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Healing and Reconciliation for Constitution Building in Zimbabwe through Theatre: A case study of ‘Heal the Wounds’ and ‘Waiting for Constitution’

By

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE WITS SCHOOL OF ARTS IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF A MASTER OF ARTS IN DRAMATIC ART DEGREE BY COURSEWORK AND RESEARCH REPORT

**SUPERVISED
BY
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MARCH 2011

DECLARATION

I declare that this report is my own unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Arts in Dramatic Arts to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination to any other University.

Tonderai Cosmas Chiyindiko

15th of August 2011

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DEDICATION

For Tawanda, who returned...and to my beautiful daughter, Watipa
Chenille Chiyindiko who has been far from the eye, but never from the
heart...

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIO Central Intelligence Organisation
COPAC Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee
GNU Governmental of National Unity
MDC-T Movement for Democratic Change (Faction led by Morgan Tsvangirai)
MDC M Movement for Democratic Change (Faction led by Arthur Mutambara)
MP Member of Parliament
NAC National Arts Council
NCA National Constitutional Assembly
NGO Non Governmental Organisation
NCA National Constitutional Assembly
SADC Southern African Development Community
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
ZANU-PF Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)
ZAPU Zimbabwe African Peoples Union
ZRP Zimbabwe Republic Police
ZACT Zimbabwe Association for Community Theatre
ZIMFEP Zimbabwe Foundation for Education with Production

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGES
DECLARATION	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
DEDICATION	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	v

1. CHAPTER ONE: PROTEST THEATRE

1.1: From Politics to Protest: The Evolution of Theatre in Zimbabwe	1
1.2: Aim	5
1.3: Rationale	8
1.4: Research Questions	12
1.5: Theoretical Framework	15
1.7: Research Methods	17
1.8: Limitations	19
1.9: Study Layout	20

2. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW OF PROTEST THEATRE IN ZIMBABWE

2.1 Overview of the history of protest theatre in Zimbabwe	22
2.2 Recent Trends in Zimbabwean Protest Theatre	30
2.3 Current state of Protest Theatre in Zimbabwe	31
2.4 Conclusion	34

3. CHAPTER THREE: PROTEST THEATRE ENGAGING WITH HEALING AND RECONCILIATION IN ‘HEAL THE WOUNDS’

3.1 Introduction	36
3.2 Synopsis of ‘ <i>Heal the Wounds</i> ’	37
3.3 Title of the play	38
3.4 Characterisation	42
3.5 Language	46
3.6 Structure	50
3.7 Conclusion	50

4. CHAPTER FOUR: ‘WAITING FOR CONSTITUTION’ AS PROTEST THEATRE IN THE SERVICE OF CONSTITUTION-MAKING

4.1 Introduction	53
4.2 Synopsis of ‘ <i>Waiting for Constitution</i> ’	56
4.3 Title of the Play	57
4.4 Characterisation	59
4.5 Style/Form	63
4.6 Language	65
4.7 Conclusion	66

5. CHAPTER FIVE: EMERGING PARADIGMS IN PROTEST THEATRE IN ZIMBABWE

5.1 Introduction	67
5.2 Findings	67
5.3 Recommendations	71
5.4 Conclusion	73

Bibliography	75
Appendix 1	80
Appendix 2	82
Appendix 3	83

1. CHAPTER ONE: PROTEST THEATRE

1.1 From Politics to Protest: The Evolution of Theatre in Zimbabwe

This study seeks to address protest theatre as an applied theatre form in the service of political activism in contemporary Zimbabwe. The study will examine the place of protest theatre, with specific reference to two case studies, within the context of constitution-making and healing and reconciliation. Given that protest plays are not a new phenomenon on the Zimbabwean theatrical landscape; the research will attempt to locate these plays from a historical angle.

From as far back as the pre-independence times, different forms of political theatre existed and they served different purposes. This theatre genre has been at the forefront of articulating social-political issues in the past and more-so within the contemporary times. Historical examples of this kind of theatre are the plays that were used for political orientation and conscientisation of the masses during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. One such play was called '*The People are Invincible*' which was produced by students in one of the liberation camps. The play's title seems to suggest that it was meant to embolden and strengthen the resolve of the fighters and collaborators as they fought for liberation from colonialism. Thus such a play would naturally portray political views that went hand in hand with the ideology of the *Chimurenga* (war of liberation).

Furthermore, it was political theatre because it had a revolutionary outlook and bias, and sought to raise awareness and solicit support for the liberation struggle (Chifunyise 1994). This kind of theatre was political because it sought to 'mobilise black African people and promote mental decolonization...' (Kaarsholm 1994:226). Thus political theatre was and became the 'theatre of the times' as it attempted to play a role in the political education of the *guerillas* (fighters) on the one hand, and the masses on the other.

The early 80's however saw the emergence of a different type of theatre which came to be called 'community theatre'. This kind of theatre is widely thought to have been the precursor to the

protest theatre movement in Zimbabwe. At that time, the protagonists of community theatre were two exiled Kenyan theatre practitioners, Ngugi wa Mirii and Kimani Gegeu. They worked under the banner of Zimbabwe Foundation for Education with Production (ZIMFEP) which was an early education project that sought to find ways of furthering the use of drama because of the success it had had in the time of the *Chimurenga*.

Ngugi wa Mirii would later be instrumental in the formation of the Zimbabwe Association of Community Theatre (ZACT) which became the mother body for the movement. ZACT's main achievement was to bring community theatre groups' together under one umbrella body.

An example of the first hugely successful community theatre plays produced by ZACT was *'The Trials of Dedan Kimathi'* written by Kenyan playwright Ngugi wa Thiong'o which toured many parts of the country. Prominent Zimbabwean playwright and theatre historian Stephen Chifunyise states that this play heralded the success of community theatre plays because it resonated with people's experiences and was made with their participation and input (1994:66).

In a way one could say that this kind of theatre where the community was actively involved resonated with the tenets of 'applied theatre'. As community plays further developed, that audience-performer relationship would gradually fade but still reappear from time to time either by design but mostly accidentally in various plays.

The progression from political to protest theatre was by no means a straightforward and Chifunyise argues that 'most of the plays written by Zimbabwean playwrights fitted well into the category of political theatre' (1994:61). One could argue that by then, one political epoch of colonization had passed therefore the post-independence plays could still be regarded as 'political' but not in the sense of the pre-independence outlook or orientation. This argument is premised on the idea that the themes and issues depicted in the plays were essentially about various 'socio-political issues' as they affected people's way of life. Examples included plays such as *'Mavambo*,

First Steps, *Katshaa!* (1985) and *Samora Continua* (1988) produced by university (of Zimbabwe) theatre group, 'Mavambo/Izibuko' (McLaren 1992:106).

Under the watchful eye of prominent South African actor, director and activist Robert McLaren, the 'use of poetry, revolutionary song, and interaction with the audience' became a defining feature of Mavambo/Izibuko's productions (McLaren 1992:92). Hailing from an early South African protest theatre era, he was;

...part of a small group of theatre artists who came together and decided something must be done to alert Zimbabweans of the battle raging just over the border, to mobilize them in solidarity with the struggle there (McLaren 1992).

According to Chifunyise the plays initially produced by Mavambo/Izibuko had 'a political thrust which made them suitable for commemorative and solidarity events and conferences' (1994:65). The plays therefore played a 'political role' but one that unwittingly placed them in bed with the new black majority government. On the other hand, the plays Mavambo/Izibuko produced 'effectively turned the university into a workshop for political theatre' (Chifunyise 1994:62). The plays followed an agit-prop format in terms of their style of presentation and this would later be adopted by other community theatre groups.

Another seminal political play to emerge during the same period was Habakuk Musengezi's *The Honourable MP*. The play was a critique of 'politicians in independent Zimbabwe who advocate socialism while depending for their survival on the capitalist economic infrastructure' (Chifunyise 1994:62). This play took an openly militant and confrontational stance in that it directly criticised the way the government of the day was running the country. This was a further move away from the conformist political theatre that had existed up to that point.

Interestingly, at the end of the play it was not the same government that intervened to overturn the oppression but ordinary peasants who took it upon themselves to liberate themselves. The play showed the

role that theatre could play in articulating critical issues through empowering the people or masses to free themselves. McLaren thinks that it was inevitable for this ‘critical theatre’ to emerge because ‘much of the original revolutionary optimism had evaporated, to be replaced by increasing disillusionment (1992:113).

Since then, the political or protest theatre has come to be the dominant genre largely in response to the numerous social and political issues Zimbabwe has faced over the years. This ‘theatre of protest’ has come to be renowned for its hard-hitting and no-holds barred dramatic depictions that have incurred the wrath of the state wherever and whenever they have been staged. Such a scenario has made protest theatre be at constant loggerheads with the authorities.

Protest theatre as it currently exists in Zimbabwe has had many protagonists but the most prolific has been Harare based theatre company Rooftop Promotions. Established by producer and director Daves Guzha, this production house has produced protest plays with impressive regularity at its popular ‘Theatre in the Park’ venue. This ‘theatre in the round’ stage has played host to protest theatre plays from all parts of the country and today stands as a bastion for free speech and freedom of expression in Zimbabwe.

‘Heal the Wounds’ was first performed at ‘Theatre in the Park’ in September 2009. The play attracted much critical acclaim because it focused on issues of national healing, reconciliation and integration that were current and pertinent to the country. This play brought much attention as well as criticism to renowned academic and prolific playwright Stephen Chifunyise. Prior to *‘Heal the Wounds’*, Chifunyise had been dabbling in traditional-ritualistic-cultural plays such as *‘The Wedding Night’* and *‘Muramu’* which dealt more with the erosion of culture by modern values and tastes. His foray into protest theatre as exemplified by *‘Heal the Wounds’* met with widespread responses given that he once served in government with the Ministry of Education and has been a prominent cultural activist and playwright.

Chifunyise described his writing of *‘Heal the Wounds’* as;

...a search for the best way to heal the wounds in the nation (and a)...celebration of national healing efforts by both the state and church groups who think Zimbabwe can get past its season of mistrust' (www.dailynewsonline.co.zw/ accessed 10/01/2011).

Whilst such intentions were indeed welcome and commendable, it is the way in which this particular play placed protest theatre under the spotlight that made the conducting of this research relevant and critical.

'Waiting for Constitution' premiered at 'Theatre in the Park' in February 2010. The play sought to throw spotlight on the attempts at making a new constitution in Zimbabwe. This play was also engaging with 'current affairs', asking important questions about the realities and contradictions of that process. The play further placed protest theatre on the spotlight to an extent that one minister commented that;

...such works of art like this play (WFC) will play a key role in conscientising our people on the need for participation in this unique national project' (www.ipsnews.net/news/ accessed 19/10/2010).

It is worth noting that these two protest plays were produced during separate yet similar times in the country's history. It is the similarities and shared pertinence of the two plays which will frame this inquiry into the protest theatre genre in Zimbabwe. It is hoped that through this study, protest theatre and its role will be scrutinised within an applied drama and theatre paradigm. Such an undertaking would aim to ascertain how and to what extent these plays managed to articulate the important national issues they were focusing on.

1.2 Aim

'Heal the Wounds' and *'Waiting for Constitution'* are two similar plays that both fall under the banner of protest theatre in Zimbabwe. In doing an analysis of the two plays, I will look at how they portray the issues of national healing and reconciliation and the constitution

making process. As protest theatre plays, I will look at how effective that 'protest' has been, given that the issues depicted in the two plays are ongoing and current. Such a critical analysis is premised by my locating and critiquing these protest plays from an applied theatre practice framework. Part of that method of critical inquiry draws one to issues of critical pedagogy among other things. Critical pedagogy itself is premised upon issues of the transformation of social structures and conditions that do not promote the democratic participation of people in issues to do with their own liberation (Darder et al 2003:2).

I will also interrogate how the two plays attempt to engage audiences in dialogue about the national healing, reconciliation and constitution-making issues. The aim being to ascertain how such a dialogue could translate into meaningful involvement and participation of the people who watched the two plays.

Furthermore, I will critique the assertion that the two plays empowered and enabled those who watched them to conduct personal and collective critical debate on the issues portrayed by the plays. This critical engagement on the personal and collective meaning of national healing, reconciliation and constitution-building is important if the plays are to be viewed as having been successful in their attempts to articulate these issues. This approach would require us to use an 'applied participatory theatre' approach which in the end should help us determine the efficacy of protest theatre in Zimbabwe as depicted in *'Heal the Wounds'* and *'Waiting for Constitution'*. Furthermore, such a critique would entail looking at how the two plays attempt to engage and place the audience and/or participants at the centre of the intervention or performance process.

Once this is done, it is possible to then talk of issues of 'efficacy' in the way in which the two plays articulate these critical issues of national importance. This study will endeavour to address pertinent questions raised by the plays in light of applied theatre processes.

'Heal the Wounds' sought to interrogate National Healing and Reconciliation taking into account that it could not be done or

achieved in a blanket/collective manner. With that in mind, it is important to find out if the play critiques, interrogates and ultimately produce a holistic and faithful dramatisation of the meaning of healing and reconciliation for the ordinary man on the street. The aim of such an exercise would be to ascertain what kind of contribution and platform '*Heal the Wounds*' created for the audiences' meaningful engagement with these issues.

As for '*Waiting for Constitution*', it sought to interrogate;

...the culture of silence and encourage community access to important information as the constitution thus enhancing community participation in governance and developmental issues (www.rooftop.co.zw/ Report on '*Waiting for Constitution*', 2010).

The breaking of this 'culture of silence' was perceived as important because in order for people to be fully empowered, they need to participate in matters that affect their lives and how they are governed through the constitution. The idea around the play was to get the people who watched to actively participate in the making of the constitution, and do so through showing in '*Waiting for Constitution*' their lack of interest and apathy would not be in their best interests.

The importance of '*Waiting for Constitution*' as a play is that it sought to ask and address critical questions on the making of the new constitution. The study will therefore interrogate how and to what effect the play as protest theatre attempted to articulate the constitution-making process in Zimbabwe. This critique will provide important insights into the overall 'efficacy' of protest theatre in Zimbabwe. One of those questions would be how protest theatre presents the issues on behalf of the masses and to what extent the masses move from one level of understanding of their condition to another.

Protest theatre in Zimbabwe needs to be analysed from this angle in order to ascertain how it contributes to the creation of critical citizenship. The study will also contest the idea and meaning of 'community participation' as portrayed in '*Waiting for Constitution*'.

This is important because one of the hallmarks of applied theatre practice is the participation of the target group or community in which an intervention is being conducted.

Furthermore, on the question of ‘efficacy’ will be viewed in terms of how ‘democratic spaces’ for meaningful and critical dialogue before, during and after the play were created through its performance. These spaces are both real and imagined; real in terms of protest theatre being performed in formerly so called ‘no-go’ areas and ‘one party provinces; and imagined in terms of the non-existence of such spaces even for non-physical engagement as provided for in the UN Human Rights Charter.

Looking at the two plays together, they seem to suggest that ‘constitution-making’ can stand alone as a separate process with ‘healing and reconciliation’ also doing the same. Such a view I would argue does not show an appreciation of the symbiotic and intertwined nature of the issues raised in the two plays.

That separation of the issues in the dramatizations’ could actually be detrimental to the overall efficacy of the protest theatre as portrayed in the two lays.

Lastly, it is also important to examine what kind of platform the structured post-performance discussions provided for the engagement and critiquing of what healing, reconciliation and integration and constitution-making mean to the audiences who saw the *‘Heal the Wounds’* and *‘Waiting for Constitution’*.

1.3 Rationale

‘Heal the Wounds’ and *‘Waiting for Constitution’* represent a theatre genre that has come to be regarded as ‘mainstream’ or ‘popular theatre’ in Zimbabwe. Protest theatre movement has been at the forefront of articulating the disillusionment, despair, hopelessness, apathy, hopes and aspirations of Zimbabweans at home and abroad. It is the ‘genre of the moment’ as evidenced by the numerous plays dealing with a myriad of issues that have been produced over the years. The two plays that this study uses as ‘case studies’ are part and

parcel of that protest theatre movement in Zimbabwe. In many ways, one could say that the continued deterioration of the Zimbabwean economy and social fabric has fed the growth of protest theatre.

As such protest theatre is a genre that needs to be engaged with through a critical performative pedagogical process because of its widespread use and overall prevalence. Such an inquiry would prove useful to protest theatre practitioners and audiences alike as far as the issues of its efficacy are concerned. This study is but one isolated attempt at doing a critical analysis of protest theatre as it exists in Zimbabwe today using the plays of Stephen Chifunyise.

If we look at protest theatre from an applied angle then issues of transformation and change come to the fore which in turn brings about the central issue of the efficacy of protest using theatre. It could be argued that since theatre is about the making or construction of meaning, as well as a negotiation between the performers and the audience; it is important for the performer-audience transaction to be audited as this inquiry sets out to do.

This line of thinking also assumes that all theatre that is produced is perceived as not neutral, that it expresses certain inherent political side-taking and preferences either for or against the status quo. Therefore it is of importance that protest theatre in Zimbabwe be critiqued with such a view so as to reach a point where there is a generally accepted consensus on its efficacy.

Ultimately the meaning-making transaction of theatre could be anywhere between the audience, playwright, director or the actors. The negotiation and making of that meaning is what can be deemed 'political', not so much because it blatantly or explicitly portrays certain political ideas, but because even the so-called neutral or ordinary plays become political because of how and where they are presented, received and interpreted by audiences.

Another point is that since protest theatre in Zimbabwe has been at constant loggerheads with the government bodies such as the Censorship Board, it is important to look at the history of that animosity and distrust. The aim would be to then look at how that

relationship could find ways of being re-imagined as it can only be of benefit to theatre practice as an industry.

This antagonism between protest theatre and the government has further strained the relationship and stifled the growth of theatre and therefore needs to be remedied.

These developments make the interrogation of the protest theatre genre to be an even more critical endeavour given the highly polarised political climate that it is operating under. Regardless, protest theatre groups have religiously pursued their art if not for the money promised by western NGO's then for the fact that they actually do believe in the efficacy of the genre in the long run.

Perhaps if protest theatre is to be taken seriously by audiences and viewed favorably by the authorities, then the questions of its efficacy would be crucial to that process. The two plays used as case studies in this inquiry are of critical relevance because of their thematic concerns that place protest theatre as a genre under the unforgiving gaze of the state.

Furthermore, if the protest theatre plays that are created are done so with the mistaken assumption of 'showing' audiences what they do not know, it merely becomes a patronising and disempowering exercise that brings forth passive engagement and regurgitation of expected answers without critical engagement. This is why the inquiry into the efficaciousness of protest theatre as depicted by *'Heal the Wounds'* and *'Waiting for Constitution'* is so central and important to this study. Such an approach not only helps the practitioners evaluate their impact but also the audiences to have critical engagement with the work.

The play *'Heal the Wounds'* seems to suggest that healing must actually start within and among families and communities so that it can be genuine and meaningful. Whilst this is highly commendable, the question is whether the ideas the play proposes can be taken out of their dramatic/fictional context and 'applied' to the real business of National Healing and Reconciliation. Is it possible that what is shown to be possible within the confines of the play could be seen as a

‘rehearsal for the revolution’ as Augusto Boal posits in his Theatre of the Oppressed.

Such questions and their answers need to come from critical interrogation of the play as it is inevitable that protest theatre at some point requires this kind of probing.

Protest theatre is a powerful tool that could bring about some form of re-engagement and create platforms for dialogue. Through the presentation of issues that may be difficult to talk about and suggesting solutions that can be acceptable within the framework of the performance, protest theatre could play a critical nation-building role. Within the context of the two plays, such ideas are not far-fetched because protest theatre is being placed at the service of national issues.

I want to argue that the role of protest theatre apart from articulating national processes needs to go further to highlighting flaws within the those processes and foster a culture of questioning, engagement and critical citizenship. Therefore genuine healing and reconciliation cannot come about if what needs to be healed has not been heard in the open, hence the need for ‘truth-telling’ initiatives prior to any other process. The same applies to constitution-making processes which cannot work if there is no space for dissenting voices. Protest theatre should not therefore stand on a moral high ground and simply show ‘fictional characters’ solving ‘real issues’. A theatre that rests on critical pedagogy would seem to be the way forward towards articulating the crucial issues and such a theatre should heavily rely and draw from participatory applied theatre.

The placing of protest theatre at the centre of national processes and as a vehicle for the addressing of national healing and constitution issues in Zimbabwe calls into question the new role theatre is appropriating for itself and the space that it is creating for wider engagement in and within society. However this role seems to need a new or different protest theatre that calls all stakeholders to account and that places importance on the involvement of masses/audiences in their own liberation. To simply show ‘healing and reconciliation’

without interrogating issues of justice, reparation, restitution and compensation would in itself be a self-defeating purpose. To simply portray ‘debates’ on the constitution but not engage with the other issues of subaltern voices and equal participation would also be a hollow and unproductive process.

The question is whether the two plays do justice to the issues they attempt to interrogate and to what end given that country is still grappling with those same issues. Protest theatre indeed has a role in all this but that role needs to be critiqued as this study attempts to do so as to show how fiction can challenge reality and vice-versa but bring about liberation and transformation. This is what Augusto Boal calls ‘metaxis’.

1.4 Research Questions

The most popular and widespread plays in Zimbabwe mostly fall under the banner of protest theatre. In this genre communities are able to scrutinize themselves and endeavor to live according to targeted goals sought by a people who aspire to be a democracy. According to the producers of *‘Heal the Wounds’* and *‘Waiting for Constitution’*;

Protest theatre relays messages to docile societies urging them to embark on new ideals that would eventually remove the burdensome albatross of silence’ (www.rooftoppromotions.org, accessed 21/09/2010).

The above statement frames the central ideas of the research problem that this study will attempt to interrogate. Part of that would be to ascertain how protest theatre has been applied to communicate national healing, reconciliation and constitution-building through these two plays. Since protest theatre seeks to raise critical issues through some form of ‘protest’, it does so by using dramatic or theatrical means and devices. Therefore the study delves into the ‘way of protest’ as depicted in *‘Heal the Wounds’* and *‘Waiting for Constitution’* to ascertain their influence of public opinion and sentiments.

If the role of protest theatre is to awaken ‘docile societies’ as claimed, I would argue that it is important to make it not only awaken but empower those societies with critical mindsets. Secondly, the assumption that societies are docile and are in desperate need for ‘protest theatre’ to articulate the meaning of their existence on their behalf needs to be critically scrutinised. This is so that the efficacies of interventions emanating from that school of thought are realized in line with the hopes and aspirations of those societies.

One example is the protest theatre in South Africa during the apartheid regime which on one hand ‘referred to those plays that appealed to the conscience of the white oppressor’ and on the other ‘aimed at mobilizing the oppressed to become active in the resistance movement against apartheid’ (Boon & Plastow 2004:119). Zakes Mda, a prominent South African playwright and theatre practitioner provides a critique of this protest theatre by stating how he felt it was ‘very strong on the mobilisational aspects and rather weak on the creation of critical awareness among the target audiences’ (Attridge & Jolly 1998:259). Such a view though true to some extent can be contested given that apartheid did eventually end and so it could be argued that protest theatre did do much more than what Zakes Mda asserts. However his observation is still valuable as it also applies to the Zimbabwean context in terms of how the theatre may simply ‘protest’ but not give people alternative realities which lead to their liberation.

These arguments show us that the current protest theatre in Zimbabwe seems to have developed in response to whatever has been happening in country at a particular time.

The same criticism could be levelled against protest theatre in Zimbabwe because the issues it focuses on have up until now not been resolved. In some circles protest theatre has been accused of not doing enough to articulate the issues that Zimbabweans are grappling with mainly because of its failure to raise critical awareness which results in action. Some have even started talking of ‘protest theatre fatigue’ because the plays seem to be recycling the same stories which also inevitably impacts how they are received and their efficacy.

A similar argument was aimed at HIV/Aids plays when almost every other community drama group was doing an ‘Aids play’ of one kind or another. Questions started to be asked about what kind of messages the ‘Aids plays’ were putting across and whether they were actually not doing more harm than good. In the case of *‘Heal the Wounds’* and *‘Waiting for Constitution’*, that accusation could at some point be proved to not be far from the truth.

In my view, the two plays did not harness a critical pedagogical approach to ascertain how the audience responded to the plays and what kind of platforms the plays created. Such an atmosphere for the realisation of the people’s liberation is a critical aspect of applied theatre that draws on critical pedagogy. These are some of the issues that the research will grapple with in pursuit of the ‘efficacy of protest’ in Zimbabwean theatre.

Other questions that the study will engage with are listed below;

‘Heal the Wounds’

- How is national healing and reconciliation conceptualised in *‘Heal the Wounds’* given the rural setting where the play is set?
- What circumstances would allow genuine national healing and reconciliation processes to take place and how are they presented in the play?
- Is it only the victim(s) and/or perpetrator(s) who needs healing, reconciliation and forgiveness and how does the play address this issue?
- Who should lead the local/national processes of national healing and reconciliation and how does the play address this question?
- How can the effectiveness and sustainability of national healing and reconciliation processes be ensured and what does the play propose?

‘Waiting for Constitution’

- How is the process of constitution-making conceptualised in the play and what role does the play suggest the audience take in the actual processes on the ground?
- How and to what extent does the traditional marriage ceremony motif provide a platform for the discussion on the making of a new constitution?
- How are the power relations constructed between the family members and how does that mirror the idea of equal participation in the process of making a new constitution?
- Does the play encourage dialogue on constitutional issues presented and how does it do so and to what effect?
- As a protest play, what does the play protest about and how does that ‘protest’ translate into action?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

In order to engage with *‘Heal the Wounds’* and *‘Waiting for Constitution’* to assess their efficacy as protest theatre, it is important to do an in-depth analysis of the two plays. Such an exercise would interrogate the plays in terms of their storylines, thematic concerns, audience involvement/engagement, style, structure of performance and other related issues. However, conducting a mere analysis using such a criteria would not produce conclusive results.

To go further, the use of ‘critical performative pedagogy’ as a tool for analysis would not only be necessary but critical to the study. By so doing, it would be possible to look at how the plays deal with issues such as ‘social agency’, ‘voice’ and ‘democratic participation’ (Freire 1971 & Darder et al 2003). These three issues are paramount to any performance or intervention that places and values the issue of efficacy. Given that the playwright himself does not specifically say that he sets out to provide ‘agency’, ‘voice’ and ‘democratic participation’, it is the intention of this research report to use these same paradigms to critique this work in so far as it represents protest theatre in Zimbabwe.

By applying critical performative pedagogy to the two performances, we enter into a different realm where such application questions the

role and indeed subsequent efficacy of these two protest plays. Since we are dealing with performances, such an intervention would indeed require a performance based theoretical approach like critical performative pedagogy. Augusto Boal (1982) proposes using this theory in his 'Theatre of the Oppressed'. For him, the issues of physical oppression required 'an effective pedagogical praxis that evolved directly from the audience's participation, collective reflection, and the action generated by the participants (Darder et al 2003:6). Such a stance is also taken by this study because the issues the two plays confront exist on various levels.

Mpondi encapsulates the intentions of this study by saying that;

Critical research can best be understood in the context of the empowerment of individuals and groups. Inquiry in critical research is an attempt to confront injustices of a particular society. Research thus becomes a transformative endeavour unembarrassed by the label political and unafraid to consummate a relationship with an emancipatory consciousness (2004:165).

Critical performative pedagogy (Boal 1982, Conquergood 1992) focuses on the communicative/transformational aspect of theatre as a tool for such purposes. A critical pedagogy analysis of protest theatre in Zimbabwe through '*Heal the Wounds*' and '*Waiting for Constitution*' places the spotlight on the 'active, constructive and democratic process of knowledge construction' (Dewey 1993). Whilst his arguments were within the realm of education, they are also applicable to protest theatre in terms of how knowledge is constructed within a performance.

Furthermore, the two plays require the use of a multi-disciplinary theoretical framework and approach given the complexity of the issues they tackle. This argument is elucidated in the fact that it is not enough to simply make 'protest' or 'political' plays but rather make theatre that allows for critical engagement with the issues and also stimulates genuine processes of change and transformation. Mike van Graan (2008) quotes South African theatre stalwart Barney Simon

who concludes that protest theatre must ‘go beyond just protesting against the horrors and inspire people to function constructively’. This aim is what the study is seeking to discern by looking at the functionality of the two plays especially given the critical issues they address.

Further, a ‘constructive critical distance’ (Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz 1994) is required in order to interrogate the plays in a wholesome yet pedagogic manner. Such a ‘constructive distance’ is needed so that audiences are not merely ‘moved’ to catharsis but become ‘critical citizens’. Such a scenario would allow for more pedagogic protest theatre processes which are firmly entrenched within the broader framework of applied theatre practice.

What is contained in this pedagogy is the enrolment and empowerment of the audience from the onset and not to relegate their participation to the post-performance discussion session. If empowerment involves a ‘rehearsal for the revolution’ (Boal 1982) then that rehearsal must be done with the active participation of the audience. Critical performative pedagogy addresses the functionality of plays and proposes new paradigms necessary for the realisation of liberation by the oppressed.

1.6 Research Methods

According to Krippendorff (2004), the purpose of a methodology is to;

...enable researchers to plan and examine critically the logic, composition and protocols of research methods; to evaluate the performance of individual techniques; and to estimate the likelihood of particular research designs to contribute to knowledge (xxi).

Ackroyd (2003) defines methodology as ‘the theoretical questions that inform our research and how it is done’. Thus in my quest to ascertain the efficacy of protest theatre in Zimbabwe, conducting a critically grounded qualitative research is critical. My data collection techniques will range from qualitative video analysis, structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews and analysis of

publications, websites, books, documents and other relevant materials all of which will primarily be about the state of protest theatre in Zimbabwe. The reason for this ‘cocktail’ of research methods is mainly because the two plays exist as video recordings and much of the research relies heavily on that methodology. The qualitative interviews were done to get an in depth and ‘thick description’ of the workings of protest theatre in Zimbabwe.

Taylor (2005:106) contends that;

...qualitative reports (interviews) are about formulating in-depth understandings of the perspectives of the stakeholders who come to applied theatre... (and) inquiry of the multiple and shifting perspectives surrounding an applied theatre event.

These frames and paradigms should make the findings credible and noteworthy and contribute through critique the state and function of current protest theatre initiatives in Zimbabwe.

Since my primary sources are video recordings of the two performances, I will use a content analysis methodology to do an in-depth critical analysis of the two plays. The reason for that is that;

...content analysts examine data, printed matter, images or sound-texts-in order to understand what they mean to people, what they enable or prevent, and what the information conveyed by them does (Krippendorf 2004: xviii).

That analysis will focus on many things including form/style, structure, language and theatrical content including the previously mentioned parameters. The aim is to analyse these plays as protest theatre from a critical pedagogy which places emphasis on a dialogic approach. Critical pedagogy is about enhancing and valuing all forms of knowledge; it is about the meeting of the known and unknown; about theory and practice. Such an exhaustive approach should in the end shed light on the role of protest in modern times as it struggles to address the present and future challenges.

1.7 Limitations

My research study made use of video recordings of the two plays '*Heal the Wounds*' and '*Waiting for Constitution*' as primary sources and this proved problematic in that I was viewing 'recorded' live theatre performances. The 'point of view' that I was limited to as the researcher was invariably altered and this in turn affected how I critiqued the two plays given the absence of the immediacy of theatre. This quality of '*live-ness*' in which the plays existed in their original state was therefore lost and inaccessible to me as the researcher. This negatively affected my analysis of the plays. Furthermore, this scenario made me not have access to the nuances, responses, mannerisms and reactions of the audience to what they were watching.

Secondly, I conducted formal and informal open-ended interviews with various people who are part and parcel of the protest theatre scene in Zimbabwe but who had not necessarily watched both plays. Some had watched one or the other and therefore this affected the answers they offered. The weakness of interviewing discussants who were relying on memory to remember also negatively affected the study.

Some of those interviewed included arts journalists, producers, theatre directors, actors, cultural activists, political activists and people from the NGO sector in Zimbabwe especially those that interface with theatre in their work. The other challenge was obtaining the interviews in terms of dates and time because the time period that I was in Zimbabwe coincided with the end of the year for many NGOs. I also was unable to travel to where some of the crucial theatre practitioners whose interviews would have added much to the study were. This was also a detriment to the quality and quantity of the interviews that were crucial to the study.

Some of these informants envisioned in the research plan would have given this study multiple viewpoints. In addition, some of the informants are artists and therefore had various tour programmes and schedules that made it difficult for the researcher to access them. In one case, a scheduled interview with a theatre Producer did not take

place and when another date was sought, the company including the Producer had already travelled out of town.

However even with these limitations identified by the researcher, the study still managed to obtain meaningful information from the interviews conducted. Secondary data in the form of newspaper articles and reviews also proved useful and critical during the writing of this research.

1.8 Study Layout

In this chapter, chapter one, I discuss the history and evolution of protest theatre in Zimbabwe. I also introduce the subject matter of my research by giving a historical overview of theatre in Zimbabwe. I locate protest theatre's origins from within the political theatre of the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, I discuss the aims, theoretical framework and research questions that will guide the study.

In chapter two, I conduct a thorough literature review and overview of protest theatre in Zimbabwe. I further the arguments started in chapter one on how the protest theatre movement emerged from the didactic liberation war theatre.

In chapter three, I introduce the play *'Heal the Wounds'* and place it within the context of the history of national healing and reconciliation right up to recent times where the play is set. I do an analysis of this play using 'critical performative pedagogy' to expose the weaknesses and limitations of this kind protest theatre.

In chapter four I introduce the play *'Waiting for Constitution'* and discuss the issues around the making of the new constitution in Zimbabwe. This is done through the work of theorists who argue that constitution making must be a process that encompasses all voices. I also undertake a critique of the play and how it was received by those who watched it. I evaluate the play in view of my concept of protest theatre.

In chapter five I present my findings, question the relevance of protest theatre and propose that new paradigms should be engaged with in order for protest theatre to begin to address the critical issue of efficacy. Transfer to end

2. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW OF PROTEST THEATRE IN ZIMBABWE

2.1 Overview of the history of protest theatre in Zimbabwe

This chapter furthers the argument started in chapter one of how protest theatre has developed and how the focus of its 'protest' has shifted with the changing political landscape. Furthermore, it is important to re-trace the historical origins of protest theatre, from the time when a formal indigenous black or 'popular theatre' movement emerges. The latter term which was first used by theatre practitioners such as Ross Kidd in the 1970s to describe the kind of development theatre work they were doing (Kidd 1982, 1985).

Prentki and Selman (2000:8) describe 'popular theatre' as;

...a process of theatre which deeply involves specific communities in identifying issues of concern, analysing current conditions and causes of a situation, identifying points of change, and analysing how change could happen and/or contributing to the actions implied.

The 'popular theatre' definition could also mirror the two case studies as they sought to address 'issues of concern' to Zimbabweans which in this case were the national healing, reconciliation and constitution-making processes. Though the definition does not encompass all the tenets of 'popular theatre', it could be argued that the overall form, style and structure of protest theatre plays in Zimbabwe seems to share some similarities with this 'popular theatre'. Kaarsholm adds to this definition by saying that;

...popular theatre provided an outlet for frustration and a possible forum for the articulation of criticisms that would otherwise have been kept quiet or exploded as unarticulated violence (1994:226).

Unpacking the history of protest theatre is pivotal in locating and grounding the inquiry in terms of how this history brings us up to the current issues that necessitated the writing of two plays and the

conducting of this study. Central to this approach is the establishing of ‘how’ and ‘to what effect’ pre and post-independence protest theatre plays addressed issues of national concern.

It is also important to delve into this theatre history to locate and identify precedents to the current protest theatre in Zimbabwe. This part of the study will set the parameters for subsequent assumptions and conclusions in this and other chapters, mainly on the role of protest theatre from a historical perspective through a mapping of protest theatre’s history in Zimbabwe.

Chifunyise (1994:57) posits that the existence of ‘exotic’ European theatres and performances existed to ‘ensure that the kind of theatre which developed in the colony (Rhodesia) was consistent with that of Britain’. This was an example of theatre serving purposes of ‘cultural hegemony’ which Kaarsholm describes as the ‘legitimization’, ‘harmonization’ and ‘consolidation’ of white rule in Rhodesia (1994:225).

Kerr (1995:21) adds that the ‘*expatriate theatre*’(s) (main) activity was to increase the white community’s sense of solidarity and group cohesion’ (my italics). Kaarsholm (1994:226) further supports this argument by saying that drama was there to ‘fortify the bastions of white pride and supremacy’ and was in its own way ‘a genuinely popular cultural movement’ though only in the service of white domination.

Thus, the white theatre’s existence does not seem to have played any significant role towards the development of an indigenous ‘black’ theatre movement nor that of protest theatre. In fact, Kerr (1995:21) says the white theatre merely sought to entrench and reinforce ‘the overriding ideology of the colonial administration’. The initial trend of what could be described as purely indigenous or black theatre is said to have ‘had its roots in the liberation struggle in guerilla camps in Mozambique and Zambia and inside the country’s (Zimbabwe) liberated zones’ (Chifunyise 1994: 55). This indigenous theatre was made by the people together with the guerillas to articulate the necessity of the war of liberation, and further illustrate the symbiotic

role that both the people and the combatants shared in the ultimate goal of achieving independence. This indigenous theatre movement is said to have emanated from the *pungwe*. According to Chinyowa (2010:2), what he calls '*pungwe theatre*' involved 'all-night theatrical performances that villagers and guerillas engaged in during the national liberation struggle'. This *pungwe* theatre laid the foundation of the community theatre movement in Zimbabwe that would emerge after independence.

Chifunyise (1994:55) describes the *pungwe* in the same terms as Chinyowa by saying it was 'an all-night song-dance-political rally...which became the medium for the dramatisation of the people's struggle (*Chimurenga*).' Thus the critical role of the *pungwe* both as a 'vehicle' for liberation and a 'cultural event' is shown to have been pivotal in the establishment of formal theatre structures in pre and post-independence Zimbabwe.

Chinyowa (2010:3) further argues that through this;

...*pungwe* theatre, the armed liberation struggle became a rehearsal for freedom and democracy, a means of questioning the colonial system, a display of people's responsibility in shaping their own history and conscious awareness of the need to strive for social justice, human dignity, self-respect and equal opportunity.

Kaarsholm (1994: 242) describes the theatre made during these *pungwe*'s as '*propaganda theatre*' because it was aimed at making those who watched 'identify with a specific ideology and political line'. It is possible that within these performances, the guerillas (combatants) would place situations to make the '*povo*' (masses or ordinary people) 'see' and experience first-hand the oppression of the colonial regime and why it had to be toppled (Kaarsholm 1994). This use of theatre to mobilize and articulate the struggle was a powerful way of soliciting support for the liberation war, and also as 'education' and political conscientisation of the masses. McLaren describes the *pungwe* as;

...an all-night political meeting conducted by the guerillas among the people, with its format of political speeches, slogans, songs, dances, and sketches, (and) was the most influential arena for the liberation of culture which accompanied the war of national liberation (1992:96).

This gives the *pungwe* a critical place in the development of protest theatre in Zimbabwe. This platform provided by the *pungwe* gave the so-called 'propaganda theatre' a lease of life as 'conscientisation theatre' aimed at generating activism in the masses. Chifunyise concludes that during the *pungwe*, 'theatre (was) used by combatants to articulate the people's role and aspirations in waging a war of liberation' (1994:55).

An early form of protest theatre seems to have evolved from within the liberation camps as the combatants and recruits are said to have started using theatre to articulate grievances about life within the bases (Kaarsholm 1994). This scenario would probably have been necessitated by the strictness of military life whereby one had to follow proper channels in order for any issue to be addressed. Theatre in this case would provide an outlet for bringing out those issues in a harmless way that did not subvert military etiquette and standard procedures. Kaarsholm states that within the bases;

...*dramatisation* became a way of expressing your needs and getting what you wanted. In this way, a tradition of *discussion theatre*, a drama dealing with and directly articulating the political grievances of everyday life, developed in the camps... (my italics, 1994:234).

This form of 'protest theatre' could, though far-fetched have played some part in the development of formal protest theatre structures after Zimbabwe's independence. Kaarsholm calls this protest theatre in the camps 'an early variety of community based-drama (1994:234). The fact that this theatre came into existence as an outlet for grievances points to the overall role and platform for engagement and dialogue that theatre created within the struggle camps. This theatre also developed 'democratic pedagogic principles' and a 'dialogic teaching'

practice more out of necessity than anything else to help articulate various issues within the camps and about the struggle to the mostly illiterate students and cadets (Kaarsholm 1994).

After independence in 1980, Chifunyise illustrates that;

The earliest part of our theatre was political conscientisation, trying very much to take the liberation struggle messages that came with independence, and trying to push the idea of socialism. It was didactical material promoting what we thought was going to be the political ideology... (Interview with Chifunyise, Harare, 23/11/2010).

Plays made during this era include *'Takaitora Neropa'* (1983) and *'Rivers of Blood'* (1985). Chifunyise contends that the objective of this kind 'revolutionary theatre' after independence was mainly 'to conscientise the people of Zimbabwe about the history of the revolution' (1994:56). Such plays were gradually overtaken by adverse socio-political developments and challenges that came with independence. Thus it became necessary to have another form of theatre that dealt with the pertinent issues of the people's growing political and social disenfranchisement.

Another reason highlighted earlier by Chifunyise for the emergence of protest theatre could have been due to the 'unchanged and business-as-usual' state of affairs in formal theatre structures after independence. Black actors and theatre groups had expected access to the 'white theatres' and state sponsorship that had been enjoyed by the minority theatre movement. In fact, 'there was nothing that challenged the 'white theatre' to transform or to accommodate to the new idea of the non-racial culture' (1994:57).

Upon seeing this, a few companies tried to align themselves with the white theatre establishment in order to access some of these benefits. One of them was 'Sundown Theatre' which ironically had John Haigh, a white man as its director whilst having an all-black cast made up of some of the brightest talents on the theatre scene. They initially performed plays by renowned South African playwright Athol Fugard such as *'The Island'* and *'Master Harold and the Boys'*.

By performing these plays, they were ‘challenge(ing) the orientation of the white theatre establishment by discussing life in apartheid South Africa’ (Chifunyise 1994: 57). The mere performance of these ‘anti-apartheid plays’ could be regarded as a form of ‘protest theatre’ being used for the same purpose but in a different context. What they managed to do though was to challenge the underlying ‘sensitivity of white Zimbabweans to such themes’ (Chifunyise 1994:56).

Chifunyise is critical of this theatre group’s impact and methods in attempting to transform the theatre scene and says that ‘they did not produce plays which dealt with life in Rhodesia which challenged the racist attitudes of white Zimbabweans’ and furthermore did not feature any ‘traditional performing arts’ (1994:57). This indictment seems somewhat warranted given that Zimbabwe was now an independent country which could develop its own theatre plays in line with its traditions and culture.

With these realities and challenges, protest theatre emerged in Zimbabwe. However, much unlike protest theatre in South Africa which directly challenged the apartheid establishment, the Zimbabwean equivalent started addressing the pertinent issues in its own way. In fact, in apartheid South Africa;

...as repression grew and the voices of political activists were increasingly silenced, theatre became an important means of voicing the protests that were banned from the streets and political platforms of the country (www.southafrica.info/ accessed 18/02/2011).

This was not the case in the development of protest theatre in Zimbabwe which was mainly aimed at dealing with the challenges of independence.

One of the earliest ‘protest’ plays to emerge dealing with these post-independence issues was ‘*The Honourable MP*’ written by Habakuk Musengezi. This play portrayed a self-indulgent black politician obsessed with women, imported goods and multiple farms. This example of what was described then as a ‘more satirical kind of political drama’ would inspire other groups to take it up as a way of

giving voice to the criticism that up to this point had been thinly veiled in secrecy and hushed tones (Kaarsholm 1994:224).

Chifunyise adds that at this period, other writers started coming up with similar plays showing how ‘the politicians were not living the socialist ideal but were peddling capitalism...’ (Interview with Chifunyise, Harare, 23 November, 2010).

Another form of protest theatre which developed after independence was that which the workers were using to articulate their grievances such as the low wages they received and the long hours they worked. It was protest theatre because it sought to highlight the adverse working conditions workers faced especially on the farms and in factories. Chifunyise notes that ‘domestic and farm workers were the first class of workers to use drama in independent Zimbabwe to express their plight and aspirations’ (1994:64).

One can say that the power of theatre at that time lay in providing an avenue for expression of the workers’ grievances without fear of reprisals such as suspensions and dismissals. Chifunyise notes that this ‘working class theatre’ also went further and ‘examined the racial dimension of employer and employee relationship in Zimbabwe’ (1994:65).

Plays such as ‘*Shingai Mumatambidziko*’ (1985), ‘*Tikiti Wanga Bwana*’ (1986) and ‘*Upfumi ne VaShandi*’ (1987) all sought to articulate the workers’ grievances and their aspirations. Much of this kind of theatre could be regarded as protest theatre because it was seeking to bring about improvements in working conditions and remuneration of the workers. Some of the plays were developed and performed by the workers themselves whilst semi-professional drama groups also had a hand in the plays that emerged during that time.

Another form ‘workplace protest theatre’ to emerge was that which was challenging male chauvinism in the work places. This theatre sought to articulate issues that were affecting women such as sexual harassment, nepotism, forced marriages among other issues. Plays such as ‘*Madzimai Pabasa*’, ‘*Waringa*’ which was adapted from Ngugi wa Thiongo’s ‘*Devil on the Cross*’ and ‘*Not For Sale*’ (1985)

were some of the works performed for these purposes (Chifunyise 1994:64). This protest theatre was mainly aimed at articulating the struggles of women as a minority group within the work places.

As a fully-fledged protest theatre movement emerges in response to failures of socialism and the entrenchment of capitalist ideals, one play that marks that period was produced by Amakhosi Theatre Productions. Written and directed by Cont Mhlanga, *Workshop Negative* (1986) challenged the state of race relations in the wake of the first policy of 'National Reconciliation' in post-independence Zimbabwe. This policy had been advocated for by the then Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe as a way of bringing the nation together after the protracted war of liberation.

The play marked the end of the 'cordial' relations that theatre had enjoyed with the government. Kaarsholm (1994:246) remarks that;

Performances of *Workshop Negative* brought about a liveliness of discussion and controversy over culture and politics in Zimbabwe that had not been experienced before.

Suddenly the government began to take exception to plays that it viewed as critical of its policies and how it was running the country. Ravengai observes that *Workshop Negative* was 'unofficially' banned which 'ultimately contributed to the cutting of aid to community theatre groups by the Zimbabwean government' (2010:166). Kaarsholm points to the fact that;

Though the play (*Workshop Negative*) was never censored and Amakhosi were not forbidden to take it abroad—they were only denied 'the Government's blessing'—the controversy still produced uneasiness among writers and theatre people in Zimbabwe (1994:246).

The idea that the government, apart from its core obligations of running the country, had to 'bless' certain theatre plays that glorified over its achievements rather than exposed its failures would seem to have been the first cause for concern. This scenario seems to also have contributed to the harsh reprisals, antagonistic relationship and

debilitating censorship laws that protest theatre plays would endure and continue to at the hands of the Censorship Board.

2.2 Recent Trends in Zimbabwean Protest Theatre

Chifunyise illustrates that;

It (theatre) then moved even further when people were now challenging the lack of democratic structures that leads us to the period of 2000, and as from 2000 onwards we see protest theatre really taking a stance with or supporting the position of multipartism and fighting against aspects which they thought were fighting against democracy...then quite a number of people started looking at contradictions from the ideological positions which the ruling party and people who had fought in the liberation struggle were exhibiting (Interview with Chifunyise, Harare, 23 November, 2010).

This kind of theatre is what we have seen over the past 20 years or so. These mostly NGO-sponsored protest plays have thrived and many of them produced mainly by Rooftop Promotions and performed at its 'Theatre in the Park' in Harare. Debates have raged in theatre and development circles about the role of this kind of theatre vis-à-vis its 'didacticism' and message driven nature; and the apparent willingness to sacrifice the aesthetic for the political statement and developmental message. These debates though interesting are however beyond the scope of this study.

These protest theatre plays have been highly critical of the ZANU-PF led government's policies especially on issues such as land reform and redistribution, elections, political violence, HIV/Aids, corruption and many other issues that make up Zimbabwe's national discourse. Some of these plays such as '*Super patriots and Morons*', '*Decades of Terror*', '*Final Push*' and '*Overthrown*' have incurred the state's wrath because of their perceived and apparent 'anti-government' stance. The actors have been harassed and arrested whilst the plays themselves have been banned.

2.3 Current state of Protest Theatre in Zimbabwe

Research on protest theatre in Zimbabwe is scattered in terms of its focus and overall intentions. Chifunyise is of the opinion that after the 2008 election period;

...we see another type of protest theatre which is saying ‘look we cannot use certain actions like violence, justifying it...so it is not protest theatre aiming at political parties only, its aiming at everybody saying if we let this violence, or we let things like that go around you, how can you say that you are aware of the damage you do to yourself, to development, to your country... (Interview with Chifunyise, Harare, 23 November, 2010).

When we look at the plays produced during this period, indeed the permeating themes seem to be that there is need for a different kind of protest theatre that can stand up to current challenges that Zimbabweans are facing. Playwrights such as Stephen Chifunyise and Raisedon Baya seem to have taken note with plays such as ‘*Rituals*’ (2010) and ‘*The Crocodile of Zambezi*’ (2008), written by the two playwrights respectively as attempts to move towards a different direction in protest theatre. In ‘*Rituals*’ which is a follow up to ‘*Heal the Wounds*’, Chifunyise is now proposing ways of addressing the contentious issues of national healing and reconciliation from traditional cultural practices such as the holding *bira*’s and ideas around ‘*kuripa ngozi*’(compensation, normally of a young girl given to the relatives of the deceased).

Another point that Chifunyise makes concerning the current state of protest theatre is that it is now;

...brainstorming across the board, because you can see someone doing theatre that in places is challenging the people who were in the opposition, who are now failing to deliver and others challenging those who would like to use political forces to maintain their political stance or their political positions... (Interview with Chifunyise, Harare, 23 November, 2010).

While such protest theatre is commendable, questions still remain as to whether it can shake off the shackles of its developmental thrust emanating from its history with community theatre and TFD. Scholars like Chikonzo (2010:1) are of the opinion that ‘theatre instigated for change cannot yield an environment for liberation and recuperation against dominant ideology if it is construed within the generic regime of at concern realism’. This argument is proposing alternatives in terms of the kind of theatre used from a stylistic point of view.

Currie (1998:93) insists that ‘if the resistance to some hegemony uses the same resources as the oppressor, the revolution will simply substitute one form of domination for another’. If this were to happen it would inevitably create ‘tension between the pedagogical and the performative’ Currie (1998:93). It is my opinion that these arguments could be applied to ‘*Heal the Wounds*’ and ‘*Waiting for Constitution*’ as they are both ‘realist plays’ and representations of Zimbabwean protest theatre in general.

While the arguments against ‘realism’ in ‘*Waiting for Constitution*’ are relevant, he does not propose an applied theatre practice as a viable option but rather an addition to the characters so that there are multiple voices discussing the constitution. This proposal goes against some of my arguments that the already large number of characters within the ‘*Waiting for Constitution*’ actually does not enhance the role of protest theatre.

Kaarsholm discusses similar issues but from a different perspective when he argues that plays such as ‘*Workshop Negative*’ were attacked for their apparent ‘lack of realism’ and representation of ‘untypical events’, which shows how the issues of form and style were already highly contestable terrain(1994:246).

Mpondi is of the opinion that;

The resurgence of protest and *anti-oppression theatre* in Zimbabwe is an indictment on the leaders of any society, for it means that a nation is now seeking sanctuary in the world of the

make-believe, where at least the tongue is not seen as posing a hazard to national security (2004:107).

This argument about what he calls '*anti-oppression theatre*' could in a way be an indictment of protest theatre in Zimbabwe. If the people leave 'protesting' only to the theatre, then there is a danger that the legitimacy of that protest could be questioned. Furthermore this resignation does not augur well with the aims of protest theatre or even applied theatre which is to 'lobby for certain changes and it should go hand in hand with the wishes and aspirations of the people...' (Interview with Daniel Maphosa, Harare, 23 November, 2010).

Mpondi adds that;

Artists and their counter-narratives and discourses have played an active role in advancing their interests and those of their constituents and audiences by interacting discursively; they have also shaped collective and individual visions and ways of interaction in society (2004:207).

While this to an extent is true, there still remain critical pedagogy questions of voice, agency and democratic participation in the making of protest theatre. Maphosa is of the opinion that because these questions are not addressed, protest theatre has in a way become 'an alien mode of communication' as demonstrated by dwindling numbers of theatre audiences at community theatre venues...' (Interview with Daniel Maphosa, Harare, 23 November, 2010).

Wrolson (2009:73) argues that Zimbabwean theatre groups could generally be grouped into 'educational, political (protest), or entertainment based' in terms of the work they have produced from the time of independence. She contends that 'political theatre groups worked fairly closely with the Zimbabwean government to promote its cultural policies' after independence. However as shown earlier, that relationship did not last which brings us to what she calls 'panic theatre'. (2009:74) This kind of theatre termed 'panic' because it is 'art in a time of emergency', almost like the 'hit and run political guerilla theatre' that Zenenga (2008) identifies.

It is also ‘panic theatre’ because it is performed in unconventional places, with minimum props and rehearsals. Plays such *‘All Systems Out of Order’* which was a satire on corruption set in a public toilet and *‘Right of Admission Reserved’*, both produced by Edzai Isu Theatre Productions are examples of this kind of theatre.

Wrolson further argues that these ‘panic plays’ have attempted to have some form of engagement with the audiences by having talkbacks or ‘vivas’ to raise the audience’s awareness or to pose solutions, rather than the performance itself.’ (2009:79) This she says was done to avoid the harsh censorship that would have made the play be banned by the Censorship Board before it even got produced. It also goes along with some of Augusto Boal’s ‘Forum Theatre’ techniques though in an accidental way and for totally different reasons.

What the current literature on protest theatre in Zimbabwe seems to show is an overwhelming preoccupation with the need to articulate the issues that Zimbabwe has faced and is currently facing through protest theatre. Though this has been done in many different ways by different theatre groups, what unites these efforts is the need to ‘protest’. The plays that have been produced seem to all fall within the broader definition of protest theatre, but of alarm is their preoccupation with non- dialogic and non-pedagogic plays that are didactic and that are not premised on participatory applied theatre traditions.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored protest theatre in Zimbabwe from a historical perspective and located it from its roots in community theatre. I have demonstrated and shown how that kind of theatre emerged mainly as a response to the post-colonial disillusionment especially the failure of socialism in Zimbabwe. I have also given references to numerous examples of protest plays and why these plays seem to not have elements of critical performative pedagogy within them and how such a critical lack has affected how the messages are articulated and eventually received.

In this chapter, we have also seen how the development of protest theatre in Zimbabwe was viewed in an antagonistic way by the authorities through such plays as *'The Honourable M.P'* and *'Workshop Negative'*. We have also noted and picked up on how the government started taking exception to the work of university theatre group, Zambuko/Izibuko Theatre which had previously enjoyed its support through ZACT because of its focus on local issues.

In the next chapter I will introduce the play *'Heal the Wounds'* and we will grapple with the issues around national healing, reconciliation and integration. I will also seek to show how the play articulates these issues and to what extent that endeavour is successful or not from a critical performative pedagogy angle.

3. CHAPTER THREE: PROTEST THEATRE ENGAGING WITH HEALING AND RECONCILIATION IN '*HEAL THE WOUNDS*'

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores protest theatre in Zimbabwe through Stephen Chifunyise's play '*Heal the Wounds*'. This exploration is undertaken in the context of a broad history of protest theatre as it has existed in Zimbabwe and used by different groups for varied reasons from personal to political, from private to national. As discussed in the preceding chapters, the role of protest theatre in Zimbabwe has been fraught with challenges and inconsistencies. As such, it needs to be problematised and scrutinised in order to unearth its underlying politics, effectiveness of its techniques and latent power of its aesthetics. This is crucial because in order for us to understand Zimbabwean protest theatre, we need to appreciate other factors that have influenced its development as these have contributed to its current state.

It has been argued in some sections that since protest theatre evolved out of community theatre, the forms, structures and techniques that it uses are inevitably drawn from that genre; therefore the 'weaknesses' of community theatre practice would be inherently found in protest theatre. To some extent this assertion holds water as evidenced by examples such as the apparent oversimplification of complex issues in dramatisation without actually unpacking them to make them more understandable. This weakness would render the dramatic portrayals to be devoid of deep and critical engagement which inevitably makes the plays appear to be out of touch with reality and at worst anachronistic.

The second weakness which in part protest theatre owes to its community theatre origins as much as it does to NGOs who tend to fund theatre to promote development issues is its apparent obsession with 'didacticism'. This seems to emanate from the 'developmental outlook' of community theatre plays as they sought to 'inform'

audiences rather than deconstruct knowledge pedagogically. This makes the plays assume a rigid and instructive nature that does not leave room for audiences to have free-will to critically engage with the issues the plays address. Furthermore, when it then comes to issues such the national healing and reconciliation process which '*Heal the Wounds*' addresses, these inherent weaknesses tend to emerge. Some are supposedly because of general misunderstandings towards what the national healing and reconciliation process means, the role of ordinary people and/or audiences who watch the play. This apparent confusion is what one would expect the play to tackle first given that that is the main issue that it seeks to interrogate. If the play does not create conditions for those who watch it to understand what the 'real' issues are, then it becomes difficult for that understanding to be expected to come in the post-performance discussion as in the case of '*Heal the Wounds*'.

3.2 Synopsis of '*Heal the Wounds*'

Godknows Zinyemba is a councillor in the City of Harare. He is married to Esnat Nyikavanhu (an NGO worker) whose brother Adam Nyikavanhu is a senior civil servant in the newly established Government of National Unity. Both Godknows and Adam have been chosen by their respective political parties to serve on a national committee that will champion the national healing process. When Headman Nyikavanhu visits his son Adam in Harare he is shocked to find that his son-in-law and his son are on talking terms and have visited each other and have even begun to discuss how they should promote the healing process in their two families. Headman Nyikavanhu invites his son and his son-in-law to his rural home where inter-party violence left a trail of destruction of life, families and property in order to begin the healing process at the family level.

When Godknows and Adam go home, they find their two families divided and isolated by the big wounds left by the inter-party violence of March and June 2008. The two men are made to understand that the rural people were the most brutalized by the political violence.

The rural people do not believe that political parties and their leaders who brought political violence to their homes in 2008 are honest about national healing when they have not publicly accepted the crimes they committed; when the rural people have not been allowed to mourn publicly and bury the remains of their relatives who were victims of the senseless politically motivated violence; when people who took property from others, as a form of punishment for belonging to other political parties, have not been asked to return what they took as well as pay for the destruction they caused; when all the traditional ceremonies and rites of healing have been ignored and when all the machinery and structures that ushered in political violence are still in place and perpetrators of violence and death are free. The Zinyemba and Nyikavanhu families show Godknows and Adam that their strategies for healing the nation cannot succeed if they ignore the issues raised by their parents and traditions in each community on how to achieve genuine forgiveness, healing and reconciliation. (Source- www.rooftop.org)

3.3 Title of the Play

The title of the play *'Heal the Wounds'* seems to be a call, affirmation or declaration that there are certain wounds in need of healing. This title seems to be an attempt to capture the complex process of national healing, reconciliation and integration in a way that does not magnify or belittle the issues.

Presumably, those who watch the play would therefore expect those 'wounds' to be revealed and proposals of ways through they can be healed. The title is quite powerful and engaging because it breaks down national healing to a personal and community level presumably to make it more understandable. Healing by its very nature can either be an internal or external process; internal in terms of psychological wounds needing healing and external as physical wounds on the body needing a different form of healing or restoration of wholesomeness or health.

Thus a critique of how the play exposes the ‘wounds’ and what proposals it puts forward for them to be healed is central to this chapter and overall study in general. Such an endeavor is pivotal in that if we are to view *‘Heal the Wounds’* through a performative critical pedagogical lens, we need to start from the title itself, what it could mean, how it serves the overall purpose of the play and to what effect?

The characters in the play give life to the title when in one of the scenes they are discussing the work and meaning of healing and reconciliation from their ‘informed’ perspective;

Godknows Zinyemba: It’s about getting the whole nation of Zimbabwe heal the wounds caused by the political violence of 2008.

Adam Nyikavanhu: It’s a process of finding ways of ensuring that everyone in Zimbabwe forgives each other and reconcile in order to build a nation in peace and harmony.

Whilst their explanations on healing and reconciliation appear to be insightful, they actually show a rather shallow understanding of the complexities, contradictions and conditions necessary for such processes to take place. This deliberate casting of those meant to be in charge of critical processes not being knowledgeable about the critical issues seems to be an indictment to the actual authorities to seek to understand what the real issues are from the community. Further, this seems to be a critique of the top-down development model approach which does not give ear to the local understanding and knowledge base.

If one of the aims of protest theatre in general is ‘to give voice to injustice...and...evoke awareness of issues in public or for all who are observing the performance’ (<http://cnx.org/content/> accessed 03/01/2011), such an assertion needs to be tested through the critical analysis of what *‘Heal the Wounds’* as an intervention or play actually does.

In that case, the ‘injustice’ needing to be given voice could be the widespread political violence that has generally happened in Zimbabwe prior and post-election periods. These times have seen large numbers of people being abducted, arrested, tortured and even killed because of their political affiliation (Raftopolulous & Savage 2004, Mashingaidze 2010).

Secondly, the nature of the ‘wounds’ needing healing is not fully explained nor understood by the two sons and one could assume that the wounds are existing on multiple levels such as physical, psychological and otherwise. As such, we are told in one of the scenes that the ‘wounds’ need to be exposed first;

Headman Nyikavanhu: Adam, how can you heal a wound that you have not seen how big or deep it is?

Headman Zinyemba: ...and you don’t know whether the wound is on the leg, on the hand or on the head? How do you heal it?

These questions put forward by the two old men represent the richness of local and indigenous knowledge’s and understandings. The playwright demonstrates through these two old men how the process of national healing and reconciliation should have been approached in the first place. One of the characters articulates this view succinctly when she says;

Esnath Zinyemba: I personally understand what our fathers are saying. I think that the national healing process should have started by consulting people at grassroots level...people like you *mhamha* (mother), our father and the NGOs...

Whereas the playwright seems to give the women and ordinary rural folk a critical voice, he does seem to take it further by giving the same power to audience during or after the performance. It is commendable that the playwright seems to want to show above all that age makes one have a clearer and better understanding of issues something that is generally believed to be true in African cultures.

Further, the playwright tries to capture the issues through the notion of '*axes on the heads*' which seems to be the thread that runs through the play. This is an allegory of what the wounds have done; it speaks of them with graphic detail of how an axe could be stuck on a person's head and presumes that there would be a wound where that axe is stuck.

Headman Nyikavanhu: ...and yet there are still people in this village who are walking around with axes stuck in their heads...

Adam Nyikavanhu: You mean to tell us there are still people in this village that are walking around with axes stuck in their heads...

Headman Zinyemba: *Shumba* you don't know by now that all these people have axes in their heads...

Godknows Zinyemba: *Madyira* that's not possible, how can a person walk around with an axe stuck in his head?

The words give a powerful imagery which the playwright explores on various levels in order to articulate the nature of the issues needing to be interrogated by the national healing body which the two sons represent in the play. This allegory is explained later in the play but I would argue that its explanation does not do justice to what the statement would have set up because it seems to only focus on the loss of material things such as livestock. This explanation I would argue is rather pedestrian as the characters are outlining how they lost property and livestock and want those things returned. The importance of livestock in rural areas and in traditional African life cannot be overemphasized but perhaps if the characters too are portrayed as having incurred the political violence first hand as happened to many in the rural areas, then the post-performance discussion would become a more involving process where the telling of stories provides some closure or element of healing for the victim. Mashingaidze seems to advocate for similar processes when he talks of 'victim-sensitive national healing' (2010:20).

Whilst the playwright sets up the tone of the conversation in the play through this statement, he does not allow for it to be explored further. If this were a forum theatre piece, perhaps that discussion could be

started by getting the audience's thoughts on what they understand by the term 'axes stuck on the head' which would actually lead to a broader discussion on the real issues of healing and reconciliation.

The title of the play comes through as a 'protest' towards the inflicting of more wounds on helpless people and also a chastisement to those guilty of inflicting them so that they mend their ways. The title seems to suggest that the play is addressed towards somebody or something i.e. a person or organization, community or government and as such is powerful enough to engage those who are affected by the wounds in one way or another.

The playwright Stephen Chifunyise is quoted as saying that when he wrote the play its purpose was 'not to open old wounds but to chart a way forward after the traumatic experiences many people have gone through' (www.zimbojam.com/ accessed 04/12/2010). It remains to be seen whether the play achieves what the playwright sets out to do or does the opposite. The study will attempt to address this and other questions that are pertinent to this particular play and the issues it was seeking to address.

3.4 Characterisation

In terms of style which would influence the characterization, 'Heal the Wounds' comes through as realism.

Therefore even the characters we encounter seem to be taken out of real life and thus are portrayed as real, well rounded people who have beliefs and opinions that influence how they behave and operate within the play. The aesthetic framing of the play makes the characters appear as everyday people grappling with serious issues from a personal and community level as evidenced by storyline and situations presented in the play.

Apartheid South Africa protest theatre which seems to have had a focus on the creation of iconic characters such as Robert Zwelinzima in Athol Fugard's *'Sizwe Bansi is Dead'*. In *'Heal the Wounds'* the focus seems to be on the realism of the storyline rather than the

creation of situations and characters that are iconic and encapsulate the mood and the overall message of the play.

The idea behind this argument is that audiences are already generally aware of their problems and issues, therefore what they seek are ways of dealing with these issues, of unpacking them to understand them or finding ways of coping or revolting. After all the play is ‘protest theatre’.

In much of apartheid South Africa protest theatre, we tend to find techniques and traditions such as ‘Poor Theatre’, a brainchild of Jerzy Grotowski articulated in his seminal book *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968). His theories emphasised on the ‘spectator-actor’ relationship rather than on-stage luxuries such as grandiose sets which he was vehemently opposed to. Grotowski (1968:19) was of the opinion that;

...by gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we (he) found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, “live” communion.



Headman Nyikavanhu (R) speaking to his wife.

Plays such as *'Sizwe Bansi is Dead'* and *'Woza Albert'* were renowned for their multiple characterisation and minimalistic sets. This scenario may also have been more to do with the scarce resources towards the staging of plays of this kind and also these 'foreign' performance traditions that permeated South African protest theatre and stayed.

In Zimbabwean protest theatre we seem to mainly encounter 'stock characters' and caricatures of those in power portrayed in ridiculously unapologetic fashion. The characters presented in the plays in general are not complex enough to be explored and scrutinised so as to discover why they do what they do and what they represent. In many cases in protest theatre plays, characters are portrayed as 'bad because they have no choice but to be bad', or 'too good to be real' which renders the power behind characterization as ineffectual.

I argue that without serious characterisation from conceptualisation of the story by the playwright, directors are left with the job of breathing life into already 'dead', one sided characters who are not complex as real people are. Plays such as *'The Good President'*, *'Final Push'*, *'Super-patriots and Morons'*, *'The Two Leaders I Know'*, *'Pregnant with Emotion'* and more recently *'Election Day'* have had characters that at face value are easily recognizable. This is because the characters are based on or in many cases caricatures or replicas of real people existing in Zimbabwe's political landscape.

While this kind of characterization provides for instant recognition from audiences, the downside is that audiences may become more interested in how best those characters mimic or caricature the 'real person(s)' much to the detriment of the actual message or issues that the play seeks to protest about. Certain would-be serious plays have often become comedic because of the way the characterization becomes the central figure of the play rather than the issues the play seeks to address.

In *'Heal the Wounds'* we are introduced to characters such as *Headman Nyikavanhu* and his wife, *Amai Nyikavanhu*, *Amai Adam* or *Amai Esnath* (meaning mother of Adam or Esnath). *Headman Nyikavanhu* is related to *Headman Zinyemba*, another of the characters we are introduced to through the marriage of his daughter *Esnath*, to the latter's son *Godknows Zinyemba*. *Godknows Zinyemba* and *Adam Nyikavanhu* are presented to us as colleagues within a committee that has been set up to oversee the national healing process.

While this kind of characterisation is plausible and vivid enough to capture the attention of audience members, it lacks a certain artistic authenticity in that it appears fictional that such relationships would exist in one play. The sheer number of the characters in the play makes certain scenes appear as if they are dominated by arguments as the characters seem to be competing to speak. There is a preoccupation with the moral and social expectations of the extended family's relationship that then take up some chunks of the play.

An example *Godknows Zinyemba* is portrayed as trying all he can to behave like a proper 'son in law' by refusing to sit on a chair provided to him or by clapping hands every time he passes close to his mother-in-law. Whilst these exchanges are rich in social and cultural commentary, they may actually disrupt the flow of the play as too many things then happen within one play.

The exchanges are on the whole funny and provide some comic relief but in the end I would argue do not justify their existence within the play. Another example is the 'argument' as to whether *Godknows Zinyemba* should eat the food that his mother-in-law has offered him which ends up being a 'heated' exchange though with comic undertones.

Whilst these exchanges and situations demonstrate the playwright's wealth and depth in knowledge of the marriage traditions, expectations, norms and values; that knowledge perhaps could be relegated to less serious plays that are not dealing with matters such as national healing and reconciliation. If not then a suggestion would

be that they be kept at a minimum to allow for the play to move forward and for the issues to be addressed.

I want to argue that for *'Heal the Wounds'* to have genuinely addressed the issues of national healing and reconciliation, such an aim would require a broader characterisation that allows for multiple voices to be heard rather than just the 'extended family set-up' with its inherent politics, social and moral expectations and etiquette.

3.5 Language

In *'Heal the Wounds'*, language exists on two levels. Firstly the play is generally presented in the English language to audiences. In Zimbabwe there are three official languages and English is only one of them yet the play is performed in English throughout. This use of English may serve to alienate the play from other audience members who may not necessarily understand English.

Within the play we find some *Shona* phrases and sections spoken by some of the characters but these are far apart and few. I would like to argue that the issue of language could make the play seem elitist in its outlook if performed to a purely rural audience and given that the characters portrayed in the play are also rural folk but who happen to speak excellent English! One needs to look at characters such as *Headman Nyikavanhu*, *Amai Nyikavanhu* and *Headman Zinyemba* to understand how the language may not necessarily be true to their characters as they are presented to us. The argument is not about how well a typically rural character would speak English, but it is rather on the apparent contradiction between what the characters say and who they are in the story.

This apparent irony I would argue creates some distance between the audience and the play, and could make the issues that are being addressed become far-removed which would not serve the purpose of the play as a vehicle for interrogating the national healing and reconciliation process. Even when it comes to the post-performance discussion, one may find that some member of the audience may want to speak in *Shona* because they are more comfortable expressing

themselves in their indigenous language yet the ideas and points they want to make were actually made in English by the character.

Given that the play is performed in English, this could make the contributions rather laborious and only scratch the surface without actually delving deeper into the issues highlighted in the play.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o speaks on the importance of language when he says that in creating '*I will marry when I want*' with the Kamiriithu Community they realised that;

...the choice of language was crucial. There was no barrier between the content of their (audience) history and the linguistic medium of expression. Because the play was written in a language they could understand the people could participate in all the subsequent discussions on the script. They (the audience) discussed its content, its language and even the form. (Prentki & Preston 2009:265)

The fact that the audience members or participants that Ngugi wa Thiong'o was referring to went even further to discuss the issues of language around '*I will marry when I want*' points to the importance of a play or intervention being in indigenous languages. If we are to use 'performance as a tool for pedagogy', we would need a 'dialogical approach that allows learning and communication to unfold, so that all participants shape the events, and power is balanced among participants (Howard 2009:2). That dialogical approach I would like to argue would be contested on the issues of language because they are so critical to the communicative aspects of any play or intervention.

Given that in '*Heal the Wounds*' we are presented with some characters who are supposedly mature in age, the content and reception of a theatre piece depends on how it manages to engage the audience in the story from the onset. In making '*I will marry when I want*', Ngugi wa Thiongo 'the question of audience settled the problem of the language choice; and the language choice settled the question of the audience'. (Prentki & Preston 2009:264). In the case

of *'Heal the Wounds'*, the playwright may have simple been following the trend of English protest theatre plays.

What is important to note here is that in the making of a play like *'Heal the Wounds'* which seeks to address serious issues such as national healing and reconciliation, the issue of language and how the audience will engage with the play needs to be addressed.

A second critical point is to look at the appropriateness and undertones that using the English language only could convey is found in the first scene where we are presented with the first pair of characters. There seems to be an underlying anger in the tone and delivery of *Headman Nyikavanhu* as he speaks with his wife, *Amai Nyikavanhu*. It may be because the issues of religion that they are discussing are close to their hearts and deeply affect them; nevertheless language needs to be able to create the environment that will enable for the reception of the play without it actually being one of the inhibiting factors. In the following exchange we encounter for the first time the 'real issues' of the play as we are made to understand that there are still wounds from the *Chimurenga* war that are yet to be healed;

Amai Nyikavanhu: Baba Esnath, you are angry, you are angry with last year...?

Headman Nyikavanhu: Yes, yes I am angry. Very angry. In 1976, I nearly lost my life because people from this village went and told the Rhodesian police that my brother had gone to Mozambique to join the comrades. And in 1978, I nearly lost my life again because the very same people had told the comrades that I had taken cattle to the dip tank, that I was a sellout, an informer and a collaborator, and those people are still living in the very same village...but what happened last June made me remember everything...



In this scene, Headman Nyikavanhu (L) speaks to Headman Zinyemba (R) whilst their sons Adam (FL) and Godknows (NR) look on. (Picture courtesy of [http.news@bbc.co.uk](http://news.bbc.co.uk))

The exchange shows that in fact when we are dealing with these issues of national healing and reconciliation, they need to be approached from a historical and all inclusive angle. However, perhaps it is not so much an issue of language rather than style or techniques where characters enunciate their anger through actually saying it. The language itself if used properly or better still if the indigenous languages are used would allow for more nuanced responses that actually depict real scenarios which would allow for meaningful post-performance discussions. Again, the issue of language and its appropriateness comes through in the ‘axes on the heads’ statement. When translated, the phrase evokes images of a person or persons who have been attacked by an axe which is now stuck on their head. Through such powerful imagery which is evoked by the language, it is worth noting that its use must be accompanied with care since such events actually did take place in some communities.

Whilst this way of speaking and technique is part and parcel of culture and traditional life where elders talk in parables and metaphors, it may actually serve to alienate the audience if misunderstood or used in the wrong context. Another factor is that due to the nature of the political violence, some victims actually were attacked by the perpetrators with axes so I would think that Chifunyise needed to be careful in his use of this term. However, the

characters within the play seem to see the funny side of the analogy which I think renders it ineffectual as a tool to talk about the difficult issues of healing and reconciliation. This is one instance where language could have been used to draw audiences to the issues but which I think becomes a lost opportunity.

3.7 Structure

The opening scene is dominated by a conversation between the two characters that we are introduced to initially. This is supposed to set the scene for the action that will follow in the actual play. They discuss the squabbles bedeviling their beloved Anglican church and given that these issues are not fictitious, this has an element of drawing in those who are aware of the goings on. However, it is also a possibility that some who watched the play might not have been aware of it. This ‘debate’ is meant to be ‘a way in’ to the play but I would argue that it could act in an opposite way if the audiences who are watching are actually Anglican by religious affinity or persuasion. The conflicts within the Anglican church have even taken a political twist by sucking in those who support the appointing of a new Bishop on one hand as being rebels or part of the so-called regime-change agenda, and those who prefer the old one to stay on the other as being pro-government (www.timesonline.co.uk /accessed 27/02/2011). In one interview, a parishioner commented that ‘everything you do in Zimbabwe places you on one side or other of the political divide’ when asked about why the squabbles within the church seemed to have taken political twists (www.globalpost.com /accessed 28/02/2011)

3.7 Conclusion

At the end of the play, we see ‘the people’ represented by the two elders managing to get their way by using all sorts of tricks to put forward their own ‘Ten Points’ on how national healing and reconciliation must be conducted.

This act is an empowering one in that it demonstrates how the villagers and communities should actually take charge and be consulted when it comes to issues of national healing and reconciliation. The situation on the ground however has not provided for such platforms because the organ itself has a problem of legitimacy because it is made up of politicians. Many people are of the belief that politicians have no moral authority to lead such processes since they are perceived to have been the architects of the political violence in the first place. Below is a cartoon illustration questioning the role and legitimacy of those leading the national healing and reconciliation process in a local newspaper.

The danger with ending the play in such a way is captured by Thompson when he says;

...any theatre that assumes that it is working against the pain caused by conflict needs to examine carefully any possibility that it is part of a dynamic that does the opposite (2005:31).

In the study, I have attempted to explore and interrogate *'Heal the Wounds'* through critical pedagogical lenses. The critique took into account that as a protest theatre play, what was its role in articulating the national healing and reconciliation process and to what effect and extend did it succeed in doing this.



Picture courtesy of www.standardnewspaper.co.zw

Above, a cartoon illustrating some views about the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration published in a local paper.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: ‘WAITING FOR CONSTITUTION’ AS PROTEST THEATRE IN THE SERVICE OF CONSTITUTION-MAKING

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I did a critical analysis of the play *‘Heal the Wounds’* written by Stephen Chifunyise. In this chapter, I will interrogate *‘Waiting for Constitution’* also written by the same playwright. Writing for one of the local newspapers, one critic summarized the issues this play tackles by stating that;

The current play (*‘Waiting for Constitution’*) is a candid and refreshing exploration of hot-button issues such as the participation of women in the process, disagreements of various proposed drafts, divisions that have rocked civil society because of the process, the coercion of people at the grassroots by different political parties, the participation of exiled Zimbabweans in the process, the composition of teams driving the process, and the rights of minority sexual groups.(www.standardnewspaper.co.zw/ accessed 14/11/2010)

The play sought to highlight and advocate for a number of issues chief among them a genuine, transparent and democratic constitution-making process that allowed for diverse voices from across the political divide to be heard. Since constitutional matters are inevitably issues to do with politics and power, I would agree that it was critical for ordinary people to become ‘active participants, but they must bear some of the responsibility for the process...through a collaborative, communal effort’ (Howard 2009:6). This ‘active participation’ is critical component of an applied theatre process and if done properly, the outcome of the constitution-making process would be generally accepted by all stakeholders.

‘Waiting for Constitution’ was performed in many of the country’s districts as a precursor to the Constitutional Outreach Teams’ public

consultations which meant it was ideal in terms of facilitating debate on the matters of the constitution. The play would be performed at a particular venue then the actors would lead the audience in post-performance discussions on the issues the play had raised. The play managed to create platforms for debate on the constitution whenever and wherever it was performed. Protest theatre in this case was being used to unpack, articulate and promote public discussions on the issues around the process of constitution-making. Given the highly volatile political temperature at the time, this platform was just but one of the pre-requisites to a genuine constitution-building process which took the views of the electorate seriously. Be that as it may, one of the critical questions this raises was that after those semi-formal and at times ad hoc discussions were held between the actors and the people, how would that platform created by the play be used to ensure genuine and effective of the people when the Constitutional Outreach Teams eventually came to ‘collect their views’. This and other questions will be tackled in the next few sections of this study.

The performance of *‘Waiting for Constitution’* did provide an important previously nonexistent platform for dialogue on constitutional matters. However, the issues this study raises concern the overall role of protest theatre in the face of widespread ignorance and apathy on constitutional matters in Zimbabwe (See www.sokwanele.com/ www.ncazimbabwe.info)

According to the producers ‘the play (*‘Waiting for Constitution’*) could not have come at a better time than now when the country is undergoing a constitutional making process that has not been spared from challenges and controversy’ (www.rooftop.co.zw/ accessed 23/11/2010).

These ‘challenges’ and ‘contradictions’ though downplayed have made the whole constitution-making process be fraught with irregularities that many constitutional experts have questioned

whether the final outcome will be a true reflection of the will and aspirations of the people of Zimbabwe. I would argue that an important play such as ‘Waiting for Constitution’ should have attempted to address/incorporate some of these issues given that the process itself desperately lacked credibility and genuine participation by those in the grassroots. Another question that the study interrogates is whether a play of this kind generated interest in constitutional issues and how that was carried forward in terms of educating and creating awareness in people of the importance of their individual and collective voices in the final document.

The play will be critiqued on how far it went in creating a level of critical understanding and awareness in audiences and how that new knowledge empowered ordinary people who watched the play.

The study therefore seeks to engage with the play on its own merits through a performative critical pedagogical lens; given that performance is itself a form of pedagogy (Howard 2009).

Furthermore, the performance of a play should be ‘uniquely aligned to transformation’ (Howard 2009:8) which allows for certain outcomes that were previously nonexistent. Ideally that ‘transformation’ would promote critical awareness and responsible citizenry and would point to the effectiveness of that intervention. Does *‘Waiting for Constitution’* do any of these?

Some examples of how theatre has dealt with issues such as the ones discussed in this study are found in apartheid South Africa protest theatre plays which ‘attempted to translate the subjunctive mood of virtual public sphere into the future indicative of a new South Africa’ (Kruger 1999:155). In the case of Zimbabwe, theatre is attempting to re-imagine how the making of a new constitution can be empowering and unite families and communities ravaged by divisions caused by political violence and intolerance (Interview with Chifunyise, 15 November, 2010).

If protest theatre is to have much more visible efficacy, it should be creating ‘situations in which theatre injects information in support of political lobbying, propagating ideas that may lead to reforms within the community or the society at large...’ (Eskamp 2006:131).

‘*Waiting for Constitution*’ will be analysed from various angles in order to ascertain how it achieves efficacy given that it addresses important constitutional matters.

4.2 Synopsis of ‘*Waiting for Constitution*’

A family marriage consultative meeting fails to take off, erupting into a heated debate on the constitution as the gathered family members wait for Constance, the bride, to arrive. It turns out that they are not only waiting for Constance but waiting for the new Constitution because Constance is attending a constitution making meeting. The family is sharply divided by their different beliefs, affiliations, ambitions, interests and questions pertaining to what a new constitution is and what it should address or include in terms of democracy and good governance. This heated debate leads to the acting father of the family, an ex-combatant who considers the many questions as anti-government propaganda promoted by foreign NGOs and foreign unfriendly media institutions and governments, storming out of the family meeting and throwing the marriage discussion into disarray. Although this crisis disrupts the marriage discussion it however enables the family to face each other and raise diverse critical issues on the constitution, governance and human rights as well as on the responsibility and ability of the people of Zimbabwe to use their constitution and the laws of the country for development and proper governance at all levels. This disastrous family encounter shows why frank dialogue on socio-economic and political issues and the respect of other people’s views are critical not only in the constitution making process and governance issues but also in matters that require consultation. (Source: www.rooftop.org)

4.3 Title of Play

The title of the play is captured in what one of the characters says;

Titus: *We are not waiting for Constance but we are ‘waiting for the constitution’, because Constance will not come until the new constitution is finished!*

The relationship of the protagonist’s name to the title of the play is not accidental as the playwright was seeking to use this as a technique to entice the audience into the debate about the constitution through having the actors initiating such a debate within the play first.

Whereas this title is catchy and seems to evoke ideas around the longevity and time-frame of the making of a new constitution, it could also mislead given that the ‘waiting’ part could actually be in vain. It is possible the title could actually be disempowering people by portraying the idea that they must ‘wait’ for the constitution instead of ‘taking part’ in its making. To some extent, the technique does place constitutional matters squarely on the limelight and this may add a dimension of the importance of the issues it raises and what role the audiences should play in the whole process.

The analogy of the constitution making process to marriage negotiations marriage is a technique that brings familiarity as many of the audience would at one point or another have witnessed or been involved in such negotiations. However, this analogy could be a double –edged sword given that there are processes that are followed that do not add value to the play but bring about contentious issues on women’s rights in this highly patriarchal ceremony.

In critical performative pedagogy, the oppressed himself must perform an action and that will then enable the performance of that ‘theatrical fiction’ in real life (Boal 2001). The idea is that if the play simply portrays the ‘waiting’ rather than the ‘action’, the audience is left underpowered and unable to change their social reality. Theatre should not only serve aesthetic or entertainment purposes but should be used ‘in epistemological terms for social reform’ (2009). In the case of *Waiting for Constitution*, that social reform would entail the

capacitating of the audience members to realise the importance of their participation in the constitution-making process.



Comrade Babamunini (C) discusses with Susan (L) and Constance (R), Picture courtesy of Fungaifoto/ www.zimbojam.com

According to one critic;

The performance uses the divisions in the family over Constance's marriage plans - like disagreements on how much should be charged as bride price, and who should pocket what fraction of the proceeds - to highlight competing positions that have emerged over Zimbabwe's new constitution. (<http://ipsnews.net/news.asp> accessed 19/10/2010)

The question is whether that marriage analogy or motif captures the complexities of such a process and what it actually achieves in the end given that those issues are still unresolved. I would like to think that though the title captures the importance of the constitution, participation of ordinary people and also the need to negotiate different positions, it may actually mislead given that at the end of marriage negotiations the bride is indeed 'given away'. In the case of Zimbabwe, that bride here meaning a new, people-centred and driven process is still a long way from being a reality. The play does not capture this and should have as a way of articulating how that process should not be partisan and driven by selfish and narrow-minded 'party

politics’ as is currently the case. It is an opportunity missed. The real business of making the constitution continues to exclude the contributions of ordinary people and be fraught with contradictions that in the end will render whatever document produced be unacceptable and not in the best interests of the people it is meant to serve and protect.

4.4 Characterisation

According to the playwright;

‘Waiting for Constitution’ is about those current and important issues of making a new constitution. It is a tool for dialogue, discussion and allowing people’s views to be heard and those responsible for writing of the constitution to ensure that it is a truly ‘people-driven’ exercise...The play is just another medium for dialogue and raising those critical talking points.
(www.standardnewspaper.co.zw / accessed 22/08/2010)

In the play we are introduced to a number of characters who all represent different positions within the marriage negotiations. The characters are taken from everyday life and their positions are easily recognisable though the explanations of why they stand for those particular views are not explored to their fullest and pretty much left to the audience to decipher. This is both a good and bad thing, given that in the end those characters are not transformed.

In the *Zunde* family, we are introduced to ‘*Susan*’ who we are told has been living in America for twelve years. She is presented as an outspoken, independent and intelligent young woman and the words we identify her with as the play progresses are ‘This colony will never be a country again!’ This is a powerful statement of how she views the country’s politics especially on the making of the new constitution. She also ridicules the more popular ‘This country will never be a colony again! This is bold given that there are those in the play who stand for the view that the country should not be ‘given’ back to the colonisers through this new constitution. This view has led to the politicisation of a process that was meant to be non partisan and all inclusive regardless of party-political affiliation. This is not

interrogated by the play though it has led to numerous disputes even within the constitution making body itself. The play could have addressed how the continuous tug-of-war in COPAC is not in the best interests of the country as a whole.



On the left is Susan and on the Right: Sekuru Matambo .Picture courtesy of FungaiFoto / www.zimbojam.co.zw

'Sekuru or Tezvara Matambo', an ex Rhodesian policeman whom we come to identify through the words 'bloody kaffirs' is the other character in *'Waiting for Constitution'*. His use of these words is ironic given that he himself would have qualified to be called thus yet he continually refers to fellow black people on those same terms. He constantly reminisces of the old days when he was a respected and feared as a policeman for the white regime and yet hated and ridiculed as a colonial sympathizer by his own. His overall contribution to the critical issues is overshadowed by the need to be unnecessarily funny and humorous through his broken English (described as 'Shon-glish') yet ducking away from actually pushing forward the real issues that the play seeks to address.

The next character we meet is *'Comrade Babamunini'*, an ex-combatant, self proclaimed 'war veteran' and a part-time 'new farmer'. When we meet him he is singing a revolutionary song *'Takaitora Nehondo'* (We took back the country through a war) to show his political inclinations towards the ruling party. In the play, he is at constant loggerheads with *Sekuru Matambo* as they question and poke fun at each other over the authenticity of their war

credentials. This conflict takes centre stage and may provide the audience with comic relief but it does not serve the overall purpose of the play which is to place the debate on the constitution on the centre stage.



‘Comrade Babamunini’; Picture courtesy of FungaiFoto / www.zimbojam.com

‘Titus’, a firebrand and equally outspoken young man is the next character. He wants to take a leading role in politics (including family affairs) given his keen interest in political and constitutional matters. His argument with his mother over who should lead his sister’s marriage negotiations also cements his somewhat ‘progressive’ views on the critical issues. He also represents the vibrancy and zeal of youth minus the wisdom of age. One of his standout lines is where he says, *‘Kana vakatisunungura vachitirambidza kuti tisununguke saka ngavanosungirira nyika yacho toisunungura isusu’* (If they liberated/unchained the country but do not want us to be liberated/unchained, then they must ‘un-liberate’/re-chain the country so that we can go and liberate/unchain it ourselves.

When we first meet Titus in the play, he is singing renowned ‘exiled’ Zimbabwean musician Thomas Mapfumo’s *‘Vanhu Havadi, Musavamanikidze’* (The people do not want, so don’t force them). This shows his wild, youthful and iconoclastic nature showing his perchance for going against the authority. His overall contribution to the play is in how he wants to question everything that his mother,

Comrade Babamunini, *Sekuru Matambo* and *Susan* stand for. His childish arguments/sibling rivalry with *Susan* does not really add value to the important issues in the play though it does provide sterile/stale comic relief.

'*Amai Constance*' is the last but not least character we encounter in the play. In the play, the lines we associate her with are '*Chivanhu chedu hachichinje!*' (Our old traditions and culture will never change!) and also 'This country will never be a colony again!'. She stands with *Comrade Babamunini* in furthering the interests of a particular status quo within the play. In terms of her contribution to the constitutional debate, this is relegated to 'unwavering agreement' with whatever the men propose as she keeps propping up the dying patriarchy represented by *Sekuru Matambo* and *Comrade Babamunini*. Through her, we are made to see the importance of including the subaltern voices especially women in the constitution making process. The playwright does not show us how she becomes empowered but rather the effects of her subalternity and this may actually not augur well with what the idea of a democratic, all inclusive people-driven constitution making process should stand for and mean.

Lastly but not least is '*Constance*', from whose name the play's title is derived though we never meet her in the play. When the play opens, it is her impending marriage consultations that take centre stage and we are also told that she works for one of the committees on the Constitutional Team. The play is entitled '*Waiting for Constitution*', but because of *Constance*'s absence this would have read as 'Waiting for *Constance*' as *Titus* elaborates in the early part of the play.

With such an array of characters from different backgrounds and representing different political beliefs and ideals, Chifunyise seeks to have them discuss the constitution-making process through the *lobola* negotiations motif. The problem with such a multiplicity of voices is when it comes to dialogue on the issues at hand; personality clashes take centre stage rather than the constitution which 'supposedly' is a unifying factor in the play. The exchanges between all these

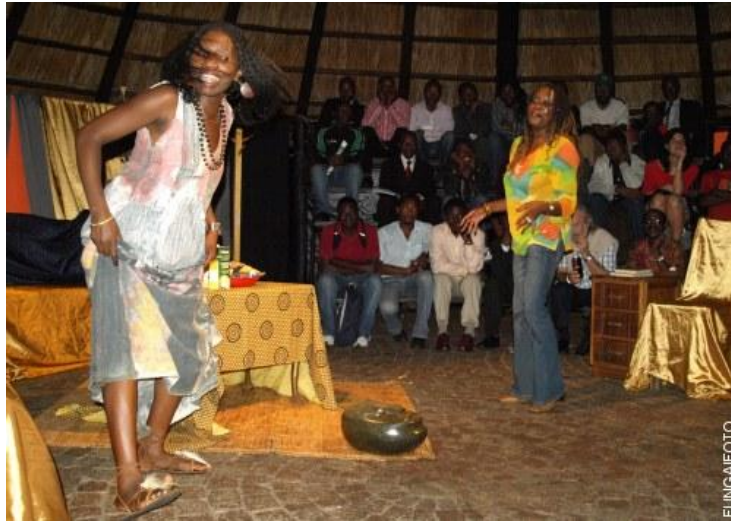
characters are rich in humour but do not add much to the exploration of what the constitution-making process really means and how it must be done.

The characters presented all represent various viewpoints when it comes to the issues of the marriage negotiations which is a reflection of varied views in the constitution-making process. *Titus* even suggests that ‘We must tell the *Mugomba* family that, (we) the *Zunde* family (...) don’t want cattle for *danga* (cattle-gift) or money for *rusambo* (bride-price) because Constance is not for sale!’ This is a powerful indictment of the marriage negotiations given the contentious issues it brings up along the lines of women’s rights.

This statement places ‘*Titus*’ in conflict with his traditional mother who chastises him by saying that ‘Such things will never change!’ This exchange shows how the conflict is entrenched because of two disparate viewpoints and seems to point to how even in the making of a new constitution such conflicts are to be expected. This analogy is a brilliant technique which captures something complicated by portraying something much more mundane and common. What is missing from it is how such techniques could be equally used to effectively discuss the constitution-making issues in a tolerant and peaceful environment. This would be the roles that protest theatre should take in showing how processes such as that of constitution making will be fraught with disparate views yet in the end there must be some room for common ground.

Such characterisation while vivid and rich in cultural context brings about the issue of subaltern voices as Chikonzo (2010) observes. This characterisation is masterful from such an esteemed playwright as Stephen Chifunyise but it lacks when it comes to placement and balance of issues of lobola and the constitution. One wonders whether such a delicate balance is possible or even necessary but would no doubt add much more substance to what the playwright seeks to address by creating these interesting and diverse characters.

4.5 Style/Form



A scene from the play featuring Amai and Susan, picture courtesy of FungaiFoto, www.zimbojam.co.zw

The play '*Waiting for Constitution*', its characters and storyline are presented to us in a realist-naturalist fashion. The conventions that the playwright uses have much to do with the way in which theatre has been conceived from the time of community theatre.

Given that the play seeks to empower people to understand and become active participants in the constitution-making process, the presentation and use of these characters may actually do the opposite. Characters such as *Sekuru Matamba* and *Comrade Babamunini* are portrayed in a way that places them in conflict with the youthful voices of *Titus* and *Susan*. This antagonism may actually end up reinforcing notions of superiority as the youths are ridiculed because of their youthfulness while the old are simply ignored.

The play's preoccupation with fidelity to events and to the 'story' seems to place the addressing of the constitutional issues in jeopardy. Thus the characters spend time justifying why they are in the play and speaking for unknown and absent 'others' which does not help the story to move forward and effectively address the burning issues.

The role and place of theatre in Zimbabwe as depicted in *Waiting for Constitution* would seem to take a somewhat 'hands-on' approach given the context and content of the play. However, what critical performative pedagogy seeks to do is to pose questions as to the

efficacy of the play given how the playwright weaves a story around characters representative of Zimbabwe today.

The background of the entire constitution making process had been accused of being partisan and frictional that some commentators still doubt the acceptability of the final outcome. As a result, it is reported that;

Violence has marred the series of outreach meetings being held across Zimbabwe, where members of the Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee (COPAC) come to hear what ordinary Zimbabweans want to be included in their new constitution. (www.irinnews.org, accessed 29/09/2010)

According to Conquergood performance should be a site for re-imagining and ‘decentering power’, and for ‘staking claims to poetics and persuasion, pleasure and power, in the interest of the community and critique solidarity and resistance (1992:80). In its original style of presentation and form, *Waiting for Constitution*’ seems to fall outside what a performance that incorporates critical performative pedagogy should have in order to assure its efficacy.

4.6 Language

The issue of language in *Waiting for Constitution*’ as it was performed and during post-performance discussions exists on a number of levels. Generally the characters are portrayed as speaking either in English, *Shona* or both. On one hand this could contribute to the play’s overall appeal given that the two main indigenous languages spoken are *Shona*, *Ndebele*. However, what has emerged is that many of the protest plays that have been done have ended being either ‘*Shona*-centric’ or otherwise and this has an alienating effect. However if the play is taken to areas where literacy levels are low, or where *Shona* and English languages are not used, then the communicative aspect of the drama would be lost.

In one of the exchanges we encounter language, this time used in a different context which echoes that which already exists in mainstream Zimbabwean society today. This has an effect of

appealing to the audience who are aware of the same kind of phrases such as the ones the actors use. The question however is whether the mere use of those phrases attracts a critical engagement to the underlying meanings or it just serves as part of what the actors say thereby reinforcing the oppression of language?

Titus: This colony will never be a country again!

Amai Constance: This country will never be a colony again!

This issue of language, its appropriateness and the underlying messages it conveys rings true at this point because with the exchange one gets a sense of the kind of rhetoric exists in political circles and how it has permeated into ordinary conversation. Some critics say that in using that kind of language, one is reclaiming it but there are contradictions to such kind of stance as well.

4.7 Conclusion

If protest theatre is to be engaged in important nation-building processes such as constitution-making, national healing and reconciliation, then it is important that besides portraying ideal circumstances, it must adapt and also portray realities within those processes. Such a stance would bring to light the inconsistencies and contradictions between policy and practice even in circumstances where the two are perceived to be working in tandem.

Protest theatre needs to play a difficult balancing and mediating act especially at this crucial juncture in the country's history. It cannot be critical for criticism's sake neither can it 'sugarcoat' or endorse flawed processes.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: EMERGING PARADIGMS IN PROTEST THEATRE IN ZIMBABWE

5.1 Introduction

With current protest theatre initiatives seemingly ineffectual in influencing the course of Zimbabwe's political processes, the question remains as to where the people can look to for the ushering in of new political discourses through protest theatre? Can this kind of theatre afford to retain its didactic, non-dialogic form and structure in the face of resurgent complexities within current national processes? This is what we have seen with the protracted discussions on how healing should be done and who must lead that process; and also how a constitution that can be acceptable not only to politicians but the general populace can be made. Ultimately, can plays such as *'Heal the Wounds'* and *'Waiting for Constitution'* still be made in the same way they have been yet expect different results?

5.2 Findings

The role of protest theatre in Zimbabwe is one that I would argue is very much in need of new and more efficacious forms of that 'protest' which place a 'critical pedagogy' at the centre in order for that theatre to dialogue with people's challenges and realities. As this study has shown, the role and place of protest theatre needs to be re-examined with the view of making it speak back to people's lived experiences yet in a way that allows for critical awareness and engagement with the issues of the times the country and its people find themselves faced with.

Protest theatre as it exists currently has played a critical role in placing important issues on the limelight but one also begins to sense some disillusionment with this theatrical form/style as the country's multiple crises do not seem to be abetting. This study has attempted to

interrogate the role of Zimbabwean protest theatre as depicted in the two plays in addressing the issues of national healing and reconciliation as well as constitution-building. Though these two plays have recorded some measure of trying to engage politicians and ordinary people in critical discourse, they have been failed by the inherent weaknesses of a movement that emerged from community theatre and which has not made bold attempts to create new paradigms for performance. Such paradigms if created would have to be more dynamic with the sole aim of awakening a critical citizen capable of challenging and speaking truth to power.

The study has suggested Applied Theatre as one alternative that could succeed where protest theatre has failed. Given that with applied theatre, scholars such as Taylor speak of its critical role in their own practice. For Taylor;

...applied theatre in its intentional form creates a practice that seeks to debate vital issues and see those concerns transformed into new stories or within familiar settings...to provide people with a means to work their way through difficult transitory periods...(2005:200).

As applied theatre provides ‘means’ to assist communities in imagining new realities for themselves in ‘difficult transitory periods’ such as the ones Zimbabwe finds itself in, I believe that protest theatre in Zimbabwe needs to find ways of incorporating some of these ideas.

The use of protest theatre to highlight national healing and reconciliation in *‘Heal the Wounds’* may be viewed as a ‘work in progress’ given that the ending of the play is not conclusive. The play ends with the audience seeing *Headman Zinyemba* and *Headman Nyikavanhu* hand out what they call the ‘Ten Points’ as their contribution to the national healing and reconciliation process. These ‘Ten Points’ could be seen as symbolic of how the process of national

healing and reconciliation should include all voices and must allow for meaningful involvement of all concerned. Curiously, the playwright nor the play itself show us why only 'Ten Points' are what is needed to make such a complicated and lengthy process succeed.

In as much as there is a message on why ordinary people especially those personally affected must have their own local processes; the handing out of the 'Ten Points' could be viewed as a 'handing over' of responsibility by the people to the very same politicians who have brought about the need for healing in the first place. What applied theatre would propose in this instance would be that people take charge of their own destinies and get empowered to bring out their own forms of dealing with their crises rather than have a top-down approach as has been the case. A culture of taking responsibility needs to be inculcated and awakened in those who watch protest theatre, and that culture can start by having the audience involved in their own liberation.

On the other hand, this gesture in a way does demonstrate how the process of national healing and reconciliation should actually begin at the grassroots level. It is a powerful gesture and moment within the play which could have been empowering yet sadly only remains only in the 'play'. The question raised towards protest theatre here is that after showing what should be done, what other platform does the play provide or create for the realisation and rehearsal of the solutions it suggests? In applied theatre especially that practiced by Augusto Boal, members of the audience were given a free reign to effect changes as the play was being staged. That kind of freedom is not granted to those who were viewing *'Heal the Wounds'*. If this had been done, then we could have seen;

...in practice how the theatre can be placed at the service of the oppressed, so that they can express themselves and so that, by

using this new language, they can discover new concepts...
(Boal 2008:97)

On the other hand, if the aim of *'Heal the Wounds'* was to merely protest, then perhaps there would be no need for a whole play to do that. It would have sufficed to have a non-theatrical forum where the community would simply voice concerns about the issues affecting them and how they could be compensated for their material losses. It is commendable that the playwright acknowledged that even as efforts towards constitution-making were being done; national healing should have taken precedence as the basis for the entrenchment of democratic processes and ideals.

One observer even went so far as saying that;

The wounds are not healed and people do not even trust anyone with their views, more so at public meetings. I only see those sponsored by political parties giving their contributions and ordinary people will be hesitant to speak
(www.dailynews.co.zw/ accessed 04/01/2011).

In terms of *'Waiting for Constitution'*, some of the arguments and weaknesses that have been observed in *'Heal the Wounds'* may still apply to it. In *'Waiting for Constitution'*, the *lobola* ceremony does place the issues of the constitution on the spotlight but again the play suffers from trying to strike a balance between the motif and addressing the real issues. Questions such as how the play creates a critical awareness in the audiences and what their own contribution as ordinary people should be remain largely unanswered. This is a weakness of using well made plays that do not allow space for constructive engagement within the performance of that play. The

play does achieve what the Constitution Outreach Teams fail to do and create a sense of security and one observer commented that;

Whereas the outreach team meetings are full of tension and fear, '*Waiting for Constitution*' has no hassles with the people. The people feel so free that they open their hearts to the actors - telling them that they wished they were the ones collecting their views. They said they liked the play because it was coming to the people unlike COPAC teams, which were asking people to gather at certain venues where they could not go because they were being watched. COPAC is facing serious logistical problems, which sometimes result in confusion over venues and times of meetings. (www.thezimbabwean.co.uk Accessed 28/11/2010)

This creation of a safe space is commendable but becomes an opportunity wasted given that COPAC officials were not present to take advantage of it. The question of efficacy also comes through strongly because as the commentator mentions, the audience members even wished the actors were the ones collecting their views on the new constitution. The absence of COPAC officials though is no fault of the play, but there could have been ways of 'holding' and furthering the process should the officials eventually arrive. My contestation is on whether the play created any measures of empowering those who watched it to lead similar processes which would in turn empower and promote democratic principles and values even when the performers were long gone.

5.3 Recommendations

It is not an easy process to get to a point where theatre works miracles and wonders as academics and theorists hope for and expect, because as has been pointed out by the playwright, issues such as funding and time come into play which hinders such efforts. This is a weak

excuse Nevertheless, Boal suggests that it is important to ‘make the audience participants in a dramatic action, but in complete consciousness of the reason’ (2002:241). If this is done, then it is possible to have processes that can have an impact on the issues they are meant to be addressing and which can provide room for transformation from one state of understanding to another.

For plays such as *‘Heal the Wounds’*, and *‘Waiting for Constitution’* to be effective protest plays?work, they will need to have some changes made in terms of their overall style, structure and presentation. The aim should be to;

...to activate audiences, creating structures that will facilitate spectator’s participation within the drama as makers of meaning and agents for change’ (Boal 2002:68).

If that is done, then we can start to see new forms of audience-spectator engagement and we can begin to realise the power of creating and awakening ‘agents for change’ rather than passive, disempowered spectators. The difference being that the former could be described as ‘spec-actors’ who are empowered rather than the latter who simply regurgitate expected and ‘rehearsed’ responses.

Boal again argues that theatre must seek to;

...bring back theatre to the centre of political action-the centre of decisions- by making theatre as politics rather than merely making political theatre. In the latter case, the theatre makes comments on politics; in the former, the theatre is, in itself, one of the ways in which political activity can be conducted (1998: 23)

In Zimbabwe, some theatre companies such as Savannah Trust have questioned the logic of creating plays in isolation then taking those plays as ‘packaged products’ to unsuspecting communities. Daniel

Maphosa who is the director of the organisation thinks that what they try to do in communities in terms of peace building and promoting local healing and reconciliation initiatives could achieve more results as it is aimed at creating a capacity within the community.

This would fall into what Boal was doing when he says that;

...to encourage autonomous activity, to set a process in motion, to stimulate transformative activity, to change spectators into protagonists. And it is precisely for these reasons that the Theatre of the Oppressed should be the initiator of changes the culmination of which is not the aesthetic phenomenon but real life. (1992: 242)

Maphosa admits though that even with their own practice, there are fundamental flaws that need to be addressed if at all protest theatre is to become an effective tool for critical engagement with the issues.

In the end, (protest) theatre must try *to develop the (ir) desire for change* in audiences (Boal 200:20). If it manages that, then it is possible for new realities and paradigms to be ushered in that can effectively confront and address the issues that people are dealing with daily within their existence.

5.4 Conclusion

The study sought to interrogate protest theatre in Zimbabwe using the plays *'Heal the Wounds'* and *'Waiting for Constitution'*. The study used a critical performative pedagogy framework to analyse these two plays vis-à-vis their aims of articulation national healing and reconciliation on one hand, and the constitution-making on the other.

What emerged is that though the two plays did interrogate the basic issues, they did not provide enough space for the spectators to engage with the issues except in the post performance discussions. The

weaknesses of post performance discussions are that the spectators may not remember certain things which if the play were to be done in a 'start-stop' Forum Theatre format, such weaknesses would be eliminated. This would allow the audiences to engage with the issues and allow for processes of critical understanding, critical citizenry, change and transformation to occur. In their current states, the two plays can be commended for focusing on these important and pertinent issues but the way in which they do so could be enhanced if they took in elements of critical pedagogy and applied theatre as best practice. The role and place of protest theatre in Zimbabwe is one of critical importance yet at the same time needs revamping so that it can meet the needs and challenges of a country in transition.

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Interviews

Daniel Maphosa, Interview at Savanna Trust Offices, Harare,

Privileged & Priscilla Mutendera, Interview at Theatre in the Park, Harare,

Stephen Chifunyise, Interview at Mutevedzi, Harare,

Trust Khosa, Interview at Herald House, Harare, 15/11/2010

Vimbai Zimuto, Interview at Strathaven, Harare,

Appendix 1

University Logo/Letterhead here)

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A MINIMAL RISK RESEARCH STUDY: ADULTS

(Theatre makers, Actors, Directors, Playwrights, Producers ,Arts and Political Journalists, Human Rights Activists, Academics, NGO officials, Cultural Worker, Government Officials and Audience Members/Community)

Title of Research: Healing and Reconciliation for Constitution-building in Zimbabwe through theatre: The case studies of ‘Heal the Wounds’ and ‘Waiting for the Constitution’.

You may be eligible to participate in this research study. This form gives you important information about the study. It describes the purpose of the study and the risks and possible benefits in participating in the study.

Please take time to review this information carefully. After you have finished, you should talk to the researcher about the study and ask them any questions you have. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this form. Before you sign this form, be sure you understand what the study is about.

Research Description

Why is this study being done?

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Tonderai Chiyindiko. The overall purpose of this research is to investigate how healing and reconciliation and constitution building are being conceptualised and implemented in Zimbabwe, with particular reference to the plays ‘Heal the Wounds’ and ‘waiting for the Constitution’. You are invited to participate as a theatre maker, actor, director, arts journalist, cultural worker, human rights activist, academic and audience member to share your opinion on these and other plays.

What am I being asked to do?

During this study you will be asked to answer questions about the two case studies and the role of theatre as a form on political activism in Zimbabwe. This may take at least thirty minutes to an hour.

Will I be reimbursed for my participation?

You will not receive any reimbursement for your participation

Are there any risks to participation?

There are minimal risks to participating in this research which include questions that may be sensitive in nature and that may require some answers which may be deemed sensitive. I will endeavor to protect the identity of the participant should they not wish to be known or quoted by name in my research.

Are there any benefits to taking part in the study?

There are no direct benefits associated with participation in this research; however your willingness to take part may, in future, may contribute to the better understanding of this topic.

Voluntary Participation

If you decide to take part in this study, it should be because you really want to. You will not be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate, or to change your mind later. Your decision will not affect your relationship with the researcher. You can stop at any time during the study and keep the rights you had before volunteering.

What other options are there?

If you do not want to participate in the study, there are no other choices except not to participate

Privacy and Confidentiality

I will do everything I can to protect the confidentiality of the information you provide should you not wish to be identified.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, contact Tonderai Chiyindiko on tchiyindiko@gmail.com or 002771 786 6326 (SA) or 00263713420506(ZIM).

If you wish to talk to someone not associated with the research, or if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please email Rory Bester, Head, Wits School of Arts Ethics Committee at Rory.Bester@wits.ac.za or call 071 717 4612

Adult Participants Capable of Consent

I have read the consent form and have been given a chance to ask questions. I agree to participate in the research study described above titled, **Healing and Reconciliation for Constitution-building in Zimbabwe through theatre: The case studies of ‘Heal the Wounds’ and ‘Waiting for the Constitution’**. I will receive a signed copy of this form for my own records.

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Research Participant

Signature of Researcher

Date

Printed name of Researcher

Appendix 2

Proposed Questions for interviews

1. Zimbabwe has a long history of protest/political theatre, in your opinion what is the role of this kind of theatre and what made it work back then and why has it not worked now??
2. Did you watch the plays ‘Heal the Wounds’ , ‘Waiting for the Constitution’ or ‘Rituals’ and what do you think of their portrayal of the constitution-making process and national healing? Does it aid in the understanding by ordinary people and addressing of these concepts by the stakeholders?
3. What do you think is the role of theatre in constitution building and healing and reconciliation?
4. Can drama be used as an effective catalyst for social and political change and transformation? How? With the current theatre in Zimbabwe, do you think it is possible to foster a new tradition of activist theatre?
5. How can the role of Protest/Political theatre be improved to ensure issues of critical dialogue, change, transformation and critical pedagogy are addressed and also the opening up democratic space for meaningful engagement by people e.g with issues of the new constitution and the government led ‘healing processes’?
6. When a play is done, it is usually from some research then goes to Theatre in the Park and then embarks on a nationwide tour? How does this structure affect the reception of the plays? Besides the opening night dialogue/feedback, what other avenues for dialogue are opened up if any by the performance of these plays?
7. In your opinion, do the two plays inspire people to become ‘agents for change’ in the ‘rehearsal for the revolution’ in Boalean terms? (these plays are made without their active participation and presented as ‘finished products’ which do not allow for any changes to be made during their performance as in Forum theatre?)
8. Do these two plays foster a culture of dialogue and if so, how?
9. What do you think of hard-hitting titles such as ‘*Final Push*’, ‘*Super Patriots and Morons*’ and ‘*Overthrown*’ or similar plays you have watched? Do they portray theatre in a light that ensures it is taken seriously in nation building issues and not just as an antagonist?
10. Any other comments, thoughts, opinions on protest/political theatre in Zimbabwe?

Appendix 3

Proposed Interviewees

(The ones with the * sign were interviewed by the researcher)

Academics

Dr Nyasha Mboti

Nehemiah Chivandikwa

Kelvin Chikonzo *

Memory Chirere

Stephen Chifunyise *

Arts Journalists

Terrence Mapurisana (ZBC)

Trust Khosa (Herald) *

Robert Mukondiwa (Sunday Mail)

Mthandazo Dube (Sunday Mail) *

Playwrights

Raisedon Baya (Bulawayo)

Cont Mhlanga (Bulawayo)

Stephen Chifunyise (Harare) *

Mandisi Gobodi (Bulawayo)

Actors

Zenzo Nyathi (Bulawayo)

Joyce Mpofu (Bulawayo)

Tafadzwa Muzondo (Harare) *

Eunice Tava (Harare)

Producers

Daves Guzha (Harare)

Daniel Maphosa (Harare) *

Theatre Directors

Patience Tawengwa (Harare)

Daves Guzha (Harare)

Raisedon Baya (Bulawayo)

Cont Mhlanga (Bulawayo)