

MACBETH – PRESS from the 2001/02 production and an essay by Ashraf Jamal

Verdi's opera of ambition, corruption and witchcraft interpreted into the idiom of mythological Africa by theatre director, Brett Bailey, and composer, Pieter Louis van Dijk. Performed by an all-black cast of about 50 performers. This is what the press said:

HORRIFIC AND FUNNY PRODUCT OF A DARKER VISION

Robert Greig, SUNDAY INDEPENDENT, 14/07/02

In Bailey's nightmarish universe nothing is either/or and everything is both. Divisions between life and death, good and bad dissolve.

Brett Bailey has transposed Verdi's opera to post-colonial Africa, "chopped into Verdi's score with all the vengeance of the Macbeths themselves, hacking the opera down to about 90 minutes, and centred it very much on the drama". The result is visually and musically breathtaking – a vision of an amoral universe.

Bailey works with rural casts, travelling widely in Africa and creates a total theatre. There is no proscenium arch, with the resultant safety for audience. With promiscuous energy, he mingles allusions to different times and places – for Bailey artistic purity and consistency are yesterday's notions – and equally mingles styles: the work lurches from horror to humour within the space of a breath.

But this Macbeth is primarily visual. Bailey thinks in the images of a painter who has been saturated in the darkest of black magic and Hieronymous Bosch. The allusions in the look of this work are far-ranging: sometimes you believe you are in a charnel house of hungry, angry ghosts – the entire work seems conceived as a nightmare.

The cavernous State Theatre has been cut in two. The audience sits on stage in a V-shape. A playing area is between the seats and the orchestra, which is shoved right up against the opposite wall, making Bailey's intended emphasis on multi-media action rather than music clear. As you come into the theatre, you move between life-size statues of sangomas and warriors: at first, not looking properly, you imagine the figures are live human beings. In other words, Bailey places the action of his work in an indeterminate zone between life and death.

In one corner three sangomas sit, rocking to and fro like patients in a psychiatric ward. Behind the narrow main playing area is a large screen. During the action the lighting reveals the chorus, in serried rows and tribal dress. They do not simply stand and sing: they sit throughout and have been choreographed to move their arms and hands or fingers or heads for emphasis. They flutter and rustle like the voices of ghosts.

Macbeth is sung by Simphiwe Qavane, a stocky, compact man of physical presence and vocal power, opposite the larger Ntombi Zodumo Mboniswa as Lady Macbeth. She dominates the couple, a figure of vast proportions and capacity who melts like a candle under the pressure of horror. (One feels her horror is not the working of conscience, but the killings have turned her world into a blood-soaked blanket held over her face.) The sense of horror is highlighted by Bailey's satirical humour. For example, Duncan appears on stage in an old colonial-style uniform, dripping with medals. He lies down to sleep and is killed, an echo of Hamlet. In the play, the murder is the play's central horror; in this opera it is a casual affair and Duncan's costume renders him negligible, a disposable colonial relic.

Bailey mingles references to time. Macbeth and his wife tango; Lady Macbeth gets SMSs on her cellphone, for example, and the result of the mingling is to create a troubled, coruscating surface to the work in the context of a smoke-thickened, aromatic atmosphere.

Divisions between life and death, day and night, good and bad are entirely eroded. It is a production that has a consistent vision of evil defined as a state of no boundaries, no human tenderness.

The sheer originality of Bailey's vision is arresting. It is steeped in a sense of the otherworldly but also – and this is what makes it eerie – in a slightly Edwardian notion of ju-ju and darkest Africa. It is as if Bailey views Africa bi-focally, combining two perspectives and living with the contradictions. He relishes the contradictions, using them comically, anticipating criticism and deflecting it. You cannot take Macbeth entirely seriously because it includes so many devices that draw attention to its theatricality and artifice, but the thoroughness of his imagination and the consistency of images create an unignorable atmosphere of horror.

Hannah Arendt said famously that evil was banal, and this seems to sum up Macbeth. That the murderous couple are banal does not make them any less horrifying. Their evil is "framed" by the words of the diviners who refer to a long view of history. The words force one to see the action through the wrong end of a telescope, rendering the immediate actions of deaths miniature. In many of the scenes of Macbeth there are characters watching, uninvolved. This is an old theatrical technique that allows the audience to detach from compelling actions and see them from a distance.

Bailey works in a universe where nothing is either/or and everything is both/and. His Macbeth is horrific and funny. His characters are absurd and deeply serious. His action is luridly melodramatic and powerfully dramatic. What one sees is ultimately meaningless and so saturated with significance it is claustrophobic. Watching demands involvement and also distance. This does not rely so much on balances – it is as if Bailey pushes his vision and directing so far, it bursts through the usual categories into a soupy realm devoid of morality and whose characters have no choices.

A CULTURE FOR EVERYONE

John Matshikiza (MAIL & GUARDIAN, 19/7/02)

A rather unkind commentator, in his ruthlessly camp way, once described Brett Bailey as "the Stromboli of community theatre" -- comparing the enfant terrible of South African theatre with the old man who created Pinocchio in that old European fairy tale.

It was a sourly humorous comment, both on Bailey, a young white man, and on struggling young black theatre practitioners in this strangely barren landscape of post-apartheid culture.

Bailey's stock in trade, as a director, is, indeed, to manipulate (as directors do) large companies of mostly untrained black actors in the telling of theatrical stories on an epic scale. But does this make him a puppeteer, as Stromboli was, creating lifeless puppets that miraculously learn the power of speech and eventually become almost human, as Pinocchio did?

Bailey has produced some remarkable work in this idiom that he has created for himself. The most powerful for me was his brave, multi-layered *iMumbo Jumbo* at the Market Theatre, which attracted brickbats from many of Johannesburg's black glitterati because he, a white man, dared to stray into nervous African territory -- a mixture of witchcraft, corrupt tradition and dodgy modern politics. Woven through all this were the themes of reparations, the righting of ancient colonial wrongs and the restoration of black dignity. How dare he dabble in this kind of debate, was the key response.

He has also scored some duds, which he himself will be the first to acknowledge. His exploration of the Nongqawuse legend at Grahamstown the following year was not nearly as successful. And yet he went ahead with his attempt at exploring that equally treacherous, shameful, unresolved episode of Xhosa history in seeming defiance of those who said he

should lay off stuff that wasn't part of "his" culture.

But then again, no one else was doing this kind of brave, extravagantly theatrical stuff. Why shouldn't he?

Till now Bailey has been doing all his own work -- researching and developing stories in his own time, on his own terms and in his own language -- even doing his own choreography and sometimes going so far as to write his own music, which has tended to be a hit-and-miss kind of thing.

Now he has emerged into a different landscape, taking on a formal opera for a formal opera company and giving us something to think about once again.

Heaven knows what possessed Cape Town's Artscape opera company to ask the wild and wilful Bailey to tackle Verdi's *Macbeth*. Possibly it was a desperate attempt to find a solution to the problem of a dying art form. Opera, like ballet and classical music, has not had an easy time in the new South Africa. In fact, it has been under threat of slowly bleeding to death, with government cuts replacing the extravagant spending of the apartheid era, when "traditional, European" art forms were artificially propped up as part of the total onslaught against the forces of communism and incipient African darkness.

What Bailey has done is to give us a native version of Verdi, without changing a note. And it works remarkably well.

Macbeth is the ultimate tale of evil and human fallibility. It has witches and devils who, with remarkable ease, incite a previously incorruptible soldier to commit regicide and then wade further and further into rivers of blood in a series of desperate moves to hold on to power. It also has an ambitious wife who goads her husband on to these excesses and loses her mind, and her life, as a result. All in all, it is not exactly politically correct stuff.

Bailey takes this very Scottish story, adapted from English wide-boy Bill Shakespeare's adaptation of an ancient Celtic legend and sung in incomprehensible Italian, and sets it firmly in the middle of his favourite Eastern Cape landscape.

Once again he has defied potential criticism. Is it not too obvious, indeed patronising, to thrust this motif of witchcraft and corruptibility into a black African context? What with the recent makeover of the Dark Continent into the noble image of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the African Union, in this age of the "African renaissance", is it wise to encourage us to hark back to the image of the continent and its peoples that was created by the likes of Rider Haggard, Tarzan and Trader Horn?

The fact is that, in this day and age, it is hard to imagine *Macbeth* being played any other way. Although Bailey in some respects does not go far enough in his interpretation (the witches, for example, could have been much more extreme, as some critics have pointed out, and he could have gone further in his choice of mixing live and video imagery) the settings, the dramatic lighting, sets, costumes and make up, and the very presence of this largely black company of performers gives the telling of the story an edge that it is hard to imagine a "traditional" rendition of this opera achieving.

The central characters are magnificently sung and confidently portray the conflicting qualities of beauty, frailty, tragedy and evil that make this such a compelling play. And Bailey's use of the chorus, painted with white clay and staring down with cold indifference on the unfolding proceedings, adequately makes up for the missed opportunity of the three witches (or "weird sisters", as they should properly be called).

The proof of the pudding was in the eating. On the two occasions when I attended the show at Pretoria's rather forbidding, apartheid-era State Theatre (almost as grim as the Voortrekker Monument) the audience was largely made up of the traditional Pretoria theatre constituency - white and middle class. Their "oohs" and "aahs" of appreciation for this appropriation of their traditional fare were a pleasure to behold.

The more philistine of our new elite have been heard to denounce the existence of "colonial culture" in our midst altogether. In his latest offering, Bailey shows us a middle way, where culture actually can be for everyone, after all.

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BAILEY REVITALISES AND RECOLONISES OPERA

Adrienne Sichel (THE STAR, 18/7/02)

You don't have to throw the bones to know that Brett Bailey is an innovative theatremaker with an artillery of provocative agendas.

Since 1996, this director has conjured with cultural practices to create an authentically eclectic signature in his researched, reality-based theatrepieces Zombi, ipiZombi, iMumbo Jumbo, Heartstopping, The Prophet and Big Dada, created with his Third World Bunfight company.

These works have been performed in township halls, a cemetery, a quarry, on a truck, a derelict Grahamstown power station, in the Transkei hills, on the Market Theatre mainstage and at the Barbican in London.

So it's no surprise that in his first operatic adventure, an adaptation of Verdi's Macbeth commissioned by Cape Town's Angelo Gobbato last year, he succeeds in not only revitalising but decolonising opera.

But in true Bailey style, he parodies this art form as he reinvents it.

Brett's mission, as described in the programme note of the State Theatre season, to "throw you all into the flames of the opera and emphasising the ceremonial within the saga", is achieved through his well-developed hybrid sensibility and cross-pollinated iconography.

And through his collaboration with composer Peter Louis van Dijk, who doesn't shy away from adding African essences and rhythms to Verdi's music, he is bridging the past through the present.

Brett's signature conceptual magpie wizardry, synonymous with live white chickens, pith helmets, animal horns and umbrellas, is complemented by designer Michael Mitchell. For starters the make-up is a cross between minstrel black face and African and Asian masks.

The collaborators blur boundaries between opera, musical theatre and ritual performance.

When Macbeth, wreathed in mpepho smoke, SMSs Lady Macbeth that he has become the Thane of Cawdor, there's another message - opera in SA has had a spell irrevocably cast on it.

As usual in his ongoing commentary on the limitations of formal proscenium arch theatre, Brett ransacks conventions, belief systems and ideologies to create yeasty metaphors. The Drama Theatre auditorium is left empty save for a few twigs symbolising Birnam Wood, aka Bailey's Forest. As you leave the stage after 90 minutes, the comment is clear: traditional theatre/opera is dead - the real experience is on the stage where everyone, artists and their audience, belong in a circle of shared experience.

This imaginative adaptation of Verdi's opera, inspired by Shakespeare's tragedy, swops Scotland for a mythical voodoo land in the African bush, where AK 47s and animal spirits are perfectly at home. Cape Town sangoma Sylvia Mngxekza (the lead diviner) links the six scenes, speaking in English.

Instead of the original four acts, the opera is now a one-acter performed by wonderful singers from Cape Town Opera and the Cape Town Opera School. The Cape Philharmonic, conducted by Chris Dowdeswell, is integrated into the action, spearheaded by Simphiwe Qavane's Macbeth and Ntombizodumo's murderous voodoo-doll-wielding Lady.

This is not just another night at the opera, it's a seance - where high Western art meets a pan-African ethos, tongue firmly in post-colonial cheek.

MACBETH DAZZLES IN EVERY DEPARTMENT

Carl Fourie, THE ARGUS, 18/09/01

Overwhelmed! Overwhelmed by Shakespeare's genius and relevance; overwhelmed by the power of the theatrical production; overwhelmed by the stupendous voices of the singers. Brett Bailey, together with Pieter Louis van Dijk, has reduced Verdi's Macbeth to a non-stop 90 minutes, exploring the malevolence of the human urge for power, and the rich musical text of Italian opera.

Direction is brilliant. From seating arrangements to make-up; from lighting effects to the four seething spirit beings that permeate the fabric of the production; from glorious vocal forces to intense, desperate drama.

There is no let-up in the bizarre tale of wanton power and the horrendous consequences of a guilty conscience...

But surely the most rewarding experience of the evening was the magnificent voices that were heard. What a showcase of choral and solo talent! And thus what a pity if other national (and international) centres are not afforded the opportunity of experiencing this outstanding production. Never again can opera be referred to as a European phenomenon.

...see this production if it's the only theatre outing you have this year. It's an unforgettable musical and dramatic experience.

AFRICANISED MACBETH IS A HIT

Deon Irish, THE CAPE TIMES, 17/09/01

This is an unquestionably extraordinary theatrical experience... Director Brett Bailey and composer Pieter Louis van Dijk have taken the Verdi opera, disassembled it, and put the essential elements back together as a taut, furiously paced African allegory.

The staging is enormously engaging: the audience is seated on raised stands running the depth of the stage and the action takes place primarily on the stage revolve, which attains the idiomatic status of a *kraal* [cattle byre]. With the orchestra sensibly retained in the pit, the action occurs in front of it and attains enormous immediacy.

The transportation of this tale into a deeply rural African somewhere is relatively painless. Eleventh century Scotland was only just emerging from a tribal wilderness of superstition and ruthless warlords; the unspecified locality of this production represents a lingering 'backwater wasteland', to quote Bailey's notes.

... This is a production that anyone interested in an emerging South African operatic identity or in arresting stagecraft should not miss.

BAILEY PRODUCTION A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

Suzanne Joubert, BUSINESS DAY, 18/09/01

... The audience is seated around the stage and the characters seem to evaporate and reappear from nowhere... the lighting is a subtle yet effective engine that drives home the fact that this is not 11th century Scotland.

Macbeth and his increasing megalomaniac tendencies are subverted by his accompanying army, dressed in shabby military uniform, clearly becoming less and less convinced of his plan of action.

...Ntombizodumo Mboniswa as Lady Macbeth shines brightest. Her voice has a liquid clarity that is addictive, and it is delivered with an equal force by her ability to capture the various stages of downward spiral into which Lady Macbeth descends. The emotive power in her voice is mesmerizing...

The music provides a continuous roller-coaster ride through the rough terrain of murder, betrayal and greed, pausing at times to provide light relief. A saxophone intermittently cuts across the vein of serious intent, bringing a quirky spontaneity to the action...

This was undoubtedly a Brett Bailey production, bearing all the trademarks of his fascination with African imagery. It has great potential for export.

“AN EXTREMELY VEXED OCCUPATION”: WRITING SOUTH AFRICA.

An essay on Brett Bailey's MACBETH by Ashraf Jamal

Robert Greig's review of Brett Bailey's production of *Macbeth* (2002), an abridged adaptation of Verdi's opera, conveys the crisis of representation that dogs South African culture. Greig begins by noting the transposition of Verdi's opera to "postcolonial Africa." The shift comes with its attendant hazards and innovations. Conceived by Shakespeare as a play for the court, *Macbeth* was designed to dramatize the inversion of power the better to reinforce power's rightful authority. In Bailey's production - which "chop[s] into Verdi's score with all the vengeance of the Macbeths themselves, hacking the opera down to about 90 minutes, and centre[ing] it very much on the drama" - there is no reintegration, no final authorization of justice. It is this refusal, which I interpret as a conscious elision of the reactionary premise that founds the initial conception of the play, which, for Greig, makes it all the more compelling and ultimately disturbing. It is this disturbance, measured through Greig's response, which, in turn, has triggered my inquiry into what Bailey is up to. In keeping with the syncretic logic of postcoloniality, Greig notes that Bailey "mingles allusions to different times and places - for Bailey artistic purity and consistency are yesterday's notions." The driving power of the production, we learn, is not textual but visual. The implication, here, is that the story of *Macbeth* has already been thoroughly inscribed into the cultural DNA of the audience. A further implication, one which challenges the capacity of words to stand in the place of imagery - points to the Bailey's preoccupation with visualization and movement as the signs for contemporary meaning; signs which have become increasingly more trenchant and pervasive in cultural production. Today we watch more than we listen. Meaning largely resides in the eye of the beholder. Hence Greig's observation that Bailey's production emphasises "multimedia action rather than music." Both music and words become secondary. "Bailey thinks in the images of a painter who has been saturated in the darkest of black magic and Hieronymus Bosch." This prioritization of the visual - and its linkage with the occult - produces yet another structural

deterritorialization: that of the stage. There is no proscenium arch, hence no “resultant safety for the audience.” Rather, “the cavernous State Theatre has been cut in two. The audience sits on the stage in a V-shape. A playing area is between the seats and the orchestra, which is shoved up against the opposite wall. ... As you come into the theatre, you move between life-sized statues of sangomas and warriors: at first, not looking properly, you imagine the figures are live human beings. ... Bailey places the action of his work in an indeterminate zone between life and death.” Following Greig’s reading, a disturbing logic unfolds. Having placed the ear under erasure, fixated and haunted the eye then refracted it through movement, having undermined the audience’s capacity to mediate the action by splitting its focus, Bailey has shifted the established co-ordinates of reception. To what end? Greig points to the answer when he notes that Bailey “places the action of his work in an indeterminate zone between life and death.” This placement, the key to Bailey’s oeuvre, brings me to the core of this paper: an examination of *indeterminacy* as the condition for the representation of culture in South Africa, a condition which the cultural analyst, Leon de Kock, describes as an “extremely vexed occupation” (2001: 272). The source of this vexation is incarnated in Bailey’s *Macbeth*, a production in which “[d]ivisions between life and death, good and bad are entirely eroded. ... a production that has a consistent vision of evil as a state of no boundaries.” **If Shakespeare and Verdi post a triumphal and concluding good, then Bailey, unhampered by a teleological commitment to the righting of a collapsed order, chooses – or is compelled against choice - to foreground the battle between good and evil and to restrict his focus – or fixation - to the unresolved moment in that battle when evil assumes dominance. Whether or not in that moment Bailey chooses to prioritize evil is open to question.** To maintain that he does is to ascribe sovereignty and control. Bailey, I would argue, resists the notion of total control. Greig, in turn, qualifies his claim: “The sheer originality of Bailey’s vision is arresting. It is steeped in a sense of the otherworldly but also – and this is what makes it eerie – in a slightly Edwardian notion of ju-ju and darkest Africa. It is as if Bailey views Africa bi-focally, combining two perspectives and living with the contradictions. He relishes the contradictions, using them comically, anticipating criticism and deflecting it. You cannot take *Macbeth* entirely seriously because it includes so many devices that draw attention to its theatricality and artifice, but the thoroughness of his imagination and the consistency of images create an unignorable atmosphere of horror.” Greig concludes: “Bailey works in a universe where nothing is either / or and everything is both / and. His *Macbeth* is horrific and funny. His characters are absurd and deeply serious. His action is luridly melodramatic and powerfully dramatic. What one sees is ultimately meaningless and so saturated with significance it is claustrophobic. Watching demands involvement and also distance. This does not rely so much on balances – it is as if Bailey pushes his vision and directing so far, it bursts through the usual categories into a soupy realm devoid of morality and whose characters have no choices” (The Sunday Independent, July 14, 2002: 10)

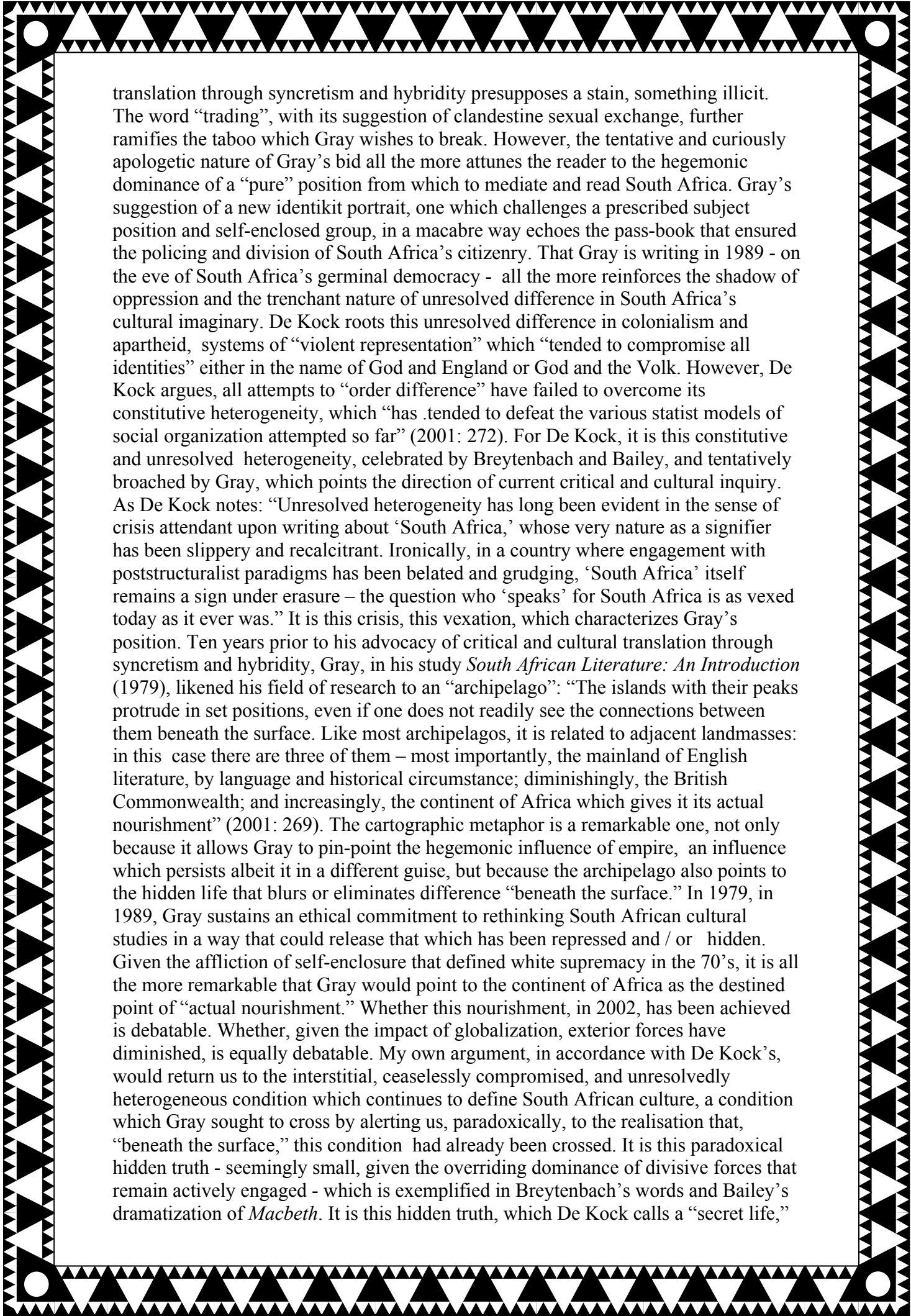
What makes Greig’s review of Bailey’s production of *Macbeth* a compelling point of departure for this inquiry into the problem, dilemma, or crisis of representation, is that Greig’s reading also informs cultural production in general and the figuration of South Africa’s destiny in particular. Bailey’s choice of Verdi’s opera (and Shakespeare’s play) is not only fitting because it allows him to continue a theatrical exploration into ritual murder, exorcism, and the occult, but because, by focusing on the liminal moment in the drama, he is able to foreground a more far-reaching exploration of this

liminal moment in South Africa's cultural history. Moreover, in affixing an extra-moral dimension to this moment – a moment between and beyond good and evil – Bailey challenges the play's received closure. It is this challenge, a challenge which Greig succinctly articulates, which, today, has come to shape the inquiry into culture in South Africa. This inquiry, in which my own writing plays a part, has, necessarily, been compelled to express or dramatize itself reflexively. Moreover, it is an inquiry which has had to foreground a constitutive indeterminacy as the shifting basis upon which to sustain the inquiry. If Bailey's production could be said to incarnate this engagement, it is because it also serves as a telling cipher for a host of contradictions which afflict and shape cultural production in general. Greig has deftly forged a summation of some of these constitutive contradictions. These include a destabilization of an authoritative perspective, the implication of reason in the irrational, the daemonization of sense and the senses, the imbrication of seriousness and laughter, the refraction of integrated characterization, the uneasy blending of the familiar with the horrific, the melodramatic with the dramatic, and, most importantly, the manifestation of an aesthetic and ethical resistance to balancing these coexistent and incommensurable positions and counterpoints. If Bailey "bursts through the usual categories" it is not only because he chooses to play fast-and-loose with these categories – though, through a reflexive play and heightened theatricality, he does – but because his aesthetic and ethical vision, while caught in the binaries he attempts to dissolve, also points to an extra-moral and acategorical realm – one that bursts and renders fluid all categories – which, always nascent, has emerged in-and-through his production to challenge a hegemonic and moral drive to categorise, divide, and rule. Another suggestion thrown up by Greig's review is that this emergent extra-moral and acategorical agency was always already a part of the psychic fabric of the society which colonialism and apartheid sought to suppress. The allusions to "ju-ju", "black magic", the "interzone between life and death" point to an irrational or pre-rational dimension to cultural expression: the eternal return of the repressed. This primordial dimension has always been an integral part of Bailey's theatrical explorations. In *Macbeth* it finds the perfect vehicle. Bailey has been condemned and celebrated for this exploration in his work. Here his exploration serves as a clue to the realisation that the very desire for control and division meant the suppression of extra-moral and a-categorical drives, drives which, I would argue, not only posed a threat to this desire for control and division, but which thrived despite the putative threat ascribed to these drives by the machinations of power that sought to suppress these drives. Bailey's production, by conjuring these repressed drives, by giving full vent to the extra-moral and a-categorical force that founds these drives, not only challenges the continued dominance of a system defined by division and rule, but also poses an invitation to those who seek to restore these repressed drives and wish to factor these drives into an alternative conception of the agency of culture. The cultural analyst, Leon de Kock, while avowedly more "vigilant" and more "skeptical" than Bailey, has taken up this invitation.

De Kock begins his introduction to the critical anthology, *South Africa in the Global Imaginary*, with a quotation from Breyten Breytenbach's *Dog Heart* (1998). Breytenbach: "What I want to write about is the penetration, expansion, skirmishing, coupling, mixing, separation, regrouping of peoples and cultures – the glorious bastardisation of men and women mutually shaped by sky and rain and wind and soil. ... and everywhere is exile; we tend to forget that now. The old ground disappears, expropriated by blood as new conflicting patterns emerge" (2001:). From the outset

we see that De Kock, via Breytenbach, has embarked on an exploration of South African history and culture marked by a foreknowledge of inter-penetration and bastardization. If “the old ground” has disappeared it is not because that ground supposed a fixed and pure order, but because the penetrations, expansions, skirmishings and couplings which were already underway allowed for “new conflicting patterns” to emerge. Here Bailey’s *Macbeth* serves as an index of the new that is also the old, for, like Breytenbach, Bailey consecrates no pre-given “purity and consistency.” De Kock, in turn, focusing his inquiry upon the terrain or “field” of South African cultural studies, discovers the inverse of Breytenbach and Bailey’s fascination with “the dangerous fluidity of categories.” Rather, De Kock notes a well nigh pathological suppression in South African cultural studies of a vision that could inhabit and sustain Breytenbach’s conception of history and culture. The objective of De Kock’s study is to discover the reason for the suppression, and, more compellingly, to inquire why it has consistently failed to succeed.

De Kock begins by asking the question: “If cultural heterogeneity is nothing new or surprising in a context of globalization,” then why does cultural heterogeneity in South Africa remain “to this day a scene of largely *unresolved* difference”? The emphasis is telling. Irresolution, we will discover, is the key to De Kock’s alternative reading of South African history and culture. It is also this irresolution, as we have already noted, that forms the defining characteristic of Bailey’s production of *Macbeth*. Returning to De Kock, we find that the continuation of “*unresolved* difference” is the direct result of the incommensurability of difference as it is lived and experienced in South Africa. Contrary to Breytenbach’s celebratory immersion in difference, the proponents of cultural studies have, De Kock argues, striven to mediate difference, and to do so from sovereign and authorized positions. Even self-critique in the instant of mediation, **De Kock notes, has failed to justify the insistence upon difference. Rather, it is difference – as the other, known or unknown – which the South African cultural analyst has valorized and rendered “totemic” (2001: 265). I will not detail the various examples De Kock provides in order to demonstrate this reification of an unresolved and constitutive difference which defines South Africa’s cultural imaginary.** Rather, I wish to point, with De Kock and Breytenbach, to the new emergent conflicting patterns that define cultural inquiry within and on behalf of South Africa today. In ‘Some Problems of Writing Historiography in South Africa’ (1989), Stephen Gray charts a vision of culture that could by-pass the endemic polarization that defined cultural analyses and engagement. “The writer,” says Gray, “is always forced into a position of having to negotiate between extremes, into crossing the language-colour barrier; he or she can only be a syncretist and hybridizer. And *therefore* the basic act of writing is one of carrying information across one or other socio-economic barrier, literally of ‘trading’ I propose, thus, a new identikit portrait: the writer exists at any of several boundaries (*not* at the centre of one self-enclosed group); his or her act of making literature is part of transferring data across that boundary, from one audience to another – an act which in its broadest sense may be termed ‘translation’” (2002: 268-9). What is interesting here is not only the nature of the cultural engagement Gray promotes, but also the counter engagement that prohibits it. Clearly Gray’s values and vision are in accordance with Breytenbach’s in that both champion syncretism and hybridity. The enunciation of their vision, however, is markedly different. There is in Gray’s promotion a tentative, provisory quality which hems in the thrill of the epistemic possibility he advocates. Gray, as I read this passage, implies that cultural



translation through syncretism and hybridity presupposes a stain, something illicit. The word “trading”, with its suggestion of clandestine sexual exchange, further ramifies the taboo which Gray wishes to break. However, the tentative and curiously apologetic nature of Gray’s bid all the more attunes the reader to the hegemonic dominance of a “pure” position from which to mediate and read South Africa. Gray’s suggestion of a new identikit portrait, one which challenges a prescribed subject position and self-enclosed group, in a macabre way echoes the pass-book that ensured the policing and division of South Africa’s citizenry. That Gray is writing in 1989 - on the eve of South Africa’s germinal democracy - all the more reinforces the shadow of oppression and the trenchant nature of unresolved difference in South Africa’s cultural imaginary. De Kock roots this unresolved difference in colonialism and apartheid, systems of “violent representation” which “tended to compromise all identities” either in the name of God and England or God and the Volk. However, De Kock argues, all attempts to “order difference” have failed to overcome its constitutive heterogeneity, which “has tended to defeat the various statist models of social organization attempted so far” (2001: 272). For De Kock, it is this constitutive and unresolved heterogeneity, celebrated by Breytenbach and Bailey, and tentatively broached by Gray, which points the direction of current critical and cultural inquiry. As De Kock notes: “Unresolved heterogeneity has long been evident in the sense of crisis attendant upon writing about ‘South Africa,’ whose very nature as a signifier has been slippery and recalcitrant. Ironically, in a country where engagement with poststructuralist paradigms has been belated and grudging, ‘South Africa’ itself remains a sign under erasure – the question who ‘speaks’ for South Africa is as vexed today as it ever was.” It is this crisis, this vexation, which characterizes Gray’s position. Ten years prior to his advocacy of critical and cultural translation through syncretism and hybridity, Gray, in his study *South African Literature: An Introduction* (1979), likened his field of research to an “archipelago”: “The islands with their peaks protrude in set positions, even if one does not readily see the connections between them beneath the surface. Like most archipelagos, it is related to adjacent landmasses: in this case there are three of them – most importantly, the mainland of English literature, by language and historical circumstance; diminishingly, the British Commonwealth; and increasingly, the continent of Africa which gives it its actual nourishment” (2001: 269). The cartographic metaphor is a remarkable one, not only because it allows Gray to pin-point the hegemonic influence of empire, an influence which persists albeit it in a different guise, but because the archipelago also points to the hidden life that blurs or eliminates difference “beneath the surface.” In 1979, in 1989, Gray sustains an ethical commitment to rethinking South African cultural studies in a way that could release that which has been repressed and / or hidden. Given the affliction of self-enclosure that defined white supremacy in the 70’s, it is all the more remarkable that Gray would point to the continent of Africa as the destined point of “actual nourishment.” Whether this nourishment, in 2002, has been achieved is debatable. Whether, given the impact of globalization, exterior forces have diminished, is equally debatable. My own argument, in accordance with De Kock’s, would return us to the interstitial, ceaselessly compromised, and unresolvedly heterogeneous condition which continues to define South African culture, a condition which Gray sought to cross by alerting us, paradoxically, to the realisation that, “beneath the surface,” this condition had already been crossed. It is this paradoxical hidden truth - seemingly small, given the overriding dominance of divisive forces that remain actively engaged - which is exemplified in Breytenbach’s words and Bailey’s dramatization of *Macbeth*. It is this hidden truth, which De Kock calls a “secret life,”

and which I, in turn, perceive as the suppressed cornerstone or allegory for a culture at once resistant and post-resistant since it is a culture - defined by the dangerous fluidity of categories - that we already possess, even though we may declare that we do not. To suggest, then, that South Africa as a culture does not know itself, is to foreground the immense suppression of a hidden truth that lies just beneath the surface. The role of art has been to access this repressed and disfigured truth. Here, to repeat, Bailey's *Macbeth* is a case in point. What I wish to draw the reader's attention to is the suppression of an a priori miscegenated consciousness and culture which no denial and no suppression can successfully destroy. The question, then, is what to make of this miscegenated consciousness and culture? How express this miscegenation in a way that is not pathological and repressive? How foreground this connectedness that lies beneath to the surface? These questions are more easily posed than answered. Indeed, as we will discover, the answers that have arisen are all the more damaging, for while they seem to cherish this connectedness, they have all the more suppressed the power of its impact. As De Kock notes, the greatest threat to this miscegenated consciousness and culture - another name for hybridization, creolisation, and syncretism - is "unity in difference" or "sameness." Informed by nationalism and globalism, these "metatropes" cancel the depth-charge that distinguishes this syncretic or hybrid connectedness. For, as I understand it, this connectedness, this secret life beneath the surface, does not diminish the agency of heterogeneity, but hones and clarifies its conflicted condition. De Kock's claim that South Africa, irrespective of its purported unity, in fact remains a hornet's nest of unresolved, heterogeneous, and conflicted states, and Gray's call for a position that crosses boundaries, remain cogent propositions.

In pointing to the violence perpetrated under colonialism and apartheid as being "epistemic", De Kock makes the following compelling observation: "The crisis of the sign ... belongs as much in the country's history of suffering as it does in university seminar rooms, and an exploration of South African signifying economies appears essential to an understanding of its literary and cultural production" (2001: 273). What makes De Kock's argument persuasive is his foregrounding of the epistemic as intrinsic to, and not a supplementary aspect of, an unresolved and differentially constructed culture. Greig, in his review of Bailey's *Macbeth*, similarly suggests that Bailey's aesthetic and ethic does not presuppose an inviolate, intact, and opposed position. Rather, his is a non-position: a position that absorbs difference and relativizes its impact. The "indeterminate zone between life and death" is matched by other indeterminacies: between here and there (South Africa and the Europe of Shakespeare and Verdi), self and other, reason and madness, good and evil, etc. For Bailey these indeterminate extremes are not advisedly mediated, rather, they must be traversed, rendered all the more fluid. **To do so Bailey must speak from within the unresolved heterogeneity of South African culture. In doing so, however, Bailey cannot wholly claim the validity of this inner position, or inner voice, hence the strikingly fraught and hysterical reflexivity of his position. Bailey, therefore, must traverse yet another binary - that between the inner and the outer - the better to express a new conflictual pattern. If I claim non-positionality as the constitutive matrix for Bailey's aesthetic and ethic it is because, like the country that is its putative generator, Bailey's production exists under erasure. Hence his refusal to supply *Macbeth's* accepted ending, and with it a resolution of the drama's contradiction on behalf of the good and the just.** Indeed, the very unresolved heterogeneity of Bailey's production of *Macbeth* can be said to serve as an

aesthetic and ethical response to, and reinforcement of, De Kock's conclusion that any resolution of South Africa – its people and its cultures – in the name of unity is an “ultimately quixotic attempt to bring a certain order of composure, of settlement, to a place of profound difference” (2001: 274). If Greig, in his review of *Macbeth*, perceives this profound difference - a marker for the absence of closure, the refusal of settlement - as a kind of “evil,” it is not because the erosion of closure and settlement is in itself evil, but because the thematic of the drama, left unstaunched, begs this reading. A less fearful and empathetic review, however, would ask why the characters in Bailey's play “have no choices”, and why evil emerges as the compelling force that drives the production. An answer to these linked questions could lead us a step further in this exploration of unresolved heterogeneity. If, here, profound difference could be read as evil, or immoral, it is because the fear of profound difference is kin to the fear of the loss of self, the loss of a definable group and the absence of settlement, in-and-through which one believes that one mediates the world. It is this oppressive and acculturated belief in a homogenized self and “self-enclosed group” which Gray bravely believed he could vault through syncretism, hybridity, and translation. However, as I have pointed out throughout this thesis, this is an extremely vexed occupation. In doing so one forfeits as one gains. The decision to follow the journey of syncretism or hybridity or translation is never a moral one. As the Italian idiom *tradurre e tradire* suggests, translation is betrayal. Following De Kock, one could argue that it is precisely morality - and the socio-economic, political, and cultural machinery that sustains it - which has produced the incommensurate and paradoxical faith in unity-through-heterogeneity which defines South Africa today. For De Kock, the homogenization of heterogeneity is tantamount to “erasure”: another kind of betrayal. (2001: 274) In contrast, the erasure which Bailey produces is one that stalls conclusion and settlement: it is an erasure that invigorates, an erasure that foregrounds “the crisis of the sign” the better to show the unresolved conflict that persists.

De Kock believes that “it is the *representational* dimension of cross-border contact that has received relatively short shrift in South African studies.” What De Kock gestures towards, and valorizes, is a critical and cultural discourse which, reflexively, points both to the construction of difference and its erasure. This position must eschew objective mediation; the positivist construction of knowledge of a given “contact zone.” Such a position would not cancel a critical distance; rather, it would reconcile distance with an immanent and subjective engagement. This is the position Greig finds himself in when confronted with Bailey's *Macbeth*: “Watching demands involvement and also distance.” More tellingly, Greig notes: “the work lurches from horror to humour within the space of a breath.” The shift, then, can be infinitesimal. To endure a production that shifts with such rapidity one needs a critical subtlety and emotional intensity, for it is not only the production that exists under erasure, but the audience. De Kock, in a broader though equivalent sense, calls for an epistemic engagement with the question of South Africa which demands a perceptual and emotive dexterity comprised of shifts that are instantaneous and canny. He focuses this engagement in the sphere of “representation”, of signs. Moreover, he locates the canny reading of these signs not only in the halls of academia, but on the suffering minds and bodies of the victims of history. The sum of these minds, these bodies, is each and every one whose history, whose sense of being and place, is defined by the ubiquitous sign: South Africa. Importantly for De Kock, South Africa – as a system of representation – cannot be objectified as an “order of differences,” a procedure “intrinsic to the gesture of colonization.” This gesture, De Kock argues, is deployed

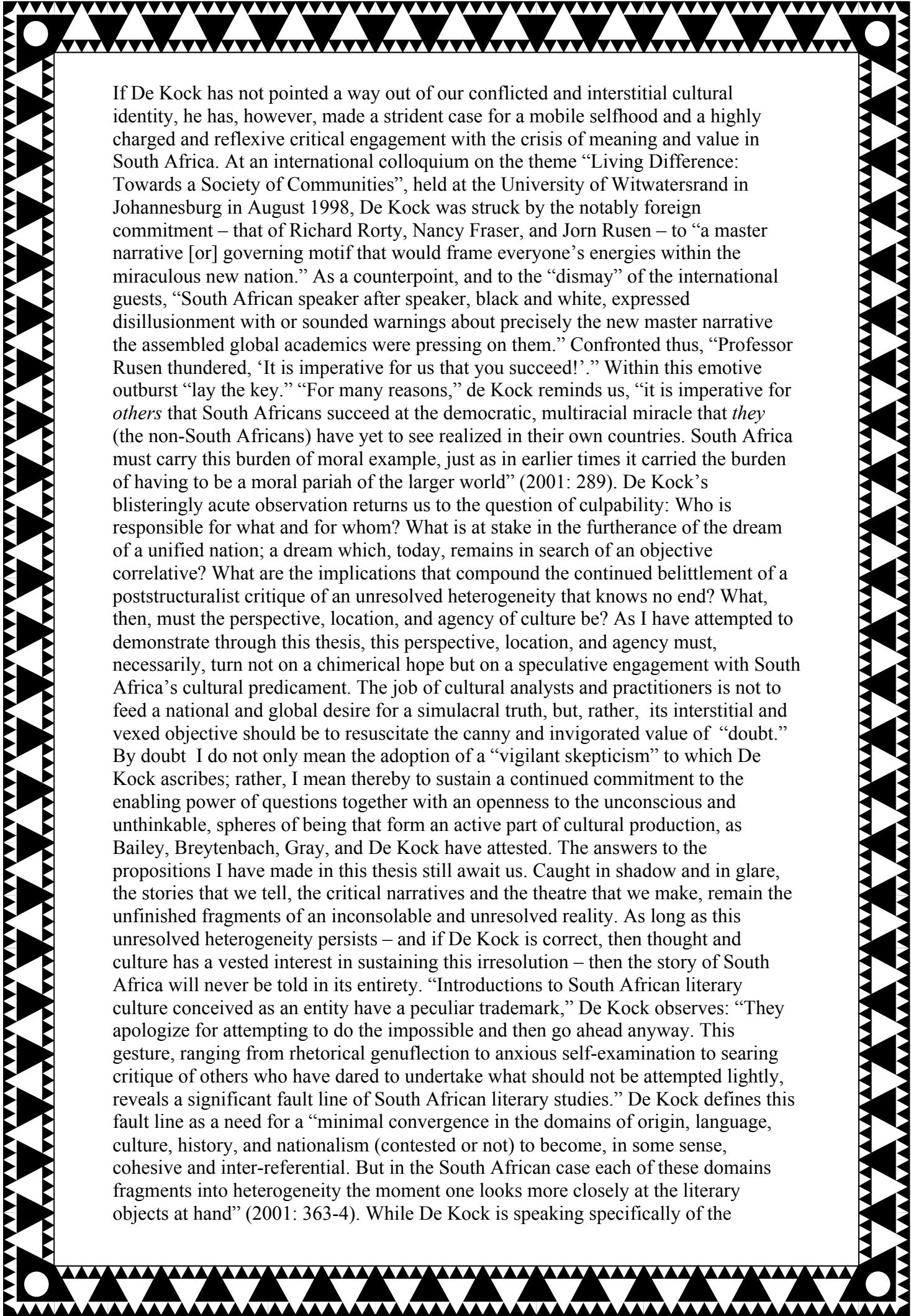
“despite – perhaps even because of – the observable fact that, on the ground, identities increasingly were becoming hybrid and mixed. Such dangerous fluidity of categories were countered by the establishment of a foundational order of representation in which ironclad binaries operated as metatropes in the long and arduous process of inducing new forms of subjectivity in colonized people” (2001: 278). If these “metatropes” persist today, which they do - indeed, they have sustained their hegemonic dominance - then they do so because, and in spite of, the processes of erasure which, in foregrounding heterogeneity, have done so without deferring to “a foundational order of representation.” Here, as I have insisted, Bailey’s *Macbeth* is a case in point. Works of this nature, however, remain comparatively unique. The “dangerous fluidity of categories” which marks the innovation of Bailey’s production also sets it apart in a society and a culture driven by the fear of heterogeneity, even in its current paradoxical manifestation as a unity-in-difference, as sameness. As De Kock points out, it is this much vaunted sameness – “Simunye we are one” – which “in the guise of equal civil opportunities as a citizen of empire, a pseudouniversality of being” has resulted in “the colonized African subject ... willingly forego[ing] claims to cultural difference” (2001: 280).

Against this national and globalized logic of sameness, which bypasses rather than engages with the unresolved heterogeneity of South Africa, De Kock repeatedly points to the agency of an epistemic engagement with the signifying economy of cultural production that turns on what he calls the “seam”: “a ‘junction made by sewing together the edges of two pieces ... of cloth, leather, etc.; the ridge or the furrow in the surface which indicates the course of such a junction.’ The *seam* is therefore the site of a joining together that also bears the mark of the suture. ... it needs to be noted that [the] postulate of a crisis of inscription is characterized by a paradoxical process: on the one hand the effort of suturing the incommensurate in an attempt to close the gap that defines it as incommensurate, and on the other hand this process unavoidably bears the mark of its own crisis, the seam” (2001: 276). It is this double logic of the seam to which Greig implicitly refers when noting the “indeterminate zone” which characterizes Bailey’s production. In pointing to the self-awareness of Bailey’s theatricality, Greig, furthermore, foregrounds the work’s indeterminacy as a reflexive suturing of unresolved difference. What, for De Kock and Bailey, is gained through this syncretic merger? By way of an answer, De Kock turns to Homi Bhabha’s essay, ‘Sly Civility’, and locates the logic of this essay - the doubled logic of the subaltern - in Sol Plaatje. According to De Kock, Plaatje, “a mission-educated subject who was nonetheless a proto-African nationalist, was thus enfolded in the colonial seam along which difference had been pressed into an uneven alignment with a pseudouniversal model of singularity. The only means open to him to legitimate claims to equal treatment for his people was via an appeal to the foundational ‘civil’ virtues of empire that had been so closely aligned, by missionaries, with the universal reign of God. At the same time, however, Plaatje’s appeals are embedded in an implicit knowledge of the colonial ‘grammar of differences’ – he was at the same time also campaigning against the notorious Land Act of 1913, whose basis was racist and exclusionary. This is a crucial point to keep in mind when considering the possible meaning(s) of statements by black subjects of missionary education.” Having charted Plaatje’s “markedly strained position,” De Kock goes on to argue that it is this strained position that is “typical of the poetics of the seam in South African refractions of identity, an example of how the first-person singular begins to seek ways of slipping across or into the seam joining it with the

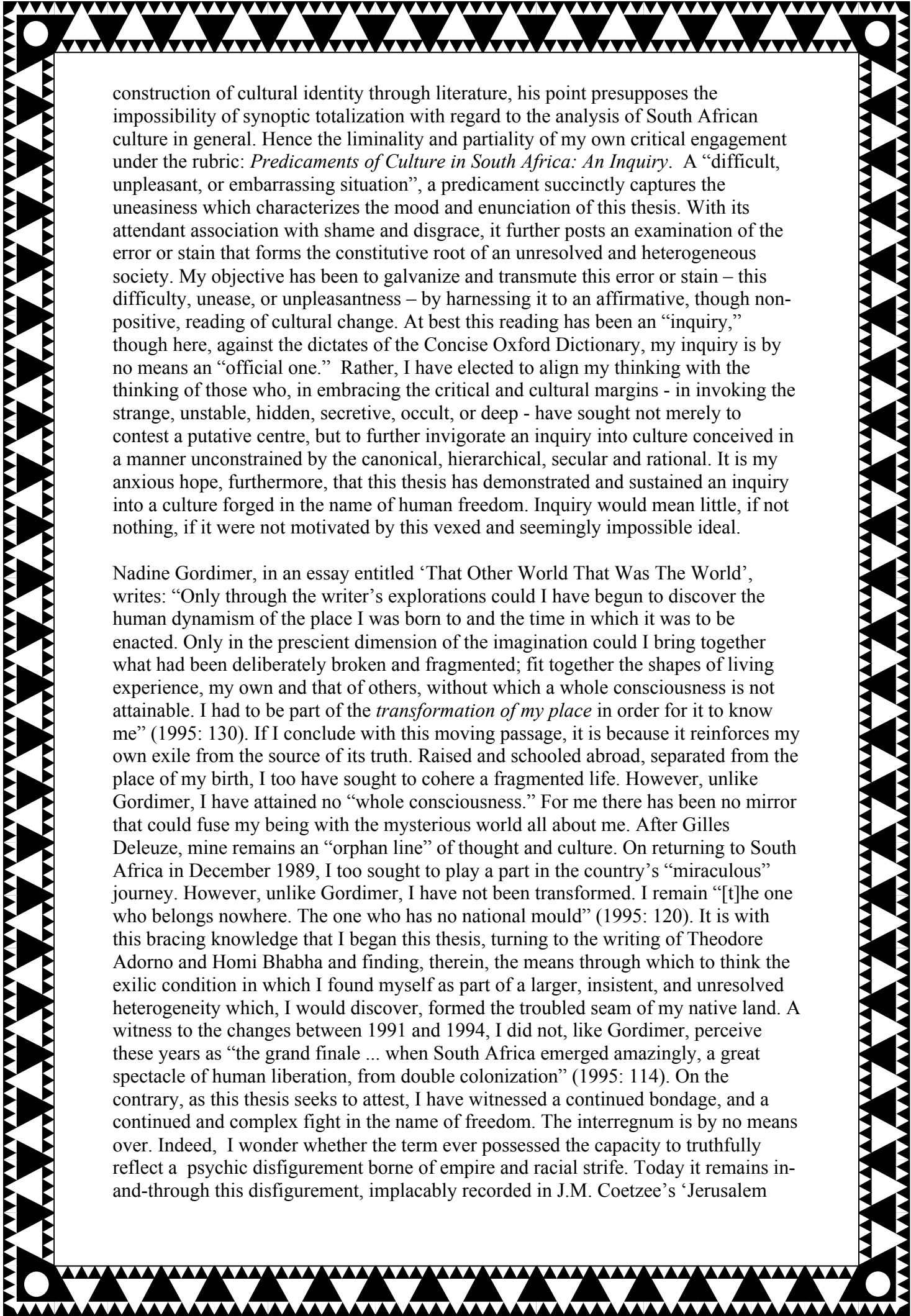
first-person plural. The process, though, manifests a crisis of inscription. In seeming to foreclose the African subject's difference in an appeal to universal Christian virtue, Plaatje is in fact seeking an assurance that he and his brethren will not be *differentiated against*; in other words, his very act of claiming oneness carries with it the knowledge of doubleness, a doubleness that is the defining quality of the representational seam in which Plaatje is caught" (2001: 280). De Kock's canny reading of the slippage that marks Plaatje's position, a position convicted and shifted by its double, is later developed as a position from which to read against the indifference that is the sum of the contemporary culture of sameness. One speaks, today, both from within and outside the hegemonic domination of oneness, the better to retrieve the value of heterogeneity, a value deemed secondary to national and global unity. Here, once again, Bailey's production of *Macbeth* returns as an exemplary incarnation of De Kock's thesis. Because of its reflexive foregrounding-and-erasure of the seam that figures difference, Bailey's production draws the audiences attention to the constructedness of meaning at the same time as it cancels the privative binary that founds this constructedness. Importantly, this reflexivity is not only achieved because of theatricality and artifice; rather, its more "eerie" agency lies in its commandeering of reflexivity in the name of the unconscious and the unsaid: Gray's hidden world and De Kock's secret life. Thereby, the "crisis of inscription" becomes a crisis whose source lies not only in representation, but in what representation does not, or cannot, say. As Greig has noted: "Bailey's vision ... is steeped in a sense of the otherworldly but also – and this is what makes it eerie – in a slightly Edwardian notion of ju-ju and darkest Africa." In other words, by simultaneously showing and concealing – or evoking that which cannot be revealed - Bailey constructs a doubled space of representation and its shadow. In doing so he implicates the familiar in the strange. The result is a deterritorialization and reinvigoration of the signifying economy of cultural production. This deterritorialization and reinvigoration emerges as a dramatization of what De Kock has called the "poetics of the seam." This poetics cannot at any point be self-evident. Rather, it is a poetics that is defined by a resistance to what Louise Bethlehem calls the "rhetoric of urgency", a rhetoric characterized by "a persuasive attempt to weld signifier to signified, to bypass the fraudulent contingencies of the sign and seek a place where things mean what they say." As we have noted, it is precisely this vaunted transparency between signifier and signified which Bailey has challenged. The paradox with which he infects the singularity of meaning is, for De Kock, critical to any contemporary reading and expression of South African culture. De Kock's postulate is as follows: "[A] crisis of representation has been endemic to the geographical and cultural conjunction that has become South Africa and that 'it', the country conceived as a third-person singular entity, is a seam that can be undone only at the cost of its existence. Its very nature, its secret life, inheres in the paradoxes of the seam" (2001: 284). It is the "secret life" which Bailey restores by staging the dangerous fluidity of categories.

In no uncertain terms De Kock has posted a warning to those engaged in cultural analyses and production who refute "the crisis of the sign" that is South Africa, and who refuse to engage cannily and reflexively with its "interstitial identity," its "doubleness and representational crisis." Speaking specifically of the South African writer – though here one could include those who "write" South Africa in-and-through other media – De Kock notes that any engagement in representation "in the full sense requires imaginative inhabitation of the seam as a deep symbolic structure"

(2001: 284). Once again we find the emergence of the hidden, secret, inner world that founds South Africa's unresolved heterogeneity. De Kock points to the writing of J.M. Coetzee as an exemplary instance of this imaginative inhabitation of this inner world. I, in turn, have pointed to the work of Brett Bailey. However, what makes de Kock's valorization of the crisis of the sign and his perception of the "paradoxical divisiveness of the seam as a site of self-constitution" (2001: 285) all the more compelling is that its agency extends the domain of cultural production to include "the most everyday acts of identity formation." The crisis of the sign, he says, is "endemic": "The country, in all of its various guises as a collective 'state,' has been dogged by a crisis of naming, either a naming of people as other than what they might conceive themselves to be or a naming of oneself in a constitutive (oppositional or identificatory) relation to others." Today, under the metatropes of sameness, a marked shift has occurred; a shift which, for De Kock may appear redemptive but which remains caught in a repression and denial of an on-going and unresolved heterogeneity. Today, De Kock notes, the country is characterized by "an overwhelming desire ... for a unitary political identity and for the *suppression* of difference. This desire has been formally translated into the new South African constitution, which does indeed enshrine equality for all regardless of race, gender, or class, does make us all the 'same' legally and constitutionally." However, as an imaginative inhabitation of a new symbolic structure, this juridically endorsed metatropes of sameness remains patently out of synch with reality "on the ground," as well as the reality defined by a "deep symbolic structure." "Racial and class cleavages persist. Political rivalries of the past, with accompanying atrocities, continue to emerge. Debates about affirmative action and employment equity cannot but mobilize racial particularity as a category of identity." As a consequence, therefore, "[w]e are ... still fully in the seam, still restaging our identities in a place of converging difference – a place where neither oneness nor difference can be maintained without reference to the knowledge of its double, its constitutively cross-hitched character. In such a context representation must bear the strain." (2001: 286-287). Given an episteme which is divisive in the same instant that it is self-constitutive, De Kock advocates the cultivation of selfhood and nationhood – in-and-through representation – that is ceaselessly mobile and fluid. If we do not take up this call – a call exemplified by the doubled or non-positionality expressed variously by Platje, Coetzee, and Bailey – then we will remain subject to a "teleology of liberal justice, which seemingly culminated in the democratic elections of 1994, holding us to oppressive fixations of oneness and sameness" (2001: 288). In the light of De Kock's conclusion it is not surprising that Bailey should render the drama of *Macbeth* inconclusive. Clearly, for Bailey, the righting of an unresolved, unbalanced, and heterogeneous society and culture would be premature. Better, then, to sustain a dangerous fluidity. Better, then, to post the crisis that dogs order. After Breytenbach, better to let old and new patterns of conflict emerge. The "soupy realm devoid of morality" is not merely the sign of a willed and gratuitous foreclosure of hope, but an incisive and deft response to a culture which, to date, has by no means vaulted the crisis of meaning and value that remains its abiding core. "Profound difference" prevails. "Let doubt return," De Kock concludes. "Let the tatty, patchwork 'rainbow nation' (in Breyten Breytenbach's description, a 'pot of shit') become once more, in representation, the normal thing that it is in the streets, the shacks, and the bloody intellectual parlors of the old 'new' South Africa" (2001: 290).



If De Kock has not pointed a way out of our conflicted and interstitial cultural identity, he has, however, made a strident case for a mobile selfhood and a highly charged and reflexive critical engagement with the crisis of meaning and value in South Africa. At an international colloquium on the theme “Living Difference: Towards a Society of Communities”, held at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg in August 1998, De Kock was struck by the notably foreign commitment – that of Richard Rorty, Nancy Fraser, and Jorn Rusen – to “a master narrative [or] governing motif that would frame everyone’s energies within the miraculous new nation.” As a counterpoint, and to the “dismay” of the international guests, “South African speaker after speaker, black and white, expressed disillusionment with or sounded warnings about precisely the new master narrative the assembled global academics were pressing on them.” Confronted thus, “Professor Rusen thundered, ‘It is imperative for us that you succeed!’” Within this emotive outburst “lay the key.” “For many reasons,” de Kock reminds us, “it is imperative for *others* that South Africans succeed at the democratic, multiracial miracle that *they* (the non-South Africans) have yet to see realized in their own countries. South Africa must carry this burden of moral example, just as in earlier times it carried the burden of having to be a moral pariah of the larger world” (2001: 289). De Kock’s blisteringly acute observation returns us to the question of culpability: Who is responsible for what and for whom? What is at stake in the furtherance of the dream of a unified nation; a dream which, today, remains in search of an objective correlative? What are the implications that compound the continued belittlement of a poststructuralist critique of an unresolved heterogeneity that knows no end? What, then, must the perspective, location, and agency of culture be? As I have attempted to demonstrate through this thesis, this perspective, location, and agency must, necessarily, turn not on a chimerical hope but on a speculative engagement with South Africa’s cultural predicament. The job of cultural analysts and practitioners is not to feed a national and global desire for a simulacral truth, but, rather, its interstitial and vexed objective should be to resuscitate the canny and invigorated value of “doubt.” By doubt I do not only mean the adoption of a “vigilant skepticism” to which De Kock ascribes; rather, I mean thereby to sustain a continued commitment to the enabling power of questions together with an openness to the unconscious and unthinkable, spheres of being that form an active part of cultural production, as Bailey, Breytenbach, Gray, and De Kock have attested. The answers to the propositions I have made in this thesis still await us. Caught in shadow and in glare, the stories that we tell, the critical narratives and the theatre that we make, remain the unfinished fragments of an inconsolable and unresolved reality. As long as this unresolved heterogeneity persists – and if De Kock is correct, then thought and culture has a vested interest in sustaining this irresolution – then the story of South Africa will never be told in its entirety. “Introductions to South African literary culture conceived as an entity have a peculiar trademark,” De Kock observes: “They apologize for attempting to do the impossible and then go ahead anyway. This gesture, ranging from rhetorical genuflection to anxious self-examination to searing critique of others who have dared to undertake what should not be attempted lightly, reveals a significant fault line of South African literary studies.” De Kock defines this fault line as a need for a “minimal convergence in the domains of origin, language, culture, history, and nationalism (contested or not) to become, in some sense, cohesive and inter-referential. But in the South African case each of these domains fragments into heterogeneity the moment one looks more closely at the literary objects at hand” (2001: 363-4). While De Kock is speaking specifically of the



construction of cultural identity through literature, his point presupposes the impossibility of synoptic totalization with regard to the analysis of South African culture in general. Hence the liminality and partiality of my own critical engagement under the rubric: *Predicaments of Culture in South Africa: An Inquiry*. A “difficult, unpleasant, or embarrassing situation”, a predicament succinctly captures the uneasiness which characterizes the mood and enunciation of this thesis. With its attendant association with shame and disgrace, it further posts an examination of the error or stain that forms the constitutive root of an unresolved and heterogeneous society. My objective has been to galvanize and transmute this error or stain – this difficulty, unease, or unpleasantness – by harnessing it to an affirmative, though non-positive, reading of cultural change. At best this reading has been an “inquiry,” though here, against the dictates of the Concise Oxford Dictionary, my inquiry is by no means an “official one.” Rather, I have elected to align my thinking with the thinking of those who, in embracing the critical and cultural margins - in invoking the strange, unstable, hidden, secretive, occult, or deep - have sought not merely to contest a putative centre, but to further invigorate an inquiry into culture conceived in a manner unconstrained by the canonical, hierarchical, secular and rational. It is my anxious hope, furthermore, that this thesis has demonstrated and sustained an inquiry into a culture forged in the name of human freedom. Inquiry would mean little, if not nothing, if it were not motivated by this vexed and seemingly impossible ideal.

Nadine Gordimer, in an essay entitled ‘That Other World That Was The World’, writes: “Only through the writer’s explorations could I have begun to discover the human dynamism of the place I was born to and the time in which it was to be enacted. Only in the prescient dimension of the imagination could I bring together what had been deliberately broken and fragmented; fit together the shapes of living experience, my own and that of others, without which a whole consciousness is not attainable. I had to be part of the *transformation of my place* in order for it to know me” (1995: 130). If I conclude with this moving passage, it is because it reinforces my own exile from the source of its truth. Raised and schooled abroad, separated from the place of my birth, I too have sought to cohere a fragmented life. However, unlike Gordimer, I have attained no “whole consciousness.” For me there has been no mirror that could fuse my being with the mysterious world all about me. After Gilles Deleuze, mine remains an “orphan line” of thought and culture. On returning to South Africa in December 1989, I too sought to play a part in the country’s “miraculous” journey. However, unlike Gordimer, I have not been transformed. I remain “[t]he one who belongs nowhere. The one who has no national mould” (1995: 120). It is with this bracing knowledge that I began this thesis, turning to the writing of Theodore Adorno and Homi Bhabha and finding, therein, the means through which to think the exilic condition in which I found myself as part of a larger, insistent, and unresolved heterogeneity which, I would discover, formed the troubled seam of my native land. A witness to the changes between 1991 and 1994, I did not, like Gordimer, perceive these years as “the grand finale ... when South Africa emerged amazingly, a great spectacle of human liberation, from double colonization” (1995: 114). On the contrary, as this thesis seeks to attest, I have witnessed a continued bondage, and a continued and complex fight in the name of freedom. The interregnum is by no means over. Indeed, I wonder whether the term ever possessed the capacity to truthfully reflect a psychic disfigurement borne of empire and racial strife. Today it remains in-and-through this disfigurement, implacably recorded in J.M. Coetzee’s ‘Jerusalem

Prize Acceptance Speech', that culture, having worked through Coetzee's
inconsolable vision, will sustain its transforming and life-affirming quest.
