, channel of communication and technology) come about in textbook definitions of a medium.

Having discussed the third approach to understanding the medium, an approach which emphasises media constitution, the final section attempts to differentiate the medium from other widely used concepts in the discourse on media and intermediality. Röttger observes that there exists a wide range of nomenclatures that are used synonymously with the term “medium”. She identifies three concepts that are difficult to distinguish: apparatuses, art forms, and media. She argues that the distinction between these concepts becomes vague when it becomes uncertain what specific areas are covered by terms such as medium or mediality in the context of art forms and technology.

Röttger uses Sybille Krämer³⁴'s process, which more adequately defines a medium, to distinguish the medium both from the concept of the signifier, or signified and from the notion of a technical instrument (Röttger 2008:33). According to Krämer (cited in Röttger, 2008:33 also in Dapp, 2013:24)³⁵, media function like windowpanes: the more transparent they are, the better they fulfil their tasks. Krämer in this argument highlights the fact that media function in latency. "Wherever we interact with media, we usually focus on what media transmit and make accessible" (Krämer cited in Röttger, 2008:38). Krämer calls this condition the *aesthetic* neutrality (imperceptibility) of media, in which the mediality involved is neutral to perception. Krämer (cited in Röttger, 2008:38) therefore reformulates McLuhan's well-known dictum that the content of a medium is always another medium (McLuhan, 1964:8) to explain that the medium is not simply the message, rather, the trace of the medium is inscribed in the message. Furthermore, in order to grasp more clearly the instrumental dimension of the media – which assumes particular importance when media are conceived primarily as technical media – Krämer (cited in Röttger, 2008:34) distinguishes between "tools", understood as technical instruments and "apparatuses", regarded as technical media. Her primary aim is to differentiate between their functions: while technology understood as a tool is a labour-saving device for increasing efficiency, technology regarded as apparatus creates artificial worlds. Crucially, for Krämer (cited in Röttger, 2008:34), the function of world creation is the productive significance of media technology.

Röttger (2008:34) applies Krämer's concept of media to theatre and as such considers theatre to be a media technology that functions as an "apparatus for creating artificial worlds" rather than a labour-saving device. Highlighting the all-important function of "world-creation", Röttger clears up ambiguities regarding the nature of technology that theatre as a medium is, distinguishing it from other technical apparatuses and tools.

In summary, this section has explored several conceptualisations of the "medium" in a bid to find a suitable conceptualisation of "medium" that is applicable to the context of intermediality in theatre. Three main approaches have been used, the first approach looks at media as technology and the second one focuses on the historicity of media as it "excavates" how the media cultural

³⁴ Sybille Krämer is German philosopher whose work on media philosophy is inferred by Kati Röttger.

³⁵ Krämer's original text is in German. This chapter relies on Röttger's (2008) and Dapp's (2013) translations for the English translation of the text.

situation of the current world came to be. The final approach, which is deeply embedded in theory, analyses the constitutive elements of every medial configuration. The last two approaches have proved to be useful. The first approach has been critiqued as inadequate because it excludes live performance and theatre from the category of media even though they “process”, “transmit” and “store” information just as other media, (albeit in their own specific ways). The second approach accounts for the complex and continual relations between the older and the newer media forms, while the last approach breaks down the medium to its minute features, thereby defining it as a complex network of both tangible qualities of media and various perceptual and interpretive operations performed by the recipients of media. Having reached this rich understanding of the medium, the chapter will focus on understanding how theatre functions as a medium in the following section.

2.2.1. Theatre as a medium

The aim of this section is to define theatre as a medium and to investigate how it interrelates with other media. A good starting point for defining theatre as a medium is Chapple and Kattenbelt’s (2006b:20) conceptualisation of theatre as a collective term for all live arts, involving the simultaneous presence of the performer and spectator. To this end, they employ the semiotic code and define theatre on the sign systems of sound, image and word (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:20). This definition of theatre has pervaded theatre studies³⁶. It has also been critiqued other scholars for being too narrow as shall be explored in this section³⁷.

In order to account for theatre’s relations with other media (specifically the incorporation of digital media and the presence of other media) in their definition of theatre, Chapple and Kattenbelt attribute special qualities to theatre. They argue that theatre is a hypermedium that incorporates all arts and media and is the stage for intermediality (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:20). That is to say theatre provides a space where the art forms of theatre, opera and dance, meet, interact and integrate with the media of cinema, television, video and digital technologies (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:20).

³⁶ For examples, see the definitions of theatre from Fischer-Lichte (2008b:32), and (2014:19) and Lehmann, (2006:17).

³⁷ Refer to the arguments made by Röttger, Boenisch and Elleström in this section.

Röttger (2013) however, queries Chapple and Kattenbelt's conceptualisation of theatre as a hypermedium. She questions how intermediality, can be said to inhabit and operate in a space in-between (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:12) when theatre itself, on the other hand, *provides* a space, or stage, *for* intermediality (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:20). The contradiction here is on how theatre can provide a space for staging intermediality, while theatre itself interacts with digital and electronic media technologies. Röttger (2013) instead, argues that theatre is not a hypermedium, but an open, dynamic configuration of intermedial transmissions.

Röttger looks to McLuhan's theory to justify her claim. McLuhan *et al.* (2011:5)³⁸, using an anthropological perspective argued that media, like the human senses, are capable of transferring experiences from one sensory (medial) field to another. They therefore, do not form closed systems, incapable of interplay, but rather are open, incomplete configurations that mutually translate all senses (media) into one another. In this way, they work towards an active intermedial co-existence, in order to open up new dimensions of sensation and experience. Röttger transfers this idea of active intermedial interplay or co-existence to theatre and performance when she argues that:

Theatre, in both its productive and receptive poles relies on the co-presence of human bodies and on their specific sensory capacities. Open to the integration of all forms of technical media, it can acquire that competence of transposition that allows it to function as an open dynamic configuration of intermedial transmissions. At the same time, within its specific historical context, theatre is identical with those media in which the elements characteristic of its structure are organized in a dynamic process set in motion through the constant transposition of innumerable distinctions in between them (Röttger, 2013).

Röttger, just as Chapple and Kattenbelt before her, argues that theatre relies on the co-presence of human bodies and on their specific sensory capacities, in both its productive and receptive poles. She however, asserts that theatre is also open to the integration of all forms of technical media and functions as an open dynamic configuration of intermedial transmissions. This is to say, theatre can also integrate a variety of technical apparatuses, for example, film or television in order to create other artificial worlds, which it incorporates without losing its status as theatre. This

³⁸ Twelfth reprint of the first publication in 1962.

dynamic configuration of medial transpositions takes place between the media on stage including the bodies of the percipients³⁹ in theatre.

Boenisch (2003:34) is also against the formula “theatre + media = intermedial theatre” that is implicit in Chapple and Kattenbelt’s conceptualisation of theatre as a hypermedium. He argues that theatre’s genuine mediality already implies its “intermediality” (Boenisch 2003:34): that theatre does not require electronic or digital media to be intermedial.

When one foregrounds the basic mediality of theatre, they understand theatre no longer as something trans-historically fixed and stable, which in present days, all of sudden, is challenged by new media but will rather acknowledge that theatre itself constantly challenges its own history as a traditional medium (Boenisch 2003:34).

In his quest to define theatre as a medium, Boenisch (2006:110) argues that theatre is a medium because it processes, stores and transmits just like any other medium. Boenisch argues that compared to other media that transmit objects to another space/time or store them to make worlds out of them, theatre processes these objects into worlds here and now while simultaneously leaving them as they are (Boenisch, 2006:114). According to Boenisch (2006:110), theatre therefore, has always relied on remediating other media in order to achieve effects. In fact, it seems always to have been a medium to broadcast other medium, such as most obviously from the Western theatre tradition of the written dramatic text.

Elleström (2010c:29) considers theatre as a qualified medium⁴⁰ that is very much multimodal⁴¹ and also, in a way, very much intermedial since it combines and integrates a range of basic⁴² and qualified media. He however cautions that this does not mean that theatre is a hypermedium – he argues that saying that theatre is a hypermedium that incorporates all arts and media is an overstatement (Elleström, 2010c:28). Elleström’s asserts that theatre combines and integrates, to varying degrees, both basic media and qualified media. The aesthetic aspects of these combinations

³⁹ Term used for perceiving audience.

⁴⁰ A qualified medium is an abstract concept that describes an art form whose definition relies strongly on the two qualifying aspects (the origin, delimitation and use of media in specific historical, cultural and social circumstance and the aesthetic and communicative characteristics) (Elleström 2010c:27).

⁴¹ “Multimodality” refers to the state of having more than one modes. According to Elleström (2010c:14) sometimes it refers to the combination of, say, text, image and sound, and sometimes to the combination of sense faculties: the auditory, the visual, the tactile and so forth.

⁴² Basic media are those that are mainly identified by their modal appearances (Elleström 2010c:27).

and integrations of basic media are part of how theatre is understood and defined as a qualified medium (Elleström, 2010c:28). Each basic medium has its own modal characteristics and when combined and integrated according to certain qualitative conventions the result is what we call “theatre”, consisting of different kinds of material interfaces, appealing to both the eye and the ear, being both profoundly spatial and temporal, producing meaning by way of all kinds of signs and, certainly, being circumscribed by way of historical and cultural conventions and aesthetic standards (Elleström, 2010c:28).

Elleström (2010c:38) also hesitates to describe theatre as intermedial “in itself”, as Boenisch does⁴³. He argues that media are indeed multimodal “in themselves”. According to Elleström, theatre, a strongly multimodal media, is conventionally understood and defined as qualified media. It should therefore be understood as a coherent media rather than an example of pronounced intermedial crossings of conventional borders, although it may be said to fuse a multitude of qualified media that also exist in their own right.

In summary, from the discussion by Chapple and Kattenbelt, Röttger, Boenisch and Elleström, it becomes clear that theatre offers what appears to be an ability to absorb other media in its configuration like a “fully transparent medium” (Boenisch, 2006:112). For example, when theatre is said to incorporate other media without losing its status as theatre (Röttger, 2013), or when it is said to process objects into worlds here and now while simultaneously leaving them as they are (Boenisch, 2006:114) or when it is said to be extremely multimodal, integrating many basic and even qualified media (Elleström, 2010c:45). However, Röttger, Elleström and Boenisch strongly object the idea that theatre is a hypermedium: claiming that this is an unnecessary essentialist misconception. The three scholars advocate for an understanding of theatre that is open rather than fixed, and more importantly, an understanding that demonstrates theatre’s interrelations with other media as historical rather than as irregular or new.

2.3. Mediality

Understanding the concept of mediality is the key to understanding how meaning is arrived at in any form of communication. However, the concept of mediality is closely associated with the

⁴³ Media characterized by strong multimodality may be said to be intermedial in themselves in the sense that certain modal “borders” are crossed (Elleström, 2010c:38).

concepts of the medium and mediation such that these concepts are not easily distinguishable from each other. The concepts of medium, mediality and mediation are frequently employed in discussions on intermediality. Jørgen Bruhn (2016:16) however, observes a tendency – by media scholars such as Werner Wolf, W. J. T. Mitchell and Mark B. N. Hansen – to avoid the question of what a medium is and instead to attempt to understand what media do and also what the process of mediation involves. Bruhn (2016:16) himself in *The intermediality of narrative literature: Medialities matter* also prefers to use the term mediality, which he finds more closely related to the concept of mediation than the term medium, which according to him implies conceptual connotations of object-hood. It can be inferred from Bruhn’s discussion that the concept of mediality involves the understanding what media “do” and what the process of mediation involves as opposed to an understanding of what a medium “is” (Bruhn, 2016:16). Although Bruhn’s position confirms the close relationship between mediality and mediation, it does not clarify the relations between the two concepts. The next few paragraphs attempt to fill this gap by discussing the relations between mediation and mediality.

Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006b:23) hint at their understanding of mediation when they delimit the term from *mediatization*. “*Mediatized* is not the same as mediated, because all forms of communication are mediated by signs, but not *mediatized* by technology”. In this description, Chapple and Kattenbelt link mediation to communication but also emphasise the semioticity of the process of mediation as opposed to *mediatization*, which they associate with technology. In contrast, Elleström associates the process of mediation to materiality rather than semioticity as Chapple and Kattenbelt purport. In distinguishing between mediation from representation, Elleström (2014:11) argues that [...] mediation is a pre-semiotic notion that captures the material process of media realization, [while] representation is a semiotic notion designed to explain the process of meaning making. Elleström (2014:14) here uses the term mediation to describe the process of “a technical medium realizing pre-semiotic (potentially meaningful) sensory configurations”. Although there are obvious discursive differences in the use of the concept, what is clear from these two discussions (Chapple & Kattenbelt’s and Elleström’s) is that the concept mediality comprises of the concepts (and processes of) materiality, semioticity and perception in complex ways. The link between mediality and perception is particularly important for this study on theatrical intermediality as it implicates the audience in the understanding of mediality.

Boenisch (2006:110), confirming the close relationship between mediality and perception, argues that mediation is an act, a performance, “where both medium and spectator create meaningful spatial realities and invoke a sensorial, phenomenological experience, which adds to the semiotic reality, yet at the same time has the potential to irritate and disrupt” (Boenisch, 2006:110).

In summary, it could be argued that the focus on the concept of mediality presents an alternative approach towards the understanding intermediality as opposed to the focus on medium alone. With the focus on mediality, attention shifts from the figure of the medium (medial products, artefacts or conceptual constellations) towards the understanding of the nature and processes of mediation. In other words, when mediality is underscored, the focus is on medial processes and conditions that account for media interrelations rather than a description of the media that constitute the media interrelations. This approach is useful for this study on theatrical intermediality as it underscores the processes of how meaning is created either through the capacities of the corporeal bodies (of the actors and spectators) or other technical media.

2.4. Intermediality

The term intermediality has a long history of usage in a wide array of disciplines such as literature, visual arts, theatre, film studies and media studies. It has been argued, however, that scholars have been debating the interrelations among the arts for centuries before this relationship had been discussed in terms of “intermediality” (Rajewsky, 2005:44, Elleström 2010c:11). This points to the fact that the study of interrelations in the arts and media as expounded through the concept of intermediality, are not entirely new. While the interrelations of the arts are still the main topic of discussion in the arts, the focus of the argumentation has somewhat shifted to the intermedial relations between various arts and media in this age of electronic and digital media (Elleström, 2010c:11).

Rajewsky (2005:43) notes that there is a sustained interest in the investigation of intermedial configurations and in intermedial research perspectives in general, from the number of multidisciplinary publications and conferences devoted to the topic. Indeed, there are many more conferences and publications on intermediality in 2016 than they were five or ten years ago. Rajewsky (2005:43) also observes that there are on-going clarifications and differentiations of the research perspectives and a growing international recognition of the concept of intermediality that

she claims initially had come to be part of a fixed critical inventory mainly in the German-speaking research community. Similarly, Jens Schröter (2011:2) notes that the usage of the term “intermediality” has become widespread in the last two decades with the recognition that media do not exist disconnected from one another (also see Wolf, 1999; Kattenbelt, 2007, 2009; Chapple, 2008; Rajewsky, 2005, 2010; Elleström, 2010b).

In theatre studies, intermediality as a concept draws from media, performance and perception theories (Röttger, 2013; Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:12). Even though theatre scholars have been debating the relations between theatre and other arts and media for centuries, the use of the term intermediality to characterise the relations between theatre and other media has become popularised since the publication of *Intermediality in theatre and performance*, edited by Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006a).

The current state of proliferation of concepts and approaches can be viewed as a healthy state of a thriving scholarship. However, it may also lead to generalisations and misunderstandings. Irina Rajewsky (2005:45) argues that it would seem preferable to restrict the validity of one’s own conclusions by clarifying the aims and the object of one’s particular conception of intermediality rather making generalised claims about intermediality based on a single approach. It therefore becomes imperative to define one’s own particular understanding of intermediality more precisely, and to situate one’s individual approach within a broader spectrum to present a clear study on intermediality (Rajewsky, 2005:45).

The objective of the present section in this chapter is to address this problem at hand: to specify the study’s particular conception of intermediality, (a conception based in theatre studies) and to situate the study’s approach within the broader spectrum of existing approaches. The literature included here provide a brief overview of the discourse on the relations between the arts and media in the last few centuries. The aim is to demonstrate how several discourses have characterised the relations between the arts and media and to locate the concept of intermediality in the existing discursive fields. In doing this, the researcher will map out and explicitly specify the study’s conception of intermediality as it relates to the objectives, premises, methodologies, terminologies and delimitations of the study. Before taking on this task however, the next section will map out the different approaches towards intermediality in contemporary discourses. Thereafter, the

section that follows narrows down on the specific approaches and conceptualisation of intermediality that have been adopted by the study.

2.4.1. Approaches to intermediality

Hypothesizing that how scholars write about intermediality is determined by their research perspective, philosophical disposition and disciplinary provenance, Rajewsky (2005) identifies three fundamental distinctions that underlie different conceptions of intermediality. These three distinctions are discussed in detail below to contextualize the dispositions taken by this study.

The first distinction is between synchronically and diachronically conceived approaches to intermediality. A synchronic approach entails the study of phenomena of a particular time, with little emphasis to their historical context. A synchronic study would therefore be taken up by scholars interested in current medial configurations. The alternate approach, the diachronic perspective is concerned with phenomena as they occur or change over a period of time. The diachronic perspective is for instance taken up by media historians whose work focuses on the intersections of different media with one another⁴⁴ (Rajewsky 2005:47). Genealogical studies are another example as they investigate the relations between different media, for instance, in a context where a particular medium assumes a newly found dominance, when a new medium emerges or “is born” (Rajewsky, 2005:47). For example, with a genealogical lense, one would argue that film, theatre and opera are evidence that media combinations, from a historical perspective, quite frequently result in the development of new forms which somewhere in the course of this process are themselves conventionally perceived as distinct art/media genres.

This study is clearly situated within the synchronic perspective as it focuses on intermediality in current theatrical performances from a specific period of time in the present: the year 2014. It should be noted, however, that this study regards the two approaches, synchronic and diachronic as not mutually exclusive. Even though the study is synchronic in orientation, it addresses diachronic concerns pertaining to the case studies. In addition to the analysis of the theatrical configurations in their present state, the study also analyses their contexts in terms of their historicity, their technical development, the functionalization of intermedial strategies within each

⁴⁴ All theorists discussed under media archaeology in the previous chapter fall in this category (McLuhan, Kittler and Bolter and Grusin).

case cases and even in terms of the historically changing conceptions of the arts and media in each of the context. In this dualistic approach, therefore, intermediality is not bound to a uniform, fixed function. Individual cases of intermediality are analysed in terms of their specificity, “taking into account historically changing possibilities for the functionalization of intermedial practices” (Rajewsky, 2005:55).

It should also be noted that Elleström (2014:3) proposes a slightly different understanding of synchronic and diachronic approaches to intermediality, which emphasises the differences between combinations and integrations and transfers and transformations among media. Elleström seeks to expand Rajewsky’s understanding of the diachronic perspective, to extend it beyond the general field of media history⁴⁵. For Elleström (2014:3), the synchronic perspective is concerned with how different types of media can be understood and analysed in terms of combination and integration of fundamental media traits. This viewpoint, according to Elleström (2014:3), emphasizes an understanding of media as *co-existing media products/types/traits*. On the other hand, his diachronic perspective is about how transfer and transformation of media characteristics be comprehended and described adequately (Elleström, 2014:3). This viewpoint emphasizes an understanding of media that includes a temporal gap among media products, media types and media traits- either an actual gap in terms of different times of genesis or a gap in the sense that the perceiver construes the import of a medium on the basis of a previously known media (Elleström, 2014:3).

Even with Elleström’s distinction, this study is “remarkably ampt” for the synchronic approach because it is concerned with *co-existing media products/types/traits* within the theatrical performances, which have been formed through the combinations and integrations of basic and qualified media. However, just as Elleström (2014:3) himself acknowledges, all media products can be understood with both perspectives. One case in this study, *Mwana wanga*, discusses the interrelations between two media products that have a temporal gap that comes about in terms of different times of genesis between them.

⁴⁵ Rajewsky (2005) does acknowledge the existence of other types of diachronic approaches to intermediality in “Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation”, despite Elleström’s assertion.

The second fundamental distinction is between intermediality as a fundamental condition or as a critical category for the concrete analysis of specific individual media products or configurations – a category that is useful only in so far as those configurations manifest some form of intermedial strategy, constitutional element or condition (Rajewsky, 2005:47). Most scholars that proceed from the assumption that all media are already mixed media fall under the first approach⁴⁶ while under the second approach, scholars that regard discernible medial borders as a necessary theoretical construction for the analysis of medial configurations. In this latter approach, intermediality is regarded as a critical category for the concrete analysis of theatrical performances, a category that is primarily intended to facilitate thinking about and analysing media. This second approach results from the recognition of the fact that cultural phenomena, such as media, are creations of mental activity, which is triggered by material phenomena.

This study oscillates between these two distinctive categories. The study's conception of “a medium” is very much shaped by media-theoretical views that regard intermediality as a fundamental condition, while at the same time it recognises intermediality as a category that is primarily intended to facilitate thinking about and analysing media. While both approaches are based on the assumption that there are no media borders given by nature, the major distinction between the two approaches is that the second approach (intermediality as a critical category) emphasises on the need for constructed borders/frames to talk about intermediality.

The third and final fundamental possibility for distinguishing different approaches to intermediality, one which is closely interwoven with the first two, operates at the level of the analysed phenomena *per se* (Rajewsky 2005:47). Designating or not designating a particular phenomenon as intermedial depends on a given approach's disciplinary provenance, its corresponding objectives, and the (explicit or implicit) underlying conception of what constitutes a medium. Approaches coming out of literary or so-called media-philological studies primarily emphasize the forms and functions of intermedial practices in given media products or medial constellations. By contrast, approaches derived from media studies tend not to focus on already medialized configurations (such as individual films, texts, paintings, etc.), but instead on the very

⁴⁶ For example, Schröter's (2011:3) “ontological intermediality” suggests that there are no single media but that intermedial relations take place ubiquitously.

formation of a given medium, on the process of mediation or medialization as such, and on medial transformation processes (Rajewsky, 2005:47). The fact that this study rooted in theatre studies, is centrally focused on theatrical performances that are analysed as intermedial, already situates the study in the first approach. However, the conceptual understanding of the medium and theatre as a medium (as discussed in section 2.2) is crucial to the understanding of the theatrical performances analysed in this study.

In summary, this study is situated within the synchronic perspective as it focuses on intermediality in current theatrical performances from a specific period of time in the present. However, this approach does not exclude a diachronic dimension. Instead, it presumes that any typology of intermedial practices must be historically grounded. The study also considers intermediality as a critical category for the concrete analysis of theatrical performances while it appreciates the theories from scholars who discuss intermediality as a fundamental condition. Lastly, the study is informed by theoretical reflections on “the medium” and medial processes as it analyses specific medial configurations. With these premises underlying the study’s approach to intermediality in mind, the next section discusses general and specific definitions of intermediality.

2.4.2. Intermediality as an umbrella term

Despite the existence of a divergent range of conceptions and definitions of intermediality, it becomes practical to start from a broadly conceived generic conception of the term before going to the specifics of how it is used elsewhere in this study. As indicated by the prefix inter-, intermediality has been conceived as denoting phenomena which in some way take place “between media”. First of all, the term inter-mediality itself already carries the notion of the in-between, expressed by the prefix inter-, along with the notion of the middle or mediation that is intrinsic to mediality (Röttger, 2013). Intermediality in this broadest sense means: relations between media, media interactions and interferences (Rajewsky, 2010:51).

Even with this broad conception, one can deduce some basic assumptions imbedded within this broad conception of intermediality. The assumption that intermediality involves more than one medium is apparent. This assumption leads to another assumption: That it is possible to delimit individual media since “we can hardly talk of inter-mediality unless we can discern and apprehend distinguishable entities between which there could be some kind of interference, interaction and

interplay” (Rajewsky, 2010:52). The assumption of tangible borders/frames between individual media is therefore a fundamental premise to any reference of intermediality. This assumption has not been taken for granted in the discourses on intermediality, having been called to question by scholarship. Rajewsky reckons that medial differences and the notion of crossing media borders play a crucial role in the context of all intermedial practices.

With the same line of reasoning, Elleström carves out a thesis of his understanding of intermediality in favour of discernible media borders. He contends that the crucial “inter” of intermediality is indeed a bridge. However, he asks, if it is a bridge what does it bridge over? His reasoning is that if all media were fundamentally different, it would be hard to find any interrelations at all. If they were fundamentally similar, it would be equally hard to find something that is not already interrelated (Elleström, 2010c:12). Media, therefore, according to Elleström, are both different and similar, and intermediality must be understood as a bridge between medial differences that are founded on medial similarities. He concludes by arguing that intermediality is a result of constructed media borders being trespassed: that there are no media borders given by nature, but that “we need borders to talk about intermediality”⁴⁷ (Rajewsky, 2010:12).

However, beyond these distinctions, such a broad concept does not permit a single theory that would uniformly apply to the entire, heterogeneous subject-matter covered by all these different conceptions of intermediality, nor does it help characterize more precisely any one individual phenomenon on its own distinct formal terms (Rajewsky, 2010:46). Accordingly, in order to uniformly theorize specific intermedial manifestations, more specifically conceived (and often mutually contradictory) conceptions of intermediality are introduced, each of them with its own explicit or implicit premises, methods, interests, and terminologies (Rajewsky, 2010:46). These narrowly conceived conceptions of intermediality will be discussed in the next section.

2.4.3. Subcategories of intermediality

As seen from the previous section, this study focusses on concrete medial configurations and their specific intermedial qualities. As such, the use of narrower conceptions of intermediality becomes

⁴⁷ Irina Rajewsky (2010) in “Border talks...” also advances the notion that media borders a (necessary) construction. She argues that any conception of “a medium” is a constructed one. When we talk of “individual media”, we are talking about media that are conventionally perceived as distinct. Individual media (at any given point in time) are conventionally perceived as distinct and of medially bound frames.

necessary for the discussion of each of the media products analysed in the study. Scholars have proposed typologies that assist in understanding media interrelations in more concrete terms, what one would call, the subcategories of intermediality. This section analyses three of these typologies put forward by Wolf (2002), Rajewsky (2010) and Elleström (2010b, 2014). Thereafter, the section discusses the categories that are adopted in the study and justifies why the chosen categories are most appropriate for the analysis of cases in this study. For discursive purposes, the three typologies have been discussed in a roughly chronological⁴⁸ order starting from Wolf, to Rajewsky and finally to Elleström. This chronological review has been employed to assist in tracing the development and refinement of ideas from the cited scholars.

Wolf's (2002:17) system of categorisation consists of "intracompositional intermediality" and "extracompositional intermediality". These two categories comprise of two variants each. The first category, "intracompositional intermediality", is described as "intermediality in the narrow sense". Wolf (2002:17) defines intracompositional intermediality as "a direct or indirect participation of more than one medium of communication in the signification and/or semiotic structure of a work or semiotic complex, an involvement that must be verifiable within this semiotic entity".

Wolf (2002:22) proposes that there are two sub-forms of intracompositional intermediality. The first, "plurimediality" is characterised by synthesis and hybridity, and is only applicable when two or more media – with their typical conventional signifiers – are overtly present in a given work at least in one instance. As a marker for plurimediality, Wolf (2002:22) argues that intermediality itself and the original components of the intermedial mixture are directly discernible on the surface of the work, that is, on the level of the signifiers, since they appear to belong to heterogeneous semiotic systems. The second sub-form under intracompositional intermediality is "intermedial references" which Wolf claims, give the impression of medial and semiotic homogeneity. Intermedial references, in this context are defined as the indirect involvement of another medium in a work, through the signifiers (and the signifieds) of the work in question (Wolf, 2002:23). The referred medium, which Wolf terms the "non-dominant" medium is only "present" as an idea, as a signified and hence as a reference. "This means that a mono-medial work remains mono-medial

⁴⁸ All three scholars have had minor revisions and clarifications to their subcategories. Their ideas also overlap in some instances. Despite these concerns, it is still useful to discuss these ideas in chronological order, in order to trace the development of ideas.

and displays only one semiotic system, regardless of the existence of an intermedial reference” (Wolf, 2002:23).

Wolf’s (2002:17) second category in his typology is “extracompositional intermediality” which he views as a broader concept of intermediality. In this second category, “intermediality” applies to any transgression of boundaries between conventionally distinct media of communication. Wolf (2002:17) clarifies that the transgression that occurs in extracompositional intermediality cannot only occur within one work or semiotic complex but also as a consequence of relations or comparisons between different works or semiotic complexes.

Wolf proposes that there are also two sub-forms of extracompositional intermediality. The first consists of “transmedial” phenomena: “phenomena that are not specific to individual media” (Wolf 2002:18)⁴⁹. Wolf (2002:17) defines transmedial phenomena as “non-media specific”: appearing in more than one medium, forming bridges between different media. Examples of transmedial phenomena cited by Wolf include “motivic repetition, thematic variation and narrativity” (Wolf 2002:18). The second sub-form of extracompositional intermediality is “intermedial transposition” which Wolf (2002:19) defines as a “transfer between two media”. To say that something is an intermedial transposition is to say that “discernibly similar contents or formal aspects appear in works of different media and at the same time a clear origin can be attributed for them in another medium” (Wolf, 2002:19). Wolf (2002:19) argues that the intermedial quality in intermedial transposition is primarily located in the space between the two works, in the process of gestation, but not in the product.

To summarise, Wolf provides a comprehensive typology that distinguishes between intra-compositional intermediality (and its subcategories “plurimediality” and “intermedial references”) and extracompositional intermediality, which comprise of “transmedial” phenomena and “intermedial transposition”. This typology has been widely appropriated by many others including Rajewsky and Elleström, sometimes in its totality and in other instances with reservations or revisions.

⁴⁹ It should be noted that Wolf (2002:18) claims to be inspired by Rajewsky in the naming of this sub-form.

Rajewsky's typology consists of three subcategories of intermediality⁵⁰. The first subcategory, "intermediality in the narrower sense of medial transposition (or *Medienwechsel* in German) is also referred to as medial transformation (Rajewsky, 2010:55). Rajewsky (2010:56) calls this subcategory a production-oriented, "genetic" conception of intermediality where the medial border crossing (the intermedial quality) is in the way in which a medial configuration comes into being. Examples in this subcategory include film adaptations of literary texts and novelisations.

It should be noted that Rajewsky (2010:56) considers her category of medial transposition comparable to – and a form of – Wolf's "extracompositional intermediality" (the subcategory "intermedial transposition" to be precise). Rajewsky (2010:56) observes that her medial transposition, in the same way as Wolf's extracompositional intermediality (and by extension, intermedial transposition), does not necessarily affect the meaning or outer appearance of particular works or performances, while her second and third categories (media combination and intermedial references), just as Wolf's intracompositional intermediality, do.

The second subcategory is "intermediality in the narrower sense of media combination" (*Medienkombination*) (Rajewsky, 2010:55). "Combination" is key in Rajewsky's (2010:57) second subcategory: the various medial forms of articulation are present in their own materiality and contribute to the constitution and signification of the entire performance in their own medium-specific way. Examples of media combination cited by Rajewsky (2010:55) include phenomena such as "opera, film, theatre, illuminated manuscripts, computer or Sound Art installations, comics, or, to use another terminology, so-called multimedia, mixed-media and intermedia forms".

Crucially, Rajewsky (2010:60) argues that media combinations have the potential to expose the constructedness of delimitations of individual media. At the same time, however, the oscillating interplay between two or more "entities" calls to mind the idea of media combinations in the recipient's consciousness (Rajewsky, 2010:60). Rajewsky also likens her category of media combination to a form of Wolf's intracompositional intermediality, "plurimediality" in particular. Using Wolf's terminology, she asserts, "several media come into play in a direct way" (Rajewsky,

⁵⁰ This typology drops out "transmedial phenomena" as a category of intermediality even though Wolf's categorisation of transmedial phenomena is said to be inspired by her own discussion of transmedial phenomena.

2010:57) in the signification and/or structure of a given semiotic entity in her category of media combination.

Rajewsky's (2010:55) third and final category is "intermediality in the narrower sense of intermedial references" (*intermediale*). This subcategory includes examples such as "references to a specific film in a literary text, film genre or film *qua* medium, film to painting, or painting to photography" (Rajewsky, 2010:55). Again Rajewsky likens her subcategory of intermedial references to Wolf's intracompositional intermediality ("intermedial references" in particular), in that the "indirect participation of more than one medium in a medial configuration, is in the formation process, but also in the signification and/or structure of a given semiotic entity" (Rajewsky, 2010:55).

In summary Rajewsky's typology resembles three out of four of Wolf's subcategories, describing similar phenomena and at times even using the same terminology. Besides the omission of "transmedial phenomena" as a subcategory of intermediality, Rajewsky and Wolf's typologies are very similar. Elleström's typology of understanding intermedial relations, however, contains some fundamental differences between his and Rajewsky's categorisations, which will be explored in the next section.

While acknowledging the various intricate typologies that have been used to categorise intermedial relations by scholars before him, Elleström (2014:6) chooses to differentiate two principal perspectives in the field of media interrelations, which arise from the crossing of media borders: "media combination and integration" and "media transformation"⁵¹. Each of these two carry a variety of merging variants. While "media combination and integration" emphasizes an understanding of media as coexisting media products, media types, and media traits (Elleström, 2014:3), "media transformation" emphasizes an understanding of media that includes a temporal gap among media products, media types, and media traits – either an actual gap in terms of

⁵¹ The second category is termed "mediation and transformation" in *Media borders, multimodality and intermediality* (Elleström, 2010c:28) and in a revision of ideas, Elleström calls it "media transformation" in *Media transformation: The transfer of media characteristics among media* (2014) and qualifies that media transformation involves both mediation and representation (2014:3).

different times of genesis or a gap in the sense that the perceiver construes the import of a medium on the basis of previously known media (Elleström, 2014:6).

In Elleström's scheme-of-things, intermedial relations can be found both between basic media and between qualified media. They may consequently include both modal relations and qualified relations founded on conventions and a range of historically changing circumstances. Depending on their modal character and to a certain extent also on their qualifying properties, media can be both rather loosely combined and intimately integrated (what he terms media combination and integration) or transformed (what he terms media transformation).

In an appraisal of Wolf's categorisation, Elleström (2014:9-10) notes that Wolf's "overt" and "covert" intermediality which are later revised as "intracompositional" and "extracompositional" intermediality, partly corresponds to his own proposed distinction between combination and integration of media on the one hand and transfer and transformation of media on the other hand. He also notes that his division between transmediation and media representation is closer to some of Wolf's distinctions (Elleström, 2014:9). For example, his notion of transmediation includes both Wolf's "implicit intermedial reference" (imitation) and "intermedial transposition" despite the fact that Wolf treats these two phenomena as very different (intracompositional vs. extracompositional). His notion of media representation also resembles Wolf's "explicit intermedial reference" (thematization), although the semiotic notion of representation as used is certainly not equivalent to reference (Wolf, 2002:27-9).

However, Elleström (2014:9) criticises both Wolf's and Rajewsky's categorisations for being based on an understanding of media as containers with clearly perceptible surfaces that separate an inside from an outside. He argues that while the idea of media as containers may be useful and perhaps even necessary to some extent it is also restraining in the long run (Elleström, 2014:9). Elleström's (2014:8) main argument is that the notion of media as containers is severely reductive. Instead, media must be understood as cultural phenomena that are constituted within a field that covers cognitive and semiotic aspects and material and sensorial aspects (Elleström, 2014:8).

Of the two of Elleström's categories, only one resembles Rajewsky's categorisation. Elleström's media combination and integration is similar to Rajewsky's second category of "intermediality in the narrow sense of media combination" (Rajewsky, 2005:51-2; 2010:55).

The difference between the typologies proposed by Elleström and Rajewsky stems from Elleström's reservations about recognizing Rajewsky's two subcategories – media transposition and intermedial references – as separate. In his critique of Rajewsky's categorisation, Elleström argues that he is not convinced that media transposition and media references should be discussed separately. This is because, according to him, the distinction between “medial transposition” and “intermedial references” cannot be upheld, both in theory and in analytical practice (Elleström, 2014:9). In place of this distinction, Elleström asserts that both “medial transposition” and “intermedial references” should be considered as part of his broad field of transfer and transformation of media (Elleström, 2014:9). However, Elleström also cautions that the resemblance in his distinction between “transmediation” and media “representation” and Rajewsky's distinction between “medial transposition” and “intermedial references” is only superficial (Elleström, 2014:9).

The problem with Elleström's approach for this study is that it lumps together wide-ranging phenomena into one subcategory, a situation that is easily sorted out with Rajewsky's tri-category approach. Another problem is that Elleström (2010c:28) prescriptively designates theatre to the category of media combinations and integration⁵² as if theatre cannot involve media transformation. The examples in this thesis demonstrate that theatre cannot be confined to one category alone: that the media interrelations that are found in theatre can be analysed in more categories.

In summary, there are many overlapping ideas in the typologies employed to understand media interrelations. This study adopts Rajewsky's typology because it is the most suitable for the analysis of phenomena in this thesis. Nevertheless, the study also makes use of the various ideas that are discussed in the other typologies. The study understands the typologies discussed in this section as theoretical categorisation that only exist for discursive purposes, to aid the understanding of the complex area of media interrelations as opposed to being universal truths. In

⁵² Elleström (2010c:28) argues that “theatre, for instance, normally combines and integrates, to varying degrees, basic media such as auditory text, still image and body performance. While factual, this designation could be mistaken to mean that theatre can only be discussed in terms of media combination. It should be noted, however, that Elleström, in his subsequent book (2014) clarifies that any media product can be studied in terms of combination and integration and in terms of transfer and transformation even though certain media products appear to be apt for certain types of analysis (Elleström, 2014:4).

other words, the typologies discussed are merely tools for conceptualising phenomena. This indicates that they are valid in as far as they are helpful in distinguishing entities and if they help reduce ambiguities (Elleström, 2014:10).

2.4.4. Subcategories of intermediality as used in this study

This section discusses the three main subcategories of intermediality that are applicable to this study. Rajewsky's subcategories of intermediality were found to be most appropriate for the cases in this study when compared with other subcategories given by other scholars⁵³. It should be also noted that while these subcategories are discussed as separate entities, they are very much interrelated.

2.4.4.1. Media transposition

In media transposition, the intermedial quality has to do with the way in which a media product comes into being, that is, with the transformation of a given media product (such as a text and film) or of its substratum into another medium (Rajewsky 2005:51). This category is a production-oriented, "genetic" conception of intermediality, and its marking feature is that it constitutes an "original" text, which is the "source" of the "newly formed media product", whose formation is based on a media-specific and obligatory inter-medial transformation process (Rajewsky 2005:51). One of the cases in this study *Mwana wanga*, a theatrical performance, falls under this category. The theatrical performance originates from the song *Dearest child* by Kimba Mutanda, which also draws from the conventions of letter writing. Although the theatrical medial product is the focus in the analysis of this case, the process of transformation from song to stage performance constitutes most of the discussion for this case.

2.4.4.2. Media combination

In media combinations, the intermedial quality is the result or the very process of combining at least two conventionally distinct media or medial forms of articulation (Rajewsky 2005:52). A marking feature of media combinations is that the two (or more) medial forms of articulation are each present in their own materiality and contribute to the constitution and signification of the

⁵³ Such as those in (Wolf, 1999) *The Musicalization of fiction: A study in the theory and history of intermediality* and (Elleström, 2010b) *Media borders, multimodality and intermediality* and *Media transformation: The transfer of media characteristics among media* (Elleström, 2014).

entire product in their own specific way. Thus, for this category, intermediality is a communicative-semiotic concept, based on the combination of at least two medial forms of articulation (Rajewsky 2005:52). Media combinations are the most widely known form of intermediality.

Both South African cases in this study – *Ubu and the truth commission* and *Barbe bleue: a story of madness* – fall under media combinations, with the integration of film and video projections (and puppetry in *Ubu*) as additional technical media⁵⁴ in the theatrical performances. As shall be demonstrated in the chapters analysing these cases, the degree of media combinations oscillates from a mere contiguity of two or more material manifestations of different media to more complex integrations that would be said to privilege none of its constitutive elements.

2.4.4.3. Intermedial references

In intermedial references the media product uses its own media-specific means, either to refer to a specific, individual work produced in another medium, or to refer to a specific medial subsystem (such as a certain film genre) or to another medium *qua* system (Rajewsky, 2005:52). The given product thus constitutes itself partly or wholly in relation to the work, system, or subsystem to which it refers. Rajewsky (2005:52) cautions that subjective associations do not warrant intermedial references, rather it is the use of devices iconically related to the other medium that makes a phenomenon an intermedial reference. In this third category, intermediality designates a communicative-semiotic concept, but here it is by definition just one medium – the referencing medium (as opposed to the medium referred to) – that is materially present (this is the distinctive marker of intermedial references). Rather than combining different medial forms of articulation, the given media-product thematises, evokes, or imitates elements or structures of another, conventionally distinct medium through the use of its own media-specific means (Rajewsky, 2005:52). One case from the Malawian theatrical performances discussed in this study, *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw*, falls under intermedial references. The medial configuration that is materially present is theatre but the performance constantly refers to photography and film documentary.

⁵⁴ A technical medium is used, as defined by Elleström (2010c:16), to mean “the actual material medium”, the “form”, that realizes and manifests the latent properties of media.

2.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter discusses the three main concepts used in the study: “medium” “mediality” and “intermediality”. These concepts are extensively used in wide-ranging discourses such that it became necessary to specify their usage in the context of intermediality in theatre. The idea is that a clearer understanding of what constitutes a medium and mediality helps in the understanding of what intermediality is and what processes it calls upon. The study has chosen to adopt a concept of “the medium” which captures the complex network of both tangible qualities of media and various perceptual and interpretive operations performed by the recipients of media. However, the study also makes use of a historicised understanding of the medium as developed by media archaeologists to understand media interrelations. The chapter discusses the importance of understanding what media *do* in addition to understanding what they *are* in the section on mediality. Finally, the section on intermediality provides an overview of the discourse on intermediality. It also discusses fundamental distinctions that underlie the study’s own conception of intermediality, thereby narrowing down the conceptualisation of intermediality to individual subcategories, which are used in the analysis of the case studies.

Chapter Three

Methodological design for data analysis

3.1. Introduction

This chapter explores a methodological design for the analysis of intermediality in the theatre. Scholars have drawn from media theory, performance theory and theories of perception in their attempts to formulate methodological trajectories for the analysis of intermediality. This chapter draws from these attempts, filling the gaps, synthesising and refining the approaches to create a more efficient analytical design. Building from a variety of conceptual/theoretical frameworks and existing methodological designs, the chapter aims to put together a design for the analysis of intermediality in the theatrical cases presented in this study.

The study synthesises semiotic and phenomenological approaches in its quest to formulate a methodological design for the analysis of intermediality in theatre. On the one hand, the theoretical frameworks for understanding intermedial relations set by Elleström and Chapple and Kattenbelt play a vital role in informing the semiotic approach. On the other hand, Röttger's model for analysing intermedial relations and Boenisch's framework for the same inspire the phenomenological approach. The chapter combines these two approaches into one analytical design that informs the analysis and discussion of the cases in this thesis. In particular, this design is formulated to address the question, "how do media interrelate in the Malawian and South African theatre context?" This mixed analytical design is based on the supposition that signification (semiotics) and experience (phenomenology) are imbricated within each other in contemporary performative culture (Bay-Cheng *et al.*, 2010:29).

3.2. Semiotic frameworks

The study is informed by Chapple and Kattenbelt's (2006b:11-25) and Elleström's (2010c:11-50) semiotic theoretical frameworks for understanding intermedial relations. From these two theoretical/conceptual frameworks, the study infers methodological implications that guide the analysis of the case studies. In these frameworks, a performance is considered to be "a structured coherence of theatrical signs...a [performance] text made up of heterogeneous signs" (Fischer-

Lichte, 2008a:70). The principal aim of the semiotic approaches is the search for possible meanings. The basic assumption is that a performance is open to numerous processes of meaning making. Both approaches discussed below, therefore, highlight the conditions under which meanings emerge out of its performative processes and the meanings that are possible.

3.2.1. Chapple and Kattenbelt

Chapple and Kattenbelt's framework illustrates how the traditional semiotic coding for theatre, originally created to aid the analysis of dramatic theatre, has been adapted in the age of new media and in the realm of postmodern⁵⁵ and post-dramatic theatre⁵⁶, in response to and as part of the changes to theatre after the 20th century (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:22).

There are two main levels of semiotic coding employed in Chapple and Kattenbelt's framework. The first level is informed by their definition of theatre on the sign systems of sound, image and word. Chapple and Kattenbelt use diagrams as visual aids for their semiotic framework. The first two diagrams refer to the theatre and represent the first level of the semiotic coding (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2). In the first diagram, theatre is defined according to the traditional semiotic coding for dramatic theatre as sound, image and word (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:20). The second diagram demonstrates the relationship between the semiotic coding of theatre and the concepts of body/space/time (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:21). The second diagram also serves to show how contemporary theatre reconfigures the relations within this traditional semiotic coding, extending the conceptualisations of time, body and space.

Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006b:20) clarify that they use the term "theatre" as a collective term for all live performing arts. They acknowledge the importance of the concepts of time and space in any theatre configuration, such that they delimit their definition of theatre to the "presence of the actor and spectator in the same time and space" (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:20), as shown in

⁵⁵ Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006b:12) assert that they understand intermediality as part of a wider movement in which all postmodern arts and media are involved. According to them, intermediality incorporates some, but not all, features of postmodernism.

⁵⁶ Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006b:21) reconcile the traditional semiotic code for theatre with post-dramatic theatre by creating a second figure that demonstrates the relationship between the semiotic coding of theatre and the concepts of space, time and body, thereby including post-dramatic theatre performances that manipulate time and space, or have other media operating "as performers" in the performance space, as part of their system. Post-dramatic theatre is said to move away from the dominance of text and reliance on character-driven action (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:21).

Figure 3.2. They also acknowledge that contemporary trends in theatre, like post-dramatic theatre, reconfigure the relationship within the sign systems for theatre, including the conception of time and space (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:21).



Figure 3.1 Theatre as word image and sound (Source: Chapple &Kattenbelt, 2006b:21)



Figure 3.2 Theatre and performance (Source: Chapple &Kattenbelt, 2006b:21)

In this first level of semiotic coding, Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006b:21) further identify three levels of interpretation in their attempt to “locate” intermediality. These levels of interpretation suggest indicators for what the spectating researcher may be looking for in his/her analysis of intermediality in performance. Firstly, they locate intermediality in-between visual theatre, literary theatre and musical theatre, each of which is itself intermedial⁵⁷ (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:21). Secondly, they locate it in-between the mediality of the performers and the mediality of the art forms, and thirdly, in-between the performers and the receivers of the performance (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:21).

Chapple and Kattenbelt’s “locations” of intermediality are essential for the systematic analysis of the multi-layered aspects of the semiotic coding of theatre. At the first level of interpretation, the analysis focuses on the constitutive elements of theatre as a medium and the interrelations in-between and within the theatre medium (within and between word, image and sound) – see Figure 3.3. At the second level of interpretation, the question of mediality is key and the qualities that make a medium “medial” therefore, form the core of the discussion – see Figure 3.4. It is important to note that Chapple and Kattenbelt’s understanding of mediality is inspired by Boenisch (2006), who, in a chapter of *Intermediality in theatre and performance* defines *mediality as remediation*: the appropriation of techniques, forms and social significance of other media and attempts to rival or refashion them in the name of the real (Boenisch, 2006:105). The mediality of the performer is singled out by Chapple and Kattenbelt, perhaps influenced by their understanding of theatre as the “art of the performer” (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:29), an idea that is developed further in the same publication. The mediality of the performer is therefore paralleled with the mediality of other art forms, and the relations between the two medialities is important in this second level of interpretation. At the third and final stage of interpretation, issues of perception take centre stage and, again, Chapple and Kattenbelt single out the performer, focusing on his/her relations with the receiver of the performance – see Figure 3.5. As Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006b:21) argue,

⁵⁷ Chapple and Kattenbelt do not clarify what they mean when they claim that visual theatre, literary theatre and musical theatre are themselves intermedial. The researcher suspects what they mean is better expressed with the term “multimodality”, that what is understood as theatre in each particular context is formed by various combinations of “basic media”, such as auditory text, still image and body performance (Elleström, 2010c: 28).

“intermediality is not reliant on technology but on the inter-action between the performance and perception”.

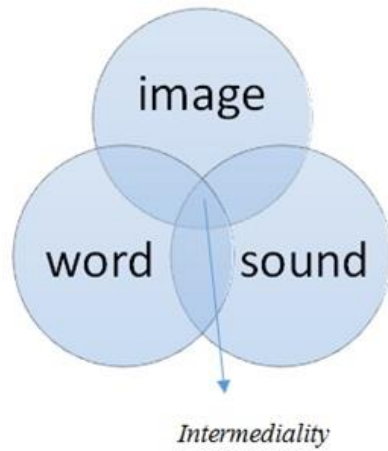


Figure 3.3 Locations of intermediality: Within the medium

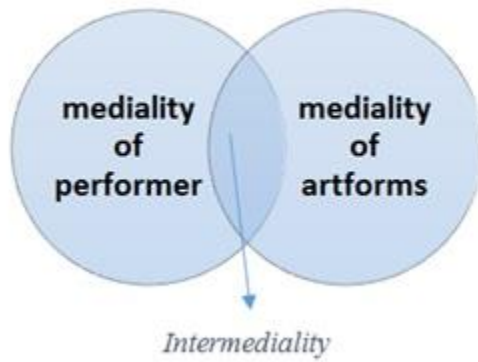


Figure 3.4 Locations of intermediality: Mediality

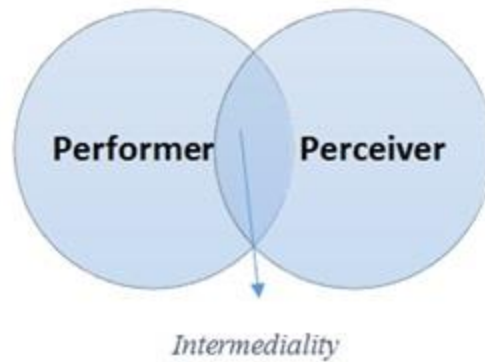


Figure 3.5 Locations of intermediality: Perception

In this first level of the semiotic coding, therefore, Chapple and Kattenbelt start from traditional theatre semiotics by employing the semiotic coding for Western dramatic theatre (Figure 3.1). They demonstrate how this traditional semiotic coding is extended in the analysis of theatre, as it exists in present times. A major aspect of this expansion is further explored in their second level of semiotic coding.

Their second level of semiotic coding adds the concept of *mediatization* to their understanding of theatre (Figure 3.6). A *mediatized* entity is understood as one that utilises recording and playback technologies (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:22). Chapple and Kattenbelt pit the concept of *mediatization* in direct opposition to the live, as defined in the first level (the presence of the actor and spectator in the same time and space), opting to theorise the two terms as relational to one another, and each one being the absence of the other – “live means absence of recording and *mediatized* means absence of live”⁵⁸ (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:23).

In this second level, therefore, the concept of *mediatization*: characterised by products such as cinema, television, video and new technology is added to the semiotic coding theatre (loosely defined to incorporate all live arts, such as dance and opera). In this perspective, Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006b:22) claim that theatre provides a space where the art forms of theatre, opera and dance meet, interact and integrate with the media of cinema, video and the new technologies,

⁵⁸ Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006b:23) acknowledge that the live and *mediatized* do not always operate as distinct binary oppositions. They do not, however, account for this phenomenon.

creating a profusion of texts, intertexts, inter-media and spaces between, and therefore becoming a home for all, a hypermedium – see Figure 3.7.

Chapple and Kattenbelt introduce the term “performance”, a more inclusive term, to describe the two diagrams that reflect this second level of semiotic coding (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7). The first of these two diagrams serves to show how theatre, performance and technology relate to each other. The binary between the live and *mediatized* is highlighted, together with the arguably lesser binary between analogue and digital technology (Chapple & Kattenbelt place the latter binary within the context of the former binary). The final diagram serves to demonstrate theatre as a hypermedium for all. New terms introduced in this diagram, such as the cinematic/televsual, the cyber-spatial, the theatrical and the sonic, serve to show the inclusivity of the theatre medium when it is considered as a hypermedium.



Figure 3.6 Theatre, performance and technology (Source: Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:23)



Figure 3.7 Intermediality in theatre and performance (Source: Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:24)

It is worthwhile to note that the locations of intermediality are not described in detail for this second level of semiotic coding as they were for the first level. The problem for the researcher is how they can go about analysing intermediality in theatrical configurations that incorporate the second level of semiotic coding. This chapter suggests that one can draw inferences regarding the “locations” of intermediality from this second level of semiotic coding too. These locations suggest indicators for the analysis of intermediality in performances that are more inclusive and may include technology. The most important clue comes from Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006b:24) themselves: the two scholars purport that intermediality [in this second level] is located in the “intersections and the spaces in-between the intersections” as the art forms (of theatre, opera and dance) meet, and interact and integrate with the media of cinema, television, video and new technologies.

The following paragraph attempts to locate intermediality for the second level of semiotic coding in a more systematic manner. Three levels of interpretation can be inferred in an attempt to locate intermediality in this second level of semiotic coding, in the same way as they were in the first level. The first level of interpretation not only focuses on the constitutive elements of and the interrelations in-between and within theatre, as it exists in its traditional semiotic coding (word, image and sound), but also in the other *mediatized* entities in the performance, and most importantly, in the relations between these *mediatized* entities and the live ones. Similarly, in the

second level of interpretation, the mediality of the performer is not only put side by side with that of the other art forms, but also with that of the *mediatized* entities. In the third and final level of interpretation, issues regarding the spectator's perception take into account the role played by technology as well.

However, Chapple and Kattenbelt also point out that digital technology provides yet another coding system to share the space with theatre, and therefore transforms the relationships between the sign systems.

Digitization changes theatre into a modular non-hierarchical inter-active non-linear process, where there is a layering of many meanings present in the same space at the same time. This leads us to the world of many meanings, where we are uncertain as to the location of the referent and we are in the world of signs and media, which refer to signs, which refer to other signs- all of which are staged by the performance (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:23).

This implies that *mediatization* further reconfigures the relations between body, time and space in theatre in such a way that meaning is decentralised even further. In terms of methodology, this also implies that Chapple and Kattenbelt's framework, while helpful for the analysis of performance, has its limitations. The analysis of performance that includes digital technology is far more complicated than what their framework can account for, and the researcher needs other tools for the analysis of the "profusions of texts, inter-texts, inter-media and spaces in between" (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:24) resulting from the interaction and integration of the art forms and digital media.

3.2.1.1. Application of the conceptual frame to the methodological design

Chapple and Kattenbelt's framework is extremely valuable for the analysis of intermediality in theatre because of its practicality for performance analysis. Their framework is ideal because of its emphasis on the meaning-making potential in the materiality of the theatrical signs. The practicality of recognising and interpreting material configurations as signs in a theatrical performance that is situated in time and space, through the sensorial faculties cannot be understated. The spectating researcher is more likely to recognise material configurations than the abstract aspects of media or conventional/aesthetic ones while experiencing the performance. This

is because, in the performance space, the spectating researcher encounters media in their material manifestation with his/her senses, and may only develop a more comprehensive understanding of the media involved in a performance during the later stages of analysis. Chapple and Kattenbelt's framework therefore provides the researcher with a practical means of analysis of the performance. It proves to be an efficient way of identifying phenomena based on what is experienced by the spectator during the performance.

The chapter further argues that Chapple and Kattenbelt's categories, such as word, image and sound, body, time and space, are easily distinguishable as theatrical signs and account for the generation of meaning in the analysis. Furthermore, the qualities of being live or *mediatized*, as defined by Chapple and Kattenbelt, also provide a neat way of categorising phenomena. Even though it has been argued that all media users remember, activate and apply their own experiences, knowledge, skills, prejudices and background, the spectating researcher embedded in the performance event may not consciously or immediately reflect on these influences, nor comprehensively understand their own role in constituting meaning as they experience the performance. Instead, their experience of the performance appears to be meaningful in that particular moment. Categorising the entities is a critical step towards meaning-making during or soon after watching the performance.

Taking the cue from Chapple and Kattenbelt, the analysis of each of the cases in this study consists of a discussion of the media, in their material manifestations, as experienced through the spectating researcher's senses and categorised as live and *mediatized*. The constitutive elements of each technical/material medium, and the relations within and between the media, is followed by discussions relating to mediality and perception. When performed during or soon after the performance event, this type of analysis allows the researcher to make sense of what is experienced in the performance event before this experiential knowledge is influenced by other types of data from the interviews and reviews.

Chapple and Kattenbelt's framework, while rich in its contribution to the methodological design for analysing intermedial theatre, also has some limitations. The framework can be considered to be theatre essentialist or medium specific. Throughout their framework, Chapple and Kattenbelt appear to attribute special significance to theatre and the performer in their relations with other

media in a way that could be considered hierarchical. This becomes apparent in their emphasis of theatre as being the *enabling agent* for this “confluence of media”, as opposed to being part of it. While all cases analysed in this study emanate from contemporary theatrical performances, the study cautiously discusses intermediality in theatre in a way that does not hierarchize theatre as a medium, nor attribute special significance to the performer in the specific intermedial configurations.

Related to the aforementioned concern, Chapple and Kattenbelt’s two-levelled framework would seem to suggest that theatre exists in its “pure” live form (see Figure 3.1) and in a “perverted” *mediatized* form (see Figure 3.7). As the four diagrams demonstrate (Figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.6 and 3.7), other entities appear to be progressively added to the traditional semiotic coding of word, image and sound, transforming theatre into a large medial framework that integrates other media without negating the assumed “here and now” quality of the live body.

In essence, despite their attempts to broaden their conceptualisation of theatre, Chapple and Kattenbelt’s conceptualisation is still essentialist, and theatre is artificially integrated with the other media it is said to incorporate. In contrast, Röttger (2013) defines theatre as “an open, dynamic configuration of intermedial transmissions”, rather than a hypermedium, as Chapple and Kattenbelt purport. This difference in assumptions brings in crucial differences in how the two approaches suggest intermediality is analysed. Approaches that start from a narrower conceptualisation of theatre, such as Chapple and Kattenbelt’s, tend to limit the analysis of intermediality when compared to those approaches that start from a flexible conceptualisation of theatre (like Röttger’s). Recognising the limitations of this approach, this study therefore considers Chapple and Kattenbelt’s framework as one of the several dimensions to the analysis of intermediality in theatre. The study infers from other frameworks to create a more comprehensive methodology for the analysis of intermediality in theatre. The section below explores in detail the particular components of Chapple and Kattenbelt’s framework that it considers as positive attributes and limitations.

3.2.1.2. Summary

From the discussion above it is clear that Chapple and Kattenbelt’s framework has its advantages when methodological implications (that aid the analysis of intermedial theatre) are drawn from it.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that Chapple and Kattenbelt's focus on the meaning-making potential in the materiality of the theatrical signs is at the expense of the other multidimensional aspects of the medium such as the abstract, the conventional and the aesthetic, even when their own framework hints at the significance of these other aspects. This one-sided approach would render an analysis incomplete, as it would let too many aspects of media "slip through the sieve".

The emphasis on the material aspects of media also tends to cause theatre and media scholars to lean towards media differentiation rather than similarity. For example, categorising phenomena as live or as *mediatized* leads to an "either/or" discussion, where emphasis is likely to be placed on the aspects of the media that are different, which in turn often leads to a limiting discussion of attributes that make the particular medium unique. Elleström's framework, on the other hand, accentuates media similarities as much as media differences, and thus provides a comprehensive understanding of the medium. His framework for understanding intermediality gives a broader understanding of the medium and is therefore worth exploring in a chapter that seeks a methodological design that holistically analyses media and their interrelations.

Furthermore, even though Chapple and Kattenbelt clearly acknowledge the centrality of the relationship between the performance/performer and its observer, their framework provides little direction on how a spectating researcher can make sense out of this relationship. Elleström attempts to address this dilemma in his framework, but the third section of the chapter, rooted in theories of perception and phenomenology provides a more detailed approach to how a researcher can discuss this vital relationship.

3.2.2. Lars Elleström

Lars Elleström (2010c:14) criticises inquiries that "as a rule start off with the conceptual units such as image, music, text, verbal media or visual media presuming that it is appropriate to compare the entities" in their investigation of the relations between media. He argues that these enquiries are futile because the units compared are often treated as fundamentally different, with little or nothing in common (Elleström, 2010c:14). This implies that every intermedial relation is perceived to be more or less an anomaly, consisting of different entities blending uniquely in an unusual union or alliance. This, he claims, is far from the truth: it is material-centred and does not reflect what actually happens when media correlate.

Elleström argues that another problem emanating from this materialist approach to media is that the materiality of the media is generally not distinguished from the perception of the media. While acknowledging that one cannot completely distinguish perception from mediality in practice, Elleström (2010c:15) argues that it is crucial to discriminate theoretically between the material and the perception of the material “if one wants to understand how media can be related to each other”.

One must be able to determine to what extent certain qualities belong to the material aspects of a medium and to what extent they are part of the perception (...) If one avoids taking notice of this intricacy, one is left with a featureless mass of only seemingly identical media that cannot be compared properly (Elleström, 2010c:15).

For Elleström, therefore, intermediality cannot be understood fully without grasping the fundamental conditions of every single medium. These conditions are the “essential cornerstones of all media without which mediality cannot be apprehended” (Elleström, 2010c:15). The fundamental conditions constitute a complex network of tangible qualities and various perceptual and interpretive operations performed by the recipients of the media. Elleström’s main argument is that media are both similar and different in so far as they share or do not share these qualities (Elleström, 2010c:15). One therefore, cannot, compare media without clarifying which aspects are relevant to the comparison and exactly how these aspects are related to each other. When understood this way, the relations within and between media cannot be considered as irregularities formed out of unusual unions, but rather as emanating from the similarities and differences within and among media.

Elleström (2010c:35) argues that he presents a bottom-up approach. Instead of starting from the material or recognisable entities encountered, he claims to start with the qualities that are shared by all media. In his framework, all media are similar in a number of ways: they all have latent material interface/s, they are discernible through the senses, they possess temporal and spatial characteristics and, lastly, meaning is attributed to all media that are perceived in time and space. Elleström’s framework also acknowledges the role played by conventions and aesthetics in how media are defined. All media, therefore, can be described in terms of having qualities that are conceptual, conventional and material in nature. “Basic and qualified media are abstract categories that help us understand how media types are formed by different sorts of qualities whereas

technical media are the very tangible devices needed to materialize instances of media types” (Elleström, 2010c:12) – see Figure 3.8.

The following paragraph shall attempt to explicate Elleström’s intricate understanding of the medium more elaborately. Elleström (2010c:17) argues that, firstly, every medium has a latent corporeal interface and can be discussed in terms of consisting of human bodies, other materiality of a demarcated character: such as flat surfaces and three-dimensional objects, and material manifestations of a less clearly demarcated character: such as sound waves and different sorts of laser or light projection. Elleström (2014:17) cautions, however, that the materialities of media can differ in many ways that cannot always be clearly separated. Secondly, Elleström (2014:17) argues that every medium is perceived by using one or more of the five senses of humans: seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and smelling. Attention is given to sight and hearing, which he claims are the two cognitively most advanced faculties for the context of media and arts (Elleström, 2010c:18). Thirdly, according to Elleström (2014:18), every medium can also be discussed in terms of its spatiotemporal qualities in the act of perception and interpretation, mainly in terms of four dimensions: width, height, depth and time. Fourthly, Elleström (2010c:21) argues that every medium can be discussed in semiotic terms – in terms of the processes of signification at work in the perceiver’s mind. Following Charles Sanders Peirce, Elleström (2010c:21) believes that meaning can be described as the result of sign functions, and that there are no signs until an interpreter has attributed significance. The processes of an interpreting mind attributing significance to a sign can be described in terms of being symbolic, indexical and iconic interpretation.

Elleström (2010c:16) terms these four essential cornerstones of all media “modalities of media”, and the variants of these modalities “modes”. He acknowledges that the modalities of media are interrelated and dependent on each other in many ways. The modes too are entangled with each other in many different ways, depending on the character of the medium, but they can rather clearly be separated theoretically (Elleström, 2010c:16). There thus are media similarities and media dissimilarities that result from the similarities and differences in the modality modes of media.

In addition to these modalities of media, Elleström argues that an analysis of how media are actually realised and understood is incomplete when it does not consider two other factors. Firstly,

one has to consider the origin, delimitation and use of media in specific historical, cultural and social circumstances – the historically determined practices, discourses and conventions associated with the medium (Elleström, 2010c:24). Secondly, the spectating researcher has to consider the aesthetic and communicative characteristics of the particular medium. Elleström (2010c:25) claims that these aesthetic and communicative characteristics of the medium play an important role in how media are defined and identified in context.

When considered this way, the analysis of intermediality moves beyond the discussion of discernible material units that are encountered in performance, and probes deeper into other aspects of media constitution. It also moves past the *live/mediatized* binary and focuses on the actual attributes that make the media under discussion similar or different. In other words, Elleström's framework radically shifts the focus of the conversation from media materiality alone to a more holistic consideration and understanding of how media are realised and understood, thereby accounting for the similarities and differences among media that make it possible to talk about intermediality.

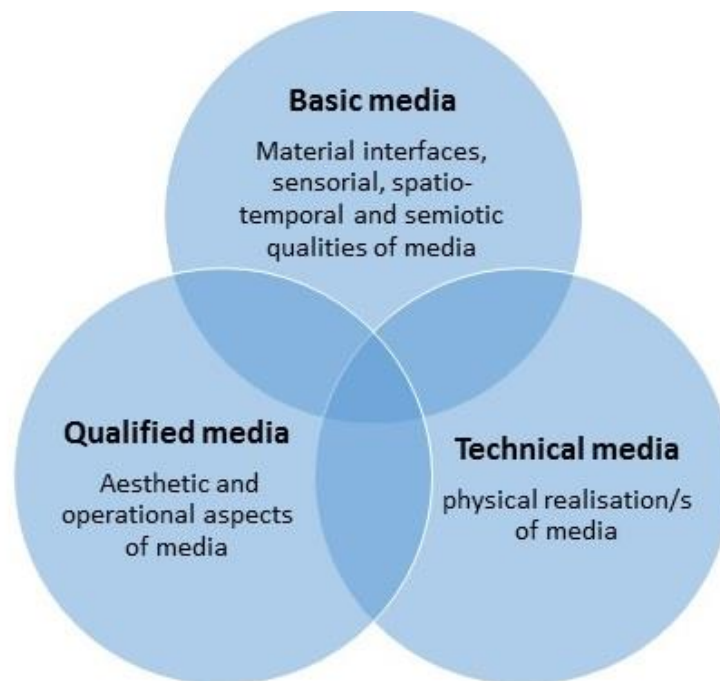


Figure 3.8 Elleström's media constitution

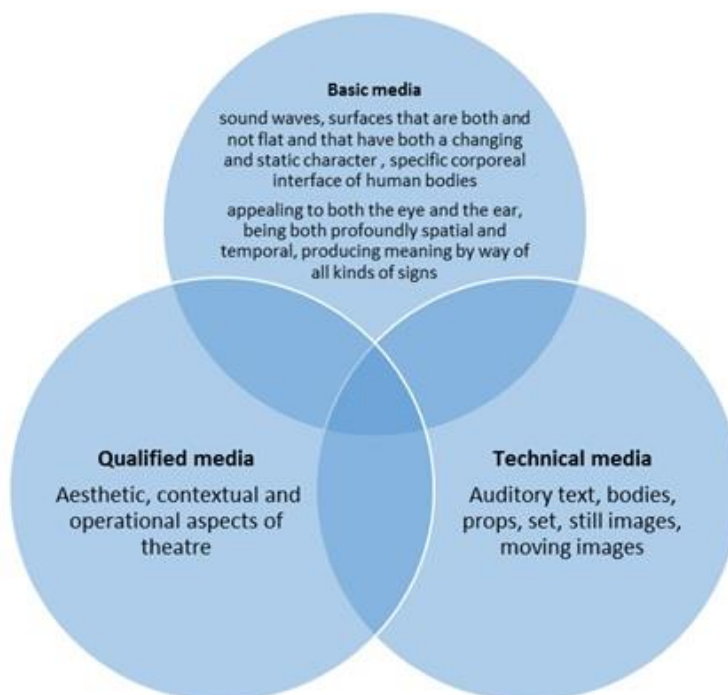


Figure 3.9 Elleström's theatre constitution

3.2.2.1. Locations of intermediality

Elleström, just like Chapple and Kattenbelt, suggests pointers to where a researcher might “locate” intermediality. One has to understand Elleström’s concept of border crossings to appreciate his locations of intermediality. Elleström (2010c:23) insists that borders are necessary to discuss intermediality. He distinguishes between two types of media borders. First, media differ because of modal dissimilarities. Secondly, media differ because of divergences concerning the qualifying aspects of media and the conventionality of media borders (Elleström, 2010c:23).

The researcher seeking to locate intermediality therefore firstly must pay particular attention to the modalities of media for each media configuration under discussion: by investigating the characteristics of their latent material interfaces, the senses used to perceive them, their spatiotemporal qualities and how meaning is ascribed to them by the researcher, as the result of the sign functions of the entity. The meeting points and divergences that exist when the media under discussion are compared in this regard partly account for the intermediality between and within these media.

Secondly, the researcher seeking to locate intermediality must also take into consideration the historically determined practices, discourses and conventions associated with the medium and the aesthetic and communicative characteristics of the medium. The meeting points and divergences that exist when media are compared in this regard, together with those of the modalities, fully account for the intermediality between and within these media. Elleström (2010c:28) goes further with his model by distinguishing two ways in which media borders are crossed, namely by combination and integration of (basic or qualified) media, and by mediation and transformation of (basic or qualified) media. Elleström places theatre in the latter category.

According to Elleström (2010c:28), theatre combines and integrates, to varying degrees, basic media such as auditory text, still image and body performance. The aesthetic aspects of these combinations and integrations of basic media are part of how theatre is understood and defined as a qualified medium. See figure 3.9.

Each basic medium has its own modal characteristics and when combined and integrated according to certain qualitative conventions the result is what we call “theatre”, consisting of different kinds of material interfaces, appealing to both the eye and the ear, being both profoundly spatial and temporal, producing meaning by way of all kinds of signs and, certainly, being circumscribed by way of historical and cultural conventions and aesthetic standards. Theatre may thus be said to be a qualified medium that is very much multimodal and also, in a way, very much intermedial since it combines and integrates a range of basic and qualified media (Elleström, 2010c:28-29).

In short, Elleström asserts that theatre is a multimodal medium capable of incorporating basic media, with their own modal characteristics but also other qualified media, which combine various basic media and modal characteristics.

3.2.2.2. Application of the conceptual frame to the methodological design

Elleström’s framework is extremely valuable for the analysis of intermediality in theatre because it provides a systematic way of analysing minutely, the features of various media and how they may be interpreted. Elleström (2010c:24) cautions, however, that his model is not intended to offer a simple, mechanical way of “checking off the modes of the modalities, one after another”. Rather,

Elleström stresses that the model's strength lies in its capacity to examine the minute features that are shared by all media: those that account for both their differences and similarities.

Elleström's framework is nevertheless a powerful tool for performance analysis because it provides the tools and the language for defining and analysing the medium using categories that are difficult to separate by sight and hearing alone. Elleström (2010c:37) defines the medium as consisting of a complex of interrelated facets: the technical, the modal and the qualifying aspects. His framework provides six main areas that can be considered with regard to media constitution (the four modalities of media and the two qualifying aspects of media). These six areas are considerably broader and more encompassing than those offered in other frameworks, as they provide a much wider frame for the analysis of the character of every single medial expression. Using this broader framework, the researcher is able to clarify the basis of the comparison between media and is also equipped with tools and lingua for investigating how the aspects are related to each other. Elleström's detail in his "bottom-up" approach provide the researcher with a richer understanding of the media encountered.

Going beyond the materiality of media, the study therefore builds on the dimension of analysis that was developed from Chapple and Kattenbelt's conceptual framework. In this framework, the researcher examines conceptual, conventional (and aesthetic) and material qualities of media. The discussion is centred on how these qualities of media relate to one another for each of the cases in the study. Elleström's modal and qualifying media borders play a vital role in the analysis of intermediality in this study. Discussions on how the specific theatrical performance cases combine and integrate basic and qualified media forms the bulk of the discussion. Unlike Elleström, this study goes further by discussing transfers and transformations in the theatre context.

Furthermore, Elleström's framework is significant because it makes a further distinction between "mediation", the pre-semiotic notion that captures material process of media realisation⁵⁹

⁵⁹ It should be noted that Claudia Georgi (2014:12) adopts Elleström's concept of a "pre-semiotic category" of media when he argues that "intermediality resides in the intermedial artefacts themselves". According to him, although intermediality tends to raise medial awareness, the existence of intermedial phenomena – especially in media combination – does not depend on them being noticed by recipients (Georgi, 2014:12). This study, while agreeing with Georgi's reasoning behind his conceptualisation of the medium, chooses to adopt Elleström's (2014:11) phrasing – "pre-semiotic notion of mediation", rather than Georgi's (2014:12) "intermediality resid(ing) in the intermedial artefacts themselves", arguing that the latter phrasing is misleading.

(Elleström 2014:11) and “representation”, a concept that explains the material process of meaning making, which includes properties that are ascribed to the media by the perceiver and properties that are ascribed by convention and society. The distinction between these two categories is not easily recognisable in practice, but is necessary to make in theory for a more comprehensive analysis. This higher level of cognisance of media constitution and interrelations provides clarity in the process of analysis.

Nonetheless, just like any other framework, Elleström’s framework is not without limitations. Firstly, Elleström’s indiscriminate use of the term “medium” is bound to cause more confusion than clarification in the analysis of media and intermediality. Elleström uses the term “media” to stand for a wide range of phenomena: to describe basic categories of features, qualities and aspects of all media on a scale that ranges from the tangible to the perceptual and the conceptual. He also uses the term to refer to qualified media (historically situated and aesthetically distinct entities constituted by a cluster of individual media products), such as theatre, film and radio. “Medium” is also used to refer to specific media products, such as the theatrical cases in this study, among other uses. The researcher, in drawing from the framework in Elleström’s analysis has a difficult task of clarifying the use of the term in their analysis.

Furthermore, even though Elleström’s framework claims to be bottom up, starting with the minute features of various media rather than “with a small selection of established media and their interrelations” (Elleström, 2010c:35), researchers using his framework in the analysis of specific media products will most likely find themselves using their preconceived understanding of qualified media as the starting point and as a comparative base for the analysis of the minute features of their specific media products⁶⁰. For example, as one begins to analyse the cases presented in this study, one cannot avoid attributing and drawing from their conventional understanding of the media frames “theatre” “film”, “cinema” and “radio” to the cases as a comparative base for their analysis. However, researchers must make a cautious effort not to let their understanding of the “qualified media” cloud their analysis by shifting the focus towards the various media properties that make up the total experience of each of the performance cases.

⁶⁰ Elleström (2010c) himself constantly refers back to the qualified media, such as film, theatre, photography and dance, as he uses his “bottom up” approach in his *Media borders, multimodality and intermediality*.

Considering each case study as a performance event to be analysed from the bottom up helps with this mind shift.

Another major limitation of Elleström's framework is that accounting for a medium's modality modes – something that Elleström's framework is best suited for – is only one-step towards understanding the nature of the relations between media. To use Elleström's example, two media products may share all modality modes and yet differ remarkably because of the difference in their compound media characteristics:⁶¹ that is, their overall structure, narrative (plots and stories story world), rhythms, melodies, pattern, style and perspective, representations of situations, spaces, places, persons, animals, objects, and motifs, just to name a few). Elleström (2014:40) defines compound media characteristics as features of media products that are apprehended and formed when a structuring and interpreting mind makes sense of the mediated sensory configurations. Although triggered by material input, compound media characteristics are ultimately cognitive inputs (Elleström, 2014:40). Although Elleström restricts the use of the term “compound media characteristics” for the description of the relations that involve transfers across modal borders, this study asserts that the concept is relevant to any other medial interrelations, and that compound media characteristics are helpful for the analysis of the aesthetic and communicative characteristics that are combined, integrated, transferred or inferred among media. In other words, understanding these compound media characteristics is key to understanding the relations between media. Elleström's model provides a basis for understanding the aesthetic and communicative characteristics involved in media transfers/combinations/references, but it does not necessarily clarify how to analyse them⁶².

Lastly, Elleström's reluctance to define theatre as intermedial can also be considered a setback for the application of his framework to a methodological approach to the analysis of intermediality in theatre. Elleström suggests that it is more appropriate to use the term “multimodal” rather than intermedial in reference to theatre:

⁶¹ Elleström explores the concept “compound media characteristics” in his book *Media Transformation: The Transfer of Media Characteristics among Media* (2014). He discusses the concept in detail on pages 39–49, 51–56, 66–71, 75 and 82–83.

⁶² In fact, Elleström's (2010c:44) “The modalities of media: A model for understanding intermedial relations”, refrains from clarifying what “aesthetic and communicative characteristics” are, even though he claims that they are vital to the formation of any medium.

(...) [T]heatre and computer games, two examples of strongly multimodal media, are conventionally understood and rather well defined as qualified media, so in that sense they are coherent media rather than examples of pronounced intermedial crossings of conventional borders, although they may be said to fuse a multitude of qualified media that also exist in their own right: music, for instance (Elleström, 2010c:38).

Elleström, in this quote, appears to be apprehensive about the applicability of intermediality (as a concept) to theatre, because, according to him, there are no pronounced intermedial crossings in theatre, as they would appear in other media. However, Elleström (2014:23) acknowledges that theatre is a qualified medium that is not only very multimodal, but also, in a way, very much intermedial, since it combines and integrates a range of both basic and qualified media in the same framework. That is to say, even though theatre combines and integrates both basic and qualified media by definition, some of those combinations and integrations (with other qualified media) could be considered intermedial.

3.2.2.3. Summary

The strength of Elleström's framework lies in the scope and depth it proposes for the analysis of intermediality. While acknowledging the complexities involved in discussing the multi-dimensional aspects of media, Elleström provides a way of separating these properties theoretically. Elleström's framework therefore, enhances Chapple and Kattenbelt's framework. Rather than focusing on systematic or hierarchical categories and divisions of the arts and media, Elleström's framework provides the researcher with tools that can be used to highlight both crucial divergences and fundamental parallels between all sorts and variants of media forms, thereby providing a firm ground for understanding, describing and interpreting intermedial relations. Drawing from Elleström's framework, the researcher is able to analyse theatrical case studies with less emphasis on the hierarchical trappings inherent in Chapple and Kattenbelt's framework.

3.3. Phenomenological frameworks

This section of the chapter focuses on the phenomenological approaches towards understanding intermedial relations in theatre. The inclusion of these approaches arises from the shortcomings of the semiotic approach outlined in the previous sections of the chapter. Even though Chapple, Kattenbelt and Elleström acknowledge perception as a major part of understanding intermediality,

their frameworks do not provide adequate tools for analysing perception. Performance analysis that is rooted in phenomenology “proceed from the eventness of a performance” (Fischer-Lichte, 2008a:71) and underscore the performative processes in a reciprocal relationship between the performer/performance and spectators. This section, therefore, focuses on media properties that are ascribed to the media by the perceiver and provides tools for analysing perception.

3.3.1. Röttger and Boenisch

Röttger is an example of a theatre scholar who has attempted to formulate a methodological approach for the analysis of intermediality in theatre. Her appropriately titled article, “The mystery of the in-between: A methodological approach to ‘intermedial performance analysis’”⁶³ (Röttger, 2013), proposes a practical approach for the analysis of intermediality in theatre. Her proposed approach draws from media theory, performance theory and the phenomenological theories of perception from W.J.T Mitchell, Sybille Krämer and Marshal McLuhan. Röttger’s work departs from previous attempts by scholars like Patrice Pavis (2003), who sought to initiate an intermedial approach to theatre.

Röttger’s approach to intermedial performance analysis is observer-centred: it focuses on the perception of the audience. In this, it shares its basic assumptions with Boenisch’s approach to intermediality. Boenisch (2006:109), like Röttger, foregrounds the crucial role of the observer in the intermedial process. He argues that intermediality should not be reduced to the use of various media technologies in live performance (Boenisch, 2006:103). Rather, intermediality is “an effect performed in-between mediality, supplying multiple perspectives and foregrounding the making of meaning by the receivers of the performance as opposed to obediently transmitting meaning” (Boenisch, 2006:103). Boenisch draws on Crary’s understanding of the observer as one who sees within a prescribed set of possibilities – one who is embedded in a system of conventions and limitations – to demonstrate the importance of the role of the observer. “It is essentially the active role of the observer that constitutes true interactivity” (Boenisch, 2006:109). This two-way process of observing is implicit in Bolter and Grusin’s definition of remediation, Boenisch (2006:109) claims, which they (Bolter and Grusin) argue takes place “in the name of the real”.

⁶³ Röttger’s (2013) article can be read as a direct phenomenological response to Chapple and Kattenbelt’s conceptual framework because of its close reference to it.

The approach adopted by these two scholars challenges the notion that one can understand the medium and intermediality fully by deciphering a medium's sign systems alone. The observer-centred approach underscores the active role of the observer in how the medium and intermediality are conceived, perceived, conceptualised and interpreted.

Röttger's (2013) methodological starting point is that the medium is a figure of mediation that cannot be measured adequately in pure semiotic or technical terms. She argues that media are not a sign *a priori* in the secondary sense or a technological *a priori* in the primary sense, that media therefore should be approached from the cultural-anthropological perspective (Röttger, 2013). Röttger (2013) advocates for a phenomenological approach because "media difference and identity are phenomenological issues concerning the transaction between media, the mediated and the observer". Her main argument is that performance is an intermedial process that *phenomelises*: "it makes audible and visible phenomena appear and become accessible to experience. It therefore enables participation, the re-constitution of the theatrical event by the audience" (Röttger, 2013).

Similarly, Boenisch understands mediation as "an act" that cannot be comprehended in semiotic terms alone. In this "act", both the medium and the spectator create meaningful spatial realities and invoke sensorial, phenomenological experience, which add to the semiotic reality, yet at the same time have the potential to irritate and disrupt it (Boenisch, 2006:110). According to Boenisch (2006:114), theatre is a medium that hides its trace in the perception of the observer.

3.3.1.1. Locating intermediality: the in-between

The in-between is Röttger's central preoccupation in her quest for a methodological approach to intermedial performance analysis. Röttger (2013) argues that the question of the in-between is central in the context of methodological concerns in intermediality, because intermediality itself appears to inhabit and operate in a space in-between. Evidently, the centrality of the in-between is quite conspicuous in both theoretical discourses and practical explorations in intermediality, and yet, according to Röttger (2013), its practical consequences for analysis remain mysterious. Her methodological approach therefore aims at reaching a clear definition of the in-between.

In her attempt to clarify the mystery around the "in-between", Röttger (2013) argues that intermediality operates in-between the media in the interplay of the medial processes of

transfiguration and transmission. It also operates between performer and audience through the embodiment and interplay of mediality, performativity and theatricality, thus constituting the *aesthetic* (perceptive) acts of the beholder and it also operates between realities by opening up perspectives on the constitutive acts of medial world making (Röttger, 2013). All these operations, she claims, take place between the visible and the invisible. And it is the impact of the gaze, the decision of the beholder, that decides what counts as (invisible) medium and what counts as its (visible) image, and thus shifts between figure and ground (Röttger, 2013).

Similarly, Boenisch seeks to understand the in-between in his approach to understanding intermediality. Boenisch (2006:108) adopts Bolter and Grusin's *mediality as remediation* perspective. "All media will always be in-between the various layers and never arrive". Understood this way, Boenisch (2006:108) argues, intermediality is not an artificial or remote phenomenon, rather, it is a default effect of mediation.

3.3.1.2. Interplay of mediality, performativity and theatricality

Röttger (2013) argues that the interplay of mediality, performativity and theatricality is always happening in performance, and that understanding this interplay is crucial to understanding intermediality in performance. Röttger (2013) therefore defines a theatre performance as an *intermedial event* marked by the interplay of mediality, theatricality and performativity. Mediality is the specific quality of the medium in regard to structures, experiences and perception. The key word for mediality is transference, because mediality reveals itself in the process of transference into another medium, in which the aesthetic neutrality (imperceptibility) of a medium is violated when a medium appears in a visible and audible figure (Röttger, 2013). Theatricality, according to Röttger, is a mode of perception. It creates the effect of spectatorship and works on the unstable border that shifts between fact and fiction, reality and illusion. Performativity, on the other hand, defines the capacity of media to constitute possible worlds by embodying audible and visible phenomena. Performativity constitutes meaningful configurations, such as text, image and music, and takes place before the eyes of the beholders and is essential for an understanding of theatre as an open, dynamic configuration of intermedial transmissions. Röttger (2013) argues that there is a perpetual process of media transformation – from one medium into the other – that is enabled by embodiment in the performance event.

In theorising on this interplay, Röttger emphasises the process-driven movement of transmission that takes place in any performance, including that which labels itself as an intermedial performance. While there is clear evidence of a process-driven movement from one medium to another in some performances (such as post-dramatic theatre), in others this evidence is absorbed by the beholder's grasp of the coherence of the fictional narrative that goes along with it (Röttger, 2013).

According to Röttger, at the heart of intermedial communication is the relationship between the produced and the perceived during a theatrical event. The bodies of the perceivers/spectators co-constitute the event by transposing it (Röttger, 2013). Röttger borrows from Mitchell and describes the perpetual process of transformation that takes place during the theatrical event as the "vortex effect". The vortex effect captures the spiral movement that presents the intermedial transfiguration process at the time of the theatrical event. During this process, the perspectives of the beholders play a decisive role in the mode of theatricality (theatricality is always functional at the borderline of the view or the perspective of the beholder to decide on truth or non-truth, reality and non-reality, fiction or non-fiction) (Röttger, 2013). "It is the beholder's perspective that shifts between medium and mediated and decides to identify pictures, words, music as referring to the discourses, histories and cultures the event is embedded in" (Röttger, 2013).

Likewise, for Boenisch (2006:113), intermediality is an effect created in the perception of the observers that is triggered by performance, and not simply by the media, machines, projections or computers used in performance. Boenisch (2006:113) argues that the trace of theatrical mediation is produced in the observer's perception alone, when for example, the actor on stage is no longer the actor, but the actor exposed on stage. In this example, theatre leaves "the thing itself intact, yet it is theatrically reproduced into something beyond their mere original presence" (Boenisch, 2006:114).

3.3.1.3. Application of Röttger's and Boenisch's approach to "intermedial performance analysis"

Röttger and Boenisch's approach is extremely valuable for the analysis of intermediality, because it foregrounds the relationship between the produced and the perceived during the theatrical event. Röttger's and Boenisch's focus on the experiencing "beholder" – the body of the perceiver – as a co-constituter of the performance event adds a new dimension to the discussion, especially in the context of a methodological design for the analysis of intermediality. Röttger and Boenisch provide means for understanding and describing the performance-spectator relationship, an element that was unclear in the previously discussed approaches. In this scheme, intermediality is located in the perceptive acts of the perceiver in the intermedial transfiguration process that takes place during the time of the performance event.

When applied to this study, the phenomenological approach presented by Röttger and Boenisch underscores the spectating researcher's own perceptive acts during the theatre event. This approach, therefore, foregrounds the spectating researcher's "experiencing" of the theatrical events, as it accounts for their reading of signs and meaning ascription that is implied in the previous approaches.

3.4. Conclusion: Model for analysing intermediality in theatre

While scholarship in the field of intermediality in theatre is growing, there currently are limited enquiries on how intermediality in theatre can be analysed. A number of scholars, such as Röttger (2013) and Pavis (2003), have attempted to formulate methodological designs for the analysis of intermediality in theatre, even though there are many works that analyse intermediality without specifying any methodological design followed.

This chapter drew on existing models towards the analysis of intermediality in theatre, but also from theoretical and conceptual frameworks from other theatre and media scholars, in an attempt to formulate a comprehensive methodological design with which to analyse theatrical intermediality. Some methodological approaches inferred from Chapple and Kattenbelt's and Elleström's conceptual frameworks based on semiotics and Röttger and Boenisch's phenomenological frameworks have been employed for the analysis of the cases in this study. This study, however, extends the applicability of the synthesised methodological model beyond its

confines, arguing that the design has the capacity to be used for the analysis of other cases of theatrical intermediality, because it combines two approaches (semiotics and phenomenology) that are proficient for the analysis of how spectators process the theatre experience.

The purpose of formulating this model was to synthesise the approaches in such a way that the shortcomings of one design are complemented by the other. Each of the approaches analysed in this chapter are useful for analysing intermediality in theatre. However, together they create a powerful analytical tool. The proposed analytical model thus is presented in three strands that function well together. It should be noted that the positioning of the strands is not suggestive of a linear and progressive structure. For example, the first and the third strand are likely to occur at the same time.

3.4.1. First strand: Considering the meaning-making potential of the materiality of the theatrical signs

Because of its practicality for the spectating researcher, the Chapple and Kattenbelt-inspired analytical tool is useful in the analysis of the meaning-making potential of the materiality of the theatrical signs. The focus on what is perceived during a performance enables the spectating researcher to recognise, categorise, and interpret the material configurations in a theatrical performance through the use of their sensorial faculties.

Categories such as word, image and sound, body, time and space are easily distinguishable using their semiotic coding as outlined in Figures 3.1 and 3.2. More importantly, the qualities of being live or *mediatized*, which are the distinguishing factors in Chapple and Kattenbelt's two-levelled framework, provide an easy way of categorising phenomena that are experienced in a performance. For example, categorising phenomena as live or *mediatized* was used to categorise performances in this study, especially for those that incorporated digital and electronic media in this study – *Barbe bleue: a story of madness* and *Ubu and the truth commission*. Recognising the limitations⁶⁴ of the strand, the study infers from other analytical strands to create a more comprehensive methodology for the analysis of intermediality in theatre.

⁶⁴ The main limitation is that this strand only considers the materiality of theatrical signs “for its potential to serve as a sign” (Fischer-Lichte, 2008a:70). The other strands on the other hand, consider the theatrical sign as more: That is, more than its materiality – second strand, and more than a theatrical sign – third strand.

3.4.2. Second strand: Considering the conceptual, conventional, material and perceptual dimensions of the theatrical sign.

It should be noted that the second strand does not nullify the first strand of analysis, but builds on it by shifting the focus to other aspects of media and mediality. The second strand of the analytical design therefore reorients the discussion away from the live/*mediatized* comparative type of analysis. Because of its assumption that media are not only different, but also similar, the approach shifts the focus towards understanding the actual attributes that allow the perceiver to distinguish between media and yet talk about the integration of media at the same time. The focus of the discussion becomes how/why do media differ and what do they have in common? What media borders are “trespassed”⁶⁵ and how? Consequently, using this strand of the analytical design, the researcher⁶⁶ was able to clarify the basis of the comparison of media and was also equipped with tools and lingua for investigating how the aspects were related to each other. For example, going beyond the live vs. *mediatized* classification of the performances *Barbe bleue: A story of madness* and *Ubu and the truth commission*, the researcher was able to determine what exactly made the media in the configurations integrate. With this dual emphasis, the analysis shifted from comparing the media to understanding how and why the media interact in a particular way in the performance.

Furthermore, Elleström’s framework is important because it makes a further distinction between technical/ “pre-semiotic” aspects of media, what others might call media properties that “emanate” from the medium itself (covering the process of material realisation of media), and “semiotic” aspects of media, properties that are ascribed to the media by the perceiver and properties that are ascribed by convention and society. This level of attention to detail is suitable for a comprehensive understanding of media constitution and interrelations in this methodological design.

However, a notable limitation of this strand is that even though it efficiently distinguishes semiotic and pre-semiotic aspects of media, it does not fully account for the aspects of the relationship

⁶⁵ Elleström’s (2010c:27) terminology.

⁶⁶ The media borders discussed in this strand are discernible by the spectator (see Elleström and Rajewsky’s conceptualisation of media borders in sections 1.1.2, 2.4. and 3.2.2). In this particular case, the spectating researcher is a “beholder”: One whose seeing is subjective and dependent their exposure to particular theatrical conventions and modes.

between the performance and the perceiver that are not semiotic. It is for this reason that the third strand of the analytical design is called for.

3.4.3. Third strand: Centering the spectator's experience

The third strand centralises the relationship between the medium and its perceiver. The phenomenological approach to intermediality accounts for how the experience of the spectating researcher contributes to the ascription of meaning in the performance event. In this approach, the spectating researcher analyses the performance as consciously experienced. As a phenomenological object, the theatrical performances are analysed insofar as they are experienced.

3.4.1. Complementarity of the methodological design

The methodological design advanced in this chapter is based on the supposition that semiotic and the phenomenological dimensions of performance analysis are intricately linked. "... [T]hey offer two different perspectives on the same object, the performance, which, ultimately cannot be separated from each other, and if so, only temporarily for heuristic reasons" (Fischer-Lichte, 2008a:74).

The first two strands that make up the semiotic analysis are based on the assumption that a theatre event is a text that is made up of signs that have to be deciphered (Fischer-Lichte, 2008a:70). The performance analysis that follows from it is therefore concerned with what the performance text *means*. The third strand is based on the assumption that a theatre event is a performative text that is *experienced* (Fischer-Lichte, 2008a:70). The performance analysis that arises from this approach is concerned with how the performance is experienced and perceived by the spectator.

Grounded in these two dimensions, the analytical design accommodates both the *event-oriented* analysis, which focuses on the performance event alone, and the *process-oriented analysis*, which focuses on the creation of the *mise en scène*. Firstly, the analysis of the *mise en scène*⁶⁷ includes "the decisive preconditions for the progression of the performance, preconditions that are fixed by the process of *mise en scène*" (Fischer-Lichte, 2008a:73). Both the meaning-making (semiotic)

⁶⁷ Which has been ascertained through a combination of strategies such as interviews with the creative team (for *Barbe bleue*, *Mwana wanga*, *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw*), involvement in the theatre making process (in the case of *Mwana wanga*) and through a review of the literature written by the creative team (in the case of *Ubu and the truth commission*).

strategies employed by the creative team and their experiential (phenomenological) means of arriving at meaning are relevant to the analysis.

Secondly, the analytical frame also accommodates the analysis of the performance event. On one hand, the framework accounts for experience of the spectating researcher in world-making, as the imaginary world of the fictional (that comes about in the process of generating meaning from theatrical signs) seems to overlap with the reality of the stage and its objects. Cormac Power (2008:15-46) calls this “the fictional mode of presence”. He argues that theatre’s very basis in the world “allows [the spectator] to perceive the ordinary – the wooden boards on stage- in a different light: The existent and the non-existent are apprehended in one perceptual moment” (Power 2008:9).

On the other hand, the performance event calls to mind the physical fact of the spectator *being* “simultaneous with a particular space-time environment” (Power 2008:3). In this dimension, the relationship between the performer/performance and the spectat[ing researcher] is paramount. The spectator “experience themselves [...] as subjects that are able to co-determine the actions and behaviour of others, and whose own actions and behaviour, in the same way, are determined by others” (Fischer-Lichte, 2008a:73). Power (2008:47-86) calls this “the literal mode of presence”. He argues that this mode of presence includes contingency: theatre as both an occurring exchange subject to the conditions of time and place in which the performance takes place and theatre as a fundamentally contingent on the presence of its audience (Power 2008:87).

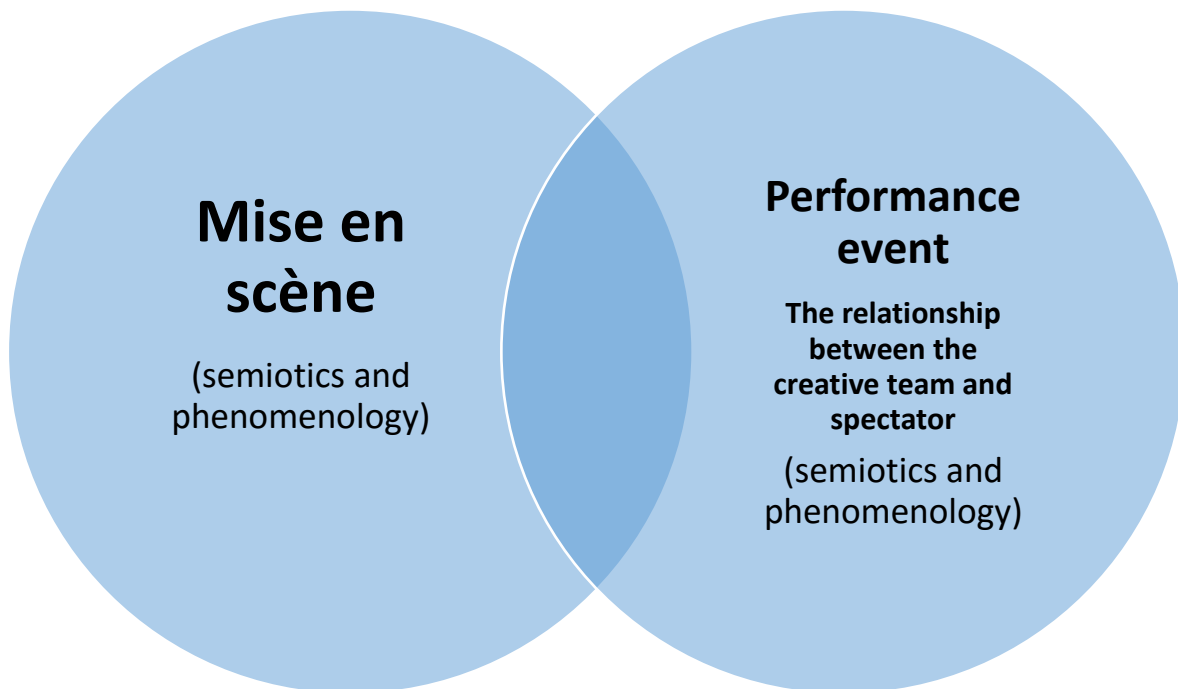


Figure 3.10 Complementarity of research design

As depicted in figure 3.10 the model is applicable to both the event-oriented analysis of the performance event and the process-oriented analysis for the *mise en scène*. The relationship between the spectator and the creative team in the performance event has been highlighted to emphasise that this is an interdependent relationship in which both parties play a part. There are semiotic and phenomenological dimensions to the analysis of the performance event and the *mise en scène* as shown in the diagram.

It is important to note that scholars have argued that interplay between the semiotic and the performative dimensions of a performance event has consequences for the processes of perception and meaning generation, which the spectator performs. “To perceive the body, the things, and the space in their specific presence is to perceive them as meaningful” (Fischer-Lichte, 2008a:74). Therefore, perceiving and the generation of meaning, in this case, are performed in and by the very

same act. In other words, the act of perceiving something as something is performed at the same time as the process of producing its meaning as this particular phenomenal being.

It is also important to note that the specific conditions of both the *mise en scène* and the performance event can influence the nature of interaction between the performative and a semiotic dimension of performance. Röttger (2013), for example notes that the specific aesthetics of a performance – for example, if the performance is an illusionist staging of a dramatic text, a postdramatical performance that deconstructs unified meanings, or a music theatre performance – determines how the interplay between mediality, performativity and theatricality is experienced in the performance event. Arguing along similar lines, Fichte-Lichte notes that there may be a tendency to privilege either the semiotic or the phenomenological aspects, in the *mise en scène* of a performance (by the creative team) as well as in the perception of individual spectators, (presumably based on the spectator's own aesthetic preferences, academic or contextual background).

Similarly, specific conditions of both the *mise en scène* and the performance event in all four cases discussed in this study influence the nature of the performance analysis in the case chapters. There are similar characteristics shared by the cases, but there are also some differences among them. One common feature about all the productions analysed is that they all take place in spaces that are designated as performance spaces, at events/sites marked as festivals. Furthermore, these “theatre spaces” all consist of spaces that are designated for the audience and the performance (designations that are at times experimented with in *Mwana wanga*). These designations not only affect both the creation of the *mise en scène* and the presentation of performance by creative team but also how the researching spectator generates meaning out of their conscious experiences of the performance events.

Even though some of the productions were inspired by pre-existing literary or performance text (in *Barbe bleue*, *Mwana wanga* and *Ubu*), the creation of the *mise-en-scène* in all cases involved elaborate workshop processes whereby the pre-existing “text” was adapted and experimented with to varying degrees and the meaning-making processes in the rehearsals was heavily reliant on a physicalized way of arriving at meaning from the interaction between the creative team and – in some instances – digital media. This accounts for the intermedial strategies and the meaning

making processes that were adopted by the creative team during the creation of the *mise en scène*. Furthermore, while three of the four productions were relatively at the beginning of their life span, *Ubu* has a 20-year life span between its initial production at a major festival and the completion of the study. This also explains the differences in how the performance is experienced by the spectating researcher and is analysed in this thesis.

The main similarity in all four cases is the role played by the spectating researcher in the research process. The study has coined the term “spectating researcher” to highlight the multiplicity of roles that are assumed by the theatre researcher in the analysis of performance. Firstly, the theatre researcher is human instrument, in a qualitative research (Merriam, 2002:3), who performs several functions such as data collection and analysis, some of which are outlined in section 1.6.2 of the introduction chapter. Secondly, the role of the theatre researcher in a performance event is defined in terms of spectatorship in this study. In this role, similar to other spectators, the “spectating researcher” experiences the performance event. However, the spectating researcher also performs a third function: that of the (academic) reviewer of the performance event. Similar to other theatre reviewers, they offer a vicarious sense to their readers of what it was like to be there as a member of an audience (Banning, 1997:56). The difference between the reader-ship is the most prominent distinction between the academic reviewer and the theatre reviewer. While the theatre reviewer writes to the general audience of theatre lovers, and may or may not be the voice of aesthetic authority and a judge of popular success of a production, the academic reviewer writes to a limited academic audience consisting of examiners, students and scholars. Nevertheless, just as the theatre reviewer, the academic reviewer is also an “expert” spectator, who can also disclaim such representativeness and claim theirs is an exclusively “personal” point of view (Banning, 1997:56) as is the case in this study. In a fourth function, the spectating researcher also performed the role of co-creator of the *mise en scène* in one of the cases, *Mwana wanga*. Section 6.2 of the sixth chapter discusses how the spectating researcher navigated through that combination of roles in that particular case.

In conclusion, this chapter has attempted to formulate a comprehensive analytical design for the analysis of intermediality in theatre. The study, having identified methodology as a main gap in the field of intermediality in theatre, took upon the task of reviewing existing approaches and

inferring new ones from key theoretical frameworks in the field. The resulting model is a proposed methodological design for the analysis of intermediality in theatre. This methodological design played an important role in analysing the data collected from the four cases discussed in this study. However, the study contends that this proposed analytical design is proficient in analysing any cases of theatrical intermediality.

Chapter Four

Media combination and integration in William Kentridge, Jane Taylor and Handspring Puppet Company's *Ubu and the truth commission*

4.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses intermediality in *Ubu and the truth commission*. While the focus of the chapter is on the 2014 production, the chapter also examines the various projects associated with the play, including the initial 1997 production. *Ubu and the truth commission (Ubu)* – a collaborative project between the Handspring Puppet Company, the animator and theatre director, William Kentridge and the playwright, Jane Taylor – is an intermedial event that combines and integrates puppetry with live actors, music, animation and documentary film footage. *Ubu* is considered as intermedial not only because it integrates multiple media on stage, but also because of the unique ways in which it concurrently employs these media to present interrelated story worlds, drawing out the themes relevant to the creative team and the nation at large in the immediate post-apartheid era.

Ubu has attracted a lot of critical and scholarly attention since its 1997 premiere. The various literature on *Ubu* have analysed both the play text and the performance text from many perspectives such as the political, historical and as puppetry, theatre, or animation film⁶⁸. This proliferation of literature on *Ubu* presents the chapter with the problem of how it can present new information on *Ubu* amidst all the available literature. However, the study argues that this chapter is distinct in three ways.

Firstly, not only does this chapter rely on the large amount of literature that analysed the 1997 production, the analysis is also privy to a panoramic view of the life of the performance text from the initial production to the 2014-15 production. The main object of study in this chapter is the

⁶⁸ The performance text has been analysed by literary scholars such as Lesley Marx (1998), Lisa Susan Malherbe (2002), Loren Kruger (2011), Geoffrey V. Davis (1999, 2003) among many others, art critics such as Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (2010), Rosalind E. Krauss (2000) and Johan Oppermann (2012, 2014), with a focus on puppetry by scholars such as Marie Kruger (2014) and Yvette Coetzee (1998), with a focus on the representation of memory by Stephanie Marlin-Curiel (2001), and as post-colonial and post-apartheid literature and theatre by Helen Gilbert (2001) and Shane Graham (2003,2009).

2014 performance attended by the spectating researcher. This allows the study to adopt a comparative mode of analysis and to explore why particular features of the performance were maintained in the 2014-15 production. Such questions, especially those to do with media interrelations reveal information that was inaccessible for those that based their enquiries on the 1997 production alone.

Secondly, unlike previous studies, which have other specific focuses, this study narrows down its focus to the question of intermediality in *Ubu*. This is not to say that previous studies have not discussed the topic of media interrelations in the performance at all⁶⁹. Nevertheless, because of the studies' focus on other themes and motifs, the discussions of media interrelations are considered as asides or as a means to an end in most of the literature. This study's focus on media interrelations alone ensures that these interrelations are interrogated in ways that are more comprehensive.

Thirdly, the study uncovered that most literature on *Ubu* is set in specific disciplinary contexts whereby scholars "read" the production from particular viewpoints in their specific field of study: An example is a literary scholar reading *Ubu* from a (literary) gender perspective. Particularly, the study found that most of the current literature on *Ubu* is too comfortably positioned within disciplinary boundaries to cater for an interdisciplinary or intermedial analysis⁷⁰. This study in contrast, departs from the supposition that one cannot fully analyse *Ubu* without an interdisciplinary, inter-generic and intermedial approach because *Ubu* is by definition an interdisciplinary, inter-generic and intermedial phenomenon. Furthermore, the chapter argues that understanding *Ubu* genealogically, that is, with references to the multiple medial configurations

⁶⁹ Shane Graham (2003, 2009), Rory Doepel (1997) and Lesley Marx (1998) for example, discuss the functioning of media in *Ubu* at length. Graham (2003, 2009) adopts the term "displacement" from literary studies and discusses how it functions as a key strategy through the use of puppetry and film in the theatrical performance. Marx's (1998) close reference to Jarry's *Ubu Roi* in her reading of *Ubu and the truth commission* enables her to compare how media is employed in the two literary and performance texts, affording her a detailed discussion on media interrelations. Similarly, Rory Doepel's (1997) comparison of the play to Kentrige's *Ubu tells the truth*, a preceding project, affords him a base for the exploration of themes and motifs from the animation footage in *Ubu*, in detail.

⁷⁰ A review of the literature from the scholars cited in the last two footnotes clearly demonstrates that there are disciplinary biases with regards to how scholars (literary scholars, fine art scholars and theatre scholars, among others) "read" *Ubu*. Furthermore, less scholars acknowledge the links between the various *Ubu* projects by Kentrige and even though some scholars present a wider outlook that includes the discussion on all media in *Ubu*, their discussion leans towards a particular medium or theme, which is of interest to the scholar.

that preceded it, offers a much clearer analysis of the performance, an analysis that traces the development of the themes and motifs that are explored in the performance.

The central argument in this chapter is that there is a direct and unmistakable correlation between the choice of media: puppetry, projection and live performance and the themes explored by the creative team: such as private and public trauma and memory /self-anamnesis, arbitrary power and madness and truth (as less defined and open-ended). The chapter argues that on one hand, the creative team made thoughtful choices with regard to the media, to communicate their chosen themes and on the other hand, the creative team also actively pursued meaningful discoveries that resulted from the practical exploration with the media during the rehearsal workshop period. In essence, the chapter argues that the employment of intermedial strategies in the production by the creative team is an example of how South African artists negotiated with meaning at the turn of the century (and the end of the apartheid era) to subsequently look back at the period in reflection.

The chapter begins with a background to the performance and its creative team. In this section, the performance is contextualised as part of a trend involving collaborative work by experts in a variety of fields. A brief note on research design is provided and thereafter, the various media incorporated in *Ubu* are discussed in detail, together with a brief genealogical analysis of the performance's relations with other related media products. The chapter finishes off with some concluding remarks on *Ubu*.

4.1.1. Background

Ubu and the truth commission premiered in July 1997. In this premier, Dawid Minnaar played Pa Ubu while Busi Zokufa (who also manipulated witness puppets) played Ma Ubu. Other members of the Handspring Puppet Company manipulated the puppets that account for the rest of the characters on stage on stage: Adrian Kohler (also involved in puppet design and direction) Basil Jones, and Louis Seboko. Performances of the play were accompanied by an art exhibition of work relating to the Ubu theme by Deborah Bell, Robert Hodgins and William Kentridge, the latter's work being particularly crucial to the genesis of the theatre project (Davis 1999:65). The 2014-2015 production maintains the original cast and most of the production team, with the addition of Janni Younge (then working for Handspring Puppet Company) as an associate director to the production.

Ubu is therefore initially a result of a collaboration between Kentridge, Handspring Puppet Company and Taylor: a team comprising of individuals with a diverse set of skills ranging from puppetry, playwriting, directing, animation and acting among other skills. The collaboration, not the first in the case of Kentridge and Handspring Puppet Company⁷¹, suggests that experimental and collaborative work are important artistic values held by the creators of *Ubu*. Furthermore, the creative team demonstrate proficiency in shifting from one medium to another. Instead of working independently or developing work in each medium separately, the team experiments and shifts freely between them, making each medium influence the operations of the other.

Ubu, therefore, is a result of the very process of combining a number of conventionally distinct medial forms of articulation such as puppetry, live performance, music, animation and documentary film. The media forms of articulation in *Ubu* are each present in their own materiality: the two actors on stage, the animal and human puppets (and their puppeteers on stage) and the projected footage on the screen all contribute to the constitution of meaning and signification of the entire media product.

The creative team also demonstrate great interest in the intellectual process by which meaning is generated by the interaction of, and practical engagement with media in their artistic work. It is this interest in the generation of meaning that led some of the artistic choices made in the rehearsal workshops of the production. The team shared their ideas behind their artistic decisions in the preface to the published play-script *Ubu and the truth commission* (1998) and its second edition, *Restaging Ubu and the truth commission: 20 years on* (2016).

4.1.2. Research design and methodology

Ubu and the truth commission was purposively sampled before the performance event occurred in July 2014. Advertised as a performance that combines puppetry, performance by live actors, music, animation and documentary footage, *Ubu* is also described as a “stunningly theatrical multimedia piece” in the programme (National Arts Festival programme, 2014:39). The incorporation of electronic technology in theatre practice was the main reason for the sampling.

⁷¹ William Kentridge and the Handspring Puppet Company collaborated in the following preceding performances: *Woyzeck on the Highveld* (1992) and *Faustus in Africa!* (1995-6).

The research on *Ubu* made use of the various literature that has resulted out of the 1997 production. This desk research not only provided information about the performance events (which would have been otherwise inaccessible to the researcher) but also on the rehearsal process, including information on how most of the artistic choices were arrived at. As such the analysis in this chapter consists of discussions on the creative team's process of creation, the spectating researchers' experiencing of the performance, but also a critique of other scholar's discussions of the production/s. Tools such as notation during the performance, video recording (which served as a mnemonic tool in the period after the performance)⁷² were used. The researcher was not able to conduct interviews with the creative team because of logistical problems. However, information from published material by the creative team assisted in supplementing the gap left by the lack of an interview⁷³.

4.2. Introducing *Ubu and the truth commission*

Ubu is a multi-layered, richly textured intermedial theatrical event, which cannot easily be condensed into a traditional plot structure. For the purposes of discussion, the section shall attempt to provide a brief synopsis of the performance from the story pertaining to the two human characters on stage. Pa Ubu is an Afrikaner whose wife, Ma Ubu suspects of infidelity because of his frequent night-time commitments. The reality however is that Pa Ubu is an agent of the state, recruited by the apartheid government as part of a death squad. Pa Ubu, aware of the investigations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), becomes fearful and paranoid. In an effort to conceal the true nature of his activities, Ubu sets about concealing compromising documents and implicating his closest allies. Searching for the evidence of his infidelity, Ma Ubu finds documents that incriminate Pa Ubu in the activities of the death squad. Ma Ubu rejoices in the revelation that Pa Ubu has not been unfaithful to her after all, but has, on the contrary, been protecting her from the swart gevaar- "black danger". This realisation prompts her to give evidence of his good character and to attempt to sell the documents to the highest bidder from the media. Pa Ubu,

⁷² See Balme 2008 for a detailed discussion on these tools.

⁷³ These publications include "The writer's note", "the directors note" and "the puppeteer's note" from the published play script, *Ubu and the truth commission* (1998) and their additions to the notes in *Restaging Ubu and the truth commission: 20 years on* (2016), Taylor's (2008) reflection on puppetry in "The as if reality of puppet theatre", Kentridge's (1997) "Ubu and the Truth Commission: Director's note" in *Ubu--±101: William Kentridge, Robert Hodgins, Deborah Bell* (1997) and Adrienne Sichel (1997) account of rehearsal observation in "The Making of 'Ubu' offers fragments of creative madness" in the same publication.

meanwhile, betrays his accomplices and having rehearsed a remorseful statement, delivers it before the TRC. He is last seen sailing off with Ma into the setting sun. Layers of complexity are added on to this plot structure with the juxtapositioning of two other story worlds presented by the other media in the performance: the dark world of systemic violence depicted on screen and the disheartening narratives of TRC witness accounts by the witness puppets.

Ubu was part of the main programme at the National Arts Festival in 2014, in Grahamstown. The performance was held in the Rhodes Theatre, a theatre building with a stage and an auditorium, with a spatial arrangement that defined the relationship between actors/performers and spectators.

The play begins with a puppet in the centre stage, making soup. The stage is nearly empty except for the props used by the puppet. The vulture, a mechanical puppet is the only constant object on stage. The set and props are wheeled and out when a scene starts and ends. The light design mostly consists of spotlights on the parts of the stage with the action. However, the spectating researcher catches glimpses of the movement to and from the stage: movement of cast as puppeteers and stage crew that takes place in the dark. This involves the wheeling in the set and the entrance of the puppeteers or the actors (in the case of Ma and Pa Ubu). The spectating researcher, therefore, witnessed the swift movement of bodies and things that are used to create the fictional worlds of the performance, throughout the performance event. For example, when the sofa is wheeled with Ma Ubu sitting on it, the set becomes the Ubus' home. However, when the Ubus dine at the same table, which functions as a bench in a puppet's Spaza shop, it becomes a liminal space. The same is true when Ubu's home also becomes the place where witness puppets present their testimony. The footage on the screen on the contrary, appears somewhat separate from both the physicality of the stage and the story-worlds depicted on it, except in instances where the story-worlds collide. Some of these instances are discussed in section 4.3.4.

There is a duality of consciousness in perceiving the documentary footage depicted on the screen: as a pre-existing fact-based media product but also perceiving it as part of the fictional world in Ubu. Similarly, there is also duality of consciousness in perceiving the testimony from the puppets both as pre-existing fact-based phenomena from the TRC hearings but also as part of the fictional story world. This dynamism in perception extends to other aspects of performance.

On one hand, the researching spectator experiences the phenomenal being of the two actors, the puppets, the puppeteers as they move in and out of stage. The puppets for example, are experienced as inanimate objects that come to life in full view of front of the audience, through the manipulation of the visible puppeteers. When the puppeteer drops the puppet, either intentionally or accidentally, the spectating researcher experienced the puppet as a thing, a physical object.

On other hand, when the puppet is animated with gestures and voice, the researching spectator experiences the puppet as a theatrical sign – it becomes a medium through which the testimony delivered (through the effort of the puppeteers and the interpreter). In another example, the spectating researcher witnesses the actor playing Ma Ubu transition from being puppeteer to human character as Ma Ubu, as an interpreter, and as (the voice of the) TRC witness. The first transformation (of Ma Ubu) from puppeteer to character occurs right at the beginning of the performance, as soon as the soup-making puppet disappears with the other puppeteer and Ma Ubu begins a dialogue with Pa Ubu, when he enters the stage. This transformation introduces the spectating researcher to the many more transformations from actor to puppeteer (Ma Ubu) and from puppeteer to translator (by the rest of the cast apart from Pa Ubu) and vice versa, that take place throughout the performance. As long as Busi Zokufa (the actor playing Ma Ubu) communicated with pa Ubu, in person or through the ‘TV’, she was Ma Ubu, although time and again, her very physicality drew the attention of the spectator to her corporeal body. When she came on stage with a puppet, which she manipulates with her hands and animates through her voice it was rather a complex mixture of bodily being-in-the-world that was perceived (She is perceived as a puppeteer manipulating an inanimate object) but at the same time her voice was perceived in relation to the witnesses’ voice.

The spectating researcher’s perception, therefore, oscillated between the various dimensions of perception throughout the performance so much so that the spectating researcher become aware that they were an active co-producer of meaning in the performance, similar to all other audience members who may or may not be perceiving the same phenomena both in the physical world but also in the fictional story worlds. An acquaintance of the spectating researcher, for example, reacted strongly to the ending of the performance. They said that the TRC testimony was too hard to hear, knowing that it was real, even after so any years. The researching spectator was not

affected in a similar way and this may be explained by their emotional distance to the historical fact-based aspects of the performance. The spectating researcher is Malawian while the acquaintance is South African.

4.3. Presentation and analysis

For the purposes of this discussion, this section discusses the (creation of) *mise en scène* by the creative team but also the experience of the spectating researcher: in terms of the narratives carried by each medium. The discussion is therefore focused on how each medium functioned in the performance and how the narratives presented through the media are integrated into one another.

4.3.1. *Ubu* as “found text”: Intertextuality

The play emerged out of the creative team’s desire to continue the collaboration (between the Handspring Puppet Company and Kentridge). In his account of the genesis of *Ubu*, Kentridge (1998:x) explains how, after *Woyzeck on the Highveld* (1993) and *Faustus in Africa!* (1996) with the Handspring Puppet Company, they decided to initiate another project, which was to be more manageable and local in theme. They soon realised that their initial choice of *Waiting for Godot* would not be realised because of possible copyright restrictions. The next idea of working with oral testimonies (as a non-conventional text), when combined with Kentridge’s current project (then) based on Jarry’s *Ubu*, (for an exhibition marking the centenary of the first production of *Ubu Roi* on stage in Paris), sounded more plausible especially after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) deliberations and testimonies started to air. The team approached the writer and academic, Taylor. At that point in time, Taylor was interested in investigating the role that artists could play in facilitating debates around the TRC (Taylor 1998:iii). Workshops with performers, puppets and animators followed, providing Taylor with material that helped to shape the eventual text (Gilbert 2001:26). The combination of these ideas birthed the *Ubu* project.

What happens when the substance of the Truth Commission, the telling of stories by victims and perpetrators, is used as the “Found Text” of a play written for a paying, literate, sophisticated audience? What happens, moreover, when these Found Texts are juxtaposed with Jarry’s *Ubu* in *Ubu Roi*? (Marx, 1998:214).

There are therefore, two “texts” that were essential to the creation of *Ubu* thereby creating a “found text”⁷⁴. As its title suggests: Jarry’s *Ubu Roi* and the proceedings of the TRC⁷⁵. The artistic choices made by Taylor as playwright and Kentridge as theatre director were modelled out of the choice of these two texts.

The creative team drew inspiration from Alfred Jarry and his Ubu projects. In 1888, the French dramatist Alfred Jarry began to write the play *Ubu Roi* as a satirical and grotesque expression of the way in which arbitrary power engenders madness. The play spans Ubu’s rise to power, his short-lived reign of terror and his subsequent overthrow and escape. *Ubu Roi* has inspired countless artists and writers, such that it is believed that Jarry’s approach to Ubu contributed the birth of a new genre: the theatre of the absurd (Christov-Bakargiev, 2010:118). From a South African perspective, Ubu is a particularly powerful metaphor for the insane policy of apartheid, presented by the state as a rational system (Christov-Bakargiev, 2010:118).

Inspiration from Jarry’s *Ubu Roi* is twofold. Firstly, the grotesque, ambitious and remorseless characters, Pa and Ma Ubu are modelled after Jarry’s characters, their dialogue carrying echoes of his “mannered and bombastic language”, which is itself a parody of the “grand” tradition of French classical tragedy (Gilbert 2001:26). Secondly, the narrative of Taylor’s text also borrows from Jarry’s burlesque style and its overall intermedial character⁷⁶. Ubu, in *Ubu* therefore becomes a perpetrator of apartheid violence, while his wife moves through a series of diverse personae. What distinguishes Taylor’s characterisation of Ubu from Jarry’s original play is the politicizing of Ubu’s world in *Ubu*, a transformation of Jarry’s Ubu into a domain where actions have recognizable and catastrophic consequences. In this respect, Taylor notes that her purpose in

⁷⁴ “Found text” is used in this context to mean work created out of (borrowed or reframed) already-existing-text/s in order to impart new meaning.

⁷⁵ The TRC was a commission of enquiry set up as an independent body, mandated to facilitate a “truth recovery process” by holding public hearings to determine the extent of gross human-rights violations in the three decades leading up to South Africa’s first multiracial elections in 1994. The commission was set up by an Act of Parliament known as The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act of 1995. Its purpose was to “bring about unity and reconciliation by providing for the investigation and full disclosure of gross violations of human rights committed in the past” (Davis, 1999:60). As well as taking witness statements from victims and their families and friends, the Commission considered applications for amnesty by those admitting to politically motivated crimes. Its broader task was to lay foundations for the reconstruction of the South African society, to create a general context through which national reconciliation might be made possible (Gilbert, 2001:25).

⁷⁶ *Ubu Roi* too was a combination of actors on stage and string operated puppets. What makes it intermedial is Jarry’s interest in experimenting with the modes of perception by his attempts to blur the boundaries between string puppets and actors on stage.

juxtaposing Pa Ubu's criminal exploits with witness testimonials drawn from the TRC hearings was to take the Ubu characters out of Jarry's burlesque context where their actions ultimately have no measurable effects (Gilbert 2001:25). The challenge in Taylor's script was to bring Ubu into a context where "actions do have consequences" (ibid:iv).

4.3.2. Actors

During the workshops, it was decided "that Pa and Ma Ubu would be played by live actors with no puppet equivalents" (Davis, 1999:65). This represents a major stylistic departure from the creative team's previous practice and it serves to open out the structure of the play, thus altering the audience's experience of it (Davis, 1999:65). The spectating researcher's experience of the performance event not only consisted of perceiving the physical world of actors, puppets, projector screens and stage props, but also the various story worlds represented by the Ubus, the puppets and the animation and documentary footage.



Figure 4.1 Pa and Ma Ubu, *Ubu and the truth commission* (Source: Handspring Puppet Company website)

From *Ubu Roi*, the creative team adopts Jarry's characterisation of Ubu. Jarry's Ubu is conceived as a tyrant and in Jarry's logic: tyrants did not deserve serious representation. As Doepel (1997:1)

puts it, “the best way of countering arbitrary power is to expose the folly and absurdity at its heart”. In the opening speech during the premier of *Ubu Roi*, Jarry announced that Ubu would be played with a mask and that the actors on stage was to be puppet-like “so that they can mirror the mind and soul of the man-sized string operated puppets” (Jarry, 1997:4⁷⁷). Kentridge and Taylor adopted this essence of Ubu. However, it is Kentridge’s previous projects on Ubu – such as *Ubu tells the truth* (the print portfolio and the animation sequence) – which provide insight on how Kentridge as a director, using some transmedial processes, developed themes and motifs from Jarry’s *Ubu Roi* to his *Ubu*.

Ubu tells the truth refers to Kentridge’s portfolio of eight etchings that were part of *Ubu: ±* exhibition in 1996-7, which was conceived as a celebration of the centenary of the Paris performance of Alfred Jarry’s play, *Ubu Roi* (See Figure 4.2). The *Ubu: ±* exhibition preceded the production of *Ubu* and involved fine artists: Hodgins, Bell and Kentridge, who engaged the theme of Ubu from differing perspectives. Kentridge’s eight etchings depict the reimagining of Jarry’s Ubu. However, visual motifs in the prints recur in the theatrical production and this in turn inevitably colours one’s reading of the prints, and vice versa. The prints are broadly politically motivated insofar as they represent Ubu the archetypal figure of power abuse embodying the most negative aspects of man. This is in contrast with the subsequent production of *Ubu*, which specifically localizes Ubu and imbeds him within contemporary political landscape of the immediate post-apartheid era and of the TRC hearings.

In the eight etchings, Kentridge set up a dialogical tension between the historical and symbolic figure of Ubu by Jarry and as a representation of man. This binary system is maintained throughout the prints. In this binaric representation Ubu is represented both as caricature based on Jarry’s image but also as an image of man. Ubu the bombastic tyrant and buffoon is represented in Kentridge’s rendition of Jarry’s original woodcut, which is sketched in chalk. This figure returns the primary visual elements from Jarry’s Ubu: the gross belly, and the conical head. Ubu the inner man is a less certain, a less stable in characterization – a man capable of experiencing pain, vulnerability – a man who might experience guilt and who might have insights and an inner life totally at odds with the external manifestation (Doepel, 1997:10). In creating the inner man,

⁷⁷ This source is a reprinted translation of Alfred Jarry’s opening speech during the 1896 premier of *Ubu Roi*.

Kentridge stood naked in front of the mirror, invoking emotions and states of the being that are associated with the figure of Ubu. Kentridge then enacted these pictures in front of the camera, the most *Ubuesque* figures were selected as the basis for further development.

Of the eight, four images are directly referred to in *Ubu*. These are: “Ubu hurts his foot”, “Ubu takes a shower”, “Ubu dreams”, and “Ubu’s self-flagellation”⁷⁸. Ubu hurts his foot is the first of the portfolio prints in the same way as Ubu hurting his foot is the first event that takes place in *Ubu*. The action of hurting one’s foot may be symbolic of the inner Ubu who is vulnerable unlike the characterization of Jarry’s Ubu. The act of hurting one’s foot, also (in both the print and in the performance) signifies the change of fortunes that sets the action of the events rolling.

The print titled “Ubu takes a shower” is directly related to a scene in Act I scene 5 in *Ubu* whereby Ubu takes a shower in a shower stall that has been wheeled in on stage. A reading of double images is required in the prints. This is because Kentridge uses differing media to portray Jarry’s Ubu in the print: the grotesque bulk, vs. the more corporeal Kentridge’s Ubu figure (Doepel, 1997:13). There are also two dimensions of reality depicted in *Ubu tells the truth*. These interactive elements between the two representations of Ubu are explicitly realized with the use of the two media. Water from the showerhead in Jarry’s Ubu world spill over into the more naturalistic rendering of the freestanding bath in the shallow stage where Kentridge’s Ubu is located. Jarry’s Ubu dips his toe into the bath and the white streaks of falling water simultaneously belong to the two worlds. In *Ubu*, the performance, Pa Ubu showers on stage, while on screen, an Ubu figure cleanses themselves, washing off dismembered body parts, which disappear down the plughole). The spectating researcher perceived both images of individuals taking a shower at the same time: The black and white figure on screen and the Ubu character in the shower booth on stage. The showering and the water symbolism suggest that Ubu is in the process of transformation (Doepel, 1997:14). This meaning is arrived at from reading the interaction between the corporeal Ubu on stage in a shower unit and in the animation film.

⁷⁸ Figure 4.2 depicts all eight images that make up *Ubu tells the truth*. “Ubu hurts his foot” is depicted in the top left corner, in the image ascribed as act I scene II. “Ubu takes a shower” is depicted in the top right corner, in the image ascribed as act I scene I. “Ubu dreams” is depicted in the third image on the right ascribed as act IV scene I and “Ubu’s self-flagellation” is depicted in the third image on the left ascribed as act III scene 9.

In the fifth etching, Ubu's self-flagellates. The print depicts the more corporeal representation of Ubu with a whip in his hand, placed on his back. Similarly, there are two self-flagellation scenes in the performance of *Ubu*. In the first, the spectating researcher perceives a shadow image similar to Jarry's woodcut of Ubu in the animated sequence (on screen) crack a whip several times as the corporeal Ubu on stage jumps and screams in pain in reaction to the "virtual" whip (Sound effects amplifies the effect of the whip). In the second, Ubu on screen is represented as a tripod, which pricks a sleeping Ubu on stage. This also happens to be a representation of the "Ubu dreams" print). Ubu's dream on stage is therefore a nightmare, which includes self-flagellation (depicted on the screen by Ubu as a tripod stand) and the presentation of a witness' testimony by the witness puppet, which hauntingly testify behind Ubu as he sleeps.

A brief analysis of these products reveal that the character, Ubu, created by Jarry, is a transmedial and polymorphous figure that transcended medial, generic, cultural and spatiotemporal boundaries. In his reimagining of Ubu, a hundred years after the initial performance, Kentridge universalizes Ubu as everyman with the theme: "there is an Ubu in all of us". Kentridge therefore reimagined Ubu as a duality of personalities, firstly, paying homage to Jarry's woodcut and secondly, as an image of man derived from naked photos of himself in his studio in the *Ubu tells the truth* project. Ubu in the performance is characterized in the burlesque mode just as in Jarry's *Ubu Roi*. However, the new play relocates Ubu to the South African context and Ubu is placed within the world of the TRC and therefore in a context where actions have consequences. In flesh, Ubu is presented as a man in underwear, which itself is a continuation of the naked and more vulnerable inner Ubu developed in *Ubu tells the truth* but also an example of Kentridge's commitment to Jarry's mission to deny Ubu serious representation. On screen, Ubu adopts a variety of personalities: as a version of Jarry's wood-cut that morphs into a camera tripod, a radio and a cat.

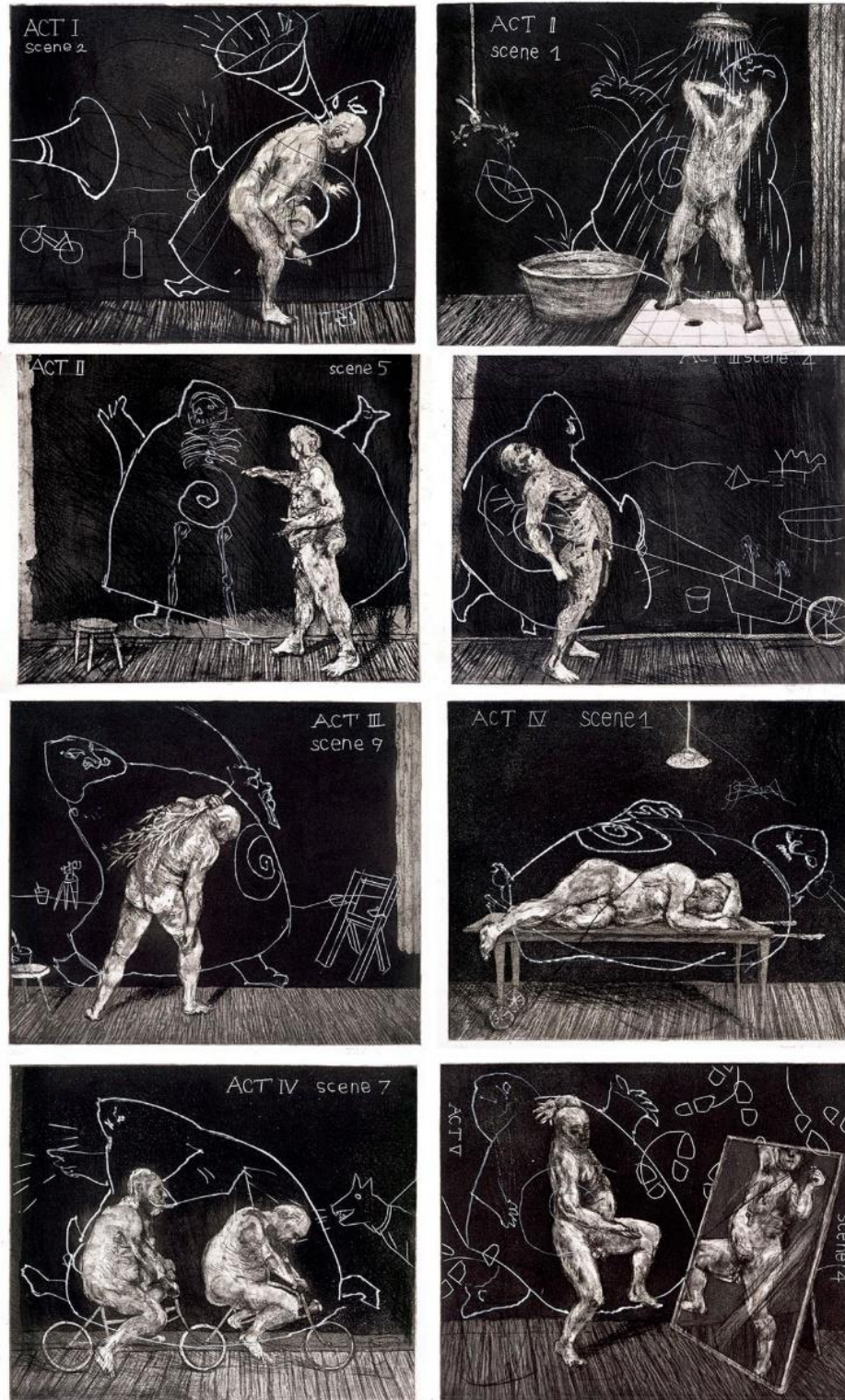


Figure 4.2 Kentridge's *Ubu tells the truth* prints in chronological order. Source: (Doepel, 1997)

4.3.3. Puppetry

According to Jones and Kohler (1998:xvi), the puppets in *Ubu* were developed in response to the project's needs. The puppets can be categorised in three: animal puppets, witness puppets and a mechanical puppet. The witness puppets are nearly human size puppet figures⁷⁹ that represent the victims that gave evidence to the TRC. The animal puppets consist of Brutus, the three-headed dog who plays the role of Ubu's henchmen and Niles the crocodile who take multiple roles such as Ma Ubu's purse, a pet, and Pa Ubu's counsel. It should be noted that these first two categories of puppets required the manipulation of visible puppeteers on stage. During the performance event, the visible puppeteers – who are dressed in beige and white safari suits – do not attempt to conceal their existence and their function in the performance to the audience. The performance also consists of one mechanical vulture that functions as a chorus. This mechanical puppet was remotely operated offstage. Before an elaboration on the puppets, the section shall provide a brief background of the Handspring Puppet Company, which was responsible for the design and the execution of the puppetry in *Ubu*.

Handspring Puppet Company was created by a group of arts graduates in Cape Town, South Africa in 1981. In 1986, the company moved to Johannesburg. *Ubu* is one of the collaborative works that emerged in Johannesburg when the company began to collaborate with expertise from other media, developing the signature multi-disciplinary style characterised by the combination and integration of puppetry, live actors and other media.

Kohler, in his role as artistic director of the company, designed the puppets for *Ubu*. He, together with Jones are the founding members that are still an integral part of the company to date. Puppetry work within the puppet company itself however heavily relies on the collaboration of artists such as performers, designers and technicians.

The creative team cites two reasons for the inclusion of puppets in the production. The first being a conceptually predetermined choice to have two human characters on stage and have all other characters represented by puppets (Kentridge 1998:xi). The second reason was motivated by the

⁷⁹ According to Jane Taylor (2008:59), the witness puppets were one-half to two-thirds of human scale.

ethical concerns regarding the representation of the testimony from the TRC hearings. Regarding this reason, Kentridge writes:

What is our responsibility to the people whose stories we are using as raw fodder for the play? There seemed to be an awkwardness in getting an actor to play the witnesses – the audience being caught halfway between having to believe in the actor for the sake of the story, and also not believing in the actor for the sake of the actual witness who existed out there, but was not the actor. Using a puppet made this contradiction palpable. There is no attempt to make the audience think the wooden puppet or manipulator is the actual witness. The puppet becomes a medium through which the testimony can be heard (Kentridge, 1998:xi).

Kentridge cites the medium of puppetry's specific qualities as a physicalized medium through which the testimony can be heard, to have been an important consideration for the inclusion of puppets⁸⁰. Agreeing with Kentridge, Jones and Kohler, in their production notes comments that:

[The puppet's responsibility] is both central and extremely onerous, as their task is to re-enact the deeply harrowing personal accounts of the effect of the former Apartheid State on people's lives. Badly handled, such stories could easily become a kind of horror pornography. The puppets assist in mediating this horror. They are not actors playing a role. Rather, they are wooden dolls attempting to be real people. As they attempt to move and breathe like we do, they cross the barrier of the here and now and become metaphors for humanity (Jones & Kohler, 1998:xvii).

The use of puppets therefore enables the creative team to stage the real documented excerpts of testimony from the TRC hearings without the ethical dilemma. Rather than re-performing those testimonies through the use of actors on stage, the performance displaces their telling of the witness accounts through the use of puppetry.

The victim puppets being described above consist of a number of (one-half to two-thirds of human scale) human figures that appear to interject the plot that unfolds in Ma and Pa Ubu's story world on stage. For the most part, these witness puppets present testimony consisting of their hallowing encounters of how they or their loved ones suffered brutality. The victim puppets are typically rod puppets that require two visible handlers on stage. These puppets were "naturalistic yet sculptural carved human figures" (Taylor, 2008:29) mainly made out of wood.

⁸⁰ The use of puppets as victims has been criticised by other scholars who view it as a stripping away of the witnesses' agency and selfhood (see Marlin-Curie, 2001:82 and Graham, 2003:20).

The puppeteers Jones and Kohler argue that the design of the puppet itself aided in giving the puppet character and expression:

The rough carving ensures that the puppets' faces have a surface well-keyed for illumination. Therefore, under the lights, the movement of tiny shadows cast by the gouging chisel, particularly the contrast between looking up, looking forward and looking down, assists the illusion of changing expressions on an otherwise immobile face (Jones & Kohler, 1998:xvii).

Agreeing with Jones and Kohler, Shane Graham too comments on how the puppet design and the lighting aided in characterisation of the puppet (see Figure 4.3) and also in depicting the demeanour and the emotion of the character through the wooden puppets (Graham, 2009:43). However, the function of the visible puppeteers that animate the puppets is underscored in this chapter.



Figure 4.3 Witness Puppet. *Ubu and the truth commission* (Source: Handspring Puppet Company website)

The puppeteers on stage serve dual functionality as they animate the puppet with gestural expression: while one of the puppeteers animates the puppet with voice and gestures, the other puppeteer takes the role of a comforter. In addition, as the testimony is recounted, an interpreter situated in a booth placed on stage translates the narrated story from one of the South African local languages to English. This created an interdependent mediated system of communication whereby the spectating researcher relied on the puppet's expression, the puppeteer's voice, expressive gestures and emotion and the translator's words to make sense of the witness accounts. In contrast with string puppetry where the expression of the puppeteer is unavailable and irrelevant, the puppeteers' expression in *Ubu* is important to the overall signification of the puppet's performance. The visible puppeteer therefore became an ambiguous figure caught between being an actor and being a medium through which the puppet comes to life. Even though the audience "reads" the puppeteer's expression as a way of understanding the puppet's emotion, the puppeteer, nevertheless, remains "a 'medium' throughout: the interpreter between the puppet and the audience" (Coetzee, 1998:40).

This triangular interdependent mediated system of communication is highlighted in one scene when a puppeteer on stage momentarily drops the puppet halfway in the narration of testimony. The puppeteer uses their own gestures and facial expression, pointing at the puppet as they explain what body parts were missing on the body of their loved one. This "failure" of mediation⁸¹ momentarily shifts the attention of the spectating researcher from the puppet to puppeteer and underscores the role of the puppeteer as one of the components imbued with agency in the interdependent but displaced mode of representation.

As they present their testimonies on stage the existence of the witness puppets appear to be in a separate realm of reality in contrast with the world of Ma and Pa Ubu and the animal puppets. Even though they share the same space, using the same furniture and props, these two realms of reality appear not to be conscious of each other from the perspective of the spectating researcher. The actress that plays Ma Ubu only interacts with the world of the witness puppets when she adopts the role of interpreter and or puppeteer of the witness puppets. Pa Ubu as a character on stage does

⁸¹ The moment is described as a "failure" because in that moment the puppeteer had ceased their traditional role as a mediator and had become a narrator (actor). However, the moment itself functioned quite well as a reminder that the realities created in the performance are a construction despite their very factual basis.

not directly interact with the witness puppets even though they are implicated in each other's space on several occasions in the performance. For example, in one scene a male puppet sets the goods in his Spaza shop in preparation for business. However, the bench he sets the items on also functions as a dinner table for the Ubus. Ma and Pa Ubu eat the goods from the shop but remain unaware of the shopkeeper puppet, meanwhile the puppet is painfully aware of his missing goods but not of the Ubus. This scene, along with others demonstrates how even though the Ubus and the witness puppets exist in different realms of reality, the actions of the Ubus have a devastating impact on the lives and livelihoods of the witness puppets.

The animal puppets, Brutus and Niles, arose from Kentridge's desire to explore imagery that was representative of the end of the apartheid era and what he metaphorically refers to as the "battle between the paper shredders and the Photostat machines" (Kentridge, 1998:viii). Kentridge observed that at that particular time, for each police general who was shredding documents of his past, there were other officers under him who were Photostatting them to keep as insurance against future prosecutions. Through the practical exploration of the metaphor, the creative team arrived at the use of the two animal puppets in place of the paper shredders and the Photostat machines during the rehearsal process.

Niles and Brutus operate in the same burlesque world of Pa and Ma Ubu and converses with them throughout the performance. The animal puppets are made out of "found objects and calved faces" (Taylor, 2008:58). Brutus, the three-headed dog requires three (visible) puppeteers to come to life and Niles, the crocodile requires one (visible) puppeteer. Brutus is characterized as Pa Ubu's henchmen, accompanying him in his nocturnal clandestine activities. "Their culpability is indivisible. As such, the dog's three characters, foot soldier, general and politician, share a single body made out of an old briefcase given by Braam Fischer to Sydney Kentridge" (Jones & Kohler, 1998). Niles, a crocodile with a belly made out of a large canvas bag for a body plays various roles as Ma Ubu's handbag, a family pet, and Pa Ubu's confidant. The inclusion of the animal puppets and their non-naturalistic elements such as the three-headed dog and the "evidence eating crocodile" also goes hand in hand with the chosen stylistic and structural principle, the creation of the unnatural realm of reality for the Ubus on stage. This un-naturalistic world of intense physicality is in contrast with the sober witness accounts from the TRC hearings and the

documentary footage and newsreel of real-life turbulent moments in South African history. The difference in the performance styles therefore, produces a radical separation between the story worlds of the *Ubus* and that of the witness puppets. According to Stephanie Marlin-Curie (2001:82), the interjection of the flow of action on stage by the witness puppets sustains the illusion of distinct spaces. [The puppets'] testimonies are not interwoven with the “plotline”, but remain narrations rather than dramatizations (Marlin-Curie: 2001:82).

The vulture is the only mechanical puppet on stage. Jones and Kohler explain that the vulture acts as a single chorus, providing sardonic commentary throughout the action of the play.

It has a limited range of actions and a set of electronic squawks interpreted on the screen as proverbs. Thus, it is a form of manipulation: like gears driven by motors, which in turn are driven by a remote technician – which is appropriate to its function in the play – an apparently authorless automaton spewing forth programmed truisms (Jones & Kohler, 1998:xvi).

The vulture corresponds with text on the screen in giving commentary to the action on stage and on screen. Text on the screen appears whenever the vulture shrieks and flaps its wings. In being an outsider to the action, the vulture is similar to the audience as observing outsiders, looking into the performance.

4.3.4. Screen projection

Animation and documentary film are the two dominant visual languages used on screen in *Ubu*. This section discusses how they functioned in the performance. In creating the animation, Kentridge uses an animation technique that departs from the one previously used in *Woyzeck on the Highveld* (1993) and *Faustus in Africa!* (1996). In the two projects, Kentridge had used charcoal drawings in combination with the animation technique of drawing under the camera⁸². In this process, Kentridge would make a charcoal drawing, alter it frame by frame, while filming the progression. The main concern in these two plays was “to find coherence between the crude drawings of the animation and the carvings of the puppets so that the two and three-dimensional could melt together” (Kentridge, 1997:28). While in both the first two projects and in *Ubu*, the

⁸² Kentridge creates most of his drawings by means of charcoal, pastel and an eraser by making marks on paper, then erasing certain marks and again making new marks over those previous ones. He is also known to use other means such as chalk on black board as he did with his body of work on *Ubu*.

screen is to be understood through its relationship with the stage, in the first two projects, the relationship is based on merging the two worlds. In *Ubu* however, the relationship is in terms of creating an alternative or subconscious world that relates to the world depicted on stage. Therefore, a shift in the objective compelled a shift in animation techniques used in *Ubu*.

The main concern for the creation of the projected film in *Ubu* was the creation of a world outside of Ubu's knowing and yet coherent with the world he has made (Kentrige, 1997:28). Pa Ubu and his wife are characters represented by corporeal bodies on stage. Kentridge argues that the use of actors and not puppets for the main characters in *Ubu* (unlike in the two past productions), necessitated a different relationship between the stage and the screen: that the dramatic focus of the performance shifted to the corporeal bodies on stage. "It is more the actors in front of a blackboard in which the lessons (of themselves) are displayed" (Kentrige, 1997:28).

For *Ubu*, therefore, Kentridge used crudely jointed cut-outs and white chalk drawings. Chalk drawn figures were manipulated by hand, and then filmed frame by frame as a sequence of individual drawings to create the effect of a blackboard explanation or moving diagram (Kentrige, 1997:28). This technique allowed Kentridge to approximate and visually allude to Jarry's signature of the Ubu figure with considerable flexibility. The Ubu figure in the animation is thus seemingly capable of endless transformations, represented firstly as an approximation of Jarry's Ubu figure (with his iconic cone head and spiralled belly) but also as a "diagrammatic tripod skeleton" that also morphs into a "camera-on-tripod, a radio, and as cat with scissor-like claws" (Davis, 2003:340). In creating these transformations, Kentridge is inspired by early film pioneers such as Louis Lumiere and Georges Méliès, in his use of stop motion photography and visual tricks (Oppermann 2014:70) such as dissolves, disappearances and metamorphoses (Oppermann, 2014:77). The paradox is that Kentridge's work refers to its historical antecedents, while becoming increasingly involved with newer forms of media and performance.

Consequently, Kentridge succeeds in presenting Ubu as a compound character, continuing the characterization of Ubu he developed in *Ubu tells the truth*. Ubu is made up of these two essences: Firstly, the flesh and blood Ubu depicted on stage: whose surface of the body hides his vulnerability but also the deeds he is capable of. Secondly, Ubu is represented as the schematic representation on screen, capable of illogical transformation. The duality of character, a theme that

starts from *Ubu tells the truth* is very much alive here. The narrative in the projection is also episodic in nature: depicting a montage of events such as the making and sending of a bomb, a stroll in town and a skyscraper panorama of brutality.

Geoffrey V. Davis (1999:69) identifies two functions of the animated footage projected on the screen. He argues that firstly, the screen is used effectively to supplement or to contradict the words or actions on stage. Secondly, Davis argues that it is used to document Ubu's guilt. Indeed, the images of hanging, detention, parcel bombs, torture depicted in the animation for example, are the audience's only window into the clandestine nocturnal activities by Ubu and his henchmen (represented both on stage and on screen by the three-headed dog). Similarly, the recurring imagery of death: skeletons, bones, skulls, gravestone evoke the fate of Ubu's victims that are also recounted by the witness puppets.

What is described as the documentary film in this section consists of the real life archival video footage, photographs, newspaper headlines and press-reports that document the resistance to apartheid over a thirty-year period. This footage includes a selection of well-known events such as the protests against forced removals at Cato Manor in 1960, the Soweto Uprising of 1976, and the clashes between demonstrators and police during the States of Emergency of 1985-1991 (Davis, 1999:69). This documentary footage is combined and integrated with the animation film thus functioning as part of the alternative or subconscious world that is distinct from Ubu's world on stage, but directly resulting from it.

The real life archival footage from the documentary film on the screen functions in a slightly different way from the animation. The documentary film, grounded in realist epistemologies serve to counterbalance the representational modes (such as the burlesque world created on stage, the animation and puppetry) as a reminder that the subject matter in the performance is as very much factual. Based on real life events, the footage firmly implicates Ubu within the apartheid era in South Africa. The combination of these real life documented footage with the animated sequences portraying Ubu's involvement firmly implicates Ubu in South Africa's dark history. Similarly, the headlines of the press-reports also portrayed on screen, hint at the counter-revolutionary activities Pa Ubu had been involved in.

What is clear to the spectating researcher is that the footage on screen is not reduced to be as illustration of the text or performance. Rather it fills a gap in the narrative on stage: it documents Pa Ubu's clandestine activities and grounds Pa Ubu firmly in South Africa's history. In other words, the screen does not play a subordinate role to the action on stage. The story world on screen is simultaneously integrated with the story world(s) on stage in the unveiling of the overall narrative.

Davis (1999:69) also argues that the most telling moments in the production occur when its diverse elements interact most effectively. He cites a moment in which the screen and stage are successfully synchronised. In this scene (previously discussed as "Ubu takes a shower"), a male figure under a shower is depicted in the animation on screen. At the same time, Pa Ubu on stage takes a shower in a shower booth that had been wheeled in on stage. As Pa Ubu on stage showers, images on screen depict skulls, bones, and scissors falling off and disappearing in a plughole. In this scene, the stage and the screen work together in creating the overall image. Pa Ubu's presence in a shower booth placed below the image of a chalk outline figure of Ubu on screen creates a doubling effect, inevitably linking the two showering figures. However, it is the screen images of skulls, bones, and scissors as they fall off that implicates Pa Ubu on stage in the atrocious actions depicted on screen, compelling the spectator to read this scene as Pa Ubu's attempt to wash away his guilt.

Similarly, citing another moment of interaction, Shane Graham (2009:44) discusses a particular scene of discovery where by Ma Ubu on stage finds the hidden documents inside Nile the crocodile. This discovery is explored further through the animation on screen.

When Ma Ubu opens Nile's handbag/stomach and discovers the crumpled documents and bits of clothing, the screen behind her shows a crumpled ball of paper unfolding into an animated image of a sparsely furnished room with a person tied to a chair. The "camera" then pans left and right, up and down between numerous images of people being beaten and tortured. Finally, the camera pulls back, revealing that each of these individual images is a window in a giant building that very much resembles the notorious John Vorster Square police station in Johannesburg. Inside each window, a scene of terrible violence unfolds (Graham, 2009:44).

In the same way as in the scene discussed above, the action on stage and on screen interacts directly with each other. The screened sequence in this instance functions as an elaboration of what Ma

Ubu reads on paper. As the spectating researcher witnesses Ma Ubu's discovery of the concealed documents on stage, the narrative on screen offers them an elaborate visual documentation of Pa Ubu's nocturnal clandestine activities. It is as if the spectating researcher is privy to a more elaborate account of Pa Ubu's activities than Ma Ubu, who continues to gaze at the paper documents throughout the action on screen. This sequence – one of the longest uninterrupted visual sequences of the animation – depicts individual acts of violence but also a panoramic view of them, made up of a sum of many acts of violence. Capitalizing on film's capability to access alogical and discontinuous space (Sontag 1966:29), the animation is able to zoom in and out of individual scenes of brutality inflicted by Pa Ubu and his henchmen, but also to provide a wider perspective of the extent of their involvement. The interaction of media continues towards the end of the video sequence when Pa Ubu, sitting on stage, speaks of his own involvement in the brutalities, recounting a particular account of how he and his friends had a braai as they waited for a human body to burn to ashes. In this scene therefore, language and (stage) dramatisation are rendered as insufficient tools for communicating the archive of traumatic events. The performance instead, combines visual – graphic and figurative – modes of representation (in the use of animation and documentary footage) which when combined with Pa Ubu's verbal narration on the events, communicate the horrors that Ma Ubu reads from the documents.

The direct interactions between the stage and the screen, as described in the two examples cited above are examples of intermediality in the performance, as perceived from the spectating researcher's perspective. In these two examples, the spectating researcher was encouraged to engage both cinematic and theatrical modes of seeing in the construction of meaning in the performance. Intermediality in *Ubu* however is not dependent on the direct interactions as described in these examples. The fact that the performance employs animation and documentary film and puppetry to the live performance – to present alternative but interrelated narratives that add to the overall signification of the performance – is an important intermedial strategy in itself.

4.4. Intermediality in *Ubu and the truth commission*

The performance of *Ubu* in 2014 at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown was faithful to the 1997 performances in terms of its cast and mise en scène. As a study concerned with intermediality the intrigue is on why the performance did not “upgrade” its media technologies to maintain the

novelty it once held in 1997⁸³ and also to connect with the new generation that could not have watched the performance seventeen years ago. This indicates (to the spectating researcher) that intermediality in *Ubu* is less about the experimentation with new technologies and more about the use of suitable modes of representation for the depiction of traumatic experiences.

Shane Graham's concept of "displacement" is helpful in understanding intermediality in *Ubu*. Graham (2009:18) borrows the term "displacement" from the Ghanaian literary scholar Ato Quayson (2001:191-214), who uses the term to describe a narrative strategy of coping with a burden of traumatic memory characterized by the disembodiment of phenomena, metonymic and metaphoric transfers or anthropomorphisation. Used in the context of *Ubu*, "displacement" explains the use of other media in theatre as a strategy for depicting traumatic experiences. Graham (2009:12) for example, argues that the separation of speaker, speech, and meaning that takes place with the use of witness puppets draws the audience's attention to the fragmentation of subjectivity experienced by the trauma survivor. She claims that paradoxically, this displacement of the testimony brings the audience closer to the victim's experience of trauma even as it puts a distance between the audience and the victim. Similarly, Graham (2009:12) notes how *Ubu*'s agency as a perpetrator is displaced by the use of the animation format yet the audience does not perceive this displacement of agency as exonerating *Ubu*.

The chapter therefore argues that in *Ubu*, the performers on stage are able to maintain Jarry's burlesque style in keeping with the creative team's decision to treat *Ubu* with no dignity and seriousness. Besides this logical and continuous narrative, however, the performance employs alternative modes of representation through the use of puppetry and animation and documentary film. These media create a powerful means for the reproduction of the experiences of trauma. On one hand, the (re)presentation of the historically factual witness accounts from the TRC hearings is enabled through the use of witness puppets, invoking a (fragmented) triangular relationship between the puppet, the puppeteer and the translator in the construction of meaning from the researching spectator's perspective. On the other hand, the representation of (historically factual) apartheid horrors is enabled through the use of the animation and graphic material (in the form of

⁸³ By 2014 the use projection and digital media in theatre was widespread in South Africa (Kerr, 2011b:xviii) and puppet theatre for adults had also become conventionalised in South African theatre – popularised by acclaimed productions such as *Ubu* itself.

documentary film and photographs) on the screen, invoking figurative and representative modes of representation. The spectator's process of meaning making demanded the combination of multiple modes of seeing and hearing to comprehend the worlds presented in the performance.

4.4.1. Creation of worlds in *Ubu*

Perhaps one of the most important functions for the creation of fictional worlds in *Ubu* is the ability to represent different realms of reality. In the play, Ma and Pa Ubu's dramatic story, characterised by the interaction between the actors and the animal puppets, would generally appeal to and appease theatre conventionalists while the world inhabited by the witness puppets and the animated film backdrop represents (different dimensions of) his subconscious (Marlin-Curiel, 2001:82). Considered this way, the witness puppets, represent Ubu's conscious and growing paranoia invading his living room, and his dreams. Likewise, the film projection symbolically representing Ubu's memory and guilt displaying the atrocities inflicted by him haunt him as he sleeps throughout the performance.

The thrust of the production therefore lies in its intermedial strategy: in the weaving together of these multiple modes of representation into one coherent unit. In this regard, Kentridge notes that the balance of power between the actors and the puppets is essential to the maintenance of tension and to the generation of meaning throughout the play.

When the play is working at its best Pa Ubu does not hold back. He tries to colonise the stage and be the sole focus of the audience. And it is the task of the actors and manipulators of the puppets to wrest that attention back. This battle is extremely delicate. If pushed too hard there is the danger of the witnesses becoming strident, pathetic, self-pitying. If they retreat too far they are swamped by Ubu. But sometimes, in a good performance, and with a willing audience we do make the witness stories clearly heard and also throw them into a wider set of questions that Ubu engenders around them (Kentridge, 1998:xiv).

Kentridge, in this quote, highlights the delicate, interdependent and phenomenological relationship between the actors and puppeteers on stage and between the performers and the audience in a performance event. He emphasises the importance of balance in the interaction between the worlds portrayed on stage: worlds that had been enabled by the employment of various media in the performance. He also highlights the role played by the audience in meaning making but also the overall functioning of the performance.

It can be argued, therefore, that the presentation of various story worlds with the use of media in the play helps Kentridge desist from a prescribing an understanding of the TRC (and the play in general) as it presents the audience with a plethora of visual and audio signs for interpretation, and a distancing between the different realms of reality. For example, because of the creation of different story worlds by the use of the media, Ubu himself becomes a far more complex character than Jarry's Ubu. Ubu's atrocities are never dramatized on stage, which leaves Ubu's actions open to interpretation and laden with meaning.

Through the presentation of various story worlds, theatre space in *Ubu* is no longer confined to a logical, continuous space, as it would be in a naturalistic performance. Because of the interaction among the media, the theatre space acquires alogical, discontinuous qualities, normally associated with video and film. It should be noted however that these new qualities are not simply a result of the employment of electronic or digital media. The performance demonstrated that puppetry too was instrumental in influencing this expansion of space.

4.4.2. Practical epistemology

The study considers practical epistemology as an important intermedial strategy employed in *Ubu*. Commenting on his use of media in his plays, Kentridge has remarked that his process of working with multiple media is not influenced by aesthetic reasons alone but out of his desire to arrive at meaning through a practical epistemology. He describes it as a "faith in a practical epistemology" – trusting in and using the artifices and techniques of the media to generate meaning (Kentridge, 1998:xii). It is therefore, the very process of, and the subsequent meaning making that results out of the interaction between the media that seems to be the main purpose of Kentridge's exploration within and between media.

Kentridge's usage of the term "practical epistemology" invokes the notions of a *physicalized* epistemology – a physical way of arriving at meaning, well epitomised by his back and forth movements in his studio work in his drawing for animation process. Furthermore, it also invokes the notions of contingency as a valid starting point for arriving at meaning in creative work, a "[...] trust in the contingent, the inauthentic, the whim, the practical, as strategies for finding meaning" (Kentridge, 1998:xiv). This understanding of epistemology is rooted in Kentridge's belief that art is its own form of knowledge. "It does not simply supplement the real world, and it cannot be

purely understood in the rational terms of traditional academic disciplines” (Kentridge 2004). With practical epistemology, linear thinking is at the periphery and the material processes are central to the creation of meaning. This approach towards the creation of art has a profound implication on how an artist works with their media. Kentridge (2004:106) describes it as a “giving over to the medium”.

This giving over to the medium is crucial. Allowing a space for the medium to lead, giving yourself over to the play itself. Playing not in the sense of following rules known in advance as in a sport, but play in the sense of the play of light on water (Kentridge, 2004:106).

The rehearsal process provided some interesting manifestations of practical epistemology at work in the making of *Ubu*. Kentridge discusses how the decision to use puppets in the play led to a whole series of meanings and opportunities in the production, the most important one being that witnesses could appear in different corners of Ubu’s life, not only at the witness stand as they had originally anticipated.

For example, we experimented with a scene in which Ubu is lying on a table and above him a puppet witness gives evidence on the death of his child. We tried it first with the witness standing behind Ubu’s hips. The body of Ubu became an undulating landscape, a small rise in the ground behind which the witness spoke. We then tried the same scene with the witness behind Ubu’s head. Immediately the testimony of the witness became a mere dream of Ubu, the story was taken from the witness and became Ubu’s confession. We put the witness behind Ubu’s legs again and he was back in the landscape. We then tried to see how close the puppet could get to touching Ubu without breaking the double image. Extremely close we found. And then we tried it with the witness touching Ubu’s hip with its wooden hand, an extraordinary thing happened. What we saw was an act of absolution. The witness forgave, even comforted Ubu for his act. These were a series of wholly unexpected meanings, generated not through clarity of thought, or brilliance of invention, but through practical theatre work (Kentridge 1998:xii).

The question “What if [...]?” underlies the creative teams’ quest from a project’s inception to production: the initial epistemological question being: “what would happen if we combined [animation with puppets and actors]?” (Taylor, 1998:ix).

4.5. Conclusion

The chapter analysed *Ubu* as a theatrical performance that incorporates puppetry with actors' bodies on stage, animation and documentary film footage. The nature of interaction among media has been discussed in terms of combination and integration. The central argument in this chapter is that there is a direct and unmistakable correlation between the choices of media: and the themes explored by the creative team. While the creative team made thoughtful choices with regard to the combination and integration of media, the creative team also actively pursued meaningful discoveries that resulted from the practical exploration with the media during the rehearsal workshop period.

The creation of the *mise en scène* in *Ubu* demanded very close and physicalised interaction between actors, puppets and puppeteers, playwright and director to arrive at meaning during the workshops. From its initial stages, *Ubu* began as a collaboration of skilled experts: a puppet theatre company, a playwright, a theatre director who is also a visual artist: in drawing, animation and film. These artists shared a mutual interest in experimentation of medial, disciplinary and generic boundaries.

The resulting performance does not offer a single cohesive plot or a simplistic story. This is because the creators of *Ubu* experimented with the use of multiple media (both electronic, puppetry and corporeal) as a means of representing the multi-layered dynamics of consciousness and memory. The chapter discussed the duality of consciousness that was experienced by the spectating researcher in perceiving aspects of the performance as factual and corporeal based but also as part of the story world. The interaction of theatrical and cinematic modes of representation and those from puppetry were therefore a key feature in the performance. It plays a role in reconfiguring the conceptualisation of theatre and theatre presence. This interaction confronts the perceptual habits and expectations of the spectating researcher such that the plethora of images, real bodies and puppets overlapping, conveys an experience that extends beyond the experience of a “conventional”⁸⁴ theatrical performance. In *Ubu*, the spectating researcher is thus confronted with different story worlds that are juxtaposed with each other and exist alongside each other. The

⁸⁴ “Conventional” within the South African theatre context.

interaction of the modes of representation leads to greater perceptual freedom for the spectating researcher in that she can interpret the performance based on their own experiencing.

The use of multiple and interrelating media in *Ubu* also results in the transformation of the theatrical space into a versatile space that is capable of portraying different planes of reality. Even though all other media are understood in relationship with the two human characters on stage, *Ubu* does reduce these media to subordinate roles of illustrating the action on stage. Rather, the story worlds presented in the other media are distinct and thus complement the narrative depicted by the *Ubus* on stage.

The chapter also discussed the 1997 production of *Ubu* as a media product that transcends medial generic, cultural, temporal boundaries in its relationship with its other related products such as Alfred Jarry's (1896) play *Ubu Roi*, Kentridge's (1996-97) *Ubu tells the truth* the portfolio prints and *Ubu tells the truth* (1997), the animation film. A critical look at these various products not only sheds light on the development of themes explored in *Ubu* but also on the transfers and transformations of ideas and motifs from one medium to another.

Chapter Five

Trans/Re-mediating the fairy-tale in Gopala Davies's *Barbe bleue: A story of madness*

5.1. Introduction

This chapter explores Gopala Davies' *Barbe bleue: A story of madness*⁸⁵, a theatrical performance that incorporates digital media and projection mapping to experiment with multiple narration techniques. The performance is considered as intermedial not only because it incorporates digital media into the conventional aspects that make up theatre as a medium, but also because of the unique way it *re*-mediates and *trans*-mediates⁸⁶ an old fairy tale of French origin into the South African context through the use of multiple media. The chapter argues that *Barbe blue* thematises the tale of Bluebeard's capacity to be realised across a variety of media and uses it to experiment with multiple narrative strategies.

The chapter begins with an introduction to the performance and its creative team. In this section, the performance is contextualised as part of a trend in South African theatre that incorporates digital media. Thereafter, the French tale of Bluebeard is introduced to foreground the transmedial qualities that enable it to maintain its relevance in its retelling in the 21st century South African context. A brief note on research design is provided before the performance itself is analysed and discussed. The chapter finishes off with some concluding remarks on *Barbe bleue*.

5.1.1. Background

Davies, born in 1988, is a South African-Indian actor and director in both film and theatre (Davies, 2016). He is a practicing scholar affiliated to the University of Pretoria. Davies' practice-led Master's project explores the role of technology in live performance as a tool for presenting varied treatments of time and space (Davies, 2016). *Barbe bleue* is his most well known theatrical production.

⁸⁵ "Barbe bleue" is the French word for Bluebeard. The title of Davies's play connects it to its French origins. Barbe bleue is an old French folktale that has been retold across time and space in various media forms.

⁸⁶ The chapter adopts Elleström's (2014:14) understanding of the dual process of re-mediation: "repeated mediation" and trans-mediation, "repeated mediation of equivalent sensory configurations by another technical medium", because this dual process describes the creative team's engagement with media in this case.

In *Barbe bleue*, the tale of Bluebeard is used to explore contemporary, postmodern issues of female identity, mental illness and violence against women. As with the old age tale of Bluebeard⁸⁷, the play retains its suspense, dark mystery and horror. *Barbe bleue* is a combination of new media technology, projection mapping and an adaptation of the tale of Bluebeard (Drama Department, 2014; 2015). The study therefore discusses *Barbe bleue* in terms of Rajewsky's (2002:51; 2005:55) "media combination", which is also referred to as "media combination and integration" by Elleström (2010c:28; 2014:3).

As a play that experiments with digital technology on stage, *Barbe bleue* can be classified as an example of what David Kerr identifies as a growing trend in African theatre: the mixing of electronic media in theatre performances⁸⁸. Kerr (2011b:xvii) observes that South Africa, because of its well-equipped theatres, has taken the lead in exploring the mixing of multimedia and live performances. He also notes that most of the experimentation takes place at university art centres (Kerr, 2011b:xvii). This is true for *Barbe bleue*, which is a production by a University of Pretoria student.

In fact, the specific *Barbe bleue* performance referred to in this chapter was the official entry of the University of Pretoria's Drama Department in the Student Festival⁸⁹ during its first year at the National Arts Festival in 2014. The director of the play, Davies, received the National Arts Festival Award for Best Director (2014) amongst the seventeen other institutions that took part in the festival that year (Drama Department, 2014). After a notably successful year, *Barbe bleue* returned for its second run at the National Arts Festival, this time in the fringe category. This second variation of the performance received a Standard Bank Ovation Award in 2015 (Davies, 2016).

In addition to its associations with the growing trend of experimentation with digital media in theatrical productions at university centres, *Barbe bleue* is also an example of a new trend of practice-led scholarship in South African theatre departments. The play is the centre of inquiry in

⁸⁷ The tale of Bluebeard is introduced in the next section.

⁸⁸ It should be noted that, unlike Kerr, this study makes an important distinction between multimediality in theatre – the "mixing" of media with theatre – which implies media comparison and intermediality in theatre, and hence implies the study of the interrelations between and the integration of abstract, tangible, perceptual and conventional categories of media in theatre.

⁸⁹ There are three main parts to the National Arts Festival programme: the main programme, the fringe programme and student theatre. See the festival programme for 2014 using this link: <https://www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/programme/2014programme-main-v2.pdf> [2015, June 26].

Davies' practice-led Master's project. Examples of such practice-led research projects in theatre include Moratiwa Molema's (2008) "Layering time: The representation of tradition in contemporary multimedia performance", and Dominik Lukasz Pater's (2011) "Biography and the digital double: The projected image as signifier in the *mise en scène* of live performance". These projects, together with Davies's project, shared two characteristics: their incorporation of digital technology on stage and the use of works of art by the researcher as a valid research basis.

5.1.1.1. The Tale of Bluebeard

Playwrights, filmmakers and artists from across national borders and throughout various historical periods have been intrigued by the tale of Bluebeard. Originating from the European oral tradition, the first surviving, and most famous, written version of this tale, Charles Perrault's "La Barbe bleue", made its literary debut in Perrault's 17th century *Tales of mother goose* (1697). The collection took the lead in transforming the oral narratives of a peasant culture into bedtime reading for children (Tatar, 2004:15).

Like all fairy tales, Bluebeard's tale has been retold, retranslated and adapted in many versions. The gist of the story involves a rich blue-bearded man, recently married to a new bride. Bluebeard had previously been married (several times) to women who had mysteriously died. After a short while in his new marriage, Bluebeard announces to his wife that he must leave the castle for an excursion, entrusting her with the keys to the castle. He encourages her to invite friends and to freely open the doors to any room except for one little room. Soon after Bluebeard departs, the wife is overcome with desire to see what the forbidden room holds, and her curiosity leads her to open the forbidden room. To her horror, she discovers blood and the hanged bodies of Bluebeard's previous wives. In haste, the wife drops the keys in a pool of blood, irremediably staining the key to the room as she dashes out. Bluebeard discovers the bloodied key as soon as returns from his trip and regards it as proof of the wife's disobedience. He thereby announces her punishment as death. In a bid to buy time from her murderous husband, Bluebeard's wife pleads for time for one last prayer while she secretly conspires with her sister to have their brothers save her. As Bluebeard is about to kill her, the wife's brothers break into the castle and kill Bluebeard – saving their sister, who in turn inherits Bluebeard's great wealth. Bluebeard's widow uses the fortune to have her

siblings married, and she eventually remarries, forgetting about her horrible experience with Bluebeard⁹⁰.

There are many versions of the tale of Bluebeard. Maria Tatar (2004:11) explains that master narratives like the tale of Bluebeard are timeless and universal in nature. Not only are master narratives encountered in print and on screen, the narratives are also encountered in performance as poems, myths, operas, fairy tales and plays. The tales rarely repeat themselves, instead, they are constantly altered, adapted, transformed and tailored to fit new cultural contexts (Tatar, 2004:11). Tatar (2004:11) argues that it is precisely this fact that ensures that the tales are never exactly the same and are always kept alive and active, “[...] always doing new cultural work, mapping out different developmental paths, assimilating new anxieties and desires, giving us high pathos, low comedy, and everything in between”.

This chapter discusses the tale of Bluebeard as a transmedial narrative, that is, as a phenomenon that manifests itself across a wide variety of media (Rajewsky, 2005:46). There seems to be an agreement among scholars that narratives are a transmedial phenomenon (Rajewsky, 2005; Thon, 2015; 2016; Wolf, 2004). For Wolf (2004:82). A transmedial study of a narrative accounts for the fact that stories can be represented in a variety of media. In addition, such a study also accounts for the medial conditions that have an influence on the realisation of the frame narrative. Jan-Noël Thon, however, uses a much narrower definition of transmedial studies based on his distinction between “medial”, “intermedial” and “transmedial” narratological approaches towards narrative works across media. He defines medial approaches as those that emphasise specific mediality of a conventional medium, intermedial approaches as those that compare medialities of at least two conventional media, and transmedial approaches as those that focus on strategies of narrative representation that are not bound to the mediality of specific media (although they necessarily have to be realised within the mediality of conventionally distinct media as well) (Thon, 2015:439). He therefore reserves the uses of the term transmedial narratology to refer primarily to narratological approaches that may be applied to different media, rather than to a single medium only (Thon 2015:440), and subsequently restricts transmedial approaches solely to studies that account for the

⁹⁰ There are slight variations between this summary of the tale and the version of the tale used in the performance, which can be found in Appendix 1. These variations are discussed in the last section of the discussion in 5.2.2.

extent to which the strategies that are found in specific media share a transmedial dimension (Thon, 2015:439).

This study does not adopt this narrower approach. In contrast to Thon, the study takes a broader approach to transmediality, regarding it as the study of narrative across media on the basis that even the study of medium-specific strategies of narrative representation, and the comparison of strategies of narrative representation in two or more media, also contribute to the study of transmediality. This is particularly true of theatre, a highly multimodal medium that incorporates other qualified media too. This study therefore takes a *both and* approach⁹¹ towards transmediality by considering narrative strategies specific to each medium, but also reflecting on the transmedial dimension shared by all the media. This informs the analysis in the entire chapter, but also specifically that in section 5.2.2.

The tale of Bluebeard as a transmedial narrative crosses time and space to 21st century South Africa in this case and is used to explore themes relevant to Davies (the director of *Barbe bleue*) and his context at large. In an interview, Davies (2014) disclosed that a recent first time meeting with his father inspired the performance⁹². The reason he had not met his father was because his mother had run away from him because he was abusive. Davies had just found out – during this meeting – that his father had a clinical problem (Davies, 2014). The tale of Bluebeard's conspicuous theme of marital abuse explains why Davies was drawn to this narrative.

In addition to this personal inspiration, Davies explains that his desire to experiment with the techniques and borders of media was also a major motivation:

I love theatre and film and I wondered why separate the strengths of the two when they could come together and work to tell a narrative? So you've got tools such as editing, montage, close up, and then on stage you've got live performers, you've got presence, live contact, things that would work together. I wanted to see how does it work? Would it work? I also did a module on digital media at

⁹¹ This approach regards transmedial studies as concerned with both the study of common strategies of narrative representation shared by media and the study of media-specific strategies for realising transmedial phenomena.

⁹² This encounter is also documented in the seven-minute documentary by Davies (2013), "Fragments of my Father", which can be accessed through this YouTube URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sukd8cWr-KU> [2016, September 15]. The documentary video can be categorised as a docudrama because it uses documentary content (real-life subject matter) with fictional form in its use of enactment. It should be noted that the documentary uses a playful enactment style that does not attempt to mask the fiction. For example, his mother, siblings and friends all play the role of Davies's father and use a (drawn) moustache as the main feature that symbolises the father.

University of Pretoria in my honours year and that initiated the project. There were other performances trying this out: I was also part of a show that did it badly: the technology was just there because it was there (Davies, 2014).

Davies cites his desire to experiment with theatre and film as the initial impetus towards the *Barbe Blue* project. Particularly, Davies explains that he was intrigued by the vast number of tools and techniques that were presented to his project by both media. Related to this reason, his educational background provided him with the technical capacity to work in both media. It therefore was the very process of interaction between media properties and techniques that Davies aimed to investigate in his performance project, *Barbe bleue*.

Having discussed the tale of Bluebeard as it relates to Davies's motivations for the performance, the next section of the chapter discusses the research methodology in brief, before moving forward to the analysis and discussion of the performance. In summary, the chapter regards the tale of Bluebeard as transmedial because it is a narrative that has the capacity to be realised across a variety of media⁹³. However, besides the tale's transmediality, issues of media combination in *Barbe bleue* are very relevant with regard to the narrative strategies adopted in the telling of the tale of Bluebeard. The analysis of the performance reveals that medial configurations used in the narrative interact and integrate in a unique way in the performance.

5.1.2. Research design and methodology

The play *Barbe bleue* was purposively sampled into the study long before the performance event under discussion occurred. Advertised as a performance that is a combination of new media technology, and an adaptation of the tale of Bluebeard (National Arts Festival programme, 2014:64), the incorporation of digital technology in theatre practice was the main reason for the selection.

Three tools were instrumental in the gathering of information during the performance event itself. The researcher was equipped with a notepad, to notate critical moments during the performance, and a video camera, to serve as a mnemonic tool in the period after the performance⁹⁴. However,

⁹³ Wolf (2004:82), just as the other scholars discussed in this section, defines "transmediality" as a special form of "intermediality" that refers to phenomena that occur in different media and are considered without regard to a possible origin in one specific medium.

⁹⁴ See Balme (2008b) for a detailed discussion of these tools.

it is the researcher's own experiencing of the performance event that informs the bulk of the discussion and analysis of the performance in the following section.

Interviews were also helpful tool for the gathering of information about the production, both before and after the performance. The interviews were in the form of semi-structured conversations with the creative team, the director and the cast. The interviews clarified a number of issues regarding the *mise en scène* of the play⁹⁵. These issues included the conceptual ideas about the play, information about the apparatus behind technical elements visible and audible in the performance, and the motivations and choices behind them. In these interviews, the cast also shared their experiences of how they negotiated with sharing the performance space with some of the technical aspects of the play, and also of having to operate some of the technical elements of the performance while performing on stage.

The discussion and analysis of the performance are hermeneutical in nature, as the researcher navigates through and interprets the diverse sign systems and codes at work in the performance. The performance itself is also considered as a phenomenological event that was experienced in its entirety and analysed by the researcher.

5.2. Presentation and analysis

For the purposes of this discussion, the performance event has been categorised into seven episodic scenes as they chronologically appeared in the performance. Of the play's seven scenes, three are encounters between a man and a woman by actors on stage. These are theatrical enactments reminiscent of the encounters between husband and wife in the tale of Bluebeard. One combines a visual illusion of a storybook, a wide-screen projection, an embodied and an auditory narration of the tale of Bluebeard to present a synchronised narrative of the tale, two are mockumentary videos that comment on and re-interpret the tale, and the final scene is a video re-enactment in response to the tale. The stories in these scenes are loosely linked together thematically, but are held apart by their individual plots. Digital media are used to link the spaces in between any two scenes, creating a liminal (virtual) space/s between them. Functioning as intermissions, clips of an

⁹⁵ Used in this context, the *mise en scène* is defined as an arrangement with a high degree of stability (Balme, 2008b:127), as opposed to a performance, which is regarded as a version of the *mise en scène* that is unrepeatable and often includes audience involvement (Balme, 2008b:127, 132).

audio and video fuzz⁹⁶ were looped in a video playlist and were accompanied by random beard facts projected onto the screen in text. These two features hold the episodic scenes of the performance together as a unit.

5.2.1. Scene 1: The first encounter

The first scene contains dialogue and dance. The plot is of a strange encounter between a man and a woman. The encounter ends with a physical altercation in which actress 1 gets pinned against the wall. She is visibly frightened as the male protagonist moves away. The flickering of the light towards the end of the scene enhances the state of anguish as actress 1 collapses onto the floor.

Scene one introduces a key feature of the lighting technique in the performance. Most of the lighting in the play is controlled by the cast⁹⁷, who have been rigged with torches on their bodies. A torch in the hands of one actor is used to illuminate another actor who is the focus of the scene. Davies argues that the choice of having actors control the lighting goes beyond serving practical or aesthetic purposes. According to him, “technology becomes part of the performance when the actor engages with it” (Davies, 2014). The physical engagement of the actors makes the lighting apparatus and its effects an integral part of the narrative.

By having the actors operate the lighting apparatus on stage, Davies therefore exposes the technology of theatrical lighting in full view of the audience. In addition to the actors in character, the spectator is confronted with the other bodies performing supporting technical roles on stage. This disrupts the theatrical illusion that Brecht was in contradiction with in his Epic theatre⁹⁸. While Brecht is reported to have flooded each scene with a bright, white light (Willett, 1964:155), Davies uses the torches on stage to remind the audience not to lose awareness of the fact that they are, in fact, watching a performance on stage.

By the end of the first scene, the spectating researcher also becomes aware that the projected “screen”⁹⁹ upstage will play an important role in the production, not only as a backdrop but also

⁹⁶ “Fuzz”, in this context, is understood as distorted sound from an electric musical instrument and as a blurry image.

⁹⁷ According to the director, only one lighting effect was operated from the lighting desk.

⁹⁸ Brecht proposed that the lighting director in epic theatre needs to abandon the idea of hiding sources of light to achieve a mysterious effect to draw the audience into the action in order to combat emotional manipulation on stage caused by an illusionist (Willett, 1964:155).

⁹⁹ In essence, this “screen” is the wall at the back of the stage, illuminated by the projector mounted in the lighting box.

as the central immersive and interactive element of the performance. In this first scene, the audience walks into a dark space with gentle snowfall on the screen. The *mise en scène* of the scene consists of actors' bodies on stage, and a screen that projects the immersive backdrop of snowfall. The technical elements of this first scene (the lighting and the projection) essentially work together to create the mood for the embodied interaction (in physical theatre) between the two actors on stage.

5.2.2. Scene 2: The storybook narration of the tale of Bluebeard

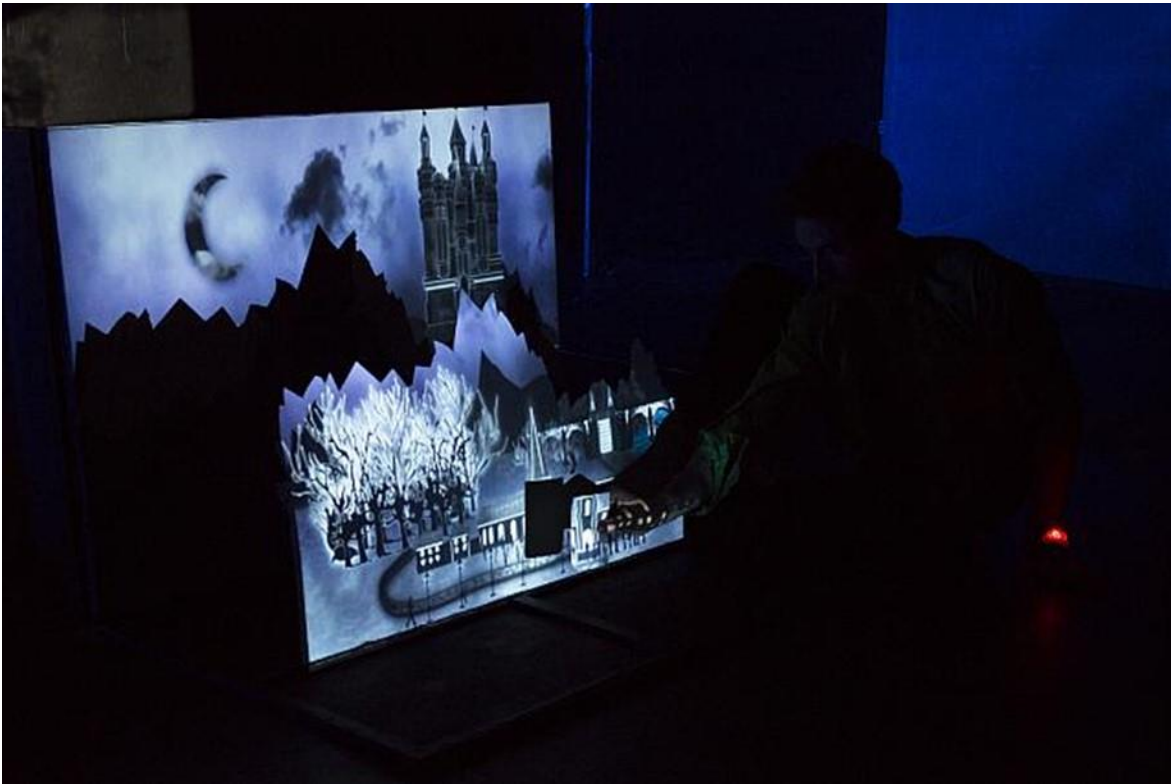


Figure 5.1 The storybook (Source: production team)

In this scene, the voice of a male narrator tells a version of the tale of Bluebeard¹⁰⁰. On stage, a replica of a “pop-out” storybook is used to aid the narration (see Figure 5.1). The male protagonist moves towards the front on the stage left and raises the “storybook” – a smaller white board on which images are projected. Some of the images, like that of the castle, are static (in the sense of a photograph), while others are moving images (like the images of the characters and the carriage),

¹⁰⁰ The complete tale as narrated in this scene can be found in Appendix 1.

in the same way as in motion pictures. The male protagonist appears to manipulate the pictures of the storybook with his hands and body.

The “storybook” comes to life as soon as the auditory narration begins. It bears images of Bluebeard’s castle and its surroundings. A few seconds into the verbal narration of the story, the upstage “screen” lights up and duplicates the images from the “storybook” to the entire wall. This creates an immersive effect: from the small storybook situated in front of the stage, the spectating researcher’s attention is re-directed to the larger projection of images that fill the back of the stage. As the story progresses, shadowy moving images appear: the first being a carriage going towards the castle. It becomes apparent that the auditory narration has been supplemented by the moving images in the video, which are enacting the tale of Bluebeard. Inside Bluebeard’s castle, a shadowy image of Bluebeard gives instructions and the keys to his wife and then, shortly after, a carriage is seen moving away from the castle, presumably taking Bluebeard away. Back inside the castle, the image of a woman going up the stairs emerges as the narrator tells of the wife’s decision to open the forbidden room. A flow of blood appears on the stairs as the storyteller narrates how Bluebeard’s wife found the hanged bodies of Bluebeard’s previous wives.

The technical aspects involved in producing and presenting what the spectator experiences in this scene begin with the filming and editing of the footage. According to Davies (2014), footage was filmed from various angles and edited together with the soundtrack. Filters were also used to create the black-and-white aged effect for the tale: a red filter was used to symbolise blood in Bluebeard’s wife’s horrific discovery in the forbidden room. During the performance, two individuals are in charge of operating the technical aspects – the beaming of identical video footage projected onto two screens. The actor on stage (the male protagonist) operates the footage displayed by the mini projector on the small “storybook” screen, while Davies himself controls the footage on the large screen. The two video operators harmonise their execution of cues to simultaneously stop and play the action on the two screens (Davies, 2014). This execution of cues is bound to differ in each performance event and in turn influence how the spectator experiences the performance.

Davies uses projection mapping to create the visual illusion of a pop-out storybook with a three-dimensional castle on the small projector screen. Projection mapping is a group of techniques for projecting imagery onto physical three-dimensional objects in order to augment the object or space

with digital content (Rowe, 2014:155). With projection mapping, images are beamed, adjusted and masked so that they seem to follow the shape of the target object instead of spilling out onto the walls. This has the effect of turning surfaces into dynamic video displays (Ekim, 2011:10). The aim of video mapping is to create a physical illusion of images by combining various audio-visual elements. Based on this classification, video mapping projects use technology as a “tool” (for composing and editing) for the creation of motion graphics and images, as well as a medium for presenting images (and a story world) to audiences (Ekim, 2011:10).

There are other visual illusions introduced throughout the second scene. A noteworthy moment is in the climax of the verbal narration of the tale of Bluebeard. As Bluebeard is enraged by his wife’s betrayal, the narrator assumes the voice of Bluebeard and, at the same time, a shadow image of a man’s head emerges on the right-hand corner of the screen¹⁰¹. The image appears to lip-sync the words of Bluebeard in the auditory narrative. The ominous shadowy image of the head, when combined with a harsh echoed voice, therefore heightens the sense of Bluebeard’s power over his wife, arguably delivering a stronger visual and audio effect.

Another prominent visual illusion occurs towards the end of the narration of the tale of Bluebeard. In the same way as it did at the beginning of the narration, the male protagonist walks to the back of the “storybook” (the smaller screen) and appears to manipulate the images on the screen with his hand. “Sometimes (the manipulation from the male protagonist) is faster than the recording, sometimes it’s slower and sometimes it is in sync with these moments” (Davies, 2014). As with the previous visual illusions, the creative team depicts a pre-recorded sequence on stage. As such, the actor’s actions behind the small screen do not contribute to the visual effect already achieved in the recording. This raises new questions about the highly controversial debate between live and the *mediatized*. While the small “storybook screen” is a clear example of pre-recorded footage projected on screen, does the live body on stage that is simulating the actions in the recorded footage add to the overall visual experience of the spectator? How does it contribute to the live versus *mediatized* dynamic in the performance? Clearly Davies aimed to create an illusionist effect, but it is not an effect that absorbed the spectating researcher into the story world of the

¹⁰¹ This shadow image could easily be perceived as live, produced by the male protagonist who is standing behind the “storybook” screen, as opposed to being filmed and edited into the video footage as it had been.

narrative, but one that made them question if what they were experiencing is live or mediated and whether this question is relevant or not.

The visual illusions described above can be discussed as examples of post-dramatic visual illusions¹⁰². Jeroen Coppens (2015:14) observes a renewed interest in the trope of visual illusions in contemporary theatre, despite post-dramatic theatre traditionally being associated with an inclination to move away from coherent narrative and illusion. Coppens (2015:25) notes that, rather than being a one-way communication process, the theatrical images from post-dramatic visual illusions are geared towards visualising how representation is an interactive process between the spectator and what is seen and, more importantly, how perception is a creative act that takes place in (and is also shaped by) certain practices of looking.

A central aspect of the projected moving images on both screens is the square frame held by an omnipresent hand, which guided the narrative by patching together the action in the auditory narrative with the action in the moving images on the screen. The frame magnifies the moments of action in the projected images. The movement of the hand-holding-the-frame also functioned as a focaliser for the most relevant part of the story on screen in relation to the auditory narrative. This had the effect of shifting the spectating researcher's gaze from one physical location of the story to another, for example, between events happening inside and outside of Bluebeard's castle. This technique is vital to the storytelling/narration motif, selecting which parts of the tale its' creator wants the audience to be drawn to, more or less in the same way a skilled storyteller crafts a story with his/her own personal touch, making additions and omissions. It therefore could be argued that the framed narrative on the screen provides a third perspective – another, primarily visual, experience (which links to the auditory experience) of Bluebeard's tale, albeit with similarities and differences to the first (auditory) and the second (moving image) narrative.

Using the different types of narration techniques at play in this scene, the director effectively employs the technique of time delay, synchronising and forwarding. This is achieved when the sequentiality of the three narratives – the auditory, the moving images and the framed narrative –

¹⁰² *Barbe bleue* is described as post-dramatic because of its lack of reliance on character-driven action and the dominance of the text, even though its performers and spectators are simultaneously present in space and time as in dramatic theatre. It is worthwhile to note that visual illusions are commonly associated with dramatic theatre rather than post-dramatic theatre, which is known to move away from them (Coppens, 2015:14).

is experimented with. The sequentiality of the three narratives appears to be in synchronised in some instances. However, there are other instances when the narrative from the visual frame is delayed and is focused on a specific part of the story, while the narratives of the auditory and moving images progress. For example, in the middle of the storytelling, the focalising hand is slow with the narrative: it shows Bluebeard leaving with the carriage while the auditory narrative has moved on to focus on the events that happened at the castle after Bluebeard's departure. Similarly, towards the end of the narration, the auditory narrative appears to be progressing faster than the moving images narrative: By the time the blood of Bluebeard's wives appears in the moving images narrative, Bluebeard had already returned to the castle in the auditory narrative. The pictorial sequentiality of the narrative as seen on screen (in the moving images narrative) is thus different from that of the auditory narrative perceived in the spectator's mind¹⁰³. In this regard, Davies succeeds in creating new and multiple experiences of time and space for the tale of Bluebeard for the audience members.

Another style of narration adopted in this scene – in addition to the auditory narration, the moving images narration and the framed narration – is the dance sequence performed by actress 1. The dance sequence, performed in close contact with the projected wall upstage, also appears to be synchronised with the story as narrated verbally and visually. For example, the repetitive motions of scrubbing are symbolic of the washing of the key by Bluebeard's wife. The motions of moving away, with hands pushed out to protect the face, suggests the wife's reaction to Bluebeard's physical assault.

In fact, the screen at the back could be read as operating as actress 1's dance partner, even though the dancer's body is three-dimensional, while the screen is flat and the dancing is situated in the now, whilst the projection is pre-recorded. There is a brief moment of doubling, as actress 1 overlays her body on the screen at the precise spot occupied by the shadow image of Bluebeard's wife. In this instance, a shadow image of Bluebeard appears to be giving instructions to his wife before his departure. At the very moment when the dancer's body overlays the image of Bluebeard's wife on the screen, the voice of a female character narrates the wife's response to

¹⁰³ Elleström (2010c:20) argues that abstract concepts and experiences of time have spatial characteristics because cognition to a large extent works in terms of spatiality.

Bluebeard's instructions. In this instance, all three technical media (the auditory, the corporeal and the moving image) have been layered to create an overall effect from the three distinctive narratives that are synchronised together.

Davies subsequently uses a variety of narration techniques to create up to six variations of the tale of Bluebeard in this scene. The first narrative is auditory and involves a narrator's voice and two other narrative voices. The second is the "storybook" narration that is physically located in front of the stage. This narrative uses visual (pictorial and video) means in its narration. The third narrative is the wide-screen projection of the same footage in the storybook narration, using the same visual pictorial and video means. However, this narrative invited the spectating researcher to adopt a cinematic way of seeing as opposed to the referred "storybook" mode created by the smaller screen. The fourth narrative is created by the square frame that functions as a focaliser. The mode of seeing is visual, but unlike in the two previous narratives, this narrative is focalised towards specific moments set apart from the overall story world of the entire visual experience. The moving body creates the fifth narrative on stage. This narrative uses the body, movement and gestures to communicate the story. Using these techniques, Davies therefore skilfully presents variations of the tale of Bluebeard in the same scene. What is remarkable, however, is the way in which these narratives are woven together and entangled (using their own media-specific narrative techniques) into one master narrative – the sixth narrative experienced in its wholeness.

The most intriguing feature in these narratives is that they all use their own medium-specific means to mark the narrative as fairy tale. The auditory narrative, for example, marks the narrative through the presence of the narrator¹⁰⁴. The narrator's verbal articulations, such as "once upon a time", "and that is the end of the sad story" and "the end", convincingly mark the narrative as fairy tale¹⁰⁵. Similarly, the "storybook" narrative capitalises on the fairy tale's traditional association with the pictorial storybook to mark the narrative as fairy tale enabled by projection mapping techniques. The image of the castle itself in the storybook may also suggest associations to the tale in the mind of the perceiver. It should be mentioned here that Davies solves the problem associated with

¹⁰⁴ Thon (2016:25) describes the narrator as a transmedial concept.

¹⁰⁵ This framing does not apply to the auditory narrative alone, but to all the individual narratives that have been integrated into one.

pictorial narratives (especially in single monophase¹⁰⁶ pictures) by incorporating movement into the static image of the castle to capture the temporal unfolding of a story through moving frames. This evokes a different visual experience to that of reading an actual storybook. The focalised narration uses a visible frame to emphasise the constructedness of the fairy tale. Because of its wide-screen resolution, the visual images on the large projected screen function better at displaying the movement in the images when compared to the “storybook”. It is reminiscent of experimentation in black and white movies by early moviemakers. A perceiver viewing these moving images may easily recognise them as related to the tale of Bluebeard. The embodied narrative is also a movement-based depiction of the story, but its “marked-ness” as fairy tale becomes more explicit when it intersects with the filmic enactment of the fairy tale. Lastly, the final narrative combines and integrates all the frames discussed above to mark the narrative as fairy tale. It is essentially left to the spectator to experience these narratives on the basis of what they are able to see, hear and feel.

In summary, Davies constructs several visual illusions that stage the complex interactions and transactions between different media consisting of complex layers of visuality and aurality. The frame-holding hand, the ominous shadowy head and the male protagonist’s hand gestures over the “storybook” projector screen are only a few examples of these visual illusions intended to critically engage the spectator with new, contemporary ways of looking and hearing. Davies therefore successfully *re-mediate* (mediate again) and *trans-mediate* (mediate again using equivalent sensory configurations across other technical media) the tale of Bluebeard, thereby *retelling* it in six distinguishable narratives that are closely interrelated in this scene. In addition to *retelling* the tale of Bluebeard, the analysis of the remaining scenes in the next section will also demonstrate how Davies *comments on* and *rewrites* the tale of Bluebeard using a variety of media techniques. Before this analysis, however, the next section discusses the auditory narrative in the second scene in detail.

¹⁰⁶ Monophase is a concept used by Wolf (2004:92) to describe a work that evokes one moment in a narrative through a single image.

5.2.2.1. The narrative (as heard by the audience)

The narration of the tale of Bluebeard¹⁰⁷ is in the third person and consists of the narrator's voice and two other voices: the voice representing Bluebeard (most probably performed by the same person as the narrator) and another voice representing Bluebeard's wife.

While Davies's retelling of the tale of Bluebeard is similar to Perrault's, there are some key additions and omissions. Davies omits the sister, Ann, and the role she plays in rescuing Bluebeard's wife. He also omits the first part of Perrault's version of the narrative, which is about Bluebeard's wife's family before she got married. This could be read as a strategy used to narrow the focus of the narrative on the wife so as to strengthen the theme of vulnerability in the performance: to stress that Bluebeard's wife was so vulnerable that her brother's serendipitous rescue was the only reason she was not killed¹⁰⁸. In Perrault's rendition, there is some ingenuity involved on the wife's part in her rescue. The narrative reveals that the wife's brothers were due to visit their sister on that very day. Recognising this as her only way out, Bluebeard's wife buys some time from her murderous husband (by asking for some time to pray) and summons her sister, with whom she arranges to look out for their brothers' arrival at the castle. In Davies' version, the narrative is focused solely on Bluebeard's wife and her vulnerability to Bluebeard's wrath. There is no sister to plan with, and her life is at Bluebeard's mercy. This heightened portrayal of vulnerability makes her rescue by the brothers seem even more miraculous and dependent on fate than in Perrault's version. The cutting of the background story from the beginning also serves similar purposes.

An important addition to the tale is found towards the end of the verbal narration. Davies's protagonist seems not to have the perfect happily-ever-after story after all, she loses her sense of curiosity. When interpreted as an effect of the trauma experienced, this addition breaks the happily-ever-after myth from the fairy tale and is in line with the themes of mental illness and abuse as developed in the performance. The performance seems to say that, even though things turn out for the better, there are still remnants of abuse that cannot be wiped away.

¹⁰⁷ See narrative in Appendix 1.

¹⁰⁸ This issue is brought up in scene four (section 5.2.4), in a mockumentary about the wife's vulnerability.

5.2.3. Scene 3: The second encounter

The second encounter is about a woman in a white dress that comes on stage in a cheerful mood (actress 2). Actress 1 is also on stage, however, her role is technical: she holds a torch that illuminates actress 2. The woman in the white dress (actress 2) performs three seemingly unrelated monologues about food, the train station and her dreams of being on a farm. The male protagonist is a prop (a suitcase) in one instance, but he later thrusts himself on top of the woman in the white dress and asphyxiates her as she sings. The second encounter scene, therefore, presents a graphic visual image of death, as it extends the theme of violence against women that started in the first encounter scene. The two encounters (from scenes 1 and 3) also mirror the vulnerability of the woman in the second scene of the tale of Bluebeard. In this regard, the two encounter scenes serve as enactments of the tale of Bluebeard. These two encounters also consist of unprovoked, extreme acts of physical violence against women, therefore suggesting the theme of mental illness and abuse.

Singing is a prominent feature of the third scene. Most of the songs in the performance are Sanskrit songs introduced to the cast by the director. Davies (2014) identifies himself as a South African Indian male from KwaZulu-Natal who grew up in a temple. While the songs most certainly emanate from Hindu belief systems from India, they have been transported to a new context – more or less as the tale of Bluebeard itself – to form part of Davies's identity. The songs are thus an essential part of the communication in the performance, informing its inception and style.

5.2.4. Scene 4: The first mockumentary video

5.2.4.1. Part 1



Figure 5.2 Mockumentary 1 (Source: production team)

Scene 4 takes the format of a mockumentary video¹⁰⁹. Actress 3, in a medium shot, gives a direct commentary on the tale of Bluebeard from the second scene. The character represented is a serious-looking upper-class woman, eloquent and confident. She talks and looks directly into the camera and addresses her audience in the first person (refer to Figure 5.2). She begins her monologue by announcing that she would look critically at the story of Bluebeard. She then asks questions regarding the vulnerability of Bluebeard's wife. Midway through her monologue, the actors on stage look, listen and comment on her monologue. Actress 3 then focuses on what the woman in the tale could have done differently to avoid her predicament. The question is paused, as if to encourage the audience to respond. However, actress 3 answers the question herself – she suggests

¹⁰⁹ A mockumentary is defined as a genre that appropriates styles not only from the codes and conventions of the documentary, but from the full spectrum of non-fiction media. A mockumentary is capable of providing a complexity of forms of audience engagement, often involving different senses of reflexivity towards the non-fiction and hybrid forms that it appropriates. The mockumentary also draws on parodic and satiric traditions (Hight, 2016:26). The film footage projected in scene 4 and 5 consist of elements that could be categorised as non-fiction film because of the use of documentary format while the footage in scene 7 can be categorised as fiction film because of its use of a fictional form and content.

that the woman should have relied on her intuition. After her commentary, she signals her departure. It turns out she had been seated on a toilet seat throughout her monologue. This becomes clear when the camera adjusts to a wider angle. The actress unrolls the toilet paper, wipes herself, flushes, pulls her pants up and exits the camera frame. The contrast between the seriousness of her subject matter and the setting of the monologue not only provides comic relief, but also emphasises the constructed-ness of the performance in the “mockumentary” video. The toilet as a setting, just as the intermission fuzz (in between each of the scenes), also constitutes a virtual space that extends the physical space shared by the actors and the audience.

This scene is described as a mockumentary because it makes an effort to resemble a documentary, even though it clearly is not¹¹⁰. Indeed, for the first part of video, the spectating researcher considered it a documentary because of its interview-like direct address to the camera, and the authentication created by the character’s eloquence and authority on the subject matter. The opening sequence of the mockumentary, for example, uses common documentary narrative techniques when the character introduces the mockumentary as a “video”. However, as the video comes to an end, the perceiver is confronted with the “constructedness” of the “performance”¹¹¹, and this challenges the authenticity of the documentary.

¹¹⁰ Gary D Rhodes and John Parris Springer (2005:4) define a mockumentary using this formula: documentary form + fictional content = mockumentary.

¹¹¹ The performance is marked as “authentic” by the camera angle, which frames the character against a neutral background in an interview-like, direct address of the camera setup. The subversion takes place in the movement of the camera angle, which reveals that this is not in fact a “serious” interview, but a playful and rehearsed performance that takes place on a toilet.

5.2.4.2. Part 2



Figure 5.3 Scene 4, part 2 (Source: production team)

In the second part of the scene, actress 3 re-emerges on stage in flesh and, a few seconds later, her virtual body is also projected on the screen behind her (refer to Figure 5.3). The materiality of the (moving) projected image of actress 3 consists of a flat surface (as opposed to the corporeal materiality of the actress on stage). However, the image on the screen does not contain sound, even though the moving image appears to be in a conversation with an unknown subject. Throughout the scene, the face on screen undergoes a range of emotions and actions, such as laughing and choking.

On stage, actress 3's voice is audible, she is involved in an intense argument with her partner, whom the audience does not see on stage but can hear. There are moments of miscommunication and cross-communication, as the voice of the male protagonist appears to be in conversation with the (muted) virtual body rather than with the physical body on stage¹¹². The actress on stage

¹¹² According to Davies (2014), it could be argued that the male protagonist's perceptions were filmic, while those of the other actor on stage were live, and this reading could add another layer of meaning in the story.

increasingly becomes agitated and, in some instances, portrays simultaneous emotions as her projected virtual version. At the end of the scene, actress 3 is silent – both on screen and on stage – as the male protagonist walks on stage and towards her image on the screen. The scene ends abruptly with intermission fuzz. It could be argued that Davies sought to create a dialogue between the two types of representation – filmic and theatrical – in this second part of the scene.

Several aspects of this fourth scene (both part 1 and 2) conjure up notions of an alienation effect (more so than the other parts of the performance). The commentary on the narrative – of the tale of Bluebeard told in the second scene – is told within the same performance, the direct address from actress 3 – towards the audience, the interruption of flow by the large-screen projection and the doubling of the character – all worked towards distancing the spectating researcher from emotional involvement and inviting them to look critically at the subject matter at hand.

The doubling of the character played by actress 3 on screen and in flesh also brings out the questions of liveness versus the *mediatized* to the fore in this fourth scene. Video footage functions inversely in the two parts of the scene: while the video in the first part is used to comment on the narrated tale from the previous scene, the video footage in the second part is used to mirror the action of the live actor on stage. The character on stage in the second part is defiant and steadfast, as opposed to the vulnerable characters from the first two encounters. Unlike the characters in the previous encounter scenes, the male protagonist does not physically nor virtually assault the character in this scene. Her image on screen is merely touched by the male protagonist. This might perhaps be construed as Davies's response to the vulnerability thematised in the tale of Bluebeard. In place of the unequal power relations in the tale, Davies presents an argument between two people in a relationship that does not end in (physical) violence.

5.2.5. Scene 5: The second “mockumentary” video



Figure 5.4 Mockumentary 2 (Source: production team)

The second mockumentary video begins with a preacher-type female character on screen (see Figure 5.4). Just as with the character in the first mockumentary video, hers is an analysis of the tale of Bluebeard (albeit a psychological and a psychoanalytical one). Actress 4's costume and demeanour authenticates the performance as documentary at the same time as it subverts it¹¹³. The actress in this video addresses her audience directly and her discussion is directed towards the male audience members. She interprets the tale from Bluebeard's perspective rather than the wife's. In her interpretation, the rooms in Bluebeard's house are chambers in a man's mind, and the key represents the innermost power centre the man possesses, which he must safeguard against female domination. For the duration of this monologue, the male protagonist gradually strips off his clothes with nothing else other than his underwear towards the end of the monologue. This is symbolic in this particular video, which depicts men as vulnerable once they let women into their

¹¹³ As the video progresses, the performance becomes increasingly marked as fictional, just like the action on stage, inevitably undermining the documentary's claim to objective truth.

“inner chambers”. In this regard, the second video is in contrast with the first video, the content of which was feminist in nature.

A key feature in this scene is the interaction between the projected film and the actors on stage. As the analysis in the commentary continues, the actors on stage pay attention to the projection. When the character on screen asks a question in one instance – “how many of you have given up your power to a woman?” – the male protagonist on stage raises his hand in agreement and the other actors on stage laugh at the male actor, insinuating that he is weak for giving up his power to a woman. The male protagonist reacts in anger and the scene ends abruptly with intermission fuzzi. This scene essentially discusses gender stereotypes and subverts the power relations that are represented in the tale of Bluebeard.

5.2.6. Scene 6: The third encounter scene

This scene begins with a song (heard from behind the stage) and consists of pantomime. On stage, the male protagonist is in a confrontation with actress 5: he fights with her over the cloth that is wrapped around her body. He unravels it from her body as he pulls it along in his walk in the opposite direction to stage left. As the cloth rolls off her and actress 5 is left in her underwear, he draws her to him by pulling the cloth, which is still attached to her. Standing very close to him, she takes the end of the cloth, hangs it around his neck, and drags him to the centre of the stage. The cloth is then zigzagged across the stage from one end to the other, held by each of the actresses that are part of the performance (on stage and on screen). The cloth, when spread out on stage this way, becomes part of the projector screen for the next and final video projection (see Figure 5.5). The themes of struggle and confrontation in relationships, which were introduced in the first two encounter scenes, recur in this scene. This scene, however, is more than just a re-enactment of the tale of Bluebeard. In place of the oppressor/oppressed relationship, the pantomime depicts a power struggle.



Figure 5.5 Closing scene (Source: production team)

5.2.7. Scene 7: The fiction-film narrative

The third video consists of an enactment of a story. In this regard, it bears closer similarities to scene 2, the storybook narration, than with the mockumentary-type videos in scenes 4 and 5. The video starts with the male protagonist who is readying himself to leave his home. On his way out, he meets actress 1, they go on a picnic date and share laughs. The next shot shows them back in his living room. Actress 1 is on the sofa looking at the male protagonist with contempt. The three other actresses from the previous scenes are superimposed onto the scene, one by one. They appear to be displeased with the male protagonist and a caption pops up that reads: “You have been a very bad boy”. Actress 1 proceeds to whip the male protagonist on his backside as the other characters laugh.

There is no dialogue in the film or on stage, where the actors hold the cloth, now functioning as the screen. This final scene concludes the power struggle between men and women as portrayed in *Barbe bleue*. The last action in the performance could be read as the female characters exerting their revenge on the male protagonist for the abuse that they endured during the course of the scenes of the play and in the tale of Bluebeard.

5.3. Discussion

Barbe bleue has received many positive reviews from theatre audiences, critics and judges (of the Standard Bank Awards at the National Arts Festival). One mixed review, by Sarah Robertson (a writer for the online arts review website, *The Clitter*, for independent arts writers and thinkers), invites an interrogation. Robertson gives the performance positive feedback for having a great concept to work with, and great video work, costuming, props and acting. She also commends the use of the backdrop as a plain block to concentrate the audience's gaze within the main video (Robertson, 2015).

Robertson, however, criticises the performance for lacking in story:

There's no character, no person, no "story" to care about [...] I don't want realism (really, I don't), and I don't need a protagonist or a neat narrative. Be fragmented. Be postmodern. Be avant-garde. But with this kind of cerebral work, without a "hook" and something to connect to, it relies on cool theatrical tricks and atmospheric evocation (Robertson, 2015).

Robertson main argument is that, while the parts of the whole were well executed, the elements do not hang together well enough as a whole to make the show effective or hard-hitting. According to her, what are promising starts do not materialise into deeper interrogations, and the performance relies on the video to explain or juxtapose what's happening on stage (Robertson, 2015).

The critique by Robertson highlights two divergent ideas on what theatre is and how it should function. While Robertson is not bothered by the presence of film in theatre, her conceptualisation of theatre places the presence of character or plot-driven action at the top of a hierarchical structure. She seems to be suggesting that, should any other media be introduced on stage, they should be used to advance and support this character/plot-driven action represented by the actors on stage. Davies, on the other hand, departs from the supposition that both theatre and film possess unique features that would work well together to tell a narrative, despite their differences. As expressed in his motivation for *Barbe bleue*, Davies is interested in particular features and techniques from theatre and film and how they would bring out the live/*mediatized* dynamic in performance and also blur theatrical and filmic presence. He sets himself the task of combining and integrating these properties of and techniques from theatre and film to create new modes of seeing things and new representational modes. While Robertson's approach fixes theatre to specific conventions with

which she is familiar, Davies takes an experimental approach that opens up theatre to new modes of representation. *Barbe bleue* is a strong example of how digital media extend theatre into a “modular non-hierarchical inter-active non-linear process where there is a layering of meaning present at the same time and space” (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006b:23): a world of multiple meanings where meaning is not prescribed and audiences are encouraged to interpret their own experience of the performance.

5.4. Conclusion

The chapter has presented an analysis of *Barbe bleue* as an intermedial performance. The nature of interaction in *Barbe bleue* has been described in terms of combination and integration. The chapter argues that *Barbe Bleue* combines and integrates auditory narration, storybook narration, fictional film, mockumentary among other narration strategies to *retell*, *comment on* and *rewrite* the age-old tale of Bluebeard into a new context – through the interplay of corporeal bodies, auditory voices, images, film video and various projection techniques. The transmedial tale of Bluebeard is thus *re-mediated* and *trans-mediated* into the South African context through the use of multiple media.

The chapter has demonstrated how the performance employed the techniques of time delay, synchronising and forwarding by experimenting with the sequentially of narrative modes thereby reconfiguring how the audience experiences theatre and theatrical presence. Davies effectively employs the conventional and unconventional – techniques, properties, ways of looking and hearing – from theatre and film (in the narration, lighting, editing, projection) to expose new modes of presentation and new performance styles and to explore new tools for the stage.

The chapter has also highlighted the breaking of traditional roles (of acting, technical direction and directing) as it discussed how the creative team interacted in the creation of the *mise-en-scene* and the performance event. The use of technology in *Barbe bleue* is also both functional and aesthetic but most importantly, it subverts conventional divisions of labour in theatre. This is exemplified by the fact that the entire cast was involved in the creation of all the materials and designs used for the performance and was also actively engaged in the execution of the lighting design in the rehearsal process, and also in the performance. Davies and his entire cast multitasked and played

crucial roles of in the creation of the mise en scène and the performance events that incorporated other media, taking multiple roles to achieve the required aesthetic effects.

Chapter Six

Transfers and transformations in Catherine Makhumula's *Mwana wanga*

6.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses Catherine Makhumula's *Mwana wanga*, a theatrical performance derived from a recorded song, *Dearest child*, by Kimba Mutanda¹¹⁴ featuring Peter Mawanga. While the previous chapters have focused primarily on the analysis of media combination and integration in theatrical performances, the main discussion in this chapter is on media transformation – how a theatrical performance was derived from an existing medial product, that of recorded song. In this chapter, the recorded song, *Dearest child*, is regarded as the source medium for the theatrical performance *Mwana wanga*, and the analysis is about the way in which *Mwana wanga* came into being from *Dearest child*. In essence, the chapter argues that there is a complex process of transfer and transformation of media characteristics and traits in the relations between *Dearest child*, the song, and *Mwana wanga*: that the inspiration from *Dearest child* in *Mwana wanga* goes beyond the appropriation of themes and motifs, but also includes the transfer and transformation of aesthetic conventions, principles of structure, and stylistic procedures.

The theoretical frame for this discussion is grounded in Rajewsky's categorisation of “medial transposition” as one of her three types of intermediality. The example in this chapter fits her first category, called intermediality, “in the narrow sense of medial transposition” (Rajewsky, 2005:51).

Here the intermedia quality has to do with the way in which a media product comes into being, that is, with the transformation of a given media product [...] or of its substratum into another medium [...] The “original” text, film, etc., is the “source” of the newly formed media product, whose formation is based on a media-specific and obligatory intermedial transformation process (Rajewsky, 2005:51).

¹¹⁴ The full name is Kimba Mutanda Anderson. Mutanda identifies as a Malawian artist, even though he holds British citizenship. According to his profile on <http://musicinafrica.net/directory/kimba> [2016, February 17], (Shumba, 2015) Mutanda was born in Denmark and was raised in Kenya, Zambia and Malawi.

The discussion in this chapter agrees with Rajewsky, who regards media transposition as an example of intermediality because it is undoubtedly a phenomenon that has to do with the crossing of borders between media.

It is worth noting, however, that there are some scholars that do not regard the transfer or transformation of media characteristics from one medium to another as intermediality. On the one hand, there are scholars such as Chiel Kattenbelt (2009:21) who distinguish “transmediality” – the transfer from one medium to another medium, from intermediality – the co-relation of media in the sense of mutual influences between media. Such scholars limit their understanding of the terms to relationships between mediality and the prefixes *inter*, *inter*, *trans* and *multi*, and therefore tend to separate intermediality from transmediality. On the other hand, there are scholars who use the term intermediality as an umbrella term to cover a wide range of phenomena that involve the crossing or transgressing of media borders. Such scholars have a broader conceptualisation of intermediality and understand the transfers from one medium to another (transmediality) as a form of intermediality. Balme (2004:7), for example, uses the term intermediality to cover the following concepts: (a form of) intertextuality, the transposition of diegetic content from one medium to another, and the attempt to realise in one medium the aesthetic conventions and habits of seeing and hearing in another medium.

Just as Balme and Rajewsky, Elleström (2014:47) uses the term “intermediality” broadly to refer to all types of relations among different types of media, and the term transmediality to refer specifically to intermedial relations that are characterised by actual or potential transfers, in terms of which “a source medium is transformed into a target medium” in a relationship that is defined as involving contiguity and continuity. This chapter bases its analysis of *transmediality as (a form of) intermediality* on how these scholars account for the relationship between the two concepts.

Elleström’s understanding of “media transformation” is particularly crucial to the arguments in this chapter. The divergences and conformities between his approach and Rajewsky’s clarify the chapter’s understanding of *intermediality as transmediality*. In introducing media transformation in his book *Media transformation: The transfer of media characteristics among media*, Elleström (2014) disparages a popular misconception that the process of media transformation involves the material transformation of the source medium. He argues that, strictly speaking, the source

medium remains intact after the appearance of a target medium, even though it may certainly be understood differently (Elleström, 2014:47). He clarifies that it is actually the source medium's compound media characteristics that are transferred to a target medium during the process of media transformation. In his words, the compound media characteristics of the source medium cannot be materially transferred to a target medium because they remain in the source medium – they are only “cloned” onto a target medium (Elleström, 2014:47).

It is also worth noting however, that Elleström conflates two of Rajewsky's categories of intermediality (media transposition and media references) into one in his approach. According to Elleström, the two categories should not be differentiated, because transmediation always includes some amount of media representation (a category he associates with media references), and vice versa. “The moment a perceiver believes that some media characteristics are represented again, these characteristics are recognisable as belonging to the source medium indicating that the source medium becomes present to the mind [...] transmediation invokes media representation in a secondary manner” (Elleström, 2014:18).

While upholding Elleström's viewpoint, that the transfer of media characteristics always includes media representation, this chapter chooses to maintain Rajewsky's categorisation of media transposition and media references as distinct categories of intermediality. This is because Rajewsky's distinction of the category “media transposition” provides a more appropriate description for the particular relations between source media product, *Dearest child*, and the target media product, *Mwana wanga*¹¹⁵. Even though both media products are situated in the same cultural, geographical dispensation, there not only is a temporal gap between the two media products, but the latter media product (*Mwana wanga*) also announces its origins in the source media product. The chapter therefore discusses the relations between *Mwana wanga* and *Dearest child* in terms of Rajewsky's media transposition, while acknowledging that this process of transposition between the two also involved media representation.

¹¹⁵ Elleström's concepts of transmediation and representation include examples where the ascription of the title “source” or “target” medium is not as clear cut (see Elleström, 2014:22). Rajewsky's (2005:51) categorisation of media transposition (which is the preferred categorisation for the relations between *Mwana wanga* and *Dearest child*) is based on the source medium-new media product relationship.

The first section of the paper introduces the source medium and the target medium in short summaries and in terms of their textual, musicological and performance analysis. The section thereafter discusses intermediality in the relations between *Mwana wanga* and *Dearest child* in terms of transfers and transformations of media characteristics and traits. The chapter ends with concluding remarks on the topic of media transposition from *Dearest child* to *Mwana wanga*.

6.2. Research design and methodology

The performance *Mwana wanga* was purposively sampled as a potential case for the study before the performance event under discussion occurred. The role of the researcher is much more complex in *Mwana wanga* than in the other cases in the study. The researcher (also identified as the spectating researcher) was actively involved as part of the creative team from the inception stages to the performance events. This in turn enabled the process-oriented approach to analysis, which examines the creation of the *mise en scène*, but it also presents the researcher with the methodological dilemma regarding the subjectivity of reading one's own work.

The researcher was influenced by scholars who understand subjectivity (in qualitative research) as an unavoidable core characteristic of research as opposed to those that characterize subjectivity as an epistemological “deficiency”, that needs to be accompanied by methodological efforts, to minimize/to eliminate possible biases (Breuer, Mruck & Roth, 2002). The researcher therefore, took a reflexive approach towards the multiple roles as both a participant in the creation of the *mise en scène*, but also an observer of the process, and a spectating researcher during the performance event.

The same research questions that guided that researcher in the other cases were used in this case. As was the case with the other cases discussed in this study, the data collection for this case included watching the performance, taking performance notes, recording a video version of the performance, and semi-structured interviews with other principal creatives.

6.3. Introducing the source medium: *Dearest child*

Dearest child is a song by Kimba Mutanda and Peter Mawanga, produced by Qabaniso Malewezi¹¹⁶. In the song, a mother writes a nostalgic letter to her child, who is living in faraway

¹¹⁶ Also known by his stage name Q.

lands. Even though the relationship is strained by distance, there are strong sentiments of love and longing from the mother to the child. The song lyrics for *Dearest child* are included in Appendix 2.

Written by a rapper (Kimba Mutanda), the text of *Dearest child* was originally conceived in terms of lyrics/verses of a rap song. These verses on a page were later remediated into a recorded song, where they are *trans*-mediated by voice and musical instruments, and then again by voice and body in performance poetry and in a theatrical performance. In other words, the text's fundamental characteristics are represented repeatedly by different types of sensory configurations of other technical media. In this particular context, the transmediation of *Dearest child* is understood as both “re-mediation – repeated mediation – but also *trans*-mediation: repeated mediation of equivalent sensory configurations by another technical medium” (Elleström, 2014:14).

Dearest child, the song, refuses simple categorisation. Oscillating between its rap presentation, “poetic” text, an Afro-pop chorus and instrumentation, it consists of both vocal and instrumental, recorded music. A further complexity arises in that the song not only announces itself as a letter, but also appropriates distinctive markers from letter writing. It therefore becomes imperative to analyse *Dearest child* both as a letter and as a song, before analysing the exact media characteristics that are transferred from it to *Mwana wanga*.

6.3.1. *Dearest child*, the letter

One noticeable feature about the song *Mwana wanga* is that it adopts the structure of a letter and also contains markers of letter writing as an activity. There is of course no tangible/material letter (in the form of ink on paper) in the recorded song, but the idea of a physical letter and that of the letter-writing activity are both evoked by the skill of the artist using means that are medium-specific to music. It could be argued, therefore, that the song *Dearest child* evokes a letter-writing intermedial reference in its configuration because of its ability to conjure up the letter-writing activity in the minds of the listener or perceiver by using its own medium-specific means (that of a song). Intermedial references, while not the major topic of interest in this chapter, are discussed at length in the next chapter on *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* (Encounters).

This section of the chapter discusses both the letter and letter-writing markers. In addition to these structural markers, the section also analyses the text of the “letter”. Both the structural and textual analyses are crucial for understanding the thematic, textual and structural traits that were transferred from the song (as letter) to the play.

6.3.2. Structural analysis

Even though songs and letters can be said to share some structural characteristics, there was a clear and deliberate attempt on the part of the artists to make the song resemble a letter and to be construed as one by the listening audience. This was achieved by the meticulous placement of markers throughout the song. These markers include a salutation, the body, the closing, the identification line and, finally, the P.S. (post scriptus). The “letter” in the song is structured using the following formula:

Salutation – Body – Closing – Identification line – P.S.

Mwana wanga

Mwana wanga

Mwana wanga

The first of these markers is the salutation “mwana wanga” (interpreted as dearest child or my child)¹¹⁷, which is the first phrase to be uttered in the song. The salutation “mwana wanga”, called out three times at the beginning of the song, performs the same function as it does in the letter: it is an introductory phrase signifying to whom the letter is addressed.

The three main verses of the song can be read as the body of the letter, consisting of three long paragraphs (with interjections in between them in the form of a melodic chorus of the song). Unsurprisingly, the verses under discussion perform the same function as the body of a letter: they carry the subject matter content in three distinctly themed “paragraphs”:

From the bottom of my warm heart, yours eternally, your mother, Malawi.

¹¹⁷ It should be noted, therefore, that the association of the play *Mwana wanga* with the song *Dearest child* begins from the title itself, since “mwana wanga” (a Chichewa phrase) translates into “dearest child/my child” in English. As also noted above, mwana wanga, the Chichewa phrase, is also the first utterance in the song and is discussed as a salutation in this section.

The song also contains a closing. The closing is the part of a letter defined as a farewell phrase or word. It precedes the identification line and is often followed by a comma. The closing in the song, captured in the phrase “Yours eternally”, functions as a farewell in a similar way with the use of the following phrases: “Yours truly”, “Sincerely”, “Respectfully yours”, and “Regards”. This particular closing is also anticipated by a preceding phrase, “from the bottom of my heart”, which consolidate it as a closing. In addition, the closing also works together with a few more phrases that precede it. In the song, they can be found in these phrases:

I miss you.

But don't let my emotion be a weight on your spirit

These words should be like a sad song that makes you feel warm and confident when you hear it

Remember, my main concern is that you're happy.

Together with the closing, these lines, which express the mother's best wishes for her child, signal that the letter is coming to an end.

The closing in the song is as expected in a letter, followed by an identification line, “Your mother, Malawi”. In this particular case this line is crucial because it is the only instance in which the identity of the writer is explicitly revealed to be a metaphorical reference to the country Malawi as the mother, in conversation with its “children” (its citizenry), as opposed to being a letter from an ordinary mother to a child.

PS, Whatever you do, you know I wish you the greatest success

Take care for you for me child

God bless.

The letter also includes a postscript, a brief sentence or “paragraph” introduced by the initials, “P.S.” (*Post scriptus*) – Latin for “after having been written”. The postscript signifies that the persona would like to express him or herself in an afterthought, on completion of the letter-writing process. In the song, the postscript performs that same function, reiterating the writer's best wishes in the form of an afterthought.

In addition to these structural markers of the letter in the song, the song comprises phrases that allude to the letter-writing activity itself, announcing and marking the song's “letteri-ness”. These

markers, placed throughout the song, serve to remind the listener of the letter-writing motif, the main motif that is transferred from the song (as letter) to the theatrical performance.

The sentence, “I’ve decided it’s better if I *wrote*¹¹⁸ this letter in English”, which appears as the very first sentence after the salutations, is an explicit proclamation to the listener that the song is in fact a letter. The reference to the “enclosed photo” (in the first “paragraph”) performs the same function, conjuring in the mind of the listener the physical image of the letter with a photo enclosed in it. Towards the end of the first verse, the sentence “I have to stop now, my *hand* is getting sore, but I promise once I gather my thoughts to *write* you some more”, refers directly to the laborious task of letter writing after a long “paragraph” of the letter. It also serves to remind the reader of the letter-writing context of the song, thereby sustaining the letter-writing motif. Finally, the line “I’m gonna *post* this to your last known address”, placed as the opening of the last “paragraph”, signifies the ending of the letter by referring to an activity that takes place after the letter writing process, that of posting.

6.3.2.1. Textual analysis

The first “paragraph” of the song (as letter) evokes the themes of memory, kinship and the diaspora. It also establishes the letter-writing activity from a mother to her child. From this first paragraph there are clues already hinted at, that the relationship in question may be more than one between an ordinary mother and child, that it may well be about Malawi the country itself, personified as a mother addressing her citizens in the diaspora. The dress, referred to by the persona as her best dress, “[t]he black, red, and green one with the setting sun stitched across the chest”, represents the colours and design of the Malawian flag. The persona claims she’s in her forties in the song: Malawi was forty years into its independence (from colonialism) at the time the song was released. The “under construction” state of the house hints to the various socio-economic problems that still rock the country 40 – now 50 – years after its independence.

Finally, the ending of this first “paragraph” can be read to be about the neo-colonial realities of Malawi. The reference to “uncle Chilembwe” in the sentence, “They say they’ve lost faith in your uncle Chilembwe’s pocket money and would rather get/cash that’s green, or be paid by a woman

¹¹⁸ Emphasis has been added throughout the paragraph.

they call Queen”, is significant because it brings out the theme of the brain drain from Malawi. Some Malawians, having lost faith in the socio-economic situation at home (symbolically referred to in terms of the John Chilembwe¹¹⁹ banknote), have opted to emigrate, mostly to the UK (the reference of the woman called Queen), continuing Malawi’s complex relations with its former coloniser, Britain.

The second “paragraph” provides much bolder clues to the political character of this letter and the letter-writing process¹²⁰. The persona reflects on how she fared in her responsibility as a mother, acknowledging that she might have failed her children because of her unsuccessful relationships with the various men that she had married. Because of the close references to particular moments in Malawian history, the letter seems to be a reflection on Malawi’s post-independence leadership and its effects on its citizenry.

My first husband was a jealous man [...] He thought too much freedom a crime/He’d punish your
older siblings sending some into exile/It took me thirty years to end that relationship, and when I
did it felt great.

These lines are very suggestive of the 30-year post-independence dictatorship under President Hastings Kamuzu Banda, from 1964 to 1994. The attempted (unconstitutional) bid for a third term by Malawi’s first post-multiparty president, who was in office from 1994 to 2004, is also strongly hinted at in these lines:

So I give my new partners two years and that’s that/Though the first man I tried it with almost got
too attached/Maybe I made the mistake of showing him too much affection/because when his term
was over he tried to get an extension.

The persona demonstrates maturity and growth in this part of the “letter”, which is presented in a reflective mode. There is a clear differentiation between her domineered status in her previous “marriages” and her current confident demeanour and self-reflection as she writes the letter. The

¹¹⁹ John Chilembwe is the most revered national martyr who appears on Malawi’s biggest bank note, MK2000. In Malawi, Chilembwe is also a colloquial reference to money in general.

¹²⁰ The letter is construed as political in terms of its themes concerning the diaspora and national development. The letter-writing process is construed as political because it alludes to the process of self-reflection, which Malawi, as a nation (and its citizens in the diaspora) needs to take after 50 years of independence. Both *Dearest child* and *Mwana wanga* are metafictional and self-reflexive.

mother ends with a note of hope: she wishes for her child's return because it is her conviction that her child's return as a skilled professional could be the only way out of her status quo.

The final "paragraph" deflects back to the theme of diaspora, focusing on the harsh conditions in the diaspora (especially for illegal immigrants) and the effect of the brain drain on the source nation. These effects are hinted to manifest in terms of the disruption of the development process. Finally, the letter ends on a loving note. The mother does not blame or condemn her child for being away. However, what is clearly expressed throughout the letter and in its ending is the strong sense of love and longing, and the desire for the prodigal child to return home.

6.3.3. *Dearest child, the song*

Intro – Verse – Hook – Verse – Hook – Verse – Hook

Dearest child follows a typical hip-hop structure, as cited above. The beginning of the song has a short intro, which calls out to the child three times. This has been discussed as the salutation part of the letter in the previous section.

The three "paragraphs", which are the body of the letter discussed above, make up the three rap verses of the song. These three paragraphs are punctuated with a hook/chorus, which carries a short, catchy verbal melody, which is repeated twice after the first and second verse and four times after the last verse, in a more textured call-and-response counterpoint¹²¹.

Mutanda delivers the verses in rap (he takes on the role of the mother), while Mawanga sings the chorus. The rap consists of a fast tempo, compared to the tempo used for letter writing (an activity that is evoked in the song). The pauses, and the accentuation of words that rhyme, are noticeable throughout the song and serve to punctuate the song and mark emphasis. The intended audience of the song is Malawians in the diaspora and people in diaspora in general.

The song begins with African drums, an element that is sustained throughout the song. This is followed by the intro and the instrumental melody, which consists of two parts in a call-and-response arrangement. The first verse commences soon after, and more musical instruments are added in the arrangement. Both the vocals and the instruments are briefly paused just before the

¹²¹ In music, counterpoint is the relationship between voices that are harmonically interdependent (polyphony), yet independent in rhythm and contour (Laitz, 2008).

chorus, and then reintroduced again one by one during the chorus. These vocals and the instruments continue concurrently for the rest of the song.

6.3.4. *Dearest child*, performance poetry

Verse one – Verse two – Verse three

The song *Dearest child* is also encountered as poetry when performed by the song's producer, Malewezi¹²², who is a leading Malawian performance poet. In fact, in an interview, Malewezi said his performance of *Dearest child* “as poetry” was his very first encounter with the genre of performance poetry¹²³.

The performance of the verses from *Dearest child* by a poet in front of an audience frames it as performance poetry. Even though *Dearest child* as poetry is not directly related to the creation of *Mwana wanga*, the theatrical performance, reference to the performance poetry is helpful for the analysis of the transposition of media characteristics from the song *Dearest child* to *Mwana wanga*, the theatrical performance. *Dearest child*, when performed as performance poetry, exposes the processes of transfer and transformation that takes place from song to performance in general (whether as a theatrical performance or as performance poetry). In particular, it gives an idea of how the performing body captures and approximates the relocated traits using the means available at its disposal. This, in turn, provides a fuller comparative base for the analysis of the text as a song, as performance poetry and as a theatrical performance.

It should be noted that the hook/chorus part of the song is omitted in the performance poetry, and that the performer punctuates the poem with means available to him as an embodied performer, such as pauses, facial expressions and gestures.

¹²² Both Mutanda and Malewezi are the copyright holders of the song. In the 1990s, the two artists belonged to a Malawian hip-hop group, called Real Elements – Mutanda as a rapper (stage name Plan B) and Malewezi (Q) as the producer of the music.

¹²³ Malewezi is cited in the following interview by Vangi Gantsho (2016) <https://vangisafrica.wordpress.com/2016/02/04/my-love-letter-to-poetry-q-malewezi/> [2016, August 17]. His performance of *Dearest child*, at Poetry Africa 2014, can be viewed in this YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pX1d2mS3UI> [2016, July 15] (Centre for Creative Arts, 2015).

6.4. Introducing the target medium, *Mwana wanga*, the theatrical performance

Act one – Act two – Act three

Mwana wanga is a woman's biographical journey of love, betrayal, abuse, courage and strength explored through the writing of a letter to her child. Through her letter to one of her children, she explores issues such as unity, exploitation and blame, touching on the very fabric of what it means to be Malawian.

Mwana wanga is a workshopped play that uses a minimalistic set and props. The only objects on stage are a chair and some sewing materials. Inspired by the three paragraphs or verses of the song, the performance consists of three long monologues, with intermissions within and in between them. There are noticeable similarities and differences between *Mwana wanga* and *Dearest child*. Just as in the song, a mother also writes a letter to her long-lost child in *Mwana wanga*. As the narrative progresses, it also becomes clear that this is a metaphoric representation of a bigger relationship between a country and its citizenry. This correlation between song and performance informs the plot and the narrative structure of the play. Similarly, *Mwana wanga* does not have the paper materiality of a letter, in the same way as *Dearest child* also does not. The letter and the letter-writing activity are both evoked by means conventionally associated with performance, such as the actor's words and body and hand gestures. However, while the author of the song was interested in exploring the theme of diaspora in their depiction of the relationship between Malawi the country and its citizens in the diaspora, *Mwana wanga*'s focus is extended to include issues that concern citizens both in the diaspora and those at home.

The creative team consists of Malawian artists with a diverse range of talents. Uchizi Munyenyeembe (a recently graduated acting student at the time) performed the play as a one-woman act under the direction of Catherine Makhumula¹²⁴ and Mbene mwa Mbene (a freelance actor and director who took the role of assistant director), with Robert Magasa, a freelance sound and lighting technician. There were three main performances of the play in 2014 – in the Great

¹²⁴ The director of the play is also the researcher and author of this PhD thesis. She is currently enrolled in a PhD programme in the drama department at Stellenbosch University. She is also currently a member of staff in the department of Fine and Performing Arts, Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

Hall, Chancellor College in Zomba, in the Nanzikambe Arts Amphitheatre in Blantyre, and at Madsoc Theatre in Lilongwe, Malawi¹²⁵.

Mwana wanga, just as any other theatrical performance, combines and integrates medial products, types and traits. However, this chapter focuses on its relationship with *Dearest child* in terms of the processes of transfer and transformation that occurred from the song to the theatrical performance.

6.5. Intermediality in the relations between *Dearest child* and *Mwana wanga*: Transfer and transformation

Intermediality is discussed in this section in terms of a transfer and transformation of media traits and characteristics from a primarily auditory medium, namely (recorded) music (which is recognised as the source), to a primarily auditory and visual theatrical composition. There is a temporal gap between the two media products, *Dearest child* and *Mwana wanga*. This gap is both in terms of different times of genesis and in the sense that a perceiver may construe the import of a song medium in *Mwana wanga* on the basis of having known the song *Dearest child* before.

The nature of media transformation involved in the transfer from song to theatrical performance is both pre-semiotic and semiotic. In other words, it involves both a material process of media realisation of entities (with material, sensorial and spatiotemporal qualities and a semiotic potential) from one medial product to another, but also a semiotic aspect involving the process of meaning making that involves the creative team and the audience.

There are fundamental factors that make the transfer and transformation from the song, *Dearest child*, to the theatrical performance, *Mwana wanga*, possible. According to Elleström (2014:38), the modes of the four modalities of media constitute a transmedial foundation for understanding the transmediation of media. These modalities and their modes, however, are not transferred from one medial product to another, but only help in understanding whether or not transfers and transformations are possible.

¹²⁵ See the following newspaper articles that review the performances, from *The Malawi Nation* newspaper (online version of the print publication) <http://mwnation.com/chanco-theatre-lecturer-brings-one-woman-play/> [2016, February 2] (Seyani, 2014) and *The Daily Times* newspaper (online version of the print publication) <http://timesmediamw.com/woman-in-grand-one-actor-show/> [27 February 2016] (Banda, 2014).

Mwana wanga and *Dearest child* share some modes of modalities of media that make processes of transmediation possible. The material interface for *Dearest child* is sound waves, and that of theatre consists of a combination of several interfaces: surfaces that are both flat and not flat, and that are both changing and static¹²⁶. The fact that both media share an interface helps explain why *Mwana wanga* can successfully transmediate *Dearest child*. While the physical and mental acts of perceiving the sound waves from *Dearest child* are predominantly through the sense of hearing, perceiving *Mwana wanga* involves both hearing and sight. The spoken/rapped letter from mother to child is well transmediated by theatre, because theatre already integrates auditory media. *Dearest child* and *Mwana wanga* also share temporality: both the song and the theatrical performance have a beginning, middle and end, even though *Dearest child*'s temporality is recorded and that of *Mwana wanga* occurs in real time in front of an audience. Similarly, the meanings construed from both medial products are created through symbolic, indexical and iconic signs.

However, the sharing of modality modes alone does not account for the transfers and transformations from the source medium to the target medium, according to Elleström. Elleström (2014:39) claims that it is the compound media characteristics¹²⁷ and not the modalities that are transferable from one medium to another. Media products may share all modality modes and yet be very different from each other. Elleström argues that each media product has a rather distinct set of compound media characteristics that make up its full media expression that is discerned and construed by the observer.

The analysis in the following section therefore particularly concerns compound media characteristics that are transferred and transformed from *Dearest child* to *Mwana wanga*. Key questions discussed include: How are the compound media characteristics in *Dearest child* (such as narrative structure, musicality, melodies and events to which their symbolic signs refer)

¹²⁶ The classification in this paragraph is based on Elleström's (2010c:17-24) discussion of modalities of media and their modes.

¹²⁷ Elleström (2014:40) defines compound media characteristics as features of media products that are apprehended and formed when a structuring and interpreting mind makes sense of the mediated sensory configurations. Although triggered by material input, compound media characteristics are ultimately cognitive inputs (Elleström, 2014:40). In this particular case, compound media characteristic are the overall structure, narrative (plots and stories story world), rhythms, melodies, pattern, style and perspective, representations of situations, spaces, places, persons, animals, objects, and motifs, that are transferable from *Dearest child* to *Mwana wanga*.

transferred to *Mwana wanga*, the theatrical performance? What was relocated successfully without any changes, and what required approximations and transformation? What could not be relocated? The section provides a detailed description of shared medial traits between them, but also differing medial features between them, in order to analyse the process of transfer and transformation in the media products.

6.5.1. The transfer of the letter-writing motif

Mwana wanga imports the letter-writing motif from *Dearest child* as a structural element in its own narration. To start with, the structural markers of the letter that were discussed in section 6.2.1 are maintained verbally. These include the salutation, body, closing, identification line and the P.S. Similarly, the verbal letter-writing markers from the song are successfully relocated to the performance. However, in addition to these verbal markers, gestural markers are added with the use of the actor's body. In other words, the presence of the corporeal body in the performance transforms the verbal markers beyond the verbal realm to the physical realm. For example, in addition to the phrase "I have to stop now, my *hand* is getting sore" uttered by the actress on stage, the spectating researcher experiences the strenuous task of letter writing by seeing the character on stage write (the character on stage uses hand gestures to symbolise letter writing. This symbolic letter writing is conducted at the same tempo as her letter reading activity), and hearing her articulate the words of the letter as she writes in real time confirms the claim of strain that she makes (see Figure 6.1). The tempo of verbal performance by the actor on stage is much slower than in the rap or the performance poetry session. This is because the performer on stage attempts to approximate the tempo a writer would use when he/she actually writes.

Besides the structure of the letter, the performance is also able to represent the letter-writing activity itself in different ways than in the song. Letter writing, a physical activity that takes time, space, thought and energy, is symbolically approximated by theatrical means rather than literally, through the use of gesture rather than pen and paper. However, the physicality of the letter-writing process, which in this case involved physically sitting down and miming, was characterised by externalised internal dilemmas, interruptions, diversions and revisions (some of which are alluded to in the song). These features were represented by means of the corporeal body of the actor on stage.

Similarly, the idea of the listener, which is implicit in the song through the reference to the intended audience of the letter, becomes quite literal in the performance¹²⁸. This is because the intended audience works out to be more than suggestive in the performance. The presence of the corporeal body, the personification of mother Malawi, in the same time and space as the intended audience, implicates the immediate audience in the action of the performance. Additionally, in *Mwana wanga* the character on stage addresses the audience as her sons and daughters, siblings of the child the “letter” is referring to. The actor on stage capitalises on this relationship through their interaction with the audience, evoking call-and-response moments with them, such that it is strongly implied that the character on stage, the mother, is having a conversation with her children while writing a letter to her child in the diaspora. Depending on the location of the performance and the type of audience, the intended audience of the performance has the capacity to generate new meanings. Nevertheless, at the signification level, the relationship between the character and the audience is much more literal in the theatrical performance than the relationship between the persona and the listening audience of the song, which is spatially and temporally detached.

¹²⁸ The idea of the listener as the intended audience is suggested in the direct address of the mother to the child in the song.



Figure 6.1 *Mwana wanga*: Letter writing (Source: production team)

6.5.2. Transfers of the music

This section analyses how *Mwana wanga* directly incorporates music from *Dearest child*¹²⁹. These transfers comprise of easily identifiable parts of the song in the performance. The inspiration from *Dearest child* in *Mwana wanga* is recognisable in the performance in the form of an adaptation of the text itself, and of the melodies – both verbal and instrumental. The existence of these aspects of the song in the performance demonstrates how the inspiration from the song is more than just thematic: that there are concrete traceable and identifiable markers of the song in the performance that would be recognisable by anyone familiar with the song.

¹²⁹ This direct incorporation of music is to be differentiated from an analogical or metaphorical borrowing from music.

The instrumental melody, for example, found in both *Dearest child* and *Mwana wanga*, performs the same structural function in the performance as it did in the song: it holds the pieces together by functioning as a linkage from one scene to the next. In the song, the instrumental melody can be heard from the beginning to the end of the song, (while other instruments and vocals were added and removed at particular moments of the song). In the performance, the instrumental melody recurs at transitions from one scene to another, thereby functioning as the principle underlying base that holds the narrative structure in one coherent entity by linking all its parts together.

Counterpoint, another trait that *Mwana wanga* adopts from *Dearest child* also plays a structuring function in the performance. Just as in song, the texture of the performance becomes heavier towards the end of the performance, with many narrative techniques juxtaposed together. The use of multiple narrative techniques in the solo performance has the effect of altering the texture of the play. By adding layers of narration techniques in the performance in addition to the singular/linear first-person active narration from *Dearest child*, *Mwana wanga* adopts a more complex narrative structure that functions in a similar way counterpoint in the song. What started out as simple letter writing action morphs into an active monologue addressed to the audience, combined with call and response moments of interaction with the audience.

6.5.3. Theatrical transformations and approximations of song

This section discusses how the theatrical performance of *Mwana wanga* approximated some of the (not easily transferable) media traits from the song to the stage. This follows Elleström's (2014:6) understanding that there is a process of transformation that goes along with the transfers, when one medial product is derived from a markedly different medium: "something is kept, something is added, and something is removed".

One main narrative trait that can be identified in both the song and the performance is call and response. Call and response manifests differently in the song and in the theatre performance. In the song, the call and response can be located in the hook, while in the performance, it is located between the performer and the audience interaction. The fact that the song and the performance are markedly different in modal traits (the song being primarily verbal and the performance being both verbal and corporeal) necessitated that the performance approximates this trait using its own medium-specific means – primarily through performer-audience interaction. Call and response and

performer-audience interaction are discussed in this chapter as features of both solo performance and indigenous African performance in this context. However, the question of the extent to which these features in *Mwana wanga* can be attributed to either the genre of solo performance or indigenous African or both is debatable and beyond the scope of this study. It is clear, nonetheless, that the approximation of these features in *Mwana wanga* is particular to performance in general.

In the song, call and response is evoked by counter-melody (a secondary melody played in counterpoint to the primary melody) in both the vocals in the chorus and the instruments that play throughout the song. In the play, however, call and response is evoked by performer-audience interaction. The performer prompted responses from the audience throughout the performance, either through song or through direct addressing of the audience, in such a manner such that the audience became heavily involved in the unfolding of the play.

It is possible to talk about this narrative style and technique described above in terms of *nthano*¹³⁰. The telling of a *nthano* is an interactive experience, commencing with the initial call and response, whereby the narrator says “*padangokhala*” (which means “once upon a time”) and the audience responds by saying “*tilitonse*” (literally translated as “we are together”). Throughout the telling of *nthano*, the narrator inserts gaps in the narrative so that the audience can chant “*tilitonse*”, to indicate that they are following the story attentively. While *Mwana wanga* did not have a recurring catchy call-and-response phrase, the type of interaction evoked in the telling of *nthano* was the desired effect that was sought by the creative team in *Mwana wanga*. The actor on stage sought to achieve this effect by encouraging the audience to take part in some call-and-response songs and chants that involved singing and the clapping of hands, and by directly referring to them as characters in her story world.

It is also possible to talk about this narrative style and technique as a characteristic of solo performance. Jo Bonney (2000), for example, argues that a distinctive trait of solo performance resides in its frequent lack of a fourth wall separating the performer from the audience. According

¹³⁰ *Nthano* is a Chichewa term that can loosely be translated as “story” or “oral narratives” in English. The term is commonly used in Malawi and Zambia. David Kerr (1991:50) defines *nthano* as “narratives with song”, while Moya Malamusi (1990) defines them as “chantefables”. However, the context of *nthano* is as important as its content. *Nthano* sessions in their natural context take place at night, around a fire. *Nthano* are most likely to involve an elderly woman as performer, and children as (participating) audience (Kerr, 1991:51).

to him, a “solo show expects and demands the active involvement of the people in the audience” (Bonney, 2000:xiii). In place of sound heard from electronic instruments, *Mwana wanga* conjures up the character of mother in flesh and blood, on stage in a solo act. Distinct from other types of theatrical performances, *Mwana wanga* performed as a solo act uses audience interaction to break the monotony of a solo actor on stage.

The relocation of the letter-writing motif also demanded an appropriation from song to theatrical performance. The letter-writing activity was presented as a mother’s private, intimate activity in the song, albeit broadcast to the world through electronic *mediatization* (through media such as radios, computers, phones – depending on which devices are used by the audiences). In the play, the letter writing is also presented as detached solitary physical activity by the actor on stage in an active narrative mode¹³¹. This solitary activity is marked by the actor’s use of space and movement on the stage¹³². However, the solitary activity is interspersed with and morphs into a communal activity involving the audience¹³³. In the midst of the gesticulated and verbalised letter writing activity, the actor would take the same story explored in the letter-writing world and turn her attention to the audience, continuing it and exploring it with them, subsequently using her body to extend its unfolding in performance (compare Figure 6.1 and 6.2). In these instances, the actor adopts the traditional story-telling techniques discussed above as opposed to the solitary letter-writing activity where the audience is not necessary acknowledged. This chapter argues, therefore, that through theatrical means (solo performance in particular), *Mwana wanga* approximated and expanded the letter-writing activity (to even involve the audience) from how it manifested in the song *Dearest child*.

In addition to the active narrative mode evoked by the letter-writing motif, *Mwana wanga* blends several modes of presentation, used by the solo performer. These include “dramatic monologues”, which involved the adoption of multiple characters by one actor and “narrative monologues”,

¹³¹ This refers to the externalised/vocalised thoughts presented in a monologue for the audience to witness (what would otherwise remain internal and written).

¹³² The actor retreats to the middle of the stage and uses a confined space as she sits on a chair and is absorbed in the letter writing.

¹³³ This is marked by the actor’s approach towards the audience and her use of the stage-front and audience spaces.

which involved a character telling a story in the past tense. Of particular interest to the question of transformations and approximations is the use of flashbacks and flash-forwards in *Mwana wanga*.

Mwana wanga enabled the enactment of flashbacks and flash-forwards that were merely suggested in the song. One-liners from the song, which evoked memory, were fully developed into and dramatised as scenes. The line, “we might have met before/But I think the last time I saw her was in 1964”, for example, refers to the interaction between Malawi and Britain, its one-time coloniser. The actor dramatised the tensions inherent in this relationship on stage in the form of a dramatic monologue. Similarly, the line “My first husband was a jealous man”, in reference to the turbulent relationships between Malawi and its political leadership are also dramatised on stage. A flash-forward, inferred from the line “I reserved a spot on a beach with the best sands by the lakeside for your home coming party ... whenever that may be”, is also dramatised in a scene that highlights a union between a mother and her child from the diaspora. In summary, through the use of dramatic monologues as a medial approximation of the song, elaborate scenes were created to dramatised some of the encounters briefly mentioned in the narrative in *Dearest child*.



Figure 6.2 *Mwana wanga* audience interaction (Source: production team)

6.6. Conclusion

This chapter discussed media transpositions from the song *Dearest child* to the theatrical performance *Mwana wanga*. The nature of interaction between the theatrical production and the song has been discussed as a process of transfer and transformation whereby the theatrical production of was derived from an existing medial product, that of recorded song. The chapter argued that there is a complex relationship between the song (the letter) and performance that is clearly defined in terms of one being a source material for the other. While the song refers to the conventions of letter writing, using its own medium-specific means, the theatrical performance relocates this letter-writing motif, as well as other compound media traits, through a process of transfer and transformation.

While some traits were more easily transferable, other traits demanded approximations. The resulting effect is a multi-layered complex narrative structure consisting of various narrative modes. *Mwana wanga* therefore appropriates elements of the song from its adaptation of *Dearest child*. *Mwana wanga* is clear about its inspiration by *Dearest child* in terms of the transfer of themes and motifs, and musical elements, and through the transformation of some traits from *Dearest child* through *Mwana wanga*'s specific medial means. This creates a reciprocal interrelationship that is typical in intermediality. While *Dearest child* inspires *Mwana wanga*, the theatrical performance also becomes part of the interpretive context of *Dearest child* once its existence has been acknowledged.

The inspiration from *Dearest child* in *Mwana wanga* starts from the conceptual stages, even before the rehearsals. This involved a close interaction among the creative team and a close engagement with the song (and its creators), as the creative team appropriated the features of the song in a variety of ways, through practical exploration in the workshop process. Throughout the rehearsal workshop, the song remained a key source of inspiration for the performance. While central to the conception, the rehearsal period allowed further experimentation beyond the song itself to explore the themes further and to allow for the incorporation of the creative team's personal style and aesthetic nuances, which were added to the *mise en scène*. *Mwana wanga* successfully "re-theatricalizes"¹³⁴ theatre by using ideas, "frames" and techniques from another art form: music. In other words, *Mwana wanga* reconfigures conceptualisations of theatre and theatrical presence by appropriating and approximating "frames" and techniques from music.

¹³⁴ *Re-theatricalisation* is a concept used by Roesner (2016:94) to refer to the integration of a sense of musicality into the process and performance to rejuvenate theatre. Roesner's book, *Musicality in theatre: Music as model, method and metaphor in theatre-making*, discusses *re-theatricalisation* by Meyerhold, Appia and Artaud, among others. Used in this context, *re-theatricalisation* underscores the processes of appropriation of techniques and qualities from music in general, and from *Dearest child*, the song, in particular, to invigorate the theatrical performance, *Mwana wanga*.

Chapter Seven

Documenting cross-cultural encounters: Intermedial references in “*Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw*” (Encounters)

7.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* (Encounters), a cross-cultural theatrical performance by Solomon Peacocks Theatre (Blantyre, Malawi) and Fräulein Wunder AG (2016) (Hannover, Germany). While the previous chapter focused primarily on the analysis of media transformation – how a media product was derived from another existing media product, this chapter discusses intermedial references: how the theatrical performance *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* (Encounters) uses its own medium-specific means to refer to other media, such as documentary film and photography. The chapter argues that the employment of “referred media” (documentary film and photography) in the performance enabled the creative team to achieve a complex and continuous shifting of frames between the factual and fictional realms of reality within the theatre context. This constant shifting of frames was an essential tool for blurring the two realms of reality in the exploration of a personal yet communal, and mundane yet contentious, subject of cross-cultural human encounters.

The theoretical grounding for this discussion is Rajewsky’s categorisation of “intermedial references” as one of the three types of intermediality. The example in this chapter is most suited to her third and final category of intermediality. In this category, Rajewsky (2005:52) defines intermedial references as “meaning-constitutional strategies that contribute to the media product’s overall signification, whereby the media product uses its own media-specific means, either to refer to a specific, individual work produced in another medium or to refer to a specific medial subsystem (such as a film genre) or to another medium *qua* system”. The given product thus constitutes itself partly or wholly *in relation*¹³⁵ to the work, system or subsystem to which it refers (Rajewsky, 2005:53).

According to Rajewsky (2005:53), intermedial references are similar to media combination in that, in both, intermediality designates a communicative-semiotic concept. However, unlike media

¹³⁵ Rajewsky’s emphasis.

combination cases (as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 in this thesis), in medial references, “*by definition* it is just *one* medium – the referencing medium (as opposed to the medium referred to) – that is materially present”¹³⁶ (Rajewsky, 2005:53). Instead of integrating different material medial forms of articulation in one media product, as in cases of media combination, the given media product in media references *thematizes, evokes, or imitates*”¹³⁷ elements or structures of another, conventionally distinct, medium through the use of its own media-specific means (Rajewsky, 2005:53).

There are, therefore, three main markers of an intermedial reference. First, a “thematisation”, “evocation” or “imitation” of elements or structures of another conventional medium must be evident in the intermedial reference. Rajewsky (2005:52) explains that intermedial references, by definition, imply “a crossing of media borders”, and thus a medial difference. She also insists that the “illusion-forming quality”¹³⁸ that results from this thematisation, evocation or imitation should create an analogy between the referring and the referred medium’s respective principles, rules of communication and strategies. Secondly, this thematisation, evocation or imitation must only be achieved using the medium-specific means of the referring medium. In this particular case, the referencing medium is the theatrical performance, and the intermedial reference can only be achieved through theatrical means. The third and final marker of intermedial references is that only the referring medium is materially present in the medial configuration. Rajewsky (2005:55) acknowledges that a given media product cannot genuinely *reproduce*¹³⁹ elements or structures of a different medial system through its own medium-specific means: it can only *evoke* or *imitate* them. Consequently, she argues that an intermedial reference can only generate an *illusion* of another medium’s specific practices. In Rajewsky’s (2005:53) words, “[...] and yet it is precisely this illusion that potentially solicits in the recipient of a literary text, say, a sense of filmic, painterly, or musical qualities, or – more generally speaking – a sense of a visual or acoustic presence”.

¹³⁶ Rajewsky’s emphasis.

¹³⁷ Added emphasis.

¹³⁸ Rajewsky (2005:54) uses the phrase “illusion-forming quality” to specifically mean an illusion that aims for an analogy between a referring medium and the referred medium’s respective principles, rules of communication and strategies.

¹³⁹ Rajewsky’s emphasis in the following sentences.

It is worth noting, however, that Rajewsky's (2005:57-59; 2010:57-60) main example of intermedial referencing in "Intermediality, intertextuality, and remediation: A literary perspective on intermediality" involves the erection of a huge picture frame-like construction on the stage in a dance theatre production titled *Körper* (Bodies) by Sasha Waltz in Berlin in 2000¹⁴⁰. In this example, Rajewsky argues that the evocation of the medium of painting is not achieved simply by means of subjective associations that may (or may not) be elicited in the viewer's mind. Rather, the placement on stage of "an oversized frame – a device that is iconically related to a picture frame, and that effectively 'frames' the action taking place on stage – explicitly designates painting as the medial system being referred to, and thus marks the overall *mise en scène* as an intermedial reference to painting" (Rajewsky 2005:57).

While this chapter agrees that the designation of a phenomenon as an intermedial reference requires more than subjective associations that may or may not be elicited in the viewer's mind, the chapter also asserts that intermedial references do not necessarily have to manifest in (physical) materiality, as with the oversized frame in Rajewsky's example. The chapter therefore asserts that markers of intermedial referencing may be immaterial, and that these "immaterial markers" qualify as intermedial references insofar as they create a semiotic relationship or association between the referencing and the referred medium. The example discussed in this chapter involves immaterial markers of intermedial referencing which, when considered together in a collective, elicit a semiotic association with the referred medium, subsequently creating an analogy between the referring and referred medium.

It should also be noted that Rajewsky's categorisation of intermedial references is closely related to Elleström's types of media transformation, "transmediation" and "media representation", insofar as the two categories allude to a semiotic process that involves meaning-making through cognitive and perceptual acts of reception. Elleström (2014:8-10), however, argues that the link

¹⁴⁰ In this example, dancers are placed between the transparent front-pane and the back panel of the picture frame-like construction. They support the weight of their bodies by pressing their limbs against the two "walls" of the frames. Rajewsky argues that the dancers evoke an illusion of manneristic painting in the minds of the viewers in this intermedial reference. This evocation is achieved using the means and instruments of dance theatre (bodies, costumes, movements, lighting, stage props, etc.) when the dancers "move very slowly, head up and head down, in every possible direction, seemingly weightless and as if freed from the necessity to touch ground" (Rajewsky, 2005:57-59; 2010:57-60).

between Rajewsky's conceptualisation of references and his designation of transmediality and media representation is only superficial, and that Rajewsky's approach is reductive for depicting media as having clearly distinguishable surfaces and contents. Despite this variance in categorisation, there are some crucial similarities in the ideas presented by the two scholars.

For example, with regard to Elleström's "media representation": In relation to the repeated representation of media traits, Elleström (2014:12) argues that to say that a media product represents something is to say that it triggers a certain type of interpretation. "When something represents, it calls forth something else: the representing entity makes something else – the represented – present in the mind" (Elleström, 2014:12). It is precisely this "triggering" of another medium in the mind of the perceiver that is at the core of Rajewsky's intermedial references. Rajewsky claims that the idea of the referred medium is triggered through the thematisation, evocation or imitation of the referred medium's elements or structures.

Similarly, with regard to Elleström's process of "transmediation", *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* (technically) does not involve transmediation when transmediation is defined as "the material process of media realization" (Elleström, 2014:11). However, Elleström's focus on understanding the complex (pre-semiotic and semiotic) processes that take place between two media, which is crucial to his concept of transmediation, is helpful for understanding how the referring medium uses its own sensory and spatiotemporal qualities to trigger the idea of the referred media through semiotic means¹⁴¹.

Considering these crucial similarities, Elleström's argument – that the "transmediation" and "media representation" are implied in one another and may not easily be separated in a clear-cut way – is also an important supposition for this chapter¹⁴². The study recognises that intermedial

¹⁴¹ Note that, by his own admission, Elleström's (2014:9) notion of transmediation also includes Wolf's "implicit intermedial reference" (imitation), despite its close associations with the material realisation of media. Wolf's implicit intermedial reference, on the other hand, is very similar to Rajewsky's intermedial transposition, in that both scholars claim that the process of transposition does not affect the meaning or outer appearance of particular works or performances (Rajewsky, 2010:56).

¹⁴² Elleström (2014:13) also claims that separating the semiotic notion of representation from the process of mediation (which he defines as the pre-semiotic notion that captures the material process of media realisation) is not a productive endeavour, either in theory or in practice.

references involves both pre-semiotic and semiotic processes that equally contribute to the experience of the perceiver.

Rajewsky's categorisation of intermedial references also closely resembles Wolf's (2002:24-25) intermedial references, with subcategories such as implicit and explicit references, also known as "thematisation" or "imitation". Wolf (2002:23) defines intermedial references as the indirect participation of a medium of communication in the signification and/or semiotic structure of another work or semiotic complex. According to Wolf (2002:23), intermedial references give the impression of a medial and semiotic homogeneity, because the involvement of another medium is indirect – through the signifiers of the work in question. The medium referred to is only present as an idea, as a signified, and hence as a referent. Unlike Wolf, Rajewsky does not categorise explicit and implicit intermedial references in two separate subcategories.

What these three conceptualisations have in common is that, references are considered to be an example of intermediality¹⁴³. Most importantly, the three scholars emphasise the link between references and the meaning-making process in the minds of the beholder¹⁴⁴. The differences between the conceptualisation of references in these three accounts go beyond nomenclature, however, and can be traced back to their conceptualisation of a medium¹⁴⁵.

¹⁴³ Wolf (2002:17, 21) discusses media references as a variant of intracompositional intermediality, which he calls "intermediality in the narrow sense". As discussed previously, Rajewsky's (2005:52-53) media references are the third and final subcategory of the umbrella term intermediality, which generally applies to all media interrelations. Elleström (2014:11) discusses media representation as one of the two types of media transformation, an example of intermediality.

¹⁴⁴ Wolf (2002:25) argues that, in the imitative variant of intermediality, the reference to the other medium therefore always involves some kind of iconicity. Rajewsky (2005:53) asserts that intermedial references are meaning-constitutional strategies that contribute to the media product's overall signification, hence a communicative-semiotic concept. Informed by Pierce's semiotic trichotomy, Elleström asserts that there are three main types of representation: iconicity, based on similarity between representamen and object. Elleström calls iconic representation depiction. Indexicality is based on contiguity between representamen and object. Elleström calls indexic representation deiction. Lastly, symbolicity, which is based on a habitual connection between representamen and object, is called description (Elleström, 2014:13).

¹⁴⁵ Accounting for the differences, Elleström, for example, argues that both Rajewsky and Wolf emphasise a dichotomous understanding of the medium, with clearly perceptible surfaces that separate an inside and an outside (Elleström, 2014a:8). On the other hand, he claims to have adopted a more complex conceptualisation, which understands the medium as cultural phenomena that are constituted within a field that covers cognitive and semiotic aspects and material and sensorial aspects. Elleström, however, acknowledges similarities in all three conceptualisations, despite the differences. Because Elleström's work is the most recent of the three, this chapter regards Elleström's ideas as a reconceptualisation and a building up from the previous work by the other two scholars.

Being aware of the differences discussed above, the researcher in this chapter chooses to use Rajewsky's categorisation for the purposes of discussing the case because it describes the phenomena in terms that are more concise. Using her three main markers of an intermedial reference, the study investigates how *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* (Encounters) *thematizes*, *evokes* or *imitates* elements and structures of other conventional media, such as documentary film and photography, *through* the use of its own medium-specific means, with only one medium, theatre, the referencing medium, materiality present. While acknowledging that the intermedial references in this particular case involve some degree of transmediation, Rajewsky's categorisation of intermedial references suits the example in this chapter better than Elleström's concepts of transmediation and media representation. The chapter therefore uses Rajewsky's categorisation, while acknowledging its strengths and limitations and also drawing from the other conceptualisations.

A brief note on research design is given in the next section of the chapter. This is followed by an introduction to the performance and its creative team. In this section, the performance is contextualised as part of a trend in Malawian theatre that experiments with international collaborations that fuse media, genres and cultures. Thereafter, the constituent components of performance itself is analysed and discussed. The chapter finishes off with a discussion of intermediality in the performance, and some concluding remarks on *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* (Encounters).

7.2. Research design and methodology

The performance *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* was purposively sampled as a potential case for the study long before the performance event under discussion occurred. However, because it is categorised as a performance that evokes the presence of other media rather than one that "incorporated digital or electronic media", identifying the performance as "intermedial" was not as straightforward as the other cases in this study.

As with the other cases discussed in this study, the data collection for this case included watching the performance, taking performance notes, recording a video version of the performance, and semi-structured interviews with principal creatives. It should be noted, however, that the researcher obtained another video recording of the performance from its producers, and the differences

between this video recording and that taken by the researcher inform the discussion on the documentary film as a referred medium in section 7.4.1.

The play *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* was performed in many venues in both Germany and Malawi. However, the analysis in this study will focus on the performances at the Blantyre Arts Festival held at the Blantyre Cultural Centre and at Stella Maris Secondary School.

7.3. Introducing *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw*

The project *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* (Encounters) was a collaboration between the Solomonic Peacocks Theatre in Blantyre and Fräulein Wunder AG, a Hannover theatre collective. The project involved ten artists – four actors and one musician from each team. The Fräulein Wunder AG team comprised Verena Lobert, Vanessa Lutz, Malte Pfeiffer and Marleen Wolter, and Steffi Krahn for music. The Solomonic Peacocks team comprised McArthur Matukuta, Regina Kaiya, Jimmy Maole and Talent Phoya, and Ben Michael Mankhamba for music. The project was funded by TURN (Fräulein Wunder, 2016), the German Federal Cultural Foundation, the Lower Saxony Ministry for Science and Culture, the Foundation of Lower Saxony, and the Cultural Office of the City of Hannover under the Städte partnership between Hannover and Blantyre¹⁴⁶.

The resulting theatrical performance from the four-month collaboration is called *Msonkhano*¹⁴⁷ and *Begegnungen*¹⁴⁸, which loosely translate as “encounters” in English. As reflected in the title, the performance is in three languages: Chichewa, German and English¹⁴⁹. The conceptual basis of the creative work in *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* (Encounters) revolves around two teams answering the following questions:

What is common to us? What separates us and what can we learn from one another – culturally, aesthetically and politically? (Fräulein Wunder, 2014).

¹⁴⁶ It is important to note that the two cities where the theatre companies are from, Blantyre and Hannover, have been twin cities since 1967. It is against this background that the quest for cultural exchange and understanding through the arts is framed. See <http://www.hannover.de/en/Government-Service/State-Capital-Hannover/Twin-Cities-of-the-State-Capital-Hannover/Blantyre> for more information on the city twinning [2016, June 28].

¹⁴⁷ In Chichewa.

¹⁴⁸ In English.

¹⁴⁹ Notice that the idea of cross-cultural interaction is suggested in the title of the play through the exchange of the country domain suffixes, .mw and .de.

The starting point in the collaboration, therefore, was the quest to uncover similarities and differences between the two teams in terms of (artistic) aesthetics, culture and politics. The general theme was cultural exchange – to find common ground and to learn from each other. The research for the performance involved drawing from the artists' own biographical background, as well as from their encounters with each other and from their newly encountered cultures and artistic forms, as a source of material. All the material explored in the performance hence stemmed from the encounters between these two teams.

Even before rehearsals began, each group decided which events in the other country would be interesting for their joint rehearsal work. The participants could decide, for example, to attend a classical concert in Germany or to listen to a storyteller in Malawi. The results of their joint theatrical research were presented in the form of a cross-cultural production that explored the relations between Malawi and Germany.

The collaboration between the Malawian Solomonic Peacocks and the German Fräulein Wunder AG should be understood within the context of international cultural cooperation within the theatre context in Malawi as part of a growing trend of theatrical collaborations between Malawi and Western European countries in recent years. This trend has been necessitated by the lack of state funding for the Arts in Malawi on one hand, and the interest and availability of funding for cultural diplomacy (between European and African countries) in European countries on the other hand.

On the one hand, Malawi has not had a cultural policy in its 50+ years as an independent sovereign nation. The latest revised document has since been approved by a cabinet committee, in 2015 (Banda, 2015a). This draft had been in circulation since 2005 (Lexow, 2011:10). The approval of the policy formally establishes the blueprint for the implementation of a programme that promotes and preserves Malawi's cultural heritage (Banda, 2015b). However, the strategy for implementing this policy is yet to be put forward, and the government's historic *laissez-faire* attitude towards the cultural policy is indicative of further inaction. The lack of arts policy has meant very little cultural support infrastructure for the promotion and the development of arts and culture in Malawi, such that all national arts institutions and their membership have had to rely on international cooperation for funding. The Cultural Support Scheme, funded by the Royal Norwegian Embassy and administered by the Copyright Society of Malawi, has been the main formal infrastructure for the

funding of the arts in Malawi (Lexow, 2011). Besides this funding channel, Malawian arts organisations have developed their own funding networks through international collaborations, as is the case with *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw*.

On the other hand, there has been sustained interest in the funding of collaborative projects from Western European countries¹⁵⁰. Specifically, there has been interest in funding collaborations between German and Malawian artists by the German Federal Cultural Foundation¹⁵¹ in the last few years. This follows what Laurenz Leky (2014:123) has identified as the foundation's movement towards the support of projects that include African artists or arts organisations. Issues regarding the dynamics of cultural exchange and the politics of cultural international corporation from the German/Malawi point of view have been discussed in *Theatre in Africa: Between art and development cooperation: Stories of a German-Malawian collaboration* (Keller, Nix & Spieckermann, 2013) by both Malawian and German theatre artists, scholars and cultural workers. This publication is the result of a three-year collaboration between the German Theatre Konstanz (state theatre) and the Nanzikambe Arts Theatre Company from Blantyre, Malawi.

7.3.1. *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* as documentary theatre

This chapter situates *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* as documentary theatre because of its reliance on lived encounters as a source for artistic exploration. Carol Martin (2006:9) defines documentary theatre as theatre created from a specific body of archived material, including interviews, documents, hearings, records, video, film and photographs. Giving a background to the documentary format, Dereck Paget (2009:227) argues that the very concept of “documentary” was forged in the last century, and since then documentary has become a key mode of expression in theatre, film and literature. According to Martin (2009:84), “documentary theatre is about both the possibility and the impossibility of recreating history”. In other words, Martin argues that documentary theatre *depends on* and depicts history at the same time. Making a similar claim, Caroline Wake (2011:1) observes that, in depicting history, documentary theatre inevitably alters and augments it.

¹⁵⁰ This interest has of course been affected by the global economic meltdown, which has led to the shutting down of some projects and some institutions. The shutting down of the French Cultural Centre and the Goethe Institute in Malawi serve as examples in this regard.

¹⁵¹ Regarded as one of the most important funders of culture and arts in Germany (Leky, 2004:123).

Documentary theatre has been historically linked to the use of media technologies. While documentary theatre relies on human bodies for both its production and reception, “it remains a form of theatre in which technology is a primary factor in the transmission of knowledge” (Martin, 2006:9). As such, media technologies that report, record and replicate, such as radio, film, recorders, video, copy machines and computers, are the sometimes visible, sometimes invisible, technological means of documentary theatre (Martin, 2009:17). “Documentary theatre therefore typically incorporates the media version of an event even as it attempts to distinguish itself from the mediatised event” (Martin, 2009:88).

Because of its historic associations with media technologies, Andrew Eglinton claims a special significance for documentary theatre’s relations with the field of intermediality in theatre practice. Eglinton (2016:10) asserts that documentary theatre can be considered as an example of theatre practice at the vanguard of “intermediality”, the dominant trend in the arts and media of the twentieth century that is associated with the blurring of generic boundaries, crossover and hybrid performances, and intertextuality.

Linked to its reliance on media technologies, documentary theatre has been said to have a paradoxical relationship with the presentation of “truth”. Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson (2009:2) argue that a predominant topic in documentary theatre is the attempt to grasp the elusive truth claim of “the document” and the dynamics of its theatrical incarnation. It has been argued that this fixation with the truth is part of a “faith in facts”, a belief that the world could be made better through information, and a widespread excitement about new possibilities in technology (Paget, 2009:227). Yet, as Janelle Reinelt (2009:13) claims, documentary theatre attempts to balance the presentation of the document as an “objective conduit to reality” and “the subjectivity at the heart of production and reception”.

Similarly, Martin (2009:61) refers to documentary theatre as a “paradox of a theatre of facts” because it “uses representation to enact a relationship to the real”. According to her, the phrase “documentary theatre” is inadequate. Yet at present, it is the best phrase available. She argues that documentary theatre’s blurring of the real and the represented is just as problematic as television’s ambiguous “re-enactments”, “docudramas”, and “reality” shows. It is also part and parcel of the “*mediatization*” of everyday life. For Martin, as for many others, these paradoxical pairings of the

actual and the fictional, the real and the representational, the personal and the political make documentary theatre so complex and compelling.

Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw therefore is an example of documentary theatre because it draws from archival material and the lived experiences of the cast – “depending on it as it depicts it”, to use Carol Wake’s terms. Like other documentary theatres, *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* maintains its historic associations with media technologies. In contrast with other documentary theatre performances, *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* does not incorporate electronic or digital media in its configuration. Rather, the presence of other media is evoked through theatrical means. As to be explored in the next section, *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* aims at experimenting with the paradoxical pairing of the factual and the fictional, and it is this experimentation that directs the creative team towards the intermedial references.

7.4. Presentation and analysis

The discussion of the performance in this chapter does not follow the chronological order of the plot. Rather, key elements have been selected to guide the discussion. For the purposes of this discussion, the performance event has been categorised into five main modes of representation, oscillating between the realms of factual (re)presentation and fictional representation: documentary film, letter reading, dramatisations, tale narration and family portraits. For the chronological moment-to-moment breakdown of the performance, see Appendix 3.

7.4.1. The “documentary film”

The performance begins with a song. The actors sing a song as they walk onto the stage from backstage. The actors thereafter sit in pairs on transparent buckets, which are placed sparsely on the stage. They begin recounting the initial encounters between the Malawian group and the German group. Each actor delivers a monologue about their first encounter with their partner, who is seated right next to them. The partnering is both gender sensitive (a male is paired with a female), but also nationality conscious (a Malawian is paired with a German)¹⁵².

¹⁵² McArthur is partnered with Marleen, Regina with Malte, Stephanie with Ben, Jimmy with Verena and Talent with Vanessa. This partnering is effective throughout the performance, through the reading of the letters that starts soon after this first scene and continuing to the end of the performance.

There are a number of clues that are given in these accounts that made the spectating researcher question if what they are experiencing are accounts of the factual initial encounters between the pairs, or if they are fictitious accounts that have been scripted and rehearsed for the performance. This is because there is a close resemblance between the background information about the performance and what is recounted in these first impression accounts.

Firstly, the actors on stage address each other using their real names. These names are readily available on the cast section of the programme. There is also no distinguishable stylisation in the acting, as the actors recount their encounters while seated on the buckets, as if in a direct conversation with the audience. Secondly, the subject matter discussed in these monologues is about initial airport encounters between people who have not met before. At this point, the audience is already aware of the cultural exchange context of this performance. The programme notes of the performance, which are readily available before the performance commences, ensure that the audience knows that the two teams, one from Malawi and the other from Germany, are involved in the performance, teams that met for the first time only recently for the purposes of creating this very performance. These factors are only a few of the reasons why these encounter narratives from the first scene would make the spectating researcher (and perhaps other audience members) to question how much of these accounts actually happened and how much is fiction. The convincing circumstantial evidence around these narratives encouraged the spectating researcher to follow the accounts of the encounters more or less as factual truths about the first encounters between pairs of the two groups. However, more complex and technical reasons situate the encounter accounts in the realm of reality rather than fiction.

For example, it becomes clear after the first few narrations that the actors are answering a particular set of prearranged questions in an interview format. The questions, while they are not heard by the audience, are responded to by the actor's account in a way that betrays them as interview questions. Based on the format of the monologues of the partners, the questions are most likely to resemble these below:

Who is your partner?

What was your first impression of your partner when you met him/her at the airport?

What do you have in common?

What do you love most about him/her?

What scares you the most about him/her?

What does your partner hide from you?

The interview, along with other markers that are found in this scene, are suggestive of the fact that a documentary film format has been adopted in the first scene of the performance¹⁵³, the indirect interview format¹⁵⁴ specifically. In this particular instance, indirect interview techniques – that allow an audience to see a subject but not see or hear the interviewer who asks the questions – have been used¹⁵⁵. Set up within a theatrical context with a live audience, the indirect interview format makes an even stronger impression that the character is speaking directly to the viewer or audience than it does in film.

The narration of the encounters by the pairs (who are seated on plastic buckets positioned across the stage) does not follow a linear or predictable manner. It is quickly established that the acting space has been divided into intimate spaces shared by each pair, such that the narration of the encounters shifts from one pair to another. The performance adopts a stylistic device whereby there is a sudden transition from one narrator to another (of a different pair). This sort of transition functions the same way as the “cut” in film. The actor performing the next part of the narrative uses his/her voice and body to attract the attention of the audience from the concluding narration – which would be located in a different location of the stage – towards their narration, thereby effecting an abrupt transition. The study argues that the techniques used in this scene are theatrical approximations of the filmic cut¹⁵⁶ and “switchback”¹⁵⁷ from the one pair to another. From the first narration to the end of the first scene, the switchback from one side of the stage to the other is in operation, enabled by the “cuts” from one narration to another¹⁵⁸.

¹⁵³ The interview is one of the oldest and most basic documentary techniques (Friedmann, 2014:144).

¹⁵⁴ The indirect interview format, when used in documentary film, allows a film subject to speak directly about events, prompted by the questions asked by the (invisible) filmmaker. In this particular case the actors used the personal delivery format of someone speaking directly into the lens, conscious of an audience (Friedmann, 2014:144).

¹⁵⁵ See the responses to the indirect interview questions in the fourth row of Appendix 4

¹⁵⁶ A filmic cut is a transition from one shot to another shot. The type of cut referred to in this chapter is a “jump cut”, an abrupt type of a filmic cut (Jackson, 2010:158).

¹⁵⁷ The “switchback”, according to Melvyn Stokes (2007:75), is an editing technique popularised by Griffith, which involves alternating scenes showing what takes place simultaneously in two or more locations.

¹⁵⁸ See examples of cuts and switchbacks in Appendix 4.

Approximating filmic techniques with the use of theatre presents its challenges, of course. Writing about the capabilities of theatre in approximating filmic techniques, Dennis Carroll argues that filmic techniques such as the “switchback” in theatre never function with transparency, as they do in film. “The arrested or non-functioning narrative strand is still subliminally visible to the audience, even though the actors may be frozen in semidarkness” (Carroll, 1985:131). In this case, the team does not attempt to conceal the other narrative strands. True to this assertion, and to what Susan Sontag calls the theatre’s frontality¹⁵⁹, the scene is set up in such a way that the audience has one wide view of all actors seated on stage. However, through the use of the actor’s voice and gestures, the actors are also able to approximate “closed ups” that would return the audience’s attention of the spectating researcher is drawn to the particular pair narrating their encounter at the moment. The resulting effect is that the attention is devoted to one pair of partners, at each particular moment in time. In this moment, one partner speaks while the other reacts to the partner’s impression of him/her, using facial expressions, and sometimes even verbal or gesticulated responses. As the focus is on one pair, the other pairs are silent and look straight at the audience.

The difference between the frontality of theatre and the dynamism of perspectives available with film (editing) is clearly discernible in the video recordings of the performance. The first video recording, made by the researcher, was shot from the perspective of a spectator located in the audience section of the auditorium and remains unedited. Unaware of the performance’s experimentation with modes of representation, the video can be described as truly frontal. The second video recording, shot by the production team, anticipates the experimentation with modes of representation in the performance and, where relevant, it uses the camera to effect the filmic techniques that were merely approximated with theatrical means in the performance event: the close ups, jump cuts and switchbacks and more. However, watching the second video does not negate the theatrical approximations that were effected during the performance, experienced by the audience. In fact, it magnifies the skill put in by the creative team in effecting these approximations.

¹⁵⁹ Sontag (1966:362) discusses theatre’s frontality, which she defines as the experience of the spectator of a play fixed in his seat. She considers this as one of the distinguishing features of theatre from film.

From this discussion it can be concluded that actors in *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw*. approximate documentary film techniques through the use of theatrical means alone. There are no filmic technologies and materiality such as film reels, cameras, screens or projectors on stage. However, there are semiotic signs associated with documentary film present in the first scene. These include a story rooted in reality and the archive, presented in an indirect interview format. In addition, the performance also appropriates the conventionalised “language” of film in approximating techniques such as cuts, shots and close ups in its configuration. The use of these invisible symbols and techniques explicitly designate film as the medial system being referred to in the theatrical performance. See the summary and examples of techniques in Appendix 4.

It can be argued, therefore, that the actors on stage successfully “document” their initial encounters using theatrical means while adopting some techniques from documentary film. The staged “document” is not recorded (as in documentary film): it maintains theatre’s ephemerality because it is firmly embedded in a theatrical environment. The “documented encounters”, however, are clearly marked off from the representational formats that follow this initial scene. In fact, the “documented encounters” foreground the entire performance, setting the factual frame through which parts of the performance are to be perceived, but also anticipating the blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction that takes place when the factual frame is fused with the fictional frame in later scenes.

This chapter claims that this first scene not only adopts a documentary-based mode of (re)presentation, but that it also appropriates techniques from documentary film to situate the scene in the realm of reality and to set it apart from the fictional realms that are also introduced in the performance. The markers for documentary film, when considered individually, appear to be ordinary techniques that are not specific to any medium. However, when considered collectively, they clearly mark the theatrical performance within the realist frame and conjure a documentary filmic experience among the audience. In other words, the use of direct address, the use of real names, inspiration from real-life encounters, the indirect interview format, theatrical “close ups” and “stage cuts” are not entirely new or distinct in their usage in the theatre form. However, when considered collectively, they create an illusion that begs for an analogy between the theatrical

performance and documentary film's respective principles, sensory and spatiotemporal qualities, and strategies.

7.4.2. The letters and dramatisation

Another format presented on stage is the letter. These letters are read throughout the performance. The partners introduced in the first scene read out letters that have been addressed to each other. Sometimes the actors on stage read actual letters, on paper, that are visible to the audience, while at other times the letters are only marked verbally (with the salutation, body and closing) and with hand gestures. The subject matter in the letters is the particular (lived) experiences and encounters that the actor recalls from his/her experiences in the foreign country. In this regard, the letters function in the same way as the documentary film – in terms of being in the factual frame as opposed to the fictional frame. The knowledge that the spectating researcher had about the performance context assists in creating the realist frame in the letter-reading sessions.

However, there are differences between the presentational mode adopted in the first scene and the letter-reading scenes. For example, in place of the direct address to the audience that is adopted in the documentary film, the letters are addressed to the partner. The letters, therefore, disrupt the direct communication between the actors and the audience that was set up in the documentary scene. The most important distinction between the letters and the “documentary film”, however, is that, while the documentary film was clearly marked off in the factual frame, the letters are juxtaposed with enactments or dramatisations of some of the themes that arise in the letters throughout the performance. There is thus a constant shifting of frames between the realm of the factual and the realm of the fictional that takes place in the reading of the letters and the enactment that follows.

For example, Vanessa's letter to Talent is about her fascination with overnight prayers in Malawi, even though she is not religious herself. Talent's letter to Vanessa is about the ambiguities of the concept of equality in German society. These two letters are intercepted by two enactments as the two actors read them on stage. One enactment depicts Vanessa's baptism by water conducted by Talent, who adopts the role of priest. The priest, during the baptism enactment, gives Vanessa a “clan” name in place of the name Vanessa and this is immediately followed by a scene that depicts Vanessa's domestication into an “African woman”, symbolised by her change of attire *into*

*Chitenje*¹⁶⁰ and the activity of drawing water with a *chikho*¹⁶¹. In her new role, Vanessa pours the water into a bucket on top of Talent's head. Incidentally, as this domestic activity takes place, Talents reads a letter addressed to Vanessa, which questions the legitimacy of gender equality without the security of the institution of marriage.

In another example, Jimmy and Verena's enactment commences before they even begin reading their letters. The two actors sit in front of the stage, roll their eyes, and leap like animals (Figure 7.1). These actions are a precursor to Verena's letter to Jimmy, which recounts her encounter with a chameleon that fell from a tree. Verena links this encounter with the old fairy tale of the Princess and the frog, where the frog, when kissed, turns into a handsome prince. This is followed by further enactment of the "kissing the frog" scene by Jimmy and Verena, which ends in a moment suggestive of this iconic kiss. This enactment sets the scene for one of the major enactments in the performance, that of the *Chinkhoswe*¹⁶² scene.



Figure 7.1 Jimmy and Verena's enactment (Source: production team)

¹⁶⁰ The Chitenje or Kitenge is a batik fabric usually worn by women around their waist and is common in Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, and the DRC and in some West African countries.

¹⁶¹ A Malawian domestic utensil made of the dried hard shell of a gourd.

¹⁶² A Chinkhoswe is a traditional engagement ceremony that is recognised as marriage under Malawian customary laws (Mwambene, 2008:89). It is practised by matrilineal societies in Malawi. The Chinkhoswe itself is a performative event. It is a cultural performance that involves dramatisation by two representatives of the families of the bride and groom.

The Chinkhoswe scene is the most complex dramatisation in the performance, blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction even further. Taking a cue from the Princess and the frog scene, the actors on stage take part in a betrothal process that precedes a wedding in matrilineal Malawian societies. During this “betrothal” dramatisation, the characters on stage perform an enacted metaphor that is used by the family representatives (usually the maternal uncles) of the soon-to-be-married couple in the initial stages of marriage negotiations¹⁶³. The dramatisation starts when Jimmy tells his uncle (a character called Mr Chikabudula, played by McArthur) that he has found someone to settle down with. The two leave for the girl’s home, where they find her uncle. Mr Chikabudula explains the reason for his visit to his host. He explains that their “cock” (referring to the groom-to-be) has been missing and that they have been reliably informed that it has taken an interest in the host’s chicken coop. The host denies any knowledge of this and claims to only have hens in their chicken coop. Because the visiting uncle insists on their claim, the host instructs his wife to bring out the “hens” (who in this case are the two older girls in the household). The two girls are brought on stage with their heads covered in chitenje. When Mr Chikabudula looks at each of them, he insists that they are not what he was looking for. The hosts bring out what they call the unlikely candidate, the youngest of the girls, a recent school leaver. When the girl is brought forward, Mr Chikabudula confirms that this is the girl they were looking for. The father verifies this information with the girl in question and, when everything is confirmed, the two family representatives proceed to make wedding arrangements.

Brechtian interruptions are a notable occurrence though out the Chinkhoswe dramatisation. In the middle of the enacted metaphor, Ben, using an interruption technique, disrupts the performance twice, to inform the audience that the reference to the animals in the enactment is metaphorical – that the two characters on stage are merely enacting a cultural performance. Similarly, Regina, in her role as hostess, interrupts the flow of the play in her direct address to the paraded girls, Marleen, Verena and Vanessa, informing them of what postures to adopt and how to respond to the questions asked by the uncles. These Brechtian interruptions serve as a disruption to the flow of the enactment because the action in the scene is halted during the interruptions. The interruptions, placed within the enacted scene, further blur the boundaries between fiction and reality. While the

¹⁶³ For an example of this enacted metaphor as it occurs in real life, refer to Bridget Matinga’s (2015:69-72) PhD thesis.

enactment is clearly situated in the fictional realm, the interruption claims to present some factual information and uses the real names of the actors to this effect¹⁶⁴. Note that the spectating researcher is encouraged to be consistently aware of the difference between actor and character in this scene because of the specific aesthetics chosen by the creative team in the performance.

7.4.3. The bird narrative: The tale of the egrets' banquet

The narration of the tale of the egrets' banquet is clearly marked in the fictional mode as opposed to the documentary encounters and the letter-reading narrations. The use of the marker "padangokhala" (loosely translated as "once upon a time") clearly marks the narration in the fictional realm¹⁶⁵. The tale of the egrets' banquet is an oral narrative with Malawian origins, which in this particular instance is used as commentary on racial and cultural inclusions and exclusions. In the tale, a crow hears about the egrets' banquet and desperately wants to attend. Because of the difference in his physical appearances, the crow devises a plan to change its black feathers to white so as to fool the egrets into believing that he is one of them at the banquet. Unfortunately, the egrets decide to swim to the banquet and, by the time they arrive, the crow's disguise has melted off in the water. The crow is then shamefully ejected from the banquet.

The tale of the egrets' banquet operates as a *leit motif* and is recounted in various versions several times throughout the performance. The first narration of the tale is by Regina, soon after the documentary encounters. Breaking from the documentary format of the first scene, Regina moves to the front of the stage and says "padangokhala", to which the audience intuitively answers "tilitonse". The narration that follows is close to the version described above. The next narration is performed by Marleen and is a translated version of Regina's tale delivered in German¹⁶⁶. The second version of the tale reverses the roles played by the crow and egrets in the first narration –

¹⁶⁴ The interruptions, when executed in performances in Germany or elsewhere outside Malawi, would most likely provide factual information about unfamiliar cultural practices from Malawi to the audience. However, when performed in Malawi, the interruptions, while still factual, are stating a piece of information that most people are familiar with already. This applies for both sets of interruptions – Ben and Regina's.

¹⁶⁵ The call "padangokhala" and its response "tili tonse" have already been discussed in the previous chapter as formulaic markers for the nthano narration in some Malawian and Zambian communities.

¹⁶⁶ There are some noticeable differences between Regina and Marleen's narration of the tale. Regina's narration is accompanied by guitar music played by Ben on stage, while Marleen's narration is accompanied by music on an accordion played by Stephanie, who also uses her vocals. Regina's narration relies on the use of her body: gestures, facial expressions and intonation. The music in this narration also functions as a background to the narration. In contrast, Marleen utilises props (confetti) to capture the central moment of her performance, and Stephanie's involvement is as important as Marleen's oral narration in the overall performance.

the egret is removed from the crows' banquet. Unlike in the first version of the tale, in this version there is a simultaneous narration, whereby the German version of the tale is told simultaneously with the Chichewa version. If the narration serves as a metaphorical reference to the actor's race and cross-racial and cross-cultural encounters, this reversing seems to say that the experiences of exclusion and alienation is mutual in cross-cultural encounters. The theme of racial alienation is also captured in Malte's letter to Regina discussed in section 7.4.4.

The third narration of the tale of the egrets' banquet is delivered in pantomime. The actors on stage adopt bird sounds and mannerisms and also use costumes to represent the crows and egrets. In the same way as the verbal narration, one bird from one side attempts to change its appearance in order to fit in with the other type of birds. This scene is transformed into another documentary format, which is performed while the actors are still in the bird costumes. In this scene, Regina confronts the paradox of humanitarian aid from Germany to Malawi. The seriousness and reality of the subject matter delivered in animal costume creates one of the most powerful scenes in the performance.

The final narration of the tale is a collective verbal narration involving all actors on stage. In contrast with the other narrations, this last version it is accompanied by the song that was sung at the beginning of the play. The ending of this version of the tale is anti-climactical because it presents a gloomy finality confirming an eternal divide of the birds in the story world.

7.4.4. The "photographs"

Two "photographic" moments are referred to in this performance. The chapter argues that, the creative team capitalises on the medium's (photography's) historical associations with depicting reality to create a "real" moment separate from the representational formats before (within) and after it, in the same way as it did in the documentary film. When accompanied with the enactment, however, the photography moments function in the same way as the letter-reading scenes described above, than the documentary film. Just as in the letter-reading scenes, a contrast is set up between the factual realm (the photograph) and the fictional realm (the depiction of an event that has not taken place), a contrast that blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction in the same moment.

The first photographic moment takes place during the reading of Regina and Malte's letters. Regina's letter raises the question of the viability of an interracial relationship between herself and Malte and the idea of raising a child together. To mark this fantasy, Regina takes the packet of corn puffs from which Malte was eating, closes it and places it back in Malte's hands as a baby. The two actors then pose as if taking photographic portraits with the "baby". It should be noted that the two actors move around the same spot to create various scenarios. They pose¹⁶⁷ and pause (hold their positions) and move on to create the next scenario several times, before they finally sit down with the "baby". At this point it is unclear whether the subject matter of Regina's letter (whether Regina has considered the idea of an interracial relationship with Malte in real life) is real, as had been the subject matter of the other letters. It would seem that the creators of the performance opted to blur the boundaries between fact and fiction. What is clear, however, is that the issue of raising a baby together is only an ideal or a fantasy referred to by the two actors. This fantasy is marked with a factual (photographic) frame.

The second photographic moment also develops from the letters between Regina and Malte. Having fantasised about having a child together, the other actors join the pictorial frame created (by the now sitting "parents") one by one, each arriving with a piece of (verbal) advice (for Malte and Regina as an interracial couple, if they had a child together), and ending their lines with a pose and a pause. At the end of the moment, all actors are on stage and are involved in this "portrait". This picture functions more like a family portrait, more so because the actors announce their advice from a kinship point of view, for example, "if I were Malte's sister, I would advise them to [...]". There are significant differences between the photography references and the documentary film references. These are discussed in section 7.5 on intermediality in the performance.

7.4.5. The "documentary film 2"

There are two other scenes towards the end of the performance in which the actors evoke the documentary film. However, unlike the first "documentary film" (in the first scene of the performance), which was bracketed off as factual, these documentary films are intertwined with fictional representational modes. The first of these is a monologue followed by a dialogue, headed

¹⁶⁷ Used here to mean, "to assume a posture or attitude usually for artistic purposes" (merriam-webster.com, 2016, s.v. "Pose"). It also captures the idea of impersonation, assuming a different character, which is also implicit in the same term.

by Regina, on the paradoxes of development aid. While the subject matter itself is an important one, specifically in the context of international cooperation between artists from a donor country and a country that is a receiver of aid, this monologue is delivered in bird costume from the pantomime scene, thus blurring the lines between fact and fiction yet again. The final documentary film-like moment is one of the last scenes, in which each team forms a line and each person shouts out (stereotypical and racist) qualities of the other race. Considering the controversial nature of the subject matter, one would understand why the teams opted to keep this scene blurred between fictional and factual representation.

7.5. Intermediality in *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw*

What is evident throughout the performance is that the central structuring principle of the performance is a constant switching of frames of (re)presentation. The table in Appendix 3 refers to this shifting of frames from one moment to another throughout the performance. On one hand, this shifting of frames plays an important role in organising the sequence of scenes, movement in space and the temporal constellations of the performance. On the other hand, it is also used to distinguish and to blur the boundaries between the fictional modes and the factual modes of representation. The employment of “referred media” in the performance enables the creative team to “invent” a factual frame of representation – using the techniques and sensory and spatiotemporal qualities of the referred medium, – which in turn enables the continuous shifting of frames between factual and fictional realms within the theatre context. The creative team therefore attempt to present the (referred) documents as “objective conduit to reality”, while the performance is deeply rooted in the “the subjectivity at the heart of production and reception” (Reinelt, 2009:13). This constant shifting of frames was an essential tool for blurring the two realms of reality in the exploration of the cultural exchange theme in the performance, which could be considered ordinary and controversial at the same time.

This study argues that *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* “thematized”, “evoked”, or “imitated” elements and structures of documentary film and photography and therefore constituted media references in the performance¹⁶⁸. It should be noted that the thematisation of photography is less

¹⁶⁸ Just as in the previous chapter, *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* also evoked the letter sometimes without its materiality.

about the verbal mentioning of a particular medium, as defined by Wolf and Elleström¹⁶⁹, but rather through the actor's use of physicalised languages associated with the use of the medium of photography. In contrast, the referencing of the documentary form takes place through a more detailed appropriation of conventional symbols and languages from film in the performance. Both evocations of other media are described as intermedial references in this study, because both conjure the presence of other media without their materiality in the performance. The intermedial references create a framework for understanding the performance by marking the fictional and factual realms of the performance as distinct. In other words, the documentary film and the photographs are real insofar as they clearly mark off the factual from the fictional realms of representation in the performance event.

It is also important to note that there is a slight variation in the functioning of the referred media in the performance. While film documentary is evoked in more traditional ways, for the purposes of displaying lived experiences and as a way of depicting and commenting on it, the photographic moment depicts fictitious moments fantasised by the performers. Despite this difference, the use of both the documentary film and the photographic moments is important for framing the moments in the factual realm. The film documentary is factual in the sense that lived experiences are depicted and, the photographic moments are factual in the sense that the moment depicted reflects the ideals held by the actors.

7.6. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the interaction of media in *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* in terms of intermedial references. The main reason why this chapter argues that *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* constitutes itself in relation to documentary film and photography is because the performance used its own media-specific means to simulate the experiences of documentary film and photography. One cannot claim that the performance truly reproduces documentary film and photography. However, even without the media (documentary film and photography) materially present, the performance successfully employs its own medium-

¹⁶⁹ Elleström and Wolf both present “thematization” as a simpler form of intermedial referencing, which involves one medium “mentioning” or “appearing” in another. (See Elleström, 2014:9-10 and 28-19, and Wolf, 2002:24).

specific means in a way that imitates film and photography principles, rules of communication and strategies.

Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw reconfigures the conceptualisation of theatre and theatre presence by highlighting theatre as a versatile medium that possesses the ability to evoke other (technological) media without changing its own materiality. Theatre in *Msonkhano* is no longer a medium for fictional representational modes of expression only, but also a medium for factual representation too.

Guided by Rajewsky's categorisation of intermedial references, the study identified immaterial markers that frame the action, designating documentary film and photography as the medial systems referred to. The intermedial references in *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* are hence not marked by any physical entity that iconically would elicit an association with documentary film and photography. Instead, all the markers employed are immaterial and ephemeral. These immaterial markers are utilised successfully to evoke the documentary film and photography's elements, structures, techniques and representational practices. True to its basis as documentary theatre, *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw* evokes digital and electronic media through theatrical means for the purposes of creating a factual mode of representation that is juxtaposed with fictional modes of representation as a commentary on the ambiguities of cross-cultural encounters.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

The motivation behind this study was to explore (what is happening to) African theatre in the age of new media and digital technology. During the initial stages of the research, the researcher encountered a lot of literature that was alarmist¹⁷⁰ in nature, literature that presented African theatre as under threat and domination by newer forms of media and their related technologies. To some scholars, an actual threat to the point of extinction was plausible. In addition, this literature not only predicted the demise for theatre practice, but also of theatre as a scholarly and academic discipline. It is this alarmist approach towards the understanding of contemporary African theatre (in present scholarly discourses) that inspired the researcher to investigate the relations between theatre and other media.

Despite this alarmist viewpoint, primary reading on the topic revealed that the debates on the relations between old and new media are not confined to Africa alone, nor are they a new phenomenon in the current digital era. These debates have occurred throughout history at the dawn of new technologies, and across cultures. In the Western theatre context, for example, the debates on the relations between theatre and other media have been renewed since the turn of the century, with a focus on the relations between the live and *mediatized*, in response to the digital era. This has led to a drive (by some theatre scholars) to re-evaluate their field and reassert their relevance in the light of the “threat” of *mediatization*.

Further research on the topic in the African context revealed that the image painted by the alarmists was also incompatible with theories of African theatre. African theatre, when conceptualised as originating from oral systems of aesthetics and knowledge, is said to be unfixed and always on the move, constantly defying the boundaries set forth by modernist epistemologies imposed by Western theatre. These features have been characterised as central to “orature” by Ngugi wa

¹⁷⁰ The term “alarmist” is used in this chapter to describe sensationalist writing on the relations between theatre and other media. Such sensationalist writing is captured in the title of this newspaper article – “Drama crawling to its death-bed” (Mlozi, 2016).

Thiong'o¹⁷¹, and as the “synaesthesia of mixed art forms” in African theatre by David Kerr¹⁷². From this perspective, such an alarmist understanding of the current state of affairs in African theatre appears more or less as unfounded.

Furthermore, emerging literature on African theatre practice has also established that the interaction between theatre and other media in the theatre space is fast becoming a trend in African theatre practice. This suggests that there is more to the effects of the proliferation of media technologies on theatre than what the alarmists purport. In other words, it suggests that the alarmist school alone is insufficient to account for the effects of media proliferation on African theatre.

Through the engagement with current literature on the topic, the researcher found that the concept of intermediality, and the theoretical and methodological approaches it proposes, provided a much clearer picture of the situation in contemporary theatre practice. More precisely, the concept of intermediality was much better suited to the analysis of the relations between theatre and other media in the theatre context, as opposed to approaches that focus on the status of theatre in the cultural economy at large. With the concept of intermediality, the investigation shifted its focus away from delineating the medium-specific qualities of media from each other – an approach that prompted a comparison with the materiality of media – towards the understanding of interrelations between theatre and other media within and across media configurations. From the researcher's perspective, the latter approach was best suited for this study because it provides a way of filling the gaps in the literature – left by the alarmist school – in its attempts to explore overlooked dimensions of the relations between theatre and other media. Expressed in other words, in the place of studies that analyse how the arts and media fare on the cultural economy front, the study instead focused on the analysis of the complex nature of medial interrelations between theatre and other media in a medial (theatrical) configuration. The idea of “media interrelations”, a key perspective

¹⁷¹ Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2007) argues that the key feature of orature is the interconnectedness of all elements through performance. His definition of orature includes the fluidity of art forms and media. He argues, for example, that “cyber-orature born out of cyberture (cybernurture)” is a field that needs to be explored further (Thiong'o 2007:7).

¹⁷² Kerr (2011b:xiv) understands the “synaesthesia of mixed art forms” as one of performative modes that highlight the adaptive genius of much of African creativity.

in the study of intermediality, provided the study with new heuristic tools and methodologies that accounted for the phenomena encountered on stage.

The study therefore investigated the interrelations between theatre and other media through the performance analysis of four theatrical performances in major arts festivals in Malawi and South Africa in 2014. The study analysed the four performances in order to uncover how intermediality manifests in these contexts.

8.2. Choice of study contexts

The desire to situate the study outside the European context – where most scholarship on theatrical intermediality comes from – was the main reason for the choice of a contextual study¹⁷³. The study's underlying assumption was that intermediality is strongly linked to the social-political and economic situation of the context. Naturally, as a study undertaken by a Malawian theatre scholar, well-versed in the conventions of its theatre, the desire to investigate how intermediality manifests in Malawian theatre became the centre of the enquiry. The inclusion of the South Africa was influenced by contemporary literature that located South Africa as a central hub for the experimentation with media technologies in theatrical performance. The impulse towards this setup was not to have a comparative study between the two countries. It arose from a general interest in understanding theatrical intermediality outside its most studied domain.

8.3. Findings

The following section discusses the key findings of the study. Primarily, the study set out to investigate how theatre interrelates with other media in cases from the Malawian and South African theatre context. Specifically, the study sought to investigate three concerns: firstly, the nature of interaction between theatre and “other media”. Secondly, how intermediality shapes the conceptualisation and perception of theatre and theatre presence and thirdly, how the creative team(s) create (d) *mise en scène* that incorporates other media.

8.4. Limitations of the study

The thesis does not attempt to make claims about African theatre in general, or to provide a “national” understanding of how intermediality manifests in the contexts of study. The scope of

¹⁷³ The term “contextual study” is used to emphasise that this study is situated in a historical and cultural setting.

the work and the sample size is too small to make such broad generalisations. The sample therefore is clearly not representative of the entire context, the countries, or even the festivals from which the performances were drawn. However, the use of theatrical performances from major festivals in the Malawi and South Africa was a strategic choice for delimiting theatre performances that express “the moment of the time”¹⁷⁴. Therefore, even though the claims made in this study are in reference to the individual cases alone, they are also representative of the theatrical season of the time, based on Temple Hauptfleisch’s (2007b:39) concept of the “eventification” of the performances at arts festivals¹⁷⁵. The four cases analysed in this study should therefore be considered as a starting point for creating an understanding of how intermediality manifests in the theatrical performances in the contexts under discussion.

Further investigations on a larger scale, for instance, or on specific types of African theatre or using different methodologies, could build on this study. As deduced from this study, the African theatre context presents a rich and largely unexplored field of study as far as theatrical intermediality is concerned. Africa’s engagement with electronic and digital technology, its developing film industries, reliance on mass media forms for communication, and its diverse forms of theatre present a variety of research areas for further exploration. Of particular interest to the researcher is the investigation of intermediality in cultural and social performances, in performance art and in the public sphere.

It should also be noted that the two main criteria for choosing cases in this study did not function in the same way. The first criterion, the incorporation of digital media, was easily identifiable from the festival programmes. From the desk research, the researcher knew beforehand some key terms that would indicate that the performance involves more than one medium. For example, “multimedia performance” was the widely used term in the context of the National Arts Festival (2014) in Grahamstown. Another common term found in South African literature was “mixed

¹⁷⁴ The focus on current performances was a methodological choice for the study. A study of similar objectives would be possible with the use of other methodologies (such as an archival study of past performances or a focus on audience reception). The need to focus on present theatre practice arose from the attempt to interrogate what other scholars were writing with regard to the current state of affairs in African theatre practice.

¹⁷⁵ Hauptfleisch (2007b:39) argues that festivals are more than a location for works of art: they are where artistic output is turned into a significant cultural event, framed and made meaningful by the presence of an audience and reviewers who respond to the celebrated event.

media”. In some instances, the synopsis of the play spelt out the exact media that were incorporated in the performance. None of the performances used the term “intermedial” to describe it¹⁷⁶. It was only after experiencing the performance, however, that the researcher would ascertain whether the performance was intermedial or simply multimedial. “The presence of other media” as a sampling principle presented more challenges for the researcher, as it was not easily identifiable from the programmes. It is only after experiencing the performance that the researcher could categorise a performance as evoking the “presence of other media”. These factors justify why the use of a combination of semiotic and phenomenological (theoretical and methodological) approaches was most suitable for this study.

8.4.1. How do theatre and other media interrelate in the Malawian and South African theatre contexts?

The cases in this study present compelling evidence that theatre practice in these contexts is far more experimental in transcending the boundaries between theatre and other media, in contrast with the picture painted by African theatre scholarship, which reinforces boundaries between media, genres and categories. Of the four performances, two performances incorporated digital and electronic media (and puppetry). One performance resulted from the appropriation of music, while another evoked the experience of other media through its own media-specific means. The range of “other media” that interacted with theatre in these cases includes media such as puppetry, animation film, documentary film, music and photography among many others.

It should be noted that this study has discussed intermediality (media interrelations) in two main ways. Firstly, the study discussed media interrelations in terms of strategies employed the creative team, during the creation of the *mise en scene* and in their interaction with the audience in the performance event. While some of these strategies were intended – consciously conceptualised by the creative team, others were arrived at through a practical engagement with (and among) the media. Secondly, the study has discussed intermediality as an attribute assigned to the performance event by the spectator. Grounded in the physical fact of the spectator being simultaneous with a particular space-time environment of the performance event, the study accounted for experience

¹⁷⁶ Davies (2016) has since adopted this term in his description of *Barbe bleue* on his website <http://gopaladavies.com> [2015, June 16].

of the spectating researcher as they generated of meaning out of their experience during their interaction with performance event.

The first case, *Ubu*, combined and integrated media such as actors' bodies on stage, puppetry, shadow theatre and projection in order to explore the development of themes in the performance. Despite its use of multiple media, *Ubu* is perceived (by the spectating researcher), through the theatrical frame, and the two actors on stage sustain the story of the action on stage, while the other media (witness puppets, animation film and documentary film) are used to explore alternative (but connected) story worlds. The chapter for this case, Chapter 4, uncovered that, while some of the creative choices in the performance were deliberated upon beforehand for the purposes of exploring the themes, many other creative choices were arrived at in the rehearsal process, resulting from the interaction of the media. Intermediality in *Ubu* was therefore a chosen strategy for the creation of the *mise en scène*.

In *Barbe bleue*, the director, having been involved in performances that used technology for its own sake, worked towards avoiding such a predicament in this production. The performance employed (combined and integrated) a variety of media, such as large-screen film projection, a projection-mapped "storybook", the moving bodies of actors on stage, and auditory narration. The study uncovered that the performance experimented with multiple narration strategies in its treatment of an old fairy tale through the interplay of corporeal bodies, the auditory narrative voice, still images, video and various projection techniques. The resulting effect is a retelling, commenting on and rewriting of the tale into a new context, and with personal motivation.

In the third case, *Mwana wanga*, the relations between theatre, song and letter-writing were investigated. Similarities among these media, on the one hand, accounted for the successful straightforward transfer of media traits from song to theatre while, on the other hand, the differences accounted for the use of alternative, equivalent sensory configurations in the theatre. The study therefore uncovered a complex process of transfer and transformation of media characteristics and traits from music to theatre. As discussed in the chapter, a reciprocal interrelationship is thus created between the song and the performance: while *Dearest child* inspires *Mwana wanga*, the theatrical performance also becomes part of the song's interpretive context.

The fourth and final case, *Msonkhano*, is classified as documentary theatre. The study uncovered that the performance used its own medium-specific means to refer to other media such as documentary film and photography. The study argues that the employment of “referred media” in the performance enabled the creative team to achieve a complex and continuous shifting of frames between factual and fictional realms within the theatre context.

This short overview of the four cases presented in this section reveals the dynamic ways in which theatre interrelates with other media and their related technologies. The four examples show that simplistic descriptions of African theatre as “pure”, “uncontaminated” and “indigenous” simply do not hold and are not based on a practical understanding of the situation on the ground. The examples in this study therefore exhibited the versatility of African theatre, demonstrating that African theatre encompasses a wide spectrum of performance traditions, styles, presentational modes and modalities and aesthetic forms. Most importantly, the performances also demonstrated how African theatre incorporates, develops from and evokes the presence of other media in dynamic and enriching ways.

8.4.1.1. Labelling and intentions

The study found that performances that were labelled as multimedia were most likely to have “the investigation of media interrelations” as part of their main motivations. On the other hand, the performances categorised (by the researcher) as exhibiting “the presence of other media” did not set out to explore interrelationships. In these cases, the presence of other media in the performances was only a means to explore particular themes that were central to the creative team.

Barbe bleue, for example, was created with the intention of exploring media interrelations between film and theatre through the appropriation of an old tale to serve a contemporary personal theme. *Barbe bleue* was labelled as multimedia in the programme and was easily identified as a potential case. Similarly, the initial impetus for *Mwana wanga* was to appropriate the theme of diaspora explored in the song, *Dearest child*, in the performance. The performance, therefore, developed from its inspiration by the song from the conceptualisation phase: transpositioning media traits and characteristics from the song to the performance. Having the performance’s principal creator as the sole researcher in this research study on intermediality in theatre certainly influenced the

choices made in this project. Examples of such choices include the use of music as inspiration for theatre, and the decision to exclude digital media (in its material form) from the performance.

Msonkhano, on the other hand, was developed out of the need to explore the theme of cross-cultural encounters. The structuring principle of the performance demanded a fusion of the presentation of factual material (the teams' own experiences) and fictional treatment (theatre as a mode of representation). This led to the exploration of and experimentation with both factual and fictional modes of representation, and in turn evoked the presence of documentary film and photography, which functioned as validators of the truth-value of the factual modes.

Ubu, however, oscillated between these two categories. Labelled as multimedial, the project clearly announced its employment of other media from its inception. Additionally, the skill set and expertise of the creative team in the collaboration already implied the use of multiple media in a theatrical setup (multimediality). However, in contrast with Davies – whose work incorporated digital media for the purpose of investigating the use of film in theatre, the initial exploration of this kind had already been explored in the earlier theatrical collaborations between Kentridge and the Handspring Puppet Company. The employment of electronic media in *Ubu* therefore is linked to the desire to transport Alfred Jarry's *Ubu* from his original context and to situate him in the newly post-apartheid era of truths and reconciliation. The creative team's need to take *Ubu* out of his burlesque original context, its decision to focus on *Ubu* (the perpetrator of crimes rather than the victims), and the crisis of representing witness accounts of apartheid victims all were concerns that influenced the major decisions regarding the employment of media in *Ubu*¹⁷⁷. While *Ubu* started out as a multimedial performance, its experimentation with other media led to the employment of the media in an intermedial way.

The labelling of the performances (as multimedia or intermedial) and the intentions of the principal creatives also affected how the research tools fared in the course of the research. The semi-structured interview, when administered to creatives who set out to investigate media interrelations in their work, functioned quite well in eliciting the conceptual ideas for the performance: the

¹⁷⁷ This argument is strengthened by the fact that the creative team found no need to upgrade the media in the 2014 remake of the original *mise en scène*, 17 years after the premier of the performance. This confirms that the aim of the performance was not experimentation with new media *per se*.

reasons behind the employment of media and the behind-the-scenes technical aspects of the performance which may not have been grasped from watching the performance alone. On the other hand, the semi-structured interview questionnaire was not as useful for performances that did not set out to investigate the relations between theatre and other media, because the driving force behind the “presence/incorporation of other media” was not a primary objective.

8.4.2. What is the nature of the interaction between theatre and other media?

The interaction of media in *Ubu* is best described in terms of the realms of reality that were created through the employment of multiple media on stage. Situated within the same realm, the interaction between the actors on stage and the animal puppets is the closest among the interactions in the performance. Within the plot structure of the stage action, the animal puppets are symbolic representations of loyal accomplices to Ubu’s crimes against humanity within the apartheid context. The study found that an often-overlooked interaction, however, is that which exists between the puppet and the puppeteer who operates the rod puppets while bodily present on stage. The study has argued that there were complex interactions between the puppets, the puppeteer and the human characters, which played out in front of the audience. In addition, these interactions are achieved without hiding the artifice of their art and without creating a disruption in the flow of the performance. The study also argues that the relations between the virtual world of the screen and the world of the stage was deliberately left ambiguous, sometimes interacting and directly referring to the stage action and vice versa, and at other times appearing to follow its own plot structure separate from the stage action. The study argues that this technique was used by the creative team to encourage the audience to explore its own generation of meaning with regard to the performance.

Instances of interaction between the corporeal and the virtual were also a prominent feature in *Barbe bleue*. The study argues that the creative team sought to create “balanced” interaction between film and theatre to ensure that one does not overpower the other. The crucial task of the team therefore was to present the media and their modality modes as equally capable of transmediating the age-old tale of Bluebeard. In scene two, for example, the synchronizing of multiple narrative strategies was achieved through the “superimposing” of the human body into

the action of the story projected on the screen while the auditory narration of the tale by an omnipresent narrator was also being performed. The chapter also discussed at length how the performance sought to investigate the interaction between film and theatre in the employment of simulated “liveness” by having an actor on stage imitate the pre-recorded actions depicted in the performance.

The interaction between the source medium and the target medium was both direct and indirect in *Mwana wanga*. The study argues that, on the one hand, the sharing of media traits between theatre and song enabled a direct transfer between the two media, as *Mwana wanga* adopted parts of the music, such as the instrumental melody and the lyrics directly. On the other hand, the process of transfer of media characteristics from the song to the performance also demanded the approximation of the media traits that were not easily transferable from song to performance. The chapter also argued that, apart from the direct and indirect transfers from the song, the performance adopted “a sense of musicality” that goes beyond the specific song, *Dearest child*, itself.

Technically, there is no interaction of media in *Msonkhano* because the performance consists of one medium alone. However, the interactions in *Msonkhano* (a theatrical performance that refers to documentary film and photography without having them materially present) can be discussed in terms of the modes of representation created by the source medium (theatre) and the referred media (documentary film and photography). The performance emphasised and (in other instances) blurred the distinction between the factual modes associated with realist epistemologies and the theatrical representation imbedded in fictional representations, depending on the effect they sought to achieve. The interaction between the referring and the referred media is therefore an amicable one in *Msonkhano*. The similarities of the media in question make it possible for the referring media to evoke the referred media (documentary film and photography) in the minds of the audience, even though it is only the referring medium that is materially present in the performance.

All in all, the cases in this study highlight dynamic ways of interaction between theatre and other media. The interaction between media in these cases is enabled or hindered by the sharing or clashing of media traits. The use of multiple media in these performances accounts for their multimediality: it is the “hows” of their interaction, however, that constitutes their intermediality.

8.4.3. How does intermediality shape the conceptualisation and perception of theatre and theatre presence?

Following on the discussion in the previous section, one can argue that the interrelations between media in theatre play a role in reconfiguring what is known as theatre and what is considered to constitute theatrical presence. The evidence from the four cases indeed confirms that the performances served as experiments in reconfiguring the conceptualisation and perception of theatre in their attempts to augment how performances are experienced.

In *Ubu*, for example, the use of multiple and interrelating media enables the performance to transform the theatrical space into portraying different realms of reality, all existing within the overall frame of theatre. For instance, the world of the two actors on stage and their loyal “pet” puppets is a burlesque one, full of symbolic representation and scatological language. This world was different from that of the TRC, where the witness puppets relayed their testimonies, even though these two worlds shared the physical space on stage. Similarly, the world created by the images projected on the screen was a more distanced, secondary world (which some would argue is a world of the subconscious) when compared to the world presented on the stage, highlighting and at the same time concealing Ubu’s brutal past. In addition to these worlds, the use of a mechanical puppet together with written texts on screen and some symbolic visuals (such as the eye or the tripod stand) evoked the world of observation of and commentary on the action on stage and on screen, a world in which the spectating researcher took part in. *Ubu* truly demonstrates how the concept of theatrical space can be expanded through the use of other media.

In the same vein, *Ubu* could be said to have reconfigured the concept of “character” in its complex characterisation of the main character of Ubu. The characterisation of Ubu is more complex than the usual binaric representation created out of the iconic relationship between the corporeal body on stage and the virtual body on screen, as exhibited in many theatre performances that incorporate electronic and digital media. In *Ubu (and the truth commission)*, Ubu exists in flesh and blood on stage, but is also implicated in the apartheid brutalities portrayed on screen through his symbolic depiction in the form of Alfred Jarry’s iconic drawings of Ubu which also morphs into a variety of personae. Furthermore, a large, puppet-like Jarryesque “Ubu” figure first appears as a shadow figure on the screen (representing Ubu’s subconscious as he sleeps on stage), and then later on

stage as a large, physical puppet-like costumed character. All the Ubus are present in their own materiality and play important roles in the multiple interlinked plots throughout the performance.

In the second case, *Barbe bleue*, the question of theatrical presence was central to Davies's experimentation with digital technologies. Theatrical presence is one of the qualities of theatre that Davies was interested in experimenting with in his bid to incorporate the medium of film in theatre. Davies deliberately set out to create virtual screen doubles of corporeal bodies on stage and doubles of the film footage (in the storybook, back screen projection and with the hand-holding frame) in an effort to explore the notions of time delay, synchronizing and forwarding. The resulting effect is an augmentation of how the spectating researcher experienced time and space in the variety of narratives in his performance. Indeed the study argues that the spectating researcher was confronted with multiple "presences" (such as the theatrical, the virtual, the storybook-like) that were sometimes synced and experienced together, enriching their overall experience, while in other instances the "presences" were isolated to highlight the fact of theatrical presence as a construction in the performance.

The debate between Robertson and Davies's conceptualisation of theatre provides insight into how Davies conceptualises theatre and its interrelations with other media. As explored in Chapter 5, Robertson bemoans the lack of a character or plot-driven story (that she expects in theatrical performances) in *Barbe bleue*. She therefore regarded Davies's performance as ineffective, because the elements of the parts of the whole were not joined together in a manner that she is used to. When one considers Davies's conceptual underpinnings for the performance, however, one realises that Davies intended to have the performance as fragmented as it was as part of his postmodernist mission of revising the age-old fairy tale. The chapter therefore argued that Davies intended to have the audience (which includes Robertson herself) take part in this process of revision in his attempts to augment how they (individually) experienced time and space in his multiple and interacting narratives.

In the third case, the performance experimented with the boundaries between music and theatre and, in doing so, appropriated concepts and qualities from music to revitalise the theatre performance. Through its elaborate adaptation of *Dearest child, Mwana wanga* succeeds in creating a sense of musicality in the performance. Theatre, of course, has historically been closely

associated with music. However, in their case, the creative team in *Mwana wanga* makes a conscious effort to draw from music in general, and from the specific song, to rejuvenate theatrical performance and to pay tribute to the song.

The final case, *Msonkhano*, highlighted theatre as a versatile medium that possesses the ability to evoke other (technological) media without changing its own materiality. Theatre in *Msonkhano* is no longer a medium for fictional representational modes of expression only, but also a medium for factual representation too. The performance of *Msonkhano* is framed within theatre, and the only medium available in its materiality is theatre. However, through the use of its own means, the perceivers are able to distinguish between factual modes, such as documentary film and photography, and representational modes, such as storytelling, pantomime and enactments, in this performance.

In summary, the performances analysed in this study certainly call for an expansion of conventional understandings of what theatre, theatrical presence, theatrical time and space entail in the Malawian and South African theatre contexts. The cases described above prove that, by using intermediality as an approach to understanding theatre, the concepts of “theatre” and “theatrical presence” can no longer be understood from a dominant or singular viewpoint.

8.4.4. How does the team create a mise en scène that incorporates other media?

The question on the creation of the mise en scène is process oriented and thus calls for an understanding of the interactions of people, skills and expertise, from the rehearsal process to the performance. What is particular about the creation of mise en scène in these cases is that the process involved working with more than one system of aesthetic conventions, principles of structure, and stylistic procedures. There were no additional media *materially*¹⁷⁸ present in the mise en scène of the last two cases in this study. However, this question is still relevant for these two cases, because the cast(s) of the performance(s) still worked with concepts and elements of more than one medial configuration in their creation of the mise en scène.

¹⁷⁸ Emphasis added.

Collaboration was central to the creation of the *mise en scène* in *Ubu*. From its initial stages, *Ubu* was a collaboration of skilled experts in drawing, animation and film – a puppet company (consisting of designers, puppeteers, actors and technicians), a playwright and a theatre director who is also a visual artist. Furthermore, this collaboration was initiated within a workshop setup, where most of the creative choices were arrived at through physicalised exploration of meaning making (including the script, which would become the most widely used surviving remnant of the performance). The director’s notion of practical epistemology, the centrality of physicalised knowledge as a valid way of knowing, and his method of “giving in to the medium” played a key role in the resulting *mise en scène*. The study discusses, for example how Kentridge and the team, through experimenting with the placement of the witness puppets in relation to a sleeping *Ubu*, arrived at a chosen meaning from a series of other meaning-making opportunities. The creative team in *Ubu* capitalised on a physicalised and contingent methodology as a tool for creating a *mise en scène*.

In *Barbe bleue*, Davies as the principal creative for the performance, created a setup in which the entire cast was involved in the creation of all the materials and designs used for the performance. For example, the cast took part, as cast and crew, in the filming of the mockumentaries and the enactments. The creative team was also actively engaged in the execution of the lighting design in the rehearsal process, and also in the performance. During the performance, all actors were rigged with torches, which they manipulated at certain times in the performance. The involvement of the cast in the creation and the execution of the technological elements of the performance demonstrated Davies’s approach to the use of technology in theatre. Davies, in *Barbe bleue*, utilised technology both as labour-saving devices and as an aesthetic aspect of his performance. The use of an actor to operate the visuals and audios from the “storybook” tale is also worth mentioning here. In addition to the acting and lighting tasks, this particular actor was entrusted with operating the “storybook” (starting and stopping the sequences), but also with creating the visual illusions on stage by repeating the actions portrayed by the characters in the film projection. There were, therefore, no rigid divisions of labour (between the technical and the performance aspects of the production) in the creation and execution of the performance in *Barbe bleue*. Davies and his entire cast multitasked and played crucial roles of in the creation of the *mise en scène* and

performance event that incorporated other media, taking multiple roles to achieve the required aesthetic effects.

Mwana wanga does not make any pretences about its inspiration by *Dearest child*. This is why, even before the rehearsals, the conception of the theatrical performance involved a close engagement with the song (and its creators), as the creative team appropriated the features of the song in a variety of ways. Throughout the rehearsal process, the song remained a key source of inspiration for the creative team. Central to the conception stages, the rehearsal period involved further experimentation beyond the song itself and allowed for the incorporation of the creative team's personal style and aesthetic nuances, which were added to the *mise en scène*.

The last case, *Msonkhano*, used lived experiences of all the participants as a resource for the creation of the *mise en scène* in the performance. From the beginning to the end, the team sought to create a performance that was reliant on the real stories, feelings and opinions of the creative team, and which were shared, workshopped and even developed through fictional modes of representation. The *mise en scène* therefore consisted of the collective experiences of the cast, their encounters with each other and each other's cultures. The thematic, the idea of using their own personal encounters as raw material, took precedence over the idea of using theatre to depict other media. The presence of other media in the *mise en scène* was consequently a resulting effect of the thematic engagement with the materials. However, through the elaborate study of the switching of frames from one mode of representation to another, the study uncovered how the performers used their bodies, voices, costumes, space and props to distinguish between modes of representation. This confirms that all actors needed the competence to execute a range of both fictional and factual modes of representation in a discontinuous manner throughout the performance.

In summary, the creation of a *mise en scène* that incorporates other media involves a familiarisation with the conventions of other media beyond the theatrical modes of representation. This assertion is true even for those cases that did not incorporate other media materially. All the performances discussed in this study were arrived at through rigorous processes of workshop experimentation. Where traditional texts were used, as in the case of *Ubu* and *Barbe blue*, other media were employed to aid in the transformation of the old texts to the new contexts. More importantly, the creation of *mise en scène* that incorporates other media involved a restructuring of the traditional

roles and functions (of the director and the cast) ascribed by theatre conventions. Furthermore, the creative processes involved harnessing skills and expertise from other media.

8.5. Impact of study

This study is a contribution to the scholarship on the study of intermediality in theatre, a trend that was ignited by the seminal work of Chapple and Kattenbelt (2006a) in their book, *Intermediality in theatre and performance*. The study explored the use of the concept of intermediality in different theatre contexts. While most of the body of literature on theatrical intermediality has been generated in the European context – which in some instances presents sweeping generalisations about intermediality in the global context – this thesis recognised that there are (contextual) considerations at play in designating a phenomenon as intermedial. The study is therefore purposefully contextual: it attempts to create an understanding of intermediality in specific (less explored) geographical contexts outside the dominant paradigm.

The study also contributes to the scholarship on theatre and media interrelations in the African theatre context, inspired by the groundwork set in *African theatre 10: Media & performance* (Kerr, 2010a), the most elaborate work that has attempted to connect the fields of theatre and media in African theatre to date. Specifically, the study continues the investigation of a trend identified as the use of “mixed stage techniques” (Kerr, 2011b:xviii), which was described in the book as a fast-developing trend in African theatre. While the dominant trend in the study of intermediality has been to study the incorporation of digital media into theatre, this thesis shifts the discussion back to a more inclusive definition of intermediality, which includes the study of the “presence of other media” in a phenomenon, in addition to the study of the incorporation of (digital) media. In this widened perspective, the study also interrogated techno-centric conceptualisations of African theatre and media.

8.6. Conclusion

This study sought to gain an understanding of how theatre and other media interrelate in the South African and Malawian theatre contexts. The four cases analysed in this study revealed many dynamic ways in which theatre interrelates with other media and their related technologies, and presented convincing evidence that theatre practice in these contexts is far more experimental in exploring the relations between theatre and other media than is purported in the literature.

The study found that the interrelations between theatre and other media play a major role in reconfiguring conventional conceptualisations of theatre and theatrical presence. The evidence from the four case studies indeed confirms that other media were employed in the performances (by collaborative creative teams) to augment how the audience experienced theatrical presence, theatrical time and theatrical space, among other concepts, and because of these efforts traditional conceptualisations and perceptions of theatre were reconfigured. The performances analysed in this study therefore call for an expansion of conventional understandings of what theatre, theatrical presence, theatrical time and theatrical space entail in the Malawian and South African theatre contexts.

In addition, the study found that the interaction between theatre and other media reconfigure traditional methodologies of making theatre, and the roles played by the cast members and the production teams in the creation and execution of the performance. This was because the performances demanded an understanding of and competence in working across more than one system of aesthetic convention, structure and stylistic procedures, often requiring collaboration in the interactions of artists, and in skills and expertise from different fields from the rehearsal process through to the performance.

Most importantly, however, and contrary to the discourse generated by alarmists in African theatre studies, the cases in the study exhibited the versatility of African theatre. They prove that African theatre encompasses a wide spectrum of performance traditions, styles, presentational modes, modalities and aesthetic forms, and capabilities of incorporating or evoking newer forms of media. This broad spectrum of interrelations found in this study ranges from indigenous performance traditions at one end of the spectrum, to the latest digital technologies at the other end, and constitutes what African theatre is today.

The study therefore argues that it is no longer sufficient to characterise the relationship between theatre and other media from the cultural economy perspective, and thus to discuss it in terms of being a “domineered” medium alone. Similarly, the study found that it is unfounded to theorise African theatre as “pure” or uncontaminated, because African theatre exists in a world where old and new media coexist and interact. The study therefore argues that the field of theatre studies in these contexts can no longer afford to be rigid when practice is experimenting with other media.

Theatre studies in these contexts needs to be responsive to the experimentation in theatre practice, which continuously augments how theatre is conceptualised, created and experienced. The study calls for a shift in approach towards medial interrelations in African theatre, lest scholarship separates itself from theatre practice.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The tale of Bluebeard as transcribed from *Barbe bleue: A story of madness*

The tale of Bluebeard. Once upon a time in a Fairland of France there lived a powerful lord, the owner of estate, and a very splendid castle. His name was Bluebeard. He was very handsome and charming.

But if truth be told, there was something about him that made you feel a little uneasy. Bluebeard often went away to war and when he did, he left his wife in charge of the castle. He had had lots of wives all young, pretty and noble. As bad luck would have it, one after another, they had all died and so the noble lord was forever getting married again. Bluebeard would say one died of smallpox, one of a hidden sickness another of hay fever, another of a terrible infection. “Argh! I am very unlucky and they are unlucky too”. Nobody found anything strange about that, nor did the sweet and beautiful young girl who Bluebeard took as his wife I think its Regina. A month or so later Bluebeard had a carriage brought and said to his wife. “Darling, I must leave you for a few weeks but keep cheerful during that time. Invite whoever you would like and take care of castle”. “Here”, he added, handing his wife a bunch of keys. “Now this little key here” and he pointed to a key that was much smaller than the others, “opens the little room at the end of the great ground floor corridor. Take your friends where you want, open any door you want but not this one. Is that quite clear?” Repeated Bluebeard, “Not this one. Nobody at all is allowed to enter that little room and if you ever did go into it, I would get into such a terrible rage that it’s better that you don’t [...]”, “Don’t worry husband, I’ll do as you say”. Bluebeard entered into his carriage, whipped up the horses and off he went.

The days went by. The young girl invited friends to the castle and showed them all rooms except the one at the end of the corridor. “Why shouldn’t I see inside the little room, why? Why is it forbidden?” She thought about it so much that she ended up bursting with curiosity until one day she opened the door and walked into the little room. Of all ghastly horrors inside, hanging on the wall were the bodies of Bluebeards wives, he had strangled them with his own hands. Terror-stricken, the girl run out of the room but the bunch of keys slipped out of her grasp, she picked

them up without a glance and hurried out of the room. She was living in the castle of the dead. The girl summoned up her courage and she noticed that one of the keys, the very key to the little room was stained with blood. "I must wipe the key before my husband comes back". Determined as she would, the blood stain could not wash away. She washed, she scrubbed and she rinsed, all in vain for the key was still red. That very evening, Bluebeard came home. Just imagine the state his poor wife was in. Bluebeard did not ask his wife for the keys that same evening but he remarked, "You look a little upset darling, has anything nasty happened?" "Oh no, no". "Are you sorry I returned back so soon?", "Oh no I'm delighted". That night the bride did not sleep a wink. The next day Bluebeard said. "Darling give me back the keys" and his wife hurried and did so. Bluebeard remarked, "there is one missing, the key to the little room". "Is there? I must have left it in my room", "go right then and get it". But when Bluebeard's wife put the key into his hand, Bluebeard turned white and in a deep hoarse voice demanded "Why this is key stained with blood?" "I don't know". "You know better than that. You went to the little room didn't you? How about you go back again, this time for good along with the other ladies? You must die, no you must die!" He must have been about to strangle her neck when two men burst into the room, a Dracon and a musketeer. They were his wife's brothers. Drawing their swords, they leapt behind Bluebeard who tried to veer up some stairs, but swiftly, he plummeted to his death. And that is the end of the sad story. Bluebeard's dear wives were given a Christian burial. The castle was completely renovated and the young widow some time later married a good and honest young man who helped her forget the terrible adventure. And that young girl completely lost all her sense of curiosity. The end.

Appendix 2: *Dearest child* by Kimba Mutanda and Peter Mawanga

Mwana wanga

Mwana wanga

Mwana wanga

I've decided it's better if wrote this letter in English
'coz some of you were pretty young when you left
and you might not remember your mother tongue.

I enclosed a photo of me in my best dress
The black, red, and green one with the setting sun stitched across the chest
The picture's a few years old unfortunately,
but I look much the same even though I'm in my forties
I'm still living in the same house you left me in
and it's still under construction.

Remember the one built on the T-junction where those three major roads meet?

Zambia Ave, Tanzania Road and Mozambique Street?

Your family is bigger but it's not quite the same
'coz a lot of your cousins and family have jumped on planes to chase dreams that they've seen
on DSTV screens.

It makes no sense to me,

They say they've lost faith in your uncle Chilembwe's pocket money and would rather get cash
that's green, or be paid by a woman they call Queen

Her name's familiar ... we might have met before

But I think the last time I saw her was in 1964

I have to stop now, my hand is getting sore,
but I promise once I gather my thoughts to write you some more

Dearest child.

Chorus

Bwera	Come home
Oh aitana	Oh she's calling
Bwelera bwelera	Return, return
Kwanu nkwanu mwanawe	There's nothing like home dear child
Mdalaka njoka, mthengo	Foreign land is not home
Mai Malawi aitana	Mother Malawi beckons

And I know I haven't been the best mother at times
My first husband was a jealous man.
As much as I loved him he was hard to understand.
He thought too much freedom a crime
He'd punish your older siblings sending some into exile.
I even heard rumours of prison cells and crocodiles.
It took me thirty years to end that relationship,
and when I did it felt great.
After that experience I concluded maybe it's better just to date.
So I give my new partners two years and that's that,
Though the first man I tried it with almost got too attached
Maybe I made the mistake of showing him too much affection
because when his term was over he tried to get an extension
And it seems there's always somebody who knows what's best for me, better than me
Like your white cousins who are constantly trying to give me advice and say I can't survive
without their expertise.
I'm like Oh please! I've got kids that are educated better than some of them will ever be

Doctors, lawyers, economists, and engineers.

When I say this some of them chuckle, and some of them sneer.

But I can't wait to see the look on their faces on the day you re-appear

bwera

Come home

Oh aitana

Oh she's calling

Bwelera bwelera

Come home

Kwanu nkwanu mwanawe

There's nothing like home dear child

Mdalaka njoka, mthengo

Foreign land is not home

Mai Malawi aitana

Mother Malawi beckons

I'm gonna post this to your last known address

I hope the stress of living illegally in a foreign place hasn't prematurely wrinkled your face

When I'm alone I think of silly things like if you miss my cooking

It's painful to think that you're just a single plane booking away from my loving arms

I'm contemplating writing a will because if I ever come to harm I'd like to guarantee your inheritance.

As a consequence of you being overseas, some of my assets are being managed by Libyans and Lebanese

It makes me wonder how different it would be if my future plans were in your hands

Oh, by the way, I reserved a spot on a beach with the best sands by the lakeside for your home-coming party ... whenever that may be.

I miss you.

But don't let my emotion be a weight on your spirit

These words should be like a sad song that makes you feel warm and confident when you hear it

Remember, my main concern is that you're happy

From the bottom of my warm heart, yours eternally, your mother, Malawi

PS, Whatever you do, you know I wish you the greatest success

Take care for you for me child

God bless

Bwera Oh mwana wanga
Bwerera bwerera Kwanu nkwanu mthengo
Mdalaka njoka, Oh mwana wanga, Mthengo
Mai Malawi aitana oh mwana wanga
Bwera, Oh aitana
Bwerera bwerera Kwanu nkwanu mthengo
Mdalaka njoka Oh mthengo
Mai Malawi aitana Amayi
aitana
Bwera Oh aitana
Bwerera bwerera Mwanu wanga Kwanu
kuno
Mdalaka njoka Oh mwana wanga
Mai Malawi aitana Mwanawe Tabwera
Bwera Oh aitana
Bwerera bwerera Kwanu nkwanu Mthengo,
Mdalaka njoka Mthengo
Mai Malawi aitana
Bwera, Oh aitana

Bwerera bwerera
Come home Oh dearest child
Return return foreign land is not your home
It's not home Oh dearest child, it's not home
Mother Malawi calls oh dearest child
Come home, she's calling out
Return return, foreign land is not your home
It's not home, it's not
Mother Malawi beckons, mother beckons
Come home, she's calling out
Return return, my child this is your home
It's not home, oh dearest child
Mother Malawi calls out, come my child
Come home, oh she's calling out
Return return, foreign land is your not home
It's not home, it's not
Mother Malawi beckons
Come home Oh she's calling out
Return return

Appendix 3: Chronology of moments in *Msonkhano.de/Begegnungen.mw*

MOMENT-TO-MOMENT BREAKDOWN	FORMAT	MARKERS/FRAMES	EFFECT
Singing of “Kalilima” song	Song: representational format	Verbal markers that are based on the pre-existing relationship between the song and the tale of the egrets’ banquet	Associations between the song and the tale signal possible themes (and possibly mood) of the performance Association with the tale signals a storytelling mode of representation
Narration of encounters	Referred documentary film format, factual format: using theatrical means	Verbal markers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct address to audience, • Use of actors’ names instead of character names • Implicit (indirect) interview responses • Use of higher pitch to attract attention to “interviewed” duo Gesticulated markers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raising of hands to attract attention to “interviewed” duo • subtle (unexaggerated) facial responses in response to partners’ narration of impression 	Marks off this moment as factual as opposed to the fictional representation that follows the scene
Narrative 1. First narration of the tale of the egrets’ banquet (in Chichewa)	Storytelling: representational format	Verbal markers: Narrator’s call: “Padangokhala” Audience response: “Tilitonse”	Shifts the performance from the factual mode of the

		Narrator's direct address to the audience Gesticulated markers	"documentary film" to the fictional storytelling mode
Letter reading and enactment 1 (Talent and Vanessa).	Letter reading (presentational format) Dramatisation (representational format)	Letter in physical materiality Verbal markers: "Dear Talent/Vanessa" Adoption of new roles: Talent as Priest, Vanessa as Nambewe	Shifts the performance from the (fictional) storytelling mode to (factual) letter-reading mode and back to the (fictional) dramatisation mode
Narration of egrets' banquet tale 1 (in German)	Storytelling: representational format	Verbal markers: "Padangokhala" and "Tilitonse" Direct address to the audience Gesticulated markers	Breaks off from the (fictional) dramatisation mode to another fictional mode (storytelling)
Letter reading and enactment 2 (Jimmy and Verena)	Letter reading (presentational format) Dramatisation 1: The Chameleon Kiss (representational format) Dramatisation 2: The Chinkhoswe (representational format) Brechtian interruption 1 (by Ben) Brechtian interruption 2 (by Regina) Re/presentational format:	Verbal markers: "Dear Jimmy" Adoption of new characters as chameleons Adoption of new roles and fictional names (Mr Bamusi, Mr Chikabudula) Actor uses body movement and voice to disrupt the performance Actor uses body movement and voice to disrupt the performance Verbal markers: Use of real names for Verena and Marleen	Shifts the performance from the fictional mode (storytelling) to the factual mode of letter reading, back to the fictional mode of dramatisation. Note that the use of the Brechtian interruption incorporates a factual mode within the dramatisation
The wedding scene dance (waltz)	Continued dramatisation (representational format)	Costume Dance and music	Continued fictional mode of dramatisation
Narration of egrets' banquet tale 2 (in Chichewa and in German)	Storytelling (representational format)	Verbal markers: "Padangokhala" and "Tilitonse" Direct address to the audience Gesticulated markers	Shifts the performance from the dramatisation to the storytelling mode
Letter reading and pictorial moments 3 (Malte and Regina)	Letter reading (presentational format)	Verbal markers: "Dear Malte/Regina"	Shifts the performance from the fictional mode of

<p>Song and dance (German and Malawian)</p>	<p>Referred pictorial moment 1 (fusion of presentational and representational formats) Referred pictorial moment 2 (fusion of presentational and representational formats)</p>	<p>Gesticulated markers Gestural markers</p>	<p>storytelling to the factual mode of letter reading. Shifts from the factual letter reading mode to the pictorial mode, which fuses both fictional and factual representation</p>
<p>Narration of egrets' banquet tale 3 (in pantomime)</p>	<p>Pantomime (Representational formats)</p>	<p>Movement, gestures and sounds</p>	<p>Shifts the performance from the factual/fictional pictorial moment to the dramatisation mode</p>
<p>Development aid "documentary"</p>	<p>Referred documentary format, presentational format Representational format</p>	<p>Verbal markers (Direct address to audience, interview) Bird costume</p>	<p>Shifts the performance from the storytelling fictional mode to the factual documentary mode which is also fused with some fictional aspects</p>
<p>Letter reading and dramatisation (McArthur and Marleen)</p>	<p>Letter reading (presentational format) Dramatisation 1: Bicycle taxi ride (re/presentational format) Dramatisation 2: The feeding as bilateral agreement (re/presentational format) Dramatisation 3: Ear massage (re/representational format)</p>	<p>"Dear McArthur/Marleen" Adoption of new roles (Marleen as bicycle, McArthur as rider fused with retention of real names) Metaphorical representation of relationship fused with retention of real names Metaphorical representation of relationship fused with confrontation of existing racial stereotypes</p>	<p>Shifts the performance from the (factual) documentary mode to another factual mode, letter reading Shifts from the factual mode to the fictional mode, dramatisation Shifts the performance again from dramatisation to a mixed fictional/factual mode of representation</p>
<p>Narration of egrets' banquet tale 4 (in Chichewa and German)</p>	<p>Storytelling (representational format)</p>	<p>Verbal markers: "Padangokhala" and "Tilitonse" Direct address to the audience Gesticulated markers Singing of Kalilima song</p>	<p>Shifts the performance mixed fictional/factual modes of representation to the fictional mode of storytelling</p>

Letter reading (Ben and Stephanie)	Letter reading (presentational format)	Letter in physical materiality, verbal markers: "Dear Stef"	Ends the performance on the factual mode that emphasises the themes of the performance
Singing	Song (re/presentational mode)	Verbal markers that capitalise on the pre-existing knowledge of Ben as a singer/song writer and the awareness of the theatrical context of performance ¹⁷⁹	

¹⁷⁹ Ben (Michael) Mankhamba, a Malawian music icon (guitarist, singer, songwriter, composer, performer, producer, percussionist, choreographer) who has released several albums and has performed at many festivals, both local and international. See (Sundu, 2015) <http://mwnation.com/malawis-master-of-the-stage/> [2016, September 23].

Appendix 4 The “documentary film”

#	MODES AND TECHNIQUES	MARKERS	EXAMPLES
	Modes	Markers	examples
1	Documentary format	Use of real names	“This is my partner Marleen.”
		Use of lived encounters	“When I first met Marta at the airport...” Talent on Vanessa: “I still remember this other day we were in this huge church in Germany...”
2	Indirect interview format for documentary film	Direct address to the audience	“This is my dear partner McArthur” (Un)stylized acting techniques
		Implicit indirect interview questions	<p><i>Who is your partner?</i> “This is my partner McArthur”, “This is my dear partner Malte”, “Meet my beautiful partner Verena” “This is Jimmy here”.</p> <p><i>What was the impression of your partner when you met them at the airport?</i> “When I first met Ben I thought this man cannot hug”.</p> <p><i>What do you have in common?</i> Vanessa on Talent: “Talent and me both had asthma as children and we both got cured by a medicine man”.</p> <p><i>What do you love most about them?</i> McArthur on Marleen, “What I like most is that she is inquisitive”.</p> <p><i>What scares you the most about them?</i> Regina on Malte: “What scares me about him is his honesty”.</p> <p>Vanessa on Talent: “What I’m really scared about is to talk about the big issues ... I’m afraid to find out that we are so far apart in core values that we cannot connect anymore”.</p> <p><i>What does your partner hide from you?</i> Regina on Malte “What he hides from me is whether he has moved on or not from his past love relationship”.</p>
3	Theatrical approximation of cuts and switchbacks	Gestures, verbal and facial responses	Regina raises her hand and speaks to take the attention away from McArthur. The two are positioned on two opposite parts of the stage.
4	Theatrical approximation of close ups (focus on each pair)	Gestures	Marleen touches MacArthur’s arm when introducing him. Marleen and McArthur look at each other and smile.
		Verbal responses	Marleen interjects in McArthur’s account and says, “I will tell you sometime” when McArthur informs the audience that she never speaks of her boyfriend.
		Facial responses	Ben smirks when Steffi talks of her first impression of him. Malte has a shocked face when Regina says that he was not as big as she imagined him to be at the airport, he smiles when she says he has a good sense of humor.