MAKING/ DOING/ THINKING

METHODS FOR PERFORMANCE RESEARCH

EDITED BY
**Mark Fleishman
and Alex Halligey**

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

heeten bhagat was born in Zimbabwe. Presently, he oscillates between Harare, Cape Town and any place that involves long-distance travel. Currently, his work delves into the emerging terrain of 'pracademics' – essentially looking to expand collaborations and design experiments between academia and real-life systems. He approaches this work as a methodologist – bringing pragmatic and provocative programming to support decolonial and diversity-expanding processes in overlooked and underserved environments. His experience across the learning spectrum (rural, community and informal spaces through to established cultural and academic institutions) gives him the ability to interact in these spaces in formations that are looking to engage dissonance as a way to activate pathways towards inspired productivities. This range of work has, most recently, catapulted him into the thickets of transdisciplinarity – a leap that he thoroughly welcomes.

Mark Fleishman is Professor of Theatre in the Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies at the University of Cape Town. He is also a co-artistic director of Magnet Theatre, an independent theatre company established in 1987. He has created and directed many performance works for the company that have been performed nationally and internationally over the past 37 years and is involved in development projects in urban townships and rural communities using theatre as a tool for social justice and transformation. His articles have appeared in the *South African Theatre Journal, Contemporary Theatre Review* and *Theatre Research International* as well as in numerous edited collections, most recently in *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Politics* (2019), *International Performance Research: The Unconditional Discipline?* (2017), and *Magnet Theatre: Three Decades of Making Space* (2016). He is editor of *Performing Migrancy and Mobility in Africa: Cape of Flows* in the Studies in International Performance series at Palgrave (2015) and also of two special issues of the *South African Theatre Journal* on *Translation & Performance* (2019 & 2020) that emerged from a multi-year collaboration with colleagues in the Netherlands and India. He is currently principal investigator on the project *Re-imagining Tragedy from Africa and the Global South* funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Alex Halligey has a PhD in drama and urban studies through the University of Cape Town's African Centre for Cities and the Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies. Her research is concerned with theatre and performance as research tools and conceptual lenses for exploring the relationship between people and the built environment. At the time of writing she is a lecturer at the University Currently Known as Rhodes. Her monograph *Participatory Theatre and the Urban Everyday: Place and Play in Johannesburg* was published by Routledge in 2020, and 2021 saw the publication of a scholarly volume she co-edited with Sara Matchett on the women-lead theatre organisation, The Mothertongue Project: *Collaborative Conversations: Celebrating Twenty-One Years of The Mothertongue Project.* She has an ongoing practice as a theatre-maker and in keeping with her investment

in understanding the relationship between bodies and space, she is also a practicing Alexander Technique teacher.

Juliet Jenkin is a writer, director and researcher. After working in the performing arts for over ten years, she returned to UCT for MA studies in 2016 and her PhD in 2018. Using ensemble performance as an object lesson on social dynamics, pattern and participation, Juliet's research identifies an absence of order in contemporary social life and offers a design-based response to that absence, theorising order as a participatory, embodied, relational practice that may be designed through performance.

jackï job is a dancer and choreographer, theatre-maker and director, producer, and academic researcher at the University of Cape Town. Her predominantly independent performance career has been eclectic, with performances ranging from experimental solo work, to choreographing commercials, directing classical operas and theatre works, as well as hosting television shows. She has created more than 70 productions since the start of her independent career in 1994 and engaged in collaborations with an array of eclectic artists, performing in academic institutions, cultural festivals and theatres in Africa, Asia and Europe. She has been awarded with the David and Elaine Potter Fellowship, the Bunkacho Cultural Fellowship and twice, the National Research Fund's Thuthuka Grant. The academic translations of her performance processes relate to literature on feminist decolonial discourse, soma-aesthetics, philosophy, theatre and Butoh. As a performer she resists humancentric philosophies and conceptualises human-animal configurations in her choreographies. She also draws from details in the everyday world to develop avante-garde notions which contribute new meanings of personhood and transformation in South Africa. She currently serves as a Associate Professor in the Centre for Theatre, Dance & Performance Studies at the University of Cape Town.

Mwenya B. Kabwe is a Zambian-born maker of theatre and performance, a facilitator of creative processes, and a performer, writer, arts educator and scholar. She is currently a Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Theatre Dance & Performance Studies at the University of Cape Town where she received her PhD and MA degrees. She majored in theatre with a minor in African studies and psychology as an undergraduate at Northeastern University in Boston. Her creative practice and research is focused on contemporary African theatre and performance, migration, immersive and site-specific performance work, live art, collaborative and interdisciplinary art-making and re-imagining African futures. She has lectured at the UCT Drama Department, Wits School of Arts division of Theatre & Performance, and the Market Theatre Laboratory. She is a co-curator of the Unrehearsed Futures conversation series https://dramaschoolmumbai.in/conversations/unrehearsed-futures/ and a project partner on the OpenScape Network, a transnational platform for artistic and curatorial exchange.

Illka Louw has been a set and costume designer for approximately 25 years. She studied set design as a one-year post-graduate diploma at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama,

preceded by a national diploma in fashion design at the Cape Technikon (now CPUT). She was fortunate to bridge from fashion to theatrical costume by first-hand experience in various theatrical wardrobes. Until 2023, she taught design as part of a BA Drama programme at the University Currently Known as Rhodes. Woven within this timeline are Louw's Honours and MA studies at UCT. As a visual dramaturge, she has devised non-text-based scenographic events with cast members as well as pieces where multiple texts were merged and performed in multiple sites, examining how we look at the performance event. She has made immersive and interactive installations with the emphasis on the agency of non-human 'actants' and their effect on the viewer. Her research has involved thinking about the designer's engagement with the materials of her craft and art, and how that engagement becomes tangible for a performer and eventually, an audience member.

Alude Mahali-Bhengu is a Chief Research Specialist in the Equitable Education and Economies programme at the South African Human Sciences Research Council. With a background in the arts, including degrees from Rhodes University and a PhD from the University of Cape Town, Alude has worked in the social sciences over the last 8 years. Alude's research expertise and experience focuses on youth social justice work using innovative visual and participatory methodologies, especially those suited to resource-strained contexts. Alude was recently principal investigator on a project on civic education for youth and another on language policies and practices in South African higher education institutions. She is currently the co-principal investigator on a longitudinal cohort study of African tertiary alumni of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Programme that investigates how to maximise the impact of young African graduates as agents in the social and economic transformation of Africa. In 2018, she was nationally recognized as one of the *Mail and Guardian's* 200 inspiring young South Africans. She is former editor of the *South African Theatre Journal* and currently honorary lecturer in the School of Arts at the University of KwaZulu Natal.

Aja Marneweck is a puppeteer, educator, theatre-maker and director specialising in puppetry and material performance. She is currently a senior lecturer and convenor of the Laboratory of Kinetic Objects/Puppetry Arts (LoKO) at the Centre for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape. She is also the artistic director of the women's puppetry and performance company The Paper Body Collective. Marneweck's work engages the art forms of Puppetry and Visual Theatre as critical contemporary performance praxis and the transformative possibilities they offer for the revisioning of identity, gender, politics and meaning in the 21st Century. Marneweck acknowledges the support of the Centre for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape and the NIHSS Humanities Hub grant in the writing of the chapter in this volume.

Sara Matchett is the former Director of the Centre for Theatre, Dance & Performance Studies at the University of Cape Town. She is also a Lead Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework®, the Regional Co-ordinator of the Fitzmaurice Institute for Africa, and an Advanced Breathwork

Practitioner with Breathwork Africa. Her teaching profile centres around practical and academic courses that include, voice, acting, performance-making, applied theatre and performance analysis. She is especially interested in transdisciplinary modes of creating. Her research explores the body as a site for generating images for the purpose of performance making and specifically focuses on investigating the relationship between breath and emotion, and breath and image, to make performance that is inspired by a biography of the body. Her interests are in embodied practices that focus on presencing, co-sensing, co-llaborating and co-generating as a way of transforming egosystems to ecosystems. As co-founder and Artistic Director of The Mothertongue Project women's arts collective, Sara has experience in the field of theatre and performance as a performance maker, performer, director and facilitator.

Khanyisile Mbongwa is a Cape Town based independent curator and sociologist who engages with her curatorial practice as Curing & Care, using the creative to instigate spaces for emancipatory practices, joy and play. She is one of the founding members of arts collective Gugulective and Vasiki Creative Citizens. She has curated locally and internationally, such as for Infecting the City in Cape Town, CAT Cologne in Germany, Twenty Journey in South Africa, Marres in Netherlands and Black Gotham in New York. She has served in advisory and executive capacities for Handspring Trust Puppets, Cape Town Carnival, Obsidian Literature & Arts, and was Adjunct Curator for the Norval Foundation. Mbongwa is a PhD candidate at the Institute for Creative Arts, University of Cape Town and is a Blak C.O.R.E (Care of Radical Energy) Fellow at the University of Melbourne. She is the founding Chief Curator of the Stellenbosch Triennale and was the Curator for the Liverpool Biennial 2023.

Sanjin Muftić is a Bosnian-born Canadian digital scholar and film editor based in Cape Town. He completed his theatre PhD at UCT focusing on the planetary, bricolage and theatrical images and is currently working for UCT Libraries as a Digital Scholarship Specialist. His tasks include implementing and maintaining the university digital collections site (Omeka S), developing advocacy towards practicing research-data management, and helping researchers curate and showcase their digital scholarship projects and collections. He has presented at international conferences of the International Federation for Theatre Research, the International Society for Intermedial Studies, CREATIVATE Digital Arts Festival, Open Repositories and the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations. His written contributions include articles in the *South African Theatre Journal*, *Research in Drama Education* and *Resources for African Indigenous Languages* and chapters in *Performing Exile: Foreign Bodies* (Ed Judith Rudakoff) and *Performing Migrancy and Mobility in Africa: Cape of Flows* (Ed Mark Fleishman). He has also directed and designed videography for numerous theatrical productions in South Africa, while also having edited two feature films including *Barakat*.

Alan Parker is a choreographer, dramaturg, and researcher based in Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown), where he is employed as a Senior Lecturer in the Drama Department at the University Currently Known as Rhodes. As a lecturer, Alan teaches, coordinates and supervises student learning and research in the fields of physical performance,

choreography and interdisciplinary performance praxis. He holds an MA in drama, specialising in choreography, from Rhodes University as well as a PhD in live art, interdisciplinary and public art, from the University of Cape Town. In 2016 Alan was an ICA Live Art Fellow at the University of Cape Town and, in 2017, served as an ICA Writing Fellow as well. Since 2019, Alan has been the resident dramaturg for the Live Art Arcade, a non-profit company and annual performance platform focused on the mentorship and development of early-career or emerging artists working in the fields of live art and performance art. Alan currently heads the Network for Embodied Research in Africa, a newly-established body-based research and community-building initiative based at Rhodes University.

Rosa Postlethwaite (she/ they) works as a performance artist, dramaturg and facilitator across theatre, live art, dance and socially engaged art. They work collaboratively to make performance, club/ cabaret nights and workshops. Rosa's work is informed and driven by queer, feminist, anti-racist and socialist practices and is interested in the relationship between macrostructures and daily life. Rosa is currently a PhD researcher on the 'Mobilizing Dramaturgy' Co-tutelle Programme within Coventry University's Centre for Dance Research and Aarhus University. Their research is focused on dramaturgy with other-than-human species. They hold an MA in theatre and performance from the University of Cape Town and a BA in drama from Queen Mary University of London. Rosa grew up in Leicester (UK) and currently has home bases in the UK and Denmark.

Noluthando Mpho (Jupiter) Sibisi is an artist who makes use of writing, performance and visual art as modes of complicating, documenting and disseminating South African black women narratives. She is especially interested in developing the archive of black queer women experiences in contemporary performance and the literary canon. Through serious play and a recent preoccupation with breathing she has been long-listed for the 2020 Sol Plaatje European Union Poetry Award and Anthology. Noluthando obtained a Masters degree in Theatre and Performance studies from the University of Cape Town (2021), and in 2022 was nominated as a laureate for the MILL's Beauty Reality Salon.

Myer Taub is a senior lecturer teaching theatre practices in the Department of Theatre and Performance, Wits School of the Arts, where they continue-to practice as teacher, academic, multi-disciplinary artist and innovator. Myer's research focus includes Performance as Research, Theatre & Ecology and Urban Dramaturgy. A specific focus that Myer is currently working on is the idea of Wild Zones as kinetic overflows in performance studies with plans to publish in this area.

Kabi Thulo's journey into the world of theatre arts commenced through his undergraduate studies, which he completed in 2004 at the University of the Free State. Thereafter he started his professional career as an Arepp Theatre for Life (Educational Theatre Trust) performer in 2005 and he continues to work as a professional performer primarily in theatre. He worked

for the Free State Department of Arts & Culture as a cultural facilitator from December 2006 to June 2007 before completing his Honours studies at the University of Cape Town in 2007. He also pursued and completed his MA qualification at the University of the Witwatersrand in 2009 and lectured within the university's former Division of Dramatic Arts. Subsequently, he had lecturing tenures at Tshwane University of Technology's Drama and Film Department (2014-18) and Durban University of Technology's Department of Drama and Production Studies (2020-22). Thulo is a traditional healer of Sotho origin who has recently graduated with a PhD from the University of Cape Town's Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies. Currently, he is an independent scholar and freelance theatre practitioner. In terms of scholarly undertakings and artistic practice, his areas of interest are: the intersections between ritual and theatre, devising performance/ theatre-making, directing and dramaturgy.

Peter Van Heerden is an artist, educator, producer and director. Born in Johannesburg, South Africa, he is based in Westport, Connecticut, USA. . He currently serves as Executive Director of the Quick Center for the Arts at Fairfield University, where he is focused on developing and implementing innovative and dynamic performing arts-based programmes in Fairfield County and the greater surrounding metro area. His cumulative experience in the art, heritage and cultural sector on a national and international level, ensures that core programming areas in visual art, performing art and education generate a profound impact on the community by ensuring that art is accessible, approachable and an enriching part of all participants' lives. As an advocate for arts and education, Van Heerden is driven to establish the Quick Center as a leading force in the field of art and culture in the state of Connecticut. Van Heerden also has an ongoing practice as an independent performance artist.

Sarah Woodward completed an MA at UCT specializing in theatrical voice as part of the Theatre and Performance Coursework MA Programme in 2005. She has written about, taught and directed in voice-centric circles for most of her career. From 2007 to 2016 she worked as an academic at Wits University in Johannesburg where she developed the voice curriculum and taught voice and speech from first years to post-graduate students. She lectured on both the academic courses in radio drama; film, visual and performing arts (FVPA) and the practical courses as a voice lecturer, dialect coach and theatrical voice coach. She has also worked as in the private sector as a professional voice and communications coach, with clients such as Sasol, Absa Capital, RMB, PWC and AmPlat. Currently Sarah is the Director of Tongue Twisters Voice Agency in Cape Town, which she has managed since August 2016. She also works as a freelance voice-over artist.

ABSTRACTS FOR PART II

CHAPTER 1: **A DIFFERENT STAGE: FROM PLAY THINKING TO RESEARCH THINKING**

By Juliet Jenkin

This paper describes the process of altering my conception of theatre-making from an arts practice to a research practice. Centred on the process of writing and directing a play, the paper begins from my initial struggle to conceive of the purpose of theatre-making in an academic context, and in doing so conceive of a research-based way of practicing theatre. At the outset, I begin working on my play in the same way I would have done in an artistic context and combine this process with a series of theoretical reflections on the practice. Through this simple progression of practice and reflection, familiar theatre-making activities like blocking and note-giving reveal themselves as potential ways of thinking and modes of research. In viewing these practices as a form of embodied logic that are reasoned through the action of the play, I am able to access a mode of thinking that centres theatre-making as both a method of investigation and the theoretical position of the research.

CHAPTER 2: **DRAMATURGICAL METHODS: MIGRANT ATTITUDES, WAYWARD ARCHIVES AND OTHER PROPOSALS FOR CREATIVE RESEARCH**

By Mwenya B. Kabwe

In this chapter I attempt to trace the development of the PaR framework that I developed for my PhD thesis, titled *Theatres of migritude: towards a dramaturgy of African futures.* The thesis seeks to respond to the question, 'what does it mean to have a migrant attitude for theatre and performance making?' and is an attempt to answer illusive questions that I have about my own work, that are dramaturgical and poetic. The thesis explores an approach that brings migration and Africanfuturism into closer relationship towards a dramaturgical practice mobilised in the direction of possibility, potential and a more hopeful future. In this chapter I map the organic evolution of my research design questions and the process of arriving at my methods of analysis. The thesis aimed to articulate a particular dramaturgical process through the analysis of five play texts which were thematically and aesthetically concerned with migration and which are created by women whose biographies flow through the African continent. Due to the variation in genre, content and form of these case studies, the research-design process required a way of addressing multiple forms of critical interpretation with the aim of developing a pliable dramaturgical framework. This chapter addresses the hunch that I followed in selecting these play texts, the wayward approach I used to create an archive of these works and how I worked dramaturgically to arrive at the compositional focus of each play.

CHAPTER 3: **DBLE: A CURATORIAL APPROACH TO PRACTICE AS RESEARCH**

By Khanyisile Mbongwa

In this short essay, I introduce how I have developed my theory of *Demonstrations and demonstrating: Black lived experience (DBLE)* through practice as research and how I use it as a fundamental research methodology that underpins my research practice. I unpack mapping, tracing and discernment as approaches embedded in *DBLE* and share how my curatorial practice shaped and functions within my research approach.

CHAPTER 4: **AND THEN…: REVEALING THE TEACHINGS OF THE PRAYING MANTIS**

By jackï job

The chapter describes my notion of *philosoembodology* by looking at a set of principles that guide and creatively evolve my practice in dance and choreography. It looks at a series of performances, *And then…*, which enable an articulation of notions of Blackness and power from the molecular proximity of a praying mantis. The trajectory of the works, constructed between 2018-2021, hone new understandings of personhood and transformation in South Africa. The chapter further expands Giorgio Agamben's perception of liminality and re-imagines the potential of identity beyond humancentric configurations. My practice resists Western dance modalities and embodies notions of communion, interpenetration and repetition as phenomenological strategies in developing choreography. In explicating my processes, I propose the detail of everyday life as pivotal to conceiving and realising performance. I point to the significance of engaging with things that are difficult, different, strange and unknown, to reconsider modes of power beyond racial tropes. To place these elements in perpetual dialogue, ripples are created between memories, dreams, philosophies, modalities of dance and choreographic techniques. Finally, the chapter offers a feminist application of Butoh principles to ultimately understand complex nuances of identity, through the body, as a thinking-doing-dreaming organ.

CHAPTER 5: **THIS IMAGE MAY CONTAIN …: A VISUAL AND AURAL ARTICULATION OF RESEARCH INTO NOTIONS OF SPECULATIVE INDIGENEITIES**

By heeten bhagat

This image may contain… refers to a pivotal element of my PhD dissertation. What began as a somewhat conventional, prosaic even, inquiry into the mechanisms of indigenousness and indigeneity morphed into a multi-media installation that stood in as the concluding

articulation of my doctoral dissertation. My chapter explains this journey in three parts. I begin with a rationale of sorts, contextualising and positioning myself in relation to the enterprise of academic research. I follow this with an overview of my doctoral research project – unpacking the performative logics of indigenisation in present day Zimbabwe. The final section is reflective. It is supported by a film and audio piece that offer a glimpse of the visual elements of the installation as well as what it sounded like. Leaning on the generosity of hindsight, I re-member, quite literally, the processes of making the installation, or artwork, as it has come to be known. I grapple with the quandaries of what it took to extend prose into poetry and how this move nurtures notions of PaR.

CHAPTER 6: **PIECING TOGETHER A GIRLHOOD: USING 'GIRLFRIEND PLAY' AS METHOD TO PERFORM MEMORY**

By Alude Mahali

This chapter discusses *Katuntu (...and you too)*, a work devised and performed by myself and Injairu Kulundu as part of my thesis production in fulfilment of my MA in theatre-making from the University of Cape Town. *Katuntu (...and you too)*, performed at UCT's Little Theatre in October 2009, was concerned with the playing of memory with reference to narratives of loss: loss of language, place and family caused by an uprooted childhood, resulting in the playing of unnerving memory fragments. *Katuntu (...and you too)* was my attempt to play my own understanding of the consequences of a fragmented memory of myself as a black South African woman with an immigrant past, in hopes that it may resonate with a shared experience of black girlhood. *Katuntu* summoned the voice of memory into being by using song performance in the creation of shared girlfriend memory through incantatory call and response. By using Kevin Quashie's (2004) 'girlfriend aesthetic' as a starting point, this chapter makes suggestions for how one might adopt a practical methodology and begin finding the material to help 'play memory'. To that end, the chapter outlines the praxis used in the process of creating *Katuntu*.

CHAPTER 7: **LITTLE DID I KNOW**

Myer Taub

This chapter considers how I have used PaR in terms of my thematic alignments to ideas on such events as *crisis* and *catastrophe*. I have assembled a series of written chronological and non-chronological fragments (like this section as *One: remapping*, currently 2023). The written fragments point to the organisation of my own research as a mediation between crisis and catastrophe through the mechanism of making that I like to call *remapping*. This is a point of rewriting and immersing-in reflection, also reflexive... The chapter includes a series of stylistic interventions in order to provide further meaning, like font choices, footnotes, or the interventions of commentary made by Alex Halligey.

CHAPTER 8: **UGCWELE UKUDLALA: WAYS OF SEEING, LEARNING AND KNOWING THROUGH SERIOUS PLAY**

By Noluthando Mpho Sibisi

In response to the prompt, 'practice as research', I write this chapter as an exploration of the research strategies and methodology I employed for my MA in Theatre and Performance. In 2021, I completed a mini-dissertation titled *Sexuality and cultural heritage at odds:* I Fuck What I Like, *an ode to the young queer black woman in South Africa* through the University of Cape Town's Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies MA programme. The dissertation functioned to complicate what I argued to be an insistent narrative of queer black womanhood as emblematic of abjection by exploring the concept of queer black woman joy. I turned to the work of Koleka Putuma, Zanele Muholi and Athi-Patra Ruga as artistic influences from whom I garnered multivocality, collage, ode and play as research methods. This chapter will function as a documentation of the processes, routes, roots and rituals that informed my readings and replications of the black queer counterculture offered by these artists while unpacking the autoethnographic reflections (writing, performance, visual portraiture) that became integral to my practice, my research, and my use of PaR.

CHAPTER 9: **BREATH-BODY-SELF: A PRACTICE-LED JOURNEY**

By Sara Matchett

This chapter considers a methodological study that informed my doctoral thesis that set out to explore the body as a site for generating images for purposes of performance making. The study employed various methods, traditions and somatic practices that drew from yoga, Fitzmaurice Voicework®, the Sanskrit system of rasa, body mapping and free writing. The hybrid methodology engaged embodied practices as well as case studies that focused on a series of small experiments that took place over three years and culminated in a workshop process that considered the application of the method in a creative workshop process.

The study employed a practice-led, qualitative research design that drew from ethnographic and autobiographical approaches to research. It made use of grounded theory in that it utilised methods and practices to investigate lived and embodied experiences of the people it engaged. Some of the key qualitative methods that were used in data collection were: interviews, observations, reflexive journaling, focus group discussions, digital documentation and blogging.

CHAPTER 10: **PRACTICE AS RESEARCH: SOME INSIGHTS INTO DEVELOPING A THEATRE-VOICE BASED PEDAGOGICAL PRAXIS**

By Sarah Woodward

In this chapter I have revisited a few early practice-as-research projects that formed part of my coursework MA in 2004 and 2005 and would lead eventually to both a final practical project and a written dissertation. I explore two key concepts that framed my work, namely 'action is the impetus for motivation' and 'clear and rigorous and unflinching boundaries offer the best framework for creativity'. My research drew on the contemporary subcultural phenomena of rap, slam and freestyle poetry as a way of disrupting a prescriptive approach to theatre voice, while still creating viable coursework that would fulfil academic and pedagogical objectives. Using examples discovered in my original notebooks I have unpacked the process of developing voice exercises in practical sessions, from early hunches to well thought-out practical explorations, in both classwork and in performance. The chapter highlights how important documentation (i.e. video, audio, photography) is to the research practitioner.

CHAPTER 11: **THINKING THROUGH MICROPRACTICE: AN EMBODIED INTERROGATION OF THE ARCHIVE**

By Alan Parker

The paper introduces the doctoral research project, *Anarchival dance: choreographic archives and the disruption of knowledge* – a practice-led investigation of the archive, explored through the creation of three anarchival performances. Located in the field of archival studies, the project explores the relationship between the body and the archive and between logocentric, document-biased epistemologies and embodied, performative ways of knowing. The paper theorises the anarchival as a creative research methodology that is enacted through the body of the researcher through engagement with various archival remains. Micropractice is then offered as a useful method for decolonial archival praxis and is theorised as a form of deterritorialisation (after Deleuze and Guattari) where the intentions and desires of the researcher are decentred within the research by actively moving away from the subjective or familiar experiences of the researcher towards other pathways and opportunities offered by the practice itself. The paper concludes by framing micropractice as a research method that is closely aligned with performance philosophy, which recognises the capacity of performance to think and produce knowledge beyond the specific intentions of the researcher. As such, the paper argues for the necessity for researchers to critically reflect on and interrogate thinking that is emergent in creative practice through an additional layer of embodied practice – namely writing.

CHAPTER 12: **BEYOND FLAILING: REDIRECTING TACIT KNOWLEDGE OF METHODS IN DESIGN TO CREATE A RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN VISUAL DRAMATURGY.**
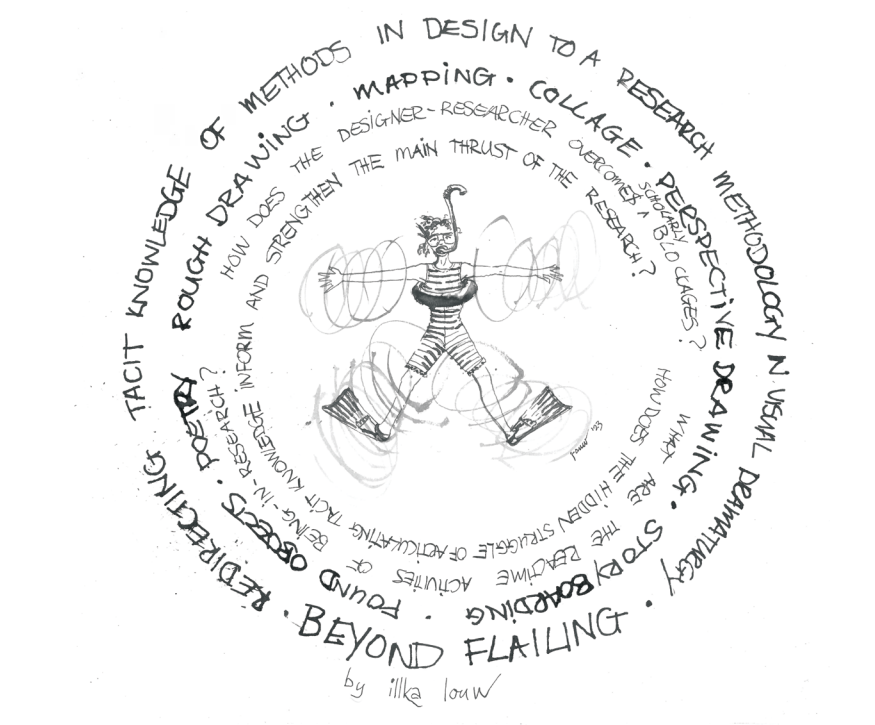
By Illka Louw

Figure 121: Abstract. Artwork by Illka Louw.

CHAPTER 13: **PRACTICE AS RESEARCH IN PUPPETRY PERFORMANCE: THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF PLOT 99**

By Aja Marneweck

The chapter explores how puppetry and visual performance provided a catalyst for the creative and critical methodologies that went into the making and unmaking of meaning and form in my PhD process. Culminating around a central thesis performance entitled *Plot 99,* the PhD was a PaR enquiry into the possibilities of puppetry and visual performance for complex feminine representation in South Africa today. Using various performative, sculptural, filmic, photographic, aesthetic, written and digital outlets, the PhD process was driven by a central enquiry into the possibilities of the forms and concepts of puppetry in critico-creative experimentation and research.

CHAPTER 14: **PRACTICE AS RESEARCH IN DEVELOPING SAAMTREKKING AS A PERFORMANCE ART PRACTICE**

By Peter Andrew Hamish van Heerden

This chapter considers my performance art practice over the course of my MA in 2001 and 2002 which critically engaged hegemonic white South African, and in particular Afrikaans, masculinity in the context of South Africa's then newly post-apartheid landscape. The chapter considers the primary and secondary historical research I did into Afrikaner nationalist history, particularly in relation to 'The Great Trek' of 1835-1846, where Dutch settlers in the Cape colony migrated into the interior of southern Africa, annexing land from indigenous peoples through threat and intimidation. I then describe how this initial research informed my studio practice to develop durational, ritual performances using my physical and historical whiteness to enact atonements for the gross racist injustices of the past to conceive of the nascent possibilities for a white, South African and Afrikaner identity that might participate constructively and justly in a post-apartheid South Africa.

CHAPTER 15: **EXPLORING AUTOTOPOGRAPHY: METHODS**

By Rosa Postlethwaite

I am a performance artist and PhD researcher based in the UK and Denmark. In this chapter I describe the artistic process, research methodology and methods I used during my PaR MA at University of Cape Town (2013 - 2014). My MA thesis was titled, *Exploring the field of autotopography through live art practice:* The Frieze, The Anatomy Lecture Theatre *and* The Security Hut, and as the title suggests I created three live art works as part of my thesis for examination. For each of the three making processes I repeated the task of making autobiographical performance in response to a site, working in different sites within the university campus. I repeatedly used methods of free-writing, returning to the site, reading texts in relation to the site, and reflective writing about the process in discussion with González's (1995), Heddon's (2002), Bal's (2002) and Arlander's (2012) conceptualisations of autotopography. I describe how the methods unfolded in *The Frieze*, in relation to the artistic process and methodology.

CHAPTER 16: **PRACTICE AS RESEARCH INTO LEARNING EVERYDAY URBAN PLACE-MAKING THROUGH THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE**

By Alex Halligey

My PhD through the University of Cape Town's then Drama Department and the African Centre for Cities used theatre and performance practice as research to explore everyday placemaking activities in an inner city suburb of Johannesburg. In this chapter I consider

the methods I used to build a PaR process from conceptualising my doctoral project to the final thesis write-up and beyond. I divide the full arc of my PhD PaR into four chronological phases, unpacking how each phase emerged from and developed on the previous phase. The chapter offers insights into specific methods and how they served the conceptual, methodological approach of my research concerns. In doing this, the chapter gives ideas for useful PaR methods, but also how to creatively conceive of methods to serve the conceptual and thematic focus of a PaR project. Finally the chapter aims to give a practical sense of how the 'theoretical' work of research (reading and writing) might be integrated throughout a project with the 'practical' work of research (in this case, theatre and performance-making) and how reading and writing are a practice as much as art-making is a way of theorising or thinking through things.

CHAPTER 17: HOW RDM COULD HAVE HELPED THE PAR IN MY PHD: RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT IN A PAR PROJECT

By Sanjin Muftić

In 2019 I completed a 7-year PhD journey establishing a poetics of planetary theatre: image and bricolage. The project focused on investigating the buildings blocks of performance – 'images' – and how they are assembled into complete performances. Over this time, I developed this argument in distinct practical stages through PaR by devising live performance events. As my PhD was by dissertation, I spent a considerable amount of time at the end remembering, re-watching recordings, and writing up the practical findings of rehearsals and performances. Afterwards, I began working at the library of the University of Cape Town, and one of my tasks was to assist researchers with managing their data. Research data management (RDM) is the process of documenting and describing the research project material. During my consultations, I discovered how the very things I was now advocating as good practices were things that I could have used. If I had recognised and managed my research material as data, the PhD experience would have been less frustrating, the write-up more articulate and the journey shorter. In this chapter I re-do my project with the assistance of RDM, sharing practical steps to assist those embarking on their own PaR PhD project.

CHAPTER 18: MOHAHLAUDI-BAHAHLAUDI (TRAVELLER-TRAVELLERS): A CASE OF PRACTICE AS RESEARCH

By Kabi Thulo

This chapter draws from my PhD study, *The [un]knowing director: a critical examination of directing within the context of devising performance,* undertaken from 2011 to 2022 at the University of Cape Town's Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies. In doing so, the chapter articulates my experiences of employing PaR by addressing (a) how I

went about conducting research, and (b) what the processes and objects of my research were. Mohahlaudi-BAHAHLAUDI (Traveller-TRAVELLERS) is a piece of creative writing included in the thesis to portray my dealings with PaR. Thus, the referred-to piece of writing serves the chapter as its overarching contextual reference that presents the methodology as an acutely emergent and/or non-predeterministic research endeavour realised through a researcher's undertaking of travel-like 'movement(s)' during their research journey. Furthermore, PaR is posited as a methodological enterprise that is fundamentally exploratory while also being reliant on the employment of a researcher's relative, yet specific, research methods referred to as methods in practice. These methods in practice can be decided upon through a researcher's persistent engagement with reflective practice in relation to their artistic practice(s)/ process(s). Essentially, then, this chapter is a contribution speaking to the 'how

INTRODUCTION

This handbook is a product of the Reimagining Tragedy in Africa and the Global South (ReTAGS) project, a research project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, of which Mark Fleishman is the principal investigator in partnership with Mandla Mbothwe. ReTAGS is housed within the Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies (CTDPS) at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The project's thematic concern is with how the concept of tragedy might be re-imagined through African and other global South contexts to serve as a critical lens for engaging the complexity of the global postcolonial present and negotiating possible futures within and outside the discipline of theatre. The methodology for the ReTAGS project is artistic practice as research (PaR)[1] and one of the key aims of the project, alongside its thematic investment, has been to develop a younger generation of African theatre and performance scholars, specifically in the use of PaR. In service of the intention for ReTAGS to offer scholarly training, this handbook was planned as a resource that might provide guidance to theatre and performance scholars in Africa and globally beyond the official conclusion of the project.

What do we mean by artistic practice as research? In summative terms, we mean using an artistic process as a way of developing knowledge: I apply my artistic practice to investigate a research question. The art-making provides 'answers' or understandings in response to a research question, but the art produced in the process also offers a medium for sharing these findings. In other words, I don't only document the knowledge generated through the artistic process in the words of formal scholarly writing, but the artistic products themselves document, reflect on and broadcast the knowledge generated. Though it may be fairly quick and easy to give this summary of artistic PaR, the implications of doing it, accounting for the depth and range of its value and possible methods, and having the research institutionally recognised, are far from simple.

In recent decades, there has been considerable debate on artistic PaR and on practice as research more broadly. Terms such as artistic research, performance as research, practice-led research, practice-based research, the practice turn and phronesis, all speak to the same territory of learning and sharing knowledge through practice. Recognition of the value of PaR, what we might call 'knowing through doing', is not new, but the robust revival of the debate responds to numerous factors in the contemporary context of higher education and knowledge development more generally. A book like *The practice turn*, offers excellent insights into a contemporary championing of practice as a way of learning and knowing across disciplines in the humanities, social sciences and so-called 'hard' sciences (Schatzki, Knorr

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1   A note on the use of the acronym PaR: PaR can stand for 'performance as research' or 'practice as research', where performance might mean artistic performance or the broader sense in which any practical action is a performance, a process of doing something. In this introduction we have used artistic performance as research/PaR to indicate the specific PaR area the handbook locates itself in. Throughout the book the acronym PaR is favoured, with an intended dual indication by the 'P' of 'performance' and 'practice'.

Cetina & Savigny, 2001). In their respective books, Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (2007), Henk Borgdorff (2012) and Robin Nelson (2013 and 2022) offer valuable summations of the debates and investments of artistic research, in particular, as a practice for knowledge development.

All these authors reflect on shifts in higher education artistic training across the globe, where conservatoire-style training centres have been either incorporated into universities or been required to shift their internal assessment process to align more with university research accreditation models (see, in particular, Nelson's articulation of this trend, 2022:3). The result, as Borgdorff articulates, is a resistance from arts professionals to the "academisation" (2012:5) of the arts and a resistance from academics outside of the arts to artistic research as "unregulated" and insufficiently regulatable (4). These core polarised concerns – on one hand of the arts losing their artistry through an association with academia, and on the other hand, the rigour of the academy's methods being undermined by 'unruly' artistic ways – have required an engagement in the argument for artistic PaR in the arts on three fronts:

1. Arguing for artistic PaR as valuable to developing knowledge by: (a) productively expanding the boundaries of the academy by including artistic PaR; (b) productively expanding the boundaries of artistic value through its engagement with academia; and (c) questioning the definition of boundaries within the academy. This final point is compellingly supported by scholarship like *The practice turn*, which considers that all research, even in scientific laboratories, is characterised by an unruliness that is productive to knowledge (see, in particular, Knorr Cetina, 2001:186). As Borgdorff argues, the cognitive, analytical approach of conventional academic scholarship draws on an intuitive practice, much as the creativity of art-making requires cognitive logic (2012:49).

2. Developing systems for recognising artistic PaR within higher education systems.

3. Putting artistic PaR to work in research investigations to: (a) extend knowledge and arenas for sharing knowledge; and (b) develop understanding for how artistic PaR might be constructively used to innovate in knowledge development and conceptions of knowledge.

This handbook offers numerous perspectives on advocating for artistic PaR, with Part I particularly focused on the philosophical argument for PaR as a knowledge paradigm. The effort to have artistic PaR recognised within higher education systems is less directly dealt with, aside from a reproduced chapter by Mark in Part 1, "Artistic research and the institution: a cautionary tale". However, the rewards of motivating for institutional recognition of PaR are evident in the fact of having published in this volume chapters by 19 artistic researchers reflecting on their post-graduate PaR projects. Putting artistic PaR to work in research investigations (Point 3, above) is the handbook's key contribution, but with a particular focus on the *how* (the things done) of the PaR as opposed to the *what* (research subject, research data and analysis).

There are particular nuances to artistic PaR endeavours in different geographical regions, and this handbook is concerned primarily with the South African context as it

connects to the African and then global South contexts within international PaR discourse and practice. It is also concerned with artistic *performance-based* PaR, encompassing such sub-disciplinary practices as theatre, dance, live art, scenography and video art. Although there may be some blurring of boundaries with visual art and sound art/music in the research projects discussed, the focus is on theatre and performance practices.

The handbook draws on over two decades of training in artistic PaR from postgraduate theatre programmes at the University of Cape Town (UCT). In 2008, the first cohort enrolled in the coursework MA in Theatre and Performance, an MA scaffolded for students to design their own artistic PaR process over the course of the two-year degree. The MA Theatre and Performance gives constructive, creative prompts and parameters progressing through minor, medium and major projects. Through these projects each student develops their own individual PaR process to explore their thematic research focus, culminating in the substantial artistic product of the major project. At the time of writing this handbook in 2023, the UCT MA programme had graduated 60 MA students, through what was the Drama Department and became, in 2018, the Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies through a joining of the Drama and Dance Departments.

In 2012, Aja Marneweck was the first doctoral candidate at UCT to graduate with a PhD that included practice as an examinable element of the thesis,[2] with artistic product and thesis carrying equal weight. Since then two other PhDs have been conferred to candidates on this basis and at the time of writing in 2023 there were seven people registered. Many more doctoral candidates have come through the UCT Drama Department/Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies employing PaR as their foundational methodology even though they have been examined conventionally on the basis of an 80 000-word thesis.

Part II of this handbook, and its most substantial component, is made up of chapters by theatre and performance scholars who did the MA in Theatre and Performance course or their doctorates, or both, through UCT Drama Department/Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies, using artistic PaR as their methodology. In these chapters, the authors consider their research design: what methods they used to do what they did to explore their research curiosity. In the case of artistic PaR, what is visible at the end of a project is the artistic product. The process that realised the product is invisible or hard to trace, and yet it is through the process that so much of the significant knowledge development happens. Since a thesis, at MA or PhD level, is far more concerned with the concepts and findings that are developed through the research this means that an explicit focus on how you did what you did to learn what you came to know through your PaR is sidelined to a brief discussion of methods in a methodology section. With this handbook we hope to achieve two related things. First, to give space and visibility to the invisible processes of PaR so that an MA or PhD student starting out, or for that matter a well-established researcher moving into artistic PaR, might gain clear insights as to the overall nature of doing PaR: the kinds of serious thinking and practical things that get done, and how the thinking and doing are an evolving process of research design. Second, to make explicit that there are no set templates for actioning PaR as a research methodology.

The diversity of themes, methods and structures for the PaR process across the chapters illustrates the uniqueness of each PaR project. Where there is similarity across the Part II chapters it is in the authors describing how they grappled through practice to work out how and what to do. It is both this diversity and this similarity that we hope readers will take away with them. Each PaR process is unique and each process is a grappling with *thinking through doing* to discover what your unique research process will be.

With the core intention of the handbook being to offer researchers who are starting out with their artistic PaR case-specific, method-focused insights into the practice as research process, Part I frames the conceptual concerns of PaR through a selection of reproduced articles, chapters and keynote addresses by Mark Fleishman. Artistic PaR has been Mark's defining methodology over the course of his career, and his scholarship has been crucial in the evolving debates on PaR since the early 2000s: championing PaR, unpacking the nuance of its epistemological value in the academy and beyond and critically engaging with its limitations. It is Mark's own PaR journey and his significant involvement in PaR discourse internationally that underpins the ReTAGS use of PaR as a methodology and the project's investment in developing a younger generation of African theatre and performance scholars working through artistic PaR.

Part I starts with two articles by Mark: "Knowing performance: performance as knowledge paradigm for Africa", which was first published in 2009 in the *South African Theatre Journal,* and "The difference of performance as research", first published in 2011 in *Theatre Research International.* These articles are in a sense the starting point of the arc in Mark's published thinking on PaR and describe what makes artistic practice as research distinctly valuable relative to other research methodologies. The second two papers in Part I are "Beyond capture: the indifference of performance as research", from the 2015 International Federation for Theatre Research conference in Hyderabad, and "Artistic research and the institution: a cautionary tale" from the Arts Research Africa conference 2020. These two articles represent the other end of the arc that started with the first two articles, as indicated in the play on words in the titling, which refers to the "difference" of performance as research in the 2011 paper and its "indifference" in 2015. The "cautionary" in the title of the *Arts Research Africa* paper alludes to the intervention these later papers make. Having established the value and use of PaR, it can be engaged critically as a knowledge paradigm to offer some cautionary thoughts about the extent to which we can account for what artistic PaR does and how. This critical engagement in no way undermines Mark's earlier argument for the value of PaR, but rather points to a new frontier of thinking around it: in the excess of what emerges through PaR processes, there is more than we can "capture" to measure its value.

These first four pieces are followed by reproductions of writings that present more granular, case study-based discussions of Mark's work with PaR. They are: '*Cargo*: staging slavery at the Cape' (*Contemporary theatre review*, 2011) and 'Making space for ideas: the knowledge work of Magnet Theatre' (*Magnet Theatre: three decades of making space*, 2016). In these reproduced writings, Mark considers one of his own long-term, multi-production PaR projects and the ways in which it sought to respond to the concerns of the Cape

postcolony. Written over the course of a decade and for various contexts, the reproduced works in Part I inevitably contain some repetition. We encourage the reader to engage with Part I as a record of an unfolding PaR journey, offering insights into the different, though overlapping, concerns of PaR.

Part I is more conceptual in its focus, but does also indicate methods and their evolution. Conversely Part II focuses on methods, but also inevitably speaks to the conceptual in each author's PaR work. To bridge the shift in emphasis from conceptual concerns to practical methods, Part II starts with a section where authors have used the analysis of how they developed their methods to speak more philosophically about the PaR process. The second section of Part II includes chapters that deal more singularly with the methods the authors used in their PaR. The final section of Part II comprises two chapters that consider data management and analysis. Although these are critical tools for all research, it is often hard for artistic researchers who are starting out to see what counts as data in their artistic processes and products, let alone how they might store, sort and analyse it.

PART I

SECTION 1:
ADVOCATING FOR PRACTICE AS RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION TO PAPERS REPRODUCED IN SECTION 1

Part I starts with 'Knowing performance: performance as knowledge paradigm for Africa', first published in 2009 in the *South African Theatre Journal (SATJ)* and Mark's first published article to argue for the value of PaR. Mark had been using artistic practice as a mode of research from the start of his career as a scholar and teacher of theatre and performance in the early 1990s. The initiation of the MA Theatre and Performance course at UCT in the early 2000s stands as a key moment in the consolidation of processes for furthering PaR in dialogue with postgraduate students and colleagues based in South Africa. In 2006, Mark was one of the founding members of the Performance as Research working group within the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR), which held its first formal meeting in Helsinki that year. 'Knowing performance' came out of this international dialogue on PaR over the period 2001-2009, as well as from Mark's artistic practice as research in this period, which resulted in the theatre productions/projects: *The Clanwilliam Arts Project* (2001-2018), *53 Degrees* (2002-2003), *Onnest'bo* (2002-2006), *Rain in a Deadman's Footprints* (2004-2005) and *Cargo* (2006-2007).

The second article in this section, 'The difference of performance as research', was first published in 2012 in *Theatre Research International (TRI)*. To Mark's mind this 2012 article is a more refined, distillation of the ideas that he expressed in 2009. I (Alex) motivated for both to be included because as a PhD candidate and early career researcher, I found both useful in different ways.

The 2009 'Knowing performance' in the *SATJ* starts with a useful definition of performance, summarising key performance studies scholars' understanding of the term, but then extends their definitions to consider performance as a way of knowing. The article proceeds to synthesise, critique and put into dialogue philosophical discourse on knowledge production to challenge European and north American models of thinking that privilege the textual and the analytical in a split from the embodied, material and sensory. 'The difference of performance as research', published in *TRI* in 2012, offers a summary of the thinking from the 2009 'Knowing performance' article, but then moves on to more extended philosophical considerations of PaR.

As an undergraduate or postgraduate student starting out in theatre and performance studies scholarship, especially someone who is coming from a practical artistic background, the 2009 article offers an excellent introduction to what we mean by performance in performance studies and how performance might serve as a way of knowing. Critically the 2009 article is an introduction to performance and more specifically to performance as a way of knowing framed within an African, rather than European or North American, context. The article contests the hegemony of certain strands of European and North American scholarly lineages and expands the European and North American influenced field of performance studies with an African perspective.

Where 'Knowing Performance' is about the *why* of PaR, in his 2012 article 'The difference of performance as research', Mark delves more deeply into an argument for

how PaR serves as a way of knowing. In 'The Difference of Performance as Research', Mark proposes that PaR uses embodied repetitions over time and on micro and macro levels, in search of difference in the repetitions. The micro is the repetition of smaller actions, particularly in devising and rehearsing: "bodies, movement, sound, improvisations, moments" (Fleishman, 2011:30). The macro is the repetition of larger actions: "events, productions, projects, installations" (30). Mark draws primarily on Henri Bergson's notion of "creative evolution" (1944) and Gilles Deleuze's (and Félix Guattari's) interpretation of Bergson through the notion of difference and repetition (Deleuze, 1994; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Broadly this line of thinking proposes that living, in other words the ongoing making of the world, is enacted through repetitive action. Paradoxically, repetitive actions reinforce ways of being, behaviours and identities, but also inherently create an opening for change or 'creative evolution' in that no one action is exactly the same as any other. Every repetition is slightly, and sometimes even radically, different. Fleishman proposes that artistic performance, with its own repetitive nature, serves as a way of slowing down the speed of real-life daily repetitions, to make the differences between successive repetitions evident and thus available for more self-aware engagement.

The play on words in the title 'The difference of performance as research' is a key to understanding how the 2012 article works in relation to the 2009 'Knowing performance' and it sets up the possibility for further word play in the 2015 paper, 'Beyond capture: the indifference of performance as research'. The 'difference' alludes to how PaR differs from other research methodologies for learning and knowing, and its value as a way of learning and knowing, as established in the 2009 article. The 2012 article then builds on this 'difference' as a methodology, by highlighting the 'difference' between successive repetitive actions in everyday reality. Finally, there is a third sense in which we can understand the phrase 'difference of performance as research': this refers to how artistic performance as an activity differs from artistic performance *as research*. It is to this sense of the 'difference' that Part II contributes significantly as authors consider how they turned their artistic craft to serving their research interests.

Where the first two papers in Section 1 argue for what PaR can do and how; the last two papers in the section consider how PaR might be limited through the imposition of external restrictions and, related to this, how there is an inherent limit to PaR, which relates to the extent to which it is possible for us to account for what it does.

'Beyond capture: the indifference of performance as research' was a 2015 presentation Mark gave at the International Federation for Theatre Research annual conference. It discusses how – because artistic PaR is a creative, emergent, embodied and relational process – the knowledges and understandings it discovers exceed what can be pinned down through analysis and reflection. PaR is in this sense 'indifferent' to us as researchers. It is a relational process on its own trajectory, creating, evolving and producing a multiplicity of effects, while we as researchers try to keep up with it, tracking, observing and inevitably exhausting how much we can 'know' of what we have set in motion.

'Artistic research and the institution: a cautionary tale', is a paper Mark presented at the 2020 Arts Research Africa conference. This paper considers PaR from the perspective

of institutionalisation. It describes how the legitimisation of artistic research within the academy (the very thing the papers in Section 1 argue for) leads to it being bounded by measurable criteria, and to the instrumentalisation of the measurable criteria. This in turn allows artistic products to be recognised as research outputs so that the producers of the outputs can access institutional funding and advance their careers. In this process PaR becomes reduced to the same 'text-based' criteria as all research and researchers may fool themselves into thinking they are doing something innovative with their PaR, when they are in fact rendering it measurable in the same way as journal articles and book chapters 'count' as research. The point for Fleishman is that the value of PaR lies in its 'difference' and its 'indifference'. In other words the power of PaR as a methodology for learning, understanding, interpreting and being in our world is that it is different from other forms of research because of its embodied, creative, relational and emergent nature; and because as a process, it is indifferent to our accounts of it. PaR produces more than we can wrangle into neat metrics.

These critiques caution us to stay with the radical potential of PaR and not to instrumentalise its institutional, capital-driven recognition, nor to lose sight of how much it might surface beyond what we can anticipate or account for. Arguably, these cautions and advocacies extend to all forms of research in which the processes of learning and making are also practices: this can apply even to conventional ways of reading and writing. As Henk Borgdorff suggests, there is phronesis (2012:47), or knowing through doing, in all research activities. Attending to this, the practice of all research challenges us to stay at a constructive and ethical edge of research frontiers, for knowledges and ways of being that are more inclusive, just and full of potential beyond what we can measure or imagine.

KNOWING PERFORMANCE: PERFORMANCE AS KNOWLEDGE PARADIGM FOR AFRICA²

By Mark Fleishman

My work here is to expand Chantal Mouffe's critique of the 'post-political' as a space in which the partisan model of politics has been overcome and there is no possibility of alternatives, to the realm of knowledge production. It questions the prevalent position that there are no alternatives to orthodox knowledge paradigms and suggests the possibility that performance constitutes an alternative way of knowing – both in respect of its representations but also with regard to its embodied practice. It suggests that performance as a knowledge paradigm is particularly appropriate to Africa and argues that it capitalises on our historical legacies and our particular niche advantage in the humanities.

With regard to the former, note the processes of oral and bodily transmission of knowledge through dance, storytelling, poetry and song through communities and between communities – what Diana Taylor refers to as the "so-called ephemeral repertoire of embodied practice/knowledge" (Taylor, 2003:19) – that persist across the continent despite colonially imposed preferences for the written and the ravages of so-called modernity. With regard to the latter, two prominent African academics have recently suggested in separate newspaper articles that in South Africa at least we should be devoting more time and resources to the humanities than is currently the case. In the *Sunday Times* (7 September 2008) Malegapuru Makgoba suggested that South Africa's strength in knowledge production lies in the humanities and that the humanities should be "our priority national knowledge project for which we have an unparalleled history, icons, and a social laboratory of unique values that should be exploited by scholars" (Makgoba, 2008). Two weeks later, writing in the Sunday Independent (21 September 2008), Achille Mbembe argued that "South Africa as a nation needs to do more in the humanities, social sciences and the arts ... [t]o break with a technocratic vision of national development that is blind to the opportunities created by the new global cultural economy" (Mbembe, 2008). Part of my argument here is that performance, embedded as it is in notions of culture, might offer real opportunities for development on the continent that exceed technocratically imposed development solutions.

What do I mean by performance? Performance as a noun constitutes a set of not so much objects, as events that includes theatre, dance, ritual, but also occasions such as political rallies, funerals and the like. In this sense, performances belong to the domain of representations: symbolic expressions of experience. What makes performances different from other forms of representation such as novels or paintings however, is precisely their lack of 'thingness' and their apparent lack of durability. Peggy Phelan for example

suggests that performance is characterised by disappearance. In other words it does not remain beyond the event itself.

> Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representation. ... Performance's being ... becomes itself through disappearance. (Phelan, 1993:146)

In my opinion this overstates the case. Although performance is characterised by the specifics of the event at one point in time and can never be repeated exactly – that a particular performance is the same but different each and every time it is performed, a difference of degree – this does not mean that it has no durability. As Rebecca Schneider asks: "in privileging an understanding of performance as a refusal to remain, do we ignore other ways of knowing, other modes of remembering, that might be situated precisely in the ways in which performance remains, but remains differently?" (2001:101). My contention is that the performance event not only remains but gains value over time; but does not remain in ways preferred by the Western academy.

Importantly for my considerations here, performance is also a process, a verb, the doing that makes performance as a noun. It is a set of practices that are embodied and belong to the domain of the non-representational. Non-representational theory focuses on practices that "cannot adequately be spoken of, that words cannot capture, that texts cannot convey – on forms of experience that are not only or never cognitive" (Nash, 2000:655). It is centred on the "body-subject, not the body, engaged in joint body-practices of becoming" (Thrift, 1997:142).[3]

For me, however, performance is also an epistemology, a way of knowing and it is in this sense that I think it intersects most clearly with what we call research particularly, but not exclusively, in the humanities and certainly appropriately here in Africa. It is in this sense that I am most interested here; the ways in which performance articulates a correlation between the world of places and material objects and the world of ideas and sentiments, a correlation that is achieved from the vantage point of the body-subject and through the body-mind in active engagement with the world.

Performance as a way of knowing challenges at least three major knowledge orthodoxies that are all interconnected. The first is the platonic notion that action is the "inability to contemplate". For Plato the actions, passions and the emotions were located at the lowest reaches of the human soul whereas the intellect was located at the highest. Furthermore in the *Theatetus*, Plato divided theory from practice. As Bordieu puts it:

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3   It is worth noting here that the adjectival form of performance is often denoted as 'performative'. However, as Diana Taylor points out, performative, with its history in the writings of Austin, Derrida and Butler and its sense as a speech act that brings something into being through naming, remains in the realm of the discursive. She argues that in order to capture the non-discursive aspects of performance an alternative adjectival form is required. Her suggestion is the word 'performatic' which is a borrowing from the Spanish *performático*. In her mind it is 'vital to signal the performatic, digital and visual spheres as separate from, though always embroiled with, the discursive one so privileged by Western logocentricism' (Taylor, 2003: 6).

"practice" was not helped by Plato who offered intellectuals ... a justificatory discourse which, in its most extreme forms, defines action [one might say practice] as the "inability to contemplate". (1990:28)

The second orthodoxy is the Cartesian notion that the mind (set off against the body) is the sole locus of certain knowledge. In the *Discourse on the method* (1637) Descartes describes his famous dictum, translated as "I think therefore I am", as the "first principle of the philosophy for which I was seeking". Later he describes himself as:

a substance the whole essence or nature of which is to think, and that for its existence there is no need of any place, nor does it depend on any material thing; so that this "me", that is to say, the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from body, and is even more easy to know than is the latter; and even if the body were not; the soul would not cease to be what it is. (Descartes, 1970 [1637]:101)

What this suggests is a divided sense of being in which the body becomes at best the carrier of the mind that is alone the locus of thought and the essence of human being. It also suggests that the mind exists somewhere beyond place at a remove from the material world and our body-in-the-world.

The third orthodoxy is the Durkheimian distinction between ephemeral sensation and durable representation. For Durkheim all sensual representations – "sensations, perceptions or images" – are in a state of perpetual flux, "they come after each other like the waves of a river, and even during the time that they last, they do not remain the same" (Durkheim, 1976 [1915]:433). Sensations or perceptions are particular and linked to specific moments, the "precise instant when they take place" (433), and they can never be experienced again in exactly the same way. He argues that even if the circumstances were to remain the same, the person doing the experiencing is always changing over time hence the sensations or perceptions become different. However, according to Durkheim, we have the capacity to represent experience conceptually by catching sensual or perceptual images and lifting them out of the stream of consciousness, placing them on a level apart from the agitation of the sensations in a "different portion of the mind", one that is more calm and serene. Such conceptual representations "resist change", they are "a manner of thinking that, at every moment of time, is fixed and crystallized"; they are a stability that remains while consciousness flows on (433). Furthermore, the sensations are individual and private and hidden from others whereas the representations are social and public and therefore available to others. And the means of this making-available is language: "the vocabulary of our mother tongue; for every word translates a concept" (433).

The consequence of this is an assumption that knowledge transfer is dependent on forms of representation that stabilise what is generated through the sensations so as it to make them durable and available and in particular available through language. The corollary is that that which evades representation; that which remains in the 'agitated' world of the sensations and perceptions beyond concepts and 'our mother tongue',

remains hidden, unavailable and unreliably private and subjective.

The three orthodoxies mentioned above, also give rise to a particular geography of knowledge production that initiates a set of distances or gaps between, on the one hand, the investigating subject and the object of investigation and, on the other hand, between the community of specialist investigators and the broader society, often the subject of investigation. In other words, in the academy we set ourselves apart from that which we are studying. This works both materially and conceptually. We create real distances, separate and enclosed sites of knowledge production "which crystallise through spatialisation a separation of Mind from Body, a notion of science as a removal from the world" (Massey, 2005:144). But we also create conceptual distances by for instance, as Johannes Fabian (1983) argues, relegating the object of study to a different time rather than recognising the world to be a space of radical coevalness in which multiple narrative trajectories coexist, in which we are all living contemporaneously but differently. By means of such processes of spatialisation and separation we legitimate and authorise particular forms and practices of knowledge while banishing others to the geographical peripheries and the temporal behinds.

These orthodoxies also establish a certain sequentiality of knowledge production based on an idea that knowledge systems are vertically integrated. In other words they involve an application of a pre-existent schema or concept onto the experience of the world. According to this view, in order to know, we refer our immediate and fragmentary experience or sense-data (lower level) to the pre-existent schema (higher level) in order to render it coherent and intelligible. In other words we produce a kind of cognitive map *before* we use it to find our way. Then as we move in the real world we refer back to the map to check where we are and whether we are heading in the pre-determined direction towards the pre-determined destination. This results in a closing down of the possibilities of the future. It reduces the potential for getting lost and for chance encounters along the way and it restricts adventurousness and novelty and the unexpected discovery. But it also assumes that the world represented by the map is fixed rather than in a state of constant emergence, that the meaning that we seek is suspended awaiting our arrival, and that we are somehow detached from the world, self-contained, stable and fully formed rather than in a constant state of our own emergence in the course of our embodied, practical engagement and involvement with the world. As Ingold describes it:

> [T]he world emerges with its properties alongside the emergence of the perceiver in person, against the background of involved activity. Since the person is a being-in-the-world, the coming-into-being of the person is part and parcel of the process of coming-into-being of the world. (2000:168)

Despite decades of criticism of the Cartesian divide and more recent neuro-scientific research exposing "Descartes' error" (Damasio, 1994); despite phenomenologically-based theories of perception and knowledge production (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Heidegger, 1971; Ingold, 2000) and more recent arguments in favour of non-representational theory (Thrift, 1996, 1997, 1999), it is still very much taken for granted in most institutions of knowledge generation that knowledge arises as a result of distanced, static, dispassionate and self-

contained contemplation, that it is a product of the mind as somehow separate from the body, and that it gives rise to concepts that are durable, stable, available and transmissible. The latter requires a language shared by a community and a particular technology of communicating that language: in this case writing. These assumptions are historical in that they are a result of particular historical processes of emergence in which particular practices are bracketed out in favour of others (art from science, remembering from representation, incorporation from inscription, process from form, fiction from fact); political in that they are designed to turn diversity into singularity and uniformity and perhaps to bring under control a world of nature that includes the body and other parts of our animality; and fictional in that they are not the way things are practiced at all even in the so-called hard sciences.

With regard to the latter, as Ingold argues, based on the work of David Turnbull (1989, 1991), knowledge is not vertically but laterally integrated, formed or in a constant process of formation as we move around in our environment. The knowledge that has brought us (and this includes even the scientist) to one place is put to work in setting off towards another (Ingold, 2000: 229). So rather than applying a map that has been pre-made, the map is produced on the go. In other words, as Ingold puts it, "we know as we go, not before we go" (230). This is not map-making or map-using but simply mapping, an ongoing process of attention and involvement and if this gives rise to artefactual representation these are merely "stepping stones along the way, punctuating the process rather than initiating it or bringing it to a close" (231). It is interesting that while rejecting the idea that mapping is an outward manifestation of the map that pre-exists in the mind of the mapper, Ingold suggests that it is a "genre of performance" (231). By this he means two things: one, that it is an interactive, embodied process of relating to the world by moving through it, and two, that it is a kind of "retrospective storytelling … the retelling of journeys made (or possibly the rehearsal of journeys to be made)" (232). Whether such a re-telling results in the generation of an inscription (as in the form of a retracing of a journey in the sand or on paper in the course of the performance) is for Ingold incidental, what is important is the performance itself, the process of *incorporation* to use Paul Connerton's term (1989). This is a process of remembering (putting the body back together or putting back together by means of the body) rather than of representation.

Now in the same institutions of knowledge generation referred to above, it is assumed that body-based practices such as performance whilst being expressive and symbolic, are unavailable (except in the most private and individual of senses) and non-transmissible being both ephemeral, non-discursive and beyond language and textuality. Because of this, despite being nice to have, they have little to do with thinking and knowing the world.

It is my contention however that performance that is active, immediate, on the move, embodied, sensual, fluid, interactional and affectively engaged – that might give rise to representations but is not of itself a project concerned with representation – is a way of acting on the world "probing more deeply into it and discovering the significance that lies there" (Ingold, 2000:11). And that this significance is available to those who are attuned to it and transmissible through the interactional relationships of bodies.

Let me briefly summarise what I perceive to be the principle objections to my position that performance is a way of knowing and that it is particularly appropriate to our location

in Africa. First, performance is considered to be creative in the sense that it layers meaning onto the world rather than finding out about the meaning in the world. Second, performance is supposedly private and non-transmissible because it evades textuality and is therefore not readily available to others. Third, performance is considered playful and play in the West is, as Richard Schechner puts it, "a rotten category, an activity tainted by unreality, inauthenticity, duplicity, make-believe, looseness, fooling around, and inconsequentiality" (Schechner, 1993:27). Fourth, performance is considered to be devoid of politics and therefore unable to engage with the 'real' issues and challenges we face in our world today.

Limitations on space here do not allow a full discussion of any of these objections but what follows are some brief comments. The first objection, that of creativity, lies in a misunderstanding of how performance as process or epistemology has operated throughout the history of humankind and continues to operate. Performance in this sense does not cover the world with meaning it opens up the world of meaning. It is a process of discovery that allows us to penetrate the surface of the world. As Ingold argues:

> Far from dressing up a plain reality with layers of metaphor, or representing it, map-like, in the imagination, songs, stories and designs serve to conduct the attention of performers *into* the world, deeper and deeper, as one proceeds from outward appearances to an ever more intense poetic involvement. (2000:56)

This is a process of attentive engagement and an exploratory search for knowledge that is non-representational and in a constant process of emergence. The inability to understand this is based on a textual view of the world that cannot venture beyond representations and the semiotic and hermeneutic procedures that such a view implies. As Dwight Conquergood puts it, "scholarship is so skewed towards texts that even when researchers do attend to extralinguistic human action and embodied events they construe them as texts to be read" (2002:147). What is required is: "A shift from an imagination of a textuality at which one looks, towards recognising one's place within continuous and multiple processes of emergence" (Massey, 2005:54), and performance is just such a process.

This leads on to the second objection, non-transmissibility owing to a privacy and a lack of textuality. First, performances are never individual, private or simply subjective. Michael Jackson comments that "stories … are *nowhere* articulated as purely personal revelations, but authored and authorised dialogically and collaboratively in the course of sharing one's recollections with others" (2002:22: emphasis in original). As with storytelling so with all other forms of embodied performance. In performing the performer attends not only to the task at hand but to the other to whom the performance is directed, and the experience is "*lived through* as a physical, sensual, and vital interaction" between the body of the performer and the body of the other (Jackson, 2002:28: emphasis in original). In this sense performance is always social and inter-subjective and the boundary between private and public is effaced.

Second, why should transmissibility be necessarily linked to textuality at all? There are a vast array of practices and meanings that are transmitted in other-than-textual

ways. What is required is to become attuned to these ways of transmission. But these processes of attunement are seldom covered in the curricula of the Western-oriented academy. For Conquergood, "the root metaphor of the text underpins the supremacy of Western knowledge systems by erasing the vast realm of human knowledge and meaningful action that is unlettered" (2002:147). The hegemony of the text is not politically innocent and this should be of greater concern to academia in Africa than it currently is. As De Certeau would have it, scriptocentrism is a major part of Western imperialism:

> The power that writing's expansionism leaves intact is colonial in principle. It is extended without being changed. It is tautological, immunized against, both an alterity that might transform it and whatever dares to resist it. (1988:216)

He describes a sign above the gates of modernity that reads: "'Here only what is written is understood.' Such is the internal law of that which has constituted itself as 'Western'" (1984:134). In my view, performance constitutes 'an alterity' that resists the hegemony of the text in the academy. It is a transgression that seeks to break down the separation of subject and object, of body and mind, and therefore must be either expunged, silenced or policed by the academy.

My response to the third objection, that performance is playful, is to agree that it is, but to argue that playfulness is its inherent advantage as a way of knowing. As Thrift argues quoting Schechner:

> Play is ... a process of performative experiment: "the ongoing, underlying process of off-balancing, loosening, bending, twisting, reconfiguring, and transforming the permeating, eruptive/disruptive energy and mood below, behind and to the side of focused attention" (Schechner, 1993:43) which is brought into focus by body-practices like dance and which "encourages the discovery of new configurations and twists of ideas and experience" (Schechner, 1993:42). (Thrift, 1997:145)

The experimental nature of performance as process, the trial and error method of feeling one's way towards a goal, open to the possibility of bumping into new discoveries along the way, the creation of imaginary or potential spaces within which to engage with specific questions, is what makes performance able to "articulate complexes of thought-with-feeling that words cannot name, let alone set forth. It is a way of accessing the world, not just a means of achieving ends that cannot be named" (Radley, 1995:13). The problem with this, as Thrift points out and as I have outlined above with reference to Ingold, is that "many academics do not see the world in this experimental way. For them it is already found before it is discovered. But in a world that has never been more mapped we surely still need to set out without maps every now and again" (Thrift, 2003:2023).

Finally, with respect to the fourth objection, that performance has no politics, I would suggest that this has in a certain sense been dealt with through the argument that

performance transgresses the hegemony of the text and the authorising and legitimating practices that it fosters. However, to offer another instance of performance as political, let me return to a statement I made earlier to the effect that performance offers opportunities for development that exceed technocratically imposed development solutions.

Engaging with the world through performance offers a strategy for creating agency in the face of disempowering circumstances. This needs to be understood in relation to Albert Hirschman's concept of 'voice' – developing resources by which to express views and achieve results that are in one's own interest; to contest, debate and oppose (1970). In these terms, performance offers an opportunity to change the story, to reconstitute events so as "no longer to live those events in passivity, but to actively rework them, both in dialogue with others and within one's own imagination" (Jackson, 2002:15). Storying makes connections between life as it is and life as it could be. Recognising that there are different stories and that stories have multiple interpretations involves identifying the limits of one's own horizons and an interest in seeing alternative perspectives. This is what Arjun Appadurai calls building the "capacity to aspire" (2004; 2007). He argues for the development of "practices that allow poor people to exercise their imagination for participation" (2007:33). He notes that the imagination is a means by which people are "disciplined and controlled – by states, markets and other powerful interests" but he also sees the imagination as "the faculty though which collective patterns of dissent and new designs for collective life emerge" (2000:6). For Appadurai, the idea of democracy has shifted from developing the capacity to participate to participating in order to develop capacity. What this means is that through active engagement, in this case in particular performance-based projects or practices "that have local cultural force", capacity and agency is developed for participation in other aspects of life (Appadurai, 2004:67).

So to summarise my position, performance involves acts of storying, sounding, moving, feeling and relating that are all embodied and constitute alternative ways of knowing that are non-representational, experimental, and potentially political, both in the sense of transforming knowledge in the academy but also as a means of creating voice in marginalised communities. And that these ways of knowing that proceed from the body give us access to a vast range of ideas that distant and dispassionate contemplation cannot. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "[many] ideas would not be better known to us if we had no body and no sensibility... they owe their authority to the fact that they are in a transparency behind the sensible, or in its heart" (1962:150).

So how does this work? I will attempt a brief explanation with reference to Spinoza. Acts of performance are forms of extension (res extensa) in the Spinozan sense as opposed to thought – the thinking thing (res cogitans). Now before we go about making simple links between extension and the body and thinking and the mind, and then dividing the one from the other, it is important to recognise as Damasio points out, that Spinoza himself in proposition 26 of the *Ethics part II* argues that:

The human Mind does not perceive any external body as actually existing except through the ideas of the modification (affections) of its own body.

Damasio interprets this to mean:

> Events in the body are represented as ideas in the mind. There are
> representational "correspondences," and they go in one direction – from body
> to mind. … [T]he mind cannot perceive an external body as existing, except
> through the modifications of its own body. He is in effect stating a set of
> functional dependencies: he is stating that an idea of an object in a given mind
> cannot occur without the existence of the body; or without the occurrence of
> certain modifications on that body as caused by the object. No body, never mind.
> (Damasio, 2003:212–3)

Damasio goes on to state that Spinoza's position in this is supported by neurobiological research that posits that the majority of images that arise in the brain have their origin in the sensory modalities of the body – "the mind is filled with images from the flesh" (214). For Damasio these images arise from two sources: from deep inside the body itself, from the viscera, and from closer to the surface of the body, from what he calls the sensory probes: eyes, ears, nose, skin. So from this perspective, the forms of extension are not separated from thought, they are, according to this view, means of enabling thought. "No body, never mind".

Now all this seems to suggest a relationship between the body, the mind and the material world outside of the body. In what followsI would like to explore this three-way relationship with reference to three specific examples across time and space that link place, material culture and performance in Africa with thinking and knowing.

The first example is that of //Kabbo and the other /Xam men and women who narrated stories to Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd in Cape Town in the late nineteenth century.[4] Most of these storytellers had been brought to Cape Town as convicts to serve prison terms at the Breakwater Convict Station. Their crimes were various, ranging from stock-theft to murder. Bleek recognised that the /Xam were destined to extinction. By 1840 the trekboers had moved all the way up to the Orange River in the North, stealing /Xam land and waterholes, murdering families and wiping out the game on which the /Xam depended for their survival. He wrote in 1875, just before his death:

> with energetic measures … [we could] preserve, not merely a few "stick and stones,
> skulls and bone" as relics of the aboriginal races of this country, but also something
> of that which is most characteristic of their humanity, and therefore most valuable –
> their mind, their thoughts and their ideas. (cited in Skotnes 1999:29)

The collection of stories told by //Kabbo and the other tellers and transcribed by Bleek and Lloyd interest me not only because of their range, the sheer immensity of stories – 2000 notebooks, 13,000 pages – or because of their aesthetic beauty and particularity as stories. What interests me more for current purposes is their performance and the way it reflects a process of thought in action.

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4   The remarkable story of the origins of the Bleek and Lloyd Collection can be found in Bank (2006) and Skotnes (1996 and 2007).

The stories for //Kabbo do not reside in his head but in the landscape of his place. His people move around that place and visit each other and while visiting they relate stories they have gathered on their way. These stories come from the landscape and they float on the wind, coming from a distance, behind the backs of mountains and along well-travelled tracks. They drift towards those who are alert to them, those who sit waiting for them to float into their ears. In other words the stories are available to those who are attuned to them. And the stories that he gathers are not representations that cover the landscape with meaning, they are in a fundamental sense *the* landscape imbued with meaning, that enfolds those who dwell within it as well as "the lives and times of predecessors, who over the generations, have moved around in it and played their part in its formation" (Ingold, 2000:189). So if the stories are the landscape then the telling of the stories connects the teller to the landscape.

When //Kabbo was telling his stories he was not so much transmitting information as mapping, recalling an itinerary of journeys made, his own and those of his ancestors – those who had walked the same paths through the landscape before him – and rehearsing potential journeys to come. What was important was not the stories (as they were for Bleek and Lloyd) but the performance, the ongoing practice that linked him to those that had come before. By so doing //Kabbo was not only participating in a salvage project designed to conserve the body of stories in the face of the inevitable destruction of his people and his culture but also desperately trying to maintain the connection with his place. The longer he stayed in Cape Town the harder it became for him to access the stories and the more disconnected he felt from home. It is interesting to note that another of the tellers, Diakwain, described the fading connection with the land as a break in the "thinking strings" that seems to suggest a connection between the embodied act of telling and the act of thinking and the link with the material world beyond the body-mind.

What is also striking is the way the stories were often told in relation to particular material artefacts, "natural history exhibits, photographs, copies of rock paintings, children's picture books and an assortment of homemade artefacts" (Riley, 2007:295). What this suggests on one level is that the artefact operates as a kind of mnemonic prop facilitating the recall of a particular story, but on another level it suggests the possibility that performance might be a process of unlocking meaning inherent in the artefact itself. I will come back to this a little later.

This relationship between performance and material artefact leads me on to the second example, that of Tshibumba Kanda Matulu the most prominent Katanga/Shaba genre painter in the 1960s and 1970s, and his narrations to the anthropologist Johannes Fabian.

According to Fabian a Katanga/Shaba genre painting:

> was valued for its capacity to remind the viewer of past events and present predicaments, specifically for its becoming the subject of occasion to tell a story. (Fabian, 2007:74)

In his conversations with Tshibumba Kanda Matulu he heard many such stories that arose and were performed in relation to paintings produced as part of Tshibumba's *History of Zaire*, a series containing more than a hundred individual works. Tshibumba insisted, according to Fabian:

> That his work as both a painter and a historian was in essence to think, *–waza*, to express ideas, *mawazo*, rather than simply to recount and depict. (Fabian, 2007:74)

In telling stories in relation to the paintings it seems that Tshibumba was not journeying across the surface of his painting but leading the listener into the painting itself – piercing the surface – to reveal the meaning beyond the outward appearance. Again he was not conveying information, explaining what the painting meant, but using a body-based performance genre as an opportunity or means to open up the material artefact. And the artist-historian describes this as a process of thinking. Elsewhere he comments that the past must be thought while the present must be remembered. Fabian explains this as follows:

> Thinking and remembering are, to say the least, difficult to keep apart. Inasmuch as thought/thinking evokes rationality, it belongs to the realm of truth and judgement (which, incidentally, may be what Tshibumba meant when he said that his task as a historian was to think the past). Remembering, especially in the hortative sense of commemoration, that is something that is to be done, performed, or fulfilled, calls for stories to be told (songs to be sung, rituals to be performed, plays to be staged, images and monuments to be created). (Fabian, 2007:99–100)

In other words, the process of painting the past is a process of thinking but the present task, the embodied performance that opens up the painting, is a process of remembering. A remembering that is less about the need to forestall forgetting than it is about putting back together the body that is broken – an altogether more active process. This resonates with the idea that the telling of stories by //Kabbo and the other /Xam tellers is an active process of recall, a re-tracing of steps, of journeys made, that it is "not so much a matter of calling up an internal image, stored in the mind, as of engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past" (Ingold, 2000:189).

Fabian goes on to indicate that Tshibumba refers to the stories he tells in relation to the paintings as "lies" (Fabian, 2007:100). If they are lies then as Camus reminds us, they are lies not because to lie is to say what is not true; "it is also and above all, to say *more* than is true" (1970:336).

This short discourse on remembering brings me on to my final example, one that I have drawn from my own work on "Remembering in the postcolony" that focuses on performance events that engage with key "sites of memory" in and around the city of Cape Town. The term is taken from Pierre Nora (1989) and refers to a conglomerate of physical, material and archival sites that function to concentrate remembrance in a world in which, to paraphrase James E. Young, the more we monumentalise, the more we seem

to have "divested ourselves of the obligation to remember" (2000:94).[5]

To date the project has produced four productions based on four sites of memory: *53 Degrees* (Robben Island), *Onnest'bo* (District Six), *Rain in a Dead Man's Footprints* (the Bleek and Lloyd Archive) and *Cargo* (the archive of slavery at the Cape). These have been performed for paying audiences in and outside of mainstream theatre spaces in metropolitan Cape Town and elsewhere. It has also produced a fifth project (also based on the Bleek and Lloyd Archive) that is different to the others in the series in that it is an 8-day participatory arts residency for school learners in the rural town of Clanwilliam that in its current form has operated annually since 2001. The latter project is an attempt to repatriate the body of / Xam stories back into the landscape from which they had come and to use the stories to engage with transformation amongst young people in the community. One of the key foci of the broader project is the revelation of subjugated histories; that which is silenced in the archive, buried under layers of official text.

Each project begins with an extended process of gathering traces or fragments, because as Nadia Seremetakis reminds us, the memory of the past comes to us in pieces, it does not show itself all at once, in wholes (2000:310). These fragments include documentary traces: the deposed testimony of eyewitnesses, the records created by those who are 'witnesses despite themselves' and images passed down from previous times, paintings, drawings, etchings, photographs and cinematic records.[6] They also include material traces, the kinds of fragments usually dealt with by archaeologists, shards of pottery, old coins, furniture, clothing, architectural remains.

For Carlo Ginzburg (1989) there are testimonies and there are clues. The testimonies testify through written words; the clues '"testify" through their muteness" (Ricoeur, 2004:174). Ginzburg proposes a "conjectural paradigm" that involves using clues to penetrate the opaque surface of reality (1989:123).

Ingold also refers to clues in discussing the ways in which novices are called to pay attention to aspects of their environment.[7] In his discussion he distinguishes between clues and ciphers. He suggests that in attempting to discover the meanings inherent in the environment, the novice is:

> provided with a set of keys ... not as ciphers but as *clues*. Whereas the cipher is centrifugal, allowing the novice to access meanings that are attached ("pinned

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5   It is worth emphasizing that in the sense that it is intended here, a site need not be a place, it could just as well be an object or a set of objects, an archive of documents or images, or a piece of music, or combinations of all of these.

6   The notion of 'witnesses in spite of themselves' or 'involuntary witnesses' refers to those who create records of some aspect of society in one period that become a testimony in another period without this being the intention of the 'witness' (Ricoeur, 2004: 170 -171). Bloch argues that 'in the course of its development, historical research has gradually been led to place more and more confidence in ... the evidence of witnesses in spite of themselves' (1964: 61).

7   The idea of an 'education of attention' passed on from generation to generation is taken from James Gibson's Ecological Approach to Visual Perception (1979: 254).

on") by the mind to the outer surface of the world, the clue is centripetal, guiding him towards meanings that lie at the heart of the world itself, but which are normally hidden behind the façade of superficial appearances. The contrast between the key as cipher and the key as clue corresponds to the critical distinction ... between decoding and revelation. (2000: 22)

Once the fragments have been collected, a repertoire of dramaturgical tools and methods, gathered and developed over time, are used to work on the fragments. It is a kind of forensic archaeology performed by the body interacting with a fragment. What we hope to do is to prise open the fragments to reveal meaning rather than to interpret a meaning "pinned on" to the outside of the fragment. The intention is to create what De Certeau calls a "breach in the text" through which:

the voice exiled on the borders of discourse, might flow back, and with it, the murmur and the 'noises' from which the process of scriptural reproduction distinguishes itself. In this way an exteriority without beginning or truth might return to visit discourse. (De Certeau, 1988:236)

So like the /Xam storytellers who performed in relation to material artefacts and Tshibumba whose paintings provided the opportunity for performance, my dramaturgical method uses the body-mind and play to unlock meaning inherent in the material world. At the heart of the work is improvisation, a particularly playful and experimental approach. Western discourse around improvisation centres on the concept of 'spontaneity' – the removal of all blocks or impediments to responding immediately in the moment – and the idea of "remaining in the present" (Spolin, 1963; Hodgson and Richards, 1966; Johnstone, 1981; Steinman, 1986; Frost and Yarrow, 1990; Johnstone 1999; Johnston, 2006). Much emphasis is placed on not predetermining the outcome, not deciding on a 'text' and then setting out to realise it in the improvisation but rather on responding as truthfully as possible to proposals in the present moment.

Traditions other than the Western and particularly oral traditions in which improvisation plays an essential role – performances are composed in the moment of performance – don't quite see it in this way. In these traditions, improvisation involves a play or dialogue between certain core elements of the existing tradition and the spontaneity of the moment. The performer engages with the specifics of the environment – the context, the space, the audience – and these determine the particular innovations of the tradition in each particular performance event.

My own current thinking on theatrical improvisation is more influenced by this latter way of thinking. This is also to some extent supported by neurological research, particularly by Antonio Damasio, on our perception of the world around us (1994 and 2003). The improviser responds to propositions in the present moment (what Damasio calls "perceptual images") originating in the archival fragments, in the other performers, in the space. At the same time, however, the improviser is also engaged with what has been discovered at earlier stages of the research (what Damasio calls "recalled images"). The process of improvisation thus involves a

relationship between these two sets of images in what Shannon Rose Riley (2004) describes as "an intentional process of layering". She goes on to argue that in such a process:

> attention is not split so much as layered and in a state of ongoing dialogue and change. ... [E]mbodied processes focus on becoming attentive to recalled images and their dialogical relationship with perceptual imagery offering the actor a method for becoming attuned to the polyphonic connections between body and brain, organism and environment. (454)

This highlights the particularly embodied and sensory nature of the improvisational process and relates to Ingold's notion that we perceive the environment through active, embodied attention and participation from which thought arises; we don't think our way into the environment (2000:185-188).

Now that we have looked at some of the ways in which performance as a way of knowing operates, indeed has always operated in African worlds, let me return once again to where I started, to Chantal Mouffe. By suggesting that performance constitutes an alternative way of knowing particularly appropriate to Africa I am not suggesting in some naïve way that performance will or should simply replace other forms of knowledge in the academy. In Mouffe's terms I am not proposing an antagonistic relationship, one between "friend and enemy". What I am proposing is what she describes as an "agonistic conflict", one between adversaries or "friendly enemies" (in Miessen, 2006). Such a relationship involves a conflictual consensus rather than outright dissensus. It is not a simple revolution but an ongoing interruption that disturbs any easy assumption about what knowledge is and how it should be practiced; the idea that there are no alternatives to playing the one game in town when it comes to knowledge production, a game whose rules and practices are often inappropriate, problematic and detrimental in our location. Knowing performance, not in the sense of 'knowing about' but more importantly in the sense of 'knowing with, through, or by means of' has the potential to transform knowledge production by closing the gap between subject and object, between body and mind, between the academy and society.

Figure a: *Clanwilliam Arts Project*, Clanwilliam. Photograph by Mark Wessels.

THE DIFFERENCE OF PERFORMANCE AS RESEARCH[8]

By Mark Fleishman

Baz Kershaw, director of the UK's PARIP (Practice as Research in Performance) programme (2001–5),[9] recently observed that by the end of the last decade "practice as research" (PaR) had become "a well-established approach to using creative performance as a method of inquiry in universities in the UK, Australia, Canada, Scandinavia, South Africa and elsewhere" (Kershaw, 2009).. The establishment and growth of interest in the idea of practice or performance as research[10] is reflected in the increasing number of publications[11] devoted to the subject that grapple with the concept in all its heterogeneity and complexity.

While accepting that, at this juncture, definitions of PaR are at best provisional, there is a general consensus that PaR concerns research that is carried out through or by means of performance, using methodologies and specific methods familiar to performance practitioners, and where the output is at least in part, if not entirely, presented through performance. In other words, such activity suggests that there are certain epistemological issues that can only be addressed in and through performance itself and that such performance practice 'can be both a form of research and a legitimate way of making the findings of such research publicly available'. Hence, there is no necessary connection "assumed between the apparatus of research and the written word" (Painter, 1996:n.p.).

My own ideas on PaR have developed within my institutional context in South Africa, which, while having connections with the global academic mainstream, has been

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9   Practice as Research in Performance (PARIP) was a five-year project headed by Baz Kershaw and the Department of Drama at the University of Bristol and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board. Its objectives were 'to investigate creative-academic issues raised by practice as research, where performance is defined … as performance media: theatre, dance, film, video and television' (**http://www.bris.ac.uk/parip/introduction.htm**).

10   There are a number of terms used to describe the type of research activity we are dealing with here, including practice/performance as research, practice/performance-based research and practice/performance-led research, creative research, artistic research etc. While the use of practice rather than performance opens up the concept to a broader range of disciplines and applications within disciplines, for the remainder of this article I will use the term performance as research and/or its abbreviation, PaR, for its greater specificity in relation to my own work and because this is the currently agreed terminology within IFTR's Performance as Research Working Group.

11   Recent publications include Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Ludivine Allegue *et al.*, *Practice-as-Research: In Performance and Screen* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Shannon Rose Riley and Lynette Hunter, *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research: Scholarly Acts and Creative Cartographies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

sufficiently isolated in the recent past as to create interesting spaces for experimentation. At the same time, my thinking in this regard has also been informed by the PARIP process and more recently (since 2006) through my engagement with colleagues in the Performance as Research Working Group of the IFTR. Informed by these contexts of creative thinking, I set out here to contribute to understandings of PaR by proposing a conceptualization in which PaR is posited as a series of embodied repetitions in time, on both micro (bodies, movements, sounds, improvisations, moments) and macro (events, productions, projects, installations) levels, in search of a series of differences[12] In order to do so, however, I need first to elaborate on the ways in which PaR more generally has been making a difference to theatre and performance studies as an academic field of study – this not least because performance ways of knowing propose *different* ways of knowing from those of traditional textual scholarship.

PaR: A PARADIGM SHIFT

For Kershaw, placing "creativity at the heart of research implies a paradigm shift, through which established ontologies and epistemologies of research in arts-related disciplines potentially could be radically undone" (Kershaw, 2009).

Further, in his article subtitled "Practice as research as a paradigm shift in performance studies", Simon Jones insightfully reminds us that "the term paradigm is taken from Thomas Kuhn's *The structure of scientific revolutions*", where it is defined as being "sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity" while simultaneously being "sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve" (Kuhn, 1962:10, cited in Jones, 2009:19).

The Performance as Research Working Group of the IFTR arguably exemplifies – in Kuhn's terms – a "redefined group of practitioners" engaged in attempting to resolve a set of problems arising from the idea of performance as a mode of research, problems that are both ontological and epistemological. These include issues of knowledge types, aesthetic values, contextual responsiveness, practice/theory problematics, questions of how to best present PaR in conference contexts, debates about different types of reflexivity appropriate to PaR, and so on.[13] While accepting that there are no neat and easy solutions to these problems, the group is convinced that there are differences that exist between

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12 The ideas that follow have their origin in a presentation made in an open panel at the 2010 IFTR conference in Munich entitled Exhausting Modernity – Repetition, Time and Generative Processes, with reference to the ideas of Teresa Brennan on modernity as exhausted or exhausting. This panel formed part of the Performance as Research Working Group's broader investigations of repetition, time and generative processes. In general, the Working Group has focused less on the sharing of individual projects and more on grappling with the workings, the nuances and the complexities of PaR, usually by means of performance itself. In other words, the Working Group has set out to contribute to developing the meta-discourse of the practice.

13 Information available at www.firt- iftr.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id= 26&Itemid=3&lang=en.

PaR and other forms of scholarship and that these are important and productive for the discipline, that they open up new ways of thinking and new subjects for exploration that traditional textual scholarship does not or cannot gain purchase on. There is no doubt that increasing numbers of scholars and students within the discipline wish to include performance as an integral part of their research activity and that this number widens as we move across geographical boundaries and particularly away from the Euro-American academic context. There is a real desire for information and a real need to articulate what PaR is all about, how it works and how it differs from other ways of knowing.

However, by suggesting that performance constitutes an alternative way of knowing I am not suggesting in some naïve way that PaR will or should simply replace other forms of scholarship. Too often in the past practitioner-researchers have jumped reactively to defend the discontinuities between what we do and what they do, between embodied practice and traditional textual scholarship. Such a response is often framed as a contest between epistemes: the particularity of performance as a way of knowing and its place vis-à-vis dominant and hegemonic forms of knowing in the academy. In the narrative of this contest the dominant way of knowing is characterized as being: distanced, static, dispassionate and self-contained contemplation, a product of the mind as somehow separate from the body, giving rise to concepts that are durable, stable, available and transmissable, requiring a language shared by a community and a particular technology of communicating that language – in this case, writing.

The performance way of knowing is, by contrast, close, active, immediate, on the move, embodied, sensual, fluid, interactional and affectively engaged. It gives rise to representations but is not of itself 'a project concerned with representation'. It is a way of acting on the world "probing more deeply into it and discovering the significance that lies there" (Ingold, 2000:11). And this significance is available to those who are attuned to it and transmissable through the interactional relationships of bodies.

The narrative goes on to argue that the processes of attunement required to grasp such transmission of knowledge are seldom covered in the curricula of the Euro-American-style academy. As Dwight Conquergood writes, "the root metaphor of the text underpins the supremacy of Western knowledge systems by erasing the vast realm of human knowledge and meaningful action that is unlettered". He elaborates, "scholarship is so skewed towards texts that even when researchers do attend to extralinguistic human action and embodied events they construe them as texts to be read" (Conquergood, 2002:147). This hegemony of the text is not politically innocent: as De Certeau would have it, "scriptocentrism" is a major part of Western imperialism (De Certeau, 1984, cited in Conquergood, 2002:147). So, according to this view, performance constitutes 'an alterity' that resists the hegemony of the text in the academy. It is a transgression that seeks to break down the separation of subject and object, of body and mind, and therefore it must be either expunged, silenced or policed by the academy.

Now this particular contest narrative, while politically expedient at certain key moments in terms of certain immediate struggles within the academy, and while both complicating and clarifying an understanding of the workings of the binary described

above, tends perversely to reinforce and propagate the very binaries and dualities that the political project is trying to do away with. What is required is an honest acceptance that the principle of 'compossibility' – fleshes alongside texts alongside images, sight alongside hearing and touching and feeling and moving – is called for. Or perhaps, from the converse perspective, what characterizes performance as research is, as Jones observes, "the materializing of 'incompossibilities', paradoxes at play, the mixing of ideas and things anomalous to each other's paradigms" (Jones, 2009:24). So what is the difference of performance as research? How does it operate differently from conventional scholarship, and what kinds of insight might it deliver that other forms of knowing find difficult to grasp?

MY TAKE ON PERFORMANCE AS RESEARCH

I begin with the proposition (1) that performance as research is a series of embodied repetitions (2) in time, (3) on both micro (bodies, movements, sounds, improvisations, moments) and macro (events, productions, projects, installations) levels, (4) in search of difference. I will consider this proposition briefly in terms of Bergson's notion of "creative evolution" and Deleuze's engagement with it, and with fleeting reference to two projects in performance as research that I have been involved with over the past nine years: the Clanwilliam Arts Project, a participatory project with school learners in the rural town of Clanwilliam, three hours outside Cape Town, and a project on "remembering in the postcolony" that uses a particular dramaturgical method to engage with the historical archive of Cape Town, the (post)colonial city. However, I will begin with two whimsical performative anecdotes:

ANECDOTE 1 – THE MOSQUITO

I am lying on my bed in the thick heat of an African summer night and a mosquito is sounding a high-pitched squeal somewhere above my head [sound of mosquito whining can be heard]. I can hear it, but I cannot see it. I lash out in an attempt to ward it off or, better still, squash it [frantic attempts to catch the irritating invader]. It continues to squeal [continued sound effects]. Again and again I lash out at it, sometimes with the flat of my hand [hand bangs down hard on the surface of a table or lectern], sometimes with a rolled-up newspaper, desperately trying to control the squeal but it will not go away. It is too fast, too illusive, and I am too slow. I am never successful at warding off the mosquito, at stopping the squeal, but I keep lashing out, night after night, on and on until I have exhausted myself. On some nights I believe I have it in my closed fist but when I open my fingers it is not there. On other nights I actually grasp it [hands clap together violently], I can feel its wings against my skin, I close my fingers around it, squeezing tight [closed fist held up to view], but when I open my fingers again the mosquito flies away [fist opened to reveal nothing], squealing triumphantly. Despite this failure, I believe, fundamentally, that one night I will make real contact and bring the squeal under control, so I keep on trying.

ANECDOTE 2 – 'THROW ME ON THE FLOOR, DADDY!'

When my son was little he loved playing a game called 'Throw me on the floor, Daddy'. The rules were simple – he stood still in front of me and I was to lift him up into the air and lay him down on the ground, only for him to stand up and demand that the whole thing be repeated again and again [physical action of lifting and dropping repeated a number of times in a repetitive fashion]. He could go on for hours being 'thrown onto the floor', squealing with delight. I, on the other hand, became rapidly exhausted and tried to bring the game to a close as quickly as possible. He wouldn't give up very easily and so I would have to keep myself interested by inventing new and more creative ways of getting him onto the floor. He couldn't care less how I did it as long as I repeated the action of 'throwing him on the floor' and would have gone on forever, I believe, if I didn't insist that the game come to an end.

In the first of my performance projects, a particular story is chosen each year from the Bleek and Lloyd Collection,[14] an archive of San mythology housed at the University of Cape Town, and introduced to a group of around six hundred school learners in a small rural town around 250 kilometres outside Cape Town who engage with the story using a variety of artistic modalities in order to find the importance or significance of the story for their lives. For ten years the same set of stories, the same methodology, the same broad outcome: a parade through the streets with lanterns and a performance of the story for the community.

Year 1 – Year 2 – Year 3 etc. . . . Year 10

In the second project, four different performances were created between 2002 and 2008 based on research done on four sites of memory in and around the city of Cape Town – Robben Island (place of banishment and incarceration and its museum and archive), District Six (apartheid-evacuated working-class city district and its museum and archive), the Bleek and Lloyd Collection referred to above, and the archive of slavery at the Cape (a dispersed collection of trial records, household inventories, legal and bureaucratic documents and physical sites). Each performance event created was different in form but followed the same basic dramaturgical making process that became more and more refined and conscious over time.

Production 1 – Production 2 – Production 3 – Production 4

Standing on this side looking back at these repetitions I often hear myself calling them a series, like *The Sopranos* or *CSI*, perhaps. But a series implies that I knew what I was embarking on at the beginning and then played it out one episode at a time. But I did not. I knew what I wanted to do in that moment with that first production when it started and it was not to create a series. So why the repetitions? Why the compulsion to return over and

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14   See http://lloydbleekcollection.cs.uct.ac.za

over to the same thing, to do it again and again, in this way and that way, with this content and that content? Am I under an illusion that if I repeat the same thing more often it will gain in value or weight, that it will be taken more seriously? Or are there really differences in this sameness? And if so, what is the nature of these differences and where do they lie: in the repetitions or in the spaces in between? And is there a point at which the unleashing of differences is exhausted and I am compulsively repeating what is already known and experienced, or is it just me that is exhausted, unable or unwilling to go on repeating in this way? And does it make a difference, this embodied repetition in time? Is there an ethical or political dimension to working in this way, with the body, over time, again and again and in an institutional context designed to at best demean and at worst disqualify and discipline this way of working?

According to Keith Ansell Pearson, "Deleuze conceived a thinking of difference and repetition as historically specific to capitalist modernity" (Pearson, 1999:4). For Pearson, Deleuze's project is an attempt to reinvent this modernity and articulate a radical project for philosophy, through Bergson (Pearson, 1999:2). I would suggest that through Bergson and then Deleuze we can begin to understand the difference of performance as a mode of research, its refusal of binaries (body-mind, theory–practice, space–time, subject–object), its radical openness, its multiplicities, its unrepresentability, its destabilization of all pretensions to fixity and determination.[15]

For Bergson, time is not a series of instants but an experienced duration – "the continuation of what no longer exists into what does exist" (Bergson, 1965:49) or "the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances" (Bergson, 1944:7). When Bergson speaks of duration he does not refer to the realm of distinct entities ("things and states") but to a realm of creative processes and becomings ("changes and acts") (Bergson, 1944:270). He is, in Pearson's words, less interested in "the thing produced" than in the "activity of evolution itself", the infinite capacity for inventive novelty (Pearson, 1999:44). But this realm of creative processes and becomings is not an abstraction for Bergson; it is a form of practised embodiment close to the concrete, everyday life-world (Linstead & Mullarkey, 2003:3-13).

This idea of duration informs Bergson's notion of "creative evolution". In his book *Creative evolution*, Bergson rejects both neo-Darwinian mechanism, in which evolution is driven by a pre-existent model or latent code that plays itself out mechanistically over time (a compulsion of the past), and neo-Lamarckian finalism, in which evolution works towards a perfect form achieved at the 'end' (the attraction of the future). Instead he suggests that evolution is a process of constant invention (a series of explosions) in which contingency plays a significant role. For evolution to take place requires only two

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15   I acknowledge that using philosophy in such a selective and reduced fashion in support of a practice for which it was never intended is a risky business and might render the philosophy itself unrecognizable. However, given that philosophers have few qualms about using theatre and theatricality in similarly selective and reduced ways in support of their arguments, I am prepared to take the risk here.

things: an accumulation of energy and "an elastic canalization of this energy in variable and indeterminable directions" (Bergson, 1944:278). For Bergson, we cannot know where we are going to until we have got there, for, as Pearson summarizes it:

> Only once the road has been traveled is the intellect able to mark its direction and judge that where it has got to is where it was going all along. But this is no more than a deception since 'the road has been created *pari passu* with the act of traveling over it, being nothing but the direction of the act itself' (Pearson, 1999:44)[16]

This process of creative evolution is, for Bergson, "a continual invention of forms ever new", a ceaseless string of invention and reinvention (Bergson, 1944:374). The ethical project is, for Bergson, to learn to live in duration – "It is no use trying to approach duration: we must install ourselves within it straight away" (Bergson, 1944:325).

Deleuze (later with Guattari) builds on Bergson in a number of key ways as he transforms creative evolution into "creative involution", a concept that must be distinguished from any association with regression or a movement to a state of less differentiation or the exhaustion of differentiation – "Becoming is involutionary, involution is creative" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987:238). In summary, Deleuze and Guattari achieve this first by bringing creative evolution into relationship with the "non-evolutionist idea of transversal communication", emphasizing the non-genealogical, non-filiative nature of creative evolution and stressing instead change occurring across phyletic lineages (Pearson, 1999:162). In other words, they counter the progressivist and perfectionist ideas of evolution with the notion of transversal 'becomings'. Second, they argue that such becomings "involve neither the development of forms nor the constitution of substances and subjects but rather modes of individuation that precede the subject or the organism" (Pearson, 1999:159). These modes of individuation exist on a different level, a "plane of immanence" consisting of "abstract" and "non-formal" elements, intensities and qualities, "relations of speed and slowness", affective variations and so on (Pearson, 1999:159).[17] In other words, change or difference occurs at the molecular level, not at what he calls the "molar" level of formations and structures. Third, Deleuze and Guattari stress the surplus value of any code and its capacity for free variation. In other words, it is through excess, through surplus, through the accidental and unexpected that difference emerges. These surpluses are engaged in "side communication" involving heterogeneous populations and "machinic assemblages" that evolve through recurrence, in unexpected mutations and "monstrous couplings" (Pearson, 1999:151 & 159).

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16 The reference to Bergson in the Pearson quotation is to the 1962 French edition: L'Évolution créatrice [Mindy's addition here – check you're happy with it?].

17 For a more detailed exposition of the 'plane of immanence' see Gilles Deleuze and Félix´ Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (1994:35–60).

So what does this mean for performance as research? I would argue that the PaR project is a process of creative evolution. It is not progressivist, building towards a finality; nor is it mechanistic in the sense that it knows what it is searching for before it begins searching. It begins with energy (an impulse, an idea, an intuition, a hunch) that is then channelled, durationally, through repetition, in variable and indeterminable directions; a series of unexpected and often accidental explosions that in turn lead to further explosions. It expresses itself through a repeated, though flexible and open-ended, process of ontogenesis. It is not, as Gregory Bateson would say, "bounded by … skin but includes all external pathways along which information can travel" (1987:231). In fact I would argue that it does have some kind of membrane around it that is perceptible in retrospect and establishes a 'territory', but that such a membrane is always elastic and porous. This is in line with Deleuze and Guattari, who, despite arguing for "open systems" and "deterritorialization", emphasize that limits always exist and play an important part in any process of "creative evolution". This is because "the territory does not merely isolate and join but opens onto … forces that arise from within or come from outside, and renders their effect … perceptible" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994:185-6). In other words, while creative evolution does lead to some degree of individuation and closure, such closure is always in communication with an outside that includes Bateson's multiple "external pathways", through a variety of means that Bergson identifies as "musical": "created by modulation, repetition, transposition, juxtaposition" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994:190).[34]

So to return to my two projects identified at the start, if there is difference arising from the successive iterations of each project, it is not occurring serially in the individual representations as a set of connectable points. Rather it is occurring in the "middle" as a process of inventive becoming, and "becoming has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination … [it] is neither one nor two nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between, the border or line of flight" that runs perpendicular to both (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987:293).

Furthermore, it is not occurring at the level of the formation itself, at the level of the individual production or representation (perceptible through reflection); it is occurring at the molecular level of its process of production as changes or shifts in intensities or qualities (perceptible only by living through the duration of the process). In other words, this difference is not something to be looked at from a position outside and after the fact, like a text to be read; it must be experienced from within a durational process of continuous and multiple becoming in which the perceiver is also in a state of emergence. But the difference, the changes, the continuous inventions and variations, are occurring at what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the "absolute speed of movement", (1987:293) like the squealing mosquito audibly present but not quite visible or easily graspable, or the train in Zola's *La bête humaine* (1890) that Deleuze refers to as part of his discussion of "the crack" in *The logic of sense*: (Deleuze, 2004:359-62) "hurtling towards the future with mathematical rigour, determinedly oblivious to the rest of human life on either side".[38]

For Deleuze and Guattari, "Movement has an essential relation to the imperceptible; it is by nature imperceptible … Movements, becomings, in other words, pure relations of speed and slowness, pure affects, are below and above the threshold of perception" (cited in Pearson,

1999:116). If the 'event' of PaR is a runaway train, beyond the 'threshold of perception', and if the researcher is hanging on trying desperately to make sense of it, or trailing behind trying desperately to catch up, then how do we make the knowledge of the event conscious? How do we make it visible to ourselves and to others? If performance as research is anything, it is the desire to make conscious, to become aware from within the midst of the endless process of becoming and then to attempt to translate this for others through a variety of modalities. This requires a kind of perceptual still point, a slowing down or thickening of the ongoing, of the flow, so as to surface the differences in the spaces in-between.

My suggestion is that repetition is the apparatus by which we achieve this slowing down. Repetition is an attempt to trip us up, to stop somehow the onward flow or at least to interrupt it, to slow it down so as to allow us to grasp it even if only fleetingly. Nadia Seremetakis describes it as "discontinuous punctures, that render the imperceptible perceptible as they produce marked moments – tidal pools where an experiential cosmos can be marked out in miniature" (Seremetakis, 1994:12). For *André* Lepecki, discussing the repetition inherent in the work of choreographer Jerome Bel, "Repetition creates a form of standing still that has nothing of the immobile" about it. He characterizes such repetition as "paranomasia", a rhetorical form in which an idea is developed linguistically through stringing together words that share the same stem. He argues that "repetition with a difference performs a reiterative spacing of the idea, allowing for a specific kind of slow turning that gives 'intellectual objects' variation and hence shifts their aspects or appearances" (Lepecki, 2006: 62).

But however much repetition might slow things down it never exhausts the capacity for difference. Difference continues to be produced on a molecular level as long as the performance repeats and even after it has finished repeating, in the repetition of its traces – "the mobile flies forever before the pursuit of science" (Bergson, 1944:327). It is us who struggle to keep up, to keep trying to bring things to consciousness, to keep failing to translate for others. It is us who become exhausted and who draw a line underneath the project and say 'enough'.

But just because it is difficult to imagine how to "think true duration", to stay focused on the "movement going on" (the flux/flow) rather than on the "movement accomplished" (the final form or representation), (Bergson, 1944:325) is not an excuse for not trying or a reason for disqualifying the activity. What is required is a willingness to continue to engage with the task, to create the conditions for seeing from within duration where all is movement and change. For, as Bergson makes clear, conventional scientific enquiry is "accustomed . . . to think the moving by means of the unmovable". It is always focused on "immobilities", on stable points or "points of rest" in the movement flow. The intervals between these stable points, "the movements constituting the action itself [,] either elude our consciousness or reach it only confusedly" (1944:325). We need to find ways to "feel and live the intervals" (Bergson, 1944:368). This is the radical project of performance as research, and its difference.
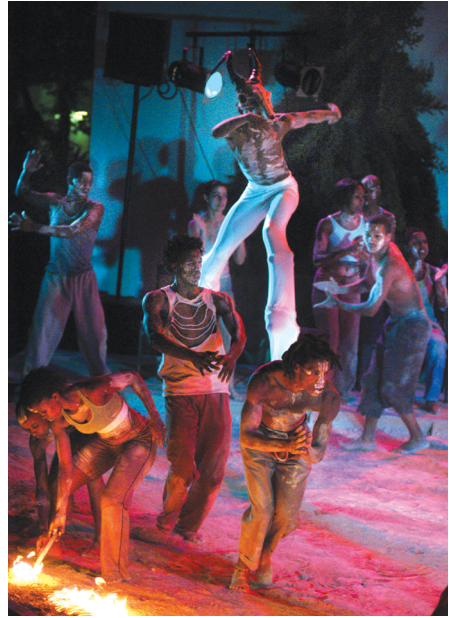
Figures b and c: *Rain in a Deadman's Footprints*, Oude Libertas Amphitheatre, Stellenbosch, 2004. Photograph by Garth Stead.

BEYOND CAPTURE: THE INDIFFERENCE OF PERFORMANCE AS RESEARCH[18]

By Mark Fleishman

> Things-in-themselves? But they're fine, thank you very much. And how are you? You complain about things that have not been honored by your vision? You feel that these things are lacking the illumination of your consciousness? But if you missed the galloping freedom of the zebras in the savannah this morning, then so much the worse for you; the zebras will not be sorry that you were not there, and in any case you would have tamed, killed, photographed or studied them. Things in themselves lack nothing, just as Africa did not lack whites before their arrival. (Bruno Latour, 1988:193)

> We find ourselves in a buzzing world, amid a democracy of fellow creatures.
> (A.N. Whitehead, 1929:50)

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

My goal here is to link the theme of theatre and democracy to the concern of the Performance as Research working group, in the light of a comment by Baz Kershaw that PaR operates according to "a democratically deconstructive and decentring agenda" (2009:15).

I will take democracy to mean not a political regime or a representative system of government but rather, in Chantal Mouffe's terms the extension of the principles of equality and justice "to the widest possible set of social relations" which she describes as "radical and plural" democracy (1992:11).

And I will take "social" here to be, in the words of Bruno Latour, "*much wider* than what is usually called by that name, yet *strictly limited* to the tracing of new associations and to the designing of their assemblages" (2005:7, emphasis in original). In other words, Latour insists that we need to expand the social to include "entities which are in no way recognizable as being social in the ordinary manner, except during the brief moment when they are reshuffled together"; the "momentary association" of human and other-than-human actors "into new shapes", new forms of assembly (65).

In such a conception of the social how do all these entities – persons, zebras, rocks, PaR

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research objects – that on the surface, at least, seem so utterly different the one from the other, relate? Levi Bryant has titled a recent publication *The democracy of objects* (2011). It is his position that "the moment we pose the question of objects we are no longer occupied in the question of objects, but rather with the question of the relationship between the subject and the object" (14) or "the question of a particular relation between humans and objects" (16). In the publication he attempts to unshackle objects "from the gaze of humans" (19), to think of an object "that is for-*itself*" rather than always being understood in relation to a subject – what he calls "a *subjectless* object" (19, italics in original). But in order to do this, he argues, we must shift discussion from epistemology (the ways in which we know objects) to ontology (the actual 'being' of the objects for themselves). For as Bryant argues, "Questions of ontology… must precede questions of epistemology or questions of our *access* to objects. What an object *is* cannot be reduced to our *access* to objects" (2011:18, emphasis in original).

This has led to what has become known as "correlationism" which is the ground of most contemporary philosophy regardless of the content of that strand of philosophy. As Quentin Meillassoux explains it:

> by "correlation" we mean the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never either term considered apart from the other. (2008:5)

In other words we only ever understand the actual being of objects in relation to an aspect of the human.

> What we thus get is not a democracy of objects or actants where all objects are on an equal ontological footing, […] but instead a monarchy of the human in relation to all other beings where some instance of the human is treated as that which overdetermines all other beings and where the primary order of the day is always to determine how individual minds relate to other objects or how the social and cultural relates to being. (Bryant, 2011:39-40)

Bryant argues for a flat ontology (as opposed to a hierarchical ontology) in which all – including human subjects – are objects and the goal of democracy would then be to extend equality and justice to all such objects as far as it is possible to do so.

So my proposal here is first to spend some time exploring the ontology of the PaR object before questioning something of the politics of how we go about working with this object in pursuit of a radical sense of democracy.

PART 2: THE PaR OBJECT

For Peggy Phelan, the ontology of performance is its refusal to enter into the "economy of reproduction". In other words, "Performance's being … becomes itself through disappearance" (1993:146). As Simon Jones remarked some time ago, performance is akin

to Deleuze and Guattari's figure of the Bachelor: full of libidinal energy but with no desire to reproduce (2009:24). This has led many of us, and I am as guilty as the next guy on this score, to describe our works as ephemeral. The very existence of our works depends on our being able to experience them directly. If such an occasion for experience does not present itself, the work disappears. Faced with the crisis of the disappearing artwork most feel the need to find ways to hold on to it. We do this by weaving together documents – primarily images and words – and in this process a "textility" (Ingold, 2011:211) produced by makers from fleshy materials becomes a textuality produced by scriptorians (to coin a phrase from Latour), with the objective of grabbing hold of, stabilizing and then fixing the wayward works.

While I think there might be some truth in this line of thinking, the situation is probably somewhat more complex and interesting. Elsewhere, I have suggested that the nature of the knowledge objects in PaR can best be described as what historian of biology Hans-Jörg Rheinberger calls "epistemic things". According to Karin Knorr Cetina (2001:181), Rheinberger is particularly interested in "objects of knowledge that escape fixation", that are less like things and more like projections and/or processes. She suggests that these are knowledge objects that are "open, question-generating and complex" (2001:181); that there is an "incompleteness" about them whereby they unfold indefinitely over time and in unanticipated directions, never quite attaining a finality or fixedness. All we can hope for are representations that stand in for these knowledge objects as if they were able to hold together the object in time long enough for us to grasp its possibilities. Even when the project or production is "finished", there is a sense that it could have been otherwise; that it is never quite perfected or final or definitive. Whether we continue to work on it directly or not, the object will mutate and produce other meanings and significances; it will generate more questions, extend the practice, while always remaining unfinished, incomplete.

In my understanding, this description of a particular kind of research is close to what we are engaged in when performance practice becomes research practice. Even if productions emerge from such processes that have lives in the professional theatre context, and that end up as archival objects or traces in a company's historical record, as research objects they remain unfinished parts of a continually unfolding thinking process that expands in time and across space, intersecting with other unfinished objects and their thought processes along the way. As Knorr Cetina (2001:184) reminds us, "a stable name is not an expression and indicator of stable thinghood". Over time the object changes.

To use Steven Shaviro's terminology, our research objects are "forever escaping our grasp" through a "double movement of … retreat and eruption" (2014:LOC. 864). The former because our objects are always retreating into referential networks that are plural, forever expanding and highly complex and which are beyond our capacity to trace in their totality; the latter because the singularity of our objects constantly take us by surprise in ways that are beyond our expectation and in their excess confound our ability to articulate much about them. For Shaviro:

> Retreat and eruption are both movements by means of which things demonstrate that there is more to them than we can gather about them. A thing can never be fully defined by any list, no matter how extended, of its characteristics and qualities, for beyond all these, it has its own autonomous power. (Shaviro, 2014:LOC. 864)

Furthermore, "What retreat and eruption have in common is that they are alike irreducible to any correlation of subject and object, or of human perceiver and world perceived. They are both modes of escape from presence and from a human-centered context" (Shaviro, 2014:LOC. 864). This is what Jane Bennett calls 'vital materialism': "vitality is shared by all things and not limited to ourselves alone" (2010: 89). As Bennett puts it, "the capacity of these bodies [i]s not restricted to a passive 'intractability', but also include[s] the ability to make things happen, to produce effects" (2010:5).

But all of the above are descriptions of the external – or to use Whitehead's formulation: "public" – aspects of the knowledge object that emerges from PaR. They focus on the ways in which the object appears to us and/or the ways in which it behaves in relation to us or other objects. In this way the subject/object distinction remains intact. What about the "private" or inner experience of that object that escapes the subject because it is not available to us?

In a seminal paper written in 1974, Thomas Nagel argues that "there is something that it is like to *be*" an organism, like a bat for example, "something it is like *for* that organism" (436). Nagel points out that:

> ... bat sonar, though clearly a form of perception, is not similar in its operation to any sense that we possess, and there is no reason to suppose that it is subjectively like anything we can experience or imagine. This appears to create difficulties for the notion of what it is like to be a bat. (438)

What Nagel is saying is that humans are restricted to the resources at our disposal, our perceptual capacities and our language for example, and this means that humans "are inadequate to the task" of imagining what it is like to be a bat (439) or to the task of articulating in our language a detailed description of bat phenomenology or Martian phenomenology for that matter. However, this should not "lead us to dismiss as meaningless that claim that bats and Martians have experiences fully comparable in richness of detail to our own" (440).

Nagel does not extend his argument beyond the animal world to things like rocks or artworks for example. However, the philosopher Sam Coleman, building on the work of Bertrand Russell, extends Nagel's ideas, arguing that "absolute what-it-is-likeness" does not only apply to living things like bats, or quasi-living things like Martians, but must lie "at the heart of ontology" (2009:97).

I do not have the time or space here to delve into the intricate details of Coleman's argument, suffice to say that his position is (a) that there is a "what-it-is-likeness" for all things;

(b) that this private or inner state exceeds human capacity to imagine or articulate and has an existence independent from it like Latour's zebra's on the savannah in the first epigraph.

There is much argument between philosophers, even those who agree on the above facts in general, as to how and to what extent this plurality of diverse things interacts – from Graham Harman's withdrawal of objects into "mutually exclusive vacuums" (2005:75-6) from which any relation "is an extraordinary, fragile, and contingent achievement" (Shaviro, 2014:LOC. 562) to Whitehead and Shaviro's more fluid conceptions in which objects are engaged in broadly extensive, "universally promiscuous" (LOC. 519), relations. I tend to follow the latter in this regard. Whitehead argued that what he called "feeling" was distributed "throughout the actual world" (1929:177), although, like Coleman he did not believe "that a stone's feelings are conscious in the way that a human being's are" (Shaviro, 2014:LOC.1020). What this means for Whitehead is that each object "feels" all the other objects it encounters through "the transference of throbs of emotional energy" (1929:116) between the entities all of which exist on an equal plane. Which is why Whitehead suggests, as we saw in the second epigraph, that: "we find ourselves in a buzzing world, amid a democracy of fellow creatures" (1929:50); a world in which aesthetics as a mode of contact between beings "belongs to ontology as a whole, not to the special metaphysics of animal perception" (Harman, 2007b:205). Of course this involves what Shaviro calls "a certain cautious anthropomorphism" designed to avoid a pernicious, dualistic anthropocentrism (2014:LOC. 1020). As Jane Bennett puts it:

> Maybe it is worth running the risks associated with anthropomorphism (superstition, the divinization of nature, romanticism) because it, oddly enough, works against anthropocentrism: a chord is struck between person and thing, and I am no longer above or outside a nonhuman environment. (2010:120)

And this brings us to the third section of the discussion here in which we must question something of the politics of how we go about working with our performance-as-research objects in pursuit of a radical sense of democracy.

PART 3: BEYOND CAPTURE

Earlier I proposed, following Mouffe, that democracy involves the attempt to distribute principles of equality and justice through a wider group of players than simply those we understand as human. I would like to add to the discussion at this point, the views of Jacques Rancière on democracy. Much of Rancière's thinking on the subject is driven by a desire for "emancipation", which he understands as "a set of practices guided by the supposition that everyone is equal and by the attempt to verify this supposition" (1992:58). For our purposes, let us change the word "everyone" in the above to "everything".

But if we do this we must acknowledge as Bryant does quoting Ian Bogost, that while "all things equally exist … they do not exist equally" (Bogost, 2010). In other words, our democracy of objects is haunted by division. But then of course division is etymologically tied to the word democracy.

As Rancière would have it, democracy is "less a state of being than an act of contention that implements various forms of dissensus. It can be said to exist only when those who have no title to power, the *demos*, intervene as the dividing force that disrupts the *ochlos*" (Rockhill, 2004:83-84).

For Rancière the *demos* is the excluded part – those who have no place ("no share in the communal distribution of the sensible" (84)) whereas the *ochlos* is the part at the centre; the part that has a place and that is obsessed with an idea of unity ("a community obsessed with its own unification at the expense of excluding the demos" (88)).

Now I would suggest that our championing of PaR has been, in part at least, motivated by an urge to emancipate ourselves and our works from the strictures of academia and its regimes of performance management that involve the commodification of research outputs and processes that seems wholly alien to what we do. In other words we argue for our works to be treated equally to other kinds of works that are fundamentally textual and supposedly stable and thus transferable and reproducible. To this extent we are the *demos* – those who have no place – that aims to disrupt the *ochlos* – the textuality in all its form that occupies the place at the centre of our discipline.

Yet paradoxically we often *do* the opposite in our attempts to make our works fit within the accepted paradigms – we capture them. Note our constant obsession with documentation – a desire to capture what we are doing to make it more stable; to fix it.

To this extent our fervent desire for documentation operates as a kind of trap – that traps the work and, as we shall see, ourselves. And a trap, of course, is a device designed to bring someone or something into submission through some deceit or trickery – its primary features are "arrest and closure" and the "loss of mobility and autonomy" on the part of the trapped (Chow & Rohrhuber, 2011: 53). So, in the words of Rey Chow and Julian Rohrhuber:

> What begins as a democratic attempt … to dissolve [a] distinction … reintroduce[s] into the scene a crucial type of distinction – the hierarchy between the hunter and the prey, a hierarchy that underwrites the zone of contact as a site of cruelty, domination, subordination and assymetrical power dynamics. (2011:54)

In the light of this, what becomes of Kershaw's claim for PaR that it works according to "a democratically deconstructive and decentring agenda"? It seems to me that if we are to assert a claim to democratic practice we need to find a way to operate beyond capture.

The first sense in which this may be possible is to try to resist by all means "the ubiquity of the commodity", the reduction of the performance work to a form of textuality by stealth. This would require of us to refrain from all forms of documentation and writing that traps the work like a pinned butterfly (Bannerman, 2006); to have the courage to resist the reproducible commodity so desired by the institution and the fortitude to argue persistently for an acknowledgement of different ways of knowing and different modes of knowledge transfer and sharing. For as Simon Jones has argued "the performance as research object always runs the risk of remaining proper to writing, playing support to the

production and handling of texts of one sort or another" (2009:29). It might be said that for all that seems to have been achieved within the sphere of PaR over the past decade or so we might very well have simply served to refresh and consolidate the hegemony of the textual enterprise. It would seem to me, as it did to Jones, that "practice-as-research is that which flees textual practices" (2009:30) and yet we are all too quick to reduce our work to writing when the institution demands it from us for "the academic (alongside all other workers) performs or disappears" (2009:25) and performance in this sense requires the production of the fetishized textual object.

But I would be the first to acknowledge that such a refusal is probably unrealistic given the pressures we face as academic-practitioners in the institutions in which we work. So if this way of operating beyond capture is not going to work, and in my view it is unlikely to, we need to spend a little time exploring other possibilities beyond the acceptance of the capture-paradigm. Or at least to worry the problematic politics of entrapment by raising more complex ways of thinking about it and understanding it.

If we are to act democratically (understood in the dissensual sense that Rancière champions); if we are to do justice by our works, we have to think about capture differently and to do this I will draw some help from Rey Chow and Franck Cochoy.

Chow's strategy is to remind us that the story does not end once the trap is activated. Once the prey has been captured something new/other is brought into being: "the prey's experience of being captured" (2011:56). In this way, the aggressive act is transformed into an affective experience. And this experience is heteronomous: it is for the captured and the captor alike. The captured does not simply disappear or die; it is a captive in the trap oscillating between shock and pain and the fear of possible annihilation. Chow's point is that "a supplementary plane of articulation, the plane of articulation of an other, ensnared in but not coinciding with the hunter's, philosopher's, or conceptual artist's … now slides into place to rupture from within the trap's aforementioned, presumed discursive unity" (2011:57). In other words the trapped speaks back to the setter of the trap – a speaking that both evades and ensnares the hunter.

It evades the hunter because the trapped thing exceeds our capacity to know it and therefore our capacity to contain it. It is a buzzing, boiling thing that continues to assert its existence in the world regardless of us – we don't in fact turn it into a corpse as Bannerman would have us think of the pinned butterfly – because that is beyond our capacity. As Jane Bennett makes clear, "a vital materiality can never really be thrown 'away', for it continues its activities even [when] discarded" (2010:6).

And it ensnares us because we who have set the trap are drawn in, lured towards this other articulation – we become captivated. And in doing so we open a space, a hole from which the trapped can escape. As an example, Chow uses the Stasi operative, Wiesler, in the film *The lives of others,* who is tasked with spying on – listening in to – the writer Georg Dreyman but in the process becomes captivated by Dreyman's life to the extent that he inserts himself into that life. Wiesler visits Dreyman's apartment when he is absent. He wanders around in it, lies on the bed, steals a copy of Brecht's poems, and then when the Stasi are about to effect an arrest, he removes a crucial piece of evidence – a typewriter –

from its hiding place and thereby saves his supposed prey from final annihilation. This involves a kind of double move that captures and then infiltrates in order to free again.

Working in a completely different field – economics and marketing – Franck Cochoy sets out to examine what devices make possible the interaction between regulated and organized structures and "the less understood, more fleeting, more fluid collectivities" (2007:204). He defines the French word *captation* as "the ensemble of the operations which try to exert a hold over, or attract to oneself [...] something that one does not, or rather not yet, completely control" (204 and 205). To my mind this sounds a lot like what we do in our interactions with our research objects as we endeavour to bring their waywardness under control. In his field, *capitation* reflects "the will to encircle, to surround … to catch … or to seduce users, clients, consumers" in order to increase sales and as a result, profits (204). For us it is about forcing the artwork to do our work – to stand as proof of our performance in a research environment. But the point Cochoy makes is that we have a greater chance of benefitting from those/that we wish to hold onto if we allow for the possibility of "departure or indifference … and even allow one's target freedom: one has a greater chance of holding onto one's prey … if the latter has the feeling that [it] is able to leave, to be unconcerned" (205). The language here is the same; the modus operandi is different. For Cochoy '*captation* supposes an opening, mastery implies dispossession'. He suggests that we must "vigorously supply the means to allow flight, to ensure free movement" (205). Our focus should be less on how effectively we can trap/capture that which emerges from our research makings and more on observing the path of the target, anticipating its trajectory and trying to join up with it (212). This is akin to what Tim Ingold, in his own contribution to the debate on the interaction of diverse kinds of entities, refers to as following the materials (2011: 212) like a carpenter follows the grain of the wood as he works on it. This is not a passive following but an active one in which we must pay close attention, be ever alert to cues and clues along the way. So to develop the analogy one step further and to draw to an end let me turn to a practice example.

The first peoples of Southern Africa, the San hunter gatherers, engaged in a particular hunting practice that involved no laying of traps. Instead hunters would track animals – usually large antelope – for days and if successful in tracking down the animal would shoot it with a poison-tipped arrow. But the animal did not die immediately or even quickly. In fact, the animal was then allowed to escape, to flee the hunter and the hunter would run behind the animal, following in its tracks, in order to retrieve it once the poison had finally brought it down, which could take as long as 4/5 days. Because the animal could run much faster than the human hunter there was a good chance that if the hunter was not a skilled tracker or a strong runner, when the animal fell, it might not be found or it might become the prey of some other predator. And then all the running would have been in vain and worse than that, the hunter might actually find himself in some danger: physically extended/exhausted; with little to sustain him; exposed and in danger of being devoured himself by other predators. As the anthropologist, Alfred Gell argues, this form of "hunting equalizes hunters and victims" and unites them "in spontaneous action and reaction, whereas trapping decisively hierarchizes hunter and victim" (1996: 29).

To operate beyond capture and according to "a democratically deconstructive and decentring agenda" requires, I think, not the trapping of our works but freeing them – their innate "what-it-is-likeness" – allowing them to develop as they will through retreat and eruption. And then to nurture our capacity to follow alongside paying close attention. It also involves a recognition that if we try to trap them we might very well become ensnared ourselves. We need to concentrate less on holding onto than on accepting the ultimate indifference of our works and their possible departure from us, their free flight of fancy in which they exist for themselves and interact with other objects independently of us who made them. All we can hope for is to follow the trajectory. Hopefully what this might lead to is less space needed to store documents and more space made for an open, question-generating thinking unfolding over time in unanticipated directions.

Figure d: Jennie Reznek and Mdu Kweyama in *Onnest'bo*, District Six Homecoming Centre, 2003/2004. Photograph by Mark Wessels.

ARTISTIC RESEARCH AND THE INSTITUTION: A CAUTIONARY TALE[19]

by Mark Fleishman

What impact do the specific institutional contexts in which we produce research have on the artwork? What would an ethical approach to the work of art-making entail with reference to these institutional pressures/distortions?

POINTS OF DEPARTURE

The central question I will examine here might be stated as follows: what impact do the specific institutional contexts, academic or otherwise, in which we produce research, have on the artwork itself and the potential ways of knowing associated with it? If we were to shift from a concern with epistemology (how we go about doing artistic research), or ontology (what in fact artistic research is), to a Levinasian concern with ethics, what would an ethical approach to the work of art entail with reference to these institutional pressures/distortions?

I have been engaged with artistic research since the mid-1990s. Over that time, I would suggest that artistic research has undergone a process of institutionalisation. I understand institutionalisation to be a process by which individuals come to accept shared definitions of a particular reality – the process by which actions are repeated and given similar meaning by oneself and others. Such an understanding requires us to accept that institutions are not 'naturally' occurring entities but are made by people over a period of time. Any process of institutionalisation involves regulative elements: the development of policies and work rules; normative elements: the emergence of habits and work norms; and cognitive elements: the institution of a relatively stable set of beliefs and values – all three help to provide a basis for legitimacy and durability. One vector of institutionalisation has been driven from within the arts disciplines themselves. Artistic research has developed a history, a number of structured organisations in different geographical locations (PARIP; The Society for Artistic Research; The Performance as Research Working Group of the IFTR; The SenseLab, etc.), and a set of writings, literature consisting of a body of key texts. And, while these texts are by no means equally available or meaningful to all and the literature assembles and reassembles differently according to regional specificities, understandings, and proclivities, the literature ensures an element of legitimacy and a perception of stability to the practice. Even if we cannot/do not necessarily always agree on everything to do with artistic research, the existence of the literature suggests that

something actual is out there when we speak of artistic research in our various contexts.

One of the papers from that body of literature, published in 2009, continues to haunt me in the sense that it unsettles any certainty I might entertain about what we now, quite confidently, assert about artistic research. It is a chapter by Simon Jones, at the time Professor of Performance at the University of Bristol, with the title: "Practice-as-research as a paradigm shift in performance studies" (2009). I will take some time here to rehearse some of what I take to be its key points.

Jones begins by pointing out that the chapter is itself a development of an earlier conference paper entitled *The con and the text* (1993) in which Jones is interested in the idea that when we engage in doing art practice as a form of research in the academy, we "con" or fool others in the academy into believing that practice is a text by a different name and that what we do when we practice is the same as what they do when they produce texts (2009). Or, alternatively, we "con" ourselves that we are doing something different, with an entirely different logic, when in fact we are really aligning performance texts in the academy with "always already self-authorizing critical texts" and "in doing so, we have committed the theatre event to the logic of the critical text. We have validated it on terms not its own" (2009:20).

Jones then goes on to argue that "the closer [artistic] researchers get to power – that is to say, the white-hot interstices through which capital circulates – the more volatile the environment becomes, and the more attention researchers' activities are subjected to by their paymasters"(2009:20). So, as long as practice-based work in the academy remained essentially undergraduate and was focused on skills development for application in the various forms of the so-called "creative industries" out of the orbit of research and knowledge production (the "real" work of the university), we were pretty much left to our own devices (we could determine our own modes of practice and of assessment for example). However, as soon as we began to venture into the realm of research (including doctoral education) and to make claims on the funding schemes associated with that realm, our modes of practice were subjected to a level of scrutiny previously not encountered.

The latter, in my opinion, introduces institutionalisation from without: the ways in which the academy, as institution, maintains itself by resisting the unfettered development of difference. In other words, once the reality of artistic research became clear, and because of the need to maintain a semblance of academic autonomy, rather than an outright outlawing, specific policies, forms, and methods were instituted by those in authority, which disciplined artistic research, delimiting its possibilities. And, these policies, forms, and methods were acceptable as long as they were essentially recognisable or believable as 'text-like': in other words, as long as we could con the institution or ourselves. In this way, "the hegemonic authority of the textual asserted itself" (Jones, 2009:21) once more and the institution maintained its own reality in which there are many different disciplines but very little fundamental difference between them epistemologically.

Jones argues that one of the consequences of what I am calling the institutionalisation from without is the economisation of the objects and outputs of artistic research. According to Brian Massumi, economisation refers to "the process by which the qualitative field…

is economically appropriated and subsumed under the principle of perpetual quantitative growth" (Massumi, 2018:39). As part of this process, artistic research becomes commodified – its essential eventual/occurrent nature gives way to the production of things that are apparently stable and occupy a specific fixed position in time and space. These things are then valued quantitatively (the more we can produce, the more value is generated), and this becomes the basis for processes such as tenure evaluations, promotion applications, and research assessment exercises. The drive of the neo-liberal institution, then, is to keep the system operating efficiently (read: producing as much as possible so that the institution can profit) and, to paraphrase Jon McKenzie, the artistic researcher, like all other workers, must perform or ultimately disappear (2001).

This leads to the part of Jones' argument that I find haunting. It is the appeal, right back at the point of artistic research's emergence, not to allow this process to take root. Not to con ourselves or others into believing that there is a commensurability between the artistic practice part of our research and the hegemony of the text in the academy; rather, for artistic research to become a play of weakness at the heart of the academy. That is, by emphasising the anomalies in our practices "that threaten … to disrupt the strong lines of force that mark the flow of capital conducted by certain kinds of textual practice, the attempt to monopolize the business of naming, of judging, of mastering, in the pure sense of coming to know a practice apparently once and for all time" (Jones, 2009:22). In this sense, Jones is arguing for artistic research to operate in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's terms, as a "minor literature": "an expression machine capable of disorganizing its own forms, and disorganizing its forms of contents"(Deleuze & Guattari: 1986:28). I say that I find this haunting because I fear that we have capitulated too easily, that we have given in to the authority and the logic of the text so as to meet our performance targets and imperatives at the expense of holding onto what makes artistic research particular/different – the possibility of getting beyond capitalist imperatives, in part at least, by revaluing value as qualitative rather than quantitative. This is an action that Massumi argues is "ethical by definition" (2018:4). By not taking heed of this call, it is my contention that we have behaved unethically or, perhaps, we have ignored/forgotten the ethical dimension of the work of artistic research. At this point, I will leave Jones's paper temporarily, but I will return to it later.

MY PRACTICE AND ITS CONTEXT: MAGNET THEATRE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

For the past 32 years, I have been engaged in a practice that involves the making of performance works or productions. This is a practice I have described elsewhere as a particular form of dramaturgy (Fleishman, 2016). The particular context within which I have conducted this practice is the organisation known as Magnet Theatre, based in Cape Town. In parallel with this practice, I have also been an academic in a university theatre department. It is important to note here that the duration of my art practice extends beyond the duration of my academic employment. In other words, I was engaged in the practice of art before I began to conceive of it as a part of my research.

Elsewhere, I have outlined the features of Magnet's dramaturgical practice in detail (see Fleishman, 2010; Fleishman, 2012), but here I simply wish to suggest that besides being a practice of making works, Magnet's practice of dramaturgy is also a knowledge practice. In other words, while making space for new works, Magnet also makes space for thinking, for raising questions, generating ideas, and developing concepts. In this respect, in Karin Knorr-Cetina's terms, Magnet Theatre is a particular "knowledge setting" (1999:8). As such, it has its own "epistemic culture" that is defined by Knorr Cetina as "those amalgams of arrangements and mechanisms … which, in a given field, make up *how we know what we know*," (1999:1, emphasis in original) and its own knowledge-producing strategies, which are not so much regulated as normative patterns of activities.

While completely unpacking this "epistemic culture" is beyond the scope of this presentation, I would like to highlight four features. First, the body, as opposed to textuality, is the central methodological instrument or point of departure in Magnet's knowledge practice. This does not mean that we eschew texts completely, but rather that we proceed from the body in space and, if texts become involved, they follow after. Second, the nature of the knowledge objects in Magnet's knowledge practice can best be described as what the historian of biology, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, calls "epistemic things": "objects of knowledge that escape fixation" (Rheinberger, 1992). As Knorr Cetina suggests, these are knowledge objects that are "open, question-generating and complex" (2001:181). For Knorr Cetina there is an "incompleteness" about such knowledge objects; they unfold indefinitely over time and in unanticipated directions, never quite attaining a finality or fixedness. Third, each Magnet production has a project team which constitutes a "repertoire of expertise" (Knorr Cetina, 1999:225) required to bring the production to fruition. The emphasis is on collaboration rather than on individual genius. Fourth, if Magnet's practice is a way of thinking – another way of doing philosophy – then it is a philosophy understood in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, not as a set of concepts that are "waiting for us ready-made like heavenly bodies" (1994:5) to be applied to the world and our engagement with it, but rather the "art of forming, inventing and fabricating concepts" (2).

Despite research being a part of what Magnet Theatre says it does (its vision statement claims that it "seeks to celebrate a spirit of theatrical research") and that it has the infrastructure and collaborative networks to facilitate the work of artistic research, it is not funded as a research organisation but as an arts organisation. And, as an arts organisation, particularly one in the global South, it exists under conditions of precarity – always needing to chase the money – whether from audiences buying tickets or from funders. In an environment of austerity with a decreasing funding pool, the chase is increasingly competitive. Furthermore, under the conditions of the neo-liberal economic system operative in the country, access to funding, whether from public or private sources, is dependent on being able to demonstrate social impact. Such impact is demonstrated through quantitative value measures – bums on seats, numbers of people benefitting; numbers of outputs produced; instances of skills transfer. Therefore, Magnet has built up a whole suite of projects around social impact, with only an indirect relationship to the theatre production and research foci, and has used these to fund the

research and production activities described above, indirectly or, perhaps, covertly. As a result, while Magnet has, over time, become a relatively well-resourced organisation with a growing community of participants, most of these participants do not have an interest or expertise in research and, even if they do have an interest, they certainly have minimal time in the midst of everything else they are doing to pursue/develop it. Furthermore, as an arts organisation, Magnet has no overt requirement to reflect on its work and its relation to other existing practices, or to articulate publicly the thinking it generates through its research activities and the discourses that support it. The only requirement is that it demonstrates social impact in quantitative terms relative to other similar organisations and, to do this, it must produce – continually and in increasing quantities.

On the other hand, the university is a space in which the ideas emerging through practice at Magnet can be refined through discussion with a community of like-minded researchers, through research writing, and through postgraduate teaching – particularly pedagogical initiatives around artistic research methods and procedures. In other words, the work at Magnet is folded into the university context and, in the process, it becomes the driver for ongoing theorising, and influences other practitioners. At the same time, my position at the university pays my salary, ring-fences time for a different kind of thinking (at least notionally), and provides access to other research costs, such as travel (on a competitive basis).

It seems from the preceding discussion that the two contexts of Magnet Theatre and the university exist in a symbiotic relationship with respect to artistic research, where symbiotic refers to an interaction between two different entities/organisms existing in close physical association. This relationship has evolved over a number of years and is facultative rather than obligate; the different symbionts or entities involved can exist independently of the relationship – they do not require the relationship for their ongoing and complete existence. The question that follows is whether this symbiotic relationship should be characterised as mutualism: both sides benefit; as commensalism: only one side benefits but the other side is not harmed; or parasitic: one side benefits to the detriment of the other side.

AN ETHICAL APPROACH: OPERATING BEYOND CAPTURE

In 1951, Suzanne Briet published a manifesto on the definition of the document. In it, she states that "a document is evidence in support of a fact" (1951:7). It is "any physical or symbolic sign, preserved or recorded, intended to represent, to reconstruct, or to demonstrate a physical or conceptual phenomenon" (7). She goes on to consider the case of an antelope. If the antelope is running free in the African veld, it is, according to her, not a document. However, if it is captured and displayed in a zoo, it becomes an object of study and therefore a document, which acts as evidence for those who study it. It becomes an intentional object.

Are Magnet's works like antelopes? When they are brought into the institutions of the academy – do they become documents? Are they reduced to pale versions of their true

selves forced to exist within the confines of the institution and its logics? Has, in Tim Ingold's terms, a "textility" (2011:211) produced by makers from fleshy materials become a textuality produced by "scriptorians" (to coin a phrase from Bruno Latour), captured, stabilised, and fixed in place and time?

While I believe there is a truth in this that presents a challenge to those of us who would conduct our research through art practice, I am not proposing that we abandon all our attempts at exposition: at speaking or writing. I might suggest, however, that we think less of writing *about* and more of writing *with* or *alongside* the practice. But I would also suggest that we resist the will to meaning/comprehension that is so prevalent in the Humanities and, in the process, avoid or perhaps simply delay the inevitable domestication of the antelope in the zoo. To do this, I contend, we have to proceed primarily from an ethical perspective and, in line with Emmanuel Levinas, such an ethics would insist on conceiving of and maintaining the artistic research object as alien: alien in and of itself – beyond grasping or comprehension – and alien to the institutional logics and neo-liberal imperatives of the contemporary university. With regard to the former – the alien in and of itself – we must, I would argue, aspire to engage in a manner that is beyond capture, that does not trap, appropriate, or render mundane our artworks in pursuit of our research.

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The work of art is (and here I am influenced by Levinas) not a phenomenon but an enigma. It is "something ultimately refractory to intentionality and opaque to the understanding" (Critchley, 2002:8). To the extent that we can approach it analytically at all, it is "a movement toward an alterity … that is not comprehended, or appropriated" (Lingis, 1986:xiii). For Levinas, the relationship with alterity is the topic of ethics. In his later work, Levinas suggests that it is through "sensibility" that we can begin to approach across the distance between ourselves and the alien, that we can begin to make contact: a contact that reverberates as sensation. For Levinas, sensible things have a specifically sensuous character made up of quality and intensity and sensation "is not just reception of data for cognitive synthesis" – a reduction of sensible things to signs that reach beyond the sensations themselves to some meaning that lies beyond them (Lingis, 1986:xx). As Alphonso Lingis argues, "Levinas contrasts presence, achieved in representation, and proximity, effected in sensibility. Cognition represents, it renders present across a distance. Sensibility … effects proximity and contact, approaches across that distance" (Lingis, 1986:xiii). Adopting such an approach can be described as "non-hermeneutical" and "a challenge against the universality claim of interpretation" (Gumbrecht, 2004:2). This goes against the grain of the dominant modes of practice within university humanities disciplines based on particularly western epistemologies, but it is not meant to be "anti-hermeneutical" – against all interpretation, specifically of so-called aesthetic objects. Hans Gumbrecht, for example, argues that we should "conceive of aesthetic experience as an oscillation (and sometimes as an interference) between 'presence effects' and 'meaning effects'" (Gumbrecht, 2004:2).

To engage in this way proposes a slowing down of approach that is, in itself, oppositional to the overall habits of the neo-liberal institution in which the will to produce is limitless, profoundly inhuman, and totally remorseless. For the Korean-born, German-based philosopher, Byung-Chul Han, "what we face today is an absence of any experience of duration" or the ability to "linger" (2017:33-4). This is coupled with the fact that we have all become enslaved to work: "everything has to be a kind of work, and there is no time that is not dedicated to work" (2017:98). He draws on Martin Heidegger who, in his later work, makes much of the idea of slowness, the "courage to go slowly". Heidegger emphasised the idea of lingering or dwelling in the world in a manner he termed "releasement" (*gelassenheit*), a "counter-movement, even a counter-rest to the determination to act" (Han, 2017:83). *Gelassenheit* in Heidegger refers to a particular mode of thinking that is described as "meditative" as opposed to "calculative". While calculative thinking builds on the given circumstances to achieve specific ends racing "from one prospect to the next" and generally reproducing the same because of increasing time pressures, meditative thinking "bides its time," attempting to reach for something truly different beyond the known and the same (Han, 2017:46-7). As Heidegger put it, we are "in flight from thinking"(1966:45) and we need to cultivate the patience required to trace the "measured signs of the incalculable" (Heidegger, 1998:237). This requires a practice of lingering, through which we can rediscover an experience of qualitative duration.

With regard to the latter point on alienness – alien to the institutional logics and neo-liberal imperatives of the contemporary university – I will return, once again, to Simon Jones. In his article, Jones proposes a model for the "emergence of value" in artistic research based on the idea of "dialogue" proposed by the physicist David Bohm. He conceives of such a dialogue as a gathering of multiple participants, logics, and modalities in which any sense of judgement is suspended; an act of thinking together collectively without predetermined agenda or fixed objective. A dialogue is not a discussion or a debate that works towards a goal or decision. It is an open-ended process of exploration between positions that can technically never agree even when embodied by the same person but which, nonetheless, recognise the value in working along- side each other without any attempt to resolve the paradox. Such gatherings have the potential to produce a "complexity and intensity ... infinitely greater than any single artist or scholar," (Jones, 2009:27) or any individual modality could produce.

The above suggests that artistic research practice must struggle to retain its collaborative and open-ended dimensions when it enters the academic context – what Massumi calls its "transindividual" and "n-dimensional heterogeneity" – in the face of attempts to reduce it to "a punctual event of accumulation, individually owned" (Massumi, 2018:38-9). When an artistic research process becomes an intentional object in the institutional context of the academy, we must fight to retain its alien multiplicities: multiple dimensions; multiple modes of investigation; multiple questions to answer; multiple problems to address.

Now, with this idea of multiplicities in mind, I want to return to Magnet Theatre. There is another, intermediate level of organisation at play that is central to the "epistemic

culture" of Magnet Theatre and its symbiotic relationship with the university. Early Magnet works tended to be random, opportunistic events that responded to various impulses and circumstances. Over time, a more considered relationship between the work in the university, and its conceptions of research, and the practice in the studios, and on the stages at Magnet, began to emerge. This led to conceptualising a number of multi-year thematic foci around which a number of different kinds of activities and outputs coalesced. In this way, the research is arranged into what I term, following Deleuze and Guattari, "assemblages". Some of the elements that make up any particular assemblage take the form of an "intermingling of bodies reacting to each other"(1988:88) at a variety of scales – the human and non-human bodies engaging each other in the molecular moments of each production; one production reacting to another at the molar level of forms and formations. Other elements take the form of "acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies"(1988:88, emphasis in original) which might be formal (as in journal articles, or book chapters) or informal (as in interviews, rehearsal notes, post-performance discussions, reviews, etc.).

Some of the elements are produced by Magnet, and some are produced by others, most often from within the university context, in reaction to what is produced by Magnet. To this extent, the assemblage is not entirely predictable or planned. It is not determined in advance but emerges over time, revealing its properties and capacities in the process. It is a structural composition defined by its dynamic nature, shifting and adapting as it incorporates new elements. There is a sense of coherence between the elements. But this doesn't mean a sense of total agreement. The assemblage is characterised by difference, by the emergence of alternative possibilities. What is required is what Deleuze and Guattari call a "disjunctive synthesis", which is an affirming and "positive relation among a multiplicity of… incompatible alternatives" (Shaviro, 2009:114).

I would argue that conceiving of artistic research as an assemblage is to understand it – to paraphrase Massumi – as an ecology of multiplicities belonging to everyone and no-one, which resists private appropriation: the enclosure of its potentialities into a possession (Massumi, 2018:38-9). This, together with an ethical approach built around proximity rather than presence (understood as representation or comprehension), around lingering rather than the hectic onward rush to production, has the potential, at the very least, to resist, weakly and playfully, the institutional stresses and the distortions they cause to our ways of knowing.

Figure e: *Clanwilliam Arts Project*, Clanwilliam. Photograph by Mark Wessels.

SECTION 2:
PaR IN RESPONSE TO THE WORLD

INTRODUCTION TO PAPERS REPRODUCED IN SECTION 2

This second section of Part I collects Mark's writing between 2011 and 2016 which explores how PaR might be used to respond to socio-political areas of concern in our contemporary world. Where 'Knowing performance' and 'The difference of performance as research' establish a foundation for using PaR as a methodology, the papers in this section show PaR in play through various artistic research projects. In each paper Mark articulates the specifics of his PaR process, the philosophies underpinning and enacted by the PaR processes, as well as a detailed engagement with the theatre productions that made up his artistic research arc from 2000 onwards: *The Clanwilliam Arts Project* (2001-2018), *53 Degrees* (2002-2003), *Onnest'bo* (2002-2006), *Rain in a Deadman's Footprints* (2004-2005) and *Cargo* (2006-2007).

Each paper considers a different philosophical aspect of Mark's PaR process, in dialogue with a specific production. It is perhaps also useful to note, in connection with Part II of this handbook, that Mark identifies his artistic practice within the field of theatre and performance-making as dramaturgy, in the way that in Part II, say, Khanyisile Mbongwa identifies hers as curation or Illka Louw identifies hers as scenography. The papers gathered in this section engage the contentiousness of remembering in the postcolony and the intervention that a dramaturgical process and theatrical products might make in the memory work of the postcolony, in this particular instance in the region commonly named through colonial into postcolonial history as 'Cape Town' and, when including its surrounding areas beyond the city boundaries, as the 'Cape'.

The first paper is the 2011 "*Cargo*: staging slavery at the Cape", which was published in the *Contemporary Theatre Review* and it takes as its case study Magnet Theatre and Jazzart Dance Theatre's 2007 production, *Cargo*, directed by Mark. In the article Mark articulates how he understands his dramaturgical process as engaging time and silence, drawing in particular on Tim Ingold's "dwelling" (2000) and Paul Ricoeur's writing on historiography (the methods of historians) (2004).

The article starts with a discussion of the controversy surrounding the Prestwich Place development in Greenpoint, Cape Town, in 2003. As property developers began work on a luxury residential high rise they unearthed the remains of over 3000 humans from the early days of the Cape colony. On investigation the area was found to be the burial grounds for people deemed to be on the margins of the colony's society and a torture and execution site under colonial law. How to respond to these human remains with respect and honour in the contemporary moment, with a 90-million-rand property development under way, led to a complicated, painful debate between state, civil society, various academic disciplines and the corporate sector. Fleishman pulls time and silence out as the two key factors in this public debate: time for the work of memory, for remembering the dead, and the knottiness of silence when silence is what made the humans, whose remains were found, invisible in life and death, but that archaeological exhumation and study of the remains would be a kind of "speaking for" the dead that does a further violence to them in a way that a respectful silence might better honour them. Mark positions his discussion

within discourse on the African postcolony (Mbembe, 2001), memorialisation and in particular the memorialisation of historic violences (Nora, 1989; Young, 2000), to argue for how performance might offer constructive ways for engaging time and silence in memory work.

As Lauren Cull advocates, referenced by Mark in '"Routes of inheritance" in performance as research', performance and philosophy are able to develop "new ideas…on the basis of a mutually transformative encounter" (2012:23, qtd in Fleishman, 2013).[20] 'Cargo: staging slavery at the Cape' articulates the ways in which the making of *Cargo* and the final production, productively and complexly intervened in the public debates over the human remains discovered at Prestwich Place. The article however also articulates how *Cargo* engages and furthers philosophies and practices for memory work. African oral practice, the work of scholars like Ingold, Ricouer, Nora and Young and performance practice theory are drawn together to inform each other in thinking through what *Cargo* did, and *Cargo* in turn, as a work of PaR, speaks back to and how it extends the possibilities of these practices and discourses.

The final paper reproduced in this section is 'Making space for ideas: the knowledge work of Magnet Theatre' from *Magnet Theatre: three decades of making space*, a retrospective of Magnet Theatre's work, published in 2016. Magnet Theatre is the theatre company Mark co-founded with Jennie Reznek in 1998 and continues to co-direct with Reznek and Mandla Mbothwe. The artistic PaR Mark describes in the articles discussed and reproduced here in Part I, is facilitated and enabled by Magnet Theatre and PaR is one of Magnet Theatre's core functions as a performing arts organisation. 'Making space for ideas' draws together the interrelated ideologies supporting Mark's dramaturgical process into an overarching delineation of how Magnet Theatre: 1) conducts research to make theatre; 2) reflects on the practices of theatre and what they might enable in response to the world; 3) draws on insights from point 2 in relation to the gathering of research material of point 1, to use theatre as a research tool to better understand and respond to the world.

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20 '"Routes of Inheritance' in Performance as Research", was presented at the International Federation for Theatre Research conference, Barcelona, 2013. The paper takes as its case study *53 Degrees*, using Alfred North Whitehead's thinking around "routes of inheritance" (1929/1978, 279, as quoted in the title) and Tim Ingold's "wayfaring" (2007) to articulate the aspect of Fleishman's PaR work that deals with discovery through the process of performance making.

Another paper not included in this handbook, but which has relevance to Mark's articulations of PaR is "The Body in/And the Archive: A Dramaturgical Approach to Remembering from the Postcolony", a keynote address given at the SIBMAS annual conference in Copenhagen, 2016. SIBMAS is the International Association of Libraries, Museums, Archives and Documentation Centres of the Performing Arts. Given the context the paper was presented in, it makes an intervention into conceptions of archiving and archival objects. *Onnest'bo* is the case study focus of this paper. Made in partnership with the District Six Museum, this production resonates with the SIBMAS context of thinking through archival practices and museums. Interestingly, where SIBMAS is concerned with documenting performances and preserving their traces, Mark offered this keynote to propose how *performance* might be a particular kind of valuable and enlivening archival tool. Both *53 Degrees and Onnest'bo* are discussed in "Making Space for Ideas", the final reproduced paper in this section of Part I.

Figure f: Full company, *Cargo*, Spier Amphitheatre, Stellenbosch, 2007. Photograph by Garth Stead.

CARGO: STAGING SLAVERY AT THE CAPE[21]

By Mark Fleishman

This is about remembering in the postcolony. A remembering that is less about the need to forestall forgetting than it is about a putting back together of the fractured body (Brandstetter, 2000; Seremetakis, 2000). A postcolony defined in the terms of Achille Mbembe: the multiple, contradictory moments of everyday life in Africa read against the persistent accretions of slavery, colonialism, apartheid and neo-liberal forms of democracy (Mbembe, 2001).

Mbembe describes the postcolony as a "time-space characterized by proliferation and multiplicity [. . .] an era of displaced entanglements, the unity of which is produced out of differences" (Mbembe & Hoeller, 2002). Its characteristics include volatility, excess, hysteria, racial delirium, superfluity, nervous discomfort and improvisation, flexibility and resilience. In this palimpsestuous timespace, diverse urban worlds exist in the same territory filled with discontinuous fixtures and flows and odd juxtapositions, and the past has an uncanny habit of inserting itself into the present in surprising and unexpected ways (Mbembe, 2004:373-405).

An example of this haunting of the present by a past that will not be silenced is the case of Prestwich Place. In 2003 the remains of in excess of 3000 human skeletons were discovered on a site in Prestwich Street in Cape Town, buried beneath a building demolished to make way for a 90-million-rand private sector 'New York-style' 'World Class' residential development now known as 'The Rockwell'. Prestwich Street[22] lies in an area called De Waterkant, which the city describes as a development node. In the early colonial period the area was a sandy stage for hangings, torture and the burial of those elements of society who were not considered fit enough for internment in the colony's respectable cemeteries: "slaves, free-blacks, artisans, fishermen, sailors, maids, washerwomen and their children, as well as executed criminals, suicide deaths, paupers and unidentified victims of shipwrecks" (Hart, 2003, cited in Shepherd, 2007:7).

The remains discovered at Prestwich Street seemed to have formed part of this vast burial ground for the underclasses, buried without grave markers or coffins. In accordance with the recently enacted National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999), the developer was obliged to halt construction and to inform the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA). The developer appointed the Archaeological Contracts Office (ACO), a University of Cape Town-based unit, to conduct the

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21   This text by Mark Fleishman was first published in 2011 in the *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Volume 21, Issue 1, under the title "Cargo: Staging Slavery at the Cape". The copyright is held by *Contemporary Theatre Review* and it is reprinted here with the permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, <u>http://www.tandfonline.com</u>, on behalf of *Contemporary Theatre Review*.

22   The site is commonly referred to as Prestwich Place.

archaeological work on the site, and the ACO applied for and was granted a permit by SAHRA to conduct "a rescue exhumation of human remains".[23]

The exhumations began on 11 June 2003. A few weeks later the public participation process required by the act began with a meeting at St Stephen's Church. This angry meeting was the beginning of an intense and often dramatic debate regarding what was to be done with the site and the remains. On one side stood the developers, stressing daily the millions of rands that they were losing as a result of delays, and the archaeologists appointed by them who were intent on removing the bones and subjecting them to scientific study to recover the 'facts in the ground'. On the other side stood the hastily formed Hands Off Prestwich Place Ad Hoc Committee, [24] consisting of ex-anti-apartheid activists, Muslim and Christian spiritual leaders and academics from the historically black University of the Western Cape, resisting the exhumations (Shepherd, 2007:8). In the middle stood SAHRA, mandated by legislation to intervene and adjudicate in such affairs.

The upshot of this confrontation was that permission was granted for the bodies to be exhumed and to be removed from the site and that a new site in the vicinity was identified 'for memorializing and re-internment'.[25] However, it was also declared that no anatomical research would be allowed on the bones.

According to Nick Shepherd, the conflict around Prestwich Place was one between archaeology conceived of as "instrumental science, distanced from broader issues of culture and society", and a more nuanced, multi-disciplinary research approach that "sought to insert the events at Prestwich Street into a prevailing debate in post-apartheid society around notions of truth, reconciliation and restitution" (Shepherd, 2007:20). Are the bones artefacts, units of information, of cold, hard data, or are they ancestors, to be awakened, recalled, honoured, recognized and remembered? But what exactly would such a multi-disciplinary research involve? And what was it that the Prestwich Place Project Committee (PPPC) was proposing for the site?

In my reading, based on the records of the public participation meetings and the submissions made by the PPPC at various stages of the administrative process, two things were being sought: time and silence.

According to Heidi Grunebaum, people who attended the public participation meetings "appealed for time to come to terms with the meaning of a burial ground in the centre of a 'major node of development expansion in the city'" (SAHRA Permit Committee 2, cited in Grunebaum, 2007:213). What was being requested on the one hand was a suspension of time, an opportunity for "countertemporality", (SAHRA Permit Committee 2, cited in Grunebaum,

23   SAHRA 2003, Permit No. 80/03/06/001/51 issued by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) Archaeology, Paleontology, Meteorites and Heritage Objects Permit Committee to T. J. G. Hart of the Archaeology Contracts Office.

24   Originally the committee was known as the Hands Off Prestwich Street Ad Hoc Committee, echoing the Hands Off District Six campaign in earlier times. Later it became the Prestwich Place Project Committee (PPPC).

25   SAHRA, 2003, p. 6, cited in Heidi Grunebaum, 'Unburying the Dead in the "Mother City": Urban Topographies of Erasure', Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America (PMLA), 122.1 (2007), 210–19 (p. 215).

2007:214) or, as one person put it, to open "a time for the dead" (cited in Shepherd, 2007:11). This was time for memory work: naming, listing, recalling, re-storying, accounting, deferring, listening, speaking and claiming (Grunebaum, 2007: 214). On the other hand, and in an apparently contradictory way, what was being requested was a process of historicisation, the locating of the site and the remains within time, marking a position within a sequence of past, present and future from which they had been excluded before.

As for silence, in its final appeal to the Minister of Arts and Culture, the PPPC expressed a desire for the exhumations, the scientific investigations and the development to be stopped and for the site to be preserved as a *vrijplaats* – an open space for memory and identity.[26] This notion of an open or free space, emptied of any new structures or uses, suggests a particular kind of silence. Nick Shepherd argues that what is required in places like Prestwich Street is an "archaeology of silence, of secrecy, of closure (rather than disclosure)" to prevent the "archi-violence" Keisuke Sato writes about, the material and epistemological "violence done against sites and remains in the process of archaeological investigation" (Sato, 206, cited in Shepherd, 2007:21).[27]

But the call for silence displays an obvious contradiction. On the one hand, those who call for the silence deplore the erasures that cause the silence. On the other hand, they can offer no way of alleviating the silence except by offering more silence (Jonker 2005:68).28 This gives rise to many questions. What might render silence articulate? How might silence be made to speak in unspeakable ways? Is there an ethics of silence? As Julian Jonker asks: who has the ethical right to speak for the dead and of the dead? How may the dead be made to speak, and of what will they speak? (Jonker, 2005:50-51).

What the example of Prestwich Place indicates is that while the postcolony demands remembering, its particularities render remembering highly problematic, if not impossible. In what follows, I will suggest the possibility that performance and a particular practice of dramaturgy might be one way of intervening in this process of remembering, one way of making the silent dead speak, because performance is

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26   According to Nick Shepherd, the term 'vrijplaats', as used in this context, comes from Christian Ernsten, 'a graduate student in the Centre for African Studies at the University of Cape Town who followed events closely', as quoted in 'Archaeology Dreaming', p. 12. In this regard, see Christian Ernsten, Stylizing Cape Town: Problematizing the Heritage Management of Prestwich Street (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 2006).

27   The silence caused by 'erasure' is of course different from a consciously conceived project of silence as an ethical response. As Julian Jonker argues, there is a need to 'differentiate between *articulate* silence and *inarticulate* silence, or even to describe silence as a dialectic of the articulate and the inarticulate', in 'The Silence of the Dead: Ethical and Juridical Significances of the Exhumations at Prestwich Place, Cape Town, 2003–2005' (unpublished master's thesis, Faculty of Law, University of Cape Town, 2005), p. 68. However, it is my contention that the differentiation does not do away with the contradiction and its resultant demand for response.

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connected to both time and silence in key ways.[29] I will do this with reference to the production *Cargo*, first produced as part of the Spier Arts Summer Season in March 2007 in Stellenbosch and then at the National Festival of the Arts in Grahamstown[30] and the Baxter and Artscape Theatres in Cape Town later that year.[31] In 2006, together with a group of collaborators, representatives from two Cape Town-based performance companies with connections to the University of Cape Town, I set out to create a production on the history of slavery at the Cape. The production, *Cargo*, is the fourth part of a series of productions based on key "sites of memory" in and around the city of Cape Town. The term is taken from Pierre Nora (1989:14) and refers to a conglomerate of physical, material and archival sites that function to concentrate remembrance in a world in which, to paraphrase James E. Young, the more we monumentalise, the more we seem to have "divested ourselves of the obligation to remember" (Young, 2000:9).[32]

The project takes place within the particular landscape of post-apartheid South Africa, a society in transition, struggling to come to terms with its past and the realities and challenges of its present, whilst creating a sustainable future. Within this landscape, debates about heritage, memory and history are of great concern. In particular, the project takes place against the background of Cape Town's own transformation from colonial 'mother city' to one of the more recent metropolitan additions to Mbembe's African postcolony.

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29   I use the term 'performance' here rather than 'drama' or 'theatre' because the works produced as part of this project display a wide range of live performance genres and combinations of these and do not easily reduce to traditional notions of theatre or drama. Central to all the performances, however, is an insistence on the primacy of the body and its relationship to space and a concurrent devaluation of the verbal text. This is fundamental to the idea of speaking 'the unspeakable' that is at the heart of the project. This challenge to speak 'the unspeakable' is articulated by Jonker at the end of the second chapter, entitled 'The Ethics of Memory and Silence', of his master's thesis (Jonker, 'The Silence of the Dead', p. 75).

30   The name 'Grahamstown' was officially changed to 'Makhanda' on 2 October 2018. Makhanda (also known as Makhana and Nxele) was a spiritual and political leader at the time of the conflict between the *amaXhosa* and the British settlers in the region that is now known as the Eastern Cape province in South Africa. Colonel John Graham was the British soldier and administrator of the colonial settlement in the valley that took his name, and was changed to Makhanda in 2018 as an act of redress for the British colonial oppression of the *amaXhosa*.

31   The production was commissioned by and premiered at Spier (24 February to 4 March 2007), a wine estate located 45 minutes outside of Cape Town on the outskirts of the town of Stellenbosch. The estate was once a major site of slave-holding in the Cape. Today it is a major tourist site and boasts a large outdoor amphitheatre that stages opera, dance and theatre productions in the summer months. The second season was in Grahamstown (28 June to 7 July 2007) in the Eastern Cape province near the city of Port Elizabeth as part of South Africa's National Arts Festival, the largest all-comers arts festival outside of Edinburgh (see Megan Lewis, 'Past, Present and Future: A Tense South Africa Performs', PAJ 89, 30.2 [2008], 93–101; and Loren Kruger, 'Performance Review: National Arts Festival', Theatre Journal, 60.1 [2008], 117–20). The third season was at the Baxter Theatre (8 to 11 August 2007), an arts centre attached to the University of Cape Town, and the final season was at Artscape (12 to 21 October 2007), the major opera house complex in Cape Town, part of the old Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB).

32   James E. Young, At Memory's Edge: After-images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 9. It is worth emphasizing that in the sense that it is intended here, a site need not be a place, it could just as well be an object or a set of objects, an archive of documents or images, or a piece of music, or a combination of all of these.

The sites I have focused on are:

- Robben Island (place of banishment and incarceration and its museum and archive);
- District Six (apartheid-evacuated working-class city district and its museum and archive);
- The Bleek and Lloyd collection of /Xam records (an ethnographic archive housed in the library of the University of Cape Town and more recently accessible on the Internet);
- The archive of slavery at the Cape (a dispersed collection of trial records, household inventories, legal and bureaucratic documents and physical sites).

These are not just any sites; they are what might be termed sensitive sites. They are sites that embody a history of "extreme events" (Roth & Salas, 2001:3). They contain "disturbing remains", the disturbance of which raises difficult questions.

The productions and projects created from these sensitive sites are, respectively:

- *53 Degrees* (2002–03)
- *Onnest'bo* (2002–06)
- *Rain in a Dead Man's Footprints* (2004–05)
- *Cargo* (2007)

They were all created with my company Magnet Theatre, a professional company that has operated in South Africa and abroad for the past 21 years.[33] Most have been done in partnership – primarily, as in the case of *Cargo*, with the Jazzart Dance Theatre (Cape Town's foremost contemporary dance company), but also with the District Six Museum in the case of *Onnest'bo*.

In making each of the works mentioned above, my collaborators and I faced two fundamental and interconnected problems related to the themes of time and silence: how to find an appropriate image in the present for something that has passed, and how to make the archive speak in unspeakable ways. The work proceeds from Michel de Certeau's notion that history is not the objects in the archive; the material traces. It is what is done with them or on them, through operations/practices (De Certeau, 1988:20; Ahearne, 1995:22). The specific practice here is dramaturgy understood as the making of new works for performance. In all of my projects I am credited with being the director but I always feel more comfortable with the idea that they are pieces I write, with other bodies, in space. The role of the dramaturg here is part pedagogical, part facilitatory, and part authorial. It involves the employment of particular tools and methods in acts of gathering, generating, guiding, advising and shaping. In other words, I assist in the making of content and the weaving of form.

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33   For more information on the company, see http://www. magnettheatre.co.za.

Dramaturgy is a thing; an end product; the particular compositional logic of the work created. It is a relationship between a subject matter, its framing and the particular context in which it occurs. But dramaturgy is also the process of getting there; the multiple conversations, interactions and exercises that lead to that end product.

In all four productions in the series, dramaturgy and the performance it makes and makes use of are put to work on what remains from the past. It reflects, comments on and re-imagines the historical and memorial processes at work in SouthAfrican society during critical junctures of our social transformation.

My particular conceptual approach to dramaturgy is based on the idea of "dwelling", a term borrowed from the anthropologist Tim Ingold, whose work on dwelling proceeds from a question posed by Heidegger (Heidegger, 1971) on the difference between building and dwelling. The answer has for a long time been that we build in order to dwell; that buildings are containers to live in. This leads to what Ingold calls the building perspective: "worlds are made before they are lived in" (2000:179).

This perspective depends on an essential division between the perceiver and the world, "such that the perceiver has to reconstruct the world, in the mind, prior to any meaningful engagement with it" (Ingold, 2000:178). So in our world, houses are designed inthe mind before they are built (by us, or for us, by others).

Ingold's dwelling perspective poses an alternative:

[T]he forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relationalcontexts of their practical engagements in their surroundings. [. . .] People do not import their ideas, plans or mental representations into the world, since that very world, to borrow a phrase from Merleau–Ponty, (1962:24) is the homeland of their thoughts. Only because they already dwell thereincan they think the thoughts they do. (Ingold, 2000:186)

The dwelling perspective does not, therefore, separate the perceiver from the world. Its point of departure is the body-in-the-world. We build forms, not as a consequence of having had thoughts but as a consequence of dwelling, of being in the world, of being in action. And one kind of action we take whilst dwelling, one among many, is "taking thought" (Whitehead, 1938:217) or imagining ways of meeting our needs. "In the process of dwelling we build" (Ingold, 2000:188).

Ingold argues, further, that from the dwelling perspective, "landscape is constituted as an enduring record of – and testimony to – the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves" (2000:189). When we dwell in the landscape, we dwell amongst what is already there and because of what is already there. When we dwell in the landscape we remember, which in this sense means "engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past" (Ingold, 2000:189).

From the western perspective, when we perceive an environment we construct a view which leads to one particular meaning of the word landscape. This perspective is from the outside looking in or from afar looking at the world that is something other than ourselves. From an alternative perspective, a perspective Ingold derives from his study of hunter-gatherer societies, we perceive an environment by engaging with it, "moving about in it, exploring it, attending to it, ever alert to the signs by which it is revealed"; (Ingold, 2000:55) by adopting a view from within it. This perspective is from the inside and exists in active relation to parts of the landscape other than ourselves, but our selves are not separate from the landscape or from those other parts: we are our body-in-the-landscape. This is a very different sense of landscape.

In line with this view, my dramaturgical method involves locating myself within the landscape of a particular "site of memory" that is pregnant with a particular past. It involves adopting a view from within this landscape, paying close attention and involving myself, and others I work with, in an active, participatory, embodied way. I don't build a structure in order that the performance might dwell therein. I dwell in the landscape over time in order to learn *how* to build there. It is not a case of building a container in the mind and then filling it. It is a case of allowing the living itself to reveal the right container. This is a methodological approach that reverses the cognitive model. It is not a Cartesian thinking to effect being; it is an incarnated, participatory being developing thought through creative discovery and paying attention to the landscape.

In his monumental work *Memory, history, forgetting*, Paul Ricoeur, building on De Certeau, describes the historiographical operation as consisting of three phases (Ricoeur, 2004:136):

- The first phase he terms the documentary phase. It runs from "the declarations of eye- witnesses to the constituting of archives, which takes as its epistemological program the establishing of documentary proof".
- The second phase he terms explanation/understanding. It is the phase in which the researcher puts questions to the documents in the archive "seeking the multiple uses of the connective "because" responding to the question "why?" "Why did things happen like that and not otherwise?"
- The third phase he terms the representative phase. It concerns "the putting into literary or written form of discourse offered to the readers of history".

These three phases are not meant to be seen as "distinct chronological stages, but [. . .] methodological moments, interwoven with one another" (Ricoeur, 2004:137). The process of making *Cargo*, as with the three productions that preceded it, aligns to a greater or lesser extent to this triadic structure.

It began with a year-long process of research working with primary sources in the archive, and with secondary sources, the studies conducted by historians and archaeologists who have worked on the archive of slavery, physical slave sites and the Cape colonial period in general.

When one dwells in the landscape of a site or an archive, one encounters its content, that which it contains, but one also comes face to face with the logic of its construction, its rules of inclusion and exclusion. "Archive as much as you like, something will always be left out" (Nora, 1989:14). One of the particular focuses of my project is to uncover subjugated histories; to identify what has been left out or what can only be inferred.

The work at this stage involves gathering traces or fragments, because, as Nadia Seremetakis reminds us, the memory of the past comes to us in pieces, it does not show itself all at once, in wholes (2000:310). These fragments include documentary traces: the deposed testimony of eyewitnesses, the records created by those who are "witnesses despite themselves" (Bloch, 1964:61) and images passed down from previous times, paintings, drawings, etchings, photo- graphs and cinematic records. [34] They also include material traces, the kinds of fragments usually dealt with by archaeologists: shards of pottery, old coins, furniture, clothing, and architectural remains.

For Marc Bloch (1964), all are testimonies, either written or unwritten, and all are equally unreliable, demanding a critical reading on the part of the historian.[35] For Carlo Ginzburg (1989), there are testimonies and there are clues. Ricoeur sees Ginzburg setting up "a dialectic of clue and testimony internal to the notion of trace and thereby to [giving] the concept of document its full scope". The testimonies testify through written words; the clues "'testify' through their muteness" (Ricoeur, 2004:174).[45] Ginzburg proposes a "conjectural paradigm" that involves using clues to penetrate the opaque surface of reality. (1989:123). These clues must be read symptomatically, a practice that Ginzburg argues originates in tracking and divination, passes on to medical diagnostics, appears in detective stories and forensics and of course in psychoanalysis, and ultimately forms the basis of all semiotics. In fact, the practice of reading symptomatically is present wherever there is a need to surface what is hidden from view; our subjugated histories.

Ingold also refers to clues in discussing the ways in which novices are called to pay attention to aspects of their environment.[36] In his discussion he distinguishes between clues and ciphers. He suggests that in attempting to discover the meanings inherent in the environment, the novice is

> . . . provided with a set of keys [. . .] not as ciphers but as *clues*. Whereas
> the cipher is centrifugal, allowing the novice to access meanings that are

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34   The notion of 'witnesses in spite of themselves' or 'involuntary witnesses' refers to those who create records of some aspect of society in one period that become a testimony in another period without this being the intention of the 'witness' (Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, pp. 170–71). Bloch argues that 'in the course of its development, historical research has gradually been led to place more and more confidence in [. . .] the evidence of witnesses in spite of themselves', in *The Historian's Craft*, p. 51.

35   Bloch acknowledges the unwritten traces, referring to them as 'vestiges of the past', in ibid., p. 53, but deals with them in far less detail and complexity than he deals with the written traces.

36 The idea of an 'education of attention' passed on from generation to generation is taken from James Gibson's *Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), p. 254.

attached ("pinned on") by the mind to the outer surface of the world, the
clue is centripetal, guiding him towards meanings that lie at the heart of the
world itself, but which are normally hidden behind the facade of superficial
appearances. The contrast between the key as cipher and the key as clue
corresponds to the critical distinction [...] between decoding and revelation.
(Ingold, 2000:22)

In this sense, meaning does not cloak or cover the world – as in "multiple layers of
symbolic meaning or cultural representation [...] deposited upon it" (Cosgrove: 1989:118-
35).   Rather, it is to be discovered in the world, in relation to specific features of the
landscape. The task of discovery is not one of interpretation of layers of representation
(decoding), but of probing ever more deeply into the landscape in order to discover what
meanings are there to be found (revelation). "Meaning is there to be discovered in the
landscape, if only we know how to attend to it. Every feature [. .] is a potential clue, a
key to meaning rather than a vehicle for carrying it" (Ingold, 2000:208). It is important,
however, to stress that the meanings that are discovered in the landscape are both plural
and partial, not singular or absolute.

My primary concern in the first phase of the making of Cargo was to gather fragments
that shed light on key aspects of slavery but also suggested a particularly bodily or kinetic
trace. The focus on the body is central to all the work. The body in space is the starting point
of the creative process, and the body is the primary agent of exploration and expression,
with a concurrent devaluation of the 'text' as point of origin and authority. This body-centred
approach draws from Artaud's theatre of the phenomenal body in which the function of the
body "is not to identify layers of signification within operative cultures (i.e. the domain of
semiotics) but to aim to discover 'language beyond words', a metaphysics of the theatre via
an immersion in the physical" (Sanchez-Colberg, 1996:43-44).37 Artaud writes of the stage as
a "concrete physical space" to be filled by its own "concrete language" (1958:37):

[it is] intended for the senses and independent of speech [...] [T]here is a
poetry of the senses as there is a poetry of language, and [...] this concrete
physical language [...] is truly theatrical only to the degree that the thoughts it
expresses are beyond the reach of spoken language. (Artaud, 1958:38)

This search for expression "beyond the reach of spoken language" is precisely at the

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37   Ana Sanchez-Colberg, 'Altered States and Subliminal Spaces: Charting the Road towards a Physical
Theatre', *Performance Research*, 1.2 (1996), 40–56 (p. 43). The body-space nexus as point of origin can also be
traced to the work of Rudolf Laban. According to Sanchez-Colberg, 'In Laban's work the central guiding
premise is that of the "body in space". Before there is movement, there is a body in space — a body that has
orientation, dimensions, inclination, that by virtue of just existing occupies and produces space. Movement
follows from this first principle' (p. 44). This idea can also be found in the work of Henri Lefebvre in *The
Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991): 'Before *producing effects* in the
material world [...] before *producing itself* by drawing nourishment from that realm, and before *reproducing
itself* by generating other bodies, each living body is space and has its space' (p. 41).

heart of the work, the aim of which is not only to find images in the present for what has passed, but to make the archive speak in unspeakable ways.

My secondary concern in this first phase was to identify a principle or logic to guide "emplotment", Ricouer's term for the "grasping together" or configuration of a series of disparate events into a discursive whole that says more than what the individual parts say on their own.[38] I will come back to this idea of emplotment further on, but for now let me indicate that the two principles that I identified to guide the emplotment for *Cargo* were listing or inventorising and the staging/performing of social relations in the space of the colonial household and its environs. The first principle arose from a recognition of the work of the TANAP[39] transcription project working on the VOC archives in South Africa, Asia and in the Netherlands. One of the key elements of this project involves the transcribing and translating of inventory lists of the household items of people who died intestate, produced by the Master of the Orphan Chamber. These inventories are being studied in terms of the clues they provide about many aspects of life during the colonial period at the Cape, including many aspects of the life of slaves. The inventory list was to become both structure and productive catalyst for *Cargo*. The second principle was based on work by archaeologist Yvonne Brink, who reads the layout of the Cape Dutch homestead semiotically as a stage for performing power relations and hierarchies and for disrupting them. In this way we were echoing the methodology of Robert Shell in his major work on slavery at the Cape, *Children of bondage* (1994). His study is conducted from the level of the slave-holding household, a household he describes as a "theatre of subordination", to create a "[h]istory not only from the bottom up, but from the inside out" (Shell, [1944} 1997:xxv) Ultimately, the production would be performed on a set that begins as a double- volume cargo crate surrounded by water and earth, then falls open to simulate the layout of a Cape Dutch household without walls, as if turned inside out but also turned around so that the audience's entry point is from behind, as was that of the slaves. The second phase of work begins by exposing performer-collaborators to the collected material and the broad territory, helping them to find their way into the landscape and to position themselves within it. This is achieved through workshops, lectures, tours to physical sites, video documentaries, whatever is available.

Next, a repertoire of dramaturgical tools and methods, gathered and developed over time, is used to work on the fragments. It is a kind of forensic archaeology performed by the body interacting with a fragment. What we hope to do is to prise open the fragments to reveal meaning rather than to interpret a meaning "pinned on" to the outside of the fragment. The intention is to create what De Certeau calls a "breach in the text" through which

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38   See Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, vol. 1, trans. By Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), pp. 41–2 and 53–4, for more detail on 'emplotment' as a grasping together of disparate elements into a narrative whole.

39   TANAP (Towards a New Age of Partnership) is a joint Dutch, Asian and South African research partnership intended to preserve, restore and increase access to the VOC (Dutch-East India Company) archives. For more information, see http://www.tanap.net

> [...] the voice exiled on the borders of discourse, might flow back, and
> with it, the murmur and the "noises" from which the process of scriptural
> reproduction distinguishes itself. In this way an exteriority without
> beginning or truth might return to visit discourse. (De Certeau, 1988:236)

At the heart of the work in this phase is improvisation. Western discourse around improvisation centres on the concept of 'spontaneity' – the removal of all blocks or impediments to responding immediately in the moment – and the idea of 'remaining in the present'.[40] Much emphasis is placed on not predetermining the outcome, not deciding on a 'text' and then setting out to realise it in the improvisation, but rather on responding as truthfully as possible to the proposition in the present moment.

Traditions other than the western literary traditions, and in particular oral traditions in which improvisation plays an essential role – performances are composed in the moment of performance – don't quite see it in this way. In these oral traditions, improvisation involves a play or dialogue between certain core elements of the existing tradition and the spontaneity of the moment. The performer engages with the specifics of the environment – the context, the space, the audience – and these determine the particular innovations of the tradition in each particular performance event.

My own current thinking on theatrical improvisation is more influenced by this latter way of thinking. This is also to some extent supported by neurological research, particularly by Antonio Damasio, on our perception of the world around us (Damasio [1994] 2006; 2003). The improviser responds to propositions in the present moment (what Damasio calls "perceptual images") originating in the archival fragments, in the other performers, in the space. At the same time, however, the improviser is also engaged with what has been discovered at earlier stages of the research (what Damasio calls "recalled images"). The process of improvisation thus involves a relationship between these two sets of images in what Shannon Rose Riley describes as "an intentional process of layering". She goes on to argue that, in such a process,

> [...] attention is not split so much as layered and in a state of ongoing dialogue and
> change. [...] [E]mbodied processes focus on becoming attentive to recalled
> images and their dialogical relationship with perceptual imagery offering the
> actor a method for becoming attuned to the polyphonic connections between
> body and brain, organism and environment. (Riley, 2004:454)

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40 Viola Spolin, Improvisation for the Theater (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1963); John Hodgson and Ernest Richards, Improvisation (London: Methuen, 1966); Keith Johnstone, Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre (London: Methuen, 1981); Louise Steinman, The Knowing Body: Elements of Contemporary Performance and Dance (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1986); Anthony Frost and Ralph Yarrow, Improvisation in Drama (London: MacMillan, 1990); Keith Johnstone, Impro for Storytellers: Theatresports and the Art of Making Things Happen (London: Faber & Faber, 1999); Chris Johnston, The Improvisation Game: Discovering the Secrets of Spontaneous Performance (London: Nick Hern Books, 2006).

This highlights the particularly embodied and sensory nature of the improvisational process and brings us back to Ingold's notion that we perceive the environment through active, embodied attention and participation from which thought arises; we don't think our way into the environment.

For *Cargo*, we began our process by identifying objects from the inventory lists and making our own lists arranged as alliterative strings:

A bed, a bucket, a book, 'n baadjie, a boot, abottle, 'n bees, 'n kooi, 'n kas, 'n koekje seep, a mirror, 'n mes, 'n matras . . .

Then we associated outwards from the listed objects so that:

Bed became: birth, death, washing, sexual intimacy, sexual abuse, rape, nightmare, family, sleep, suffocation, stain

Bees (beast/cattle) became: work, strength, food, land, load, castration, slaughter, meat, blood, skin, leather, dung

Koekje seep (bar of soap) became: washing, cleaning, smell, luxury, slippery, guilt

We then listed places in the house or around the house and mapped the individual objects to particular places. Then we matched documentary fragments gathered from the archive to each object/ place combination. Then groups of performers were asked to respond to these collections of cues using the body. Later I did the same thing with trial records involving slaves, listing violences enacted on the bodies of slaves and places that were identified in the testimonies and then mapping them together, before subjecting them to bodily investigation.

The physical exploration of the fragments begins in silence.[41] The relationship is between the bodyand what is suggested by the fragment, how it speaks itself to the body. Slowly a sounding might begin, sound as an extension of physicality. Only later does the quoting of documentary fragments find its way in, and right at the end music it is fed in to dialogue with what has been discovered, music that has been composed in parallel according to its own independent research process.

As the improvisational work proceeds, I dwell in the changing landscape, paying attention to the images the performer-collaborators produce, seeking out what I call

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41   All improvisation, and all performance for that matter, begins in silence. In fact, moments of silence punctuate the subtle shifts of action throughout a performance. This silence is not empty, however; it is full of potential energy waiting to become kinetic, to burst into action at one or another level. According to Eugenio Barba, '[T]he Greek word ene´rgheia means [. . .]: to be ready for action, on the verge of producing work' (The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology [London: Routledge, 1995], p. 55). The above resonates with the notion of an articulate silence and its insistent demand for utterance referred to by Jonker above.

second-order fragments, bits and pieces of performance material that re-imagine, reflect on, uncover and reveal the archival fragment in interesting ways, and then feeding that back into the performers' work. By paying attention to these fragments I am beginning to select, to make choices. This paying of attention doesn't only reveal content, it also starts to reveal form. A shape for the fragments begins to emerge from within the landscape.

The above process results in a collection of compound images, compound because they consist of layers of physical, vocal and musical gestures, but also because, although they primarily refer back to the past, embedded in them are flashes, moments, fleeting gestures of what the past has become in the present. And these anachronistic moments have a certain disobedient playfulness about them that unsettles the overall reading of the images. This deliberate insertion of 'play' achieves what Ermarth refers to as "the elasticity in a line that is not pulled taut, of the flexibility in a system that can also include its capacity to permit substitutions even to the point of shifting the balance of its so-called structure" (Ermarth, 1992:146). For Jacques Derrida, (1978) play is what distinguishes a living system from a dead system and must be seen in opposition to all attempts at structuring that have as their goal the limitation of play. Central to this notion is the idea of "supplementarity" derived from Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in general linguistics* (1986). As Ermarth puts it with reference to Derrida, "supplementarity" is:

> [. . .] the process whereby a fixed system or syntax is perpetually renewed by the necessity of substitution: substitution of one term, one experiment, one improvisation after another as dictated by some irreducible ambiguity in the system of signs. (Ermarth, 1992:148)

It must be emphasized that these compound images are not re-enactments of the past; they are re-creations, refigurations of what remains from the past. Their relationship with the past is sometimes metaphorical, sometimes metonymical, but never simply imitative.

Finally, in the third phase the images selected are emplotted, woven together into the final representative form to be shown to the audience. I have already indicated the logic of the emplotment of *Cargo*. The selected images are ordered sequentially as items on an inventory list. Each item is announced:

> Een kokje seep . . . a cake of soap.
> Twee porseleijne potten . . . two porcelain pots.

Most items are linked to a place in the house:

> In de agterplaats . . . in the back yard
> In de kraal . . . in the kraal
> Agt Beesten . . . eight cattle

And then the fragment is performed. There is no attempt to create cause-and-effect links between items. They begin and end. If there are links they involve rhythmic contrasts and shifts in tone. The idea is that when you have read through the contents of the inventory you have determined the contents of the house. The effect is cumulative. For Paul Ricoeur, the configuration or grasping together of disparate events into some form of narrative "effect[s] a mediation between the events and certain universally human "experiences of temporality'" (White, 1987:173). In other words, there is a meaning inherent in the emplotment that is separate from the meaning of the individual parts, and that meaning, or "content of the form", (173) to quote Hayden White, concerns our human sense of being in time and the complexities thereof.

The emplotment places the images in time, both the time of the performance itself, its duration, but also the linking of the time of the past to the time of the future so that the present, the moment in which we perform or watch, is a transition between the incomplete projects of the past and the yet-to-be-fulfilled projects of the future. But the present cannot just be a passage for historical processes; for the uninterrupted flow of "historical time".[42] It must be a site of engagement, of the "counter-temporality" called for at Prestwich Place. It is in the present that we play at assemblage, that we generate possibilities through the adventure of experimenting and improvising with fragments from the past and what we make of them in the present through the act of dwelling.

If *Cargo* is a history, it is not the history of the past as much as it is the history of the present. And it is a particular present – the present of the postcolony that is not, as we have already argued, easily remembered. The post-colonial body is too fractured to be easily reconstituted into the narrative Paul Ricoeur would want. We set out in search of coherence, of new ways of being together, but the forms that emerge tend towards disruption and discontinuity and ultimately dissolve back into fragments. In this sense, each production is a proposed response to the problematics of remembering in the postcolony and each proposal is also an inevitable failure and a celebration of that failure. It cannot make fully present what has gone before but is now absent. What it can do is to offer mnemonic provocations so that the audience might creatively remember, might bring fragments or remains of the past together in the present into a narrative of restitution. But the narrative aims for no resolution, no sense of closure. It is an assemblage that is, as Gilles Deleuze suggests with reference to the poetry of Walt Whitman, "a whole that is all the more paradoxical in that it only comes *after* the fragments and leaves them intact, making no attempt to totalize them" (1998:58).

So as the "state busily tries to memorialize and museumize, to build new monuments and historic landscapes that are supposed to bring together the different fragments of the nation", (Mbembe, 2004:404) transforming the past into a site of petrified signification

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42   As Ermarth shows in Sequel to History, historical time is not a given, it is produced. It is equivalent to the kind of space produced by the Quattrocento: the system of single-point perspective developed by Renaissance painters. It coordinates 'past, present and future – and by implication all the possible viewpoints contained therein – into a single system of measurement [and thereby] organizes [. . .] the faculty of consciousness in much the same way that realist painting rationalizes the faculty of sight' (p. 66). The result is an objective view of the world, regardless of perspective, of the particular location of each spectator.

pronouncing new rights and truths, domesticated and purged of all ambiguity, productions such as *Cargo* propose an alternative version of remembering. A remembering that is an active and embodied project, a project that recognises, to quote Keith Jenkins, that the past "is never over and done with but must be made tomorrow and the day after" (2003:30), as must all performances. And a remembering that is also ultimately a dismembering – that dissolves into fragments almost as soon as it suggests a particular figural coherence; that keeps fragile contradictions and disobedient adventures in play for a short duration and then watches them disappear, as do all performances.

One of the motifs that runs through the *mise-en-scène*, across the inventory list, is the steady accumulation of papers until finally, in an item called "13 spades", a large trunk is brought onto the stage filled to the brim with paper. Suddenly, from within the pile of papers a figure explodes upwards into a standing position, still in the trunk, freeing herself from the mass of paper. In silence she begins to knock on the bones of her body. The body is amplified. The silence is filled not by words but by a desperate and insistent knocking of bones resonating through the space of the theatre. Which brings us back to those bones we began with and a question asked earlier: are they artefacts or ancestors? "Facts in the ground" that must be tested or mnemic traces,[43] signposts to something intangible and silent that lies beyond; the absence we struggle to make present?

But *Cargo* is merely a title pointing to something that has to be brought into being through the collective efforts of performers and audiences. It too is an absence that must be made present every time it is performed. This might be performance's particular and subversive contribution to the history of the present. The fact that it must be worked at, brought into being, creatively imagined, re-invented, collectively sustained, argued over each and every time. That it is never complete, never stable, never fixed once and for all. As Derrida comments: "Inheritance is never a given; it's always a task. It remains before us" (quoted in Bennington, 2000:37).

Figure 9: Women's chorus, *Cargo*, 2007. Photograph by Garth Stead.

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43 'Mnemic' is used here in the Freudian sense, to signify a hysterical thought with an unaccounted-for intense affect.

MAKING SPACE FOR IDEAS: THE KNOWLEDGE WORK OF MAGNET THEATRE[44]

by Mark Fleishman

The work that Magnet has produced over the past 27 years can be described as 'boundary work' in the sense in which it is used by Henk Borgdorff. In an interview on Artistic Research,[45] Borgdorff suggests that art works that propose to be research projects are 'boundary objects', a term he borrows from Thomas F. Gieryn (1983) and which he describes as objects "that [change their] ontological and epistemological nature depending on the context in which [they are] used". He suggests that "artistic research places itself on the border between academia and the art world" (Borgdorff, 2012: 177). To this extent, I am interested here in exploring the particular ways in which Magnet's performance practice – that is produced for and has its existence and a particular set of meanings within the art world – might be understood as quite consciously making space for ideas or generating a particular way of thinking both about itself as performance and about aspects of the world beyond the theatre. In other words, the ways in which it can be understood as a research or knowledge practice in the academic world.

I would propose that Magnet's work is a process of research both in the sense of 'research for' theatre – gathering material for the making of work through intensive processes of information gathering that makes use of more conventional research methods as well as somatic or embodied methods – and in the sense of 'research about' theatre – a self-reflexive interest in the methods and particularities of our practice; what in fact is actually going on in the multitude of individual moments and the flow of our processes. But it is also "research by means of" theatre in so far as how we make work and how that work functions in the world is a way of thinking the world and the work. And in this sense it is hopefully performative in the way in which it enacts something, brings something into being in the world through doing and making, through the fabrication of concepts and ideas and speculative projections that might have the effect of changing attitudes and beliefs, a process I would describe as a project of active and creative citizenship in a transitional social context.

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44 This text by Mark Fleishman was first published in 2016 in the book *Magnet Theatre: Three Decades of Making Space* as Chapter 2, titled "Making Space for Ideas: The Knowledge Work of Magnet Theatre". The copyright is held jointly by the editors, Megan Lewis and Anton Krueger and by Magnet Theatre and it is reproduced here with the permission of the Licensor through PLSclear.

45 There is little agreement over terminology for this kind of activity. Artistic Research is the term preferred in non-anglophone European contexts while Practice or Performance as Research (PaR) is the accepted term in anglophone countries and the International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR) working group on the subject is called the Performance as Research Working Group. Some other jurisdictions and groupings prefer Practice/Performance-led Research. In my view these terms all refer, to a lesser or greater extent, to the same idea or set of practices.

In what follows, I will begin by outlining the relationship between philosophy and performance broadly and then move on to discussing the particular knowledge practice in Magnet's work using one production process to ground the argument, finally I will try to show how individual Magnet productions form part of larger research assemblages, with different modes of articulation, within the overall body of work.

PERFORMANCE PRACTICE AND PHILOSOPHY

In a recent article, Laura Cull asks the question: "What is the relationship between performance and philosophy?" (2012: 20). She suggests that in theatre and performance studies we need "less philosophy *per se*" and more attention paid to "specific philosophies" which "provide us with the resources to rethink performance itself as a kind of philosophy, and indeed to reconceive what counts as philosophy" (21). She points out that what motivated her interest in this question was primarily a desire to articulate how the arts work in different ways; ways that value and express those aspects of performance practice such as "art's affective presence and material force" (21) and the "seemingly ineffable" (20) aspects of what we do that other discourses always fail to express.

According to Cull, this is not a question of simply applying philosophy to performance but rather "that the rare marriage between performance and philosophy is at its richest and most egalitarian if philosophy is willing to encounter performance as thinking" (2012: 21). In other words, performance practice avoids application "when it conceives of itself as a way of thinking rather than the mere demonstration of existing ideas" (23). For Cull, the meeting of performance and philosophy must bring about "new ideas [for] both on the basis of a mutually transformative encounter" (23). Her conclusion is that "we need to move away from the application of the theoretical models we already possess and towards an embodied encounter with the resistant materiality of performance's thinking, its embodied-thinking, participatory thinking, or durational thinking – encounters that generate new ideas of what thought is and where, when and how it occurs" (25). The example she uses to support this proposal emerges from "practice-as-research" that in her words "has already gone some way to explore the nature of performance's kind of thinking, taking a particular and strategically necessary interest in how performance practice produces new knowledge" (25). But she warns, "the production of knowledge is arguably only one definition of thinking, or specifically of 'research' […]; indeed, rather than applying this definition of thinking to practice (as if it were the same as text-based research), perhaps we need to look to performance itself to produce new ideas of what thinking is" (Cull, 2012: 25).

As Cull herself points out the practice or performance as research (PaR) movement has for some time now set out to investigate what performance as thinking might mean and having been involved with PaR both in the South African context and in the context of the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) where I have been a member of the Performance as Research working group and its co-convenor for a number of years, my thinking has been both shaped by the discourse generated in that context and my

work with Magnet has contributed to that discourse. In other words, there has been a mutually beneficial relationship backwards and forwards between the practice at Magnet and the meta-theoretical ideas on PaR developed amongst international colleagues though workshops and conferences.

The general consensus is that PaR concerns research that is carried out through or by means of performance; using methodologies and specific methods familiar to performance practitioners; and where the output is at least in part, if not entirely, presented through performance. Previously (Fleishman, 2012a) I have argued that PaR is a form of creative evolution in the Bergsonian sense, not a progressivist building towards a finality; nor a mechanistic unfolding of a predetermined plan in search of something it knows exists before the search begins. It begins with energy (an impulse, an idea, an intuition, a hunch) which is then channelled, durationally, through repetition, on both micro (of bodies, movements, sounds, improvisations, moments) and macro (of events, productions, projects, installations) levels, in variable and indeterminable directions, in search of difference. Such an ongoing channelling has been described by theorists of practice as a kind of "tuning"(Pickering, 1993: 564) or "tinkering" (Knorr Cetina, 1981: 34) – a set of adjustments in the reciprocal encounters between different sets of actors – human and non-human.

According to Joseph Rouse, "the concept of practices is typically invoked to explain continuities or commonalities among the activities of social groups" (2001: 190). The particular practice Magnet has been involved in for 27 years is the making of performance works or productions. This is a practice I have described as dramaturgy.

Elsewhere I have outlined the features of this dramaturgical practice (see Fleishman, 2011 and Fleishman, 2012b for example). Following Tim Ingold I have described it as a process that is more about dwelling than building. For Ingold:

> [T]he forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagements in their surroundings. [...] People do not import their ideas, plans or mental representations into the world, since that very world, to borrow a phrase from Merleau-Ponty, is the homeland of their thoughts. Only because they already dwell therein can they think the thoughts they do. (2000: 186)

According to this view, we build forms, not as a consequence of having had thoughts but as a consequence of dwelling, of being in the world, of being in ongoing action. And one kind of action we take whilst dwelling, one among many, is "taking thought" or imagining ways of meeting our needs. "In the process of dwelling we build" (2000: 188).

In line with this view, in Magnet's dramaturgical process we don't build a structure for the performance to dwell in; we dwell in the landscape over time in order to learn *how* to build there. It is not a case of building a container in the mind and then filling it. It is a case of allowing our embodied, active and participatory dwelling to reveal the right

container. This is a methodological approach that reverses the cognitive model. It is not a Cartesian thinking to effect being; it is an incarnated, participatory being developing thought through creative discovery and paying attention to the specific landscape of each individual project as it emerges. The dramaturgical view is from the inside rather than from a distanced perspective and by paying attention to the embodied encounters that unfold in the process, both content and a way of creating form suggest themselves.

I have also suggested elsewhere (Fleishman, 2014) that it is a choreographic practice following Andre Lepecki who points to the "syncretic composition" of the word "choreography" that fuses "two apparently incongruous terms – movement and writing – into one single linguistic sign" (Allsopp & Lepecki, 2008:1). In other words it is a process of writing with bodies in and through movement. It has been a feature of all of Magnet's work since its inception in 1987 that theatre originates with specific bodies in specific spaces rather than with words on a page, so there have only been few occasions over that time in which the script has been the starting point for a production rather than a record of what has been created through processes of physical making.

Furthermore, as a choreographic process it involves what Rudi Laermans has described as *"the making and modulation of assemblages ...* the explorative associating or coupling of materially heterogeneous kinds of actions of humans as well as non-human performers" (2008: 11, italics in original). Such choreographic assemblages involve a non-hierarchical collection of human and non-human bodies encountering each other in such a way so as not to favour the human bodies over for example bodies of light and of sound and of scenography. And what emerges from such assemblages is a particular singularity that is more than the sum of the individual parts, that is characterised by a complex layering of movement(s), and that engages the audience in a bodily and visceral way in a space that is beyond language.

But my argument here is that besides being a practice of making works the practice of dramaturgy is also a knowledge practice. In other words, while making space for new works Magnet also makes space for thinking, for raising questions, generating ideas and developing concepts. In this respect, in Karin Knorr Cetina's terms, Magnet Theatre is a particular 'knowledge setting'. As such it has its own 'epistemic culture' that is defined by Knorr Cetina as "those amalgams of arrangements and mechanisms ... which, in a given field, make up *how we know what we know"* (1999: 1, italics in original), and its own knowledge-producing strategies that are not so much regulated as normative patterns of activities.

While unpacking this 'epistemic culture' completely is beyond the scope of my considerations here, I would like to highlight four features: the method of practice, the nature of the object of knowledge, the structure of participation, and the philosophical orientation. First, as has been alluded to above, the body is the central methodological instrument in Magnet's knowledge practice. Knorr Cetina describes the body as a "black-box instrument" (1999: 99). By this she means two things. First, the body is silent, it provides "no systematic description of sensory or bodily behaviours, no written instructions as to the appropriate bodily reactions in specific experimental situations, and no behavioural rules to be followed [...]" (99). Second, through repeated physical and

sensory activities the body becomes experienced. A specific "tacit knowledge" become inscribed in the body, which Knorr Cetina describes as "a bodily archive of manual and instrumental knowledge that is not written down and only clumsily expressed" (99). Turner (1994) has highlighted the fact that such body experience is difficult to share and uses this to suggest that perhaps something like a coherent practice that is shared by a group, cannot be said to exist at all, but I would suggest that it is not impossible particularly in a discipline that relies heavily, and as a matter of course, on the body-to-body transference of skills and knowledge, the way one body affects, and is affected by, other bodies. In addition, while there is clearly nothing like a tacit rule-book that must be followed when engaging in such a practice, there is an agreed set of values, principles and techniques that is not so much laid down through a linear process of instruction or a set of standing orders, but is produced collaboratively through ongoing, iterative conversation in which parties feel their way towards a level of stable understanding and agreement.

Second, the nature of the knowledge objects in Magnet's knowledge practice can best be described as what the historian of biology, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, calls "epistemic things". Rheinberger is particularly interested in "objects of knowledge that escape fixation", that are less like things and more like projections and/or processes (Knorr Cetina, 2001:181). As Knorr Cetina suggests these are knowledge objects that are "open, question-generating and complex" (181). For Knorr Cetina there is an "incompleteness" about such knowledge objects, they unfold indefinitely over time and in unanticipated directions, never quite attaining a finality or fixedness. All we can hope for are representations that stand in for these knowledge objects as if they were able to hold together the object in time long enough for us to grasp its possibilities. Even when the project is "finished" there is a sense that it could have been otherwise, that it is never quite perfected or final or definitive. If we were to continue to work on it the object would mutate and produce other meanings and significances, would generate more questions, would extend the practice, but it would remain unfinished, incomplete. In my understanding this description of a particular kind of research that is dynamic, creative and constructive, drawn from biological sciences, is close to what we are engaged in when performance practice becomes research practice. Even if productions emerge from such processes that have lives in the professional theatre context and that end up as archival objects or traces in the company's historical record, as research objects they remain unfinished parts of a continually unfolding thinking process that expands in time and across space and intersects in the process with other unfinished objects and their thought processes. As Knorr Cetina reminds us, "a stable name is not an expression and indicator of stable thinghood" (2001: 184). In other words, just because a Magnet project produces a production with a title does not indicate that the name represents a stabilised object. Over time that object is changing either by virtue of its continual performance in a variety of diverse contexts, to different audiences and sometimes with different performers (various aspects of the production intensify, clarify over time), or by virtue of its shifting life in the somatic memories of those who encountered it and are then reminded of it or recall it for one reason or another at another time, or in its comparison with other works by Magnet

or other performance makers or other thinkers, writers, artists engaged with similar themes and ideas.

Third, each Magnet production has a project team which constitutes a "repertoire of expertise" (Knorr Cetina, 1999: 225) required to bring the production to fruition. There are two levels of participants at Magnet that I will loosely define as practitioners and leaders. The practitioners (performers, designers, technicians, composers) are passing through, making their particular contribution to the project (or perhaps a series of projects over time) but at the same time building up their own profiles which leads to a certain tension between what the company is trying to do and what the individuals aspire to do. The practitioners are also more or less experienced, more or less involved, and have spent more or less time working with Magnet. The leaders, on the other hand (primarily Jennie Reznek and I[46]) while often fulfilling specific practitioner functions are oriented differently. A significant part of the leader's orientation is outward away from the specifics of the work itself to the society broadly. The leader has responsibility for ensuring the sustainability of the company as a whole, of ensuring that the work is disseminated successfully whether in the form of performance on various platforms or in the form of the discourse on the practice which is disseminated in both formal and informal ways through a variety of both written and oral, analogue and digital, channels. What this means is that over time, and as the company has grown and become more successful, the leaders are pulled away from doing the actual work to writing grant proposals, mentoring new people, attending meetings, relaying information backwards and forwards between the company and the world. This means that certain other individuals begin to take on directorial functions on productions so that a kind of hierarchy begins to develop at the practitioner level with certain practitioners (Mandla Mbothwe is the primary example here) beginning to absorb certain leadership roles with their own productions, which, while falling under the Magnet banner and suffused with the practice culture that has been built up over time, also begins to take on the particular intellectual concerns, aesthetic orientations and predilections of the new leader figure. There is a certain play that is at work here because while Magnet absorbs these new directions and ideas and they become part of the evolving practice culture, if they were to deviate significantly from the core values and principles of the company, this would produce an unacceptable tension. In any event, even where the absorption of the new directions does not produce a conflict in terms of the work produced it might very well produce an internal conflict for the lead-practitioner who begins to feel the need to individuate, to find a new space in which to develop independent of Magnet at which point s/he leaves to take on a leadership role somewhere else.

What this points to is not so much a picture of a closed and stable structure rather a kind of rhizomatic structure which has different entry and exit points, is open to the world and adaptable to new things, in which a multiplicity of pathways and event nodes intersect, entangle and engage to produce a fluid and evolving practice which is still sufficiently coherent so as to be recognizable as Magnet work.

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46   Jennie Reznek and Mandla Mbothwe are co-artistic directors of Magnet Theatre alongside myself.

Fourth, if Magnet's practice *is* a way of thinking, another way of doing philosophy, then it is a philosophy understood in Deleuze and Guattari's terms not as a set of concepts that are "waiting for us ready made like heavenly bodies" (1991/1994: 5) to be applied to the world and our engagement with it, but rather the "art of forming, inventing and fabricating concepts" (2). Furthermore, it follows A.N. Whitehead in understanding philosophy as "an experimental adventure" (1929/1978: 9), "an adventure of ideas" (1933/1967). For Whitehead, every "new idea introduces a new alternative" (1929/1978: 11), a new way of approaching and understanding experience. As Isabelle Stengers remarks in her book *Thinking with Whitehead*, to think with Whitehead today is "to imagine, and to fight against 'ready-made' models and above all, not to despair" (2011: 11).

To think with Whitehead today is also to affirm that the success of a philosophical proposition is not to resist objections but to give rise to what he himself calls a "leap of the imagination" (PR, 4) – and the point is to experiment with the effects of that leap: what it does to thought, what it obliges one to do what it renders important, and what it makes remain silent (2011: 22).

With these thoughts from Whitehead in mind, let us take the imaginative leap into a concrete example, the production *53 Degrees*.

THE LEAP (*53 DEGREES*, 2002–2003)

I might have chosen any production but I have chosen this one based on the history of Robben Island, the low-lying, rocky outcrop situated some 10 km off the coast of Cape Town that has been occupied in one form or another from before the first colonial arrival. It has been used as a place of exile, banishment, isolation and imprisonment for centuries but it is most widely known as the prison in which Nelson Mandela was incarcerated for more than twenty years along with other leaders of the liberation movements resisting the apartheid regime.

Figure h: Gosekwang Poonyane in *53 Degrees*, Grahmstown Power Station, NAF, 2002. Photograph by Garth Stead.

It is an early production in my body of work that sets out to engage dramaturgically with the Island in an attempt to construct a more inclusive historical presentation. In this sense, *53 Degrees* proceeds as a kind of 'microhistory'. Microhistory has been defined as the reduction of the scale of observation for "experimental purposes", motivated by "the belief that microscopic observation will reveal factors previously unobserved" (Levi, 2001: 101). Carlo Ginzburg, one of the foremost exponents of microhistory, in an article entitled 'Microhistory: two or three things that I know about it' (1993), identifies a number of key features including:

- "the minute analysis of a circumscribed documentation, tied to a person who was otherwise unknown" (22)
- [In our case, Florrie Berndt, the daughter of the Robben Island baker, and one of the first women to swim from the Island to the mainland];
- a focus on the narration of an individual event rather than being restricted to its "reconstruction" (23)

[In our case, the story of the first organized swim from Robben Island to the mainland];
- "obstacles interfering with the research [are] constituent elements of the documentation and thus … become part of the account" (23)

[In our case, the staging of a contemporary woman's struggle to reclaim a creative life interrupted by domesticity, and the difficulties, both personal and historiographical, that this presented].

The latter is a kind of Brechtian distancing device intended to overcome the possibility that the narration "*could* translate itself into an account that filled the gaps in the documentation to form a polished surface" (Ginzburg, 1993: 23, italics in original). Ginzburg, the historian, "who has only at his disposal fragments of things and documents" (28), accepts their limitations while "transforming them into a narrative element" on "a terrain of invention" (28). He describes this work as a "leap" over the "inevitable gap between the fragmentary and distorted traces of the event … and the event itself" (28); a leap betwixt the past and the present, across the inevitable abyss that lies between.

It seems to me that such a leap, with all its impossible dimensions, is central to what I am trying to argue for here and to the way of working Magnet has been engaged in over the past 27 years.[47] In fact, it is one of the core images of *53 Degrees*, repeated over and over again in Nxele's attempt to jump across Cove Rock. Nxele (or Makana) was a prophet who led the Xhosa nation in battle against the British in the 19th century, at a place now known as Grahamstown[48] which today hosts one of the biggest theatre festivals in the world:

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47   This text was first written in the lead up to Magnet Theatre's 30th anniversary. At the time of publication of this handbook, Magnet Theatre has been active for 37 years.

48   At the time of this chapter's first publication, the place was still known as Grahamstown, though was changed to Makhanda on 2 October 2018, in honour of Nxele.

> For Nxele, the last act had come. He had fled with his followers eastwards along the coast. His final gesture of resistance created an extraordinary scene in an extraordinary setting. He chose a place known today as Cove Rock … a huge cliff-like slab, 86 feet high … at the extremity of a wide sandy beach.
>
> Cove Rock … is cleft by a deep, wide notch in the middle, through which the sea thunders, and is in fact two separate slabs. The one side adjoins the shore and the other the deep sea, and it was from atop the landward slab that Nxele declared that he would summon the Xhosa ancestors to rise from the sea and come ashore to help drive the white man from the land.
>
> To summon them, he said, he was required to leap from the landward slab to the seaward one, across the gap above the dashing seas that burst into the notch.
>
> […] On the appointed day the sands surrounding Gompo [the Xhosa name for the sandy beach below Cove Rock] were packed by a multitude eagerly awaiting the miracle. Nxele ascended the rock from which he was to leap and sat atop it, contemplating the wide and dangerous gap. He sat thus through a long, weary day and made no attempt to jump. […] From the crowds rose urgent cries, "Nxele, the sun has set. We are tired and cold. Leap! Leap!" But he remained motionless. (Mostert, 1992: 483)

In the end, the Xhosa were defeated and Nxele ended up being imprisoned on Robben Island. He drowned while trying to escape in a small boat but his body was never found and the Xhosa believe that he will still return.

In the episode described above Nxele stands poised, ready to take the leap. In the end he does not jump, but at that precise moment everything is possible – all routes remain open and available, the miracle is still possible, the ancestors might still arise. What is required is a decision; a risk. It is this aspect of the decision that is central to the process of making and the emergence of novelty, the way the virtual becomes actual in the process, and it is used in the way it is understood by Whitehead "in its root sense of a 'cutting-off'" (1929/1978: 43). It is an act of selecting or choosing from alternative possibilities. And such moments of decision are, at least primarily, felt rather than thought. They are suffused with what he calls "affective tone" (1933/1967: 176) and this affective tone and our feeling of it, exists prior to any attempt to cognize it, and is in excess of any attempt to cognize it. In fact the feeling of the affective tone is a condition for any cognizing that might occur. Furthermore, such decisions are singular – they cannot be determined in advance or made according to any rule. It is what Étienne Souriau refers to as "a case of instauration, a risk taken, a discovery, a total invention" (Latour, 2011: 310).

The dramaturgical process in this early work was much less formed or conscious than it has subsequently become, but it produced a multitude of questions and first tentative answers that were to be worked through with greater clarity in productions that followed.

Some might raise the objection that to begin without a question in mind reflects a rather sloppy, unsystematic, perhaps random approach to conducting research. But I would argue that far from being unsystematic or random it represents one of the actual strengths of performance as a mode of research, its particular emergent character. As Baz Kershaw puts it, "even the most open and carefully expressed [questions] inevitably imply a more or less predictable range of responses, which flatly contradicts the qualities of radical openness and excess that the creativity of performance practice at its best can produce" (2009: 112). Objections to this approach are based on a particularly orthodox sequentiality of knowledge production based on an idea that knowledge systems are vertically integrated. In other words they involve the application of a pre-existent schema or concept onto the experience of the world. According to this view, in order to know we refer our immediate and fragmentary experience or sense-data (lower level) to the pre-existent schema (higher level) in order to render it coherent and intelligible. In other words we produce a kind of cognitive map, defined according to a predetermined question or set of questions, *before* we use it to find our way. Then as we move in the real world we refer back to the map to check where we are and whether we are heading in the pre-determined direction towards the pre-determined destination which is the answer to the predetermined question/s. This results in a closing down of the possibilities of the future. It reduces the potential for getting lost and for chance encounters along the way and it restricts adventurousness and novelty and the unexpected discovery. But it also assumes that the world represented by the map is fixed rather than in a state of constant emergence, that the meaning that we seek is suspended awaiting our arrival, and that we are somehow detached from the world, self-contained, stable and fully formed rather than in a constant state of our own emergence in the course of our embodied, practical engagement and involvement with the world.

Ingold argues, based on the work of David Turnbull (1989, 1991), that knowledge is not vertically but laterally integrated, formed or in a constant process of formation as we move around in our environment. The knowledge that has brought us to one place is put to work in setting off towards another (Ingold, 2000, 229). So rather than applying a map that has been pre-made, the map is produced on the go. In other words, as Ingold puts it, "we know as we go, not before we go" (230). This is not map-making or map-using but simply mapping, an ongoing process of attention and involvement and if this gives rise to artefactual representation these are merely "stepping stones along the way, punctuating the process rather than initiating it or bringing it to a close" (231).

The experimental nature of performance as process, the trial and error method of feeling one's way towards a goal, open to the possibility of bumping into new discoveries along the way, the creation of imaginary or potential spaces within which to engage with specific questions, is what makes performance able to "articulate complexes of thought-with-feeling that words cannot name, let alone set forth. It is a way of accessing the world, not just a means of achieving ends that cannot be named" (Radley, 1995: 13). The problem with this, as Nigel Thrift points out is that "many academics do not see the world in this experimental way. For them it is already found before it is discovered. But in a world that has never been

more mapped we surely still need to set out without maps every now and again" (2003: 2023).

So setting out 'without maps', at first with just the desire to create something new, we became concerned with finding images of women doing extraordinary feats despite the difficulty of their circumstances. This was the starting point of the journey. This led us to the first Robben Island swim and that in turn led us to the site of Robben Island and its history, because to engage in the event of that first swim proved impossible without engaging in a heterogeneous history, filled with contesting narratives or at least fragments of narratives some more visible than others. Also because the swim suggested itself as another image of escape, another way to attempt to flee the bondages of the Island bringing the swimming narrative into relationship with the narrative(s) of escape attempts that are so much a part of the Island's various histories.

As we worked, the original impulse to find images of women transcending the limitations of female lives in a male-dominated world through physical activity (inspired/ driven by a contemporary woman's struggle to reclaim a creative life interrupted by domesticity) continued to interface with the emergent discoveries of the varied and complex history of the Island. And the difficulties of the research endeavour (both because of the complexity of the history and because of personal life demands) became part of the research itself.

Questions emerged or perhaps puzzles that required solving. Central to these was one regarding the relationship between the past and the present. How do they exist alongside or perhaps entangled with each other? How do they speak to each other, if at all? More specifically we were engaged by the challenge of making the piles of paper drawn from the archive – the traces of the past – live on stage in the present. In other words, how to embody or perform the archival fragments? What spatial image to create on stage to contain the fragments of the past? How to define the nature of relationship between the body of the actor present on stage and the bodies from the past, absent except for their disembodied and fragmentary inscription/description in documents from the archive? Dramaturgical questions of space, of structure, of character, all determined by the central question regarding the nature of the relationship between the past and the present.

As I engage in remembering the production, *53 Degrees*, it is obvious to me that these questions did not lead to easy answers. In fact in many senses the answers are as paradoxical as the questions were and continue to be and the production reflects this in its uneasy and disordered character.

What I am trying to point to here is the way a process of thinking unfolds and at a variety of different levels or scales, woven into the making of the work, which gives rise to questions and some proposed answers, however tentative these may be, and these are picked up and developed further in other works that forms part of what I would call a particular research assemblage that operates over an extended period of time. In the next section I will try to think through how this happens in some more detail with recourse once again to Whitehead.

Figure i: Jennie Reznek in *53 Degrees*, Grahmstown Power Station, NAF, 2002. Photograph by Garth Stead.

THE CORPUS

A production like *53 Degrees* exists as an entity on its own with its own proper name. But to say this does not imply that it is a fixed and finished thing. Rather, to describe a production as an entity is to suggest that it has achieved a certain level of "objective immortality" (Whitehead, 1929/1978: 29; 238); enough of a sense of "integral satisfaction" to suggest something relatively stable has come into existence even if there can be no suggestion of finality here because the "pure thisness" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1977:7) of the thing produced is "perpetually perishing" (Whitehead, 1929/1978:29). This is both in the sense that all performance works have their existence only when they are being performed, and the sense in which the existence of these performance works in the corporeal memories of those who participated in the performances – practitioners and audiences – fades progressively or becomes more and more imperfect over time, or on the contrary, the sense in which these works shift and expand as a result of additions to the overall landscape of productions.

At the same time, following Whitehead, "there is nothing that floats into the world from nowhere" (1929/1978:244). Each individual production is related to all other productions while not being determined by them. Each new production reacts consciously or unconsciously to the gestures, propositions, the thoughts and questions raised in earlier productions, but at the same time each production asserts its own singularity. As Whitehead puts it:

> [each] novel entity is at once the togetherness of the 'many' which it finds, and also it is one among the disjunctive 'many' which it leaves; it is a novel entity, disjunctively among the many entities which it synthesizes. The many become one and are increased by one. In their natures, entities are disjunctively 'many' in process of passage into conjunctive unity (1929/1978, 21).

So every production, which is ultimately an event, a process of becoming, is connected to what it is related to from before and is attempting to break away from these interconnections. "It both inherits everything that comes before it and breaks away from everything it inherits" (Shaviro, 2012: 110). This is what Whitehead calls a "route of inheritance" (1929/1978:279).

Whitehead's ideas on routes of inheritance are applicable at various levels of scale in Magnet's work: at the molecular level of the process of making or of performing, as we leap from one moment of decision to the next; at the molar level of formations – how one production relates to others; and, at the level of the *corpus* – the body of work as a whole. And it is this third level that I am most interested in here.

The body of work is a "conjunctive unity" of other bodies – "the many become one". But this does not imply that the body of work is a simple totality. As Deleuze and Guattari proclaim:

> [if] we discover totalities alongside various separate parts, it is a whole of these particular parts but does not totalize them; it is a unity *of* all these particular parts but does not unify them; rather it is added to them as a new part fabricated separately. (1972/1977: 42, italics in original)

Nor does it imply a consistency or continuity whereby the body of work maintains itself by recreating the very processes that produce it (Varela's process of "auto-poesis"). Rather it implies a process of "continual redefinition, or becoming other than what it was" (Shaviro, 2012:112, note 7).

There is, however, another, intermediate level of organization at play in the work of Magnet Theatre that is central to the 'epistemic culture'. Early Magnet works tended to be random, opportunistic events that responded to various impulses and circumstances. Over time a more considered relationship between the work in the university and the idea of research, and the practice in the studio began to emerge. This led to conceptualizing a number of multi-year thematic foci around which different kinds of activities and outputs coalesced. The first of these themes concerned performing history or staging the archive. This involved four productions: *53 Degrees, Rain in a Dead Man's Footprints, Onnest'bo* and *Cargo*, the work in Clanwilliam with school learners on the Bleek and Lloyd Collection in the Clanwilliam Arts Project, a number of journal articles, and ultimately a PhD thesis with the title, *Remembering in the postcolony*. The second focus was on migration. Here again, there were four productions: *Every Year, Everyday, I am Walking; ingcwaba lendoda lise cankwe indlela* [the grave of the man is next to the road]; *Die Vreemdeling* [The Stranger]; *Inxeba Lomphilisi* [Wound of the Healer]; journal articles; a collection of playscripts: *The Magnet Theatre 'Migration' Plays* (Reznek *et al*, 2012); and a collection of academic essays: *Performing migrancy and mobility in Africa: cape of flows* (2015).

In this way, productions are arranged into what I will term research assemblages. The concept of the assemblage appears in the work of Whitehead and Deleuze and Guattari and while all use it to refer to a set of relationships between heterogeneous elements, it

is the latter pairing who are most systematic in defining what is meant by the term. It is instructive that the French word that is translated as 'assemblage' in English is *agencement* and according to Shaviro it is defined "as a conjunction 'of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another,' and also 'of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies'" (Deleuze & Guattari quoted in Shaviro, 2012: 148, note 3).

Some of the elements that make up any particular assemblage take the form of an "intermingling of bodies reacting to each other" at a variety of scales – the human and non-human bodies engaging each other in the molecular moments of each production; one production reacting to another at the molar level of forms and formations. This is what Deleuze and Guattari refer to elsewhere as "the *production of productions,* of actions and of passions" (1972/1977: 4, italics in original). Other elements take the form of "acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed *to* bodies" that might be formal (as in journal articles, or book chapters) or informal (as in interviews, rehearsal notes, post-performance discussions, reviews etc.). Deleuze and Guattari refer to these as "*productions of recording processes,* of distributions and of co-ordinates that serve as points of reference" (1972/1977: 4, italics in original). Some of the elements are produced by Magnet and some are produced by others in reaction to what is produced by Magnet. To this extent the assemblage is not entirely predictable or planned. It is not determined in advance but emerges over time revealing its properties and capacities in the process. It is a structural composition defined by its dynamic nature, shifting and adapting as it incorporates new elements. In line with this, as Manuel DeLanda emphasizes, the assemblage is not based on relations of interiority in which the individual parts form the identity of the whole. Rather, they are defined by relations of exteriority in which the whole is not reducible to its parts – the components that make up the assemblage are not essential to the identity of the whole; they could be replaced by other components (DeLanda, 2006:18). But this does not mean that the components do not interact with or relate to each other. The assemblage produces associative links between elements as a result of their contiguity in space and time, relations of resemblance, and relations of cause and effect. Together these produce a sense of coherence between the elements. But this doesn't mean a sense of total agreement. The assemblage is characterized by difference, by the emergence of alternative possibilities. What is required is what Deleuze and Guattari call a "disjunctive synthesis" which is an affirming and "positive relation among a multiplicity of... incompatible alternatives" (Shaviro, 2012:114). This can be likened to Leibniz's notions of compossibility and incompossibility. But where for Leibniz there is one "most perfect or most fully real" incompossibility in the series of incompossibilities, for Whitehead all incompossibilities must be equally affirmed. Or as Deleuze puts it: "For Leibniz... bifurcations and divergences of series are genuine borders between incompossible words. [...] For Whitehead ... on the contrary, bifurcations, divergences, incompossibilities, and discord belong to the same

motley world" (Deleuze quoted in Shaviro, 2012:116/7).

The combination of these research assemblages make up the body of work and as

Jean-Luc Nancy suggests, "it makes sensible an insistence, if not an obsession… a certain way of thinking" (Nancy, 1993: ix) or as Cull would have it, "a kind of philosophy" (2012: 21). As a kind of philosophy it "does not consist in knowing and is not inspired by truth. Rather it is categories like Interesting, Remarkable, or Important that determine success or failure" and "this cannot be known before being constructed" which is how Deleuze and Guattari describe all philosophy (1991/1994: 82).

As a kind of thinking it is as Henk Borgdorff suggests – with reference to Hans-Jörg Rheinberger's work – "unfinished thinking" – "a productive *not-yet-knowing* against the backdrop of an ever receding knowledge horizon" (2012: 194). It is a leap into the unprecedented and the unknown. Furthermore, it does not reveal the meaning of the work/world as if it had been hidden away, out of sight, awaiting our arrival and our sudden raising/parting of the curtain, the sudden capacity to see it, or make it be seen, as if for the first time. Rather such thinking is a form of poesis that as Nadia Seremetakis reminds us "means both making and imagining" – an "action that is the cause of something to emerge from non-existence to existence" (Plato quoted in Seremetakis 1994: 15) – it brings something new into being; new concepts, new methods, new ideas, new questions, projections and possibilities. In this way it becomes a machine for thinking the future even when, as is the case with much of Magnet's work to date, it works with material from a past that will not easily pass. To this extent, it is motivated by an ethical project, the concrete obligation to intervene in the present, to respond to the task that is before us in South Africa today, the task of being free.

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PART II

SECTION 1: CONCEPTUAL

CHAPTER 1

A DIFFERENT STAGE: FROM PLAY THINKING TO RESEARCH THINKING

By Juliet Jenkin

INTRODUCTION

After more than a decade of working as an actor, writer and director in South African theatre, I began my postgraduate studies with the intention of finding a new relationship to the theatrical form. For my MA, I wrote and directed a choral satire on middle-class South Africa through which I investigated using pattern as a creative and interpretive approach to play-making, defining pattern as a repeated aesthetic system that enacted regularity, strategy, transformation and mimesis through its recursive form. This investigation integrated my heretofore discrete conception of pattern in social and theatrical performance, enabling me to comprehend the performance of pattern as a mutually mimetic social and artistic phenomenon. It was from this conceptual point that I developed the methodological thesis of my doctoral research – proposing performance as a mode and method of social design.

My initial approach to PaR was to simply pursue my theatre-making practice the way I had done in my professional career but with the added vague and inconsistent perception that because the work I was doing was in an academic context it was a different form of practice. While I appreciated the motivating logic of PaR, it initially seemed to me to be a kind of academic wishful thinking that I was unable to institute as part of my theatre practice. Having previously only made theatre for theatre's sake, I was resistant to the notion that an artistic form could be anything other than what it was, not least of all because I viewed arts practice as produced by a complex web of collective and personal unconscious drives that could not explicitly be made conscious or extrapolated as academic products. What took me some time to understand was that these unconscious motives would always be present in a creative process regardless of whether they were aesthetically exploited for the cause of an artwork. In framing my theatre practice outside of artistic motives, its embodied, relational actions were revealed as a way of thinking that I already used in my artistic practice but had not recognised as such.

THE MA PROCESS

At the outset of my MA I did not have a clearly defined research question and could only gesture towards a research impression that had something to do with pattern in performance. Despite my idea being methodological in focus, when I started the process of using theatre-making as research, I felt unable to consciously practice or even parse my methods. I was clearly engaging in techniques, approaches and tactics I had learned and

developed over my career, but they were, if not unclear to me, then so deeply connected to one another and to the totality of what I perceived as 'the theatre-making process', that I struggled to distinguish them during the process of the practice itself. At this stage, I was only able to access a conscious PaR approach through reflecting on my practice after completing a practice process. In the University of Cape Town's Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies (CTDPS) coursework MA programme, this reflective method took the form of critical essays and discussions that engendered a 'methodological review' type of thinking, through which I deliberated on what I had done. During this stage, I consciously thought about my practice rather than consciously used my practice as a mode of thinking, but this purely reflective mode was a necessary and revelatory step in moving towards a conscious mode of thinking-through-practice. The simple feedback loop of practice and reflection allowed me to clarify my research question and began to bridge the gap between my theoretical and methodological grasp of PaR. For example, I recognised that even though my play-making process was fundamentally the practice that led or constituted my research, my play could not passively exist as research in and of itself, and I needed to consciously identify and actively practice the elements of theatre-making in order to undertake practice-based research.

From hereon I began a process of shifting my perception of my practice from theatre-art to theatre-research. The primary theatre-making practice I used as a research method during this time was blocking or choreography. In my habitual artistic process, I would simply block the play according to my own aesthetic sense of the performance and what I took to be its spatial requirements. This process would be largely unconscious, unplanned, and would occur as a responsive reaction to the participation and proposals of the actors.[1] Moreover, assessing the effectiveness of the play's blocking was a responsive, affective, aesthetic experience that I would access through a conscious and unconscious sense of how the play 'felt'. In the PaR iteration of this process, I used blocking as a way to practically investigate my research question. This meant consciously considering the relationship between the staging of embodied patterns in performance and the linguistic patterns of *(inter alia)* rhythm, line and meter in the script. While I generally did not pre-plan these sessions, and while they still involved the responsive participation of the actors, they were (if not theoretical) far more conscious, cerebral and formally discursive than my artistic blocking approach. This new PaR blocking process mirrored the practice and reflection feedback loop I just described but with the significant distinction that the reflection phase took place as a part of the action of the practice rather than outside of the practice as a discussion or an essay.

Thinking about blocking as a site of research made my approach to it far more considered and experimental and the collective action of 'working out' the blocking seemed to uncover the question of the research: asking what blocking could do, what it could mean and how I could use it. In this shifted application, blocking not only fulfilled

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1   In some instances, I would have a sense of a shape or moment I wanted to create and would map it out beforehand.

its traditional function of shaping the play but began to reveal more clearly its potential function as an embodied practice of relational and social interpretation. In the staged production of the play when the social patterns of middle-class South Africa (and the affects of those patterns) were performed through dramatised patterns, my blocking investigation appeared (at least from my perspective) to practically demonstrate the theoretical position of my thesis through the embodied, relational, ephemeral, agonistic action of performance, i.e., the practice enacted the theory in real time as an affective, collective experience.

The process of shifting my perspective on my artistic practice was the underlying scholarship of my MA. It took the process of researching through practice for me to understand *through practice* the possibility of PaR and to gradually gain research consciousness within the presentness of performance practice and the relational workings of the rehearsal process.

Figure 1.1: Performing *Woolworths*. Photograph by Peter Bruyns.

INTO PHD PROCESS

At the outset of my PhD research, my MA play was in production,[2] and after several cast changes I had begun a series of rehearsal processes that included re-staging parts of the play. During this time I was still trying to refine and clearly conceptualise the details of my doctoral research question. Like the initial stages of my MA, my PhD hypothesis was locked inside an imaginative, aesthetic, affective understanding that I was only partly conscious of, and could not coherently extrapolate through mental and linguistic logic. My doctoral idea seemed to be a submerged and unformed thing, but my MA play was a beacon of clarity, a living, breathing object lesson that revealed new insights with each rehearsal.

Frustrated with my PhD and absorbed in the product of my MA, I resolved to use the play to think through my doctoral research. I did not do this in a planned or systematic manner, but simply resolved to observe the process and think of it as a viable way into reasoning through my doctoral research question. Through this framing, the play became a methodological case study that allowed me to understand my PhD as a methodological thesis in and of itself. Having this outlook made me feel like I was making progress with my thinking without getting too tangled up in endless spirals of cerebral logic. Whether I was rehearsing, waiting for a rehearsal, driving to a show, or speaking to the lighting operator, I was observing and participating in a case study. Through this observational method, my play became the foundational plan or blueprint for my PhD. Every aspect of the practice (from warm-up sessions, social interactions, rehearsal struggles, audience encounters and lighting cues to ticket price discussions) was revealed as part of an intricate structural, creative, participative experience. This experience, centred on a social collective that created and participated in the social structures of their environment, led directly to the methodological logic of my PhD where I theorised performance as a mode of design.

During this case study, I isolated two methodological performance practices that influenced my thinking and that I instituted into the design projects[3] of my doctoral research. The first was centred on the participatory social web that actors generate as an inter-personal response to the experience of rehearsing and performing the play together. This cohesive action created the cast's collective identity and was developed through the shared work of the process combined with the repetitive exposure of the actors to one another and the play itself. As a result of this repetitive familiarity, the group generated an emergent, creative relationality that resulted from the play but existed outside of (as well as encompassed) it. In other words, the cast began producing another form of the play that was borne out of the participatory experience of performing the play together. This social web (and its cohesive action) was not strictly speaking a method I could actively practise myself but was rather an emergent methodological outcome that resulted from my performance practice. To apply it, I could try to generate the conditions that enabled

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2   As the play's producer, director and stage manager, I was involved in every aspect of the production.

3   The practical research projects of my PhD investigated using performance as a method and mode of design. They aimed to address a collective, relational problem and use performance-as-design to investigate that problem.

it to occur and interpret and shape its occurrence as a generative aspect of the project.

The second significant methodological approach I identified was the directorial practice of giving notes and feedback during a rehearsal or after a performance. Getting seven performers to execute (often very challenging) blocking and dialogue in unison and achieve rhythmic and tonal congruence was a difficult process that involved considerable critical discussion between myself and the cast. This discursive space was often agonistic and the cast frequently struggled to grasp what I was asking of them and literally struggled with one another as they tried to perform the blocking together, often with opposing views of how it should work. This agonistic space, though often frustrating, was (as Chantal Mouffe[4] proposes) negotiatively productive and produced in me an 'explanation struggle' through which I tried to get the group to apprehend my comments and criticisms in a clear, efficient and embodied way. Through this agonistic explanation feedback loop, I developed my directorial feedback into a symbolic, associative shorthand that I would describe as conjuring a brief, non-literal and immediately accessible image through language. This feedback mode often referenced shared inter-personal, cultural and pop cultural references that I communicated in a 'verbal meme' form to the cast. Examples of these were recalled to me by one of the actors who showed me some of the directorial notes she had taken down in her script, a selection of which read: "Horror aquarium!", "You are a dead fish", "Sex dogs, go!" and "Michelle, can you handle this?" The last note, referring to the opening lyrics of the Destiny's Child song and music video *Bootylicious* (2002) was an immediately accessible marker that expressed a dense visual, affective, and choreographic landscape about hyper-feminised women playfully and competitively dressing up and asserting their sexiness and/or sexual dominance over one another. I was able to express that density of meaning through one simple phrase that (because of our shared popular culture reference points) the cast immediately understood and could begin improvising around.

SYMBOLIC SHORTHAND

A simple evocative phrase invoking shared interpersonal, cultural and pop-cultural references that is immediately comprehensible to a cast on an embodied level, allowing them to improvise around this shared understanding. For example, Juliet describes using "Michelle, can you handle this?" from the opening lyrics of the Destiny's Child song and music video *Bootylicious* (2002) as an immediately accessible reference that expressed a dense visual, affective, and choreographic landscape about hyper-feminised women playfully and competitively dressing up and asserting their sexiness and/or sexual dominance over one another.

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4   Mouffe's concept of the agonistic struggle of democracy reasons that it is through adversarial exchange that negotiative democracy emerges: "...the task for democratic theorists and politicians should be to envisage the creation of a vibrant 'agonistic' public sphere of contestation where different hegemonic political projects can be confronted" (Mouffe, 2005:3).

Developing my directorial communication through the agonistic discursive environment of these feedback sessions progressively clarified my intentions for the play, because even though I had developed the work over the two years of my MA, my aesthetic and theoretical motives were often only made coherent to me through the act of discussion. I took these discursive methods into the design projects of my PhD by using agonistic discussion and explanation as a way of understanding, developing and imagining the scope of the design projects, and I applied 'symbolic shorthand' as a way of leading improvisations that connected the theoretical aims of the projects to their practice. For example, in one of the projects (that I conducted with a group of 2nd year acting students) the theoretical aim of the project centred on the notion of consent and physical intimacy in theatre practice at UCT's CTDPS. I wanted to incorporate these theoretical aims into the practical explorations without overburdening the process with an academic or linguistically conceptual approach. During our discussion, one of the participants spoke about what you feel you are 'inside' versus how you are perceived 'outside' and I took this inside/ outside icon as a generative symbol to guide and frame the explorations of the project.

I applied these discursive and symbolic methodological approaches to my primary method of group improvisation. Moreover, I used interrogative questions (based on Keith Johnstone's "What comes next?" improvisational technique) and stated motives (for example: in this improvisation we will investigate the space between the door and the window, we will not be using our feet to move around) to shape, frame and develop the process. Improvisation enabled me and the participating group to investigate, generate and reflect on the aims and themes of my hypothesis and these variously framed improvisations not only embodied and enacted my theoretical position but produced, reproduced, reflected on and critically demonstrated my theoretical position as an action of practice.

KEITH JOHNSTONE'S "WHAT COMES NEXT?"

An interrogative dramaturgical technique described by Keith Johnstone in *Impro for storytellers* (1999). The director/facilitator keeps asking the participants, "What comes next?" The question focuses the participants on the logical development of narrative action and "allows one action to lead into another." (Johnstone, 1999: 134-142)

In attempting to demonstrate performance practice as a justifiable mode of design practice, I necessarily used the actions and methods of performance to support my argument. In this way, the methodological argument of my thesis was directly related to the theory *of* practice and did not reason out an argument of a theoretical research question entirely detached from the logic of practice. That said, in my experience, using PaR and practice-based methods generated a mode of thinking that centred practice not only as the method of investigation, but as the theoretical position of the research.

CONCLUSION

My post-graduate experience of PaR was one of reorientating my artistic practice both in my motives for its outcomes and in the potential for its methodological function. The condition of performance as a practice of the present (Phelan, 2003) meant that using performance as a PaR method required practising this presentness as an action of research. This was not an easy or immediate process, but over the course of my studies, I became more able to practice the performance present as a research mode, and by the end of my PhD, my mind entered the form very differently from the way it had when I only practiced theatre as an art form. More than simply using performance methods as a mode of research, my experience of PaR involved coming to a conscious and deeply detailed understanding of my practice and using that understanding to reconsider my practice from inside it. Through this process, I did not simply identify general performance methods and apply them to my research but rather identified the details, motives and techniques of my artistic practice and attempted to re-imagine their application as a tool of interpretive and generative research. The methods and methodological approaches I describe here (directing a play, observing collaborative cast dynamics, blocking, directorial feedback, and symbolic note-giving) are familiar to theatre and performance practitioners and not significant to PaR in and of themselves. Like the myriad methodological actions of performance, the approaches are made significant through being questioned and extrapolated in a different way, a way which does not merely accept the set motives and applications of theatre as an arts practice, but rather asks: what else can theatre do?

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DRAMATURGICAL METHODS: MIGRANT ATTITUDES, WAYWARD ARCHIVES AND OTHER PROPOSALS FOR CREATIVE RESEARCH

By Mwenya B. Kabwe

INTRODUCTION

As an artist and scholar, my primary research interests revolve around notions of migration in and through Africa along the intersections of gender and race. Inspired by my own migrant biography, my theatre-making tends towards poetic, image-based work which makes expansive use of theatre materials and which explores movement and mobility dramaturgically. My MA thesis work, consisting of a mini dissertation and a thesis production, took the form of a site-specific 'choreopoem' titled *Afrocartography: traces of places and all points in between.* It was staged at the Scalabrini Centre in Cape Town and was set in a dreamlike realm where the characters of the Traveller, the Afropolitan, the Afrosettler and the Mapmaker met and mingled. As the character names suggest, the work centred strongly on issues of migration and this project went on to have several iterations that have been written about in a chapter titled "Mobility, migration and 'migritude' (Migritude, in *OED online*, 2023) in Afrocartography: traces of places and all points in between" (Kabwe, 2015b). I mention this MA thesis project here as my first PaR endeavour.

The research project that I will be discussing here is my PhD thesis titled *Theatres of migritude: towards a dramaturgy of African futures.* The research aims to contribute to the genre of black migrant cultural production called 'migritude', which developed largely in African diasporic literary circles and traces its evolution from the Negritude movement. The thesis sought to respond to the question, "what does it mean to have a migrant attitude for theatre and performance-making?" It explores an approach to thinking about how a relationship between migration and Africanfuturism can be put towards a dramaturgical practice mobilised in the direction of possibility, potential and a more hopeful future.

RESEARCH DESIGN

My PaR research design for a traditional dissertation included the analysis of five case studies in order to investigate what alternative understandings of African migrancy might exist in the spirit of a selection of theatre and performance works made by women whose biographies flow through the African continent. These texts were: *Migritude* (2010) by Shailja Patel, *Every Year, Every Day I am Walking* (Fleishman, Reznek & Yisa, 2012) by Magnet Theatre, *Moj of the Antarctic: An African Odyssey* (2011) by Mojisola Adebayo, *Afrogalactica*

Deep Space Scrolls (2015) by Kapwani Kiwanga and *Astronautus Afrikanus* (2015a) devised by a group of students at the University Currently Known as Rhodes, under my direction. The area of focus in terms of performance was on the compositional elements of these productions that are thematically and aesthetically concerned with migration, with the aim of developing a pliable dramaturgical framework for a migrant attitude.

My selection of texts to study was made from plays and productions that were familiar to me and that were about movement, mobility and migration in both direct and indirect ways. *Every Year Every, Day I am Walking*, for instance, is a play about a small family that is forced to leave an unnamed African country and travel to South Africa as refugees; *Moj of the Antarctic* is an epic time-travelling one-person play inspired by the real-life story of Ellen Craft who escaped enslavement by cross-dressing as a man; *Afrogalactica* is one in a series of performance lectures that casts African history speculatively into the future, and *Astronautus Afrikanus* was staged at the University Currently Known as Rhodes as the 2015 Fees Must Fall and Rhodes Must Fall student protests were gaining momentum across South African universities. *Astronautus Afrikanus* was inspired by Edward Mukuka Nkoloso whose visionary dreams of Zambia's independence equated with Zambians being the first to land on the moon. *Migritude* was not only an autobiographical performance poem about the author's migratory lineage, but also provided the conceptual and theoretical basis for the study as a whole.

These plays vary widely in terms of genre, content and form, and they came together in my study only because I had selected them through a hunch that they each held a particular, yet-to-be-discovered key to unlocking what I was trying to articulate by the term 'migrant attitude' in the realm of theatre. At this stage, a number of research design questions needed to be addressed: (1) How was I to relate to these plays as a collection? (2) How was I to clarify for myself what I was analysing in each play? and, considering the response to the previous question, (3) How was I to approach the analysis of each play when there was variation in how I had accessed them and what kind of residue was still available for studying them?

CENTRING DRAMATURGY

The subtitle of the thesis, *Towards a dramaturgy of African futures*, implied a hope that the various pieces of the project would lead to some kind of articulation of a particular dramaturgical process. The project worked with a broad understanding of dramaturgy as:

> a particular process of work that is common to all artistic production (whether "experimental", "traditional", "new", or "old"), and that sheds light upon the ways in which encounters, work, and the creation inside (and possibly also outside) the artistic frame happen. (Georgelou, Protopapa & Theodoridou, 2017:15, parentheses in the original)

Among the many definitions of dramaturgy, I leaned towards those that resonate with my own particular approach to theatre-making and chose those that are more processual than structural, more collaborative than directorial, more intuitive than bound by rules, and those

that maintain a non-hierarchy of theatrical materials, where the written text, if it exists at all, is an element amongst many others. As the area of focus in terms of performance lay in the compositional elements of productions that are thematically and aesthetically concerned with migration, my intention was to engage with the dynamic, contextual and political dimensions of dramaturgical practice (Turner & Behrndt, 2007). This compositional focus was a helpful point of orientation that I returned to when I felt overwhelmed by all the possible access points to each play. Looking specifically at compositional elements meant that I could choose a compositional focus for each play which would usefully contain what I was looking at, even though what I was searching for was initially unclear.

Georgelou, Protopapa and Theodoridou, speak of "a 'dramaturgy of process' in works that are oriented towards the construction of possibilities and not the establishment of clearly definable and repeatable schemas" (2017:12). This notion of a dramaturgy of process was very useful in this case. My interest was in the compositional logics of the works studied, but I was working with what was emerging as I looked more and more closely at each text rather than applying some kind of dramaturgical formula to them. Working dramaturgically, also helped to define my area of inquiry around an interest in how performance works come to be as a consequence of a particular process, and in this case a process that involved various notions, tropes and images of migration as expressed by women in dialogue with people, materials, media, bodies and space towards identifying an aesthetic overlap. My task was to isolate some of these dialogues occurring in each text to see how connections were being made between dynamic theatre-making elements to form an organic whole.

Another useful point of distinction for me – for thinking through a PaR framework and again to maintain a practice of dramaturgy as central to the exercise – was to recognise that although the case studies would be 'analysed' there was a useful distinction to note between 'performance analysis' and 'dramaturgy' even though they are often used interchangeably. Analysis implies a sense of taking apart or unravelling, while dramaturgy is linked to ideas of composition and implies a bringing together of parts to view them in relation to each other (Turner & Behrndt, 2007). This distinction speaks also to the method employed here of identifying specific elements in each production that were extracted and then woven together to create a new dramaturgical palette. The productions examined in the thesis used migration dramaturgically. That is, not only thematically and metaphorically, but in their particular compositional logic; in their relationship between the subject matter, the framing and the contexts in which they are created (Fleishman, 2015b). My central argument was that a dramaturgy of African futures extends these migrant compositional logics spatiotemporally into an elsewhere, taking the restlessness of migration to mean a constant seeking of what else is possible and more desirable.

CREATING AN ARCHIVE

While the plays varied widely, they were all plays made by women with a relationship to the African continent; they were thematically and/ or conceptually dealing with movement and mobility and I had had some kind of direct engagement with them, either by having read, seen or devised them or some combination of the three. This led me

towards more confidently claiming that the collection of case studies in fact constituted an archive of sorts. This was an experimental archive with political implications. What I had before me was an intuitive assembly of material and immaterial artefacts composed of wayward 'objects' which varied between productions that I had watched, to those that I had made, to play texts that I had read and video recordings that I had examined. The research design process therefore required a way of addressing these multiple forms of critical interpretation.

By gathering these case studies together, I had made a collection of things. I had constructed an archive and the process of writing the thesis involved extracting from the archive answers to illusive questions that I have about my own work, which are dramaturgical and poetic. This experimental archive that had been made for this particular creative research endeavour contained material traces of performances in the form of video recordings and published play texts as well as immaterial traces such as my own memory of watching some of the productions. This archive also included a production that I had devised, complicating my position as archivist in terms of being both internal and external to its contents.

ASSEMBLING AN ARCHIVE AS METHOD

Drawing together the material for your research and considering it as an archive. Video recordings, play texts, props, set, memories of watching live productions – all these and more – can be considered objects in your own personal research archive to be treated with the same kind of curiosity and reverence as you would an official archive in a museum or library.

To claim that the collection of case studies formed an archive was to enter a politically contested arena in relation to what has been and continues to be worth remembering, in what ways and by whom. To claim that my memory and experience of live performance works, their video recordings and also their play texts and my own work, can constitute an archive was also to challenge prevailing definitions of archives as composed only of physical artefacts. In the context of my project, this manner of archiving pointed to how stories of migration are embodied, and embodied by women, across the African diaspora, which, as Holly A. Smith notes, is about "[...] the ways historically marginalized communities are not often present in written archives, from benign neglect to intentional erasure" (Belle et al, 2020:19). The intention of this project then, was to make visible, not only certain subjects, but also certain ways of knowing. It was both an intervention and a response. It was a position that was not set apart from that which I was studying (Fleishman, 2009).

In the theatre the issue of remains for archival purposes is complex. For Rebecca Schneider, the theatre resists 'remaining' according to the logic of the archive as

traditionally known, but in fact recomposes its remains while refusing to conform to a certain status of object, and therefore "remains differently" (2001:101). To claim to have made an archive was to argue that live performance is "beyond capture"), as Fleishman (2015a:1) notes in his piece of the same name, to the extent that performance remains while threatening the terms of captivity dictated by the archive (Schneider, 2001). Diana Taylor's work also reminds us that the debates about the ephemerality of performance are profoundly political, as she asks: "Whose memories, traditions, and claims to history disappear if performance practices lack the staying power to transmit vital knowledge?" (2003:5). These are the same archival logics that make determinations about the value of some bodies (of knowledge) while rendering others as discardable.

At the levels of both content and form then, the archive constructed for the thesis project operated to make visible that which has been deemed invisible and unvaluable (Belle et al., 2020), challenging narratives of the erasure and disappearance of black migrant bodies as well as marking the ways in which the performing arts necessarily expand notions of archive. My immersion in the very archive that I was studying was also to counter the traditional Western anthropological gaze of 'us' (on the outside) studying "them" on the inside. I share in Diana Taylor's investment in performance studies as deriving "less from what it *is* than what it allows us to *do*" (Taylor, 2003:16, italics in the original). In this case, including my own work in the circulation of knowledge about performance studies allowed me to engage in a decolonial practice that takes the performing arts "seriously as a system of learning, storing and transmitting knowledge" (Taylor, 2003:16), necessarily expanding what we mean by knowledge in the first place. This archive is a "collection of subjectivities" (Belle et al., 2020:20) including my own, and it produces its own prompts for how to engage with it. This notion of being prompted became an important aspect of the method, which will be expanded upon in the section to follow.

My proximity to this archive conformed with creative research practices in which artist-academic hybrids (Lam, 2020) work with their own artistry all the time. In the art-making practice of theatre and performance there is an understanding that the work is somehow bigger than the makers; it is already excessively articulate and when it is released into the world for an audience, the makers relinquish any last measures of control over it. It can then be approached anew as an 'object' by the same makers who ushered it into being, from a perspective that is both inside and outside. This version of archival work aims to be capacious, decentralised, accessible and experimental in the sense of not knowing what will emerge from its exploration (Belle et al., 2020). This archive is not one that is relegated to a specific time and place and is more akin to a field of currents that cross geography and history.

The theatre does not let us down by 'disappearing'. It changes mode, it becomes stealthier, but the ideas that it has put into the world cannot be retracted, they cannot be disappeared. There is no doubt a curation of materials and a concentration of energies at the performance event itself, but my contention is that this moment sits on a continuum of collecting, spreading, cohering, expanding and exploding of ideas that remains unfinished. In this case, my proximity to this project's archive was to acknowledge that the performance work that I had made and included in the archive exists separately from

me to a significant extent, and in a swirl of already existing ideas about Africa, migration, women and futurism. To reiterate, this was not a physical archive. It was an intuitive assembly of material and immaterial artefacts composed of materials that were entirely too wayward to be housed in a physical archive.

WA(O)NDERING AS METHOD

As the objects in the archive varied from productions that I have watched, to those that I had made, to play texts that I had read and video recordings that I had examined, there were multiple forms of critical interpretation that had to be engaged with, including watching, reading, looking (Fensham, 2009) and making. Through each of these interpretive modes, the focus was to wa(o)nder through and with the works, not knowing what this would yield, but allowing this wa(o)ndering to shape and determine my evolving route, prompted by what the archive collection was providing. This wayfaring through the amorphous archival terrain, was guided by Tim Ingold's rule of thumb (after Deleuze and Guattari)[5] to "*follow the materials*" (Ingold, 2011:213, italics in the original).

Both theatre and migrants are characterised by non-arrival, by defying finality or fixedness and, as unstable entities, they are well suited to each other. I therefore essentially determined that an archive made of wayward artefacts about wayward subjects required a wayward approach. This following of materials was done by isolating an interaction at play between some of the theatrical materials in each work that could be read through a migrant lens. These readings reflected and responded to the working formulation of migritude for theatre-making by building a migrant attitude. And it is the application of this migrant attitude that I am calling a dramaturgy of African futures. Each of the case studies had a particular way of 'thinking' about migration, an artistic point of view, a stance, a mood, an approach, an orientation, an interpretation, a feeling, a disposition – an *attitude* if you will. A migrant attitude to be more precise, and a formulation inspired by Shailja Patel's autobiographical performance poem, *Migritude* (2010).

In operation here are two definitions of the word 'attitude': "a settled way of thinking or feeling about something" and "a position of the body indicating a particular mental state" ("Attitude", 2023). The first part of this definition pointed to the project as a process of arriving at a way of thinking and/or feeling through looking at the work of others, making, writing and researching. The second part of the definition pointed to the particularity of theatre-making as an embodied practice, shifting positions of the body in relation to other materials that suggest not only a mental state but also an emotional and political one.

In Patel's *Migritude* (2010), she explicates a migrant attitude that is about *a* critical mode of being in the world that signals to uneven relations of power, the endurance of colonial socialisation in Africa and a particular orientation to history and geopolitics from a migrant perspective that centres on the enactments of empire on the bodies of women. It is a theatre of migration (Cox, 2014) that is concerned with transnational and intercultural politics. It is from this point of departure that I have taken the term 'migritude' to mean

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5   Deleuze & Guattari, 1987:409.

'migrant attitude', and have assumed that this attitude comes in a multitude of forms (as attitudes do), and have extracted a series of conceptual positions, if you will, by looking for where and how else this attitude is expressed in the other case studies. Each of these productions was understood as a complex web of elements and their migrant attitudes emerged from identifying where some of these elements connect and interact. These attitudes were aesthetic, "ideological, compositional, philosophical and socio-political" (Turner & Behrndt, 2007:33).

This formulation of a migrant attitude takes its lead from Nelson Maldonado-Torres's work on Frantz Fanon. He makes a valuable distinction between attitude and method in relation to the decolonial turn in psychology, towards what he calls a decolonial attitude (2017), stating that,

> The idea of method as a guarantor of truth and knowledge in the sciences emerged from a certain confidence about the capacities of the cognitive subject and the status of the object, method being that which allows the subject to produce and secure true knowledge about the object— that is, objective knowledge. (2017:442)

Maldonado-Torres goes on to explain how Fanon's approach to attitude sought to counter "Western methodic knowledge [which] acquired normative status and led to the rejection or subordination of other forms of knowing" (2017:433). For Maldonado-Torres, and in opposition to claims of objective knowledge, Fanon's work approaches attitude as no less than "the dimension of the subject by virtue of which the subject can seek to challenge [established] knowledge, power, and being" (Maldonado-Torres 2017:434). The primacy of attitude over method then marks not only a decolonial turn in psychology, psychiatry and the human sciences, but also applies more generally in areas of knowledge, power and being (Maldonado-Torres, 2017). Fanon's philosophical approach to attitude is not only a matter of opting for subjective intention or purpose over structural condition, but it is also relevant in the foundational role that attitudes play in relation to 'being': to the human experiences of embodiment, intersubjective contact, time and space (Maldonado-Torres, 2017).

In the face of a colonial attitude with "its constant questioning of the full humanity of the colonized" (Maldonado-Torres, 2017:439), a decolonial attitude towards knowledge and being is fundamentally political and ethical. Maldonado-Torres makes the point that attitudes are also connected to action, "prepar[ing] subjects to act or not act, as well as to act or react in particular ways, including in the task of producing knowledge" (2017:434). This formative conception of a decolonial attitude which is not only political and ethical, but epistemological and aesthetic as well (Maldonado-Torres, 2017), provided me with firm grounding for conceptualising a migrant attitude in the service of reading and making performance works that are marked by "boundary crossings" (Davies, 1994:4) and have an emancipatory agenda.

DISCOVERIES

The migrant attitude in *Migritude* is unapologetic about the precarities that mark migrant lives and centralises the global historical processes that are always at play in relation to

discussions about African migrants and their movement patterns. In *Every year, every day,* I identified an attitude of vitality towards objects. This contributing thread to a migrant attitude places the movement of subject and object in new fluid configurations that gesture towards freedom. This attitude towards freedom is one that attempts to share principles of equality and justice with non-human players (Fleishman, 2015b).

In *Moj of the Antarctic: an African Odyssey,* the migrant attitude is tactical and strategic, regarding the politics of race and gender using passing as a means of gaining acceptance into social groups other than one's own. It is the attitude of a trickster, who is both seen and unseen, enabling shifts in social position and between public and private identities.

In *Afrogalactica: Deep Space Scrolls,* Kapwani Kiwanga creates a connection between events in Africa's history and an otherworldly African future. Hers is a migrant attitude that expands time and space, opening up not only a spatiotemporal continuum on which to (re)read African history, but also a portal through which to reclaim and reinvent that history through a futuristic lens.

The production *Astronautus Afrikanus* sought to make a critical spatial intervention into an institutional site's colonial history and context at a time that was ripe for the reimagining of institutional culture. This piece of the migrant attitude centres around physical space as pliable and possessing transformative potential which is activated by an audience with mobile agency.

CONCLUSION

A dramaturgy of African futures is conceived as both a reading practice and a making practice and maintains that these practices of creative research are not separate, but sees processes of making, thinking, understanding, imagining, recognising and writing as what Paul Carter calls "material thinking". He contends that "If research implies finding something that was not there before, it ought to be obvious that it involves imagination" (2004:7). This is a reading and making practice which challenges the authority and coherence of dominant migrant narratives and contributes to a kind of clarifying, to a making conscious the fluid bounds of my theatre-making territory. It coheres with doing dramaturgy as a "conversation preparing for and infecting a coming conversation, namely with an audience" (Georgelou, Protopapa & Theodoridou, 2017:143), in this case an audience that will read the thesis and a future audience that will receive the productions to come. In Carter's words: "If it is claimed that what is found was always there (and merely lost), still an act of creative remembering occurs" (2004:7, parenthesis in original). My hope is that while this "creative remembering" has value for me as an artist, it also contributes to an already rich range of dramaturgical avenues for other artists.

I contend that an individual's dramaturgical practice is influenced by how they read the political present, and using migrants and migration as an avenue through which to do this, is altered if migrants are imagined as carriers of potentiality, as mobilisers of a future vision and as a way to meditate on the impossible.
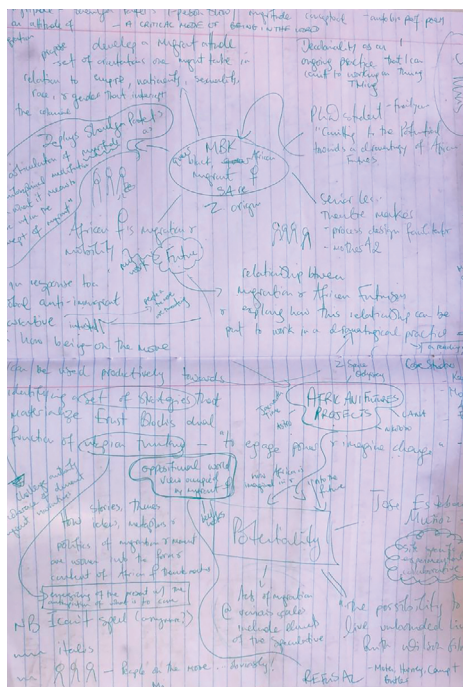
Figure 2.1: A page from PhD research notebook.
Photograph by Mwenya Kabwe.

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CHAPTER 3

DBLE: A CURATORIAL APPROACH TO PRACTICE AS RESEARCH

By Khanyisile Mbongwa

INTRODUCTION

> "I curate because I do not know, I curate because I do not want to lose my ability to imagine a world…" Khanyisile Mbongwa

Drawing on curatorial practice as research, this chapter explores *Demonstrations and Demonstrating: Black Lived Experience (DBLE)*, a term I coined in 2013 during my Honours degree in curatorial studies at UCT. I have been developing my thinking around it as a site and archive from which strategic methods of tracing, mapping, discerning are used as tools for PaR.

In thinking about this chapter, I begin by positioning *Demonstrations and Demonstrating: Black Lived Experience (DBLE)* as a site and archive from which my practice is conceived, informed, influenced and developed. It is this positionality that has given me the capacity to develop the language in my practice as research. I attempt to understand the range of methodologies that surface during the relationship or tension between intuitive practices and institutionalised protocol as the researcher moves between states of nimbleness, agility, shape-shifting and code-switching. I also touch on what I term 'the pillars of my practice', which form the foundation and are the guiding principles of my curatorial practice. It is these pillars that inform my intention in terms of how I approach my research and also that hold me accountable in the process of research.

DEFINING DEMONSTRATIONS AND DEMONSTRATING: BLACK LIVED EXPERIENCE (DBLE)

As a site and archive *Demonstrations and Demonstrating: Black Lived Experience* depicts that first moment in history that an African person, alongside their native land, is extracted and reduced to a Black Body of labour and currency – placed on a plinth, naked, unnamed and renamed, stripped of personhood and marked by enslavement permanently. This is the first moment of demonstrating Black lived experience. Apart from acknowledging histories of extractions as archival sites *Demonstrations…* acknowledges Black people as the first modernists through processes of abduction, alienation, displacement and dispossession. Kodwo Eshun refers to the significance of remembering "the collective trauma of slavery as the founding moment of modernity" (2003:288). Eshun highlights Toni Morrison's argument that:

> African subjects that experienced capture, theft, abduction, mutilation and slavery were the first moderns. They underwent real conditions of existential homelessness, alienation, dislocation and dehumanisation that philosophers like Nietzsche would later define as quintessentially modern. (289)

Eshun further argues that this "dislocation and commodification that constituted the Middle Passage meant that modernity was rendered forever suspect" (289). My practice starts here to trace, map and discern the timeline on both ends, which is to say, from before the colonial enslavement extraction and decolonising practices that emerge in and through the conditions of such violences, until what I call the 'emancipatory practices'6 that arise in what is defined as the post-colonial free world. In my attempts to find language to define what we (Black people) do, it is this word *Demonstrations*, this moment of *Demonstrating: Black Lived Experience* that I move through in search of emancipatory practices that resurrect, acknowledge and instigate a curing and care for my ancestors, my lineage and us Black people now.

Demonstrating: Black Lived Experience is about reading, mapping, thinking and imagining through the Black body – the Black body that centralises itself as a point of departure/enquiry in the work of art, literature, philosophy, new media and visual culture.

In this context, the word '*Demonstrations*' has a number of associated meanings and connotations:

> *Demonstrations* is forced removals; exile; toyi–toyi; lifeless Black body; dismembered Black bodies; unnamed graves; *irhanga* (alleyway); the Middle Passage; the legacies of slavery; the disturbed flow.

- *Demonstrations* is the expounding of Black historical narratives; Blackness moving as archive and in memory; invoking the ancestral knowledge; in pursuit of remembering; tracing through movement (dancing, *ukugida*,7 libation, migration, the slave ship).
- *Demonstrations* seeks to create a space where we imagine the afterlife in and of Black trauma. It probes at what survives and the ways in which Blackness continues to make living.

In formulating my practice I realised that there is a conversation that ensues between tracing, mapping and discernment when I anchored *DBLE*, which centralises Blackness and the bodies of Black people as the starting point of my thinking. My questions

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6   I define emancipatory practices as creative modes of communication and expression that chattel through the violent histories of colonialism, slavery, apartheid and racism as practices that insist in imagining Black life into existence. That is visual arts, literature, philosophy, new media, curating, live and public interventions that apply themselves to systematic structures that deny us access to ourselves.

7   *Ukugida* is an ancient cultural Zulu dance. We use it here to infer global Black diasporic indigenous ways the body moves to connect with self, the ancestral and celestial.

began with a mundane: What and who do I see when I look at the mirror? Who stares back at me and how? Who are the people and what are the places that configure this ensemble? These questions required me to see myself; but how do I see myself when I'm socialised and trained to see through the eyes of a white man or white gaze? Then the questions became: How do I reach my eyes so I can see me? How do I remove this white gaze veil? How do I remove the invisible white hand orchestrating continued conditions and circumstances of violence? What is the undoing work? How do I train my eyes to see, look and transmit?

TRACING

I use the Sankofa method of tracing. *Sankofa* is a Twii word from the Akan tribe in Ghana. The literal translation of the word and the symbol is "it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind" or go back and fetch it. *NgesiZulu* we speak of *ukuzilanda*, to go fetch yourself through the family and clan names, the stories and metaphors embedded in them and the places they point to. Here, my ancestors have left me with a blueprint of how to trace, what to look out for and how to look, how to read the symbols in the dreams, clothes, songs, food, dances, figures of speech, bodily gestures and the everyday. My ancestors knew I'd come looking so they left me clues that require an ancestral alignment to awaken the spiritual eye for me to be able to trace. The trace is the retrieval, a retrieval of that which we have been denied access to; a retrieval of that which has been left behind; a retrieval of that which sits in the disturbed flow; a retrieval of that which survived the triangular seas crossing. For this to happen you have to be a participating observer. Participating means that you partake in the happenings so you can observe yourself and any somatic response your body might move through; you can learn through your senses and your ancestral/ indigenous perspective; you get to engage with other people who carry the lineage and knowledge that resides in all their movements. 'Observer' means you assign yourself to an ancestral listening, a deep-time listening, a forensic listening. To observe is to train yourself how to listen, to listen before formulating a question because how could you possibly know what to ask when you have not listened? In order for the observer to emerge you need to be curious, it is the curiosity that will open you up to the practice of listening.

But your participation and observation has to be regulated by the customs of the people and the place, the kind of invitation extended to you, your intentions communicated clearly and not overstepped. As a participant you also have to offer a 'happening' in order to be participating *with* and also *to be observed* by the people and the place in question as a sign of mutual respect for being invited and accepted into their process. In this way there is an exchange rather than an extraction for your sole benefit – in my practice it is always a question of balance. After all the information has been sourced and gathered, it is to be cross-referenced with the people in question as verification and to determine what is secret, sacred and therefore not for public consumption.

Entering a museum archive where they house ancestral or sacred objects from different parts of the African continent is tracing. Let's say it is an *Nkisi Nkondi* from what

we now call the Democratic Republic of Congo. But how does one trace in the absence of the maker of the object? The first trace is to find out where the object is from; how the object became part of the archive; how it was received or welcomed into the archive; what information was made of the object; how the object was taken care of; how many times has it been on display and why. The second trace is to find the people where the object is from and enquire from them about the object – what is the intention and function of the object; in which particular region it was made; how is it supposed to be cared for; does it need to be returned or can it continue to exist in the museum archive and do you have permission to touch it, speak to it, speak about it and write about it. The asking of these questions is but one way one can practice tracing without being extractive or continuing the culture of anthropological extractiveness through research.

MAPPING

Mapping is following your intuition, which is developed over time through trusting what you feel as valid for enquiry, it is educated or informed hope and it is listening to the somatic response your body encounters. Mapping allows you to sketch, chart and outline your tracings. It creates an operation that either associates elements to each other, sees where links happen, where possible narrative or narratives of possibilities can occur. Lines are drawn and redrawn to read what the links are and where the tensions happen. It is a layering of information to make sense of it, or rerouting a line to move beyond the obvious or what keeps occurring so as to test the limits and examine how you can move beyond. It is here you begin to formulate your language that gives life to the work and defines your practice. Mapping requires agility, nimbleness and the ability to shape-shift because it is the part of the research where institutional protocol rubs against your intuitive process, because the rhythms are not the same or might not align. This tends to be the crucial part of the research process, where the institutional timeline has no space for expansion and requires you to shrink within its limits and or confines. Mapping can also assist you to manoeuvre the institutional tension through mapping its layout in a way that makes sense to your process and to the integrity of your work, and it helps to identify where there are possible synergies and hone into those so as to relieve institutional and systemic pressure. This in turn sharpens your skills of critical mapping as you learn to code-switch in a way that is sensitive to your own personhood.

During my MA I curated a series of interventions at UCT, one titled *kuDanger! kuDanger* is an electrical box that is found ekasi (in the township), commonly placed at a street corner with a lamp post looking down on it. On any given day, from early morning till late at night, young boys gather around it and sit on it. It is typically adjacent to *irhanga*. *iRhanga* is a township alleyway; a passageway between rows of township houses and at its mouth is another gathering of young boys, leaning on its walls with a streetlight shining down on them. Sometimes, a brave girl sits amongst the boys, earning a less 'feminine' status.

Down in the furniture storage basement of UCT's then Drama Department,[8] I installed *kuDanger!* Generally, this basement is a clutter of furniture used as props by the

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8   Now the Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies.

department. The first aspect of the work was to create space within this basement for *kuDanger!* to exist as an experiment that explores *irhanga* as a public space by imaging what a free Black child looks like. This act of place-making and labour revealed some of the pressing questions that the performative installation grappled with. The piece is a montage including fairy lights, video installations, three Black beings packing and repacking empty beer crates, and one Black being standing on a room divider, moving in slow motion. The only source of light comes from the pulsating fairy lights and the television screens placed in precarious positions. There are multiple layers that plunge the viewer into a curated atmosphere: these layers are spatial, as the viewer goes down the stairs; visual, as you enter a darkened room; and aural, as you find yourself within a specific soundscape. Every layer is a careful choice, intended not to override the Black Lived Experience *ekasi*, not to reduce it to only a Black body and not to spectacularise its labour, but to bring to the surface its nuanced textures and rituals of resilience.

Figures 3.1; 3.2; 3.3: 2017 MA explication in UCT Drama storage basement as part of the ICA Live Art Festival. Curated/Choreographed by Khanyisile Mbongwa. Demonstrators: Khanyisile Mbongwa, Nicholas Ngimkhethile Sithole, Asanda Muchatuta, Aphiwe Nyezi. Photographs courtesy of the Institute for Creative Arts and the curator.

This mapping exercise engages with the township as an illegitimate space that is legitimised by the existence and insistence of Black life and living. It uses the concepts of township planning, forced removals and choreography as templates to formulate grids and imagine from them. To read the township beyond the perspective of a place that reproduces violence, is a way to introduce other possible narratives that occur; reading the Black body as a being that imagines and creates from that imagination. It also presents other perspectives from which to enter the township, and thus Black life.

DISCERNMENT
Given the history of how Black people are invisibilised or hypervisualised – placed in conditions and circumstances that are precarious, therefore placing our bodies on the

line as available, accessible, disposable and erased – discernment in my research process is where I critically look at the tracing and mapping to see what I might have missed. To discern is to possess "the quality of being able to grasp and comprehend what is obscure" or in the Christian context, it is "perception in the absence of judgment with a view to obtaining spiritual guidance and understanding" (Meriam-Webster.com). Discernment is about paying attention to detail; unpacking and distilling ideas/ findings; going back to the scene or site for further observations to see what you might have missed; asking questions from various perspectives; discussing your thoughts, ideas, findings with your family (I always call my mother) and community (my friends and peers are people I think alongside with when I am formulating and examining my ideas). In respect of where I am thinking from in my practice, I always ask the following questions: How do I safeguard the sacred and secret sacred? How do I respect Black privacy? What do I need to put in place to acknowledge and pay respects?

THE PILLARS OF MY PRACTICE

Defining the pillars of your practice is a guide for how you conduct yourself during your research and what considerations you need to have as you formulate your research parameters. Pillars are what hold the structure of what you do and act as roots and reinforcement of the practice. A pillar is a supporting, integral or upstanding part of a frame. In my context I think of the pillars of my practice as the lifeline between my ancestors and me, the lifeline between the celestial and me. The pillars are a vertical line running from the bottom (ancestors) and top (celestial) towards me on this timeline. Thus, my curatorial practice is concerned with Curing and Care, engaging with creative processes to instigate spaces for emancipatory practices of joy, care, play, love and freedom. Curing and Care form part of intentionality in my practice, hold me accountable in my process of conceptualising, thinking through and manifesting curatorial propositions. They are the guiding principles and ethical considerations asking what are the particularities of care one needs to put in place to hold the space for the creative as an artist, for the narrative and for their personhood; asking what considerations and sensitivities need to be put in place and activated to instigate a curing.

CURING AND CARE

These are Khanyisile Mbongwa's guiding principles and ethical considerations for curatorial practice. The approach asks what are the particularities of care one needs to put in place to hold the space for the creative as an artist, for their narrative and for their personhood? Understanding that the careful design of space-holding for each artist is a process to instigate a curing.

An example of how I approach research through Curing and Care, is how I conducted my artist research for the Liverpool Biennial 2023. When I started studio visits both in

person and online, I wanted to put together a process that was not extractive, given that curating as a practice sits within that realm.

> **Phase 1:** I wrote a research curatorial framework that I shared with the individuals and institutions I approached, asking them to suggest artists.

> **Phase 2:** I honoured each suggestion by reaching out to the artist to set up a studio visit.

> **Phase 3:** I made a decision while I was putting together the process that I would not Google or do a social media search of the artist; I would not read any articles prior to my visit to the artist; I would come into the conversation not knowing how the artist looks, what kind of work they make, with no questions – so as to be introduced to the artist and their work through their own positioning. In this phase I would introduce myself and my research framework, and inform the artist of my approach and that I was present to listen as they introduced themselves and guided me through their practice.

> **Phase 4:** I make a decision on which artists to invite and then write a personalised email to all artists, including the artists that I had no capacity to invite due to institutional constraints.

This 4-phase approach was me figuring out how to hold the process of research within my curatorial process of Curing and Care.

CONCLUSION

As I am writing this essay, transmitting how I have been conducting my research, it becomes clear again that it is within practice. By which I mean, it is in situ, and in the act of, in which I could formulate this research model and the language that comes with it. The research framework for me appears through curiosity – a curiosity that can't always be held by institutional framing because sometimes the source of the knowledge and my curiosity sits beyond the bounds of it all.

What I have also learnt is how to *transmit*, which is not to translate or explain, from the source from which the knowledge derives and also from my curiosity which probes the journeying. The transmission is to find the language that does not harm you – as in the languaging is not a violent act in attempts to create access but more about a necessary shift. Keeping the integrity of transmitting from one place to another – which is to say, going into the ancestral-spiritual-indigenous knowledge systems and transmitting into the framing of the institutionalised knowledge, has to be done in a way that is not extractive but generative.

So, what my concept of *Demonstrations and Demonstrating: Black Lived Experience (DBLE)*

does, is give me the space, the hold, the language and pathway to do practice as research and conversely that PaR gives me a means to work through my concept of *DBLE.*

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CHAPTER 4

AND THEN...: REVEALING THE TEACHINGS OF THE PRAYING MANTIS

By jackï job

INTRODUCTION

To begin, please allow me to contextualise my ongoing wrestling with identity. Since a young child, I have instinctively been resistant to labelling and boxing people on the basis of their external appearance. This is challenging inside the complex, racialised framework of South Africa, where people are stratified according to fabricated racist formulae and designated privilege or disadvantage through calculating combinations of hair textures, facial features and skin tones. On a daily basis, individuals play out these confabulated equations to assume the knowledge, experience and personality traits of others. With the term 'Coloured' being the official racial category assigned to me at birth, a stereotype of my growing up in a neighbourhood rife with gangsters, pregnant teenagers and unemployment, is common. Given the fact that my genetic pool is configured by several geographic and cultural intersections, these reductive descriptors most definitely do not account for the sum of my capacities, wisdom and ways of being a person in this world. I have deliberately shaped my worldview with re-imagining alternative narratives that reveal visceral connections with others beyond a humancentric understanding of self.

Since the start of my independent dance career in 1994, my solo performances have held animal-human configurations, which aim to dissolve embedded, singular and racialised speculations of identity. In this regard, I created a body of work based on an original, centauresque persona, *Daai za Lady.*[9] Over the years, *Daai za Lady* has moved from its initial half-horse, half-woman construction, to a more complex character that incorporates male, female, animal, plant and insect parts. Whilst living in Japan for eight years, I studied Butoh and simultaneously assimilated its principles into my signature of performance-making. Since returning to South Africa in 2011, I have completed my Honours, MA and PhD degrees.

My practice within these processes gradually revealed critical parallels with socio-political issues. The solo performance created for my Honours looked at the complexities of love by comparing historical slavery with people's current enslavement to poverty and drugs. For my MA, I taught a series of Butoh workshops to a small group of professional dancers of Cape Town City Ballet Company. With this inquiry it became clear how the application of Butoh principles in combination with my self-developed Movement

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9   *Daai za Lady* translates into English as 'That's a Lady'.

Dynamics™ techniques,[10] could shift ballet dancers' largely external focus to one of introspection and imagination. The commencement of my PhD in 2017 coincided with a full-time appointment at the University of Cape Town. Since then, the academic articulation of my performance practice and philosophies, as well as the consciousness of my grappling with how social ideological change might be effected through psychophysical embodiment techniques, deepened. The PhD analysed 24 iterations of *Daai za Lady*, moving from its initial centaur-esque persona in 1994, to its embodiment of the praying mantis in an ongoing series named *And then...*, performed between 2018 and 2021. I focused on how performance principles of difficulty, difference, strangeness and the unknown were pivotal to practical and political discourses of identification.

Recently, I have begun to explicate *Daai za Lady* as a way of being, and I use the neologism, *philosoembodology*, to describe an embodied ontology constructed by a set of guiding principles that, like philosophy, remains open to interpretation and evolution. Several facets of *Daai za Lady* have been detailed in other writings and will not be re-animated in this chapter (job, 2019a & b; 2021a & b). Rather, here I will elucidate how my paying attention to personal, social and political struggles has moved *Daai za Lady* to its current inspiration, the praying mantis. I will discuss *And then...*, a dance series that continues to configure an idiosyncratic vocabulary which in turn hones my evolving understanding of personhood and transformation in South Africa.

MOVEMENT DYNAMICS™

Movement dynamics is a self-developed, psycho-physical technique "often taught in the warm-up phase of my teaching sessions. It comprises a series of physical, cardio-vascular, and muscle toning exercises and movements, to bring awareness, release, and a different perception to what may be considered as smaller or even hidden parts of the body. [...] Movement Dynamics also brings a consciousness to the surrounding environment and prepares the body to find meta-physical meaning [through the application] of various Butoh principles" (job, 2019:458).]

AND THEN... THE BEGINNING

Relating to the praying mantis first occurred to me in India when, in 2017, I performed in Thrikkaipetta, a remote village in the Wayanad district of Kerala. Prior to travelling to India, I had been dealing with a series of challenging financial and emotional circumstances in my private life. Arriving in the verdant landscape of Kerala, therefore, seemed to promise

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10   Movement Dynamics is "often taught in the warm-up phase of my teaching sessions. It comprises a series of physical, cardio-vascular, and muscle toning exercises and movements, to bring awareness, release, and a different perception to what may be considered as smaller or even hidden parts of the body. [...] Movement Dynamics also brings a consciousness to the surrounding environment and prepares the body to find meta-physical meaning [through] the exploration of various Butoh principles" (job, 2019:458).

new beginnings. Practising in the woody landscape surrounding the village, I recall having the distinct image of stumbling across dunes in the desert towards a mirage. To remain psycho-physically connected to this iridescent image, I refrained from holding on to any particular movement with clarity, and rather, concentrated on the sensations and images formed in the interplay of my imagination and physical movements, as well as shifts in the air currents and light of the surrounding natural environment. Consequently, as if conjured in the vibration of these multiple elements, I began to – and here I borrow from Deleuze and Guattari (2005) – sense a molecular proximity to something other than my human self that existed outside of my programmed body: a praying mantis. Immediately, I followed "an impulse, an idea, an intuition, a hunch" (Fleishman, 2012:34) that sparked a corporeal conceptualisation of transformation.

Whereas *Daai za Lady* began as a centauresque figure that portrayed the plurality of my identity, embodying the praying mantis became a way to reflect on the significance of multiple transforming identities in South Africa. For example, I correlate the idiosyncratic movements of the praying mantis with the zeitgeist of South Africa. The constant shaking of the mantis mirrors the nervousness, imbalance and unease generally felt by many South Africans (job, 2021). I think of the praying mantis as a teacher, and therefore, the shaking holds deeper implications which might generatively agitate new thinking around identity. I relate the constant shaking movement to an impression of uncertainty. In a South African context, notions of indecisiveness become socio-politically provocative, as stable, bold and clear descriptions of identity measure the distance and the successful ways in which Black people have moved beyond the debilitating racial configurations of apartheid. However, *And then…* digs into qualities of weakness, imbalance, indecision and vulnerability that arise from the current dire socio-economic conditions and insecure psychological states in South Africa, to potentially provoke new meanings for personhood and transformation. These ideas were revealed processually and particularly developed through practice as research methodologies.

For me, creating a dance work is like what Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes as "a step taken in the fog – no one can say where, if anywhere, it will lead" (1964:21). Daily physical workouts, personal events, private musings and intimate experiences in my everyday worlds have also consistently catalysed my artistic concepts. For example, a regular four kilometre run in my neighbourhood includes the ascent and descent of one-hundred-and-twenty stairs, repeated five times in various combinations. This develops physical discipline and endurance, as well as reinforces and embodies a philosophy of change that is held in repetitive acts. Moreover, at one point a few years ago, I was craving a deeper sensual embodiment and desired the palpability of touch and the unobtrusive vitality of breath in my intimate relations.

In connecting my daily life with my practice, I pondered on these ideas and wondered how my dance could enable a visceral sense of connection with others and exceed notions I held of myself. I put the body in research, employing Butoh principles of exploring the world of the secret, or the unknown, and moved into what I refer to as, a thinking-feeling-doing-dreaming mode of making. This requires paying attention to everything, seeing and trusting the interpenetration of manifold material objects, conscious and unintended

actions, as well as the interplays of spirit. In this way, my everyday life and dance practice remain in perpetual dialogue.

DANCING DREAMS, CONVERSATIONS AND DESIRE IN *AND THEN...*

One night I dreamt that I was standing in an open cockpit of an aeroplane in flight, whilst screaming instructions at two pilots who were experiencing challenging landings. Inexplicably, the wind did not stifle the volume of my voice and I remained secure in this precarious position as, somehow, my foot was hooked. The dream ends with an epiphany: build sufficient strength to hang from different body parts, especially the space between the big toe and the one next to it. This then became the impetus for a set of exercises where I extended my methodologies around attaining balance and strength from a segmented body.

Here, an arbitrary discussion held with my kinesiologist comes to mind, about the earthworm's segmented body and its cloacal system; organs that control and regulate the reproductive and excretory actions in the bodies of invertebrates. The cloaca is not present in humans; however, the ancient reflexes of the system remain and are evident in the synchronisation of the pelvis and the cranium. Laterally extending my thoughts around this cloacal absence led me to wonder whether my pre-human state might have some proximity with the earthworm's segmented form. Could I, like the earthworm, reproduce shapes and forms from segmented body parts? Further informing my thinking was a conversation I had with my daughter at two years old. Looking at my naked torso, she correlated breasts to eyes, the navel to a nose, and the vaginal region to a mouth. In terms of dance, this inversion of the body revealed innovative possibilities to me, and I began to mirror ways of manipulating the torso in the face, and vice-versa, thereby creating movement that was not replicating a traditional form. Rather, an authentic experience and construction of the body was crafted, whilst simultaneously honing new connective philosophies of the body.

Following on, to activate the individual segments of my body as a complete, whole structure *quodlibet,* [11] as it is, I combined the Butoh principle of seeing with multiple eyes. Starting with the head and then gradually moving down towards the neck, throat, shoulders, chest, rib-cage and further downwards towards the heels, I imagined looking with different intentions. For example, I would ask, how would the back of my neck see my navel? Would it catch a glimpse, stare, or possibly see with blurred vision? Responding to those questions through the body requires flexibility and a desire to stretch the body beyond its conventional abilities, behaviours and perceptions. In another exercise I would try to move body parts independently, as well as to find the interrelationship and variations of flow between joints, bones and muscles, all the while observing with multiple eyes, acutely aware of the ways in which weight was transferred and tension was held. Through the repetition of these and other exercises, I developed a juxtaposed, nuanced understanding of the body that was able to create a visual picture whilst focusing on the specific technical and psycho-

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11   Lelande de la Durantaye explains the philosopher Giorgio Agamben's use of this term as encountering something as it is. He describes it as seeing something independent from universal meaning. For more information, see De la Durantaye, 2009:162.

physical mechanisms that were required to manifest that image. Furthermore, I learnt that over and above the visceral sensations that these images produced for the audience, an artistic crafting of socio-political ideologies and philosophies was gradually being revealed. For example, in *And then...* emulating the shake, imbalance and uncertainty of the praying mantis, is technically supported by engaging different sources of strength and balance from within my body, as well as an imagination of the body that differs from what conventional dance training imposes. As opposed to concentrating on the muscles above the pelvic region to maintain balance whilst swaying on leg, I would imagine my armpits pushing down on invisible crutches, or feel as if I were balancing on a stick emanating from my heart towards the ground. In so doing, the image of vulnerability and difficulty expressed in performance is completely supported, though not shown in obvious ways.

These multiple modes of looking at the body in its parts works alongside the perpetual shaking employed in embodying the praying mantis. In spite of appearing vulnerable, an internal, hidden strength supports the body beyond conventional notions of dance. In its repeated doing, alternative probabilities of performance are glimpsed, which inform the next creative process. Moreover, its ongoing exploration brings awareness to the aporia of the indivisible yet distinct functionality of collaborating elements both inside and outside of the body. Similarly, *And then...* provokes thinking about Blackness philosophically. It is as if the work literally shakes up embedded configurations of identity and offers glimpses of the potential of perceiving vulnerability as an authentic place of power. Engaging with the qualities of vulnerability, instability and difficulty as a mode of potential rather than suffering, uncovers alternative ways of being which are not limited to socio-political configurations of race. An ongoing practice of looking into Blackness through the philosoembodology of the praying mantis, leans into these qualities as being constitutive to understanding ourselves, and thus, a conscious strategy to expand self-knowledge beyond imposed racial tropes. In this way, *And then...* affords opportunities to be re-cognised[12] or known again, independent from homogenous narratives and ontologies both in performance and everyday constructions of identity.

In Butoh it is necessary to explore the unknown, and this world of the secret led me to think about desire in the conceptual design of *And then...*. In particular sexual desires, which are often thought of as dissident, and therefore, enacted in the dark. My close collaborator in all the iterations of *And then...* is a classical pianist, José Dias. We both considered desire to be a yearning for something or someone that was absent but longed for energetically. The beginnings of our exploration coincided with a personal point of distress that I had to manage. In my family life, I felt unfairly accused of being selfish and in response, I decided to sink into the principle of *kintsugi*, the ancient Japanese craft of highlighting the imperfections of things ruptured or damaged, with gold. Butoh draws from *kintsugi* and thus, the idea of fixing or rectifying a mistake requires a deeper engagement with the point of error and in so doing, transforms the appearance of what was broken. In *And then...* we initially looked at how the

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12   The hyphenation here is to bring awareness to a different understanding of the word, where the actions of repetition and cognition are held.

female mantis eating the male after mating could be seen as a self-absorbed act. However, further investigation revealed that the female does not directly benefit from the ingested male. Rather, he serves as food for her growing mantids. The spectacle of her consuming the male thus serves as a valence for futurity, a prepossessing of the future, to borrow from the African literary scholar, Harry Garuba (2003:271). With re-imagining identity being the over-arching theme of my research, I hoped that delving into a personal criticism would, in a similar fashion, reveal something new that was yet to be realised.

In rehearsals, reproducing the constant shake of the mantis generated a vibration which José[13] and I understood to be a perpetually shifting movement of energies to which we had to pay constant attention. We applied this concept to material objects too. José acknowledged the piano as an entity with a past which held its own set of memories that could affect the performance in particular ways. He wondered what sounds could emanate if it were allowed to re-member[14] its natural source. Employing this kind of imagination, he was able to create soundtracks of landscapes that moved from rustling leaves and forest floors to dry and dusty desert plains, with atmospheres ranging from winds and storms to slow and heavy waves of heat. I wondered how the praying mantis would teach me to move if I remembered its relation to the branch of a tree, and by extension, to the earth?

Answering these questions necessitated engaging with what is imagined, invisible, and though constructed by what could not be logically understood, viscerally felt. Moreover, to realise the work, José and I developed an intimacy by eating together and engaging in conversations that stretched from personal concerns to general observations of the world. We built our connection and feeling of each other's contexts, as well as a sensibility to anticipate and effectively respond to the multiple vibrational lines from which we proceed when we perform. We both imagine the physical performance space to be constituted from a myriad of criss-crossing elastic lines which vibrate at different frequencies. In performance, the movements of my dance and his playing disturb these lines and an ever-changing energetic field enabling a heightened awareness is created. With this in mind, we do not only hear with our ears or see with our eyes. Instead, we aim to develop a deep soul-attentiveness, and listen with instinct, in order to open from the inside and enable a synergy in performance that lives through the movement of breath; the beginning of being alive. Our performance, therefore, expresses a relationship that extends beyond the immediacy of that moment and is inevitably permeated by our pasts, alongside our individual sensations and actions, as well as the presence of other things. All of these simultaneously seep into the construction of *And then...*.

AND THEN... PRACTISING TO BE ALIVE IN WORLDS

When collaborating with other performers, however, we needed to create shortcuts for them to meet us in our artistic philosophies and practice. As *And Then...* is largely fashioned

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13   Breaking the academic convention of referring to people by their last name, I am using the first name to indicate our close relationship.

14   The hyphenation here is to evoke sensing memory through the repetitive actions of the members of the body, in order to recall different memories.

as a prepared improvisation, it is impossible to predict specific beats of the music or exact movements of my dance. Our process had to enable accompanying performers to incorporate what was predetermined and well-rehearsed, as well as maintain an openness to anticipate and confidently respond to unexpected nuances in sequences. This required the relinquishing of notions they may have held of their performer selves and, instead, risk seeing themselves differently by offering a willingness to be alive in performance.

The 2018 iteration always started with a psychophysical focus that set the tone for commitment and an intimacy in the rehearsal process. To help the accompanying dancer with expressing the awkward and arhythmic dynamics associated with desire, José and I shared excerpts of André Aciman's book, *Call me by your name* (2017) with them. The concept could thus shift into a world of fiction and psychologically release the dancer from the responsibility of realising a narrative in which they might have felt objectified. One exercise focused on growing our sense of interconnectivity. There, one person would inhale and on the exhalation, gently place the palm of their hand on a body part of a co-performer. The one being touched would inhale in response and on the exhalation find a gentle movement towards or away from the touch. They would then inhale and place their hand on another body part, and exhale. Gradually, the one being touched would speak and say, "I desire you", to which the one touching would respond, "You desire me". The ritualistic repetition of these focus sessions prior to determining the details of scenes and sequences, developed organic techniques in balancing notions of truth and lies, which in my opinion, aid in sustaining a compelling performance.

The ellipsis in the show's title indicates an ongoing narrative where the next step is always a response to the dynamics of change stemming from the previous performance and everyday life. In this work, the continuum of life and death has to repeatedly play out. The 2018 iteration, however, was mimetic, as I consumed the dancer, but failed to embody the darker nuances of desire that required an end; a death, in order to begin again. Fortuitously, shortly after the 2018 performances, we experienced a big thunderstorm in Cape Town and gale force winds blew over a few trees in the vicinity of my office. Instinctually, I dragged the broken, lichen-covered branches into my workspace, feeling that somehow, they would be incorporated in the next version of *And Then...*. I remained undecided whether to include the dancer of the first version, or not, but made the offer nonetheless. The dancer declined my invitation and thereby brought that version of the work to an end. Thus, I began to dream a new show that incorporated many performers, crossing and re-crossing a landscape evoking images of new beginnings and unpreventable change. The trees that I had carried into my office several weeks before, became my subtextual symbol of life, death and life again, and were suspended at asymmetrical points in the auditorium. In terms of the concept underpinning *And then...*, the branches seemed to mirror the stick-like form of the praying mantis whilst simultaneously evoking a sense of the gravitas of age. This also matched José's aforementioned claim that the piano itself remembers that it once was a tree.

For this 2019 version I chose to work with two acting students and a professional opera singer. In the interim, we worked with the concept of desire, which, in order to enact, requires a level of control; this evolved into our considering desire's coexistence with compassion, which relinquishes control and is moved by the other. Prior to beginning the

rehearsal period, I led the performers through an intensive workshop around embodying these ideas. I created a processual exercise that began with their looking into the pupils of the other in order to see their own reflection. This progressed to observing one performer falling and, rather than catching them and preventing the fall, the focus was on responding to details of the fall, and allowing it to happen in the most organic and gentle manner.

SEEING AND FALLING

Western aesthetics emphasise the importance of dancers remaining balanced and in full control of their bodies. With a key principle of improvisation being the willingness to explore and engage with what has not been pre-determined and is thus unknown, how can a dancer develop the ability to relinquish control and allow themselves to be moved by the other? The following exercise holds 4 parts that gradually increase in complexity. The work begins with the individual experience, progresses to a group exercise and ends with modes of reflection. Notions of observation and response are key principles of this exercise.

Part 1
Step 1: Each individual stands directly in front of a mirror and looks into their own eyes.
Step 2: Intermittently, close and open the eyes. Mention the importance of observing without judgement. Allow the exercise to continue for at least 10 minutes before repeating or progressing.

Part 2
Step 1: Place participants in partners standing across each other with a distance of approximately 2 metres between them.
Step 2: Each individual looks into the eyes of their partner.
Step 3: Whilst maintaining their focus on the eyes of the other, each individual gradually takes a step towards their partner until they are standing directly in front of each other, face-to-face. Throughout, mention the importance of consciously exhaling. Continue to close and open the eyes intermittently. Allow the exercise to continue for at least 10 minutes before repeating or switching partners.

Part 3
Step 1: Place participants in a circle with one individual standing in the centre.
Step 2: The individual placed in the centre closes their eyes and slowly allows their body parts to give in to gravity and fall to the floor. Mention the importance of consciously exhaling.
Step 3: The individuals standing in the circle respond by finding ways to gently suspend and/or support the fall of the one in the centre. It is important that they do not attempt to prevent the fall. Rather, the objective is to use their body parts to momentarily facilitate an independent descent of the one in the centre.

Step 5: The exercise ends when the entire body of the individual standing in the centre arrives on the floor.
Step 6: Repeat, allowing each individual to experience falling in the centre.

Part 4
Step 1: With the aim of replicating the emotional, physical and psychological sensations felt in the body, simultaneously, have each participant move across the floor freely.
Step 2: Allow each individual to document their feelings and thoughts in writing.
Step 3: As a group, discuss the challenges, discoveries and technical ways of replicating the experience.

In addition, to maintain a sense of aliveness in performance, I repeated a technique applied in the previous version.

I choreographed sequences, but in performing, deliberately left the rhythmic structure of singular parts within the sequence to my independent discretion. In this way, even though the performers knew the overall sequence, the exact moment of change remained unpredictable and demanded their constant attention. To explain: imagine a dance sequence composed of two bodies approaching each other in a walk. They enact a series of movements with their hands and arms and conclude the sequence with one body being lifted by the other. In performing this sequence in *And then...*, the beginning and end parts would remain stable, but in between, I would lengthen, thicken or alter the movements with pauses, falls or jumps. This choreographic choice could be likened to *typoglycemia*, where words are scrambled, yet the brain still recognises a pattern and can comprehend meaning. Similarly, in a duet, the performer would recognise the beginning of a combination, but would have to remain in a state of anticipation, watching my constant shaking, waiting for me to arrive at the pre-determined movement set at the end of that section, before being able to progress to the next movement. Their body thus remained alive and ready to appropriately respond to vibrational changes. In this way I built a technique in shaping, manipulating and fixing their movements so that it could be iterable. Thus, my collaborators contributed to my ongoing search for reimagining identity and modifying ways of being through an awareness of what is different, difficult, other or strange.

Since 2020, *And Then...* has contracted to its core investigators: the piano, José and myself. We believe that this triad remains in an ongoing relational adjustment, each holding the desire to break the physical barriers we have between each other as things, as human beings, as essences, and as entities that perpetually dissolve into each other. In 2020 a 23-minute dance film was created, and, since 2021, new 80-minute iterations have been developed annually. Currently, our performances express a sensibility to the natural environment of the performance location. Processes prior to the performance might therefore require rehearsing in the desert, attempting to embody its heat, monotone and sparse flora and fauna.

Video 4.1: *And then...* dance film. Conceived, directed and produced by jackï job – <u>here</u>. Video production by Steve van Zyl productions.

CONCLUSION

Ohno Kazuo[15] reminds us that "dance is nurtured by our lives, not our techniques" (Ohno & Ohno, 2004:282), and *And then...* is always supported by subtextual information discovered in everyday situations. In this way, dance becomes a means to confront and not to escape from the world.

For me, the value of PaR methodologies is underscored by the close correlation between my practice and everyday life. Over the years, an increased sensibility of animist embodiment has brought an awareness of performance as a process that perpetually modifies ways of being. Reimagining identity beyond humancentric configurations has developed a psyche that desires to look beneath the surface of things. It has cultivated an attitude that expands life from sheer functionality to living through conscious, embodied, relational experiences. Moreover, it has animated the belief that transformation necessitates refocusing one's attention onto what remains difficult, different, strange and unknown, as places of resistance and power.

With each iteration, the vibration of the praying mantis has revealed flashes of a secret that promises new modes of living alongside what may be unforeseen in life, and a willingness to be moved by other things. With an inhalation, my heart swells and rises upwards. Exhalation, and my heart gently settles back whilst my head drops to meet it. At the places of pause, somewhere in-between instinct and intellect, something changes, and I follow. And then, who knows what might happen next?

Figure 4.1: jackï job in *And then...* 2018. Photograph by Rob Keith.

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15   Written in the Japanese way with the last name appearing first.

Figure 4.2: jackï job in *And then...* 2019. Photograph by Rob Keith.

Figure 4.3: jackï job in *And then...* 2020. Photograph by Rob Keith.

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CHAPTER 5

THIS IMAGE MAY CONTAIN... : A VISUAL AND AURAL ARTICULATION OF RESEARCH INTO NOTIONS OF SPECULATIVE INDIGENEITIES

By heeten bhagat

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is built in three parts. In the first part, a rationale of sorts, my aim is to briefly share context: of myself, my journey to where I find myself currently and what nurtures my research interests. In the second part, I share an overview of my doctoral research. The third part is reflective. Given the benefit of hindsight, my aim is to think back on what led to the making of the installation that became the final chapter of my PhD. This third section is supported by a short film and an audio piece and aims to offer some insight into the process leading up to the making of the installation and some detail of the various parts. Key to this section will be addressing a range of quandaries around how decisions were made to extend what was intended as a textual analysis of an event to include a set of arts practices: installation, video and sound art and poster design. These three sections are bookended by this introduction and a conclusion.

A RATIONALE OF SORTS

I have never really thought of myself as an artist, if I am honest. My work and interests, however, have allowed me to meander through various supporting roles ranging from scaffold monkey to production manager, to curator to documentary filmmaker and much of the minutiae in between. Of late I have been playing across a range of academic domains – urban studies, architecture, sociology and fine art – satiating my curiosity of the outer edges of academic things, exploring the peripheries and beyond of the constructs of knowledge-making. What drives these explorations has been a recent, albeit fragmentary, interest in unpacking the value of dissonance – not knowing – as a strategy to unsettle age-old normative constructs. These troublings, as it were, align with my interest in projects that extend thinking and doing beyond the now-familiar ubiquities of 'radical thinking'. In the same way that creativity became *the* panacea to catapult thinking out of a wide range of challenges facing social science research, radical thinking, from what I have witnessed across the disciplines I engage in, has found a similar groove. Its, arguably, wide-ranging purchase has rendered it palatable, familiar, banal even. This main-streaming of the left-field/ blue-sky/ out-the-box interventions is understandable in view of the increasingly complex problems we are facing – climate change, epistemic injustices, social tensions and increased political incompetence to name a few.

More recently, a growing strategy to organise and (re)act towards these conundrums has recommended a dash towards speculative processes as a means to satiate the urgent need for immediate solutions. However, and not to undermine the well-meaning suggestions that have emerged through somewhat perplexingly conventional processes of *radical* thinking, evidence of these forays into speculative terrains points to a numbing of the inherent potential to think audaciously, unreasonably even, in favour of the demand for chronically comprehensible and well-meaning propositions. In response to these observations, my work endeavours to confront these banal radicalities in playful and perhaps raucous ways, in order to propose a turn towards the outrageous. Bolstered by this rationale, I lean into my experiences in the curatorial space, shepherding ideas into spaces: conceptual, theoretical, sometimes actual, to understand and articulate what emerges from their juxtaposition. The licence to play in these spaces has grown exponentially since I qualified. Now, with the privilege of hindsight, I understand that these particular experiments found a useful and valuable rehearsal during my doctoral research.

AN OVERVIEW OF MY RESEARCH FOCUS

The starting point of my doctoral research study began with a broad and unwieldy question – *what would Zimbabwe look like if colonisation didn't happen?* This question arose with regard to the launch of the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act (IEEA) in 2007. This act was designed to legislate who could claim the title of indigenous in Zimbabwe. Being a second generation immigrant to the country, I felt compelled to build an understanding of the mechanisms of indigeneity in Zimbabwe as a form of place-making. More specifically, what did (or, still does) it mean to *be* indigenous in present-day Zimbabwe? I chose to centre my inquiry around the conceptual and theoretical constructs of indigenousness as it related to processes of indigenisation that were laid out in the IEEA (2007). I began my investigation with a broad historical, anthropological and etymological survey of the term 'indigenous' as a means to understand how it was interwoven, contextually, with Zimbabwe and its socio-political lifespan. Methodologically, my approach was designed as an interdisciplinary and experimental research inquiry that processed the range of ontological debates that emerged in relation to the term's politically manipulated elasticity. In recognising this malleability, my aim was to propose an expansion of the probabilities of 'indigeneities' within the range of existing socio-political, economic and historical analyses of indigenousness and indigenisation in Zimbabwe.

The primary site of my investigation was the independence-day ceremony that took place at the National Sports Stadium in Harare, Zimbabwe on the 18th of April 2017. This focus was motivated by two distinctive elements at this event – a banner that declared "ZIMBABWE WILL NEVER BE A COLONY AGAIN" and a fragment from the president's speech that asserted, "we can now call ourselves full masters of our destiny" (Mugabe, 2017). This particular event stood as a crucial nexus for the debates and questions that my research endeavoured to pose regarding notions of indigenisation, indigenousness and any evident registers of indigeneity. Socio-political analyses (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009; Mlambo, 2013; Monda, 2016; Ndlovu-Gathseni, 2009; Muchemwa, 2010; Willems, 2013) of this annual ritual tower above the lacuna of analysis

of its performance logics. Recognising this as an opportunity, I honed in on a performance-specific inquiry, both as a means to contribute new thinking, as well as a way to make evident my penchant for dissonance and peripheral inquiry. My aim with this specificity was to bring a sharp focus on the performative elements of the ceremony. With this I recast the independence-day ceremony through the logics of a show and doing so rummaged through a range of as yet untouched minutiae – what was the script? Who directed the staging? What do the performers' costumes tell us? What informed the set design and the props? By posing these questions of this event, what I uncovered were layers of intrigue, confusion and productive contradictions.

Speculative research processes were finding active purchase across various academic domains in 2017-2018, serendipitously around the mid-point of my research process. Looking at the information I'd garnered from the performance analyses, I set about asking a set of 'what-if' questions of the paradoxes I'd discovered (Savransky et al, 2017; Dunne & Raby, 2013). What materialised from this abstraction was a kind of hyper-proliferation of the possibilities with which to read the ceremony – both critically as well as with a measure of notional generosity. For the penultimate chapter of the dissertation, I then enacted a conceptual rehearsal of all the matter generated through an expanded understanding of queer theory. With this turn (Rogoff, 2008), I drew on queer theory's championing of multiplicities as a strategy to dislodge what I uncovered as, perhaps surreptitious, though, clearly evident logics of monolithic normativity that were being manipulated to legislate rubrics of indigeneity in contemporary Zimbabwe. Having reached this stage, I found myself facing a conundrum. The question that I found myself asking was: is it enough to land at this stage? Put another way, were the textual analyses adequate as the unique contribution to the academic canon required of a doctoral-level research project? The written arguments made were, judging by supervisory approval, sufficient. The question arose as to what kinds of possibilities were there to go beyond the written word?

A key push-factor, for me, was a kind of raucous aspiration[16] to "unsettl[e] the present" (Dunne & Raby, 2013:88), academically, that is. At the time I was writing the dissertation, in 2018, the notion of experiment had gained noteworthy traction. Posited as one of a range of interventions that could respond to growing calls to decolonialise institutions, curricula and various problematic societal constructs, devising experiments had become useful mechanisms to test the limitations of the norm. In my case, the evidence that I had at hand from the performance analysis of the independence-day event made clear a set of 'norms' – elements that had gone unchanged or fixed since the event's inception – bordering on the notion of ritual even. The 2017 event marked the 37th iteration of the same set of actions. This was remarkable especially with regard to the energy created by the launch of the IEEA a decade earlier. What was still being performed made no sense – politically, sociologically and performatively – given what was being proposed within the detail and aspirations of the indigenisation act. Additionally, 2017 marked the last year of the decades-long reign of

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16   The launch of the IEEA (2007) caused such great upheaval in the lives of many Zimbabweans causing all manner of confusion and collapse. While there are ample analyses that are both supportive and critical, the reality has resulted in an overall downturn in community relations in Zimbabwe. This was significant for me and many people I know. This was a significant driving force for my doctoral research.

the then ruler of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe.[17] This was significant since he was credited as both the architect and the champion of all matters indigenous in Zimbabwe and elsewhere. So, the grounds to experiment were bounteous and flourishing.

(Before reading further, it would be helpful to watch the film and listen to the audio piece that accompany this chapter)

Video 5.1: *this image may contain* – here. Video artwork by heeten bhagat.

Audio 5.2: *this image may contain* soundscape – here. Sound artwork by heeten bhagat.
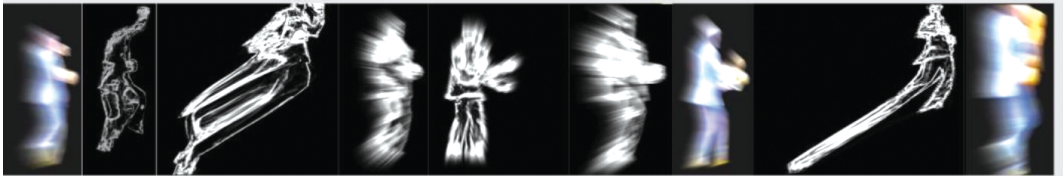
‘this image may contain’

a visual articulation of research into notions of speculative indigeneities

Figure 5:1: Fragment of the poster designed for the installation. Artwork by heeten bhagat.

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17   In November 2017, Mugabe resigned as president of ZANU-PF and of the country. Or, as he and others would see it, he was ousted. Furthermore, some analyses suggested an illegal coup d'état (Mackintosh, 2017; Cotterill, 2017), others thought it was more like a soft coup (Pilling, 2017; Chikiwore and Davis, 2017). Nonetheless, the military took over, temporarily, for about a week, to restore order. Dubbed "Operation Restore Legacy" (Mandaza and Reeler, 2018; Mnangagwa, 2017; International Crisis Group, 2017), this transition, led by Emmerson Mnangagwa, the former vice-president that Mugabe had recently fired, and Constantino Chiwenga, the general of the armed forces taking over. They are still in power today.

THE EXPERIMENT(S)

> What I had in mind was a subject-in-formation, on the one hand far too ambitious
> and on the other far too personally motivated, and these seemed respectively
> unachievable and unavoidable, given the intellectual tools and models of analysis
> and the modes of writing I had at my disposal. (Rogoff 2000: 1)

In this final section, I will reflect on the reasonings and methods that led to the production of a multi-media installation that synthesises various aural and visual elements from the 2017 independence-day event to simultaneously expose a range of instabilities that materialised from a close reading of the event, in order to strengthen the case for the concluding proposition of my research as well as to push the limits of traditional scholarly outputs beyond the written word. What I already had in hand at the penultimate stage of my research study was theoretically and conceptually adequate and yet still wanting of some further synthesis. This posed a distinct challenge – my having to contend with my limited skills as a writer. As mentioned earlier, there was a consensus from the supervisors that the textual analyses up to this stage of research was sound. Nevertheless, there still was potential to push the project further. Furthermore, there was space for a concluding chapter, of sorts.

Conversations with supervisors and colleagues shifted into the territory of practice, as both a worthy space for trial as well as a suitably risky manoeuvre to warrant the elusive 'original contribution' that is the basis of a successful doctoral research study. So began the quest for the final chapter of my doctoral research study. The steps leading up to the experiments were in themselves frantic and yet, overall, surprisingly efficient. Discussions with my supervisors revolved around the possibilities of extending academic prose into the realm of conceptual poetry. The conceptual landscape of the latter was invigorating. Having developed a sturdy yet eclectic conceptual and theoretical foundation (i.e. the preceding chapters of the dissertation) offered a lavish resource from which to both explore and experiment. The various experiments shown in the short film (that accompanies this chapter) are the elements that I am putting forward as evidence of a turn through the methodology of PaR.

An integral element of the research study involved examining several hours of footage, from multiple sources, detailing the independence-day 2017 event. This was extremely useful for the purposes of generating the performance analyses. Looking back with another lens into the material for this final stage was pretty taxing, as I remember. Pouring over the elements to develop pages and pages of textual description had excavated the footage of any visual curiosity. From this side of the project, I can only speculate that having declared this as a barren landscape, visually that is, allowed for a distinct and opportune surprise. Another round of detailed scrutiny of the event for evidence of indigenousness/ indigeneities yielded a gem. Lurking in the minutiae was a single character through whom I could make productive a speculative projection of an overlooked, undiscovered even, register of indigeneity. I could also stretch this further, conceptually, to present his performance as a device that could expose the persistent

Figure 5.2: Compilation of images taken from screenshots of *Mr Hosho's* performance. Compiled by heeten bhagat.

colonial register of the performative elements as well as suggest that he be a unicorn of sorts – that element that could unsettle the colonial fixity of the entire ceremony. Bolstered by this impetus, his performance became the site of a slew of experimenting.

This character, from the independence-day ceremony, known popularly as *Mr Hosho* (Masau, 2013), was (and still is) a member of the police marching brass band. His instruments – a pair of hand-held maranka gourd-shaped shakers, known locally (in Zimbabwe) as *hosho* – explained his moniker. The police brass band that he is a part of, with its colonially regimented uniform, dark green suits embellished with gold braids and tassels, topped with a stiff peaked cap hark back to an era that, visually at least, challenges the tenets of post-colonial independence. Added to this, their routine, replete with parade-marching styles and glistening brass instruments, actively confounded notions of localness, exposing a misguided if not surreal claim of cultural independence associated with post-colonial freedoms. (This dilemma is productively nourished by their annually persistent presence in this concert a full 37 years after the advent of independence!). Embedded in the hours of footage I had reviewed lay a 20-second clip that visually and aurally platformed *Mr Hosho's* unique performance style. As you will notice in the short film (that accompanies this chapter), his energetic and liberated choreography clearly stands at odds with the rest of his band mates. As a matter of fact, looking through footage of previous independence-day ceremonies and other official events at which the police band performs, his style, as much as theirs, is unchanging. His routine morphed in my mind into a kind of visual scream – akin to an urgent insistence to shift our attention to a conveniently forgotten past encased in a rigid colonial mould.

There was an entire world of possibilities that had begun to proliferate. Each time I watched his act more detail surfaced – choreographically, geographically, sociologically and speculatively. The 20-second clip grew richer and its potential the more intriguing. For me, it truly began to disrupt the rest of the independence-day ceremony in a wonderfully perplexing and confounding manner – divisive, queer, jester-like – strategically "janus-faced" (Bhabha 1990:6), "at once menace as it is resemblance" (Bhabha 1994:86). This clip generated a bounty of visual, textual and aural prototypes that formed the basis of the various elements for the installation. This turn to practise, with this new material, found a logical and thankfully opportune justification.

The installation comprised four main components – two video elements, a sound piece and a stack of takeaway posters. The timing of the event also had a particular significance. It was staged for 6 hours, beginning at 6.00 pm and ending at midnight. For this once-only event, I drew a connection to the very first independence-day ceremony that took place

on the evening of the 17ᵗʰ of April 1980, as a moment, perhaps a gateway that could offer a portal to a present that has yet to surface. Each of the four components held a microcosm of details that worked to connect them to various elements of my research study. As time has passed since the staging, revisiting the body of the work has allowed each component to flourish in meaning. These articulations were not fully available at the time.

Of the video elements, one was projected onto a splintered mirrored surface that resulted in a fractured rendition of *Mr. Hosho*'s unique performance. This rendering multiplied his presence as if he could have been the entire band. This extraction from the band, celebrating his singularity, was imagined as curiously introspective as much as it was also a satirical provocation. Aimed to align with Bakhtin's treatise on the carnival and the carnivalesque, this extraction from the band and multiplication of *Mr Hosho*'s performance, argued for a conception of the carnival as a particularly cathartic moment of unrestricted freedom that aligns with notions of liberation, freedom and independence – "the world on its head" (1984:150). This intervention involved a range of practices: video enhancing and editing software, sculptural thinking and doing, and processes of video art and projection mechanics.

The second video was more contained. Held within a kaleidoscopic cone-like sculpture, the device was designed to multiply clips from the independence-day routine – *Mr. Hosho* and the band he marches with – in another way. With this experiment I was playing with the possibilities of extending theoretical constructs of 'triangulation' towards a notion of "crystallization as dendritic, an ongoing and dispersed process of making meaning through multiple epistemologies and genres, constituted in a series of separate but related representations based on a data set" (Ellingson, 2011:124).

The sound piece emerged from another data set at play. There were key moments from the president's speech that, when juxtaposed with *Mr Hosho*'s routine, generated a conceptual troubling that was really astonishing and challenging to describe in words. As with the manipulation of the video footage, there was the potential to produce a more complex texture from the various snippets of audio available, namely: the president's speech, the music of the band, the *hoshos* and also the underlying and often overlooked tones, knocks, clicks and burrs embedded in footage of public events. When I listened more closely a sort of orchestra of sound materialised. Registers of the operatic as much as the interstitial were apparent. The former, operatic, worked to provoke the inherent conceit of the independence-day concert; the latter endeavoured to platform the overlooked minutiae that became vital in the conceptual undoing of the ceremony. On various visits to the site of the installation, I was aware of its actual physical limitations. Working with this and not wanting to defer to compromise, the sound piece was designed not only to support the video elements but also to distort the physical setting of the installation site. The overall intention was to create a soundscape that could transcend the actual location of the installation and suggest another time, to dislocate any direct relation to the event whilst still working with elements from it. This all was imagined through the peripheral mechanisms that speculative and queer processes allowed.

The takeaway posters drew on passages from two important queer theorists to play out a visual and thought experiment. In my thesis, I made an argument to align heteronormatively imposed binaries of female/male gendering with those of indigenous and colonial framings.

In doing so, I proposed a *reading* of both the conceptual framing of terms and of the theoretical
rendering of the text using a drag sensibility. This experiment was inspired by the film *Paris
is Burning* (Livingstone, 1992), and a particular feature in events known as drag balls. 'Reading'
or 'being read' indicates a situation in which contestants are assessed to gauge a measure of
their "[r]ealness" (Butler, 1993:387). In his analysis of the film, *Paris is Burning*, Gregory suggests
that 'reading is "one of the primary ways in which the performers in the drag ball scene
flex their intellectual muscle" (1998:19). The provocation suggested here was that it could be
designed to deliver a sharp satirical 'reading' of coloniality. The strategic twist was to conceive
of an alternative narrative of the criticism of the persistence of colonial registers within post-
colonial performances (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Muzondidya, 2011; Mbembe, 2001). The passages,
drawn from Judith Butler's *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (1990) and Diane
Fuss's *Inside/ out: lesbian theories, gay theories* (1991), were reproduced to mimic appropriated book
texts with certain words faded and replaced with 'hand written' provocations.

READING/BEING READ AS METHOD

In this method heeten bhagat proposes applying the drag ball practice of 'reading'
to the context of coloniality. 'Reading' or 'being read' indicates a situation in which
drag contestants are assessed to gauge a measure of their "[r]ealness" (Butler,
1993:387). Heeten proposes that in the way that 'reading' is a critique that troubles
the oppressive hegemony of gender binaries with deft intellectual wit, oppressive
colonial impositions on indigeneity might be similarly troubled through this queer
critical and rhetorical form.
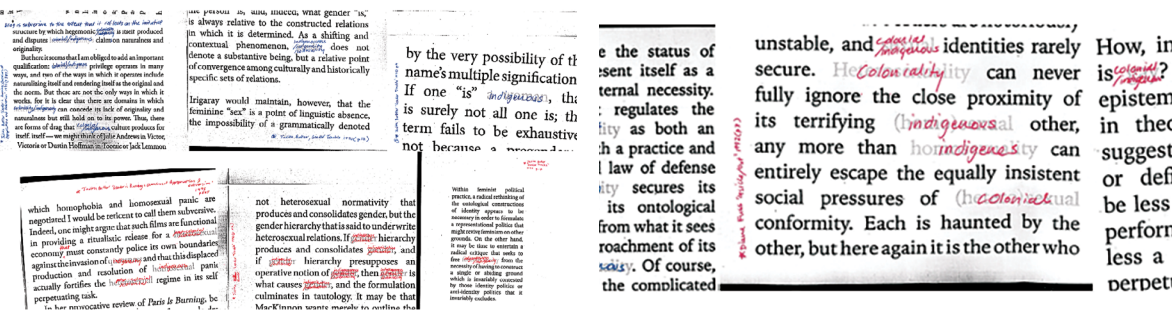
Figures 5.3 and 5.4: Selection of the posters. Artwork by Francis Burger.

Overall, what I was aiming for with the installation was to draw these complex and
perhaps disconnected elements into a space to see what transpired from their juxtaposition.
Theoretically, this was underpinned by Hans Ulrich Obrist's understanding of Damisch's
suggestion of "installation as a network … [that breaks] away from a continuous, linear
practice … [to explore] other possible dimensions" (2001:95). The actual staging, in space:
the ontological being of the things, was more momentous than I'd expected. There was a

majesty that, in its physical existence, for me at least, *matched* the ceremonial grandeur of the original independence-day celebration on the 17th of April 1980. An audacious claim no doubt, but I am making it. I must admit, having to use words, now, to rationalise the choices I made is akin to explaining the punch line of an abstract joke. In developing the text for this chapter, however, the limitations of my experiment have emerged – as is the convention of hindsight. Taking full cognisance of the restraints imposed by a work of academic rigor, I have come to see these observations, these post-experiment gaps as opportunities to extend the work, to play some more.

> Human capacity is, in reverse, a definition of the impossible that incredibly surrounds us. We are what we are not, is the paradox of fiction. What is not observed, sharply observes that which is. What is not said qualifies all that is said. (Marechera 1990:32)

CONCLUSION

Looking at this project from this end of the timeline, the one thing I can be truly thankful for was the freedom to experiment. What is kind of unsettling, though, is having to put it forward as a set of linear steps, knowing it was not so. As artists of various mediums know all too well, the work they (we?) make is often driven by a deep sense of curiosity. The result of which, equally often, does not always align with their original intention. As I embarked on the set of experiments to extend the textual analyses I had at hand, what I had in mind was a somewhat embarrassingly grandiose ambition to somehow expand *Mr Hosho*'s performance to offer a set of "…speculative propositions [that would]… infect the very manner in which the world 'goes on'" (Savransky, 2017:35). Where it landed is understandably subjective. More so, writing this chapter has given me a chance to think through the various elements. Making sense of the process, with the benefit of hindsight, is both useful and a glorious conceit.

Ultimately, I was driven by my inability to find words that could accurately express where I found myself in relation to the bodies of knowledge I needed to cohere to frame my evolving research capacities. This was further exacerbated by needing to extend into another realm – not to solve anything, but rather to, as queer(ing) does and advocates, invite more complexity to seemingly wicked problems.

And now, I have more words that were not available to me then, almost definitely a sign of my nascence.

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CHAPTER 6

PIECING TOGETHER A GIRLHOOD: USING 'GIRLFRIEND PLAY' AS METHOD TO PERFORM MEMORY

By Alude Mahali

BACKGROUND: REVISITING MEMORY

Katuntu (...and you too) (from now on referred to as *Katuntu*) was devised and performed by myself and Injairu Kulundu as part of my thesis production in fulfilment of my MA in theatre-making from the University of Cape Town in 2009. The work was concerned with memory. In particular, I engaged with the concept of 'playing memory' through narratives of loss of language, place and family, brought on by a disrupted or uprooted childhood. Playing memory suggests in the first instance, an actual active playing of personal recollection that attempts to stage that which has passed. Playing memory in the second instance, is an exploration of how one might go about re-membering in order to recall oneself into being, that is, recapturing a lost time, place and childhood in order to put oneself back together.

In an effort to revisit memories using my girlfriend 'other' and nostalgia as catalysts, *Katuntu* told a story of loss and journeying. The performing figure banished herself to an open landscape searching for what she lost in hopes of repairing her broken memory.

Katuntu as a process also served as a sense of renewal, acceptance and forgiveness seen through the eyes of the girlfriend 'other' that is also so much the self. Accordingly, 'piecing together a girlhood' involved engaging with what Kevin Quashie (2004) calls the 'girlfriend aesthetic'. Quashie's 'girlfriend aesthetic' offers a methodology for re-membering by providing a reflective surface: you see in the experience of the girlfriend 'other' something that incites your own memory and aids you in working towards healing of self. Whether or not this healing is possible lies at the heart of the development process. Accordingly, this chapter examines how one can go about 'playing memory' and how one might use "imaginative power to locate, realize and play an unconscious connection to the past" (Parker, 2001:2), in four steps.

STEP 1: FINDING YOUR THEORETICAL GROUNDING

The first question I asked myself was: why are you looking back to the past? My reason was to fill the gaps of my own fragmented memory and to bring to remembrance that which had been lost or forgotten, culturally, personally, historically, linguistically and familially, and it was also the need to search for a theatrical methodology that might assist me in coming to terms with this irrecoverable loss. I wanted to look to the past in order to function in

the present. Memory is not fixed or definite, so we look back or play memory, not as a way of reifying it or with a certainty that the gaps can ever be filled at all, but rather, with the knowledge that the gaps come to represent spaces of possibility and discovery. As a starting point then, Salman Rushdie's 'broken mirror' metaphor and Kevin Quashie's concept of the 'girlfriend aesthetic' were beneficial in grounding my methodological approach.

Salman Rushdie notes that humanity is haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim and to look back. His answer to being unable to reclaim what has been lost is to create imaginary worlds. Rushdie uses a "broken mirror" metaphor to explore fragments of the past or memory having been irretrievably lost (Rushdie, 1991:12). He points out that:

> The broken mirror may actually be as valuable as one which is supposedly unflawed …sometimes it is precisely the partial nature of memory, its fragmentation, which makes it evocative. The shards of memory acquire greater status, greater resonance because they are remains; fragmentation makes trivial things seem like symbols and the mundane acquire mysterious and divine qualities. (Rushdie, 1991:12)

This broken mirror metaphor was a useful tool with which to work with the idea of playing memory in the present. Accordingly, mirroring this oscillation between self and other, the merging and splitting of incomplete identities working in dichotomous push and pull, became a significant feature in *Katuntu*.

Figure 6.1: Alude Mahali (left) and Injairu Kulundu (right) performing the opening scene of *Katuntu* outside the Egyptian Building, Hiddingh Campus. The mirror is seen here as both object and propeller of action. Not only does the mirror provide your own reflection and that of your girlfriend 'other', but it also provides a surface through which the past is revealed by the 'other' figure in *Katuntu*. It is a portal through which to view in order to see something else. Photograph by Karabo Maine.

In practice, Augusto Boal's mirroring sequence exercises were useful for Injairu and me to start creating. There are several detailed exercises in the mirroring sequence which are designed to help participants "develop the capacity for observation by means of 'visual dialogues' between participants; the simultaneous use of spoken language is excluded" (Boal, 1992:129). Boal describes these exercises as a loving search for one's self in another: we seek ourselves in others, who seek themselves in us (Boal, 1992:134-135). For Injairu and me, this was not difficult as we were already good friends who also shared an uprooted childhood and immigrant past. I came from South Africa to the United States of America and back again, and she came from Kenya to South Africa via Lesotho – which was the impetus for our play making. For us, these mirroring exercises were a way to foster intuitive, synergistic and symbiotic physicality in the work. In *Katuntu*, the mirror is not only used as an object but also as an action that embodies what the 'girlfriend aesthetic' proposes. Quashie's 'girlfriend aesthetic' offers a methodology for re-membering by providing a reflective surface; you see in the experience of the girlfriend 'other' something that triggers or incites your own memory and aids you in working towards a sense of revelation and recovery. Whether or not this recovery is possible lies at the heart of the research.

AUGUSTO BOAL'S MIRROR SEQUENCE

In its simplest form, in this exercise two participants stand opposite each other. Slowly and carefully one participant begins to move and the other participant copies their movement. They swap over. In the third phase they move interchangeably between moving and following. There are several detailed exercises in the mirroring sequence and the exercises are designed to help participants "develop the capacity for observation by means of 'visual dialogues' between participants; the simultaneous use of spoken language is excluded" (Boal, 1992:129). Boal describes these exercises as a loving search for one's self in another.

Figure 6.2 Injairu Kulundu (left) and Alude Mahali (right), publicity pictures for *Katuntu* taken at the fourth and final site in the production. Photograph by Karabo Maine.

STEP 2: JOURNALING, WORKING WITH TEXT AND OTHER STIMULI

In the quest to deepen our practice, I had to ask: what am I looking for in my nostalgia? Is it a host of lost objects and experiences? How might I begin finding the material to help play memory? A starting point was accessing personal, cultural, familial and historical remnants of memory and pairing those with tactile objects and sensory stimuli (songs, smells, sensations, visual images, letters, journals etc.) which we could then translate into visual images. Myer Taub used this method of retrieving memory in his 2003 production of Lekker Faith, which he said began with memories of stories he heard as a child. As he began to write them down, he experienced a charge; a flurry of memories, of people, of smells. And as he began to formulate the structure of the text, he became more alert to his own memory, which was not only being used as a tool to recover fragments from his past, but could be used as an imaginative instrument in order to transfer the facts that he could not remember. Thus he was able to use childhood memory to play with and in history (Taub, 2004:39). We followed this approach as I recall instructing Injairu in our initial correspondence at the beginning of the process:

> So hang on to the stuff you write, letters etc. More importantly, keep EVERYTHING you have from childhood (if you have anything in your flat – keep it)... If you don't have anything, write about the things you remember. Can you send me a timeline of the places you grew up in? Within Kenya and outside (so like, when you moved to Lesotho, who was left behind)... take your time on this one. (Mahali, personal communication, 2009, 30 March)

Another useful approach in the process of creating was artist Betye Saar's five-step process of imprint, search, collect and gather, recycle and release. In her attempt to gather and create works of autobiographical memory, Saar makes use of Jungian psychotherapist Ira Progoff's Intensive Journal Method that he developed in the 1960s and 1970s. As part of his research Progoff trained participants to keep closely controlled and private journals, with noted details of any wishes, thoughts, dreams and memories (Dallow, 2004:82). Progoff's rationale for the use of journals was that "when a person is shown how to reconnect with the contents and the continuity of his life, the inner thread of movement by which his life has been unfolding reveals itself to him by itself" (Dallow, 2004:83). Progoff's stream-of-consciousness technique compares to Saar's approach to creating assemblages of the original objects she finds attractive. These objects could consist of old photographs, collectable miniatures, dried flowers, gloves, etc. These personal objects are interwoven in her work and when combined become autobiographical symbols. Like diary entries, Saar collects and combines fragments of memories to form a narrative. Only when she gathers all these fragmented objects and materials in one space or box for her installations does she feel that they come together to form a story (Dallow, 2004:83). In this phase of creating *Katuntu*, we did not use very many personal objects, relying instead on sonic and visual memory and stream-of-consciousness writing sessions. The objects we later introduced (like the mirror) were endowed with personal meaning based on written and practical exercises that we did.

BETYE SAAR'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MEMORY ASSEMBLAGES

In this process Betye Saar proposes creating assemblages of original objects she finds attractive. These objects could consist of old photographs, collectable miniatures, dried flowers, gloves etc. These personal objects are interwoven in her work and when combined become autobiographical symbols. Like diary entries, she collects and combines together fragments of memories in the form of objects, composing a narrative. (Dallow, 2004:83)

At the time, Injairu and I were living in different provinces and so developments in this phase took place remotely through email exchanges and messages, and the sharing of journal entries and memories. In one such email, dated 22 June 2009, Injairu details how she had been working from the text I sent her. She wrote:

Hey mchana, my brain has been spurting in starts, the result is a series of disorientated responses in song, word and images. In response to the first two paragraphs that you created I have written a melodic tune that wants to capture the element of play, the infectious conversation that the figure and the girl have together. The song is called "And you too" but is affectionately referred to as "*Katuntu*" because of how it kinda sounds like that too. Wish I could send you the song, it's not very wordy, it's a repetition of "and you too and you too" and rhythmic scatting. It grows every day.

I started to move in my head and body when I read what you wrote and the song gave rhythm – move and dance and just be silly – I am tasking myself to some serious play in the grass and in my head. The image is of a girl child and an imaginary friend overlapping, tripping over each other, rolling around, looking and finding that the other is there all along.

In response to the last paragraph and that sense of loss, I've written this short piece, it's the images that what you wrote inspire:

Image of a woman hanging upside down a child rendered dumb by the cold wind that smarts her face, a calloused landscape that is dry no moisture, a clanging of bells, disorientation, she's grown weary of looking up into the emptiness around her devoid of a sense of connection with what she sees. An ashen emissary from another world sent flying through the cacophony of a language she does not understand. Foreign pale creatures look down at her their disinterested sleek eyes gloss over the disruption she creates. Heavy tongue stuck stumped. Disorientation a murky whirlwind heavy speckled each bruise the only connection with a sense of feeling.

I have crazy music of a dream scape of clanging bells by Susumo Yokota, it's

surreal and a world that is drained and relentless, I'll bring it for you to have a listen. My mind also played with the images of these foreign pale creatures large and looming, dwarfing the girl or the presence in an alley.

In your email you spoke about dark play. I remember when I was younger, a game that we used to play that still gives me the khrills. We would meet at the end of a tunnel as long as 50 meters long one person would be egged on to enter it and try make it to the other side, somebody would be at the other side and call to you so that you had a voice encouraging you.

Sometimes that voice would turn into something malevolent as the kids would try scare you when you were stuck crawling in the heart of the dark tunnel. Pretty fucked up. I started imagining a tunnel with a girl trying to go through, with a candle and the image that light creates, the call and response from a friend and then when she's at the heart of it, the friendly echo goes away and the game becomes filled with fear – she is unwillingly on another journey now.

more soon

will write more

juju (Kulundu, personal communication, 2009, 22 June)

STEP 3: BRINGING OUR BODIES AND VOICES TOGETHER USING 'VIEWPOINTS' AND 'DARK PLAY'

The creation of a play-world was essential in the development process of *Katuntu*. According to *The viewpoints book*, a play-world is a "set of laws belonging to your piece and no other" (Bogart & Landau, 2005:167); it asks that you carefully consider the way time operates, the colour palette of your world and gestural language. Above all, this is a way of discovering the landscape of the world you have created and asks that you assume nothing and question everything and invent your own rules in making a unique play-world. Bogart and Landau describe viewpoints as:

A philosophy translated into a technique for; 1) training performers; 2) building ensemble; and 3) creating movement for the stage. Viewpoints is a set of names given to certain principles of movement through time and space; these names constitute a language for talking about what happens onstage. Viewpoints is points of awareness that a performer or creator makes use of while working. (Bogart & Landau, 2005:7-11)

A month before the production was staged, Injairu and I were finally able to physically

come together in Cape Town to further develop and rehearse *Katuntu*. We found viewpoints to be a dynamic way of framing the piece and the way in which we worked in those early stages.

Figure 6.3: This opening section of *Katuntu* performed outside the Egyptian Building on Hiddingh Campus came out of a series of improvisatory viewpoints exercises. We worked with the physical viewpoints of time (tempo, duration, kinaesthetic response, repetition), space (shape, gesture, architecture, spatial relationship, topography) and composition. Photograph by Karabo Maine.

Another approach in our development process was engaging with what Richard Schechner calls 'dark play'. Dark play demands that you take risks, as unpredictability is part of playing's thrill (2002:27). Dark play may be done consciously or unconsciously with the players unaware (at times) about what is play and what is not. This play is explosive, sometimes sudden, taking hold of the player, then, settling again. It is frenzied, sometimes dangerous, a jest, threat or hallucination. It is this very shift in and out of different states full of discontinuity and disruption, both in the process and performance of *Katuntu,* that make it apparent that dark play is at work. Dark play works against order, dissolves frames, breaks its own rules, so that the playing itself is in danger of being destroyed, but it need not be explicitly angry or violent (Schechner, 2002:36). Dark play may continue actions from early childhood, playing out alternative selves, but it only occasionally demands make-believe.

In our rehearsals together, we were able to bring to life this kind of play, at times oscillating between play and reality. Whether we were mocking one another playfully through song, engaged in a dance, screaming in agony or hollering with laughter, or becoming the witnesses of each other's purging, the playing was continuous: playing with a sense of imbalance, and with a flash of all-pervading eruptive and disruptive energy (Schechner, 2022:43). Schechner asserts that this kind of play is creative and destabilizes action: it is a mood, an attitude, a force.

STEP 4: MEMORIES COMING TO LIFE THROUGH PERFORMANCE

Developed at first during Injairu's and my correspondence, *Katuntu* used song performance as a catalyst for the creation of shared girlfriend memory through incantatory call and response, summoning the voice of memory, albeit fragmented, into being. In African and African-American culture, call and response is pervasive as a pattern of musical, social and political expression. An example of such expression can be seen in the weekly gatherings of African-Americans in the clearing in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1997) where the entire community responds to Baby Suggs' 'call' (Su, 2005:27). The gatherings blend elements of Christian revival, celebration and group therapy through the traditional African-American 'call and response' patterns. Call and response can also be place-bound (Su, 2005:27). The social structure established by the 'call and response' model proves to be easily broken and dependent on the 'caller' for continuation. But in *Beloved*, even when Baby Suggs' refuses to continue the call, the "longago singing they left behind" is still heard (Morrison, 1997:164). The clearing becomes a "primal place" (Su, 2005:30). Perhaps Su uses "primal place" in the very same way that Injairu and I used 'memory hotspots'. For us, these memory hotspots were places where we erupted and flowed into memory. We were unexpectedly stirred by the hotspots and on (or in) them we were moved, and we heard and remembered the feeling of what it must have been like to have been there – in that memory. We created a nostalgic play-world in an openly visual landscape. We played ourselves as well as each other, seemingly like each other and then very different, seeing each other's 'selves' around us, in us, through us.

The audience was required to change location to various 'memory hotspots' four times during *Katuntu*, creating a sense of disruption and motion that was necessary, not only for the movement of the piece, but also as a device for reinforcing the sense of discord, disjointedness and disorder experienced by the ever-shifting figures. In the third performance space, the audience is confronted with writing on a wall that speaks to this device:

> Keep walking … the journey does not stop for her, all the time she is unsettled, unrooted, moved to a new place. She is compelled to move … sometimes run, I cannot catch up with myself, I cannot take all my things. I collect what my feet land on … I collect the earth under my feet. You must move with me. (*Katuntu*, 2009)

This kind of play implicated the audience in *Katuntu*, at times casting them as witness or voyeur, then participant, sometimes alienating them completely – what was imperative is that they became a part of the dark play, that they were physically moving in and out of memory with us.

IN SUMMARY

Appropriating and combining these different approaches, we found a style of working that was critical, practical and revelatory in the making of *Katuntu*. The process of remembering: introspection, self-analysis, claims of affiliation coupled with play and reflection in the form of intensive discussions, practical exercises and written exercises were helpful tools (methods) in developing a workable methodology. In short, we followed a four-step process which involved:

Step 1: Finding your theoretical grounding: this phase is about finding theories, concepts and metaphors that embody your preoccupation and help propel the experimentation period. They initiate a methodological approach to the work.

Step 2: Journaling, working with text and other stimuli: this phase invites you to introspect, reflect on memory and put that recollection to work through intensive discussion, written exercises, object/ image work and engaging with other sensory stimuli.

Step 3: Bringing our bodies and voices together using viewpoints and dark play: in this phase, steps one and two are actioned through practical exercises, improvisation, movement and vocal play in situ.

Step 4: Memories coming to life through performance: in this final phase, all performance modalities (voice, text and movement) and site converge through a journey with the performing figures and spectators.

In collaboration, Injairu and I journeyed through the various paths of our memory. Through a collage of sound, visual and narrative passage, we put into practice a methodology that might better articulate how one can play memory through individual and shared experience. Using song performance, old photographs and letters, childhood images and iconography, language and a shared experience of black girlhood, we investigated disrupted girlhood, loss of home and re-imagined site as we organised our 'selves' into sisterhoods. A combination of all these instruments became talismans that linked us to the past.

No one ever experienced as 'the present' what we now view as 'the past', for hindsight cannot clarify today as it does yesterday; the past, as reconstructed, is always more coherent than when it happened. Injairu articulated this point in one of our exercises, writing:

> As your [referring to me] custodian I have the benefit of hindsight, of predicting, even knowing what will happen when this inevitable disruption will occur. I am the one who will hold the memory when you cannot name the rupture. I am the marker who already knows the consequence and when you too realize it, when you jump out of your own skin, you will come back and lay a flower on the places where you died little deaths. (Kulundu, rehearsal writing exercise, September, 2009)

This journey felt almost cyclical as we continued to revisit these "places where we died little deaths". This was the nature of *Katuntu's* ending; there was no real ending, no sense of coming to some closure because memory is always active, just as nostalgia is always placed in opposition to something else: past/ present, reality/ fantasy, there/ here. The nostalgic can never recapture a desired whole, but can always work towards filling those gaps where memory should be in an attempt at some sort of healing. In *Katuntu*, the audience is left, not with a sense of knowing, but rather left wondering where the journey will go. The figures themselves do not know where they will be led next. In the spirit of dark play, they might also surprise themselves.

Figure 6.4: Alude Mahali, pictured performing in the second performance site. Photograph by Karabo Maine.

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LITTLE DID I KNOW

Myer Taub

One: remapping the catastrophe or retrieving performance as research as difference (2023)

1.1 <u>In this reflective chapter there are a series of interventions that assist in translating the evocation of ideas made by the author, Myer Taub. These interventions include a conversational commentary made by the editor, Alex Halligey. Along with this are a set of stylistic choices inset in the text that include various fonts and sizes that inform various signifiers. To assist with these meanings a key is provided below:</u>

1.2 *Key to Fonts:*

Alex commentary text: Tahoma, size 10, prefaced with ALEX:

Myer main body of consistent ideas text: Arial, size 9.

Myer seriousness text: Times New Roman, sizes 9-12.

Myer extended thought text: Calibri, size 9-12.

1.3 In the reflection of PaR along with my own thematic alignments to ideas on such events as crisis and catastrophe, I have assembled a series of written chronological & non chronological fragments (like this section as *One: remapping*, currently 2023). The written fragments point to the organisation of my own research as a mediation between crisis and catastrophe through the mechanism of making that I like to call remapping. This is a point of rewriting and immersing-in reflection, also reflexive … that might also include a series of stylistic interventions in order to provide further meaning. Like font choices, footnotes, or the interventions of commentary made by Alex as below:

1.4 ALEX: In 2002 Myer Taub started a MA at the then Drama Department at UCT. This initiated what is now a more than 20 year arc of PaR. In this chapter Taub offers a sense of the methodological paradigm through which he understands his PaR journey, in other words the ideology or conceptual logic through which he makes sense of the ever-evolving, frequently chaotic PaR process. Along the way he offers glimpses in words and photographs

of the methods he has used over the years and how they have served specific research explorations, but also how they have been part of his bigger framing of his PaR as remapping in an attempt to negotiate between crisis and catastrophe. The chapter is performative in the sense that it does not always explicitly unpack its meaning or the references it alludes to, but rather 'performs' its meaning through the writing, much like a play text where the subtext is not stated. I interject in several moments, like this, to request clarification or offer my own senses of Taub's work in order to make explicit some of the subtext in this chapter around how PaR might build conceptual theory and conceptual theory might generate PaR.

1.5 These forms of remapping all allude to a palimpsest-like engineering as an outcome that exposes process and absence (a signalling to irresolution as a fissure or ignition to making) and finding ways to express reflection-in retrieval and in-recovery.

> What are phenomena rescued from? Not only, and not in the main, from the discredit and neglect into which they have fallen, but from the catastrophe represented very often by a certain strain in their dissemination, their "enshrinement as heritage". They are saved through their exhibition of the fissure within them. There is a tradition that is catastrophe. (Benjamin, 1999:474)

And so, to begin with the above deliberation, is to frame catastrophe as an intent in making, and it would then also mean "to have missed an opportunity" (1999:474), because, in both of these allusions (discredit and neglect) referred to by Walter Benjamin, there is a possibility of the prescription of reflecting upon the missed opportunity along with the mechanisms of time and action that afford making from within the crisis.

1.6 ALEX: In this section above Taub introduces the terms 'crisis' and 'catastrophe', framing how his PaR works with both. In our everyday conversational use, crisis and catastrophe are often conflated: we might say that an earthquake is a crisis or a catastrophe, treating the two words as synonyms. In drama, drawing on Aristotle's definition of the well-made play, crisis and catastrophe are two separate things in the arc of a play. A play starts with an exposition, a complication is introduced (the inciting incident), there is development towards a crisis (or climax) and then there is the catastrophe (dénouement). The catastrophe in dramatic terms is then what happens *after* the crisis, the unravelling, the fallout. If we translate this to everyday events, the earthquake is the crisis and the catastrophe is the broken buildings and roads, the casualties, people piecing their lives together in the wake of the crisis.

When Taub started his MA in 2002, as he discusses in more detail below, he was creating theatrical performance work in response to the plane that was crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City on 11 September 2001 (part of four, coordinated suicide attacks on the USA that day) and all that unfolded in New York City and globally after that crisis. In the second year of his MA, his final major MA task was the making of a play called *Lekker Faith*, which responded to his father's terminal diagnosis with cancer and Taub's and his family's journey as his father was dying. In his PhD, which immediately followed his MA, Taub ran a participatory theatre-making process with Camps Bay High School drama students exploring the Holocaust and its impacts and also ran a participatory integrated-arts process with women from Monkey Biz, a women's beading collective NGO, exploring the women's stories of living with HIV. The focus on crisis and subsequent catastrophe is clear in this progression of work, as are the subjects of Taub's PaR since his PhD, such as the post-colonial, post-apartheid city and the climate crisis.

Taub has used many methods along his PaR journey: bricolage, playwriting, play devising, scenography, treasure hunts, photography, video, performance art interventions and walking – to name a few. Fragmentary descriptions of these methods and more will emerge as this chapter progresses. My understanding is that what Taub is describing in his opening passage above is how his methods have been processes to try to make sense of crises and the catastrophes that follow. They have been methods to "retrieve" with self-awareness memory, feelings and experiences catalysed by crisis and emergent through catastrophe. This process of retrieval is, synonymously, a recovery of the memory, feelings and experiences but is also an attempt to facilitate recovery in a different sense: in the sense of healing from the trauma of the crisis and the unfolding catastrophe.

The Benjamin reference Taub cites is dense and complex in its implications and in particular here in terms of Taub's work. However I think a useful summarising interpretation is that Benjamin is pointing to how part of the catastrophe unfolding after a crisis is the "strain in … dissemination" of the experiences, memories, feelings (what we might understand as "phenomena") from the crisis. Benjamin's problematising of a human drive for "enshrinement as heritage", suggests that in our attempts to memorialise, we fix memory and experience, where they are essentially unfixable, not fully knowable (Benjamin, 1999:473). So Benjamin proposes that these phenomena are rescued through a self-aware, public acknowledgement of "the fissure within them" (473). In acknowledging the fragmented nature of how we might remember and process the phenomena emergent from a crisis, we almost rescue these phenomena that cannot be wholly rescued. In the quote Taub cites, Benjamin concludes by offering "catastrophe", the unfolding after a crisis, as a tradition. Taub then draws in Tiedmann, the translator of this text

from Benjamin, to qualify that what is part of catastrophe is "to have missed an opportunity" (trans. Tiedmann, 1999:473). So there is the fissure in the phenomena that might be recovered from the crisis and unfolding catastrophe (the phenomena can be most closely recovered in their 'cracked' or broken form) and, related to this fragmentary nature of recovering phenomena from crisis and unfolding catastrophe, there is inevitably "missed … opportunity". Phenomena cannot be recovered whole and opportunities are lost in the aftermath of the crisis.

My understanding is that Taub is taking on Benjamin's notion of catastrophe as tradition and engaging fragmented feelings, experience and memories with self-awareness as a way of responding both to crises and within crises and their following catastrophes. Taub is in a sense using his artistic processes as catastrophes to engage with real world catastrophes. In mapping and remapping the fragmented, 'catastrophic' nature of his art making within and in response to real world crises and catastrophes, personal and global, Taub is researching the complexity of crisis and catastrophe and how we might attempt to account for and recover from them, from a point of understanding that these processes are ongoing and necessarily irresolvable.

In the text that follows Taub speaks of "presences" and "absences", as well as "fissures" and "fragments", all relating to what he establishes above through Benjamin of the incompleteness of the memories, experiences and feelings that emerge through crises and the catastrophes that follow. You will also see him speak substantially of "failure", which relates to the "missed… opportunity" (Tiedmann, 1999:473) in crisis and the catastrophe that follows. Taub proposes through his reflection on his PaR how to investigate or process the sense that to have missed opportunities, through, within and because of crises and ensuing catastrophes, is to have failed.

1.7 (But failure can also induce a sense of the positive through redemption.)

1.8 Juan Manuel Aldape Muñoz has ascertained how PaR encourages:

> A corporeal acumen of exploring information in the process of addressing research that does not fit within conventions … and therefore … PaR is a practice which actively defies structure and, thus, distorts the spaces that it inhabits … . (2014:2-3)

In the first drafted version of his paper based upon the Occupy Movement and PaR, Aldape Muñoz described my own activation during the PaR workshops at IFTR (the International Federation for Theatre Research) in Barcelona in 2013, where, at a chosen public space of crisis, the spectator was invited to choose between

emotional valences that signalled either heritage, catastrophe or identity [ALEX: Here Benjamin's concern with the "enshrinement of heritage" as opposed to catastrophe (Benjamin, 1999: 473) is put into practice with identity as a third option. Taub's intentions for what identity might potentially signify are not articulated in this paper, but his use of an art intervention informed by theory as a mode of PaR is clear]. Aldape Muñoz's response describes a catastrophic encounter [ALEX: Myer, Aldape Muñoz's response? MYER: What? ALEX: Are you referring to Aldape Muñoz's response here? MYER: Yes. ALEX: And is Aldape Muñoz describing a spectator who chose the emotional valence of catastrophe as opposed to heritage or identity? MYER: Yes]. Encounters with catastrophe, in particular paying attention to the emotional valences that accompany encounters with catastrophe, are part of my research strategy that express how narrative constructed from such encounters will be affected in part by their context. For Aldape Muñoz, each of the objects represented in the performance referred to "different catastrophic encounters … and how Taub would enact their respective lineage when selected" (2014:1), as to engender the idea of the effect of context. My argument for retrieving the description by Aldape Muñoz[18] [ALEX: This is a great footnote for getting a sense of how Taub is working with crisis, catastrophe and remapping.] is to provide an example of remapping the catastrophe to point to the peculiarity of PaR in its relationship to convention and to the embodiment of practice situated in the research outcome usually as text. In rewriting this particular paper – if rewriting is accepted to be part of the writing process – (then) what was required along with its assembled fragmented reflections (that included several past activations at PaR working group meetings and workshops, 2015-2019) is to suggest how remapping of the catastrophe is an idea of how to **reflect within** crisis, **that informs partly** a performance praxis engaged with **resilience and** recovery. One such crisis is to indicate a performance-based methodology situated in – and from – these themes of crisis.[19] Part of the intent here, in this constant activation of remapping (rewriting) is to cohere a narrative in the practice of this kind of research. There is a

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18   Retrieving Aldape Muñoz is indicative somewhat of suggested phases in the relationship between catastrophe, crisis, and remapping the catastrophe as in: i) crisis as theme or underpinning or the paradigm; ii) catastrophe as the act of retrieving the fragment, thus is action, with indication of the potential loss of value. See Note1/N1 below as an example; and iii) remapping the catastrophe is the complex interplay of reflection and reflexive mechanisms that afford redemption iv) by noting this interplay of Aldape Muñoz and using his description as an example. N1: " Elements of that [Aldape Muñoz] paper went on to be included in the PAR anthology that Annette, Ben, Melanie, and Bruce edited (Arlander, Barton, Dreyer, Lude-Spatz, 2018) [see Munoz 2018]. The quote you selected is modified in the final publication. My comments about your work did not make it to the final version as project's scope changed in developing the paper" (email correspondence: Munoz 2023).

19   The time of crisis is contemporary (2001-2022) and also in this crisis I want to suggest ways of re-making and remembering through tracing redemptive technologies from knowing in the unknowing or unlearning as intersectional mechanisms along with glitches, fissures, failure and dislocations made in crisis.

chaotic difficulty with self-analysis, experimentation in making one's own research from one's practice along with the slippages of the themes of failure. So, the representation of this paper has been reworked in various forms of concept and stylistic activation as collaboration, dialogue with the self and others, commentary of translation and enabling cohesion, occurring in responses to the moment of reflection. This emits a subjective discourse and wants to suggest how remapping the catastrophe embodies its own failure; as a performance strategy that extends beyond the catastrophe towards remapping on towards recovery. This paper has failed in its previous attempts to affect this. Now, in rewriting the argument again **and again** – is to be clearer in what can affect difference, making its reworking apparent as the objective interweaves ideas of performance towards the yield of measurement, through reflection.

Part of an argument made from the paper's preference for the outcomes of failure has meant new ideas consolidate with old ones. This again refers to the building of subterranean, supportive and secondary networks of the ideas that are reflective of the ideas at the surface. It indicates not only interpolation of ideas about a generative archive that is also about absence and erasure in the embarkation of working with catastrophe, but furthermore, there are stylistic choices embedded in the reflective text itself that engage performatively with intercutting through descriptions of experience by simultaneously engaging with stylistic mechanisms inserted in the text itself that prompt performance modes through re-reading and retracing as an example of such modes; others include footnotes, headers, font difference, italics and font size; "whereby the written text is made to function in a more expressively performative manner" (Magan, 2007:xix). Thus the text performs the research through remapping.

But as chaotic and messy as remapping might become, PaR assists the process because the engagement of performance as the research occurs by re-performing in some form as a measuring of the effect and articulating an experience towards dimensional thinking [ALEX: As in multi-dimensional thinking? MYER: Yes, as Myer thinking in different directions and through different modes of writing: the footnote to the reader, the note to self, poetic writing, stream-of-consciousness prose, scholarly writing etc.]. In this case it is about failure as an overall theme and praxis. In particular here is a yield from the archive because of the exercise in reflecting and writing as explained below.

The figure below is from an ongoing work called "Xuetas"[20] an unfinished work that coincidently began with my attendance at PaR working group meetings, at the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) conference in Barcelona in 2013, that were alluded to by Aldape Muñoz. This work began to publicly explore by performing the allegory of crisis as a module in another inter modular provocation to an ongoing work-still undecided-still in process. My current melancholy is spurned away while excavating the below image, and retrieving it, as to provide an archival example to thought and image inscribed and encoded in the frame.

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20 *Xuetas* means pork chop in Spanish, a derogatory word for Jewish converts etc.

Figure 7.1: Pig in Image: Performing Image as Allegory & Archive in "Trasher Hunt" Maboneng, Johannesburg, 2014. Photograph created by Myer Taub.

I am provoked by re-collection and excavation on how to measure this time of crisis as also a decade span incurring variations in the enquiry of performance and research … Variations made over time might determine a difference (also to consider repetition and patterning), but produce fraught enquiry into what has changed and what remains as a kind of haunting and mourning to this effect; that, as Mark Payne has suggested, in the paradigm of depressive anthropology can induce a sense of shame, as a haunting not only haunted by the past as affect but by what also has been erased – "the idea that shame is the route by which we access the capabilities of living that are abrogated in modernity" (Payne, 2017:1). This is valuable for this reflection: that is also melancholic for variance reframed as dramaturgical variance, in making and reflecting presents how shame itself is a pre-existence to making-in the time of crisis and informing overt failure through slight gesture, fragmentary writing, irresolution and exposition of meta-text, and in doing so affords resilience.

TWO: CONTEXT: PaR AS CONTEXT & CONTEXT AS PIRACY.

2.1 (A)Context: an overview

On September 11, 2001, I was living and writing in New York City. I say living and writing because after the events of 9/11, the essence of the one and the schemata of the other broke into fragments. I became what Trinh Minh-ha might call a "sleepwalker".

> One can say that disaster times, such as the events of September 11 in the
> US or the events lived by people in war situations around the world have the

power to wipe away everything that one narrowly holds on to – the small measurements devised to keep one's life on track. People who have come out of the disaster speak of "waking up" from sleepwalking and the first thing they realise is that time cannot be bought. (Minh-ha, 2005:76)

When I returned to Cape Town, South Africa, to embark on several years of postgraduate studies in theatre-making and dramatic arts, I set out upon a journey of experimentation that I hoped would challenge the inherited sleep, in order to activate a strategy that might promote opportunities for recovery.

… Little did I know for as I engaged with a doctoral project in narrative that responded to the aftermath and remaking this as abstraction that evoked inter connected modalities that could enshrine as well as investigate drama as a philosophical and practical form of action making and remaking from the notion of "aftermath"; [21] for my own recovery as a sleepwalker, perhaps from sleepwalking in trauma after 9-11, I created a series of performances engaged with questions rather than presence or iteration, I need to repeat how unaware of performance overtly informing research, it was rather research as enquiry that led the way to meaning of what emerges from the aftermath; it is a question that led to performances projects and these imaginings of performance as a qualifier to research; that performance could be the measure, that were mostly inherent or tacit that lay under the surface in the enquiry, rather considering performance as a connection to the other comparative theories of themes forming modalities as transmissions of value measured through comparativeness.

2.2 ALEX: Taub's "little do I know" here echoes what so many of the authors in this book reflect on, that as artists they had intuitively been working with their artistic practice to work out something they were curious about in the world, to understand the thing better, to articulate and express through their artistic practice a thought-feeling-argument about the thing. Yet it was only in retrospect that they could see how their artistic practice was research and could be explicitly used as such. So perhaps Taub thought the performances he was creating were a measure of his research in the sense of this is my research outcome: a play or an installation. Or he thought the performances might be some kind of qualifier to the research: performances that happened

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21   Aftermath is also regenerative and performative. There is an ambling for resolution that is uncanny because it has a codex with unfinished time as a resource, an entanglement, yearning and mourning and redeeming and rebuilding… I had intended that this thought lies unfinished.

alongside his reading and thinking and personal internal journeying with questions about the aftermath. Only in retrospect did he start to understand how his performance practice was entwined with the reading, thinking and feeling he was doing about the aftermath. All of these "modalities" reading, thinking, "investigating drama as a philosophical and practical form of action making and remaking from the notion of 'aftermath'" and performance practice were connected and working together as practice as research. Coming to know the PaR he was doing intuitively, he could then start working with it more consciously and explicitly.

2.3 The modalities made were structural and architectural, informing a comprehension of what already seems visible, "the image understood as dialectic at a standstill is transformed into writing…" (Weigel, 1996:52). The relationship between the modalities has varied in chronological time. Now image and thought together, also serve as meditative practices, more resolved for thinking in images and deriving thought from images, suggesting how thought and image stimulate each other and assist in solving problems. For ideas can be constructed into images and images can operate as ideas.[22] As I reflect, I think that there is still a difficulty with static and how then performance emerges perhaps through the scrutiny with the self. [ALEX: This footnote is so helpful for understanding the denkbilder concept Taub was experimenting with.]

2.4 Benjamin recurs in the translations of this/ this static as a profane transmission, an effect of history on the self with imaginary dialogue recurring translations of thoughts and images, informed by use of technologies such as Denkbilder; translated as a "'double sense' of seeing and things or 'denkbilder'" (Weigel, 1996:51). I want to suggest how this double sense is also a double narrative of space where images are translated into words, and words into images. And as such a process I have placed in my research and practice as easily captured by an iPhone governed by the concept of "the translation of the language of things into that of words" (Weigel, 1996:51). Often, I have used images entangled within the idea that the visual provides examples or even direction in my reading and composition of theory.

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22   Weigel helps to explain the difference between image and thought-images through these two observations – this is in relation to Benjamin:

i.) "Image as likeness, similitude, or resemblance" (1996:23);

ii.) the combination between thought and images provides "a double sense: as images in relation to which his thoughts and theoretical reflections unfold, and also as images whose representations are translated into figures of thought…" (1996:51).

Figure 7.2: "Pretty Woman: Venus on the Landfill" Maputo, 2015. Photograph created by Myer Taub along with SLOW (social life of waste art).

2.5 I had wanted to write more about the iPhone as a stimulus not only in referring to thought and image but also as an object setting off direction for emerging work in regard to the wild zone. In 2018 I had my iPhone stolen. I traced it to a contraband cell phone market in Noord Street, Johannesburg. My experience in that market foreshadowed the idea of the wild zone as a demarcated space of informality and kinetic overflows, and progressive ideas of linking Piracy and performance as research.

The example of Piracy is discussed by Sundaram in *Pirate Modernity* (2010), first as a form of delinquency because it is produced as "an illicit form" (2010:12) provided by postcolonial media urbanism, and it is also a transmissive form for it can renegotiate spatial dynamics. This is explained through how modern piracy not only works through digital and mechanical reproduction [ALEX: Taub is referring here to Benjamin's key essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". Writing on the effects of the industrial revolution in mechanically reproducing art, Benjamin discusses how this takes away something of the 'aura' of artworks. Taub is of course adding digital reproduction, the technological means for reproduction that has come after the mechanical.] but becomes a life of its own (2010:12), thus creating a living inverted spatiality of transmissions. Its routes of transmission have the complexity of "innervation" (2010:8), instantiating technology that is the study of located dysfunction and appropriation.

THREE: FOCUS; PAR AS FOCUS… and waste as a metaphor and project

3.1 In the image above there is an entanglement of the above. There is a slight digression because of the kind of chronology (A chronology of making that is itinerant and unresolved). This is sudden as it is reflective but also mournful, haunted…. By collaboration. I think the tensions between the self and the collective over the decades have also varied and what this exchange has produced is both interesting but mournful because the collaboration is ephemeral, and in current reflection the crisis has extended this tension prompting reconsidering stoicism and hermeneutics [ALEX: Taub raises here affectual responses which are strategies for coping in a crisis and unfolding catastrophe and can be marked as phenomena for investigation through his broader research project] because of periods of enforced isolation, in regards to the pandemic. But in the digression the work above beyond its entanglement expresses a particular period whereby the subject of research was waste and extended beyond working with other waste artists from Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa through the practice of waste art (2015-2019). Why did this collaboration end? Mostly because of institutional failure, partly something that thereon too has become a subject of research interest in relation to systems and the failed state and current evolution of ecologies and theatre practice; and crisis. Performing the art of waste is something that as a period consolidated the interaction between performance and research – but I need to refer back earlier than the rendering of the image above taken from the action, rather than question.

The action or performance itself occurred in December 2014. I am standing semi naked on a landfill in Hulene, in Mozambique's capital, of Maputo, a city of more than a million people. Hulene is its local landfill and has approximately 900 tons of waste dumped daily in an area the size of 17 football fields, layer upon layer of garbage is piled as high as a three-story building and in places, it spills over into the surrounding densely populated mostly poor residential neighbourhood 10 km from the city centre. I scavenge on the dumpsite and find an authentic celluloid of the Julia Robert's film *Pretty Woman* – and with this detritus that in its original form presented the transformation of prostitution through the genre of the Hollywood screwball comedy, I playfully began to transform, my body engaging intimately with the plastic as my umbilical cord as it unrolls from the surface of waste… immersing my exchange as an experience, that engages with an idea taken from Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* who in writing about disturbance and waste says:

> No, as in true theatre, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These bodily fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being (1982:3).

The very vastness of the contemporary metaphor and materiality of waste, as a social-cultural and political schema of the human condition is invested as bodily assemblages that on Kristeva's terms "disturbs identity, systems and order…" (1982:4). Waste evoked in the embodiment of practice is as much an inversion as it is a disturbance, occurring in the making and reflection of intersubjective practice. The intersection between making and reflection are corollaries of agitation undertaken and experienced as a system of performative corollaries that include inversion, disturbance, exchange, loss, also reaction, resistance and protest. Corollaries of agitation are that which life withstands at the border of being. So, by enabling these corollaries of agitations as reflexive mechanisms to operate within the research, the research performs the very inversions, and disturbances that evoke waste. In this case by agitating not only social and cultural parameters but also, as Kristeva suggests in relation to the abject, by enabling and disobeying borders. The celluloid found and used on the Hulene Landfill in December of 2014 was like a corollary of agitation similar in the making to an ecosystem of performance guided by Kershaw's indication of the interpolation of the visible made invisible in performance to "expose the paradoxes involved in using tools – in this case dramaturgical and performance tools – in order to dismantle what the tools have made" (2007:259). Kershaw, as I understand it, is specifying how in the performance both integration and disintegration are ecological forms, systemised forms that can cut across the very thing the performance makes suggesting the potential traversable nature in the interrelation of making performance.

3.2 The conversation is staged, but also spontaneous, reflective as it is reflexive. It is as Monica Szewczyk suggests a demand "to suspend, boggle or otherwise challenge available discourses and we turn to develop a discourse to elaborate evasions, deferrals, or misunderstandings of its available notions" (2010:1). In order to begin to watch what we say - because in the presentation of the form there is a rendering of praxis. There is an expression of how returning the gaze is the implication of a radical technology. Conversation as a technology was explored collaboratively with PaR, at the PaR working group meetings in Belgrade and Shanghai in 2018 and 2019. PaR is the current rendering made from the actions of practice-led research and its entanglements with performance studies in particular. The radical technology as part of PaR extends its concepts into more anti-authoritarian lines along with its emplacement within kinetic overflows, informalities and delinquency. In Sundaram's *Pirate Modernity* (2010) (which on its own is an important wainscot of my current ideas and work of the wild zone) there is the first signalling to the dysfunctional transmission: "The Optical unconsciousness was not only a radical expression of the encounter with technology, but also held out the 'capability of returning the gaze'" (Sundaram, 2010:8; citing Benjamin, 1988). How this Benjamin like characteristic

of technologically looking back along with Benjamin's other principle of tracing the aura are in favour of production: "When a person, an animal or something inanimate returns our glance with its own, we are drawn initially into the distance; its glance is dreaming, draws after its dream" (Benjamin, 2015:188). The complexities of the gaze are not new: The Glance that is nomadic, itinerant and even dreaming provides a consciousness of forwarding transformations of space to place, and vice versa dispelling diverse transmissions of time and place; replicating radical technologies and thus creating creative economies. … as point of making. An extension of expressing ideas thus occurs through the radical - of intersections and interactions; that include the examples already made in this fragmentary reflection like the dialectic of commentary, witnessing, the making of modalities, remapping and conversation.

3.3 ALEX: In this concluding section, Taub gives a sense of where his PaR has taken him in recent years. The theoretical influence of Benjamin is clear here, but also newer influences like Sunduram's "piracy" (2010) introduced in section 2 and key performance/ practice as research and theatre studies scholar, Baz Kershaw's work (2007) on theatre and ecology and the role theatre might play in environmental activism. These theoretical influencesare newer in Taub's work, but are also 'new' in the sense of having been written and published since Taub first started his PaR journey in 2002. In focusing on waste through the SLOW project, Taub also draws on older, well-established critical theory from Julia Kristeva on waste and the abject.

Taub ties these theoretical influences to his methods, the things he did. He and his colleagues rummaged in the Hulene landfill to see what they could find. Taub made a performance proposition out of what he found that could be a "denkbild", a thought-image for engaging with notions of waste in our time of critical environmental distress. Taub's methods here were both live performance and photography. As I understand the final paragraph of 3.1, Taub uses the "Pretty Woman: Venus on the Landfill" image to reflect on the use of artistic performance as way of making visible the invisibilised negative outcomes of globalised capitalism.

Taub's discussion in 3.2 is dense in the many threads it draws together, but perhaps what is most useful to draw out is his championing of conversation and creativity. Engaging with theorists through reading and writing and collaborating with fellow artist researchers is foundational to how Taub continues to extend his research concerns in the realm of crisis and catastrophe through conversation. The creative processes of Taub's research (artistic practice, reading, writing, talking, walking) are the means through which the conversation, "the intersections and interactions" are facilitated. These

conversations through creative modalities are generative in valuable ways: they produce new insights into crises and catastrophes ("remapping") and they create processes and products for sharing experiences ("witnessing"). Where Taub's sense of his PaR process in his MA and PhD work was, "little did I know...", in terms of how conscious he was of using his practice as research, here in the third section we see how he has come to consciously work with all elements of his artistic work, scholarship and even daily life (walking a key example) as part of an evolving practice as research process in conversation with others.

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SECTION 2: METHODS

UGCWELE UKUDLALA: WAYS OF SEEING, LEARNING AND KNOWING THROUGH SERIOUS PLAY

By Noluthando Mpho Sibisi

PROLOGUE

In the past my grandmother was a seer.

That is, she often sat quietly, observing, listening for signs and symbols. She had roots, routes, and rituals; a rumbling in her chest, a groan, a moan, a bone to throw, to pick, to decipher. It was always at home, in her bedroom, with her door closed that she silently saw. *Ugcwele ukudlala/Hamb'o dlala ngaphandle/Hamb'o dlala nabanye abantwana*. Although I was more interested in her ways of seeing, I was always encouraged towards the work of play, outside, with other children.

I would reluctantly leave her ritual to join the ceremony led by my age-mates outside. My time spent with my peers saw me showing them how to see as well. This always looked like turning over and 'reading' stones, often while conjuring up a burp. Sometimes, I would touch their cotton clothes and then proceed to 'solve' their futures. I grew to love reading and replicating action in these ways; I relished the practice and the playing.

Ugcwele ukudlala. On her less demanding days, my grandmother would lend me her seeing eye, her listening ear, her ticking time and observe my close study and emulation of her aforementioned actions. She would usually laugh and remark, "*Ugcwele ukudlala*". Which is to say, "You play too much/You are full to the brim with play/You are playful".

HAMB'O DLALA NGAPHANDLE: ROOTS, ROUTES AND RITUALS TOWARDS PLAY

At the end of 2021 I completed an MA in Theatre and Performance at the University of Cape Town. My minor dissertation, titled *Sexuality and cultural heritage at odds: I Fuck What I Like, an ode to the young queer black woman in South Africa*, functioned to complicate what I was arguing to be an insistent narrative and the consequent depiction of queer black womanhood as emblematic of abjection in the performance and literary canon. I proposed that an investigation of queer black joy could offer alternative ways into writing and performing more dynamic queer black woman narratives within the said canon.

I write this chapter as a reflection on the research strategies and methodologies that I employed throughout my MA programme. Through a close study of the interdisciplinary literary, visual and performance processes that preceded the writing and staging of my

final performance piece *I Fuck What I Like*, I will centre the performance as both the artefact and the research outcome of my inquiry.

My key framing statement for the research was: queer black womanhood is not emblematic of abjection: a statement informed in part by the works of Koleka Putuma, Zanele Muholi and Athi-Patra Ruga as my artistic influences. This chapter will function as a documentation of the roots, routes and rituals that informed my readings and replications of the black queer counterculture offered by the above-mentioned artists. From these artists I garnered ode, collage and multivocality as research methods that informed my use of serious play and scripted autoethnographic reflections.

1. HAMB'O: GO, AND FIND THEORETICAL ROOTING

At the beginning of my MA I was facilitated through a series of morning practical sessions referred to as 'studios'. During these studios I, along with the rest of the MA cohort, was guided through an investigation of "ritual, space, time, embodiment and mixed media visualising" to name a few components of performance-making. In the course of the practical sessions, I was encouraged to actively think about two major tenets of my research: one of them was the theoretical anchors for my performance project and the other was the creative outputs that I was discovering while responding to the above-mentioned components of performance.

Both the search for theoretical influences and the creative output of the research project were meant to help me flesh out my research material and personal performance semiotics. This was so that I could, at a later stage, dissect the material and semiotics to uncover my performance as my research outcome. Each instance of guided in-studio exploration was underpinned by the assertion that an investigation of my artistic practice could "be viewed as the production of knowledge" (Barrett, 2007:1).

I grappled with this research approach suggesting that knowledge could be "derived from doing and from the senses" (Barrett, 2007:1) and centred studio practice as integral to the generation of new knowledge and understanding of my research inquiry and outcome. PaR posed a challenge for me, in that it was a difficult methodology to understand and quantify in terms of traditional scholarship. Lloyd P. Rieber (2001) proposes that the concept of design suggests "a planned intervention to solve a problem, fill a need or realize an opportunity [,] unlike art, design is constrained by purpose and parameter" (Rieber, 2001:2). Thus the challenge of designing research in a discipline that seemingly contradicted what was expected of research. There was, from the outset, a schism between my subjective artistic practice (which did not require empirical or theoretical justification) and my obligations as a researcher in academia (which was accompanied by an expectation for scholarly rigour evidenced by engagement with, and the citation of, other scholarship).

While I considered the need to justify my position as a researcher and present applicable and profitable research outcomes, I also took into serious consideration that,

> The innovation and critical potential of practice based research lies in
> its capacity to generate personally situated knowledge and new ways of

modelling and externalising such knowledge while at the same time, revealing philosophical social and cultural context for the critical intervention and application of knowledge outcomes. (Barrett, 2007:2)

The search for a grand design was for me, to borrow from Dianne Reid, "a process of accumulation rather than elimination" (2001:48). Like Reid, I too discovered that I was informed by an array of art forms which required that I consider a variety of vantage points from which to observe and respond to my holistic condition as practitioner and researcher. I used serious play as a strategy to achieve the potential of PaR where "innovation is derived from methods that cannot always be predetermined and outcomes of artistic practice are necessarily unpredictable" (Barrett, 2007:3). I will now map my attempt at bridging what I understood as the gap between traditional scholarship and PaR.

DLALA: PLAY YOUR WAY THROUGH/TO ROUTES

I introduce play here as an "ambiguous phenomenon" (Rieber, 2001:4) and as a "means for understanding motivation and learning in a holistic way" (Rieber, 2001:1). As cited in Rieber (2001:4), Brian Sutton asserts that, although we are all familiar with play as a concept and feeling, we fail to reach a consensus on what theoretical statements are true about what play is. Rieber also distinguishes serious play from ordinary play by suggesting that serious play extends beyond diversion, frivolity and triviality. Serious play is characterised as play "that has purpose", and Rieber advises that "experience first, explain later" (2001:4) is a useful way of understanding serious play. Here, the event and experience of play is fundamental to understanding how one plays. I argue that this take on serious play as "elusive but always ready to emerge" resonates with some of the core principles of PaR as experimental grounds on which one creates conditions to encounter instances, surprises, possibility and contradictions with self, the empirical world, and others. At the core of both PaR and serious play is experience as a verb. What is implicit here is that knowledge can be gathered from the process of consciously encountering one's physical actions, thoughts and ways of being. Therefore, the responsibility of the research practitioner is to rigorously reflect on the experiences they come across during their practice or serious play, while also acknowledging that the ambiguous nature of their process necessitates that their practice continuously interrogates itself.

LLOYD RIEBER'S SERIOUS PLAY

Lloyd Rieber distinguishes serious play from ordinary play by suggesting that serious play extends beyond diversion, frivolity and triviality. Serious play is characterised as play "that has purpose", but looks to "experience first, explain later". (2001:4)

Noluthando advocates for serious play as resonating with some of the core principles of PaR as experimental grounds on which one creates conditions to

encounter instances, surprises, possibility and contradictions with self, the empirical world, and others.

In my examination of my practice I had to become a seer. That is, I had to actively observe and listen to myself and my performance semiotics. Rehearsing and sifting through the signs and symbols signifying my ideas about how I personally arrived at blackhood, womanhood and queerhood reminded me of how I had first encountered Koleka Putuma's poem "Black joy" (2017:12). I searched through my own groans and moans to arrive at my discomfort and agreement with the sentiment shared in the poem. In "Black joy" Putuma argues for the existence of black people's joy in a performance and literary culture that predominantly insists on seeing the racial category that is blackness as, to borrow from Arthur Jafa, "the emblem of abjection" and "the repositories of badness" (Jafa, 2019:n.p.). I had a bone to throw, to pick and decipher. I had multiple stones to turn in order to fully appreciate and make sense of my visceral response to Putuma's offering.

It is worth mentioning here that in the early stages of this research timeline I encountered severe and unexpected contradictions as my practice was brought to a standstill by the COVID 19 pandemic. What was once in-person studio work was substituted for uncertainty under the strict national lockdown regulations. During this time I had to consider the potential presented by this new condition. In retrospect this was my personal rediscovery of home as an intimate space. I, once again, could read the bedroom as symbolic of interiority and intimate practices. It is here that I could make sense of Barrett's assertion about PaR (2001:2): being stuck at home presented me with the opportunity and possibility of making external and bringing into scholarly light my personally situated knowledge concerning the nuances of black subjectivity. During this time, when community and collaboration could only exist on laptop screens and cellphones, I silently saw new ways of modelling this situated knowledge within the social and cultural context I was a part of. What became apparent to me were the ongoing attempts by other artists to offer critical intervention and application of knowledge outcomes generated through PaR. Primarily I watched as others played towards self-actualisation during a particularly precarious time in our immediate present.

One of the artists who appealed to me during the pandemic was Zanele Muholi who, at the time, was working on a series of 31 painted self-portraits. Muholi presented this process on their Instagram page and I was inspired to replicate it. In my version of the exercise in self-portraiture, I decided to use photography instead of paint as my medium. Over a series of 14 days, I would wake up and curate colour-coordinated photoshoots of myself within the comfort of my home. The ritual for preparing for each shoot included my creating collages from magazine cut-outs. These collages were informed by my personal musings around my ideas of self, my complexities and the imagery I could collect to represent these. Other times, the musings were about depictions of queer black woman joy and/or ordinary life as a strategy for social reform. I would then go on to choose an outfit and design a backdrop against which to stage

Figure 8.1: An image of a collage I made in the colour yellow and a collage in the colour red. Artwork by Noluthando Mpho Sibisi.

Using my home space as a studio inspired multiple written reflections, some in the form of lyrical poetry or ode. The ode, as a conceptual framework, helped me signpost the route of my probing while also acting as a memorandum and formal address to the subject of my inquiry, "The young queer black woman in South Africa". By investigating and rehearsing the traditional forms of the ode, I eventually structured this lyrical poem, which I incorporated into the final performance:

And what do we say when we speak of you
Many things are true,
That you were born a black woman in possession
Of the physical and practical traits of sex?
That your body can be read as an index
Of your inherited cultural disposition: abjection?

And what shall we say when we speak of you
Many things are actually true
like the laughter belonging to you by reason of birth
the ease with which you command the most daring vowel:
"I…"
Like your passion with lover's arms knotted around your girth
Holding in place the rapture in your rearranged bowel:

"…fuck what I like" (whatever that is)
You are a devotion.

The material arising from and surrounding the photoshoots brought to the forefront of my inquiry the usefulness of multivocality as an autoethnographic method. This method could help me illustrate that I, as a researcher, writer, director, performer and visual artist did not possess "a single and temporally fixed voice" (Mizzi, 2010:1).

Alain de Botton (2020) reflects on rituals as being the most effective when they do not,

so much impose upon us ideas we are opposed to but take us back to ideas we are in deep agreement with yet have allowed to lapse: they are an externally mandated route to inner authenticity. (De Botton, 2020:15)

By executing the above-mentioned ritual during interventions of serious play, I arrived time and time again at my personal known, but unattended, thoughts and beliefs about my research interest, the potential of my research methods, as well as the research outcomes. Through playing with the above-mentioned process and materials I could elevate my ordinary home space to a space of ritual and then return it to its function of housing some of my most intimate identity markers and desires. This centring of my own creative choices and imagination, gave me permission to nuance the details of my subjective experiences and divert attention away from what I argued to be a pervasive mainstream insistence to reduce queer black woman narratives to only those of victimhood and trauma.

It was during this productivity peak that I also encountered a work titled *Of Gods, Rainbows and Omissions* by Athi-Patra Ruga (2018). Ruga, a visual and performance artist, was concerned with character and world-making in the production of this body of work. He makes use of multiple media and in his address of socio-political issues that are of importance to him. What intrigued me and guided me in making sense of my own character and world-making is Ruga's ongoing use of colour and the idea throughout his work that colour can be used to "disarm people" (2015). In my personal reflections and reading of Ruga's work, I mused that the mixing of media and centring of colour divorces the viewer from the proverbial "black and white" way of reading visual texts "filling the white noise of intergenerational silence with [both] factual and made up stories" (Ruga, 2015). Here, history is revised and the future is imagined using layering, texturing, colouring and collage.

Figure 8.2: Self–portrait in the colour yellow. Photograph by Noluthando Mpho Sibisi.

Figure 8.3: Self-portrait in the colour red. Photograph by Noluthando Mpho Sibisi.

Figure 8.4: Self-portrait in the colour blue. Photograph by Noluthando Mpho Sibisi.

After purposefully playing with Putuma's literary claim to personal black joy, intimacy and pleasure, emulating Muholi's process of self-portraiture and collaging alongside Ruga's multiple media, I arrived at the research methods of multivocality, ode and collage. Through repeated engagement with and reflection on these methods as my personal manifestation of serious play, I finally reached an autoethnographic exploration in which I could confidently script the characters Echo, Shadow and Reflection as manifestations of personal multiplicity and complexity.

NGAPHANDLE NABANYE ABANTWANA: MAKE A RITUAL OF PLAYING OUTSIDE WITH OTHERS

I tasked myself with bringing my understandings and articulations of queer black woman joy to the forefront of my performance studies. I was hoping that by doing so I could offer practical and updated routes towards writing and performing queer black woman interiority, multiplicity and complexity. Making use of serious play and elevating ordinary tasks into ritual, I uncovered personal gestures, images, and objects; personal semiotics of joy and complexity. It was through careful observation of my daily life and preoccupations that I could notate, theorise, analyse, and interpret personal signs and symbols that pointed my final performance beyond the confines of a representation of queer black womanhood as abject and characterised by victimhood and trauma narratives.

Most of the methods and methodologies I have identified in this paper required a level of fluidity that meant I would have to quickly abandon the notion of a personal fixed voice in favour of an ambiguous and sometimes obscure process. Depending on my daily contexts and contestations, my landscaping as an auto-ethnographer who is making connections between the "personal self and the social context" (Mizzi, 2010:1) was derived from differing digital explorations. The photography process, for example, gave rise to other processes such as digital painting, video and social media content. The obscurity manifested as a non-linear, sometimes non-categorisable and multidimensional writing voice.

In an attempt to situate this voice within an academic inquiry I made use of Heewon Chang's *Autoethnography* as method (2008) to script three voices from the character and world-making I have been describing throughout this paper. I named the voices: Reflection, Shadow, and Echo. While each of these voices was a manifestation of my personal thoughts and research, they each had a distinguishing quality as an autoethnographic writing voice. The criterion for Reflection was a descriptive and realistic voice, Shadow occupied the script as an emotive and confessional voice and Echo's voice existed as an impressionistic and imaginative poetic account. In order to make sense of how I was going to stage these voices I, once more, made use of collage as a method to combine the various mediums I had been working in. My performance of the final iteration of *I Fuck What I Like*, as both an artefact of my research inquiry and the research outcome, saw me collaging the various paintings, photography, voice-over, physical performance, digital art and Instagram filters into a performance space, aptly named the Playroom, on Hiddingh Campus at UCT.

Figures 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8: Noluthando Mpho Sibisi, I Fuck What I Like, ICA Live Art Festival 2022. Photographs by Xolani Tulumani, courtesy Institute for Creative Arts and the artist.

Through this process, I identify my turn to non-survival activities, using the example of the ritual of getting dressed, taking pictures, and posting them on social media daily, as subjective and serious play. The choice to play into and through the MA was meant to explicitly insert a generative response to what I was arguing to be dominant narratives of queer black womanhood. Focusing on a non-survival activity, such as playing in my artistic practice as research, proved both challenging and invaluable during the pandemic, a period when survival was a global thematic concern. This paper traces how I learned to lend to myself my seeing eye, my listening ear and my ticking time to observe my own studies and emulation of the multiple identity markers and realities that made up my experience of the world of performance and literature. By extension my reflections reflected back to me the social and cultural landscaping that necessitated my attempts at staging queer black woman joy and subjective agentic will. Having traced my relationship with play as a childhood practice that often constituted a form of research, knowledge and world making, I confidently assert that what has allowed me to be fully immersed in PaR as methodology was a conviction to turn back to play and play seriously.

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CHAPTER 9

BREATH–BODY–SELF: A PRACTICE–LED JOURNEY

By Sara Matchett

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on my PhD study that was completed in 2016. The thesis investigated the body as a site for generating images for purposes of performance-making. It was a study that drew from various traditions, methods and somatic practices, such as yoga, Fitzmaurice Voicework®, the Sanskrit system of rasa, body mapping and free writing.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the study was a hybrid of embodied practice and case study,[23] which, in the first instance, involved a series of five small experiments that took place over three years. The series of small experiments refined and developed various aspects of the tools and practices that make up the method of performance-making that the study proposes. A culminating workshop interrogated the application of this method in a creative process that combined all the tools and practices and formed the main case study of the research.

Figure 9.1: Namisa Mdlalose and Qondiswa James free speaking in main case study project. Photograph by Sara Matchett.

The choice to include embodied creative processes as part of the study, in the form

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23   Embodied practice was at the core of the method of performance-making the study proposed and as such was key to the overall practice-led research methodology employed by the research. Embodied practice as methodology involves researching with and through the body. Case study as methodology involves the inclusion of a case study to support the research claims. In the instance of the thesis, I chose not to include the culminating embodied/creative workshop, which took place over a two-week period, as an examinable component (as would have been the case if I had chosen to do a PhD by creative project). Instead, the case study supported my findings. Video footage, audio recordings, blog posts and images housed in a website, were available to the examiners as an addendum to the thesis.

of case studies, alludes to the synergetic relationship between theory and practice. My thinking is that the relationship is one that is cyclical in that the practice gives rise to theory that is fed back into the practice. The cyclicality of it speaks directly to the method of image generation for purposes of performance-making which the study proposes, where the route between breath, body, emotion and image, maps a circular trajectory.

The study employed a practice-led, qualitative research design that drew from ethnographic and autobiographical approaches to research. It made use of grounded theory in that it utilised methods and practices to investigate lived and embodied experiences of the people it engaged, using the interaction and communication between people as the basis for research material and the subsequent generation of theorised practice in the form of a method for/of performance-making (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Coleman & O'Connor, 2008).

In my study I explored the idea of collaborative autobiography as a form of autoethnography which, according to Judith Lapadat (2009:955-956), engages collaborative approaches to writing, sharing, and analysing personal stories and experiences. The methodology involved me, in the first instance, employing an autoethnographic practice-led approach. To this end, I completed training in Fitzmaurice Voicework®,[24] which included the making of an autobiographical performance (Small Experiment Three) that was developed into a 20-minute performance piece entitled *Breath-Bones-Ancestors,* first performed on 1 August 2012 at the *Freedom and Focus* Conference in Vancouver, Canada. While developing *Breath-Bones-Ancestors* at the beginning of 2012, I concurrently worked with a South African performer interning with The Mothertongue Project[25] to create a work entitled *Ngangelizwe*[26] (Small Experiment Four). The performer expressed an interest in making an autobiographical work and was curious to employ the tools I was using to make *Breath-Bones-Ancestors*. In addition, a workshop around autobiographical performance-making resulting from these experiments was conducted at the National School of Drama in New Delhi in September 2012 (Small Experiment Five).

These projects, which I titled 'Small Experiments' were incorporated as mini case studies into the thesis. Included in these Small Experiments were two additional investigations that preceded Small Experiments Three, Four and Five. Small Experiment One was with second year UCT students of Theatre and Performance, where I experimented with combining body mapping and Nawarasa Breath Patterns (see textboxes below) in character and textual analysis. Small Experiment Two was a class project undertaken with first year UCT Theatre and Performance students where I attempted to investigate the relationship between the Fitzmaurice Destructuring Sequence (FDS), breath, body, emotions and meaning. These Small Experiments led me to understand exactly what

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24   https://www.fitzmauriceinstitute.org/fitzmaurice-voicework.

25   A women's arts collective which I co-founded in South Africa in 2000 (www.mothertongue.co.za).

26   Xhosa for 'of the nation'.

this study investigated, and ultimately fashioned the two-week creative project/process that formed the main case study. I documented the practice chronologically as a timeline documentation. This was informed by the iterative nature of the embodied experiments that culminated in the main case study.

FITZMAURICE VOICEWORK®

Fitzmaurice Voicework® works with tremoring, which is the body's way of bringing itself back to a state of balance. The tremor encourages breath to flow through the body in such a way as to release energetic blockages and habitual patterns that may have formed in the muscles of the body. This frees the body and voice from tension and enables a more spontaneous breath, allowing space for imaginative expression. The Destructuring Sequence comprises particular postures/efforts that form the sequence.

NAWARASA BREATH PATTERNS

The system of *Nawarasa*, is associated with the over 2000-year-old Sanskrit treatise on acting, namely the *Natyasastra*, in that it is the core premise of the aesthetic theory presented in the text. The goal is for the performer to evoke the *rasa* in the bodies of the audience. *Nawa* means nine, and *rasa* is the felt sensation or essence of emotions. The nine *rasas* are *Shringara* (love/eroticism), *Hasya* (joy/laughter), *Adbhuta* (wonder), *Veerya* (courage/bravery), *Raudra* (anger/fury), *Karuna* (sadness/melancholy), *Bhayanaka* (fear), *Vibhatsa* (disgust), *Shanta* (calmness/peace). An engagement with the system of *nawarasa*, encourages emotional agility and dexterity on the part of the performer.

Small Experiments One and Two engaged first and second year students. The Third Small Experiment was an exploration that focused on myself. I felt the need to consolidate my findings in my own body before progressing with further experiments. This self-exploration was pivotal in developing the method the study proposes. The Fourth and Fifth Small Experiments involved more experienced performers and thus enabled a more in-depth exploration. This allowed more time to focus on the tools the research proposes, whereas with the junior-year students, I had to be mindful of the balance between their learning and my research. Each experiment built on and informed the next. These experiments culminated in the main case study that involved senior students of theatre working alongside two graduates: one recent graduate and one experienced professional. The main case study allowed space to revisit the findings from the small experiments. It provided a focused laboratory-like space in which the findings the small experiments had raised could be investigated in more detail.

Figure 9.2: Namisa Mdlalose free-writing as part of the main case study project. Photograph by Sara Matchett.

In my experience, practice-led research as a methodology is about "meshworking" and "wayfaring" (Ingold, 2011:63), where the research reveals itself along "paths of movement" (2011:143), and as it does so, it meshes itself into a performance, or a method of performance-making, as was the case with this study. When I set out on the PhD journey, I knew I wanted to explore breath and its relation to performance-making with women who live in violent contexts. That was all I knew. The specific questions, however, revealed themselves to me through practice. Additionally, the insights gleaned from the practice informed a set of theories that underpin the study. Data was collected, out of which theories were defined, which in turn were woven back into the data, leading to what could be termed a grounded practice methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Coleman & O'Connor, 2008). The set of theories, based both on my own practice experience and that of other people, gave rise to the method for making a particular kind of performance which engages women's experiences in particular kinds of ways to speak back to a specific social context, to assist them to develop a sense of self that enables them to become more visible to themselves, and to relate to the world they inhabit.

METHODS

Some of the key qualitative methods I employed in data collection were interviews, observations, reflexive journaling, focus groups and digital documentation and blogging. The first four methods were used in the small experiments phase of this study, and the last four for the main case study.

Interviews

The small experiments involved various forms of interviews. The interviews for each of the experiments were a combination of structured and unstructured questions. The first experiment involved face-to-face interviews with a sample of four participants. Each interviewee was interviewed alone. I structured a set of questions but allowed further questions to emerge from each participant's responses. These unstructured questions contributed to a conversational tone that characterised the interviews. I audio

recorded and transcribed each interview. The data helped shape the research questions that emerged. The second experiment involved a class task made up of two key open-ended essay questions that were posted on *Vula*, UCT's online collaboration and learning platform. These questions, although open-ended, were structured. Experiment Four involved a face-to-face interview as well as a set of questions that were emailed to the research participant. As with Experiment One, I structured a set of questions, and allowed for unstructured questions to arise out of the participant's responses, which resulted in a conversational tone. I audio recorded the face-to-face interviews and after transcribing the responses, identified key questions. These questions were structured and emailed to the participant for further deliberation. The participant's responses gave rise to further key questions.

Observation

Elaine Aston's notion of "embodied practice" as opposed to "disembodied observation" (2007:12), led me to understand the observational role of facilitator/ performance-maker/ researcher as one that is embodied, that works in relation to the performers being facilitated and that is continually being shaped by the engagement with, and responses to, the work the facilitator/ performance-maker/ researcher brings to the rehearsal room. In this way a conversation is set up between the facilitator/ performance-maker/ researcher and the performers. Arguably, this conversation is where the research lies. The research in turn becomes embodied. Embodied implies a sense of immediacy, a sense of the unknown becoming known from moment to moment, and in this process, changing from moment to moment. Ingold refers to participant observation as "a way of knowing *from the inside*" (2013:5, italics in original). This is aligned with Aston's assertion that embodied knowledge, "points to modes of exchange and sharing of knowledge and of understanding orientated towards the experiential, the physical and the material" (2013:12). The disembodied observer, on the other hand, implies a research method that relies predominantly on retrospective academic reflection. This is not to say that I did not retrospectively reflect academically on the research that was produced in practice-oriented focus group sessions, workshops and in rehearsals. It is, however, to say that the process of generating material in the moment informed, from moment to moment, the knowledge this study produced.

All the small experiments and the main case study involved an aspect of embodied observation. In all of them, bar one, I occupied the role of facilitator. In some, I occupied the role of performance-maker and director and in one, the role of maker and performer. Observation occurred over a period and worked in tandem with self-reflexive journaling on my part. Experiment One involved a four-week process, during which I met with students daily during the week to rehearse a production. The research occurred during the rehearsal sessions. Experiment Two involved facilitating, and by implication, observing, a semester-long theatre-voice course, which comprised two 90-minute classes a week over a period of 13 weeks. Experiment Three involved a considerable amount of self-observation as I developed a performance using various tools (and combinations of tools). I engaged with this experiment as performance-maker and performer. My observations in

this experiment gave rise to key features of the method of performance-making proposed by this study. Experiment Four engaged me in the role of facilitator, performance-maker and director. I was able to explore several questions that arose during Experiment Three, which subsequently led to further refinement of the proposed method. Experiment Five involved facilitating a group of 25 actors over a period of five days for three hours a day. The main case study involved working with five research participants for seven hours a day over a two-week period (Monday to Friday).

Reflexive journaling

Over the course of this study, I attempted to document my discoveries through Kaye Shumack's notion of the "conversational self". Shumack proposes that "[t]hrough a structured approach using journal entries, experiences of the … process are introduced as reflective internal talkback" (2010:1). She adds that in this approach,

> … decision points and perspectives are negotiated and potentially contested through a series of voices of self as I, Me, You, and We. These voices are intertwined within the journal narrative. (2010:1)

The decision to use this method was an attempt to explore ways of capturing the multifarious experiences and discoveries made during the various experiments. Robert Mizzi's ideas around multivocality in research writing, resonated with Shumack's notions of the "conversational self". Mizzi advocates for:

> Multivocality as an autoethnographic method to: (a) illustrate that there is no single and temporally–fixed voice that a researcher possesses, (b) unfix identity in a way that exposes the fluid nature of identity as it moves through particular contexts, and (c) deconstruct competing tensions within the autoethnographer as s/he connects the personal self to the social context. (2010:1)

The choice to use these approaches in processes of reflexive journaling resonated with the choice to use practice-led research as a methodology. The "conversational self" and "multivocality" imply a mesh of ideas and perspectives. I found that journaling with the intention to converse with the multiple roles I occupied in this study – in other words that of researcher, facilitator, performance-maker, director, and performer – offered discoveries that informed subsequent experiments. In this way the research revealed itself to me along "paths of movement" (Ingold, 2011:143). The conversations I had (with myself) through reflexive journaling, unearthed dynamic pathways that gave rise to pivotal discoveries and ensuing experiments.

Focus groups

Small Experiments One, Two, and Five, and the main case study, involved working with different groups over varying periods. Experiment One engaged a group of ten

students in a four-week rehearsal process. A major component of this process involved group discussions at various points during the rehearsal sessions. These discussions served to inform the way I structured the following day's rehearsal. Additionally, they contributed to shaping the method of performance-making that the study proposes. Similarly, Experiment Two involved a class of 30 students in structured classes over a 13–week period. The classes were interspersed with group discussions and reflections that informed research into the relationship between the FDS, breath, body, emotions, and meaning. Experiment Five entailed working with 25 actors over a period of five days. The sessions were punctuated with regular group discussions. With verbal consent from the participants, these discussions were audio recorded and informed the research material. The main case study of this research engaged a group of six research participants, including myself, over a two-week period. Verbal discussions and reflections were audio recorded and informed the findings and analyses thereof.

Case Study: digital documentation and blogging

Challenges that surfaced at intervals during this study included methods of documenting and capturing the ephemeral moments that constitute the main case study of this research. To this end, I decided to document the two-week creative project through a private WordPress site[27] that I set up prior to commencement of the project. The site functioned as a repository for participant reflections, my reflections, video and audio footage, still images, and images that were generated during the process. It held the traces that emerged and were generated over the course of the two-week project. The site contained seven pages:

- **Introduction to research**
  This page provided an overall introduction to the research undertaken in the study.
- **Blog**
  I posted questions daily to which I invited the participants to respond. I chose to use the format of a blog to allow space for interaction and reflection between participants. The blog served as a digital journal for the participants. My intention in setting up the blog in this way was to encourage a collaborative approach to journaling, and it was a means of extending the exploration of collaborative autobiography as a form of autoethnography into the main case study. I began with some idea of the broad blog questions with which I wanted to engage the participants. The specific questions, however, emerged out of the practice. The experiences and reflections of the participants each day informed the planning for the following day's work.
- **Media gallery**
  This page housed video as well as audio footage captured over the two-week process. I uploaded the audio and video footage as private YouTube clips to protect the privacy of the participants.

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27   I kept the site private to respect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. They however all agreed to make it available to my supervisor, external examiners, and academic scholars.

- **Researchers' notes, reflections and insights**
  I used this page to journal my reflections and observations as well as to plan and outline the structure of each day.
- **Free writing**
  The participants were invited to upload selections from the various free writing exercises undertaken over the two-week period.
- **Research participants**
  This page provided brief introductions to each of the research participants (including myself). I chose not to dictate how they should present themselves and allowed them to include whatever information they wanted to share about themselves. Some of the introductions took the shape of more formal biographies, while others were sketchier and more playful.
- **Generated images**
  This page contained samples of the images that were generated through the method of performance-making that the study proposes.

The WordPress site proved to be an effective way of collecting, capturing, and analysing the data that emerged over the two-week project/process. It saved hours of transcribing audio recordings and handwritten journal entries. In this way, a conversation was set up between the actual research in practice and the analysis of the practice. In other words, the structure of the two-week process informed the way the material was analysed and recorded in the thesis. Additionally, the structure of the two-week process emerged as the process progressed, with each day informing the next.

Figure 9.3: Nwabisa Plaatjie and Rehane Abrahams making poetry as part of the case study project. Photograph by Sara Matchett.

CONCLUSION

The initial title for the study was "Mapping breath-body-self". My exposure to Ingold's notion of "wayfaring" opened a series of questions around whether the study engaged

me in processes of mapping or whether the fabric of the method revealed itself to me through the experience of "wayfaring". In considering the features of a map and mapping, it became apparent that I was not following a pre-ordained path, which had been clearly written or mapped out for me, but was rather making discoveries along the journey, and that these discoveries culminated in a mesh of ideas that I have called a method of performance-making.

This practice-led study arguably utilised an anthropological approach in that as a researcher I studied with the people with whom I worked. Additionally, it utilised a case study method to collect data, which allowed space for different kinds of case studies that had different purposes. For example, the small experiments could be viewed as mini case studies that helped refine the research questions I was asking about the practice. The small experiments aided me in coming to a clearer understanding of what it was I was interested in developing through the study. The second kind of case study I utilised was one that puts the understandings gleaned from the first kind of case study into practice, as a way of testing something rather than opening up or refining a territory. This is what I set out to do in the main case study. The study engaged me in a process of working forwards through practising on myself and on others as a way of developing my ideas before refining them. Thereafter, I engaged in a process of testing the ideas in a more concentrated way. The aspect of testing shifted the way of working and engaged more of a documentary element. The combination of these two kinds of case studies enabled me to combine Ingold's notions of "wayfaring" and "meshworking" (2011:63) with ethnographic approaches that are concerned with data collection.
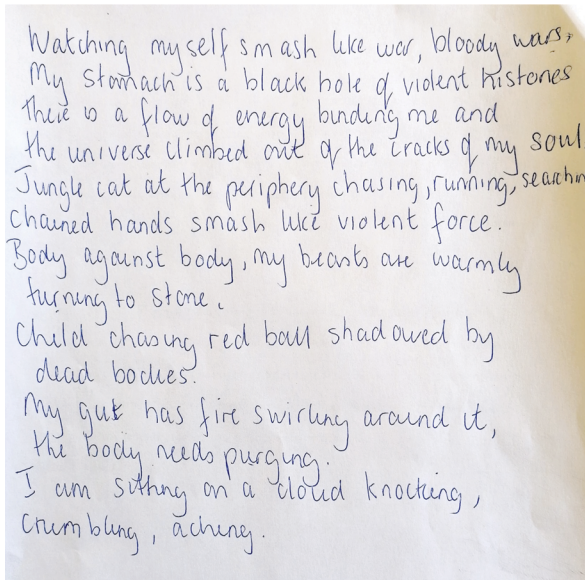
Figure 9.4: Collective poem created as part of the main case study project. Photograph by Sara Matchett.

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CHAPTER 10

PRACTICE AS RESEARCH: SOME INSIGHTS INTO DEVELOPING A THEATRE-VOICE BASED PEDAGOGICAL PRAXIS

By Sarah Woodward

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will identify some of the processes that I workshopped during the coursework of my Theatre and Performance MA that I undertook at the University of Cape Town in 2004 and 2005, which fed into my development as a theatre voice practitioner, and my construction of various voice courses that I taught from 2006 onwards at both the University of the Witwatersrand and UCT as a part-time lecturer. Practice as research was a key component in developing my student-centric approach to voice and I hope to share some experiential exercises or ways of working that can be co-opted into multiple performance spaces.

This chapter focuses on two key components to working in a PaR-focused space that I utilised during my three practical projects as part of the coursework MA programme at UCT. The first key concept was the notion that 'action is the impetus for motivation'. I began my research with very little idea of what I wanted to achieve and found that PaR offered a useful way to just *begin*. The second concept was that 'clear and rigorous and unflinching boundaries offer the best framework for creativity'.

I shall be drawing on work from a poetry project that I undertook entitled *It takes a word*, as well as a six-week exploration of various *Hamlet*-themed texts that culminated in a shared workshop experience, and some of the exercises I developed in the first-year course I was required to teach during the MA. As my research focus was ultimately on the development of a pedagogical approach to voice work, my primary material was the actual students themselves, and the way they used their voices. My background was in contemporary Western voice practice, as embodied by practitioners such as Cicely Berry (1991), Patsy Rodenburg (1992), Arthur Lessac (1996) and Kristen Linklater (1976), all of whom have written handbooks on working with the voice. My creative research lens was the contemporary subcultural phenomena of rap, slam and freestyle poetry as a way of disrupting a prescriptive approach to theatre voice.

So how did I do what I did?

The traditional social sciences have published many handbooks that offer frameworks for practical research and ways of constructing research parameters, usually conducted using a deductive approach where a hypothesis is developed before the research starts. A deductive research process is likely to run along the following lines:

1. **1.** Theory
2. **2.** Hypothesis
3. **3.** Data collection
4. **4.** Findings
5. **5.** Hypothesis confirmed or rejected
6. **6.** Revision of theory

(Summary: Social Research Methods, 2013)

What I found Artistic Practice as Research useful for, are those times when *one doesn't even know what the questions are.* When one is starting with a tiny hunch, a flickering notion, a microscopic pull in a certain direction, the key is to *play* first and foremost. In that playing I discovered that action begets motivation: to move, to play and to just do 'something' was the only way to discover what it was I wanted to be asking.

Inextricably linked to this concept is the notion of a framework – a structure within which to play. I use the words 'clear and unflinching boundaries' as a descriptor for how to construct a framework. Basically, in simplistic terms, it means 'creating the rules of the game'. The rules can be physical, such as a demarcated space set aside in which to move, which creates a physical proximity that could elicit a particular reaction. The rules could be vocal, as in one is only allowed to say a certain word in the space, etc. What the rules actually are is often arbitrary, it is what they do, which is to offer a common experience, a safety in the space (knowing what is and what is not allowed upfront) and allowing work that is detailed and precise.

A common experience or levelling of the playing field is useful when working with participants from a variety of backgrounds and skill levels, in order to make the experience valuable for all participants. 'Safety in the space' refers to both a physical safety of the body, and a release from the fear of failing. I used the concept of freeing yourself from the 'tyranny' of getting it right. A safe space is where there is no concept of failing, where the only way to fail is to not do anything at all. Working for detail and precision is useful in that one can focus on small elements of the work, taking care to fully experience all aspects. A word of caution here against overly prescriptive rules that can inhibit action as much as the lack of any framework. Discovering the optimal balance becomes a part of the processes the practical researcher needs to engage with. What follows is a description of the above two concepts as applied in a workshop session that I conducted sometime in 2004 or 2005 (my journaling system was not very precise unfortunately).

For some context, I began the research for my MA with a hunch that the spoken word movement as it existed in the late 1990s and early 2000s had something valuable to offer voice work. That there was a connection between what was happening in the sub-cultural movement I had observed and a possible poetry curriculum that could occur in an academic context. I had watched the movie *Slam* (1998) and was transported by the poetic performances that I had seen, and the dexterous use of the physicality of language was inspiring to me. I had a hunch that my students found the repetitious nature of

much of voice work to be a bit 'boring'. I had had wonderful voice teachers who were passionate about language and text and the voice, which had inspired me to pursue voice work further, but I was struggling as a young teacher, and I wanted to do something new. What follows is an example of the development of an exercise which I subsequently used throughout my teaching career.

My first step was to create the structure of the group I was working with. I had four people in the group, because I needed a number that was easy to split into pairs and that was large enough to get varied responses from, but was not too big that I would not be able to concentrate on each student closely. As a young teacher I was still learning to control large classes and my instinct was to begin small. At the prompting of my supervisor, I chose two students who were strong at voice work and two who were considered weak, as I had previously seen voice to be a primarily remedial subject and the students as 'needing to be fixed'. This became the most important thing that I needed to unlearn as a young teacher and this workshop process was a part of that unlearning.

What is set out below is an excerpt from my notebook that I found while doing research for this paper. It is an example of what it means to *just begin*.

Notebook excerpt:

> *[formal frames] onto...*
> *What beatboxing does? Isolating*
> *sound?*
> **What are you fighting against?*
> *(slurred speech) lack of*
> *muscularity... lazy tongues*
> *[rhythm/accompanied speech]*
> *ORCHESTRA of consonants –*
> *textures – aesthetic IS CLARITY*
> *(of the form) /// ARTICULATION!*
> *(Sharpening of the ear?)*
> *Range+articulation skills – high*
> *and low – freedom of range*
> *Textures?*
> *Muscularity – heightened*
> *awareness – FUN??*
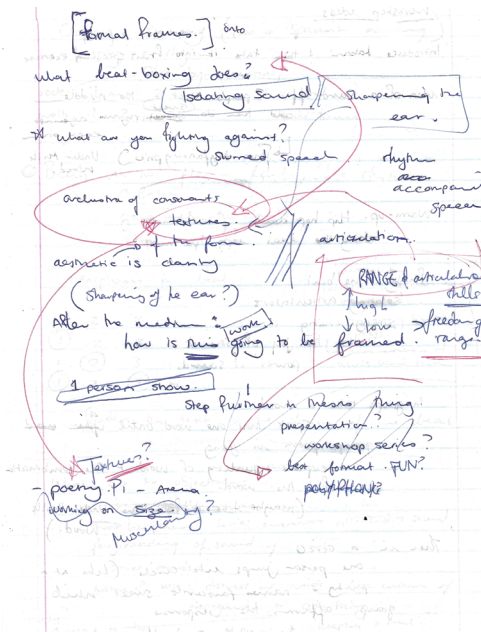> *[PHOLYPHONIC/?]*

Figure 10.1: Scan of original notebook. Source: Sarah Woodward.

Here we can see that the idea starts with a series of murky fragments, and me trying to clutch onto a concrete notion. As Figure 10.1 shows the number of arrows in this document, criss-crossing the page, trying to link ideas, is essentially a rough spider diagram above all

else. My initial hunch was that there was a connection between engaging with a textual/ vocalised image and articulation. To reduce it to its most simplistic form – if one is deeply connected to what one is saying, one will say it clearly enough for people to hear.

The "orchestra of consonants" that I had made a note of, was a reference to Arthur Lessac's "orchestra of consonants" that he describes in his book, *The use and training of the human voice* (1996). The precedent to align musical instruments to consonants was something I was contextually aware of, and my hunch was that students would have less experience with the instruments of a traditional orchestra than they would with the mechanical and industrial sounds they were exposed to in the city. I had a notion they would engage more strongly with beatboxing than with a viola. Therefore, one can see that the work didn't begin in a complete vacuum, but rather was sparked and inspired by writings I had been exposed to in my preliminary reading.

From these beginnings I can see on the next page of my notebook that I had the outline of what I called 'The Sweet Exercise' at the time. This is another transcription from my PaR journal.

Notebook excerpt:

Find a sweet from when you were a kid
Find a word (one word) to describe its colour – AND then what it FEELS like to chewy [sic])? (Find a movement for each one? Find a partner and intersect THEN begin to find a standoff? 2 against 2. Then take move into voice. Then try to convince everyone that this is the way to say it...

A: brown smooth chocolate éclair
M: Chewy red rascals
L: Hard black liquorice balls
T: Crunchy brown TV bar
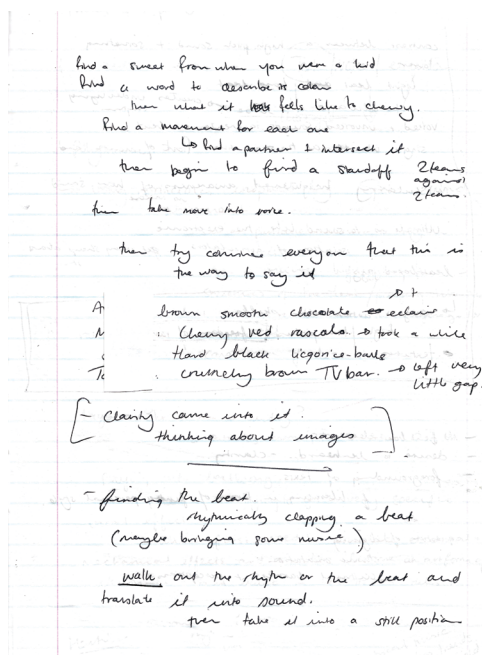*[clarity came into it? Thinking about images...]*

Figure 10.2: Scan of original notebook. Source: Sarah Woodward.

This first preliminary exploration became the following exercise as set out in my MA thesis. 'The Fruit Rant' was the culmination of a few weeks exploration as the students became more familiar with each other, and with what the exercise was requiring. The

rules had expanded to accommodate their ongoing ease with the process and with each other, and their developing facility at manipulating their own vocal states.

THE FRUIT RANT

Part one
Working by yourself, take your favourite fruit and imagine the smell/taste/feel/texture/weight/shape, whether it is sharp/sweet or sour. Begin to say the fruit name getting as much of that information into that word. Repeat the word, evoking as much of the fruitiness in the name as possible. Once your fruit name is infused with sensory meaning, begin to describe the fruit, relishing in the description.

Part two
Get into groups of about four people each and decide on a group fruit. The group visualises the fruit, and speaks about it all at once, generating as much vocabulary as possible around that fruit. Then, one at a time, speak about the fruit, while the rest of the group encourages and supports through nodding or verbal agreement. No-one is allowed to interrupt and only when there is an opening, can you take the floor. The next task is to begin to structure your 'fruity' rant and offer the next person to speak an open-ended rhyme to take up and run with. It helps to have the rest of the group form a rhythm of some kind, vocal or clapping or both.

An example might be:

Actor A: A sweet, delicious red cherry, deep in my belly, very tasty indeed, makes me need one more ...

Actor B: please feed me one more sweet cherry in my belly ...

The less sophisticated the verse the better, the pressure shouldn't be on you to think of highly creative and sophisticated rhymes. If they come to you easily so much the better, but confidence is built up in the group when you have the opportunity to be silly and accepted for it.

My analysis of how this exercise operated in the context of the overall research follows in this excerpt from my MA thesis.

> The objective of the production was to integrate all the aspects of the vocal landscape in order to serve the text in the most expressive way possible, as well experience the language on a more visceral level.

> I encouraged the students to engage creatively with the energetic impulses that created the texts to explore the physical effects on the articulators. They explored the quality of sounds, and what physiological reactions they provoked in the student. One of the ways this was achieved is with an exercise called The Fruit Rant (see above). It is about connecting a tangible object, something evocative

like fruit, to a sensory quality in the words that describe it. It is divided into 2 parts, the first part being where the student familiarises themselves with the vocabulary surrounding fruit and in the second part, they begin to construct the words into small rhymes, retaining the sensory vocal textures they have discovered. This is a gentle foray into the art of Freestyling and helps the actor to engage with language on an improvisatory level, engaging both the body and the voice.

I have also done this exercise using favourite childhood sweets as a starting point to evoke something real that they have an intense relationship with. Once the student becomes comfortable in the exercise they have the freedom to branch off into any direction they like. (Woodward, 2005)

WORKING WITH TEXT

In my pursuit of a pedagogical approach which ultimately would lead to a course in the academic curriculum, I knew that it was imperative that the students engage with written texts, both classical and contemporary. In this next example, my structural framework followed the mandate that students could choose any text they liked, as long as it was either from, or inspired by, *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare. This led to texts from *Hamlet* itself, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead* by Tom Stoppard and *Hamletmachine* by Heiner Müller. Thus, structurally, the students had a shared fictional world that they were immersed in, while also having specific viewpoints of the same characters from the different cultural and stylistic requirements of the text they had chosen, from classic renaissance language to a contemporary absurdist tradition.

The action was a series of physical exercises that the students had to put the texts through, which was essentially textual analysis, but from an action-based perspective. The action was as follows:

Notebook excerpt:

Stamp on nouns/ fling arms open on adjectives/ jump on adverbs/ change direction on verbs/ I/ me/ us/ we – smack chest/ you, them – point.

Do a physical journey with the text – take it up a mountain, through a valley over a river.

Across a chasm.

Take it for a walk/ climb– throw the text at the ceiling, scatter your text around carelessly, roll with your text, feel your text cover you like a blanket etc.
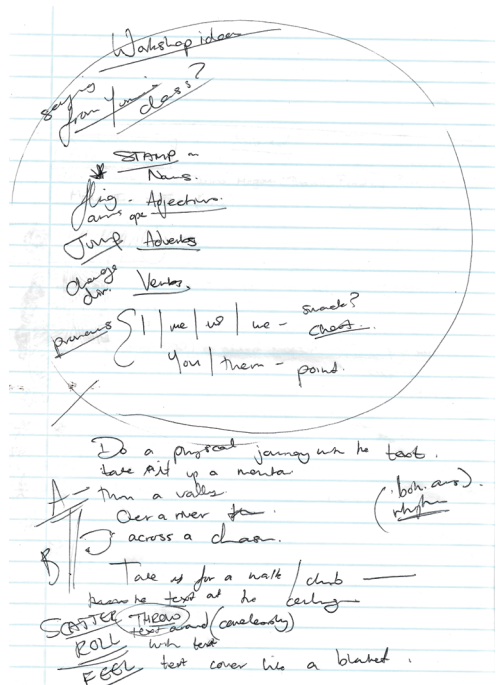
Figure 10.3: Scan of original notebook.

Source: Sarah Woodward.

The students had to speak the text throughout the above exercises, which altogether would take about an hour to an hour and a half to complete. The structure was quite deliberate, and the students would slowly become accustomed to every action. In some classes we had to take a moment to discuss what a noun or verb actually was, and then I would go even slower through the exercise. After each session, the students were required to take observational notes about what they experienced and what they discovered from the texts. The movements would need concerted effort from the students, requiring them to engage their breathing, their support, and the movement would inspire an energetic vocal shift. Essentially, what this exercise is designed to do is to evoke a visceral reaction as an impetus for speech. It is a means to embody a text.

Theoretical frameworks and post-project analysis

An essential component of working in the PaR arena is documentation. What I have discovered through this exercise of memory and analysis are the weaknesses in my own documentation process. A key component of any research is the dissemination of knowledge. It is the central tension between allowing a creative project to inhabit its own space and time, and to just 'be what it is', and the work becoming part of the so-called canonical 'praxis as knowledge' to be shared and built upon. Video, audio recordings, note-taking are all essential to the work of a creative researcher and my own lack in that regard hindered my post-practice analysis as a researcher.

What I have discovered in the years since I graduated was that many of my explorations would be grounded in a traditional theoretical framework, but it was only once I had engaged with the exercises from a playful intuitive standpoint that I could later

recognise concepts in the texts I was reading. An example of this is when I discovered that Laban's movement analysis theory, in the form of the eight effort actions, had been applied to voice work. Laban (Hodgson & Preston-Dunlop, 1990) posited the motion factors of weight, time and space (and flow) as being the components of all movement and practitioners such as Barbara Adrian (2010) have co-opted that framework into a vocal praxis. I now had the language of "dab, glide, float, press, punch, slash, wring, flick" (Hodgson & Preston-Dunlop, 1990) to describe vocal energy states that I had been playing with (unnamed) in classrooms for years. The ability to name an embodied state is essential to the work of the creative researcher.

LABAN'S MOVEMENT ANALYSIS THEORY APPLIED TO VOICE

Laban (Hodgson & Preston-Dunlop, 1990) posited the motion factors of weight, time and space (and flow) as being the components of all movement and practitioners such as Barbara Adrian (2010) have co-opted that framework into a vocal praxis. Drawing on Adrian's inspiration Sarah Woodward started using Laban's languaging along the lines of "dab, glide, float, press, punch, slash, wring, flick" to describe vocal energy states to participants.

CONCLUSION

One of the dichotomous tenets of teaching is that there is an inherent top-down power relationship in a classroom structure, but students often learn best when they are empowered and encouraged to take responsibility for their own development. I learned the most I ever learned when I became a teacher. My own practical research was as much about learning what it means to facilitate a learning process as it was about what was learned. The positionality of the researcher influences and directs the outcomes of the praxis as much as any other aspect, and therefore following a structured framework and positioning action before motivation allows for a process that engenders both participation and control of the experience. In my case, this was an essential grounding for what it means to be a teacher/ researcher.

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CHAPTER 11

THINKING THROUGH MICROPRACTICE: AN EMBODIED INTERROGATION OF THE ARCHIVE

By Alan Parker

INTRODUCTION

I stumbled into my doctoral research through my practice as a choreographer and a performer. While teaching part-time at several universities between 2009 and 2015, I had been inspired in much of my creative practice by the interrelationship between performance and the archive. I had created several performance works, sometimes alone and sometimes with collaborators, exploring different strategies and approaches for re-imagining specific works from the archive of contemporary dance in South Africa. In these early experiments, I was exploring ways to re-imagine these past dances, originally created by a range of seminal South African artists and choreographers, in order to create something new – distinct and idiosyncratic performances that are created in dialogue with their earlier iterations or historical origins. From this basis, I also began to delve deeper into some of the existing theories and discourses, written on the archive, more generally, as well as its positionality in post- and decolonial contexts, and the role played by the archive in debates concerning the ontology of performance (Phelan, 1993), the nature of liveness (Auslander, 1999) and the complex relationship between the body and the archive (Lepecki, 2010; Mbembe, 2002 & 2015; Schneider, 2011; Taylor, 2003). From these initial practice-based investigations and through the groundwork of a broad theoretical overview, I began my formal doctoral studies in 2016.

The title of my doctoral project was *Anarchival dance: choreographic archives and the disruption of knowledge*. This was a practice-led investigation of the archive through the creation of several choreographic and performed archives. The project was located, broadly, in the field of archive studies with a particular focus on the relationship between performance and the archive, considered from a decolonial perspective. As a point of departure, the research recognised (after Taylor, 2003) the historical rift established through colonialism between the body and the archive, and between logocentric, document-biased epistemologies and embodied, performative ways of knowing. By engaging with the archive, critically, through performance and the body, the research sought to explore this historical rift and surface some of the ways in which an "anarchival"[28] (Massumi, 2016) approach to the archive might

28   The notion of the anarchival is extensively conceptualised in *The go-to how-to book of anarchiving* (Murphie, 2016) as an embodied encounter with the archive and its traces that is guided by a desire to create new expressions and thinking, emerging from the traces of the past. The anarchive is presented as an embodied methodology for the reconsideration of dominant or hegemonic epistemologies and a means

initiate a different kind of thinking about the past, its archival traces and the effect of these traces when engaged with, creatively, through the body.

The research was conducted over a period of five years, between 2015 and 2019, and occurred in, with and through my own body. During the research project, three distinct but interrelated creative processes were explored, each resulting in a solo performance, choreographed and performed by myself as the researcher. The works created were *Detritus for one* (2015, Video 11.1), *Sacre for one* (2016, Video 11.2) and *Ghostdance for one* (2017, Video 11.3). Importantly, both the choreographic process of creating each individual work, as well as its sharing through public performance, informed and underpinned the thinking of the project. Alongside the creative practice, a parallel process of reflective writing, theoretical research and the analysis of selected performances by other South African artists and practitioners occurred, as a means to layer, complement and develop the thinking emerging from the embodied research. As such, the findings of the project were presented in both products emerging from the research: the digital recordings of the three performance works, available online, and in an in-depth written explication, which was ultimately presented for examination.

Video 11.1: *Detritus for one*, 2015, video recording – here. Videography by Dex Goodman, courtesy of the National Arts Festival.

Video 11.2: *Sacre for one*, 2016, video recording – here. Embedded video at page number in ebook. Videography by Dex Goodman, courtesy of the Cape Town Fringe Festival.

Video 11.3: *Ghostdance*, 2017, video recording. Vimeo link – here. Embedded video at page number in ebook. Videography by Dex Goodman, courtesy if the National Arts Festival.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMING

From the start of the project the initial methodological framing for the research was conceived as comprising two parallel and integrated layers – embodied creative practice running alongside critical theoretical reading and reflective writing. Resonating with Robin Nelson's notion of "intelligent practice", where "theory and practice are rather imbricated within each other as praxis" (2013:62), the project's research design thus framed the thinking-through of embodied investigation (occurring in rehearsal and performance spaces) in a dialogical and concurrent relationship with a second layer of embodied practice, occurring differently through the embodied acts of writing, theorising, reflecting and analysing (occurring on the computer screen and the page). As Erin Manning, in *The minor gesture* (2016) warns:

to conceive of, and explore, new ways of living and being in the world (Massumi, 2016:7).

"Thought must not be mapped onto practice: it is an emergent, incipient tendency to be discovered in the field of activation of practices co-composing" (2016:41). As such, in the project, the practices of making and writing were understood as symbiotic and dialogical, where both practices co-compose with each other, giving thought and clarity to the other, positioning the practice of writing about embodied creative practice as "an act, alive with the rhythms of uncertainty and the openings of speculative pragmatism" (2016:42). This particular framing of practice within the project recognises that thought emerges, and thinking occurs, within both layers of practice – the making and the writing – as well as in their combining.

In conducting the first layer of practice (performance-making), three different creative research processes were explored, each departing from a different understanding of an archival remain. These categories of archival trace were inspired by Rebecca Schneider's assertion that archival remains occur in different forms, as "material evidence, haunting trace, reiterative gesture" (2011:37). The creation and performance of each solo work was therefore conceived as a distinct interrogation of a particular encounter between the body of the researcher and one conception of how archives remain, but connected to each other by an overarching question, or "choreographic problem" (Cvejić, 2015): *how might the traces of the archive be re-actualised, differently, through the body?* In the first creative process, *Detritus for one*, memory (understood as being nascent within material archival objects) was explored as an archival trace, where traces of past encounters with specific objects are seen to remain, virtually, within those objects (Figure 11.1). The second process, *Sacre for one*, positioned the trace as an embodied and reiterative gesture – as the remembered physical intensities from past actions which continue to remain, corporeally, in the body (Figure 11.2). The final process, *Ghostdance for one*, framed the ghosts of the dead as hauntological traces, existing in both archival objects as well as the body and its learned behaviours and inherited actions (Figure 11.3). Each creative process was then re-engaged through the second layer of practice (writing) as a means to consider the thinking of each work, differently, in relation to existing theories and discourses, or in comparison to other related performance works by other South African artists.[29]

All three creative processes were also framed methodologically as "body-centred research" (Parker-Starbuck, 2011:210) where the body of the researcher is recognised as "the means of understanding how performance operates and makes meaning" (2011:210), and where the body is understood as "interpretable and flexible, yet materially and culturally specific" (2011:211). By locating the research in the body of the solo researcher, the analytical, interpretivist and data-collecting tools of the researcher are expanded to also include faculties of somatic, cognitive and sensory experience, thereby placing importance on the affective sensations and feelings felt in the body within the research process. This experiential body within body-centred research remains, importantly,

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29   The written thesis analyses performance and installation works by a wide range of local and international artists. South African artists whose works are examined in detail include: Steven Cohen, Dineo Seshee Bopape, Nelisiwe Xaba, Gavin Krastin, Sello Pesa and Igshaan Adams.

Figure 11.1: *Detritus for one* (2015) Dance Umbrella 2017. Photograph by Suzy Bernstein, courtesy of the artist.

Figure 11.2: *Sacre for one* (2016) Cape Town Fringe Festival. Photograph by Betalife Productions, courtesy of the artist.

Figure 11.3 *Ghostdance for one* (2017) National Arts Festival. Photograph by Mia van der Merwe.

"materially and culturally specific" (2011:211), and as such, the subjectivities, politics and representations written in and on the body constitute a significant layer in the research process, where somatic experience emerging from the research is understood as being linked to the specific body (as subject and object) within which the research occurs.

MICROPRACTICE AS METHOD

Inspired by Claire Rousell's work with the theorisation of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Alan Parker has developed a method of micropractice as embodied research. Micropractice starts with a navigation of the self where personal and subjective experiences, in the form of memories or embodied traces, became departure points for initial research processes. The processes are guided by a conscious desire to constantly displace, minimise or move beyond the self as a centrality, to find ways in which to engage with the archive outside of yourself and your own personal experiences.

TOWARDS MICROPRACTICE

Since the body of the solo choreographer-researcher was positioned as the entry and departure point for the creative research, it became necessary to develop a methodological approach that would encourage pathways within the practice that might move away from the subjective, known and familiar experiences of the lived body toward other spaces, or new territories, but without negating the subjecthood and identity of the researcher altogether. Towards this end, I began to develop an approach to the practical research that attempted to open an in-between space for creative exploration where the body is liminally positioned between subject and object, as both self and not-self. Christoph Brunner (2016:69) identifies this liminal understanding of the body as a crucial component in immersive, anarchival research where the researcher must surrender 'the self' rather than *one's* self. Methodologically, this distinction infers that in order to submerge oneself within an embodied research process, the self of the researcher needs to be decentralised within the process while still acknowledging that the affective experience of process emerges from, and is particular to, the specific body through which the creative research occurs. As such, each of the creative research processes explored in the project, required a similar navigation of the self where personal and subjective experiences, in the form of memories or embodied traces, became departure points for initial research processes but where the processes themselves were guided by a conscious desire to constantly displace, minimise or move beyond the self as a centrality, to find ways in which to engage with the archive outside of myself and my own personal experiences.

During the first creative practice in 2015, this desire to decentre my own personal experience, while still using these felt experiences as departure points for the research, was an intention that was nascent in the practice but not necessarily a methodological approach I was consciously aware of and actively implementing in the practice. While working on

the second creative process, in 2016, I came across the writing of South African performance artist and academic, Claire Rousell, who identifies and describes "micropractice" (Rousell, 2016:9) as one potential approach to conducting anarchival research. Rousell's instructions for micropractice, drawn from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), became helpful in providing a framework to reconsider the approach I had already been exploring in my creative research and to better understand the benefits and opportunities that such an approach could contribute to the research design, moving forward.

Using Deleuze and Guattari's guidelines for deterritorialising, Rousell articulates micropractice as a practical strategy for situating the researcher within anarchival research processes (Figure 11.4). Rousell synthesises Deleuze and Guattari as described in the following paragraph.

Instructions for a micropractice

Lodge yourself on a stratum

Experiment with the opportunities it offers

Find an advantageous place on it

Find potential movements of deterritorialisation, possible lines of flight, experience them.

Produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment

Have a small plot of new land at all times

From *A Thousand Plateaus*,
Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari 1987

Figure 11.4: Image depicting Deleuze and Guattari's Instructions for a micropractice, from Rousell (2016:9).

The intention of micropractice, Rousell argues, is to provide "a tool, a technique, a set of practices for deterritorialising" (2016:9). By deterritorialising, Rousell refers to Deleuze and Guattari's theory of deterritorialisation, delineated in *Anti-Oedipus* (1977/ 1972) and *A thousand plateaus* (1987/ 1980). Deterritorialisation refers to the literal and metaphoric removal of oneself from one territory through a line of flight in order to critically locate oneself from the vantage point of another, now reterritorialised, territory. In a practical sense, this understanding of micropractice necessitates situating oneself on a particular "stratum" or within a particular process or territory (in my case, within a particular encounter with a form of archival trace). From this point the researcher experiments with the unique "opportunities" (Rousell, 2016:9) this position or process offers, with an intention of finding potential lines of flight or pathways that can lead the researcher into other territories and other processes. Micropractice thus becomes a useful and effective practical research methodology because it necessitates the location of the subjective researcher within the research but is ultimately focused on the deterritorialising of this position and of this subjectivity in favour of finding other territories, processes and experiences resulting from the initial point of departure. In this way the subjectivity of the researcher is decentred within micropractice even

though it is immersed and inculcated within the research. As such, Rousell proposes that deterritorialising through micropractice presents a strategy through which to question how we "understand our own received positions and shift them" and ask ourselves "can these microshifts in perception create shifts within social movements" (2016:9) beyond our individual, subjective frames of reference?

In the project, micropractice was explored as a uniquely anarchival creative research strategy and was conceptualised through four fundamental principles. The first of these was the recognition that micropractice is not necessarily small (in relation to a larger practice) nor is it a singular component comprising a larger, overarching macro-practice. Micropractice, instead, is understood as a series of multiple, ongoing, inseparable, overlapping, and entangled practices of a qualitatively different kind. A micropractice in this sense could refer to a lengthy, multifaceted process culminating in the sharing of an evening-length performance (such as the overarching process of creating *Sacre for one*), or alternatively, a series of short, relational explorations producing small vignettes, fragments of action or physical images, which come together within the performance (several distinct processes explored during the making of *Sacre for one*). In this way, the three solo performance works comprising the research project are each understood as individual micropractices. Each of these, however, is also understood as emerging from several other diverse micropractices. Secondly, micropractice is essentially an embodied research strategy, occurring at the micropolitical level of the body and its ability to engage with, feel and co-compose with the virtual traces nascent within the archive. Although micropractice occurs in and through the body it also necessitates and encourages, as its third feature, a desubjectivising of the researcher through submersion within research processes. Lastly, the intention and aim of micropractice is always rooted in deterritorialising and the desire to find movement and flow away from one territory (whether a concept, a memory, a feeling or a past dance) to another, but through the unique opportunities of the territory itself, rather than the subjective desires of the researcher.

ON PERFORMANCES THAT THINK

While the application of micropractice was initially seen as a useful means of decentring the researcher and de-subjectivising of the researcher's body, what began to emerge while reflecting and thinking-through these creative processes, as the research progressed, was the significant role this methodology played in making vital space in the research for knowledge and thinking to emerge through the practice itself, beyond the specific intentions and desires of the researcher. This capacity of performance and the body to think and produce thought, positioned the research project within the interrelated fields of performance-philosophy and affect theory (as it relates to philosophy) and served to widen the potential contribution of the research beyond the field of archive studies and the originating intentions of the researcher. Laura Cull describes performance-philosophy as an emerging field of study that is grounded in the understanding that performance constitutes "its own kind of thinking" (2012:3). Cull distinguishes this from more commonplace intersections between performance practice, performance studies and philosophy, where performance is used analytically to illustrate or exemplify philosophical

concepts, or where philosophical concepts are directly applied to performance practice. Performance-philosophy, Cull contends, recognises the ability of performance and all of its (nonhuman) elements to think in and of themselves, and in ways that can sometimes be separate and distinct from the research intentions of the artist-researcher (2012:3).

Through the application of micropractice as an overarching methodology for the project and its insistence on the decentring of the researcher's subjectivities and desires in the research encounter, more space was created within the project for each of the performances to think in their own unique ways. At times this necessitated a markedly different approach to composition and a repositioning of the conventional role of the performer or choreographer within the creative process. This included often stepping back, as the 'author' of the performance, to instead allow the work to find its own form or to take its own shape, rather than trying to form or shape the work according to my own tendencies or compositional preferences. This was vital to the research and during the second layer of the research, the thinking-through of the practice through writing, I began to become more and more aware of thinking in the research that was occurring at the level of form, and of particular disruptions to knowledge conventions that were emerging through the taking-form of the individual performances and their sharing with an audience. The subjective distancing of my self, afforded by micropractice, even though the research was occurring within my own body, enabled me to see and then think-through the research that emerged in the gaps, unintentionally, beyond my own initiating desires, aims and goals.

Since completing my doctoral research in 2020, I have continued to both teach and employ micropractice as a methodological approach to creative and embodied research. While my particular engagement with this methodology was firmly located in relation to the archive and archival disruption, the characteristics and parameters of micropractice are useful, I would suggest, to other contexts and instances of body-based research occurring in other forms and fields as well. Through its focus on immersing the body of the researcher within their specific research territory or field, but underscored by a desire to desubjectify the self in exploring what that unique territory offers, micropractice provides a framework that can be very helpful for artists and researchers who desire to use personal experiences, memories and feelings as departure points for critical investigation, but who also desire to move beyond the personal and the familiar, in order to discover unthought-of places and other territories adjacent, parallel or underneath those selected for exploration. This is what occurred in my explorations, where the disruptions to archival knowledge that I sought to understand, emerged in ways that I could not easily see at the time as the performer performing, but that became more visible and more apparent when I was able to step back and think-through what happened, consider what emerged and continue to grapple with the thinking I actively sought and which emerged through the doing.

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CHAPTER 12

BEYOND FLAILING: REDIRECTING TACIT KNOWLEDGE OF METHODS IN DESIGN TO CREATE A RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN VISUAL DRAMATURGY

By Illka Louw

This chapter is dedicated to present and future designers and makers of things in service of theatre and performance, who stitch, draw, paint, drill, saw, hammer and glue imagination to life and who are considering taking the step beyond the studio, workshop and sewing room to rekindle or re-invent how they think about their art and craft and the materials they work and play with.

INTRODUCTION

One bright 'n breezy day in the first term of first year of MA

MA SUPERVISOR: Why are you here?

STUDENT: I don't know how to explain it, but I want people to see what I feel when I design, and I want the feeling to wash over them, and flow back on to stage. Like this! *(Makes flailing arms Olympic backstroke style in front of MA SUPERVISOR's face)*

MA SUPERVISOR: *(Stares impassively at The Flailer)* Ah-haa. Well, that's a start. Good. Get cracking with putting that in words for your proposal!

Second term, supervisor's office

MA SUPERVISOR: *(Poker face)* What are you a Master of?

A pin drops.

STUDENT: *(Ugly-cry-face as the memory of years of expertise leaves the mind of the student)* I dunnnoooo!

In the throes of writing the seminar paper

MA SUPERVISOR: (*Looking up from reading draft, there's a twinkle in the eye*) How do you know *that?*

STUDENT: (*Bristling*) What do you mean, how do I know that?! I know because I'm a designer!

MA SUPERVISOR: Yes, and? (*Looks off into the middle distance – presumably willing a vision of a future in which the STUDENT has successfully completed her MA*)

Arguably a rather casual style in which to launch a chapter on an academic project. However these questions remained with me throughout my MA studies and the answers became progressively more detailed and formalised as my understanding of PaR as a methodology became worse before it became better.

Figure 12.1: *Enso* by Illka Louw.

In this chapter I describe and track two aspects of my research process that did not appear explicitly in any seminar paper or study related to the PaR performances I created for the MA. Here I focus on the struggle of giving myself permission to 'own' my tacit knowledge of my field of expertise – set and costume design – and the methods I employed to come to grips with performing the tacit on a more explicit platform.

Returning to the first conversation with my supervisor I shared here, I would argue that my MA process did indeed focus on dealing with the feeling of wanting to share my imagination with the audience and the reader. This chapter on the other hand, aims to focus on the part described in brackets, the flailing researcher. Although I was describing the feeling of the flow of my intention with my MA, I was also indicating my inability to articulate it in words. How and what did I do to get over the blockages? What were the real-time activities of being-in-research? How did this hidden struggle start to inform and strengthen the main thrust of the research?

DRAWING THE FLAILER OUT IN PENCIL AND NEWSPRINT

As the PaR studio series was unfolding in the first section of the first year of the MA, I came across an insightful, though perhaps overused, quote by Peter Brook attempting to explain his idea of the "Holy Theatre":

...it could be called The Theatre of the Invisible-Made-Visible: the notion that

the stage is a place where the invisible can appear has a deep hold on our thoughts. (Brook, 2008:47)

The notion of creating a space for the invisible certainly had a deep recurring hold on my thoughts throughout my studies. The process of transforming the initial resonance I felt with Brook's notion of "the stage" and finding what *my* stage looked like involved not only delving into the invisible, but the unspeakable, the inexpressible.

Out of desperation, I resorted to drawing what the 'flailing' looked like as I was not able to express it in day-to-day conversation, not to mention within a traditional frame of scholarly discourse. As Donald A. Schön (1983), social scientist and philosopher, describes how professionals think in action:

> When we go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the action of everyday life, we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way. Often we cannot say what it is we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate. Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowing is *in* our action. (Schön, 1983: 49)
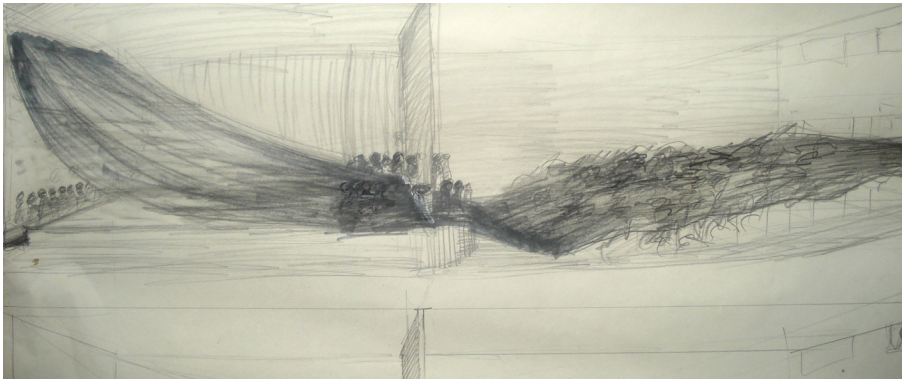
Fig 12.2: *Flailer*. Artwork by Illka Louw.

The drawing in Figure 12.2 is not perfect, but the act of mark making itself gave me a sense of movement of this overlaying and moving 'cloth' of feeling I was trying to describe and locate. The image functioned on three levels of knowing:

- the quality of mark making on the surface of the page – hard, fast and rough directional lines – reminding me afterwards of the intentions and active energy I felt while drawing;
- the 'story' of the picture 'inside' the page – backstage, stage, proscenium arch and

raked auditorium – indicating the possible location of the research question;

- a giant black cloth-like object draped over the figures and filling the spaces within the locations – alluding to the possibility that the research would not just include bodies in a theatrical locale but objects too (visible and invisible, human and non-human).

At the time I did not analyse getting the image 'out' in any detail, I simply had to get the "feel for the stuff" (Schön, 1983: 49).

SPONTANEOUS AND INTUITIVE ACTION DURING THE FIRST SEMESTER STUDIO SESSIONS

Many of the lecturers who hosted studio session tutorials, invited the MA students to make use of drawing and poetry as tools for our research journeys. Ironically, as drawing came naturally to me, I did not see my talent and skill as unique or as a *bona fide* research method. Focussing on other offerings, I found the haiku form of poetry writing to be a surprisingly insightful method of imaginative knowledge-making. The manner in which the process of haiku poetry was introduced to us seemed to relate to how the making of my *Flailer* drawing functioned as a process of knowing-in-action, as well as a reflection-in-action, which Schön describes as follows:

> *Reflecting-in-action.* If common sense recognizes knowing-in-action, it also recognizes that we sometimes think about what we are doing. Phrases like "thinking on your feet," [...] suggest not only that we can think about doing but that we can think about something while doing it. (1983:54, italics in the original)

Three aspects of the writing process started to emerge as pointers towards building a PaR methodology: the effect the maker had on the outcome of the poem, the efficacy of the completed product upon the poet and the spontaneity involved in making the poem.

In a collection of his translated volumes titled *Poetics of imagination and reverie* (1994), French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, seeks to discover the "primacy of the poetic image" as well as the root of the image-producing "force" in poetry (1994:xxxix, xlvii). Bachelard (1994) suggests:

> ... that poetic images must re-activate the material imagination, that is, they must infuse familiar images with a second life and, in so doing, cannot remain static, but must be in flux and subject to change: for if there is no change there is no imagination and no imaginative action. Poetic images "reverberate with the [spectator's] consciousness and lead [her] to create a-new [with]... the poet" (Bachelard,1994:xli in Louw: 2013).

The surprise element of the haiku-making process as well as the startling effect of beholding the finished product compares with Bachelard's notion of infusing familiar images (to the mind) with a second life. The unseen feeling of the poetic image, which then becomes revealed to the maker *in the making thereof.*

HAIKU

Haiku is a Japanese form of poetry which grabs the moment of experience as it unfolds to the experiencer in real-time. Upon reading such a poem, one might feel the immediacy of the moment that it was written in, as if the reader had written the poem herself. In Illka Louw's use of haiku writing, the exercise starts with several exploratory and visualisation tasks with objects and spaces. The performers are surrounded by their notes and drawings which they place upon the walls of the rehearsal space as they prepare to compose their haiku. Words that drift in are written down, cut out and 'played' with until the essence of a feeling of a vision resonates with the poet in the arrangement of words in three lines, split into syllables of 5; 7; 5. This general 'rule' for the haiku form does not always hold for all languages where single words may contain more than seven syllables, and was employed more as a suggestion than a hard rule.

THE MINOR PROJECT: THE BEGINNING OF TRANSFORMING FLAILING INTO FLOW

This four-week long PaR process was the first foray into creating a methodology of my own beyond the studio tutorials. My project titled *Isangqa/ Sirkelpad*, was inspired by two South African stories of two young girls of similar age, who each died while saving the lives of a male family member. The themes of grief, loss and dying were physicalised during a devised rehearsal process whereby the actors' embodied images from their imagination were harnessed by using haiku.

Through its process I came to see a link between image-making in poetry and knowledge-making in the design processes. The following poems – though not strictly haiku – were written by the performers and myself in response to the stories of the two protagonists that served as the basis for the piece.

I see Grandma Tree   Ndibone uMakhulu kwalamthi
I woke up and got a fright   ndothukile ndavuka ndingakuboni
I didn't see you   Uyakhala ebuhlanti
You are crying in the kraal   (Ntombi Makhutshi: Actor)

Little Raiya died   Raiya wesentjie dood
and as grey as her clothes   en grys gekleur klere
she spirited from this mist   gees uit hierdie mis
                                   (Jill Levenberg: Actor)

Klara se laaste asem   Klara breath breathing
Verlaat haar liggaam   Body left leaving
In die vorm van 'n Lied   Your song is sung, so long
                                      (I. Louw)

THE SEMINAR PAPER AND SEMINAR PRESENTATION: SINK OR SWIM

As a professional who had, apart from an Honours degree in directing, mostly vocational training, the challenge of taking on a complex philosophical discourse such as phenomenology – which is what I was drawn to as a theoretical underpinning – became all-consuming and my supervisor had to pull me back from the maw of a bottomless well of readings in a self-induced crash course on continental theory. Here my supervisor reminded me of what 'The Flailer' already knew before she started her studies, and to use the next part of the MA process, the seminar presentation, to communicate aspects thereof to others by sharing a visual map of my thought process. The visual map for this particular presentation consisted of sourced images and artworks of what I'd known and loved from an early age: fine art, decorative art and architecture with a leaning towards the aesthetics of China and Japan. Here I could share my approach to the spatial field of performance while aligning my creative impulse with phenomenological theory and develop a concept for the next PaR task, the medium project.

THE VISUAL MAP AND STORYBOARD COLLAGE: CONCEPTUAL BACK STROKES RETURNING TO TACIT KNOWLEDGE
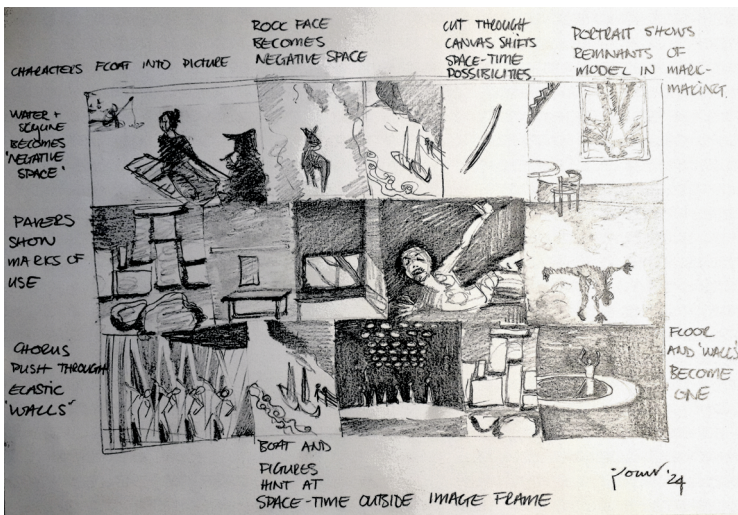
Figure 12.3: Schematic indication of original map. Sketch by Illka Louw.

For a designer the act of mapmaking (an overall view from above) is an essential method of thinking, usually in the form of ground plans. With maps come journeys, and with journeys come the way we think of how we get to where we want to go. At this stage I was not yet able to identify phenomenological approaches outside of readings on 'hard core' philosophy. However I could sense the phenomenology in these images. This method of displaying and presenting what I knew to outsiders reflected and consolidated that knowledge back at me. My way of entering into the three-dimensional kinaesthetic world of live performance was

firstly through two-dimensional image reflecting-in-action while talking through the map in my presentation as I was explaining the significance of each image.

Next I selected a few images from the visual map and made a few rough collages. These rough try-outs show how I 'play' with two dimensional images as a bridging activity from mapmaking to the rehearsal floor, acting as a spatial as well as a characterisation tool. Principles and elements of design are employed to bring action to the map. Positive and negative space are dramatised by creating action in composition and making space for narrative by creating entrances and exits off the frame of the image which point towards extending theatrical time and space on stage. As I make different versions by re-configuring the same images, I elicit a spontaneous surprise reaction to the product within myself, as described by Schön, and then turn back on the action by making new images using the same technique until I find satisfactory solutions (1983:49). This correlates with the process employed in creating haiku during our studio sessions, though it might not be how the ancient Eastern originators of haiku approached it!
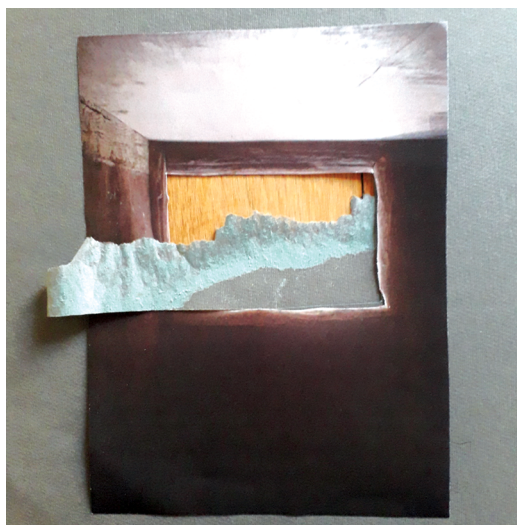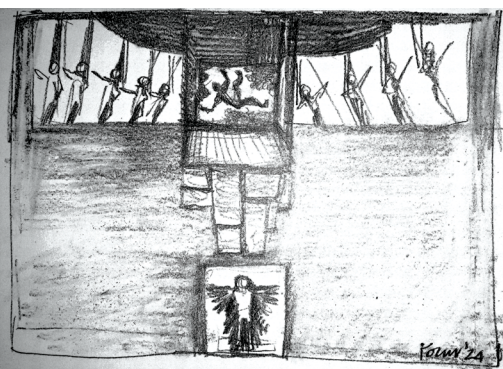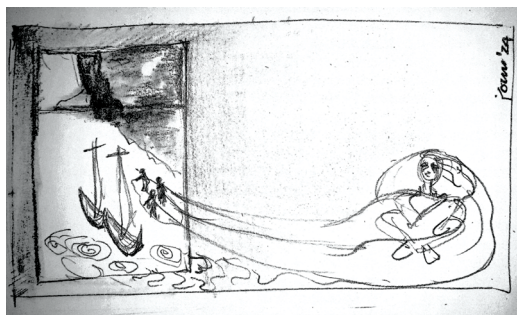
Figures 12.4; 12.5 and 12.6 Rough sketches of original collages. Artwork by Illka Louw. Figure 12.7 Collage. Artwork by Illka Louw.

Launching from the confidence I felt after the seminar presentation, I set forth with planning the medium project.

THE MEDIUM PROJECT: DIVING INTO TACIT KNOWLEDGE

This PaR project titled *Playing Space/ Speelplek,* focussed partly on exploring the dynamic and kinaesthetic contribution the scenographic space makes towards an audience's perception of a performance. This project aimed to employ negative space, materials, light, shadow, sound and silence as a driving force for the performer. Here the imagery the playwright had woven into text by means of literary devices acted as a diving board into a kinaesthetic engagement with non-human performers and non-text-based materials. Before we started experimenting with materials, I devised tasks making use of three of Reza De Wet's plays: '*Mis*', '*Mirakel*' and '*Drif*' (2000). I designed a rehearsal process which engaged with the idea of scenographic landscapes of tension between the feeling or qualities of gravity and flight, loss and liberation, presence and absence, longing and satisfaction, and of the past and the future. We selected excerpts from the plays which we agreed activated "[t]he fundamentally dynamic nature of imagination ... occupied with movement and force, not matter" (Bachelard, 1994:xlvii). That is we selected excerpts which were not static in symbolic meaning and seen as 'things' but were vibrant poetic images which had the capacity to be "lived, experienced and reimagined" (xli). The actors then selected materials and objects that held, within their properties, some aspects of these vibrant qualities.

One performer, for example, placed herself in a river of industrial size clingwrap sheets while the audience watched her meticulous and restrained struggle attempting to remain un-drowned by this domestic symbol of female oppression.
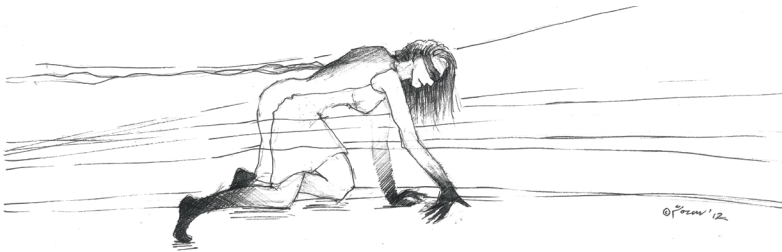
Figure 12.8: Sussie. Artwork by Illka Louw.

One used an oversized ball,

Figure 12.9: Lenie. Artwork by Illka Louw.

one used a ladder,

Figure 12.10: Meisie. Artwork by Illka Louw.

and another used a large piece of fabric.

Figure 12.11: Ezmerelda. Artwork by Illka Louw.
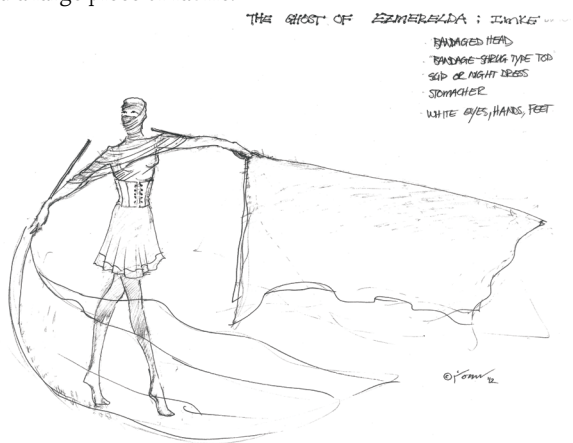
Some of the scenographic spaces held within a formal proscenium arch theatre, such as the Little Theatre on UCT's Hiddingh Campus, served as a basis for exploring the relationship between audience, performer and the significance of the space in-between; that ephemeral substance which the 'cloth' of the *Flailer* tried to articulate: negative space. The audience was moved onto stage from the auditorium to the apron,

Figure 12.12: Audience blocking. Diagram by Illka Louw.

apron to the traverse, and from the traverse to the wings,
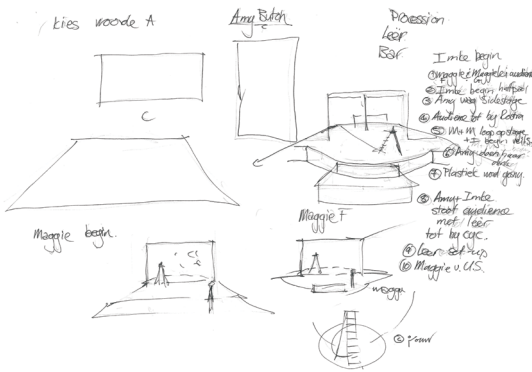
Figure 12.13: Front view. Diagram by Illka Louw.
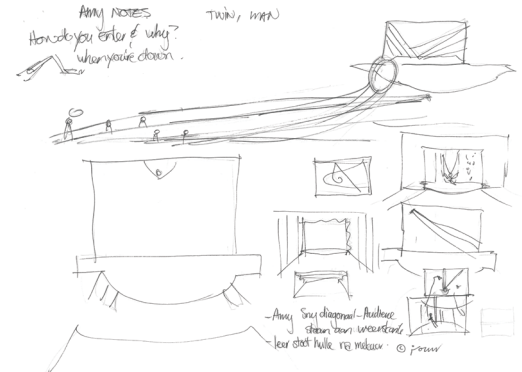
Figure 12.14: Mixed view. Diagram by Illka Louw.

experiencing a vignette in every new area.
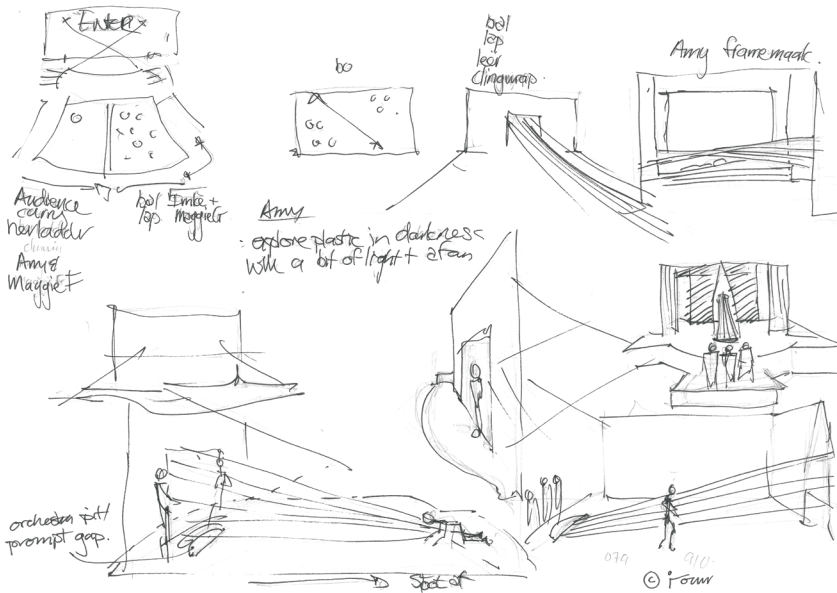
Figure 12.15: Mixed view II. Diagram by Illka Louw.

In the drawings above I made use of ground plans and rough perspective drawing to develop my ideas and create rehearsal processes. The rough storyboards below attempted to draw the significance of shadow and light as two non-human actors, and to think through my rehearsal process, while grappling with new theoretical readings and the new ideas they brought.
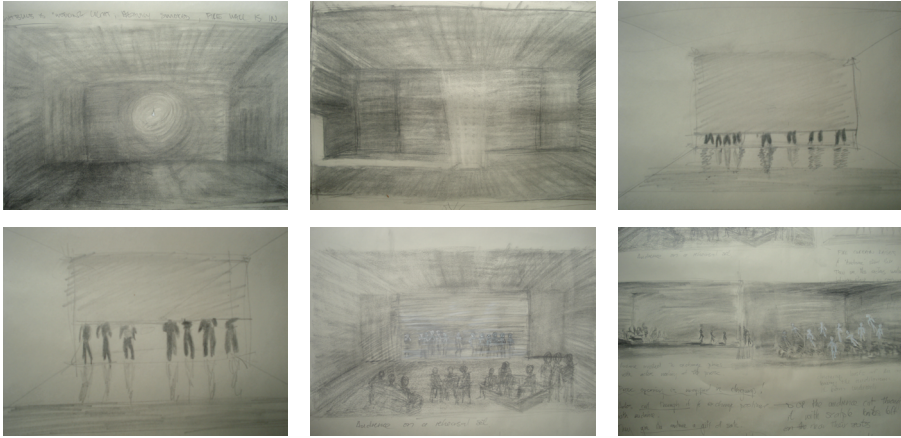
Figures 12.16; 12.17; 12.18; 12.19; 12.20; 12.21: Storyboard. Artwork by Illka Louw.

Finally, I had accepted the act of drawing out a thought as not just a clever play on words but a method of bringing an overload of theoretical and philosophical data and evolving thoughts together on a page. I could draw action, plan what to do next and, by the act of drawing, I could try to make sense of what my conscious mind could not articulate at the time.

uR: PERFORMING RESEARCH

After the seminar presentation and medium project, I could now draw from anthropology, political ecology, Taoism and Zen Buddhism, for example, as I was able to track a phenomenological seam through different readings while writing my explication. With the theory and practice of the first and second year of the MA and the explication completed, I was then ready to 'let go' of play text as a safety net in rehearsal.

'*uR*' was the title of my research production and as I wrote in my programme notes, referred to a primal beginning and becoming, a stirring of imagination, space and matter. *uR* invited the audience to connect with and share the creative space and materials of the designer and the performer. It was a three-part event which consisted of a journey through two installation pieces as well as a performance piece mirroring my creative journey as a designer.

Figure 12.22: *Lightroom*. Photograph by Rob Keith.

Figure 12.23: Darkroom. Photograph by Ella van Tonder.

Lightroom was an immersive installation piece created in the largest dressing room of the Arena Theatre on Hiddingh Campus which attempted to capture the fleeting nature of an idea and how our sensate relationship with materials feeds our imagination. This space consisted of a paper obstacle course where the audience had to flail through thigh-high tissue paper, while hearing recordings of the cast reflecting on the challenges they experienced with various materials.

Darkroom signified the moment when an idea has left the safety of our minds and is bleeding its art out into the world in a bath of ink slowly seeping through the virgin territory of seven metres of white satin cloth.
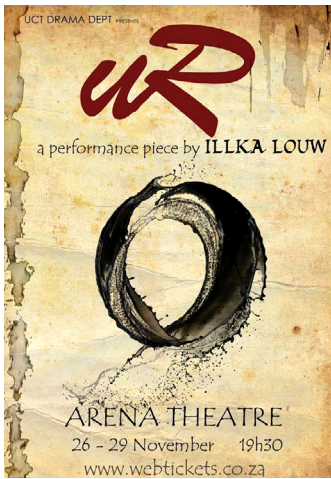
Figure 12.24: *uR* Poster. Poster design by Luke Ellenbogen.
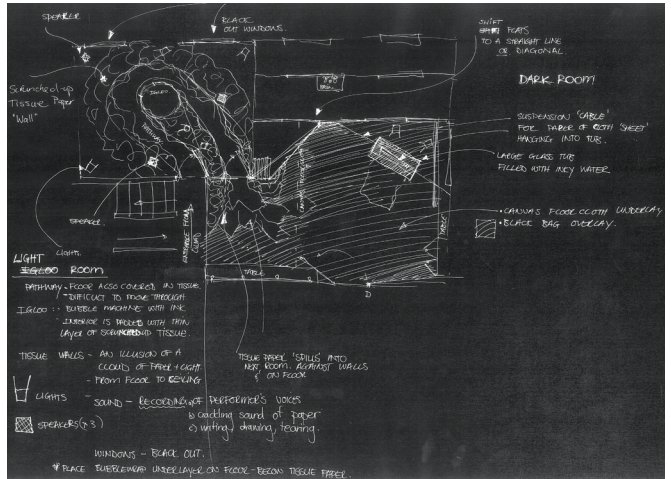
Figure 12.25: Installation groundplan. Drawing by Illka Louw.

Finally, *uR* consisted of a series of small vignettes where the relationship between materials, space and the audience was explored.

Figure 12.26; 12.27 and 12.28: *Black Wave.* Photographs by Rob Keith.

The audience travelled from backstage to a central opening leading straight onto centre stage. Here they traversed the space of the actor to reach their seats – entering the last section of 'The Flailer's' journey.

Black Wave Covered the whole performance floor and, at one point, the wave travelled over the audience's heads before it was forcibly pushed through a narrow doorway as a giant black bubble. The force of an activated inanimate object and the effort it took the performers to remain in control became a visceral experience for the audience as the wave 'crashed' over them.

Fabric Enso was a mesmerising dance with an oversized cloth, which required extreme attention from the human performer as she adhered to the task of remaining second-in-command, the cloth dictating her movements instead of the other way around.

Figures 12.29; 12.30; 12.31 and 12.32: *Fabric Enso*. Photographs by Rob Keith.

Pick-up-sticks #1: A childhood game which once again showed the force of negative space – gravity in this case – drawing the audience's attention to the spontaneity required of human actors (including designers) when they work with the properties and qualities of their non-human performance partners.

Figures 12.33; 12.34 and 12.35: *Pick-up-sticks #1*. Photographs by Rob Keith.

Pick-up-sticks #2 was a dangerous and fascinating vignette with a very long 'stick' (bamboo); oscillating in its presence from master to slave, from lover to enemy. The bamboo could fly from the performer's hands at any moment as she let the speed and force of wielding the stick almost pull her off her feet at times. The whipping *sjambok* sound brought the room to attention and seemed to escalate the feeling of menace.

Figures 12.36; 12.37; 12.38; 12.39: *Pick–up–sticks #ll*. Photographs by Rob Keith.

Paper Trio. Showed the artists' relationship to two of the most basic elements of the art-making process, humble newsprint and charcoal. As the room's atmosphere shifted due to the heat and humidity of lighting and audience presence, the paper behaved differently with every performance. This brought a sense of spontaneity and freshness to the performers' engagement, with them being forced to pay extreme attention to how the materials wanted to behave and be treated – a strong link to the designer's attitude when working with materials.

Figures 12.40; 12.41; j.42; j.43; and 12.44: *Paper trio*. Photographs by Rob Keith.

Anemone consisted of two swarms of clear vegetable bags that were blown up and tied together to create a mass of moving objects. As the human performer was mostly trapped inside this full body mask of sorts, she could not easily sense what was happening on the outside. This nebulous mass tended to 'die' very quickly after activation. Her movements on the inside were over exaggerated, with limbs, torso and head moving most awkwardly (flailing!) to keep the non-human performer active and 'alive'. Finally, she floated the swarms down from the top and backs of the audience, bringing the process full circle from that first idea. Designer, performer (human and non-human) and audience are joined in the fluid space of creative possibility.
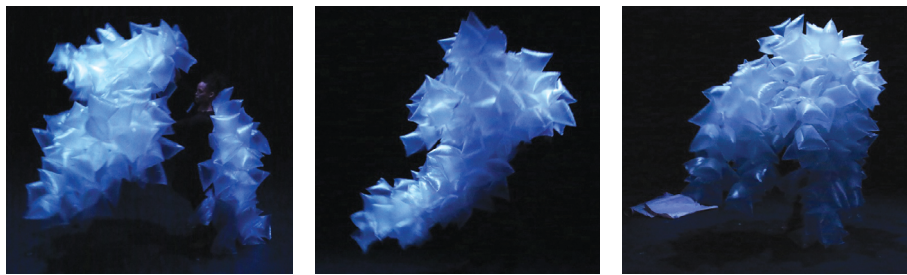
Figures 12.45; 12.46 and 12.47: *Anemone*. Photographs by Rob Keith.

Not a Haiku

Why are you here?

What are you a Master of?

How do you know that?

It is my experience that one of the attributes differentiating theatre designers from say, fine artists, is that designers are not required to place themselves at the centre of the impetus for the work. Their creativity is always in service of the production, and they often choose to remain behind the scenes while 'getting the show on the road'. On a broader scale this attribute means that they may often be left standing in the wings in matters of equity, copyright and box office sales in some countries. Being *in* the research of a PaR methodology makes for a discombobulating process for a traditionally trained designer. The Enso motive I use in my introduction, for my exam performance's poster and the bookend emblem for this
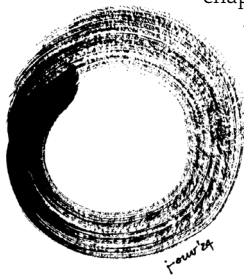
chapter, symbolises this process for me: coming full circle from chasing the hunch of *The Flailer* in my supervisor's office, to articulating that tacit knowledge to outsiders by creating a singular methodology within PaR and reflecting my thought process back at me in *uR*, the final performance. It is perhaps in this exposed space that the power of the reticent designer's creativity is amplified, not only for the audience but for the designer herself, as autonomous visual dramaturge.

Figure 12.48: *Enso*. Artwork by Illka Louw.

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PRACTICE AS RESEARCH IN PUPPETRY PERFORMANCE: THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF *PLOT 99*

By Aja Marneweck

BACKGROUND

In 2011, The Paper Body Collective (PBC), a South African contemporary puppetry performance ensemble with which I have worked since 2005 as creative director,[30] gathered for four weeks of artistic residency and public site-specific puppetry performances in the spaces of an abandoned psychiatric hospital building in Valkenberg, Oude Molen, in Cape Town. The performance was a culmination of a process conducted through my PhD at the UCT Drama Department[31] and a decade of theatrical excavations in experimental puppetry and visual performance. This puppetry performance project, entitled *Plot 99: The 21st Century Prophecy Show,* was a critical puppetry process in which the artists embarked on the creation of a collaborative, improvisatory, multiple-installation-driven work, immersed in complex relationships between race, sexuality, gender, identity, culture and history, and guided by an enquiry into the personal spaces of mental health disabilities, held within the container of a PhD led by PaR methodologies (Marneweck, 2012).

In my performance research, animism and puppetry have offered multiple pathways into re-imagining epistemology through embodied, pre-figurative knowledge systems that engage multiple levels of meaning, sentience and aesthetics simultaneously. My PhD entitled *Plot 99: towards a feminine semiotic: spiritual and sexual emergence(y) in women's puppetry and visual performance* (2012), was manifested through various drafts of written, performative, aesthetic and digital research processes over three years from proposal to final submission, seeking out the potential, through the performing object and puppet body, to enact the critical concept of a "feminine semiotic" (Marneweck, 2012). The "feminine semiotic" is a term I have developed to embrace postcolonial and feminist cultural theory in order to re-imagine where materialist and radical divisions might meet with puppetry and animism; and to imagine embodied knowledge strategies for feminine performance in South Africa today (Marneweck, 2016).

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30 Links to the work of The Paper Body Collective : https://paperbodysouthafrica.wordpress.com/ https://paperbody.wordpress.com/

31 Under the supervision of choreographer, curator and director, Professor Jay Pather, and African gender studies theorist, Professor Jane Bennett, at the University of Cape Town.

FEMININE SEMIOTIC

The potentialities and methodologies of the "puppet" (variously interpreted, and through as many different names as there are languages, as the kinetic object, the gods, the doll, vibrant matter, masks, object and material performance to name a few) across cultural, political and metaphoric landscapes are a global phenomenon. I propose the "feminine semiotic" as an approach to embodied aesthetic experimentation that starts with exploring the "vital materiality" of "lively things", to appropriate Jane Bennett's terminologies (2010:vii), for the purposes of puppet performance. Improvisation, play and experimentation between research objects, concepts, voices, temporalities, space, sound and bodies are key to troubling accepted connections between form and meaning; the hierarchies of being and sensing that structure our perceptions of the world. As a methodology of creating, researching and archiving, the feminine semiotic occurs through multi-textual written, live and in-person sources, as well as via digital and online spaces, through which we generate critico-creative puppetry material. I must make a point here that the 'feminine' and my use of the term, does not seek to uphold oppressive historico-political categories and binary logics. Rather 'feminine' is a proposal, a gesture and approach to queering, expanding, undoing and softening the boundaries of binary perception and the surfaces of being; this is not intended to remove or ignore difference, but to invite ways of co-habiting and troubling form and theory, spirit and matter. **A methodology of the feminine semiotic then is an invitation to serious play** that includes using the body-mind-object-spirit to explore liminality, excess, multigeneity, leakage and the permeability of life in general through diverse available means and spaces.

I have explored multiplex identity through emancipatory artistic practices, such as puppetry, through several productions and collaborations between 2003 and today. These productions and collaborations have provided me with platforms for experimenting with form and meaning which propose puppetry as a site for a new feminine imaginary and its disruption. In my own scholarship I have explored liminality, excess, multigeneity, leakage and permeability as key to understanding the embodied surfaces of the feminine semiotic as it arises in animist puppetry practices. The feminine semiotics of puppetry, I have argued variously, offer a representational strategy for multiplex identities in a complex marriage between content and form, intersections of metaphor and critique, and surface and innovation represented through the thresholds of 21st Century animist practices. In a post-apartheid South Africa, puppetry is emerging as a means to push the margins of political and aesthetic discourses, providing tools for new expressions of freedom and creative plurality as a feminising, decolonising form of artistic resistance (Marneweck, 2016). In my work I have explored how animist-based creative practices such as puppetry can evoke critical and contentious languages of a co-constructive femininity in strategies for contemporary performance-making today.

CONTEXTUALISING PLOT 99

When I came to do my PhD I had for a number of years been very inspired by the extraordinary story of an Eastern Cape prophetess, community leader and traditional spiritual diviner from the turn of the 20th Century. Named Nontetha Nkwenkwe, her remarkable life deeply troubled the colonial patriarchal structures at the turn of the 20th Century and subsequently historical archives and narratives of gender, race and madness. The unearthing of Nontetha Nkwenkwe's story and her ongoing legacies in the living memories of the large community of the present day Church of the Prophetess Nontetha in the Eastern Cape were recorded by historians Bob Edgar and Hilary Sapire (2000). Inspired by her story and the ongoing devotion of Nontetha Nkwenkwe's present day followers, Edgar and Sapire played a crucial role in working with Nontetha Nkwenkwe's church for the retrieval of her remains from an unmarked pauper's grave, numbered plot 99, at the Pretoria state asylum in 1998. On 25 October 1998, 63 years after her death, Nontetha Nkwenkwe was reburied in her home location of Khulile, in the Eastern Cape (Bennett, 2007). The title of my PhD thesis production, *Plot 99,* is taken from the plot number of the area of ground at the Rebecca Street Cemetery in Pretoria, where Nontetha Nkwenkwe was first buried in 1935 (Edgar & Sapire, 2000).

The highly contentious areas of race and madness, femininity and political subversion come to the fore in Nontetha Nkwenkwe's story and her eventual demise in the Pretoria state asylum (Edgar & Sapire, 2000). Shula Marks suggests that Nontetha Nkwenkwe's prophecies, "so revealing of the power relations of the colonial state, threatened … to disrupt the ordered non-communication between ruler and ruled" (Marks cited in Edgar & Sapire, 2000:xi). The crude diagnoses of colonial psychiatry at the time reflected the deep colonial fear, surveillance and containment of sexual, cultural, racial and political difference in southern Africa in the early 20th Century (Jackson, 2005). Nontetha Nkwenkwe's story raised questions around the presentation of historical-political narratives which framed my approach to exploring how reimagining women's historiographies might feed into a puppetry-driven visual performance. I questioned whether the narratives of Nontetha Nkwenkwe's life and experiences and the representation of women's mental, sexual and spiritual emergence and emergency could find expression through contemporary puppetry and visual performance in ways that might agitate perceptions and stimulate new questions relating to the historicity of women's experiences.

Taking as its key hunch the gaps and excesses in narrative and incomplete archives of Nontetha Nkwenkwe's story, *Plot 99,* developed into a workshopped production which progressed through the building of Hospital Ward F with various points of installation and distillation in spaces that became scenes *in situ,* namely: "The Entrance to the Asylum", "The Waiting Room", "The Holding Cells", "Ward 33" and finally "The Dream Space/ Deathscape". The development of various characters (in the forms of puppets, masks, costumes, live performers, object installations and digital projections) whose narratives and trajectories intersected with Nontetha Nkwenkwe's across time and space, allowed me to explore my own positionality with respect to experiences of mental-health disability and gender as the director and primary researcher on the project.

My PhD was guided by a PaR through puppetry performance approach to practical-critical experimentation using various performative, sculptural, filmic, photographic, aesthetic, written and digital creative research processes over the course of three years. My broader PhD positioned the performative production and puppetry enquiry in relation to a critico-creative approach to the work, not to privilege practice over critique or *vice versa,* but to understand practice *as* critique and critique *as* practice. This was in an attempt to come to terms with the guiding hunch of my work as a puppetry artist-scholar that puppetry as a modality, a practice and an aesthetic choice is always already involved in the making and unmaking of critical meaning, being, thought and concept. I made it my task to uncover, to excavate as it were, these complex intersections to discover puppetry as a critical-creative form that could bring forth potential performative, written and aesthetic embodiments.

Video 13.1: Full Production Live at Oude Molen 2011. Link to video available here. Videography by Anthony Strack van Schyndel.

In my proposal for a PhD by practice, I presented the argument that contemporary women's performance and gender representation in South Africa should address a necessity for critical thinking and engagement in artistic creation. The question that instigated the enquiry that would become *Plot 99*, was asking, on the one hand, how artists might manifest the complexity of multiple levels of performance and gender theory in the realms of practical innovation, and, on the other hand, how practice could guide and influence the production of theory. At a most basic level, I wanted my research to consider the extent to which the theoretical complexity of the practice of puppetry and visual performance, by female artists specifically, lends itself to the complex discourses of sexuality and gender as well as aesthetics in South Africa today. I endeavoured to set out a methodology of process, performance and documentation that might constitute a PaR methodology and submission that could hold, however tenuously, the complex and ill-defined processes I was to uncover. My proposed approach to understanding the complex interplays of theory and artistic practice was to attempt to articulate a methodology for writing, performing, archiving and receiving performance in a way that might demonstrate an aesthetic and theoretical awareness of the possibility, as well as the impossibility of the feminine semiotic operating in specific moments of the live processes at the heart of puppetry performance.

PROCESSES, FORMS AND TRANS-EMBODIMENTS

In my work with the PBC, our developing approach to visual performance through a feminine semiotic considers every element of theatre as a potentiate for living multimedia, animism and puppetry. My proposal for a performance methodology positions the concept of animism as a process of magical thinking in which all aspects and agents of a performative process are invigorated by trans-embodiment (a term originally proposed by Alissa Mello, 2016) or a potential for trans-embodiment that characterises live puppetry performance. Puppetry

practitioner-researcher, Alissa Mello, draws our attention to what she theorises as the direct and indirect techniques of trans-embodiment that she has observed in embodied puppetry practices (2016). Mello proposes that puppetry is an embodied practice which engages acts of transference between performer/manipulator and puppet/material, which she understands as a "theory and technique of trans-embodiment ... the transfer of direct and indirect embodied techniques among actor-puppeteers, puppets and materials" (2016:49). This trans-embodiment of the various objects, bodies, materials and elements of performance, in many ways exceeds mono-textuality as a symbolic practice of containment and masculinised encoding of the libidinous feminine (Cixous, 1975; Irigaray, 1985). The feminine semiotic also offers linguistic pathways for writing and performing the innovation and research of women's puppetry performance. My methods in *Plot 99* sought routes towards writing as well as archiving the performance possibilities of a feminine semiotic, where the production as well as thesis were not a final product, as much as they were a settling or distillation of moments that created forms of knowledge through intersections with the unpredictable surfacings of audience, aesthetic, improvisation, design, theory, space and time.

The process of practically creating and archiving the research development process of the live event of *Plot 99* was one of creative research intersections. *Plot 99* can be described as an intersection of semiotic and contextual elements. My PhD study comprised five primary research submissions generated over the course of three years of research: a site-specific live puppetry performance event entitled *Plot 99,* which took place in June 2011; a written theoretical research paper; a DVD of the live production of *Plot 99;* the *Plot 99* working script; and the *Plot 99 Online Visual Performance Research Archive,* which houses detailed videos, creative and theoretical writing, photographs and reflections on the rehearsal and performance process.[32] The online *Visual Performance Research Archive* was initially available to examiners of the PhD only, but also directs the readers of the archive to two other blogs which intersect with the archive, namely an online *Plot 99: The 21st Century Prophecy Show* blog[33] which I ran alongside the production process for public interaction from 2010 to 2011, and the PBC blog,[34] which details creative processes and explorations in my work with the PBC on various projects between 2009 and 2013.

These primary submissions formed the critical component of the central arguments and thesis of *Plot 99*. A 274-page research paper served to ground my study, but it was all of the creative-theoretical materials that were necessary in order to read the full research thesis. The availability and possibilities of the online archival platforms provided a complex trajectory for commentary and a digital housing of the 3-year-long *Plot 99* process in the form of research blogs (a method which I continue to implement as a key process in my creative work on different projects till today). Creative appendices, with links and references to the DVD and online archive materials throughout the final written thesis, operate as the residue and distillation points of an ongoing reading, research and

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32   Link to the *Plot 99 Online Visual Performance Research Archive*: **https://plot99par.wordpress.com/about/.**

33   Link to the *Plot 99: The 21st Century Prophecy Show*: **https://plot99.wordpress.com/the-21st-century-prophecy-show/**.

34   Link to the PBC blog: **https://paperbody.wordpress.com/.**

Figure 13.1: Julia Raynham performs Patient number 3, Inanna, in a latex mask and body cast. Photograph by Anthony Strack van Schyndel.

performance process. The variety of primary research materials helps the reader of the thesis to understand the multi-textual spaces through which we generated our critico-creative puppetry material. Each chapter of my written thesis contextualises how *Plot 99* developed as a critical-creative response in relation to material based on the inspirations of Nontetha Nkwenkwe's complex historiographies and the possibility and impossibilities of representing feminine emergence(y) in puppetry performance.

The online archive follows the structural progression of the staging of *Plot 99* through the asylum and moves chronologically through the five key staging sites or scenes, which structured the script as well as the live performance event. Various gathered visual and theoretical documents, materials, imagery and footage housed on the blogs, provide a view into the depth of layers that informed the performance developments and aesthetic practices of *Plot 99*. These include photographic essays from field research, poetry and creative writing from the cast, director's treatments, a creative practice and rehearsal journal, photographs of rehearsals, costume designs, puppet designs, installation designs, site explorations, explanations of explorations, documentation of improvisation processes and imagery from the live public performances. The video and online archives reveal new frames of intelligibility and information as to the intersections of knowledge and aesthetic, reception and emotion, politics and image-making which we engaged.

Videos of rehearsals archived on the blog show early improvisations using life size latex puppetry, shadow puppetry and object theatre techniques which I have developed over a number of years through the PBC and which we continued to develop through collaborative workshops with a cast of eight performers for *Plot 99*. The *Plot 99* rehearsals were divided into two phases: the first was the studio phase and the second was the on-site Valkenberg phase.

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Through rehearsal workshops, myself and the cast of the production explored multiple levels of object and puppet improvisation in relation to site, bodies, publics and historical research. The series of videos from the studio as well as site-specific rehearsal sessions, chart our progressions in workshops and then rehearsals to explore our expanding puppetry techniques and processes of object performance material generation.

Figure 13.2: Nobuhle Ketelo performs with a life–size latex puppet. Photograph by Anthony Strack van Schyndel.

In the first two years of the PhD process, *Plot 99* developed initially as a script and textual response to research and the explorations of various abandoned colonial asylums in the Eastern and Western Cape of South Africa, through photography, writing and field research. Site and architecture became significant research containers for the work of the feminine semiotic of *Plot 99*, which was finally performed in the historically black women-only Ward F of the Valkenberg East Mental Asylum in Pinelands, Cape Town.[35] A photographic essay of Ward F captures the entropy and decay of the space in a visual exploration of the site before our artistic residency began. In the *Plot 99* script in 2009, I had already begun writing, using a structure which might negotiate and intersect with the external and internal worlds of the colonial asylum. In compiling the historical biography of Nontetha Nkwenkwe, I worked for three years with photographer Anthony Strack van Schnydel, photographing and visiting various mental hospitals some of which were still operational and some of which were abandoned. I also explored relevant spaces in Cape Town where the performances might be staged.

Engaging asylum sites as entry points to the staging of the feminine semiotic brought feminist cultural theories of space, place and displacement to the fore and proposed the

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35 Since 1994 the site is no longer run as part of the main Valkenberg hospital, but managed as a housing and business complex by the City of Cape Town. Known as the Oude Molen Eco-Village, the site hosts numerous small businesses, non-profit organisations, and a primary school, restaurant and horse-riding centre.

making of *Plot 99* through an artistic residency in Valkenberg's Ward F. Large sections of the work were created by performers' direct responses to the site and the improvisations between the performers and the space of the abandoned asylum environment were captured through video, photography, imagery and poetry, which remain part of the online blogs.

EVOLVING METHODOLOGIES

The live event of *Plot 99* in 2011 was realised as a moving site-sympathetic and specific experience in which audiences were physically involved in transitioning through the spaces of the Valkenberg buildings. Through the unfolding events of each scene, the audience moved from room to room in the asylum, in order to witness the full event. Once in the asylum, the journey through the performances within each space took the audience into the psychic terrain of the characters and their respective physical, cultural, historical, psychological and emotional landscapes within the non-linear narrative. This journey, for the purposes of repetition, examination and archive, was re-interpreted through the video of the live performances and explored through the online archives. Over three years of scripting, devising, researching, designing, investigating, writing, poeticising, improvising, rehearsing and performing I was able, using the technologies of video and digital archive, to capture the residues of performance that led to the live event of *Plot 99*. Video and the online archive were used as primary tools for rendering visible the multi-layered and multi-textual processes as they occurred in the *Plot 99* asylum. The DVD of the live event provides the full screening of the *Plot 99* performances. Filmed by artist Anthony Strack van Schnydel and edited by myself, the final edit is compiled from footage gathered over the five-night period of the performance run in 2011.

Each night's run of the production offered variations to the output. This was due to the improvisatory nature of the production in which selected scenes were given an overarching guiding structure, but performers were allowed to navigate the unfolding of the scenes by improvising the present moment and interaction with the audience, objects and space of the scene. The range of audience across cultures, age groups, social and political backgrounds was diverse and every night offered new reactions to the material, which affected the performance. I thus selected the material based on the practicality of 1) the framing of the content of the shot; 2) providing the viewer with as detailed as possible an edit of the occurrences, narratives and intersections within each scene; 3) capturing the sense of audience as it moved and experienced the production across the five nights.

The making and unmaking of *Plot 99* as a PaR process was realised for me through the critical-creative interdisciplinarity at the heart of the project and its trans-embodiments of theory and performance. The primary interdisciplinary materials of the PhD became coalescing bodies of enquiry that produced different creative platforms for the reception and analysis of a PaR methodology for a PhD. These included, but were not limited to, the live *Plot 99* event that occurred in June 2011, as well as the experience of the creative and theoretical research materials that continue their online lives in various contexts and forms.

Figure 13.3: A scene from the Dreamspace/Deathscape.
Photograph by Anthony Strack van Schyndel.

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PRACTICE AS RESEARCH IN DEVELOPING *SAAMTREKKING* AS A PERFORMANCE ART PRACTICE

By Peter Andrew Hamish van Heerden

INTRODUCTION

The thrust of my performance practice as research stems from the title of my MA:

TOTANDERKUNTUIT: *hitchhiking on the ox-wagon of destiny*
VOORTREKKER – DRAADTREKKER – SAAMTREKKER

At the time of studying for my MA in 2001 and 2002, the focus of my practice evolved into me using my physical and historical whiteness, in particular the placement of my hegemonic white masculinity, into the context of South Africa's newly post-apartheid landscape. My practice used this whiteness, this masculinity as a point of departure for practice as research in the context of a South Africa that was transitioning from an apartheid state into a democratic nation that sought to redress the gross racial injustices of apartheid and colonialism.

Figure 14.1: Peter van Heerden at the National Arts Festival (2004), Makhanda, dressed in costume as a *saamtrekker*. Photograph by Anthony Strack van Schyndel.

Figure 14.2: Peter van Heerden, Chelvin 'Selwyn' Engelbrecht and Andrae Laubscher at the National Arts Festival (2004), Makhanda, in costume as *saamtrekkers*. Photograph by Anthony Strack van Schyndel.

My MA work explored what happens to white hegemonic masculinity when it is re-engendered and re-constructed into a new history. My research looked into the history of my whiteness, its change/transition into a new space, and what that might look like. The practice took the body and forced a process of cathartic re-enactment. This action created a new performative 'history' presented in the current moment. The practice and research sought to unpack the past within the present to enable the future. I named this evolution *saamtrekking*. *Saam* in translation from Afrikaans means together; and *trekking* in translation means pulling. History, the body's experience, whiteness and the lived experience were pulled together in my practice and presented in a new moment in time, a new view of history. My research and practice explored this 'pulling together' as *saamtrekking*: the pulling together of the physical and representative self. As a performer and artist my research and practice has continued to explore my hegemonic white masculinity. Twenty years on, and now living in the United States, I continue to use *saamtrekking* as a performative act for practicing and 'abjecting' my white masculinity in the context of a world still fighting for a fuller realisation of democracy and suffering the consequences of long histories of systemic racism. My current work, performing for Nora Chipaumire in *Nehanda*, embodies all whiteness as I play a representation of European Empire in modern colonialism. Within the work, I play both conqueror and conquered as I 'abject' and reconstruct the 'white' Empire and its representation in a new moment. This chapter explores the process of my MA through which I first developed my practice of *saamtrekking*.

Figure 14.3: The programme and poster for the live art installation, *TOTANDERKUNTUIT*, performed at Fort Selwyn for 14 days as part of the National Arts Festival, Makhanda. Photograph by Anthony Strack van Schyndel.

INITIAL MA METHODS

Born and bred in South Africa, although a white man, I used my practice as research MA at the UCT Drama Department[36] to explore what my 'whole African Identity' might be in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. To do this I started investigating figures of tyranny, savagery, colonialism; representations of the hegemonic white masculinity, specifically those born in a South African historical context. My research started with looking into theories of space and place and specific sites of historical conflict within South Africa. I researched the Anglo-Boer War (also known as the South African War[37]) skirmishes with the British, sites of execution of Boer commanders and then, from more recent apartheid history, sites of the execution of the Pebco Three and Cradock Four. The Pebco Three and Cradock four were both groups of young, black South African men that were abducted and killed by the security police during the height of apartheid in South Africa. The truth and details of these young men's stories came to light during the hearings for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1996-2002).

My research looked at and exhumed the 'executor' at these sites: at the 'executor' as 'colossus,' as 'tyrant', and as 'white African male archetype'. This archetype was defined as a white man, the body, the person or individual who stood at this site, who found himself there in this site of conflict. This research, in some manner, defined and built a character for me. Through the research, an imagined 'man' or 'figure' came into being. This 'being' then provided a path forward for my practice; a method for me to embody and activate this 'figure'.

Figure 14.4: The uitspan of the ox-wagon and site of the live art installation *TOTUNDERKUNTUIT* featuring the *saamtrekkers* Peter Van Heerden, Chelvin 'Selwyn' Engelbrecht and Andrae Laubscher. Photograph by Philip Boltt.

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36   Now the Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies.

37   See SA History Online for an overview of the South African War: **https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/second-anglo-boer-war-1899-1902.**

Once I had located and imagined this figure through my research, which entailed detailed mapping of these sites of conflict, site visits and research, this imagined figure would undergo a ritual of physical abjection in the studio through performance and practice, to manifest a new physical reality in the present. In the studio, through this practice, I developed a new archetype, a new performative character to bring to the stage. This new character was then placed in the new reality of my performance, and as the work unfolded so the character was presented and de-constructed to show the audience the possibility of a new reality in a new theatrical and historical moment.

This process became the pattern of my PaR. I would start with historical research (primary and secondary sources of written material), paired with site visits to the key historical locations. Alongside the historical research, I was reading space and place theory, along with critical theory more generally that might provide conceptual lenses to articulate what I was doing. Then I would work, through physical improvisation in the studio, with the factual and sensory knowledge I had gathered as well as materials (for example: soil, an ox-yoke) to develop character, landscape and ritual. This studio work was part of the abjection and re-construction ritual I was looking to enact through my practice-as-research, but it did ultimately culminate in structured performances for public audiences.

Figures 14.5 and 14.6: Images of the performance work *so is 'n os gemaak* performed nightly as part of the live art installation, *TOTUNDERKUNTUIT,* at the National Arts Festival, Makhanda. Photograph by Philip Boltt.

SOLO MA PERFORMANCE: SO IS 'N OS GEMAAK

In 2002 in the final year of my MA in Theatre and Performance at UCT, we were asked to create a solo performance work. For my project I created a work titled *so is 'n os gemaak,* which, loosely translated from Afrikaans to English, is 'this is how an ox is made'. My research for this project began with the white male Afrikaner body in the context of

the Anglo-Boer War. In essence this was a fight by the Boers for freedom from British rule of the region which was ultimately to become the state of South Africa. The Boers were the originators of the Afrikaner race that came to govern South Africa from 1910 to 1994. Descendants from colonial Europe, the Boers were formed and identified as a people through their flight from British rule in the Cape Colony. They moved north, subjugating and oppressing the southern African black peoples whose land they traversed and occupied. As Britain aspired to extend the Cape colony to include the land the Boers had claimed as their territory through the subjugation of black southern African peoples, the British and the Boers came to war.

More than the war itself, it was the way the Boers fought the war and the sacrifice of the human body that intrigued me as potentially valuable to what I was researching through my practice. I remember a specific section of Deneys Reitz's book *Commando* (2009), in which he describes the Boers being on horseback for days, their clothes in tatters and covering themselves with *mielie* sacks that froze over their bodies in the highveld air – what a picture. What was this condition like? What power did the body hold to sustain this? To place oneself on the edge of death for belief in a right to a place? My research then embraced the transition from the body to the beast, the horse and oxen that were staples of the Great Trek (the passage out of the Cape Colony by the Boers[38]) and the Anglo-Boer War. These animals were instruments of the Boers' survival. Often the oxen fell dead for lack of water; often they pulled unimaginable weights over unpassable passes and through huge rivers. I focused my research on the power and pain of these beasts: the dirt in their hooves, the dirt of the earth, their thirst and starvation. What it meant – especially physically – for them to fight and die for a piece of earth under the burden of man, what it meant for man to fight for a piece of earth on the oxen's backs. How might this mixture of physical strength, endurance, determination (the Boers) and abjection and subjugation (the animals) be used to enact some kind of ritual as atonement for colonialism and apartheid and to initiate a reimagining of what the white Afrikaner male might be in constructively supporting a democratic South African future?

My initial totem was an ox-yoke I purchased from a vintage store. I took this object into the studio and began working and playing with it to explore its possibilities for a movement vocabulary and to find a way to encompass the ox and feel his burden. Through this work and exploration, I was able to develop a vocabulary which became the structure for my final project *so is 'n os gemaak'*. In line with this work, I was exploring historical texts and books related to the Great Trek and the Boer history in the Cape and trek beyond the Cape Colony. I researched costume, culture, ways of community, travel and all aspects of the Boer history as they headed from the Cape to the Transvaal.

Through the research of sites of historical conflict I was able to create a backdrop and type of storyboard. I developed a landscape for a character to inhabit. In these sites of historical conflict, I attended to both physical and meta-physical data, including: the smell,

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38   See SA History Online for an overview of The Great Trek: https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/great-trek-1835-1846.

the sound, the texture of the earth, topography, historical relevance. I wanted this new identity to live in a new created space; a space that had to be enacted and practiced, not a passive space. I started researching "thirdspace" by Edward Soja (1996), and Marc Auge's theory of "non-place" (1992). These theories talk of how one needs to actively be in and move in space to create place. I created and performed this new 'character' in a space and developed a new place for him. A new reality was created for a new identity through my performance. The studio I worked in is housed in the old armoury for the Castle of Good Hope, a place of dense conflict and military history from the early occupation of the Cape by the Dutch. Within this site I placed the ox-yoke, a *bakkie* (truck) load of earth, a metal *trommel* (trunk) and an old South African flag. These objects together held a historical resonance within my research, and within the studio I began the process of unpacking and re-constructing their resonance in a new moment, a new space.

Through my research I realised that my body held its own history, its own narrative in relation to an African identity. My name is Peter Andrew Hamish van Heerden, but I am not an Afrikaner. I am considered a '*soutpiel*', a derogatory term for 'English' Afrikaners, meaning in short that their 'dicks' are hanging in the sea as they have one foot in the UK and one foot in Africa, in a form not pure, not true. This became a point of reference for an identity in flux – an identity in motion trying to define itself.

Within my performance practice I developed mechanisms for a transformation of myself. This transformation provided for new reference points and hence a new performative practice for me as an artist. My performative practice worked to create 'archetypes', that existed in a new reality, a new history. They existed in this 'non-place' or 'thirdspace' I was wanting to create in my practice, a space of contradiction and change. My body became a site of practice in which performative identities and archetypes developed at the margins. The reference points for the shifting between identities became a method of practice for the formulation of new cultural identities. I conceived of this method of performative practice in terms of Julia Kristeva's exploration of the abject as that which is "in-between, the ambiguous, the composite", horrifying, as Kristeva argues, in "being something from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object" (1982:4). The abject became a method of practice for the dissolving of identities and archetypes, and allowed for the creation of new imagined archetypes. As a performer the act or physical enactment of abjection of my lived white masculinity, became a way to practice the identification of self, the abjection of self, and in those moments there came to life the formation of a new self, a new character or archetype. Arts reviewer, Max Rayneard, gives a good sense of how this looked in practice (and public performance) through his description of the final moment of *so is 'n os gemaak* as follows:

> The final sequence of *so is 'n os gemaak* is difficult to watch. Narrating the processes involved in the castration of a bull, Van Heerden edges forward on all fours. His genitals, tied to the yoke by a thin rope, are pulled backward as he strains forward in a resonant image of the tension between tradition and

progress, between the old fashioned demands of masculinity and the necessity for painful compromise. (Rayneard, 2004)

FINAL MA PERFORMANCE: DEVELOPING THE WORK WITH OTHERS

The solo work above was developed in collaboration with other practitioners. My primary collaborator was social activist and pig farmer, Andrae Laubscher. Together we formed the *erf [81] cultural collective*. This collective was a foundational support to my PaR process and became our vehicle for a shared practice as research which followed a similar model to what I described in the previous section. We researched historical sites of conflict, physicalised this research and started to perform ritual enactments at these sites. Using my studio practice of physical improvisation to develop archetypal characters informed by South African history and then to re-imagine them through ritual processes, we created the *vrou* (Afrikaner woman), the *boer* (Afrikaner man), the beast (half man, half ox), and the ox. All of these characters were embodied and performed as fluid, merging and emerging identities. The practice became a lived experience as we would dress and act as this identity, both in performance and out – so a durational performance lifestyle was created to help develop and inform the ongoing PaR process.

Figure 14.7: The ox is born and comes to life. Images of the performance work *so is 'n os gemaak* performed nightly as part of the live art installation, *TOTUNDERKUNTUIT*, at the National Arts Festival, Makhanda. Photograph by Philip Boltt.

Figure 14.8: Images from the performance work *Flowers for my Flesh* shot at the Castle of Good Hope, Cape Town: 'the vrou and her mannetjie'. Photograph by Anthony Strack van Schyndel.
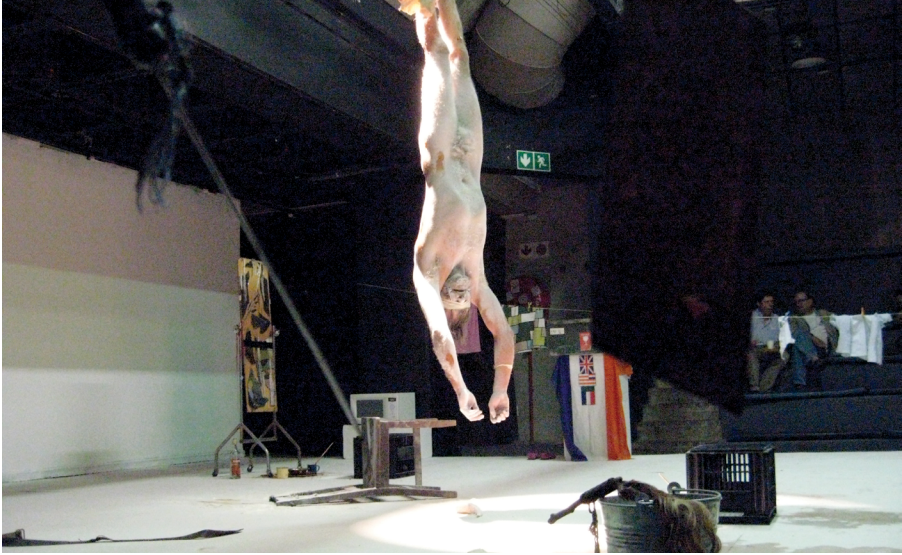
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Figure 14.9: Final image of the performance work *6 Minutes* shot at the FNB Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg. Photograph by Anthony Strack van Schyndel.

Video 14.1: Edited video version of the performance work *so is 'n os gemaak* shot in Van Heerden's studio at erf 81, Tamboerskloof, Cape Town. Link to video available <u>here</u>. Videography by Bradshaw Schaffer.

For my final MA project, for 13 days and nights, we occupied Fort Selwyn on Monument Hill in Makhanda for the National Arts Festival. When performing *saamtrekking,* we needed a specific space and construction of place to occur. Each day was dedicated to an act of performative history, past, present or future, where the historical day was deconstructed to develop a new history in that moment. As example: *Die dag van Bloed Rivier*, an infamous and terrible battle between the <u>amaXhosa</u> and the Boers, became a day to reflect on HIV and Aids. As a company we sat together and made babies out of recycled trash as a symbolic honouring of all children born HIV positive. Each day was a celebration of our lived history into the present and culminated each night in my performance work, *so is 'n os gemaak.*

The event became a reflection and contemplation on our lived history and the formation of a new history in dialogue with the festival patrons. We unpacked the past in the present in the hopes of better enabling a new future. Through this type of work, new conversations were made and history past and present was thrown into a constructive dialogue towards action for change.

CONCLUSION

My subsequent artistic work has taken numerous forms through various collaborations. However, looking back to the time of my MA, there was a clear process I went through with that work at that time: historical research, site visits and studio improvisation all leading up to moments of durational performance in sites and shorter, heightened public performances within these durational performances. What is clear to me is that, although the initial written historical source research and site visits offered the material (or research) for the improvisations and culminating durational performance and heightened, shorter performance events, the

improvisations, durational performance and heightened performance events were all also research to speak back to the written historical sources and the historical sites themselves. Myself and Andrae Laubscher in particular had certain activist intentions for the work, but we were also experimenting or asking the research question of how performance practice and our particular bodies with their identity markers as white, arguably Afrikaans men, might employ performance practice to contribute constructively to a democratic South Africa. *Saamtrekking*, pulling us together for a better world, was the performance practice that emerged and the intentions of that practice I still use today as an artist invested in defining new spaces of transformation that lead to new positive histories in the current moment.

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EXPLORING AUTOTOPOGRAPHY: METHODS

By Rosa Postlethwaite

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will describe the artistic process, research methodology and methods I used during my PaR MA at the University of Cape Town (2013 - 2014). My thesis *Exploring the field of autotopography through live art practice: The Frieze, The Anatomy Lecture Theatre and The Security Hut*, involved creating three autobiographical performances in response to different sites within the university campus. I will describe how the methods unfolded in the first project of the MA, *The Frieze*. These methods were: free-writing, returning to the site, reading texts in relation to the site and reflective writing about the process in discussion with the following authors' conceptualisations of autotopography: González (1995), Heddon (2002), Bal (2002) and Arlander (2012).

POSITIONALITY

Since returning to academia in 2021 to study for a PhD, I have been developing a practice of starting texts, workshops, talks or presentations with a description of my positionality. Considering one's positionality in relation to a research subject is of course widely considered to be important to ethical research. Whilst not achieving accountability or redistribution of privileges, it is a practice that hopes to inform how to act in an unjust world (Duarte, 2017:135).

At the time of writing I identify as being a white, British, middle-class person. I am currently receiving a stipend for a UK PhD from Coventry University and I am supported by savings from my family. I am a fluid/ queer person. I use she/ they pronouns. I have a long-term mental illness. During my master's study in 2013-2014 I identified as being a white, British, middle-class woman with a mental illness, and acknowledging that I was working from this positionality as well as exploring the positioning of myself through performance became key to live art making.

I am a performance artist, dramaturg and facilitator. I work across live art, theatre, dance, club/cabaret performance and socially engaged art. My background as an artist and a scholar has been very closely entangled. To outline the relationship between each of these roles, I have broken down my experience into five chronological periods:

- My development as an artist was initially through scholarship. I studied Drama at Queen Mary University of London, UK (2009-2012). Professor Lois Weaver's course, Performance Composition, laid the groundwork for my live art practice and introduced free-writing as a method for autobiographical performance

composition. Courses on South African Theatre and Performance Studies and Interdisciplinarity led by Dr Nadia Davids, as well as her research into performance, place and historiographic practices in Cape Town, developed my ongoing practice and research interests. The live art performances I encountered during my undergraduate studies in London experimented at the borders of art disciplines, and provoked a desire to explore the edges of disciplines, forms and conventions that has been sustained throughout my career so far;

- I completed my MA in Theatre and Performance practice at UCT (2013-2014). I will not go into too much detail about the MA now as this is the subject of this chapter. However, I will note that I was greatly inspired by my supervisor Professor Jay Pather's practices as a choreographer and curator of live art. The PaR MA honed my strategies for performance-making, which spilled out into art and facilitation projects, including collaborations with The Mothertongue Project[39] and the Scalabrini Centre;[40]

- After the MA I spent eight years working as an artist, dramaturg, producer and facilitator in the UK, mostly in North East England. I adapted my practice of autotopography to form an institutional critique of British Arts organisations in my show *Composed* (2018-2019). I produced and co-hosted a performance club night for queer, interdisciplinary and community-driven work called PUG in the North East (2016-2020);

- I am currently a PhD researcher within the Cotutelle Programme, Mobilising Dramaturgy at Coventry University and Aarhus University (2021-2025). My practice research is in "dramaturgy with other-than-human species". Currently my research supports my practice through developing workshop content. From the other angle, my practice is grounding my research; it's an opportunity to rehearse methods and to remind myself of my experiences and ways of knowing as an artist.

THE PROJECT: 'EXPLORING AUTOTOPOGRAPHY'

I will now discuss my MA research project at UCT, titled *Exploring the field of autotopography through live art practice: The Frieze, The Anatomy Lecture Theatre and The Security Hut* (2013-2014). This PaR project explored strategies of making autotopographical performance.

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39 I was involved with The Mothertongue Project through the organisation's production, *Walk: South Africa*, a performance piece made by a group of South Africa artists in response to Maya Krishna Rao's Walk. Rao created *Walk* as a response to the gang-rape and murder of Jyoti Pandey. *Walk: South Africa* was a response to the gang-rape and murder of Anene Booysen. In 2013 the artists involved were Sara Matchett, Koleka Putuma, Siphumeze Kundayi, Genna Gardini and myself. The 'line-up' of artists changed in later iterations.

40 I was involved with the Scalabrini Centre for Immigrants and Refugees as a facilitator on their drama workshops for one year. These workshops led to the creation of a performance work called, *Centre*, a collaboration between the Scalabrini Drama Group and myself. Centre was performed at Infecting the City Public Arts Festival 2014 and at Sydelle Willow Smith's exhibition *Soft Walls* (2014) at AVA Gallery, Cape Town.

The outcome of the research was three performances that presented the strategies and a written explication of the strategies in relation to theories of autotopography, site, memory and history.

DEFINING 'AUTOTOPOGRAPHY'

'Autotopography' first appears as a concept in contemporary art professor and writer, Jennifer González's chapter "Autotopographies" in the volume *Prosthetic territories, politics and hypertechnologies* (1995). González uses the term to describe personal objects, like trophies, clothing and furniture, presented in visual art that "form a syntagmatic array of physical signs in a spatial representation of identity" (1995:133). Also engaging with art objects, Mieke Bal defines 'autotopography' as a "spatial, local, and situational 'writing' of the self's life in visual art" (2002:180). In "Autotopography: Louise Bourgeois as builder", Bal uses the concept to argue against criticism of Bourgeois' work that offers biographical narratives and thus ignores the work's spatial forms (180). Deidre Heddon's use of the term is within the field of autobiographical performance, and more closely relates to the activities I undertook during the MA. Heddon uses 'autotopography' to refer to the study of "the location of a particular individual in actual space, a locatedness that has implications for both subject and place" (2002:4). Annette Arlander also uses the concept in order to analyse a site-based performance project with the private aim of re-engaging with a personally meaningful place (2012:252-253). She modifies the term to "describe practices related to topobiographically meaningful places" (Arlander, 2012:251).

AUTOTOPOGRAPHY

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González's, Bal's, Heddon's and Arlander's definitions of autotopography, and the wider principles they draw on, opened up ways of analysing the making strategies I was developing. These strategies were autobiographical and site-responsive. In performances, rather than presenting personal objects, I installed objects that represented something about my personal experience. The sites that I worked with became topobiographical through the research process, rather than being personally significant before the project. I focused on the intersections between narratives of my life (including the life during the project) and narratives of the site.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

My early experience of trying to assemble a research question for the MA was frantic and confused. When I arrived at UCT I felt estranged from the question I had applied with. I tried to quickly coax an idea from my practice, which was still very young. The two-year course was structured by three main opportunities to present practice within the department (in addition to this we delivered two seminars, and an independent project/solo performance), these were named: minor project, medium project and research project (the research project included a written explication and viva, alongside the performance). It wasn't until the second year, after completing the minor project, that I could envisage the research design. These feelings of insecurity shaped my methodological approach, which was iterative (supported by the programme structure), and guided by Tim Ingold's description of "wayfaring" (2011) and Walter Benjamin's description of "deviation" in *The arcades project*, a collection of texts written from 1892-1940 (1999).

The methodological approach I took was PaR, following the course convenor Professor Mark Fleishman's observation that, at the broadest definition, PaR is "research that is carried out through or by means of performance; using methodologies and specific methods familiar to performance practitioners; and where the output is at least in part, if not entirely presented through performance" (2012:33). Again, following Fleishman's observations on PaR, I characterised my methodological approach as like 'wayfaring' in the field of autotopography. In our initial workshops on the course, and in the text, "'Routes of inheritance' in performance as research" (2014), Fleishman introduced Ingold's description of "wayfaring" to us (2011). Wayfaring, Ingold argues, is how humans grow into knowledge (2011:162-163). It is by moving through the world that humans know, rather than through the transporting of a discrete amount of knowledge from A to B (Ingold, 2011:162-163). Inspired by this, when starting a research project, I didn't envisage a specific end goal of what knowledge I wanted to hold but rather identified a rough, shifting field to move within. I engaged in a different artistic process for the minor, medium and research project, switching directions, driven by curiosity, through this expansive field of practice.

Another way I thought about how I would come to know about the field of autotopography was through Benjamin's description of deviations. In *The arcades project* he describes how a voyager is knocked off course by the magnetic field of the North Pole (Benjamin, 1892-1940:456). Through this experience the voyager knows *this* North Pole. "What for others are deviations are, for me, the data which determine my course" (Benjamin, 1892-1940:456). I sensed that, through wayfaring, I could not directly crash into autotopography – conceived as a clear, static land – but that I could know autotopography through my failure to succeed at it and my shifting positions in relation to it.

METHODS

Free-writing: Free-association was explored in the DADA movement, to introduce hazards into an artwork to demonstrate "the absurdity of binaries such as chaos and order, agency and autonomy" (Hopkins, 2016:256). Free-writing (also known as 'automatic writing') is guided by four rules: 1) to write for a discrete amount of time (e.g. five minutes,

15 minutes) – I use my phone to set an alarm for this length; 2) to not edit yourself; 3) to not pause writing, even if you are writing "blah blah blah"; 4) you might want to start with a theme, or a first sentence and if so, before you start the clock write this at the top of your page. I am not sure if I have adapted this method, or if I am following Professor Weaver's practice exactly, because it was taught in the studio and I have no written record. Free-writing does not need to be a way to draw on personal memories, however, I used it as a method for writing an explicitly autobiographical text.

Returning to the site: I worked in three different sites inside the university campus – one for each of the three performances. When working in one of the sites I would book regular times to spend there. Rather than taking a 'capture' of a site, and then basing my performance on this, I built a physical relationship with it across several weeks. Furthermore my journey to the site (both the journey from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK, to Cape Town, South Africa, and the journey from Observatory to the Cape Town central business district) became part of understanding the site and my identity. I explored the mutually constructive and shifting relationship between identity and place. My memories of these journeys were represented in the performance through installed objects, actions and texts. The memories of these journeys also informed which topics to read in relation to the project.

Reading texts in relation to the project: The artworks were also research-informed in that reading secondary texts informed the performance. As 'I' was the one reading the texts this also became part of the *auto*topography. Some texts were explicitly linked, e.g. the site for the final project *The Security Hut* was The Little Theatre and so I read *Forty little years* by Donald Inskip, director of the Little Theatre (1933-1971). Some links were personal and only made apparent through the performance, for example, between the rehearsal room in Hiddingh Hall and art history books about Gustav Klimt's wall-painting, the *Beethoven Frieze*. Reading secondary texts served to create a different kind of relationship than 'returning to' did, however this was still an embodied exercise, a means of jogging memory to activate doing in terms of positioning, writing, installing and doing actions.

Reflective writing about the process: I wrote reflectively about the process in discussion with secondary research into autotopography, site, memory and history. Some of this writing took place within the project and became part of the performance text. Some took place between the projects, and informed the next artistic process. The writing attempted to describe what happened during the artistic process and compare these actions to other practitioners' or theorists' experiences. Furthermore I attempted to consistently write down my understanding of key concepts, in order to track how I was attaining a different understanding through the process and thus, developing (lateral) knowledge through practice.

THE DIFFERENCE IN METHODS FOR PaR

Through the process of PaR I adapted my established practice methods. Due to the reflexive nature of PaR, which involves constantly asking 'what am I doing?', and 'what

implications does this have?' I perceived the methods differently, and therefore could adapt them along the way. For example, I could see that free-writing also involved site-writing, and this opened up a new field of concepts within feminist geography that presented ways of understanding the method differently. While I am a reflexive practitioner outside of academic spaces, I am not always deviating from habitual methods or aware of my knowing them differently.

THE FRIEZE *ARTISTIC PROCESS*

The following is a description of the artistic process on the minor project, the first project on the MA, which led to the creation of a live art performance *The Frieze*. I started this project without a clearly identified research question or area. It was through this process that I began to work in autotopography. In this section I will describe the relationship between the unfolding artistic process (in black), methods (in purple) and methodology (in blue).

The starting point for making *The Frieze* was a conversation with my supervisor Professor Jay Pather, during which I identified 'autobiography, durational and participatory performance' as a broad field that I wanted to explore. A chosen presentation day for the minor project, gave me a deadline for an artistic output to begin working towards.

I booked out a rehearsal room above the Hiddingh Hall library on campus for regular times across two months. Inside the room I began free-writing. Each time I returned to the site, I free-wrote. The text listed associations made about the white walls of the room. This autobiographical text (what I would come to understand as autotopographical) became a key material and locus for the project.

Deviation 1

From one visit to the next the same memories refused to rise up. I had a sense of the past that was not static. And thus autobiography as a means of telling a true, stable, story of a life, felt impossible. Acknowledging this short-coming of autobiography to give a window to a stable past, shaped my text composition. I deviated from writing a continuous narrative and arranged the free-writing in a fragmentary list.

Deviation 2

The free-writing was responding to the site. This led me to the second limit I noticed with the concept of 'autobiography' to describe what I was doing – it did not acknowledge the action of returning to a specific site and responding to it through writing. By reading into autobiographical *and* site-responsive performance practice, I came to Heddon's definition of 'autotopography.'

Deviation 3

I started to compose and rehearse a performance which would become part one of *The Frieze*. This involved reciting the text and stacking the crockery bowls that would inevitably collapse.

I engaged in reflective writing on the experience. This 15-minute talk would become

part two of *The Frieze*. It formed another kind of autobiographical text. When performing this reflective autobiography, I was aware of the limits of autobiography to reflect on the performance I was actually doing – in the present. I understood, through performance, what I was reading about in Judith Butler's *Giving an account of oneself* – "I always arrive too late for myself" (2005:79).

Deviation 4

In the final performance of *The Frieze*, during part one, the audience members could enter the room and leave at will. They were invited to paint crockery at a table while I performed near them. Through this I aimed to explore an unfamiliar form of audience participation. I also aimed to explore duration by performing the looping action for four hours.

After the performance, I could see this project was like 'throwing everything at the wall and seeing what sticks'. By this I mean, I tried out different elements of performance: autobiographical, durational and participatory, and reflected on what these offered, in terms of gaps in research and personal intrigue. I found that the field of autobiography had been the most generative starting point. In the next project, I focused on autotopography, letting go of participation and duration as subjects for the research.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON METHODS

In summary, the method of reflective writing in relation to secondary research enabled me to track my different understandings of 'autotopography'. This meant that I could return to analyse the project with key points of deviation in mind. And this supported the aim of showing how the PaR was developing (lateral) knowledge in the field. Moving on from *The Frieze,* the method of reflective writing became reflexive writing as I considered the implications of my PaR in relation to legacies of British colonialism and postcolonial realities in Cape Town.

The iterative structure of the programme allowed for a start that felt like 'throwing everything at the wall and seeing what sticks' which activated my practice, and didn't hem me in. In hindsight this was a very useful start as it was clear through the process that the areas of my practice that I was most curious about were the autobiographical urge, and the possibilities of autotopography. During PaR, in contrast to my artistic practice outside of academia, I am consistently engaging with questions in the field. This action of slowly identifying useful concepts along the way enabled me to push the PaR along, deviating from habitual ways of practicing and perceiving practice.

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at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Working on that production as a performer-deviser was my first engagement with participatory public art and community-engaged, site-specific theatre. That experience inspired questions and curiosities in me about how such methods might be used to explore and represent the everyday life of city spaces, questions and curiosities that would, ten years later, form the basis of my PhD research. What I learned experientially through the process of devising and performing *Breathing Space*, about collaborative place-making through theatre and performance, was foundational to the conceptualisation of my doctoral work. In this way, some of the earliest PaR work I engaged, well before I knew the term 'PaR', would go on to inform the doctoral research in profound ways. I begin with this reflection to suggest that the foundations of a practitioner's PaR can precede, by many years, the formal commencement of a research project. The cyclical, iterative nature of PaR does not necessarily begin and end with a discreet research project, but can be part of a much longer, career-spanning process of inquiry. In the pages that follow I consider the doctoral work as a distinct PaR project, but one that emerged from, and is embedded within, a longer trajectory of practice-based learning.

THE METHODOLOGICAL PHASE: FINDING AN ARTICULATION

When I began my doctoral research in 2013, I knew I wanted to use theatre and performance as tools for exploring and representing the everyday place-making of city spaces. I also knew that I wanted the research to be practical, to be grounded in the making of theatre and performance. What I did not yet know was how to articulate a methodology that would guide such research. I spent the first phase of my doctoral work, then, searching for such an articulation, and I used PaR methods to do so.

I read widely across a range of disciplines and fields, including human geography, urban studies, performance studies, theatre studies and anthropology. I was looking for a way to bring together my interests in the everyday life of city spaces and in theatre and performance as research tools. Through this reading I came to understand the concept of place-making, and in particular everyday place-making, as central to my concerns.

now the Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies (CTDPS) at UCT. Matchett wanted to use participatory theatre, performance and integrated arts methods to enter into a dialogue with the women we worked with about their daily lives and how their living took place in and through the geographic areas of Darling, still starkly racially segregated post-apartheid.

In 2009 a theatre-maker friend, Nicholas Dallas, lent me Michel de Certeau's *The practice of everyday life* (1988). In 2008 Dallas had started an MA at UCT, the same coursework MA programme Matchett had done. Though he didn't continue with the degree, Dallas was so struck by a chapter from *The practice of everyday life*, given as prescribed reading early on in the programme, that he had ordered his own copy of the whole book. I was deeply struck by it too, as I found it to be speaking into my own fascination with place: our attachments to it and our role in creating it through our daily actions.

These two moments were key in the genesis of what was to become my doctoral research. De Certeau's theorisations articulated much of what I had found so valuable and necessary in the making of Breathing Space in Darling. Conversely, the making of Breathing Space put theatre and performance practice in the service of understanding the practices of daily life and its politics, which is De Certeau's concern. An idea for a project came together in my mind: to understand more about the everyday space and place-making practices of inner city Johannesburg through working with theatre and performance in a similar way to how Matchett facilitated the *Breathing Space* project. The idea felt to me an inspiration, and the necessity for doing it was consumingly compelling, with the 'why' for the necessity at this point not articulable beyond being able to say I had a hunch.

Looking back, the idea for the project that came to me in 2009 was a resolution into a structuring form of so many of my entwined artistic, intellectual, ethical, political and personal investments, which, up until that time, had been swirling in me and around me as impulses and fragmented expressions in formal and informal conversations, in my theatre-making work, and in my reading and writing (personal correspondence, creative writing and under-graduate scholarship). My PaR endeavour had already begun, and making Breathing space and reading *The practice of everyday life* were major guiding, mutually informing practices that helped me to articulate and initiate what was to become my PhD project. Interestingly, even at the outset – before I was employing any conscious methodological approach – the research was emerging through the integration of theatre practice and reading scholarly writing. And, also at the outset, the project was clearly about art and research, not one or the other. The art was to be used to learn something in a particular way about a particular city space, but there was also something to learn about the art, about what theatre and performance as an artistic form could do in responding to everyday urban space- and place-making.

This set me on the track to doing a coursework MA degree in performance studies at New York University to get more of a grounding in the critical theory of how performance might apply, in practice and concept, to socially engaged concerns.

STARTING THE PaR: ARTICULATING A METHODOLOGY

In July of 2014, I was starting a PhD with the Drama Department (now the CTDPS) and the African Centre for Cities (ACC) at UCT and had six months to write and formally submit my proposal. Essentially this meant I had only three months to arrive at a final draft proposal, because the other three had to be set aside for the departmental review, ethical clearance and revisions before final submission to faculty. Compelling as my project idea was, there was much I needed to understand and define. I knew about theatre-making – I had something of a grounding in performance studies theory – but how I would situate my research in urban studies was unknown to me in any formal way. I felt like I was trespassing on a field beyond my scope, and was daunted at the prospect. Edgar Pieterse, my supervisor from the ACC, put together a crash course reading list in urban studies for me, and Mark Fleishman, my supervisor from the UCT Drama Department, gave me three key pointers:

- Drawing on anthropologist, Tim Ingold, he advised me to "dwell" (2000) in the landscape of my research and see what emerged. The landscape was: the daily reality of Johannesburg, writing on Johannesburg, public art projects in Johannesburg in the preceding 15 years (roughly 2000 to 2014), urban studies literature, literature on participation, theatre and performance studies literature, thinking from all disciplines on place and on learning through practice, and a theatre historical review of site-specific, performance-based work.
- He suggested I 'structure the unstructuredness', dividing the hours of my week up into different kinds of 'dwelling': sit on the same park bench for an hour, the same hour each week; x amount of hours of urban studies reading, y amount for theatre and performance reading, etc.
- He said I should read to find the language to articulate the PaR approach for my project. PaR might be the overarching methodology I was intending to use, but finding theorists that spoke to me would help to articulate the specifics of the PaR methodological approach for *this* research.

My initial methods in this proposal phase were then:

- Walking through different areas of Johannesburg's CBD and inner city suburbs for an afternoon or morning at least once a week.
- Dividing my weekly reading time between the literature of the different fields that the research was at the intersection of.
- Interviewing artists and scholars whose work, or aspects of it, focused on Johannesburg.

I gave myself permission for all of July and half of August to just do these activities and to make notes, let thoughts float up, but without the pressure of starting to formulate

my proposal. I was determined to practice walking, reading, conversing, writing to see what the practices might reveal to me of a way forward with my research. Mid-August I started writing. The most significant emergence out of this period of 'dwelling in the landscape of the research' was the articulation of my methodology, drawing on Tim Ingold's *Making: anthropology, archaeology, art, architecture* (2013) in which he proposes that we think through "making with" the materiality of the world. Ingold figures this "making with" as a correspondence, "not to describe the world, or to represent it, but to open up our perception to what is going on there so that we, in turn, can respond to it"(7).

In the PhD proposal I described Ingold's "thinking through making" in terms of my research as follows:

> My proposed methodology is then to work with the materiality of Johannesburg where not only asphalt, concrete, steel, grass, bodies, clothing, rubber, but also novels, poetry, non-fiction and academic writing, art works (theatrical, performance and visual art), conversations all constitute the materiality of the city. Through working with these materials by conversing, reading, writing, conceptualising and making my own participatory arts project, I will be both learning the nature of everyday performance in relation to Johannesburg's built environment and be finding ways to correspond with this materiality through the making of academic writing and the making of art. (Halligey, 2014:6–7)

I was describing what I had been doing in my initial research for the proposal and describing not so much the methods (or what we might call the practices, the activities), but the intent with which I was doing them, my methodology: to enter into a correspondence with the city. Paying attention to my practice in this phase helped me to see and name the ideological underpinnings of how I wanted to use the PaR.

DEVELOPING METHODS

The reading, writing, walking and interviewing started in the first phase and continued in this second one, which ran from January to October 2015. During this developing methods period I drafted two chapters of my thesis – a literature review and a case study chapter looking at two recent participatory, public art projects in Johannesburg's inner city – and I ran two 'tester' projects. The first was a voluntary project that took place over eight Saturday mornings with University of Witwatersrand (Wits) students and lecturers from the School of the Arts and the School of Architecture and Planning. The workshop series culminated in an exhibition of art objects and interactive performance works that reflected on the participants' responses to Braamfontein, the inner-city area where Wits is located. The second was part of the coursework I was teaching on the Drama Department Honours programme at the University of Pretoria. Through a series of in-studio explorations and public-space interventions designed by the students in this second project, we explored Pretoria as a city, creating a final performance work called *Opsoek/ Descoberta/ Finding Pretoria*. This was a car tour of Pretoria, guided by fictional characters.

When I think back to this time I am almost overwhelmed with thinking how to articulate how much was knitting together between all the different activities I was doing. For the purposes of this chapter, I want to draw out two key aspects of the second phase of the research in terms of PaR methods:

1. A development of specific methods for a participatory theatre and performance approach to exploring daily place-making activities in city spaces.

2. A development of devices for creating a site-specific theatre work to publicly share the findings coming out of the methods developed in point one.

In terms of point one above, there were many general methods I knew I would be using in the theatre and performance-making process of the research: prompts and exercises for devising oral, physical, textual theatrical material. However, this phase was about finding the specific nature of these general theatre-making tools to serve the particularities of the research.

I was invested in understanding cities through a lens of relational becoming. In other words, that through the relationships between people, things, objects and cityscape, the city is ever in the making and emergent. This is what made Ingold's notion of corresponding with the world so fitting (2013). If I was to understand something of the relationally emergent nature of a particular city space in a particular time, framing the 'getting to know' as a relationship, as a correspondence, mirrored my sense of the nature of cities and their making. Using this methodological framework, the first theatre-making approach I tested was to frame the devising process as a container for allowing participants to develop their own correspondence with cities.

In the Braamfontein Saturday Project, I offered prompts to get participants observing and interacting with Braamfontein and then asked them to create artistic responses to their experiences using their preferred artistic medium. This produced a range of material: a short documentary, a balsa wood sculpture, installations, photographs, performance interventions. In the work with the University of Pretoria students, they had several small tasks to design performance works in relation to different public sites we explored in Pretoria. With all of them being Drama students, all these works were performance-based but expressed the particular thematic and aesthetic concerns that made up each student's particular artistic voice. In the case of both projects, I curated all these different artistic 'correspondences' with city spaces into final public showings: an exhibition for the Braamfontein project and a play for the Pretoria one. Figuring my theatre-making as a correspondence with city, these two projects helped to test, refine and affirm a performance devising approach that would facilitate the correspondence of other theatre-makers/artists with the city.

Within this broader realisation of 'correspondence' with the city through a theatre-making approach, I developed exercises on a more micro level to serve city space and place explorations. Early on in both projects I started to work with the senses, asking participants to notice and document all they smelt, heard, saw, tasted and the textures

they touched or could imagine touching in city spaces. It is hard to remember now how conscious this use of the senses was. I suspect it was at that stage mostly intuitive, though of course it fitted so well with all the urban and place theory I was reading and came to read over the subsequent years: Kathleen Stewart (2012, 2007), Arjun Appadurai (2015), Tim Cresswell (2004), Doreen Massey (2005), Nigel Thrift (2008) and Thrift and Ash Amin (2002). All our relations are mediated through our senses, and attending to them gives specific and evocative information on the materiality of actions and relations and the affectual charge they carry.

Telling Mark Fleishman about my work with the senses and using the term 'synesthesia', prompted him to recommend Josephine Machon's *(Syn)aesthetics: redefining visceral performance* (2011), in which she talks about how immersive theatre works place audiences in an affectually charged state through how they combine and blur the senses. Reading Machon's work inspired me to develop the sense exercises further, asking project participants to list the senses they associated with a place and to then find synesthetic expressions and representations of these. I would ask participants to imagine smelling a sight and let that smell affect a physical gesture through their bodies or to create a texture you could touch that might represent a sound and so on. I used this exercise throughout my PhD, and continue to use it in place explorations. It offers a deep engagement with the sensory material of place to open up the possibilities for a creative correspondence as place-learning process.

SYNAESTHETIC EXERCISE

This practical exercise was developed by Alex as a way of exploring place through the senses, inspired by Josephine Machon theory of (syn)aesthetic performance (2011).

1. Spend half an hour in a place or spend five minutes carefully imagining yourself in a place you are familiar with.

2. Make headings with the name of each sense: sights, smells, sounds, tastes, textures. You can add more senses: proprioception, balance – get creative with what might count as a sense.

3.Under each heading take 1 minute (or more) to list all the things in the place you explored that fall under that sense, in other words all the things you saw, smelt, heard, touched, tasted. Some of these sensory experiences might require a little imagination. For example, you might not have tasted anything, but you could imagine what tar on the road might taste like.

4. Looking at each list, now find ways of expressing one sense with another sense. You might draw an image for a sound or make a static physical image for a smell or a gesture for a touch.

Figure 16.1: Making a Braamfontein soundscape. Left to right: Shameelah Kahn, Nokuthula Mkwanazi, Jenni-Lee Crewe, Nondumiso Msimanga. Photograph by Frances Slabolepszy.

Figure 16.2: Bridge and Juta Street installation by Jenni-lee Crewe. Photograph by Frances Slabolepszy.

Figure 16.3: Visual representation of the smell of fire and cooking meat. Produced through an exercise to express experiences of Braamfontein synesthetically. Photograph by Frances Slabolepszy.
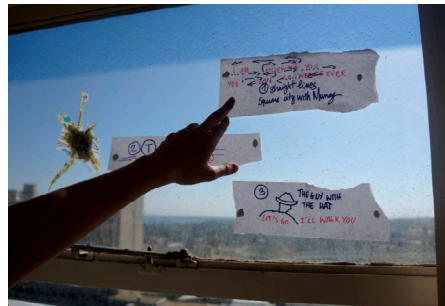
Figure 16.4: Marie Fricourt mapping her daily journey through Braamfontein on the studio window. Photograph by Frances Slabolepszy.

Coming now to point two of the key aspects in this second phase of my research, in much the same way that I had a general sense that I would be using theatre-making methods, I had a general sense that the artistic product of my research would be a site-specific theatrical performance. The question was: what kind of site-specific theatrical performance? What aesthetic and dramaturgical choices would I make to serve the research? These answers emerged entirely through the doing. With the notion of both corresponding and facilitating others' correspondence with the city through theatre/ art-making, came the sense of myself as a curator in the first project, and a dramaturge in the second. The first project affirmed a sense of my role in the final product being one of drawing different offerings together. In the second project this was more specifically focused through theatre as a medium: how might I create a play as a container for all the performances, characters, writing for performance and concepts the performers had created? In dialogue with the students, but with me bringing more of my own aesthetic

sensibilities and thematic interests into play, we crafted a theatrical experience through which we could weave together much of the material the students had devised in our exploration of Pretoria.

These two projects offered an overall sense that my correspondence through theatre-making in the research process would come through facilitation and dramaturgy, but the second project in particular offered useful structuring techniques for a final performance that could reflect the findings of the participatory theatre-making process in relation to city spaces. The defining features of this were: to structure a final play on the format of a tour, to use fictional tour guide characters to offer narratives of place and senses of people from that place, and to set within this structure more abstracted performance events along the route that evoked different qualities and experiences of that place.

Figure 16.5: *Opsoek/ Descoberta/ Finding Pretoria* poster made up of layered images from the making process. Poster design by Alex Halligey.

REFINING METHODS, ITERATING AND REITERATING FOR A SPECIFIC PLACE

Walking, interviewing, doing an art historical review of public art in Johannesburg and engaging in Johannesburg's public cultural life in the inner city, led me to settle on the area of Bertrams, Lorentzville and Judith's Paarl as the place where I would initiate the core PaR project of my PhD. As it evolved the project came to run from October 2015 to December of 2016, although I continued to run participatory drama workshops with one of the institutions in the area, Bienvenu Refugee Shelter for Women and Children, until December 2019.

Figures 16.6 and 16.7: 2015 at Gerald Fitzpatrick House and Nursing Home (left) and Maurice Freeman recreation centre (right), part of the initial 6-week set of workshops. Photographs by Baeletsi Tsatsi.

Figure 16.8: Bertrams Junior School in July 2016, part of weekly workshops that ran from October 2015 to December 2016. Photograph by Baeletsi Tsatsi.

Figure 16.9: Fabric painting 'home' with Bienvenu Refugee Shelter women and children, March 2019. Weekly mixed arts-based works that started in October 2015 and carried on to December 2019, beyond the end of the official PhD PaR in December 2016. Photograph by Alex Halligey.

As with the second phase, I was still reading, writing, interviewing and walking the city. I presented at two conferences and one summer school in the middle of this 2015 to 2016 period, and those were new methods which offered a kind of scholarly public dialogue with my work I had not encountered yet. And again, as with the second phase, the ways in which writing and reading were practices, and theatre-making was developing theory and all the ways in which I was 'working with the material' of cities, theatre and performance, participatory democratic processes and the specificity of Bertrams, Lorentzville and Judith's Paarl were constantly weaving together into knowing and interpretations at the nexus of the urban and theatre and performance theory and practice. However, if the

defining characteristic of phase one was practice to develop a methodology and of phase two was practice to develop methods, this phase, phase three, was practice to know a specific place. This involved iterative practices on a macro level:

1. An initial six-week set of participatory theatre and performance-based workshops with four institutions in the area, exploring participants' experiences of the area.

2. A longer phase of participatory theatre and performance-based workshops with two institutions in the area.

3. The making of a site-specific play in the area, Izithombe 2094.

4. The making of a history play of the area with the Bertrams Junior School group, performed at the school and a local, community cricket ground.

5. Coming to a decision in dialogue with the Bertrams Junior School principal and the Bienvenu Refugee Shelter managers and residents to respectively, conclude the 'drama' workshops with the Bertrams Junior School Grade 5s and 6s and continue the weekly workshops with the Bienvenu women and their children.

And it involved iterative practices on a micro level:

1. Putting into practice the specific devising (theatre-making process) and dramaturgical (realising a final product) methods I had developed in the second phase.

2. Adjusting these methods according to how the participants responded to them. This included developing different iterations of the methods for different groups and different iterations of the different methods through the process with each group. In other words, I needed to adapt the methods differently for Bertrams Junior School Grade 5s and 6s compared to the adaptations I made for the women and their children from Bienvenu Refugee Shelter. But I also needed to keep adapting the methods with both groups of participants as our explorations evolved.

3. In dialogue with the workshops there was an ongoing adaptation of the interviews I was doing with people who lived or had lived in the area, my own participant-observation practices as someone renting an artist's studio in the area and volunteering as a gardener at the local inner city farm, and all that I was reading and writing.

4. Adapting the methods in the work with the Bienvenu residents for a longer-term engagement beyond the focus of the PhD work.

    The longish term, iterative nature of working with these practices in the Bertrams,

Lorentzville and Judith's Paarl area enabled a complex, layered knowledge of the place – of the area's 2015/ 2016 moment. However, it also produced a detailed and evolving understanding of what theatre and performance brought to the knowing of a city space, and how a city space proposed meaningful use of theatre and performance as concepts and as artistic practices.

Figure 16.10: The audience carrying 'the sea' down Thames Street, Bertrams, in a performance of *Izithombe 2094* in September 2016. Photograph by Baeletsi Tsatsi.

Figure 16.11: Baeletsi Tsatsi as 'Sister Bae', tour guide and storyteller, in a performance of *Izithombe 2094* in September 2016. Photograph by Alex Halligey.

Figure 16.12: Toni Morkel (with the umbrella) as 'Mrs Liebenberg', fictional City Of Johannesburg official from the 1980s, in a performance of *Izithombe 2094* in August 2016. Photograph by Baeletsi Tsatsi.

Figure 16.13: Lindiwe Matshikiza as 'Sylvie', fictional Francohphone Bertrams resident, in a performance of *Izithombe 2094* in August 2016. Photograph by Baeletsi Tsatsi.

Figure 16.14: Lindiwe Matshikiza (left) as Shaun and Toni Morkel as Battery, in a performance of *Izithombe 2094* in August 2016. Photograph by Baeletsi Tsatsi.

ARTICULATING THE PaR

The fourth and final, as far as there can be a final phase of research, was the writing up of my thesis. Although writing was a key 'method as practice' from the beginning of the research process, in this phase it was the central practice. My PhD was examined conventionally on the basis of an 80 000-word thesis, as opposed to a PaR PhD which would have been examined by some form of adjudication of the participatory theatre as a public art project and on the basis of a 40 000-word written reflection on the practice. I chose to be examined on an 80 000-word thesis partly because it was easier than navigating the logistical difficulties of having three examiners, two of whom would need to be based overseas, see the theatre-making work. However the main reason was because writing to synthesise scholarly theory and theatre-making practice had been integral as a practice in the research process. I wanted the size of writing a full thesis, in the time and words it would take, as a practice to conclude and make sense of the research process as a whole.

Although there was a great deal of conscious consideration throughout the research, nonetheless much of what was happening was driven by intuitive, libidinous impulses (see Knorr Cetina, 2006:186 on the libidinous nature of PaR). I was following hunches, threads of connections between what inspired me in, for example, an urban theorist's thinking, a creative proposal in a rehearsal and an everyday, embodied, affectual experience on a Johannesburg street. Writing the remaining chapters of the thesis on the Bertrams, Lorentzville and Judith's Paarl project and revisiting the first two chapters I had already written (literature review and methodology, case study of two Johannesburg public artworks) was a process of bringing to consciousness those connections and hunches. The sense-making and articulation of what I had been learning through all the previous two-and-a-half years emerged through the writing. I made a provisional plan for the remaining chapters on the Bertrams, Lorentzville and Judith's Paarl project, and a provisional plan for the structure of each chapter, but what each chapter became, how they worked together and how I concluded the thesis all emerged through the writing (typing) and the routes that it led back to readings, notes and memories from the entire journey of the PhD project, right back to when it started with Sara Matchett's and The Mothertongue Project's *Breathing Space* in 2005.

PaR AFTER THE PaR

Writing the thesis and even the essentially bureaucratic process of submitting it for examination, and responding with revisions to the examiners' feedback, gave a sense of closure to the project. Yet, Henk Borgdorff's assertion that artistic research is never finished (2012:11) has only been borne out in what I have seen in my work since 2018, when my PhD was officially concluded. Some of these iterations of the work beyond the end were more directly related to the PhD project than others. With funding from Rand Merchant Bank, handled by The Mothertongue Project as a holding Non Profit Organisation, I was able to run weekly arts-based workshops at Bienvenu with paid student facilitators from the Market Theatre Laboratory and Wits School of the Arts and arts facilitator mentors, both independent practitioners and practitioners from The Hillbrow Theatre Foundation, Drama for Life, and Wits School of the Arts. Footage from the *Izithombe 2094* playmaking

process was eventually turned into a short documentary. I ran theatre and performance-based workshops with informal traders in the Bertrams, Lorentzville and Judith's Paarl area, as part of a project called Maker's Valley[41]

Video 16.1: Documentary on the playmaking process of *Izithombe 2094* – here. Videography by Palesa Shongwe, video editing by Dominique Little.

Other less direct iterations are still resonating through my work today, as I continue to work with 'thinking through making' and the notion of correspondence as methodology. I have continued to use and develop synaesthetic place exploration methods in a range of research contexts and through sharing them with undergraduate and postgraduate students and early career researcher colleagues. Using my theatre and performance-making practice works in conjunction with what I read; and synthesising these two practices through the practice of writing continues to serve my fascination with space and place. I get more and more sense of how valuable this concert of practices is to my entwined artistic and research interests. I am more able to articulate them even as they seem ever more alchemical and magical.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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41 Link to the Maker's Valley website: **https://www.makersvalley.org.za/.**

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SECTION 3: DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

CHAPTER 17

HOW RDM COULD HAVE HELPED THE PaR IN MY PHD: RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT IN A PaR PROJECT

By Sanjin Muftić

INTRODUCTION

In 2019 I completed a seven-year journey towards my PhD, titled: *Establishing a poetics of planetary theatre: image and bricolage*. The project focused on investigating the building blocks of performance – what I identified as images – and how they are assembled to develop complete performances. I was also interested in the movement and exchange of such images towards generating cross-cultural spaces. I borrowed Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (2003a) concept of the planetary, which asserts the necessity of recognizing diverse experiences and perceptions on the planet in order to redefine who we see as the "other". My aim was to develop a poetics of the planetary, which places the body in an intermedial space to assemble (bricolage) a performance through the exchange and juxtaposition of already existing images from across the planet.

In my project I developed this argument in distinct practical stages by constructing live theatrical performance events: from the initial experiments of selecting images out of actors' repertoires (*Sample*, 2011), weaving images from popular media to build a performance (*A Day Across*, 2014), and intersecting images from distinct cultural media archives (*Yugo-za-Nista*, 2015). In all cases the rehearsal processes involved the performers either accessing their own repertoire of previously performed material or searching for media that could be used as fragments to reconstruct or re-perform on stage (such as scenes from TV shows, movies, cartoons as well as songs). These were brought onto the rehearsal floor and had to in some way be documented as references, as well as the resulting 'images' or bits of performance that were developed together. The thinking behind each iteration of full performance pieces was to outline a methodology for devising theatre through bricolage: a performative exchange of images to be layered alongside or on top of each other. I was interested in the interplay of images and how they work together to create complex images and story, hence the process of bricolage in assembling them towards a performance. I also engaged in the full journey of theatrical creation – from how to set up a space for a planetary exchange to dramaturgical and design choices.

In this extended period of research, I collected a lot of 'stuff' – the images, the performances themselves, the rehearsal process, the notes, but also a lot of media references that were used to generate material. Even though my methodology for the PhD was PaR, the final output was by dissertation. Thus I spent a considerable amount of time

remembering, re-watching recordings, reflecting, and writing up the practical findings of the rehearsals and the performances to suggest a methodology for devising performances while working with images. While some of the write up was done in-between projects, especially in order to be able to contribute to the next production, the majority was done after the PaR was complete. While I had outlined a few places and strategies to keep track of everything I was capturing, I discovered during the write up that my documentation process was scattered. There were different books for notes, different strategies for keeping track of notes. Any recordings I did of rehearsals or performances were on different drives and not clearly labelled. Many times during a write up, I would think of a particular moment in rehearsals or in the performance that would be relevant to an argument, and then spend a few hours getting lost trying to find my notes or any recording of that exchange to be able to offer the write up more 'thickness in description'.

While I was waiting for my PhD results, I began working at the library of the University of Cape Town and one of my tasks was to assist researchers with managing their data during their research project (research data management or RDM).[42] This forms part of the mandate that many universities around the world share in participating in Open Science, which promotes a more collaborative research approach together with opening up access to the results of research and its supporting data.[43] Thus, researchers can build upon each other's data as well as increase reproducibility and accountability to those who provide the funding and the larger public. RDM is necessary to enable this kind of sharing to happen, but, initially, RDM is there to assist the researcher in being more efficient with the resources they use in their research through very practical steps and tasks to be done alongside the research journey. Though doing these tasks requires additional time every day dedicated to administrative duties, the future benefits outweigh the extra work. As I up-skilled during my job and consultations, I discovered how the very things I was now sharing as good practices for documenting, organising and cataloguing data were things that I could have used to be more efficient with my PaR and the write-up of my thesis. If I had first recognized all the rehearsal processes, records, recordings and even 'images' as data and then looked at ways that I could have actively managed them, the PhD experience would have been slightly less frustrating, the write-up more articulate and the journey at least a year shorter. In this chapter, I will hypothetically re-do my project with the help of RDM: focusing on recognizing the 'stuff' I gathered as 'data', outlining guidelines for efficient storage, dealing with ethical questions around working with fellow humans and capturing the information about the 'stuff' I gathered. While I will be taking a look back, I will write up this hypothetical situation as if I was starting on my doctoral project at this moment in time, with an awareness of RDM.

42   For more information on RDM, please visit: https://lib.uct.ac.za/digitalservices/services/research-data-management.

43   For motivations on UCT's participation in Open Science visit: https://www.uct.ac.za/research-support-hub/research-data-managing-research-data/why-open-science.

RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT

Research Data Management (RDM) refers to the systematic organisation, documentation, and care of data throughout the lifecycle of a research project. It involves the careful handling of various types of scholarly information, both captured and collected, ensuring that this data is properly organised and documented. While the main goal of RDM is to support the validation of research findings, it is also there to facilitate the efficient and effective use of data within the research project. In essence, it is about responsibly managing the data used in research to ensure its reliability, accessibility and longevity.

WHAT IS THE DATA?

The biggest leap to make towards RDM practices is to recognise that the 'stuff' you are going to work with in your research is data. For those in the creative humanities fields, such as theatre and performance, this can feel reductionist, a stripping away of the unique ephemeral and creative qualities of what we work with. However, if I take a step back and consider data as any resource that I will use during my research, I can open myself up to objectively identify the various types of resources I will source, capture, devise and develop. Doing this will enable me to consider how best to describe what I am working with, as well as how to organise it so that I can refer to it more quickly later. In this way I am enabling a more thorough documentation of the many unique qualities of the types of 'stuff' I will encounter.

So let's look at possible data sources for theatrical research:

Figure 17.1: Data within the PhD project. Table created by Sanjin Muftić.

Types of Stuff (data)	Format
Images (source) Media sources for generating material (extracts from films, TV series, music videos, songs, social media snippets)	Digital media (audio, video, still) files or web links to sources
Images (devised) Recordings of performance images generated on the floor	Digital movie files (could also be photographs or audio recordings)
Acting journals (notes)	Text (images scanned as text) if permitted by performers
Director's book	Text (images scanned as text)

Types of Stuff (data)	Format
Events in production process, such as rehearsal slots, technical runs, costume calls, etc.	Text (notes around what happened in a rehearsal, purpose, who attended, objectives, images generated, etc.)
Design notes	Text or image
Design elements (props, costumes, etc.)	Images
Interviews with cast and crew	Audio or video recordings plus transcript or textual forms to fill out

In my case, the data is going to revolve around images and their development into *theatrical images*, whether that image starts as a reference from a media source or is generated on the rehearsal floor. These images are the primary data sources that I am working with, so identifying them as such, and describing and categorising them would greatly assist in seeing how they develop and were developed over the many iterations of the project.

I can also begin to consider how I will be capturing all of these data types and where to place my priority and resources. If images are so important, perhaps I need to consider ensuring that I have some video recording equipment available during rehearsals, or at least the ability to capture them with my phone. Capturing these images and the rest of this data into some sort of digital form does not mean I am distilling the ephemeral experience of them, but I can use them to guide the development process and even as evidence of PaR work that can be referenced in my write-up later. Together with keeping track of the various notes around rehearsals, design and directing choices, I can recognise the rich collection of 'stuff' that will assist not only with future productions but also inform the write-up.

ETHICS AND HUMAN SUBJECTS

There is a key kind of 'stuff' that could be added to the types of data list and that is of course humans – the performers and crew who will be involved in the development of the theatrical performances. Ethical clearance is required for most university research projects working with human subjects. This is frequently applied when interviewing human subjects and/or collecting personal information about them, and requires researchers to outline their processes for gathering data as well as for managing and storing it. Working within the theatrical sphere, humans are part of the data that is used when generating performance. This is something we do not frequently consider as we look for ethical clearance when working on theatrical research projects where participants will act as performers. In the case of PaR, when the iterative process of experimentation is key (we try, analyse, adjust, try again), focusing on ethics clearance processes at the start of the project would be incredibly helpful and, I would argue, more ethical. For one, it would highlight the nature of working with humans and the care and respect that should be shown to them, but also it would

enable the researcher to highlight what can be done with the data that is gathered from those humans during the performance creating process.[44] As part of ethics awareness, it would be crucial to ask performers to sign release statements and consent forms that outline the expectations around working in a rehearsal process, especially as performers contribute personal material. Additionally, outlining where and how the recordings of various PaR projects can be disseminated can solve a lot of issues going forward in the publication of the research. If the PaR work needs to be showcased online in some way, whether only to supervisors or the more general public, having the participants consent to recordings of their rehearsals and performances can eliminate any doubt later on in the project.[45]

METADATA AND KEYWORDING

To fully make use of the act of gathering all of this data, it would be necessary to also describe what it is that I am gathering. I need to make some time to tag, keyword or catalogue the various types of data. This would serve as the metadata for my data, or the information about what I am capturing. When we gather or capture something, in our minds we tend to hold a snapshot of the reasons why this is important and how useful it could be later on. For example, if I record a generated image in the rehearsal space, I can also immediately record that it deals with a particular theme or a particular dramaturgical process through some kind of tag or keyword. Later on, when I am writing up a chapter on that theme, that process or even that production, I will be able to quickly search for such a tag or keyword and find what I captured. [46] Giving themes/processes/productions tags or keywords would be similar to creating index entries that I can quickly access.

It would be too tempting to think that I would be able to remember this tag or keyword in my mind or at least write it down in the notes somewhere. However, from past experience, it is more common that I would forget it or find it difficult to find the place where I wrote down this keyword or tag. This meant that during the write-up there would be a long period of searching through all of the recordings and maybe even eventually giving up and deciding not to include it. A way to avoid this would be to set up a sheet or a form with pre-populated questions that I would answer in order to note down the information about what I had just captured. This could be a sheet of paper that I could digitally capture later or, if it is a digital web form, I could do it on a phone during rehearsals. The web form would automatically create a table or spreadsheet of all of the

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44 There is a developing inter-relation between the application of an ethics clearance and a data management plan (DMP, to be discussed later in the chapter with more detail). Both documents require consideration around where and how anything captured during the research will be shared or published. Thinking of this prior to starting the research, allows the researcher to consider what steps to take to ensure everybody's rights, privacy and contribution are acknowledged.

45 For example, if the performers and crew give their consent for online dissemination, the researcher may publish recordings of a rehearsal or performance in a data repository (such as UCT's ZivaHub – https://zivahub.uct.ac.za) which can add to their academic outputs. If there is no such consent in place, the researcher would not be ethically allowed to publish any recordings.

46 In the social humanities, going through text in such a way, by adding keywords for specific sections, is called coding and the most popular software to assist with this is Nvivo.

stuff I capture. Later on, I would be able to do everything from simple searches for various keywords and tags as well as some kind of analysis such as identifying how many times a certain theme or image had been captured. A form could ask some of the below questions:

Figure 17.2: Sample metadata capture questions/ form for a generated performance image. Table created by Sanjin Muftić.

Production project number and name	E.g. 03 A Day Across
Rehearsal day/time/slot	Date and time, including session number
Who was involved in generating the image?	List of performers/participants
What media references were used to generate the image?	List of media that was used as springboard to create this image
Director notes	Free flow text on responses to image in terms of production
Thematic keywords	Choose from a list of words that deal with the themes expressed in the image
Dramaturgical keywords	Choose from a list of words that deal with dramaturgical concerns expressed in the image
Design resonances	Notes related to theatrical design choices to complete, enhance the image (i.e. lighting, sound, projection)
Images triggered by this image	Other images that this image could connect to

In order for this spreadsheet of captured metadata to help with analysis, it would be important to set up a pool of keywords and tags to use so that the capturing is consistent. Computers and simple programs have a hard time identifying similar concepts (they look for things spelt the same way), so to assist them with it, having a pool of keywords to draw from would ensure that I am being consistent with the terminology that I am using. For example if I am going to work with images about people departing, I would have to decide on the particular keyword to use, which could be: departure, farewell, gestures of departure, moments of departure (it would help to pick something that is a good balance between specific and general) so that I could apply it to all other similar images I wanted to tag. This would ensure that all images that fit within this particular topic can be identified by computers as similar, so, when grouping them or sorting them, they could be seen as such by the human eye as well.

I can extend this tagging system to include the references of media images I was drawing from, any other notes, or even rehearsal techniques, so that I would be able to bring together the many bits of data that I had gathered and look across them to see how they would line up. This would not only help with the write up, but also with the process

of building a performance. I would be able to organise rehearsals towards building a performance by using the spreadsheet table to remember previously generated material that might revolve around desires, styles or aspects of dramaturgy.

Figure 17.3: Sample keywords in different categories. Table created by Sanjin Muftić.

Images	Thematic/Style Keywords	Dramaturgical Keywords
Reunited lovers	inequality	audio-visual juxtaposition
Farewell	satire	narrative
Off on an adventure	fear	object
First morning of work week	resistance	chorus

The metadata capture process can also be shared with the participants. For example, I know that I will be asking the performers to bring their own 'images' to the rehearsal space, either from their own repertoire of previous performance or other media sources. The instruction could be extended to have them also capture some basic metadata about what they are bringing, to log it with a few descriptive keywords and source information. This table of references could then be used as a data source for future generating of images. These initial references could also be linked to devised images in rehearsal and the final recording pieces, giving the ability to automatically annotate the components of a performance (e.g. identifying how the final performance image was derived by being able to cite the sources).

STORING AND MANAGING

With the considerable amount of data[47] that is going to be gathered, it is necessary to set up a space where it will be stored which can be central, findable and accessible during the lifecycle of the project. From previous experience, I had kept changing where I was storing the material: sometimes on my computer, sometimes on my personal Dropbox or Google Drive and sometimes on an external drive. It was scattered and not consistent because I also kept changing how I was naming the files. It was only near the end of the submission process where I had found a single place to store material and thought about creating different versions of every full thesis rewrite (it got up to M from A by the time of final corrections).

To find a place to store the material, the first avenue to investigate would be what kind of digital storage solutions are open to me as a student of the university. Many institutions offer some kind of central storage system, and increasingly that is somewhere in the cloud so that it can be accessed anywhere.[48] They also tend to be generous with how much data is available,

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47   Video recordings take up a lot of space, even with compression algorithms that can reduce a file size, so that a one-hour recording in HD could take up to 1GB (gigabyte) of data.

48   At the time of writing in 2022, University of Cape Town offers both cloud storage solutions through Microsoft Office (OneDrive) of 1 TB (terabyte) and Google Drive of 5GB.

in most cases offering more space than the free personal cloud services offered by Google or Dropbox. This space would only be available to me during the time of my registration, so I would have to plan for what would happen with the data at the end of the PhD. However, it will be enough for me to store all of the footage of rehearsals, together with all other data conveniently in a location that I could access from anywhere and that was backed up.

Figure 17.4: Folder structure for project. Table created by Sanjin Muftić.

Folder Name	SubFolder Name
Admin	
	MoU
	DMP
Project ## (repeat for each project)	
	Admin
	Ethics
	Sources
	Recordings
	Notes
Outputs	
	Presentations
	Chapters
	Submission

But just putting it into the cloud is not helpful, unless there is some kind of structure to where things are stored (see Figure 17.4 above). Saving things anywhere can seem fine, but it becomes very tricky over time to go through the plethora of digital files that might have been created in one unorganised location. It also helps to keep disparate things apart from each other – something like the MoU should not be in the same folder as the consent forms, which should be separate from the recordings from the rehearsal, which should be separate from the write-ups. Taking the time to outline a structure of how things are going to be stored would make it easier to find things in the future. It is important to set up a consistent way of naming files instead of calling things untitled or storing under their camera-assigned raw name. For example, starting with the date it was created and using abbreviations for the kind of item it is, could help identify the content of the file just by looking at its filename. It would help to outline this naming convention and write it down so that it is maintained consistently throughout the project. See examples of possible file names below

Figure 17.5: Sample file names. Table created by Sanjin Muftić.

2012-06-10_Proj-01_ Sample-01_Performance-Run	Date captured PaR project count Title or name Type of recording (performance, rehearsal, image)
2014-08-28_Proj-04_ Anthem_Image	Date captured PaR project count Title or name Type of recording (performance, rehearsal, image)
2014-09-01_Proj-04_ PersonName_Reflection-Interview	Date captured PaR project count Title or name Type of recording (performance, rehearsal, image, interview)

DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

These file name conventions, together with the folder structure and even the keywords are all the kind of things that can be outlined in a data management plan (DMP) at the start of the project. The DMP[49] asks one to consider questions about the 'stuff' you are going to use when doing your research: about where you are going to store the material during your research and how you are going to organise and take care of your data. The DMP is the starting point for good practice in RDM (it also encapsulates most of the points in this paper). The questions to answer can be challenging at the outset because one might not know exactly what you are going to capture, but it forces you to think through a little bit more – going from a possible methodology into the practicalities of how you are going to keep everything organised as you do your research. One of the things about the DMP is that it is always possible to go back and adjust it and leave the record of it so that if you forget how you should name a file, or where you should store it or what your keywords are, you can go back to the document and look it up. It becomes your own guide to keep track of everything that you do. [50]

Looking back at my project, given the amount of data and its long duration, it would have been incredibly helpful to have completed a DMP at the start. Not only would I have been forced to consider the questions outlined in this chapter ahead of starting the project,

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49 A requirement for all UCT postgraduate students to complete when signing their MoU with their supervisor.

50 Many academic institutions have online platforms that allow you to create DMPs and work with them throughout your research project. You can save your answers, share with others, and export in a variety of formats. At UCT there is the UCT DMP platform, https://dmp.lib.uct.ac.za, which runs off the DMPRoadmap software which is available for generic use here: https://dmponline.dcc.ac.uk/.

but I could have always come back to the document to either find out what I should be doing, or to make an adjustment to an administrative procedure.

CONCLUSION

PaR is an iterative process that takes time to develop, shape, and understand what it is we are finding out. A great deal of my motivation for focusing on RDM is about ensuring that observations and potential for analysis are not lost because the PaR process is not documented and managed efficiently. Through real-time capturing of the metadata around what is generated further analysis can emerge, which not only serves to aid the write-up of the dissertation but also helps in reframing the approach for the next iteration of the PaR project (as well as a potential digital showcasing of the work).[51] The trickiest thing can be to recognise that even as a theatre practitioner working in a creative field, what I am working with is data. If I can back off a little from the closeness of my own creative connection to my research, to look at the 'stuff' of work objectively and see it as data, I can manage it more efficiently, observing the full scope of activities from looking at how to treat recordings sensitively due to their capturing of human subjects to how to apply keywords to improve finding connections for analysis.

Seeing one's creative work as data doesn't limit your creative output or make it any less meaningful for you, but it allows you to activate your research mind alongside the creative one when working through PaR. If anything, this could be among the first things to unpack when starting any research project with PaR, to keep asking: 'What is my data?' Answering this question can help you qualify the data that you are going to be working with in order to leverage the most analysis out of it. While many of us creatively see the final productions as some kind of culmination of our work, because this is where the applause can be found, what we find along the way of creating it can also become data for others to engage with. That is PaR and it needs to be taken care of, managed and documented. It needs a DMP. The recording of our rehearsals, the references, the way we categorise what we capture, can open up avenues for others to engage with and build on the research when working with performance. We might even then consider sharing and publishing our practice to support other dramaturgical practices, but also for ourselves to keep coming back and re-discovering the many different things we have learned along the way.

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[51] The ReTAGS project archive, found on **https://ibali.uct.ac.za/s/RETAGS/** is a great example of a PaR documented and showcased project, as it contains interlinked media material from all of its production outputs.

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MOHAHLAUDI–BAHAHLAUDI (TRAVELLER-TRAVELLERS): A CASE OF PRACTICE AS RESEARCH

By Kabi Thulo

INTRODUCTION

The scholarly texts constituting Part 1 of this publication provide testimony to the fact that PaR is the kind of methodology that scholars like Mark Fleishman, and many others, have been seriously engaged with over time. Their committed engagements have facilitated a situation whereby the methodology has gained validity within various drama and theatre university departments in South Africa, India, the United Kingdom, Finland, the United States of America and elsewhere globally. My reading of these scholarly contributions is that they generally share the common denominator of explicating PaR in terms of its various philosophical underpinnings and defining characteristics. This observation is intended to state this chapter's point of departure and essential focus, which is that it does not mainly attend to the task of adding to the existing scholarship that defines the methodology in question. Instead, it serves as an offering to the scholarship that sheds light on the possible how to of PaR, which is a challenging undertaking to deal with considering the inherently subjective nature of PaR in general and its aspect of methods in practice. As such, it needs to be noted that this chapter does not necessarily articulate an argument. Rather, it is an articulation of my experiences of having engaged with PaR during the course of my doctoral study at the University of Cape Town's Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies from 2011 to 2022. Specifically, the chapter is an account of: (a) how I went about conducting my research, and (b) what the processes and objects of my research were.

The contributions constituting this publication are meant for a primary readership of MA and doctoral candidates who are grappling with PaR in one way or another, particularly the methodology's methods in practice. The mentioned category of readership is one that I am 'close to' as an artist-researcher who grappled, and continues to grapple with PaR. Then, it is worth briefly mentioning that the decision to undertake a doctoral study was informed by two reasons: (1) my personal-professional need to have a better understanding of my way(s) of working as a theatre director who was, and still is, invested in devising performance, and (2) making a scholarly contribution to the literature that explicates directing practice particularly from a south(ern) African perspective. My doctoral thesis: *The [un]knowing director: a critical examination of directing within the context of devising performance* (Thulo, 2022) became a culmination of those inspirational factors.

Essentially, my doctoral study argues that the [un]knowing director is the kind of director who makes their artistic decisions or choices during the moment-to-moment unfolding of a devising process through their intuition and collaboration with other theatre practitioners, particularly performers. The study clarifies and highlights that the [un]knowing director is fundamentally characterised by their particularity of employing non-predetermination as pertaining to how they arrive at artistic choices such as performance text, style, venue, technical and/ or staging choices. As such, an argument is put forward which philosophically argues for knowledge as an enterprise that is acutely emergent and/ or non-predeterministic in character. Furthermore, knowledge is a non-representational endeavour that does not resonate with the Western philosophical orthodoxies that have conceived of knowledge as being inherently presentational and a product of a schism between the human mind, body and surrounding environment(s). The notion of the [un]knowing director speaks of an epistemology and ontology referred to as the I-We perspective so as to articulate the study's specific southern African socio-cultural context and ideological orientation. Tim Ingold's notions of "wayfaring" and "wayfinding" (2000 & 2011), Henri Bergson's (1907) notion of "duration" and Leopold Senghor's concepts of "rhythmic attitude", "reason-eye" and "reason-embrace" (Diagne, 2019), have generally served the study by constituting its conceptual framework. In terms of its methodology, three creative research projects were undertaken in 2012, 2016 and 2018 respectively. Additionally, seven south(ern) African directors contributed to the research by responding to its questionnaire.

As a way of proceeding with this chapter's essential focus, I will now, and hereafter, refer to the two pieces of writing that depict my sense of PaR and *methods in practice*. As indicated by this chapter's title, the first piece of writing, written in South Africa's Sesotho language, is entitled *Mohahlaudi-BAHAHLAUDI*.[52] It is accompanied by a very basic English translation thereof entitled *Traveller-TRAVELLERS*. Notably these pieces of writing should not be considered 'separately', but are meant to facilitate some lingual accessibility for the non-Sesotho speaking reader particularly. Due to this chapter's limitations, I cannot discuss the problems of linguistic translation that come with providing the two pieces of writing. However, it is necessary for this chapter to provide the two literary expressions because such a choice serves the key task of foregrounding my socio-cultural subjectivities, which have profoundly affected my doctoral study. For example, the I-We epistemology and ontology mentioned above fundamentally stem from the Basotho philosophical principle of *botho* and the cultural practice of *letsema*.[53] Then, I trust that the importance

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52   Please note that *Mohahlaudi-BAHAHLAUDI (Traveller-TRAVELLERS)* appears as Appendix 1, immediately following this chapter.

53   The Basotho are one of South Africa's black indigenous ethnic groups. *Botho* is a Sesotho word that is the equivalent of *ubuntu*, which is an Nguni (isiZulu and isiXhosa languages) word. Both words denote the African philosophical axiom: "I am because we are and, since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1970:141). Furthermore, *letsema* is the Basotho people's socio-cultural practice of voluntarism geared towards the assistance and well-being of community members who are in need of essentials such as food, shelter and security (Lebeloane & Quan Baffour, 2008:45).

of such subjectivities is not surprising since they are the foundation of my being in the world(s) and intrinsic sense of knowledge as an artist-researcher.

EMBRYONIC MOVEMENTS

From the onset, it should be noted that I am generally referring to my study's *methods in practice* as *movements* based on three reasons, namely: (a) PaR is characterised by a researcher's undertaking of a series of specific bodily undertakings or activities emanating from their artistic practice(s); (2) these bodily undertakings require certain methods as a means of momentarily yielding the necessary knowledge; and (3) *Mohahlaudi-BAHAHLAUIDI* and *Traveller-TRAVELLERS* portrays PaR as an unfolding journey of sorts, which implies travelling (a series of 'physical' *movements* from one place to another). Emphatically, here, it is worth mentioning that PaR in general, and its aspect of *methods in practice* (*movements*), is not necessarily realised in any linear manner, although PaR-based postgraduate studies give an impression of linearity in terms of the structure of their pedagogical activities. This is a crucial point to note because it speaks to the challenge that drama and theatre departments are confronted with in light of broad university requirements that 'conceal' PaR's inherently complex nature because it,

> [...] is more directed at a not-knowing, or a not-yet-knowing. It creates room for that which is unthought, that which is unexpected – the idea that all things could be different. Especially pertinent to artistic research is the realization that we do not yet know what we don't know. (Borgdorff, 2012:46)

Now, the *embryonic* (initial) *movements* that I undertook, are those related to the task of getting my research proposal approved by the Doctoral Board at the University of Cape Town. Getting this approval can be viewed as a given circumstance for postgraduate studies. However, I do not think it is such a simple matter because it was during my engagement with the referred to task that I developed a *hunch* as to what kinds of methods would be appropriate for satisfying my study and realising its methodology in particular ways. I am consciously using the word *hunch* to indicate the provisional nature of a doctoral study's proposal approval with specific reference to a student-researcher's envisioned and proposed methodology and methods. As such, I think that it is very important for any postgraduate student who is keen on employing PaR to consciously accept the provisional nature of their proposal's details as pertaining to research design and methods, at the least. Furthermore, a consideration of an MA or PhD study's proposal-writing, submission and eventual approval is helpful to appreciate as a set of *embryonic movement(s)* because it also creates the necessary opportunity for a student-researcher to somehow reflect upon their preceding creative-artistic practice(s)/ process(es) as knowledge 'sites' wherein tools or methods for their prospective research projects could be located. This is an important point because it provides possible insight as to how a student-researcher can choose appropriate research methods with reference to PaR. Such importance is based on the afore-mentioned complexity of PaR, namely, its existing myriad possibilities and/ or

options of methods. In his explication of the 'general' characteristics of artistic research, which are indeed applicable to PaR, Henk Borgdorff's following assertion is aligned to this chapter's above suggestion:

> The distinctiveness of artistic research, nevertheless, derives from the paramount place that artistic practice occupies as the subject, method, context and outcome of the research. Methodological pluralism – the view that various approaches deriving from the humanities, social sciences, or science and technology may play a part in artistic research – should be regarded as complementary to the principle that the research takes place in and through the creation of art […]. (2012:46)

Interestingly, it follows that a student-researcher's encompassing activities of their proposal-writing and eventual approval raise the following necessary question: where is the artistic practice part of PaR, particularly with reference to methods, during those activities? This is because the referred to activities, at least based on my experiences, largely involved spending many hours thinking, reading academic texts and writing (proposal development) while excluding any artistic practice. I consider this to be one of the problems with PaR-driven doctoral studies' programmes that require a student to write a proposal, hoping for its eventual approval, without providing some structure and/ or 'space' for the student's artistic practice as a key part of their proposal-writing activities. Nevertheless, the referred-to *embryonic movement(s)*, also included my discovered need to reflect upon my most significant artistic practices/ processes that led to a PhD study as a strategy to compensate for the mentioned 'missing' element. Specifically, I reflected, as best as I could, in the form of vaguely recalling the kinds of directorial things (activities, strategies, methods etc.) I did in the rehearsal rooms of various devised performance projects. Notedly, not much came from such reflective efforts, which served as part of my rationale for undertaking a PhD. Overall, the major suggestion that this chapter seeks to make, is that the proposal-writing activities for a PaR-driven PhD study in particular, should be viewed as an *embryonic movement or set of movements* whose method-related choices should ideally be informed by a student-researcher's existent artistic practice(s)/ process(es), and whose outcomes are productively provisional due to the fundamentally emergent nature of PaR as articulated by *Mohahlaudi-BAHAHLAUDI (Traveller-TRAVELLERS)*.

The concept of *methods in practice* as movements suggests that PaR requires a researcher to appreciate that it is the kind of methodology that is acutely embedded in a trial-and-error like execution of particular artistic practice–derived activities. These activities would/could facilitate a researcher's development of appropriate research methods in a manner that is emergent and momentary in nature thus characterising the research process as a series of movements that 'solidify' over time.

TRAVEL-LIKE MOVEMENTS

This chapter's introduction states that the specific methods that enabled me to journey the paths of my PaR-driven PhD study were: (1) a questionnaire that was responded to by seven South(ern) African devising performance theatre directors; and (2) three creative research projects that ultimately operated as an integrated case study in the sense that they co-constituted an investigative cycle. For the reader's benefit, I think that it is useful for this section to provide pertinent details about how I decided upon those methods and how they operated.

The manner in which I implemented my study's *methods in practice*, was certainly characterised by adaptation as necessitated by practicing (lived experiences) and reflecting thereon. Regarding the first method, it is worth noting that the initially decided-upon method (i.e. as per my approved research proposal) was the qualitative research method of a structured interview and not the eventual questionnaire. I can imagine the possibility of one's regard of such a method-related development as having been inconsequential. However, from a 'novice' doctoral student-researcher's perspective, the actual practicing of their initially envisioned methods can be daunting as expressed through *Mohluadi-BAHAHLAUDI's (Traveller-TRAVELLERS)* various references to a PaR traveller's experiences of anxiety, fear, being lost, lack of clear sight/'unforeseeing' etc. The shift in this case was due to my realisation that (a) conducting interviews with my study's 'sample' of directors would not be effective because they did not reside in the same cities; (b) I would need a transcriber; and (c) it would take me much longer than necessary to complete my data collecting (interviewing) process, all of which were going to be costly to my research process in more than one way. Through reflecting on such an unexpected method-related shift, I was able to alter my *movement(s)* while travelling.

Specifically, reflecting in this case refers to my literal act of writing notes about how the method unfolded and sharing those with my supervisor as a form of verbal reflection geared towards a refining of the method. The study's method of developing, refining, disseminating, receiving and analysing its questionnaire was not 'flawless' in its implementation or in my practicing thereof, but it yielded a very productive research outcome of determining the plausibility of the [un]knowing director from 'other' devising performance theatre directors. If one thinks about it, these directors also constitute the 'We' part of my study's grounding epistemology, referred to as its I-WE epistemology, which is also evidenced by *Mohluadi-BAHAHLAUDI (Traveller-TRAVELLERS)*. The point is that a PaR student's choice or decision of methods might also be determined by considering the philosophical premise of their pursued epistemology and ontology and how best to champion it through their methods.

The second method included the qualitative research method of case study. Similar to the above-mentioned, this method was also adapted to satisfy the study's particular purpose, which required me to engage with my specific artistic practice/ process as a devising performance director. Literally, the manner of adapting the case study method meant my undertaking of three creative research projects in 2012, 2016 and 2018

respectively. Similar to an aspect of the discussion mentioned above about *methods in practice*, the content of my approved research proposal indicates that I initially envisioned doing two creative research projects in which the first project would 'perfectly' lead to the second. Obviously, that was not the case as will become apparent. Moreover, my need and eventual decision to embark upon the third project was definitely unforeseen by me. The third project came from my supervisor's advice that I needed to undertake it in order to have the kind of data 'set' that could equate to or be substantive of a 'complete' case study investigative cycle. Specifically, my undertaking of the third creative research project was necessitated by a research need to explore whether or not the study's key insights, discovered through the preceding projects, could shift in any way or if they would be sustained. The third project also played a role in ensuring that the feedback (learning) loop gathered through PaR and its *methods in practice* as applicable to my study, was robust. Hence, the three creative research projects serve as the study's co-constitutive moments and iterations of research.

Indeed, a reading of *Mohahluadi-BAHAHLAUDI (Traveller-TRAVELLERS)* is expressive of PaR as characterised by a researcher's manner(s) of travelling being akin to an emergent, i.e. non-predetermined, and quite lateral series of *movements* (*methods in practice*). Additionally, PaR's *movements* imply repetition as their *modus operandi*. *Mohahlaudi...* is suggestive of a researcher's possible scope of experiences during their travel(ling). Generally, these refer to a researcher's conscious or unconscious engagement of their senses as their journey (research) manifests in a non-predetermined manner. The PaR traveller clearly relies on their feelings (intuition) in order to undertake the necessary *movement(s)* while fundamentally being with 'others' along a path that reveals itself as a series of moments.

Concurrent with the case study method, in the form of the three creative research projects, my study employed the methods of what I have coined as 'quasi' auto-ethnographic   note-taking and journaling. The latter method, i.e. journal accounts, is one that I adapted from Donald Schön's method-notions of reflecting *in* and reflecting *on* a professional practice, both of which are aspects of his forensic reflection methodology (1983). The 'quasi' auto-ethnographic notes are referred-to as such because my study's aim was not to produce an auto-ethnographic text as a research outcome. Instead, I saw it as productive to somehow find a useful way of employing an auto-ethnographic approach in order to generate the necessary data materials, which were ultimately the devising session accounts gathered through the study's three creative research projects. An example of a devising session account is provided[54] for illustrative purposes pertaining to this chapter's discussion on *methods in practice*. As far as this chapter is concerned, there are four useful points worth sharing regarding my manner of adapting Schön's forensic reflection methodology and auto-ethnography.

Firstly, I considered the moments of my directorial engagement with a devising process as a way of 'determining' the structure of my note-taking and journaling accounts.

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54   Please refer to Appendix 2, which is one of the devising session excerpts (accounts) of my doctoral study's creative research project 2 (Thulo, 2022:122).

This led to a structure that includes *pre-session notes*, *during session notes* and *post-session reflections*. The *pre-session* refers to those moments prior to a rehearsal session when I would be 'alone' inside or outside a rehearsal room. The *during session* refers to the moments during which I would be working together with my co-collaborators inside a rehearsal room going through the moment-to-moment unfolding of a devising session. The *post-session* refers to those moments when I would be 'alone' at the end of or after a devising session. In terms of specific application, I, through practicing the methods over time, learned that my *post-session* moments (and pre-session to an extent) were comparatively more effective for my writing of more detailed and useful reflective accounts of a devising session. On the other hand, my *during session* moments were generally not ideal for my taking of time to sit and write my reflections on a session because I would be actively working with my co-collaborators, which required my immediate action-reactions as the [un]knowing director. However, I can argue that I did employ a kind of reflective practice *during session*. The main difference is found in its non-literary and instantaneous nature, similar to the one a surgeon would experience when undertaking a delicate surgery and not having the time to consult a medical journal to decide on a route of action(s) to take.

Secondly, it is definitely useful for me to re-emphasise that my application of these *methods in practice* improved over time, which should be expected due to the iterative nature of PaR. Relatedly, which is similar to my method-related shift mentioned earlier, I undertook creative research project 1 with the initial 'plan' to also use the methods of collecting my devising sessions' audio-visual recordings and my co-collaborators' written reflections of their experiences of our devising process. Once again, it was only through actual implementation that I came to terms with the ineffectiveness of those methods. Specifically, the method of collecting my devising sessions' audio-visual recordings was ineffective because I came to realise that it was inappropriate for enabling me to articulate my lived experiences of the moment-to-moment unfolding of a devising session. Thus, it was through generating written notes and journal accounts of a devising session that I managed to articulate my lived experiences, which enabled me to effectively extract my thoughts, feelings, (artistic) discoveries, lessons, etc. On the other hand, the method of collecting my co-collaborators' written reflections of their experiences of our devising process proved to be ineffective for my research context (Creative Research Project 1) because I decided to use it based on an assumption that it would be appropriate and/or effective. Essentially, the method's ineffectiveness was due to the fact that my co-collaborators were not accustomed to engaging with literary reflective practice and some of them were simply physically unable to handwrite.

Thirdly, I think that it is helpful to appreciate the operations of my currently referenced *methods in practice* as being interdependent because I could not see how each method would operate in isolation. This could probably be attributed to my study's subject matter, but it was certainly because of my need to devise a methodical manner of momentarily capturing my lived directorial experiences of a non-predetermined devising process.

Fourthly, which is not the least important, my study's *methods in practice* enabled me to develop a sense, or awareness, of the complex interplay of theory and practice

as applicable to its particular research context. I realised PaR's theory-practice interplay by literally focusing on each task of my research and trusting that my awareness and articulation thereof (interplay) would manifest in one task or another. For example, I undertook creative research project 1 with a foundational sense of what the [un]knowing director could be in terms of having identified the study's basic definition of intuition that provided the necessary theoretical clarity of the concept. This work was achieved during my *embryonic movement(s)* of travel, particularly the developing of my research proposal's conceptual framework that provided an initial explication of the [un]knowing director with reference to the study's conception of intuition as a way of knowing. Furthermore, my research proposal's conceptual framework was instrumental in aiding me with developing the basic terminology that I would use in naming my artistic discoveries as intuitive emergences, for example, and framing my perspective of the devising sessions as being fundamentally emergent and/ or non-predeterministic in character. This implied that I started creative research project 1 having acquired a certain vocabulary emanating from theory, i.e. my proposal's conceptual framework and envisioned methods to be practiced and a sense of the kinds of *things* (intuitive emergences) that I would 'look' for during the moments of my artistic practice. Relatedly, a general reading of my study's devising session accounts evidences the moments in which I would be articulating my engagement with theory through reflecting on my artistic practice and how my artistic practice yielded research discoveries that contributed to developing some of the study's theoretical postulations.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided the details pertaining to my doctoral study's *methods in practice* with the sole intention of shedding light on the pertinent specifics of 'what I did' to conduct the research, 'how I arrived' at its method-specific choices and the application thereof. Generally, the chapter has made reference to *Mohahlaudi-BAHAHLAUDI (Traveller-TRAVELLERS)* as its encompassing literary expression of what PaR experientially entails based on the [un]knowing director's perspective. A PaR-focused student-researcher is considered to be the chapter's primary audience and I can only hope that the salient contents of the discussion are adequate in suggesting that PaR's *methods in practice* should be derived from the researcher's deploying of travel-like movements in the form of selectively drawing from their artistic-practices/processes through their undertaking of reflective practice. Lastly, the researcher should find the necessary solace in the fundamentally exploratory, adaptive, emergent and iterative character of PaR and its myriad *methods in practice*.

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APPENDIX 1: *MOHAHLAUDI-BAHAHLAUDI*

Ke-RE mohahlaudi-BAHAHLAUDI kodung ya malla, fifing la bosiu

Ha Ke-RE tsebe hore tsela eo Ke-RE etsamayng e tlamfihlisa-REFIHLISA ho kae, lehore neng

Ke-RE hahlaula Ke-RE ntse Ke-RE khotjwa
Empa tsela ke ena, ha e emise ho bua le nna-RONA

Ho kgotjweng Ke-RE kgangwa ke mofuthu wa letswalo
Tswalo e leng motswalle wa lefifi
Na ebe lesedi lese le nhladile-REHLADILE?
Na ebe Ke-RE tla khotjwa hape?
Karabo e ngotswe ho tholeng le botebong ba lefifi

Ho hlakile hore tshabo ha se tharabollo ya bothata le maqakabetsi a boima ba tsela
Ho hlakile hore tshabo e ntjhesa-RETJHESA ka lethola

Ke-RE sale fatshe

Ke-RE sa ithathelletse ka kobo ya mobu wa meutlwa

Mobu, mphe-REFE karabo

Mobu, lesedi le hokae?
Mobu o fetola ka lethola

Kea-REA bona hore dijo tsa dikgapha di tshwana le moya oo Ke-RE o phefumolang

Butle, Ke-RE utlwa modumo wa ......
Ha Ke-RE tsebe ke wa eng

Butle, e kare Ke-RE bona ho hong

Fela Ke-RE sefofu-DIFOFU se-TSE nang le maikarabelo a leeto

Sefahleho saka-SARONA se bopame
Maikutlo aka-ARONA ke seikokotlelo saka-SARONA tseleng

●●●

Lentswe hotswa botebong ba phaphamo yaka-YARONA lere:
TSAMAYA-TSAMAYANG! O-LE NA LE MAIKAREBELO! OTLOLLA-OTLOLLANG MENOTO
LE MAQAQAILANA! TISA-TISANG MESIFA YA PHAPHAMO YA HAO–LONA!
TSEBO,.....TSEBO KE TSELA!   TSELA,....TSELA KE TSEBO!

KE-RE MOHAHLAUDI-BAHAHLAUDI kodung ya malla, fefing la bosiu

E re KE-RE kenetseleng

●●●

TRAVELLER–TRAVELLERS

I-WE am-ARE traveller-TRAVELLERS in the still of the night

I-WE don't know about where this path leads me-US to and when will I-WE arrive there

I-WE travel while I-WE stumble along
But the path is upon me-US, it doesn't stop to talk to me-US

In stumbling, I-WE suffocate from fear
Fear being a companion of the night
Has the light abandoned me-US?
Will I-WE continue to stumble?

The answer is written in the stillness and depth of darkness

It is clear that fear is not a solution to the problem and intense quagmire of the path
It is clear that fear is setting me-US alight with silence

I-WE have still fallen

I-WE am-Are still wrapped with a blanket made of the earth of thorns

                                                                          Earth, answer me-US

Earth, where is the light?

     Earth answers with silence

I-WE can see that the nourishment of tears is like the air that I-WE breathe

                                                          Wait, I-WE hear a sound of......
I-WE don't recognize the sound

     Wait, it looks I-WE can see something

But I-WE am-Are blind beings who are responsible for travelling

My-OUR face is disfigured
My-OUR feelings are my-OUR pillar along the path

●●●

A voice coming from the depths of my-OUR conscience says:
GO! You-YOU HAVE A DUTY! STRETCH Your-YOUR TOES AND TINY FEET!
STRENGTHEN THE MUSCLES OF Your-YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS!
   KNOWLEDGE,.....KNOWLEDGE IS THE PATH!   *THE PATH,....THE PATH IS KNOWLEDGE!*

I-WE am-are a TRAVELLER-TRAVELLERS in the still of the night

                                                          Let I-WE travel

APPENDIX 2: **CREATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT 2 DEVISING SESSION EXCERPT**

CREATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT 2

23 May 2016   *Day 10*

1. **Opening and Welcome**
   How is everybody doing?
   Contextualise the session
   Session Aim: Look at the performance materials that we have created thus far so as to see the possibilities of structuring them.

2. **Exercises/tasks**
   2.1 Performers' group physical warm-ups led by Bongani […]. [Predetermined; done]

   2.2 I need to inform the performers about where we are in our process. [Predetermined; done]

   2.3 View the performance material that we have created thus far. [Predetermined; done]

3. **Notes**
   3.1 Pre-Session Notes
   a) I feel like it would be best for us to spend today's session on viewing the performance material that we have gathered so far. I feel like it might be better for me not to predetermine a sought-for performance structure and to leave it to emerge intuitively.

   3.2 During-Session Notes
   a) While viewing the performers undertake their 'group walk' from one end of the room to the other, I realised that some of them are not focused and I decided to ask them to stop their undertaking and start with undertaking the exercise of counting from 1-20 as we had done in previous sessions as a way of facilitating and achieving a state of focus that our work needs. The performers undertook this focus exercise and task, which proved to be productive.
   b) [Intuitive Emergence/Imaginative Response] While viewing the performers undertake their 'group walk' for the second time, I imaginatively saw an image of them undertaking the very same 'group walk', but this time the difference is that they individually start to break away from their 'group walk'. This emergent image seems to be about a performative act that could start the disintegration process of the potentially established opening group performance segment and overarching theme/

concept/ subject matter of Human Connection. I think that it would be effective if the performers keep repeating their walk until all of the performers have broken away from the 'group walk' line by each delivering a repeated physical expression/ signature that they feel like captures the essence of their experiences of attempting to establish Human Connection within the context of their respective 'duets'.

c) [Intuitive Emergence] While watching the performers undertake their 'group walk', I intuitively decided upon the order of the performance materials presentations that I need to view as follows:

1. Rinnet and La Portia's 'duet';

2. Anathi and Bongani's 'duet';

3. Nicholas and Delight's 'duet';

4. Sibusiso's solo presentation that ends up including the other performers;

5. Nelly's solo presentation that includes Rinnet's solo; La Portia's delivery of Nelly's written text; Bongani and Delight's physical interaction; and Nicholas and Anathi's vocal gibberish interaction.

d) The session then proceeded with me viewing the performance material that we have gathered thus far, excluding Nelly's material due to her absentia, according to the above-stated order. As stated in one of my previous during session notes and/or post-session reflections, I have decided not to predetermine or impose a performance structure for our unforeseen and prospective performance, because I think that such a decision is appropriate for reaching in an [un]knowing way i.e. intuitively. Therefore, I watched the gathered performance material and just took notes regarding how the material can be strengthened and what structural sequence could I intuitively discover.

e) [Intuitive Emergence] While I was watching Sibusiso's solo presentation that ends up involving the other performers' participation and presence, particularly the point when Nicholas started making whistling sounds, I got a strong feeling that his segment/performance can be appropriate and structurally effective if it either precedes or follows Nelly's solo presentation that ends up including the other performers. This is mainly because its content clearly articulates the possible effects of an individual's repeated failed attempts of establishing Human Connection. I am affectively stimulated by his material because it reaches the psycho-physical expressive intensity that most of the other performers' materials does not reach. However, I am deciding not to finalise this possible performance structural choice until I view Nelly's solo material that gradually ends up involving the other performers' participation and presence.

f) After viewing Sibusiso's above-mentioned presentation, Anathi and Rinnet made suggestions about how his presentation could be strengthened. My listening to their suggestions made me realise that their suggestions emerged intuitively to them as they were participating in Sibusiso's presentation. Due to their immediate request for my response about their suggestions, I intuitively decided that we should put Anathi's suggestion to the test because of my immediate identification of its potential effectiveness on an emotive/ affectionate level and asked Rinnet to suspend our testing of her proposal based on my immediate identification of how essentially similar it is

to Bongani and Delight's eventual physical interaction during Nelly's solo presentation that ends up involving the other performers' participation.

g) [Intuitive Emergence] After our discussion of Sibusiso's performance material presentation and the break that we took, the session proceeded with me viewing his presentation and its incorporated aspect of Anathi's suggestion. While viewing the presentation, I got a strong feeling that it could possibly work as the last segment of our unforeseen and prospective performance. I imaginatively saw an image of Sibusiso's segment, and possibly our prospective performance, ending with him lying on the floor after the other performers gradually stop encircling him by individually taking their positions on the periphery of our devising/ performance space in a box-like shape that they would create. Coincidentally, this intuitive and imaginative emergence was similar to the suggestion that Rinnet made after Sibusiso's performance material was presented the second time around regarding how it can conclude.

h) It is worth noting that Sibusiso also suggested how his presented performance material should end. His suggestion was that it should end with him moving from the position of lying on the floor while the other performers continue to encircle him and end up with him joining the other performers as a way of articulating his state of giving up on attempting to achieve Human Connection with the other 'characters'. My immediate response to his suggestion was welcoming and affirming. However, I eventually asked of him that we should wait until I view Nelly's material for me discovering or having knowledge of a performance structure that should at least be informed by my viewing of all our currently fragmented performance materials.

i) The session ended after I viewed Sibusiso's performance material for the second time. I decided for us to end today's session at that point because I still feel and think that it is necessary for me to view Nelly's material, which I currently feel like is probably more appropriate to be structurally placed somewhere towards the end of our unforeseen and prospective performance due to its content and current staging, which I find visually and affectively interesting.

3.3 Post-Session Notes/Reflection

a) The major point of reflection that I would like to elaborate upon in today's post-session reflection, based on my retrospective identification of what became clear to me, is about what influences my artistic decision-making about what to take and discard with reference to the performance material that emerge from my collaborating performers' undertakings of the molecular, micro and possibly macro levels of activity. Given the fact that today's session is evidently located at the macro level of artistic activity, which is unfolding moment-to-moment, I am realising that my decision-making emanates primarily in relation to or based on my affective/ emotional responses to what I see my collaborators do through their spontaneous and embodied undertakings. My affective/ emotional responses seem to mostly be the first thing that gets triggered inside of me that inform me or illuminate the possibility of whether or not my collaborating performers' spontaneous and embodied undertakings have the emotional and creative-artistic

weight to be included as the appropriate performance material of an/ our unforeseen and prospective performance. I have realised that my trust in my intuitive-affectively derived responses seems to be the primary determining factor of the decisions that I make as an [un]knowing director. I have learned, over time, that trusting my intuitive-affective responses tends to work well with reference to my directorial undertakings as the [un] knowing director, because of my training as a director which informs me that the director is the first audience of a performance or performer-derived performance material. This lesson and comprehension thereof have further led to my belief that there is a chance, however slight, that an audience can have a similar emotional/ affective response to what they see a performer, or the performers go through during moments of a performance. In addition to my intuitive-affective responses as contributory factors to my artistic decision-making comes my rational thinking, which also occurs simultaneous to my intuitive responses. I have realised that my rational thinking seems to be more operative when it comes to my artistic decision-making with reference to the directorial aspect of staging i.e. composition, picturisation, rhythm, tempo, how the theatrical medium's visual, auditory and kinaesthetic elements become integrated and how an overarching performance concept/content can be generated in consideration of my collaborating performers' proposed performance materials. It must be noted that I have realised that there is a continuous interplay of my intuitive and rational faculties of varying degrees throughout my undertaking of a devising process. This interplay leads me to a further realisation of the existence of skilled intuition (as coined in Atkinson and Claxton's (2000) book on intuition).

MAKING/ DOING/ THINKING

METHODS FOR PERFORMANCE RESEARCH

In recent decades scholars globally have advocated for artistic practice or performance as research (PaR) in higher education institutions as a valuable and innovative way of developing knowledge and knowledge paradigms. PaR has been championed for extending what we know and how we come to learn about it in ways that are embodied, processual and integrate creative and intellectual projects and practices in productive ways. Much of the published discussion about PaR takes the form of overarching philosophies and less attention has been given to the granular processes through which individual PaR projects are realised. Each PaR process is unique to the researcher, their particular artistic practice and their research question. Each successful PaR process is also fundamentally rigorous in its research design. This handbook seeks to give insights into the bespoke sets of methods researchers develop to rigorously support their overall methodology of PaR – a 'how-to' in support of the philosophy of PaR.

The book has been made possible by grant funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for the *Reimagining Tragedy in Africa and the Global South* (ReTAGS) project (2019-2024), based in the University of Cape Town's Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies. ReTAGS has used PaR as its foundational methodology and seeks to promote PaR in the work of African and global South scholars. Part I of the handbook reproduces Mark Fleishman's writing on PaR, giving a sense of the key philosophical concerns in this research approach. Part II offers individually authored chapters by scholars who have come through postgraduate programmes at the Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies (formerly UCT's Drama Department). The handbook offers inspirations and guiding compasses to scholars embarking on their own, unique PaR journeys.

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