Mandela's Funeral as Community Performance

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Abstract

Some of the surviving theories and documentations which deal with rituals and ceremonial rites are often suggestive of rituals' relationship with community performances. This article explores the complex traditional mourning and funeral rituals of the AmaXhosa people of South Africa, which took place during the funeral of Nelson Mandela as performances. The central issues raised in the article relate to cultural aesthetics and popular entertainment. Richard Schechner (2003) argues that western thinkers have too often split ritual from entertainment, privileging the former over the latter. It is generally asserted that ritual comes first, with entertainment arising later as a derivation or even deterioration of ritual. The purpose of this article therefore, is to examine the relationship between ritual and performance. In the paper, performance is defined as "happenings" and an avenue to "show off" certain aspects of the AmaXhosa culture relating to funeral rites. Using a descriptive narrative approach, the article provides an account of the national and global events that marked Mandela's funeral as a performance. The paper examines both the profane and the sacred rituals as liminal performative genres. It concludes by arguing that ritual and entertainment as not in opposition or mutually exclusive, but in alliance with each other. The celebrations that accompanied Mandela's funeral are viewed as instruments that have extended their frontiers to embrace "constructs of identity," and "nationhood."

Key words: Funeral rites, Nelson Mandela, performance, Xhosa practices, Thembu tradition, celebration, ritual, mourning, interment, liminal performative genres

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Introduction: What is performance?

As a socio-cultural construct, the concept of Performance is as old as the human race. Huxley and Witts (2002: 6) claim that "performance is, and always has been, a contested and often controversial issue" because it deals with a "constellation of practices." Performance theorist Richard Schechner writes, "In business, sports, and sex, 'to perform' is to do something up to a standard ... In everyday life, 'to perform' is to show off, to go to extremes, to underline an action for those who are watching" (2006: 28). In its amorphous state, performance manifests itself in "happenings" which occur before an audience (Huxley and Witts 2002: 3). In the 1960s and early 1970s, an unprepared/improvised entertainment or an event was regarded as "happening." As Peter Brook observes in *The Empty Space* (1968), "I can take an empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space while someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre [performance] to be engaged" (p.105). Performance has extended its frontier away from the stage or performance area into constructs of identity (Huxley and Witts, p. 4). In essence, a performance is capable of moving beyond its simplistic form as an agent of entertainment to embrace diverse issues and references, such as religion, politics, sex and gender. Harding (2002: 2) affirms that boundary-crossing may be inevitable during a performance. She cites the examples of an acrobat, who, during a performance, stretches the body beyond ordinary limits, achieving extraordinary feats, and challenging gravity. She also cites the clown and the comedian who make death a laughing matter in order to relieve sorrow. During a performance, "to show off" entails a behaviour that may be close to bragging, evoking "Notions of exaggerating, condensing, highlighting, and revealing" (Harding 2002: 2) aspects which accentuate a people's way of life. In a similar vein, the funeral rites of South Africans, particularly those of the Xhosa people during the funeral of the late Nelson Mandela can be construed as performances or objects of entertainment.

Performances tell artistic stories about life. Thus, a performance may also be defined as "all the activities of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants. Taking a particular participant and his performance as a basic point of reference, we may refer to those who contribute to the performance as the audience, observers, or co-participants" (Goffman 1959: 15-16).

> Community performances are an important part of the symbolic and real actions that define nationhood and cultural affiliation: from American Independence Day July 4 parades to the National Sorry Day in Australia . . . from remembrances of the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand to the carnivalesque parties at the Queen's Birthday in the Netherlands (Kuppers 2007: 33).

In the context of this paper, performance shall be regarded as 'happenings' and an occasion to 'show off.' The article analyses performances during Mandela's funeral in terms of how they constructed South African people's ethos and mores, as well as their identity,''nationhood,'and 'cultural affiliation.'

A short historical narrative of Mandela's life and those of the other Black South African freedom fighters may help to put this discourse into perspective. The narrative will underscore why Mandela's funeral became a world event. Historically, colonialism in Africa is said to have emerged from the conference convened in 1884 by the German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck to discuss the partitioning of and civilising mission for the continent. Russel Warren Howe notes that 'no [African person] was invited to the Berlin Conference, nor were Africans invited to comment on the outcome' [of the deliberations] (cited in Hulse 2007: 37). 'Bismarck's grand

design turned out to be largely in the interest of Europe without regard to how it impoverished the peoples of Africa' (Nwankwo 2009: 27-44). This 'civilising mission' encouraged the Dutch commercial merchants to camp at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, and in 1948, the government of D. F. Malan instituted the apartheid system which Mandela described as

> …a moral genocide: an attempt to exterminate an entire people's self-respect. The United Nations called that "a crime against humanity," but the former masters of the Union Buildings believed that they were doing God's work on earth, and humanity be damned. With admirable logic, apartheid's Calvinist orthodoxy preached that black and white souls inhabit separate heavens, rendering it morally imperative for the chosen few to respond to those who rose in opposition to God's will ... The ordinary black foot soldiers who rebelled were terrorised into submission, beaten by the police, sometimes tortured, in some cases assassinated, very often jailed without charge (quoted in Carlin 2013: 3).

The architects of apartheid impressed it upon the world that the Blacks who fought for their freedom in their own land were 'terrorists' (Perry 2013: 36). In addition to the many social and politically-motivated and dehumanising pieces of legislation such as the Group Areas Act, Immorality Act, Separate Amenities Act which were used to humiliate the Blacks, Black South Africans experienced numerous other ordeals during the close to 100 years of apartheid:

> ... the chiefs of South Africa's dominant white rule, the Afrikaners, administered a system that denied 85 percent of the population –those people born with dark skin –any say in the affairs of their country: They could not vote; they were sent to inferior schools so they could not compete with whites in the workplace; they were told where they could and could not live and what hospitals, buses, trains, parks, beaches, public toilets, public telephones they could and could not use (Carlin 2013: 3).

This was the system that Mandela and all Black freedom fighters opposed. He was sentenced to life imprisonment after being charged with treason for denouncing and acting against apartheid. After twenty-seven years of incarceration, he was unconditionally released from prison in 1990. The Black South Africans regarded him as a hero and he was elected the first Black democratic President in 1994.

Traditional funeral practices of the Xhosa

Funerals form part of the oldest customs of all ages (Solomon, n.d.: 5). They signal loss and mourning, especially if the deceased is a young person. In other contexts, it may be regarded as an occasion to celebrate the final journey and rest for the deceased after toiling and accomplishing his/her mission in life. In the latter case, it usually calls for merriment and involves performance. In the African cosmology, death is not perceived as a termination of life but an extension of it. It is perceived to be a state of transition into another world where spirit mediums can connect a living family member to his/her departed ancestor (Mbiti 1990: 145-161). The critical question is: 'Can human consciousness survive bodily death?' African spiritual consciousness is similar to Christianity which believes in a world beyond the physical. In John Donne's classic religious poem, 'Death Be Not Proud,' the English poet sees death not as an exterminator but as an avenue for the liberation of the body and the ascension of the soul into a higher realm of heaven. Similarly, in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), there is belief in a world beyond the familiar. It is this belief that prompts the king's horseman (Elesin*)* in the Yoruba culture of Nigeria to undergo ritual suicide in order to accompany the deceased chief to the land of the ancestors. The

bid to frustrate what the colonial District Officer Simon Pilkings regards as 'nonsense ritual' (24) constitutes the major tragedy in the play as the community is contaminated. Elesin's son commits suicide and Elesin himself later strangles himself to death. This story is not simply fiction. In the 'Author's Note,' Soyinka states:

> The play is based on events which took place in Oyo, ancient Yoruba city of Nigeria in 1946. That year, the lives of Elesin (Olori Elesin), his son [a medical student in London], and the Colonial District Officer intertwined with the disastrous results set out in the play. The changes I have made are in matters of detail, sequence and of course characterisation ... for minor reasons of dramaturgy. The factual account still exists in the archives of the British Colonial Administration ... (p. 5).

In western culture, an example of the belief in life after death is recorded in Moody's *Life after Life* (1975). In this research, the author investigates the phenomenon of death among human beings who had experienced near-death situations in life. In the study based on clinically certified dead persons who came back to life, it has been established that there is another life beyond the physical one. Bryant's *Handbook of Death and Dying* (2003) has also documented a comprehensive coverage on thanatology, the study of death. According to the book, the experience of dying is as 'social' as it is 'physiological'.

In the Xhosa tradition from which Nelson Mandela originates, 'people refer to dying as having returned home (*ugodukile*), gone away (*uhambile*), or gone down (*ushonile*)'—a comparison to the sun setting in readiness to rising again the following morning (Solomon n.d.: 36). In Xhosa culture, the dead, particularly the elderly are considered as ancestors capable of communicating with the living.

For the amaXhosa, the magnitude of a funeral depends on the calibre of the person who has died. For example, the death of a young person is mourned, but the death of a chief is celebrated nationally or, in the case of Mandela, globally. According to Solomon (n.d.), there are rituals that are observed, and these include the wearing of black mourning clothes by the widows, the shaving of hair on the head, sexual abstinence, smearing of white ochre on the body, the wearing of loose headdresses by women, and the practice of spitting out the first mouthful of a meal served and swallowing subsequent mouthfuls. For a dignitary like Mandela, the *umkhapho* ritual— the slaughtering of cattle to facilitate the transition of the spirit of the dead to the world beyond had to be observed. Oxen are usually the preferred cattle for people of Mandela's status. Ritualised practices of preparing the sacrificial offering of the beast are normally observed, including customary prayers after which the throat of the ox is cut, and blood collected in a container. A piece of meat (*intsonyama*) from the right foreleg is cut and roasted without any seasoning. Only the elders partake in the eating of this meat and no alcohol is consumed during the ritual. In isiXhosa culture, men are buried in an upright position (*ukuchopha*) and sometimes some of the precious items belonging to the deceased are buried with the corpse. This aligns with the common belief in Xhosa cultures that burying a dead person in an upright position ensures his/her readiness to fight for the liberation of the members of his/her family in the event of war.

The traditional funeral customs of the AmaXhosa entail a lot of rituals, and theatre history has affirmed that rituals are the bedrocks of theatre and performance. We can use the experience of the *Incwala* ritual of the Zulu and Swazi people of Southern Africa to buttress this point. Beyond the usual mythico-religious significance attached to some African rituals, different parts of the *Incwala* celebration constitute a dramatic experience within a communal setting through group

participation. The engagement of personalities acting out certain roles, the employment of song, dance, pageantry, and visual elements such as body adornment, beads, costumes, pantomimic and gestures, underscore the performative aspects of this ritual. Marwick (1966) states after researching the Swazi ritual, "From the short amount of time which I have been able to devote to the study of this question of the annual First Fruit Ceremony [*Incwala*], I am of the opinion that it is in effect a *pageant* in which the early life of the Swazi people is *re-enacted* in a *dramatized form*" (p.191) [italics added]. In accordance with Marwick's views, Kuper (1947), who also wrote about this ritual from the angle of social stratification, noted that the ritual is indeed 'the drama of kingship …and the heavy play of all the [Swazi] people.' These observations demonstrate the fact that a ritual is indeed a performance. Whether all the traditional funeral rites of the Amaxhosa were observed during the funeral of Mandela is a matter to be discussed later in this paper.

The Relationship between ritual and performance

Usually, a funeral invokes a feeling of mourning and nostalgia, especially among members of the affected family. However, as pointed out earlier, Mandela's funeral, instead of being a period of mourning, was filled with merriment, entertainment and performances. Did the performances that accompanied the funeral rob the occasion of its ritual grandeur? According to Schechner (2003: 170-174), some critics, especially western critics, and indeed critics beyond the west have differentiated and distanced ritual from a performance, an object of ordinary entertainment. They regard ritual as a 'serious' affair, while entertainment is regarded as 'frivolous'. Schechner (2003: 173) notes that "These are prejudiced culture-bound conclusions". This study shares the view that "entertainment and ritual are braided together, neither one being the 'original' of the other" (Schechner 2003:173). Balme (1999: 67) notes that "it is important to bear in mind that in many cultures the aesthetic functions performed by the profane activity of theatergoing are in fact contained and carried out in the sacred actions of ritual observance".

Much of the opposition against ritual as performance is the fact that ritual practice is deemed to be efficacious. Schechner (2003: 132) opines that "[…] in the 1960s and 1970s efficacy ascended to a dominant position over entertainment […] the 1980s have seen an apparent return to the dominance of entertainment." This article subscribes to what Schechner refers to as "The Efficacy-Entertainment Braid" (2003: 129-136). He explains a situation where in the Papua New Guinea Highlands, a ritual performance of warfare was transformed into dancing. Thus, entertainment took over from efficacy as a reason for the performance. It is further stated that people were not engaged in the ritual dance in order to only get results, "but also because people like sing-sing for its own sake. Efficacy and entertainment are not so much opposed to each other; rather they form the poles of a continuum […] No performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment" (pp. 129-130). Mandela's funeral is not an exception.

Mandela's funeral as performance

In early 2013 the local and international press converged at Medi-Clinic, the health facility at the corner of Park and Cilliers Street in Pretoria, Gauteng Province, South Africa, to compete to be the first to report on the death of the freedom fighter and world icon, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. However, although he was described as being in a 'critical but stable condition', Mandela left the hospital alive after spending more than one month in hospital. He was diagnosed with a severe

lung infection, purported to have originated at Robben Island where he was incarcerated as political prisoner for twenty-seven years. Considering his ailing condition at 95, the press kept watching, expecting, and secretly putting together documentaries about his life. Finally, at about 8.35pm on Thursday 5 December 2013, President Jacob Zuma announced that Nelson Mandela had passed on. Funeral arrangements were put in place which were to last for ten days. The significance of Mandela's death can be approached from many perspectives. It is indeed possible to view Mandela's funeral from the political, reconciliatory, economic, cultural, spiritual or ideological dimensions. From the theatre and drama perspective, this paper concentrates on Mandela's death and funeral using the approach of performance as entertainment. I explain what I mean by performance below.

Perhaps, the best place to start the discussion on Mandela's funeral as performance is to recall Soyinka's attitude towards performance in West Africa where "the funeral obsequies of an Oyo king in the mid-century evolved into a performance" (2002: 373). The same can be said of ancient Egypt burial rituals (Brockett and Hildy 2003: 6-9). Performance, as used in Mandela's context connotes what is expressive – the expression of the Self using any means available to the individual –song, poetry, dance, mime, screaming, and ululating. It is not 'individually authored: the end product, if it comes into existence, is not predetermined by an artist who directs people towards this goal. Instead the outcome is (relatively) open ... full of spaces and times for people to create their own expressive material' (Kuppers 2007: 4). In this regard, 'Energy' and 'tension' become bifocal principles of performance.

Mandela's funeral energised the community to create for itself lasting impressions about the icon they most revere - a deep emotional outburst manifesting in excitement that resulted in dancing, singing, prancing, acrobatics, screaming, shouting, and jumping. The occasion created a state of joy, happiness, bliss; a heightened form of external reaction and elevation of the body processes which exuded energy from inter- and intra-cultural performance modes. The Mandela funeral performances did not audition and recruit directors or players; it just happened –extempore, in calculated 'energy' and 'tension' characteristic of performance. A communal rhythm flowed through everyone and resulted in a cultural melting pot of activities. It happened in real time and space as opposed to theatrical time and stage. The funeral became a performance which culminated in a 'Rainbow of Desire' which prompted people in Government to talk about what Mandela stood for and why his exemplary character – justice, fair play, forgiveness, tolerance and humility – should be emulated by leaders in the African continent. Many performative actions that occurred during the funeral require different analytic approaches. It is impossible to discuss every aspect of what one would regard as performance during Mandela's funeral. This article deals with selected elements of performance, both secular and profane, during the funeral under the following notions: the public announcement of Mandela's death, the memorial ceremony, the lying-in-state/state funeral and the final interment.

The public announcement of Mandela's death

As mentioned earlier, the world had eagerly awaited Mandela's passing on because of his fragile health situation at the age of ninety-five, and on the day that President Zuma made public news of his death, the Xhosa cultural practice of *isikhalo* took control when women gave out loud screams and men indulged in the traditional *iyangqukruleka* in their private homes, on the roads and everywhere else. Apart from the usual shock and mourning often associated with death, the South African community, particularly the Black community erupted with displays of various dimensions of mourning. Street performances became the order of the night. The morning after the announcement, Mandela's home in Soweto was besieged by a crowd of people of different

races. *Umkhonto weSizwe* [The Spear of the Nation] veterans, the military wing of the ANC that Mandela founded during the war against apartheid sang through the streets of Vilakazi in Orlando West, Soweto. Truck-loads of human beings drove past the congested streets of most of the South African cities. People danced, sang favourite Mandela tunes, and women ululated. Amongst other performances, music from different combinations permeated the air because in Xhosa culture." Music forms an integral part of mourning and helps the individual [mourner] and group to come to terms with death" (Solomon, p. 8). The locals made shrines out of the flowers and wreaths that filled the streets.

Tributes started pouring in from home and abroad. The Prime Minister of Ireland, Enda Kenny, said, "Today, a great light has been extinguished. The boy from the Transkei has finished his long walk. His journey transformed not just South Africa, but humanity itself". Desmond Tutu, the Archbishop Emeritus, amongst others prayed, "Thank you God, for this wonderful gift who became a moral colossus, a global icon of forgiveness and reconciliation. May he rest in peace and rise in glory" ('The 10 Best Tributes to Madiba,' 2013: 7). In the days that followed, news of Mandela's death took the nation back in time as the local and international press was consumed in flashbacks of Mandela's life as a political activist and reconciliation agent. The portrayal of Mandela in some of the struggle documentaries and movies classified him as a dialectical theatrical institution and a performance site. For example, In Ngema's *Sarafina* (1992), it is the characterisation and portrayal of Mandela by Sarafina the young school girl that dominates the anti-apartheid movie. During the funeral, documentary films from historical archives detailing Mandela's long and hazardous road to freedom were screened at home and abroad and these triggered memories of the Rivonia trial, his twenty seven years in prison at Robben Island up to 1994 when Black South Africans voted for the first time during the first democratic elections. A close look at some of the documentaries, such as *Mandela City*, *Mandela Rivonia* and *The Long Walk of Nelson Mandela* offered electrifying performances about the life of this freedom fighter.

Memorial ceremony

Mandela's memorial ceremony became a spectacle which culminated in sensationalised performances instead of 'mourning.' The schedule for the memorial ceremony compelled humanity from all walks of life to book South African-bound flights and the world's congregation in the country constituted an informal United Nations. Since one location would not accommodate all the mourners, the South African national Government set aside 150 public places as memorial venues. Cape Town, Houghton, Sandton and the far away Parliament Square in Central London were some of the places where the memorial ceremony took place. Of all the memorial locations, some of the events I witnessed and read about at the FNB stadium in Soweto (Johannesburg) availed themselves as worthy of scrutiny as performances.

The day was a rainy day in Johannesburg, but thousands of people defied the inclement weather to attend the memorial service. The stadium, which functioned as a community theatre was packed to capacity with people carrying umbrellas that created an illusion of mini-canopies being erected around the space. A cacophony of noises and songs filled the air. Gevisser captures the atmosphere of the occasion when he observed that:

> Everywhere I go, people seem to be humming 'Nelson Mandela, Nelson Mandela, *akekho afana naye* [there is no one like him],'even if they do not know the words. The song seems to have become the soundtrack to this strange week, a theme song connecting strangers as they go about their daily business, a beautiful and soft hymn to our hero (Gevisser, 2013: 2).

Many world Presidents and dignitaries attended the ceremony.. The sitting arrangement seemed to have been choreographed with President Mugabe of Zimbabwe sitting close to his arch enemy Tony Blair, the former Prime Minister of Great Britain. President Barack Obama of the United States of America sat close to his Cuban counterpart, Raul Castro and a handshake became inevitable. The handshake in the South African stadium raised dust in the United States as Obama was accused of sharing the White House smile with an 'infidel.' It was a grand performance on the world stage. Later, Obama in his accustomed oratorical rendition brought the crowd to its knees as he performed his memorial speech. He was applauded thunderously by the audience. Conversely, the South African President, Mr. Jacob Zuma was booed repeatedly by the crowd – particularly by members of the Economic Freedom Fighters Party (EFF) including some members of the divided African National Congress (ANC) structures. The crowd even cheered Thabo Mbeki, the former South African President who had previously been shamed out of office by his political rivals. Why was President Zuma booed? Gevisser provides some clues:

> Zuma reaped this week what he sowed in the run-up to Polokwane, exactly this time six years ago: a culture that devalues substantive debate and degrades it into corrosive jeering. This is what Zuma and his henchmen did to Mbeki –the unlikely darling of Tuesday's memorial –and what the crowds were now doing to him (Gevisser, p. 3).

When the Director of Ceremonies during the occasion, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa cautioned the crowd not to be disrespectful towards the country's President, little did he realise that the crowd's behaviour was orchestrated by a section of President Obama's address:

> Mandela's death should prompt in each of us a time for self-reflection. With honesty, regardless of our station or our circumstance, we must ask: How well have I applied his lessons in my own life? It's a question I ask myself, as a man and as a president (from Obama'Memorial Speech).

This article reads acts of cheering, jesting, screaming, booing, or even laughing during Mandela's funeral as forms of performance. This is performance that turned what was supposed to be mourning into entertainment. According to Schechner, "Much performing among tribal peoples (sic) is, like the kaiko, part of the societies overall ecology" (2003: 117).

During the memorial service, traditional praise singers took the stage and performed appropriate dirges to the departed icon and many traditional dancers, specifically those who performed as Zulu warriors, and musicians, made their presence felt. Additionally, many contemporary artists from the international context featured prominently including Katy-Perry, Nicole Scherzinger and the gospel artist, Kirk Franklin. One of the most dramatic performances was the deafening combat songs between members of the EFF and ANC which nearly turned the event into a political 'party rally' (Mthombothi 2013: 4). In fact, many dignitaries' speeches including that of United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon were drowned in songs. The event became a social party, as Carlin reports in a review of the event:

> The party of the year, of the century. A celebration, a proud and joyous thanksgiving, with singing and dancing so uplifting, so pitch perfect, so synchronised, that anyone unaware of South Africans' astounding natural gift for choral harmony would have imagined the event had been preceded by six months of rigorous rehearsals. Had the big man been watching from on high

> […] he'd have been delighted, smiling and laughing, and jiving along with the best of them (Carlin, 2013:6).

Although some critics such as Carlin, Mthombothi and Gevisser frowned at the so-called 'noisy' and 'rowdy' state of affairs during the FNB memorial, labeling it an embarrassment and a sign of disrespect to foreign Heads of State, it is an atmosphere such as this that promotes a sense of camaraderie and fun amongst African communities. The so-called 'noise' was uplifting and may be regarded as a form of interactive performance.

One of the performance scenes during the occasion nearly threw 'hot chilli' into President Barack Obama's eyes as some people disapproved of his photo-taking action during the event. In a very jovial atmosphere, President Obama purportedly used the Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt's smart phone to take 'a selfie' which included his image and those of the UK and Danish Prime Ministers. Michelle Obama's reaction seemed not to have been accommodating coupled with criticisms by some people who viewed Obama's action as 'disrespectful at a service held to mark Mandela's death' (Hot Gossip 2013: 26). This seemingly 'trivial' action is an aspect of performance during the occasion where thousands of people were 'celebrating' instead of mourning. More entertaining, albeit controversial, was Thamsanqa Jantjie's performance during the memorial. Jantjie was hired as the official sign language interpreter during the FNB memorial and he made his claimed trade the comedy of the day. His meaningless signs spoke gibberish language to the deaf community as he sawed the air with his hands in all directions with no facial expressions. His "interpretation was so creative that at least three organisations that represent deaf people in South Africa, many experts in local sign language and a half a dozen accredited interpreters have said that Jantjie made no sense" (de Wet 2013: 13). Many derived hilarious fun out of Jantjie's performance and dubbed him 'fake.' More humour emerged from the already funny performance when the interpreter claimed that he was prone to seeing angels during the ceremony because of his schizophrenic state of health.

Memorials were held in other undesignated places all over South Africa. Concerts and public performances were held by individuals, groups, and organisations at different venues as people chose to celebrate Mandela's life instead of mourning his death. A troupe of traditional dancers from Kliptown near Soweto, draped in their traditional attire entertained the audience with their electrifying performance. Disc Jockeys and fashion models dedicated their outings to the memory of Mandela. South African singer Ringo Madlingozi paid tribute to Mandela during his performance at the Ekurhuleni Jazz Evening at Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg. The Mandela tribute concert was held at the State Theatre in Pretoria.

The Department of Arts and Culture sponsored the Shwashwi concert in Johannesburg which featured among other performances music, poetry and dance. The National Youth Orchestra opened the show. Dramatic skits were added with the renowned South African actress Olile Tshabalala acting as Winnie Mandela and Harriet Manamela playing the role of Albertina Sisulu. A performance from Simphiwe Dana held the audience spell-bound while Nondumiso Dlamini stepped into the shoes of the late Brenda Fassie in her copyright rendition of 'Black President.' Another local artist "Vusi Mahlasela was Shwashwi's favourite with his suave performance backed by the super-cool Steve Dyer on sax" (Shwashwi 2013: 18). American musicians Alicia Keys and John Legend paid tribute to Mandela in their Australian concert with a rendition of Bob Marley's 'Redemption Song.' On 9 December 2013, the American Rapper, Jay Z dedicated "Young Forever" to Mandela during his tour of Los Angeles Staples Centre (Hot Gossip, p. 26).

There were so many other performances during this celebration that any attempt to discuss all of them would be a cumbersome exercise similar to counting the leaves on a tree.

Lying-in-state/State funeral at Qunu

The Sir Herbert Baker's amphitheatre at the Union Buildings in Pretoria held the body of Mandela for public viewing. It is at this same spot that Mandela took an oath of office as the first democratically elected Black President of South Africa in 1994. Mandela's body lay in state for three busy and crowded days. Motorists parked their vehicles on the Show Grounds and were led to join the queues nearest to them. Many streets were closed. I struggled hard to view the body and only managed to do so on the third and last day of the viewing. A social drama unfolded as a stretch of human beings from all walks of life came to pay homage and their last respects to the man who liberated South African Blacks from the yoke of apartheid. Street vendors made huge profits from selling memorabilia in honour of Mandela to those in the queue. It took hours before people got the chance to see the body, and very many were disappointed because they were unable to see the corpse. Elements of performance during the lying in state emerged as people lined the streets singing, dancing and ululating as the military escorted the body in a hearse motorcade every morning and evening from and to the military hospital mortuary at the air force base in Waterkloof.

The service at Qunu crowned the events that constituted Mandela's funeral as performance. On Saturday, a day before the funeral service, the body of Mandela was flown from the Air force base in Waterkloof, Pretoria to Mthatha airport in the Eastern Cape. Amidst military fanfare and decorum, the body was handed over to the African National Congress representatives. The President spoke: "We are sending you back to Qunu".In his lifetime, Mandela had decreed that when he died, the Thembu tradition should follow its course and sending the corpse back to his ancestral home was a sign of respect for his wish. The body was carried in the South African flag-draped coffin by eight military generals representing the different units of the country's defence force and was conveyed by the Hercules C-130 aircraft draped in black. Before this, the soldiers mounted a guard of honour, and the military band played the National Anthem while the military plane was flanked on both sides by two military Gripen fighter jets displaying the South African flag as they flew across the country to Mthatha.

The reception at the airport involved more performances as the residents of Qunu sang, danced and lined the streets to welcome the corpse. Zolani Mkiza, the renowned South African praise singer who performed during Mandela's inauguration at the Union Buildings delivered his praises when the body arrived at Qunu. Like the memorial service organised by the South African government, the Eastern Cape government, fully aware of the large number of visitors that were expected, set aside twenty-one venues as mourning parlours. The corpse spent the night with the family in accordance with the Xhosa tradition. The public, including researchers were not allowed access to witness what happened in the homestead. Like the scenes during the lying-in-state in Pretoria, people who had no access to the corpse became very angry. The anger expressed at Qunu was quite theatrical as the residents blocked traffic in protest. The fact that only selected few were allowed to view the body or to attend the funeral for that matter did not help the situation as this practice ran contrary to the Xhosa tradition where people are not supposed to be invited to a funeral but attend at will and as a matter of tradition.

The church service presided over by Bishop Siwa was held on Sunday, 15 December 2013 in a domed marquee constructed specially for the occasion. 4,500 people were expected to attend.

About eight staircases led to the arched altar where there were several lit candles to symbolise "moonlight in a twilight." Selected dignitaries from all walks of life were in the church and a special choir sang hymns operatic style. The casket was conspicuously placed in the church and family members, close relatives and selected personalities delivered their last speeches and encomium for the departed freedom fighter. Even in the church, the solemnity that usually accompanies a requiem service was absent. Like the celebration of the Holy Mass in the Roman Catholic Church, the four-hour church service was more of a ritual performance than an ordinary funeral. According to the chief celebrant during the church service, the experience of Mandela's death was compared to a disappearing ship, 'big as it is, only diminishes from viewing eyes.' In the church as well as in other locations, Graca Machel and Winnie Mandela, both dressed in black were seen comforting each other.

Final interment

In preparation for the final interment, the corpse left the church in pomp and pageantry. An amphitheatre covered with a white canopy next to the grave site was built to accommodate 450 people, ranging from close family members to the military, some members of the ANC including the State President, a few former Heads of State, first ladies, traditional leaders, representatives of the African Union, four members of the international community, fifteen religious leaders and Premiers of the nine provinces. In a slow march through the red carpet, the military conveyed the body in dignity out of the church. Adorned in their maroon military suit, members of the military band played solemn and soulful tunes as the body was placed in a military truck and left the church in a procession to the grave site at about 12.20pm. The indigenous Thembu people were apprehensive of the consequences and the wrath of the gods that might follow as the corpse, according to tradition, was supposed to have been buried at 12 noon prompt. The belief is that for every transgression, there is always atonement. The route to the grave site was decorated with the presence of soldiers, the navy and air force. At the grave site there was a change of guard. The flag that was wrapped around the coffin was unwrapped and given to Mandela's wife, Graca Machel by President Zuma. Prayers were offered. Three military helicopters flew over the grave site while six falcons followed in echelon formation. Twenty-one gun salutes filled the air, the military trumpet sounded, and a private family committal took place behind the scenes away from the public eye and the press.

Conclusion

Mandela's funeral was not a period of mourning in the ordinary sense of the word; it served as an occasion to celebrate his life with formal and informal performances. It offered an opportunity for the world and its leaders to scrutinize their actions and reflect on the concepts of justice, fairplay, accountability and good governance. The funeral displayed both the sacred and the profane aspects of performance. Ritual performance (sacred) played a significant role in Mandela's funeral. The sacred observances of the Xhosa people exemplified ritual and these were in abundance when Mandela's body arrived in his homestead. In the realm of the sacred, rituals are viewed as liminal performances. "During the liminal phase, the works of rites of passage take place. At this time, in specially marked spaces, transitions and transformations occur" (Schechner 2006: 66). During Mandela's funeral, the private activities that took place behind closed doors, according to the AmaXhosa tradition, constituted liminal performances. The use of liminality here excludes ritual theorists' reference to it 'as a specific technical term.'

> As a result of Turner's writings, the term has passed into popular usage, and in the process much of this technical specificity has been lost. Within Drama, Theatre and Performance studies, the term is used in a range of ways: from Turner's quite precise technical sense, through to a more general sense – as in the suggestion that the experience of watching a play, and of taking part imaginatively in its fictional world, is in itself a 'liminal' experience (Mangan 2013: 179).

Hence, the transformation of Mandela from the state of a living being to that of an ancestor, according to the belief of his people underscored a major ritual during the funeral.

Looking at the secular, the entire ceremony from the day the announcement was made to the day Mandela's body arrived in his birthplace Qunu, all involved profane activities –the lining of the streets, pageantry, dances and the musical performances, marching soldiers, motorcades, displays in the air, entrances and exits of several world Presidents, ululations, drumming, and all the fun and frolic—feeling of hilarity. In total, the celebrations during the funeral terminated Mandela's 'long walk,' and ushered in the everlasting walk to eternal freedom. In this study, it has been established that ritual and entertainment, instead of acting in opposition to each other, reinforce their mutual complementarity. The rituals which surrounded the funeral were not only efficacious, but they also entertained and gave pleasure to both the performers and the audience, and this culminated in a celebration instead of mourning which is often associated with funerals.

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