

Knowledge Production through Artistic Research: The Structure and Embodiment of Creative Action in Theatre Making

by
Ockert Jacobus van Wyk

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Supervisor: Dr Samantha Prigge-Pienaar

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DECLARATION

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OJ Van Wyk

April 2019

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ABSTRACT

The artistic research conducted during the respective phases of this practice-led study is based on a singular theatre-event that evolved through my collaboration with secondary school dramatic arts students, a creative-collaborator, visual art students, singers, musicians and artistic contributors.

The research undertaken formulates and demonstrates my impressions, as theatre practitioner and theatre pedagogue, on the ways in which the actions, activities, contributions and lived experiences of the participants involved in the making of a collaborative theatre-event collectively determine the operation of its **creative action**.

The intrinsic attributes of my praxis, as discovered and observed by means of the systematic inquiry and reflection of this study, hypothesise the structure of **creative action** to comprise a complex and non-linear interrelation of intentional, coincidental, conscious, unconscious, interactive and reiterative acts of 'embodied cognition'.

In keeping with the methodology of Artistic Research, the academic narrative utilises stylistic devices – including metaphoric titles, the insertion of images and sound clips, and typographic designs - to symbolise activities and occurrences of theatre-making that include: instances of invention; moments of insight; practice-based decisions and deviations; chance encounters; and fortuitous incidents and collaboration/s.

The study suggests that the actions, incidents and events that give rise to, and evolve from, **creative action** are subject to, and qualified by, conceptual, sensory, corporeal and visceral conditions and intentions that are respectively foregrounded at specific times and during specific phases of theatre-making.

By drawing on experiential knowledge gained from this collaborative and multi-media theatre-event, the thesis demonstrates and describes the ways in which **creative action** is realised and practiced through the implementation of individualised approaches and strategies that are geared towards the construction and embodiment of physical and spoken texts.

In addition, the research offers insights into the ever-shifting and multifunctional role of the theatre practitioner, pedagogue and researcher as the negotiator of dissonant heterogeneous voices in a collaborative collective who are actively involved in a shared creative experience.

OPSOMMING

Die artistiese navorsing uitgevoer tydens die fases van hierdie praktykstudie is gegrond op 'n enkele teatergebeurtenis wat ontwikkel is deur my samewerking met dramastudente, 'n kreatiewe medewerker, beeldende kunsstudente, musikante en artistieke bydraers.

Sentraal tot die studie is die formulering en demonstrasie van die maniere waarop die handeling, aktiwiteite, bydraes en belewenisse van die deelnemers betrokke by die skep van 'n teatergebeurtenis die gesamentlik werking van die **kreatiewe aksie** bepaal.

Die ontdekkings en waarnemings wat ek as teaterpedagoog en teaterpraktisyn, deur middel van sistematiese ondersoek en refleksie tydens hierdie studie gemaak het, bied 'n hipotese van die struktuur van **kreatiewe aksie** as 'n komplekse en nie-lineêre interverwantskap met opsetlike, toevallige, bewuste, onbewuste, interaktiewe en herhalende dade van 'beliggaamde kognisie'.

In ooreenstemming met die metodologie van Artistieke Navorsing, gebruik hierdie akademiese vertelling stilistiese instrumente - byvoorbeeld metaforiese titels, die invoeging van beelde en klank, en tipografiese ontwerpe - om aktiwiteite en gebeurtenisse van teater-skep te simboliseer, insluitend: oomblikke van ontdekking en insig; praktykgebaseerde besluite en afwykings; insidente van toeval; asook kollektiewe meewerking.

In die studie word gestel dat die handeling, voorvalle en gebeure wat aanleiding gee tot en die ontwikkeling van **kreatiewe aksie** onderworpe aan en gekwalifiseer, deur spesifieke konseptuele, sensoriese, liggaamlike en visserale toestande en bedoelings wat onderskeidelik uitgelig word op spesifieke tye en gedurende spesifieke fases van "teater-maak".

Die tesis demonstreer en beskryf, uit die ervaringskennis van hierdie kollektiewe teatergebeurtenis, die wyses waarop **kreatiewe aksie** gerealiseer en beoefen word deur middel van die implementering van geïndividualiseerde benaderings en strategieë wat gerig is op die konstruksie en beliggaming van fisieke en gesproke tekste.

Die studie het ook ten doel om die waarde van die voordurend veranderende multifunksionele rol van die teaterpraktisyn, pedagoog en navorser, as die onderhandelaar van die dissonante heterogene stemme van die meewerkende kollektief wat aktief betrokke is by 'n gedeelde kreatiewe ervaring, te formuleer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my eternal gratitude to my life-partner, Hanno van Aartsen, whose insight; collaborative contributions and inspiration; wisdom; compassion; patience and support empowered and guided me in my search for and discoveries of 'new knowledge'.

I also acknowledge our parents for their unfailing assurance and encouragement.

I am also greatly indebted to the collaborative collective who so freely and selflessly shared and contributed to this study – their talent and idiosyncratic perspectives enlightened me to the significance of artistic collaboration. In this instance, I would like to convey my appreciation and gratitude to the drama students, singers and musicians, as well as to Hanolet Uys who together with her visual art students enlivened our theatre event with the creation of 'the puppet chorus'.

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Samantha Prigge-Pienaar who continuously encouraged me to find and to believe in my own voice - her guidance and mentoring; patience; empathy and willingness to listen to my 'ramblings' inspired and facilitated my artistic and pedagogical curiosity.

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PRELUDE

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

The background to this practice-led study is informed by my interest to bring to light the origins, motivations, approaches, principles and strategies that are innate in my creative praxis. The devising of a performative narrative - eventually staged as a full-length theatre production titled *Missing* (2017) - disclosed my desire to undertake an inquiry into the epistemology of my praxis and to explore the nature of knowledge production through 'doing'. I was motivated to actively engage with, and communicate to others, the means through which I intuited knowledge could be produced in a theatrical environment.

The creation of a theatrical work is an embodied act. This includes all the activities undertaken from the initial moments of conceptualisation to the final phases of staging and performance. The making of a theatre-event is a 'lived' experience - a collection of actions, activities and experiences of all the participants who share in, and contribute to, the operation of its **creative action**. As a theatre practitioner, who also fulfils the roles of a theatre pedagogue and researcher, I have been led to explore the ways in which I experience and imagine the operation of this **creative action**.

Although it is common for contemporary theatre practitioners to refer to this theatre-making as 'process', I choose to employ the term **creative action** since the definitions of 'process' as "a forward movement"¹ or 'processes' as "a series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end"² do not adequately inscribe all of the spontaneous, unpremeditated and surprise encounters, incidents, events, observations and revelations that seem inherent to my practice. Although accepted theatre practices, such as acting, directing, playwriting, dramaturgy and scenography, may employ procedural methods and strategies, the semantical denotation of 'process' as "[a] method of doing or producing something"³ seems reductive; the implied linearity suggests a closed experience or activity which is essentially formulaic and pre-meditated. The term accounts for some of the patterns, systems, decisions and activities that derive and evolve from **creative action**; it does not, however, fully articulate the dynamism, energy, non-linearity, complexity and vitality of 'lived', creative experiences and to which I ascribe the term **creative action**. To establish clarity and emphasis, I have employed

¹ Collins Online Dictionary. 2014. S.v. 'process'. [Online]. Available: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/process> [2018, January 7].

² Oxford Dictionary of English. 2017. S.v. 'process'. [Online]. Available: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/process> [2018, January 12].

³ Collins Online Dictionary. 2014. S.v. 'process'. [Online]. Available: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/process> [2018, January 12].

an alternative formatting strategy (typeface) to conceptually and semasiologically distinguish **creative action** as gestalt, from isolated creative actions, acts or activities.

This study aims, therefore, to uncover and trace the systems and outcomes of collaborative relationships that transpire within, and are specific to, the creative contexts in which I function as theatre pedagogue, practitioner and researcher. The study aims to locate the conceptual, sensory, corporeal and visceral mechanisms that underlie and determine my own creative practice, as well as the projection, transformation, and embodiment of the **creative action** that inhabits and emerges from imagined creative spaces. The study holds the objective of determining how the content produced within imagined creative spaces may be translated in practice during phases such as conceptualisation, rehearsal and performance, and to pinpoint how its substance manifests, interacts and behaves within the physically demarcated places in which it occurs. The study will also aim to formulate the tension that exists between the individualised space occupied by the practitioner, pedagogue and researcher in relation to the socio-cultural spaces in which creative negotiations occur. Through exploring descriptors such as imagination, creativity and invention, this practice-led enquiry seeks to discover the extent to which **creative action** comprises constituent parts including, but not limited to, elements such as codified knowledge, tacit knowing, empirical knowledge, conjecture, chance and providential events, incidents and occurrences. The research undertaken is an attempt to account for the hypothesis that the creative space is a paradoxical environment of doubt and certainty, action and stasis; and that imagined and 'lived-in' creative spaces presuppose an ongoing dialectic between its negotiators and the contexts in which their discourse is played out.

HYPOTHESIS

In this study, I offer the supposition that **creative action** constitutes a conjectural structure which might facilitate a measurable estimation of how 'creative actions', 'creative incidents' and 'creation-events' operate within the context of my own praxis. The epistemological paradigm for this study does not support a Cartesian perspective of human behaviour, but rather one in which the creative experience consists of the complex and non-linear interrelation of intentional, coincidental, conscious, unconscious, interactive and reiterative acts of embodied cognition. The inherent attributes of my praxis infer that **creative action** does not always involve obvious hierarchical or strictly causal relations. Rather, 'creative actions', 'creative incidents' and 'creation-events' are subject to, and qualified by, particular conceptual, sensory, corporeal and visceral conditions and intentions which are respectively foregrounded at specific times and during specific phases of theatre-making.

AIMS

This study intends to describe, demonstrate and share some of the insights gained by means of a practice-led inquiry into my own praxis, with other theatre practitioners and pedagogues participating in the field of artistic research. The discoveries and observations that transpired through my own engagement with the numerous collaborators and contributors who participated in the making of this multi-media theatre-event might be applicable and beneficial to the practice of others, albeit that their work will be undertaken in different contexts.

NOTES ON METHODOLOGY & FORMATTING

The research conducted during this practice-led study focused on a singular theatre-event that evolved through my close collaboration as theatre pedagogue and practitioner with secondary school dramatic arts students, visual arts students, singers, musicians and artistic contributors.

Although this study is firmly rooted in my interactions, knowledge and experiences within the fields of theatre pedagogy and theatre practice, I have also adopted other non-subject specific perspectives on the diverse constituent parts that inform the creative action. As a methodology for understanding theatre and performance practices, Artistic Research acknowledges that to locate, describe, analyse and evaluate the complexities inherent in theatre-making, the practitioner may need to adopt a multi-modal methodology that not only draws upon performative, practice-based and autoethnographic approaches and strategies, but also comprises branches of knowledge such as phenomenology, embodiment, epistemology, ontology, psychoanalysis, literary studies, quantum physics, neuroscience and musicology. This study supports the views of leading scholars in the field of artistic research such as Henk Slager⁴ who asserts that “the methodological trajectory of artistic research cannot be defined in a clear cut [manner]” (in Michelkevičius, 2012:125), and Henk Borgdorff⁵,

⁴ Henk Slager currently holds the following positions: Dean of the Utrecht Graduate School of Visual Art and Design (MaHKU); Professor of Artistic Research at HKU Utrecht University of the Arts; Professor of Theory and Artistic Research at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts/University of the Art Helsinki; Tutor Curatorial Program at De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam; Founding Member European Artististic Research Network (EARN) and Member of the Advisory Board of PARSE (Platform for Artistic Research Sweden). MaHKU *Interdisciplinary Research in Visual Art and Design*. 2018. [Online] Available: http://www.mahku.nl/ma_studies/fine_art_lecturers_641.html [2018, October 24].

⁵ Henk Borgdorff is Academic Director and Professor of Research in the Arts at the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts, Leiden University, Faculty of Humanities; professor at the University of the Arts, The Hague, Royal Conservatoire (The Netherlands) and President of the Society for Artistic Research. *RESEARCH CATALOGUE*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/?person=7033> [2018, October 24].

who positions artistic research as similar “to both laboratory-based technical research and ethnographic field study” (2011):

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. [...] Artistic practices do not stand on their own; they are always situated and embedded. Artworks and artistic actions acquire their meaning in interchange with relevant environments. [...] Experimental and interpretive research strategies thus transect one another here in an undertaking whose purpose is to articulate the connectedness of art to who we are and where we stand. (Borgdorff, 2011:5, 18-19)

Since practice itself is foregrounded in this study, it further needs to describe and demonstrate the diverse and individualised methods within artistic, educational, creative, personal and collaborative occurrences, events, incidents, interactions, experiences and contributions. In this study, inquiry and theorisation that derived from the hypothesis were demonstrated and evaluated through collaborative and directorial conceptualisation, and construction of a performative narrative largely by means of improvisatory and experimental rehearsal and theatre-making methods. The discoveries made during the various phases of the study were captured by means of diversified methods such as detailed note-taking and journaling; one-on-one and group discussions; recorded and transcribed interviews with actor-collaborators and artist-collaborators; photographs and DVD recordings; and complementary writing and research.

To articulate the ways in which I have come to ‘see’ **creative action**, I have at times in this thesis implemented linguistic strategies to evoke my imagistic impressions of its operation; I have employed analogies, metaphors and symbols that denote the topography of my ‘conceptually demarcated landscape’ with its many ‘contours’, ‘coordinates’, ‘spaces’ and ‘places’.

Creative Action as Streaming

My symbolic landscape is populated by what I refer to as ‘streams of potential action’. Streams symbolically convey the idea of movement; issuing from sources, streams are energised and naturally propelled. They determine, shape and change - but also follow - the contours of a landscape. A stream is indicative of continuous activity - although systematically

moving towards its destination it may also unexpectedly and indeterminably change course, reconnect to other streams, join tributaries or form stronger currents. The force with which it moves might be gentle, or overpowering and frenetic; its ebb and flow may occur as tides and waves, frequently or periodic, temporarily quiet, yet dormant. Streams may determine their own parameters and may be self-referential; they could occur as cyclical or linear; free-flowing or constrained. The convergence of streams is suggestive of invention, intentional or unintentional foregrounding of a specific creative activity; moments of insight, deliberate practice-based decisions and deviations; chance and fortuitous incidents; collaboration; new phases; negotiations and re-negotiations; redirection, reiteration and interventions. Streams transport and transfer energy, knowledge and information; they are catalysts for action, transformation and regeneration.

Creative Action as a Web

The active agents involved in **creative action** are likely to find themselves entangled. Phraseology such as 'entanglement' - generally used to refer to "the condition of being deeply involved"⁶- and 'entangled' - meaning "to wrap or twist together"⁷ or describing "something caught in [something] or as if in a tangle"⁸ - is used in this writing to denote the rich interwoven relationships between the various agents involved in this specific practice. I also loosely employ the term 'quantum entanglement', which is a property of quantum behaviour⁹, as it presents itself in the context of this study as a suitable analogy to describe my impression of the operational nature of interrelated creation-events as comprising magically insightful, intriguingly paradoxical and sometimes counter-intuitive moments, as well as providential and facilitative interactions.

Creative action as observed during this practice-led study involved an interaction and interconnectedness of human participants. Interrelations with others - that is, connections to their lived experiences and subjective life-worlds¹⁰ - in turn activated a web of innumerable

⁶ Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. 2015. S.v. 'entanglement'. [Online]. Available: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/entanglement> [2018, January 23].

⁷ Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. 2015. S.v. 'entanglement'. [Online]. Available: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/entanglement> [2018, January 23].

⁸ Collins Online Dictionary. 2014. S.v. 'entanglement'. [Online]. Available: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/entanglement> [2018, January 23].

⁹ The science of Quantum mechanics aims to locate and account for the properties of molecules and atoms and their constituents and encompasses the behaviour of matter and light on an atomic and subatomic scale. Britannica Academic Online. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/browse/Physics/Quantum-Mechanics> [2018, February 18].

¹⁰ In Phenomenology, life-world, translated from the German 'Lebenswelt', refers to the world as immediately or directly experienced in the subjectivity of everyday life, as sharply distinguished from the objective "worlds" of the sciences, which employ the methods of the mathematical sciences of nature; although these sciences originate in the life-world, they are not those of everyday life, which includes individual, social, perceptual, and practical

experiential strands which continuously informed our shared creation-events. One of these shared creation-events was with my life-partner, a key role-player and contributor in my theatre practice, and to whom I shall refer to in this thesis as the creative-collaborator. Other shared creation-events were with actor-collaborators and artist-collaborators involved in this specific project, including musicians, singers, and puppet designers/makers. These relationships with collaborators and myself, as well as the interrelationships that emerged amongst the collaborators, yielded constant insights, contributions, observations and acts of inspiration to the **creative action**. I am inextricably informed and formed by my subjective experiences as lived within specific cultural, socio-political and personal contexts and engaged with a myriad of existential, hermeneutical and epistemological considerations.

As a practitioner, I am also aware of the delicate reciprocation between theory and practice. Based on the **creative action** that transpired by means of this particular study, I have come to consider theory and practice to be synchronous; that theorising, as suggested by Robin Nelson¹¹, does not precede practice, “functioning to inform it, but rather [that] theory and practice are rather imbricated within each other” (Nelson, 2013:62). I infer my praxis to comprise a dynamic reciprocal ‘shifting’ between theorising, learning, observation, rumination, experience and reflection (Nelson, 2013:62). I support the assertion by Nicholas Davey¹² that:

It is the nature of art practice to be more than it knows itself to be [...] It is only by attempting to think differently about art practice that many of its hidden assumptions can be recovered [...] One role of theory is to uncover the possibilities that remain inherent within practices and thereby liberate them towards futures already latent within them. (in Nelson, 2013:64)

Creative action as Multivocal

I have chosen to present my multi-functional role in this practice-led research by employing a collection of distinguishable narrative ‘voices’. These various identities, each indicative of the intrinsic properties of the role fulfilled within creative activities, are performed as distinct

experiences. *Britannica Academic Online*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/life-world> [2018, January 23].

¹¹ Robin Nelson is Professor of Theatre and Intermedial Studies and Director of Research at the University of London Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. He is also Emeritus Professor of Manchester Metropolitan University, UK (Nelson, 2013).

¹² Professor Nicholas Davey teaches a variety of graduate and post-graduate courses on hermeneutics, aesthetics, and specifically on the theme of ‘The Hermeneutics of Practice’ at the University of Dundee. His current postgraduate modules are “Understanding. Dialogue and Interpretation” and “The Question of Vision in Art and Philosophy”. *University of Dundee*. 2018. [Online].

Available: <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/humanities/staff/details/nicholas-davey.php#tab-Teaching> [2018, January 23].

archetypal personas - the 'theatre pedagogue'; the 'practitioner-facilitator'; 'the collaborator'; 'the artist/director-practitioner', 'the playwright' and 'the researcher' - who comment, discuss, analyse and reflect on the **creative action**.

A framework which is structured according to the aforementioned demarcated functional qualities also calls for a narrative that evokes multi-perspectives through the implementation of stylistic devices. As such, archetypal voices express their unique 'modes of being' by speaking in one, or alternating between, academic, personal, prosaic and even poetic registers. The archetypal identities are conduits: they articulate, activate, negotiate and navigate the confluence of creative streams, and are key role players in the **creative action** that I deem to be specific to my praxis. To demonstrate the unique impressions, insights, realisations and contributions of these archetypal voices, I have at times employed alternative formatting styles - typographically representing these alternating autoethnographic, academic, prosaic and poetic registers.

Arrangement of Content in Thesis

The content of this study is set forth in three *Parts*: each of these *Parts* represents a distinct phase in the conceptualisation and construction of the theatre-event under discussion. The scope and length of each *Part*, along with the arrangement of its material, is largely determined by my effort at simulating, as far as possible, the detail and the duration of some of the experiences, insights and events that occurred. Sections and sub-sections within the *Parts* of the thesis aim to effectively trace, describe and account for the many contributory stages that collectively gave rise to the evolution of each particular phase of theatre-making.

Part One, titled *Unforeseen Intersections of Streams*, foregrounds the initial phases of the collaborative conceptualisation of the performative narrative and draws on explicit data gathered from sources such as website news articles and televised news coverage on the 2016 Alexandra flash floods. *Part One* also includes, amongst other insights and realisations, knowledge gained from the collaborative collective's experiential and anecdotal accounts; impressions on the triadic interplay between my roles as practitioner, pedagogue and researcher; the discovery of individualised theatre-based methods and strategies for facilitation; observations on tacit and embodied cognition; and my reflections on the complexities and paradoxes inherent in my theatre practice.

Although *Part Two*, *Worlds as Bodies, Worlds as Words*, represents another distinct phase of theatre-making, it also finds its foundation in creative acts of collaboration. Whereas *Part One* primarily demonstrates streams of **creative action** as operating within a cognitive or conceptual mode, *Part Two* foregrounds streams of action that operate within a corporeal and sensorial manner; as such, this second phase of theatre-making focusses on the discovery

and implementation of individualised approaches and strategies geared towards the construction and embodiment of physical and spoken texts.

Part Three of this inquiry, titled *Converging Streams*, does not denote a particular phase in theatre-making, but instead offers the reader insight into a selection of significant creative and aesthetic occurrences, influences, contributions and decisions that were paramount to the creation of our theatrical narrative. *Part Three* offers knowledge on the origins of my personal and artistic/directorial impulse to create an imagistic and collaborative text based on the disappearance and drowning of Everlate Chauke; inspiration drawn from what I regard as the 'power of sound'; the use and impact of puppetry; and the utilisation of a multimedial scenographic stage aesthetic.

PART ONE

UNFORESEEN INTERSECTIONS OF STREAMS

*...My ideas are like shadows
and sometimes I consider how it would have been
to create a credo, objects, ideas
and then to live in them. I can understand
when tides most tug and the moon is remote
and the trapped wild beast is one with its shadow,
how even great faith leaves room for abysses
and the taut mind turns to its own requirings....¹³*

(Jennings, 1967)

¹³ An extract from Elizabeth's Jennings poem: "World I Have Not Made" (Jennings, 1967).

SETSWETLA

I do not often listen to the radio when driving home from work. On Wednesday 23 November 2016 I did. It had just been announced that the body of the toddler found near the Jukskei river likely belonged to Everlate Chauke, a four-year-old Zimbabwean girl who drowned after her father's failed attempt at rescuing her from the flood-water. The news report included a soundbite of an interview with little Everlate's uncle Kissmo, relating how he had planned to buy her a pair of bright white shoes as a Christmas gift. Now he would never be able to give the gift to her. I was suddenly and inexplicably overcome by a tremendous sense of loss and sorrow. I was overwrought. Listening to breaking-news on the radio, there, in the car, as I negotiated a corner before ascending a steep incline into the industrial underbelly of the city, I unexpectedly found the genesis of a play. Equally unsettling was the realisation that in the midst of a terrible tragedy, I had discovered the potential for a performance-piece; and like many other writers and story-makers had presumably done, I allowed the wellspring of ideas to take shape.

On Wednesday 9 November 2016 a fierce thunderstorm moved across certain regions of the Gauteng province in South Africa. The storm, with an estimated rainfall of between 90 and 150 mm within one hour, was so extreme that it was described as "a once-in-a-hundred-year occurrence" (Van Wyngaardt, 2016). Low-lying bridges were flooded, collapsed or washed away. Major roads and highways in and on the outskirts of Johannesburg, in areas such as Midrand, Edenvale, Bedfordview, Buccleuch and Dainfern, suffered severe flooding. Reports claimed that by ten o'clock on the evening of the storm approximately one hundred motor vehicles were submerged in the flood-water on key highway-interchanges. One woman was killed as a truck ploughed through a congested traffic-intersection. Another woman, pregnant at the time, was swept away by the force of the torrent. The bodies of those who were reported missing and feared to have drowned were later found washed up in remote areas, long distances away from where they were last seen. Train-operations were affected, and an estimated twenty-six national and international aircraft diversions from OR Tambo International Airport to King Shaka International occurred, as well as to other airports such as Lanseria, Wonderboom and Gaborone.

Our **creative action** focused on the flood-devastation caused in Setswetla, an informal settlement in Alexandra, (informally abbreviated to 'Alex', or commonly referred to as "Gomorra" by local residents), a township which forms part of the city of Johannesburg. Situated on the banks of the Jukskei River, Alexandra's original well-constructed housing is offset by its estimated twenty thousand informal dwellings and the township is described as

one of the most impoverished urban areas in the country (Wikipedia, 2016). It took less than one hour for the Jukskei River to flood its banks. The downpour and sudden rush of water caught many residents unawares. Godfrey Mogakane, who had been living in Setswetla for over eight years, described how the water-level in his shack had risen chest-high within twenty minutes:

It was raining and after twenty to thirty minutes, I saw the river getting full. I then saw water in my shack and I had to go out and leave everything. It was coming very fast...We had to save other people and children because it was so bad...When it's raining, we don't sleep, we have to see how far the river is flowing. (SABC Digital News, 2016)

Two hundred families living in 'shacks' in this area lost their homes in the deluge. Affected residents in the area ascribed the flash-floods to "outdated and unmaintained roads, inadequate stormwater drains" and a "multitude of blocked drains and sewerage systems" (Pienaar, 2016). Makeshift rescue operations conducted by residents from surrounding areas brought many victims trapped in homes and the low-lying areas, especially those who lived close to the flood-line, to safety. Some families were moved out of the area and were housed in temporary shelters or nearby churches and community halls.

On Thursday 10 November the aftermath of the flood laid bare the extent of its devastation. Based on images I observed, the scarred landscape was unrecognisable and seemed irrevocably changed. Corrugated iron and wooden make-do homes, which moments before the downpour had populated the banks of the Jukskei River, were utterly destroyed and their shattered remains lay strewn along the riverbank. I watched as news reports showed some startled residents dragging waterlogged cars out of the water, whilst others were rummaging through the mud and debris in search of their belongings. Uprooted trees, mattresses, clothing, furniture, kitchen appliances and bits and pieces of broken crockery eerily glided downstream. News of the four-year-old Everlate Chauke's disappearance soon circulated Alexandra. Search-and-rescue teams found no trace of the toddler who had presumably drowned after the tree branch on which the family had stood to escape the raging torrent broke and plunged the little girl head first into the flood-water. The well-spring of ideas continued to pour, unabated...

Alexandra residents, as well residents in other areas affected by the Johannesburg flash-floods, demanded answers. A blame-game, in which someone or something ultimately had to

assume culpability for the disastrous aftermath, ensued. Ekurhuleni¹⁴ municipal councillor Jill Humphreys blamed it on the lack of foresight and inefficient stormwater clearance by the Roads and Stormwater department: “how could they not know?...the rainy season is upon us and every stormwater drain is blocked”. City spokesman Themba Gadebe, defending the city’s regular maintenance of drainage systems, blamed the magnitude of the storm, stating that it is “inevitable that the drain systems will be blocked when there is heavy rain [...] because rain



Figure 1: Aerial view of Setswetla situated on the banks of the Jukskei River. Image ©2018 Google, Map data ©2018 AfriGIS.

water sweeps grime and foreign objects into the sewer line causing it to clog” (Cox, 2016).

When doubts were raised by concerned individuals as to whether local highways were adequately designed to withstand large volumes of water, Edwin Kruger, Sanral’s bridge network manager, commented that the problem could be linked to the soil’s incapacity for adequate water absorption around Gauteng freeways, and the failure of drainage systems in built-up areas coupled with “the blocking of stormwater pipes, culverts and bridges by homeless people” (van Wyngaardt, 2016). Jeff Radebe, Minister in the Presidency, blamed climate change: “the impact of climate change is being felt through the severe weather conditions in the form of inconsistent rainfall, drought conditions, excessive heat and flash flooding” (News24.com, 2016). Although our theatre text would not concern itself with the explicit dynamics of a feud that arose between implicated parties, nor nominate the probable

¹⁴ Gauteng province constitutes six districts, of which the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan municipality, east of Alexandra is the upstream catchment area of the Jukskei River. Gauteng. 2016. [Online]. Available: <https://www.gauteng-info.co.za/provinces/article/849/gauteng-districts-towns-and-cities> [2017, November 14].

perpetrators who aided a socio-cultural tragedy, the cast and I set out to construct a dramatised depiction of a perceptibly South African narrative.

THE ONE AND THE MANY: A NEGOTIATION OF ROLES

The initial impulse to create a theatre event was prompted by an emotional and deeply personal response to a non-fictional human tragedy. Initially, during the first few weeks of this study between late November 2016 and early February 2017, my endeavour to create a theatrical narrative had been a solitary pursuit. In my capacity as a theatre-practitioner who had not yet assumed other roles such as that of the pedagogue, facilitator and collaborator – within the context of this specific theatre event - I conjured many vivid visual impressions, pondered numerous theatrical scenarios and unexpectedly chanced upon other ‘sources’ of inspiration. The imagistic narrative that had been triggered by the events surrounding Everlate Chauke’s death constituted fractured filmic as well as stage images - strong impressions on the conceptual potentialities inherent in a theatre event had begun to emerge. In my mind’s eye a large ‘thrust-type’ performance space suited to the spatial demands of a ‘river-in-flood’ appeared as a feasible staging strategy. I envisioned life-size puppets that would emulate the motion of drowning bodies trapped under water and, since I had fortuitously stumbled upon potentially pertinent soundscape material, I also entertained ideas on multimedial scenography. I also wanted to construct, by means of devising and collaboration, a theatre event firmly rooted in or at least inspired by ‘authentic’ information drawn from the Setswetla events. To achieve a counterbalanced narrative, I turned my attention to sources other than my own subjective impressions - information in this regard was gained from my investigation on available documented material such as online news articles and photographs, podcasts, video files of televised news coverage on social media, and interviews with flood victims and their relatives conducted by television reporters and on-line newspaper journalists.

Creating and developing a performative narrative based on real-life events from the 2016 Alexandra flash-floods necessitated the exploration and understanding of a very specifically South African social, political and cultural context. The flood, as I discovered through my exploration of the available factual information on Setswetla and its residents, transcended the scope of a domestic tragedy. The events surrounding Everlate Chauke’s death exposed cultural nefariousness; the unbridgeable divide between ‘local’ and ‘foreign’ was still securely intact. Xenophobia¹⁵ had reared its ugly head and the indictment was against South African

¹⁵ Since December 1994, when armed local Alexandra residents demolished the houses of illegal immigrants and demanded their forced removal, outbreaks of Xenophobic violence have been synonymous with areas such as Alexandra and Diepsloot, which is another township on the North-western outskirts of Johannesburg. Diepsloot was “established in 1995 as a transit camp for people who had been removed from Zevenfontein (informally known

citizens living in townships like Alexandra (Wikipedia, 2018). Consequently, whilst still conducting my preliminary research and before the first phases of a collective creation-process had begun, I found that I had inadvertently positioned myself within an unfamiliar socio-cultural landscape. I felt unsure of how to navigate and dramatisise its uncharted coordinates. My original directorial intention had been to create an essentially imagistic and emotive narrative: I had neither intended to fashion a documentary-style narrative nor a slice of social realism. This initial stage of my practice, involving interactions with my own subjective imaginings as well as with factual and reported material, enlightened me to the envisioned theatre-narrative's requisite functionality. I perceived its potentiality to function as a flexible theatrical hybrid that would facilitate and embody multiple factual, subjective, reported, experiential as well as imagined and dramatised 'stage' realities.

These individualised directorial ideas and realisations, that encompassed both a multimedial scenographic conceptualisation as well as an 'actual data-based narrative', evolved independently from the collaborative-collective that would ultimately be involved in this specific theatre event. During the few weeks that preceded my incentive to stage the 'Everlate Chauke story' - when I had still been searching for ways to demonstrate my theatre practice - I had already determined to devise a theatre production with a cast of young actors. That I had been particularly moved by the Setswetla tragedy and become aware of the dramatic and theatrical potential afforded by its events, seemed a plausible reason to further explore my burgeoning creative imaginings on the flash flood narrative in collaboration with other voices.

Working as a secondary school dramatic arts educator at a college in Hartbeespoort Dam¹⁶ in the North West Province of South Africa, occasioned and facilitated my search for an 'ideal' cast of co-collaborators. Auditions, which constituted two sessions during which students were asked to perform their own choice of material as well as to participate in group improvisations, were held on 7 and 8 February 2017. The cast that was eventually selected comprised six South African acting students - two females and four males. All six actors, who were between the ages of 16 and 18 years, had received acting and performance training during earlier stages of their secondary schooling from myself; I thus felt reasonably confident that my knowledge of their prior acting experience and improvisation skills, together with their performance and conceptual abilities, rendered them ideally suited to this creative endeavour.

as eSgodiphola)" and is estimated to be home to approximately 14 000 residents. Diepsloot. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diepsloot> [2018, April 18].

¹⁶ Hartbeespoort Dam (also known as Harties) is a dam situated in a valley north of the Witwatersberg mountain range and south of the Magaliesberg mountain range in the North West Province of South Africa. The dam lies approximately 35 kilometres north west of Johannesburg and 20 kilometres west of Pretoria. The name of the dam denotes "gorge of the hartebeest" (a species of antelope) in Afrikaans. This "poort" (gorge) in the Magaliesberg was a popular spot for hunters, where they cornered and shot the hartebeest". Hartbeespoort Dam. 2018. [Online]. Available: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hartbeespoort_Dam [2018, September 17].

The collaborative phase in the making of the theatre event officially commenced on 10 February 2017.

At the start of rehearsals, the actors had no prior insight into the proposed content of the collaborative theatre endeavor. They remained unaware of my emerging artistic and directorial notions. Although I had all but exhausted available research material on the Alexandra flash-floods and its victims, I had not yet discovered or decided upon ways to translate and transfer the visceral impact that these events had on me to the cast that would gather at our first meeting. I arrived armed with facts, reports, filmed footage and photographs. The cast members had all heard of the 'Chauke story', but as I related the events and proceeded in presenting visual and interview-material, I was suddenly struck by what seemed like an unbridgeable gap between the storyteller and his audience. The cast seemed only 'suitably moved' - as one might be whilst watching a documentary film. They were not as emotionally entangled as I had been on my first encounter with the Chauke narrative.

This first discussion-session left me with a distinct sense of unease. Troubled by tenable grounds for the cast's supposed indifference, I switched off the lights in the rehearsal room, closed and locked the door behind me, and headed for my car to drive the long road home. The sky grew dark and thunderclouds gathered. I angrily stacked my research material in the boot. I felt both puzzled and unsettled. I had not anticipated, or even considered, that our first discussion would yield such a disappointing outcome. I cross-examined myself, considering possible reasons for why my attempts at communicating little Everlate's story had failed. I deliberated over my emotional entanglement in the Setswetla narrative: was I to conclude that the toddler's death had catalysed a personal significance which I could never truly articulate or transfer to others? Or perhaps I had misinterpreted the cast's reaction and they *had* been emotionally affected but not shown visible signs of such. Another possibility I considered was that the cast members who I had selected as co-collaborators on this theatre event were unsuited to the telling of Everlate Chauke's story; or, perhaps, this was not our story to tell. Regardless of the possible reasons, my perception after this first session was that of dislocation: not only was I uncertain about pursuing my intentions to dramatise the Setswetla events, but I also felt somewhat alienated from the actor-collaborators that I had chosen.

By now, thick sheets of rain had settled across the valley. It would be a while still before I could return home. I switched off the engine and opened the car window. I reached out to gather a spill of raindrops in my cupped hand. The sudden rush of water grazed my skin. This unforeseen assault on my senses left me feeling strangely exposed and vulnerable. Strong notions of separation returned; I felt isolated and alone. I had inadvertently measured myself against the storm - and lost. My hitherto perception of oneness with

the world, with my immediate sensory environment, had been transfigured by an encroaching apprehension - I now perceived myself not be a part of the natural world, but apart from it. I was on the outside of the thunderstorm, observing it. I instantaneously realised that I had to re-evaluate my perception of the defining features of the 'world outside' as well as my 'place' within it. Similarly, I had to formulate strategies to approximate the experiential and perceptual co-ordinates which informed and demarcated the actors' lived experiences.

As a creative-collective, our identities reflected the past and the present South Africa: as a white South African male, born in 1972, I represented those South Africans born prior to the country's first democratic elections in 1994, who were possibly trying to shed and disown the memories of a racially divided epoch; the Setswana, isiZulu, Sepedi and English cast members who undertook the journey with me were emblematic of a new age, post-apartheid youth-culture seemingly unaffected by the politics of the past. My conceptual framework had to be accessible to teenagers whom, to a large extent, belonged to on-line communities in which their socio-cultural contextualisation found expression through digital identities 'living' in cyberspace. My young cast's ability to constantly re-invent and reenact 'super-selves' within abstract digital spaces fortified my belief that 'shapeshifting' within a rehearsal space could parallel the reenactment of personae from our Alexandra-narrative. My challenge as facilitator was going to be discovering ways to illicit emotional responses to the narrative's place-and-event-specific data.

OUR PALETTE OF LIVED EXPERIENCES

The practitioner-educator, in the context of theatre-making, is an ambiguous notion. Assuming the role of a theatre-practitioner - who works within the parameters of a secondary school environment and whose aim is to train and teach theatre and performance as a (graded) subject as much as to realise their aesthetic intentions - is unlike the dramatic arts educator who employs the strategies of theatre-making solely to achieve educational outcomes. It has been my long-standing impression that the ideals and principles of artistic invention are not easily reconcilable with the pedagogies of the conventional classroom. Traditionally, the classroom is a place of systematic learning, where information is acquired by scholars generally in a linear, logical, progressive manner and knowledge is managed by an 'expert' or 'subject specialist'. Other than in schools/institutions of specialist instruction in the visual and performing arts, students in general education contexts are seldom explicitly asked to bring to bear their personal lived experiences on their process of learning; experiential knowledge is rarely employed, and even less so towards artistic ends. In the rehearsal room or studio, however, it is a prerequisite for young actors to be honest about their lived experiences: who they are, where they are from, what inspires them, and how they feel are drawn upon as essential elements in the conceptualisation of new and imagined worlds.

Professional training in educational methodologies and theatre-practice are the steadfast co-ordinates of my pedagogical practice. My educational practice, stemming from years of teaching dramatic arts as a secondary school subject, has equipped me with practical insight and empirical knowledge on ways to navigate and negotiate the complexities facing the practitioner-educator. As my educational practice has, for the most part, involved working closely with thirteen to nineteen-year-old students, I have learnt how to communicate with young people. I have 'invented' a personalised system of mapping and communicating the 'parameters' of the creative scope within a dramatic arts context. The unspoken means of the practitioner-educator are implicit and difficult to communicate in a common verbal sense as our knowledge is dependent on distinctly personal experiences and empirical evidence made visible through a uniquely singular and highly individualised educator-to-student context. I have always believed that actor-training within a secondary school environment should extend beyond the prescriptions of a syllabus-oriented pedagogy to expose students to dramatic complexity. As practitioner-educator, I do not shy away from familiarising students with current, innovative and challenging work; promoting an outdated, traditionalist perspective within a creative learning-environment would be counterproductive. I position the rehearsal room to be an environment in which discovery and understanding are actively cultivated; it should also be the place in which theatre and its many processes and products are honoured.

The ambiguity that I experience in my roles as both theatre practitioner and educator came to the fore in the creation of this theatre event. I came to realise that the emergence of a complex paradigm appropriate for this narrative would be dependent on the legitimacy of a multi-voiced interaction of different elements, and that my role as facilitator within the collaborative-collective paradigm would have to be that of negotiating its dissonance. My drama classroom, a place in which as an educator I daily employed pedagogical methods and strategies to impart subject knowledge to my drama students, also had to become a 'safe space' in which, as a theatre practitioner, I could engage with the acting students through reciprocal modes of learning and sharing. Through my interaction with the actor-collaborators, I became aware that the employment of emotional intelligence, the cultivation of sociocultural sensitivity and the innate ability to be relatable, respectful and receptive were aptitudes required of both the theatre pedagogue and practitioner-facilitator. I became cognisant of the necessity, at times, to distinguish between the roles of 'the experienced tutor/advisor' and of 'the negotiator', and to be sensitive to instances where an interplay or a 'shifting' of these roles needed to occur. I speculated that the constant triadic interplay between my roles as pedagogue, theatre-facilitator and researcher – the latter being the one who journaled, diarised, investigated, analysed, gathered information, pondered, composed and recorded the **creative action** - could give rise to a paradigm capable of capturing the multiple voices involved in our collaborative creative endeavour.

Our rehearsal room would need to be a place where the polyadic¹⁷ voices involved in our collective play-making process could freely share and reflect on their subjective life-worlds and lived experiences, and actively engage in and acknowledge the lived experiences of others. It would also need to be a symbolically demarcated space in which tacit knowledge would be shared, and new knowledge be created through a rigorous interaction of explicit and implicit 'facts' and 'truths'. It would have to be a space where the possibility of dismantling and renegotiating the inherently regulatory and hierarchical educator-student relation existed - our creative *space* would have to eliminate customary binary relations to become a *place* in which I could guide and might also be guided.

¹⁷ Polyadic involves three or more quantities, elements, or individuals. Etymology: early 20th century: from poly- 'many', on the pattern of words such as dyadic, monadic. Oxford English Living Dictionaries. S.v. 'polyadic'. Available: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/polyadic> [2018, September 19].



Figure 2: Members of the cast and backstage crew involved in initial discussions. Photograph by Jaco van Wyk, 2017.



Figure 3: Actor-collaborators exploring possible character relationships. Photograph by Jaco van Wyk, 2017.

The concept of tacit knowledge, first introduced by Michael Polanyi in *Science, Faith and Society* in 1946, comprises much of the ground work for recent studies about this sphere of knowledge which remains a “multi-dimensional and ambiguous notion” (in Puusa & Eerikäinen, 2010:308). As stipulated by Polanyi (Puusa & Eerikäinen, 2010), explicit data also holds tacit knowledge on account that it is contingent on the context in which it is read, when it is read and by whom. My decision to hold preliminary discussions with the cast was aimed at determining those elements which defined their individual contextualised lived experiences. Discourse, I suspected, could potentially elucidate explanations for the cast members’ respective ‘readings’ of the factual Alexandra data. I had to take into consideration that my ‘reading’ of the narrative was dependent on the contextualised specifics of my own lived experiences and entanglements, for as French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggests, “the body will draw to itself the intentional threads which bind it to its surroundings and finally will reveal to us the perceiving subject as the perceived world” (in Reynolds, 2005). The Setswetla events prompted, and would over time elucidate, a series of multiple associations and interconnections between the life-worlds of the individuals who were involved in the creation process. Explicit data established an entanglement between actors and their past and present contexts; disclosed artistic and inter-personal relations between actors; and determined my role as facilitator - in relation to my personal experiences and contexts, to the human agents involved in the collaborative endeavour as well as to educational, textual and theatre-based practices. All elements were inextricably entangled in a web of hypothetical, as well as indeterminable, relations.

It seemed that a plausible way of mapping the co-ordinates of the actors’ lived experiences would be to engage in individual and group discussions. **Creative action** as one-to-one discourse between the actors and I, as well as group dialogue amongst the actors themselves, could elicit the articulation of embodied experiences since “there is no meaning which not embodied, nor any matter that is not meaningful” (Crossley in Reynolds, 2005). The notion that all thought or thinking is embodied is supported by Nelson who maintains that practical knowing - knowledge that lives “before” and “beyond” words - is a “mode of knowing” distinctly associated with Practice as Research. In *Practice as Research in The Arts*, he observes:

To have an experience is to be confronted with a possible way the world is.
For this reason, the experiences themselves, although not judgements, are
thoroughly thoughtful. Perception is a way of thinking about the world.
(Nelson, 2013:57)

Our research on the events surrounding the Chauke family’s harrowing ordeal produced multiple versions of what had happened. In the end, two short televised interviews conducted

by Eyewitness News reporter Pelane Phakgadi with Everlate's father Shadrack Chauke provided seminal material which the cast and I used to guide us during the initial stages of conceptualisation.

[T]he day of the incident I did not believe that this would happen. The tree that my child climbed on was high and when she fell off the tree I didn't see her. I was washed away to one side while she fell away into the current. My wife told me that when she fell, she fell head first. She fell off the tree and the water current was powerful, and the water took long to subside...when help arrived there wasn't any possibility for anyone to help because the current was so strong. (Phakgadi, 2016)

The immediacy of the father's words, the events related by him rather than reported by relatives, bystanders or journalists, evoked strong emotional responses in the group. Although my subsequent research provided more insight on the general impact, facts and statistics surrounding the Setswetla tragedy, I never felt closer to Everlate Chauke's story than in those moments when the cast and I observed a father's desperate attempts to voice his emotions after having failed to save his daughter:

I joined [my wife in the tree] holding our daughter tightly to my chest...Everlate and I fell into the water. I reached for her but the water grabbed her from me...I still hear her crying. I tried to save her. I feel like I failed her. (Eyewitness News, 2016)

As co-creator of the text and director of the production, I would time and again revisit my own imaginings surrounding these last moments before the child fell head-first into the water. This visceral response, which would eventually be embodied on stage as two puppet-children (to represent the fate of one human child), lay at the heart of what we as a creative collective wished to portray to the audience.

CONCEPTUALISING A PERFORMATIVE NARRATIVE

In several one-on-one sessions, the lead Actress (Nobuhle)¹⁸ and I investigated ways in which she could relate to the events that occurred in Setswetla. *Iziengbe*, who became our narrative's mother-figure, was the embodiment of explicit data on Cynthia Chauke gleaned from the scarce available interview material and news footage. News footage, reports and images focussed predominantly on Everlate's father, Shadrack Chauke, and although present in almost all the available images, the twenty-eight-year-old Cynthia Chauke's silence cast her as an obscure, mystifying figure. The Zimbabwean mother seemed to float through the barrage of proceedings, enquiries and uncertainties that arose around her child's tragic disappearance. A news report which referred to her as "heartbroken" provided one of the only instances in which Cynthia verbalised her feelings: "[Everlate] was always happy. She always asked me when we could go to the salon to change her hair style" (in Luhanga, 2016). Because of this scarcity of material, Nobuhle and I decided to construct a fictionalised internal reality for the mother-figure based on available images. We found Cynthia's presence unassuming yet undeniably powerful; we agreed that her stoicism was intriguing. What seemed to us a paradoxical image - of a mother's seemingly unnoticeable grief in the face of such tragedy - warranted and compelled us to acknowledge a range of complexities which lived beyond the written words and phrases of the press reports.

My function during the initial discussion-sessions with Nobuhle would be to discover an 'ideal' way of initiating and establishing connections to the fictional world which we were about to create. These first one-to-one discussion-sessions which preceded text-construction or rehearsals, allowed Nobuhle and I to freely share anecdotal and experiential information. As facilitator, I was left with the distinct impression that to establish connections between the actors, their life-worlds and the multiple worlds of the text, I would probably have to offer individualised and actor-specific approaches. Having previously directed the individual members of our creative-collective in drama productions and having instructed them in both the theoretical and practical complements of dramatic arts during three consecutive years of their schooling, I was able to infer potentially feasible strategies with which to elicit the conceptualisation of 'the text'.

My approximation that the disclosure of implicit lived experiences could spur tacit knowledge into the realm of explicit knowing, is echoed by Japanese business experts Nonaka and Takeuchi¹⁹ in their contributions to the discourse on knowledge management. Nonaka

¹⁸ Nobuhle is a pseudonym. The student's real name is not disclosed.

¹⁹ Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Takeuchi are two leading Japanese business experts who ascribe the success of Japanese companies to their ability to create and implement new knowledge. The 'Nonaka and Takeuchi model' is founded on holistic principles of knowledge creation and the management of 'serendipity'. The authors maintain that there exist two types of knowledge: "explicit knowledge, contained in manuals and procedures, and tacit

and Takeuchi suggest that the production of knowledge evolves from the “spiraling” interplay between explicit and implicit data (in Scharmer, 2001:138-143). They describe knowledge produced by the “knowledge spiral” as “tacit-embodied” data which encompasses knowledge on our lived experiences. “Tacit-embodied knowledge” denotes a living process and is based on action. Capturing this type of knowledge requires ‘reflection on action’ and “reflecting on one’s own actions” (Nonaka & Takeuchi in Scharmer, 2001:138-143). Nelson’s (2013) multi-modal epistemological model for *Practice as Research* outlines what he refers to as “know-how, insider and close-up knowing” as constituting “embodied cognition”. Nelson’s ideas support Polanyi in his belief that “by elucidating the way our bodily process participate[s] in our perceptions [...] will throw light on the bodily roots of all thoughts, including man’s highest creative powers” (Nelson, 2013:57).

Nelson’s advocacy of action, of “doing-knowing”, as central to the production of knowledge would become resonant in my own practice. My decision as facilitator to set in motion the action of group conversations subsequently afforded the creative-collective (myself included) opportunities to carry out actions - we set out to *remember* past experiences; we *pondered*, *discovered* and *imagined* alternative ‘realities’ and aimed to *accomplish* tasks or exercises such as to *be still*, to *listen* or to honestly *engage* or *share* our thoughts with the group. Our conversations disclosed some of the details of our lived experiences, and in our attempts to understand what we perceived, our “procedural knowledge”, incrementally facilitated our subsequent “creative actions” (Nelson, 2013:57).

I was surprised to learn that individuals such as the members of the Chauke family, their township-environment and the conditions under which they lived, and the likelihood of a natural disaster (with ramifications resembling that of the Alexandra flash-floods), were not foreign or unknown to Nobuhle. In 2012 a devastating tornado²⁰ ripped through the Tlholong Township near Kestell²¹ in the Free State Province of South Africa where she was raised, and almost destroyed her home. She recalled that “there [were] no roads, only sand, a lot of sand...a communal hall, a communal school, spaza shops and a lady who cooked for

knowledge, learned only by experience, and communicated only indirectly, through metaphor and analogy”. Nonaka and Takeuchi maintain that influences such as Zen Buddhism enlightened them to the idea of the “oneness of humanity and nature, body and mind, and self and the other”.

Virkus, *Theoretical Models of Information and Knowledge Management*. 2014. [Online]. Available: http://www.tlu.ee/~sirvir/IKM/Theoretical_models_of_Information_and_Knowledge_Management/the_nonaka_and_takeuchi_knowledge_spiral_model.html [2018, March 18].

²⁰ The tornado which occurred in the region of Kestell either severely damaged or destroyed thirty houses in the Tlholong Township. Thirteen people reportedly died when the bus they were travelling on was flipped over by the strong winds. A student from Potchefstroom University was killed on the banks of the Vaal Dam, and a farm labourer in the Bethlehem district also lost his life. Coleman, *Tornado causes havoc in FS*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.farmersweekly.co.za/agri-news/south-africa/tornado-causes-havoc-in-fs/> [2018, September 10].

²¹ Kestell is a small maize farming town in the Free State province of South Africa. It is located 46 km west of Harrismith and 45 kilometres east of Bethlehem. Kestell. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kestell> [2018, September 10].

everyone” and that “townships all have the same layout...no proper housing...[and] no proper sanitation” (Interview, February 2017).

These initial encounters with Nobuhle illustrated that I had to allow cast members to ‘tell their stories’. Their stories and the details of all that they could remember were not mere components of an auxiliary database which served as a sub-structure to support or embellish the Setswetla narrative. The creative-collective’s anecdotal and experiential narratives were primary data sources and indispensable to the emergence of their own, ‘authentic’ theatre-event. Based on memory, the sensory knowledge held by Nobuhle on what it ‘felt’ or ‘looked’ liked to live in a township-environment or to endure a tornado and its aftermath, enabled her to conceptualise an imagined present:

[W]e were playing outside and my grandmother and the other elders called us to go inside the house because the wind became very strong and it was unsafe...we did not live in a shack, but in a small brick house...I remember hearing a lot of screaming and seeing things flying all over and a lot of sand and dust blowing everywhere...After, we walked out and there were some shacks very close to us that were completely torn apart. (Interview, February 2017)

My facilitating of a conversation with Nobuhle enabled her to speak about past events. It also afforded me the opportunity to guide our subsequent discussion-sessions. Focussing on and revisiting pertinent moments from her youth in the township ‘unearthed’ further details on how she ‘felt’ at the time. Our discussions on the events that transpired during the Alexandra flash-floods, together with Nobuhle’s own recollections of similar past experiences, evoked emotional and sensory responses. As she spoke of people and places from her past, I became aware of a tenderness in her voice that had not been there at the outset of our discussions. Her manner of expression, previously factual and methodical, had become imbued with gentle and nuanced tones; she seemed somehow taller and her gestures were more animated - during these moments Nobuhle seemed thoroughly engaged in and to be ‘reliving’ both her past and her present. Nobuhle’s entanglement in past events and relationships with individuals, particularly her close family members, effected numerous and diverse sensations and interrelated personal associations. The interconnected ideas, memories and visual impressions that issued from her embodied experience led me to question my own personal entanglement in Everlate Chauke’s story.



Figure 4: Shadrack and Cynthia Chauke. Thulani Mbele. Sowetan. 2016. [Online]. Available: <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/2016-11-23-body-of-toddler-found-along-jukskei-river-will-undergo-dna-testing/> [2017, January 23].

In light of our discussions on the Chauke family and those which focussed on Cynthia Chauke in particular, Nobuhle and I decided to construct a dramatic narrative that would draw inspiration from and retain allusions and some direct references to Setswetla and its people, but perhaps more importantly, consider the probable complexities of a life lived by a Cynthia Chauke-like character. Nobuhle's recollections of her life in the township contained numerous references and fond impressions of her own mother. Her reflections affectionally referred to a determined and resilient young woman who raised her three children despite living in the shadow of her own failing health. Our conversations were centred around ideas of maternal instinct and particularly how the actress interpreted and related to traditional or accepted notions of motherhood. Notwithstanding the actress's prevailing impression that "what [she] remember[ed] most was the love and care that [her mother] had for her children...the instinct to always put her kids first", she also spoke of "difficulties, obligations and personal sacrifices" (Interview, February 2017). Our talks facilitated opportunities from which the actress extrapolated important opinions on motherhood. Her sentiment that the state of 'being a mother' ultimately embodied the tension between the preservation of the self in relation to the safeguarding of her children proved, in the end, to be seminal to the overall development and

dramatic intention of the play. Along with our perspectives on the complexities of maternal identity, we realised that the emergence of a multi-dimensional character most probably depended on affording a dramatic situation which credibly created grounds for our character to make questionable moral and ethical choices.

Notwithstanding warnings from the Alexandra community, the young Zimbabwean mother in the original Setswetla narrative seemed to be the powerless victim of a tragically destined predicament. The apparent perils and contradictions inherent to living or having to live in a make-shift shack on the flood-line of the Jukskei river gave rise to conflicting perspectives among cast members on 'choice' and 'knowledge' versus what seemed to be the inevitable exigencies and hardships of disadvantaged communities. Nobuhle, together with the collective's only other female cast member, strongly rejected the female victim/culprit relation. Rather than creating a narrative that could be incorrectly perceived as a disparaging comment on female identity, the two actresses sought to construct a fictionalised context that would provide our dramatic persona with choices, whether wise or flawed, and the agency to resolutely stand by her convictions. To avoid the overt foregrounding of a context which largely implicated a socio-economic justification for the disempowerment of the inhabitants of Setswetla, we had to conceptualise a cultural paradigm which would vindicate our mother-figure's behaviour and decisions. The prevailing cultural divide that existed in Setswetla provided the backdrop against which we could have our character's drama play out. According to Nahla Valji of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVSR)²²:

[...] a rise in Xenophobia often occurs in societies in transition [...] When times are tough, people compete over an increasingly smaller cake and frustrations are taken out on the most vulnerable. In South Africa, while research shows that white South Africans are more xenophobic than their black counterparts, violent xenophobic attacks occur primarily in the poorest communities, which are overwhelmingly black [...] the African immigrants are perceived as being direct competitors for poor people's jobs and resources [...] Xenophobia in the South African context is not just an attitude: it is an activity. It is a violent practice that results in bodily harm and damage. (Valji in Rabkin, 2018).

The foreign/local relation provided the essence of our character's dilemma and to a large extent became the incentive for her actions. The actress's entanglement in her personal history once again proved to be beneficial to her understanding and insight into the 'feeling' of

²² The CSVSR is a South African organisation that has its roots in the South African struggle for peace and justice. CSVSR. 2018. [Online]. Available: <http://www.csvr.org.za/about-us/our-history> [2018, March 18].

estrangement. According to Nobuhle, it was not difficult to relate to the notion of being a 'foreigner', as she was from African and Muslim decent. Her mother's 'foreign', ethnic origins caused division not only amongst immediate family, but also markedly affected her status and acceptance within the broader local African community (Interview, February 2017). Nobuhle's own lived experience as 'outcast' enriched our collaborative conceptualisation of character and context and also fundamentally guided and determined the content, tone, style, and dramatic structure of our performative text. The play's text would become the embodiment of her entangled, lived, remembered and imagined experiences - her personal heterogeneous 'texts', in the end, constituted a multifaceted character whose fictional reality reflected that of a 'foreigner'. During these initial phases of facilitation our conceptual and dramatic 'place' still closely resembled the Setswetla narrative with Zimbabwe as our 'foreign' cultural context and our female protagonist a foreign Zimbabwean national. It was only later, during the phases of improvisation, rehearsal and text-construction, that allusions to a non-specific pan-African context which would include references to the Congo and character names from Benin, emerged.

Next, I turned my focus as facilitator towards the conceptualisation of what was to become one of our theatre event's central male characters. During these early stages of the play's conceptualisation, the cast and I realised that our decision to reconfigure the original Cynthia-like figure impacted on the degree of significance that the father-figure could have in the play and as such, our narrative departed from the 'authentic' Setswetla model. Inventing a narrative loosely based on the information drawn from explicit data sources granted us the licence to minimise his part in the flash-flood tragedy. Whilst the play largely revolved around the 'othering' of our female protagonist, the male figure - modified to be present in a diminished capacity - functioned as but one of the catalysts to the play's dramatic trajectory. Visual footage such as photographs and televised interviews and website news articles which predominantly focussed on Shadrack Chauke rendered the father-figure symbolically representative of the family tragedy. Apart from our knowledge on his role in the flash-floods and his immigrant status as a native Zimbabwean citizen, the cast and I knew very little else about this thirty-one-year old man. Consequently, we determined that the essence of his character would be gleaned from a fictionalised husband/wife relation. Together with the lead actor (Thando)²³, who portrayed the Shadrack-like dramatic figure, the creative collective conceptualised a hypothetical domestic environment that would define, not only the two characters' interpersonal relationship, but also outline and qualify their individual and joint connections to their immediate community and their world at large. To emphasise our female protagonist's 'otherness', we determined that the domestic framework would also include the

²³ Thando is a pseudonym. The student's real name is not disclosed.

foreign/local relation: the father-figure in our text, in contrast to his Zimbabwean wife, would hail from South Africa. This departure from the original Setswetla material shifted and expanded existing plot-parameters and permitted new stories and genealogies to evolve. We sifted through many possible conceptual scenarios and eventually settled on a sequence of imagined events that would demonstrate credible grounds for the two characters' relationship and their entanglement to others, and in turn, clarify our male character's local ethnic ties and origins. Thando and I had casual one-on-one conversations - similar to the approach that I employed during my working sessions with Nobuhle - in order to deliberate on his impressions of the Setwetla incidents. As we set out to conceive of a husband and father-figure that would suit the dramatic intention of our narrative, I hoped to facilitate experiential connections between Thando's subjective life-world and the 'actualities' of the Everlate Chauke narrative.

Thando's personal entanglement in Alexandra township facilitated his ability to connect to the Setswetla-text. Since some of his family members had lived in the area since the early 1990s, he bore a close connection to the township, its customs and its people. He clearly recalled early childhood memories of his grandfather and affectionally spoke of soccer matches and games played in front of his aunt's house in a lively cul-de-sac. His conceptual perception of the explicit data produced by news articles, photographs and filmed footage was infused with sensorial knowledge. Whereas Nobuhle forged an abstract Alexandra paradigm - based on her 'generic township-life experiences' - Thando's direct connection to the 'actual' context which he regularly visited during the course of our creative endeavour, meant that his recollections and experiences were made up of vivid, sensory impressions. The imagined world of his character was crowded by the smells of his grandmother's cooking or of looking on as beggar-children gathered around steel-drum fires in winter. His entanglement granted him passage to street-slang and dialects and to witnessing and overhearing fathers and brothers and friends speak of sports, politics, and women (Interview, February 2017). Thando's personal character research enabled him to make the following observations:

I listened to a podcast of the interview [with Shadrack Chauke] and I found him stale...his answers were very bleak...when he answered questions where you think he would break down, he was very unemotional...it sounded like [the events] did not bother him much...I have to make my own character...so I'm using people I know...I'm playing who I know...in my mind I see my father. (Interview, February 2017)

According to Thando, his connection to and interpretation of a relatable and typical male figure was firmly rooted in his own frame of reference. The implications of this personal association impacted on his interpretation of the father/child relation:

[My father] is not physically abusive, but he is verbally abusive...to everyone except my mother...especially towards me. I see it most. It puts me under a lot of pressure. That's why I keep on falling down and making many mistakes. (Interview, February 2017)

These experiential 'confessions' which greatly contributed to Thando's conceptual framework served as the building blocks of our narrative's depiction of a father-figure. An improvisation session that occurred during a later stage of the conceptualisation period and which was geared towards further character development seemed to indicate some of Thando's subjective lived experiences. When I asked him to re-enact his notions on fatherhood, his immediate and unpremeditated response, which ensued without a moment's hesitation, was to shout excessively abusive remarks whilst stripping off his belt as if he were about to launch a physical attack on the actress who took on the role of his wife during the session. This unexpected response to external stimuli, which caught all the members of the creative collective off-guard, seemed to embody his visceral experience of fatherhood and perhaps also commented on his perception of the husband/wife relation. This improvisation session firmly established our Shadrack-like figure as a perpetrator of domestic violence.



Figure 5: Nobuhle and Thando engaged in the conceptualisation of our narrative. Photograph by Jaco van Wyk, 2017.

The cast and I decided to create a female character based on Shadrack Chauke's brother Kissmo whose recollections of his niece, included as a soundbite in a local radio station news report, had sparked my initial creative responses to the flash-flood tragedy in November 2016. We determined that a gender-modification of the original Kissmo-character could advance our narrative's dramatic potential for the further exploration of female identity as well as facilitate our intention to reflect on the parent/child relation. Acting as the parents' mouthpiece, Cynthia Chauke's sister, Abigail Mokondo, was reported by Gabi Falanga as saying that:

[t]heir shack was washed away. They lost all their belongings, even their money that was at their house. It would be better if we could find Everlate's body and be able to bury her, then we will always know where her grave is.
(in Falanga, 2016)

Mokondo's brief words, by chance discovered by one of the cast members, prompted a significant and potentially definitive perspective on the necessity and function of a sister-figure in the text. In speaking on behalf of the bereaved Chauke family, Abigail Mokondo acted as an intermediary between her sister and an intrusive public; between individual concerns and common interest. Her supportive role, we concluded, could be protracted to that of a confidant in our narrative - in honouring the bond of sisterhood, her care could temper domestic conflict. In her calling to speak the truth, our sister-figure would also in due time become a significant catalyst to the action of the our dramatised plot. When I initially heard the breaking news soundbite on the radio in which Kissmo Chauke gave his response to losing his niece to the flood-water in November 2016, I had little insight into the life of this man who's harrowing tale would inspire me to create a performable theatre text. I had not an inkling that the little girl who he had lost and grieved for was "his best friend" and "the only one that [he] could really relate to" (Kissmo Chauke in Falanga, 2016).

I also took her to the mall, took a photo of her and framed it...She was such a beautiful child with a bright future ahead. She always lectured me on my alcohol consumption habits. Losing her hurts a lot. They told me that when her branch broke, they could just watch her. She drowned. It was unforeseen, that's why it hurts so much. (Kissmo Chauke in Falanga, 2016)

It appeared as if Kissmo Chauke's memories constituted a befitting panegyric on the life of his niece. His words also seemed to disclose his tendency to drink either too much or too often. Our text's re-appropriation of his 'questionable behaviour', which in our estimation cast

him in the role of an 'outsider', foregrounded and supported the foreign/local relation addressed in our text. Given his emotional attachment to Everlate, in addition to the account given on his "alcohol consumption habits", the cast and I considered our information on Kissmo Chauke as suitable supplementary material for the narrative's second female character. We entertained the notion of amalgamating factual and reported data gathered from sources such as Falanga's article, with that of our own 'invented' information on Kissmo Chauke and Abigail Mokondo, achieve a multi-dimensional sister-like character.

After we had established the premise of the sister-like figure in our text, the actress (Boitumelo)²⁴ who would portray the role and I contemplated various reasons for the character's alcoholism and why the toddler would be the only one that she could really relate to. Our conjecture during the initial phase of conceptualisation yielded hackneyed results: our speculations seemed stale and failed to capture the gravity and complexity of a believable character. This predicament was only 'solved' during a later and more advanced phase of the text's construction when an improvised conversation between the two actresses who portrayed the roles of the sisters unearthed probable and convincing grounds for our amalgamated character's excessive attachments her older sister. The subject matter that issued from this visceral interaction became textually and theatrically significant. The information contained within the two cast members' improvised exchange engendered a prominent leitmotif with associated images; additional character relations; reconsidered staging objectives and scenography; as well as emergent ideas on the structural framework of our text. Subsequent parts of this study will illustrate the ways in which the impact of this specific interaction occasioned the emergence of subsequent **creative action**.

We came to realise that our amalgamated character's burgeoning complexity hinged on the interrelationship between the two sisters. After we had grappled with these contextual intricacies, we determined that the bond between the characters would be set down by the shared traits of the siblings. Our sisters' foreigner status was entrenched by the fact that they hailed from a foreign county, and as both women in our dramatised narrative spurned patriarchal decree, their 'otherness' rendered them fiercely protective of each other and their corresponding interests. Our second female character would offer steadfast support and ultimately resort to extreme measures to safeguard and preserve the ties of sisterhood.

The personal entanglement of Thabiso²⁵, the second male actor, in the 'actual word' of Setswetla proved instrumental to an informed appreciation of the township-context that we set out the create. Most of his immediate family originated from the area and since his weekly visits to his family coincided with our discussion-sessions, the cast and I had a 'direct link' to

²⁴ Boitumelo is a pseudonym. The student's real name is not disclosed.

²⁵ Thabiso is a pseudonym. The student's real name is not disclosed.

data which pertained to specific questions or uncertainties that arose during cast conversations. His anecdotes delineated a diversified perspective on the “Gomorra” that we had come to know through news reports and filmed footage. He spoke of a vibrant and colourful Alexandra which despite many instances of violent crime, poverty and an overall atmosphere of gloom, also encompassed amusing regional idiosyncrasies and quips on widely known local personalities and ‘Alex’ street-life. A cast discussion which occurred during the initial phase of conceptualisation, proved to be significant when Thabiso repeatedly referred to events that regularly played out at one of Alexandra’s busiest taxi-ranks. He seemed especially intrigued by the liveliness and particular antics of a certain “mageza”²⁶. A regular passenger in the mini-bus taxi of this driver, our actor vividly recounted, and later reenacted, memorable incidents which contributed to the play’s context as well as to the demeanour of our fictionalised Mageza.

In my capacity as director of the production and composer of the dramatic material, my deliberation on finding a suitable structure for the theatre event appeared to reside in the stature and function of the taxi-driver character, Mageza. As initial considerations of a viable form for the narrative excluded the use of a ‘story-teller’ - the text would be dependent on an uninterrupted emotional arc - the cast and I had not contemplated the notion of employing such a dramatic device. The ‘appearance’ of the taxi-driver-figure, however, established a structural framework in which a character-narrator could indirectly voice explicit flood-material and embody the spirit of Alexandra and its people. We discovered the following journalistic data in Falanga’s on-line news article during a research-and-discussion session at the time of Mageza’s character conceptualisation:

When taxi driver Samuel Mokgehle’s brother phoned him on Wednesday evening to tell him about the storm, he rushed home [to Setswetla]. “When I came back I saw it was [already] demolished. I saw my fridge floating along on the water, but what was I going to do? My ID is gone, my bank card is gone. I don’t have anything. Now I need to start afresh and I don’t know where and how, I’ll just try to hustle,” he said. (in Falanga, 2016)

The final text for Mageza, which would be devised and constructed during a subsequent phase of collaboration, consisted of phrases and images taken directly from Samuel Mokgehle’s verbatim account interwoven with a fictional narrative spoken by our character-narrator. Penina Maluleke, another Setswetla resident severely affected by the flash flood was

²⁶ ‘Mageza’ is originally a Sowetan ‘slang term’ used to denote a taxi driver. *Sowetan Slang*. (s.n). [Online]. Available: <http://sowetanslang.blogspot.com> [2018, April 2].

attending to her day-job as a cleaner in Sandton at the time. According to Mail and Guardian news journalist Ra'eesa Pather, Maluleke had a terrifying impression similar to that of the taxi-driver:

When I came back, I was so scared, my mind was upside down because when I saw my shack, I saw everything is lost. (in Pather, 2016)

The inclusion of a character-narrator as a dramatic device afforded a solution to our debate on the most suitable and sensible means to communicate the explicit details surrounding the toddler's death, and the subsequent discovery of her remains. A photograph of Everlate Chauke's body, shrouded by what seems like an impromptu 'body-bag' comprised of white plastic sheeting, provoked strong feelings amongst the members of the cast. The photograph, which has become an iconic image associated with the disappearance and death of Everlate Chauke, depicted the little girl's body laid out on a green suburban lawn in Sandton, some distance away from where her body had been found. The image occasioned one of the cast's first interactions with the toddler's corporeality and triggered a range of sensorial reactions. Their collective outrage at the apparent callousness demonstrated in crime-scene photographs would be expressed in the play through a single character:

Mageza They covered her body with a plastic sheet!
 Like no one knew her, like she belonged to no-one,
 like she was 'lost and found'... (*Missing*, Scene 17)

The cast members were adamant that the explicit material on the discovery of Everlate's body should be incorporated in the text; we agreed that having the character-narrator verbally impart the graphic detail would be dramatically functional, appropriate and preferable to enacting or utilising other media to communicate the information.

Solomon Makamo, a labourer who had been doing construction work in the Sandton area on 22 November 2016, had the following to say in a televised ENCA²⁷ news report:

I arrived here feeling a little under the weather. So, I came here in the bushes to relieve myself. When I got here, I smelt something. The smell was not sitting well with me...I noticed the legs, then the body, but the head I did not see. So, now I was scared, and I told myself that I need to tell the others

²⁷ eNCA (also referred to as eNews Channel Africa) is a 24-hour television news broadcaster, owned by e.tv, focusing on South African and African stories. ENCA. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ENCA> [2018, September 10].

because there were reports of a missing baby from Alexandra...I called the guys that I'm working with...they came and saw the body. We told our boss and he phoned the police...I know that the [father and mother] are going to mourn, but it is not going to be the same because now they have found their baby...I know because I am also a father, so when I hear another man crying it also hurts me. (eNCA, 2016)

Our completed dramatised narrative would include verbatim segments that we transposed from Solomon Makamo's recollection of the event. There were other elements contained within the interview itself, however, which proved valuable and essential to the conceptualisation of the text. In the background of Makamo's position on the riverbank during the interview could be seen bedsheets, miscellaneous items of clothing and the torn remains of many multi-coloured, plastic shopping bags dangling from the trees. These powerful and haunting images encapsulated the tragedy of the Setswetla narrative and to large extent determined the imagined space in which Everlate Chauke's story would be played out:

Mageza It looked as if corpses had been strung all
 along the branches. Everything was so quiet there.
 Nobody searching for nobody. Nothing.
 It was like I had walked into a graveyard.
 Like sacred ground. (*Missing*, Scene 17).



Figure 6: *The recovered remains of Everlate Chauke.* Image retrieved from <http://www.ann7.com/everlate-chaukes-parents-to-identify-body/> [2017, January 14].



Figure 7: *Flood debris in the Sandton area near the site where Everlate Chauke's body was discovered.* Ra'eesa Pather. 2016. [Online]. Available: <https://mg.co.za/article/2016-11-10-still-no-shelter-for-alex-flood-victims-foreign-nationals-search-for-lost-documents> [2017, January 26].

One-on-one conversations and group discussions were aimed at discovering, actively engaging in, sharing and reflecting on our individual, as well as the collective's, 'tacit-embodied knowledge' or tacit 'embodied cognition'. These conversational work-sessions which occurred during the initial stages of conceptualisation revealed our 'knowing' to encompass corporeal, sensorial, visceral and perceptual means - our attempts in this regard were towards making our subjective lived experiences knowable and observable. Our discussions also illuminated 'undiscovered' or 'concealed' knowledge on 'that which we did not know [that] we knew' and 'that which we did not know we could do'. The cast members had not known, for instance, that they were capable of conceptualising multi-dimensional characters, constructing the foundation for a dramatic narrative or dialogue, or that they could conceive of and interpret personal symbolism. I had not known, until I actively assumed the role of the facilitator, that I knew how to guide and effectively manage these specific work sessions. I did not know to trust in my ability to correctly gauge the degree to which one-on-one and group conversations would activate and disclose what Otto Scharmer²⁸ calls the "unmentioned, unthought-of, undealt with; wordless, secret and unnoticed" implicit understanding of our lived experiences (Scharmer, 2001:137-150).

My collaborative approach was to bring about amenable channels of communication between all the members of the creative collective. My objective and all subsequent procedural action in this regard was to create an organic, unbiased and truthful theatre event and comprised efforts at discovering the means to negotiate connections between personal subjective experiences and the performative demands of our dramatised narrative. My practice-led research in this instance was not, for example, aimed at finding or 'interrogating' typically recognisable performance or acting techniques of impersonating extant dramatic personae, but rather at experimenting with 'impromptu' and individualised strategies for constructing characters and facilitating the experiential means that would enable the actor-collaborators to perform what they had invented.

Rather than demonstrate an ongoing tension between heterogeneous subjective realities, our negotiated conceptual paradigm established a 'common ground' for lived experience. Our multi-modal epistemological framework, as I had hoped, became a liminal and transformative space which modified, redefined and transfigured long-held perceptions and allowed the production of knowledge, that is the making of 'new meanings', to occur. In the words of creative researcher and artist Professor Paul Carter²⁹:

²⁸ Otto Scharmer is a Senior Lecturer in the MIT Sloan School of Management and founder of the Presencing Institute. His work focuses on the core principles and applications of awareness-based systems change. *Otto Scharmer*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <http://www.ottoscharmer.com/bio> [2018, September 10].

²⁹ Professor Paul Carter is an internationally acclaimed academic, artist, industry collaborator, creative researcher, design mentor and public lecturer. His book **Material Thinking** (2005) is regarded as seminal to the theory and

The condition of invention - the state of being that allows a state of becoming to emerge - is a perception, or recognition, of the ambiguity of appearances. Invention begins when what signifies exceeds its signification - when what means one thing, or conventionally functions in one role, discloses other possibilities. In general a double movement occurs, in which the found elements are rendered strange, and of re-contextualisation, in which new families of associations and structures of meaning are established. (in Nelson, 2013:40-41)

...THE REST IS SILENCE³⁰

There is often a passage in even the most thoroughly interpreted dream which has to be left obscure; this is because we become aware during the work of interpretation that at that point there is a tangle of dream-thoughts which cannot be unraveled and which moreover adds nothing to our knowledge of the content of the dream. This is the dream's navel, the spot where it reaches down into the unknown. (Freud, 1900:525)

The initial stages of my artistic practice led me to discover that **creative action** does not occur as a predetermined sequence of events. My initial impression of **creative action** was of a nebulous composition of inexplicit causal relations. Although these first observations on the non-linear or non-chronological structure of **creative action** still hold true, my perception of its seemingly amorphous arrangement has changed. I now believe **creative action** - that is to say, the amalgamation of 'creative occurrences' pertaining to my practice - to approximate a complex network of interrelated activities which appear to originate from, and to be connected by means of, numerous 'synaptic incidents'. My visual impressions of creative occurrences are comparable to those of impulses being relayed between the nerve cells of the nervous system in that they appear instantaneously and 'magically' jump and cross the divide between transmitter and receptor. These incidents appeared to function as creative signals that passed between the elements and agents involved in the conceptualisation and construction of our theatre event.

On numerous occasions, my entanglement with the various collaborators who were involved in this theatre event – my life partner, actors, artists, puppeteers, singers and musicians - demonstrated that **creative action** continued or evolved irrespective of my physical proximity or direct involvement. This was evident, for example, at times when my life partner and I uncannily pondered exact and relevant questions about the theatre event whilst situated cities apart. Since the agencies involved in our **creative action** were fashioned by the same creation-event and, if we were to apply the analogy here of the behaviour of particles on a quantum level, since their close relationship implies that their properties are forever linked, then our 'fates' had become inextricably entangled. According to quantum physicist Professor Jim Al-Khalili³¹:

³⁰ Hamlet's dying words: "So tell him that, given the recent events here—oh, the rest is silence..." in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act 5, Scene 2, served as inspiration for this chapter's title.

³¹ As Professor of Theoretical Physics and Chair in the Public Engagement in Science at the University of Surrey, Professor Jameel Sadik "Jim" Al-Khalili OBE, is a British theoretical physicist, author and respected BBC presenter. *IMBD. Jim Al-Khalil*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2629380/> [2018, March 17].

[The quantum] world is made up of possibility and chance, it is a...world of phantoms [where] particles can multi-task; it can be at two places at once; they can be more than one thing at the same time. We cannot describe what travels as a physical object, we can only talk about where the electron might be, but weirdly it is as if the electron is everywhere at once. Particles can behave like spread out waves – it's almost like magic (Al-Khalili and Laverly, 2014).

I often pondered the inherently unique qualities of our theatre event's **creative action**: were its features predetermined, 'concealed' and 'discoverable', or did they come into existence by means of creative invention? I was very aware, for example, of numerous instances when the involvement of co-collaborators either defined, amplified or 'fortuitously' altered the course of the **creative action**. Random comments uttered in my interactions with friends and colleagues; moments of insight brought on by the unpredicted interaction of actor-collaborators; and encounters with television programmes or films, afforded unforeseen, serendipitous and seminal changes to our dramatic narrative. These occurrences contributed to my speculation that **creative action** and its creation-events are entangled and their properties appear to be indeterminable and unpredictable. Notwithstanding my impression that a definitive measurement or qualification of the express properties of **creative action**, and the means of its propulsion, is near impossible, I entertain the notion that **creative action** is observable and interpretable through the products of the practice itself. Moreover, to reflect and report on the fundamental nature of **creative action**, as I attempt to do when sitting at my computer grappling with its paradoxical inherence, is only another observation of observations already made. Although my efforts at understanding *how creative action works* are fraught with constantly shifting perspectives, contradictions and speculations, I have come to experience *that it works*.

The analogy that I have drawn between **creative action** and the properties of quantum behaviour resonates with other observations that have been made:

In spite of the overwhelming practical success of quantum mechanics, the foundations of the subject contain unresolved problems - in particular, problems concerning the nature of measurement. An essential feature of quantum mechanics is that it is generally impossible, even in principle, to measure a system without disturbing it; the detailed nature of this disturbance and the exact point at which it occurs are obscure and controversial. (Britannica Academic, 2018)

My involvement in similar collaborative endeavours in the past - creating, facilitating and developing new works for the stage with adolescents using methods of devising or workshopping - had established a familiar experiential context for the practice-led research of this study. The **creative action** in this instance demonstrated that the context of my 'knowing' - the experiential frame of reference made up of remembered instances of both successful and ineffective methods and approaches, of having learned 'what works' and 'what does not' - had been but a broad impression of '*what* I do' and '*how* I do it'. Many undefined elements which had underscored my practice were disclosed in numerous surprising and at times unintended ways.

Remaining cognisant of my own decisions and actions whilst simultaneously scrutinising, questioning, analysing and discovering the actions of others, as well as of interconnected and sometimes seemingly unrelated events, brought about an active awareness of '*what* I was doing *while* I was doing it'. Through what seemed like unremitting reflection, I came to realise that 'doing', that is, performing what I knew, produced new knowledge on the known as well as on the undiscovered aspects of my practice. I found resonance with my findings and speculations on the nature of knowledge production in complementary retrospective, reflective research. Nelson, for example, offered support for my growing awareness that practice, which supposes "knowledge in action", involved an intrinsically intelligent "dialogue with the situation" (2013:42).

Recorded interviews that had I conducted with the cast members provided significant research material; they also shed light on some of my educational and artistic practices. These voice recordings, which afforded an 'outsider' perspective on my theatre-practitioner persona, offered some evidence of my ability to mediate challenging, and at times highly sensitive, issues of conversation. In retrospect, it appears strange that as a practitioner-educator I had seldom contemplated the idiosyncratic attributes of my facilitation skills; or that I had rarely taken credit for my diplomacy during conversations, or never explicitly noted the degree of success that my 'social intelligence' yielded. 'After-the-fact' discussions with co-collaborators such as my life partner who had observed my practice, both in the past as well as during the various phases of mapping my current procedural actions, demonstrated that some of the methods I employ during the creation of theatre events, and which had remained undiscovered or 'unknown' or to me, were in fact observable to others. Notwithstanding my consideration that reflection-on-action may inevitably alter the intrinsic qualities of practice, and my reluctance to codify and reify my impressions as immutable truths, it seems plausible to suggest that some of the methods employed have been reiterative and for the most part reliable qualifiers of the results generated. I have also considered that writing *about* my practice, as I am presently doing, is yet another performative impression representative of my

'knowing-through-doing': it seems more likely to describe *that* it happened than to explain precisely *how* it occurred.

My rumination on definable, or perhaps only probable, qualities of distinct types of knowledge, and the operational interaction of these modes of knowing, extends to Martin Heidegger³², Kitarō Nishida³³ and Otto Scharmer's considerations on "thought conditions that allow [...] tacit knowledge to evolve in the first place" (Scharmer, 2001:139).

What is the force that drives the knowledge spiral itself? [...] This is the kind of knowledge [that] Buber (1970) [referred to] when he talked about the basic word "I-Thou", and Heidegger (1993) meant when he talked about Being as "coming from absence into presence" and truth as coming from "concealment into unconcealment", and what the Japanese philosopher Nishida was referring to when he spoke of "pure experience" (1990) and "action intuition" (1987). All of these scholars point at a formative state of knowledge that precedes the separation of subject and object, or knower and known. (Scharmer, 2001:139)

Reflecting on the workings of my practice has led me to question the reasons for initiating and sustaining my current creative endeavour in the first instance. It remains an intriguing thought that 'knowledge' or 'intuition' of some sort inexplicably propelled me to believe that my visceral response to a radio-soundbite could be transposed as a performative stage text. It would seem as though my knowledge of what I deemed achievable and how I would achieve it was "situated in an incipient, not-yet-enacted reality that is brought into existence through an act of 'action-intuition'" (Nishida in Scharmer, 2001:138). When I initially considered Everlate Chauke's story as the genesis of a collaborative theatre event, I neither consciously contemplated realities such as actor-collaborators having to construct a performable text nor questioned the ways in which I would realise the imagistic theatre aesthetic which spontaneously and almost instantaneously played out in my mind's eye. My perception of myself during these moments was not an awareness of an 'I' outside of an imagined world creating 'it', but rather of being part of an event which was creating itself. It seems that my perception here closely resembles Nishida's sentiment of a:

³² Martin Heidegger offered a phenomenological analysis of human existence in respect to its temporal and historical character. In his later thinking he placed an emphasis on language as the vehicle through which the question of being could be unfolded. *W. J. Korab-Karpowicz*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/heidegge/> [2018, March 12].

³³ As an influential twentieth-century Japanese philosopher, Kitarō Nishida's work is considered by some as groundbreaking since he established and enriched the discipline of philosophy by infusing Anglo-European philosophy with Asian thought. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 2016. [Online]. Available: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nishida-kitaro/> [2018, September 10].

a state of mind that transcends the distinctions between “inside” and “outside”, between “I” and “thou”, and between knowing and acting. The focus of attention is on the emergent common ground from which all these distinctions arise in the first place. (in Scharmer, 2001:140)

My theatre practice in this specific instance appears to indicate that “not-yet-embodied knowledge”, to borrow Scharmer’s term, encapsulates knowing, emotion and volition, and issues from a ‘place’ where, as cognitive psychologist Eleanor Rosch³⁴ suggests “mind and world are not separate but two aspects of the same underlying field” (in Scharmer, 2001:139). My epistemological inference in this instance resonates with the postulations of Scharmer, Rosch and Nishida as I propose “not-yet-embodied knowledge” to be spontaneous, unconditional, indiscriminate, direct, timeless and indeterminate in the reasons for its coming-into-being. In my estimation then, as evidenced by the initial stages of my practice, it seems that “not-yet-embodied” or “primary knowing” may be an instinctual feeling; that is, sense-knowing is inherently specific to its ‘knower’ and unambiguous and unwavering in the conviction of its legitimacy. Paradoxically, its true nature and origin seems, even if describable and legitimate, to be immeasurable and perhaps, for the present, ‘unknowable’.

³⁴ Eleanor Rosch is a professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, specializing in cognitive psychology. Rosch has conducted extensive research focusing on topics including semantic categorization, mental representation of concepts, and linguistics. Her research interests include cognition, concepts, causality, thinking and memory. Her work in the psychology of religion has sought to show the implications of Buddhism and contemplative aspects of Western religions on modern psychology. Revolv. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.revolv.com/page/Eleanor-Rosch> [2018, March 25].

PART TWO

WORLDS AS BODIES, WORLDS AS WORDS

*“Now I am ready to tell how bodies are changed
Into different bodies.”*

(Ovid, *Metamorphoses*)³⁵

³⁵ Hughes, T. 1997. *Tales from Ovid*. London: Faber & Faber.

As discussed in *Part One*, the streams of **creative action** identified during the initial stages of this practice-led study offered the collective new ways of interacting with the research material. This Part will describe the phase in which a collection of creative acts was designed and carried out to lend tangible qualities to our narrative's imagined life-worlds and lived experiences. This phase is represented here as following on from the previous phase of practice; however, not all the creative acts in this phase necessarily evolved from the previous phase. The streams of action selected for discussion in this Part foregrounded intentional physical activity, motility and sensorial perception. As a creative collective, we endeavoured to articulate and embody our subjective perceptions, and our personal, social and cultural connections to Alexandra, by means of creative acts that were particularly engineered to invite the emergence and evolution of organic texts, both linguistic and somatic.

DREAM-TIME³⁶

The speculations, questions, discoveries, imaginings and realisations that emerged from our engagement with the Alexandra-data persistently altered the ways in which we viewed and treated the material itself. As a creative-collective, we had familiarised ourselves with the contents of our material; but more than this, we had become entangled in it. At times during this phase, our process of gathering, discovering and inventing information became so immersive that divisions between the original text and the invented text became obscured. Our entanglement in the worlds and in the texts of our respective narratives precipitated new perspectives on our conceptual 'situatedness': we were no longer passive observers, *reading about* the stories of one-dimensionally drawn individuals in news reports; we had become *active participants in*, and *co-creators of*, the narrative. Initially we had found ourselves situated 'outside' of the events, searching for pathways 'into' Alexandra; now our theatrical narrative established a dynamic dialectic between and *within* actual and fictionalised life-worlds, and facilitated a fluidity of lived and invented experiences. Instead of coaxing the characters to 'speak' to us, we 'listened' to and 'conversed' with the multitude of polyphonic voices that had manifested in our dramatised theatre event.

As the creative collective discussed, pondered, imagined and created, my directorial-educator's mind would, at times, wander down different and unrelated 'paths'. My thoughts would drift towards the 'ideal' outcomes of our endeavour; I wondered how the theatre-piece would turn out, what this 'thing' that we were making might 'look' like in the end. During these

³⁶ The use of "Dream-Time", "dream" and "dreaming" in the context of this section of the chapter denotes the following: "dream-time" relates to times during which I found/allowed periods of time to let my thoughts meander of their own accord similar in experience to when 'in a dream', or to when "a situation or event [is] positioned as a dream" in that "you often think about it because you would like it to happen". Collins Online Dictionary. 2018. S.v. 'dream'. [Online]. Available: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/dream> [2018, September 19].

early stages of conceptualisation, my wandering/wondering-mind would constantly, and often mid-conversation, become occupied with alternative strategies, approaches or tactics that I might employ in up-coming rehearsals. More often than not, these rehearsals had not yet been planned, and my worrying-mind would trail off into the familiar territory of uneasiness regarding whether or not these strategies would achieve desired outcomes. My 'worrying-time' often coincided with 'creative-time': during cast discussions, for instance, inspiring and innovative suggestions from the cast about character development would simultaneously 'spark' powerful images and raise immediate concerns about staging limitations. Paradoxically, it seemed that the negotiations that transpired between the members of the creative collective which so often gave rise to innovative and creative ideas were frequently allied to the negotiation of pragmatic concerns, such as locating an appropriate and affordable venue suited to the staging of our 'theatrical vision'. The tension between conceptual 'flights of fancy', and logistical considerations and restrictions, was ever-present in creative-time. As such, many of the instances which I deliberately set aside for directorial/artistic contemplation - measured intervals reserved for reflection as I travelled between work and home, and which I have come to refer to as 'meditative', 'rambling' or 'dream-time' - became consigned to solving and negotiating 'mundane' concerns. In addition to these reiterative experiences, there also existed my notion of 'the race 'against time': my perception of time's significance as an all-pervasive element - forever guiding and 'measuring' our creation-incidents and events, however fleeting, fragmented or enduring - also regularly resulted in anxiety. Would there be sufficient time to achieve all that we had set out to do?

Aside from these numerous instances that occasioned 'me as a practitioner/educator' to be in conversation with 'myself', other conversations - with the creative-collaborator, artist-collaborators and actor-collaborators; discoveries and re-discoveries of new and forgotten musical compositions and composers, artworks and literature; television advertisements, documentary films and cinematic experiences; visits to friends, shopping for groceries or hardware; flashing billboards, podcasts and overheard conversations on the street, or casual comments on the radio, in restaurants or in the classroom - became imprinted on my mind like a montage of incidental tunes, voices and richly colourful images. These images brought on by conversations, remembered actualities or sensory impressions - what I had seen, heard or, as on one occasion, even the pungent aromas that I had smelled standing amidst the fresh produce in a grocery store - unexpectedly conjured vivid theatrical and plausible stage pictures. On numerous occasions in my dream-time, I 'observed' specific cast members performing or executing gestures in a theatrical environment, or 'discerned' directorial compositions or scenographic elements 'on stage'.

One such a memorable discussion with the cast, and which consequently precipitated conversations with the creative-collaborator, revolved around the question of motherhood and

what it means 'to be a mother'. This left me pondering Cynthia Chauke's 'culpability' in the final outcome of the tragic events, or the extent to which her 'lack of foresight' might have facilitated the circumstantial grounds for her daughter's death. Contemplation on this subject prompted me to revisit some of the casual, non-academic readings of the works of Carl Gustav Jung³⁷ from my past. His notions about maternal attributes, symbolically inscribed in myth and folklore and appropriated as the 'mother archetype' in his analytical psychoanalysis, have resonated with my interest in psychological, phenomenological and ontological speculation since my senior years at high school. I believe his postulations bear some relevance to the subject matter of our performative narrative in this instance. In his *Collected Works (Volume 9, Part 1: The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious)* (1959), Jung intimates that the mother archetype represents "solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exhalation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility"(1959:82).

The place of magic transformation and rebirth, together with the underworld and its inhabitants, are presided over by the mother. On the negative side [,] the mother archetype may connote anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable, like fate. (Jung, 1959:82)

The collaborative-collective's impression of Cynthia Chauke, as gleaned from portrayals of her by the press, bore very little outward resemblance to what Jung refers to as the 'positive qualities' of the 'mother archetype': her demeanour appeared undemonstrative and restrained, and her actions suggested a negligible degree of 'helpful instinct or impulse'. If we were to contextualise Cynthia Chauke's conduct and bearing as located within the realm of the 'negative mother archetype', her apparent apathy unnerved, and perhaps terrified us, as it signified the secret acts of Jung's 'anti-mother' (Jung, 1959:81-84).

However, the cast insisted - and I supported their perspective - that *our* narrative should neither condemn the mother-figure's apparent inertia, nor vindicate her inaction as stemming from material and socio-political circumstances. Instead, we determined to create a text that would recontextualise our character's position and attitude *towards* her immediate circumstances and towards her children. Our conversation spurred my 'wandering-mind' to seek alternative, supplemental impressions and opinions - from sources other than the close-knit group who were gathered in the rehearsal room - on mothers and their children. In further

³⁷ My earlier readings of Jung's works included *Psychology of the Unconscious* (1961); *Man and His Symbols* (1964); and *Collected Works of Carl Gustav Jung, Volume 9, Part 1* (1959).

discussion with the creative-collaborator, he and I conjured scenarios that would afford our fictionalised mother-figure the means to exercise control over external, material phenomena. The unfolding of these alternative fictional frameworks, often drawn from our personal experiences and recollections of myth and literature, set off a chain reaction of mental images which I choose to describe as ‘synaptic flashes’ - that is, sudden imaginings symbolically conveyed as conceptual ‘snapshots’. The occurrence of mental images was unpremeditated; imaginings sprung to mind at numerous moments and during various phases of conceptualisation irrespective of the creative activity undertaken at the time - visual impressions often occurred during and after cast conversations and rehearsals and almost always while I was ‘caught up’ in my personal ‘creative’ or ‘dream-time’. These intervals away from the collective, when I ‘re-adjusted’ my role as facilitator to that of director, were spent entertaining and mulling over these mental images and ‘day-dreaming’ about their practical stage realities. ‘Dream-time’ on one occasion also comprised a definitively significant dream that I had while asleep one night during the initial stages of my personal imaginings. This dream served as seminal inspiration for some of my directorial and scenographic choices.

My efforts at communicating and transposing these ‘snapshots’ as academic text, are for the purposes of clarity typographically presented here in an alternative font. In certain instances, I have selected to illustrate these sudden mental images in **bold** (to denote sensorial impressions); or *italic* (imitating the typography used to describe stage directions); and right-aligned, in order to distinguish them from the main body of our investigative discoveries and draw attention to their ‘synaptic’ nature. These ‘snapshots’ were often penned as verse or dialogue or sketched in my practice-specific journals before, during or after rehearsals; observed as emotive ‘pictures’ in dreams, or ‘seen’ as moments or scenes or scenarios within conceptual performance spaces:

a woman on a riverbank, who with
 a delicate sweeping motion of the
 hand, nudges a basket made of
 bullrushes forward into the
 water. She weeps at this act of
 faith and at the ripples in the
 water that could spell the
 beginnings of a war. At her back,
 the shadows of trees or soldiers,
 and then the thrashing arms of
 babies drowned and of sons
 firstborn as they are plunged into
 the river Nile

and then:

Dusk. Distant thunder.

The stage floor is covered in red sand. TWO WOMEN sit in the performance space in an area which is demarcated to indicate a dry riverbed, or a clearing close to a river's edge. Although their country of origin is unspecified, the costumes and dialect denote a remote region in Africa. THE OLDER WOMAN hums the fragments of a tune, until her voice trails off into silence. Now and then, she repeats the tune, but when she forgets the words, she clears her throat and falls silent. She hums again. THE YOUNGER woman who fiddles with an old radio, only manages static reception; only snippets of conversations, songs and advertisements are audible. Distant thunder. The TWO WOMEN repeat their actions until a sudden, new awareness catches THE OLDER WOMAN's attention. She carefully places the yellow enamel bowl next to her on the sand, walks downstage and stops to look at the sky. Distant thunder. She motions to the YOUNGER WOMAN to gather their belongings centre stage. Occasional radio static, distant thunder and a gentle breeze. THE OLDER WOMAN draws a large circle (its circumference extends across most of the central stage area) in the sand. She mumbles indistinct, atonal phrases and her actions cause her great exertion. THE YOUNGER WOMAN frantically assembles their bits and pieces into a heap. The TWO WOMEN stand centre stage, in the middle of the circle. They wait. Distant thunder as the lights fade to black.

Thoughts and visual images such as these, which sprung from our 'inspired' conversations, were presumably also a result of my personal involvement in theatre as a practitioner and drama educator. Recent encounters with the works of playwright Lynn Nottage had left a significant impression on me. In her 2009 Pulitzer-prize-winning play *Ruined*, Nottage addresses the plight of women in the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo; and she

celebrates a young girl's survival of a brutal execution-style family murder at the hands of Ugandan-led rebel forces in the truth-based *Banana Beer Bath* (2007). These theatre texts had prompted me to conduct complementary research on the rival ethnic conflict in Uganda and the DRC, respectively. Accounts of the civil war in Bunia, which between 1994 and 2003 had claimed approximately five million civilian lives (BBC, 2012), and to which I had been exposed for pedagogical purposes - I relayed this contextual information to drama students for a production of *Ruined* in 2011 - perhaps also contributed and induced certain notions:

...dark alleyways with the windows
shut as hyenas spill into the old
city, their shadows on ruptured
ruins and walls of stone, they seek
out the one who feeds them from
the butcher's block...

and

...An African man appears upstage. He wears a militia uniform and an elaborate, multi-coloured, feather headdress. At his side, on a leash, are two spotted hyenas. The circle, in which the TWO WOMEN had stood, is still edged in the sand.

I imagined:

...a performance space and a video screen. The spotted hyenas inspect the circumference of the circle and leave the performance space to appear in an ultramodern bathroom, displayed on a video screen, in an adjacent area. Both the bath, which is centrally located, and the room, are clinically tiled - it is white all-around. There is the distinct and incessant buzzing of fluorescent lights and a clink and clatter as the animals trail their chains across the floor. A white South African man stands in front of the bathroom mirror; a white South African woman calls his name over a video-intercom. She is a war-zone photographer, he is a mercenary who fought the Hema and the Lendu in Bunia. The last of the shaving-soap swirls down the

basin, and an eye, Hitchcock-like fills the video screen...

and then also

...in that **dream** I had - it could have been as a result of **Stravinsky's** irregular **heartbeat**, or on account of notes and chords as befuddling as the **violet mellowness** of old-fashioned jazz, or Laurie's electronic **Superman** wafting down the hall and settling on the bed and around the pillows, or perhaps, it was that **liver pâté sandwich** before bedtime that brought it on - the stage had become a **large stone altar**, with the sand-circle (now drawn in **white chalk**, and in such a slipshod fashion that it could not have been my handiwork), enclosed by **skulls**, and **masks**, the silent onlookers - **totemic puppets** that loom large as life - are **watching** the **twirling** of **skirts**, stripping of **feathers** and **blood spraying in circles** (the audience squirms and recoils) as THE TWO WOMEN **dance and dance the dance of death** and **hear**, amongst the rain of ash and smoke, **sharp shrills** and **shrieks** rise from the circle, as **shards of cloth** are passed from hand to hand, and then the **thundering of feet** as the **white shells** and ruins are tossed, high up (the audience gasps again, for this **MUST** be Voodoo), **to see** the stage lights dim on the **circus animals** and **militia men** and the **scavengers** that skulk in corners.

These images, dreams and manifestations of thoughts were so vividly etched on my mind, that I initially considered employing segments of these ideas as supporting narratives. At that time, the incorporation of these supplementary, multi-narratives seemed highly plausible. Nevertheless, the performance space of my mind - that is, the 'place' in my imagination in which I desired to 'see' and usually do 'see', even if only glimpses, some of the elements of this specific work in performance - had the appearance of an unattended and darkened stage.

My imagined performance area, usually illuminated and proficient in colour and movement as was often the case during prior theatre-making experiences, contained none of its customary clues and creative indicators, and remained, despite what after some time appeared to be an over-saturated conceptual landscape, reticent and inaccessible. Despite the numerous conceptual frameworks that I had discovered and contemplated, either as 'stand-alone' or parallel narratives to the plot, my imaginings, ramblings, embellishments and search for iridescence left me feeling exasperated and apprehensive. The substance of our narrative still escaped my grasp.

Returning to Question:

What is her first question / instinct — where is my husband — / take baby?

• you are drunk.

• where is my husband

Should the whole scene be so creepy antagonistic?

look @ the Logos → Morning on stage with

() (In the afternoon)

- mornings - sometimes when Sherlock goes looking for work / no
- He has stopped being angry - he has asked Cynthia's sister to come by too far to walk | Some mornings also comes over. He sleeps.

Sometimes "Kate" comes over to check playing ^{around her} alone.

Writing dialogue again to currently a voice of creation due to a fear of not engaging 13 antagonistic - I'm worried the score. / How long should the scene be? What should be included in the scene?

perhaps I should just write the scene and see how long it is?

To write a realistic Reality /
 (b) to write a theatrical reality

FIND NEW CHARACTER NAMES

Figure 8: A sample taken from the first of my journals to illustrate my thoughts on possible stimuli that could be employed in improvisation and text construction-sessions (Journal 1, February 2017).

TIME AGAINST TIME

Shadrick has been lying about his whereabouts. His addiction has been deceiving.
 Cynthia is in denial / Does not want to believe her sister.

• Important: Sister has been trying to protect her.

Question ① Why are they
 ② Where is Shadrick?

Why would this be unlikely?

The most obvious answer: No money.
 'only - getting paid next week.'
he had to borrow money (from whom)

pros of workshopping Process: Actus de done
 to relate to characters immediately. Dialogue
~~is~~ is easily improved but does not always include
necessary detail

Does Cynthia perhaps think that Shadrick is looking for a job?
 Shadrick is not looking for a job
has never been

Does not want sister to talk a doctor Bethell because of her condition

Should not be here you are going to hurt my child

Who do you think looks after her? When you are not at home? Who gives her bath? Who plays with her?

Figure 9: A sample taken from the first of my journals to demonstrate initial 'grapplings' with the plot and structure (Journal 1, February 2017).

IN SEARCH OF A LIVING TEXT

Rehearsals, which commenced in early March 2017, were geared towards discovering and implementing a dramatic form that would adequately structure and contain our numerous and varied designs and impressions, and primarily focused on the construction of the text by means of improvisation, with complementary writing only introduced at a later stage. The use of the word 'construction', in the sense that it suggests 'making' or 'assembling', is deliberate. At the outset, our text, rather than constituting 'the written word', manifested as action; it comprised the intentionally active and visceral engagement and interaction of our motile, embodied 'selves' and was 'built' and arranged '*through doing*'. Subsequent sections in this Part will aim to illustrate that the inculcation of purposed proprioceptive awareness, with which I strove to locate and connect how our perceived, subjective life-worlds resonated with some of the actual and speculative lived experiences of the Setswetla flood victims, lay at the heart of my methodological efforts and approaches during improvisation. Action effected a 'living text' imbued with gesture, sound and feeling.

To effectively illustrate some of the methods or practices that were employed for the purposes of text-construction, this discussion will employ a literary analysis to consider the actor-collaborators' involvement in the construction of the text and offer insight into the creators' inextricable entanglement to the narrative. Since this study seeks to uncover and illustrate by what means the act of theatre-making, as inscribed by the practice undertaken in this specific instance, constitutes the embodiment of **creative action**, I have included extracts from our final text, as well as shorter fragments of the 'verbatim' text as spoken, noted and recorded during rehearsals; this will effectively demonstrate, how the conceptual life-worlds perceived during the antecedent phase, became embodied as living and spoken texts during the phase under discussion. In the following section, certain selected scenes or monologues will be discussed in detail, with a brief account of the operational action of other scenes and their thematic/structural significance within the context of the narrative.

An unforeseen and thoroughly fortuitous occasion, mid-way during the improvisational phase of our efforts at constructing a text, gave rise to a creation-event that re-directed and ultimately transformed our narrative. While I was at home, watching a television programme - which is one of the strategies I employed as an attempt to shut out all thoughts of rehearsals,

journals, diaries, theatre methodologies, pedagogies and creative dead-ends - my thoughts suddenly chanced upon Euripides'³⁸ *Medea*³⁹.

Medea is the legendary sorceress from Colchis, "the daughter of Aeëtes by the Oceanid Idyia, or, according to others, by Hecate"; as the grandchild of the sun-god Helios, also of divine descent, she is a mythical figure, deeply inscribed in the cultural symbolism of the ancient Greeks (van Aken, 1997). In his *Theogony*, Hesiod⁴⁰, for example, is amongst the first to mention Medea (van Aken, 1997), and refers to her escape alongside Jason⁴¹ from the island of Colchis: "Aeson's son [Jason] led away from Aeëtes, that Zeus-nurtured king, [his] daughter [Medea], after compiling the many painful tasks imposed upon him by the great overweening king...Pehas [Pelias]" (Hesiod:992)⁴². Medea's relationship to Jason - bought about by her pivotal role in Jason's quest for the *Golden Fleece* - is also central to the action of Euripides's stage version of the myth, presumably first produced in 431BCE. However, in Euripides's tragedy, Medea's individualised plight as a foreigner, woman and mother takes centre-stage. Set in Corinth, Euripides's play traces the events that unfold after Medea and her family had been living in the city for some time. When Jason informs Medea of his intended marriage to Glauce⁴³, the daughter of King Creon of Corinth, Medea's resolve to avenge Jason's betrayal culminates in the murder of both the King and the Corinthian princess. However, Medea's ultimate revenge is effected by an act of filicide: determined neither to be laughed at by her enemies, nor to cause extreme injury to Jason, Medea slays her two sons.

It seemed peculiar that as practitioner and educator I had not previously considered the *Medea* narrative as a relevant reference or useable source material during our search for suitable variations on 'mother prototypes' - especially since I had earlier relied on my entanglement in classical literary studies to guide my thoughts during this phase of the construction of the text. I realised that what I had come to regard as an encompassing

³⁸ "Euripides (c. 480 – c. 406 BC) was a tragedian of classical Athens. Along with Aeschylus and Sophocles, he is one of the three ancient Greek tragedians from whom a significant number of plays have survived. He became, in the Hellenistic Age, a cornerstone of ancient literary education, along with Homer, Demosthenes, and Menander." Euripides. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euripides> [2018, September 12].

³⁹ 'Medea' is a tragedy written by the ancient Greek playwright Euripides, based on the myth of Jason and Medea. The tragedy centralizes Medea's revenge against Jason for betraying her. *Classical Literature*. 2009. [Online]. Available: https://www.ancient-literature.com/greece_euripides_medea.html [2018, April 9].

⁴⁰ Greek poet Hesiod is considered the creator of didactic (instructive and moralizing) poetry, and his writings serve as a major source on Greek mythology ("Theogony"), farming techniques, archaic Greek astronomy and ancient time-keeping. *Classical Literature*. 2009. [Online]. Available: http://www.ancient-literature.com/greece_hesiod.html [2018, September 10].

⁴¹ Jason, in Greek mythology, was leader of the Argonauts and son of Aeson, king of Iolcos in Thessaly. After being sent away from Iolcos by his half-brother Pelias, Jason returns as a young man only to be given the almost impossible task of retrieving the Golden Fleece in order to regain his inheritance. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Jason-Greek-mythology> [10 September 2018].

⁴² Most, G. W. (ed.). 2006. *Hesiod Volume 1, Theogony: Works and Days Testimonia*. Loeb Classical Library.

⁴³ "Glauce was a Corinthian princess who married Jason. She was killed, along with her father king Creon, by Medea who sent her gifts steeped in flammable poison". Wikipedia: Glauce. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glauce> [2018, September 13].

spectrum of divergent maternal narratives, had, ironically, neglected to consider what I believe to be one of the most significant ‘mother-narratives’ in ancient classical literature. Nevertheless, the possibility of implementing and adapting selected themes, characters and dialogue from Euripides’ text to assist us in presenting our ideas on the perceived complexities of motherhood, female identity and the parent/child relation, exhilarated me - even though I did not yet have a clear idea of how the tragedy would be implemented, or what aspects of it would feature, in our narrative. The possibility of aligning the fictionalised life-worlds of our Setswetla narrative with that of ancient Greek tragedy⁴⁴, admittedly, seemed fraught with challenges. The classical lexicon of ancient Greek drama in which the fate and tribulations of mythological and legendary heroes and tragic figures are set forth as impassioned, metrical and figurative declamations, is far removed from, if not diametrically opposed to, the socio-cultural contexts and lived experiences of our invented and re-enacted Alexandra-like characters. The schism - “split or division between [the] strongly opposed”⁴⁵ dramatic styles, genres and conventions of our narrative and *Medea* - between our characters drawn forth through improvisation from real-life events and subjective experiences, firmly rooted within the style of social realism, and the stately dramatic personae of Euripides, fashioned in an ancient and traditional tragic mode, made an amalgamation seem highly improbable.

Nonetheless, this stylistic ‘schism’ did not deter me since I subjectively perceived the human tragedy, as it unfolded in Alexandra township, to be cross-cultural, and perhaps comparable to what I discern as ‘universally’ observable events of human suffering and adversity, as mythologised and symbolised in literary works such as *Medea*. The incorporation of a parallel narrative could potentially also afford intertextual resonance. *Medea*, as a “barbarian”⁴⁶, a fugitive exiled from Colchis and deemed a non-citizen, and thus a foreigner in Corinth, bore great significance to our narrative’s perspective on the portrayal of the local/foreigner relation. Our female protagonist, similarly slighted, betrayed, estranged and mistreated, also battles the hierarchical structures of patriarchal authority as embodied by her husband’s maltreatment of her within a domestic environment, and the decrees of the state as typified in our narrative by the rejection of the broader Alexandra community. I began to speculate that the inclusion of selected material from the ancient *Medea* text in our invented

⁴⁴ The term Tragedy (*tragōidia*) was first used by the ancient Greeks of Attica in the 5th century BCE to describe a specific kind of play presented at festivals in Greece. These plays, which were religious in nature, dealt with the misfortunes of the heroes of legend, religious myth and history and were mostly based on material derived from the works of Homer. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.britannica.com/art/tragedy-literature>. [2018, April 19].

⁴⁵ Oxford English Dictionary. 2013. [Online]. Available: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/schism>. [2018 April 19].

⁴⁶ The ‘otherness’ of being a non-citizen, and hence a barbarian in the eyes of the male members of the ancient Greek Polis, is similar to the ‘otherness’ of a woman in the ancient Greek world. Djurdjina Sijakovic. *The Otherness of a Barbarianess: Euripides’ Medea and Medea*. 2018. [Online]. Available: http://www.etno-institut.co.rs/files/gei/62_2/sijakovic%20eng.pdf [2018, May 16].

parallel narrative might offer feasible solutions for the unresolved concerns and thoughts on the ambiguity of the female victim/culprit motif in our text. The idea to infuse our mother-figure with Medea's resolution to take action, held the potential to delineate a distinguishable, and perhaps a more sympathetic, maternal identity. Our fictional character's presence and behaviour, rather than opaque and indiscernible, could signify the embodiment of a multi-dimensional maternal persona capable of an overt instinct to safeguard and love her children. Providing our character with a credible rationale could give rise to questionable moral and ethical choices. In the likeness of Medea, our mother-figure would take charge of, and endeavour to, exercise a measure of control over her immediate circumstances. It is important to note that the decision to adopt *Medea* as an analogous narrative was by no means an attempt to provide a specific reading of Euripides's text, and that to interpret our text as a replica of sorts, would be inaccurate. Our narrative encompasses selected occasions, occurrences and textual elements from Euripides's *Medea* (specifically the edition translated by Ian Johnston, 2008) which were freely adapted, or embellished upon to suit our dramatic purposes.

The incorporation of *Medea* as a parallel narrative to our text expelled the 'darkness' from my 'empty', imagined performance space. The amalgamated narrative, complete with its characters from both the worlds of a contemporary Alexandra and that of an ancient Greek tragedy, inculcated the stage with life and colour - in my mind's eye, I could see and hear the burgeoning emergence of a play. I intuited that my entanglement in my personal history of playmaking and classical literary studies to have been partly responsible for feeling at ease with these notions and to confidently share these thoughts with the cast of actor-collaborators. The idea of assimilating the *Medea* narrative with that of our fictionalised text left me with the distinct impression that such a textual integration could lend structure to the emotional and experiential life-worlds of our fictionalised characters. Prior to the inclination to experiment with, and eventually deciding to implement, an intertextual narrative, most of the deliberations on character and plot had seemed ineffectual in clearly outlining the characters' emotional trajectories. Although our central dramatic figures had been established during the initial phases of conceptualisation, the cast and I were still undecided on how these characters' respective mini-narratives, or the overall plot for that matter, would ultimately be organised.

After some consideration, I offered the suggestion to the cast that our fictionalised narrative could employ the structural elements of Greek drama, that is, a dramatic, compositional framework that would comprise the "constituent parts [...] of tragedy [of which these] separable members into which it is quantitatively divided are [the] prologue, episode, exode, choral song, the last being divided into parode and stasimon" (Poetics, XXIII, 1452b). It is important to note that as a creative collective the actors and I did not aim to construct an amalgamated narrative that would emulate the ancient Greek tragic form; we did not strive to replicate what Aristotle

refers to in his *Poetics*⁴⁷ as “the perfect” or “best tragedy” (*Poetics*, XXIII, 1452b), that is, to recreate a play that is wholly compliant to the principles of ‘tragic drama’ as set forth by Aristotle in his *Poetics* (*Ibid.*) - we employed the “constituent parts” of its structure primarily as an organisational foundation for action.

As will be discussed in the following section of this Part, our integrated narrative would, in due course, denote some of Aristotle’s postulations on tragedy, such as in its “imitation [mimēsis]⁴⁸ of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude...through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation [catharsis]⁴⁹ of these emotions”, and that it [would] also take the “moral ambiguity of tragedy [as its essence]” (*Britannica Academic*, 2018). It would also deviate from some of these postulations: for instance, Aristotle’s consideration that “plot to be the soul of a tragedy, with character in second place” (*Britannica Academic*, 2018). The investigations and discoveries undertaken by the cast and I - whether during group discussions or in personal conversation, improvisation, rehearsal or collaborative text-construction - foregrounded the centrality of character, and character development, as the essence of our plot. Our amalgamated text was presented within a compositional framework that loosely followed the traditional Greek tragic form which employed *episodia* (episodes) to track the plot’s main incidents (*Poetics*, XXIII, 1452b); the use of *stasima* or choral songs was to offer communal ‘commentary’ on the unfolding action of the events. The major incidents of our fictionalised narrative, which bore the most similarity to Euripides’ *Medea*, were also organised as episodes and/or events, brief scenes and monologues; our choral interludes were either sung by a chorus of three singers, or (at times deviating from the oral, tragic ‘tradition’ as stationary songs) spoken by a chorus of puppets who imparted complementary material on the life-worlds of our central characters as well as on Setswetla street-life.

Mageza

Our *prologue*, “a part that comes at the beginning of a play, story, or long poem, often giving information about events that happened before the time when the play, story, or poem begins”

⁴⁷ Aristotle’s account of what he refers to as ‘poetry’ (a Greek term which denotes “making”) and which comprises verse drama: comedy, tragedy, satyr play as well as lyric and epic poetry, appears in his *Poetics* (c. 335 BC). Aristotle’s *Poetics* is regarded as the earliest extant philosophical treatise to focus on literary theory in the West. Aristotle. 2018. [Online]. Available: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetics_\(Aristotle\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetics_(Aristotle)) [2018, September 18].

⁴⁸ The Greek word Mimesis (derived from the Greek verb *mimeisthai*) denotes “imitation” - in the sense of ‘representation’ rather than of ‘copying’. Often positioned as the basic theoretical principle in the creation of art, Plato and Aristotle also posited mimesis as the representation of nature. For Aristotle, tragedy was an “imitation of an action” - that of “a man falling from a higher to a lower estate”. *Britannica Academic*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://academic-eb-com.ez.sun.ac.za/levels/collegiate/article/mimesis/52776> [2018, March 19].

⁴⁹ “The process of releasing strong emotions through a particular activity or experience in a way that helps you to understand those emotions”. *Cambridge Online Dictionary*. 2018. S.v. ‘catharsis’. [Online]. Available: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/experience> [2018, March 18].

(Cambridge English Dictionary, 2017, s.v. 'prologue'), also loosely followed Aristotle's qualification as it constituted "the whole of that part of a tragedy which precedes the entrance of the chorus" (Poetics, XXIII, 1452b) and served as an organising principle through which to impart expositional information on Alexandra township and its residents. The anecdotal narrative of Mageza's opening monologue (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 1:1-43), delivered in a conversational tone was designed to establish an 'informal' relation between spectator and actor. As character-narrator, Mageza's rendition of Setswetla street-life provided a glimpse into the activities of 'actual' and 'well-known' local Setswetla personalities and, as such, abounded in colloquialisms and multi-lingual street-slang⁵⁰. Mageza's spoken dialogue largely evolved from the actor's verbatim accounts, as recorded and later re-worked during rehearsals, of his own observations on the 'wheelings and dealings' on street corners and around taxi-ranks in Alexandra township:

Mageza	<p>Yazi, life! Life is difficult, you know! It kappas you like a bad hangover after you've had a beautiful party the night before. Life, it gives you masepa and wants you to convert it into gold! You see, this time, it's hit me for real. I'm broke, moneyless, nix! I don't even have nine rand nyana, to buy myself a dumpie, or five rand to get Jozi beer nyana, but I'm a man you know, so like the boer always says: "a bier maak 'n plan". So, I try. I'm pulling strings here, pulling strings there, trying to get my life in order you know, aye but, being a mageza, a taxi driver, is not easy man. Times are so tough I've had to borrow some money. From a Loanshark. I've got, how do you say, 'pressing financial troubles'. So, I go to John Brandt street, where I see the gents playing 'amadice' there, and I join in. I don't have money, but you know me. I'm like a fish, I'm slippery, you know, "can't touch dis". So, I ask the gents if any of them can bambisa me, you know, lend me a helping hand in my times of need. Ah, mara the gents are not interested. Today is not my day, you know? I feel as if I have been hexed by a very dark woman.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>5</p> <p>10</p> <p>15</p>
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⁵⁰ The meanings of colloquialisms and multi-lingual street-slang used in the text are indicated in italics, adjacent to relevant words. "Yazi": Jesus; "kappas": hits; "masepa": shit; "nix": nothing; "nyana": 'a little bit'; "dumpie": 'a smallish brown beer bottle'; "Jozi beer": 'Johannesburg beer'; "Loan shark": moneylender; "amadice": 'to gamble with dice'; "bambisa": 'to help out'; "mara": but; "two hundred": a two hundred rand note; "mfana": boy; "slyfish": 'to be cunning'; "eish": a South African expression that denotes a feeling such as annoyance in this instance; "voetsek": 'go away/get out of here'; "wêna": you; "Amstel": Amstel Lager is a South African beer.

Bhaski asks me what I need the money for, so I tell him. “You see, me Bhaski, I am my woman’s man”, I tell him. “I want to buy my beautiful wife a beautiful dress. You see that Calvin’s uh, what-what, and that Daniel ‘defletcher’ dress, and I want to take her out to a gourmet restaurant, you know, like Nando’s or Spur or Chicken Licken. One of those fancy restaurants that you only eat at when you accidentally pick up a two hundred from the gambling table”. Bhaski, he just laughs. “Bhaski, you’ve borrowed some money before, from that Loanshark, what happens if you don’t pay it back”. Before I even finish asking him, he laughs at me. He says: “Ah, that man is going to sell your knee caps on OLX mfana! *He laughs*. It is the end of you and your cunning ways!” So, I say nix cause me, I’m too clever. I see an opportunity. There is a fifty rand note sitting on the table unattended, so I decide “let me give this fifty rand an owner”, so I snatch it fast, like a snake. “Slyfish” is what I like to call myself, but eish, Bhaski is a problem! You see, I mentored that boy, and now he thinks he is smarter than the master! Aye, he’s got good eyes! So, he sees me and shouts “Voetsek man, wêna! You come here to steal our money because you don’t have your own!” Eh, so the gents start throwing anything they could find at me. Bricks, Amstel bottles, dice, rocks and even bread! Heh, a whole brown loaf, thrown at me! Ah, so I take a big bite right there and I run. I run for my house and I take the rest of that bread back to my wife, back to my beautiful Phindi. Aye, she is the light of my life... Life is difficult, you know. It is hard, but there is always my beautiful Phindi, at home, waiting for me.

The character-narrator’s function in the prologue was also to introduce and set forth ‘fragments’ of the plot - details which are only gradually revealed as the narrative unfolds. Mageza’s allusions to events that had transpired before the inception of the plot foreshadow, by implication, probable calamitous, subsequent revelations:

Mageza *Lights up on Osasere. She is rummaging through the mud. She stands and stares up at the sky. After a long while. You see that woman? Look, there she is again. She is always here, looking for something, staring up the sky. Night or day, summer and winter, searching for what she believes the river took from her. She lives out here on her own. People put food out here for her. She eats some of it, the rest she throws into the water. Pause. She sees nothing. Hears nothing. She talks to no one. She has been like this since that day. That day when we lost everything.*

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The character-narrator, who also appears in the *parode*, - a section in a Greek tragedy which, according to Aristotle, occupies “the whole of the first utterance of the chorus” (Poetics, XXIII, 1452b) - together with the ‘puppet chorus’, only appears again at the end of the play, in the “*exode*, [that] part of a tragedy which is not followed by a song of the chorus” (Poetics, XXIII, 1452b). The narrative’s exodus was structurally designated to accommodate much of the explicit material, in other words, the ‘raw footage’ as well as our re-interpreted or re-constructed data on the Setswetla flash-floods, and as such embodied the conclusion to our amalgamated tragedy:

Mageza When I arrived home on that Wednesday night, I found that my house had collapsed under the weight of the water. I had been working when I heard the reports of the flood on the radio. The skies turned dark. The sun was gone, disappeared behind the clouds. It looked as if the rain had pulled a thick black curtain across the sky. It was almost impossible to get through it. The roads vanished. Water everywhere. No one could see where they were going. Cars were washed off the roads. Bridges collapsed. I heard of one woman who was trapped in her car. She could not get out and the water just took her. She could not be saved, and she was pregnant (*spoken in mother tongue only*). When I got back my mind was upside down because when I saw all these people who had lost their houses and all

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their things, I saw everything was lost. The Jukskei river swelled
 and glided through Setswetla like an angry snake filling its belly 15
 with water. Shacks were swallowed whole, trees and telephone
 poles were knocked over. Nothing looked the same (*spoken in
 mother tongue only*). Downstream, quite some distance away
 from my house, on the riverbank, quite steep and high up from 20
 where the river flowed, it was dense with trees, almost like
 entering a dark forest. Clothes and bedsheets and plastic bags
 hung from the trees. It looked as if corpses had been strung all
 along the branches. Everything was quiet there. Nobody
 searching for nobody. Nothing (*spoken in mother tongue only*). 25
 It was like I had walked into a graveyard. Like sacred ground.
Pause. At the foot of one of the trees, I saw a little heap which
 could have been some rubbish covered by leaves, or a pair of
 shoes washed up after the storm, but there was also a terrible
 smell, and that's when I saw her feet. I could not see the head, 30
 but the little feet were light brown and swollen. There were
 pieces of tree and grass in between her legs. It was definitely a
 baby girl. She was lying face-down in the dirt. I knew her. It was
 Mabuda's little girl.
 A pretty little thing. Seven years old. I liked her. "Hey, Mageza", 35
 she said to me just last week, "it's almost Christmas time, don't
 forget. Shoes, I would like new shoes. White, like I showed you
 in the pamphlet". When the police arrived, they covered her
 body with a plastic sheet. Like no one knew her, like she 40
 belonged to no one. Lost and found. Her brother is still missing.
 Mabuda's boy. Some say that his mother took him away with
 her when she left, just before the flood, in the middle of the
 night. Others believe that he drowned. His body was never
 found. There are many stories, but no one knows for sure. 45
Pause. Look, there she is again. *Osasere appears. Like in the
 beginning she is rummaging through the mud. She stands and
 stares up at the sky. Always here to uncover secrets, night or
 day, searching for the children and the sister she has lost, to
 find what she believes the river took from her. Pause*. But they 50
 are gone and they are not coming back (*spoken in mother
 tongue only*). Life is difficult, you know, it cuts you like a thief in
 the night. *He looks back at Osasere*. Who knows why

everything happened the way it did. Some say it was the hand of a god, or people's anger or their pride. Or love. So many stories. Who knows. No one. No one knows. 55

Iziengbe

The discussion on the construction of the mother-figure's text in this Part does not overtly refer to or include an analysis of all the instances in which she speaks or appears on stage. The two female actors and I had decided, after many discussions and research, to re-name the Cynthia-character, or the mother-figure in our text, *Iziengbe* - a female Benin name that denotes *patience*. Although Iziengbe's dialogue in many instances closely resembled the thematic, contextual and compositional presentation of Medea's speeches and interactions in Euripides's tragedy, new scenes or monologues were added, while other speeches and character exchanges were either adapted or omitted to effectively signify the trajectory of Iziengbe's narrative. In some cases, scenes from the *Medea* text that contained key-information and that we perceived to have direct bearing on our narrative's material, were not retained as spoken dialogue, but were reinterpreted and depicted through multimedia forms, including filmed-footage, video, choreography, song, soundscape and puppetry. Instances in our narrative that employ these alternative media and performance forms 'as text', will be the focus of subsequent discussions in *Part Three*.

In contrast to Euripides' tragedy in which Medea's cries of lament are heard 'offstage' (Johnston, 2008:121-123), Iziengbe's first appearance (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 3:4) establishes her identity, that is, who she remembers herself to have been in contrast to who she had become, by means of sensory reflection. As playwright-practitioner, I set out to construct the expository character information on Iziengbe by means of an imagistic narrative. Rather than impart information on the events from her past, she shares the life-world that she once knew as an embodied lived experience: she does not tell us about the past, but lives it; she hears it and feels it as "alive...on her skin" (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 3:5,6); she does not employ words to conjure what she remembers, but invokes images through which to live.

Iziengbe	Wet grass...green. Damp soil... dark and heavy... sunlight... and the skies...oh the skies... an early morning blue. Heat followed by months of rain and then, the winds in August. Dirt
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roads and trees...for miles on end. These are the things I miss most. The feeling of it. How it smells. Home. Alive. That's how it feels. The feeling of it all...to be alive...on my skin. *She opens her eyes.* Not here. I don't feel that here. Numbed. That's all. Here, the mornings smell of ash. And petrol. In winter, the walls become paper thin and the door turns to ice. The cold sits heavy on my coat. At times I feel like I'm not really here. Everyday, in the early morning, my husband is off to work. He gets up and leaves the house before any of us are awake. I lie in the dark and listen as he leaves. I wait for the door to shut, and only then do I get up. I light the fire and heat up some water in the faded yellow enamel pot. For washing. *Lights reveal the puppet children.* My children prefer the water hot. My neighbour takes care of them during the day when I'm at work. Ah, my beautiful children. When I look at them my heart wants to sing the old song of Qelelebo! When I think of them, I feel light. Like I'm back home. Walking over warm river stones or lying in the shade of the tall trees. *Pause.* I also fear for them. We are strangers in a strange land. "Lethlanya" or "Satane". That's what I'm called around here. No one calls me by name. Iziengbe. It means patience. Sometimes I am lucky and I am left alone but, at other times even the women hiss at me as I pass them in the street. Taxi drivers never stop for me, so I have to walk a long distance to the rank in Melusi street. *The Puppet Chorus appears. They whistle and shout words such as 'lavo' and 'sweety'.* Turning the corner, I don't go unnoticed. Boys and young men whistle and cheer, but here, among the crowd gathering in queues, I become an ordinary woman. A woman waiting for a taxi to go to work.

In the earliest stages of development, the construction of Iziengbe's text originated from work-sessions during which Nobuhle and I conceptualised, improvised, composed and wrote text-material. As facilitator, my aim during these sessions was to discover and elicit a personal, symbolic language, from both the actor and myself, that would accurately and succinctly convey the sensory and visceral lived experience of our central character. The symbolism

arrived at powerfully evoked personally remembered and perceived impressions: "...Wet grass...green. Damp soil...dark and heavy...sunlight...and the skies...oh the skies... an early morning blue" (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 3:1,2). These images, drawn from our respective memories of childhood, were specifically selected, not only for their clarity and authenticity, but because they effectively captured the 'otherness' of a remote or remembered, material landscape. A conversation with the artist-collaborator, who had lived in Zambia for a time, prompted us to envisage: "...Heat followed by months of rain and then, the winds in August. Dirt roads and trees...for miles on end..." (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 3:2-4). The emphasis on images that call to mind the natural world, and that of Iziengbe's identity finding expression through a symbolic language that connects her to natural elements, also alluded to, and foreshadowed, her 'otherworldly' and chthonian⁵¹ agencies which, as it transpires throughout the play, constitute the fulcrum of the drama's final outcome. The tension between her identity which belongs to the 'there and then' of the past and through which she lives, and the present 'here and now' in which she does not feel alive but "numbed", is reiterated through her sensory perception. Her experience of the natural world and its transformed associations, figuratively envelopes her in a heavy seasonal coat, and engineers her non-being: "At times, I feel like I am not really here" (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 3:10,11).

The feelings of estrangement experienced personally by Nobuhle, brought about by her 'dual cultural descent', proved significant in contributing to the centrality of the recurrent foreigner/exile motifs. Her subjective life-world, living as an 'outcast' in a South African township during childhood and early adolescence, along with faithful recollections of her mother, served as experiential basis for our insight into, and conjectures about, the ways in which a female identity might manifest and exist within the physical and metaphysical confines of the family home. In our amalgamated narrative, Iziengbe, like Medea, finds her identity almost exclusively limited to, and located within, the spatial and metaphorical parameters of the household as opposed to "the cults of the [Greek] state or polis" (Nugent, 1993:313). According to Classicist Dr Georgia Nugent⁵²:

⁵¹ The term Chthonian is usually employed when discussing or inferring 'underworld mythology'. In Greek mythology, for example, Hades and Persephone, who reign over the underworld, might be referred to as 'chthonic deities'. The term may also be applied to contexts that denote or resemble a mythological underworld such as 'chthonic darkness'. 'Chthonian' or 'chthonic' may also be used to describe natural or earthly things. *Meriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/chthonic> [2018, May 18].

⁵² Dr Georgia Nugent is currently serving as the Interim President of The College of Wooster in Ohio, USA. She is President Emerita of Kenyon College in Ohio, where she served for 10 years. She has served on the Classics faculties of Princeton, Brown, Cornell and Swarthmore universities. *AUS. American University of Sharjah*. s.a. [Online]. Available: <https://www.aus.edu/faculty/dr-s-georgia-nugent> [2018, September 18].

[D]espite the fact that in the strictly political sense woman as exile is an oxymoron, in a broader social sense, a woman as exile is axiomatic. Any woman who is a wife is, in some sense, exiled. Each household is constituted, in the Greek mind, as a kind of self-contained, autonomous unit, and any woman who marries is moved from her paternal household to the household of her husband. A Greek wife occupies a place that is literally liminal or marginal, as a person who has a foot in either household - that of her father and that of her husband [and] she remains, to some extent, an outsider. (Nugent, 1993:313)

Supplanted, away from her ancestral “home” where she used to walk “over warm river stones “and [lie] in the shade of the tall trees”, Iziengbe’s new home is not a place of well-being or familiarity: in winter, “the walls are paper-thin and the door turns to ice” (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 3: 8, 9) - a feeling to which she is unable to acclimatise. Iziengbe’s brief mention of her husband in the context of her present ‘here and now’, before she swiftly resumes her conversation about her home and her children, alludes to an estranged marital relationship: she is a strange body, an outsider, a *xenos*⁵³ in her new home. Her exclamation, that thoughts of her children “make her feel light” as though she is “back home” (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 3:20), implies that the liminal space she occupies is the selfsame marginalised space in which her children reside: “We are strangers in a strange land” (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 3:22). Iziengbe and Medea share a common history of exile and magic. Medea is “an eastern princess (and sorceress from Colchis), and as granddaughter of the sun, her origin significantly marks her as barbarian: [a] non-Greek” (Nugent, 1993:309). Similarly, Iziengbe’s origins, firmly rooted in the world of the supernatural - a feature which is only explored later in the text - predetermine her metaphysical, and eventually her physical, marginalisation and exile. “The problematic status of the exile is often conceptualised spatially, as being sent from the centre of a society or group” (Nugent, 1993:314) and Iziengbe’s peripheral and ‘foreign’ identity is metaphorically reinforced within the spatial confines of the household, and reaffirmed by the ‘centralised’ majority of pedestrians, commuters and taxi drivers who “hiss at [her] as she pass[es] them” on her way to the taxi rank “in Melusi street” (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 3:28). Both Iziengbe and Medea, therefore, “inherently [pose] a problem in the dynamics of the household” as well as

⁵³ Xenos is a Greek term for foreigner or outsider. Xenos (Greek). 2018. [Online]. Available: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xenos_\(Greek\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xenos_(Greek)) [2018, September 17].

Xenos is the root word from which Xenophobia is derived. Etymology (Ancient Greek): xenos (strange, foreigner) + phobia (aversion, avoidance, irrational fear for). *Online Etymology Dictionary*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/xenophobia> [2018, September 19].

to the median constituent of their community which, accordingly, is under constant threat of degeneration and disintegration at the hands of ‘the outsider’. However, as Nugent maintains:

Her precarious placement in this potentially dangerous role necessarily bestows a certain power on the woman. As with other categories of ‘strangers’ or figures at the border of the society, it is often a magical or religious power, which may manifest itself as a threat. As one contemporary woman in exile has lamented, ‘All people who find themselves away from their place of origin are always suspect to somebody - or everybody’.
(Nugent, 1993:316)

A Contest of Wills

The construction of the *agon*⁵⁴, (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 9:17), was, to a large extent, informed by and centred around, the embodied, subjective and socio-cultural ‘selves’ of the two leading actors. Improvisation and rehearsals facilitated action: they were now *doing* - actively ‘performing who they are’ - how/what they had *felt* during the initial phases of conceptualisation. Thando’s sensorial impressions, brought about by his direct entanglement in the culture of Alexandra, his assumptions about masculinity, ‘male behaviour’ and paternity, determined how he ‘behaved’ towards the characters of our ‘working’ text. The subjective life-world that he was accustomed to, and which included a particularly cynical perspective on the parent/child relation that he firmly believed in, often prompted fervent, visceral responses during improvisation and writing-sessions. His embodied language during writing-sessions often dictated the ways in which the preliminary text lived *through* him. His view on *Mabuda* - a colloquial appropriation of the South African name *Sibusoso* or *Blessing* in Isizulu, a name that he insisted “best defined his character” - despite many other suggestions from the cast - was that of “a man of few words” (Interview, March 2017). Mabuda’s utterances, he maintained, were to be unembellished and tactless, and as such, the character’s reasoning in the *agon*, as constructed during improvisational rehearsals and often expressed in his mother tongue, was less rhetorical than that employed by Jason in the *Medea* narrative (Johnston, 2008). Observing the ways in which the cast, and the lead male actor specifically, responded during these play/theatre-making sessions, I wrote in my journal that: “we *do not become* embodied, *we are embodied*” (Journal 2: March 2017).

⁵⁴ An *agon* describes a debate or contest between two characters in Attic comedy. In Classical tragedy it is also employed to refer to a ‘contest of opposed wills’. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2018. [Online] Available: <https://www.britannica.com/art/agon-theatre> [2018, May 23].

Mabuda	How many times have I warned you about that big mouth of yours? Talk, talk, talk. Do you ever think before you do that? Before you open your mouth, and let all those words come out? Huh? You could have stayed here, in this city, in this house. Happy. With your children. I would not have neglected you. I would have made sure that this roof over your head remains yours. That it belongs to you. You would not to have worried about how you are going to feed our children or that you would be cursed or laughed at or burnt alive in the streets.	1 10
	But now that you have behaved like a mad woman, lying and crying in your house the one day, and then shouting at everyone who pass by the next, I cannot do these things for you. You have made enemies of those around you. You frighten our children! I care about you. I know you, but I cannot help you now.	 15

Reinforcing our motif of domestic estrangement, Iziengbe offers an embittered rebuttal on Mabuda's betrayal and violation of domestic harmony: "You destroyed our home. Every bit of it. All of us. What about your children...there they are...Look at them! (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 9:24-28). This is dissimilar to Medea who "demonstrate[s] the merits of her claims" by proclaiming "her crucial role in Jason's victorious return to Greece with the Golden Fleece" and holding the "kind of agency associated in Greek society not with women, but with men such as *Ajax* [and] *Achilles*" (Sypniewski & MacMaster, 2010:149). Our text neither gives prominence to the tension between the 'heroically-martial' and the maternal (Lush, 2014:25) - a motif in Euripides's *Medea*; nor does it seek to "provide a specifically feminist 'reading' of the [action], interpreting her [Iziengbe] as an everywoman, suffering under a patriarchal regime" (Mackay & Allan, 2014:59). Although our narrative explored the female/male relation, it also, and perhaps more pertinently, considered the relation of parents and their children.

Iziengbe	<p>As a man you are the worst there is. There is no trace of a man in you. You are not a lion (<i>spoken in mother tongue only</i>). You only come to me now. After everything's been done. After everything has been arranged. Now that you've become my worst enemy you turn up at my house. Coward. First you hurt your family, and then you come back to humiliate them? Shame on you. Shame on you! You destroyed our home. Every bit of it. All of us. What about your children?</p> <p>If I were barren or did not want to bear your children, I could have perhaps understood why you would want this new wife so badly, but there they are. Your children. Look at them! My love for you was greater than my own wisdom (<i>spoken in mother tongue only</i>).</p>	<p>20</p> <p>25</p>
Mabuda	<p>I want to raise them to have proper lives. To grow up decent. Not having to look into others' eyes for charity...I want them to have enough food to eat... I want them to go to school. They must have books. I want them to read. They must grow up to be proud. They must walk down that street without being afraid. I want them to have friends who they can wave at and who will wave back at them. Friends who like them. Who know them. <i>Pause</i>. As long as you are around, they will never have that. They will never be safe. They will always be the witch's children (<i>spoken in mother tongue only</i>). <i>Pause</i>. You women are all the same. All you are worried about is if your husbands are having sex with other women. And if they are enjoying it. That's all. You think that if everything is good in bed you have all you need, but if the sex is bad, then all the finest things mean nothing. <i>Pause</i>. We are not like you. Men think about the future. About what happens tomorrow, or the day after that. What will become of my children? What will become of my blood? My children's lives do not end with you (<i>spoken in mother tongue only</i>).</p>	<p>30</p> <p>35</p> <p>40</p> <p>45</p>

Mabuda's attempt to disguise his infidelity as valiance exposes him as a sophist. His exclamation that he wants his children "to grow up decent" and "not to "[have] to look into other's eyes for charity" (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 9:31), veils his true motivation: "We are not like

you. Men think about the future. About what happens tomorrow, or the day after that...What will become of my blood?" (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 9:46-47). Within the realm of evolutionary psychology, Mabuda's behaviour, like that of *Jason's*, is deemed "inevitable" and "biologically determined"⁵⁵:

Among humans, institutionalised patriarchal control of females ensures preferential male advantage in terms of reproductive success. Marriage decisions in ancient Greece were in the hands of a woman's controlling males: her father, brother or sons. Classical scholars agree that marriage was a fully defined legal mechanism enabling and privileging male-to-male political exchange. Cross-culturally, men prefer younger wives because younger women, in terms of average expected future reproduction potential (Buss 2008, 141-2), are likely to bear more children in the future than older women. In taking a younger, more fertile wife, Jason certainly was behaving in accord with sociological expectations of his gender. (Mackay & Allan, 2014:62)

The cast affirmed, based on their personal, individual observations, the commonly held notion that men like *Mabuda* acted in accordance with "the sociological expectations of [their] gender". Thando, who asserted that "that is the way that most men think" (Text construction session, March 2017), was unsettled to find that his sentiments, as observed through his close involvement with 'masculinity' and 'male behaviour', were also echoed in an ancient text:

Jason	<p>Do you need more children? In my case, there's some benefit to have new children to help those already born. Was this a bad scheme? You'd agree with me, if you weren't so upset about the sex.</p>	5
	<p>But you women are so idiotic — you think if everything is fine in bed, you have all you need, but if the sex is bad, then all the very best and finest things</p>	10

⁵⁵ Although such a viewing is not the intention of this study, and I do not necessarily support these postulations, a biopoetic interpretation - derived from the findings of evolutionary psychologists Maria Makcay and Arlene Allan - of *Medea* is interesting and has some relevance to the discussion because of the views of the creative-collaborative.

you make your enemies. What mortals need
 is some other way to get our children.
 There should be no female sex. With that,
 men would be rid of all their troubles.

Get this straight— this royal bride I have, I didn't marry her 15
 because of any woman. As I told you,
 I wanted to save you and have children,
 royal princes, with the same blood as my sons.
 That way my house has more security. (Johnston, 2008)



Figure 10: Nobuhle and Thando constructing a 'verbal text'. Photograph by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.

Thando insisted that our narrative alluded to these comments. Iziengbe's response to Mabuda that "I'm not like other women. I see into the future. I know what's coming. The gods have given me the eyes of a prophet" (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 9) is the first overt allusion to her sacral agency. Medea's remark in the second *agon* (Johnston, 2008:1018-1046) finds resonance in Iziengbe's resolve to avenge Mabuda's betrayal.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ For our narrative's purposes and for the sake of brevity, the cast and I decided to combine the action of the first *agon* (Johnston: 2008, lines 524 - 747) with that of the second.

A SENSE OF 'BEING IN THE WORLD'

Although the function and broad outline of the sister-figure in our narrative, Osasere⁵⁷ (usually a female Benin name, which historically denotes “*God is supreme*”), were established during the initial phase of conceptualisation as that of an intermediary and confidant, the cast and I had neither discovered, nor clarified, the exact character-elements or intentions that would constitute and guide the relationship between the sisters. Two improvisation sessions that occurred on 5 and 6 March 2017 (both of which were two hours in duration), were dedicated to the development of the two sister-figure-characters and the construction of their dialogue. Since both the female actors had been instrumental in the conceptualisation of the characters and had become very familiar with the life-worlds of the ‘actual’ Setswetla flood-victims, I implemented personalised improvisational methods that required the re-enactment of the two characters’ fictionalised life-worlds. As theatre-pedagogue, my strategies, which often originated on the spur of the moment in accordance with the demands of the situation, were aimed at providing the actor-collaborators with the means to ‘become aware of’ - a phrase which I often found myself verbally reiterating to the actors - and to find connections between themselves, their characters and the conceptual environment in which both their ‘invented/performative’ and ‘actual/experiential’ entities were to ‘co-exist’. My pedagogical objective during these sessions was to elicit sensory awareness which according to Professor Marth Munro⁵⁸ (2018) “includes and surpasses ‘interoception’” and implies “an awareness of sensations in the ‘viscera and internal tissues of the body’” (Blakeslee & Blakeslee in Munro, 2018:10), as well as ‘proprioception’ (Blakeslee *et al.* in Munro, 2018:10) “which provides internal information of how and where the body is moving in space” (Munro, 2018:6). Aside from implementing impromptu activities which I hoped would evoke the actors’ awareness of the properties of their bodies and how these constituent bodily elements behaved in both their practical and conceptualised surroundings, I also devised strategies that foregrounded an awareness of their “sense of being” and of their “identit[ies] in relation to the[ir] environment” (Munro, 2018:10). My efforts during this phase of text construction were geared towards the facilitation of the actors’ ‘embodied learning’⁵⁹ (Munro, 2018:1). I intentionally implemented

⁵⁷ The meaning of Benin names can be found at *African names and African baby names*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <http://www.edofolks.com/html/pub172.htm> [2018, May 22].

⁵⁸ Professor Marth Munro (University of Pretoria, Drama department) is the Director of Research at the internationally renowned Lessac Training and Research Institute. Prof Munro is also qualified as a registered Sound Therapist with the South African Centre of Sound Therapy. Her key research interest is embodied performance. *Profile: Prof Marth Munro*, 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.up.ac.za/drama-department/article/1820533/profile-prof-marth-munro> [2018, September 18].

⁵⁹ Munro defines “embodied learning” as: “the deliberate use and recognition of multimodal bodymind activities and strategies to facilitate shifts in perspectives, paradigms, behaviour and actions” (Munro, 2018:2).

activities such as improvisation-sessions, group and one-to-one conversations to bring about “shifts in [the actors’] perspectives” of themselves and others, and to consider alternative “paradigms, behaviour and actions” (Munro, 2018:1) that would contribute to the creativity of the collective, as well as be employed towards the conceptualisation of the individualised characters of our theatrical narrative. My perception of ‘embodied learning’ as evidenced by my work with the collaborative-collective supports the supposition that “embodied learning is [...] the active process through which changes and shifts are experienced in, through, with, and because of the body. It is the mindful attention to, and retention of, this aforementioned process that determines the continuous emergence of self and that facilitates learning and cognition” (Munro, 2018:6).

I often conjured circumstances and situations that served as the impetus for sensory and corporeal awareness. In one particular rehearsal session, I prompted Boitumelo, for example, to perceive and experience herself as both human agent - that is, her physical, biological, phenomenological and experiential self (Hocking *et al.* in Munro, 2018:6) - and ‘invented’ self - as the character in our dramatised narrative - through the foregrounding of her physical action/s, focusing awareness on her interaction and engagement with an imagined material environment. During this session I asked the actress to attempt to ‘get a sense of the character’ by focussing on *how* she ‘felt’ and responded in different situations given certain stimuli. The various scenarios that were played out during the two-hour improvisation session centred around establishing useable scenes that were to feature Osasere alone on stage. As facilitator I deliberately steered away from using terminology or references such as ‘embodiment’, ‘bodymind’ or ‘embodied self’, and instead employed words that I anticipated would evoke emotive and sensory impressions and responses. Boitumelo and I conjured numerous hypothetical scenarios that foregrounded Osasere’s alcohol abuse: plausible situations included ‘waking up in a deserted street’; trying to procure or steal alcohol’; ‘breaking into a tavern’ or ‘sensing the danger of an approaching thunderstorm’. The stimuli that I provided during this particular improvisation comprised strategic impressions such as:

...**body aching** due to sleeping outside; head **spinning**, **hearing** distant thunder; **smelling** the possibility of rain, **sensing** an impending storm; **hungry** and **thirsting** for alcohol; **seeing** no other people in the vicinity and **feeling** lonely and confused; **experiencing** trouble **walking**, **balancing**, consequently **stumbling and falling down** now and again; **blurred vision**; endeavouring to **communicate** with others, but **slurs** and **stammers**...(Improvisation session, March 2017).

I also provided different scenarios capable of generating feasible and 'usable' character information, and as the idea of domestic violence so prominently features in our text, these improvised scenarios focused on probable situations within domestic settings. The two actresses were asked, for example, to 'replay' probable encounters by using, altering or adding to the ideas and actions that they expressed during multiple, improvised versions of a specific scenario. This reciprocal approach to scene and character development enabled me to select ideas that I deemed potentially significant and to employ these, often verbatim words or phrases, as stimuli with which to elicit new discoveries and to reinforce, elaborate on, amplify and refine extant material. My approach as theatre pedagogue during these working sessions was to evoke visual impressions, call to mind hypothetical scenarios and provide stimuli to provoke visceral and sensorial responses in/from the actor-collaborators. I intentionally set out to neither interfere nor 'forcibly guide' their creative discoveries: as practitioner and pedagogue I facilitated their lived experiences and conceptual findings and actively encouraged "the enactment of knowledge and concepts through the activity of [their] bodies" (Lindgren & Johnson-Glenberg in Munro, 2018:6).

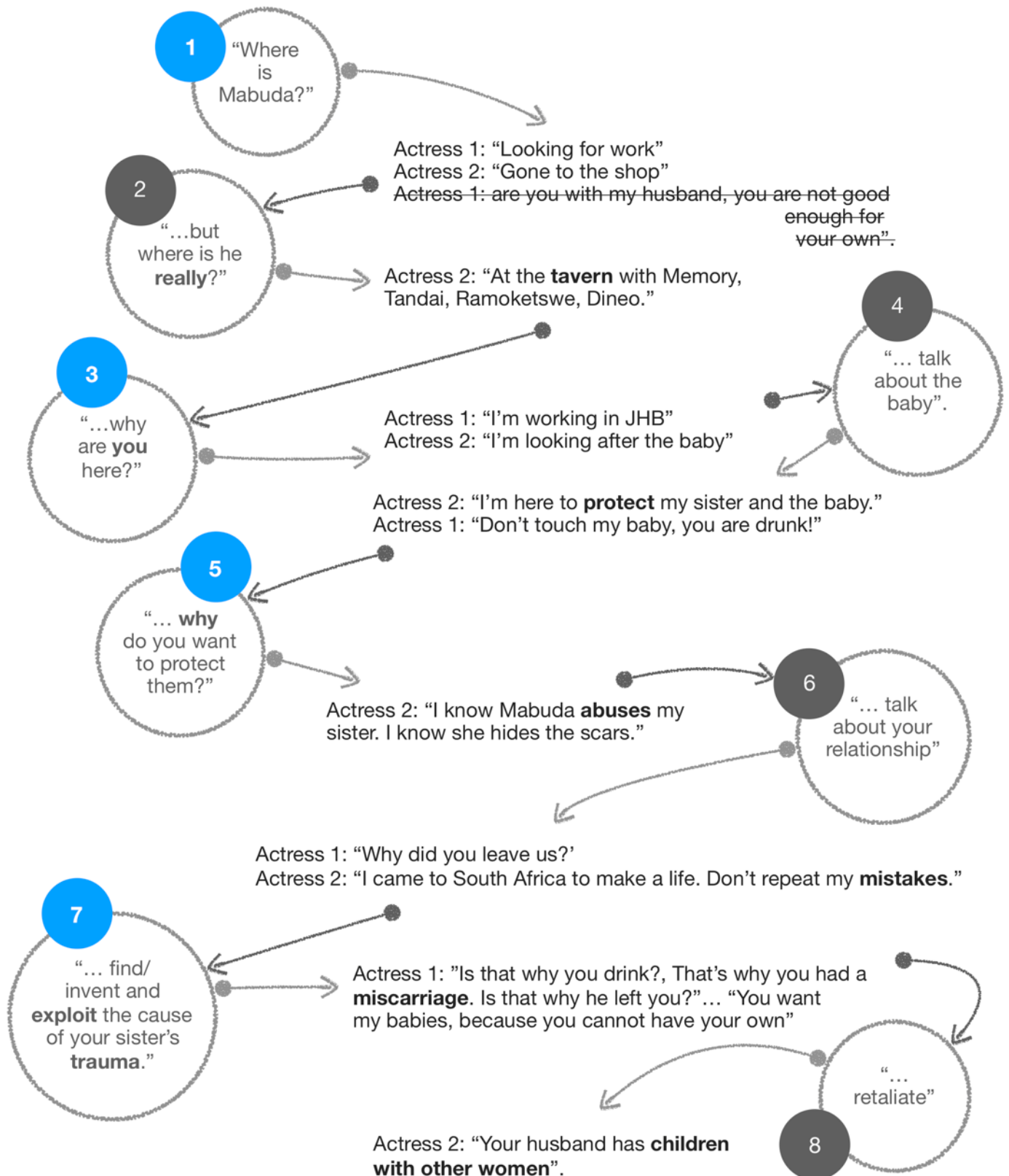


Diagram 1 illustrates the reciprocal interaction of give|take, question|answer, stimulus|response, during rehearsals as eight significant stimuli (represented as questions or instructions 1 - 8).

Transcription 1. The extract below captures the two female actors' verbatim dialogue as spoken and recorded during rehearsal. The interactive stimuli used in these rehearsals are indicated as numbers 3,4,5,7 and 8.

Actress 1: ~~Are you with my husband? You are not good enough for your own".~~

Actress 2: You are not the only one he has a child with.

Actress 1: I'm tired of you trying to live through me. Stop making up lies to make your life just as good as mine.

Actress 2: Do you really think I would like to live your life. Your husband abuses you.

Actress 1: Are you in my house when my husband touches me, as you say?

Actress 2: I'm in your house more that you are.

Actress 1: I'm working, unlike you. I'm working, while you are sitting.

Actress 2: He is not here because he has other children, Cynthia-Iziengbe, listen to me!

Actress 1: Get out of my house!

Actress 2: I can't leave, I have duties to do.

Actress 1: You've got duties towards my baby? I've seen through you, I've seen right through you. You want my baby, you want my baby because you cannot have your own. Mm, is that why he left you? Because you cant have our own? And now you want my life? You want my baby?

Actress 2: Cynthia-Iziengbe shut up, shut up now! Are you saying this just because I lost my baby? Why are you digging up my past? I'm making you a better person that me.

Actress 1: I'm sick and tired of you playing the victim. We are all from Zim. We all go through the same struggles. I work, Kate-Osasere. I work. You do nothing. You sit, and you drink. No wonder you could not have a baby, because you are drinking all the time. Jisses! You are going to tell me about my life? Get out of my house, you are not needed here. Don't point your finger at me. Stop it! Voetsek!

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This method, which hinged on an organically free-flowing and reciprocal interaction of give/take, question/answer, stimulus/response between the actors and I, and between the two actors, is illustrated in *Diagram 1*. Although the illustration is a condensed and linear representation of a more complex series of unpremeditated, unpredictable and mostly spontaneous creation-events that transpired during the two rehearsals, it nevertheless demonstrates the creative (inter)action undertaken in these rehearsals as eight significant stimuli (represented as questions or instructions 1-8) that collectively contributed towards fundamental and pivotal compositional material. The illustration further demonstrates how some of these stimuli (graphically represented as numbers 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8), which had become the seminal 'building blocks' of the characters' relationship, were incorporated during one of the final improvised 'takes' of the scene. *Transcription 1* captures the verbatim dialogue as spoken by the two female actors and recorded on 6 March 2017 during a final improvisation of a scene that would later constitute the material for *Missing*, Sc 6, pp.9 - 12. (Although much of the dialogue spoken during these improvisations would be redrafted or rewritten before rehearsals began, the intrinsic nature and substance that engineered the complexities inherent in the two sisters' relationship had been firmly established through the two actors' corporeal and visceral engagement and interaction with their material and each other).

The improvisational phase, and the improvisation-sessions under discussion here in particular, provided crucial information and in many ways influenced and gave rise to the narrative's central themes and motifs, contributed to the conceptualisation of its staging, and elucidated the specifics of multi-media as well as the mood and atmosphere of the play. Whereas Mabuda's infidelity, a notion introduced by Boitumelo, proves to be the motivating force that spurs Iziengbe to take action, Osasere's miscarriage clearly defines and validates the nature of the relationship that exists between the sisters. Both the 'original' scene, of which the dialogue is indicated in *Transcription 1*, as well as the dialogue in the finalised text, renounces Osasere - who has been abandoned by her husband because she "cannot have a baby of her own" and consequently seems to "drink all the time" as worthless, inconsequential, debased and peripheral:

Iziengbe	I'm tired of you trying to live through me. Stop making up lies to make your life just as good as mine. You want my baby because you cannot have your own. (Original dialogue, recorded 6 March 2017)
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Iziengbe You have always lived your life through me. Never had a thought of your own. Always following me around. Even as child you had your hungry little eyes on me. Hiding in the shadows, like an abandoned animal begging for scraps. Waiting for me to throw you a bone. I see right through you little sister. (Final text: *Missing*, Scene 6).

The **creative action** that occurred during the improvisation sessions and the creation-events that sprung from it, once again led my wandering mind down familiar paths; as I observed and mulled over the discoveries that materialised in the rehearsal room, I distinctly recognised some of the figures, faces and the outlines of curious, and at times, surreal spectres that reappeared in my imagination. The “*TWO WOMEN*” who had on a previous occasion manifested as part of my imagined stage directions, as sitting on “*a dry riverbed... in a remote region in Africa*” and who also “dance[d] the dance of death” in “that dream I had” that resembled a Voodoo ritual, revisited my imagined performance space. These two strangely supernatural and even numinous figures, who seemed to have stepped out of a nightmarish civil war in Bunia and onto my imagined stage, also heralded the reentry of the “militia men and the scavengers that skulk in corners”. The spotted hyenas that first “spilled” into my imagination as shadows against the ruined and ruptured walls of a war torn city somewhere in Africa, and later reemerged as portentous envoys of death, materialised, not as virtually simulated images, animations or life-size puppets as I had hoped, but rather found expression in Iziengbe’s abusive and grotesquely scornful insults as she compares her sister, Osasere, to a rummaging scavenger, reminding her that as a “child [with] hungry little eyes...[Osasere hid] in the shadows, like an abandoned animal begging for scraps”. Ironically, by comparing Osasere to a scavenging “animal” (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 6), an analogy that conjures Osasere in the likeness of an hyena, Iziengbe’s fear to be laughed at by her enemies - Hyenas’ distinct vocalisations are often compared to human laughter - is an intended, parallel allusion to Medea’s motivation to take action against her enemies in Euripides’s tragedy. Osasere’s argument (seminal information conceptualised by the second actress during the improvisation session recorded on 6 March 2017), that it is her natural instinct “to protect [Iziengbe’s] little ones” (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 6) an assertion often disputed by her sister, also significantly contributed and enhanced the compositional material of our narrative. In addition to these discoveries on the siblings’ relationship functioning as essential ingredients of the plot, it was only retrospectively - after the construction of the scene (indicated by *Diagram 2* below) was finalised, and after deciding to use the structure of Euripides’s drama as an organising principle in our narrative - that I recognised the analogous significance of Osasere

as that of an intertextual counterpart to *the nurse* in traditional Greek tragedy who functioned as a subordinate “[and derived her only authority] from [her position] as [the] supervisor of children” (Fletcher, 1999:par1). Since I support Fletcher’s contention that “the nurse of the Medea [has a] deep understanding of Medea’s [behaviour, which] enables her to provide more insight into her character” (Fletcher, 1999:par1), I endeavoured to keep with the conventions of ancient Greek tragedy and to present Osasere as caregiver who functions as a dramatic device to comment on Iziengbe’s state of mind and behaviour, and who provides background information as well as serves to foreshadow future events (Fletcher, 1999: par1).

The final text of this scene as performed on 6 and 7 July 2017 is indicated as *Diagram 2* below. The inclusion of the text (*Missing*, 2017, Scene 6:6-9) in its entirety here, serves to indicate the ways in which the reciprocal interaction of stimulus/response (as indicated in *Diagram 1* and in *Transcription 1*) was developed and finally employed as the spoken text of the scene.

Iziengbe Where is Mabuda?

Osasere *She is obviously startled.* I thought you are in Johannesburg.

Iziengbe No I'm not. I'm home. *Pause.* Where is my husband?

Osasere He's out. Gone to the shop.

Iziengbe *Reaching out.* Get your hands off my children. *Indicating the girl.* Let go of her. I don't want you touching them. Do you hear? He is supposed to be here, looking after them. And what shop are you talking about? He can't go to the shop without money. We have no money. I'm only getting paid next week. I've had to borrow money.

Osasere I'm just helping out.

Iziengbe What do you mean helping out? You can't help. Look at you.

Osasere What about me?

Iziengbe You are drunk.



1

Osasere I'm not drunk.

Iziengbe You are drunk, and you stink. I don't you want you near my children when you are like this. I've told you before. I don't trust you with my child.

Osasere I look after them every day when you are not here.

Iziengbe I've never asked you to look after them. I would never leave either of them alone with you. You can't look after anybody. You can't even look after yourself!

Osasere I look after your children every day. When Mabuda is out and you are in Johannesburg, I come here. To your house. And I stay here until just before your taxi arrives in the evening.

Iziengbe You are a liar! (*Spoken in mother tongue*).

Osasere I'm not lying. It's true. Your husband is almost never at home. When he is at home, he sleeps.

Iziengbe He is out there looking for work.

Osasere He stopped looking for work weeks ago.

Iziengbe That's not true. *Pause*. Who feeds them?

Iziengbe My husband will never leave his children alone with you.

Osasere He does not even have to ask me. I come around here anyway. I come because I'm scared that he will forget about them. I'm scared that they will get hurt here on their own.

Iziengbe I do not want you in my house when I'm not here. I do not want you near my children.

1

2

1

2

Osasere I'm trying to protect your little ones. I'm trying to protect you!
(*Spoken in mother tongue*).

Iziengbe Protect me?

Osasere Yes, I want to protect both of you.

Iziengbe Why, against what?

Osasere Against him.

Iziengbe Against Mabuda?

Osasere Yes, Mabuda.

Iziengbe Why?

Osasere I know what he does to you. You think no one knows, but I know. I've seen you crying. In the mornings before you get on the train. I worry about you, so sometimes I'm here, outside, in your street before the sun is up. I wait. I hang around as the men light their fires. I watch as Alex wakes up, just to make sure that you wake up too. I want to see you walk down the street. My beautiful sister walking tall and proud. I know that you were not attacked in Johannesburg that time. There were no thugs. (*Spoken in mother tongue*). No one stole your money. It was him. The bruises on our legs. Your eye. The cut along your cheek. I've heard people talk about it in the street. People know.

Iziengbe People don't know!

Osasere Yes, they do! (*Spoken in mother tongue*).

Iziengbe They are not here, with us, in our house, when we are alone, so how can they know? These are our lives, and you should stay out of it! The lot of you!

4

5

5

Osasere He brags about it at the tavern. I heard him say it once. Sitting there drinking with his friends, and with those girls on his lap. He was saying how he put you in your place, and how you should be grateful that he has not thrown you out into the street. He was bragging and saying all of these things and the girls were laughing. Everyone was laughing.

Iziengbe What were you doing?

Osasere I told him that we should go home.

Iziengbe You are lying. How do you know these people? Who are they? (Spoken in mother tongue).

Osasere Memory. Tandai. Ramoketwse. Dineo. Your husband is not who you think he is. How am I going to get that through to you? Where have you been? Everyone can see him for what he is. Except you! Open your eyes. Look at him and see the man he is! (Spoken in mother tongue). He has had many other women and he is planning on marrying a new wife as we speak!

Iziengbe Why did you follow me here. *Pause*. Why did you follow me to this country? Look at what it has done to you.

Osasere I came because you are here. I came to be with my family.

Iziengbe You have always lived your life through me. Never had a thought of your own. Always following me around. Even as child. Your hungry little eyes on me. Hiding in the shadows like an abandoned animal begging for scraps. Waiting for me to throw you a bone. (Spoken in mother tongue). I see right through you little sister. Have you forgotten who I am? You are not talking to a fool.

Osasere Iziengbe you are wrong. This time you are wrong!

8

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6

7

Iziengbe You are making up these disgusting lies because you want my babies. You want them for yourself. You want them as your own. Is that why your man left you? Because you could not have babies of your own? No matter how hard you tried you could not give him what he wanted. And now you want all this, you want my life.

Osasere vomits



PART THREE

CONVERGING STREAMS

All that is living rises as does the sun, from the water, and at evening plunges into the water. Born from the springs, the rivers, the seas, at death man arrives at the waters of the Styx in order to enter upon the "night journey on the sea." The wish is that the black water of death might be the water of life; that death, with its cold embrace, might be the mother's womb, just as the sea devours the sun, but brings it forth again out of the maternal womb. Life believes not in death. (Jung, 1961:18)

ORIGINS

It was during early December 2016, amidst the throes of a blistering heatwave, that I chanced upon the music of German-Iranian composer, *Ramin Djawadi*. In this instance, my choice to refer to this occasion of discovery as a ‘chance encounter’ is deliberate as I had not been actively searching for soundscape-material for this specific theatre piece at the time of my introduction to the composer. In fact, this first fortuitous encounter with Djawadi’s work was brought about by the creative-collaborator. As an avid music collector, his on-going search for works by ‘obscure’ composers or unsung musicians across a broad range of genres, had in the past often unearthed inspirational and creative material suited to theatre-making. Similarly, on this occasion, only a few days after I had listened to Kissmo Chauke’s emotionally charged account of Everlate’s death, our entanglement with music, prompted my encounter with Djawadi’s *The Light of The Seven*. Originally composed as a background score for a popular television series *Game of Thrones*⁶⁰, Djawadi’s haunting melody comprises piano, organ, strings and two boy soloists, and is loosely arranged as a *passacaglia*⁶¹: “a slow instrumental piece characterised by a series of variations on a particular theme played over a repeated bass part”.

The stylistic intricacies inherent in the melody elicited a sensorial and imagistic overload and my emotions oscillated in step with the work’s rhythmic patterns and transmutations. Intermittent piano chords, tenderly played in various octave combinations, left me feeling acutely melancholic. Shortly after, followed the inconsolable weeping of the strings, the dissonance and sublimity of the boys’ solo voices and orgiastic exultation of the church organ. The melody seemed to emulate perpetual motion; waves of sound rolled and swelled and aurally intimated the patient undulation of low tide. Turbulent moments in which I experienced savage exhilaration were sharply offset by instances during which my awareness was that of terror and despair.

Aside from my immediate and unmediated emotional response to Djawadi’s composition, I also instantaneously found myself midst a vivid imagistic landscape. The composer’s musical score had become the soundscape to a montage of moving images that seemed alive and imbued with filmic naturalism:

⁶⁰ *Game of Thrones* is an American fantasy drama television series created by David Benioff and D. B. Weiss. It is an adaptation of a series of fantasy novels, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, by George R. R. Martin, the first of which is *A Game of Thrones*. *Game of Thrones*. 2018. [Online]. Available: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Game_of_Thrones [2018, August 12].

⁶¹ Collins Online Dictionary. 2014. S.v. ‘*passacaglia*’. [Online]. Available: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/passacaglia> [2018, August 12].

...A black screen. The **river** is murky. A **piano**. It almost seems as though a dark liquid had been poured into the **water**. Sediment seems to have settled in-between the grit and gravel gathered in its chinks and the **pale-yellow reeds** are caked with mud. A breeze. Pools and puddles are fringed and measured; these are patterned, like tortoiseshell. A cello exhales. Catching the light, the surface of the water glitters. It has its own rhythm. A gentle shifting. Backwards and forwards and from side to side - like the tender rocking of a cradle. **Music notes are droplets. Ripples and circles** of light on the water. It is winter. Feathers, twig and eggshell - it is a bird's nest roughly amassed as a baby's burrow or a spiderweb sketched or woven - **float downstream**. "Who will be waiting on the other side?". **A child face-down in the water**. I cannot make it out. "There will be no-one". It is girl I think, but her outlines are blurred and there are gaps in the narrative. It is like I've been spliced and edited. A little brown hand and fingers in the water, floating there amongst the reeds and the stones in the warm sun. Sharp chords. I am also there. I am also present in the film watching her. I am watching myself, watching her and I am aware that I am watching. The melancholic tune again. These notes are yellow. Yellow notes against a dark brown background. Silence and longing. Water and the inevitability of things. A leaf stirs, or not even. Ripples and echoes and earthquakes, then nothing. Nothing, again. A light swirling of nothings and water, then seeing **tall stick-figures. Smiling caricatures wrapped in bright cloth**. Green wetlands. The search is on. "How quickly the seasons change and turn. Look up! **Look up at the clouds!**". A chorus of voices. **These are the things she will see before it all ends**. There is a pale sky. **I am gliding and diving like a little boat**. The church organ eggs me on. I am bobbing and bouncing and whilst **black birds are flitting and darting overhead, white birds are drawn in chalk on a black board. She drew birds using a red crayon once and the swallows flew off the page**. There is a rushing of water. **A tumbling and churning** and breaking apart as she and I shatter to pieces. The music shoves and drags me towards death. **Our limbs spread out underwater like ribbons**. There is no use fighting the current and I am no swimmer. This is what it feels like at the bottom amongst the stones and bones and things. My dress feels heavy. **I am heels over head**. Down here the world moves at its own elegant pace. Her hair gathers in knots. There are sharp shafts of light and we drown...

The vividly radiant yellow and dark brown hues that emanated from the piano and the strings respectively, together with the sudden onset of emotion and the complex filmic

narrative, seemed to occur simultaneously. Notwithstanding retrospective contemplation and subsequent reading on the matter, I remain uncertain about the interconnection between my emotional, visual and auditory domains. While some researchers⁶² have, with some degree of certainty, demonstrated that “strong analogies between [these areas exist]”, current studies on the interrelationship between music, visual imagery and emotion are on-going (Eerola, 2017:2)⁶³.

My questioning of the sudden and involuntary nature of my response to Djawadi’s music led me to ponder whether this sensory encounter could, in some sense, be likened to a synesthetic experience. I concede that an investigation on the inner-workings of the phenomenon that neuroscientists have come to define as synesthesia (a term derived from Greek⁶⁴ denoting “a union of the senses” or “to perceive together”), would be a near-impossible undertaking given the scope and purpose of this specific study. Nevertheless, my reference to the phenomenon here constitutes my interest in discovering and contemplating relevant observations and insights on elements that might constitute the structure of my sensory-emotional and imagistic experiences. American neurologist Richard Cytowic describes synesthesia as:

an involuntary joining in which the real information [received by] one sense is accompanied by a perception in another sense. In addition to being involuntary, this additional perception is regarded by the synesthete as real. (in Steen: 2001:203)

According to some researchers, synesthetes who possess ‘conceptual synesthesia’, who “see abstract concepts [...] as shapes or colours projected either internally or in the space around them” have also confirmed that the “phenomenon is biological, automatic and apparently unlearned, and distinct from both hallucination and metaphor” (Carpenter, 2001:1,2). Cytowic maintains that synesthesia is “clearly separate from artistic fancy [...] Its reality and vividness are what make synesthesia so interesting in its violation of conventional perception”. Cytowic’s observations reveal that “induced images tend to be visual, whereas

⁶² One of the key-researchers in the field is Bill Thompson. He is Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychology, Macquarie University. He is also a Chief investigator of the ARC: Centre of excellence in Cognition and its Discourse, and Director of the Music, Sound and Performance Lab. *Macquarie University*. 2018. [Online]. Available: http://www.psy.mq.edu.au/me2/index.php/people/individual/bill_thompson [2018, August, 12].

⁶³ Tuomas Eerola is Professor of Music and Cognition at Durham University. He is currently head of the Music Department. *MUSIC & SCIENCE LAB, Music, visual imagery, and emotions*. 2017. [Online]. Available: <https://musicscience.net/2017/06/08/music-visual-imagery-and-emotions/> [2018, August 12].

⁶⁴ The word “synesthesia” or “synaesthesia,” has its origin in Greek *syn* meaning union, and *aesthesia* meaning sensation, and therefore: “a union of the senses”. *Internet Online Encyclopedia*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/synesthe/> [2018, August 14].

inducing stimuli tend to be auditory, tactile, or gustatory” (in Steen, 2013:203). Laboratory experiments conducted by Martino and Marks suggest that in cases of ‘strong synesthesia’, correspondences between modalities “tend to be idiosyncratic and systematic at the same time”.

Correspondences are idiosyncratic in that each synesthete has a unique scheme of associations. Middle C on the piano may be blue to one color-music synesthete and green to another. Yet both synesthetes will reveal a systematic relationship between color brightness or lightness and auditory pitch: the higher the pitch of the sound, the lighter or brighter the color of the image. Notable is the association of pitch to shape and size: the higher the pitch of the sound, the sharper, more angular, and smaller the visual image (Martino & Marks, 1978:62).

Martino and Marks⁶⁵ also note the prevalence of ‘weak synesthesia’ -the notion that one need not be a synesthete to “create, identify, and appreciate cross-modal connections or associations”. They contend that “one form of association is the cross-modal metaphor found in common language”, perceptions such as “warm colour[s] and sweet smell[s]” (Martino & Marks, 1978:63). These observations and advances in synesthetic studies make it plausible to consider the significance of synesthesia in my attempts to decipher my own sensory-emotional and imagistic perceptiveness. Given the objective of this study, it might suffice to view these remarks on synesthesia as reflective of my pursuit to gain insight on the nature of the creation events that are specific to my practice.

The visceral and emotional impact of the experience was, and remains, profoundly significant since the seminal information that resided in its imagistic content would ignite much of the creative action; it would also precipitate what could be described as the genesis and the ‘crux’ of the play. At this point of our **creative action**, as a theatre artist who had not yet stepped in to the role of educator or collaborator, I sensed the ‘scene’ that had played out in ‘my mind’s eye’ would, in a theatrical sense, serve as the core image around which a narrative would be constructed. I was determined to stage the imagistic narrative, or at the very least to bring elements of it to life. At this early stage, the only indication of the play’s diegesis was

⁶⁵ Gail Martino has 20 years of experience in applying techniques and interventions based on her training in Psychodynamic Psychotherapy, Psychoanalysis, Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy, Mindfulness, and Life Coaching. *Psychology Today*. 2017. [Online].

Available: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/gail-martino-westport-ct/69783> [2018, August 16].

Lawrence E Marks is Professor of Psychology at Yale University. His main interest centres around human sensory and perceptual processes. *Yale University: Department of Psychology*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://psychology.yale.edu/people/lawrence-marks> [2018, August 16].

that it would have Everlate Chauke's disappearance and drowning as its primary trajectory. The elements of the 'story', however, had not appeared as spoken dialogue or clearly demarcated scenes, but as images depicted in a filmic fashion. The imagistic narrative was in and of itself a manifestation of the toddler's thoughts and fears, and the montage of moving images articulated my own impressions on loss and memories of a painful childhood. My perception of what it means 'to be myself' and 'to lose myself' seemed inextricably entangled with the fate of little Everlate Chauke - 'our' drowning embodied questions around death and dying and the mystery that lay enshrined in both.

The numerous impressions of water bore great personal significance: the river, at first "murky" and "dark", also had "glittering" "pools" and "puddles" that were "fringed" by dry grass. The water was both placid and buoyant, appearing strangely tranquil and secretive. It seemed alive: it undulated, cascaded, rushed and churned; its protean quality indicated dynamic motion. The luminous silvery green vividness of my imagistic storyboard denoted the world of dreams, emotion, the subconscious and the unconscious. Here I traversed the realm, where according to Jung, water signalled "the maternal", (Jung, 1961:82), "birth", "the mother's womb", "the fountain of life" (Jung, 1959:111), "cleansing, purification and baptism" (Jung, 1961:426); "intuition" (Jung, 1961:146), and "transformation" (Jung, 1959:146).

...the [un]conscious is the world of water, where all life floats in suspension; where the realm of the sympathetic system, the soul of everything living, begins; where I am indivisibly this and that; where I experience the other in myself and the other-than-myself experiences me. (Jung, 1961:45)

The emotional and imagistic impressions were inextricably linked to the musical language of my filmic experience. Djawadi's instrumentation intimated the rhythms, sounds and 'music' of the [un]conscious and signified the mercurial nature of memory. Besides the solo voices and the notes of the piano, the chords of the full-rounded bass of the cello travelled through me and resounded within me. The visual narrative, together with the musical language as established by the initial filmic impressions, put in place the inherent poetic qualities of the play.

THE POWER OF SOUND

The first visual impressions, as induced by Ramin Djawadi's work, prompted subsequent stage imagery, accorded the conceptual narrative its metaphysical theatre aesthetic, and to a large degree determined the play's conceptual soundscape. In addition, our amalgamated text, with its inclusion of Euripides's *Medea* as an analogous narrative, evoked theatrical

images - not in a filmic fashion as before, but images that could be staged inspired by ancient classical texts and Greek Mythology. In my mind's eye, 'the land of the dead' rose as an apocalyptic windswept and monochromatic wasteland from the depths of the river Styx⁶⁶. Here, where the ferryman⁶⁷ bore the bodies of the dead, the familiar shadows of Hyenas, militiamen and the two African women, who had before so prominently featured in my conceptual landscape, reappeared. On stage, a four-member congregation of ghostly figures assembled on the riverbank.



Figure 11: The Ghost Chorus. Photograph by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.

These silent onlookers, a group of actors/singers in due course referred to as the 'ghost chorus' who stood in a demarcated up-stage area, were a manifestation of the re-appearance of familiar imagery interwoven with the mental pictures that had emerged in the filmic narrative. The 'caricatures wrapped in bright cloth' who had appeared as silent observers in the film-like scenario, resembled the keen-eyed 'totemic puppets, enclosed by skulls and masks' that had visually materialised a few weeks before. These spectral figures, I later decided, would become the dramatic and theatrical exemplification of my imagined persona who, in the filmic narrative, observed the body of little Everlate Chauke floating downstream. The imagistic impressions brought on by Djawadi's melody, which conjured those suppositional fleeting

⁶⁶ In Greek mythology, Styx is a deity and a river that forms the boundary between Earth and the Underworld, often called "Hades", which is also the name of its ruler. Styx. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Styx> [2018, August 16].

⁶⁷ During ancient times, many cultures buried their dead with coins as a way to pay a mythical ferryman to take their souls into the afterlife. *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ferryman> [2018, August 16].

moments before death of what one 'sees', and in this instance, what Everlate might have seen or experienced, led me to locate the functionality of the 'ghost chorus' as that of critically 'watching' and 'remembering'. Situated on the riverbank, the supernatural figures who had seen the before-and-after of the flood, assumed their role as atemporal commentators. Speaking, whispering and singing as 'the voices of the dead', the 'ghost chorus' would become the sacral narrators who had insight into both the past and the action played out in the present. The dramatic convention of the all-knowing narrator, who as ancestral-like figures in this instance were also privy to the characters' thoughts, would be reiterated in the omniscient observations of the taxi-driver who, during the opening moments of the play, intimates that his reflections on the characters and the events of the past might shed light on what had happened 'that day' in Setswetla.

The burgeoning visual landscape coincided with the **creative action** undertaken in the rehearsal room: the conceptualisation of characters and improvisation sessions was well underway. Although the construction of the text had only begun, I had already approximated and entertained the fanciful notion of including live music, and for the 'ghost chorus' to be a small group of 'auxiliary' singers. In the meantime, however, the cast of actors and I determined to focus on, develop and construct the main characters directly involved in the Setswetla narrative. Developing a soundscape that would underpin the poetic identity of the play indicated the exploration and discovery of music capable of evoking similar visual, emotional and sensory sensations as those brought on by Djawadi's musical composition. The soundscape had to support and advance the trajectory of the play's dramatic action. The various components of the plot - constituent elements such as the prologue, episodica, choral interludes and the epilogue - were to express a thematically unifying musical language, and the choice of instrumentation had to accentuate and augment character development. Each choral interlude, portrayed by feature characters from Setswetla by means of puppetry, would accommodate our collaborative conceptualisation of 'Alexandra street-life'; as such the soundscape had to take the content, tone and atmosphere of these scenes into consideration. In this pursuit I hoped to uncover 'new' or 'unknown' works. My search, again conducted in conjunction with the creative-collaborator, also occasioned the re-exploration of a shared music-collection. I revisited already known, and happened upon newly developed, works by

familiar as well as undiscovered contemporary composers such as Max Richter⁶⁸, Jóhann Jóhannsson⁶⁹, Ólafur Arnalds⁷⁰, Nils Frahm⁷¹, Adam Taylor⁷² and Ben Frost⁷³.

Following weeks of ‘listening’ to compositions that would resonate in the likeness of a similar musical language, a period during which I identified many feasible options, I narrowed down my findings to two musical works⁷⁴ by Jóhann Jóhannsson and Adam Taylor that evoked similar, if not identical, emotional, sensorial and visceral responses. Although Taylor’s composition was incorporated as a choreographic score in Scene 11 of the play, Jóhannsson’s music did not assume an incidental function in the production but only endured as the implicit essence around which much of our **creative action** revolved.

The similarity in reactions I experienced when listening to these respective pieces lay bare my speculative impression that there existed certain corresponding qualities in the instrumentation and orchestration of these works. Both pieces are slow-paced, dark, ominous, melancholic and bleak. Taylor’s composition - described by Pete Simons as “the Nordic Noir [of Music]” given its resemblance to compositions by Icelandic musician-composers Ólafur Arnalds and Nils Frahm - is “[predominantly] minimalist and “orchestrated for strings and synth[esised] and processed sounds” (Simons, 2017). The piano, here recorded in such a way that the “mechanics of the piano itself” are revealed, a technique associated with the works of Frahm and Richter, is also occasionally implemented. The composition’s themes are expressed as “chord progressions” rather than melodies, and it features one signature sound

⁶⁸ Max Richter is a pianist, composer, producer, remixer and collaborator who is inspired equally by The Beatles and Bach, punk rock and ambient electronica. Richter blends baroque beauty with minimalist methodology. classical orchestration with modern technology. *Deutsche Grammophon is Classical Music*. 2-2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.deutschegrammophon.com/en/artist/richter/biography> [2018, August 17].

⁶⁹ Jóhann Jóhannsson (1969–2018) was an Icelandic award-winning composer, musician and producer. Jóhannsson often blended electronics with classical orchestrations. His work bears the diverse influences of the Baroque, Minimalism, and drone-based and electro-acoustic music. *Deutsche Grammophon is Music*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.deutschegrammophon.com/en/artist/johannsson/biography> [2018, August 16].

⁷⁰ Ólafur Arnalds is an Icelandic multi-instrumentalist and producer. He mixes strings and piano with loops and beats crossing over from ambient/electronic to pop. *BBC Music*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/music/artists/6655955b-1c1e-4bcb-84e4-81bcd9efab30> [2018, August 16].

⁷¹ Nils Frahm is a German composer and musician whose work combines acoustic and electronic instruments with a primary focus on pianos and synthesizers. His recordings range from solo and prepared piano compositions to melodic synthesizer pieces, as well as soundtrack work. *ALLMUSIC*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/nils-frahm-mn0001098849/biography> [2018, August 16].

⁷² Adam Taylor is an American composer known for his work in film. His work incorporates orchestra, synths, and tape manipulation. *ALLMUSIC*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/adam-taylor-mn0003211201/biography> [2018, August 16].

⁷³ Ben Frost is an Australian experimental electronic music composer who is influenced by a wide range of music from classical minimalism to punk rock and black metal, as well as sound art and design. *ALLMUSIC*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/ben-frost-mn0001954449/biography> [2018, August 16].

⁷⁴The Handmaids Tale, Original Television Soundtrack, Adam Taylor, Lakeshore records, released May 2017. *FILM MUSIC DAILY*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://filmmusicdaily.com/2017/05/05/the-handmaids-tale-soundtrack-adam-taylor-out-now/> [2018, August 16].

Arrival, Original Film Soundtrack, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Deutsche Grammophon, Released 11 November 2016. *FILM MUSIC DAILY*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://filmmusicdaily.com/?s=arrival> [2018, August 16].

that is “an uneasy, distorted, pitch-shifting noise that comes and goes like waves” throughout the score. The undulating “waves of sound” created by an increase and decrease in “dissonance and volume” are, according to Taylor, the “dynamics [that shaped] the orchestral elements of [his] score” (Simons, 2017).

[O]ne idea for the score was to reiterate sounds and instruments through processes that would create a loss in fidelity, like a poor-quality photocopy... [I] experimented with an old tape echo to achieve this sound [and] went as far as tracking an instrument, then changing the speed of the tape to ‘fake’ melodic changes. It took some time to get right, but was worth it in the end – and ended up being crucial to making, what was essentially a two-note theme, sound emotive and interesting. (Taylor in Simons, 2017)

In Jóhann Jóhannsson’s score, the slow rhythm which is also sustained throughout, is created by a modular synthesiser which creates an “insistent bass-drum pattern” (Hirway, 2016). The percussion constitutes different resonances and tones emanating from mallets played on various types of wood which are “filtered and distorted” during production; “Everything else”, maintains Jóhannsson, “is arrhythmic, and kind of random” (in Hirway, 2016). Working in a Berlin sound studio, Jóhannsson recorded:

various instruments, [and created] rich, layered analog tape loops. [He] recorded them at various speeds. A low note, for example, recorded at high speed and then played back at the lowest speed becomes [a] subsonic rumble. (Hirway, 2016).

Avoiding prolonged notes, Jóhannsson employs a “stuttering, random pattern of female voices” (Hirway, 2016). His close association in this instance with *The Theatre of Voices*, a chamber choir conducted by Paul Hillier whose artistic collaborations in the past have included the likes of Arvo Pärt⁷⁵ and the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir⁷⁶, explored the use of the human voice - Jóhannsson’s preferred choice for the instrumentation and orchestration of this piece - “in a textural way” (Hirway, 2016). The extended vocal techniques of *The Theatre*

⁷⁵ Arvo Pärt is devout Orthodox Christian an Estonian composer. His style of music based on the slow modulation of sounds such as those ‘produced by bells and pure voice tones’. His technique reminiscent of the medieval Notre-Dame school and the sacred music of Eastern Orthodoxy. 2018. *Encyclopædia Britannica: Arvo Part*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Arvo-Part> [2018, August 17].

⁷⁶ The Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir (EPCC) is one of the best-known Estonian music ensembles in the world. *The Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir*. 2017. [Online]. Available: <https://www.epcc.ee/en/the-choir/> [2018, August 17].

of Voices include “throat and harmonic singing”, create “an improvised and wordless vocal score” constituting a “cloud of staccato rhythms” which are “unpredictable and out of time” (Hirway, 2016).

As I listened, the dark gulfs of sound that seemed to pour from yawning chasms or underground fissures appeared to resonate and vibrate within, and to travel through my body. Not only could I hear the synthesised, filtered and processed notes of the orchestrations, or aurally perceive the dissonance of “pitch-shifting” noises that cascaded like waves, I seemed to also physically feel the musical instrumentation. Both the rich, deep and warm tones of the bass in Taylor’s composition, and Jóhannsson’s elemental “insistent bass-drum pattern” and “subsonic rumble”, evoked visceral ‘shudders’ and what felt like ‘somatic’ emotions.

According to Tom Service⁷⁷, “[the] baseline [in music] is the engine room that has powered centuries of music” (Service, 2018). Service asserts that all music, from “the drones of Indian Raga⁷⁸”, the “lowest gongs of the Indonesian Gamelan⁷⁹”, the “largest drums of West Africa” to most western music, in both the classical and Jazz genres since the Baroque period, is structured around its baselines (Service, 2018).

Every progression, every harmonic movement starting in the base, every piece written in this tonal system - however large like an opera or a symphony or small like a collection of piano or harpsichord miniatures - is essentially a journey from and back to a home key, a home chord, a sense of musical stability. (Service, 2018)

A bottom ‘A’ note on a piano-keyboard inhabits the lowest region on the frequency spectrum: it is “as much a feeling, as it is a pitch”. Since our range of hearing extends from approximately 20 hertz to 2000 hertz, the bottom ‘A’ note on the piano-keyboard is located in

⁷⁷ Professor Tom Service is a British writer, music journalist and television and radio presenter, who has written regularly for The Guardian since 1999 and presented on BBC Radio 3 since 2001. He is a regular presenter of The Proms for Radio 3 and has presented several documentaries on the subject of classical music. Tom Service. 2018. [Online]. Available: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Service [2018, August 16].

⁷⁸ In Hindustani (North Indian) classical music, a ‘raga’ is a melodic recipe for a mood. - each raga has certain moods associated with it, and usually has a specific time of day and/or season in which it is meant to be played. *North Indian Raga*. 2018. [Online]. Available <http://www.ancient-future.com/hindustaniraga.html> [2018, August 17].

⁷⁹The indigenous orchestra type of the islands of Java and Bali, in Indonesia, is the ‘gamelan’, also spelled ‘gamelang’ or ‘gamelan’. The consists largely of several varieties of gongs and various sets of tuned metal instruments that are struck with mallets. The gongs are either suspended vertically or, as with the knobbed-centre, kettle-shaped gongs of the bonang, placed flat. *Encyclopaedia Britannica: Gamelan*. 2017. [Online]. Available: <https://www.britannica.com/art/gamelan> [2018, August 16].

the “very depths of what our ears can physically hear as human beings” (Service, 2018). Laurel Trainor, founding director of the McMaster Institute for Music and the Mind, contends that:

We can hear sounds down to about 20 cycles per second. These are very low and they have a very long wavelength. The wavelength of a 50 hertz sound is about seven meters [so] when that impinges on your body, not only do your ears respond to that, but you actually feel the vibrations in your body. You also feel them through the vestibular system. If you play sounds that are very low and very loud, your whole body is feeling the vibration, and your vestibular system is stimulated as well. So, in terms of the physics of sound-waves, low frequencies are literally traveling through us with their long waves, whereas the higher, tighter wave forms of upper frequencies, higher notes, bounce off us. (in Service, 2018)

Trainor’s observations, based on her research in Neuroscience and psychology, seemed to support my speculation of the profound relationship between low frequency sound waves, ‘bass notes’ in particular, and how I experienced *feeling* whilst listening to the works of Taylor and Jóhannsson. Trainor’s findings are corroborated by psychologist Professor Richard Wiseman and Doctor Ciaran O’Keefe who based similar conclusions on their 2003 experiments conducted in London’s Purcell Room around the effects of and interconnections between contemporary music and infrasonic waves (Angliss, 2003). Wiseman and O’Keefe’s research indicated the possibility that infrasound, that is sonic frequencies from 0,001 hertz - “a sound wave that lasts a thousand seconds, or 60 minutes” - to 20 hertz, could induce “scientifically measurable feelings of anxiety, uneasiness, extreme sorrow, nervous feelings of revulsion or fear, chills down the spine and feelings of pressure on the chest” (Service, 2018).

My interest, research and subsequent remarks on the conjectural interrelationship between low-frequency sound waves and ‘subjective feeling’ are by no means an effort at demonstrating an irrefutable or scientific relation between these elements. The data collected in this regard significantly contributes towards my production of knowledge, and specifically, provides insights on the ways in which I respond to, am inspired by and create theatre by means of the ‘power of sound’. It would seem then that the emotional, sensory and imagistic experiences effected by the sonic orchestrations of both Taylor and Jóhannsson in this instance, were brought on by surpassing “the threshold of hearing” and by my descent into the domain of “ultra-super-sub-bass”, “the realm of pure feeling” (Service, 2018).

THE INCORPORATION OF SONG



Right Click the icon to listen to John Tavener's 'The Lamb', performed by the cast. (.m4a audio file format).

This practice-led study, which focuses attention on the **creative action** of a collaborative theatre-event in the present, affords me the opportunity to reflect on the actions that have underpinned my collaborative, educational, dramaturgical, artistic and directorial practices in the past. In many of these collaborative and educational ventures, I worked alongside African actors and students which yielded opportunities to witness and share in improvisational acts of song or music-making. As a theatre practitioner I have always been significantly inspired and influenced by music. Whether I am creating, writing, choreographing or directing for the stage, the use of music is integral to my practice. Although the creative impetus for wanting to 'make theatre', both in the past as well as during the current practice, is often derived from what I have felt or seen in my minds' eye whilst listening to a wide spectrum of music genres, the impulse has usually proceeded from contemporary classical works which are a combination of ambient electronica, choral and classical orchestrations, rather than from songs that employ lyrics as their primary emotive arrangement.

Music is central to my day-to-day living. It effects short periods of contemplation on my daily commute; it resides in and emanates from every room in my house and sometimes manifests as the incidental backdrop to the framing of thoughts. Music seems to be the backdrop to mostly all that I do and think. Music also constitutes a great deal of the conversations that I have with my life-partner, the creative-collaborator. His knowledge of, and participation in, my music choices for stage productions have frequently enlivened and imbued my theatre practice, whether in artistic or educational contexts, with intertextual gravity, imagistic symbolism and atmospheric identity. Our conversations on a soundscape for *Missing* occurred concurrently with the numerous other creative acts and creation events that came into existence during the making of the play. Our musings on the soundscape's intentionality intermittently coincided with afternoon and weekend improvisations and rehearsals, as well as interspersed with my meetings with puppet specialists and artist-collaborators and the search for suitable performance venues. While the collaborative research on Alexandra invigorated and successfully engineered the emergence of what the cast and I had hoped would be multi-dimensional characters, and as the imagined life-world of Setswetla grew evermore clear, the 'complexities' of its conceptual soundscape loomed large. The collaboration undertaken by the cast and I were singularly focused on the conceptualisation and construction of a textual narrative. The deliberations on the soundscape that occurred between the creative-

collaborator and I independently and unpredictably evolved as a perceptively extraneous design that might have seemed, at first, as an incongruous expression of Setswela's socio-cultural life-world. Our objective to incorporate 'songs', preferably sung 'live', was an unexpected and atypical notion - partly because I deemed the idea to be stylistically 'counter-intuitive', and because our song preference indicated the music of German composer Kurt Weill. It turned out, however, that the creative-collaborator's rediscovery of Weill's *September Songs* in 2016 was fortuitous and to a large degree offered a crystallisation of the play's theatrical identity. In 1997 *September Songs: The Music of Kurt Weill* was released as an audio version of a documentary-style film by the same title released in 1994. The album, described as a compilation of "Folk Rock, Soul-Jazz, Smooth Jazz, and Art Rock"⁸⁰, pays homage to the works of Kurt Weill and features artists such as Elvis Costello, Lou Reed, Nick Cave, PJ Harvey, Lotte Lenya, William S. Burroughs and The Persuasions.

The son of a Jewish cantor born in Dessau, Germany, Kurt Weill became one of the most prolific forces in musical theatre. He made his theatrical debut at the age of twenty-six with his first opera, *Der Protagonist* (1926). His second work, a one-act surrealist opera titled *Royal Palace* (1926) was composed shortly thereafter. In 1927, the year during which he penned *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren* ('*The Tsar Has his Photograph Taken*'), he also famously collaborated with the Marxist playwright Bertolt Brecht on *Mahagonny [Ein Songspiel]* (Juchem, 2010:1-10). Weill is closely linked to the emergence of the German cabaret culture in Berlin in the 1920's - a decade marked by avant-garde modernist aesthetics, the rise of Nazism, a catastrophic economic climate and a surge in urbanisation, and which gave rise to the prevailing Zeitgeist of post-and-prewar Europe (Balik, 2009). As a firm supporter of the political left-wing, Weill's leaning "towards a popular taste in music" (Balik, 2009) and his employment of a "popular musical idiom", at a time during which Berlin cabaret often employed entertainment as socio-political tool, also meant that his individual songs could circulate on their own and be performed in cabaret-like settings (Hinton in Balik, 2009).

After his collaboration with Brecht on *Die Dreigroschenoper* (*The Threepenny Opera*) in 1931, Weill fled the Weimar Republic and the imminent horrors of Hitler's Third Reich. He settled in The United States of America in 1933, and in October 1938 he collaborated on his first musical with American playwright and lyricist, Maxwell Anderson (Juchem, 2010:1-10). Anderson, celebrated as one of the "most prolific American playwrights" (Juchem, 2010:1-10) working on Broadway in the 1930's and 1940's, commented in his preface to the printed libretto of *Knickerbocker Holiday*, Maxwell and Weill's first collaboration, that the lyrics were "obviously written to make an occasion for Kurt Weill's Music" (Juchem, 2010:1-10). Having

⁸⁰ *September Songs: The Music of Kurt Weill*. ALLMUSIC. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.allmusic.com/album/september-songs-the-music-of-kurt-weill-mw0000026000> [2018, August 21].

already worked alongside the likes of Bertolt Brecht, and with “little interest in escapist operetta”, Weill envisioned collaborating with dramatists or poets such as Anderson, rather than “second-rate librettists” or “over tried-and-true lyricists” (Juchem, 2010:1-10).

My subjective perception of a *Kabarett* - a German term that denotes “an entertainment-oriented, somewhat literary, small music hall” (Lareau, 1991:437) - which undoubtedly sprang from my own generalised impression of a pre-war Berlin that signified the “legendary decadence of [a] modern Babylon” (Lareau, 1991:437), was of a highly theatrical performance style “[where] a great deal of champagne is consumed and a great number of cigarettes” (Lareau, 1991:437). A description of a cabaret, offered by German writer and illustrator Edmund Edel, supports some of my own subjective images of the style/genre:

On the stage stands a black grand piano, at which genuinely lovely music is occasionally produced. Occasionally. But usually just reheated popular tunes. A conferencier tries to emit clever words of introduction between each "number," a chanteuse twitters a little song, which, because the author's name is mentioned, is considered "literature." An elegant gentleman comic tells some jokes and acts out verses of a couplet in a charming way: a daring remark, a juicy punch line - people smile, they laugh, they applaud, they sip a bit of champagne, they flirt with the lady at their table or at another table, and the "real" ladies are delighted that they can sit in the midst of such a "stunningly interesting" milieu for a few hours. (in Lareau, 1991:437)

Aside from these impressions on Cabaret and its inherent potentiality for theatrical and stylistic experimentation, the addition of a narrator-singer who could comment on the plot's action during intermittent choral interludes seemed enticing. Conceptually, the inclusion of a narrator-singer as a stage convention, complete with the all the identifiable tropes of Cabaret and whose function would closely resemble that of an ancient Greek chorus, inevitably also altered the overall identity of the play. The *mise-en-scène*, which until that point had only depicted Setswetla, almost instantaneously constituted, amongst other stage paraphernalia, a grand piano, a pianist and a singer. Over time, these initial imaginings on a narrator-singer ‘matured’ and were rearranged as ‘the ghost chorus’ - a selection of three singers (one female and two male) whose musical narrative would reinforce the thematic intentions of the spoken text. My initial reservations about implementing ‘live music’ in my theatre productions were largely rooted in my belief that its use could very easily eschew, ‘situate’ or incorrectly contextualise the thematic objectives of the text. The use of lyrics, whether performed live or utilised as an incidental soundscape, carry the potential of conjuring subjective associations or responses in the audience, and the songs themselves are, more often than not, self-

referential. My scepticism was fortified by the fact that I had neither collaborated with a musical director at any time in the past, nor held prior knowledge of directing or producing music in performance. Prior knowledge of the excellent singing ability of the three singers was insufficient to fortify my hope that ‘live’ music had been a wise choice or an accomplishable aim. Upon reflection, I can assert without reservation that the decision to include the three singers, who would perform five songs in the final theatre-event, was a leap of faith.

My choice at this stage of our creative endeavour to trust or have faith in aspects of **creative action** that were unknown, unpredictable, and literally seemed to be beyond my control, was largely based on the insights gained from the creative actions, interactions, incidents and encounters that transpired during previous phases of conceptualisation, experimentation and improvisation. My observation during these antecedent stages of our theatre-making brought to light the significance of not only paying credence to other dissimilar voices, but to negotiate and encourage the dissonance of its polyphony. My ever-increasing impression of artistic practice, and perhaps especially in a collaborative and dynamic medium such as devised theatre, was that it seemed to embody spontaneity, risk-taking and the dissemination of surprise and often fortuitous anecdotal and experiential facts, intuitions and contributions. The creative collective’s “embodied passions” - to borrow Nelson’s description of the diverse ways to articulate modes of thinking in and through artistic practice (Nelson, 2013:62) – seem to have contributed to the production of new knowledge; as theatre pedagogue and theatre practitioner I gained insight and was afforded an alternative vantage point for reflection on the essence of research, pedagogy and practice and the constant triadic shifts that occurred between these roles. My sentiment that the ‘unknown’ is a necessary ally in the realm of knowledge production is echoed in the views expressed by Borgdorff and Sarah Rubidge⁸¹ (2011:18-19) that “[artistic] research often resembles an uncertain quest in which the questions or topics only materialise during the journey” and that the practitioner/pedagogue “besides not knowing exactly what [they do] not know, [...] also [does] not know how to delimit the space where potential answers are located” (Rubidge in Borgdorff, 2011:18). Sally Mackey⁸² in an article in which she posits the possibility that Applied theatre might be viewed as “a curious conflation”, describes the rewards enshrined in the methodology of practice as follows:

⁸¹ Sarah Rubidge was Professor in Choreography and New Media until her retirement at the end of 2013, and now remains associated with the University as Professor Emerita. She is a digital choreographer who specialises in the dialogue between performance and New Media, with a particular interest in interactive installations. *University of Chichester*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.chi.ac.uk/staff/professor-sarah-rubidge> [2018, October 29].

⁸² Sally Mackey is Professor of Applied Theatre and Performance and Associate Director of Research and Projects at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London. *Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London*. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.cssd.ac.uk/staff/prof-sally-mackey-ba-pgce-ma-phd-frsa-fhea> [2018, October, 29].

[...] the meshing of creativity and experiment in live practice is deeply attractive for many of us who have been, and are, practitioners working in participant contexts. Its ontological and epistemological unpredictability is exciting; as Kershaw⁸³ et al. said, ‘a profound principle of practice as research in theatre and performance [is] that its methods always involve the dislocation of knowledge itself’. (Mackey, 2016:1)

The creative-collaborator and I spent a great number of hours listening to *September Songs*. Having the album’s songs surge at full blast through the house had become an everyday occurrence. A version of ‘Lost in The Stars’ performed by Elvis Costello and the Brodsky String Quartet effected a profoundly visceral and philosophical impact.

The musical, ‘Lost in the Stars’, is an adaptation of South African author Alan Paton’s novel, *Cry, The Beloved Country*, in which Stephen Kumalo, an apostate African South African pastor, travels to Johannesburg after his son is jailed for killing a ‘white man’ in a robbery. As a refashion version of *Eneas Africanus*⁸⁴ the adapted musical-project afforded Weill and Anderson the opportunity to create a work that not only addressed the political situation in South Africa, but also “commented on the hypocritical segregation policies at home [in the US]” (Anderson in Nance, 2016). Anderson’s remark that *Lost in the Stars* “essentially [deals with] the story of a man in a chaotic world in search of his own manhood and his rules of conduct”, appropriately encapsulated the musical’s “indictment of the recently established apartheid regime”. *Lost in the Stars*, significantly existential in nature, was billed as “a musical tragedy”:

Its emotional power caught many theatregoers by surprise. One woman stated that “she was made so happily unhappy by ‘Lost in the Stars’ that she felt like dropping in at ‘Death of a Salesman’ just to cheer herself up.” Alan Paton, who had arrived from South Africa in time for the premiere, reported that the audience “wept and shouted and clapped.” (Nance, 2016)

⁸³ Prior to his retirement Baz Kershaw was Professor in Theatre and Performance Studies at Warwick University and formerly held the Foundation Chair of Drama at the University of Bristol, where he was also Director of the five-year research project PARIP (Practice as Research in Performance). *WARWICK. Arts: Theatre and Performance Studies*. 2018. [Online]. Available: https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/theatre_s/staff/baz_kershaw/ [2018, October 29].

⁸⁴ In 1939, Weill and Anderson started their work on a project based on *Eneas Africanus*, a novelette written in 1919 by Harry Stillwell Edwards, that recounts the tale of an African American slave’s search for his home following the American Civil War (Nance, 2016). The musical, developed over the course of one year and which would feature the bass-baritone/actor and activist Paul Robeson, was eventually abandoned. However, a decade later in 1947, four surviving musical numbers from the original project re-appeared and in December of the same year premiered on Broadway as the now critically acclaimed musical, ‘Lost in the Stars’.

Over the years, interpreters and performers of the title song ‘*Lost in the Stars*’ have included, amongst others, Judy Garland, Frank Sinatra, Lotte Lenya, Sarah Vaughan, Johnny Mathis, Peggy Lee and Elvis Costello. Musicologist James L. Zychowicz maintains that although most of the subsequent versions of the song bore no overt reference to a South African or apartheid context, the song “whether it’s performed as a lullaby or [as] an anthem, [...] always ends up as a song about being lost” (in Nance, 2016).

Performed as a choral interlude by two members of the ghost-like chorus in *Missing*, the song’s slow emotionally-charged melody stands in sharp contrast to the verbal violence expressed in Scene 7. Weill and Maxwell’s lyrics were intended to underscore the disintegration of Iziengbe and Osasere’s relationship and to reflect their mutual feelings of disillusionment. Their subjective independent perceptions of loss, abandonment and of being “lost” are also intended to encompass similar conjectural impressions of loss brought on by experience within a broader socio-cultural context. Seen against the backdrop of the Setswetla flood tragedy and within the context of little Everlate Chauke’s death in particular, Weill and Maxwell’s lyrics articulate what Nance terms a “sort of folk cosmology in which God, in creating the heavens, allowed ‘a little dark star’ to ‘slip through his fingers’” (Nance 2016).



Right Click the icon to listen to Weill & Brecht’s ‘Oh Heavenly Salvation’, performed by the cast. (.m4a audio file).

The second song appropriated from *September Song* was the 1997 version of ‘Heavenly Salvation’ sung by The Persuasions⁸⁵. The song is an English adaptation by Arnold Weinstein of Weill and Brecht’s lyrics to ‘O wunderbare Lösung’ from their first operatic collaboration, *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* in 1930. Written in 1972, Weinstein’s adaptation of *The Rise and Fall of The City of Mahagonny*, in which ‘Heavenly Salvation’ so prominently features alongside the equally well-known ‘Alabama Song’⁸⁶, similarly traces the fate of the doomed city dwellers of Mahagonny, a pseudo-foreign city in the US, “dedicated to pleasure, greed and excess” (Meany, 2014). Originally a ‘Songspiel’ in three parts, “the central ingredient being the American-influenced ‘song’ rather than operatic arias”, (Hinton, 2002), the epicurean city of Mahagonny is at a loss since its citizens can no longer afford to pay for the enticements offered them by whiskey, poker, horses and women. When God condemns

⁸⁵ The Persuasions are an *a cappella* group that began singing together in Brooklyn, New York in the mid-1960s. The Persuasions. 2018. [Online]. Available: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Persuasions [2018, August 21].

⁸⁶ The “Alabama Song” is also known as “Moon of Alabama”, “Moon over Alabama”, and “Whisky Bar”. It was written by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill for the 1927 play *Little Mahagonny*. Alabama Song. 2018. [Online]. Available: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alabama_Song [2018, August 21].

Mahagonny's inhabitants to hell, the city revolts proclaiming that they "have been in hell all along" (Hinton, 2002). Hinton contends that the Songspiel can best be described as an anti-opera:

It was set in a boxing ring, and incorporated 'lowbrow' jazz music and intentional vulgarity. Many of the musical gestures are taken from familiar tonal contexts (foxtrots, waltzes and marches) but are spiced with surrealistic dissonance. If it was intended to shock, then Mahagonny certainly achieved that aim. (Hinton, 2002)

Following Mama Ntombi's monologue predicting the impending Setswetla flashflood - which was a collaborative adaption of an extract from the Christian bible (Genesis 7, 17-24) - and the deaths of Iziengbe's two children, symbolically portrayed by means of puppetry in Scene 13 of the play, the rendition of 'Heavenly Salvation' by the ghost chorus expresses the relief of the residents of Setswetla at not having lost everyone or everything to the flood.

The Lamb, composed by John Tavener in 1985 (refer to the music link at the start of this section, p98), is based on William Blake's poem by the same name, published in 1794, as part of the poet's series of works entitled *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (Snoddgrass, 2008: 40-48). Tavener, who is perceived by some as one of the most prolific composers of religious music, both in "Britain and indeed, in the world" (Hazlewood & Barley, 2014), is renowned for works such as *The Whale* (1966); *Hymn to the Mother of God* (1985); *The Lamb* (1985); *The*



Figure 2: 'Little Lamb' performed by members of the Ghost Chorus. Photograph by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.

Tiger (1987); *The Protecting Veil* (1989); *Song for Athene* (1993); *Apocalypse* (1993) and *The Eternity's Sunrise* (1997). According to Tavener, "the whole purpose of sacred music must be to lead us to the threshold of prayer, a true encounter with the living God" (in Snodgrass, 2008:41). His work, which draws on these "religious insights into the Christian tradition", constitutes "uncomplicated and haunting melodies", the "use of dissonances", and "long arching elegiac lines" (Snodgrass, 2008:45). Tavener's composition delicately echoes the sentiments of purity and innocence of childhood as expressed in Blake's poem. Suggestions that the composition pronounces characteristics associated with the "son of God" and Blake's view of "Christ and God the Father as two separate but entwined manifestations" are conveyed through textual painting⁸⁷ and the repeated use of homophonic rhythms, - sections in which one melody predominates (Snodgrass, 2008:45). The simple melody when modified through inversion, in other words when "turn[ed]...upside down", creates a melodic "mirror effect" and when sung together by a selection of different voices - sopranos, altos and tenors - at times attains a discordant quality. It is theorised that the inversion in this instance could foreshadow the loss of innocence and purity of childhood "and the trajectory for the life of The Lamb, Christ, who must be sacrificed to save humanity" (Chant Claire, 2015). Mother Thekla, a Russian Orthodox nun with whom Tavener collaborated on *Song for Athene* in 1993, once commented that "Tavener's music seeks to enlighten those who have never seen an ikon except as a mere painting or a holy picture" (in Snodgrass, 2008:45).

The haunting melody of *The Lamb* is repeated twice during the narrative. On both occasions, the song serves as introduction to scenes which prominently feature *Izienbge* and *Mabuda's* two (puppet) children. Seen in the context of the play, the lyrics allude to the children's predicament as innocent sacrificial victims at the hands of their parents' failed relationship. As 'lambs to the slaughter', the children are used as pawns by *Iziengbe* to punish her husband and his new bride. Ultimately, the song intimates and foreshadows the death of the two toddlers. Echoing *Medea's* act of filicide in Euripides's text, *Iziengbe's* children also suffer a similarly gruesome fate. The narrative, however, never overtly states the exact cause of their disappearance or their drowning: the tale of their mystifying and ambiguous disappearance is immortalised as regional folklore.

Our inclusion of these three songs, which independently address matters surrounding the hope for salvation, the loss of innocence and the questioning of existence, achieved unexpected and unintentional responses. Notwithstanding these works' existential, sacral or

⁸⁷ The use of 'gesture(s)' in a musical work reflect, by means of imagery, the literal or figurative meaning of the work. The term is generally applied to vocal music, although a programmatic instrumental piece might in some sense exploit the technique. Grove Music Online. 2018. [Online]. Available: <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781n561592630.001.0001/> [2018, August 2018].

religious associations and connotations, I was surprised to learn that some 'readings' of the text in performance comprised overt religious theorising. The three songs included here for discussion to a large extent fashioned the play's metaphysical identity and collectively underpinned its broader thematic intentions.

The fortuitous discovery and subsequent intentional song choices and their inclusion in our theatre-event occasioned new insights on what, as the creative-collaborative, *we did not know that we knew*. As participants in the performative narrative the singers and actor-collaborators were surprised to learn of the extent of their ability to work under pressure; the singers, who had hitherto been unfamiliar with the demands posed by works of composers such as John Tavener and Kurt Weill, greatly benefited from the extension of their knowledge on their singing and performance techniques, skills and abilities. As theatre practitioner and pedagogue I learned to 'throw caution to the wind' as it were; to trust in the abilities and insight offered by others – the unexpected, unforeseen and often surprising contributions from the participants involved in our **creative action** brought about providential, if not perhaps some of the most significant creative 'turns', decisions and occurrences during the making of our collaborative theatre-event. The idiosyncratic manner with which the members of our creative collective chose to interpret and perform the songs included in our theatrical narrative is another indication of embodied experiences brought about by dynamic **creative action**. The actors/singers' conceptual, sensorial and visceral responses to the death of Everlate Chauke, as effected by their sense of 'being in the world', embodied the philosophical and thematic objectives of our dramatised narrative.

A PUPPET CHORUS

Although an enticing notion, I had always in the past steered well away from what appeared to be ‘the sacred realm’ of puppetry. I had neither ever closely worked with puppets, nor directed a play that revolved around the use of puppets - the world of puppets and puppetry had hitherto been foreign territory. At the outset then, I deem it necessary to emphasise my limited knowledge or experience in this field. However, the ways in which I employed puppetry in my practice in this instance, facilitated and greatly contributed to both the dramatic as well as the theatrical purposes and final impact of the production in performance. The imagistic (filmic) narrative evoked by Ramin Djawadi’s music - I choose to refer to it as the ‘imagistic genesis’ of this theatre piece - denoted continual motion. It also evoked vivid impressions of a human body struggling against a strong water current, drowning, sinking and its movements under water as it whirls, sinks or floats. If I were to portray Everlate Chauke’s death in the way that it occurred in my mind’s eye on stage, the use of puppetry and the mobility that it afforded seemed a decidedly plausible and worthwhile course of action.

My first meeting with the artist-collaborators, who later constituted the team of puppet designers and puppet makers, occurred in early January 2017. Although they seemed much taken with the broad outlines of my conceptual proposal, they diplomatically demanded, and understandably also required, an extensively detailed description of the envisioned diegetic and theatrical elements of the production. I could not provide these answers since the text and its characters had not yet been constructed - I suffered a crisis of confidence. My creative actions and the ways in which I create seemed to be foreign to others. The realisation that I would have had to acquiesce in shared artistic action was a new and frightening prospect. In retrospect, the artist-collaborators’ willingness to ‘trust in the [my] process’, may be cited as another instance where the impulse to engage in creative action seems to be an indiscriminate, spontaneous and unconditional act - the conceptual origin of the puppets was rooted in yet another a leap of faith.

The team of artist/puppet-collaborators consisted of a visual art teacher, a MA visual art student, a professional puppet maker/performer and a small number of grade 10 visual art students. The visual art teacher who had little knowledge on puppet building, resourcefully devised and constructed anatomically proportionate human figures out of newspaper, glue, masking tape, screws and numerous-sized dowels that varied in length - she often playfully remarked that I had reduced her to a ‘mere craftswoman’. As full-time day scholars, the visual



Figures 12 & 13: The first manifestation of our Puppet Chorus. Photographs by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.

art students, who also had no prior experience of puppet making, had to work extra hours on the construction of the puppets. Given the limited time available to the students for puppet-construction - both the visual art teacher and I taught full-time during the course of a school day - intermittent periods of 'stasis' occurred from time to time. Meanwhile, 'behind the scenes' in the rehearsal room, the cast and I had not yet finalised our conceptual narrative. Although cast discussions on characters had been underway, we were not able to provide the artist/puppet collaborators with 'newfound' insight on 'who' the personages that we were devising and 'working on' would turn out as - the successful outcome of our **creative action** often seemed to be balanced on a knife's edge. Aside from the text that had still not been finalised and with the puppets only in the first stages of construction, my burgeoning notions on music and the possible incorporation of video only acerbated my apprehension that our creative endeavour had become too expansive.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF A TEXT

Once the cast and I had concluded that our amalgamated text would constitute both an 'invented' Setswetla and an analogous Medea narrative, I turned my attention to those constituent sections of the plot that were geared towards the contextualisation of the play's action. The central action of the plot - the events that give rise to the crumbling of the two

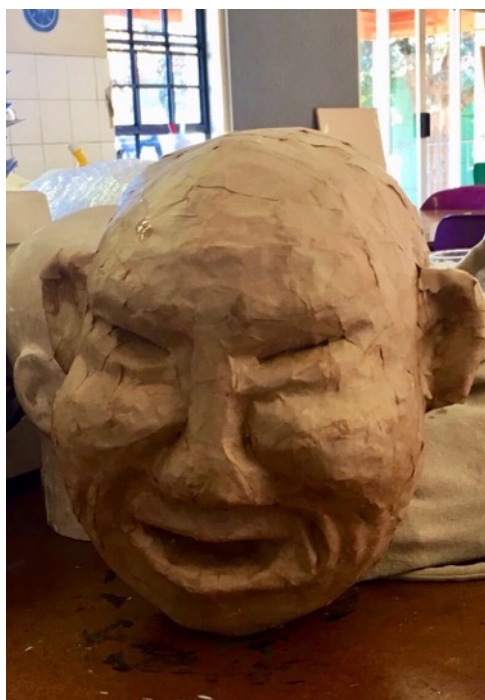
central characters' relationship, ultimately culminating in the deaths of the couple's two children - is expressed in clearly demarcated episodes. Whereas these episodes comprised the action that propelled the narrative's trajectory, the segments in which the puppets appear functioned more or less as independent 'choral interludes' fashioned in the style of ancient Greek tragedy. As such, the puppet chorus's dramatic function was to comment, advise and forewarn. However, the puppet chorus, in contrast to the conventions of Greek tragedy in which the chorus embodies a 'singular voice', constituted three distinctly different characters (two male and one female) whose varied and often contradictory responses were representative of diverse conjectural perspectives and attitudes held by the residents of Setswetla. In so far as the omniscient ghost chorus functioned as an atemporal manifestation of the metaphysical, the puppet chorus not only firmly rooted the play's action in the streets and taverns of Setswetla, their colourful and anecdotal exchanges also conveyed essential information on the plot and its central characters. Since the specifics of our amalgamated narrative had begun to take shape, we were able to provide character information such as age and gender towards the end of March 2017. April signalled the emergence of three discernibly 'human-like' puppet figures as heads and limbs appeared in various shapes and sizes. The cast and I could distinguish distinctly unique facial features - this, our first viewing, was to become the earliest and perhaps one of our most significant 'puppet encounters'.

The characters that constituted the puppet chorus were based on personalities that the cast members had either observed in Setswetla or similar townships, or recalled from memory based on anecdotal data. The construction of the choral interludes corresponded with the methods and techniques employed during the initial stages of the play's conceptualisation. In this instance, however, the cast, who also doubled-up as the plot's central characters, did not use explicit data drawn from the events surrounding the flash-floods as inspiration for character-work. The puppet personalities - they had all assumed distinctly different physical features - that evolved during improvisation sessions were rooted in 'who' the puppets resembled. The actor-collaborators' engagement with the puppet personas required no 'prompting' or encouragement. They were freely, without inhibition, projecting their subjective experiential life-worlds onto these life-like inanimate objects that were composed of materials that can be procured at a hardware store.

For the duration of these improvisation sessions - the cast insisted that the puppets 'sit in' on each session - I allowed myself the 'luxury' of stepping out of my role as educator-director. As a 'passive' collaborator, I sat back and reveled in the animated anecdotes that were played out the rehearsal room. I remained in the background for the most part of these sessions - my role extended no further than recording and re-composing the devised material.

The female actor, who also portrays the role of *Osasere*, related stories of an infamous tavern owner that she had heard from her mother. *Mama Ntombi*, the notorious African 'shebeen queen'⁸⁸ from Soweto, a suburb on the outskirts of Johannesburg, who had overcome arduous circumstances during the apartheid years to become an esteemed cultural

Figures 14, 15 & 16: Members of the Puppet Chorus during the initial phases of construction. Photographs by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.



⁸⁸ Originally, in African tradition, shebeens were operated illegally by women who were called Shebeen Queens. Shebeen. 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shebeen> [2018, August 23].

icon in her local community, served as inspiration for the female puppet character portrayed in the text. Vivid accounts of incidents that occurred in and around a Soweto tavern presented the cast with a conceptual foundation on which they could build and explore prospective scenes. The first appearance of the puppet chorus, in Scene 5 of the play, introduced the audience to a group of rowdy patrons gathered in a Setswetla tavern. The scene, which follows Iziengbe's first monologue (*Missing*, Scene 3), affords a first glimpse of *Mabuda's* character: although Iziengbe only briefly refers to him in the preceding scene - she "lie[s] in the dark and listen[s] as [her husband] leaves [for work]" (*Missing*, Scene 3) - the first appearance of the puppet chorus denounces Mabuda as a marauding philanderer:

Mageza	That Mabuda, last Night. He hey, he was blessing all of us with Jozi beer!
Sjovi	That man does not even work man. Where does he get his money? He bought for everybody.
Mageza	He stole the money from his new girlfriend. The one he wants to marry.
Mama Ntombi	Oh, that one...
Sjovi	He hides the money from his wife. He gives her nothing. She knows nothing.
Mama Ntombi	You mean the girlfriend form...
Mageza	Where do you get your stories from, hey man, wêna?
Mama Ntombi	You better watch out how you speak to me.
Mageza	Ah thula man, voetsek! (<i>Be quiet, go away!</i>)
Mama Ntombi	You won't be talking like that, with that mouth of yours when my boys come at you.
Sjovi	Ah mama, you know Mageza. He is like this.
Mageza	A wêna Voetsek! Who are you, how do you know? Are you Mageza? I'm not scared of you.
Mama Ntombi	You don't have to be scared of me, you should be scared of the two men behind me.

Sjovi Hey, you are taking about Dineo. The one who talks on the radio.

Mama Ntombi Dineo?

Sjovi Yes

Mama Ntombi *Imitating Dineo's voice:* "Ah, Good Morning Alex..." *Laughs.* Oh yes, that one!

Sjovi Yes that one! *Also imitates her voice:* "...Alex Fm 84 point 7.."

Laughter, explanations, mocking phrases. Ok" and "Alright", "mmm...she trying to be white", "Brunch time almost lunch time" etc.

Mama Ntombi Her father...

Bhumba Jerry.

Mama Ntombi Yes. Jerry. He is a police man. A chief. That is why she is like that. She feels very important!



Figure 17: Mama Nthombi. Photograph by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.

The boisterous Setswetla tavern is used as an 'ideal' setting to establish the local clientele's attitude towards Mabuda's "new girlfriend, Dineo. Mama Ntombi derides the local radio

personality, who appears as an analogous ‘incarnation’ of the Corinthian princess, Glauce, and attributes her father Jerry’s (Creon’s) position as chief-of-police as the reason for the young girl’s air of importance. Mama Ntombi, who here demonstrates her intolerance of schemers such as Mageza and sides with her customers in condemning Mabuda’s infidelity, later becomes one of Iziengbe’s harshest critics. *Mama Ntombi* takes her matriarchal role as guardian of local polis-values very seriously - her xenophobic small-mindedness is instrumental to Iziengbe’s eventual extradition from the community.

Sjovi’s mean-spirited and misogynist boasting about his sexual prowess was fashioned from anecdotal information on a close family relation - the actor who portrayed the role of Sjovi immediately likened the puppet’s lean and sharp featured silhouette to that of his uncle:

Sjovi He he! You are a slow one. You see, we Zulus are soldiers when it comes to...you know what I'm talking about. We are an army of cobras, me, you see, I'm a *man*. I can make a bed shiver!

Bhumba I can do the same!

Sjovi Hey man, voetsek wêna! You will tickle her!

The cast’s impressions on gender roles, and on commonly eschewed views of the male/female relation specifically, were also expressed in Scene 7:

Sjovi You must make sure that in your house, you are the man. If you don't wear the pants, who is going to take them off you my brother? Have you seen my wife controlling me? Does your wife have a joy stick attached to her body? Yes, she does. You control the joystick my brother, you control it. You must get into their heads. Once you are in her head. You are in her body. One time!

Iziengbe Who are these girls? Who is Tandai, who is this Deneo?

Mabuda I like young girls, who does not like young girls?

Sjovi You control her.

- Iziengbe Do you not care? Do you not care about your babies?
- Mabuda Of course I care, I love my children.
- Iziengbe Why are you not here then?
- Mabuda Why these questions?
- Sjovi If you feel like hitting her, hit her. And if she does not like it...what is she going to do...run away? Where is she going to go? Where?
- Mabuda This is the house where I am the Lion. The Lion of Judah. These are my cubs. I am the head of my pride, this is my temple and you are not the only woman here.



Figure 18: The Puppet Chorus in rehearsal. Photograph by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.

The actors' devised dialogue during this improvisation session was recorded in 'one take'. Their knowledge of the text's central characters, together with the information and experience gained from their foundational work during the 'tavern-session', again facilitated uninhibited responses. The remarks on the "The Lion of Judah", which admittedly evoked 'startled', if not stunned, reactions in the rehearsal room - the actor's 'ingenious' association here stemmed from frequently singing this gospel hymn in church - came to emblemise Mabuda's view of

himself as the king of his pride: “I am the head...this is my temple and you are not the only woman here” (*Missing*, Scene 7). The actor’s choice to present the text’s central male character as a Machiavellian “black Jesus” who as “a poor man [has no] job, [gets given] beautiful, fancy shoes” because he is “clever”, occasioned the potentiality of a leitmotif. Scene 7 to a large extent employs the analogy “The Lion of Judah” - a reference that intimates Jesus in the Christian bible - to illustrate the characters’ perceptions on male supremacy and virility.

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Mabuda | Don't look at me like that. You are not allowed to look at me like that. |
| Sjovi | She never looks me in the eye when I talk to her. |
| Iziengbe | When you have been doing all of this I can do whatever I want. |
| Mabuda | You can't do anything, all you can do is work for some white people in Joburg. You look at me and all you see is a man who drinks, but you know what? I'm clever. I get whatever I want. I'm black Jesus. I am a poor man, but I get given everything I need. Look, I don't have a job, but I have these beautiful, fancy shoes. You must make them want to give you everything (<i>spoken in mother tongue</i>). |
| Sjovi | If a woman doesn't want to do what you want her to do, then why keep her? Two is the amount of sugars I put in my coffee in the mornings. I like it sweet, it makes it taste better than one spoon. It's the same with my women, I always add quantity. |

Directing the puppet chorus posed numerous challenges. Since the actors who portrayed the puppet personalities also doubled-up as the play’s central characters, puppeteers had to be included in the puppet chorus scenes along with the performers who portrayed the character-voices on stage. The puppets were ‘life-size’ anatomically proportioned human-like structures designed to be ‘strapped’ onto the puppeteers’ bodies. Their mechanical composition by no means followed ‘professional methods’ or techniques, and as such



Figure 19: The Puppet Chorus (*Missing*, Scene 5). Photograph by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.

comprised a great deal of experimentation and a ‘cornucopia’ of ‘DIY’ solutions. Puppet torsos, which were constructed from light wood, papier-mâché and bubble-wrap, also sported arms, hands and detachable heads (to facilitate mobility), whilst the puppeteers’ legs and feet, which were visibly part of the structural framework, completed the substructure’s anthropomorphic ‘gestalt’. The puppets, given their size and weight, in the end required the support of two puppeteers - while the first puppeteer navigated spatial demands, engineered head movements and held the frame in place, the second puppeteer regulated and maneuvered arm mobility and accompanying gestures.

The puppeteers, who had not shared in the conceptualisation of the puppet characters and subsequently felt no connection to these personalities, initially perceived them to be no more than impractical and ‘wearable props’. My efforts at devising ways of orchestrating a relationship between the puppeteers and ‘their objects’ culminated in a workshop that yielded insightful and valuable results. The three-hour workshop, conducted by a professional puppeteer and puppet builder⁸⁹, presented the students with ways to “live as” or to “breathe

⁸⁹ After completing her BA in Drama at the University of Pretoria, Christelle van Graan went on to start a production and theatre company, Pôkô Events and Productions, which focuses on creating new and exciting theatre for the South African entertainment industry.

along with” their respective puppets (van Graan, 2017). In addition to these techniques which successfully facilitated ‘an emotional bond’ between puppet and puppeteer, the students were also provided with workable ideas on how to effectively synchronise gestures and dialogue - acting constituted the meticulous coordination of encoded movements and spoken text.



Figure 20: A workshop with Christelle van Graan on puppeteering. Photograph by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.

THE FLOOD

Scene 16 of our collaborative theatre-event was an attempt to capture my original conceptual impressions on the drowning of little Everlate Chauke - which had presented itself in my imagination as a vivid imagistic filmic narrative - as a stage reality. From the initial stages of the artistic research undertaken in this study, when as theatre practitioner-director I had not yet taken up the responsibilities and functions of the theatre pedagogue, facilitator or researcher, I had surmised the corporeal manifestation of the toddler’s death to be achievable through the utilisation of puppetry. To this end, the puppets used in our stage production were motile and easily manoeuvrable life-size structures designed and constructed for the purposes of simulating the movements of drowning human bodies. In keeping with the poetic scenographic stage aesthetic, brought about by presenting an atemporal performance space which simultaneously depicted a spectral and an actual stage reality, Scene 16 did not portray the turbulent water currents of a river-in-flood. Instead, the scenographic arrangement, stripped down to a bare stage washed with hues of blue light, centralised the slow-motion rise-and-fall of the humanlike puppet-children’s bodies submerged in the water of the Jukskei River. The infants’ simulated drowning evoked strong visceral reactions from the observers who had gathered to watch the scene at its first viewing during rehearsal in June 2017; in performance this scene seemed to have elicited similar emotional responses from spectators.



Figure 21: Our puppets simulating the drowning of Iziengbe’s children in the flood. (*Missing*, Scene 16). Photograph by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.

My search for plausible explanations for how the imitation of human action by ‘inanimate objects’ crafted from light wood, paper and glue could evoke overtly emotional responses from spectators directed me towards literature on kinaesthetic empathy. According to American psychologist James Jerome Gibson, with reference to the kinaesthetic dimension of vision: “eyes should not be thought of as ‘cameras’ but as ‘apparatus for detecting the variables of contour, texture, spectral composition and transformation in light’” (in McKinney, 2013:8). Following on Gibson, Joslin McKinney⁹⁰ suggests that “the effects produced by spectacle are registered in the viewer’s whole body” and maintains that “these sensations are orchestrated by kinaesthesia⁹¹” (McKinney, 2013:8). Dance critic John Martin’s postulations on ‘kinaesthetic sympathy’ in relation to the ‘muscular and emotional experiences’ and ‘responses’ of spectators when ‘watching dancing bodies’, which have also come to encompass other “interactive” cultural/aesthetic areas such as cinema and theatre, seem to centralise the

⁹⁰ Dr Joslin McKinney is an experienced set and costume designer who conducts practice-led research into scenography. She also actively contributes to the development of scenography as an area of academic study internationally. *School of Performance and Cultural Industries*. 2018. [Online]. Available at: <https://ahc.leeds.ac.uk/performance/staff/361/dr-joslin-mckinney>. [2018, October 18].

⁹¹ “Kinaesthesia functions as a means of detecting movement and position and is embedded as part of a network of sensory modalities that include vision, hearing, touch, muscle sensation and body position. This constant flux of varieties of movement and position are the means by which our senses are stimulated, allowing our body to respond accordingly”. (McKinney, 2013: 8).

relation between empathy and the viewing of “aesthetic objects” (McKinney, 2013:7). Similarly, Jewish-French philosopher Henri Bergson observes that:

[a]rt aims at impressing feelings on us rather than expressing them [...] We should have to relive the life of the subject who experiences [an emotion] if we wished to grasp it in its original complexity’. (in Grant 2017:196)

According to Reynolds and Reason (in Grant, 2017:196), Bergson’s postulations on “mechanical imitation” and “mirroring” bear much relevance to neurological theorisation that the function of ‘mirror neurons’, as the triggers of empathetic responses, is their ability to “activate those parts of the human brain which would function if an observer were themselves experiencing what they see happening to others” (in Grant, 2017:196). German poet and novelist Friedrich T Vischer⁹², who in his *Die Tücke des Objekts (The Spite of Objects)* foretells the conspiracy of inanimate objects against humans, contends that empathising with objects entails the viewing body “incorporating itself into the object being viewed” (in Grant, 2017:196).

McKinney provides insights about “scenographic spectacle” and the spectator’s body as a “site [...] of perception and reception” when she offers personal remarks on her experience as spectator at an outdoor performance of *Sea Odyssey* by the French company Royal de Luxe⁹³ in 2012 (McKinney, 2013:1-24) which incorporated oversized puppets:

I put myself in [the puppet operators’] position, and feel through my own body what it would be like to be doing what they are doing. My muscles tense and release, mimicking the bodies of the operators. Their urgency and effort is compelling, and I feel exhilaration as I watch their bodies leaping through the air and share their satisfaction and pleasure as effort and engineering result in animation [...] I am not empathising with the [thirty feet tall] ‘Little Girl’ as though she were another human being, but as a beautiful machine that generates the textures and outlines of human experience and interaction. She is human only to the extent that she arouses memories of my own experiences of human interactions. (McKinney, 2013:9)

⁹² Friedrich Theodor Vischer was a German novelist, poet, playwright, and writer on the philosophy of art. Friederich Theodor Vischer. 2018. [Online].

Available: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Theodor_Vischer [2018, October 19].

⁹³ Royal de Luxe is a French mechanical marionette street theatre company. Royal de Luxe. 2018. [Online]. Available: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_de_Luxe [2018, October 18].

McKinney's remarks, which are based on her embodied response to this "scenographic spectacle", and to the "[puppet-] machines" in particular, are reminiscent of my own muscular and emotional experiences and responses to our puppets's replication of human experience. In the light of postulations as set forth by the likes of McKinney, Gibson, Bergson, Reynolds and Reason, it would seem that our empathetic responses and connections to Iziengbe's children might have stemmed from our internalisation of their experiences based the embodied knowledge that we hold of our own lived experiences and the phenomenological perceptions of our own subjective life-worlds.



Figure 22: Iziengbe and her children. (*Missing*, Scene 13). Photograph by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.

A MULTIMEDIAL TEXT

My exploration of suitable ways to faithfully capture the numerous visual impressions that constituted the plays' stage reality, precipitated my decision to employ functional and theatrically effectual scenographic strategies. It had become necessary to orchestrate a performance space capable of accommodating a cohesive theatre aesthetic that would comprise fractured and displaced narratives and locations. Our amalgamated and analogous narrative would to a large degree be made up of shifts in time and place and had to accommodate both Aristotelian and naturalistic approaches to storytelling or character depiction. The narrative's circular structure which coincided with flashbacks into the past and told from diverse points of view also had to encompass atemporal metaphorical and metaphysical stage 'realities'. To establish a scenographic aesthetic that would assimilate the

demands of our text and embody our collective imaginings, I adopted a multi-media approach that would not only support an understanding of the text, but also bring about a dynamic interaction between performers and various types of media. The discussion that follows, therefore, aims to elucidate the ways in which I incorporated diverse media as an intertextual, and to some degree intermedial⁹⁴, dialectic between the imagined worlds of the text.

An Elemental Environment

The incorporation of video in *Missing* originally stemmed from my intention to authentically capture the imagistic (filmic) narrative that had been brought on by listening to Ramin Djawadi's *The Light of The Seven*. My vivid recollection of little Everlate Chauke's final conjectural impressions of her environment as she drifted downstream with the clouds slowly gliding overhead, remained central to the visual language that I, together with the collaborative, aimed to communicate to the audience. This required the use of a scenographic medium capable of faithfully conveying a sense of continual motion and 'boundless' space.



Figure 23: Still image from video depicting the moon in various scenes in *Missing*. Captured from video by Tom Goss. 2014. [Online]. Available: <https://youtu.be/5kskqFLjeaU> [2017, June 3].

⁹⁴ Gieseckam describes 'intermedial' as that in which an extensive interaction between the performers and various media reshapes notions of character and acting, where neither the live material nor the recorded material would make much sense without the other, and where the interaction between the media often substantially modifies how they conventionally function, inviting reflection upon their nature and methods (Gieseckam: 2007:8).



Figure 24: Still image from video depicting clouds in various scenes in *Missing*. Captured from video by Freemediabank. 2010. [Online]. Available: <https://youtu.be/YgmlibSnZs> [2017, June 3].

Digital (filmed) footage of cumulus clouds (see Fig. 24) set against a dark blue sky was projected against a 6x9m white cyclorama. Serving as backdrop to the action, the visual impression of clouds in continuous motion also functioned on a metaphorical level. The presence of slow-moving clouds that drift into view as Iziengbe makes her first appearance in Scene 3 of *Missing*, symbolically portrays her state of mind. As she relives the sensorial impressions of her past, she recalls the “sunlight...and the skies...[the] early morning blue” and longs to escape the present where the “mornings smell [...] of ash” (*Missing*, 3:1-8). The projected image of the clouds that dominated most of the white cyclorama, created an added impression that the spectral figures of the ghost chorus, who were placed upstage in proximity to the cyclorama, are from time to time being enveloped by the perpetual rise-and-fall of the undulating clouds. As herald of an impending storm, the ghost chorus who at this point/in this scene resides over ‘times of fairer weather’, also foreshadows the appearance of thunderclouds which are similarly projected on the cyclorama in Scene 17 of the play. Video footage of a large and radiant full moon illuminated the stage during the opening scenes of the play. According to Jung, “[the moon] is the spirit mother” (Jung, 1961:404), and as such a symbolic manifestation of nature’s feminine aspects. ‘She’ is emblematic of the passing of time, the changing of seasons, the realm that denotes the worlds of the conscious and the unconscious; she is also the token of night and day, of light and darkness and of “the gathering place of [the] departed souls [of the dead] (Jung, 1961:352). The rising of the moon in its orbit, visually projected in selected scenes throughout the duration of the play, metaphorically traces Iziengbe’s emotional trajectory over the course of the narrative - in spite of all that she endures,

Iziengbe's gathering strength renders her all the more resolute. The moon, luminous and imposing at the start of the play, disappears behind a curtain of dark clouds towards the end, and only returns to its original radiant shape in the last moments before the lights finally dim. The moon's passage and the journey which Iziengbe undergoes conflate in a parallel trajectory.

Mabuda and Iziengbe

Scene 7 of the play features filmed footage of Mabuda's face projected on the cyclorama. The digital narrative, which is filmed in black and white and incorporates both medium- and close-up shots, establishes a visually dramatic and subtextual contrast to the events played out by the actors on stage. Mabuda is openly abusive in the 'real-time' narrative and disdainfully pronounces his status as the "Lion of Juda" who, as the "only muscle in [the] house", claims his right to conduct his extra-material affairs in his own "temple" where he reigns as the "head of [his] pride" (*Missing*, Scene 7). The digital narrative, however, projects a different impression of Mabuda: he is shown as ordinary, placid, short of bravado and vulnerability.

In Scene 13, following the news of her revenge on Mabuda's new bride, Iziengbe revels in the success of her plans. In her address to the puppet chorus - the text in this instance is an amalgamation of our devised narrative interspersed with the addition of lines 10 - 16 which I freely adapted from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Act 1, Scene 2 - Iziengbe resiliently defends her actions. She is resolute to accept her exile from the community honourably:

Iziengbe	No, I'm not afraid. Your eyes on me from behind closed windows and through the cracks in the door. Your eyes on me now. Trying to see me, trying to make sense of me. Looking into your eyes now that you are so close, I see you. I see you with my black eyes. I see you with my eyes that are as dark as the mud of the river. I see you now and you no longer frighten me. Look, see here. The colour of my muddy fingers. I am the colour of water. I am the colour of the river that runs through the land. I am the black of the river that bursts its banks and tears through towns and cities. My current is strong and you cannot	1 5
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steer me off-course. I wanted to be like you. You would not laugh at me then. You would not stare or make fun or make faces behind my back. Chattering and jeering like apes, your smiles and tricks and traps were razor-sharp and jagged. Like adders and cobras with cloven tongues you hissed me into madness. You taught me language and my only benefit on it is that I learned that I can curse.

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Iziengbe's digital text, filmed in black and white, supports her resolve to call upon and honour the seat of her strength - her sacral origins. The video footage, incorporating both medium- and close-up shots at two interchanging angles (from front and side) showing Iziengbe donning a headscarf, was intended to evoke a warrior-like impression - as if gathering her strength to go into to battle. The attentive and meticulous way in which she wraps and twists the headscarf (see Fig. 26) neatly into its place is reminiscent of the way in which she dressed herself at the beginning of the play before leaving her house for Johannesburg.



Figure 25: Mabuda. (*Missing*, Scene 7). Photograph by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.



Figure 26: Iziengbe dressing to do battle. (*Missing*, Scene 9). Photograph by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.

The Death of the Bride

The digital scenography in Scene 11 presents footage of a young woman exploring the rich counters of a red organza headscarf. She has her eyes closed. She is filmed in colour against a viridescent background and shot in extreme close-up - only her head, forehead, eyes, right hand and fingers are shown. She depicts Mabuda's new bride and her ornate jewellery suggests a life of privilege. This digital narrative projected onto the cyclorama was intended to denote the young bride's curiosity and excitement at opening the wedding gifts sent by Iziengbe. The filmed scenography, in this instance, represents the moments before her death, before these events are related in Scene 12. The scene's conclusion is signalled by a static image of the young woman's face: she stares directly into the camera, at the audience.

On stage, another young woman dances to a melancholic tune performed on a cello. She is the corporeal manifestation of her virtual self that is being projected on the video screen. Her movements are gentle, leisurely, and mirror the tender curiosity of the hand gestures portrayed on screen. Sudden dissonance resounding from the musical instrument resonates in the dancer's movements: she is transformed. Her gestures, at first delicate and unhurried, become confused and obsessive - her physical text embodies her imminent death. The dancer's narrative, here portrayed by means of choreography, expresses and foretells the death of the young bride. For the duration of Scene 11 and 12, the dancer *is* the young bride: she staggers, her body convulses and becomes misshapen; her body is on fire; she pulls her hair and tears at her dress as her flesh is consumed by poison (see Fig. 28).



Figure 27: Mabuda's bride. (*Missing*, Scene 11). Photograph by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.

The heterogeneous scenographic elements simultaneously exist within a singular theatrical stage space. Whilst collectively contributing to a multifaceted and unified *mise-en-scène*, each narrative element, or text, holds independent significance. Diverse narratives, styles of mediation and scenographic elements are juxtaposed - the text of a dancer's body that operates as separate to, as well as in conjunction with, the choreographic and musical narrative, for example, is set against the unspoken metaphysical text of the actors who portray the omniscient ghost chorus. The dancer's movements are either synchronised or disharmonious with the sound of the cello's undulating rhythms while the images of the young woman's digital narrative projected on the large video screen evokes a jarring intertextual relevance. The immediacy of live performance interwoven with the digitally generated narrative also achieves self-reflexivity (Gieseckam, 2007:246). Viewed in relation to, and intertextually commenting on, each other, each element re-enforces the other's distinctiveness. The rectangular 6x9m video screen asserts itself as a structure designed for the *display* of digitally generated material or special effects; the dancer *impersonates* the death of a young woman; the young woman in the pre-recorded digital footage *enacts* the final moments before her own death; and the music is designed/employed to deliberately *underscore* the overall emotive impact of the scene. Viewed as such, it would seem as if each self-referential scenographic component in the context of this specific scene, for the present self-consciously refers to no more than what it is - no attempt is made to disguise the autonomy of the scene's constituent parts. However, If we were to infer the human body to be central to

all knowing, and that knowledge resides at the point of interaction between any/all elements, irrespective of whether these constituent parts are termed alive/real/present or virtual, it follows that when presented or framed in a particular manner, these elements might invite a certain 'sense' or 'embodied knowing' in those who share in the experience. Therefore, despite the classification of these elements as 'virtual', 'non-real', 'metaphoric' or 'immediate', the qualities enshrined in these heterogenous elements will in all probability still be experienced as a coherent whole - albeit presumably a highly individualised experience - by a spectator in the physicality of the live performance.

Theatrically, the set complete with its scenographic elements "functions as an instrument of performance"; it is simultaneously functional and metaphorical (Burian in Dixon, 2007:25). Metaphorically, the scenography in the scene under discussion denotes the death of the young bride. Although this detail of the narrative has not yet been verbally delivered (a messenger relates the event in Scene 12), it is conveyed by means of a "fractured" representation (Smith in Gieseckam, 2007:202). A representational fracturing of the narrative affords divergent perspectives on the same event:

[It is the] expression of a free and many-sided time-space operation, in which one and the same action is observed from several optical and ideational angles [...] [I]t means breaking up the linear continuity of theatre action, and its transformation into separate events or moments. (Burian in Gieseckam, 2007:53)



Figure 28: A dancing body performing the character of the bride. (*Missing*, Scene 11). Photograph by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.

Scene 11 comprises a fracturing of character: two diverse presentations of *the young bride* are simultaneously played out on stage. If performance were to be viewed to entail the embodied interaction between ‘individual’ and ‘other’, whether on or outside of a stage environment, with a human agent as the source and site of knowledge, it might follow that although the body on-screen has been recorded and recalled by means of a virtual reality, it is still experienced by a viewer in the present, from their current vantage point. Notwithstanding that the character of the young bride is mediated by means of the body of an actress and pre-recorded digital footage, both are considered ‘live’ in the moment of performance. Both the dancer and the actress captured in the digital footage *perform* the bride’s narrative. Although the digital footage may seem less ‘live’, and more ‘staged’ and deliberate, the first-time spectator viewing it within the context of the staged production might perceive the digital depiction as immediate and as real as the corporeality of the dancer – both arise simultaneously as the ‘live’ performance. Allusions to a singular and dramatically unified character fall away - the spectator’s “attention is drawn to the *performance* of identity and the *construction* of character” (Gieseckam, 2007: 248, *my emphasis*). The dancer, despite seeming more ‘live’ and ‘unmediated’ is also performing identity and constructing character, albeit through the medium of stylized gesture and stage orientation. The fractured representation of a singular identity in which the “boundaries between real and imaginary behaviours...between inner and outer states [or] thoughts and actions...are blurred” (Kent in Gieseckam, 2007:203)

leaves room for interpretation - the metaphorical significance of the deconstructed identity is subjective and 'open-ended'. As the probability that the nature of embodied knowledge might be perceived in new ways arises, conventional/binary notions of knowledge as prescribed, contained and categorical are challenged and fall away.

My directorial intention was to intimate an intertextual significance of the stage/screen relation. I optimistically hoped that the simultaneous existence of both texts within the same scenographic environment would facilitate the agency for mutual and interchangeable commentary. In this regard, Gieseckam's postulation, that the "simultaneous [...] presentation of various sources" demands "an alert spectatorship ready to read the relationships between different types of material or presentation" (Gieseckam, 2007: 258), seems plausible.



Figure 29: A wedding gift. (*Missing*, Scene 11). Photograph by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.

In Scene 12, the character who will report on the death of the *young bride* steps out of the ghost chorus and walks downstage. The dramatic function of his monologue - his text is largely appropriated from Johnstonn's translation of *Medea* (2008) - closely resembles that of a 'messenger's speech' common in ancient Greek tragedy. The messenger's account, relayed in grotesque detail, reiterates the dancer's gestural text as expressed in Scene 11. Footage of the *young bride* reappears on screen. Although her head, forehead and eyes are not visible this time, her hands - she still wears the same ring - are recognisable. The close-up of her hand gestures demonstrates tactile curiosity. The bride, wearing a skirt of red, yellow and white tulle strips, bears a golden satin dress on her lap. The dress which she carefully arrays over her knees, once again resembles the unwrapping of her wedding gifts. The film-narrative ends in a static image of the *young bride* who has folded her hands in her lap. The dancer,

who is now shown to wear the same dress of colourful tulle, continues to play out her narrative in the guise of *the young bride*. She is now seated in a chair. As before, the fractured scenography facilitates narrative and temporal leaps by the introduction of an additional scenographic element - the messenger; and by readjustments of the existing texts - the dancer performs gestures that are similar but she has turned her chair away from the action to directly face the audience, and the audience's inability to definitively identify the close-up of the young woman on screen as *the young bride*. Gieseckam contends that the utilisation of scenographic elements in this way brings about a shift in scenic location as it transports the spectator from one fictional scene to another fictional scene, in a way similar to conventional scene-changes or displaced diegetic inserts in cinema (Gieseckam, 2007:30).



Figure 30: A dancing body and a virtual body performing the character of the bride. (*Missing*, Scene 11). Photograph by Jaco van Wyk. 2017.

The use of a fractured scenographic stage reality lends a sense of atemporality to each scene. Corporeal and virtually generated characters, symbolic stage elements and sonic texts each seem to operate within their own space-time relation. These assorted scenographic components are neither related to their surrounding temporal stage representations, nor do they create or contribute towards a singularly unified space-time stage reality. Characters and texts that exist within this “space-time metamorphoses” seem to “disrupt audience perceptions of temporality” (Dixon, 2007:13). Fractured scenographic elements “temporarily appear to suspend time and space” (Merx in Dixon, 2007:13). It could be theorised that the space-time captured by the digital impression of *the young bride* achieves an extra-

temporality: as a pre-recorded manifestation, she exists as an ‘off stage’ impression captured within a mediated past - she exists outside of or beyond ‘stage’ time (Merx in Dixon, 2007:13).

The hybrid of diverse and separate textualities, images and media demonstrates a collagist⁹⁵ approach to the play’s scenographic organisation. Employing what I refer to as a textual ‘disruption’ of, and stylistic schism between, staged elements, most often results in spectral estrangement. The consistent presence of the metaphysical ghost chorus as silent observers to fractured instances of realism; life-size puppets interacting with human actors; parallel interconnections and interplay between constructed identities; the incorporation of Kurt Weill’s *September Songs* and the music of John Tavener within the socio-cultural context of our Setswetla narrative – engendered strange ‘realities’. In retrospect, however, it is clear that the co-existence of these stage ‘realities’ simultaneously established connections and associations. Svoboda justly claims:

[These relations] are not realistic, but rather supra-realistic, perhaps surrealistic. [...] [T]he contrast of varied things on stage is basic to theatre: the objects thereby acquire new relationships and significance, a new and different reality. (in Dixon, 2007:26)

Based on my subjective recollections of the final rehearsals of *Missing* and of the play in performance, the enduring impression I am left with of the play’s overall scenographic impact is that of “cohesion, homogeneity and unity”; not of “differences”, but rather “that of correspondences” (Dixon, 2007:27). Although my collagist approach to the play’s scenographic orchestration appears to have foregrounded plurality, rather than a unity of space, time and action, *Missing* achieved synthesis and harmony. My deliberate attempt to discover and portray feelings, perceptions and impressions which are ‘universally typical’, or circumstances and experiences which are perhaps recognisable, similar or at least familiar to all people, gave rise to **creative action** and creation events that expressed new insights into my own subjective realities as well the realities of others. *Missing* comprised scenographic multiplicities and metamorphoses that intentionally and unintentionally evoked a poetic stage reality:

the hybrid or the meeting of [...] media is a moment of truth and revelation from which new form is born. [...] The moment of the meeting of media is a moment

⁹⁵ Happenings and Fluxus events celebrated hybridity and collagism, with actions, sound, text, visual images and film often layered against each other, and with barriers between performers and audiences broken down in diverse ways (Gieseckam, 2007:37).

of freedom and release from the ordinary trance and numbness imposed on them by our senses. (McLuhan, 1964: 55)

AFTERWORD

When I initially set out to uncover the ‘hidden truths’ inherent in my theatre and pedagogical practices, I had not an inkling of what I would find, or where exactly to begin my search for this new knowledge. At the very onset of the study, I had only a broad impression of the nature of my practice: I thought of myself as a seasoned secondary school theatre educator taking pleasure in, and benefiting from, the luxury of also being a theatre practitioner. An ‘after the fact’ perspective enables me now, without much effort, to single out distinctly significant areas of practice for further academic scrutiny and research; originally, as I pondered the topic of my research question, I ‘simply’ strove to understand my reasons, my methods and my impulses to make theatre. Considerations such as, for example, whether there existed specific mechanisms, or perhaps a distinguishable or idiosyncratic structure to the elements that determined the operation of my particular practice; or speculations about the nature of the strategies that I employ to transform and realise aesthetic flights of fancy as practical and observable stage realities - these emerged and evolved as distinct research questions through acts of self-scrutiny, insight gained through felicitous collaborative experiences and unremitting reflection.

Entering into and sharing a ‘collaborative space’ in which the ‘dissonant’ voices that arose from the creative-collective of young acting students, artists-collaborators, puppeteers, singers, musicians and my life-partner contributed and actively shared in the construction of our theatre event, enlightened me to the providential attributes that sprung from and gave rise to unpremeditated, surprise, unforeseen, unpredictable and fortuitous creative events, occurrences and incidents. I became cognisant that **creative action** – as a collection of innumerable streams and waves of potential actions, incidents and occurrences observed and experienced during and by means of collaboration - comprises a multi-modal epistemological paradigm constitutive of elements such as codified knowledge, tacit ‘knowing’ and empirical knowledge. This instance of theatre-making which had become the fulcrum of the research undertaken in this study - which for the most part foregrounded collaboration - afforded seminal realisations such as those that I suggest on page p.20:

Through my interaction with the actor-collaborators I became aware that the employment of emotional intelligence, the cultivation of sociocultural sensitivity and the innate ability to be relatable, respectful and receptive were skills required by both the theatre pedagogue and the practitioner-facilitator. I became cognisant of the necessity, at times, to distinguish between the roles of ‘the experienced tutor/advisor’ and that of ‘the negotiator’, and to be sensitive to instances where an interplay or a ‘shifting’ of these roles needed to occur. I

speculated that the constant triadic interplay between my roles as pedagogue, theatre-facilitator and researcher – the latter being the one who journaled, diarised, investigated, analysed, gathered information, pondered, composed and recorded the **creative action** - could give rise to a paradigm capable of capturing the multiple voices involved in our collaborative creative endeavour.

This practice-led study has elucidated the ways in which I work. Consistent observation and reflection on 'what I do' and 'how I do it' has brought about the awareness that my practice has to a large degree centered around what I have already learned or have known based on past experiences. I have also come to infer that my 'action-intuition' or 'sense-knowing' is the 'primary knowing' that has led me to instinctively employ individualised methods of engaging with actor-collaborators by means of dynamic discourse. I have endeavoured to instil a sense of 'being in the world' through a focussed awareness of experiences that occur within, through, with and outside of their bodies.

The formatting employed in this writing, along with my utilisation of specific stylistic features such as the use of analogies, metaphors and symbols as well as 'experiments' in typography as a way of emphasis, were attempts at sharing what I still perceive to be an expansive, multi-dimensional, complex, paradoxical, non-linear and at times an inexpressible creative experience, in a chronologically structured and linear manner. There were moments which I perceived as profoundly insightful; there also existed instances when such significant realisations seemed like little more than re-observed known facts - on many occasions it was difficult to distinguish new knowledge from past experience. Viewed in this light, it would appear as if the cyclical nature of **creative action** has borne me back where I had started almost twenty-three months ago.

As I now find myself back in the drama classroom, engaging with some of the actor-collaborators who had shared in the making of *Missing*, I am again cognisant of my supposition that the making of a theatre-event is a lived experience: as a creative-collective we had become entangled in its **creative action** and by means and through its many actions we had come to experience our 'creative place' as 'a creative space' where we felt safe to share our stories.

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