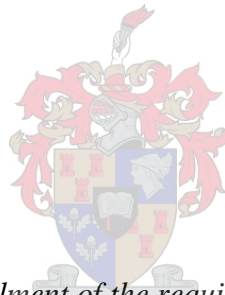


**A possible missing (or theorized) link between absurdities in the human psyche and in the Theatre of the Absurd, using fairy tales as a connecting vehicle**

by  
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MA in Drama and Theatre Studies in the Faculty of  
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## **Declaration**

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## **Abstract**

This research addresses whether there is a possible missing or theorised link between absurdities related to the human psyche (psychology) and the Theatre of the Absurd, with the fairy tale genre as a connecting vehicle between the two main theories. This research consists of both a theoretical and practical component, with the theoretical component relying primarily on literature studies.

To determine this link, research was done in the disciplines of psychology (more specifically Jung's stance on the psyche and psychoanalysis concerning specific mental disorders, which may be adhered to as absurdities concerning the psyche), philosophy (more specifically absurdism/existentialist philosophy), fairy tale literature, and theatre (more specifically the Theatre of the Absurd).

The methodological approach used was research-based practice as gained from the iterative cyclic web of Smith and Deans (2009). This was used to aid in defining the possible link theoretically and adapting the theoretical insights into a practical production.

The practical production was self-written and directed using the insights gained from the Theatre of the Absurd, and Jung's stance on the psyche and psychoanalysis of mental disorders, with character inspiration obtained from popular Western fairy tales. An account of the practical exploration is given, along with addendums A and B which consist of the written text and photos from the live theatrical production.

The results from both the theoretical and practical insights showcased connections in each field with the other as follows: Psychology and theatre have a connection of their own, further stemming into the specifics of this research, and psychoanalysis and the psyche link with the Theatre of the Absurd from a Jungian perspective. The aforementioned psychological principles link with fairy tales and fairy tales with the Theatre of the Absurd. Fairy tales as a vehicle of discussion are universal and their archetypes, symbolism, morality, collective understanding and cognitive inclusions are what allowed for a deeper exploration into linking the two main fields. A possible link was defined between absurdities as related to the psyche and the Theatre of the Absurd, however, the real truth in the link lies in mankind itself, yet it is also established that truth is always deceiving and perspective-dependent.

## Opsomming

Hierdie navorsing ondersoek die moontlike “missing” of geteoritiseerde verband tussen absurditeite van die menslike psige (psigologies) en die Absurde Teater, met die feëverhaal as skakel tussen die twee teorieë. Die navorsing bestaan uit ‘n teoretiese en ‘n praktiese komponent. Die teoretiese komponent is hoofsaaklik gebaseer op literatuurstudie.

Om hierdie skakel te bepaal is navorsing gedoen in die dissiplines van psigologie (meer spesifiek Jung se siening van die psige en psigo-analise betreffende spesifieke geestesversteurings, waarna verwys kan word as van die absurditeite van die psige) en filosofie (meer spesifiek absurdisme/eksistensiële filosofie). Die metodologiese benadering wat gebruik is, is die van navorsinggebaseerde praktyk soos verkry van die iteratiewe sikliese web van Smith en Deans (2009). Dit is gebruik as hulpmiddel vir die definiering van ‘n moontlike skakel, teoreties, sowel as toepassing van hierdie teoretiese insigte in ‘n praktiese produksie.

Die praktiese produksie is selfgeskep en self-geregisseurd met gebruikmaking van die insigte wat verkry is van die Absurde Teater en Jung se siening van die psige en psigo-analise van geestesversteurings, met karakterinspirasie verkry van populêre Westerse feëverhale. Die praktiese eksplorering, sowel as Addendums A en B, word in geskrewe teks en foto’s van die teaterproduksie weergegee.

Die resultaat van beide die teoretiese en praktiese insigte weerspieël die konneksies van een veld met die ander as volg: Psigologie en teater het ‘n konneksie van hulle eie. Verdere delwing in die besonderhede van hierdie navorsing toon dat daar ‘n skakel is tussen psigoanalise of die psige met Absurde Teater vanuit ‘n Jungiese persepsie. Die genoemde psigologiese beginsels skakel met feëverhale en feëverhale met Absurde Teater. Feëverhale as voorwerp vir bespreking is universeel en hulle argetipes, simbolisme, moraliteit, kollektiewe begrip en kognitiewe inklusiwiteit is wat dit moontlik maak om die skakel tussen die twee velde in diepte te eksplorieer. ‘n Moontlike skakel tussen absurditeite van die psige en Absurde Teater is gedefinieer. Die ware skakel lê egter in die mensdom self, nogtans is vasgestel dat waarheid altyd misleidend en afhanklik van perspektief is.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Rationale**

#### **1.1.1 The origin of the study and a personal perspective**

The motivation and interest behind this chosen study and the interest in the research and practical components involved had no specific timeline from which it emerged, but rather has been an interest that was always fixated in my subconscious. The probable enlightenment behind this came about at a young age with my first introductions to children's fairy tales and the lasting effect they had on me. Fairy tales are announced as stories that attempt to find the truth and give glimpses of greater things the future may hold, along with the morals, values and lessons they are meant to teach children (Spitz, 2015). However, it has also been deemed that others value fairy tales for the opposite reasoning: relating to their "untrue" natures of sorcery and spells and impossible plot twists that are "resolved by uncanny metamorphoses that provide eerie yet satisfying 'returns' to something both deeply known and unknown" (Spitz, 2015). All of these reasons seem understandable, but then the question arises: Where does the truth lie?

With that question in mind both consciously and subconsciously throughout my youth, a new topic arrived with my first formal introduction to the theoretical component of theatre in my grade 10 year: Theatre of the Absurd. The exploration of this form of theatre with its expressions of searching for truth and its uncanny and unnatural styles of attempting to bring about those factors immediately intrigued me. It bravely acknowledges the fact that to those individuals who have lost their worldly sense of meaning and central explanation, "it is no longer possible to accept art forms still based on the continuation of standards and concepts that have lost their validity" (Esslin, 1961). In other words, the absolute possibility of knowing, acknowledging and accepting laws of conduct and the ultimate values derived as an individual's firm foundation of growing up, growing through life and having a revealed certainty about the purpose of man in the universe is expressed as a tragic sense of loss. Furthermore, it is a theatre of situation as opposed to a theatre of events in sequence – and, because of this, it uses a language of concrete images rather than the norm of cursive or argumentative speech, always trying to present a sense of being (Esslin, 1961). I find this to be such a remarkable means of explaining mankind, almost forgiving and explaining our unruly

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and unpredictable, yet always predictable, nature; a force working in opposition as well as in identical structures to both give and take the meaning of life, of being, of art and the human psyche.

My favourite element derived from this theatre type is absurdity, which is expressed in many performance forms, including but not limited to avant-garde and modern theatre. Absurdity also comes across in many forms; for example, in avant-garde theatre, overlooking all of the other aspects of this experimental form itself, one can find that most absurdities manifest in the characters. Other than the usual trait and presentations of irony, most of these characters barely make the description of reality-oriented, three-dimensional characters with human-like qualities from an audience's point of view. Rather, they form "impressionistic sketches in which human quality or condition is reduced to its quintessence" (Hooker, 1960). Current theatre has absurdity as a household term in its vocabulary, with its assumption of many secondary meanings, resulting in the term becoming manifold in the application, versus the philosophical meaning of "nonsense" (Sellin, 1969). The term absurdity is associated with Albert Camus, who originally considered "absurdity a state of mind and a mode of being resulting from an awareness of the hopelessness of thinking in terms of tomorrows" (Sellin, 1969).

Absurdity as a state of mind and a mode of being reminded me of personal inflictions experienced as a young child, specifically with introductions to the darker villainous characters associated with fairy tales. This mindset or psychological thought inhabitancy led to my questioning of the psychological mindsets of villainous fairy tale characters, specifically that of the popularised character type of "Wolf". Does this character type also possess an awareness of hopelessness? If so, from where does this stem? These unfiltered thoughts led to the writing and researching of the practical component involved and the further establishment of the theoretical research. Adhering to the philosophical nature of this research, it is impossible to state what came first: the chicken or the egg. In my terms, the research and the text influenced each other<sup>1</sup>. Preconceived knowledge led to the idea of the play text, researching this knowledge led to writing the text, and the written text led to further questions to research. The general ideology was to find where the truth lies in meaningless, fantasy-oriented, absurd realities, and whether a psychological linkage exists.

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<sup>1</sup> This will be further discussed in my research design using the Iterative Cyclic Web.

## **1.2. Contextualisation of key terms**

### **1.2.1 Defining “absurd”, “absurdity” and “absurdism” in the contexts of theatre, literature and psychology**

“Man is nothing because he has the liberty of choice and therefore is always that which he is in the process of choosing himself to be, a permanent potentiality rather than actual being.” – Martin Esslin (1962:195)

A common phenomenon in the reality we live in today is that we are identified and created through and/or by the choices we make. We choose certain aspects for us to become someone, either to be more or to be less like the “someone”. Regarding the above quote, learning that our very choices – or rather, the process of decision making – are what make us nothing has the hallmark of absurdity, with its direct approach to defiance of our being. The term “being” is potentially such a controversial term; in essence, a homonym. Is it being, as in existence, or being, as in the nature of a person? If it is the former, we delve into a philosophical point of view about absurdism. If it implies the latter, we might find ourselves amid a psyche phenomenon. The real question here, for this research, is how much these two differ from one another, especially if the nature of a person is to exist unless existence itself is the nature of people. This line of questioning existence and comparisons of things that seem the same but differ are points to highlight within this study, both in the cases of comparisons and in questioning. The main focus concerning comparisons lies in comparing the aforementioned terms “absurd”, “absurdism” and “absurdity” within the lines of psychology, theatre and literature, specifically in the realm of fairy tales. The line of questioning takes on a philosophical and esoteric approach, especially due to it being the origin of the term, “absurdism”.

The term “absurd” originally stems from the musical context, meaning “out of harmony”. Its dictionary definition is, “out of harmony with reason or propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical” (Esslin, 1962:23). Per the Collins Dictionary (2021), “absurd”, as the adjective form of “absurdity<sup>2</sup>”, is described as criticising something due to thinking it is ridiculous or

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<sup>2</sup> Absurdity is a noun form that simply means, “being in the state of the absurd, or something of an absurd quality” (Collins, 2021)

something that does not make sense. Other synonyms include “silly” and “crazy”, but **for this research, our literature definition simply adheres to *something being ridiculous***. The reason behind this choice is that the inclusion of fairy tales and their ridiculous creatures allows for literature-defined support in stating that a talking wolf, for example, is absurd. The term can also be seen as an umbrella term concerning it stretching out over vast and different fields of study, including literature, theatre, art, psychology and philosophy. With this elongation of a single term arises other derivatives, such as the nouns of absurdism and absurdity, which may have a similar context, but different meanings. “This term has acquired a new connotation since Albert Camus has taught us to find absurdity in actions and institutions that had been taken seriously before” (Esslin, 1960).

One cannot discuss the term “absurdism” without acknowledging and including the philosopher that developed and fathered this term, Albert Camus (1913–1960). A French novelist and philosopher, his work focused on the examination of alienation inherent to and in modern life, becoming best known for his concept of “the absurd” (King, 2019). He **defined absurdism as, “the futile search for meaning in a universe that is incomprehensible, devoid of a God or any true meaning”**. Absurdism, therefore, arises out of our tensions in the desire for meaning, happiness, order, and, even further, the universe’s refusal to provide any of that, thus posing the inevitable question: Is life worth living? (King, 2019). This was his start in developing the philosophy of absurdism, which can especially be exemplified in his essay “Le Mythe de Sisyphe” (1942) or as we know it to be, “The Myth of Sisyphus”<sup>3</sup>. Camus’s way of thinking can already give us a way to relate this absurd notion with the psyche, which, as we understand it to be, is the whole inclusion of the human mind and soul/spirit<sup>4</sup>.

Camus as a philosopher asserts that humankind should embrace the absurdity of human existence and strive to create meaning and value, thus having efforts and resilience as an appropriate response as opposed to the massive contradictory response of suicide and despair. Diverging back to Sisyphus for example, this Greek hero is seen as happy in terms of having

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<sup>3</sup> This story revolves around the great Greek mythological hero Sisyphus who was condemned for eternity by the Greek Gods to push a boulder up a mountain only to have it roll down the other side back to the bottom again. This visual literature piece allows us to gain understanding in Camus’s thoughts provoking his comparison of humankind asking and longing for order and the meaning of life, only to have our answers tumbling down over and over (King, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> A further question that he has us pondering, which will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 2, is whether suicide is a legitimate response if life doesn’t have any meaning (King, 2019).

accepted his pointless task, and, instead of giving up or committing suicide, he has risen above his fate through his own choice and carries out the task repetitively and admirably (King, 2019). This is another means of showcasing that although the absurd and absurdism have shared context, they do differ concerning the fields of study they are being ascribed to, being literature as a descriptive means of this ridiculous task, or philosophy as a search for meaning behind the task.

In theatre, a popular phenomenon is the “Theatre of the Absurd” which relates to plotlines devoid of purpose, showcasing life as being a senseless process with characters cut off from religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots. Thus, it perceives the absurdity of the human condition by merely presenting it in being, such as through stage images (Esslin, 1962:25). In relating to its philosophical viewpoint, as discussed above, this type of theatre connects to the anxiety<sup>5</sup> and fear that is experienced when being confronted with the limitations inherent to existence. The Theatre of the Absurd will be explored in more depth in a later chapter.

In referring back to the philosophical debacle in absurdism, the psyche has a direct correlation as well. Per the APA<sup>6</sup>, the psyche is described as follows:

“(n.) in psychology, the mind in its totality, as distinguished from the physical organism. The term, which historically had come to refer to the soul or the very essence of life, derives from the character of Psyche in Greek mythology, a beautiful princess who, at the behest of her divine lover, Eros, son of Aphrodite, is made immortal by Zeus” (The American Psychological Association, 2020).

In analysing a “mind in totality” we need to take into consideration both of its components: biology and psychology. For this research, however, the biological structure and workings such as hormones, tissues, and grey matter, will be disregarded<sup>7</sup>. Thought processes, emotions and the aforementioned psyche are completely different areas of study and thus require psychology,

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<sup>5</sup> Chapter 2 has an in-depth discussion on the anxiety counterpart mentioned here

<sup>6</sup> The American Psychological Association (APA) is the leading professional and scientific organisation that represents psychology in the United States concerning research, consultation, education and clinics (The American Psychological Association, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> The focus of this study is the analysis of the characters being created and the aspects that they may represent. These characters rely on the theories derived from the research in the research-based practice methodology applied.

as opposed to neurology, for further analysing and understanding. Looking at famous psychologist Carl Gustav Jung's perspective<sup>8</sup> could also allow us some insight into the psyche and its workings. From a young age, Jung was influenced by symbolism, literature, religion and the occult, hence why he is the main chosen psychoanalyst focused on, as many of his influences pertain to those of theatre as well. These influences remained with him as he progressed into becoming a doctor of medicine as well as a psychological theorist, aiding him in becoming a pioneer in the field of general psychoanalysis (Macek, 1997).

Jung cited the importance of the unconscious as a religious channel as part of his psychological studies. In his perspective, the unconscious is the single medium in which an individual can experience God (Macek, 1997). This brought forth his ideology of the dangers of ignoring the unconscious, stating that this ignorance will both deprive the individual of the religious experience and blind them to their capacity for evil (Macek, 1997). As opposed to most of the ties when describing the absurd and the unconscious, Jung was insistent on psychology being empirical and phenomenological as opposed to philosophical and metaphysical; yet he believed psychologists should take religion into account during analytic processes due to it representing one of the most ancient and universal expressions of said unconscious and the human mind (Macek, 1997).

Jung's view has an emphasis on human meaning-making<sup>9</sup> that is related to similar synchronicity in describing that "All synchronicities generate indicative signs but only where this becomes a 'living symbol' of a transcendent intentionality at work in a living universe does synchronicity generate the kind of symbolic meaning that led Jung to posit the existence of a Universal Mind" (Colman, 2011:471). This is a means of both personal and experiential knowledge that belongs to an "imaginal world of meaning" as opposed to our known "rational world of knowledge". Rational knowledge consists of meaning in terms of logical links and

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<sup>8</sup> Jung was an early supporter of Sigmund Freud due to their shared interest in the unconscious. In 1912, however, Jung publicly criticised Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex, along with his emphasis on infantile sexuality (McLeod, 2018). This ultimately led Jung to develop his own version of the psychoanalytic theory which reflected his theoretical differences with Freud (McLeod, 2018). An example of this would be his agreeing with Freud concerning an individual's childhood and past experiences determining future behaviour, yet he also believed individuals are shaped by future aspirations as well (McLeod, 2018). A further influential difference that is a focal point in this research is their take on the unconscious mind, with Jung believing it to be a storehouse of repressed memories that are relevant and specific to an individual and the ancestral past. On the other hand, Freud's take on this is described as a storehouse of unacceptable repressed desires that are specific to the individual (McLeod, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 to follow.

causal chains, whereas imaginal meaning is formed through a more congruent correspondence and the creation of narratives (Colman, 2011:471). Jung further explains that the images found within the unconscious place responsibility upon man, as failure to understand these deprives man of his wholeness that lead to painful fragmentariness in his life (Macek, 1997). This shows Jung's emphasis placed on the symbolic images of the unconscious, which if understood properly, leads to mental health.

As individuals, we experience symbols in everyday life, through dreams, fantasies, artworks, folktales, myths and even symptoms. We try to orient ourselves and understand our lives through the impacts experienced by these symbols. This reiterates Jung's stance on overcoming difficulties in life, as he suggests that any difficulties overcome in a fantasy, or dream, may be symbolic expressions of psychological difficulties in oneself. Therefore, in overcoming these differences in your imagination, one also overcomes them in the psyche (Macek, 1997). Within this view, as explored and explained through Jung's teachings, the psyche acts independently of the person who receives its messages, therefore implying that the Self has infinitely greater knowledge than the Ego<sup>10</sup>, having the "Self" not as a singular subject, but rather a greater subject that separates from meaning-making processes of human subjectivity. This leads thus to the unconscious mind being equivalent to the Universal Mind, or even God (Colman, 2011:472).

On the subject of the Self, Jung established that the Self produces an identical symbolism to that which is produced by human religious activity. Jung explains this by stating that "psychology does have to reckon with the existence of a God-image. Consequently, it seems probable that the archetype of wholeness occupies a central position which approximates it to the God-image, for it produces a symbolism which has always characterized and expressed the deity" (Macek, 1997). In Jung's theories, ignoring "God" in the lives of humans may lead to ultimate despair. His reasoning behind this resides in the intellectual approach to man that simply disregards the need for the unconscious, which, as such, makes man an absolute. This concept, therefore, shares similarities with the philosophical theory of absurdism explained by

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<sup>10</sup> The concepts of the Self and the Ego come forth prominently in both psychology and philosophy and are both fields of study in their own right. The Self is viewed as a knowledge structure that can be described in an arrangement of terms of ordered levels of representational complexity (Lapsley & Power, 1988), but for this research, it shall be adhered to as the part of an individual which is connected to a higher being. The Ego, on the other hand, is one's sense of self-importance (Lapsley & Power, 1988).



Camus, in the sense that both Jung and Camus depict sense-making through the unconscious, as opposed to the reality we live in. Hence, we understand that man suffers an emptiness and searches for meaning in life, whether by an existential philosophy, such as with Camus or through religious neuroses, such as with Jung. With these views in mind, it gives a clear indication of why the mind is such a great field of study in both philosophical and scientific means, such as through psychology, which may even represent a bit of both of these two independent factors.

In further leaning on the field of psychology, patients of psychologists are treated following the absurdities presenting in their lives, where they are aided in adapting to the absurdities of life through external means, such as environmental factors, and internal means such as thoughts and their mental health state or through means of self-discovery in exploring and studying the individual dependence of the psyche. Humans, regardless of their financial or social status, education, career or familial situations, all share a common trait of self-awareness. This further evokes their awareness of the metaphysical fact that “the self is an illusion” (Proulx, 2011). Further absurdities in their psyche can therefore be developed through how humans react to this factor. Their reactions and responses, which are characteristic traits derived from external and internal environmental factors, also lead to the recognition or creation of further absurdities. These can thus be observed and described in terms known as “schizophrenia”, and “anxiety<sup>11</sup>”. This especially occurs when individuals' perception of their world is threatened or changed, and thus the people and places and, in some cases, objects among these individuals whose total can be classified or imagined as the “selves” (Proulx, 2011).

In summary, the terms (for this research) “absurd”, “absurdism” and “absurdity” stand as umbrella terms, with the focus of this research being on the disciplines of a) literature (more specifically, fairy tales), b) philosophy, c) psychology and d) theatre (more specifically, the Theatre of the Absurd).

- Within the literature, “absurd” shares the same definition as its synonyms, “illogical” and “ridiculous”, especially when ascribed to a particular storyline, such as in the case of “Little Red Riding Hood”, where one meets a talking wolf in a forest who later ends up pretending to be a grandmother, and in that same sense, about the absurd characters and notions within fairy tales.

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<sup>11</sup> Both of the terms are discussed in their respective fields of study in Chapter 2.



- In terms of a philosophical approach, it is defined as the futile search for meaning in an incomprehensible universe, which further influences the definition of the Theatre of the Absurd<sup>12</sup> as a theatrical style that relates to plots devoid of purpose and showcases life as this meaningless search for meaning as its philosophy pertains.
- Lastly, in the realm of the psyche and psychology, “absurd” relates to the unconscious as described in the next chapter and further defines itself as the absurdities within the psyche and how they may present psychological disorders when an individual’s world or perception is threatened or their sense of meaning-making distorted.

### **1.3. Background**

#### **1.3.1. The confluence between theatre and psychology**

Psychology and theatre have respectively been intensive fields of study in the past. There appears to be a real affinity between these two different realms, as they each make use of one another’s key principles as a means to better understand their core concerns. One realm borrows jargon from the other freely to explain core principles. Actors and writers delve deep into a character’s psychological history when portraying or creating a said character to discern their motivations and fate. For example, Stanislavski argues that an actor has to feel what the character would feel like in every situation they are in when placed on the stage. Therefore, to this extent, the art of acting took on a rigorous and psychological framework, being so fully immersed in emotion (Florent, 2019).

Conversely, psychologists speak in terms of roles that are adopted and employed as they observe character traits presented by their patients (Zinn, 2018). A connecting point of study created from these two forms also includes theatrical psychology which has a particular emphasis on different personal and semantic developments (Klimova, 2016:149). It aids in helping individuals create peace for themselves, as well as creating an open artistic and creative environment. The further entwinement of theatre and psychology is also important for development in modern education, teaching children means of developing their creative

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<sup>12</sup> More detailed focus will be placed on the differentiation, especially in the theatre field through exploration of artists such as Ionesco and Beckett in Chapter 4.

activities<sup>13</sup>. Further identifiers are conveyed by adolescents, as theatre is expressed as a means of socialising, experience obtained by participating in the creative performance implemented (Klimova, 2016:150). For us to fully grasp the symbiotic relationship between the actor and theatre or the audience and theatre in terms of psychology, an important aspect to take into consideration would be the “Theory of Mind” concept which is explained in detail in the chapter to follow.

### **1.3.2. The absurdity of the Theatre of the Absurd**

The Theatre of the Absurd has proven its significance not only in its psychological demonstrations and philosophical theories but also as a reflective mirror of the world with its reality merging imperceptibly into fantasy (Esslin, 1962:388). Furthermore, it bravely faces up to the fact that for individuals to whom the world has lost its central explanations and meanings, it is not possible to accept art forms focused on continued standards and concepts that no longer have validity. This in turn then refers to “the possibility of knowing the laws of conduct and ultimate values, as deducible from a firm foundation of revealed certainty about the purpose of man in the universe” (Esslin, 1962:389-390). This term was derived from an essay by Albert Camus entitled “Myth of Sisyphus”, defining the human situation as meaningless and absurd (Culick, 2000).

The Theatre of the Absurd has been taken up by numerous playwrights, directors and artists who all shared the view that man is an inhabitant in a universe in which he is out of key (Culick, 2000). These artists further made the Theatre of the Absurd their own while still adhering to the conventions of the theatre type. Theatre of the Absurd has many attributes relating to the content of the plays, ranging from expressionism and symbolism in erroneous ways by authors that expect their audience members to draw their own conclusions (Esslin, 1962:20). The origins of this theatre type are rooted in the avant-garde experiments found in the artwork of the 1920s and 1930s, whilst simultaneously being strongly influenced by the traumatic experiences of the Second World War which showed impermanence of any values and shook

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<sup>13</sup> Psychology also has its way of examining the unique relationship between audience members and performers through descriptions of how emotions are conveyed, even through non-verbal processes, as well as an explanation of the instinctual origins of impulse. It further aids in identifying who is attracted to performing, the reason why as well as the particular stress or stresses to which they are subject (Wilson, 2002).

any validity of conventions. This led to the highlighting of the precariousness of human life along with its meaningless and arbitrariness (Culick, 2000).

These plays of supposed esoteric avant-garde made such a deep and immediate impact on audience members of different classes, environmental upbringings, races and sexes, possibly due to their confrontational nature. The plays that fall under this theatre type are still seen as a developing stage convention that has a barely general understanding and has hardly been defined truly and straightforwardly (Esslin, 1962:21).

To explain and explore these conventions of the Theatre of the Absurd it is best to do a comparative deduction between another popular theatre type and its conventions. For this comparison, the table below shows the differences in the theatre conventions of Realism versus the Theatre of the Absurd with focus placed on characters, plot and/or storyline and stage setting. The reason I chose Realism for this particular case is because of its nature as a genuine theatre style that focuses on realistic characters, sets and scenarios (Cash, 2021), as opposed to the Theatre of the Absurd which works in opposition to this. This theatre movement originally emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe as a reaction against Romanticism and sensationalism of melodrama which dominated the theatre worlds of both Europe and North America for the majority of the 1800s. Audiences began seeking more authentic, believable characters, plots, costumes and sets on the theatrical stage and hence this need was met through Realism. These plays were still often slightly heightened and elaborate; however, the dialogue was comparable to that of everyday speech and the plots of these realistic plays were typically psychologically driven due to the cause and effect relationship experienced between scenes (Cash, 2021). Realism still has a massive influence on theatre today (Cash, 2021) and can be compared with the conventions of the Theatre of the Absurd as follows:

|             | Realism:   | The Theatre of the Absurd:  |
|-------------|--|---|
| Characters: | The characters found within this theatre style are believable, everyday individual types of characters (Cash, 2014) with their own distress, motivation, ambitions and authentic personality types. Their costumes are | These characters often have a lack of character development, may appear stereotypical, are often out of sync with the world they live in and lack motivation, which highlights their purposelessness (Cash, 2015). Time, location and character |

|              |  |   |
|--------------|--|---|
|              | <p>also authentic and particular to the time setting the play is placed in; in other words, appropriate to the era. The dialogue between these characters is vernacular and not necessarily heightened for effect (Cash, 2014), with their movements and means of completing actions taking on a realistic, everyday method.</p>   | <p>identity may come across as a blur with these characters who often are not sure who they are. This can be presented in both presentation and representational means of acting (Cash, 2015). Their dialogue and means of speech consist of distrust of language as a means of communication. The Theatre of the Absurd consists of conventionalised speech, slogans, technical jargon and clichés which are distorted and broken down (Culick, 2000). The movement of these character types are illogical, have interchanging speeds and repetition and are a mixture of realistic and non-realistic, including elements of circus, acrobatics and vaudeville. It also includes ritualistic components and often either misinterprets or defies logic (Cash, 2015).</p> |
| <p>Plot:</p> | <p>The storylines for realistic plays are deliberately ordinary with the drama typically being psychologically driven (Cash, 2014). The plot is often the secondary focus, as the primary focus is placed on the characters and their motives. The realist style often has its plays incorporate the protagonist's rise up against the odds to assert themselves against injustice of some kind (Cash, 2014). A theatrical example here could be that of Nora in Henrik Ibsen's <i>A Doll's House</i>. Audience members are easily able to</p> | <p>The plots within the Theatre of the Absurd and its plays are often anti-realistic and go against the norms of realism, it may even be referred to by some as "anti-theatre" (Cash, 2015). These storylines are often characterised by a deliberate absence of both the cause-and-effect relationships within and between scenes, as well as conflict. The plot development is more often than not non-linear and cyclical, having the play end where it began. Furthermore, in some cases, there is no plot at all (Cash, 2015). This goes against the norms and factors found within the</p>  |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <p>identify with the realistic situations and the characters on stage (Cash, 2014). More often than not, plays within the realist style follow the “Well-Made Play Structure” as coined by Eugène Scribe<sup>14</sup>. In summarising this concept, we adhere to seven common elements such as the characters, including an antagonist (1) and a protagonist (2), the storyline consisting of a beginning (3) a middle (4) and an ending (5). furthermore, an inciting incident (6) that reveals the protagonist's want, which helps to alleviate the play's action and plot, and finally, a climax (7) needs to be included as a turning point for the actions and/or the characters (Cardwell, 1983).</p> | <p>“Well-Made Play Structure”. It follows Samuel Beckett’s conduction of a play structure within the Theatre of the Absurd style, as it lacks any traditional dramatic conventions, including the plot and distinctive characters with individual features (Karoly, 1996:32). Furthermore, the dialogue is incoherent and meaningless, the themes are barely exposed and there is mostly a lack of development of and solving within the dramatic action. This confronts the audience with fragmented images that are placed in a surrealistic and unnatural, empty world (Karoly, 1996:32). It is, however, important to note that traditions were not rejected on a theoretical basis, as for example in <i>Waiting for Godot</i>, a wide range of sources are drawn upon that still pertain to dramatic devices and are merely adjusted to suit the intentions (Karoly, 1996:33). There are still certain elements derived from ancient Greek theatre, such as limiting the number of actors, resorting to dialogue, having crises take place off stage, the absence of divinity and the lack of setting (Karoly, 1996:33).</p> |
|--|---|--|

<sup>14</sup> There is no general structure that is common to all plays, rather this is useful in describing common practices and tendencies as to better understand the “typical” play as opposed to focusing on the exceptional (Cardwell, 1983). The range of possibilities within play structuring is too broad to coin a single formula of exactly what is needed and not needed, so this is rather an aid in the construction of plays to aid in the differentiation between a realist play and a play pertaining to the Theatre of the Absurd.

|                |  |  |
|----------------|--|--|
| Stage setting: | The stage setting shares similar qualities with the character types – real, believable, everyday fashioned sets. The settings are often purposefully indoors and consist of a “box set” (Cash, 2015) with intricate details of both the period and the characters within the play. These sets usually consist of three full walls and have both an inclusion and indication towards the fourth wall (Cash, 2014), for the audience members to get a glimpse into their real lives. | These sets are often simple and minimalistic with little use of stagecraft (Cash, 2015). As opposed to realism, these stage settings consist of barren set pieces that barely denote a location (Cash, 2015). An example of this would be the set of the play <i>Waiting for Godot</i> (1952) by Samuel Beckett, which consists mainly of a tree and a country road. A main element of the design lies in the representation of symbolism and representation of stage images (Esslin, 1962:25). This is often done through the characters themselves and the placing of symbolic objects which may have a dual meaning as opposed to elaborate sets. |
|----------------|--|--|

In Martin Esslins’ book *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1962:21-22), he has a depiction that is easy to comprehend in terms of the absurdity of the absurd concerning “normal” theatrical conventions:

“If a good play must have a cleverly constructed story, these have no story or plot to speak of; if a good play is judged by subtlety of characterization and motivation, these are often without recognizable characters and present the audience with almost mechanical puppets; if a good play has to have a fully explained theme, which is neatly exposed and finally solved, these often have neither a beginning nor an end; if a good play is to hold the mirror up to nature and portray the manners and mannerisms of the age in finely observed sketches, these seem often to be reflections of dreams and nightmares; if a good play relies on witty repartee and pointed dialogue, these often consist of incoherent babblings.”

With this kept in mind, we can distinguish that the conventions of the Theatre of the Absurd share a similarity with the philosophy of absurdism in ways of opposition to expectation and finding meanings and answers in nothing. It showcases that man is lost with senseless actions

that are absurd and useless, having a means of metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of humankind and the human condition.

Concerning the theatre versus the philosophical aspect of the absurd, the philosophical dramatists differ in presenting their respective sense of the irrationality of the human condition in the form of lucid and logic-oriented reasoning. The Theatre of the Absurd, on the other hand, strives to rather express its sense of the senseless human condition, along with the “inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought” (Esslin, 1962:24). Therefore, the Theatre of the Absurd attempts to achieve a sense of unity between its basic assumptions, along with how they are expressed. Esslin had the term “Theatre of the Absurd” introduced to describe some of the pioneering work of the before-mentioned playwrights, along with any younger generations, such as Harold Pinter, inspired by them (Vassilopoulou, 2007). This circular effect of inspiration coined by this term is possibly designed to motivate aspiring writers and directors (such as myself) to also further pursue this in both theoretical and practical means.

In summarising, Martin Esslin (1962:392) expresses these above sentiments as follows:

“Concerned as it is with the ultimate realities of the human condition, the relatively few fundamental problems of life and death, isolation and communication, the Theatre of the Absurd, however grotesque, frivolous, and irreverent it may appear, represents a return to the original, religious function of the theatre – the confrontation of man with the spheres of myth and religious reality. Like ancient Greek tragedy and the medieval mystery plays and baroque allegories, the Theatre of the Absurd is intent on making its audience aware of man’s precarious and mysterious position in the universe.”

### **1.3.3. An integration of fairy tales**

A fairy tale is a story that cloaks its truth in metaphor and symbolism (Rubin, 2013:37), similar to the likes of symbols shared both in the Theatre of the Absurd and within the psychoanalytic theories of Jung<sup>15</sup>. To extract the essence of the tale and get down to this truth, it is required to penetrate the meaning of these symbols, along with the dynamics of the story, as a fairy tale story is meant to deceive. The fairy tale is capable of reaching into a magical domain where

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<sup>15</sup> This is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

contradictions and opposites can coexist, while characters and situations may not always be what they appear (Rubin, 2013:37). Fairy tales as a category are fantastical and mythical through either imaginative forms, theatrical forms, literature forms, stories being told (oral format) or traditional stories that are generally known, understood and accepted by a population. Fairy tales have the capability of doing so much: they can evoke experiences individuals have never had, and therefore instead of being merely seen as methods of commenting on life, fairy tales add proactively to it (Martin, 2019:239).

For clarity, there are mentions of different international fairy tale types in this research due to their overall influence. However, the focus is on fairy tales from the Western tradition, predominantly European. The symbolism embedded in these tales gave them the freedom to express and experiment with common doubts in the restricted view of traditional religion and the utilitarian. Fairy tales open up a reality of being able to both question and exercise freedom along with symbolism in the conveying of their particular messages. They are experienced by their readers, listeners, or viewers not as realistic, but rather as symbolic poetry (Martin, 2019:240). Fairy tales further give meaning to their story through the entwining of truth and beauty, which brings joy to the individual immersed in the tale. They have a higher purpose, more than merely being viable tools for amusement, enrapture or teaching. Martin (2019:242) points out that, “the best thing you can do for your fellow, next to rousing his conscience, is not to give him things to think about, but to wake things up that are in him”. This arousal of an individual’s soul and being able to think for oneself is strongly influenced by nature as the mood-engendering and thought-provoking concept it is, which is what we strive for fairy tales to be as well, as there should be a correspondence between nature and fantasy, art and music (Martin, 2019:242).

Fairy tales are also able to bring across esoteric messages involving the existence of hope, and helping humanity find their wholeness (Martin, 2019:257). This soulful entwining behind fairy tales is perhaps interconnected with that of the absurdist philosophy, along with the esoteric interconnectedness of the psyche, which is why this form was chosen as a foundation in comparison and in highlighting results. This form is also easily transferable into theatre forms of different kinds, ranging from children’s theatre and pantomime to orchestra concerts, ballet and even, as in the case of this research, the Theatre of the Absurd. Fairy tales are universal and applicable to almost anyone, regardless of age or other differentiating factors.



Fairy tales often share common traditional techniques that have overlapping similarities between the techniques and the shared conventions found in the Theatre of the Absurd<sup>16</sup>. As with the Theatre of the Absurd, a widely used technique within the folklore tradition is repetition, as it is the universal nature of repetition to naturally occur in the properties of speech or during the act of communication (Kholmurodova, 2018). Repetition within fairy tales does not necessarily only pertain to techniques, but often the overlap of actual stories – for example, the significance of the number three (as in the case of “The Three Little Pigs, Goldilocks and the Three Bears”). Another popular repetition in fairy tales is that of characters, more specifically and especially in line with this research, the character of Wolf. We find this character in “Little Red Riding Hood”, “The Three Little Pigs”, “The Big Bad Wolf”, “Wolf and the Seven Kids”, “The Boy who cried Wolf”, and even in the Afrikaans tradition, the stories of “Jakkals en Wolf”. Wolf is very popular and somehow always the antagonist.

The wolf, or *Canis lupus*, has been much maligned in the Western literary tradition, as superstitions and fears have contributed to creating a fictional beast that seemingly consistently plays the villain throughout many European fairy tales and stories (Jesse, 2000:3). This antiquity and continuity established the eminence of the wolf as a universal beast that helps to account for the persistence of its derogatory symbolism, with the role of the wolf within fairy tales uncovering the persistent image of them being ravenous, greedy and devilish creatures with their tendencies towards corruption and thievery (Jesse, 2000:3). An explanation for the hatred of wolves to make them these villainous characters may arise as a fear of the beastly qualities presented in humans which are projected onto this animal (Jesse, 2000:4).

The reputation of the wolf as a ravenous beast, however, was constructed within European stories dating from even before Christ (Jesse, 2000:5). This largely uniform characterisation of this animal as a symbol of greed and rapacity eventually formed as the wolf regularly emerged and appeared throughout different forms of Western literature, with the negative images still enduring today (Jesse, 2000:5). Early Greek and otherworldly legends had their conflicting opinions of wolves; however, the fairy tales, fables and bestiaries that followed due to the legends of werewolves formed a literary consensus on their nature. Thus, a recognisable image

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<sup>16</sup> This will be discussed in even greater detail in the chapter concerning fairy tales of the absurd.

of wolves as beasts of destruction and greed emerged from consistent and common literary representational works from antiquity until modern times <sup>17</sup>(Jesse, 2000:5).

Although many of these ancient tales may appear miraculous, superstitious, magical or unreal to many, they were believed in the same way that individuals today believe in cults, miracles, religions and notions that have little basis within reality (Zipes, 2012:3). Religious and patriotic stories have many similarities to fairy tales, except fairy tales tend to be secular and are not based upon prescriptive belief systems or religious codes. Rather, they are informed by a human disposition to action to transform the world and make the world more adaptable to our human needs, whilst simultaneously having individuals change and make themselves fit for the world (Zipes, 2012:3). Hence the focus of fairy tales, whether they are oral, in a theatrical format, written or cinematic, has always been on finding extraordinary technologies, or magical instruments, or powerful people and animals that enable the protagonist to transform themselves along with their environment, aiding in making it suitable for living in contentment and peace (Zipes, 2012:3). As a result, fairy tales have the innate ability to connect us, whilst still expressing the tales and stories of shared human nature, as well as giving us the factor of hope to attain with us on our individual, yet shared journeys.

The inclusion of fairy tales within this research, therefore, allows a developmental foundation in which to practically apply and theoretically link and relate the research gained from the psychological and theatrical components. Fairy tales with their truth and symbolism about human nature and worldview understanding thus assist in correspondence both in a practical means through creating relatable and well-known characters, whilst easing the explanations of psychological involvements such as through fairy tale archetypal discussions following in Chapter 2, for example. Lastly, a famous character in fairy tales is “the Wolf” which is used as both a main character in the practical, as a symbol within psychological absurdities to be expressed and as a linkage between the absurd nature of humans and their inner beast with an arbitrary outcome in life, thus an absurdist perspective.

#### **1.4. Problem statement**

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<sup>17</sup> The concept of “Wolf” forms a big part of the practical component of this research, especially in character creation for the lead character, therefore more detailed discussions are presented in later chapters.

Theatre and psychology have proved to be intertwined subjects as expressed in both disciplines over years of studies and overlapping jargon and exercises, as my previous research discussions have demonstrated. Using fairy tales as a foundation of comparison for theatre versus psychology is justifiable due to the highly acclaimed emphasis on psychotherapy and the usage of fairy tales in that regard:

“Fairy tales are quite a suitable tool for young children’s psychotherapy, and they can reflect children’s perplexity and deal with their psychological complex, thereby promoting their psychological growth” (Mo, 2016).

Children are also able to absorb the adult world experience imperceptibly through fairy tales. Fairy tales seem to hold an uncanny truth in the lives of children and adults alike, allowing another interception into the other human affective realms of theatre and psychology. The philosophy of absurdism seeks meaning whilst expressing a meaningless and contrite existence, once again being an intertwining term that comes across in the discipline of theatre (specifically the Theatre of the Absurd), psychology (specifically the psyche) and fairy tales (specifically in absurd fairy tale characters). With my research, I will attempt to find a solid and refined linkage between these three disciplines within the realm of the absurd through both theoretical analysis and practical exploration.

Having briefly explained the origin of this research topic and some insight into the main components, mainly absurdity in theatre and absurdity of the psyche based on the foundation of fairy tales, the problem statement thus alludes to how these mentioned art forms possibly link. Therefore, finding the cause and effect ratio between the two interlocking categories of fairy tales is an added tool to prove the theory. A simple means of explanation would be to put it into an equation form as follows:

Absurdity in psychology + Absurdity in theatre

Fairy tales

=? (The research in question)

## **1.5. Research question, aims and objectives**

### **1.5.1 The research question**

The research question for this research study is as follows:

What is the possible missing link between absurdities related to the human psyche (psychology) and in the Theatre of the Absurd, as explored in the context of fairy tales?

Secondary research questions that might be explored are:

1. Does this link exist?
2. How do these fields link?
3. How can this link be defined or what could this link be theorised as?

To address these secondary questions, points addressed include:

- How is the Theory of Mind concept related to early childhood development?
- How do the Theory of Mind concept and the DSM5 relate to theatre experience, specifically, concerning absurdities in theatre?
- Are there any psyche-related claims to underline the creative task force implemented in creating absurdity in theatre?
- Where is the connection between absurdity in fairy tales and absurdity in theatre? What are some of the differences to discard this theory?
- What was the psychological impact of absurd theatre?
- What psychological impact alluded to absurdity in theatre?
- Can absurdity in theatre be used as a means to address absurd psychological conditions, i.e. schizophrenia?

As the research progresses, more questions are raised to be both formally answered and explained or to be disregarded as not having any formal answer. Along with these research questions, other problem statements arise that might be considered liable to address within this study or could be moved onto further studies with a singular focus on said problem statements.

### **1.5.2. Aims**

This research aims to determine what is the possible missing link or already existing link between two different absurdity forms, those related to the psyche and absurdity in theatre within the context of fairy tales; thus either substantiating a current theatre and psyche relation

in absurdity terms or hypothesising an entirely new idea or concept. Concerning the psychological section of the research it includes thought patterns, cognitive response and behavioural integration along with other sub-categories that may be identified and expressed at a later stage. In relating to the theatrical aspect of the study, most of the focus is placed on the writing and directing components, i.e. absurdity within writing styles, absurd character traits and absurd situations that characters are placed in<sup>18</sup>. With this, most of the research also includes childhood development in terms of the psyche, as an important development in social cognition is the Theory of Mind that takes place during early childhood, i.e. from infancy up to five years old (Astington, 2010). A second method to be incorporated in both the study and in the written play to be performed (for character creation) is the use of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5 or the DSM 5 as it is commonly referred to.

The further childhood-related substance is derived from the absurd notion of fairy tales (including a talking wolf as in “Little Red Riding Hood” or three pigs that can build human structured houses, as examples). Accumulating information from these topics adheres to whether a young individual has their thought patterns progressively grow into thinking patterns classified as being an absurd human being (e.g. someone being diagnosed with schizophrenia). Furthermore, with these thinking patterns, comparisons in working psyche methods and absurdity as a tool for theatrical structuring conclusions can be drawn on the influence these components have on one another.

- Through the inclusions of these abovementioned sections, the aim is to establish a foundation in Chapter 5, especially in terms of character creation, the use of Jungian archetypes and the DSM5 and create comparative notes and theories to either relate to or counteract Chapter 4, as a means of concluding what the link this research seeks to investigate might be.

In conclusion, I hope to achieve that absurdity in theatre and absurdity in the psyche are generally linked and whether those “absurd fairy tales” have an influence or not.

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<sup>18</sup> The last two mentioned aspects being facilitated by the realm of fairy tales.

### 1.5.3. Objectives

My general objective in this research is to indicate that theatre and psychology as a whole go hand in hand, therefore, determining a possible link, whether it be a missing one or theorising one as a whole between absurdities seen in a theatrical piece and absurdities in psychology, is completely possible. Furthermore, I believe using fairy tales as a foundation of comparison for theatre versus psychology is justifiable due to the highly acclaimed emphasis on psychotherapy explored in fairy tales, thus, I hope to achieve that developing minds are affected by these mentioned art forms which in turn affect said art forms.

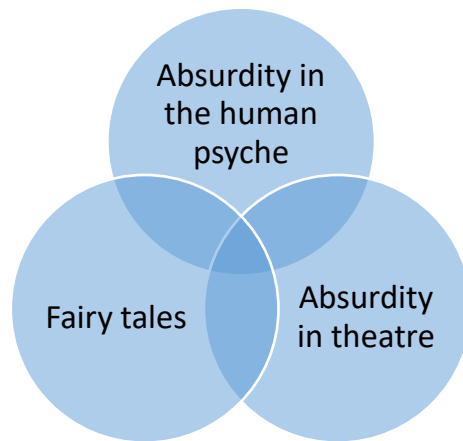
Due to the incorporation of different disciplines, this research may prove to be of a larger capacity than originally anticipated to answer the primary question of what is possibly the missing link.

### 1.6. Research design and methods

The type of knowledge this research aims to contribute, concerning theatrical academia, falls under the category of basic research<sup>19</sup>, (which can also be ascribed as pure or fundamental research). This form is suitable due to the origin for doing this research being a pure curiosity. The research is aimed at developing knowledge and either finding or theorizing a theory of this missing link between absurdity within theatre and absurdity experienced in the psyche. This research is thus exploratory due to the research being aimed at finding a link in two categories that are on different spectrums, such as science versus art (Bowen, 2005:209). Although the two main focus points are stated clearly, the third component of fairy tales should also not be disregarded as a possible third, outlying research spectrum (falling under literature), which then further adheres to the research style being shifted in an explorative direction. With that, the research components would then be mutually inclusive with one another in the following manner:

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<sup>19</sup> This term refers to research means that aid in increasing our understanding of a particular phenomenon (Cherry, 2020). In the case of this research, it refers to the theorising of a link to join two opposite spectrums of study, i.e. theatre and psychology.



*Figure 1*

The method of research is thus qualitative as the comparisons of subject matter and definitions are vital in this research, with little to no use of quantitative research. Qualitative research entails a more holistic approach that enables discovery, which is at the forefront of this research – discovering the missing link or theorising one. This research aims to develop a model that includes high involvement in the actual practical experience, to be able to transfer the literature and research-orientated analytics into a practical component (Williams, 2007). The qualitative research approach constitutes purposefully describing, explaining and interpreting the data collected from the three respective fields to form and build a new theory, as proposed by Williams (2007). Furthermore, the overall proposed problem has a multidisciplinary<sup>20</sup> nature due to explorations being done in the fields of psychology, theatre and fairy tales, which may be accumulated as both a theatre practice and literature equivalent. The components of the study also take on a multidisciplinary approach as there is an entwining of research and practical performance discovery.

Concerning the performance practice that goes in hand with the written component, it is a method of incorporated research-led practice, as firstly the literature is obtained and then put into practice as a theatrically written and performed play. This is established through being a performance piece that possesses characters that are both archetypal fairy tale characters and representations of archetypes in society, thus combining theatre, psychology and fairy tales practically as well. This methodology works best due to it having the potential to expand the understanding of the findings of this research through the dramatization and performance of

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<sup>20</sup> This research form is a pursuit of investigation or discovery that takes place through combining different academic approaches and specialised fields of learning (Choudhary, 2015).

the research itself. A study of this nature can support both distillation of meaning, as well as an expansion of a possible meaning (Landy, 2012). This provokes a new learning experience whilst still honouring the research means, only through an aesthetic procedure (Belliveau, 2015). Through the use of the iterative cyclic web, as proposed by Smith and Dean (2009:20), the objective is to use the techniques gained from the research in elements of the Theatre of the Absurd, creating the text as such and applying it practically as a director. Furthermore, the same approach is used by applying the insight gained from the fairy tale and psychological components to create characters in a similar research-led practice orientation.



*The iterative cyclic web of practice-led research and research-led practice (Smith & Dean, 2009: 20)*

Reverting to the process of qualitative methods, this analysis grants the supportive notion that theatre can be used both critically and effectively during the collection, analysis and dissemination of the accumulated research. Providing research through a practical component within the art form of drama also allows giving form to feeling, as theatre is “grounded in the transformative process of enactment” (Landy, 2012). In turn, this provides insight into the development and conditions of this approach, thus critically and creatively generating meaning through theatre built upon the three literature-oriented disciplines being handled with the clear intent of presenting the work to an audience (Belliveau, 2015).



Documentation of the factors involved in the performance, such as the text and the performance itself, is done by including the written text in Addendum A, photos of the play in Addendum B and recordings of the finalised theatre piece, upon request. The most important and intricate factor to focus on with these methodological proceedings is to find and create the balance between the research as an element and the art form as an element in their respective regards. Research-led practice, especially concerning a theatrical production based on its research, has its ultimate strength in art and research informing one another, whilst working together with neither taking precedence over the other. As Belliveau (2015) states, “Generating inner dialogues with characters in moments of crisis or indecision presents the human condition more vividly” – and with this in mind, it brings across the notion of psychological incorporation through linking the theatre, in this presentation of the human condition, with the exploration of the field of psychology and the Theatre of the Absurd as a whole.

### **1.7. Artistic exploration and performance ethics**

The second entwinement of this research is the mentioned production to be adhered to through a written text and a public domain performance. This play consists of comedy factors, real issues and relatable topics; however, their means are represented in an oddly-structured manner. Although the play may come across as a realistic storyline, the elements and moments included are absurd. This absurdity is portrayed through the characters themselves, their notions and actions, and the décor and costume representation, with a bottom-line of absurdity in style and the factors from well-known fairy tales.

Aesthetic value is the value possessed by an object or event in virtue of its capacity to elicit pleasure or displeasure when experienced aesthetically. This play aims to elicit both of those, with pleasing and colourful costumes and décor and entertaining scenes, along with its fairy tale elements alluding to visual pleasures. On the other hand, however, audience members may experience displeasure due to discomfort caused by the expressions of certain character traits or even negative relatable situations as attributed to the human condition. The reason for these specific aesthetic values derives from the theoretical component of the research, and thus a research-led practice-based performance. The research is being practised in the aesthetic style through the components and intertwinement of fairy tales, psychology and theatre within their respective absurdity forums.

In terms of ethics to be able to perform this play, ethical clearance was applied for and granted at Stellenbosch University<sup>21</sup>. It is important to mention that the research is focused on the characters as created by me and portrayed by the participants, and not on the participants themselves.

## 1.8. Chapter layout

The research will be split into four respective components as chapters (excluding Chapter 1 as the introductory chapter and Chapter 6 as the concluding chapter): one on the psychological section of the research<sup>22</sup>, one on the Theatre of the Absurd, one on fairy tales, and one on the practical component and how these first three components influenced and aided in creating the practical component of the research.

The title and main links found concerning absurdity are directed towards theatre and the psyche specifically; however, there needs to be a set of groundwork addressed and explained before being able to express this link. For this research, the psyche involves both the body, mind and soul aspects of human beings, which all essentially pertain to a psychological aspect, which will be expressed in full in Chapter 2. With this, most of the research includes cognitive development in terms of the psyche, as an important development in social cognition is the Theory of Mind<sup>23</sup> that takes place during early childhood, i.e. from infancy up to five years old (Astington, 2010). Another research discussion to be incorporated in both the study and in the written play to be performed (for character creation) would be the use of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* 5<sup>24</sup> or the DSM 5 as it is commonly referred to. This is not an in-depth discussion on the manual as a whole but rather an opportunity to use it as a tool to gain insight into the workings of the psyche in specific disorders that are portrayed in the practical piece. Lastly, archetypes will be brought in to draw a comparison between and

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<sup>21</sup> The ethical clearance project reference number is 21941. The review reference is DRA-2021-21941.

<sup>22</sup> This includes thought patterns, cognitive response and behavioural integration along with other subcategories that are identified and expressed at a later stage.

<sup>23</sup> Theory of Mind refers to an individual's understanding of others as mental beings, thus each having his or her own mental state including thoughts, desire, motivation and feelings (Astington, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> The American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) is a classification of mental disorders that have associated criteria designed specifically to facilitate a more reliable diagnosis for these disorders (The American Psychiatric Association, 2013). There has been a successive number of editions and means over the years, but the most recent one is the DSM5, published in May 2013.

cognitive understanding of the three disciplines at hand: the Theatre of the Absurd, psychology and fairy tales.

A second method to create characters for the practical component is the use of fairy tales and Chapter 3 is accordingly dedicated to this, whereas Chapter 4 is dedicated to the theatre style at hand: the Theatre of the Absurd. Both these chapters follow in-depth discussions on their role within the absurd, as well as highlight the important factors needed to both support as well as draw upon in this research to relate them to each and the psychological discipline.

Lastly, to support the arguments between the different disciplines, substance will be derived from the absurdity of fairy tales (including a talking wolf as found in “Little Red Riding Hood” or three pigs that can build human structured houses, as examples). Accumulating information from these fields could shed light on whether a young individual has their thought patterns progressively changed into ones classified as being akin to those of an absurd human being (i.e. someone being diagnosed with schizophrenia). Furthermore, with these thinking patterns, comparisons in working psyche methods (such as psychoanalysis) and absurdity as a tool for theatrical structuring, the components may lead to conclusions on the influence the different disciplines may have on one another.

## **Chapter 2: Psychological entwinement**

This chapter will provide theoretical insight into the psychological components of both the means of a) cognitive development and b) the mental health scale within fairy tales and in the psyche itself. This allows for the use of the research findings to conduct a comparative examination of these components to draw the link between the previously mentioned absurdities. To achieve these outcomes, this research will:

- Explore the terms associated with the psyche and its meaning-making components when it comes to the absurd in the arts, and in the specific case of this research, theatre;

- Follow this with methods of examining cognitive responses towards fairy tales to gain a better understanding of the impact they may have on the individual succumbing to this literature form; and
- Conduct a psychological interpretation that will assist in Chapter 5 as it relates to the artistic exploration and involvement of the practical piece.

The relationship between psychology and fairy tales further branches out into archetypes in association with those described by Carl Jung, who has an in-depth understanding of the esoteric beliefs and advancements behind the psyche itself, which will be explained and elaborated on deeper into this chapter. After having established the psyche and its workings, this chapter further delves into psychological absurdities by:

- Defining and referring to an underdeveloped Theory of the Mind;
- Highlighting specific mental disorders from the DSM5 that pertain to the practical component of this research. This is taken a step further in producing a counter-argument between the creation of the term “schizophrenia” presumably being non-existent, which gives us a theoretical assessment probability of absurdity within psychology self.

## 2.1 Theory of Mind

**Theory of Mind** develops in early childhood, charting a child’s knowledge about the mind and developing knowledge and coherent common sense. Children as young as three years old present evidence of possessing this common sense through grasping the distinction between mental constructs and physical entities. Furthermore, “they have an understanding of the relationship between individuals' mental states and their overt actions" (Wellman, 1992). **False-belief understanding**<sup>25</sup> and independence in a child’s language ability have all been related to social functioning, including the ability to engage and reflect on conversations and to resolve social conflicts. Thus, children who have a grasp of these factors are more advanced in social development and overall understanding. If a lack in the Theory of Mind components presents

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<sup>25</sup> False-belief understanding is the understanding that an individual’s view, belief, representation and/or understanding of the world may be in contrast with reality (Bauminger-Zviely, 2013).

itself, social development may be delayed or compromised, such as in the case of autism or “psychopathy” due to a lack of empathic development. Executive functioning present in the Theory of Mind (i.e. pre-schoolers with inhibition and cognitive flexibility) is better able to hold multiple perspectives (Thompson, 2017). In being able to switch between these multiple perspectives, individuals can distinguish between reality and belief, whether this belief is presented in another person or in a theatre form (i.e. distinguishing between the play and real-life occurrences). As with the example of autism and psychopathy, determining the actual disorder does not only require not fulfilling the Theory of Mind components; as with many disorders, other factors come into play. The easiest and most efficient means of measure to determine these disorders is the use of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM5). These are determined through the use of coding and the selection of certain symptoms<sup>26</sup>.

In shifting the psychological focus over to acting as an isolated career type within theatre, an actor needs to understand their character's mental and psychological world, as well as the experience of that character's emotions and feelings. In psychologically participating in viewing a theatrical production, the most efficient analytical method to determine these aforementioned factors involved in character creation and understanding are also through the concepts involved in the Theory of Mind. The core concepts of this theory include beliefs, desires and intentions<sup>27</sup>. These are all used to understand why an individual acts in a certain manner and as a means of predicting how an individual will act, through understanding another person's (or showcased character's or that of a character to be portrayed by the actor) beliefs, knowledge, emotions, thinking patterns and intentions. With this, it is further used to understand how to navigate social situations (Thompson, 2017). This relates directly to false-belief understanding which further promotes the understanding of the Theory of Mind by expressing that an individual's perspective and belief of the world may be in contrast with reality. This theory can apply to further spectrums through theatre as opposed to only the actor and the audience, as the character's self is created and established through the efforts of writers and directors who also need to express and put to use this psychological procedure.

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<sup>26</sup> This is showcased in detail with the three disorders associated with the theoretical and practical research later in this chapter.

<sup>27</sup> Stanislavski and Vakhtangov are examples of theatre practitioners that implemented these components in their theatrical teaching styles.

The main reason for including this measure of psychology is to better analyse the absurdities present in the human condition and to adhere to truthful character traits in the practical aspect of this research. Therefore, including the analyses presented through the DSM5 within the text written, as well as the characters created within the text, allows for Absurd Theatre characters to present characteristics of different psychological disorders; an example of this is borderline personality disorder being manifested in the structure and content of Absurd Theatre plays. “Just as the classical theatre (Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Ibsen) parallels the content and conflicts of the classical neurosis, it is fairly well accepted that the artist, in this case, the playwright or poet, is often an avant-garde chronicler of changes in society, be they social, political, philosophical, or psychological” (Norman, 1967).

Psychological disorders are useful tools for an actor to understand, however, they should be used with care as well in order not to diagnose themselves or misdiagnose a character through misinterpretation. In doing so, an actor could cause psychological harm to themselves as a human and/or take an extremely unrealistic approach concerning character creation. Within a psychological setting, individuals do not get diagnosed unless their symptoms disrupt their everyday means of functioning; therefore, as actors, they should rely on what is given within the text and use that context as opposed to just labelling a character (Brown, 2006).

Some psychological disorders that are portrayed more commonly within the theatre realm include (but are not limited to) those that fall under the categories of major anxiety disorders (for example, phobic disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders and panic disorders); mood disorders (for example, depression and bipolar disorder); somatoform disorders (such as conversion disorder and hypochondria); dissociative disorders, personality disorders and schizophrenia (Brown, 2006). For the theoretical and practical components of this research, the focus will be on the last three categories of dissociative disorders, personality disorders and schizophrenia, with further discussions to follow.

## **2.2 The meaning maintenance model**

“Interpretations are only for those who don’t understand; it is only the things we don’t understand that have any meaning. Man woke up in a world he did not understand, and that is why he tries to interpret it.” – Carl Jung (1968:14).

“What the fuck is going on?” – a thought process often experienced across a broad spectrum of daily encounters, from politics to relationships, through to Absurd Theatre plays. What is going on? In life, politics, fairy tales, our world, theatre? In the minds of creatives, artists, philosophers, ourselves? Whatever it may be, the objective of this interrogative cognitive response is naturally meaning-making.

As the core fundamentals of this research are related to performing arts and theatre, the psychological focus on meaning-making will be shifted to follow suit, as many works of art, however they may be presented, challenge our view and understanding of the world. Concerning the specifics of the Theatre of the Absurd, we find illogical and incongruous elements presented that also have the uncanny and strange juxtaposed with the familiar and seemingly normal (Robson, 2020). As strange as the occurrences and experience of this theatre type are, there still seems to be a broad appeal to it. Clues to why this appeals to us have come to light in a recent study among psychologists who strive to understand the effects it may have on the brain (Robson, 2020). This is where the “meaning maintenance model” comes in – it is a means of exploring human reasoning to determine the abovementioned effect on the brain.

Conclusions derived from this proved that absurd and surreal art forms can, in some ways, be so unsettling that the brain reacts similarly as with physical pain exposure, yet in the same way, it also allows us to reaffirm who we are, and it sharpens the mind when looking for alternative ways of making sense of the world. Apart from just a psychological breakthrough, this is also helpful in suggesting new ways of improving education and helping explain our reasoning and responses to absurd political events (Robson, 2020). Therefore, the meaning maintenance module can be summarised as follows:

“When mental representations of expected associations are violated by unexpected experiences, people experience an uncomfortable arousal state that evokes the affirmation of alternative expected associations” (Proulx, 2011).

In other words, when an individual’s expectations are changed or violated in any uncanny or unexpected way, it evokes a strange feeling that allows the individual to cling to their beliefs more strongly. This occurrence is associated with our daily conscious lives, our unconscious lives and even inspiration from external sources such as literature, for example. Concerning this research, an example includes expected notions when relating to fairy tales. There is a

tendency to expect good characters to be rewarded in life, while bad characters are punished, however, these expectations might be violated by unusual experiences where a tragedy may befall the good character and the villains may prosper (Heine et al., 2006:89). Therefore, any violation of a committed belief will evoke an effort to both affirm and confirm committed beliefs, regardless of whether these are related to one's sense of self or not (i.e. in the example of fairy tales, if you relate to good or bad characters and their expected outcomes). The meaning maintenance model can in this case be used as a general explanatory psychological framework that encompasses this phenomenon, and as a research means, demonstrates heightened moral affirmation and trivial sources of uncertainty (Proulx, 2011).

Many Western existentialists have suggested that people have the general desire to maintain their expected associations, including Martin Heidegger, Soren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. These philosophers proposed that humanity shared this common desire to see their experiences (such as in the realms of science, philosophy and religion) connected in ways that make sense. These connections naturally took on the term meaning and anything that is not connected to an existing expected association is regarded as meaningless (Heine et al., 2006:91). The existentialists expressed that these feelings of meaninglessness could be evoked by any violating experience in one's expected associations, from alienation to an error in judgement, an unexpected observation, surrealism in imagery, or mortality, with death being thought as representing man's final disconnection from the world (Heine et al., 2006:92).

Meaning later transferred from philosophy to experimental psychology where the English psychologist Fredric Bartlett introduced a novel term “**schemas**”, which referred to these expected associations. Existentialists spoke of meaning, while psychologists shifted their focus to different types of schemas, worldviews and paradigms and eventually used a variety of terms to express the same concept; expected associations connecting humanities experiences in ways that make sense (Heine et al., 2006:92). Therefore both psychologists such as Frederic Bartlett and philosophers such as Albert Camus were the inspiration behind the meaning maintenance model, which was first proposed in 2006 by three psychologists: Travis Proulx, Steven Heine, and Kathleen Vohs (Robson, 2020). This team proposed that the workings of the mind are like a web of interconnected beliefs that document our external environment, including the people, objects and places that surround us. When we are faced with an inexplicable event that breaks our known framework, we feel a sense of profound uncertainty, hence the “feeling of the



absurd” (Robson, 2020). Proulx, Heine and Vohs had three avenues to mitigate this feeling, including:

1. Building a new mental representation to incorporate this inexplicable event;
2. Reinterpreting this event to fit into our existing mental model; and
3. Strengthening other beliefs and values, even those that relate to an unconnected domain.

This phenomenon was coined by these psychologists as “**fluid compensation**”, which includes retreating to a safe place where the individual’s world makes sense again (Robson, 2020). The reasoning behind this relates to one’s means of self-reflection and enables a way of seeking solace in response to any threats to self-esteem. Following the meaning maintenance model, surreal or absurd art forms might have similar effects.

“Fluid compensation” is a term in social psychological literature and is often demonstrated when a threat is presented to one’s self-concept and/or self-esteem, and alternatively, when other beliefs about oneself are strongly affirmed. Therefore, in events or situations where individuals are not able to account for their current schemata, their response is affirming an alternative schema to which they find themselves already committed (Proulx, 2011). Due to the centrality of the self to an individual’s thoughts, self-relevant threats are reliable when it comes to evoking compensatory affirmation behaviours (Proulx, 2011).

Humans share a common capacity for self-awareness, regardless of their social, economic, educational, or occupational standpoint, which renders them implicitly aware that the self is an illusion. This “metaphysical fact”, however, makes one anxious, to such an extent that a person means to maintain the integrity of their mentioned relations and feel anxious at any time the expectations of these relationships that constitute the self are violated (Proulx, 2011). This is especially pronounced when a perceived connection to the external environment is threatened, including to people, places, and objects amidst which one finds oneself situated. A common term used to describe the acute form of anxiety that arises when our sense of self is threatened by a breakdown or compromise of the relations that compromise this external environment is “**alienation**” (Proulx, 2011).

This feeling of anxiety, or angst, extends beyond self-relevant relations and adheres to the experience of any non-relation as well; any violation of an expected relationship evokes the same angst or anxiety, whether this derives from a relatively trivial anomaly or the awareness of profound existential absurdity. This can be succinctly described as, “the universal feeling that one’s experiences have suddenly become incoherent” (Proulx, 2011). The notion that individuals experience general angst is a cornerstone of existential theory, as it leads to an enumeration of psychological processes that individuals engage in to comprehend and deal with the “feeling of the absurd”. The most common means to deal with absurdities is to simply “cover it up” to make sense of it, therefore employing some subterfuge to convince oneself that there have been no anomalies encountered. This can also be termed “**assimilation**” (Proulx, 2011).

Existential theorists, however, deemed this mode of anxiety reduction as inauthentic because it lacks full acknowledgement of the anomaly that is the source or trigger of the anxiety. A more authentic mode of absurdity repair would be a forced acknowledgement of anomalies and making the effort to make them sensible; this is termed “**accommodation**” (Proulx, 2011). However, sense-making also has its limits. In cases where covering over and accommodation are not possible or effective, another solution (that may be deemed, again, as inauthentic, yet familiar) would be to refocus one’s efforts and attention on beliefs that still make sense. In other words, “affirm what still makes sense in the face of senseless experiences” (Proulx, 2011).

In reiterating these terms, we understand that the **meaning maintenance model** is the violation of expected associations concerning mental representations through unexpected experiences evoking the uncomfortable arousal state that evokes the affirmation of alternative expected associations (Proulx, 2011). With this, the entwinement of fluid compensation, alienation, assimilation, and accommodation are termed as well. As mentioned, **fluid compensation** relates to strengthening other beliefs and values and retreating to a place where one’s world makes sense again. **Alienation** is used in describing the acute form of anxiety that arises when there is a threat to the sense of self through means of a breakdown or compromise of the relations that compromise external environments. **Assimilation** is termed as employing subterfuge to convince oneself that no anomalies have been encountered, hence dealing with life’s absurdities by covering them up. Lastly, in reiterating the definition of the

term “**accommodation**”, this is an authentic mode of absurdity repair through a forced acknowledgement of anomalies and making the effort to make them sensible (Proulx, 2011).

After explaining the derivatives and absurdities of the meaning maintenance model, how does this aid in understanding why people turn to the absurd and the surreal for entertainment? One of the psychologists that formed part in establishing this model, Travis Proulx, explains it in a similar way as to why people watch horror movies: This type of film is a safe place to both experiment with and experience one’s fears. Therefore, in the same way, people enjoy exploring existential anxieties in a similar safe space, where emotional reactions can be further explored with the subconscious knowledge that it is a safe space (Robson, 2020). Whether it be the work of Kafka or Lynch, “a little dose of the surreal and the absurd helps us wrestle with the grander questions of our place on Earth, and catalyses our search for meaning within it” (Robson, 2020).

Per the meaning maintenance model, the violations of any mental representations of meaning frameworks or expected associations provoke the same arousal states, as well as the heightened affirmations of alternative beliefs (Proulx, 2011). This model further submits that the problematic dissonance can be alleviated through affirming beliefs that do not share any content with the original violations, having the affirmed meaning framework proposed as entirely irrelevant. The relevance comes in when one’s relative commitment to said violated meaning framework and the commitment thereof is affirmed. Individuals are more committed to their self-conception to such an extent that positive self-relevant experiences regarding one’s abilities provoke anxiety if their self-conception is violated (Proulx, 2011). Therefore, self-relevant anomalies are most likely to evoke **the feeling of the absurd**. As such, this further provokes subsequent compensatory efforts related to affirmation, whether this relates to the threatening of one’s self-esteem, a sense of belonging, the reminder of imminent death or indeed figuring out what is going on.

## 2.3 Cognitive responses to fairy tales

Fairy tales<sup>28</sup> can be considered to be both the purest and simplest means of expressing the collective unconscious psychic processes of their time and context (Betts, 2009). Due to this, their value concerning the scientific investigation of the said unconscious can exceed all other material. They represent the archetypes in their simplest and most concise form, and consist of a less specific conscious material, ultimately mirroring the basic patterns of the psyche in a clear manner (Betts, 2009).

When well written, fairy tales with their unique qualities can transport the reader (or viewer, in the case of theatrically performed fairy tales) into an experience that both explores and expands an individual's experience of life (Martin, 2019:239). Fairy tales can reflect the essential developments and conditions within humanity's existence, with a further educational value due to it being an active anthroposophist emphasising the human consciousness, as well as language. This, in turn, aids in childhood development, making fairy tales important in schools and educational settings (Martin, 2019:239). Although fairy tales can have a magical quality to them and are well-loved by children, some themes are often violent and/or sexual, which may not always appease the eyes or minds of children. In this case, fairy tales can be seen as a guide for adults in their psychological development (Rubin, 2013:37).

### 2.3.1 The cognitive response to fairy tales

Children can gain a sense of who they are through narratives, through telling stories to others and themselves about what happened to them. They further form their identity through the integration of their unique family histories and incorporation of stories, myths and legends relating to their culture and religion. Due to stories of myths, legends, s and more particularly in this research; fairy tales following a hero on an adventure and transformation period, these classics may encode patterns that enable "the restoration of vibrant functioning" (Koutsompou, 2016:213), especially in children. Concerning the broad spectrum of investigation relating to literary responses to fairy tales, most of it lies within the field of psychoanalysis (Bolton, 2016:397). Fairy tales – as both a literary form and found within theatre genres such as, but not

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<sup>28</sup> For the purpose of this research the fairy tales are mainly associated with those condoning to Western literature.

limited to that pantomime, children's theatre, forms of physical theatre, ballet, and even puppetry – can support healthy emotional development. This is due to the readers or audience members being immersed in an experience that provides them with comforting and indisputable affirmations of the uprightness of the individual's moral principles (Bolton, 2016:398).

Fairy tale-oriented literature includes a set of aesthetically justified texts. These may contribute to a child's entertainment and spiritual cultivation, including, but not limited to, the shaping of freedom of thought, the development of being able to perceive beauty as well as personality maturation (Koutsompou, 2016:213). The notion that fairy tale-oriented literature helps in resolving emotional conflict is not a new one. Fairy tale enchantments function as a catalyst for emotional growth in young children who have suffered emotional disturbances (Bolton, 2016:407). For this section, the psychological cognitive response to fairy tales will be predominantly discussed in literary forms. Later on, in Chapter 5, some of the means discussed here will be transposed onto the theatrical analysis to support the practical component involved in this research.

Traditionally, literature has been known as a way of comforting readers whilst offering an escape from contemporary reality (Bolton, 2016:399). Fairy tales seem to be appreciated and treasured for their distance between their suggested realities, which as a result, sets them in a category of their own, which differs from other forms of fiction. Although fiction as a whole seems to offer a general escape from everyday life, it seems that the fairy tale genre appears to be the only fictional genre that is widely used within therapeutic sessions (Bolton, 2016:399). The act of meaning-making from a fairy tale and its therapeutic properties lies in understanding the nature of the distance between the readers' reality and the fairy tale's reality, whilst also examining the transactional process of making a distant reality meaningful (Bolton, 2016:399). For practical explanation purposes, this research will reference the fairy tale "Little Red Riding Hood". In our reality, there won't be little girls running off into a forest and coming across a talking Wolf; the chances are even slimmer that the same Wolf would hide our grandmother in a closet and impersonate her to get closer to Little Red Riding Hood. In our reality, we believe that someone may impersonate another, that a stranger may approach a little girl, and that a wolf may be found in a forest. Yet, in this telling of the fairy tale we can believe their reality and our own, whilst being able to distinguish between the two and acknowledge that the tale is still a false reality.

The reader of the fairy tale at hand is aware that the author of the fairy tale and the reader do not exist in the same time and place, while also being aware that the fairy tale itself exists on a different temporal plane, which is also separated from the current time at a great distance. This distance acts as a boundary between the different realities and isolates the fairy tale world from any personal experiences, new insights, personal initiatives in interpretation and understanding, and new points of evaluation (Bolton, 2016:399). The fairy tale's past is both conclusive and immutable, therefore giving it a magnetic force in terms of the messages it conveys, as at this point, its validity can't be evaluated. This includes the events and characters, along with the associations of their untouchable pasts. Referring back to "Little Red Riding Hood", we accept that the girl visits her grandmother without questioning where her grandfather may be; we also accept that she is a young girl and that the grandmother is an elderly woman, without having age given to us. Hence, events within a fairy tale play out truths as opposed to likelihoods and prophecies instead of predictions (Bolton, 2016:399). As a result, readers are compelled to give the messages of the fairy tale greater reverence in comparison to other fiction genres. Fairy tale events and characters being removed from indecisions of a current reality assume a finished quality in their existence on a temporal plane, hence, their closed reality (Bolton, 2016:400).

The question then becomes: What happens when the reader establishes a connection with the events and characters from this closed reality, such as perhaps trying to befriend someone like Red Riding Hood, or trying to become similar to her? Transactional theory indicates that readers construct meaning from these fairy tale texts using their memories, associations, and feelings as possible building blocks for meaning-making (Bolton, 2016:400). Through the use of personal material to construct meaning from a closed reality, readers that do establish these connections may find a shift or transformation in their perceptions of reality, which in some readers, may result in emotional integration<sup>29</sup> (Bolton, 2016:400).

In assuming that a text changes a reader's perception of aspects of their life, the reader would have taken an active, personalised role in responding to the fairy tale literature and creating meaning from it (Bolton, 2016:400). For example, the moral lesson derived from "Little Red Riding Hood" would be to not talk to strangers. This response is towards the patterned textual symbols<sup>30</sup> that are presented on the page and, within the transactional theory, serves as the basis

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<sup>29</sup> This refers to the identity, unity, and/or similarity of emotions (Maheshwari, 2014).

<sup>30</sup> This refers to the text itself (Bolton, 2016:400).

for how fairy tales can support healthy emotional development within an interactional means (Bolton, 2016:401). This theory was originally coined by Louise Rosenblatt (1978) who further explains that readers read in combinations of two possible ways: efferent reading and aesthetic reading, which coexist at opposite ends of a continuum, thus juxtaposing each other (Bolton, 2016:401). For this research, our focus will be on aesthetic reading, as opposed to efferent reading<sup>31</sup>.

Aesthetic reading is focused on the act of reading itself, specifically in terms of the feelings and associations that stir up in a reader as a response to the words (Bolton, 2016:401). This form of reading adheres to the transactional theory as the text acts on the reader whilst the reader simultaneously acts on the text. In the aesthetic reading form, personal feelings, memories, and associations are supplied by the reader for the construction of meaning in a manner that is guided by the stimuli of the text, ultimately creating an environment suitable for a therapeutic reading experience (Bolton, 2016:401).

Aesthetic reading further allows for a savoured reading experience and a space to construct meaning based on the reader's associations, the selection of which is guided by the textual symbols found within the literature. The reader acts on the text by supplying their material for meaning-making, while the text acts on the reader by guiding them to conclude the most relevant choices (Bolton, 2016:402). An example of this includes pondering the trust of people with "Wolf"-like tendencies as a reference to our fairy tale at hand, or perhaps by establishing a sense of bravery in the sense that if a little girl can stand up to a wolf, the reader can be brave enough to accomplish tasks for the day.

The aesthetic reading form requires both continual awareness of the textual symbols, as well as a constant selection of the reader's associations. Because of this, it is an experience that can fuse the cognitive and emotive, or even comprehend both as facets of the same experience that has been lived through (Bolton, 2016:402). Literature has been suggested to provide an ideal linkage between thoughts and feelings, and even behaviour to an extent. The aesthetic reading

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<sup>31</sup> Efferent reading refers to the carrying out of information from a particular text for later use (Bolton, 2016:401). In this form of reading, auditory characteristics of words do not need to be dealt with, as readers might immediately make associations between the visual characteristics of words and meanings for a quick and practical purpose, hence its value lies in the purpose of retaining important information for later use or contemplation (Bolton, 2016:401). Examples of this include reading and recalling a food recipe or the rules and means of play for a board game.

form permits thinking and feeling simultaneously, and as a result, allows the emotional mind to function rationally alongside its emotive characteristic counterparts (Bolton, 2016:402).

Reading in this form asks the reader to simultaneously read and pay attention to the elements activated within them through the text, so this aesthetic stance can be called constructive, as an avenue by which the fusion of both the cognitive and emotive can take place is created (Bolton, 2016:402). This fusion may be facilitation in the re-narration of certain memories, aiding in stripping away self-doubt elements, denial, and fear, and thus leaving the memory with a different and new corresponding emotion. This new emotion will be the result of a suggestion from the textual pattern of the literature, along with being affirmed by the ethical standpoint which adheres to human moral principles (Bolton, 2016:402). An example of this would be replacing shame in the memory of a traumatic event with compassion for oneself. In the case of an individual who has undergone psychological trauma, an affirmation of the validity of one's pain can be a powerful force. Having the link between emotions and memories, whilst having hierarchically-valourised literature affirming emotional-cognitive fusion is what allows these memories to settle in a harmonious place within the overall narrative of an individual's personal life: "It is the active guidance of the fairy tale and its treatment of morality which ushers heretofore painful disintegrated memories into a harmonious place within an integrated personality" (Bolton, 2016:402).

Although individuals are not consciously aware of the distance between the literary and actual realities during the reading experience, the effect is tangible. When fully absorbed into the reading experience, individuals' thoughts construct worlds that are inhabitable and do not sit at an identifiable point within their realistic timeline (Bolton, 2016:417). The collision of these two hierarchically disparate realities is of great force, but not in a destructive manner; rather, this collision happens in a manner that is disruptive to the mechanisms and structures of things. The fairy tale exerts a powerful, yet strange magnetism in these collisions, which has sparked the interests of psychoanalysts, giving fairy tales a position in clinical settings (Bolton, 2016:416).

In a psychoanalytical approach concerning myths and fairy tales, Bettelheim (1989) argued that nothing provided a greater wealth than traditional children's literature, especially to children themselves. His view was further supported by arguing that these literature forms may aid in children learning about possible problem solving, as well as human progression, due to



the nature involving problems and character development a child may understand. Furthermore, the moral behaviour of heroes may teach a child that fighting against difficulties of life is inevitable, but that these difficulties can be overcome (Koutsompou, 2016:215). Children thus self-reflect as they learn how to distinguish between evil and good characters which enables the ability to identify with the good and reject the evil in their reality.

Transactional reading, as discussed above, is possibly a crucial prerequisite to the self-reflective process, as it allows for the rationality of the mind in fusing thoughts and emotions while facilitating a contemplative response from the reader to this occurring fusion (Bolton, 2016:417). Concerning fairy tales, this response is accepted in nature due to the validity of the resulting emotional-cognitive fusion being indisputable, as “made so by the temporal distance between realities and a treatment of ethical principles based on the sensually based moral needs of human beings” (Bolton, 2016:417). Resulting from these modes of valorisation, as unique to the fairy tale genre, the emotional-cognitive fusion presented through transactional reading can be accepted during a self-reflective reading process. This would thus result in the ability to reflect on one’s life with acceptance of one’s memories and hence reiterates that fairy tales can facilitate the re-narration required in integrating memories harmoniously into the reader’s life, allowing this to be a valid link between fairy tales and mental health (Bolton, 2016:417).

Fairy tales further allow us to understand how individuation happens, as a result of the rich material accessed from the collective unconscious through fairy tales (Betts, 2009). As children, many individuals were both exposed to and acted out the stories from fairy tales, becoming full archetypal characters with intention while fully debriefing the experience. On a personal note, I remember my younger siblings, cousins and I doing this role-play experience as children, and “Little Red Riding Hood” happened to be one of the plays we acted out. Being the eldest, I was “cast” as the grandmother, with a more assertive family member playing “Wolf”. This interpretive interaction can stir up strong emotions, as individual complexes, as well as typology, are constellated in uncanny ways through this medium (Betts, 2009). A common error is expecting human- or reality-based qualities from a fairy tale character that guides them while confusing the character with the structure of the psyche (Betts, 2009); thus, fairy tale interpretation needs its own set of guidelines for truth and accuracy.

A popular guideline for fairy tale interpretation was developed by the French psychoanalyst Catherine Moreau and is known as The Moreau Guidelines (Betts, 2009). This is primarily

used in structuring the interpretation of a fairy tale and is split into two discrete sections: the first incorporating a detailed work-through of the fairy tale itself and the second being the amplification of the core symbols (Betts, 2009)<sup>32</sup>.

In concluding this section, there is a basis for insight into the separation of realities and worlds as created by fairy tale literature in comparison to our realities and worlds, along with its importance in developing the child's mind which may or may not have a linkage with the Theory of Mind concept. The literature comparison on reality versus worlds applies to the practical component of this research as it aids in the accurate structuring of the written play text found in Addendum 1. The above set of guidelines can also give me, as the writer of the text, a means of structuring and reinterpreting the fairy tales' components entwined with the specific psychological components involved. This further establishes a linkage point between the fairy tale incorporations and the psychoanalysis involved through both the theoretical and practical basis of this research.

### **2.3.2 Archetypes overlapping in psychology and fairy tales**

Through the perspective gained from the above section of meaning-making from symbols through fictionalised fairy tales, psychoanalytic fairy tale interpretation and ascribing Jung's stance on overcoming life's challenges, we can deduce that overcoming difficulties in one's imagination and imaginative worlds is (or can be) associated with individuals being able to overcome challenges in their psyche. Jung furthered his theory through his creation and interpretation of 12 archetypes<sup>33</sup> that represent personality types. According to Jung (1968:3), "archetypes" occur as early as Philo Judaeus referencing the God-image (Imago Dei) in man. Jung was the first to apply archetypes in analytical psychology in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Within this psychological framework, archetypes are ascribed as unconscious and universal idea patterns (Toolshero, 2018). According to Jung, most of what individuals attribute to deliberate, reasoned, conscious thinking is guided by unconscious activity (Voridis, 2016). This includes the organisation of the archetype forms, existing in our minds before conscious thought, thus having a powerful impact on an individual's perception of experience (Voridis, 2016). Jung

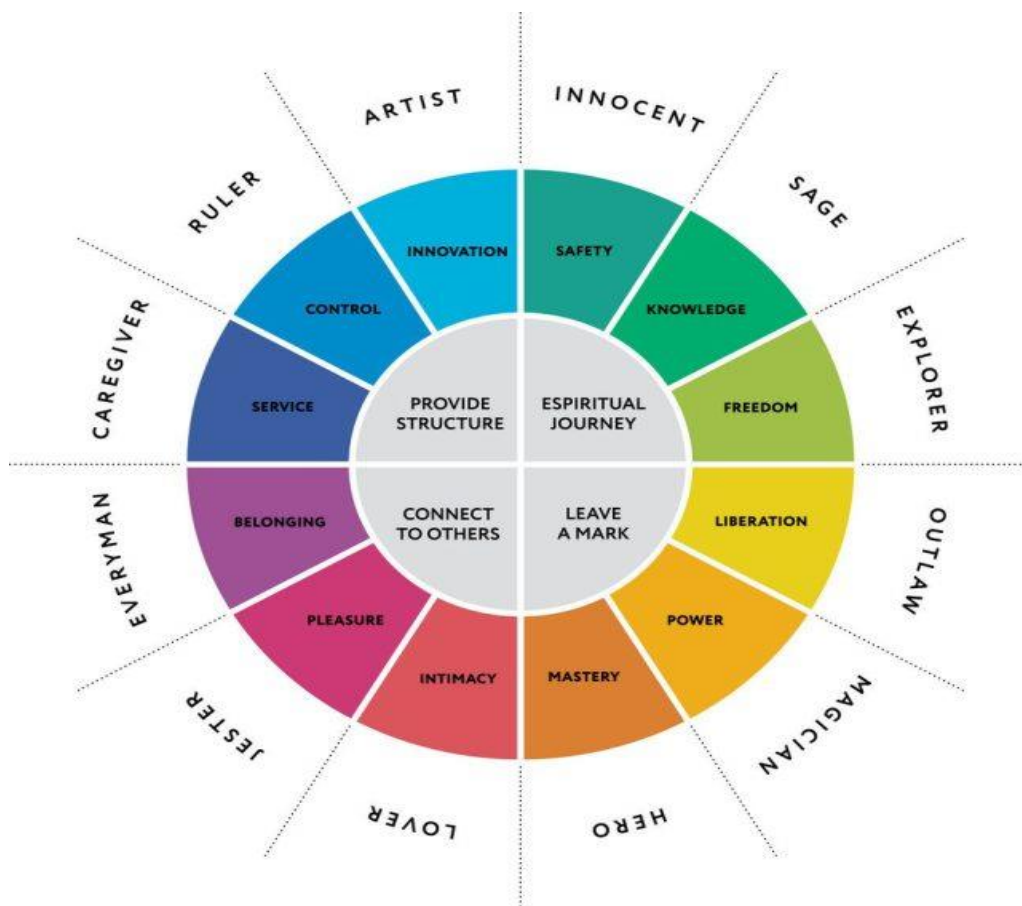
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<sup>32</sup> This guideline was followed for the creation of the text of the practical component of the research and will be discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>33</sup> "Archetype" originates from the ancient Greek word "arche" which means origin. Therefore this refers to an original model or pattern (Toolshero, 2018).

(1968:5) states the following: “This term (archetypes) is apposite and helpful because it tells us that so far as the collective unconscious contents are concerned we are dealing with archaic – or I would say – primordial types, that is, with universal images that have existed since the remotest times.”

Archetypes are frequently used in mythology, theatrical character types, folk tales, sagas and fairy tales all over the world and, according to Jung, archetypes exist in the collective consciousness within the human brain (Toolshero, 2018). Archetypes further concern the instinctive memory of individuals that show identifiable behaviour that is recognisable by others, hence they are fixed in the unconscious, but become visible through behaviour (Toolshero, 2018). Jung further elaborates that human archetypes are comparable to animal instincts as they also activate automatic behaviour, automatic emotion and thought patterns (Toolshero, 2018). This concept is apparent in his theory of the human psyche, and with this, he identifies 12 universal and mythical character archetypes that reside within our collective conscious to represent the range of basic human motivations (Neill, 2018) as follows:



*Figure 2* (Neill, 2018)

The central circle in the diagram above (Figure 2) refers to the four cardinal orientations, meaning the desires that the specific archetypes are seeking to realise. The outermost circle showcases the archetypes themselves, with the middle circle (in colours) referring to their description or the association most commonly made with this archetype. The reasoning for the incorporation of these archetypes is to provide a further understanding of the relationship between psychology and fairy tales, as well as to refer to the psychology behind the archetypes within fairy tales and the use of archetypes within the practical component of this research.

Jung suggests that fairy tales are a well-known expression of archetypes (Jung, 1968:5). He further states that one is best able to study the comparative anatomy of the psyche, and so further adhering to this psychological framework within analytical psychology, along with these archetypes, he expresses that fairy tales play an essential role in obtaining a wider comprehension and understanding of human nature (Jacquet, 2021). The reason for this is that stories such as “Snow White” and “Little Red Riding Hood”, for example, contain less cultural-conscious material as opposed to myths and legends, so they can mirror the basic patterns of the psyche in a clearer manner (Jacquet, 2021). Fairy tales are described as the purest and simplest expression of the collective unconscious psychic process and so they can represent these universal archetypes in their simplest and most concise form (Jacquet, 2021). They play an important role in the expression of archetypes, as these simple, stripped-down characters enable us to identify archetypes in their starkest form and realise how they exist in us or the individuals around us in a highly effective manner (Jacquet, 2021).

Archetypal roles are significant in more than just theatre and through the re-enactment of fairy tales. They can be ascribed to individuals in one’s family, career or scholarly life, and they seem to create an excitement that holds mythological proportions (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2011:1520). This manifests through characterising others as central figures such as a mother, son, father or a queen, prince and king, further going into being a witch or a devil. There seems to be a tendency to make use of archetypes imported from fairy tales to understand and communicate an individual’s experience in an experiential group, which appears unrestricted by time and place. It is believed that both the organisational and social lives of individuals foster archetypal imagery, especially under the conditions of relational turbulence, polarisation, frustration, conflict and anxiety (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1520).

The characters from fairy tales are recognised as powerful archetypes for attributions, along with projections and projective identifications (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1520). This, along with the wisdom and lessons gained from fairy tales allows us as individuals to make adaptable analyses of ourselves and others in our environments. An example of a study worth mentioning to substantiate this idea is one by Radulescu<sup>34</sup> in 2014 that was structured around identifying universal archetypal feminine figures within fairy tales (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1520). The specific set of characteristics associated with particular archetypal roles, though seldom spoken of, seem to thrive with many individuals and generate and meditate important behaviours and responses within many different areas<sup>35</sup>.

Referencing back to Jungian means of thought, symbols of fairy tales (and other mythological tales and stories) reveal basic elements at the very core of organising and categorising. This is apparent through thoughts, behaviours, and the classification of others and emotions, due to the constructive nature of cognition being concordant with what is expected to be encountered in typical English fairy tales (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1520). Fairy tales, their roles and plot structures are most likely intertwined in our minds as a result of being nature's innate storytelling device which specialises in the simulation of human problems, providing simple rules for knowing who and what is good and bad, or strong and weak (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1521).

Mythic perspectives have a strong position concerning the understanding of human behaviours and interests within the realms of Jungian archetypes (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1521), as they seek to reveal unconscious motivation, emotion and cognition (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1522). The esoteric Jungian approach is engrossed within the spiritual person and their beliefs, archetypal imaginations and symbols, with these symbols becoming salient when reaching down to the archetypal level, and thus these symbolic acts can release powerful forces that may be understood as long-running within daily life (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1522). This further supports the Jungian stance that human actions are steered through unconscious

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<sup>34</sup> Radulescu found both positive and negative archetypal figures present in everyone's personal fairy tales. This ranged from the good mother and wise old women to witches. Naturally, there are no real witches, excluding religious-based practices such as Wiccan and practitioners of the occult; these archetypal roles are rather metaphoric and symbolic expressions of familial archetypes that make it easier for an individual to organise, conceptualise and take control of their internal and external reality (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1520).

<sup>35</sup> This ranges from religious, cultural and governmental, to business organizations and wider political settings (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1520).

fantasies and symbols, thus providing the term for “the collective unconscious”. In further expanding on this field of thought structuring, all humans, regardless of race, culture, sex or class share a fundamental organic structure and have common characteristics hidden in the psyche structures, which Jung coined as these archetypes where significant emotions and fantasies emerge (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1522).

Psychologists have for years held onto the theory that myths grant individuals access to human imaginative universals, and through this, the structures of the inner psyche, which Jung identified as archetypes (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1523). These archetypes represent a broad theory on how organisational experiences are shaped and catalogued. Archetypes are further understood as inner guides, presenting individuals with deep structures for their experience and meaning, which further shapes one's outlook, having Jung's psychology taking the form of an animation of inner personages (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1523). These inner imagoes gained from archetypal perspectives influence individuals' relationships with others, especially with those of high importance, such as authority figures. They further influence actions, even the smallest kind, if charged with archetypal imagoes from powerful predispositions which can govern human behavioural patterns when activated (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1523).

Archetypal roles used as a cognitive tool aid in the interpretation and reconstruction of reality, having Jung's archetypal concept a legitimate means of explaining that certain emotion-charged role images are either inborn or acquired at an early stage of life. One is not conscious of this, yet they have a tremendous impact (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1523). In this sense, archetypal roles can be considered unconscious mental forms, which are filled with the residues of primordial emotional life. When this primordial emotional life interacts with an external environment, individuals are predisposed to respond with automatic effects, thoughts and behaviours (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1524)<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> The archetypal roles that are most frequently attributed are known as the Big Five of Fairy Tales and consist of only “good” archetypal characters, namely: the King, the Queen, the Princess, the Crown Prince and the Wiseman (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1532). Within the realms of fairy tale fiction, myths, and reality, individuals seek mostly roles that are eternally and entirely good, especially concerning the roles within the core family of the father, mother, son and daughter (and sometimes their wise helper). This creates a parallel or even isomorphism between the Big Five of Fairy Tales and the core family roles, which makes it easy to infer that both of these role structurings are phenotypes that commence from the same archetypal template (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1533).

In concluding this section, it becomes apparent that the deep and highly charged, yet subconsciously unexplored parallels are present between symbolic reality and an individual's organisational reality, with fairy tale archetypal roles presenting as a functional feature of mental life. Furthermore, we can deduce that the concept of an archetypal role is an important aspect of social reality through the influence of unconscious fairy tale role imagoes, with the importance of the role archetype concept extending beyond fairy tales and running through many cultural worlds (Moxnes & Moxnes, 2016:1535). In forming part of this research, this insight further assists in the writing of the text associated with the practical component. This section is especially helpful in aiding with character creation to present a truthful perspective of archetypal imagery that associates with the research and includes a linkage between the psychologies associated with this component of fairy tales.

## **2.4 The psyche, psychology and the absurdity of it all**

### **2.4.1 The psyche from a Jungian perspective**

In Chapter 1, the incorporation and standalone dynamic of the psyche were briefly mentioned concerning its relationship with psychology. For Jung, the psyche consisted of a multitude of things, as he found it to be fluid, multi-dimensional, alive, and with the capability of creative development (Salman, 2008:57). Jung had a clear love for the psyche's integrity and its orderly chaos, stating that "in all chaos there is a cosmos, in all disorder a secret order, in all caprice, a fixed law, for everything that works is grounded in its opposite" (Jung, 1968:15). These two factors are what ultimately led Jung to shape his psychoanalytic vision (Salman, 2008:57). Jung was infamous for drawing on esoteric sources such as alchemy and astrology, and with this, drawn to their symbols and symbolic meanings, as he believed they were directed at a more synthetic understanding of the psyche (Salman, 2008:57).

Jung elaborated that he understood the psyche as the totality of all the psychic processes, incorporating both the conscious and the unconscious attributes of this, hence the term "psyche" as opposed to "mind"<sup>37</sup>. He further maintained the psyche too, just like the body, to be a self-regulating system (Hopwood, 2006). Jung, therefore, had his posture towards the psyche rooted in a central metaphor of it being a dialogue between the conscious and the

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<sup>37</sup> The mind in this instance may be used in common parlance when referring to the aspects of mental functioning that are only seen as a conscious aspect (Hopwood, 2006).



unconscious. He perceived that the psyche strives to maintain a sense of balance between opposing qualities whilst simultaneously actively seeking individuation, meaning its development (Hopwood, 2006).

Jung was adamant about maintaining the reality of the psyche as he saw it, to such an extent that he saw the concept of the soul as a psychological fact, regardless of whether there was scientific proof of its existence. He further explored and expressed that psychic phenomena are related to, but not reducible to, other levels of individual experiences. These experiences range from the biochemical makeup of the brain to one's history, making these psychological phenomena autonomous, and so they should be investigated as they are experienced (Salman, 2008:60). Jung believed that psychological phenomena are as real in their own right as physical objects, autonomously functioning through a life of their own, such as in the phenomena of dissociative disorders (Salman, 2008:60).

In referring back to the exploration of archetypes, they are impersonal and objective elements within the psyche, and as such, reflect universal issues with many aspects remaining unconscious and functioning both powerfully and autonomously (Salman, 2008:64). These aspects are known as “psychoid” areas of the archetype which function as discrete centres of psychic energy that coexist with ego awareness, manifesting in fusion states such as projective identification<sup>38</sup> or mystical illumination (Salman, 2008:64).

Through identifying the characters of the archetypes, their affective impact, impersonality, autonomy and numinosity, Jung introduced different comprehensions and understandings of the dynamics of the borderline psyche (Salman, 2008:64). Some of these dynamics may include idealisation, omnipotence, fusion and separation-individuation struggles; yet, it was recognised that disturbances and primary instinct are healed at this deeper level of psychological processing, where the numinous power of the archetypes are felt (Salman, 2008:64). In terms of differentiating the personal from the archetypal, analytic work needs to be conducted, while simultaneously reintegrating, through means of symbolism, the archetypal and personal experience. Archetypal and personal experiences may differ vastly, but archetypal experiences never exist within a void, so they are triggered, released and experienced by an individual

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<sup>38</sup> This refers to a defence mechanism where an individual projects qualities that are deemed unacceptable to the self onto another. The other then internalises these projected qualities and believes themselves to be appropriately and justifiably characterised by this (Association, 2020).



(Salman, 2008:64). There is a paradoxical relationship between archetypal motifs and personal issues, such that the archetypal image should be analysed as symbolic and emergent, yet also expressed within experience (Salman, 2008:65). Lacking a relationship to the archetypal dimension results in a spiritual impoverishment and creates a sense of meaninglessness in life (Salman, 2008:65).

Jung describes the psyche to be inherently dissociative with its complexes and archetypes personified and functioning autonomously through a means of multiple fields of reality, thus conceiving many secondary selves, as opposed to only unconscious drives and processes (Salman, 2008:67). This research, set of theories and processes can be applied to and incorporated into the studies and understandings of trauma, dissociative disorders and multi-personality disorders, as it was observed that material surfacing from the unconscious serves as a means of bringing light to the ego's limited awareness (Salman, 2008:67). As such, "a symptom develops not because of prior history, but in order to express an unconscious process or accomplish a psychological purpose" (Salman, 2008:67). This unconscious process may relate to Jung's theory on the collective unconscious, as the unconscious is not necessarily individual, but universal with contents and modes of behaviour that are shared and found within different individuals everywhere. This constitutes a common psychic substrate of suprapersonal nature present in each of us (Jung, 1968:3).

For Jung, the most serious emotional disease is not the existence of complexes, but rather the psyche's breakdown of its considerable self-regulating capacities, for example, the ability to rectify a current situation through bringing into awareness dissociated complexes, as well as archetypal material (Salman, 2008:67). Symbolic representation is another important element aiding in this and other psyche-orientated explorations. Symbols can be described as living and emerging images that reflect active psychological processes filled with meaning and fully capable of acting as transformers of psychic energy (Salman, 2008:70). Symbols are the language of so many philosophies, meanings and other inclusive fields, including the previously mentioned archetypes in fairy tales and the Theatre of the Absurd. They originate within the archaic layer of the psyche where they could either be healing, destructive or even prophetic, thus acting as the transformer of psychic energy as a result of having a symbolic image evoking the totality of the archetype being reflected. These images are what evoke both the aim and motivation of instincts, further creating the links for affective experience (Salman, 2008:70). Furthermore, images give form to emotion, which in turn give a living body to the

imagination, having the expression of archetypal possibility both dramatic and simultaneously poetic. “The explication of symbols is capable of imparting meaning and therapeutic direction to a condition of meaninglessness and despair” (Salman, 2008:71).

In conclusion, Jung’s stance on the psyche and the attributes and influence archetypes have on it in its dissociation of complexes becomes clearer. Furthermore, a link has been established concerning the influence and importance of symbolism in all three fields of this research.

#### **2.4.2 Psychological absurdities**

From the above sections, a similarity can be established in terms of the existence of different realities, whether this is creating one in the case of threatening situations, through delving into fairy tale cognition responses, or the different realities exposed and experienced through different levels of the psyche, and all-round symbolism. In referring back to the Meaning Maintenance Model, it shares a common thread with the existential theory itself, which undoubtedly influenced the esoteric work and beliefs of Jung too. When any committed meaning framework is violated, individuals experience a state of arousal that prompts them to affirm other meaning frameworks to which they are committed (Proulx, 2009:230), whether this is a change in the reader’s cognitive response after having read “Little Red Riding Hood”, a misjudged archetypal grievance, suppression of thought, behaviour or emotion, or deception or intrusion of the psyche.

“Nostalgia for unity is the impulse of the human drama,” says Proulx (2009:230). This can perhaps be a general impetus for relating propositions to one another to such an extent that every proposition ultimately relates to the others, regardless of what their content may be. This can be coined as the system of relations and forms the basis of individuals’ subjective understanding of reality, whether this is through an external environment or an individual’s self<sup>39</sup> (Proulx, 2009:230). However, realities can be deceiving, as wherever we look, we find that life does not make sense. According to existentialist theorists, “whatever experience is the source of this senselessness, the same unique arousal state is evoked – a ‘feeling of the absurd’”

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<sup>39</sup> The existential philosopher Soren Kierkegaard explained this as “a relation that relates itself to its own self, and in relating itself to its own self, relates to another” (Proulx, 2009:230). I found this explanation to be useful in aiding to perceive this system of relations being referred to, just showcasing it as an example of everything relating to every other.

(Proulx, 2009:230). There seems to be a struggle in pinpointing the unusual qualities presented in this arousal state, as it does not necessarily pertain to an emotion, but rather a mood or a general sense that things are not adding up. Often, individuals can address this sort of mood and consciously rework a meaning framework accordingly, thus taking an authentic approach to dealing with the absurdities of life (Proulx, 2009:230). However, on occasion, some absurdities are intractable and defy the efforts to rework the meaning frameworks, ultimately rendering the experience incomprehensible. The feeling of the absurd that is aroused by these irresolvable meaning violations leads to provoking an indirect and inauthentic response; that is, the affirmation of other meaning frameworks (Proulx, 2009:230).

Individuals may resort to the affirmation of these other meaning frameworks should there be arousal of personal uncertainty, an unconsciously perceived visual anomaly, environmental patterns that may follow threats to their sense of self-concept or self-control (Proulx, 2009:231) or even simply after having read a short story by Kafka. Either way, a general feeling of the absurd is aroused through the following of any meaning framework violation, which all individuals can recall having experienced at one time or another in their lives (Proulx, 2009:232). However, what happens when these meaning frameworks start disintegrating cognitively, possibly in the same sense that one cannot tell the difference between realities of an individual's own and that of "Little Red Riding Hood"? Or even more so, if these feelings of the absurd start taking over the perception and the psyche and one becomes "stuck" in this self-made meaning framework? These questions are what inspired and informed this investigation of "alternate realities" that manifest in the psyche and present themselves in absurd psychological behaviours, which is where this research directs itself to psychological disorders, further pertaining to both the theoretical stance as well as character creation for the practical component.

To better understand this concept, it is necessary to refer back to the Theory of Mind concept. It develops in early childhood as a charting of a child's knowledge about the mind and developing knowledge, as well as a coherent common sense. This common sense is evident in grasping the distinction between mental constructs and physical entities (Wellman, 1992). The social-cognitive skills of Theory of Mind and empathy are crucial in everyday interactions, along with co-operation and cultural learning (Goldstein, 2012:19). Any deficit in these skills or a lack of the Theory of Mind components results in a delay or compromise of social development, which may result in disorders such as an autism spectrum disorder,

“psychopathy” (due to a lack of empathic development), sociopathy and nonverbal learning disorders (Goldstein, 2012:19). Social cognitive skills of matching the emotional state of others through empathy, and understanding the mental states of others through the Theory of Mind, are crucial for interactions and co-operation on a daily basis (Goldstein, 2012:20). Executive functioning, such as inhibition and cognitive flexibility, present in the Theory of Mind enables individuals to hold multiple perspectives (Thompson, 2017), and with the ability to switch between these multiple perspectives, individuals can distinguish between reality and belief, such as, for example, between a theatre piece and real life, or between Little Red Riding Hood's universe and one's own. Therefore, we can distinguish that lacking in Theory of Mind links to difficulty in meaning-making of the different presented realities.

Determining mental disorders does not only require not fulfilling Theory of Mind components or being unable to submerge in meaning-making when feeling absurd, or an imbalance in one's psyche, though they have a definitive impact. Possibly the most efficient means of determining a disorder, should any of the above factors come into play, would be the use of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health* (DSM), the most recent one being developed in 2013, known as the DSM5. As mentioned previously, this research does not aim to go into depth on the manual itself, but rather use it as a guideline in highlighting specific disorders. This serves to incorporate them into the practical component as a means of compiling a practical link between the Theatre of the Absurd and the psyche. The three mental disorders chosen, namely Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), schizophrenia and psychopathy, may be ascribed as absurd in their own right, with discussions on this following.

#### **2.4.2.1. Dissociative Identity Disorder**

Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder, is more often than not experienced as a means of escape for an individual to both avoid stress and cause a separation in normally integrated character facets (Brown, 2006). This disorder may manifest itself in childhood due to overwhelming experiences, traumatic events and/or childhood abuse, especially when trauma occurs before the age of five (Traumadissociation.com, 2021). The mind's capacity to protect the soul, even from a young age, is truly remarkable (Vincent, 2010:1); and, referring back to Jung, he believed that the psyche dissociates as a normal occurrence. However, what is understood to be abnormal is when dissociation occurs with an autonomous complex, along with the personalities that are

associated with Dissociative Identity Disorder (Stiles, 2017:3). Each alter personality that may be typically found in DID has been equated to Jung's views and concepts on archetypes and complexes (Vincent, 2010:iv). Carl Jung took the approach of looking at individuals' symptoms that may relate to DID as purposive, along with serving the person's soul (Vincent, 2010:4).

DID is a disorder characterised by the presence of two or more personality states or identities that recurrently control the individual's behaviour, along with an inability to recall important personal information. This disorder is characterised by identity fragmentation as opposed to a proliferation of separate personalities (Traumadissociation.com, 2021). Early childhood trauma may be the main, but not necessarily the only, contributor to causing DID to develop through the prevention of the child forming a cohesive (or unified) sense of self in their early years. Instead, the prolonged trauma causes different behavioural states that are present from birth up until the present age which results in increasingly disconnected or dissociated personality states. Over time, these disconnected states result in the development of alternate identities (Traumadissociation.com, 2021).

Per the DSM5, Dissociative Identity Disorder (diagnostic code 300.14) needs to adhere to specific diagnostic criteria to be validly diagnosed. The first criterion (A) is a disruption of identity which is characterised by two or more distinct personality states. This further needs to adhere to the disruption of marked discontinuity in a sense of self as well as a sense of agency. There should also be a further accompaniment of related alterations in affect, behaviour, memory, perception, consciousness, cognition, and/or sensory-motor functioning, as symptoms either reported by the individual or observed by others (Traumadissociation.com, 2021). The second criterion (B) includes recurrent gaps in recalling everyday events, important personal information, and/or traumatic events that are inconsistent in terms of ordinary forgetting (Traumadissociation.com, 2021). A third criterion (C) includes the abovementioned symptoms resulting in causing clinically significant distress, and/or impairment in terms of social, occupational or other areas of functioning (Traumadissociation.com, 2021). Finally, the fourth criterion (D) states that the disturbance is not a part of normal cultural or religious practice, not attributable to the psychological effects of substance abuse or another medical condition (Traumadissociation.com, 2021).

A discontinuity of an individual's sense of self can affect any and many parts of their functioning. Outlooks, morals, attitudes and even personal preferences such as food or clothes

may change inexplicably and suddenly change back again (Traumadissociation.com, 2021). This happens due to an alternating personality, or *an alter*, having different outlooks, morals, attitudes and preferences. Hence, a sudden change occurs when an alter has either taken control, or strong influence over said individual, and when the alter is no longer active, things change back to “normal” (Traumadissociation.com, 2021). Discontinuity within an individual’s sense of agency means not feeling in control of (or “owning”) their feelings, thoughts or behaviours. This is not a delusional belief that an individual belongs to an outside person, but rather the perception that their thoughts, behaviours and speech do not feel like they belong to or make sense to them (Traumadissociation.com, 2021). This occurs in DID due to the alter personalities’ intrusion into an individual’s conscious awareness, even if they are not aware that they have these alter personalities. This is known as passive influence or as partially dissociated intrusions of said alter identities into the individual’s conscious awareness (Traumadissociation.com, 2021).

Referring back to Jung and his archetypes as a primordial, structural element of the human psyche, he describes them as being centres of psychic energy with a numinous, lifelike quality. Furthermore, these have the likelihood to manifest themselves in critical circumstances, through either an exterior event or due to an inner change (Vincent, 2010:20). There is almost an infinite variety of archetypes that stem from the 12 basic types mentioned, with some that are very remote from consciousness and others that are more immediate and to be described in connection with the structuring of the human psyche (Vincent, 2010:20). Through the work done with his patients, Jung began noticing patterns of similarities between their dreams and their situations. This led him to further exploration of this, along with encountering these similarities in myths, fairy tales and stories that are indigenous to diverse cultures (Vincent, 2010:20).

This led Jung to theorise that there are universal symbols, as mentioned previously, that may appear in both religious myths and psychotic delusions (Vincent, 2010:21). After his conceptualisation of archetypes, he came across complexes through the discovery of his word association test<sup>40</sup> which led to him finding all possible varieties of these complexes from the

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<sup>40</sup> This consisted of a list of 100 words that were read to the patients, with the patients responding with the first word that came to mind. Through timing the interval between the stimulus and the response, it was possible to show that, unknown to themselves, participants are influenced by the words that arouse their emotions and in turn slow down their responses (Vincent, 2010:22)

small groups of unconscious representations to the full-fledged dual personalities (Vincent, 2010:22). With this, there was a typical theme linked to the groups of words, so for these compilations of associations, the term “complex” was coined by Jung. Furthermore, through these experiments, Jung traced the nucleus of these complexes (which are mostly unconscious or only partially conscious) as the interweaving of environmental stimuli, as well as associated contents of personal experiences which were rooted around an archetype (Vincent, 2010:22).

What was previously seen as a failure to react was identified by Jung as complexes that create a barrier between the will and the act. These have relatively stable patterns of complexes resulting in a compromise of the structure underlying both the ordinary conscious and neurosis. Hence, those that are not well integrated within the conscious result in behaviour as part-personalities within the psyche, with each striving to become a model for conscious identity (Vincent, 2010:22). The ego develops as a complex in which some effects and experiences dissociate from the consciousness and become the personal unconscious (Vincent, 2010:22). This existence of complexes aids in the esoteric explanation of multiple personality disorders, or what we now term as DID. Early trauma is often the root of these cases, as the ego dissociates as a response to a painful traumatic event. This results in the self-regulating function of the psyche becoming active and creating a complex that disremembers the event (Vincent, 2010:22)<sup>41</sup>.

Jung’s view of the dissociable aspect of the psyche was that it was a natural process as the psyche’s means of defence against the potentially damaging impact that ensues from trauma. This further led him to the belief that the whole personality self is not split in half, but rather small fragments are broken off. This corroborates an age-old experience of mankind as reflected in the universal supposition of a plurality of souls in the same individual (Vincent, 2010:28). Jung further elaborates on the characteristic symptoms that may appear and deduces

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<sup>41</sup> Most of Jung’s thoughts and writings on this complex theory were conceptualised concerning dissociated personalities. His first study conducted was on a 15-year-old girl who claimed to be a medium and said that she was under the control of a variety of different personalities, which Jung then interpreted as “personifications of various unconscious parts of herself” (Vincent, 2010:28). This led to the continued thinking of personality being capable of dissociation into numerous subsidiary personalities, which could temporarily take over at any given time. His findings concerning complexes corroborate a disquieting picture of the possibilities within psychic disintegration, as fundamentally there is no viable difference in principle between a complex and a fragmentary personality (Vincent, 2010:28). They have the same essential features in common until one comes across the delicate question relating to fragmented consciousness. However, whether psychic fragments as complexes also have consciousness of their own, is still unanswered (Vincent, 2010:28).



that the contents appearing in the consciousness at first are symptomatic. These symptomatic contents are in part adhered to as truly symbolic due to them being the indirect representatives of unconscious processes or states whose true nature can only be inferred as well as realised from contents appearing in the consciousness (Vincent, 2010:28). Finally, Jung posited that this state was neither pathological nor strange, but the original norm, whereas the psychic wholeness comprehended within the unity of consciousness is a goal that has not been reached (Vincent, 2010:28).

The phenomenon of dissociation will always appear as an illness concerning the ego. However, if the context is taken out of the psychic field, these fragmenting phenomena may be understood rather as reassertions against the central authority of the singularity parts: “This movement of consciousness into psychological reality is experienced at first as pathological; things fall apart as the one becomes many” (Vincent, 2010:28). In summarising the esoteric beliefs behind DID, Jung focused on the capacity of the psyche in terms of splitting into different personalities or systems of consciousness (Skea, 2020). He deemed this to be normal and supposedly a non-trauma-related complex formation. Further stating that these complexes originate in the archetypal depths of the psyche, patterns, deep structures, as well as ways of living that essentially represent an inherited memory relating to the history of human culture (Skea, 2020). Jung proposes that this dissociative capacity of the normal psyche aids in promoting the expansion of the personality through means of greater differentiating functions. Furthermore, he elaborates that dissociation allows certain parts of the psyche to be singled out, and so, by a concentration of our will, these parts can be trained and developed to their maximum, ultimately producing an unbalanced state that is similar to that caused by a dominant complex, such as a change of personality (Skea, 2020).

The differentiation of consciousness corresponds to a differentiated manifestation of the unconscious, its symbols and archetypes, with the primordial of undifferentiated archetypes leading to the emergence of individual archetypes. An example of this can be the archetype of the Great Mother leading to archetypes of the Witch or the Whore or the Wise Woman. (Skea, 2020). This creates a parallel with the discriminatory powers of ego consciousness, resulting in the embrace of these diverse archetypal images, without being possessed and/or overwhelmed by them (Skea, 2020).



This hints at cultural change brought about by especially creative individuals that bring up socially useful archetype ideas and innovations into the consciousness. This Jungian view can therefore be wedded to a pathological view of dissociation: for example, if arising through trauma, by acknowledging that the early trauma stimulates the creation of adult heroes, prophets or artists, such as Frida Kahlo, Mozart or Jung himself (Skea, 2020). These are exceptional individuals who were able to transform their traumatic experiences creatively; however, this is not possible for all, yet Jung believed that this therapy form can aid in the restoration of pathological forms of dissociation. (Skea, 2020). Creative transformation, more often than not, involves a form of conscious expression that emerges through healing images and symbols from the unconscious, through dreams, artwork, dancing and active imagination. This relates to Jung's concept of individuation, implying the development of the wholeness of personality (Skea, 2020). Many creative individuals are deemed unbalanced in the direction of their area of genius, as opposed to being well-rounded, and this comes through in especially pronounced ways in artists such as Frida Kahlo, Jung and other talented and creative artists that are simultaneously traumatised and dissociative (Skea, 2020). This in-depth understanding of dissociative identity disorder is not only applicable to the practical component of this research but also allows insight into the dissociation self. This can further link with the dissociation of different realities, as well as this influx on the human condition.

#### **2.4.2.2. Schizophrenia**

The term "schizophrenia" was originally coined in April 1908 by Professor Eugen Bleuler during a lecture at a meeting of the German Psychiatric Association in Berlin (Ashok et al., 2012:95). Professor Bleuler argued that *dementia praecox* may be associated with neither precociousness nor dementia, and emphasised the splitting of psychic functioning as an essential feature relating to schizophrenia. Most of Bleuler's information was obtained through careful clinical observation of his patients, as opposed to collecting information from them, positioning himself as practically living in the surroundings of his patients (Ashok et al., 2012:95). His concept for schizophrenia<sup>42</sup> was derived from the Greek verb "schizein",

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<sup>42</sup> Within the context of schizophrenia, ancient Indian views on health are worth mentioning. Hindu descriptions in the Atharva Veda hypothesised health being the result of the balance between five Bhuthas and three Doshas (humors) (Ashok et al., 2012:95). Should there be an imbalance, the result may be mental illness, thus exemplifying a special reference towards mysticism in the current postulations of mental illness. This further influenced one of Bleuler's great followers, Carl Jung, into taking up Eastern philosophy in his writings (Ashok et al., 2012:95).

meaning “splitting”. The second half of the word was derived from another Greek word, “phren”, which originally meant “diaphragm”, but later changed to “soul, spirit, or mind” (Ashok et al., 2012:95).

In 1911, Bleuler insisted on calling *dementia praecox* “schizophrenia” instead. This was because of his hope that it could show more clearly the splitting of the different psychic functions, being one of the most important features of the condition. In each of his cases, there was more or less a clear split of psychological functions, as with the illness becoming more distinct, the personality progressively starts losing its unity (Ashok et al., 2012:96). Bleuler believed schizophrenia to be an organic illness and that is possible to inherit. Furthermore, he used the concepts intertwined with psychoanalysis to explain the colouring of the symptoms presented as opposed to attributing etiological importance (Ashok et al., 2012:96). Professor Bleuler’s work was continued by his son, Manfred Bleuler, concerning these hereditary aspects, along with interfamilial environmental factors, therapeutic interventions and personalities. The diagnosis for this disease is still made following most of the original concepts as conducted by Eugen Bleuler (Ashok et al., 2012:96).

Following modern definitions of schizophrenia, the DSM 5 describes it as being a severe and chronic mental disorder that is mostly characterised by disturbances in thoughts, perceptions and behaviours (Hurley, 2021). Due to the vast range of cognitive, behavioural and emotional symptoms involved with this condition, it can be difficult to diagnose. Often, the diagnosis comes down to the recognition of a constellation of symptoms that harm social and/or occupational functioning (Hurley, 2021). Schizophrenia (code 295.90) falls under the DSM chapter for Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders Class, due to it being defined as a psychotic disorder. Per the DSM 5, the criterion involved in making a diagnosis of schizophrenia needs two symptoms to be present for at least a month in the representation of delusions, hallucinations, disorganised speech, diminished emotional expressions, and/or grossly disorganised or catatonic behaviour. Furthermore, at least one of these symptoms needs to adhere to either:

1. Causing impairment in a major area of functioning (such as work, self-care or interpersonal relations) for a significant period since the onset of the disturbance; and/or

2. Some signs associated with the disorder must last for a continuous period of at least six months; and/or
3. Any other mental disorders are ruled out, such as schizoaffective disorder, bipolar, depression, substance abuse or another medical condition (Hurley, 2021).

In retracing back to the Theory of Mind, there was a substantial body of research conducted and highlighted in the evolution of this concept as an impaired Theory of Mind within the range of neuropsychiatric disorders, such as schizophrenia (Brune, 2005:21). Theory of Mind can be impaired in schizophrenia specifically with many of the psychotic symptoms that are associated with this mental disorder being best understood in light of the disturbing capacities of patients and their relating to their intentions when it comes to both executing behaviour and monitoring the intentions of others (Brune, 2005:21). Clinical findings have suggested that patients suffering from schizophrenia are impaired in their social interactions that relate to their reduced capacity to be able to effectively engage in communication. It has been suggested that the Theory of Mind within these patients is compromised due to their failure to monitor their own and others' mental states and behaviours <sup>43</sup>(Brune, 2005:21).

The evolutionary perspectives associated with the Theory of Mind concept within the context of schizophrenia are helpful in their parallel with the adaptive changes in the brain. It is the brain areas involved in the Theory of Mind that are mostly, however not exclusively, recurrent in abnormal schizophrenia (Brune, 2005:22). Further evolutionary intrigue was raised when compiling whether the psychotic symptoms in schizophrenia could be explained in terms of underlying cognitive misinterpretations of an individual's own and others' intentions. For example, some patients diagnosed with schizophrenia may, instead of taking their beliefs as subjective representations of reality, equate their representations with that of reality and as such have difficulty distinguishing between subjectivity and objectivity, leading to maintaining false beliefs in the form of delusional convictions (Brune, 2005:23). Moreover, the neglect of others' social signals and their putative intentions may result in the breakdown of communication and even lead to formal thought disorder. Furthermore, individuals with this disorder who may have difficulty in experiencing their behaviour as the result of their intentions may interpret this as being a form of alien control (Brune, 2005:23). Therefore, a compromised Theory of Mind may

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<sup>43</sup> There are some disputes, however, on whether the Theory of Mind in schizophrenia patients is impaired or exaggerated (Brune, 2005:21).

account for disorders in willed actions, self-monitoring and monitoring the thoughts and intentions of others (Brune, 2005:23).

We know the Theory of Mind to be the recognition of an individual and other individuals' mental states, assuming that they may share the same thought processes and means of thinking that we do and that they may even have the same search for meaning in life as we do. However, this is rarely the case, including, for example, individuals lacking the ability to come to agreements on the same thinking patterns of the coining and depiction of mental disorders. This is partially where an absurd notion in this specific region of psychology exists, as following others, the mental disorder of schizophrenia as detailed above, does not even exist.

According to the SARDAA<sup>44</sup>, approximately 1.1% of the world's population is diagnosed with schizophrenia. However, Professor of Psychiatry Jim van Os from the Maastricht University Medical Centre and a member of the DSM 5 schizophrenia sub-committee debates this notion in stating that schizophrenia does not exist (Tatera, 2016; Van Os, 2015). He argues that the term "schizophrenia" implies a hopeless and chronic brain disease and should instead be understood as a psychosis spectrum syndrome for more accuracy (Tatera, 2016)<sup>45</sup>.

Psychotic disorders tend to have many overlapping symptoms, making the classification systems in place not necessarily sufficient to lead to a solid diagnosis. The consequence of this is that humanity does not know enough to diagnose real diseases, so a system of symptom-based classifications is used instead (Tatera, 2016). Schizophrenia is also wrongly known as "the disease of the split mind" (Van Os, 2015), and the language used in describing schizophrenia may differ from academic journals to that described by the American Psychiatric Association<sup>46</sup>. Van Os concludes the theory of schizophrenia not existing by stating that, "it's time to forget about the 'devastating' schizophrenia as the only category that matters and start doing justice to the broad and heterogeneous psychosis spectrum syndrome that really exists"

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<sup>44</sup> *Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America* (Tatera, 2016).

<sup>45</sup> His reasoning behind this is that psychotic illness can be classified into numerous different categories, including bipolar disorder with psychotic features, schizophrenia, delusional disorder and schizoaffective disorder. However, these categories don't represent diagnoses of discrete diseases. Therefore, because of this remaining unknown, psychologists rather describe how symptoms can cluster for the purpose of grouping patients in accordance with their particular mental disorder's category (Tatera, 2016).

<sup>46</sup> The former describes it as being a devastating and highly heritable brain disorder, whereas the latter describes it as a chronic brain disorder (Tatera, 2016). In this light, schizophrenia is depicted as a distinct and genetic brain disease, yet this means of categorisation is not used within the other categories of psychotic illness.

(Tatera, 2016). This confusion surrounding the term “schizophrenia” creates difficulty in correctly diagnosing a patient, thus supporting its absurd notion due to the confusion of its existence and formal title. This discussion enables this absurd notion of misdiagnoses to be put forth into the practical component of this research.

#### **2.4.2.3. Psychopathy**

Violence seems to be a common theme in modern literature as a result of its strong parallels to modern life, taking on many different forms, from psychological to fictional to physical. For existentialist-absurdists such as Sartre and Camus, violence, regardless of its form, is proof of the meaninglessness and absurdity associated with human existence (Kaplan, 1980:116). Violence is the embodiment of man’s irrationality and the chaos that threatens to engulf man at any given moment. Violence furthermore places a focus on the reality of evil within human life, to point the way to eternal values and ultimate truth, with violence, in its extremity, having the ability to shock an individual into the acknowledgement that man needs a God as an answer to that which man can neither justify nor understand (Kaplan, 1980:116). This sentiment may be expressed as the ultimate test of human life where it exists in a world of apparently gratuitous evil, with possibly the most horrific embodiment of it being that of a psychopathic killer (Kaplan, 1980:116).

Psychopathy is probably one of humanity’s most fascinating as well as most dangerous disorders, especially regarding some famous psychopaths like Charles Manson, Ted Bundy, and John Wayne Gacy, to couples such as Karla Homola and Paul Bernado (Egan, 2016). Even local South African psychopaths such as Daisy de Melker and Moses Sithole have made their mark. All of them share the common thread of violence as mentioned previously, condoning a certain type of evil that denotes a specific breed of cunning, bloodthirsty predator that has a lack of empathy, remorse or impulse control. They readily violate the rules of social conduct through the exploitation of others to get what they want. They are capable of the most heinous crimes, yet more often than not, come across as both charming and manipulative to mask themselves behind a well-cultivated sense of normalcy, with only those who get caught becoming household names (Egan, 2016).

With the advent of neuroscience, it is now more clearly understood that the brains of psychopaths are atypical, with some leading experts going as far as calling it a neurodevelopmental disorder that is diagnosable even in early childhood (Egan, 2016). The term was originally coined in the 1800s from the Greek roots of “psyche” and “pathos”, which translates to “sick mind” or “suffering soul”. The condition was considered a type of moral insanity in that era; however, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, psychopaths were rather identified as “the forgotten man of psychiatry” by the psychiatrist Hervey Cleckley (Egan, 2016). It was understood that many psychopathic individuals were violent criminals, but many were released from psychiatric hospitals early due to their display of perfect genuine sanity, suggesting robust mental health (Egan, 2016). Cleckley’s rally call was, however, largely ignored, to such an extent that the DSM 5 replaced psychopathic personality and its criterion with an antisocial personality disorder. This excluded the hallmark traits associated with psychopathy, such as the lack of empathy and callousness (Egan, 2016). This “lack” of existence within the DSM 5 pertains to psychopathy as being an abstract mental disorder.

Referencing the DSM 5, psychopathy’s closest counterpart, antisocial personality disorder (code 301.7), includes a strong representation of behavioural deviance symptoms. However, it has a weak representation of affective-interpersonal features that are considered central to psychopathy (Strickland et al., 2013:327). Within the DSM 5, the diagnostic criteria for Antisocial Personality Disorder include:

1. The failure to conform to social norms concerning lawful behaviours;
2. Deceitfulness;
3. Impulsivity;
4. Irritability, hostility or aggression;
5. The reckless regard for the safety of oneself and others; and/or
6. Consistent irresponsibility and lack of remorse or callousness.
7. Furthermore, these cannot be a result of another mental disorder or substance abuse. (Strickland, et al., 2013:328)

Although there is an abundance of research done on psychopathy, there are still disagreements on its specific origins, with the majority interpreting it as anomalies within the brain structure and function as being a cause-effect relationship. Others presume nurture trumps nature and the origins are due to an onset of early abuse and/or trauma (Egan, 2016). Furthermore, it has

also been argued to be a developmental evolutionary condition where it is not seen as a disorder, but rather an adaptive lifestyle strategy. Psychopaths should not be described as having either a more primitive or more evolved brain, as it forms part of natural diversity. For example, if a fly is killed, some highly empathetic individuals feel remorse, which may be deemed as one extreme, with psychopathy being the other extreme and the majority of humanity finding itself somewhere in between the two (Egan, 2016).

From a synthetic philosophical perspective, the psychopath is understood to have a deficit in their ability to apply moral metaphors to situations; more specifically, there seems to be an inability to appreciate the importance of others' interests – thereby condoning a lack of Theory of Mind, whilst also having the inability to see themselves through the eyes of others (Stein, 1996:576). According to Stein, we understand that “psychopathy entails deficits in the cognitive-affective process used in moral reasoning and evaluation” (1996:578). This aids in the creation of a fertile ground for thinking through the nature of morality overall, as this disorder may be philosophically viable in examining the views on which morality is not based on self-evident universal truths and facts or relativistic constructions, but rather involves a rational and evaluative process on both metaphor development and extension (Stein, 1996:579). The insights on psychopathy are a major influence in the creation of the lead character in the practical component of this research, as discussed in Chapter 5. It also showcases a dissociative link in the absurd and psyche realms of morality.

## **2.5 A Camusian perspective on a suppressed psyche**

In referencing Albert Camus, he speaks of the necessity to overcome the Absurd as depicted in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1943). His writing of this, however, was a result of emotional and psychological turmoil, as he was at the time contemplating committing suicide, as was highly prevalent among a large number of others in Europe at the time (Al-Qadhi, 2020:1116). This led to Camus spending his time attempting to identify the real meaning of life that seemed to be passing through many a pessimistic station. Philosophers of Absurdism believe an individual to have endless wishes, along with permanent desires, whilst trying to ask the world for satisfaction of their internal interests. Having the world reject these human demands patently may lead individuals to live in isolation, which may further lead to the possibility of committing suicide (Al-Qadhi, 2020:1117). Camus thus attempts to prove the futility of suicide and to



refuse individual despair, having death, according to Camus, depicted as a non-real solution to human suffering (Al-Qadhi, 2020:1117). He further displays his acceptance of the notion of the Absurd as dominating the life of individuals, dealing with it as a phenomenon that can obstruct human desire. The futile conduct of the world, according to Camus, can hinder any human ambitions, having the outcome of complete alienation from both the universe and an individual's caged soul (Al-Qadhi, 2020:1117).

The suppressed psyche<sup>47</sup> is recognised through the changeable attitudes individuals present towards their understandings of death and life, so “Camus is distinguishing between the actual absurd and the depiction of that absurd philosophically in art” (Al-Qadhi, 2020:1120). The human soul is consumed in thoughts of a world free of any sense, anywhere, which is why the Absurd culture is associated with the three significant points of freedom, revolt, and the passions of man (Al-Qadhi, 2020:1120). Classical thinking and learning should be yielded to a more modest attitude of mind that leads to a common stream, as the relationship between an individual's thoughts and suicide takes place vehemently within the silence of the heart. Individuals conceal so many fragments of day-to-day ordeals being faced, that they postpone their clash with the futile fields of life (Al-Qadhi, 2020:1120).

An absurd individual's suppressed psyche is violently suffering from futile and hopeless labour, as well as the uncertainty of direction. This is why Camus urges individuals to rebel against the arbitrary conflicts and punishments that relate to the system (Al-Qadhi, 2020:1121). Individuals should not be puppets of political power and individuals should create their fate, following the Absurd philosophy. Therefore, individuals, in this case, can psychologically achieve a victory against quandaries and punishers (Al-Qadhi, 2020:1121).

## 2.6 Summary

For individuals to live a meaningful life, they should gain sufficient power, attention, energy and the right of selection, otherwise, the soul might be divided into fragments that are punished

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<sup>47</sup> Camus's argument for the strong connection between absurdity and the meaninglessness of life may be presented as a cry of the suppressed psyche as a rejection of the predicament of suicide, and as a return for religious rituals to provide life with an appropriate meaning (Al-Qadhi, 2020:1118). Hence, the human potential remains obsessed only with the means of defeating the limitations and frustrations that may shape an individual's life (Al-Qadhi, 2020:1118).



by pessimistic circumstances associated with life, as deduced from Jung and the meaning maintenance models stance throughout this chapter. Hence, individuals should not only delve into their challenges but rather share all happiness, beauty, knowledge and the salvation of others to establish a community that will satisfy their human desire and ambition (Al-Qadhi, 2020:1121). Through this, individuals can live a life that provides inner satisfaction at the least and prevent being inserted into any future psychological stresses or ordeals: “His soul can rest and adjust with the surrounding conditions” (Al-Qadhi, 2020:1122). With these insights gained, we can draw a vital link between the suppressed psyche and its pertinence to the existential philosophy of Absurdism. This vantage point can be split into the three disciplines accordingly in Chapter 6, where this research is applied to the theatrical component of Absurdism as well.

The insights gained from the Meaning Maintenance Model correlate with the above stance, as well as interlace with Jung’s theory on the dissociative aspect of the psyche. This further bridges out into the Theory of Mind concept, or the lack thereof, and its confluence with the discussed mental disorders. All of this allows for the understanding and application of these insights into the practical component and allows for a starting point for applying a link to the theoretical aspects of this research.

## Chapter 3: Fairy tales

### 3.1. “Once upon a time”: an introduction to fairy tales

Once upon a time indeed – the well-known phrase from the age-old tradition of storytelling, with stories that may not be able to breathe, but do their work to animate human life. Stories are about people and are written for people and always have an effect on people, whether conveyed in the original oral tradition or derived from Westernised literature. It is impossible to trace the origins and evolution of all fairy tales, but humans have been telling stories and tales since the capacity for speech was developed in the first place (Zipes, 2012:2). Together, oral and literary tales form a singular immense and complex genre due to their inextricable dependence on one another (Zipes, 2012:3).

Amongst all of these stories, fairy tales have a distinct uniqueness but are not necessarily independent, as their interdependence aids in the understanding of this uniqueness and the impact they have on human lives. To gain an understanding of this, it is vital to take into account the origins of language and its evolution. Once a plethora of stories began circulating through societies throughout the world, the seeds of fairy tales formed through metaphor, metamorphosis and the human disposition to communicate shared experiences relevantly (Zipes, 2012:4). These primary tales are what inspired and enabled individuals to both invent and reinvent their lives, along with creating or recreating gods, divine powers and supernatural creatures and forces, such as demons, fairies, witches, fates and magic. Because of the human capacity for storytelling, another world is alive within fairy tales (Zipes, 2012:4) with a language that is formed of cognition, packaged for interpersonal communication. Humans seem to have a want or a desire for sharing experiences, so over time, the creation of symbolic conventions satisfies that purpose (Zipes, 2012:6). Fairy tales are, after all, stories cloaked in symbolism and metaphor to extract the essence and gain the truth, penetrating the meaning of the dynamics of the story along with its symbols (Rubin, 2019:37).

The genres of storytelling, along with tale types, originated from applying stories to social and biological life through daily occurrences (Zipes, 2012:8), thus leading to the conventions of fairy tales. These tales that had their relevance within families, villages, clans, tribes and even cities, were retained through memory and passed on through the means of traditional verbalisations of actions and behaviours. Throughout the world, different cultures employed

similar patterns or sequences of events within the communication of stories (Zipes, 2012:8). However, various tale types and variants were created as a result of differences in customs, beliefs and rituals. For example, most cultures have inclusions of cannibalistic creatures or monsters that threaten a community (such as ogres or giants or dragons), as well as tales that contain a protagonist going out on a quest whilst facing a ferocious savage. This quest or combat-type tale is undertaken in the name of civilization as a stand against the forces of voracity (Zipes, 2012:8).

Tales change with the change of character names, the making of distinctions amongst motifs, as well as setting, behaviour and either the introduction of newer stylistic and social applications or the abandonment of older ones. This allows the changed tale to create new meaning in life for the community of its listeners who may become carriers or tellers of the tale (Zipes, 2012:8). This tale defines itself differently, yet still adheres to the traditions of tales that might be indecipherable in both the telling and writing of a story (Zipes, 2012:9).

The fairy tale world has always been perceived and created by the storyteller and its listeners as a counter-world to that of their reality. Storytellers and listeners alike have collaborated through their intuition, along with conscious conception for the formation of worlds that are filled with naïve morality (Zipes, 2012:14). The moral pulse of a fairy tale is fundamental, as it tells us what we lack and how the world needs to change or be reorganised for us to receive what is needed. With the evolution of different types of fairy tales, the genres have - up to the present day - borrowed and used themes, characters, expressions, motifs and styles from different genres and narrative forms (Zipes, 2012:14). Tales want to be relevant in the same ways that individuals seek to make themselves relevant through storytelling. Tales, however, do not have agency; they are not alive, yet they are vigorous, and with each passing through the traditions of storytelling, they almost start assuming a life of their own (Zipes, 2012:17).

In referencing the techniques of repetitions, they create patterns that allow the human brain to recognise them, which further alludes to a culture that includes repeated traditions and can both create and build on fairy tales (Zipes, 2012:19). Millions of stories have been predicated as a result of human communication set in shared experiences. For example, the number three is considered magical in fairy tales, as these tales often contain three wishes or suitors to win a princess or attempt to rectify a situation (Rubin, 2013:40). Within the human mind, distinctions

have been made between which tales have more relevance, and hence are retained in memory for the sake of repeating or recreating (Zipes, 2012:20).

Fairy tales, much like our own lives, are born of conflict, and not initially created nor intended for children, yet can resonate with them. Even more, children can recall them as they grow in their confrontations with injustices and contradictions in the real world (Zipes, 2012:20). These cultural artefacts with their similar responses through human experience have stuck in human minds due to their purposeful evolution to remain relevant (Bottigheimer, 2009:367). Fairy tales continue to be irresistible and offer hope for us to change ourselves for the better while changing the world (Zipes, 2012:20). This relevance embeds particular imagery in the minds of children and adults alike, which depict the magnitude of ourselves and the stereotypical or archetypal images that link with this.

## **3.2. Archetypes in fairy tales**

### **3.2.1 Archetypes found in fairy tales**

Following the discussion of Jungian archetypes and their overlap with fairy tales in Chapter 2, there is a deep and highly charged parallel – which is subconsciously unexplored – between symbolic reality, fairy tale or mythological reality and an individual’s organisational reality. Furthermore, we have seen how fairy tale archetypal roles present as a functional feature within the sphere of mental life. Archetypes arrive *in statu nascendi*, or, without a back story, as their lives have up until this point been predictable (Lynley, 2015). Famously within fairy tales, the character is destiny, as whoever the personages are and whatever happens to them are entirely inseparable as there is an undeniable bond between the character and their fate. For example, we can predict what will happen to a “good” princess purely based on the fact that she is a “good” princess; her identity maps out her future. More often than not, within quintessential fairy tales, there are no individual characters, merely only character types (Lynley, 2015).

Fairy tale character archetypes are also commonly one-dimensional, having their personalities barely filled out. Fairy tales rely on their audience to fill in the mood, the personality and the emotions, along with their visual details and attributes (Hulse, 2021). Fairy tale characters are more often than not built on numerous fixed formulae that are repeated, similar to that of the tales themselves. It is also worth noting that any given character can have more than one archetype (Hulse, 2021). Archetypes within fairy tales are also not necessarily set in stone but

can be one (or multiple of) a broad range of types, most likely heroes, dispatchers, helpers or villains, (Hulse, 2021), or wise women, fools, and mentors (Lynley, 2015). These characters may appear in the form of magical or supernatural creatures, animals, royal family members, or average human characters, but what we do know is that these beings do not exist in reality. The vocabulary of fairy tale character types (such as those that fall under the archetypes, for example, a witch or a fairy godmother) is easier to understand because the fairy tale world is so perfectly self-explanatory (Lynley, 2015). Furthermore, fairy tale characters are stock characters<sup>48</sup> that are not conscious, and hence have little in the way of complexity in their lives, with their motives clear and obvious, so there are limited or no psychological inclinations (Lynley, 2015).

Nothing within a fairy tale or its characters is concealed: “the tremors and mysteries of human awareness, the whispers of memory, the promptings of half-understood regret or doubt or desire that are so much part of the subject matter of the modern novel are absent entirely” in fairy tales (Lynley, 2015). Fairy tale characters seldom have their own names – they are known by their social position, occupation, animal type or even the colour of their garments, such as Little Red Riding Hood. Fairy tale characters are flat and one-dimensional, yet that is all that audience members need for their depictions of intense activity or passion for their part in the fairy tale to be easily understood from any distance (Lynley, 2015), whether this distance is physical, such as in the case of a book or the theatre, or metaphysical, such as through a distant reality in comparisons of ours to that of the tale.

As discussed previously, there are many different archetypes within the fairy tale realm, but for this research, the focus will be on highlighting and briefly discussing a handful of archetypes, as depicted within the practical component of this research. Firstly, an archetype that has not yet been discussed in any depth here is that of the “Girl” or “Sisters”. Within fairy tales, sisters are identified as either good or evil, based on their appearance – having pretty girls as good girls, and ugly girls as the inverse, which falls into a case of physical discrimination (Lynley, 2015). However, it falls into the fairy tale notion that “what you see is what you get”, unless the tale wishes to deliberately deceive. The adult male protagonist seems to have a bigger variety of possible roles, however, if the character is a female protagonist, they are deemed to fall under one of two roles – that of either a princess or an underprivileged, but worthy girl

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<sup>48</sup> This refers to being stereotyped in their specific archetypal genre.

(Lynley, 2015). As stock characters, they don't need any more than that, other than to carry on with their purpose as depicted in the story, whether this is to make it to the palace ball or to deliver food to grandma. The reason for incorporating this insight is to showcase the difference between what is considered the "typical" female archetype, and by breaking this archetype as an absurdist element within the practical component.

An archetype worth giving special emphasis on is that of the villain, especially because of their creative character types, such as an evil witch or a beastly talking wolf. Villains are characterised as dangerous, cunning, powerful and often even cannibalistic (Lynley, 2015). Fairy tales are full of these fabulous monsters and creatures that produce a giddy sense of disorientation that arouses the curiosity of many (Lynley, 2015). They may even be a confrontation of our unconscious worries, fears or what we aspire not to become. Villains are also not only confined, as with the above example, to only two character types, though they often share similar sentiments; they can be female or male, ugly or attractive, but as with most antagonists, they always seem to find themselves in a downfall nearing the end of a tale.

When we find ourselves looking at the stereotypical male archetypes within fairy tales, we often associate them with the protagonist, but sometimes, such as with the example of the villains, this is not the case. The "Boy" or "Brothers" archetype can span further than just the prince or the hero, as brothers within a fairy tale often manifest different aspects of personality (Lynley, 2015). This usually provides a moral tale on traits that might lead to a downfall, or get one further in life. An example could be that of the lazy brother, the smart brother and the haughty brother, which is also depicted within the practical component of this research. Another example would be how the youngest brother within fairy tales is often the best, most heroic or admired, due to their being the least privileged; in cultures of primogeniture, often the eldest inherits everything, so fairy tale archetypes teach that younger brother are still able to succeed on merit (Lynley, 2015).

Possibly the most complex and intricate archetype is that of the "Fool" or "Jester". The jester is often portrayed as a sacrificial victim that is associated with the abnormal or the absurd, and because of this, the fool may have magical or supernatural powers (Lynley, 2015). The fool archetype extends back to the Dionysus festivities of ancient Greek culture, where ecstatic and animalistic trance-like behaviours were encouraged. Continuing into the Dark Ages, Christianity began to take hold, and as a result, there was suppression in theatre in favour of

didactic stories. Although the “fool” was never considered a good role model, the character never went away and stayed on under different pseudonyms (Lynley, 2015). This archetype is known for singing, dancing, miming, making music, performing acrobatics and providing comedy acts. Every culture has its fool archetype, and the fool, in many ways, resembles the child (Lynley, 2015). The fool archetype may come across as bumbling and stupid, but the character does have a certain wisdom to them as well. Fools exist to show their readers or listeners or audience members that the world is, generally speaking, a foolish place, and everyone is a fool in their own manner. Fool archetypes are often found in humorous stories and absurd situations where their foolishness plays a central part, but their overarching suggestion is that the world is foolish and others are not able to recognise their wisdom (Lynley, 2015).

The last archetype to be discussed here is that of the “Mentor”. This archetype is one that often receives the least amount of credit within fairy tales and can range in form from a wise wizard or owl to a fairy godmother or supportive parental figure. Mentors are seen as ally-type characters concerning the hero protagonist. They typically bestow a secret, a weapon, a means of support or a magic spell to help the protagonist on their quest, and sometimes they may even be a physical guide themselves (Lynley, 2015). The mentor in a large number of fairy tales has often been ostracised from society due to their nonconformity, such as witches in the middle of a forest, for example (Lynley, 2015). They may be understood by the audience or reader as mad because of their ability to both see and recognise the truth.

Through the use and understanding of archetypes as well as archetypal patterns, fairy tales have proven to be an ideal vehicle for having children comprehend cultural norms, such as imposed gender norms, behavioural expectations, and even beauty standards to a degree (Keller, 2021:1), such as in the cases of the stepsisters in “Cinderella” or “The Ugly Duckling”. Fairy tales and their archetypes have the subtle ability to shape our beliefs, ethics and behaviours because of their powerful creation through culture and modification of history (Keller, 2021:1). For this reason, they form part of the methodology as applied to the research in a practical setting by being a basis of character creation for the practical component.

### **3.2.2 The relationship between archetypes in Jung’s theory and fairy tales**

The human mind, language and myth seem intricately connected, with the fairy tale's roles and plot structures just as intricately hardwired into the human mind as nature's innate storytelling devices that simulate human desires and problems (Keller, 2021:2). This desire is seen in children too, in their natural tendencies to mimic and want to become certain fairy tale archetypes. Considering this, these stories can define social groups, as well as hold them together (Keller, 2021:2). The archetypes found in fairy tales have the indoctrinating quality of asserting gender beliefs and stereotypes within cultures, as children adopt and internalise the gender role qualities within these archetypal characters through imagination and role-play. As a result, fairy tales and their archetypes can be considered didactic, not only for the sake of keeping children in line through the use of scare tactics to encourage good behaviour, but also for the edification of the masculine and feminine roles (Keller, 2021:2). Within the fairy tale realm, children are punished following their curiosity and vice, but the way they are punished is often determined by their assigned gender role, as patriarchal gender-embedded codes are established in these tales (Keller, 2021:3).

The above, along with the discussions in the second chapter, enhance the notion that fairy tales play a role in shaping the human psyche, as well as in a child's personal development. Because of this connection, it is vital to understand the meanings of the archetypal patterns embedded in fairy tales and how they work within the human psyche, as brought to the surface in Chapter 2. We understand that fairy tales are the most simple and pure form of expression of the collective unconscious psychic processes, so archetypes are in their most bare and concise form (Keller, 2021:6). The basic structuring of the archetypal elements of these fairy tales is built into a formal expression that innately connects to the cultural collective consciousness as well as known historical material. Within the Jungian theory, archetypes constitute the structure of the collective unconscious and function as psychic innate dispositions that facilitate an individual's experience and represent basic human behaviours (Keller, 2021:6).

Referring to the discussion on the "Big Five of Fairy Tales"<sup>49</sup>, Jung hypothesises that these frequently-repeating roles are the underpinnings of a default model of personality traits. Although the archetypal image is not the complete comprehension of the human psyche, it aids in representing and modernising myth into a psychological form (Keller, 2021:7). Because of

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<sup>49</sup> The King, The Queen, The Princess, The Mentor and The Hero-Trickster (Keller, 2021:7).



this, this section involves a brief overview of the archetypal patterning that associates with both Jungian theory, as well as its embedding in fairy tales.

The most practical starting point is that of the “Father/King” archetype, as many fairy tales have similarities in their openings, with the reader, listener or viewer being transported to an unknown place in time with the mentioning of a king or a kingdom of sorts. This exposition of nowhere-ness seems apparent in most fairy tales and indicates a timelessness and non-linear space, perhaps alluding to the nowhere-ness of the collective unconscious (Keller, 2021:7). The fairy tale reaches a magical domain in which contradictions and opposites can co-exist, similar to that of the Theatre of the Absurd, such that the characters and situations present may not always be what they appear (Rubin, 2013:37). The Brothers Grimm’s<sup>50</sup> collection of fairy tales is a prime example of fairy tales that start with the introduction of a king and his sons, with at least 60 tales of this sort. This paradigm does not represent a normal family, naturally because of the lack of feminine elements, and the fairy tale family showcases obvious dominant male culture from the get-go (Keller, 2021:8). When analysing the “King” archetype, Jungian scholars look at leaders within primitive societies where these stories may have first originated. From the Jungian perspective, the King is representative of the self and acts as the central symbol within the contents of the collective unconscious, underlining the political and religious doctrines in social groups (Keller, 2021:8).

Alongside the “Father/King” archetype, the “Mother/Queen” archetype appears. They offer distinct patterns of their feminine behaviour, similar to the expression of the “Girl” archetype, as this archetype is shown in one of two ways: either as a benevolent or evil character (Keller, 2021:8). If the archetypes are representative of a benevolent mother or queen, they are often shown as receptive, compassionate and quiet. This maternal character is often barren or reference is made to her infertility or the loss of a child, such as in the cases of “Sleeping Beauty”, “Rapunzel” and “Rumpelstiltskin”. Sometimes, there can be an entwinement between these two different archetypes, such as in the narrative of “Rumpelstiltskin”. The female

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<sup>50</sup> The Grimm brothers differentiated between myth and legend and the fairy tale. The myth refers to a symbolic tale of a distant past concerning itself with origin and the nature of the universe. The legend is a story referring to a more recent past, considered to be historical even if it is not necessarily verifiable (Rubin, 2013:37).

character in this tale has developed into a true queen by the time Rumpelstiltskin fulfils his promise, so she can make use of her new position, resources and capacities to trick the trickster, transforming from the benevolent queen to the “dark” female figure (Rubin, 2013:38). In opposition to the benevolent “Queen” archetype is the dark and evil female figure, such as the evil queen/witch/stepmother, which appears more often than its benevolent counterpart. This evil witch-type woman is frequently depicted throughout fairy tales and has its primary focus on the evil feminine image, as females that are envious of youth or beauty and will go as far as thievery or murder to fulfil their desires (Keller, 2021:10).

The third archetype in this discussion for this section is the “Maiden/Princess” archetype. This archetype often portrays a bumbling, passive and one-dimensional girl who finds herself in trouble when stricken by curiosity and lofty ideals (Keller, 2021:10). Fairy tales often portray the character of the maiden or the princess as docile without any ambition or career goals, even without any particular behaviour. Instead, the tales work as didactic devices in warning younger girls of the world and its dangers, insisting they should be courteous and well-bred (Keller, 2021:10). The princess or maiden archetype is often found venturing out on their own, but at the end of the day, they usually need saving by the fairy tale hero, often due to imprisonment in some form by the evil witch/queen/stepmother archetype. In this way, the imprisoned maiden or princess becomes the quintessential heroine of the fairy tale in that this feminine archetype always needs a saviour, demonstrating how this character cannot exist alone – pushing forward the universal notion of chauvinistic ideals (Keller, 2021:11). The collective unconscious is thus permeated with these standards, as the imposing gender behaviours and rules lead to the promotion of domestication, docility and the submission of the female gender (Keller, 2021:11).

The last archetype to form part of this discussion is the “Hero” archetype. Typically male, this archetype typically displays good and bad qualities, with trouble seeming to find them at the start of the tale already. Regardless of any distress this archetypal character may encounter during the tale, near the end, the hero will have redeemed himself, often finding himself ruling the kingdom and living happily ever after with a fair maiden (Keller, 2021:11). Following Jungian studies, this hero figure exists as a tool that expresses in totality what the self wants to happen. This archetypal figure presents a model of the ego function in accord with the self and further gives a model for living and striving through challenging situations (Keller, 2021:11).

Through understanding the didactic nature and psychological effects of fairy tales, it follows that these become tools to aid in the development of subconscious behaviours within, especially in children. Children can learn through language and tales due to the cultural symbols contained within them (Keller, 2021:11). When applying the principles of absurdism to these stereotypes, we can both break and incorporate new stereotypical traits, showcasing the true nature of the human condition, as practically conducted in the theatrical component of this research.

### **3.3. The Wolf in fairy tales**

Fairy tales share many similarities, even in character creation. Cognate tales from various cultures have been studied in an attempt to reconstruct the origins and forms of classical fairy tales of Western culture as they were before they were written down. Researchers have gone as far as examining the distributions of common plot elements across regions to make inferences on past mitigation and cross-cultural contact, along with the geographical distance and language barriers in terms of cultural diffusion (Tehrani, 2013). It has been suggested that the patterns of both change and stability within fairy tales can provide insights into universal and variable aspects of the human experience. This can further reveal the psychological, social and ecological processes' interactions with one another to shape continuity and diversity (Tehrani, 2013). As opposed to being composed by a single author, fairy tales have evolved gradually over time, with parts of the story lost and new ones added as they get passed down from one generation to the next (Tehrani, 2013). Although some of the stories' details may change, there still seems to be an uncanny number of similarities, even coming from nations and cultures that have their depiction of what Western culture deems to be a classic fairy tale. A prime example to illustrate this phenomenon would be to examine the story of "Little Red Riding Hood".

Most versions of this classic tale in modern popular culture originated in Charles Perrault's published version in 17<sup>th</sup>-century France. This version recounts the misadventures of a young female visiting her grandmother's house, while the grandmother has been eaten by a wolf who then disguises himself as the old woman (Tehrani, 2013). There is evidence that Perrault based this story on an old folktale that is known as "The Story of Grandmother", which has survived through oral traditions in France, Austria and northern Italy. In most of these tales, the young female lacks her famous red hood and nickname, yet manages to outwit the wolf before he manages to eat her (Tehrani, 2013). Upon recognising the wolf as a villain in disguise, she asks

to go outside to the toilet. While the wolf agrees, he does, however, tie a rope to her ankle to prevent her from escaping. When she gets out, she cuts the rope and ties the end to a tree before fleeing into the woods in case the villain realises his mistake (Tehrani, 2013). Other variants of the story told in other geographical locations have similar plotlines, but the girl as the main character sometimes differs in form, ranging from medieval European to African to Japanese versions of the young girl in the woods (Tehrani, 2013). This demonstrates how stories across cultures have their shared qualities and character types (or archetypes). In examining different fairy tales, there seems to be a shared single villainous character in many of the popular tales, especially in Western literature – and that is, in some form, the character of the Wolf.

### **3.3.1. The background of the Wolf character**

Storytellers and fairy tale authors alike have brought the Wolf character to life in their tales for many years. The wolf has a reputation as a ravenous beast, which was constructed as such in European stories, including myths, fables and fairy tales, dating from before Christ (Jesse, 2000:5). Deviations from the consistent rendering of wolf-like characteristics within literature appear primarily in early depictions of the character type. Sometimes contradictory in their characterisations, early legends depicted wolves as nurturing, maternal figures and life-givers, as opposed to being beasts of prey (Jesse, 2000:5). The founders of Rome – according to legend, Romulus and Remus – were suckled by a she-wolf in 70 A.D. There are stories by Plutarch that depict ancient legends involving wolves dating to the fourth century B.C. Many Native American beliefs also have the wolf in positions of reverence and respect, for example, the Nez Perces people believed the wolves to be the ancestors of humans (Jesse, 2000:5).

The wolf as depicted in fairy tales and other literary forms, however, differs from this more ancient portrayal of wolves being respectful and nurturing figures, as the contradictory characterisations resolved themselves. A uniform characterisation of the wolf as a symbol of greed and rapacity began to form with the regular appearance of the wolf in Western literature. These negative images of the wolf still endure today, and this solid literary consensus of the wolf's nature emerged from consistent representations within literary works from antiquity until modern times (Jesse, 2000:5). An important development in this role happened in the Middle Ages, where wolves were cast as monks within ecclesiastical tales, as a commentary on monastic practices and the monks themselves. These stories condemned individuals that became monks for material comfort rather than spiritual piety, so being termed the “Wolf” was

associated with becoming a monk when it suited a man's convenience. This, in turn, turned into tales with a similar theme in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, including "The Wolf" by Ovid and "The Wolf Goes to Hell", for example. This presence of the wolf-monk within tales enabled a sharp criticism of the ecclesiastic hierarchy, with the wolf characterised as a selfish, gluttonous, greedy and negligent figure that ends up meeting his death as a punishment for his sins<sup>51</sup>.

The character of the wolf is also mentioned in Dante's "The Divine Comedy" as a she-wolf who is laden with the cravings of her greed, and later on as a cursed wolf of hell. This she-wolf was seen as a symbol of the Papal court as well as the corruption within the church, and those who were condemned for the sins of the wolf – which included hypocrisy, thievery, seduction and even magic – ended up residing in the eighth circle of hell (Jesse, 2000:13). This fear of wolves constructed through literature contributed extensively to a collection of superstitions and folklore, whose outcome was the persecution of wolves (Jesse, 2000:14). This was especially true for werewolf and wolf folklore<sup>52</sup>. Many cultures also contain a variety of were-creatures, especially the perennially famous werewolf of medieval Europe. Popular across Russia, Greece, Serbia, Ireland and especially France, many people were even burned at the stake if they were deemed as werewolves (Jesse, 2000:15) – and we thought the witches were the only ones who had a hard time.

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<sup>51</sup> This character type gained so much popularity that it was nicknamed "Ysengrim" in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, growing further into the literary animal epic known as the "Ysengrimus" (Jesse, 2000:12). The name has an uncertain etymology, as it may refer to the cult-animal worship of tribal warriors or possibly to an evil spirit found in Swiss folklore. Regardless of the origin, it was used to designate wolves as clerics and by the time of the composition of the "Ysengrimus", there was broad recognition of the "wolf-monk" (Jesse, 2000:13).

<sup>52</sup> In highlighting a specific cultural story that included werewolves, Irish mythology had a tale of their own, which has also been modified and included into the practical component of this research, namely "The Man-Wolves of Ossory". Ancient Ireland was said to have been plagued by a particularly large and fierce breed of wolf, with men at the time often going to war with them. As chaos ensued and man lost control of these wolves, a mighty breed of dog was bred, known as the Irish wolfhound. However, according to older stories, these dogs were bred not for the hunting of wolves, but a darker beast that was part wolf, part man. The people of the Kingdom of Ossory had the power to change themselves into wolves as they pleased (Joyce, 1911). During the time that an Ossirian lived as a wolf, his human body had to remain at home, as if dead, with strict orders that no one may disturb or move the body, for if it were moved, the Ossirian may never find human form again and be doomed to remain a wolf for the rest of his life. This extraordinary superstition has prevailed in Ireland in volumes transcribed in the year 1100 (Joyce, 1911). It was so prevalent, in fact, that the head of a wolf became the banner of "Ossory of old". These beasts of half-man, half-wolf inspired many stories and questions on why humans have attributed human qualities to wolves, as opposed to only attributing wolf qualities to humans (Jesse, 2000:15).

Modern scholars postulate that wolves in fairy tales may be representative of sexual predation (Jesse, 2000:15) – a strange association, especially considering, as mentioned before, one of the primary roles of fairy tales being a means of moral instruction for children. This relationship is, however, not a new one, as the term “Lupa” (“she-wolf”) referred to prostitutes in ancient times. In more recent centuries, wolves have been described as vicious and ravenous creatures, in children’s fairy tales such as “Little Red Riding Hood”, “The Three Little Pigs”, “Peter and the Wolf” and “The Seven Little Billy Goats<sup>53</sup>” featuring a wolf that is diabolical and rapacious (Jesse, 2000:15). The descriptions of wolves from childhood still have recognition and a great impact on our present-day notions of the character of the wolf. Fairy tales and fables, with their continuous creation and recreations of various versions of this character, demonstrate the continuity of the role of the wolf (Jesse, 2000:16). This continuous representation may also have inflictions upon humans, both children and adults as either a fear mechanism or as a relating component with its ravenous beast like characteristics and truth to its wild nature. This continuity has been applied to the practical component of this research in a character creation discussion as will be explored in Chapter 5.

### **3.3.2. The manifestation of the Wolf character in fairy tales**

Many stories in fairy tale literature share numerous themes and characteristics, yet have variety both amongst the different tales and within the versions of individual tales themselves. Every fairy tale has its history with numerous different versions, translations and origins, with some of their characteristics changing over time and becoming milder in more recent times. This can be seen in distinctions between original tales, such as those by the Brothers Grimm and the corresponding versions created by Disney, which have become very popular in the modern age. The versions of the tales by Disney have a gentler approach and are also much longer and musically inclined with predictable happy endings<sup>54</sup> (Jesse, 2000:24). Fairy tales stemming from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, on the other hand, are extremely brutal and often end with the death of the main character. The more recent retellings have developed creative and elaborate ways to rescue the protagonist, “with the heroes often being liberated alive from the belly of the villain wolf” (Jesse, 2000:24).

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<sup>53</sup> This fairy tale has different names, according to where the tale is derived from culturally; previously in this research, it has been referred to as “Wolf and the Seven Kids”.

<sup>54</sup> For this research, emphasis is placed on the “original” versions of these tales as opposed to the Disney versions.

Fairy tales often depict the Wolf character as a sinister and threatening persona, with wolves becoming great enemies with humans. Even in the tales where other animals encounter wolves, these other animals seemingly have a more civilised approach and live quietly, as the humans do. On the other hand, the Wolf emerges from the forest to invade houses and habitats, whether these houses or habitats belong to goats, pigs or grandmothers. This Wolf character is not merely one who only steals sheep in a field anymore, but an intruder in private spaces, going as far as taking the place of a grandmother in her bed, making the Wolf in fairy tales a personally threatening beast (Jesse, 2000:25). Fairy tale authors, though mainly writing for younger readers, write from an adult experience, such that the elements from adult imaginations form part of a children's story. This alludes to a deeper complexity as compared to what merely appears on the surface (Jesse, 2000:25).

As an example of this hidden complexity, the key fairy tale that forms the backbone of this research, "Little Red Riding Hood", possibly contains sexual overtones in how both the interactions in the forest and the one in the bedroom take place. When children are taught these stories, they are unlikely to re-evaluate them as adults, so negative impressions of the wolf are left in the minds of the youth (Jesse, 2000:25). For example, images of the "Big Bad Wolf" can remain in the subconscious of any individual who knows the tale of "The Three Little Pigs". The wolf can destroy the houses made of both straw and wood, yet fails to destroy the brick house, leading him to be tricked to his death. The possible intent of this tale is a lesson in preparedness and secondary effects. It encourages a fear of wolves, with the term "The Big Bad Wolf" having its entry in the English vocabulary, to the detriment of wolves in general (Jesse, 2000:25).

The original version of "Little Red Riding Hood" by Perrault seems to be a brutal lesson on wandering off or dallying, only to end with a violent encounter with the "wicked Wolfe". In the version by the Brothers Grimm, the heroine, known as Little Red Cap, is eaten by the wolf, who then falls asleep, snoring so loudly that a huntsman finds him, opens up his belly and rescues both the little girl and her grandmother who are still alive inside. The huntsman then replaces the two rescued women with stones, causing the wolf to fall dead from the weight of the rocks. The lesson at the end of the story is to never wander off a path alone when a parental figure has said not to (Jesse, 2000:27), regardless of the brutal killing of an animal. This



valuable lesson was so simple that it contributed to the tale's popularity, while also contributing to the negative perception of wolves.

The Wolf in fairy tales has, in more recent psychological analyses, been described as a representation of the fantasies of unconscious thought, with modern psychoanalysts paying particular attention to the sexual undercurrents in "Little Red Riding Hood" (Jesse, 2000:27). In this instance, the Wolf resembles a sexual predator taking advantage of the young maiden that is Little Red Riding Hood. The red colour of her hood may even represent menstruation as a sign of sexual female maturity, hence coming to the theory that she is being punished for leaving the path of virtue. This further suggests that the wolf's desire to devour the girl showcases his hidden desire to play a female through having living beings inside his belly, and lastly, his death through stones within him may represent sterility (Jesse, 2000:27).

Although complex psychological details may have been subconsciously infused into fairy tales by adult authors, these tales remain primarily consumed by children. Their initial understanding of the wolf remains simply as the "Big Bad Wolf" from youth-oriented fairy tales, regardless of the presence of any possible mature themes (Jesse, 2000:29). What is important is what these young readers, listeners or viewers perceive from the fairy tales – that wolves are essentially evil beasts who prey on humans (or other animals). These children grow into adulthood with the same perceptions, even unchanged through their adult reinterpretations. Through this process, fairy tales construct a lot of the hate and fear that is both aimed at and associated with wolves (Jesse, 2000:29). Due to these absurd predatory human qualities being imposed on wolves within fairy tales, their bad reputations remain popular and permanent. Therefore, the inspiration was to give the Wolf a chance to tell his version of the story (or stories) in the practical component. However, with the methodological incorporation of practice-led research, this character still maintains his permanent bad reputation due to his psychologically manifested behavioural patterns.

### **3.4. Symbolism in fairy tales**

Symbolism is a key element in fairy tales across cultures and historical eras. Most theologians are aware of the shared similarities between tales and reality and have different means and thought processes to evaluate them. For example, Carl Jung perceived symbols within both fairy tales and dreams as an expression of the innate archetype that demonstrates the basic



patterns associated with the human psyche (Keller, 2021:13). Within fairy tale interpretation, there is a tendency to examine the symbols etched and hidden in these tales. Symbols offer different propositions about their meaning and are often created in a similar way to those used in the Theatre of the Absurd through colour, elements, numbers, setting and anything else that can ultimately be translated as symbolic (Keller, 2021:13). Examples of this may include the colour red, the number three, blood, mirrors and time, which are all common symbols that appear in fairy tale worlds, with their prevalence and repetitive natures aiding in the influence of archetypal patterns (Keller, 2021:13).

A popular symbolic device in fairy tales and storytelling, in general, is numbers, as they not only help readers, listeners and audience members to remember key points within the story, but they also have special symbolic meanings (Keller, 2021:13). A popular fairy tale example is “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs”, with the numbers three and seven making their appearances often throughout the tale. Snow White is seven years old when the magic mirror gives the queen insight into her no longer being the fairest in the land. Snow White encounters seven chairs, plates and beds upon entering the dwarves’ home, not excluding the actual seven dwarfs themselves. The evil queen travels past seven little mountains when travelling to the forest to visit Snow White. With the number three, it takes the queen three attempts before being able to kill Snow White without the dwarves being able to save her, and they wept for three days after her death (Keller, 2021:14). The numbers three and seven appear over and over again throughout the tale, and scholars have been attempting to decipher the symbolic meaning behind this. The number seven, for example, may connect to the days of the week, the seven planets known at the time or even the seven rungs of perfection (or the Ladder of Divine Ascent) as the complete cycle of the moon, indicating the passing on to a new cycle (Keller, 2021:14).

A second symbolic device frequently found in fairy tales is that of colour, especially the colour red. More often than not, the colour red is immediately associated with blood, which, within fairy tales, holds a myriad of interpretations. The colour red, or blood, may be a symbol to show the change from sexual innocence to desire, as mentioned above regarding Little Red Riding Hood, but it may also represent passion, life, sacrifice and even fertility, often connected to both witchcraft and magic (Keller, 2021:18). In the tale of “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs”, the story starts with the (good) Queen pricking her finger during embroidery which results in the splash of three drops of blood against the pure white snow. This is what essentially

contributes to the Queen's desire for a child as white as snow and with lips as red as a rose. The interpretations behind the blood on the white snow are numerous and range anywhere from menstruation and sexual encounters (Keller, 2021:18) through to possible foreshadowing of the story, especially due to the colour red appearing throughout the narrative, such as in the red of the apple that results in Snow White<sup>55</sup> being sacrificed, depicting blood spill, due to the envy of her beauty.

In discussing the use of symbols and how they pertain to the human psyche, it is believed that in mythology, human beings are the soil of symbolic motifs (Keller, 2021:21). Hence, one cannot disregard an individual's emotions or reactions when it comes to symbols and metaphors, as humans are the beings writing and telling the tales, therefore both creating the symbols and interpreting them. Because of this, fairy tales are subjectively told and understood, making them cultural tools, as the same behavioural and moral lessons remain in these fairy tales throughout time as a result of the symbolism and archetypes within the tales remaining unchanged, even if the surface may represent some change (Keller, 2021:21). Due to the prophetic use of symbols and images, fairy tales and their language seem to be the perfect universal communication means, which is further explored in Chapter 5. Furthermore, these symbolic uses allow a relationship between fairy tales, the concept of the psyche from Jung's stance and the Theatre of the Absurd which aids in contributing toward our missing link.

### **3.5. Fairy tales of the absurd**

When we experienced fairy tales as children, we seemingly understood them perfectly, and as adults, we are still able to comprehend them – but probably not as well because of the intricacies of paradox and absurdity involved in the battle with adult logic (Hart, 1951:198). The methods involved in logical analysis, principles of logical classifications and the symbolic notation that have helped so many fields of science and other systems involved in necessary truth do not necessarily pertain to or account for fairy tales. The best way to comprehend fairy tales might not lie in the clarification of logic but rather in distortion (Hart, 1951:198). Fairy tales are identified and analysed through their archetypes, history and symbols, but these tales remain

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<sup>55</sup> Similar to the colour red, the colour white also appears often in the tale, such as in the title "Snow White" and the description of the maiden, along with the already mentioned snow. White is often associated with purity, virginity, chastity and peace (Keller, 2021:19). The contrast of the red blood against the white snow could symbolise death or an old life and the birth of a new one (Keller, 2021:19), thus demonstrating the transition of Snow White as expressed in the symbolic devices of numbers above.

irrational and fantastic and may even be read as an attempt to represent an exaggerated reality. At the same time, as opposed to being an exaggerated reality, they may very well be a departure from it (Hattenhauer, 1992:167). In this regard, logic flees and the notions of absurdity come to light, not only in its characterisations (such as talking animals, for example, or even character types that are non-existent, such as elves, trolls and dwarves) but also in the plot (Hattenhauer, 1992:167). Fairy tale characters are often able to miraculously do difficult tasks, or tasks that take dedication and training (such as the playing of musical instruments or sword fighting) that they have never attempted before, purely out of their desire and will to do so (Hattenhauer, 1992:167).

Another extreme absurdity in fairy tales is that within this realm exists at least one thing of every kind – that is, if elves were to exist, then by logical necessity, something of every mentionable kind would need to exist (Hart, 1951:200). In this there exists a truth of contradiction: If we were to establish that all elves have pointed ears or that no elves have pointed ears, both would need to be accepted as true, given the circumstances that, realistically, there is no such thing as an elf (Hart, 1951:201). All universal propositions within the fairy tale world, whether this is creatures or a certain notion about certain creatures, are true, however, vacuously true. Yet, any particular proposition (such as some elves having pointed ears and some not) is false (Hart, 1951:201), hence creating the paradox we try to justify with logic. This air of paradox is not dissipated by a second glance, as to make believe that there are elves, speak as if there are elves and to know whether they have pointy ears or not, is not the same as asserting the vacuous truth that nothing is an elf and has pointed ears. The truth we know and what is true in fiction creates an absurdity in human logic.

In the case where a fairy tale is told to us, we know that elves do not exist; however, the storyteller, for our entertainment purposes, makes use of particular words and descriptions in speaking of these creatures as if they do exist, saying things that may be both true or false if they did exist. Because they do not exist, though, this cannot be true or false (Hart, 1951:204) – this is how the absurd comes in when pressing the question of whether it is true if all elves have pointed ears or not. This could relate to our notions of the character of the Wolf. Firstly, it is absurd to think that an animal can talk, never mind impersonating a grandmother. Secondly, would this mean that it is true for all fairy tale wolves that they would be able to impersonate grandmothers? This absurd defiance of logic opens up a new means of thinking,

which is what motivated connecting the fundamentals of fairy tales with the notions of the absurd.

### 3.6 Summary

The integration of this chapter aided in establishing a **dual linkage between fairy tales and psychology**, especially concerning the **importance of cognitive development as associated with the Theory of Mind** and the linkage between **Jungian and fairy tale-oriented archetypes**. Further linkage was established in **absurdism in its fictional truth versus the truth we know that results in absurdity in human logic**. These factors aid in establishing that fairy tales may be considered a vehicle for the connections of the two main theories.

Secondly, an in-depth discussion was provided on the origins and manifestation of the **Wolf within fairy tales to connect the research to the practical** in light of academia as proposed by the research-based practice approach and to further aid in **linking the absurdity of the beastly human existence with that of the psyche**. Linkages were further established with the inclusion and discussion of **symbolism** within this section that links into symbolism within Chapter 4 that pertains to the Theatre of the Absurd

In the next section, we delve a little deeper into the notions of the absurd within the Theatre of the Absurd, including its creation of Absurd Worlds, theories, insights and characteristics. This allows for further insight into the topic to use the derivatives to both conduct the practical means of this research and to link everything together in the conclusion.

## Chapter 4: Absurdity and theatre

### 4.1. Existentialism and the absurd

The full implications of a godless universe, as promulgated by late 19<sup>th</sup>-century thinkers, becoming evident led to the search for essential truths and fundamental questioning of existence and man's place in the universe (Cardullo, 2014:351). While the essentialist philosopher may question what it means to be human, the existentialist philosopher inquires about what it means to be or to exist. Existentialist philosophers, such as Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, perceived that human beings are responsible for creating what they are themselves, and if these individuals do not make free and conscious choices before taking actions, they cannot truly exist as human beings (Cardullo, 2014:351). This philosophical movement sought to free individuals from any external authorities, along with the authority of the past, whilst forcing them to discover within themselves the grounds for doing and choosing, having the notion of existentialist characters who live in and out of an eternal past (Cardullo, 2014:351).

The early existentialists of the 1940s produced plays that linked the experiments of Dada and Surrealism to the Theatre of the Absurd through the rehearsal of new ideas, without the adoption of its form. As a result, the perspectives resembled those of the Theatre of the Absurd, but the playwrights did not depart from traditional dramatic conventions of the time (McGuckin, 1996:59). This served as a prelude to what was coined by Martin Esslin as "anti-literary theatre", which was affected by the historical context of the time in which existentialism developed. McGuckin (1996:60-77) argues that this development took place in light of the war, depression and genocide that were dominant throughout half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A play by Pablo Picasso entitled *Desire Caught by the Tale*<sup>56</sup> and directed by Albert Camus foreshadowed the development of the Theatre of the Absurd and further led to the considerations of several other existential works. This play was seen as a bridge between Surrealism and the Theatre of the Absurd and described by Esslin as a Picasso painting that sprang to life and verbally explicated its meaning.

The dramatists that defined the Theatre of the Absurd movement strived to express a sense of metaphysical anguish directed at the senselessness of the human condition, often by a means

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<sup>56</sup> Picasso wrote this play in six acts, ignoring the conventional five-act structure. He also had a cast of characters with strange names such as Skinny Anguish, Fat Anguish and Bow-Wows, with several names evoking the image of food, such as Onion and Tart. The characters Curtains and Silence further mocked traditional theatre conventions as their role is to simply exist.

that mirrored meaninglessness or a lack of purpose (Cardullo, 2014:352). The cause-and-effect relationship that governs the incidents within a play, such as a climax, denouement and turning point, is abandoned by Absurdist playwrights such as Samuel Beckett and Eugene Ionesco. As opposed to chronicling the connective quality of the events of a play in a linear structure, the action in plays of the Theatre of the Absurd tends to be ritualistic or circular, concentrating on exploring the texture of a static condition or situation (Cardullo, 2014:352). Within this theatrical style, dilemmas are seldom resolved and characters tend to be archetypal as opposed to being specific individuals. They often even exchange roles or transform into different characters, while others are given only numerical or generic designations. Time for these characters is flexible, in the same way as in dreams, with their place or setting generalised or unclear. These characters often find themselves in a symbolic location or one that is a void cut off from a concrete world, with language also downgraded as a means of communication in this limbo. In compensating for the downgrade in language, absurdist plays emphasise their metaphorical aspects through imagery and scenery. Their poetry, according to Esslin, emerges “from concrete and objectified images of the stage itself” (Cardullo, 2014:352). The happenings on the stage and the imagery presented are often in contradiction with what is spoken by the characters or beings.

Regarding the nature of Being, many Absurdist playwrights make extensive use of the metaphors entwined with absurdity, revealing the power that is inscribed within. As a theatrical device, the absurd situation, which is a metaphor for anguish in the human condition, expands the possibility of communication for philosophers (McGuckin, 1996:60). After the horrors of the First World War, existentialist philosophers found it necessary to introduce a new language or new words to adequately describe the sense of bewilderment that confronted human beings. This anguish was thought to derive from the universal human condition as the quest on what it means to be, as well as what constitutes the self, along with the inability to develop answers for these eternal questions (McGuckin, 1996:60).

Existentialist philosophers also wrote for the theatre, designating the theatre as a conduit for expressions of complex ideas. This happened along with the inexpressible form of modern anxiety that had been affecting human beings that followed Nietzsche announcing the death of God, and with Kierkegaard describing spiritual despair as being “a sickness unto death” (McGuckin, 1996:61). The term, not the philosophy, “existentialism” was thus born amidst the turmoil at the end of the Second World War and was often considered coined by Jean-Paul Sartre (McGuckin, 1996:61). The absurdist drama is broadly conceptual, as it too seeks to

project an intellectual perception about the human condition; and, as it is, the Theatre of the Absurd gives up the search for a dramatic model that aims to discover the fundamental philosophical or ethical certainties about the world and life itself (Cardullo, 2014:353). Therefore, both the Theatre of the Absurd and existentialism concern themselves with what it means to be human concerning the human response towards negative experiences and the discovery of the potential of the human condition. Humans exist first, according to this philosophy, and then create their essence through their free choice (McGuckin, 1996:66).

The fundamental issues in existentialist philosophy lent themselves to the adaptation of a theoretical form, providing a timely experiment in the communication of ideas. Despite their lack of experience, the philosopher-playwrights recognised theatre as a means for allowing subtlety within argumentation that was not always possible in didactic philosophical writing (McGuckin, 1996:67). When the popularity of existentialism began to fade in the 1950s, the theatrical dissemination of the philosophy was still available in an undiluted form through the Theatre of the Absurd (McGuckin, 1996:67). The only certainty we have about human reality, according to Ionesco, is that it is devoid of purpose, as man that is cut from his transcendental, metaphysical and religious roots becomes lost, with all his actions becoming senseless, useless and absurd (Cardullo, 2014:353). This notion can also be visually and artistically showcased through the Theatre of the Absurd.

#### **4.2. The Theatre of the Absurd**

The theatre has often served as a forum for the multiple layers of human experience, with theatre-going itself being a public activity humans have used from the earliest of times to exchange ideas through behaviour and discourse (McGuckin, 1996:10). This forum can assist in the absorption of both social attitudes and new ideas, even if what is being presented is not always entirely understood by the audience. The plays of Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Becket and Arthur Adamov, to name a few, have been performed with high levels of success, yet the audiences that were amused by these plays were fully aware that they were not able to comprehend what was being communicated or what the authors' intentions were (Esslin, 1960:3). These plays initially confront their audiences with a bewildering experience filled with irrational and nonsensical actions, being seen as "anti-plays": due to their lack of appropriate time or place being clearly stated, for example, in Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*, the clock strikes 17. The characters are strange and barely complete, and the laws of probability



and physics are suspended, such as in the case of young ladies having two or three noses in Ionesco's *Jack, or the Submission*. As a result of these uncanny happenings<sup>57</sup> and imagery, it is not often clear whether the action is supposed to represent a world of dreams and nightmares or actual happenings (Esslin, 1960:3). Above all, everything presented and happening seems to be beyond rational movement, as the occurrences are random or "through the demented caprice of an unaccountable idiot fate" (Esslin, 1960:3). Yet, these extravagant, tragic farces and farcical tragedies continued arousing interest amongst audience members and scholars alike, which leads to the question: What could be the explanation of this strange phenomenon?

According to Esslin (1960:4), these plays are prime examples of "pure theatre". Esslin (1960:4) further denotes that these plays prove that the magic of the stage persists outside of the frameworks of conceptual rationality:

"They prove exits and entrances, light and shadow, contrasts in costume, voice, gait and behaviour, pratfalls and embraces, all the manifold mechanical interactions of human puppets in groupings that suggest tension, conflict, or the relaxation of tensions, can arouse laughter or gloom and conjure up an atmosphere of poetry even if devoid of logical motivation and unrelated to recognisable human characters, emotions and objectives."

However, this explanation is only partial, as the elements of "pure theatre" and abstract stagecraft have more substantial content and meaning. Not only do the plays within the Theatre of the Absurd make non-conventional sense, but they also express the basic human issues and problems in unique, efficient and meaningful ways to meet the audiences' unexpressed yearnings and deepest needs (Esslin, 1960:4).

The world is shown as an incomprehensible place in the Theatre of the Absurd, as audience members see the happenings on the stage from a completely outside perspective, thus never understanding the full meaning behind the strange patterns of events in a language that they may not yet have mastered (Esslin, 1960:5). The confrontation between the audience and the characters along with the happenings in the play make it nearly impossible to either sympathise with or share the emotions and aspirations depicted in the play. The alienation effect, as coined

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<sup>57</sup> This refers to the events and actions taking place in the theatrical setting.



by Brecht originally as “Verfremdungseffekt<sup>58</sup>” is highly applicable in the Theatre of the Absurd, as it is not possible to identify oneself with these characters if one cannot understand them or their motives, hence maintaining the distance between the happenings on the stage and the audience (Esslin, 1960:5). Emotional identification of characters is then instead replaced by puzzled, critical attention, as even though the happenings are absurd, they remain recognisable as relating to the absurdities of life. This brings the audience members face-to-face with the irrational side of their existence. As such, the absurd and fantastic happenings within this theatre style end up revealing the irrationality of the human condition, along with the illusion of what we knew to be its apparent logical structure (Esslin, 1960:5) – harking back to the philosophical ideologies of existentialism.

If these plays’ dialogues consist of meaningless clichés along with the mechanical and circular repetition of stereotyped phrases, how much of this is used in our day-to-day conversations? If these plays’ characters change personalities halfway through the play, how truly integrated and consistent are the people we meet every day? (Esslin, 1960:5) Furthermore, should these characters appear as helpless puppets without a will of their own and at the mercy of fate, along with meaningless circumstances, does this apply to our over-organised world, and do we possess any genuine power or initiative to decide our destiny? With these questions in mind, we can concede that the audience members of the Theatre of the Absurd are confronted with a grotesque and heightened version of their world, without faith, meaning or genuine freedom of will. For this reason, “the Theatre of the Absurd is the true theatre of our time” (Esslin, 1960:6). We can, as a result, establish it as a reflective artwork of the absurd human condition.

#### **4.2.1. The evolution of a style through absurdist playwrights**

The term “Theatre of the Absurd” is applied to a range of different plays, yet some of the characteristics coincide in many of these plays, such as those of the vaudeville, the mixture of absurd and tragic imagery, and the characters that are caught in hopeless situations and forced to do repetitive and/or meaningless actions (Eckersley, 2014). This form became popular in the 1950s, but many believed this theatrical style to have started with the French Symbolist *Ubu* plays in 1896 by Alfred Jarry. A second early pioneer was the Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello, whose plays *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921) and *So*

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<sup>58</sup> This refers to the inhibition of identification between an audience member and an actor (Esslin, 1960:5).

*It Is (If You Think So)* (1917) started developing the conventions and ideas we associate today with the Theatre of the Absurd (Eckersley, 2014).

While many consider this theatre style to be male-dominated<sup>59</sup>, perhaps even misogynistic, the contributions of women in hybrid forms, which incorporated many of the aspects associated with Theatre of the Absurd, are important to consider in the evolution of the artform (Eckersley, 2014). The playwright and performer Else Lasker-Schüler paved the way for a physical form of the absurd, as in 1907 when her prose collection *Die Nächte der Tino von Bagdad* began her process of exploring absurdist forms, which soon led to the publication of her first play in 1909 titled *Die Wupper* (Eckersley, 2014). This play was considered the first absurdist play by a woman because its narrative was of a divergent structure, and it had an emphasis on the meaninglessness of relationships and interactions which present as stylistic qualities of the Theatre of the Absurd (Eckersley, 2014).

Another important female pioneer in the field was Elsa Hildegard Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven, a German Absurdist, Dada performance artist, assemblage artist and poet. Her first assemblage of absurd art pieces was created in 1917 in New York by creating both art and performance pieces from the use of street rubbish (Eckersley, 2014). Her costumes for both her performances and her daily life were made up of rubbish, domestic items and objects she found at random, and in so doing, turning both her life and performances into a living collage. This was an attempt to comment on the landscape of the artificial boundaries presented between life and art, with her costumes attacking the bourgeois concepts of both consumer wealth and the traditional definitions of female beauty and femininity (Eckersley, 2014). She transformed her body into a performance space to explore the notions of gender, androgyny and the constraints

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<sup>59</sup> It can be argued that the Theatre of the Absurd is male-dominated in terms of the gender balance of both its most influential playwrights and theatre-makers, but there are a number of female practitioners and playwrights whose work should also be included in the canon of Absurdist. For example, American playwright Tina Howe has the ability to tread the fine line between Realism and Absurdism through many of her works (Eckersley, 2014). Her play *Museum* (1967) involved 55 characters at a group art show that had both the structuring of the play and the dialogue clearly reflecting the defining characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd. Her play *The Art of Dining* (1979) used two of her favourite tropes, food and dining, to explore the absurd and timeless environment of waiting for a meal. This play shares some of its characteristics with the work of Beckett and Ionesco in the way the action, dialogue, situation and detail work together in creating the absurd (Eckersley, 2014). Furthermore, her play *Coastal Disturbances* (1986) is set on a beach and this production shows how the characters and situation can drive the Absurdist drama, as opposed to language. Her more recent works are not strictly Absurdist in style, but still make use of the conventions of the Theatre of the Absurd. Lastly, she has also done numerous translations of the plays by Ionesco (Eckersley, 2014).

of femininity. During her performances, she often played with scents and smells, going so far as allegedly using menstrual blood in some cases (Eckersley, 2014).

Jean Genet, French playwright, activist and poet took up the mantle of the absurdist form in the 1940s. He was arrested on numerous occasions by both German and French authorities, and while in prison, he wrote his first two plays: *Deathwatch* (1944) and *The Maids* (1946). Prominent writers and artists such as the likes of Jean-Paul Sartre and Pablo Picasso petitioned the French president in 1949 to have Genet's life sentence commuted and have him released from prison entirely (Eckersley, 2014). Following his release, he went on to write what were probably his greatest dramatic works, including *The Balcony* (1955), *The Blacks* (1955) and *The Screens* (1956) (Eckersley, 2014). The work of Genet was then followed by two playwrights who are to today still considered the masters of the Theatre of the Absurd: Samuel Beckett<sup>60</sup> and Eugène Ionesco.

Eugène Ionesco is both obscure and enigmatic, yet brilliantly persuasive and highly lucid when expounding his ideas. This is affirmed by examining how he defended himself against attacks by dramatic critics, such as the likes of Kenneth Tynan<sup>61</sup> who, after watching *The Lesson* and *The Chairs*, warned the public of the dangers of Ionesco. He depicted Ionesco as the messiah of the enemies of realism in theatre (Esslin, 1962:125), leading to the birth of what we know as "anti-theatre". Ionesco deliberately moved away from theatre that had characters and events involved with traceable roots in life, such as in the works of the likes of Chekhov, Gorki, Arthur Miller, Brecht, Tennessee Williams and even Sartre. However, he protested against being a deliberate anti-realist, stating, "I simply hold that it is difficult to make oneself understood, not absolutely impossible" (Esslin, 1962:126), further depicting that society

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<sup>60</sup> Samuel Beckett wrote poetry, novels and plays from 1936 until his death in 1989 with some of his most notable Theatre of the Absurd works including *Happy Days* (1951), *Waiting for Godot* (1952), *Endgame* (1957), *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958), *Breath* (1969), *Not I* (1972), *Catastrophe* (1982) and *What Where* (1983). Other mentionable playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd include the Spaniard Fernando Arrabal, with his famous plays *Picnic on the Battlefield* (1958), *Automobile Graveyard* (1966) and *The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria* (1967). Harold Pinter, an Englishman, gained notoriety for *The Room* (1957), *The Birthday Party* (1957), *The Dumb Waiter* (1959), *The Caretaker* (1959) and *The Homecoming* (1964). Another English playwright, Tom Stoppard, gained some influence with his works *A Walk on Water* (1964), *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966), *Dogg's Hamlet* (1979) and *Cahoot's Macbeth* (1979). The American playwright Edward Albee with his plays *The Zoo Story* (1958), *The Sandbox* (1959) and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1962) gained some fame when the latter was produced as a film. Czech philosopher, dissident and playwright Václav Havel's works include *The Garden Party* (1963), *The Memorandum* (1965) and *Audience* (1975) (Eckersley, 2014).

<sup>61</sup> Kenneth Tynan was a theatre critic working for the *London Observer* around the 1950s and 1960s (Esslin, 1962:125).

formed the barriers between human beings and language, and that the authentic community amongst man is much wider than society (Esslin, 1962:126).

Ionesco posited that society has never been able to abolish human sadness, nor has a political system either delivered individuals from or aided them with the pain of living, the fear of death or the thirst for the absolute. Rather, the human condition directs the social condition and not the other way around (Esslin, 1962:127). This is what led to his breaking down of language in society which he deemed to be nothing more than empty formulae, slogans and clichés. Ionesco further stated, as ascribed in Esslin's book (1962:127), that:

“In order to discover the fundamental problem common to all mankind, I must ask myself what my fundamental problem is, what my most ineradicable fear is. I am certain then to find the problems and fears of literally everyone. That is the true road into my own darkness, our darkness, which I try to bring to the light of day ... A work of art is the expression of an incommunicable reality that one tries to communicate – and which sometimes can be communicated. That is its paradox and its truth.”

This “truth” reiterates the stance this research takes on the fairy tale genre in which the literary elements attempt to cover up this truth with magical elements and absurdist characters. Yet even fairy tales have specific darkness in the light of the above quote. In this regard, we have two valid common themes coming through in all three of the disciplines this research refers to: truth and darkness. This truth is either the avoidance of it, such as in the case of dissociation as explored within the psyche; covering it up, as occurs in fairy tales; or searching for it, as a commonality in the human condition explored in both the absurdist philosophy and within the realms of the Theatre of the Absurd. In terms of darkness, this reveals itself as a metaphorical beast across the three disciplines. It may manifest itself as the beast of man found in the psyche due to the conversion or avoidance of anomalies, which further has been projected onto fairy tales as our innate fears, and thus creates beastly characters such as the Wolf. This “beast” could also be man itself in a purposeless life, constantly preying on a search for meaning in this life devoid of it, and never satisfying this symbolic hunger.

#### **4.2.2. Conventions and theatrical structuring**

Although the elements, theatrical structuring and conventions of the Theatre of the Absurd have been introduced already, it is important to expand on them further to illustrate some key concepts as included in the practical component of this research.

Samuel Beckett<sup>62</sup> is esteemed as a great theatre innovator, especially because of the challenging, questioning nature of his work, as well as his ability to dismantle aspects of traditional theatre. Even in his more conservative plays, there is a lack of what is “required” in a traditional drama, including a plot, coherent and meaningful dialogues, an exposed theme, a semblance of reality and distinctive characters (Karoly, 1996:30). Rather, audience members and readers are confronted with fragmented images in an unnatural, empty world, sometimes even in what appears to be a dream or a nightmare. Beckett’s work cannot be approached with traditional expectations, as with works that exist in the realm of Realism, and the organic forces within Beckett’s works do not arise from character development, dramatic conflict or even the storyline, with the lack of these conventions leaving the audience with little to nothing. Beckett, however, has succeeded in the development of his tools, creating a special kind of theatre (Karoly, 1996:30).

Despite all of the iconoclastic features, there was not a complete rejection of traditional theatre on a theoretical basis by Beckett, such as with the Dada movement. Beckett rather drew from a wide range of sources that concerned dramatic devices and then adjusted them according to his intentions. This included certain elements of Greek theatre, such as the number of actors being limited, the resorting to dialogues, the absence of divinity, and the lack of a setting. There has even been attention drawn to the roots of post-naturalist tradition by scholars such as Alfred Jarry and Chekhov (Karoly, 1996:32). Symbolic devices and ritualistic elements are often present within this theatrical style. The peculiar identity, along with the mutual relationships of the characters, allow for allegorical interpretations that relate these styles of plays with the personified virtues and vices found in medieval mystery plays. Most notably, these plays employ numerous conventions of the circus as well as vaudeville shows, thus diffusing an arrangement of different elements into the forging of a unique, homogeneous and typical stage world (Karoly, 1996:32).

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<sup>62</sup> It is important to keep the work of Samuel Beckett in mind as his theatrical structuring and conventions in his theatrical works are alluded to in the practical component.

As for the dialogue in his plays, there is a curious inclusion of dual rhythms, such as in *Waiting for Godot*. On one level, there appears to be a sequence of attempts to talk about anything, no matter what it may be; however, after a while, these attempts fail and the conversation comes to a complete halt. On another level, this insignificant blathering lends an uneven pulsation to the drama, emerging out of the capricious changes relating to the repetitive topics. As such, the basic devices used in the constitution of the dual rhythm include, firstly, the repetition of themes, conversations and sentences, and secondly, the variations in and among these repetitive elements, whilst modifying each other's meanings and significance through the course of the drama (Karoly, 1996:33).

Time is another important factor within this theatre type, as it is both relevant and irrelevant simultaneously, as there is nothing to relate it to. For this reason, time can flow either infinitely slowly, only to speed up suddenly at other times, or it can be a time completely made up. Time is often structured into conversations as a series of repetitions, as well as variations, as it is the only thing that can measure it within this theatrical world, thus giving it some self-reflexive meaning (Karoly, 1996:34). The drama within the Theatre of the Absurd plays circumscribes a state of existence, such as in the case of *Waiting for Godot*, for example, where man is doomed to passivity, and even something like suicide is not a way out as it is a deed that requires action – so the need to carry on living is a pretence of having a reason and purpose for life (Karoly, 1996:36). Often, these plays, such as in *Waiting for Godot*, complete a perfect circle, ending as they begin.

Beckett's plays, more often than not, are universal metaphors and symbols, showing man deprived of faith, of God, of his certainty and sense of stability – literally deprived of any meaning and being sentenced to life due to commitment of the original sin that is being born (Karoly, 1996:38). Beckett states:

"Life is habit. Or rather, life is a succession of habits, since the individual is a succession of individuals ... The periods of transition that separate consecutive adaptations ... represent the perilous zones in the life of the individual, dangerous, precarious, painful, mysterious, and fertile, when for a moment the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of living." (Karoly, 1996:38)

Habit may be mechanical and boring, as in opposition to the essence of life; but when forced to face our existence, completely stripped of any illusions, we are engulfed by agony, making habit the lesser of the two evils. In almost all of Beckett's works, the traditional dramatic devices of plot, dialogues and character are all subdued to the unity of expression, with the essential dramatic tension brought forth using dual rhythm where the level of language and the level of thought are in contrast with each other. Both language and thought are developed through the delicate means of variations and repetitions, gradually modifying the meaning of typically recurring sentences, phrases and words, hence facilitating the comprehension of underlying philosophical and psychological convictions (Karoly, 1996:41).

Naturally, it was not only Beckett that created the conventions that still stand as elements of the Theatre of the Absurd today, but rather it seemed to have been a shared artistic experience. For example, Ionesco attempted to exteriorise the anxiety of the characters within his plays through objects, making the settings of the stage speak a visual language, and translating the action into visual terms to project visible images of remorse, alienation, regret and fear. Ionesco states, "I have thus tried to extend the language of the theatre" (Esslin, 1962:129). Ionesco further wanted to create the images of human life that haunted him through anxiety and hallucinations as a result of his experiences as a child. He depicted that he does not have any other images of the world other than evanescence, brutality, rage, vanity, nothingness and shadows forever engulfed in the night (Esslin, 1962:132). This may very well be the reason for the Theatre of the Absurd often being described as a world of nightmares, especially if we look at the minds of its great writers.

In summarising, the major conventions of this theatre style include ambiguous and fluid replications of place, time and identity, the incorporation of surreal or unrealistic characters and situations, meaningless, illogical and repetitive plots and dialogues, artful use of meaningless chaos (Eckersley, 2014), and language emerging from concrete and objectified stage imagery. Of course, most importantly, the Theatre of the Absurd would not be understood as such without the portrayal of the absurd and the meaningless human condition.

### **4.2.3. Symbolism**

Symbolism in the arts is a way to reveal the underlying harmonies and correspondences, rather than simply an analysis or exploration, with the intuition of unity as the main essence of this



aesthetic experience (Lyon, 1992:146). Symbolism in a theatrical drama tends to delve into collective subject matter, the mysteries of human destiny, myths, legends, instinctive passions, traditions and even folk cultures of our times (Lyon, 1992:146). In using theories of symbols, along with the fundamentals of semiotics, both the characters and theatrical processes in particular theatre styles can be presented with precision. In every symbol, individuals distinguish between implied and designated, appearance and meaning, signified and significant, as well as icon and content (Kott & Czerwinski, 1969:18). Symbolism may also be a theatrical convention, but for this research, it will be helpful to do a more in-depth exploration of this convention because of its consistency with the other two disciplines, along with its analytical value as outlined in philosophical theory.

Signs are divided into the literal, mimetic and symbolic, following simple theories of semantics. In the context of the literal sign, the meaning and the icon are the same, whereas, in the symbolic sign, the actual “code” underscores the meaning behind the icon (Kott & Czerwinski, 1969:18). A simple example to explain this would be through the use of road signs: If a railroad-crossing has a lowered barrier, it is a literal sign; if a sign contains a cow or a deer, it is a mimetic or imitative symbol; and if we find a red light or the word “stop”, it is a symbolic sign. Theatrical productions themselves are more often than not a collection of signs, both ambivalent and inconsistent by nature (Kott & Czerwinski, 1969:18). In a “normal” theatre, a chair is just that, and as such is a literal sign. Painted wood on a canvas is a mimetic sign, and a sign that might state “The Forest of Arden” is a symbolic sign. In all the various elements in theatrical productions, all three of these types of signs are intermixed. Walking onto the stage is, again, a literal sign, whilst running is a mimetic sign. The analysis and interpretations of the relations between these icons and their meanings are what allow for the designation of theatrical styles (Kott & Czerwinski, 1969:19).

Referring back to the “*Verfremdungseffekt*”, in theory, this concept was meant to serve to strengthen the cognitive, didactic, anti-Aristotelian function associated with theatre. However, in practice, it strengthened the theatricalisation of the theatre, unveiling new styles of theatre (Kott & Czerwinski, 1969:19). Both the body of an actor and their costume are seen as an icon, so if an actor plays himself – i.e. an actor – the icon becomes a literal sign, but if he plays a character from a play, a mimetic or symbolic sign, it becomes an illusion, which “*Verfremdungseffekt*” attempts to dismantle (Kott & Czerwinski, 1969:19). This destruction is done as a consciously-executed leap, from a character that was created to an



actor; theatrical time to time in reality; and, crucially, the leap from an imagined place to the actual theatrical space can be designated as the use of the same icon, first as literal, second as mimetic or symbolic (Kott & Czerwinski, 1969:20). Therefore, being in a theatre means everything, as what is happening does not happen because it is happening in the theatre. One of the answers to theatrical identity, possibly even the historical answer, is that of the Theatre of the Absurd (Kott & Czerwinski, 1969:21).

In terms of symbolism and theatrical iconography in the Theatre of the Absurd, Ionesco's *Amedee* (1954) has mushrooms sprouting up both within a room and at the feet of a corpse, for example, which slowly end up taking up the entire stage. So what then would this growth of these mushrooms represent? Possibly suppressed remembrances, time destroying love, concealed betrayal or even the approach of death (Kott & Czerwinski, 1969:21). In this example, the icons of the signs are extremely precise in their definition and their theatrical expressiveness is both inevitable and unmistakable, yet their symbolic meaning remains unclear (Kott & Czerwinski, 1969:21). The symbolic icon in its essence is richer and more startling than any of its meanings.

### 4.3. Absurd worlds

A typical association made with Absurdist drama in literary terms is that some partial impossibilities can often be captured through accessibility relations as opposed to logical compatibility. Furthermore, having the creation of absurdity lying in the fact that the mismatches fail to move the plot forward contradicts what happens in other genres (Vassilopoulou, 2007:120). Absurdist plays may even further liberate their associated universes from the principle of noncontradiction (Vassilopoulou, 2007:121). The term "Theatre of the Absurd" was introduced by Esslin as a means of describing the pioneering work of absurdist playwrights in the early 1950s. This term is not put forward as an organised movement or proclaimed school, but Esslin rather proposes it as a common label for the post-war dramatists expressing within their work the sense of loss and the futility of existence preceding humanity's decline in religious faith and the facing of the absurdity of their essence (Vassilopoulou, 2007:121).

Esslin regarded the work of Absurdist playwrights as a means of articulating the philosophy expressed by Camus in his works of *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942). Esslin presented Sisyphus as

an archetypal absurd hero, a reflection of the absurdity that pervades the human condition in terms of the alienation of humans from their universe as well as their condemnation to being preoccupied with pointless and perpetual action whilst accomplishing nothing, thus suggesting that life is without meaning (Vassilopoulou, 2007:122). At first, this existential perspective was developed in conventionally-structured plays which followed logical reasoning and then proceeded to become the core of the genre that is Absurdist drama. The innovation of the texts in this genre lies in the unique way the topic is presented, mainly through abandoning the conventions of realism, as opposed to the topic itself (Vassilopoulou, 2007:122). The playwrights associated with Absurdist drama aim to startle their audiences (or readers), as well as unsettle them and shake them out of their trite and mechanical existence while protesting against the art forms of conventional theatre that are no longer convincing in a purposeless and meaningless post-war world. There are also discrete differences in these playwrights' stylistic preferences for creating absurdity, guaranteeing their uniqueness due to the indicative dramatic techniques they employ in their work (Vassilopoulou, 2007:122).

In examining the absurdist world as opposed to the "real world", there is an infinite number of possible worlds that surround it. These are abstract, with the "real world" being only one of the many possible alternative worlds. These fictional worlds are plausible and believable even though they are inconsistent, such as through their tendency to violate the laws of noncontradiction, while in logical worlds they would be considered impossible, hence establishing the applicability to the Absurdist drama (Vassilopoulou, 2007:123). These fictional worlds of the Absurdist drama are often inconsistent because they contain logical impossibilities. In the inconsistent world of Ionesco's *The Bald Prima Donna*<sup>63</sup> (1950), for example, logical contradictions are seen early in the text through the discussions held by the protagonist couple Mr and Mrs Smith, which revolve around Bobby Watson who is mentioned as being dead. Yet after having established his death, it is contradicted by the two characters referring to Bobby Watson as if he were alive and soon to be married, even though the two characters claim to have been at his funeral and spoke of his widow, thus creating a sheer contrast with what has been presented as the truth (Vassilopoulou, 2007:124). A person that has been discussed as being both alive and dead constructs a logical impossibility, resulting in the projection of a world that includes contradiction as part of normality. This is a universe that relaxes the principles of noncontradiction (Vassilopoulou, 2007:125). The world of Absurdist

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<sup>63</sup> Also known as *The Bald Soprano*.

plays and texts is firmly rooted in the relaxation of the principles of logical compatibility, creating world types that are not wholly impossible, only logically impossible. How the characters describe their worlds makes it impossible for audience members or readers to have reliable access to this Absurdist world (Vassilopoulou, 2007:126). Absurdist plays containing contradictory accounts are therefore rendered as logically impossible worlds that prevent the authentication of fictional existence, so these literature types cannot be fictionally authentic (Vassilopoulou, 2007:126).

A second Absurdist drama to mention here which includes prime examples of this absurd world phenomenon is Ionesco's *Jack, or The Submission*<sup>64</sup> (1955), which constitutes a parody of bourgeois society, with most of this play's plot revolving around selecting an appropriate bride for the protagonist after succumbing to his family's creed. Audience members and readers are gradually faced with a world that relaxes the identity of 'normality' due to its inclusion of human beings with properties different to those of the 'real world' (Vassilopoulou, 2007:127). The bride-to-be, Roberta, first appears on stage with her face covered by a white veil and her body hidden by her bridal dress. When her face is revealed, she has two noses, allowing the audience to face one of her monstrous characteristics. An important reason for the creation of absurdity in this regard is the fact that the relaxation of the properties of identity takes place in a textual or staged world that otherwise appears realistic (Vassilopoulou, 2007:127).

The groom to whom Roberta is to be married is, however, not happy, as he wants a wife with at least three noses as opposed to only two, which Roberta's father appears prepared for by presenting another daughter that has three noses, even though upon original introduction, it was put forward that Roberta was an only child. At this point, logical compatibility is also relaxed, as there are two daughters available, both of which are regarded individually as only children, thus having the claims both contradicted and mutually refuted (Vassilopoulou, 2007:128). However, the other characters accept this claim as rational, having the notion of the term "only" expand its meaning to suit the character's purpose and adjust the reality of the particular world accordingly. Upon presenting the second only child to the groom, he is still unsatisfied as he wants an even uglier wife, which turns this seemingly realistic world of the play into one that is absurd. This is absurd not primarily due to its population of human beings with non-human characteristics, which thus relaxes the identity of human properties, but also due to the

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<sup>64</sup> This play can also be titled *Jacques or Obedience* according to some scholars (Vassilopoulou, 2007:127).

characters sharing the odd belief that the more monstrous another looks, the more attractive they are considered (Vassilopoulou, 2007:128).

The last play to feature in this section is Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*<sup>65</sup> (1959), in which the conventional bourgeois setting is presented once again, whilst still raising the expectations of a seemingly realistic plot. However, audience members or readers are confronted with another absurd situation in which all human beings gradually transform into rhinoceroses, apart from the protagonist, Berenger, thus violating the physical compatibility associated with the "real world" (Vassilopoulou, 2007:128). Absurdity is not created in the relaxation of the physical compatibility itself, but rather in how the characters deal with the situation of human beings turning into rhinoceroses. The characters are neither surprised by the presence of rhinoceroses nor by the fact that these rhinoceroses are their transformed co-citizens, thus further indicating the incompatibility between an attitude and a situation in what seems to be a realistic world, justifying the characterisation of this fictional world as absurd (Vassilopoulou, 2007:131).

In these views and from these examples, it becomes apparent that Absurdist plays relax accessibility relations that are associated with fictional worlds and are simultaneously not very distant from the "real world", as it is not the relaxation itself that is responsible for creating the Absurdist effect, but the contribution of specific factors (Vassilopoulou, 2007:135). Firstly, the lifting of relations takes place in what seems to be realistic settings, which is the main difference between the worlds of Absurdist dramas and fairy tales, for example. Although the worlds in fairy tale literature may see the lifting of physical laws and taxonomic compatibilities, due to its inclusion of witches, magical transformations or talking animals, individuals remain aware of the fact that the fairy tale world differs from their own. Therefore, they can construct it in their minds without necessarily considering it to be absurd (even though it includes Absurdist qualities). On the other hand, in absurdist dramas, individuals are faced with a world that shares similarities with their own, but all expectations of a realistic plot are then disrupted, with the characters further adhering to this disruption through their unexpected reactions to the

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<sup>65</sup> This play has often been discussed in relation to Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1915), in which the protagonist awakes one morning to discover he has been turned into a bug, while the rest of humanity is normal, yet it is described as a "realistic fantasy" as opposed to Absurdist. The difference is represented in the character's own personal psyche, as in the case of *Metamorphosis*, the other characters have a "normal" reaction to the protagonist's transformation through not accepting it, and talking about him and his new being with hatred, hence considering the strange situation possible, yet unacceptable and unbearable (Vassilopoulou, 2007:131).

impossibilities (Vassilopoulou, 2007:135). The attitudes of these characters are in no way in accord with the way individuals would realistically react in the “real world”, as characters in this world do not hold the same assumptions about the laws governing their world (Vassilopoulou, 2007:135). As a consequence, any attempts on an individual’s part, whether as an audience member or a reader, to construct a coherent world in this genre are simply met with frustration. This is in total opposition to the fairy tale genre worlds which have premeditated and predictable outcomes, but the commonality here lies in the value of reality as dissociated from our own.

#### 4.4. Absurdist plays

This section serves as a textual analysis of two distinct plays in the Theatre of the Absurd canon. These two plays are key to forming a theoretical understanding of the practical component of this research. The two plays to be discussed are *Rhinoceros* (1959) by Eugene Ionesco and *Endgame* (1957) by Samuel Beckett, and this section will examine the differentiation between two very different Absurdist playwrights.

*Rhinoceros*, a social parable, reveals a situation of a man lost within a society he cannot conform to. No matter how much effort is put in, he is unable to comprehend the absurdities and insanities fed to him by his society (Gibbs, 1966:6). The action of this play takes place in a provincial French town, but the location is mostly irrelevant, as it could be set anywhere else in the world with equal effectiveness. We are introduced to the dishevelled Berenger at the onset of the play, who aims to create order out of a disorderly Sunday morning by trying to cure his hangover by drinking. His friend Jean is found scolding him for his poor living habits and his lack of willpower, when, amid their discussion, a rhinoceros charges down the street, followed by another one charging through the square. Naturally, the citizens of the town gather together to discuss the strange phenomenon, and even though the appearance of the rhinoceroses causes a stir, the spectators become emotionally distraught over the trivia surrounding the event (Gibbs, 1966:6). Whether the beasts were many or few, had double or single horns or were an African or Asian breed came across as one-lined segments of an aria-like arrangement which ends in the rise of a crescendo of insanity (Gibbs, 1966:7).

By the second act of the play, more rhinoceroses appear and the readers and audience members are led to believe that the citizens of the town are changing their skins for hackles, having

“Rhinocerititis” seize this small town, taking member by member until only Berenger remains. Although Berenger is tempted to join the others, he remains the last human in a “dehumanised world” (Gibbs, 1966:7). The audience is presented with a single man pitted against a world overthrown by the epidemic of Rhinocerititis, resulting in the ideology of man losing his identity to become a member of a herd, according to Ionesco (Gibbs, 1966:7). Although there are times when some citizens are concerned with the problem at hand, the concern is not enough to influence the mass decision on repelling the conformity magnet (Gibbs, 1966:7). This play has definite undercurrents and allusions to Nazism (Gibbs, 1966:8) – for example, looking at the order in which the citizens of the town join the herd. First to join are those that are committed to society, such as Jean, who has an obsession with the need for willpower. Following is the Logician who analyses life through a means of syllogisms, then high officials and lawyers, then intellectuals who rationalise the situation as the best outcome under the current conditions. Lastly, the sceptics join as well because of the need to take the side of popularity in the decision made – presenting the audience with a realistic “joining sequence” that traces the paths of Nazi followers in the Second World War (Gibbs, 1966:8). It was by this means that the evils of conformity in Germany affected the majority to form a “great, thundering, trumpeting herd” (Gibbs, 1966:8). With the overall themes presented in the analysis of this play, we can deduce that social trivia gets in the way of evaluation of the real concern until it is already too late, with the damage done. This allegory thus satirises society as seen in its existence today, with the implied warning of resisting conforming to the herd (Gibbs, 1966:8).

The second play to be examined in this section is *Endgame* by Samuel Beckett. This play is played like a game of chess, with the audience witnessing the final stages of chess with only a few pieces left on the board and the approach of “checkmate” or “stalemate” in sight (Gibbs, 1966:38). This play employs four main characters along with a minor role, but this plotless play may be seen as characterless as well, due to there being no character studies and only allegorical essences (Gibbs, 1966:38). These four main “characters” are Hamm, his parents Nagg and Nell and his son-servant Clov. The play is set in a hollow of lands that are lifeless and waters that are motionless with the time of zero. Concerning the relationships of the characters, Hamm as a Materialist and Egoist is dominant over Clov as the Intellectual. Hamm’s sad condition is a result of his parental influence with Nagg and Nell representing “Emotions” and “Passions” which are a fabrication of the Past, and as a result, have become refuse, so each of the main characters (or rather essences) act as an aspect of man (Gibbs,

1966:38). The essence of Hamm is that of a man who has turned himself into four children, a man who has lived out his entire life which is approaching its end and therefore he is no longer able to see the beauty in life. He only sees decay because life for him has no meaning. The characters of this play are very similar to those of *Waiting for Godot* as they, too, play the game of waiting. We can both see and share in the depths of depression as the man finally realises what has been done with his life (Gibbs, 1966:39). In this regard, the overarching message is that life is a game, and we can't find a reason for why we are playing (Gibbs, 1966:40).

In comparing the characters and their interdependent relationships with each other, it is important to remember their representative symbols. Hamm is the dominant one born of emotions and passions with a childish demeanour who is always searching for pity. He is highly selfish, even at the expense of others. Clov, on the other hand, is servile with a great sense of hatred towards Hamm, yet is unable to leave him. Seeing as Nagg and Nell are already seen and made out to be refuse in their stark state of decay, it appears that the real conflict arises between the Ego and the Intellect alone (Gibbs, 1966:40). Due to this chess game ending in a stalemate position, neither essence achieves true superiority over the other, concluding that the Ego and the Intellect are of equal strength in the vital forces of modern man (Gibbs, 1966:40). This presents a situation where life is made analogous to a chess game. Seeing as Ego is born out of Emotions and Passions, these three sides are representative of the force of the Ego which finds itself in direct competition with the Intellect. Each player may make a move that will determine the outcome as well as the course of events (Gibbs, 1966:40). As each player progresses, life still carries on in terms of the competitive struggle to win, eventually leading to the game becoming immobile and achieving the stalemate position (Gibbs, 1966:41).

In the metaphysical overtones of *Endgame*, the main concerns revolve around reality versus illusion: "Is reality what exists outside or what is perceived by the individual?" (Gibbs, 1966:41). If it is the latter, then we can assume that reality is illusionary and that the reality illusion within this play exists within the mind, as a reality bereft of God. According to Beckett, the only alternative is to wait and hope that the end is near and for men of the future to contemplate their navel with the attitude toward God and the universe (Gibbs, 1966:41). This inclusion of an illusory reality relates to the notion of dissociations within the psyche. Understanding the analytic devices that drive other Absurdist playwrights enables a theoretical understanding when it comes to the practical component of this research. Furthermore, it allows



one to notice patterns within the respective disciplines of Absurdism as a philosophy and theatrical style and how it pertains to the illusory realities associated with the psyche.

This theatre form has a singular focus – “it has concerned man in his relation to man, and man in his relation to God” (Gibbs, 1966:43) – which is similar to Jung’s stance on the collective unconscious, and as such, the psyche’s relation to the Self. The conflicts, both internal and external, as well as the pressures affecting man, have changed in light of more complex conditions, but the essences which were a concern of Sophocles and Euripides have now become the concerns of the Absurd playwrights (Gibbs, 1966:43). The isolation of man in current society is possibly a secondary theme in the work of Absurdists, as man loses his identity in joining the “herd”, and as such loses his identity and values, leading to no longer being able to differentiate between the illusory and real life. This theatre form presents the conflict but concerns itself with the ageless philosophical query that forces its viewer to look within the self (Gibbs, 1966:45). It is equally concerned with man’s inability to relate to others, having this lack of empathy leading to the estrangement of one man from another (Gibbs, 1966:46).

#### **4.5. The significance of the Absurd**

Mankind is still searching for a way to confront a universe deprived of what was its essential centre and living purpose, and what has become disjointed and purposeless – and thus absurd (Esslin, 1962:389). The Theatre of the Absurd is an expression of this search, as it bravely showcases to those that have lost this central meaning and explanation that it is not always possible to accept all of the art forms that are based on the continuation of concepts that have lost their validity. According to Esslin (1962:390), the search is for “the possibility of knowing the laws of conduct and ultimate values, as deducible from a firm foundation of revealed certainty about the purpose of man in the universe”.

In the expression of this loss and disappearance of ultimate certainties, the Theatre of the Absurd is a symptom of what comes close to being a religious quest in our day and age. It is a timid and tentative effort to laugh, sing and weep, although not necessarily in praise of God, at least in terms of searching for a dimension of the ineffable. It is a means of making man aware of the realities of his condition and refrains within him the loss of cosmic wonder and primaevial anguish. This is all in an attempt to shock man out of the contrite existence that has also



manifested itself as complacent, mechanical and deprived of the dignity associated with awareness (Esslin, 1962:390). A dual purpose is fulfilled within the Theatre of the Absurd, as firstly it castigates, in a satirical manner, the absurdity of lives being lived in a state of unawareness and unconsciousness of ultimate reality. Secondly, the Theatre of the Absurd faces up to a deeper layer of absurdity as that of the human condition itself in a world that has faced a decline in religious belief, therefore depriving man thereof as well as of any certainties (Esslin, 1962:391). When there is no longer the possibility of acceptance of complete closed systems of revelations and values of divine purpose, the reality of life needs to be faced in its raw, true, stark form.

As concerned as this theatre type is with the ultimate realities of the human condition, including the fundamental problems of life, death, communication and isolation, the Theatre of the Absurd, however frivolous, represents a return to the original and religious function of the theatre. This is the confrontation of man within the spheres of religious reality and myth (Esslin, 1962:392). The Theatre of the Absurd is intent on making its readers and viewers aware of man's mysterious and precarious position in the universe. By apprehending the world at any given moment, we simultaneously receive a whole complex of different feelings and perceptions (Esslin, 1962:395). We are only able to communicate this instantaneous vision by breaking it down into elements that can again be built up into a sentence or series of sentences and into a sequence of time. In converting our perception into conceptual terms, logical thought and language, we are operating analogously to single impulses. This poetic image, with its evocation of multiple elements and ambiguity, is one method of communicating the reality of our intuition within this world (Esslin, 1962:395).

It is in this striving for communicating our basic and yet undissolved totality of perception, our intention of being, that we can find the key to devaluation and disintegration of language as found in the Theatre of the Absurd (Esslin, 1962:396). If the translation of the total intuition of being is transposed onto the logical and temporal sequence of conceptual thought that causes a deprivation of its complexity and poetic truth, the artists need to find a means to circumvent the influence of discursive logic and speech, as seen in the language used in the Theatre of the Absurd. In carrying the poetic endeavour over to concrete stage imagery, it goes beyond the poetic essence as dispensed in logic, language and discursive thought. The stage becomes a multidimensional medium, allowing the simultaneous use of visual elements, light, movement and language, thereby being particularly suited to communicating complex images of the

contrapuntal interaction of all these elements (Esslin, 1962:396). This can similarly be applied to modern-day psychoanalysis, as every child is aware of the gap between what is consciously thought and asserted and the actual psychological reality behind words spoken. As Esslin (1962:396) states, “The subconscious has a higher content of reality than the conscious utterance”.

In concluding this section, it becomes clear that there is no contradiction in recognising the limitations of man’s ability to comprehend all of reality within a single system of values. Furthermore, comprehending the ineffable and mysterious oneness, beyond any rational comprehension that, if and when experienced, gives the mind serenity and strength to face the human condition (Esslin, 1962:418), are two ends of the same spectrum. The ineffability of ultimate reality and the mystical experience of absolute otherness is the poetic and religious counterpart to the rational recognition of the limitations of man’s senses and intellect, thus reducing man to exploring the world through trial and error (Esslin, 1962:418). Ultimately, the Theatre of the Absurd does not reflect despair but rather expresses man’s endeavour to come to terms with the cosmic universe and the world he lives in, allowing him to face up to the human condition as it is.

#### 4.6 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to give insight into and distinguish between Absurdism in both theatrical and philosophical forms. Furthermore, linkages have been made in terms of how they not only influence each other, but both **reflect and influence human thinking and the human condition**. This linkage is important in this research due to it **forming a viable relationship with both psychology and fairy tales** in the case of the thinking and conditions of human beings, along with their societal reflections and behaviours. A further linkage to represent the aforementioned is that of including **symbolism** once again but exploring it through a theatrical and philosophical lens, to depict its linkage with symbolism in the other highlighted fields.

A ritualistic or circular structure has been ascribed both theoretically and applied practically when it concerns the Theatre of the Absurd. Within this chapter, detail was given to explore, identify and differentiate between the structuring of Absurdist plays, the creation of Absurdist worlds and the conventions concerning both. Gained from this was the ability to **liberate associated “universes”** from the mainstream principle that is non-contradiction, allowing me

the chance to practically write my Absurdist universe without the completed ideology of logical compatibility. This thus enabled a theoretical departure to start building on the practical that was executed.

## Chapter 5: Artistic exploration of the practical component

This chapter will focus primarily on linking the theoretical research with the practical component of this study, along with highlighting and discussing the motivations behind the practical component through artistic exploration. The key to this research is putting it into practice, and the means of doing so was through the writing, directing and staging of a theatrical production titled *Wolf*. This production aimed to showcase the absurdities that are investigated in this research in a visual and artistic form. The script, directorial nature and production had a combined implementation of the research theories, as discussed in the previous chapters. Chapter 5 discusses the elements of the production, as well as the processes involved in the writing and staging of the full production. At the end of this research are two addendums, the first being the written script that was used for the performance, and the second an album of photos of the production as staged during production week. The written text, directorial orientation and production all contain the theoretical frameworks of psychology and fairy tales as well as elements of the Theatre of the Absurd as discussed and defined within this research. This section illustrates the process of bringing this research to life through theatre.

### 5.1 Character creation

The creative process involved in creating and staging the practical component started with conceptualising and creating the characters represented in the theatrical production. Due to the nature of this research revolving around the search for meaning and the condition of man, the initial concept was to have both of these elements incorporated into creating the essence of the characters portrayed. To place them in the same singular foundation, their archetypal basis was taken from both fairy tales and those put forward by Jung (outlined in Chapter 2). Jung's analytical psychology allows for a unique and viable lens to both interpret and create works of art (Reynolds, 2019: 73). The characters portrayed share the sentiments and structure of famous fairy tale characters, but are still rooted in the Absurdist nature of the condition of man. The psychological principles discussed previously highlight this condition as well as illuminate the essence of the collective unconscious with its inclusions of Ego versus the Self, and Mind versus Soul. Furthermore, a Jungian approach allows for an understanding of characters that may be governed by their psychological complexes and journeys of individuation (Reynolds, 2019:74), as portrayed in the written text and the characters' journeys to their ultimatum. This allows for both psychologically viable

characters and characters that relate to the Absurdist nature. There are six characters cast in the play, with each of their processes of creation and theoretical value explained thoroughly below.

### **5.1.1 Connor Wolf**

The title of the play *Wolf* is a foreshadowing that this is the story of the main character from his perspective. This character was inspired by observations of strangers and their behaviours towards others, imagining what they are thinking, where their minds wander and why. Being indecisive about exactly who or what to base the character of Connor Wolf (or simply “Wolf”, as he is referred to in the text) on, is what led to the start of this research. The aim was to create a character both relatable to an audience, yet dissociated from reality, therefore, the incorporation of both man and his condition intertwined with dissociation experienced both within the collective unconscious, as well as in the mental disorders discussed in Chapter 2. As taken from the Jungian psychoanalytic theory presented in Chapter 2, we can deduce that if individuals can overcome challenges in their imaginative worlds, they can overcome the challenges presented in their psyche. We are further able to deduce that archetypes form a basis of everyday life because of the human nature of defining people by certain preconceived categories. In light of this, the creation of the character Wolf involved putting him into a category associated with the “everyman” archetype but breaking it down through his inability to conquer his imagination. The symbolism in this character and his psychological discrepancies are representative of a loss and lack of control in our universal nature, once again showcasing the inevitable loss associated with the condition of man.

In discussing the creation of this character, the most effective means is to have a basic idea of what this character is centred on, as well as what the character's purpose is. This purpose is defined primarily by the principles outlined in this research: firstly, as a means of being able to compare the three different fields (theatrical, psychological and literary) in a cognitive, yet visual and artistic way. Secondly, and most importantly, the purpose of this character is to show the emotional manifestation (or lack thereof) of ultimate loss, confusion and rejection in the same way that man experiences them when confronting the meaning of life and existence. In treating this character as if he were a real human, the principles of psychoanalysis can be applied, firstly on the background of this character, analysing why he is here and what brought him to this. Delving into the character's background may provide a clearer understanding of

this character's continuous dissociation and mental state. Furthermore, this would grant us the opportunity to place him in the appropriate archetypal mould of both psychology and fairy tales, finally expanding on his breaking of this mould and relating it to the Absurd.

In *Connor Wolf*, the name "Connor" has its roots in the Irish "Conchobar", meaning "lover of wolves"<sup>66</sup>. This play was written in a structure that jumps through time, which will be explained in more depth later in this section after all the characters have been examined and outlined. In this asynchronicity in the play, the revelation to the audience of Wolf's background is left for last. The Grimm Brothers' fairy tale titled "The Wolf and the Seven Young Goats", which, as is common when it comes to older fairy tales was transcribed over and over again throughout history, may have undergone several title changes – one of which is, for example, "Wolf and the Seven Young Kids". A small part of this fairy tale influenced the background of *Wolf* – in a nod to the original Grimm tale, he is someone who comes from a family of seven kids. It is worth noting that this character is human, and his parents – those of the seven children – had their hands full, and the father had an aggressive and abusive nature, especially towards the "black sheep" or "runt" of the family, being our character, Wolf. As a result of the abuse experienced as a young child, he grew to know it and become accustomed to it, but it naturally still left a traumatic mark on our character. To make matters worse, he also suffered the loss of both his parents at the age of seven. While Wolf was just a child at the time, it was difficult to find someone willing to adopt all the children, but their Godmother took it upon herself to adopt six of the seven of them, excluding Wolf himself, leading to a lifelong sense of rejection. The only way Wolf was able to cope with the loss of his family, his trauma, his rejection and his feelings of loss of purpose was to dissociate himself entirely from reality. The easiest ways in which he could process this was through living in his mind and perspective, as well as continuous role-playing – so he became an actor. The irony of his becoming an actor is his constantly being cast in the role of the Wolf in the fairy tale favourites "Little Red Riding Hood" and "The Three Little Pigs", further leading him to dissociate himself from being Connor and growing increasingly into being Wolf.

In psychoanalysing our Wolf character, a useful first step is to understand him within the framework of his Jungian archetypal category. This character inhabits the Everyman archetype,

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<sup>66</sup> His name can then, in English, be "Wolf, Wolf" which is associated with an Afrikaans children's game titled "Wolf, Wolf, hoe laat is dit?". This game has a mention of the Wolf "eating" others, so the name "Wolf, Wolf" is already a foreshadowing of murder to follow in the play.

meeting the criteria as a result of the overarching loss of meaning in his life and his search for belonging. However, he is also the Hero of his own life's tale, growing his sense of mastery over his own life through his perceptions of reality. Because our Wolf character endures life as if caught up in a fog of perplexity, he is prone to ignoring what is truly evident and real. He is troubled with what is both manifested and unfolding within his psyche, as well as what is happening in his relationships, with a serious dilemma appearing in his moral-spiritual development. In this character's story, we see an archetypal pattern associated with the Hero's journey. A struggle manifests in his outer world or reality, but it occurs within himself and in the depths of his soul. This manifests through specific elements and their symbolic values which can be contextualised through the consideration of the fairy tale genre (Rubin, 2013:38).

An important insight from Chapter 2 that relates to this character is the similarity that was established between the existences of different realities. These realities include the dissociation from reading fairy tales to creating a new one to escape or handle a threatening situation, as established in the Meaning Maintenance Model. These realities may either manifest in the individual's psyche alone, or in their behaviour towards the self and others which may lead to a misjudged archetypal grievance along with an intrusion or deception by the psyche itself. In this case, we are left with the absurdities of life as particular to our character of Wolf – his absurdities, as well as his traumas and background that led to him building a dissociative reality for himself. The character does, however, acknowledge his feeling of the absurd as aroused by the irresolvable meaning violations, hence his means of attempting to resolve this includes affirmation of other meaning frameworks, such as changing his memories, perceptions and realities on how things played out. We find our Wolf character stuck in a repetitive pattern in both his language and his weekly routine, which is explained through a secondary character – his psychologist.

In the sessions with his psychologist, we can visually and contextually explore Wolf's alternate realities that manifest within his psyche and present themselves as absurd psychological behaviours towards the other characters. Leading back to Wolf's background and the concept of the Theory of Mind, we can understand why this character may lack having his own Theory of Mind, yet he still searches for a sense of belonging and a meaning for and within his life, whether this is through friendship, love or family. Due to the nature of his upbringing and his childhood, there is a deficit in his social development, causing a decline or even an absence in his Theory of Mind, such that he can comprehend but not feel empathy. All of these strange

behavioural issues are what eventually lead our psychologist character to try and determine the mental disorder Wolf might be influenced by, hence the incorporation of the explanations of dissociative identity disorder, schizophrenia, and ultimately psychopathy.

The intention was for this character to present different elements of each of these disorders, per their descriptions in both Chapter 2 and the written text in Addendum A, yet for him to be misdiagnosed. It is through this misdiagnosis that we perceive the light of human suffering as both absurd and yet concrete, as there is a little bit of truth evoked each time, just not in the manner that is always applicable. This association can once again relate to the Theatre of the Absurd, through the search for meaning and reason, only to be afflicted by a mental block. This makes the concepts relatable because it dissociates us from our intentions and perspectives of reality.

To combine these concepts and create a believable main character, a key common theme in literature, theatre, psychology and everyday life is added: violence. Violence has, as discussed within this research, been identified as a means of demonstrating the meaningless and absurd notion of human existence (Kaplan, 1980:116). The character of Wolf takes on the embodiment of man's irrationality and chaos through his violent actions and thoughts, placing the focus on the reality of the evil in man. To have this concept further relate to this research, the character of Wolf was lastly based on common tropes of two kinds of evils: one that presents in psychology as mental disorders, and one in fairy tales as their ever-popular villainous creature.

The absurd notion of an antisocial personality disorder as outlined in the DSM 5, as opposed to psychopathy itself, is where this is being directed. There is undeniably a great difference between someone being antisocial and being a serial killer. With this gap in mind, as already outlined in Chapter 2, we gain some insight into why Wolf still seems to roam helplessly and meaninglessly through life, as we are unable to entirely tell what is wrong with him. Wolf possesses a thread of violence which denotes an evil embodying a specific breed of cunning and bloodthirsty character with his lack of remorse, impulse control and empathy. This description adheres to both the insights we have on the wolf character in fairy tales, as well as in the discussion on psychopathy, creating another character linkage in that regard. As seen from his background, we may understand these actions as a revenge protocol on the psychologist; however, what of the killings of the other characters? Is the character a suffering soul, as would be described in Jungian terms, a man at a loss of his human condition and



meaning, or a showcase of man's dark side, a beast? Possibly all of the above. This is where the vital components of this research start tying in with the practical, through creatively exploring the conditions of man, through the characterisation of Wolf, in different forms of violence and darkness, yet still denoting a meaningless existence. Wolf is the epitome of the unconscious destructive forces of the mind that determine and showcase outward behaviours.

### **5.1.2 Fairy Godmother/Psychologist**

The second character to be discussed is the psychologist, who also represents the fairy tale embodiment of the Fairy Godmother. As discussed in Chapter 2, fairy tale archetype characters aid in resolving emotional conflict, functioning as a catalyst for emotional growth for those that have suffered an emotional disturbance (Bolton, 2016:407). In the same sense, this is what is expected from a psychologist. As such, this character has a dual function, acting as these two presences merged into one. Her methods to assist Wolf strengthens the main character's abilities for fluid compensation, aiding him in strengthening other beliefs and values and allowing him to retreat to a safe harbour – his mind. Furthermore, she implements the strategy of accommodation in helping Wolf with absurdity repair by allowing him to acknowledge the anomalies in his psyche and physical life to make them sensible (Proulx, 2011). Due to this character's stance and purpose within the theatrical play, she falls under the archetype associated with the caregiver in Jungian theory, as she delivers her service in an attempt to provide structure for Wolf. This caregiver archetype may even stem further into the concept of "Mother", especially as viewed by the Wolf self. Nearing the end of the play, we determine how Wolf's childhood was, thus being an explanation for his negative associations with family and his hostile (Reynolds, 2019:75) behaviour towards the maternal approach given by the psychologist.

Furthermore, her repetitive nature is not only an elemental structure of the Theatre of the Absurd, but it also acts to mirror the psyche's basic actions to present them clearly and concisely. In this regard, she forms part of the aforementioned "The Big Five of Fairy Tales", as she represents the "Wiseman". Yet, as making mistakes is a part of being human, she still has the mindset of a human, seeking to find the meaning behind the human condition. Her means in this search is through her attempts to diagnose the Wolf character in the appropriate mental disorder category, but similar to existential beliefs, this is a similarly time-consuming and unsuccessful endeavour. The psychologist, however, does seemingly find her answer, only

to be met with inevitable death. From a philosophical standpoint, this is symbolic, as she finds her answers to her search for meaning only through meeting her maker.

In the fairy tale aspects of her character, she is known primarily by her function in the play, as opposed to having her name and full back story; yet her personality is still stable and concise throughout the play. Her only real purpose is to guide our lead character within his psychologically-oriented search for both meaning and belonging. In this sense, she may also be symbolic of the fairy tale archetype of the “Mentor”. Similar to the “Wiseman”, these archetypes may often be ostracised from society due to their nonconformity, possibly even deemed as mad themselves for their ability to recognise the truth (Lynley, 2015). Truth also seems to be a common pattern found in the disciplines in this research, about a linkage between what can be deemed as a truth, versus what could be established as actual truth. Both of these truths remain dependent on the character at hand and their imminent reality.

### **5.1.3 Red**

The character Red was based on the main character of the example fairy tale used throughout this research: “Little Red Riding Hood”. However, the aim was for her to break the associated stereotype of a frightened little girl, as well as her lack of hope for her survival. Because of this, this character was unable to fulfil her premeditated life’s purpose. This pertains to an element of the Theatre of the Absurd in the sense of breaking expectations and not finalising a character’s destiny. Furthermore, her language use has been modernised in that it is a mix of both English and predominantly Afrikaans, to symbolise a loss in translation and thought. This character also possesses her reality and background, as we are aware of where she is going: her grandma’s house; as well as the events that led up to her being here: her parents’ death. We also understand this character lives in a circular world, repeating the same actions on the same day with the same red cloak.

To further explore symbolism as discussed in both the fairy tale and Theatre of the Absurd sections, her red cloak and her initial path are plethoric. The continuous red and ultimate destruction of her path is a foreshadowing of her dying in her cloak. This red symbol carries a meaning more than just that of death – it also elevates her personality of passion and ultimately gives the audience a visual representation of love between her and Wolf, and a destructive love at that. In terms of Jungian archetypes, she is firstly associated with the Lover archetype in her

attempt to both be a connection point for the audience to relate to her as well as a possible intimately connect with Wolf. This stigma of the archetype gets overshadowed by her other two archetypal images, being both an Outlaw in her way of dealing with a downfall in life (as depicted by her short and fleeting backstory), as well as being an Explorer archetype in her search for freedom. This search for freedom again ties in with existentialist theory, only for her to meet freedom through sudden death, choking in the very cloak that both gave her life and was her point of association.

A directorial choice made for this character in an attempt to break away from the stereotype associated with fairy tale archetypes was for her face to be fully covered throughout the production. This alluded to the focus being placed on her words, wisdom and actions, rather than her being categorised as simply a beautiful, benevolent maiden. This action is similar to the bride found in the Ionesco play *Jack, or the Submission*, except her appearance is never revealed; rather, the ideology behind the ridiculousness of feminine beauty was followed. The character of Red started as the bumbling Fool, as is commonly associated with the Maiden archetype in fairy tales; however, she broke the stereotypes associated with this through having ambitions in life, a degree, as well as her story arc. Furthermore, chauvinistic ideals are broken by expressing that his character can exist on her own, taking a stance against the standards as promulgated by the unconscious collective.

#### **5.1.4 The Three Brothers: Hecate, Ordell, Claudia**

The characters of *The Three Brothers* were based on the fairy tale classic “The Three Little Pigs”, and reworked following the incorporation of both Absurdist elements and stereotypical fairy tale archetypes. This choice was made to depict the highly-charged parallels that are subconsciously unexplored between symbolic reality, fairy tales and an individual’s organisational reality. These roles pertain to the idea of *in statu nascendi*<sup>67</sup> to avoid drawing attention away from the intentions and story arc of the Wolf character. Originally, these characters were predominantly for entertainment purposes, but as the artistic exploration followed through, they too became a depiction of the human condition as intertwined with basic archetypal images. All these characters have are their “talents” (which they are also associated

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<sup>67</sup> As mentioned previously, this refers to archetypes that have no back story as their lives up to this point have been deemed as predictable (Lynley, 2015).

with) and each other, thus expressing the mundane and repetitive existence which can correlate with the human condition. The characters of Ordell<sup>68</sup> and Hecate<sup>69</sup> specifically represent this notion and are further placed in the idea of stereotypical male archetypes – more specifically the “Brothers” archetype. It is worth noting, in a nod to elements of the Theatre of the Absurd, that there exists an opposition in that the practical element consists of two females and one male, while still being referred to as the “Three Brothers”. This further allows for breaking the stigma associated with the gender bias that presents in the unconscious collective at times.

The personalities that are often associated with this archetype provide moralistic traits that, in the case of this production, lead to their ultimate downfall. This is primarily a result of naivety, but it further expands into stereotypical character traits that were also gleaned from the original version of “The Three Little Pigs”, including the smart brother and the haughty brother, with the second brother, Claudia, falling into a different archetypal and absurd mould. The brother Claudia relates to elements of the Theatre of the Absurd in his use of (or inability to use) language: this character uses silly and strange actions, but speaks words of truth that are lost to the audience due to him only being able to say “lank, lank gelede”<sup>70</sup>. He, therefore, falls into the complex archetype of “The Fool”, as the sacrificial victim that is associated with the absurd and the abnormal. Some of the traits associated with this character were expanded onto all three of The Brothers, including singing, dancing and the provision of comic acts, but the intricate wisdom associated with this archetype was especially applied to Claudia, bringing forth a sense of irony in the use of the language barrier. The character’s purpose was to show the audience that the world is at a loss for words and is a foolish place, and Claudia’s absurd situation proves that humans are not always able to recognise truth and wisdom in their direct environments. This character, as in the realm of the Theatre of the Absurd, further showcases the unity of expression where the level of language and thought are in constant contrast with one another, hence the character’s downfall being visually showcased through the lack of verbal cognitive development, leading, once again, to a sudden death. This pattern, as associated with language and thought, is another linkage point due to it being a continuation of the interlinking of the three disciplines discussed throughout this study.

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<sup>68</sup> The name Ordell is a gender-neutral name meaning “Little Knife”. This provides clarity on him being a chef and is another foreshadowing of danger within this play.

<sup>69</sup> Hecate is a Greek goddess that is associated with witchcraft and the underworld. Within this play, she is depicted as a scientist, and because of the magical elements associated with fairy tales, alchemy is her talent. Furthermore, the reference to the underworld provides another foreshadowing of their imminent death.

<sup>70</sup> A direct translation of this is “long, long ago”, but in the fairy tale setting, refers to “once upon a time”.

All three of *The Brothers* experience this downfall as their lives revolve around a repetition without condoning the actions to follow. An example of this is the constant reference to making breakfast but never reaching the stage of actually making the breakfast at all. Rather, all of their attempts to put things into action “blows up in their face” (quite literally and visually too). Hence, these characters, with their interdependent relationships, facilitate the comprehension of underlying philosophical and psychological convictions (Károlyi, 1996:41), once again showcasing the absurd and meaningless debacle that is the human condition.

## **5.2 Writing and creating the text**

Creating these characters is what ultimately led to the practical component of this research, bringing the text to life through a theatrical production, per the Iterative Cyclic Web put forth by Smith and Dean (2009:20). To clarify the order in which the events of the creative process took place, the idea was generated based on the construction of the characters, upon which the theories and techniques stemming from the theoretical research were applied to further the artistic and theoretical exploration, as on the methodology of research-led practice discussed in Chapter 1. The characters are based on well-known fairy tale characters due to it also being a universal means of representation and communication that aligns with Jung's stance on the collective unconscious, where it is even claimed that he believed this to be the pure source of art (Reynolds, 2019:80).

After having established characters appropriate to the original idea that intertwine with the relevant theory, the text follows a particular Tuesday in our lead character's life. Apart from some of the psychologically inclined dialogue, moments and character-specific mental conditions, the biggest influence on the writing of the text stemmed from the insights gained from elements of the Theatre of the Absurd. This includes the creation of an Absurd world, as well as some of the components from the Moreau Guidelines due to its linkage of fairy tales with psychology. In reading the text itself, the attempt was to stray away from the aesthetic reading method and rather adhere to the transactional reading method. This was a deliberate choice made to keep to a self-reflective process, thus allowing the rationality of the mind to fuse thoughts and emotions (Bolton, 2016: 417). This allowed for a temporal distance to be created between realities, not only between the reader/audience member and the practical piece but also between the worlds of the text and the production itself. This allowed for the ability to

reflect on one's life with acceptance of one's memories, such as in the case of Wolf, for example. This again relates to the incorporation of the Meaning Maintenance Model to acknowledge – and possibly accept or change – any unwanted anomalies. However, as is the Absurdist way, these premeditated ideas were all turned on their heads to show the true nature of the human condition.

In reiterating the use of the Moreau Guidelines, below were the elements used as an influence in writing the text<sup>71</sup>. Within this section, the conventions and theatrical structuring that pertains to the Theatre of the Absurd along with the creation of Absurd worlds are also implemented, thus combining different strategies as follows:

1. The title: This title was chosen both as an expression of the beast that lurks within man, along with relating to the main character and the following of his journey.
2. The initial paragraph: Within this practical, this was established within the opening monologue that already represents uncanny behaviour and psychological downfall. It further allowed us to understand that different realities are at play: the characters' worlds, Wolf's perspective and memories, as well as the initial setting, which is the psychologist's office. This becomes the steppingstone to creating an absurd world with the infinite possible worlds that surround it, and as such, reiterating the stance on alternate realities, whilst relating directly to the Absurdist drama genre in its inconsistencies and logical impossibilities.
3. Dramatis Personae: As established in the previous section on character creation within this chapter, this allowed for the structuring of the peculiar identities and relationships between characters that allow for allegorical interpretations.
4. Numbering patterns: Due to the repetitive nature of both the fairy tale and Absurdist genres, the creative decision made here was incorporation, especially of the number three. Actions, habits, language use and ritualistic devices were incorporated in sets of three throughout this play. This served a dual purpose: It allowed for distractions from what was happening, as well as highlighted important behaviours and intentions. The basic devices used in the constitution of dual rhythm were included through the repetition of themes, conversations and sentences. This was further implemented in the

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<sup>71</sup> Not all of the steps put forth in the Moreau Guidelines were adhered to, as this is not specifically a fairy tale, but rather incorporates elements of one. Hence, only the structures relevant to carrying across the focal points of the story were incorporated.

variations in and amongst these repetitive elements, whilst modifying each other's meanings and significance through the course of the drama (Károlyi, 1996:33).

5. Key sentences: A main key sentence that kept being repeated was, "Wolf, Wolf, hoe laat is dit?"<sup>72</sup> The reason for this was to both reiterate the questionable construct of time and adhere to the fact that this entire play revolves mainly around the character arc and journey of Wolf.
6. Structures of the psyche: The structures of the psyche have been included in character creation, but they also further pertain to reflection as a reader and an audience member. This further allows for visually showcasing the condition of man in the world at loss.
7. Motifs and archetypal situations: This has been established and is discussed in the previous section on character creation.
8. The end resolving the beginning (or not): The drama within an Absurdist play circumscribes a state of existence that showcases man being doomed to passivity, allowing for living life as a pretence to gaining a sense of reason and purpose in life. The narratives of plays of this nature complete a perfect circle, ending as they begin. In the case of this production, the motivation was to implement this along with possible interpretations of individuation of the psyche. Therefore, the ending of this play completes the circular effect of the beginning. The play opens with a soundscape of characters chanting, "Wolf, Wolf, hoe laat is dit?" and the play ends with the Wolf character answering this question by saying, "Etenstyd"<sup>73</sup>. Concerning blocking the characters, the Wolf started the playdown centre stage and ended it in the same place. A further manifestation of this circular effect includes that of Wolf at the start of the play evolving from a wolf to a human and, in opposition to this, at the end of the play he loses his humanity and becomes more beast or wolf.
9. Symbols in the tales: Within this practical component, three main symbolic devices were incorporated: time, colour and the number three. This was done as a means of reiterating Jung's stance on perceiving symbols as an expression of the innate archetype that demonstrates basic patterns as associated with the human psyche (Keller, 2021:13). This use of symbols enabled a visual tie with the elements of the Theatre of the Absurd and fairy tales, along with developments, understanding and the psyche. Symbolism in the arts is a way to reveal the underlying harmonies and correspondences, as opposed

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<sup>72</sup> This is translated as "Wolf, Wolf, what time is it?" and is taken from the game of "Wolf, Wolf, hoe laat is dit?" as previously discussed.

<sup>73</sup> This is translated to "Time to eat".



to an analysis or exploration, with the intuition of unity being the main essence of this aesthetic experience (Lyon, 1992:146). This also allowed for a universal communication means, as associated with symbols in fairy tales discussed previously. As the colour red has already been established as symbolic – as discussed concerning the character Red – the final symbolic device used is that of time. In the Theatre of the Absurd, time is both relevant and irrelevant simultaneously. This play is structured into conversations as a series of repetitions, in the sense of constantly looking at the clock, constantly asking the time and constantly speaking of time moving forward, allowing it to be one of the few measurable things within this world, giving it meaning. Time also has a strange construct in this theatrical world, as an artistic decision was made to put a working clock on stage and manipulate it to end at exactly 12h00 when the play ends. This ties in with both the concept of lunchtime – associated with and brought forth by the final line of dialogue, being “Etenstyd” – as well as tying in with the fairy tale symbolism of Cinderella, due to the clock being in the psychologist/Fairy Godmother’s office. After all, the magic ends at midnight, breaking the illusion. Time within this play also has a distortion, as the clock is moving forward, but the play includes time jumps as associated with Wolf’s memories. This reiterates the stance that time is simply a man-made concept, and thus, as with the human condition, is irrelevant and purposeless. This symbol can be further explored metaphorically as showcasing man’s deprivation of a sense of stability, certainty and any true meaning.

10. Parallels in the tales: The characters in this play all have distinct connections to well-known fairy tales. This includes the Fairy Godmother from “Cinderella”, “The Three Little Pigs” from the tale with the same name, as well as Little Red Riding Hood from “Little Red Riding Hood”. Further parallels lie with the character of Wolf and his presence in many fairy tales that are even referred to in a part of the psychologist’s dialogue, such as The Big Bad Wolf, for example.
11. Psychodynamic interpretation of the fairy tale: If an individual, such as the reader or audience member, can gain an understanding of the psychodynamic response and working psyche of fictionalised characters, they can gain perspective for themselves as well (Betts, 2009). Although this was partially implemented within this play, the attempt was to juxtapose this to have humans as a whole relate to the Absurdist theories this play contains. This was done to evoke a feeling of discomfort, alluding to the Meaning Maintenance Model theory on reworking the anomalies as associated with the



psyche in an attempt to compose this as an allegorical and visual depiction of the collective unconscious.

Through the use of this structure, all of the disciplines contained in this research were included in the play in some way, and this allowed for the practical exploration of the link that this research seeks to identify. This enabled a different approach for concluding by being able to visually identify recurring patterns within the disciplines, such as symbolism, the search for truth and the darkness of man, as well as his repetitive nature.

Habit and the construct of man-made realities through the essence of time may be mechanical and boring, fundamentally opposed to the essence of life, yet when forced to face our existence, we are engulfed by agony, thus making habit the lesser of the two evils. This was relevant in the creation of this text in showcasing a visual possibility of what happens when one dissociates from their existence and pushes for the loss-meaning of the human condition. Does one condone becoming part of the conventional masses (or the “herd”)? Does one break apart their anomalies and give in to the beast within? This essence of what man is supposed to be – or could be – was the primary message this play sought to deliver. The only escape is through death, and even that is habitual and repeated every single day (or, in the case of this play, every hour, which holds to it as well). The concept of thought and language enable the facilitation of the comprehension of underlying philosophical and psychological convictions (Karoly, 1996:41). However, even this gets lost to us numerous times in our lives. As individuals, we are all on different cognitive levels, different platforms in life, have different ways of dealing with our inner beasts and have a different sense of loss in time, thought and language. What we do share, however, as the collective unconscious, is this constant yearning and search for meaning. We see this in the depiction of symbols, through analysing characters, through picking through texts and constructs, yet we do so without purpose and without truly knowing why. With this in mind, we may find some truth within this text, in that a coherent world itself is absurd, and most likely, so is humankind.

### **5.3 The production process of *Wolf***

#### **5.3.1 Directorial preparation**

As this research has dual counterparts of a theoretical study and a practical component, I was also in the position of both a researcher and an artist, in the sense of writing the text as well as

directing the play. My approach to these dual counterparts was for the research to lead to putting things into practice and further research any new ideas that may present themselves during the artistic exploration, as outlined by the Iterative Cyclic Web as my methodology (discussed in Chapter 1). As part of my directorial preparations, my primary focus was on gathering the research and creating the text. With this, I was able to bring the practical piece to life by giving it an aesthetic vision that encompasses the elements of both fairy tales and the Theatre of the Absurd.

To achieve this vision, the next step was to create the set along with its different worlds as they relate to the different characters. This was done predominantly on paper and is included in Addendum A, thus putting the key ideas into a descriptive form before aesthetically visualising them. This visualisation took place throughout the process, through creating décor, sourcing props and implementing changes where something might not match the aesthetic or might be too difficult to implement fully. Naturally, in creating these character worlds, one needs characters as well, which led to the next process: auditions.

The audition process was open to all students from the second year and up at the University of Stellenbosch, specifically those enrolled in the BA Drama and Theatre Studies degree programmes. Auditions took place over three days, of which one of those days consisted of call-backs. In the audition form and announcement itself, I laid out the basic plot of the story, along with its nature being Theatre of the Absurd, with the incorporation of fairy tales. This was a means of preparing any actors that may want to audition for the specifications of the play. After the audition process concluded, I proceeded with the call-backs, in which I gave the voluntary actors scenes from the written text to act out in an improvisational way. This allowed me to make clear casting decisions based on who already possessed physical traits and abilities (such as dancing capabilities, for example) that I attributed to the characters. While the actors were volunteers, my focus remained on the characters, with the actors merely giving life to the research and visual elements attributed to them by the insights of this research.

### **5.3.2 Rehearsals**

The rehearsals took place over a four-week time frame, ranging from three to five rehearsals per week at two to five hours per rehearsal. Throughout this process, the actors were merely a tool to bring the researched and created characters to life. This was done by giving them their

character analysis before rehearsals started, and their thought processes given to them as the process unfolded. This was done so as not to stray from the research or have any personal bodies of afflictions involved, but to keep the characterisations as merely a portrayal of the research put into practice; as such, the actors functioned only to visually express premeditated ideologies. To properly maintain this, I proceeded to put into action the ethics as discussed in Chapter 1. The rehearsal experience ran very smoothly, as the actors were very diligent in their efforts and thus were able to communicate the vision clearly while working well in a semi-ensemble cast.

### 5.3.3 Technical aspects

This was perhaps my favourite aspect of the entire process. I was very fortunate to have a creative and hardworking technical team working beside me that both aided in bringing my vision to life and doing so in a realistic way. For the aesthetic vision, I was influenced by some of the techniques used by Beckett and Ionesco. This included the incorporation of the conventions of the Theatre of the Absurd as introduced by Beckett, as well as Ionesco's method of externalising the anxiety of the characters through objects (Esslin, 1962:129). The latter technique, as brought to life by Ionesco, allowed the stage to speak a visual language of its own, highlighting images of implicit danger, fear and alienation. This was especially relevant in the two distinct character worlds of Red and the Three Brothers, with a literal sign placed indicating a dark forest ("Die Donker Woud"). An example in the world of Red included the trees created out of wire with dilapidated red cloth strung around them, alluding to a possibility of being either cut or getting caught in the wires. In the case of the Three Brothers, there were three doors suspended from the roof, creating the illusion that they could drop and fall at any time. These images of danger<sup>74</sup> both evoke angst and aid as precursors<sup>74</sup> to the danger to come.

In further conveying the feeling of angst and an uncanny distorted world, the incorporation of a single continuous sound and lighting experience was incorporated. The sound used throughout the play was the slightest, softest sound of a ticking clock, constantly alluding to discomfort and causing an unconscious cognitive association with time<sup>75</sup>. The only other sound cues were the songs that Red danced on, though these songs were in opposition to each other,

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<sup>74</sup> Photos of the set have been included in Addendum B for visual reference.

<sup>75</sup> This is merely an assumed statement, as it was the attempt, however no audience members were interviewed during or after the play to justify its accuracy.

mimicking the sense of time ticking on. It started with a gentle song<sup>76</sup>, and as the play progresses, the next song becomes more evocative of the element of danger<sup>77</sup>, as a foreshadowing mechanism due to it being repeated during the actions leading up to and in the event of Red's death.

The lighting in this play was also used as a visual storytelling tool. It allowed the audience to understand which reality was being followed and in which world they were placed. This was especially vital in making a visual jump between being in the mind of Wolf, versus being in his memory, versus being in the present – which was the psychologist's office. The lighting further allowed for creating ambience and playing on the characters' thoughts and lives. An example of this is that of having used lighting to create shadows during a scene where Red was telling a story of citizens that are half man, half wolf, taking the audience away from the visuals and intently listening to the story, as it is a fairy tale re-imagining of Wolf's reality. A second example would be lighting placed on the doors of the Three Brothers, and each time a brother dies, the light on their specific door dies out.

The final technical aspect to be discussed is the incorporation of details of the fairy tale genre. Apart from influencing the development of the characters, the fairy tale genre presented itself in the different character worlds through props and décor. In the case of the Fairy Godmother/psychologist, we had two books that were the tales of “The Three Little Pigs” and “Little Red Riding Hood” present on her bookshelf. In Red's world, the ever-famous picnic basket was incorporated, along with a fairy tale favourite element of the apple. Lastly, in the case of the Three Brothers, each brother had an element referencing the original story of “The Three Little Pigs”, including a bed made of straw, a fireplace made of sticks/wood and a small brick wall. Each of these inclusions allowed for a visually aesthetic play that incorporated the world of fairy tales and the elements of the Theatre of the Absurd, all while causing angst and discomfort in the audience members. This allowed for a practical means of testing the link as hypothesised in Chapter 1 and gaining more insight into theoretically theorising this link.

#### **5.3.4 Challenges**

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<sup>76</sup> “Woman” by Mumford and Sons, 2018

<sup>77</sup> “Wolf” by Fever Ray, 2011

I was very fortunate in having a very smooth theatre experience, especially due to having a wonderful creative team from cast to crew. Effective time management and being fully prepared throughout the process aided in making the journey easier than expected. There were, however, a few challenges, all of which were resolved creatively.

A technical challenge – the “explosion”: One of the more advanced technical incorporations in this play was creating an explosion of blue. The reason for this was to create a physical manifestation of a play on words in a visual way of the original tale of “The Three Little Pigs”. The idea was for Wolf to say, “I huff and I puff and I blow”, but due to this play being bilingual, the word, “blow” is a homonym of the Afrikaans “blou”, meaning blue. A creative decision was made for this blue explosion to occur. This was, however, not easy to achieve, and many attempts were made with many different techniques – all of which were unsuccessful. Eventually, a solution was found by throwing blue paint powder into a bicycle pump which was hidden inside the cauldron and behind the brick wall, allowing a stagehand to push down on the pump on cue to initiate the explosion.

A casting challenge – compromise and re-evaluation: There were other productions on the go during the auditions for this play, and so some actors were cast in both my production and others. However, through compromise and re-evaluation of the voluntary actors that attended my call-backs, a solution was found and all productions were seemingly satisfied with their cast. I was very fortunate with mine, as they exceeded my expectations entirely and showed immense dedication.

A world challenge – staging a production during COVID-19: Staging a full-length theatrical production during the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic was possibly the most challenging part of this entire process. For the safety of the actors, the Drama Department implemented rules for social distancing and always wearing masks, including during rehearsals and the actual performance. Fortunately, due to the nature of this play and with creative thinking, the cast and I were able to work around this. For example, in implementing social distancing, we incorporated a murder weapon that was taken from the cloak of Red, allowing each character's murder to be done via a prop as opposed to any of the actors touching each other. In the case of wearing the masks, we incorporated this into their costumes, as the Three Brothers, for example, had pink masks with black dots representative of pig snouts, once again, alluding to the original tale they were based on. The last challenge in this area was the limited number of

audience members that were allowed to watch, with the social distancing rule being implemented amongst them as well. The audience limitation was easily resolved by adding an extra performance. The implementation of social distancing played in the favour of this research, as it physically alienated the audience members from each other, thus highlighting this sense of loneliness and loss as associated with the human condition and explored in the principles of the Theatre of the Absurd.

#### 5.4 Notes and feedback

After having four successful runs of the show, my next stage in the process was answering questions on the practical element as the researcher, posed by the examiners of the production. This section is dedicated to the feedback given and questions that arose, along with my notes on these queries.

| Questions   | My notes  | Additional comments/explanations  |
|---|---|---|
| Is all of mankind stupid and is that our absurdity? | Cognitive development and capability differ from one individual to the next. Some are “stupid” in certain scenarios, others are “stupid” in a different set of scenarios. The absurdity here lies in the underlying metaphorical search of putting this “wisdom” into the mode of obtaining our purpose, which – under the philosophy at hand – is a meaningless search. As such, people are “stupid” in their attempt at finding this purpose and their meaning within this purposeless world. | This was initially a statement that makes use of a play on words. “Mensdom” is translated as “humankind,” but switching around “mensdom” to “dom mens” translates to “stupid person”. |

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| <p>We are caught up in a circular effect of violence, we all have a dark side – is that absurd?</p>  | <p>The circular effect was included as an element of the Theatre of the Absurd. The utterance of man’s dark side refers to the inner beast, referring to the dissociated expression of the psyche, as well as being symbolic of the beast that is “Wolf”.</p>                        |  |
| <p>Are we simply playing roles that repeat circularly and never end? Are we the limited humans never capable of breaking out of this stereotype?</p> | <p>Humans share three things in the circular effect of life: we are born; we search for purpose and meaning; we die. So, in that respect, yes. We play the role of “human”, a “character” that is metaphorically repeated throughout history and shares these same three traits.</p> |  |
| <p>What makes this character a “missing link”?</p>   | <p>This character is the portrayal of man’s condition, and the “link” appears when placing a “human” with absurd anomalies in an absurd world. This is expressed in more detail in the next section.</p>   |  |
| <p>Are you suggesting that fairy tales do not have any value to understand life and human nature, or is this just</p>                                | <p>Fairy tales have a link to evaluating and understanding human life, especially in a cognitive sense, as outlined in chapters 2 and 3. This is just lost on the Wolf character due to his dissociation from what</p>   |  |

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|--|---|--|
| through the lens of the Wolf character?  | is real and his abrasive ways of making meaning out of anomalies of his own accord.   |  |
| Are you suggesting that the disorders in the human psyche contribute to the meaningless existence dilemma? Hence creating an absurd world that is devoid of purpose. | Yes, especially in a case where one is not able to comprehend their anomalies. This creates an absurd world (or, in the literary sense, an illogical world) for themselves in their psyche to escape a world devoid of purpose.   |  |
| In whose shoes does one stand? Is that the question?   | This reiterates the stance that humans relive the same life over and over again as mentioned previously, only, perhaps, in a different pair of shoes. The shoes may change, but the human condition – a life devoid of purpose and the imminence of death – stays the same for all of humankind, hence linking in with the shared collective unconscious. | The reference to shoes comes from a visual trope that, after a character dies, only their shoes are left behind. This was implied especially when Wolf took the time to take off the shoes of the character Red. This refers to the story of “Cinderella”, in the sense that she is running around as a result of the construct of time, to escape the breaking of the magic, or in the case of this production, the illusions of being alive. |

### 5.5 How it further ties in with the research

The purpose of this section is to highlight the insights gained from the practical piece as they pertain to the theoretical research. An important note to make, firstly, is concerning the scope of this research. Due to the nature of this study incorporating a wide range of disciplines and relating these disciplines from a theoretical to a practical standpoint, as per the Iterative Cyclic Web (Smith & Dean, 2009:20), the scope became bigger than initially anticipated. A thorough investigation and discussion had to be adhered to, to fully comprehend the essence and nature



of the different disciplines to theorise a validated link as per the initial primary research question. This link also needed to be both theoretically supported and visually applied to a staged theatrical context, so the patterns found in the different disciplines as associated with the practical were as follows:

1. **Everyman – The character of Wolf:** From a Jungian stance and a fairy tale perspective, we were able to find an overlap in archetypes. These archetypes can help an individual to categorise others, as well as dissociate from the differences between them, whilst being rooted in the Absurdist nature of the condition of man, hence provoking an essence of the collective unconscious pertaining to the Self. Furthermore, we can establish that humankind has a dark side within – the metaphorical beast.
2. **Symbolism:** This element was initially a part of the textual incorporations in highlighting symbolic themes as associated especially with fairy tales. However, this element has shown a repetitive pattern in all the disciplines, possibly due to the human nature of searching for meaning within everyday life. This includes symbolic images associated with the psyche, fairy tale symbolic images, as well as symbolic stage images relating to the Theatre of the Absurd.
3. **Repetition:** This is a common factor in both the Theatre of the Absurd and fairy tales. From the insights gained in the practical component, this could also be representative of the psyche and man's condition. Two examples of repetition include the constant need for habits and cyclic living procedures, as well as the repetitive nature of time that seems to have control over humankind's repetitive thinking and behavioural patterns.
4. **Anxiety:** An unexpected element that was found in the theoretical research that showcased practically was anxiety or the feeling of angst. Firstly, from the bulk of the theoretical research, we understand this to form part of the villainous creatures associated with fairy tales due to the projection of fears and anxiety onto characters. Secondly, man faces general angst in his search for life's meaning, as presented in the Absurdist philosophy and visually showcased in the Theatre of the Absurd. Lastly, anxiety can be understood as an anomaly concerning dissociating oneself from an unpleasant situation at hand, and reacting in a mental state as associated with the psyche as a coping mechanism.
5. **Dissociation:** This is the factor that was brought up the most in all of the disciplines, as it can be spread into the dissociations of different worlds, such as reality versus fairy tales. Furthermore, it could also refer to dissociation of oneself, going to another mental

state to cope with anomalies at hand. Dissociation was also a factor that was “accidentally” practised throughout this research due to the extreme effect of alienation that was applied involuntarily as a result of the COVID-19 social distancing protocols.

6. **Truth:** Truth is subject to the realm it is placed in<sup>78</sup>. Theatre might not be instantly true, but it could hold up a reflective mirror to the truth. Fairy tales attempt to cloak the truth to reveal another truth. Truth within language and cognition is at a loss due to different means of comprehension. Lastly, what I perceive as the truth might not be what another individual might perceive as true, once again showcasing the devoid nature of purpose due to a loss of real truth.

With these insights, it became possible to visually highlight the elements and patterns in the attempt to theorise and explore the proposed link. Most importantly, there is perhaps not a singular link, but rather patterns that create a linkage between the two disciplines of the psyche and theatre within the realm of absurdity. The realm of absurdity is vast, as it falls under more than one discipline – hence both supporting its meaning in each discipline and also changing it when applied to a different one. The next chapter summarises these theoretical insights by providing an overview of them and also addresses the links at hand to support the theory as gained and deducted from this research.

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<sup>78</sup> This is not to be confused with the French Neoclassical ideology of verisimilitude, but has some merit to it. Verisimilitude refers to the appearance of truth within a play (Panttaja, 2012), and though all plays have an establishment of truth within them, they do not necessarily have to be believable, as in the case of this specific theatre style and its classic element of verisimilitude.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

### 6.1 Overview of the study

This study aimed to address the primary research questions as follows: What is the possible missing link between absurdities related to the human psyche (psychology) and the Theatre of the Absurd, as explored in the context of fairy tales?

For this research, the terms “absurd”, “Absurdism” and “absurdity” were defined within their respective fields. The two main definitions adhered to within this research include:

1. “**Absurd**” in the literary sense is defined as something being ridiculous.
2. “**Absurdism**” in the philosophical sense is defined as the futile search for meaning in a universe that is incomprehensible, devoid of a God or any true meaning.

Because this research can be deemed a comparative study, another term I would like to highlight is the “**psyche**”.

1. The “**psyche**” is defined as the mind in its totality, as distinguished from the physical organism. This term refers to the soul or the very essence of life.

The definitions of “absurd” and “Absurdism” versus “psyche” may be seen in an esoteric light; however much they seem to be in opposition, the former refers to a futile life and the latter to it being the essence of life. The main factor gained from this was the ultimate revolving around and contradicting of life itself, along with everything relating to the human condition. To be able to place these two oppositions in the same bracket, a third discipline had to be brought in. This third discipline had to embody similarities to the other disciplines, including a theatrical quality, philosophical nature and psychological deviance. This motivated the decision to revert to possibly the oldest tradition of humankind: storytelling – more specifically focused on fairy tales. Within this realm, the two main disciplines could be placed in a similar context, within a cognitive context of psychology and an Absurdist theatrical context as in the Theatre of the Absurd. These disciplines were further explored in a practical nature to express their interconnectedness visually and aesthetically in the embodiment of theatre.

To have the three main disciplines overlap, they first had to be split into their respective fields, where overlapping naturally occurred due to their clear similarities in key areas. This split was a choice made so each discipline could also be expressed and explored as a singular unit in its own right. Engaging with the disciplines separately, it became possible to gain two different perspectives on the theory aspect of this research. The first pertains to the theoretical link, as discussed below, and the second aided in applying the research into practice through using the

theory and using the insights and techniques gained from this theory to create a theatrical text and staged play. Therefore, chapters 2, 3 and 4 were focused on the singular disciplines both theoretically and practically applicable as follows:

### Chapter 2 – Psychology

Theory: An introduction to and exploration of the Theory of Mind, the Meaning Maintenance Model, the psyche from a Jungian perspective, and a Camusian perspective on a suppressed psyche. These were the main sections that aided in substantiating a partial connection from this specific discipline.

Practical: The Meaning Maintenance Model, cognitive responses to fairy tales, archetypes and psychological absurdities including dissociative identity disorder, schizophrenia and psychopathy. These sections aided in character and plot development concerning the practical piece, especially concerning how the psyche is prominent in both textual and character structure.

### Chapter 3 – Fairy Tales

Theory: **Symbolism** in fairy tales and those with **absurd elements** aided in substantiating a partial linkage from this discipline, illustrated by common patterns found within the other two disciplines. However, this discipline mostly provided the theoretical foundation that was practically applied.

Practical: Archetypes and the Wolf within fairy tales. Some of the insight gained in the section discussing the Wolf character also has theoretical value in substantiating a linkage, more specifically that which relates to man's darkness and inner beast.

### Chapter 4 – Theatre

Theory: This section is mostly dedicated to theatre, but has important incorporation of philosophy that pertains to this research, and which was the starting point in manifesting the Theatre of the Absurd. This discipline aided in substantiating a linkage through the section that adhered to this philosophy in **Existentialism** and **the Absurd**. Other sections included **Symbolism** and the **significance of the absurd**.

Practical: The styles of Absurd playwrights, conventions, analysing of Absurd texts and the creation and understanding of Absurd worlds.

Through comparing these three different fields and their two different perspectives, the linkages in the primary research questions became apparent. This link was explored practically which allowed for the visual portrayal of the theory and further substantiation of the ultimate link this research seeks to find.

A general objective entwined with this research was to investigate that psychology and theatre have a connection of their own, further stemming into the specifics of this research; psychoanalysis and the psyche from a Jungian perspective linking with the Theatre of the Absurd. In the same light, an objective/secondary question was to link the aforementioned psychological principles with fairy tales and fairy tales with the Theatre of the Absurd. The reason for establishing connections between the main two fields and fairy tales is to enable a simple understanding and stronger foundation of the “missing link”. Fairy tales are universal and their archetypes, symbolism, morality, collective understanding and cognitive inclusions are what allowed for a deeper exploration into linking the two main fields. Therefore, the concluding aim of including fairy tales was as a vehicle to find or theorise the missing link between the absurdities associated with the “psyche” and the Theatre of the Absurd.

## **6.2 The conclusion: theorising a missing link from the research**

Throughout this research, there was no direct link found between absurdities related to the psyche and theatre, specifically within the Theatre of the Absurd. There were, however, many overlapping elements and ideologies<sup>79</sup> identified in these two respective fields, especially after having placed them in the context of the third field – fairy tale literature – to highlight their similarities with a different perspective. Hence, as opposed to finding a missing link, this research rather theorises that one exists, through first applying linkages in the different fields and applying these patterns to the realms of the psyche and the Theatre of the Absurd both theoretically and practically.

In briefly reverting to the history of the development of the Theatre of the Absurd, we understand it to have gained popularity after World War Two, upon which time so many facets of human life had been changed. Due to its basis being primarily philosophical and about the Absurdist (Existentialist) philosophy, the oppressed human soul became the main objective for

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<sup>79</sup> These include the elements as discussed within the previous chapter and the theoretical linkage outlined in this chapter.

Absurdist playwrights to depict these calamities and dilemmas as brought forth by the war (Al-Qadhi, 2020). The emergence of this theatre style was revolutionary, as instead of presenting arguments of human life and existence, it presents it in **being**, as opposed to resolving, the absurdity of life and human existence. This representation of being was one of the queries that exposed itself at the start of this research: “being” as in existence, or the essence of a person? This homonym forms the backbone of the link between the two different disciplines explored here, as the Absurd philosophy depicts “being” as existence, and the psyche as the essence of a person. However, the Theatre of the Absurd allows for “being” to mean both existence *and* the essence of mankind, even if in allegorical form.

This theatre type is a means of making man aware of the realities of his condition, both consciously and unconsciously, especially through the ultimate implementation of **symbolism** and **visual evocation of imagery**. This imagery is specifically created to shock mankind out of a contrite existence that is especially associated with **self-awareness** (Esslin, 1962:390). Hence, this theatre type castigates the absurdity of lives lived in a state of unawareness and unconsciousness of the ultimate reality. This unconsciousness represents a metaphorical dialogue between the conscious, as proposed by Jung, such that the psyche has natural incorporation in attempting to make sense of this theatrical type. This is done through maintaining a sense of balance between opposing qualities as presented within the Theatre of the Absurd and the realm of fairy tales, whilst actively seeking individuation with what is expressed by this theatrical and literary type, as about the Self.

This esoteric approach is engrossed in the spiritual person along with symbols that become salient when reaching down to an archetypal level. This relates to the unconscious area of the psyche in the way humans are steered through, for example, unconscious symbols, which may have derived from the images as explored in seminal works of the Theatre of the Absurd. This analytical procedure and the human desire to both understand (such as in psychoanalysis), showcase (such as in theatre) and be driven by symbols forms a great part of what makes up the collective unconscious. This collective unconscious is what holds human ideologies and shared experiences, such as life, death, or whether elves have pointy ears or not, and a search for purpose and meaning. With these shared ideologies, we are both able to express and experience ourselves, others and theatre. In thought structuring, all of mankind shares a fundamental organic structure with common characteristics hidden in the psyche’s structures, thus correlating the psyche with the human condition.

Concerning these psyche-bound thought processes and the human condition, we find another opposition, especially within the process of meaning-making. Individuals may understand symbolic expressions, but their meaning-making behind these expressions may differ vastly due to different perspectives when it comes to truth. These processes were seen in the explanation of the Meaning Maintenance Model as well as the dissociation of complexes as explored within the psyche's absurdities of mental disorders. When we experience an event that breaks our known framework, we feel a sense of profound uncertainty or the feeling of the absurd; if an individual is not able to overcome the anomalies associated with the breaking down of this framework, the result could be a suppressed psyche. This suppressed psyche is manifest in the history of the Theatre of the Absurd, as this theatrical type was created in an attempt to overcome this (Al-Qadhi, 2020). For example, the Camusian stance expressed overcoming a desire for committing suicide. This escape from the Self is inevitable in existential reality that delves into the fruitless quest for identity, along with metaphysical despair, and alienation from oneself and reality.

These premonitions again share a link with the Theatre of the Absurd, as the writers of this genre have dealt with the rejection of suicide, the essential meaning of life, as well as the sharing of an individual that creates an ideology of society, as pertaining to the collective unconscious. These artists portray the dilemmas that lead to a suppressed human psyche, thus leading to the entire seclusion of man (Al-Qadhi, 2020). In theatrically demonstrating the vehement oppression and suppression of the human spirit, the likes of Camus, Ionesco, Beckett and other Absurdist dramatists incorporated non-grammatical sentences and shattered language. In this way, it showcases mankind as unable to express dreams, demands, yearnings or will of purpose. This is not meant to be unconsciously processed as an expression of despair, but rather man's endeavour to come to terms with the cosmic universe, enabling one to face up to the human condition and coincide with the collective unconscious.

Therefore, there is a possible link between absurdities as related to the psyche and the Theatre of the Absurd, however, the real truth in the link lies in mankind itself, yet truth may be deceiving as it is perspective-dependent; even the truth we know and what is "true" in fiction and theatre creates an absurdity in human logic. Humans can be the "missing link", a link that was never truly missing but rather misunderstood due to perceptual truths. The human condition is what roots the psyche (or is because of the psyche) and it is also the reflective mirror in theatre, showcasing ourselves and our own psyche's consciousness back to us. It lies in the creation and carrying over of fairy tales through storytelling, the ideologies behind

philosophy, and ultimately, it forms the collective unconscious forever searching for a meaning and a purpose in this life devoid of it.

### **6.3 Possibilities for further research**

This research centred on the incorporation of two main disciplines: the psyche within psychology and theatre, specifically the Theatre of the Absurd – along with two sub-disciplines within these: fairy tales, specifically selected, traditionally Western ones, and philosophy, specifically Existentialism. Thorough further research could be conducted in all of the smaller elements within each of these disciplines to either substantiate the theory, gain new insights or theorise a different linkage as follows:

Differentiation in fairy tales could be explored concerning African traditional fairy tales, for example, as well as more exploration of myths, folk tales and lore. This would help to delimit the study field. Implementation of these differentiations could potentially highlight the functioning of different psyches and outcomes in highlighting the specifics relating to particular cultures as opposed to a universal theory. Another class of research that could be explored further would be to take this discipline out of the equation entirely, as it was rather a discipline incorporated out of choice due to its entwinement and factors of similarity present within psychology and the Theatre of the Absurd.

This research had its focus and insights drawn from the works of specific practitioners, including (but not limited to) Camus, Jung and Ionesco. Further exploration could be carried out through the inclusion of other practitioners in a more detailed view, thus doing a comparative study on the insights, opinions and ideologies of other experts in their respective fields. Examples of this could be Freud versus Jung and Camus versus Sartre.

Incorporation that may have strengthened the outcome of this study (or added a change in perspective) would be audience inclusion. The audience forms the foundation of lived human existence and condition concerning the concepts explored in a theatrical setting. It could have been in this study's interest to gain insight from audience members through measures of subtle psychoanalysis, especially concerning their perspective on the outcome of the practical component. The three main reasons behind rejecting this possibility are the rules and limitations imposed by COVID-19 protocols, ethics involved in the inclusion of outside participants, and a personal academic lack of proper techniques associated with psychoanalysis. Concerning the latter reasoning, this could have led to a downfall, unless a second party was



part of this research that condones the study of psychoanalysis on members of the public, as the field of study examined in this research is limited only to that which is incorporated here.

On a final note, this research may be viable for a second comparative study, one of opposition to the futile existence of man. A study could perhaps be done in discounting or disproving the evidence and insights presented within this research. The psyche, theatre, philosophy and fairy tales have many other elemental branches that may disprove the pointless search for meaning in life. Hence, concerning the main confluences of this research, a new means of study could prove this research to be devoid of purpose.

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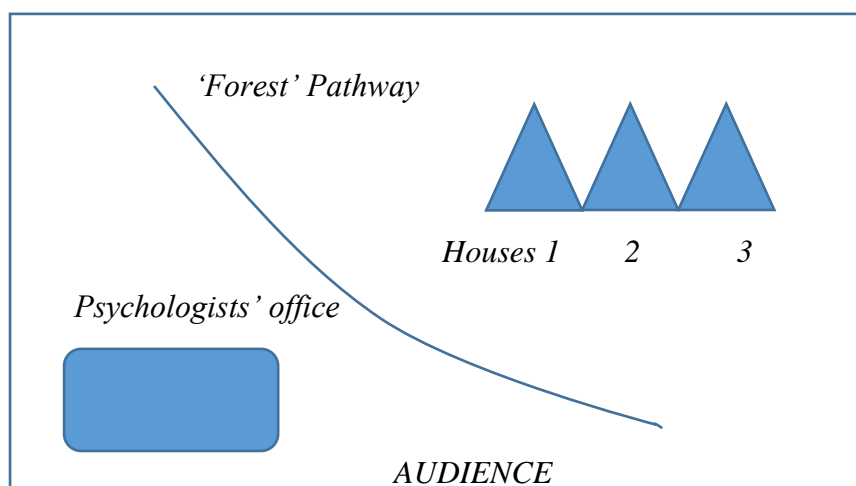
## Addendum A: The Text

**WOLF:** Written and Directed by Bianca Dell

**Set:** *Staging has three sections. Stage right is a psychologist's office. The office consists of a book shelf filled with absurd plays and fairy tales only, especially ones consisting of a wolf. There is a BIG clock on the Shelf (note this clock has to be working and the time has to be set to 10h55). The bookshelf is white, as are the remaining furniture's, a white wooden table with nothing on apart from a clipboard, two white chairs and a white rug that looks like a sheep's wool/fur.*

*Crossing through diagonally in a spiral form from upstage right to down stage left is a forest path. The forest is made out of barbed wire and dilapidated cloth (all torn red pieces). Down centre stage is a wooden sign with two arrows pointing, with one saying "The three brothers" and another one saying "Die donker woud"*

*Stage left we have the houses of the three little pigs. This is made up of three doors hanging from the ceiling. The one door has stacks of straw/grass in front of it (forming a bed). The second door has logs of wood in front of it creating a fire (lighting can make it appear real). The third door has bricks stacked at one side of it that curves around the door and has a wooden table and wooden chair in it. There is a cauldron on the table and vials/ bottles of scientific/medical nature.*



### Characters:

1. Connor Wolf

2. Fairy godmother/psychologist
3. Red
4. Hecate
5. Ordell
6. Claudia

## OPENING

*The stage is completely dark. There are howling sounds and whispers and sounds of wind whispering from the stage. In downstage centre we see a shadow movement, a physical theatre piece of sorts of a dog changing into a human. As he becomes human he slowly starts walking, as a spotlight starts to fade in on him. The howling and whispers become louder until it becomes a chant of “Wolf Wolf hoelaat is dit?” The spotlight brightens and he starts running in place, as the chanting gets louder and faster, so does he. Everything stops abruptly.*

## Blackout

## ACT i

**Lights on. Centre Spotlight. Sound cue: Soft ticking clock throughout.**

*Wolf is standing in his original spot. The curtains are closed. Another character is seated at one of the chairs placed stage right.*

**Wolf:** Punctuality is the virtue of the bored. Evelyn Waugh. ‘n Wyse man. Tyd is immers net ‘n mensgemaakte realiteit. Dit gee jou perspektief oor hoe lank om jou eiers te kook, ‘n gemaak in ‘n tydperk om by jou destinasie op te daag, soos my sielkundige se kantoor vandag, Dinsdag om elf uur. Om elf-uur. Die woord ‘om’ herinder my aan ‘n sirkel, ‘n siklus van verduideliking. Om elf-uur. Elf-uur val op die ronde horlosie wat heeltyd in die onbewus af speel. Luister bietjie...My hele lewe word uit beplan en gelei deur daai kenmerkende klank van mensgemaakte realiteit. Dis hoekom ek laat is. My eiers het te lank gevat om te kook, ek was nie bewus van die tyd nie. In dié realiteit is die lewe vol draaie, weereens ‘n verwysing na die siklus effek wat alles terug kom na die onrealistiese realiteit van mens dom. Of sê mens nou dom mens? In engels is dit human kind. Of is dit nou kind human? Wys vir my ‘n enkele mens van so aard, almal het hulle ewil, hulle donker. Dit alles as gevolg van die dom mens. Ek bedoel, natuurlik die mens dom. Sikluse van geweld broei sikluse van geweld. Die lewe en al sy kwale is ‘n sirkul, deur geskiedenis, deur oorloë, deur onregte, deur misbruik, deur politiek, deur psiegilogiese afwykings. Die mens gemaakte realiteit wat ons in strewe word keer op

keer herhaal. Dit begin die selfde. Dit eindig die selfde. Die dom mens speel die selfde rol oor en oor. Mag dit net sowel 'n 'once upon a time' benoem word. Of verkies julle lank, lank gelede?

*Wolf moves to the other chair stage right. Lights focus on stage right. Lights in Centre off*

**Psychologist:** You're late

**Wolf:** I'm late

**Psychologist:** You're late

**Wolf:** I'm late

**Psychologist:** You're late

**Wolf:** I'm late

**Psychologist:** You are late

**Wolf:** I am late

**Psychologist:** You are late

**Wolf:** I am late

**Psychologist:** You are late

**Wolf:** I am late

**Psychologist:** You are late again

**Wolf:** I am late again

**Psychologist:** You are late again

**Wolf:** I am late again

**Psychologist:** You are late again

**Wolf:** I am late again

**Psychologist:** Hello

**Wolf:** Hello

**Psychologist:** Hello

**Wolf:** Hello

**Psychologist:** Hello

**Wolf:** Hello

**Psychologist:** Hello, Connor

**Wolf:** Hello fairy godmother

**Psychologist:** Hello, Connor

**Wolf:** Hello fairy godmother

**Psychologist:** Hi, Connor

**Wolf:** No. You are wrong.

Lank, lank gelede. Van gehoor. Van gesien. Selfs aan gedink. Die onveranderlike tyd verskil tussen toe en nou het my in 'n ander pad van denke gelei. Sy was magies. Sy is niks. Sy is magies. Sy was niks.

**Psychologist:** Mister Wolf, your presumption on the unasked question already indicates your thinking process on the situation is situated in your current state of being. Yet in my time with you, you have not once elaborated on where the question derives from. Or whom it is referring to; her or to the event.

**Wolf:** To her! To her! Ek en sy was net 'n sielsgenoot paartjie wat aan die verkeerde kant van die lewe se spectrum gedans het. Sy wou altyd rooi wees. Waar ons moes gaan vir 'n sagter kleur. Wit. Neutral. Onbelangrik.

**Psychologist:** What is interesting to me Mr Wolf is your means of explanation, your formation of imagery in time and colour seems invalid, yet you keep using these descriptive terms to skip the true emotional value of what happened.

**Wolf:** Invalid? Haar naam was Red! En hy was blou van wat gebeur het na die tyd! En tyd... as ek nou terug dink het tyd nie eers bestaan met haar nie. En na dit was daar ook baie rooi. Altyd baie rooi. Nooit tyd nie.

**Psychologist:** What is your depiction of red?

**Wolf:** Her

**Psychologist:** No, the colour.

**Wolf:** It wasn't a question.

**Psychologist:** I see.

Let's filter through these images Mr Wolf. We'll play, as you would identify with, an improvisation game. I'm going to give you three verbal cues and you can depict them through physical action.

Love.

*Wolf depicts a smothering action*

**Psychologist:** Friendship.

*Wolf depicts a smothering action*

**Psychologist:** Family

*Wolf goes numb. No motion. No movements.*

**Wolf:** I like your shoes, they seem practical.

**Psychologist:** My, what big eyes you have

**Wolf:** The better to see you with my dear

**Psychologist:** How long, exactly have you played wolf?

**Wolf:** Since the 7 kids.

**Psychologist:** How long have you been an actor?

**Wolf:** I'm not an actor, I am wolf.

**Psychologist:** The big bad wolf?

**Wolf:** No. That's my father

**Psychologist:** Tell me about your father?

*Wolf goes numb*

**Wolf:** I like your shoes, they seem practical.

**Psychologist:** My, what big eyes you have

**Wolf:** The better to see you with my dear

**Psychologist:** Let's filter through some images Mr Wolf. We'll play, as you would identify with, an improvisation game. I'm going to give you three verbal cues and you can depict them through physical action. This time we'll shift through your emotional comprehensions. Compassion

**Wolf:** Verlede week was ek vasgevang in 'n illusie van tyd, weer, altyd, altyd weer. Dit was Mandag, net na my repetisies van Wolf en die drie varkies. Ek, was natuurlik Wolf. U moet verstaan, as 'n akteur word 'n mens maar getik om die selfde tipe rol oor en oor te speel. Dus speel ek altyd Wolf. Denke was wat my tyd op spandeer was na die repetisies. Denke oor ons sessies. Daar sal tog saam met my gestem word dat my progressie inderdaad van 'n hoë gehalte is. Met dit, weet ek ook dat medelye met vreemdelinge, of 'compassion' soos u dit benoem, 'n gevoel is en nie 'n emosie nie. Dus is my improvisasie beeld aan jou vir die spesifieke term; niks. Is die doel van jou te sien nie dat jy my emosies vir my ontleed nie, hoekom dan heeltyd speel, my lewe is nie 'n kinderverhaal nie. My tyd is min en dit word gemors.

**Psychologist:** Mr Wolf, I'll be frank with you. Your progress has been remarkable, but it still seems as though there is a slip into this fairy tale world every now and again. From my sessions with you, I have derived that you are aware that you have played the character of Wolf too many times in both Little Red Riding Hood, as well as the Three Little Pigs. Yet your associations to these seem more personal, more rooted, of a higher and prominent emotional value as opposed to just being an actor trapped in a character. What is your connotation to these fairy tales?

**Wolf:** Dis waar jy my misverstaan, ek is 'n akteur, ja, maar ek is nie vas gevang in 'n feëverhaal nie. Hulle was realiteit, sy was realiteit. Haar naam was Red! En hy was blou van

wat gebeur het na die tyd! En tyd... as ek nou terug dink het tyd nie eers bestaan met haar nie. En na dit was daar ook baie rooi. Altyd baie rooi. Nooit tyd nie.

*Wolf gets up and goes back to his spot from the opening position. Psychologist remains in office with light focused on her.*

**Wolf:** Ladies and gentlemen. Fairy tale creatures of all kinds. Thank you so much for attending my performance tonight. A special round of applause to my Fairy Godmother on the right here. Welcome, welcome, to my perspective. I find it nice and cosy in here, in my mind. Here in my mind, in here I find it nice and cosy. For my first act, I'll be showcasing the truth between Red riding Hood and the Wolf. She was simply a lowly, under loved female figure and I a man with a different sort of hunger. So let us all sit back. Relax and enjoy the feast!

**Psychologist:** Impulsivity, memory problems, tardiness, obsessive compulsiveness, a language switch, absurd notions, physical alterations, altered consciousness, Mr Connor Wolf and Wolf, a definitive presence of two very different personalities, each with its own relatively enduring pattern of perceiving relating to the environment and himself, with two very distinctive traits. Diagnoses 3.7: Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) DSM5 code 300.14 and on the (ICD of 10 F44.81). A family induced trauma perhaps? Note to self, amnesia is a common trait in this diagnoses that is not represented within the patient. As well as flashbacks.

## **BLACKOUT**

### **ACT ii**

*There is a flashing of a light to represent a flashback. A soft hue comes up on upstage right and centre stage, as well as down stage centre where wolf is standing. Wolf has a moment, exploring the inside of his mind where previously he was a wolf. He is now human.*

*Sound cue: "Women" song*

*The character RED comes in doing a soft ballet style physical theatre dance (Irish ballet inclusions). She continues even as the music is fading out. She stumbles and drops her basket.*

**NOTE:** *there is a big contrast between RED as a character and her movements*

**Red:** *(picking up the items) Ag fok. (an item is broken or squashed) Daar kak 'n R20.*

*WOLF attempts to help retrieve the things to put in the basket, absolutely mesmerised by RED*

**Red:** *Jy't nou niks gesteel nie right? Whatever, thanks vir die help. Ek kan nie vir jou 'n R2 aan bied of 'n loosie nie, maar hiers vir jou 'n appel. Dis nou groen, so ek hoop jy like van sour? Wats met die weird outfit?*

**Wolf:** Vra jy? Eks 'n akteur. Ek lewe en strewende in my karakter se liggaam om hom in 'n organiese lig te vorm.

**Red:** Daars niks organic aan 'n paar honde ore op jou kop nie. En my outfit is supposed om 'n runaway bride effect te skep plus eks blond en lyk goed in rooi. 'n Akteur? Ek weet nie of dit cool is of of ek jou jammer kry nie, oh well, enige iets beat my werk en lyk my ons altwee is in die kunste. Ek's Red by the way, nice to meet you. Ja dis my regte naam, eks 'n danser. Nie een van daai wat kaal tjet met die slange dans nie. Eks fokken bang vir 'n slang. Meer soos by 'n bachelors, amper soos 'n promo girl, net met meer interesting outfit choices... Soos jy kan sien... Werk is skaars though, die fokkers wil nie trou nie, dis hoekom ek so pissed is oor my wasted twenty. Nie dat jy gevra het nie.

**Wolf:** Uh, Connor. Connor Wolf.

**Red:** Jy's seker nie ernstig nie? Connor WOLF? Hoe absurd. Daai head getup maak nou sin. En shit hier dog ek eks die een met issues. Okay Mr Connor Wolf, I'll bite. Behalwe as jy meer die krap tipe is?

**Wolf:** Net as dit jeuk.

So. Red? Dis 'n ongewone naam. Ek vermoed jou ouers is ook kunstenaars?

**Red:** Ek sal nie weet nie, ek het hulle nooit geken nie, my ouma het my Red genoem, ek like dit. Dit gee vir my edge, pas by my hood girl thing I got going, jy weet independence, vat nie kak nie. Besides, Connor is net so weird naam, wat was jou ouers dan, con men? Jokes. Ek weet eks 'n danser en al, maar ek het actually 'n graad in Ierse mitologie, so ek weet Connor beteken lover of Wolves. So jou naam is lover of wolves wolf? Soos, wolf wolf? Maar ja, dis useless informasie, wat kan mens anyways met 'n BA graad doen?

**Wolf:** Ek is jammer om te hoor oor jou ouers.

**Red:** Nee man, dis cool. Hulle het letterlik net verdwyn, al wat hulle agter gelos het was 'n paar skoene, so who knows. Ek weet ook nie hoekom ek nou net dit vir jou vertel het nie. Eks seker my ouers sou vir my leer, never talk to strangers. En jy classify definitief as strange.

**Wolf:** En jy is nie? Vertel my meer.

**Red:** Okay so, daar was die king right, hy's soos semi-legendary, sy naam was Conchobar MacNessa en hy was die koning van Ulster. Hulle sê hy was die selfde tyd as Jesus Christus gebore. Jy's mos 'n actor right? So daar was very much 'n Shakespeare twist waar almal soos mekaar se lovers dood maak en shit. Anyways, hiers die cool deel, een van sy eerste vrouens was koninging Mebd, wat ook geken was as die Wolf Queen. Sy was soos 'n archetypal warrior character en baie strong willed. Sy was ook lekker los klink it my. Maar ek dink sy was maar net 'n OG feminis en die mans kon haar nie handle nie. Op die ou eind van die dag

was Koning Conchobar MacNessa en Koninging Mebd soos hectic enemies. Lyk my hy was toe nie so groot lover of Wolves na dit nie.

**Wolf:** Wow.

I think you are ravishing.

**Red:** You think I'm ravishing?

**Wolf:** I think you are exquisite.

**Red:** You think I'm exquisite?

**Wolf:** I think you are mesmerising.

**Red:** You think I'm mesmerising?

**Wolf:** I think you are beautiful.

**Red:** Seriously? Beautiful? Dis boring.

**Wolf:** No, you are wrong.

**Red:** Interesting. Connor Wolf. Wolf, hoe laat is dit?

**Wolf:** Tyd is 'n mensgemaakte realiteit. Jy sê jy is ook 'n danser?

**Red:** My, my, what big ears you have

**Wolf:** Better to hear you with, my dear.

Is Lord of the Dance deel van Ierse Mitologie?

**Red:** Nee, dit was very much Americanised. Maar van die dans routines in dit self was rooted in traditional Ierse dans. Wat baie rituelisties was in baie cultural events, letterlik van druidic worship na animal worship en selfs in oorloë. Dis moeilike though, Ierse dans.

**Wolf:** Sal jy saam met my dans?

**Red:** Nou?

**Wolf:** Nou, môre, gister, altyd.

**Red:** Ek dink nie so nie. Ek like dit nie as mense aan my vat nie Wolf. Wolf, hoe laat is dit?

**Wolf:** Tyd is immers net 'n mensgemaakte realiteit. Sal jy saam met my dans as ek nie aan jou raak nie?

**Red:** Nie vandag nie

**Wolf:** Wat van gister, môre, altyd?

**Red:** Ek sal daaroor dink Wolf. Wolf, hoe laat is dit?

**Wolf:** 9 uur

**Red:** Great, eks nie laat nie, maar ja... Dit was lekker om jou te ontmoet, Connor, ek moet in die pad val.

**Wolf:** Laas wat jy in die pad geval het, het jou maandjie saam met jou geval. Waar na toe gaan jy?



**Red:** Haha. Na my Ouma toe. Ek sien haar elke Dinsdag. Sy's bietjie siek, so ek vat maar vir haar haar weeklikse groceries, haar pille en maar net bietjie gossip you know.

**Wolf:** Elke Dinsdag.

**Red:** Elke Dinsdag.

**Wolf:** Sal jy Dinsdag saam met my dans?

**Red:** Jy hou ook nie op nie neh?

**Wolf:** Sal jy Dinsdag saam met my dans?

**Red:** Miskien

**Wolf:** Sal jy Dinsdag saam met my dans?

**Red:** Ek sal Dinsdag saam met jou dans.

**Wolf:** Sal jy elke Dinsdag saam met my dans?

**Red:** Woah. Nou push jy dit 'n bietjie.

**Wolf:** Sal jy elke Dinsdag saam met my dans?

**Red:** Miskien

**Wolf:** Sal jy elke Dinsdag saam met my dans?

**Red:** Ek sal elke Dinsdag saam met jou dans

*Lights fade and change from dark to light, light to dark. An indication that time is passing/has passed*

*Wolf and red do a retraction sequence with the light sequence, indicating that time has passed between them as well as follows:*

*Lighting with ACTION SEQUENCE 1*

*Lighting with ACTION SEQUENCE 2*

*Lighting with ACTION SEQUENCE 3*

*Lighting with ACTION SEQUENCE 4*

**Red:** Ek het vandag vir jou nog 'n Ierse mitologie, die een is soortvan 'n fairytale. So dis the man-wolves of Ossory. In die ancient Ireland, right, was daar 'n plague van moerse groot wolwe, nou in plaas van hom hulle te hunt of whatever, het die folk hulle gebruik om saam met hulle te baklei in oorloë. Hulle het villages vernietig en the works. Ons het wel later uit gevind dat die spesiefike wolwe was eintelik nie gebruik om mense aan te val nie, maar 'n donker kreatuur. Party sê dit was half man, half wolf, soos letterlik 'n beast. Nou Ossory was 'n koningryk met 'n koning met die naam Feardach en volgens sy broer, prins Laignech Fáeld, kon die koning en al sy kinders, as ook soos die mense van sy tribe, in hierdie half wolf/half human in verander. Hulle het soos games en shit gaan speel waar hulle vir fun gaan hunt en chase en onnodig doodmaak. Hulle het dit letterlik wolfing genoem. So toe noem

hulle die man-wolves Ossirians, of, the man-wolves of Ossory. Nou hiers die catch, dit het so evolve naderaand dat die wolwe uit die human bodies uit emerge het en die liggaam daar gelos het, soos ‘n dooie lyk amper. Maar niemand mag aan hierdie lyke gevat het nie. As hulle het, kan die wolf spirit nie die lyf weer vind nie en dan word die mense geurse om wolwe te bly vir eternity.

**Wolf:** En die person wat die lyk geskuif het?

**Red:** Wel, as ek ‘n wolf was sou ek ‘n regte bitch wees en die donder wat my curse gaan dood byt, dalk eët even.

**Wolf:** Wow.

I think you are ravishing.

**Red:** You think I’m ravishing?

**Wolf:** I think you are exquisite.

**Red:** You think I’m exquisite?

**Wolf:** I think you are mesmerising.

**Red:** You think I’m mesmerising?

**Wolf:** I think you are beautiful.

**Red:** Seriously? Beautiful? Dis boring.

**Wolf:** No, you are wrong.

*Lighting with ACTION SEQUENCE 5*

*Lighting with ACTION SEQUENCE 6*

*Lighting with ACTION SEQUENCE 7*

*Lighting with ACTION SEQUENCE 8*

*Lighting with ACTION SEQUENCE 9*

*When the lights stabilize, sound cue comes up, they start doing a dance routine, a chase between WOLF and RED. WOLF catches RED*

*Sound cue: “The Wolf”*

**Red:** Moenie aan my vat nie!!! Moenie aan my vat nie!! Ek like dit nie as mense aan my vat nie!

**Wolf:** Ek vra omverskoning.

**Red:** Ek weet nie of ek meer hierdie kan doen nie. Dit en jy en alles is eintelik fokken weird. Ek dans al vir 3 maande saam met jou, elke Dinsdag. Sonder konteks. Ek ken jou nogsteeds nie eers nie. Ek voel asof jy my manipuleer het van die get go af. Dit was daai groen appel

neh? Toe like jy wragtig sour. Kyk hier Connor, ek dink ons moet aan beweeg. Soos, het jy nie vriende of iets nie?

**Wolf:** Ja, drie.

**Red:** Natuurlik is dit drie, alles is altyd in dries met jou vir een of ander absurde rede. Ek wil net in vreugde na my Ouma toe gaan van nou af okay? Gaan kry vir jou 'n girl wat minder issues as ek het en wat op die selfde psiegiese vlak as jy function. I'm out.

**Wolf:** Jy het nie issues nie.

I think you are ravishing.

**Red:** Ja jy sê dit elke Dinsdag. Dis as of jy 'n routine het? En ek het issues okay. Weet jy hoe voel dit om net uit te vind jou ouers het besluit om te fokkof? Ek kan dit nie verdra as mense aan my vat nie omdat ek nie as 'n baba genoeg vas gehou was of whatever nie. Ek is nie stabiel nie right, maar jy is nog fokken minder. Ek het safety in jou gevind aanvanklik. Gedink jy's soos 'n charity case wat my kan laat beter voel. Maar partykeer kan ek nie onderskei of jy besig is om te act en of jy rerig dink jy's 'n wolf nie en soos pretend of dink of whatever dat ek rerig rooikappie is nie?

**Wolf:** Laaste dans

**Red:** Warrefok? Nee.

**Wolf:** Laaste dans

**Red:** Ek sê nee

**Wolf:** Laaste dans

**Red:** Luister hier, Psycho, ek het gesê nee. Ek weet nie waste fairytale world jy in leef nie, maar die deel van jou fairytale is klaar. Jy versmoor my.

**Wolf:** Ek het gesê laaste dans.

*Lights darken*

**Red:** My, my, what big eyes you have

**Wolf:** Better to see you with my dear

**Red:** My, my, what big ears you have

**Wolf:** Better to hear you with, my dear

**Red:** My, my, what big teeth you have.

*Music fades back in, while RED is wrapped in her hood/veil costume in a choking.*

*Smothering action. Wolf emerges with a single red cloth. He tucks it into his shirt/pants.*

*Before he leaves, he picks up the picnic basket. MUSIC FADES OUT.*

**Wolf:** Haar naam was Red! En hy was blou van wat gebeur het na die tyd! En tyd... as ek nou terug dink het tyd nie eers bestaan met haar nie. En na dit was daar ook baie rooi. Altyd baie rooi. Nooit tyd nie.

### **BLACKOUT**

*When lights come on, WOLF is back at the psychologist's office. In the space where RED was, remains a single pair of shoes.*

**Psychologist:** When was the last time you saw her, Mr Wolf?

**Wolf:** On Tuesday, fairy godmother.

**Psychologist:** It's Tuesday today

**Wolf:** It's Tuesday today.

**Psychologist:** It is Tuesday today.

**Wolf:** It is Tuesday today.

**Psychologist:** Do you love her?

**Wolf:** No.

**Psychologist:** Do you love?

**Wolf:** No.

Do you?

**Psychologist:** I feel love yes

**Wolf:** For who?

**Psychologist:** My children, mostly

**Wolf:** Do you smother them?

**Psychologist:** With love? Sometimes.

**Wolf:** I smothered her with love

**Psychologist:** Who?

Red?

Did she love you back?

Did she love you?

Did she reject you?

Did your family reject you?

I see

**Wolf:** I like your shoes. They seem practical.

**Psychologist:** So you've said. Let's recap. You mentioned you have three friends?

**Wolf:** Lank, lank gelede was daar drie varkies. Hulle moeder lief, dierbare vrou, het vir hulle gesê sy dink dis tyd, sien daars daai woord weer: tyd. Sy het vir hulle gesê dis tyd om uit die

huis uit te trek. Die drie varkies, almal mans natuurlik, was baie braf en het toe besluit om hulle eie huise te bou. Die eerste varkie besluit op 'n strooi huis so dat hy vir die res van die dag aan sy pyp kan huff en puff. Die tweede varkie is effens skerper en besluit op 'n hout huis, sodat hy heelyd hout het vir vuur om meer kos te maak. Die laaste varkie, die mensdom en nie die dom mens nie, besluit toe op 'n baksteen huis. Om heel aand lank sy vrou en kinders eendag met 'n baksteen te kan bliksem.

*Wolf gets up and goes back to his spot from the opening position. Psychologist remains in office with light focused on her.*

**Psychologist:** Diagnoses 3.7, again, failed to pen out. New symptoms arise. Distraught manners, faraway thoughts, out of touch with reality, disorganised behaviour, lack of emotional response, persecutory delusion. Diagnoses 3.8: Schizophrenia. (DSM-5) code 295.90 with ICD-10 of F20.9 A family induced trauma perhaps? Note to self, amnesia is a common trait in this diagnoses that is not represented within the patient. As well as hallucinations. Can he separate his world as an actor from reality?

## **BLACKOUT**

### **ACT iii**

*WOLF is standing in his central position with a basket in hand.. Light shifts to Stage left with 3 figures having their back to the audience. 3 figures break out in song and dance sequence*  
*SONG AND DANCE FORMS PART OF WORKSHOP BASED ON CHARACTER*  
*PERSONALITIES DEVELOPED IN PROCESS EXERCISE: The choices made were to remix*  
*'Bennie and the Jets'*

**Wolf:** Wag, wag, wag, dit het nie so gebeur nie. Ek is by Mandag. Nie by Dinsdag nie. Tyd is 'n mensgemaakte realiteit.

**Psychologist:** Mr Wolf, are you having distortions between your acting world and your real world, again?

**Wolf:** Klim uit my kop uit. Klim net uit my kop uit. Dit was na dat ek en Red uit mekaar uit was. Die drie broers het my oor genooi vir ontbyt. I huffed and I puffed and there was blue.

*Lights change, only focusing on Stage left.*

**Claudia:** Lank lank gelede! Lank lank gelede!

**Ordell:** Connor!

**Hecate:** Finally, someone with his head screwed on right. Hello Connor.

**Wolf:** Claudia, Ordell, Hecate, nice to see you.

**Hecate:** As you can tell from the state of this place, my brothers seem to like living like absolute animals, I apologize about the pig sty you have walked into.

**Ordell:** Praat jy, broer. Jou heksketel en flessies staan die hele plek vol

**Hecate:** Excuse me? I'm not the one that built a wooden fire in the middle of a living area and that drags a straw bed around with me.

**Claudia:** Lank lank gelede?

**Ordell:** Sê hom Claudia! My mooi vuurmaak plek het jou nooit van tevore gepla nie. Dis my kuns, hoe moet ek 'n beroep as 'n sjef uit leef sonder 'n kosmaak plek?

**Hecate:** A chef? As if that's a real job, you fall on the same spectrum as theatre actors, you're a seasonal treat if you can convince your patrons well enough.

**Ordell:** Oh en 'n chemise ingenieur is 'n regte beroep? Nie in die land nie skattebol

**Hecate:** Am I or am I not the man of this house? The only one bringing in any form of income.

**Ordell:** Oooh die arme verswakte manlike ego. Al wat jy jou so genoemde inkomste op spandeer is verf.

**Hecate:** If your two brain cells weren't so busy running into each other the whole time, you'll be able to tell the difference between paint and Methylthionium Chloride.

**Ordell:** Daar het ons dit dames en here, Hecate kook meth.

**Hecate:** I'll have you know that I'm on the verge of a breakthrough, this medication is used to treat methemoglobinemia, a condition of elevated methemoglobin in the blood. I'm trying to create an emergency cure with similar compounds without the added side effect of mental confusion

**Ordell:** Eks is nou geestelik verwaard. Kook jy meth op meth vir meth?

**Wolf:** Gepraat van kook. Ek dog ek is hier vir ontbyt.

**Hecate:** We have plenty of bacon, did you bring the eggs?

**Ordell:** Verskoon my broer Wolf. Wolf, hoe laat is dit?

**Wolf:** 10 uur.

**Claudia:** Lank lank gelede, lank lank gelede. Lank, lank gelede?

**Hecate:** That's a valid question, when are we meeting the ever famous Red?

**Wolf:** After breakfast

**Ordell:** After breakfast

**Hecate:** After breakfast

**Claudia:** Lank, lank gelede

**Wolf:** After breakfast.

**Ordell:** Ek maak vir ons vandag 'n heerlike eiers florentyn met gerookte spek en hollandaisesous.

**Hecate:** I prefer my eggs boiled.

**Wolf:** Gekookte eiers sal lekker wees.

**Claudia:** Lank lank geleede!

**Ordell:** Julle is seker nie ersntig nie? Gekookte eiers? Dit gaan lank vat. Die temperatuur van my vuur is gestel vir eiers florentyn.

**Hecate:** Then you better get huffing and puffing

**Ordell:** Nou wie gaan my help huffel en blaas?

**Claudia:** Lank, lank geleede!

**Ordell:** Nie jy nie Claudia

**Hecate:** Not you Claudia

**Claudia:** Lank, lank geleede!

**Hecate:** I'm sorry brother, we made a promise to mother to keep you out of any threatening situations until your cognitive development, well, develops.

**Claudia:** Lank lank geleede.

**Wolf:** Claudia, wees bly jou twee broers kyk so mooi uit vir hulle jongste broer. Nie een van my broers of sisters het my gehelp met enige iets nie. Nie my ma nie. Nie my pa nie. Nie my broers nie. Nie my sisters nie. Nie my ma nie, nie my pa nie, nie my broers nie, nie my sisters nie. Not my mother. Not my father. Not my brothers. Not my sisters. Not my mother. Not my father. Not my brothers. Not my sisters. Not my godmother.

**Claudia:** Lank lank geleede, lank, lank geleede, lank lank geleede, lank lank geleede, lank lank geleede? Lank lank geleede.

**Hecate:** Exactly what he said, you're our friend Connor, you're our fourth brother. Please, treat us like family

**Ordell:** Presies, ons kan die vier broers wees. Jy's ons familie. Hanteer ons soos jou familie.

**Wolf:** Familie

**Hecate:** Family

**Claudia:** Lank, lank, geleede!

**Ordell:** Familie. Nou as 'n familie lid, gaan jy my help huffel en blaas

**Wolf:** Het ek 'n keuse?

**Ordell:** Dit was nie 'n vraag nie. Hecate, jy help ook.

**Hecate:** Sorry to disappoint brother, but I need to get back to cooking my meth, as you call it. Connor, you're welcome to give me a hand after you've done your huffing and puffing.

*A chant sequence takes place around the fire place with WOLF and ORDELL:*

**Wolf & Ordell:** Huff and Puff. Huff and Puff. Huff and Puff.

**Ordell:** En blaas. *WOLF blows.*

**Wolf & Ordell:** Huff and Puff. Huff and Puff. Huff and Puff.

**Ordell:** En blaas. *WOLF blows.*

**Wolf & Ordell:** Huff and Puff. Huff and Puff. Huff and Puff.

**Ordell:** En blaas. *WOLF blows.*

*While this sequence is taking place, HECATE is mixing vials and ingredients together in her cauldron*

**Hecate:** Double, double toil and trouble; fire burn and cauldron bubble. Fillet of fenny snake, in the cauldron boil and bake; Eye of newt and toe of frog, wool of bat and tongue of dog... Tongue of dog? I don't have tongue of dog Ordell where do we keep our Tongue of dog?

**Ordell:** Jissus Hecate, kan jy nie sien eks besig nie?

**Hecate:** Tongue of Wolf, you'll have to do the trick.

**Wolf:** I huff and I puff and I...

*The cauldron has a blue explosion going off. Hecate has her face splattered in blue paint.*

**Wolf:** Blue?

**Ordell:** En jy wonder hoekom ek 'n sjef is en nie 'n chemise ingenieur nie...

**Hecate:** Oh shut up you pig

**Claudia:** Lank lank geleede! Lank lank geleede!

**Hecate:** You shut up as well. Connor, would you mind giving me a hand?

**Wolf:** You mean a paw?

**Hecate:** I mean a hand

**Wolf:** You mean a paw?

**Hecate:** I mean a hand

**Wolf:** You mean a paw?

**Hecate:** I mean a hand. I'll do it myself.

**Wolf:** Do you want to play a game?

**Claudia:** Lank, lank geleede!

**Wolf:** That's the spirit. Hecate? Ordell?

**Ordell:** Watse deel van gekookte eiers gaan lank vat verstaan jy nie? Ons kan na ontbyt 'n speletjie speel.

**Hecate:** Are you serious Connor? Did you see what just happened?

**Wolf:** I huffed and I puffed and there was blue.

**Hecate:** This is not one of your plays Connor. Get with it.

**Wolf:** It's Wolf



**Hecate:** Seriously Connor, stop it.

**Wolf:** It's Wolf

**Hecate:** Connor, I mean it

**Wolf:** It's Wolf

**Hecate:** Fine. Wolf. First lesson in having brothers Wolf, we help each other out.

**Wolf:** Let's play a game.

**Ordell:** Ag jissus man Hecate, haal jou vinger uit jou hol uit, vee jou gesig af en speel tog met die ou sy speletjie, jy kan mos sien hy's klaar in karakter, dalk berei hy voor vir 'n oudisie of iets. Moenie 'n vark wees nie. Dis jou vriend. Jou broer. Jou familie.

**Claudia:** Lank, lank geleede, lank, lank geleede, lank, lank geleede.

**Wolf:** Dankie julle. Hecate, as jy mooi saam speel, kan jy nou vir Red ontmoet.

**Hecate:** Why, is she here?

**Wolf:** She's close.

**Hecate:** How close?

**Wolf:** She's close

**Hecate:** Around the corner?

**Wolf:** She's close

**Claudia:** Lank, lank geleede, lank, lank geleede?

**Wolf:** Ja Claudia, jy kan haar ook ontmoet. Hecate. Sit vir my op die stoel asseblief. Claudia. Sit vir my op die bed asseblief. Ordell. Speel jy saam?

**Ordell:** Ag, hoekom nie, die eiers gaan nog lank vat om te kook.

*HECATE and CLAUDIA sit in their respective places. WOLF ties HECATE's arms behind her back using the red picked up from RED's scene.*

**Hecate:** I don't like this. What are you doing?

**Wolf:** It's an improvisation game. I'm going to be the big bad Wolf, in the same way my father was, and you are going to be the three little pigs.

**Hecate:** We are not characters in one of your plays Connor

**Wolf:** It's an improvisation game. I'm going to be the big bad Wolf, in the same way my father was, and you are going to be the three little pigs.

**Claudia:** Lank, lank geleede?

**Wolf:** It's an improvisation game. I'm going to be the big bad Wolf, in the same way my father was, and you are going to be the three little pigs.

**Ordell:** Ek het dit. Ek is gereed, wat wil jy hê moet ek doen?

**Wolf:** Be a pig. If you get it right, you win. If you don't, you lose. As simple as that.

**Ordell:** Ooooh dit klink opwindend.

*Ordell does a joking impression of a little pig. Everyone apart from WOLF laughs and is enjoying his gimmick.*

**Ordell:** Dankie, dankie. Hoe was dit? Het ek gewen?

**Wolf:** Be a pig. If you get it right, you win. If you don't, you lose. As simple as that.

**Ordell:** Ek was dan nou net een?

**Wolf:** Be a pig. If you get it right, you win. If you don't, you lose. As simple as that.

*ORDELL does another impression. This time more serious. No-one is laughing.*

**Ordell:** Was dit meer wat jy in gedagte gehad het?

**Wolf:** Pigs don't speak.

*WOLF snaps ORDELLS neck.*

**Claudia:** Lank, lank geleede, lank lank geleede, lank lank, geleede!

**Hecate:** Ordell? Ordell! This is not funny Ordell! Maybe I was cooking Meth, but the paranoia isn't funny Ordell! Connor? What's going on? Ordell! I want boiled eggs, please, please, I want boiled eggs!

**Claudia:** Lank lank geleede, lank lank geleede...

**Hecate:** Wolf please, please, what's going on? Untie me! Claudia, help me!

**Wolf:** Do you want to meet Red, brother?

**Hecate:** I don't know, yes? No? Yes?

**Wolf:** Let's play a game.

**Hecate:** I don't want to play a game!

**Wolf:** It's an improvisation game. Be a pig. If you get it right, you win. If you don't, you lose. As simple as that.

**Hecate:** Connor, please, listen to me. This is not funny. This is not a game. ORDELL! Wake up!!

**Wolf:** Your brother lost the game. He's meeting Red now

**Hecate:** Claudia! Run! Hide!

**Claudia:** *Hides behind own hands* Lank lank geleede...

**Hecate:** Connor, please...

**Wolf:** It's Wolf.

**Hecate:** Yes. Of course. Sorry. Wolf. I'll play with you, I'll be a pig for you. *Does a pig squeal impression.* There, see I'm a nice pig, *does a pig squeal impression.* I'm playing your game with you. *Does a pig squeal impression.*

**Wolf:** Pigs don't speak.

*Wolf snaps neck*

**Claudia:** Lank lank geleede... lank lank geleede...

**Wolf:** Hulle het gesê ek moet hulle hanteer soos familie. Dis wat ek gedoen het. Ek was gaaf genoeg om hulle aan my liefste Red voor te stel. En Ordell kon nie eers my ontbyt klaar maak nie. Die eiers gaan nou lank vat om te kook.

*Pause*

**Claudia:** Lank, lank geleede.

**Wolf:** Miskien kan jy vir Ordell gaan vra waars die bacon?

*Wolf moves closer to CLAUDIA, lights start fading out into a BLACKOUT. Claudia keeps screaming out "lank lank geleede" and stops abruptly before uttering:*

**Claudia:** Fluit, fluit, my storie is uit.

*Wolf moves into starting position with lights coming up, he is running.*

### **BLACKOUT**

*Lights come up on stage right in psychologist's office. Where the previous characters were are only their shoes that they wore.*

**Psychologist:** When was the last time you saw them, Mr Wolf?

**Wolf:** On Tuesday, fairy godmother.

**Psychologist:** It's Tuesday today

**Wolf:** It's Tuesday today.

**Psychologist:** It is Tuesday today.

**Wolf:** It is Tuesday today.

Today is Tuesday.

Today is our last session.

**Psychologist:** Oh?

**Wolf:** Yes, fairy godmother, your magic touch has surely helped me progress. I feel more myself than ever before.

**Psychologist:** And who is that?

**Wolf:** I am Wolf

**Psychologist:** Are you Wolf from red riding hood?

**Wolf:** No that is my sister

**Psychologist:** Are you wolf from the three little pigs?

**Wolf:** No that is my brother

**Psychologist:** Are you the Wolf in sheep's clothing?

**Wolf:** No that is my mother

**Psychologist:** Are you the Big Bad Wolf?

**Wolf:** No, that is my father

**Psychologist:** Are you the Wolf from Wolf and the 7 young kids?

**Wolf:** No that is my godmother.

**Psychologist:** Your godmother?

**Wolf:** You have kids

**Psychologist:** I do.

**Wolf:** Are they your biological children?

**Psychologist:** No

**Wolf:** Once upon a time, there was a mommy wolf, a daddy wolf and their 8 little baby wolves. Now we all know wolves travel in packs and we all know each litter has a runt. The runt in our fairy tale today had a very difficult time. He was bitten and beaten, beaten and bitten. They hit him like a dog. They hit him with a shoe. Like a dog he was hit, he was hit with a shoe. Canines are funny creatures. They like chewing shoes and they are carnivores. But did you know, fairy godmother, that wolves are extremely opportunistic when it comes to being carnivores, cannibalism is a very common trait among them. They eat their sick and injured. They also eat their enemies. Let's get back to my story. The runt of the litter was, as nature would have it, kicked out. The parents however, suffered an unfortunate event, having only the shoes left behind. The kids, however, were lucky to survive and were taken in by their wonderful godmother. All but 1 of them.

**Psychologist:** Connor. Why do you call me fairy godmother?

**BLACKOUT**

**CLOSING**

*A spotlight on downstage centre on the PSYCHOLOGIST Sound cue: Ticking clock gets slightly louder*

**Psychologist:** Diagnoses 3.8, again, failed to pen out. New symptoms arise. Superficial charm, high intelligence, pathological egocentricity, incapability of love or remorse. Pathological lying. Manipulation. Grandiose sense of self-worth. A bold efficacious interpersonal style. Diagnoses final: Psychopathy. Abstract, not recognised in the DSM -5, the diagnostic statistical manual represents an anti-social personality disorder, code 301.7 with ICD of F60.2. A family induced trauma. Relevant, regrettably so. Note to self: There is no evidence of patient possessing serial killer tendencies. Is he, as a psychopath on the brink of? Is the patient a psychopath or is the patient just a really good actor?

*Lights darken, but not too much, in order to see all the shoes left over on the stage*

*All the characters slowly emerge and stand behind their shoes*

**All (but wolf & psychologist):** Wolf, wolf, hoelaat is dit?

*Wolf snaps Psychologists neck*

**Wolf:** Eërens tyd.

*Sound cue: Only the ticking clock.*

**BLACKOUT**

*Centre spotlight comes up on only a pair of shoes where the psychologist was standing*

*Sound cue: Ticking clock fades out.*

**\*\*\*END\*\*\***

## Addendum B: Production photo's

Image 1: the character Wolf



Image 2: the character Fairy Godmother/Psychologist



Image 3: the character Red

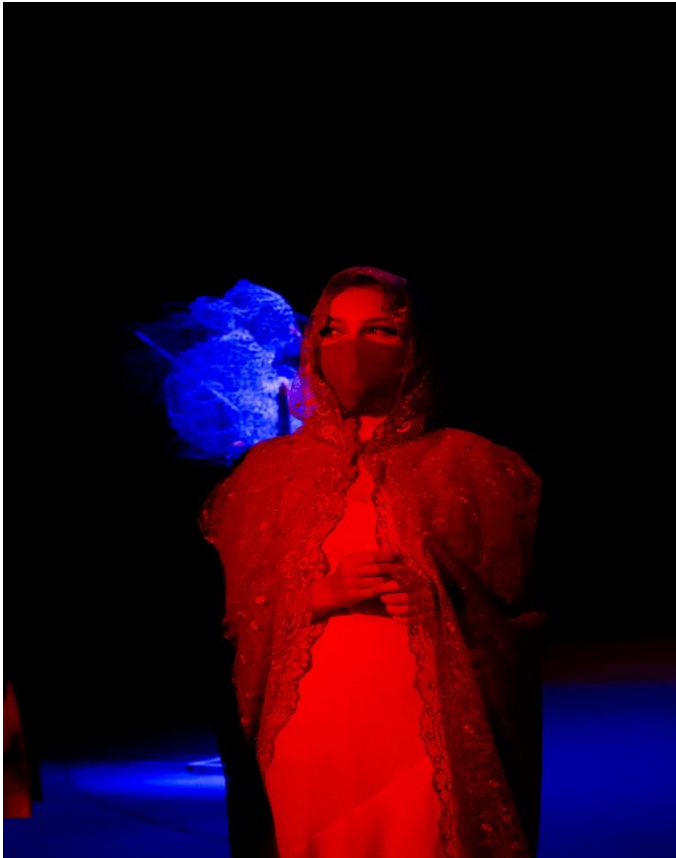


Image 4: the Three Brothers Claudia, Ordell and Hecate





Image 5: Set – the Psychologist’s office



Image 6: Set – Red’s Forest





Image 7: Set- the Three Brothers Houses

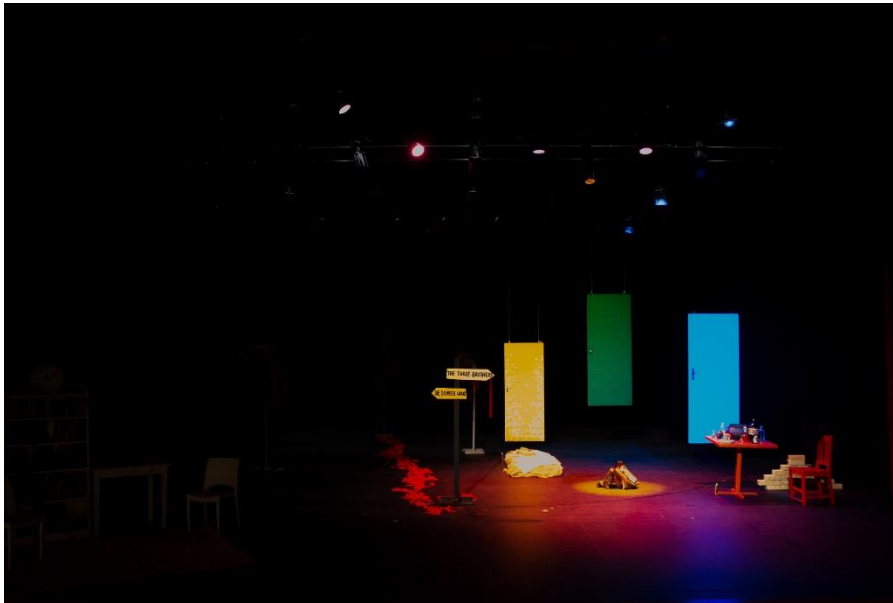


Image 8: Set – The sign



Image 9: Playing with Shadows



Image 10: The death of Red



Image 11: Hecate's work station and props



Image 12: The ‘explosion’



Image 13: The Fairy Godmother/Psychologist’s death



Image 14: The End:

