

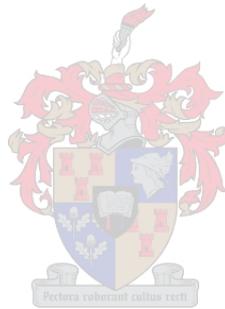
# Reading the Distance

Decoding the Autobiographic Novel, *Portrait in Pieces*

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By

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## Declaration

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I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

**Date : 2 March 2009**

## Abstract

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The aim of this thesis is to decode my autobiographic graphic novel, *Portrait in Pieces* (a narrative of a mother / daughter relationship), utilising a genealogical mode of analysis. This takes place, firstly, through a discussion of the themes of photography, memory and repetition which occur in the graphic novel; secondly, through a consideration of the role of language and difference within a specific mother / daughter relationship; and thirdly, through the study of autobiography and the self as performative entities. In this thesis I interrogate the autobiographic genre in a manner that questions internalised notions of femininity and (patriarchal) cultural constructs, which precede and influence the performance of our 'life scripts'. I posit *Portrait in Pieces* as a transitional object between my mother and myself, and language as a medium which can both Otherise and close the distance between us. Translation is the medium by which one reads this distance, turning miscommunication into communication, and misunderstanding into understanding. The illustrations and text constituting the graphic novel have been produced through creative play, representing the 'post talking' required for the process of healing, empathising, and taking ownership of one's 'life script'.

## Opsomming

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Die doelwit van hierdie tesis is om my outobiografiese grafiese verhaal, *Portrait in Pieces* ('n narratief van 'n moeder / dogter verhouding), te ontleed deur gebruik te maak van 'n genealogiese metode van analise. Dit vind eerstens plaas deur 'n bespreking van die temas van fotografie, geheue/herinneringe en repetisie wat voorkom in die verhaal; tweedens, deur 'n konsiderasie van die rol van taal en verskil binne 'n spesifieke moeder / dogter verhouding; en derdens, deur die ondersoeking van outobiografie en die self as performatiewe entiteite. In die tesis ondersoek ek die outobiografiese genre in so 'n wyse om die ge-internaliseerde idees van vroulikheid en (patriargale) kulturele konstruksies te bevraagteken. Hierdie konstruksies word vooraf bepaal en beïnvloed hoe ons ons lewenstekste speel. Ek plaas *Portrait in Pieces* as 'n transisionele objek tussen my moeder en myself. Verder gebruik ek taal as 'n medium wat beide kan Verander (om die Ander te skep), asook om die afstand tussen ons uit die weg te ruim. Vertaling is die medium waardeur ons dié afstand lees, waardeur miskommunikasie verander word in kommunikasie, en kommunikasie in miskommunikasie. Die illustrasies en teks wat die grafiese verhaal uitmaak is deur 'n kreatiewe spel vervaardig, verteenwoordigend van die 'post-gesprekke' wat nodig is vir die proses van heelwording, empatisering, en die toe-eiening van 'n persoon se 'lewenstekste'.

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For My Mother

The mouth is our strangest muscle.  
It subtracts syllables,  
leaves only the line of I.  
In this way, they unnamed you.

When you kiss me, their voice moves in,  
echoes against teeth.  
It is the sadness that I love  
of fear, the slow curve of their worry  
against our tongues, the sounds,

sweet and swollen, rising into  
children we'll give ourselves, quickly  
naming places not taken  
by our parents'  
silences and words.

(From *Mother Tongue*  
by Marjorie Maddox, 1995:461)

“... I will never get there, the contamination is everywhere and we would never light the fire. Language poisons for us the most secret of our secrets, one can no longer even burn at home, in peace, trace the circle of a hearth, one must even sacrifice one's own sacrifice to it.”

(From *Cinders* by Jacques Derrida, 1991:64)

## Introduction

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The practical component of my MPhil degree in Visual Arts (Illustration) consists of an autobiographic graphic novel, entitled *Portrait in Pieces*. The story is told in three parts, each utilising a different narrative approach. It is a fragment of my life, memories and thought patterns told in bits and pieces. In this sense, this graphic novel can be regarded as an extended self-portrait. The main aim of this thesis is to decode *Portrait in Pieces*. This takes place, firstly, through a discussion on themes of memory, photography and repetition, that occur in the graphic novel; secondly, through the role of language and difference within a specific mother / daughter relationship; and, thirdly, through the study of autobiography and the self as performative entities.

Making one's self visible or mapping identity are not only figures of speech but also tropes for recovery of understanding, which is always elusive. Because these genres foreground the plurality and processes of identity and of autobiography, they are also transformative; neither the person nor the text can reveal any single or final truth, but both can provide activities of interpretation, in which the reader is compelled to join .... We become part of the map of interpretation (Susanna Egan in Smith & Watson, 2002: [v]).

The *pieces* from the title, *Portrait in Pieces* refer to two aspects within the graphic novel. Firstly, they refer to shards and splinters of a fragmented sense of wholeness. To illustrate this concept; one can imagine gazing at one's reflection in a broken mirror – all the pieces represent you – but it's a shattered you. Secondly, the term refers to pieces or cinders<sup>1</sup> left over from a burnt out mother / daughter relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> In my practical work, 'cinders' are dormant memories and feelings from my past, which can at any moment, through the creative act of play or the use of language flare up again to be felt within the present. Language affirms the possibility and potential for that which is silent to become heard. This silence becomes heard through the act of play, which was necessary in the creation of *Portrait in Pieces*. The specific use of these terms 'language' and 'play' will be clarified later in this thesis. The term cinders originates from Derrida's paper, *Cinders*, which has been a seminal text in my research. In *Cinders*, Derrida describes the cinder as 'something that erases itself totally, radically, while presenting itself', it is a 'remains without remainder' (in Lukacher, 1987:1). 'Cinders are neither proper nor metaphorical names', according to Lukacher who, in his introduction to Derrida's *Cinders*,

These ‘leftovers’ are inherited, internalised notions of femininity, on the one hand, and cultural translation, on the other. Within this thesis, internalised notions of femininity are linked to performance, identity and the self within autobiography. It must be noted that this thesis is by no means an attempt to assemble these pieces in order to get them into the ‘correct’ place. The intention is rather to examine them and decode them in order to determine their significance. I intend to reveal how it is possible to re-inscribe oneself from the insights gained from this decoding of cultural, psychic, filial, kinship relations, and the subsequent synthesis of the pieces with which I have been playing. Since play<sup>2</sup> is an important element in people’s lives, and it is only through its use that one is able to be truly creative and begin to access the entire personality, and thereby discover the self, I will be looking at Donald Woods Winnicott’s notion of play as an important constituent of the self-discovery process (Winnicott, 1971:55).<sup>3</sup>

Primarily, the difficulty in communication between my mother and myself is investigated and decoded in this thesis, since she was born and bred Afrikaans, yet raised me to be English. I will therefore be looking at language and translation as potentially Otherising mechanisms.<sup>4</sup> To what degree are language and life

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expounds on Derrida’s notion: ‘[C]inders name another relation, not to the truth as such, but to its possibility’ (1987:1). According to Derrida; there is ‘no cinder without fire’ (1987:37). ‘*Cinders* is about the fire that is still burning at the origin of language, the not yet literal but more than figurative fire that can be felt in the cinders of language’ (Lukacher, 1987:2). In Lukacher’s description, ‘[c]inders name both the extreme fragility and the uncanny tenacity of this relation’ (1987:2). Quite literally, a cinder is wood, burnt coal or ash that has stopped burning. This ash could, however, still be hot with the potential of re-ignition (Hornby, 2005:252).

<sup>2</sup> Whenever Winnicott speaks about children and play, in *Playing and Reality*, he is actually referring to adults as well. According to him, ‘playing [is] just as evident in the analyses of adults as it is in the case of [his] work with children’ (1971:54).

<sup>3</sup> Donald Woods Winnicott was a psychoanalyst and pediatrician who worked with children and their mothers. He is most commonly known for his theories of the ‘good enough mother’ and the ‘transitional object’ (Ward & Zarate, 2006:173). These concepts, along with his theories on ‘play’, have been investigated for the purpose of this thesis.

<sup>4</sup> The concept of the ‘Other’ is used within many academic disciplines ranging from phenomenology, philosophy, post-colonial theory and psychoanalysis. A very simplified definition of the term is that it is the opposite pole of the ‘subject’, that of the non-self, the outsider, that which is Other and different. Furthermore, it has been thought that the Other is a source of ‘threat to the autonomy and freedom of the subject or the ‘I’, according to the *Dictionary of Critical Theory* (Macey, 2000:285). For Sartre, the relationship between self and Other exists in the antagonistic conflict of being either dominant or dominated. Levinas’ more positive idea is that the face of the other challenges the subject’s feelings of self-containment and self-assurance. Furthermore, Lacan’s view of the Other is connected to Hegel’s master and slave theories wherein both subject and other look for recognition in each other. And lastly, the term ‘Othering’ has been used in postcolonial theory to describe the way in which Europe placed

translatable? Furthermore, to what extent is a mother's love translatable? Since languages encode cultural norms and values, cultural translation will also be explored in this thesis.

Experience is fragmentary and disjointed, so my story is not direct, but told with as much distance as possible and is disconnected. As a result, the narrative is in a state of 'undecidability'<sup>5</sup> (Sayre, 1989:xii) and is incoherent, with much slippage, many gaps, silences and contradictions. The story is revealed bit by bit, through the use of metaphor and narrative techniques. This is intentional as I did not want the story to have a clear beginning and end, since it is a fraction, a piece of my life – a life which, in the words of Rosemary Betterton, 'is still "in process"' (1996:173):

In the conventional form of autobiography, a line is tracked from childhood to the achievement of an adult identity that is conceived as an endpoint, as the resolution of choices made and obstacles overcome, however convoluted the journey. Feminist writing of the self, on the contrary, resembles unfinished business, often taking the form of a series of movements between present and past, self and Other, towards the production of an identity that is still 'in process'.

While *Portrait in Pieces* is a journey of self discovery, it is also a story of a mother / daughter relationship. The story within the graphic novel portrays a problematic relationship which has been told from the perspective of the daughter. This relationship is explored using Sigmund Freud's notion of 'the uncanny'.<sup>6</sup> I study the intimate contact zone between my mother and myself, which is revealed in *Portrait in*

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itself in the position of subject and the people and countries that they had colonised as the object, the Other (2000:285-286).

<sup>5</sup> 'Undecidability' is a postmodern term used by Henry M. Sayre to describe 'the condition of contingency, multiplicity, and polyvocality'. He has borrowed the term from Derrida (Sayre, 1989:xiii).

<sup>6</sup> 'The Uncanny' is, in the words of Freud, 'undoubtedly related to what is frightening to what arouses dread and horror' (1953:1). Yet uncanny is a term more complex than this. Freud defines the uncanny as 'that class of frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar' (1953:2). However, something needs to be added to this state of familiarity for it to be able to be named uncanny (1953:2). That which is uncanny is often associated with the German words *heimlich* (homely) and that which is *unheimlich* (unhomely). *Heimlich*, is a word which is ambiguous: it can stand for both that which is 'familiar and agreeable' and that which is 'concealed and kept out of sight'. It is also associated with the word *geheim* [secret] (Freud, 1953:5). According to Freud, '*heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*' (1953:6). A situation can be in the 'highest degree uncanny when an inanimate object – a picture or a doll – comes to life' (Freud, 1953:19).

*Pieces*, as simultaneously over-familiar (*heimlich*), and intensely estranged (*unheimlich*). What makes us the same? Is one bound to become like one's parent? Furthermore, what makes us so different? These terms, *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, are simultaneously associated with the uncanny, that which is both homely and not homely at one and the same time. My story is a secret that has been revealed though the confessional nature of the narrative. The notion of a secret, which should have remained hidden but has been revealed, is also associated with the uncanny (Freud, 1953:16).

This study has taken shape in a circular fashion. To begin with, the cycle is launched with the notion of performance<sup>7</sup> and the self. When one is a small child it is mainly one's mother who decides what one will be performing. She writes the script<sup>8</sup> of what one eats, when one sleeps, what one wears, what one may say, and so on. This 'mother script', as I will be calling it, needs to be interrogated before one can move forward and claim one's script for oneself. Language is the tool by which I decode this script, in order to reach some form of 'understanding' so as to make myself visible. Because notions of the self and understanding 'foreground the plurality and processes of identity and of autobiography, they are also transformative' and therefore unstable (Smith & Watson, 2002:[v]).

I look at language as a medium which can Otherise and create distance between the mother and the self. Language cannot always be directly translated and therefore a shift in meaning often occurs. For this reason, using language to translate the 'mother script' is problematic. Even before anything is translated,<sup>9</sup> according to Derrida,

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<sup>7</sup> For theories of performance, the main literature consulted is comprised of the following: H. M. Sayre's, *The Object of Performance. The American Avant-Garde since 1970* (1989); *The Ends of Performance* (1998), with an introduction by the editor, P. Phelan; *Unmarked: The politics of performance* by P. Phelan (1993); S. Salih's book, *Judith Butler* (2002); and lastly, *Undoing Gender* (2004) by J. Butler.

<sup>8</sup> In this thesis I constantly return to this notion of the 'script'. This 'script' refers to the power that one has over one's personal life story. In other words, it signifies the extent to which we take control of our lives. When speaking of the 'mother script', I am referring to the degree in which one's mother (or socio-political circumstances and upbringing) potentially 'shapes' one's life.

<sup>9</sup> Regarding translation and translatability, I consulted the essay *The Task of the Translator* by literary critic and translator, Walter Benjamin, published in *Illuminations*, a compilation of his essays put together in 1973, long after his death in 1940. In *The Task of the Translator*, Benjamin refers to translation in the literal sense of translating one language into another. For the purpose of this thesis, a

language is already a restless entity, and meaning its slippery friend which is endlessly deferred (Ward, 1997:105). Before elaborating further, it is necessary to point out that the terms 'language' and 'translation', as utilised in the context of this thesis, are non-literal. Alternatively, these terms are metaphors of communication between my mother and I, which will be explained in further detail later.

'There is no [way of] purifying language of its traumatic residue', writes Judith Butler.<sup>10</sup> She proposes that there is 'no way to work through trauma except through the arduous effort it takes to direct the course of its repetition' (Butler in Salih, 2002:109). There are many themes of repetition within *Portrait in Pieces* that occur through storyline, content, symbolism and aesthetics. This playful repetition is therapeutic, since it is a process of working through the trauma<sup>11</sup> of the past. People tend to repeat and relive the events of a traumatic experience, and according to Cathy Caruth, 'Freud seems to describe ... trauma as the successive movement from an event to its repression to its return' (1995:8). The general symptoms of post-traumatic stress have been described as 'a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event' (Caruth, 1995:4). In Caruth's words, 'the historical power of trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all' (1995:8). In this way, forgetting also becomes an important part in the process of healing. In the case of *Portrait in Pieces*, this can only take place once the book is completed and put away.

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non-literal reading of this text has been adopted, appropriating Benjamin's 'translation' as a medium for interpreting communication and understanding between two people.

<sup>10</sup> Judith Butler is an American feminist philosopher. Her first book studied the impact of Hegel's work on French philosophers in the twentieth-century. Her subsequent literature draws extensively on post-structuralist, feminist and psychoanalytic theories (Salih, 2002:1). To some extent, 'all Butler's books ask questions about the formation of identity and subjectivity, tracing and processes by which we become subjects when we assume the sexed / gendered / 'raced' identities which are constructed for us (and to a certain extent by us) within existing power structures' (Salih, 2002:2). Butler is known best for her work relating to gender (in *Gender Trouble*) and queer theory (in *Bodies that Matter*) (Macey, 2000:52-53). In Ettinger's opinion, queer theory deals with 'the discursive strategies that reject and transform the categories produced by hostile and hegemonic heterosexual discourse' (Ettinger in Fouché, 2003:5).

<sup>11</sup> The book, *Trauma. Explorations in Memory* (1995), which is edited by Caruth, is the main literature consulted in connection with trauma for this study.

Whilst translation can be problematic, perhaps a more direct way of reinscribing the mother / daughter script is by producing physical evidence. In my work, this physical evidence exists in the form of family photographs.<sup>12</sup> These family photographs are deeply laden with memory, a phenomenon which is not physical, but rather metaphysical and personal. Family photographs are not uncomplicated; they are heavily burdened with connotations and associations. In addition, they can be a performance of an idealised, constructed truth.

Within the family album, the circle is completed with a rereading of the script, a rereading of the self and, as a result, one undergoes a great deal of ‘talking’ things over. Creating *Portrait in Pieces* has become my way of ‘talking’ things over, my healing process. This has been my way of digging into the past; the remembering, the writing, the drawing, painting, the planning and, yes, the talking that I needed to do in order to create this graphic novel and thus to take control of my own script. In this way, *Portrait in Pieces* is a transitional object<sup>13</sup> between me and my mother; between hurt and healing; between loss and recovery. It is a tool to mediate internal and external realities through transference. This is achieved through play and the act of talking things over. Furthermore, one cannot ignore the fact that this novel is a work of autobiography and that both novel and thesis therefore have a personal emphasis. Because of this, an understanding of relevant issues surrounding autobiography is necessary.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Literature consulted with regards to issues around family photographs includes, M. Hirsh’s *Family Frames* (1997), H. M. Sayre’s *Object of Performance* (1989), P. Phelan’s *Unmarked* (1993), I. Jacobs’ unpublished MA thesis, *Performing the Self. Autobiography, Narrative, Image and Text* (2006), and P. Fouché’s unpublished MA thesis, *The Distance Between Us. Strategizing a queer, artistic, personal and social politic* (2006).

<sup>13</sup> Winnicott introduced the concepts of the ‘transitional object’ and the ‘transitional space’ occurring between mother and infant (Ward & Zarate, 2006:84). In his words, ‘[i]t is not the object ... that is transitional. The object [rather] represents the infant’s transition from a state of being merged with the mother to a state of being in relation to the mother as something outside and separate’ (1971:19-20). This object can be anything that mediates the bond between mother and child, such as a blanket or teddy bear, or even a car later in life. The ‘transitional space’ exists between ‘reality’ and the internal world and ‘becomes a space for creative play and imagination’ (Ward & Zarate, 2006:84). He also introduced the notion of the ‘transitional experience’ to indicate a specific developmental sequence. Where this transition is concerned, ‘Winnicott means an intermediate developmental phase between the psychic and external reality’. Furthermore, Winnicott has stated that in some instances there is no transitional object for the child except for that of the mother herself (Winnicott, 1971:6).

<sup>14</sup> A feminist and visual arts view of this is even more appropriate and therefore S. Smith and J. Watson’s *Interfaces. Women / Autobiography / Image / Performance* (2002) on this subject is relevant. Their introduction is especially useful for gaining insightful information on these topics. The final chapter of R. Betterton’s book, *Intimate Distance. Women Artists and the Body* (1996), named

Now that the aims of this thesis have been covered, I will give a brief outline of the theoretical approach which has been adopted in the formulation of my discussion. To begin with, the backbone of this study is shaped by a genealogical theoretical framework. In *Revisiting Bodies and Pleasures*, Butler describes genealogy as something which 'is not a clear history of events, but the enquiry into the conditions of emergence (*Entstehung*) of what is called history'. She further describes this as 'a moment of emergence that is not finally distinguishable from fabrication' (Salih, 2002:10). Genealogy is concerned with identity. It 'investigates political stakes in designating as an *origin* and *cause* those identity categories'. Butler states that these are the 'effects of institutions, practices, discourses, with multiple and diffused points of origin' (Salih, 2002:48).

Butler is associated with feminist and gender studies. The context of a mother / daughter relationship within my work lends itself, by design, to a feminist viewpoint which is the one from which I am writing. In this thesis, I intend to analyse the autobiographic genre in a way that questions internalised notions of femininity, gender, and (patriarchal) cultural constructs as aspects which precede and influence one. I compare this performative process by which we shape our lives to the multiple roles that I have performed in creating my autobiographical work. Furthermore, I will be looking at performance within the family album and the manner in which gender is interpellated.<sup>15</sup> In this analysis I question the assumed patriarchal hand which holds the camera, and the influence of my mother's phallogentric, Afrikaner, Nationalist upbringing as factors that write the rules of how one is taught to perform one's life script.

According to Sara Salih (2002:10), Butler is concerned with the 'process by which the individual comes to assume her or his position as a subject'. Her work follows the process by which the construction of identity occurs within discourse and language. Butler has extended Simone de Beauvoir's proposition that '[one] is not born, but rather becomes a woman', which implies that being a woman is something that one

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*Identities, Memories, Desires: The Body in History*, is also instructive in its reference to memory and autobiography.

<sup>15</sup> 'Interpellation' is a term used by Butler to describe how 'subject positions are conferred and assumed through the action of "hailing"' (Salih, 2002:78). For instance, an 'interpellation of sex and gender occurs', according to Salih, when a child is born and its sex is announced – 'It's a girl/boy!' (2002:77).

'does' rather than 'is'. Butler, accordingly, proposes that performance 'pre-exists the performer' (Salih, 2002:10) and that 'performativity contests the very notion of the subject' (Salih, 2002:63). When comparing performance to performativity one must take into account that performance 'presupposes the existence of the subject', while performativity rather 'contests the very notion of the subject' (2002:63).<sup>16</sup> In *Gender Trouble*, Butler 'engages in a genealogical critique that analyses the conditions of the subject's emergence within discourse' (Salih, 2002:70).

In this thesis I also make reference to certain aspects of the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan, when engaging with notions of subjectivity and identity. His theories on the formation of the individual (Betterton, 1996:7) suggest that one cannot separate the psychology of a person from her / his individual history (Sarup, 1993:7). This study has employed certain aspects of the interpretive mode of psychoanalysis, in particular Lacan's mirror phase; Winnicott's theories of object relations and play; and Freud's notion of the uncanny (mentioned above), all of which will be unpacked and discussed in due course.

Chapter One, entitled *Portrait in Pieces: Memory, Photography and Repetition*, begins with an overview of the origins, background and description of my autobiographic graphic novel. This thesis follows my practical work closely and therefore a breakdown of the narrative with regard to text and image is necessary. Following this description, is a discussion on the importance of the role of memory in my work, as a constructed entity which one learns to manipulate. I pay attention to the performance of the past through identification and appropriation of old family photographs, where the notion of the constructed, 'happy' family will be examined. Repetitive themes and imagery which occur throughout *Portrait in Pieces* will also be

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<sup>16</sup> In the words of Butler, 'gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed' (Salih, 2002:63). Performativity is a concept that has gradually evolved over the course of several of Butler's books. It is a shifting concept (Salih, 2002:11). Her notion of performativity is the 'reexperiencing' and 'reenactment' of established social constructs (McKenzie, 1998:227). According to J. McKenzie, 'Butler resignifies both performativity and performance: performativity now refers to a discursive compulsion to repeat norms of gender, sexuality, and race, while performance refers to an embodied theatricality that conceals its citational aspect under a dissimulating presence. Thus, in addition to stressing performance as both normative and transgressive, Butler also stresses both the discursive and embodied dimensions of performativity' (1998:227).

analysed in this chapter, with regard to both the performative and uncanny associations that they contain.

In Chapter Two, *A Mother Tongue: Translating the M(Other) and the 'Special Child'*, I consider language as a medium which has created distance and difference between my mother and me, but also as the silent communication of body language by which one identifies with another. In my practical work I deal with Otherness in the way that I portray myself, the 'special child', and that in which I portray my m[Other]. The first half of this chapter discusses the notion of the 'mother tongue' as a language of instruction, nurturing, cultural formation, and in this instance, a paradoxical keeping of distance and protection of identity. The second half of this chapter analyses the relevance of themes of absence and presence, regarding language, which occur in *Portrait in Pieces*. These themes include the mother's absence and presence with regard to the abandonment of her own mother tongue; the 'special child's' absence and presence which discusses the notion of myself as a distant and distanced Other; and, lastly, the absence and presence of a father figure in the narrative, which I use as a metaphor to question patriarchal power relations.

While reading this chapter, one should take into account that this difference and distance brought about through language, which I speak of, should not be regarded in a literal sense.<sup>17</sup> Language in this case refers to that which is communicated and understood. When I say that my mother and I speak different languages, I am not suggesting that we are the first to do so. Many children grow up in cross-cultural families – it is neither unusual nor bizarre. This difference in language is a symbol I use to discuss miscommunication, the failure to communicate and misunderstanding. When I speak of translating this language constraint, I am not implying the literal linguistic translation from one language to the next, but rather the procedure by which one transforms miscommunication into communication and misunderstanding into understanding. Translation in this sense is an empathetic tool – the only way in which one can really attempt to understand the Other.

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<sup>17</sup> My mother and I are both bilingual, but we have somehow always spoken to each other in English, even though this is not her mother tongue. We do understand the words that come out of each other's mouths. It is as individuals that we do not understand each other.

Chapter Three is named, *Mother Script / Daughter Script: Autobiography and Psychoanalysis*. In this chapter, I analyse the degree to which we are taught to perform our life scripts. The autobiographical text is the means through which I am able to take ownership of my own script, with regards to the content, aesthetics, and the witnessing and testimony to the truth / the confession of my story. Furthermore, in order to decode the autobiography, one has to take into account the specific constructed context from which I have come into being; as a middle-class, white, English speaking, South African woman, born in 1981. And because I am recounting my experience of a mother / daughter relationship, the script which precedes me, my mother's script also needs to be considered. It is proposed that one writes one's identity through autobiography. As I write my identity, this script becomes a means of closing this chapter of my life, of moving on and making peace with the conflicting mother / daughter relationship that has impacted on me.

In this final chapter, I will, furthermore, consider ways in which one can change one's life script, ways of breaking away from the 'mother script'. I mediate between the 'mother script' and my own through the creation of the graphic novel, a transitional object. I do this, firstly, through the confessional nature of the narrative and, secondly, through the creative play by which this graphic novel came into being. The process of confession and play is the 'post talking'<sup>18</sup> that I needed for moving on, healing and coming to an understanding of the past.

Finally, I conclude by stating that I required distance from the 'mother script' in order to look back into the past and create *Portrait in Pieces*, my confession which was once a silent witnessing. I propose that, through play, this silence can be broken; and by talking things over, the translatability of communication is encouraged. Language is a medium by which one can learn to heal, empathise and reach acceptance. However, while playing and in the process of learning to utter the words, one should be aware of the patriarchal constructs which govern language.

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<sup>18</sup> When I refer to 'post talking', I am addressing the reflective dialogue that comes after an event.

## ***Portrait in Pieces: Memory, Photography and Repetition***

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The narrative of *Portrait in Pieces* depicts a personal journey of self discovery, but it also conveys a tale of a complex mother / daughter relationship. The graphic novel is made up of three parts (Figures 1-3), each constituting a different narrative approach and appearance.<sup>19</sup> To avoid confusion, the three sections of the graphic novel will be referred to as *Part One*, *Part Two* and *Part Three*.

The concept for the narrative of *Portrait in Pieces* came into being as a result of the memories and associations triggered by an experience involving old family photographs. In 2005, my mother went to America and unexpectedly never returned. As a result, I was left in charge of packing up her life – I had to go through all her things; I had to decide what to keep and what to throw away. I kept the family photographs and moved with them to my new flat in Stellenbosch. A water-pipe burst in the flat, while I was away, and various sentimental possessions were destroyed. Among these were parts of my portfolio, hundreds of my own photographs and my mother's precious photo album from the 'happy days' that she had always treasured (Figure 4). It was bad enough that my memories had been symbolically destroyed so soon after my mother's emigration, but it is a terrible thing to feel responsible for someone else's memories. I cannot claim ownership for the memories fixed in these images, yet feel burdened by a sense of responsibility for their dissolving ink. I have not yet had the courage to tell my mother that her precious photographs have been damaged, and feel guilty in my secrecy. These damaged and destroyed photographs mirror my ambivalent relationship with my mother, as both generate conflicting feelings of fond nostalgia and great loss.

The feelings of loss are for my own childhood memories, but also for a time which precedes these. Yet this loss and mourning are also for my mother who has moved

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<sup>19</sup> Although the three parts all utilise similar illustrative techniques. The use of medium will be discussed further in Chapter Two and Three.

out of my life both literally and figuratively. The damaged photographs represent the damaged and dissolving state of our relationship. They also represent the ‘death’ of my mother’s previous life, her self-erasure, and the start of her new life in a new place. Marianne Hirsh, in her study of photography, refers to the importance Roland Barthes attributes to this form of record:

[He] makes photography – taking the picture, developing it, printing and looking at it, reading it and writing about it – inherently familial and material, akin to the very process of life and death. And he defines loss – the cutting of the cord, and its reparation through the photographic imagetext<sup>20</sup> – as central to the experience of both family and photograph (Hirsh, 1997:5).

In *Part One of Portrait in Pieces*, I have illustrated a selection of these photographs (some damaged and others survivors of the flood) and presented them in a photo-album format. The photo album is illustrated to resemble the sort that my family always used, the old-fashioned sticky-paper album that was popular in the seventies and eighties. The illustrated photographs (many of which dated before my birth) are arranged in a scattered, non-chronological order, combined with handwritten captions. These captions make up three disparate narratives. Firstly, they serve as clues to the people depicted in the illustrated photographs and provide bearing concerning time and place (for example, ‘Christmas, 1975’ [Figure 5]; and ‘Catherine. Pretoria. 1989’). The dates referring to the illustrated photographs provide the viewer with knowledge as to which scenes date before, and which after, my birth. There is relevance to the presence of the photographs which precede me. I have illustrated my mother’s precious album – not my own. These short, descriptive captions are, therefore, in my mother’s hand, not my own.

Regarding the purpose of the captions in *Part One of Portrait in Pieces*, there is a second category of text which functions to convey the narrative of how I grew up with

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<sup>20</sup> The term ‘imagetext’ is connected to ‘the irregular relationship between verbal (literature, discourse, audition, as well as reading) and visual institutions (visual arts, media, display, and spectacles)’ in the words of the illustrator, Michael Taylor (2006:53). Identifying them as different is not as simple as taking note of the fact that we ‘see the one and hear the other’. Furthermore, according to him, ‘the nature of a viewer-reader implies that images, too, are read, and that the visual appearance of text could in fact be “looked” at as an image (the “tone” of type setting, a “word pattern”’. Imagetext as a definition relies on the consideration of interpretive analysis methods. This is a ‘negotiation between concepts of semiotics, aesthetics, and the social – something to make the viewer-reader recognise and coordinate signs for what they stand for’ (Taylor, 2006:53).

a learning disability and was perceived as a ‘special child’ with ‘special needs’, as illustrated in Figure 6. The story ends with the conclusion that it is not so bad being ‘special’ as it sets one aside from the crowd; and at the end of the day, my mother, because of her strong individuality, was ‘special’ in quite a different way. Thirdly, there are captions forming an additional narrative, explaining the damaged appearance of the illustrated photographs, and telling the tale of this occurrence and its implications (also in Figure 6). These last two forms of text form parallel narratives and are my story, inscribed over my mother’s album.

Contrasting with the photo-album appearance of *Part One*, *Part Two* of *Portrait in Pieces* has been illustrated in a manner which imitates a wordless, children’s picture book. The picture narrative resembles an *Alice in Wonderland* narrative genre, featuring an adventurous little girl who longs to learn more about her mother, but her inquisitive nature lands her in trouble. The story begins with an illustration of a dressing table, upon which a framed school photograph of the little girl, a handbag and various cosmetic items rest (Figure 7). In the following double-page spread, the photograph of the girl comes to life as a tiny little person, who steps right out of the frame onto the dressing table. The little girl has always wondered what marvels lay within her mother's handbag (symbolising the intimate spaces of her life) – so she decides to climb into it and see for herself (Figure 8). But sadly, on arrival, she finds the handbag’s interior to be a dark, cruel, unfriendly abyss (as illustrated in Figure 9) and she retreats from the world belonging to her mother and gets on with her own life.

While the above-mentioned two sections of *Portrait in Pieces* refer to my childhood, *Part Three* depicts scenes from my teenage and adult life. This final section is illustrated sequentially, in a comic-book format consisting of text and image as portrayed in Figure 10. The narrative of *Part Three* centres on themes of remembering, questioning, and acceptance, depicting my present experience of the past.

Now that I have summarised the content and background of my graphic novel, I will continue by discussing themes relating to memory, family photographs and repetition, all of which occur in *Portrait in Pieces*. As I do so, I will be paying attention to the performative nature of these themes. Betterton states that ‘history always represents

the present as much as the past, and that that autobiography is an important medium through which women can investigate the psychic and social creation of “feminine identity”’. In her opinion, this is ‘how particular patterns of gender and family, of class, race and history are mapped out within the individual narrative’ (1996:172). Sidonie Smith & Julia Watson affirm that, by being the subject of one’s autobiography, one ‘is in dialogue with [one’s] own processes and archives of memory’, and that, furthermore, one is also ‘inescapably in dialogue with the culturally marked differences that inflect models of identity and underwrite the formation of autobiographical subjectivity’ (2002:9).

The narrative of *Portrait in Pieces* relies deeply on memory. The graphic novel reflects my present experience of the past. It is made up of memories and thought patterns that I choose to reveal, but equally importantly, much is concealed. According to Elin Diamond, there is ‘no presence that is not traced and retraced by what it seems to exclude’ (1996:1). Absence plays a key element within my narrative, in which the viewer / reader<sup>21</sup> essentially needs to fill in many gaps.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, we can never be certain of memory’s reliability as an accurate account of recalling. In my opinion, memory is constructed in our minds to be what we choose to remember and therefore much is left out and forgotten. The past cannot be thought of as an inactive storeroom of one’s experiences; it is rather constantly occupied in the present, in a state of flux (Smith & Watson, 2002:9). ‘Memories are records of how we have experienced events, not replicas of the events themselves’, according to psychologist, Daniel Schacher. Furthermore, he says that ‘we construct our autobiographies from fragments of experience that change over time’ (in Smith & Watson, 2002:9). And as our memories are ever-changing, their substance lies in personal interpretation. In the words of Smith & Watson, ‘[W]e inevitably organize or form fragments of memory into complex constructions that become the stories of

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<sup>21</sup> In the beginning, I have stated that I have created this story for myself and therefore one would wonder why I am speaking of the viewer / reader. I have, from the start, realised that this book cannot solely be for myself. And it is my wish that there will be viewers / readers who will be able to relate and feel a sort of comfort in my story. However, while planning the story I did have to think of it as something for myself in order not to try to please an audience.

<sup>22</sup> This distanced approach can be somewhat disturbing in certain instances. An example of this is the absence of my father from the story. He does not play a role at all. Yet, he does play a role in my life. My parents are divorced, but he has never been out of the picture. This will be discussed further in due course.

our lives' (2002:9). *Portrait in Pieces* is an interpretation of a fragmented childhood, as well as that of more recent memories. In addition to this, it is about my mother's memories and history, which, like the damaged photographs, lie outside of my control.

Memory 'has a history', according to Smith & Watson: '[W]e learn how to remember, [and] what to remember' (2002:9). Similar to the manner in which one has the power to choose what to include or exclude in one's photo album, one (to a certain extent) has the power to edit what one chooses to remember or forget. I turn now to a discussion of the ways in which the purposefully selected illustrated family photographs<sup>23</sup> that make up *Part One* of my graphic novel serve as an archiving, commentary and performance of the past.

The family photographs illustrated in *Part One* of *Portrait in Pieces* function as the documentation of a time past for my mother, but they also act as documentation for myself. I, too, am implicated in this by the presence of both my photographic image and inscription through my own text. My presence, however, only makes up a part of the album, and many of the photographs illustrated date from before my birth in 1981. A selection of these date from 1974 to 1975, and are snapshots taken of my mother, brother and sister (Figure 11). In Hirsh's experience, when viewing her family's photographs from before her time, she can 'read [her] non-existence in the clothes [her] mother had worn before [she] can remember' (1997:1). I experience my family's photographs that precede me with simultaneously ambivalent, uncanny feelings of familiarity and unfamiliarity. These photographs serve as documentation of the mothering of my brother and sister. When illustrating my birth in 1981, I have chosen to exclude imagery portraying evidence of any mothering towards me (Figure 12). By choosing to do this, I am in no way implying that there was no close maternal bond between us – this is rather a narrative technique that I implement to show the gap in communication between the two characters in my graphic novel. I separate us in the photo album so that ultimately we can face each other from a distance.

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<sup>23</sup> When I state that these illustrations have been purposefully selected, I am referring to my own process of editing and illustrating family photographs. The photographs themselves may have been quick snap shots taken on occasions when a camera was at hand.

Furthermore, concerning imagery originating before my time, I have illustrated an old photograph of a woman dressed for the occasion of having her photograph taken (Figure 13). The back of the original photograph is inscribed with the words '1895 Tannie Anna' (Aunty Anna). I have placed her in the middle of a page in the graphic account, all alone, because she is foreign to me. Who was Tannie Anna? She was a distant, unknown relative, whose image I have in my possession in the form of an old, now damaged photograph (Figure 14). Henry M. Sayre, in his study on photography, claims that we read photography in view of both absence and presence. It is a presence on its own as a physical object, but is also a presence which signifies the absence of some prior experience (1989:1).

Furthermore, when text supplements a photograph, it can serve as an additional element in achieving the purpose of the image, as the documentation or proof of an instant in time. According to Sayre, '[t]he accompanying text deconstructs the rhetoric of the image'(1989:59). In this way the text I have inserted subverts the images, giving them new meaning. Here Sayre uses artist Duane Michals' work composed of photography and text, *This Photograph Is My Proof*, as an example (Figure 15). By regarding the picture as 'proof' of a particular circumstance, the familiar belief that photography represents 'objective facts' is endorsed. Here, 'the irony', according to Sayre, 'is that the moment [Michals] *writes*, the moment the compulsion to interpret the image takes over, the meaning of the work *exceeds* the frame itself'. In this way, the work becomes open to a new interpretation, that of a 'pathetic little narrative about the ways in which we insist that people "prove" their love'. This is 'the ultimately destructive desire to make concrete, in order to possess, not only another's most intimate feelings but also the other herself' (1989:60).

When I supplement illustrated photographs with text in *Part One of Portrait in Pieces*, the text begins to counter, contradict, subvert, reinforce, particularise and thereby go beyond the range of connotation presented by the images alone. The result of this is that the images become part of an extended narrative that exceeds the frame, so that meaning transcends margins.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> I have also worked with the physical surface of the photographs in my illustrations as metaphor of this proliferation of the margins of meaning. This has been through the manner in which the

The family album has been constructed, reconstructed, and reinscribed from three perspectives in *Part One* of *Portrait in Pieces*. Firstly, by the absence of my father's image in the album, one can assume that he is the one who holds the camera and takes the photograph. As Barthes describes 'photography [a]s a kind of primitive theatre' (Sayre, 1989:52), so my father acts as a director, who has the power to portray, and crop the scene to his preference. He is the one who configures the image of the 'happy family', just as accepted patriarchal cultural constructs decide what is acceptable and what is not.<sup>25</sup> An image of a 'perfect' domestic abode is described by nineteenth century art critic, John Ruskin in his notion of the 'true nature of the home':

[I]t is a place of peace: the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt and division .... So far as the anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it, and the inconsistently-minded, unknown, unloved, or hostile society of the outer world is allowed by either husband or wife to cross the threshold it ceases to be home (Ruskin in Sayre, 1989:5).

Although the family album serves a documentation purpose in *Portrait in Pieces*, it should not be confused as mirroring a happy family. It is actually a reconstruction of a fictional condition of happiness and not physical evidence of the past. This past is, however, merely a performance of a 'normal', functional, 'happy family'. Ruskin's description is no realistic outlook on family life, and because the family photograph promotes itself as a record of the real, the result naturalises cultural practices. In this way, photography also conceals its stereotypical representation of the 'functional' family and the perpetuation of domestic myths (Hirsh, 1997:7). Photographs 'reveal even as they conceal. They are as opaque as they are transparent', in the words of Hirsh (1997:2). By decoding *Part One* of the graphic novel, I am exploring that which is opaque, the unwelcome injury, 'all [that] terror, doubt and division' of which Ruskin writes.

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photographs blur and seep off the edge of the frame and thereby merge with the background (figure 16). This transcendence of boundaries represents dissolving memories, loss and separation.

<sup>25</sup> The relevance of my father's absence in image, and presence created by the assumption that he is the one who takes the photographs, in relation to patriarchy will be discussed further in Chapter Two.

The family photographs taken by my father were reconstructed by my mother, when she adopted, edited, and placed them in her personal, special album. According to Hirsh, family photographs rely on ‘a narrative act of adoption that transforms rectangular pieces of cardboard into telling details connecting lives and stories across continents and generations’ (1997:xii). In other words, photographs have to have significance for a person, to be part of their ancestry or history in order to signify and relay any emotional response. A visual image of someone one knows can stir up the senses and bring one to reminiscing on that person, taking one back to recollections of the familiar voice, touch, smell. Family photographs usually only have impact for those to whom they relate. Yet an outsider will often experience an uncanny sense of familiarity when viewing another’s family photographs, due to the way in which the photographs probably have the same type of look and feel as ones belonging to her / his own family.

As mentioned earlier, the illustrated photo album making up *Part One of Portrait in Pieces* is my own personal inscription worked over my mother’s photo album. Here, I am narrating a constructed ‘reality’ of myself, over my parent’s edited, arranged, personally constructed selves and depictions of family life. As we most often experience our family photographs with a warm nostalgia, it may sound offensive to suggest their being constructed in their disposition. Realistically, however, the performative nature of the photograph should be considered, and can be regarded as a direct metaphor for the way in which the self is said to be performed. In Sayre’s words, which echo those of Barthes, ‘the self... is a kind of theatre, an ongoing transference of identity, an endless “acting out”’ (1989:57). Furthermore, according to Butler, ‘[p]erformativity is ... not a singular “act”, for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition’ (Diamond, 1996:5). This suggests that performances rely, above all, on repetition to be effective. I move now to a discussion on the repetitive nature by which the self is performed. I also analyse repetitive themes as they occur in *Portrait in Pieces*.

There are two variations of repetition, according to Sayre: ‘One, which we might call Platonic and which is the basis for mimetic theory in the West, believes that the original is unaffected by its repetition’, and the second, a Nietzschean form of

repetition grounded on difference rather than sameness, holds that ‘repetition generates “simulacra”, not copies, but traces of the original which has never been’ (1989:65). The photograph participates in this form of repetition: ‘Because the photograph is always other than what it represents, a document, it posits the self as always in excess of what is presented to us within the frame. It affirms the polysemy of representation’ (Sayre, 1989:65).

According to Freud, ‘whatever reminds us of an inner “compulsion to repeat” is perceived as uncanny’ (1953:14). Repetition, in his opinion, ‘does undoubtedly, subject to certain conditions and combined with certain circumstances, arouse an uncanny feeling, which, furthermore, recalls the sense of helplessness experienced in some dream states’ (Freud, 1953:13)<sup>26</sup>. The uncanny repetition of which I am speaking is of an involuntary, unconscious nature, of which I was unaware at the time of planning the graphic novel. The various cases of repetition within *Portrait in Pieces* were only discovered later, when the illustrations were well under way and into the process. Freud states, that ‘[i]t is possible to recognize the dominance in the unconscious mind of a “compulsion to repeat” proceeding from the instinctual impulses and probably inherent in the very nature of the instincts’ (1953:14).

Peggy Phelan, in the ‘Introduction’ to the study edited by her and Jill Lane, demonstrates how the performance of ‘the past in the present’ is related to Freud’s term *nachträglichkeit* (deferred action or ‘afterwardness’) and to Schechner’s notion of performance constituting ‘twice behaved behaviour’ (1998:7).

The dramatization of the past in the present is related to both Freud’s term for psychoanalytic understanding, *nachträglichkeit*, ‘afterwardness’ or deferred action, and Schechner’s understanding of performance as ‘twice behaved behaviour’. For

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<sup>26</sup> The following is a description of an uncanny situation as experienced by Freud himself:

As I was walking, one hot summer afternoon, through the deserted streets of a provincial town in Italy which was unknown to me, I found myself in a quarter of whose character I could not long remain in doubt. Nothing but painted women were to be seen at the windows of small houses, and I hastened to leave the narrow street at the next turning. But after having wandered about for a time without enquiring my way, I suddenly found myself back in the same street, where my presence was now beginning to excite attention. I hurried away once more, only to arrive by another detour at the same place yet a third time. Now, however, a feeling overcame me which I can only describe as uncanny, and I was glad to find myself back at the piazza I had left a short while before, without any further voyages of discovery (1953:13).

Freud, *nachträglichkeit* indicated the retrospective account that reinterprets the past in such a way that what had been repressed by the unconscious can be joined with consciousness. The querulous dreamer can join the worrier here in the ‘afterwardness’ of the conference, retrospectively interpret the gad wrought by the difference between the plan and the event, and rename it *The Ends of Performance* (Phelan in Phelan & Lane, 1998:7).

This ‘twice behaved behaviour’ is prevalent within the narrative of *Portrait in Pieces* and here repetition thematically occurs on three different levels: firstly, through the repetition of storyline; secondly, through the use of different methods of visual representation; and thirdly, through the repetition of symbolic imagery.

Concerning the first form of repetition, repetition through storyline, all three parts of the graphic novel actually reiterate the same story – each in a different way. It is an obsessive, confessional repetition, a paranoid inscription of: ‘I am not my mother’, ‘I am not my mother’ and, again, ‘I am not my mother’. In regard to my own subjectivity, I am who I am in the novel because I am not someone else. I am who I am, because I am *not* my mother. In the graphic novel, I constantly question whether I am not just like my mother, and whether I am bound to make the same mistakes. Figure 17 illustrates this endless questioning: ‘What if I’m just like her?’. Through this process of questioning and denial, I turn myself into a fictional object, a character in the graphic novel.

The second form of repetition occurs through various modes of visual representation in *Part One* of the graphic novel, in the following sequence: A subject is photographed; that photograph is illustrated; and the illustration is placed into a book format. To begin with, when creating the illustrations constituting *Part One*, I used damaged, old family photographs as source material. But photographs are already representations of an actual event, place or person (although these may be constructed). They are, in a sense, a copy of ‘reality’. For instance, in 1895, ‘Tannie Anna’ posed for a photograph – the photograph is obviously not her physical self, but a representation of that self. Yet, according to Butler in *Force of Fantasy*, ‘the real is positioned both before and after its representation; and representation becomes a moment of the reproduction and consolidation of the real’ (Phelan, 1993:2). In this

way, 'the real is read through representation, and representation is read through the real' (Phelan, 1993:2).

Phelan states that 'representation is almost always on the side of the one who looks and almost never on the side of the one who is seen' (1993:25-26). I can see the photograph of 'Tannie Anna', but it cannot see me. Invisibility (my gaze) polices the visibility of the photograph (Phelan, 1993:26), thereby giving me (the looker) an appropriative authority over it. However, the woman in the photograph and I have some things in common, such as our trademark family nose (the Botes's<sup>27</sup> nose from my mother's side of the family). Through this reflection of our bloodline features, the photograph returns my 'I/eye'. 'In this returning regard', Phelan states, 'the subject sees where [she] is and recognizes [herself] as other-than' the photograph (1993:20).

The subsequent form of visual representation occurs when the family photographs are illustrated and thereby appropriated. I do not know who 'Tannie Anna' was, but have taken her image out of context to use as an instrument in my novel. The illustration of 'Tannie Anna' is a representation of a representation (an illustration of that which is already a representation of a person, the photograph). Two laws govern representation, according to Phelan. 'It always conveys more than it intends; and it is never totalizing' (1993:2). As a by-product of representation we get an 'excess' of meaning which makes it possible to have multiple readings of a subject (Phelan, 1993:2). This 'excess' of meaning leaves room for open interpretation and open ownership, thus transforming my 'appropriation' into 'pastiche'. Here all hierarchy is abolished, according to Barthes (Sayre, 1989:52):

[The original is] no longer consecrated by a narrow ownership (that of the immediate creator), it journeys in a cultural space which is open, without limits, without hierarchies, where we can recognize pastiche, plagiarism, even imposture – in a word, all forms of the 'copy', a practice condemned to disgrace by so-called bourgeois art (Barthes in Sayre, 1989:52).

'Despite this excess', Phelan states that 'representation produces ruptures and gaps; it fails to reproduce the real exactly' (1993:2). Furthermore, referring to art critic

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<sup>27</sup> Botes is my mother's maiden name.

Rosalind Krauss, she notes she ‘has demonstrated that there is no original until the copy is operative. Thus, the meaning of originality is dependent on the copy, the forgery, the counterfeit.’ (Phelan in Phelan & Lane, 1998:9). When reading this twice-behaved behaviour, Phelan suggests that we are in fact, reading performance:

What then do we mean when we move from the behavior of the rehearsal room to the behavior of the performance? To frame an act of ‘behavior’ is to engage in a highly technological semiotics of movement; it is, in other words, to execute a rigorous mental ‘behavior’ we might call ‘reading the performance’. As Schechner has often pointed out, ‘twice behaved behavior’ gets to be called ‘behavior’ because it is performed much more than twice. This mimicry and iteration is the place where performance and performativity intersect (Phelan in Phelan & Lane, 1998:9-10).

The third form of repetition occurring in *Portrait in Pieces* is in the form of symbolic imagery which has been used in all three parts of the graphic novel. The symbols are, namely, mirrors / self-portraits, photographs and handbags. Firstly, the use of mirrors and self-portraits will be analysed. *Portrait in Pieces* functions as a large self-portrait: It is a work of autobiography, a reflection of thoughts, but there are also smaller self-portraits within the book. These self-portraits live in images of my reflection in mirrors (Figure 18, 19 and 20), in family photographs of myself (Figure 21, 22 and 23), and in illustrated representations of myself throughout the graphic novel (Figure 24, 25 and 26).

*Portrait in Pieces* is a work of autobiography told through a sequential narrative made up of a ‘series of self-images’ (Smith & Watson, 2002:7). With a self-portrait come connotations of self-reflection, self-analysis, and self-observation. One cannot ignore the mirror, with all the emotional and theoretical baggage it reflects, when creating a self-portrait. The mirror can be considered a double<sup>28</sup> of the self, and thereby a repetition of the self.

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<sup>28</sup> The double is discussed in Freud’s paper *The Uncanny*. According to Freud, this concept has been analysed by Otto Rank, who looked to it in regard to ‘reflections in mirrors, with shadows, with guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and with fear of death’. But Rank does offer a more positive association claiming, that the double was firstly something which insured one against the ego’s destruction. Rank explains this as an ‘energetic denial of the power of death’. Freud goes on to say that ‘the “immortal” soul was [probably] the first “double” of the body’. The invention of doubling would have been preservation against that of extinction. This has a ‘counterpart in the language of dreams, which is fond of representing castration by a double multiplication of a genital symbol’. These

The capacity of representing oneself to oneself, mirror-reversals, the obsession with symmetry, and the division of the subject into both subject and / or object are later reactivated in the dreams of adults or, in a more extreme form, in psychoses (Grosz, 1990:38).

The continuous, repetitive use of self-portraiture and mirror images within the novel posit yet another example of Freud's notion of the uncanny.

The mirror raises another spectre of psychoanalysis. In this regard, Lacan's mirror phase and theories of the mirror should be considered. One can compare Lacan's mirror phase to the notion of autobiography. Barbara Steiner and Jun Yang, in their book *Art Works, Autobiography*, explain how autobiography serves as a mirror, since one can experience seeing 'oneself as someone else', and how this forms part of the process of 'constituting and identifying the self' (2004:16). They claim that:

Looking in the mirror, just like being looked at by society, is a means of constituting and identifying the self. Lacan argues that this always localizes the image of the self in an exterior. The formation of the self is a consecutive process: at one moment I am a subject, then I am an object. This process is paralleled in the creation of autobiography, which allows one to see oneself as someone else, while the writing itself becomes a means of fashioning identity, and must be seen as the setting of the individual writer's formation of self (Steiner & Yang, 2004:16).

Lacan's *Mirror Phase* has influenced Winnicott's thinking on the mirror. For Winnicott, the mirror evokes the mother's face (1971:149): 'In individual emotional development the *precursor of the mirror is the mother's face*' (Winnicott, 1971:149).

[T]he mother's role of giving back to the baby the baby's own self continues to have importance in terms of the child and the family. Naturally, as the child develops and the maturational process becomes sophisticated, and identifications multiply, the child becomes less and less dependent on getting back the self from the mother's and the father's face and from the faces of others who are in parental or sibling relationships. Nevertheless, when a family is intact and is a going concern over a period of time each child derives benefit from being able to see himself or herself in the attitude of

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ideas arise from unbounded self-love coming from primary narcissism of a child or primitive man's mind. 'When this stage is surmounted, the "double" reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death' (Freud, 1953:12).

the individual members or in the attitudes of the family as a whole (Winnicott, 1971:159).

Winnicott includes in his theory of mirroring, ‘actual mirrors that exist in the house and the opportunities the child gets for seeing the parents and others looking at themselves’ (1971:159). Glen Ward corroborates Winnicott’s thinking when he states that throughout the mirror stage, one sees oneself ‘reflected in the gestures of adults and other children and in mirrors’ (1997:149). Within my graphic novel there are three instances of my playing with the notion of my mother’s face as reflected in my own. The first example of this is in the conclusion of *Part One* of *Portrait in Pieces*, where two portrait photographs are included – one of my mother as a child (aged about five) and the other of my self as a child (aged about seven) (Figure 27). These images mirror each other on a double-page layout (each portrait centred in its own page, like the two sides of the mirror). My portrait is, however, severely damaged, while my mother’s interestingly is not. In the comic piece entitled, *The Other Woman*, in *Part Three*, I question whether my mother and I are bound to make the same mistakes (Figure 28). Here the viewer sees my reflection in the mirror but cannot see the person on the other side. And, lastly, in the same section of the graphic novel, the piece, *Table View* utilises a double narrative technique, where I portray ‘a day in the life’ of myself mirrored against ‘a day in the life’ of my mother (Figure 29).

Representations of photographs constitute the final form of repetitive symbolic imagery utilised in the three parts of *Portrait in Pieces*. Firstly, in *Part One*, old family photographs have been illustrated in a photo album format. In the ‘little girl in handbag’ scenes of *Part Two*, old family photographs form a constituent of the illustrations. Here they are integrated in a collage making up part of the background via the technique of photocopy transfer (Figure 30). Furthermore, in *Part Two* there is an illustration of a framed primary school photograph of me (Figure 19), and another illustration where I am sitting at a dressing table, upon which framed photographs of three generations of women rest; my self, my mother and my mother’s mother (Figure 20). In the comic-book illustrations of *Part Three*, photography has been utilised for the purpose of visual reference. Lastly, concerning repetitive symbolic imagery, a series of reappearing handbags occurs in the graphic novel. These images are the basis for the ‘little girl in handbag’ story in *Part Two* (Figure

31), and they occur on the title pages introducing the three parts of the graphic novel (Figure 32).

To conclude this chapter, *Portrait in Pieces* is my personal archiving of memories that I have chosen to store, work, rework, recall and, at the end, leave in the past when I choose, finally, to close this book. According to Butler there is ‘no way to work through trauma except through the arduous effort it takes to direct the course of repetition’ (Salih, 2002:109). Originally, when one is little, it is one’s mother who has the power to decide how one’s identity will be performed before the world. Yet, in Salih’s words, ‘the idea of the subject is not a pre-existing, essential entity and that our identities are constructed, means that it is possible for identities to be *reconstructed* in ways that challenge and subvert existing power structures’ (2002:11). In this way, by attempting to claim my script in order to take power of my life, I am challenging the very construction of my identity.

## A Mother Tongue: Translating the M(Other) and the 'Special Child'

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My mother was born and bred Afrikaans speaking, yet, with a change of her tongue, she ended up 'being' English in her marriage and with her children. English is therefore the language which she performed in the most intimate spaces of her adult life. At the same time, it is a language which is Other or foreign to herself. Speaking a language which is not one's own can feel disembodied or uncanny. It can be symbolic of a 'splitting' of the self. At the end of the day, my mother and I speak different languages – that in itself is a big divide.

It seems that one cannot hide from language. 'There is no subject independent of [it]', according to Lacan. We are all immersed in it and cannot escape (Sarup, 1993:10). Language determines the knowledge one has of the world, of others and of the self (Sarup, 1993:8). Lacan's theories of language are explained, as follows, by Madan Sarup:

Language is the precondition for the act of becoming aware of oneself as a distinct entity. It is the I-Thou dialectic, defining the subjects by their mutual opposition, which founds subjectivity (1993:8).

Butler's writings also trace the process by which 'identity is constructed within language and discourse', according to Salih (2002:10). In this way we are, to an extent, controlled by the language that precedes us. We all have the task of representing ourselves through language,<sup>29</sup> according to Lacan, and it is only through language that we can access others (Sarup, 1993:10). However, in the case where two parties speak different languages, language cannot always be directly translated and therefore a shift in meaning often occurs.

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<sup>29</sup> Lacan believed that a person who does not come to a point of understanding language, would be psychotic (Sarup, 1993:10).

In this thesis, ‘the mother tongue’ refers to the language of nurture, instruction and cultural formation; but, in this case, it also means a paradoxical keeping of one’s distance and the protection of one’s identity. With regard to the nurture that a mother relays to her infant, what happens when her love is expressed in words that do not convincingly belong to her as the language she speaks is not her own? Here, the question arises: ‘To what extent is a mother’s love translatable?’ Body language is perhaps the real language when speaking the language of love. According to Freud, the mother’s breast is considered the infant’s first love object. Furthermore, in his words, ‘[t]he mother, in stroking, kissing, and rocking the baby, is fulfilling her task “in teaching [her] to love”’ (cited in Ainsworth, 1969:3).

Lacan recalled, in his seminar *Encore*, that a woman as a mother makes the little human speak, and that, as soon as [she], in turn, transmits ‘*lalangue*’<sup>30</sup> back to her, ‘[s]he has unconscious effects’. This transmission is not a cognitive exercise, for *lalangue* is not only the idiom of each person’s region; for it is, first of all, the private language of the primal couple – the mother and her little ‘premature child’. It is the language of the Eros<sup>31</sup> of the first body-to-body connection, whose words leave a trace of the *jouissance*<sup>32</sup> that they have harboured (Soler, 2006:123).

The handbag in *Part Two* of *Portrait in Pieces* is a metaphor for the mother’s body. The little girl in the story is happy and familiar with the closed handbag but longs to know more about its contents. The closed handbag represents the ‘imaginary order’,<sup>33</sup> which is associated with the body (mother’s love through body language) and the inside of the handbag represents the *symbolic order*, associated with language

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<sup>30</sup> *Langue* is the feminine noun in French for both ‘language’ and ‘tongue’ and refers specifically to the way in which one speaks, while *langage* is the masculine noun for the word the ‘language’ itself (Cousin, 1982:376).

<sup>31</sup> According to the *Columbia Encyclopaedia*, Eros is the Greek ‘god of love. He was the personification of love in all its manifestations, including physical passion at its strongest, tender, romantic love, and playful, sportive love’ (2003: <http://www.answers.com/topic/eros>). Concerning psychoanalysis, Freud, in his ‘final theory of the drives ... made Eros a fundamental concept referring to the life instincts (narcissism and object libido)’. Furthermore, Lacan ‘distances, without completely separating, love and desire (Eros). Love is the mirage in which desire is caught’, according to the *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (2005: <http://www.answers.com/topic/eros>).

<sup>32</sup> The French word, *jouissance* (masculine noun) can be translated into English, as ‘pleasure’ (Cousin, 1982:143).

<sup>33</sup> Lacan distinguishes ‘between *the imaginary*, *the symbolic* and *the real*’: To begin with, fantasies and conscious and unconscious images belong in the realm of *the imaginary*. Next, the *symbolic order* is that of language. The infant is compelled to enter into this system of language when leaving that of the imaginary. And lastly, that which exists exterior to the confines of speech and the symbolic is known as *the real* (Salih, 2002:83).

(the untranslatable). Furthermore, the story is wordless, emphasising the notion that we do not necessarily have to rely on language in order to communicate successfully. According to Lacan the ‘first body-to-body connection’ constitutes ‘the language of the Eros’ (Soler, 2006:123).

The combination of understood body language (*langue*) of this meaningful ‘body-to-body connection’, and misunderstood verbal language (*langage*) creates an uneasy ambivalence. And through this ambivalence, understanding gets lost along the way leaving a sense of distance. My mother, by separating her *langage* from mine in this intimate space, conceals (withdraws) herself at the moment of revealing her *langue* – herself – to me, her child. In line with Derrida’s notion of cinders, she ‘erases [herself] totally, radically, while presenting [herself]’ (Lukacher, 1987:1).<sup>34</sup>

When considering the mother tongue as the language of instruction, one should take into account the extent to which a child is shaped by language (Sarup, 1993:8). In accordance with Lacan’s theories, language is ‘the vehicle of a social given, a culture, prohibitions and laws. The young child is fashioned and will be indefinitely marked by it without being aware of it’ (Sarup, 1993:8). When looking at this instruction, ‘prohibitions’ or ‘policing’, as Colette Soler refers to, in relation to the body of the infant, it is considered to be regulated through language. Here she questions the imprint that one obtains from the Other, in the process of the surfacing of the self:

It is certain that the body is concerned here. First of all, if the child who is born already figures as a subject in the sayings (*dires*) of its parents, when it comes into the world it is as a body, a sexed organism. It is an organism that is to be given life, but also one that is to be civilized and bent to one’s own prescriptions. The mother, or her substitute, has to lend a hand: voicing the first imperatives concerning regulation and support, she is, in this respect, the first to mediate what could be called the policing of the body. The latter could not take place only through the silence of regulated habits, although the child cannot be unmarked by them. There must be language in order for the demand to be articulated, and this articulation alone allows this body to ‘be made into a body by the path of the signifier’ (Soler, 2006:116).

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<sup>34</sup> Refer back to the footnote on *Cinders* (page 3).

When she instructs; ‘Don’t eat with your mouth open, don’t put you hands down your pants, don’t play in the mud’, the mother figure regulates habits and disciplines the child’s body. According to Soler, ‘the powers of the word go very far’. She states that ‘this is to the point of regulating jouissance’ for the child (2006:116). The foremost representative of this power is the mother, and it operates, Soler claims:

[F]rom the moment that she introduces the child to the articulated demands by imposing the bid in which the child is alienated: a double bid, of language (*la langue*) in which the demand can be made, and also of the response that comes from the Other (2006:116).

In this regard, language is a medium which can lead to alienation between mother and child. The mother tongue is the language used to convey the script of both mother and child. But in this autobiographic account, this instruction occurs in a language which does not naturally belong to the mother. It therefore opens itself to misinterpretation and misunderstanding. In this way, an ever-increasing lack of understanding develops between mother and daughter.

The mother tongue can also be considered the language of cultural formation. In *Part Two of Portrait in Pieces*, I have played with pages from a *tweetalige woordeboek* (an English / Afrikaans dictionary) which I have worked over to create the ‘little girl in handbag’ scenes (Figure 8). This *woordeboek* represents the division between mother and daughter in regards to language. But this division of language between English and Afrikaans is also a division between South African cultures. For Afrikaners, the English, for many years, represented friend and enemy, ally and dominator, the language of educational opportunity and oppression, symbolising what was both achievable and unattainable (Anthonissen, 2008:2). To illustrate the division in culture, I use the following example: I have childhood memories from the early eighties of playing ‘Boer War’ with the Afrikaans children who lived in our street in Pretoria. I remember the game as hostile, patriotic, and highly ‘serious’ on the part of both teams. According to Christine Anthonissen, the relationship between English and Afrikaans South Africans in the twentieth century was, in some regards, influenced by memories of that war (2008:2), thus creating a hostile rift between peoples. This hostility would, to some extent, and despite my mother’s decision to be

English, have unconsciously been translated as a dividing element in hers and my relationship.

When considering my mother's script, I cannot be expected to translate it, as it was not written for me, nor for an audience. Her script was written for herself, just as I am writing my script (consisting of *Portrait in Pieces*, of the psyche, of memories, inscription and interpretation) for myself. According to Walter Benjamin, the law which governs translation is its translatability (1973:71). Her script, discussed in Chapter Three, consists of much detail which is untranslatable as it 'does not lend itself to translation' (Benjamin, 1973:71). And in writing the script only for herself, she was and is able to protect her identity and keep it separate from mine. Even if some components of the script do happen to be translatable, translation always comes later than the original, and there is no translation that can ever be identical to its original (Benjamin, 1973:72). In this way, slippage of meaning occurs between the original and its rendition, the result leading, again, to miscommunication and misunderstanding.

Furthermore, translation is only, in Benjamin's words, a 'provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages' (1973:75). The sum of the particular elements which belong to foreign languages, such as structure, sentences and words are reciprocally exclusive (Benjamin, 1973:75). In this way, translations from English to Afrikaans are not always accurate and can be misleading in terms of meaning. For example, there are some words in both languages that just do not have an existing word in the other. For one reason, the Afrikaans language only has so many words, while the English language, because of its assimilation of words for many centuries, has an infinitude more. Of translation, Benjamin writes:

While content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin, the language of the translation envelopes its content like a royal robe with ample folds. For it signifies a more exalted language than its own and thus remains unsuited to its content, overpowering and alien. This dysjunction prevents translation and at the same time makes it superfluous (1973:76).

By keeping her language separate from mine with regard to the nurture, instruction and cultural formation that have been discussed, my mother archived her identity. In doing so, by leaving her identity in the past, she cuts out her 'mother tongue', replacing it with a 'prosthetic tongue'. I now examine themes of absence and presence regarding language, as it is depicted in the context of this thesis. These include: the mother's absence and presence with regard to the abandonment of her 'mother tongue'; the absence and presence of the 'special child', which discusses my retrospective feelings of Otherness toward both my mother and my childhood self; and lastly, the absence and presence of the father figure in this narrative.

By the performative act of changing oneself from an Afrikaans woman to an English woman, one would give up a large part of one's life. At the time when my mother's three children were born (1971-1981), the National Party (and therefore the strength of the Afrikaans people) was dominant in South Africa. By choosing to become English, she forfeits the culture, power and identity associated with the Afrikaans people for that of something Other to her. By this act, she cuts out her tongue and, in its place, takes on a 'prosthetic tongue', thus constituting both absence and presence. This tongue feels, looks and works differently to the natural tongue with which she was born and grew up, making communication a trying task and therefore causing her words to be difficult to translate. This violent performance may be seen as a mutilation of her physical and psychological self.

The tongue as prosthesis may, in this case, be seen as a signifier of what Butler refers to as the 'lesbian phallus'.<sup>35</sup> Butler claims, according to Salih, that 'the phallus'<sup>36</sup> is a

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<sup>35</sup> The *lesbian phallus* does not have anything to do with lesbians, or being a lesbian. To give a definition, one needs first to understand that Lacan's notion of *morphological imagery* refers to 'the morph or form the body takes on through imagined or fantasized projections'. Butler rewrites Lacan's 'morphological imagery' so that it 'displaces the phallus from its privileged signifiatory position'. 'Asserting that the penis and phallus are not synonymous', in Salih's words, 'Butler shows how the phallus may be "reterritorialized" by people who do not have penises. This is because the phallus is a symbol of a body part whose absence or 'vanishing' it signifies'. Disconnecting the sign (the phallus) from the referent (the penis), allows Butler to 'displace the privilege Lacan accords this phallic signifier' (Salih, 2002:87).

<sup>36</sup> According to Lacan's theories, the *phallus* is a 'privileged signifier that confers meaning by other bodily signifiers' (Salih, 2002:85). But from a different approach, the phallus stands for 'the effect of a signifying chain summarily suppressed' in Butler's opinion (Salih, 2002:85). Going back to Lacan, concerning sexual development, a defining instant takes place when an infant takes notice that its mother 'desires a phallus that she does not possess' (Salih, 2002:85). Here 'the child wishes to be the phallus in order to satisfy that desire', in the words of Lacan. But in his opinion, a small boy already

“plastic” signifier that may suddenly be made to stand for a number of body parts’ (2002:86). Butler suggests ‘that “having” the phallus can be symbolized by an arm, a tongue, a hand (or two), a knee, a pelvic bone, an array of purposefully instrumented body-like things’. The lesbian phallus thereby represents ‘the “displaceability” of the [real] phallus [and] its ability to symbolize body parts or boy-like things other than the penis’, in this case, the tongue (Salih, 2002:86).

Metaphorically speaking, I propose that, when she disposed of her mother tongue, my mother castrated the lesbian phallus. But it is more than the tongue (language and culture) that is lost here, for with it she loses an aspect of her body and her womanhood. These are lost through the process of becoming the mother and woman which, according to Julia Kristeva, ‘means the separation and loss of the self’ (Betterton, 1996:32). Motherhood can be considered a way of ‘cutting off’ an aspect of one’s self.<sup>37</sup>

We deal with loss through mourning. In mourning her mother tongue, lost through amputation, I propose that my mother is also mourning the woman whom she once was. This does not mean that she will forget her former self through the mourning process, but rather come to terms with its loss. Butler states: ‘One mourns when one accepts the fact that the loss one undergoes will be one that changes you, changes you possibly forever’ (2004:18); furthermore, ‘that mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation the full result of which you cannot know in advance’ (Butler, 2004:18). One needs to consider ‘losing’, with its negative associations, and ‘the transformative effect of loss’, which could have either a positive or a negative effect. Either way, the latter is unpredictable in that it cannot be planned or charted (Butler, 2004:18). The ‘prosthetic tongue’ is symbolic for the transformation, the foreign unknown my mother chose to undergo.

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‘has’ this phallus and a little girl needs to ‘be’ it for another. This differentiates the two sexes for Lacan. Butler’s notion on the phallus differs from this. According to her one does not need to possess a physical penis to ‘be’ or ‘have’ a phallus. Furthermore, possessing a penis does not mean that one necessarily ‘is’ or ‘has’ a phallus (Salih, 2002:87).

<sup>37</sup> ‘In patriarchal terms, the feminine should be either woman or mother, never both’ In this patriarchal context, a woman who attempts to be both is considered a great threat, in Boudous Walker’s opinion (1998:136).

In Butler's opinion, 'it could be that in [the] experience [of grief] something about who we are is revealed, something that delineates the ties we have on others' (2004:18). This notion brings to light the ties that my mother would have had with her former self and the grief she would have suffered. These 'ties constitute a sense of self, compose who we are, and when we lose them, we lose our composure in some fundamental sense: we do not know who we are or what to do' (Butler, 2004:18-19). In Butler's words, 'one does not always stay intact during grief. One may want to, but despite one's efforts one is undone, in the face of the other' (2004:19). In this case, the Other would be my mother's former self. But this can also be viewed from a different angle, from my own perspective. I propose that I, too, am grieving, but my grief is for the loss of my mother whom I experience as distanced from me for the various significant reasons set out above. I, too, cannot manage to 'stay intact' and am 'undone, in the face of the [m]Other and of her memory'. In this way 'we're undone by each other' (Butler, 2004:19).

Considering the Other in the various contexts above, it is better, Butler claims, to look the Other – in this case my mother – in the face and pose the simple yet unanswerable question: 'Who are you?'.<sup>38</sup> This is, perhaps, more appropriate than the violent response of choosing to ignore the Other and the question (Butler, 2004:35):

The nonviolent response lives with its unknowingness about the Other in the face of the Other, since sustaining the bond that the question opens is finally more valuable than knowing in advance what holds us in common, as if we already have all the resources we need to know what defines the human, what its future might be (Butler, 2004:35).

In refusing this direct question to the Other (and thus not 'sustaining the bond' that its enquiry might beget), we rely on social norms to answer our question. In doing this, we are conforming, Butler explains, to a constructed humanity (2004:36). If we make the assumption, for instance, that 'all women are maternal by nature', we are conforming to such. And by expecting this of all women we are expecting a 'normalised' stereotype which is, of course, never a realistic, nor a fair option. 'If we take the field of *human* for granted, then we fail to think critically and ethically about

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<sup>38</sup> I pose this question: 'Who are you?' to both myself and my mother, as will be explained shortly.

the consequential ways that the human is being produced, reproduced, and deproduced', according to Butler (2004:36) [my italics].

Relating this matter of constructed humanity to grief, Butler holds that, one can be said to be 'outside oneself' or *beside oneself* in emotional grief (2004:22). On this 'problem of grief' she writes further:

... to the moments in which one undergoes something outside of one's control and finds that one is beside oneself, not at one with oneself, we say grief contains within it the possibility of apprehending the fundamental sociality of embodied life, the ways in which we are from the start, and by virtue of being a bodily being, already given over, beyond ourselves, implicated in lives that are not our own (Butler, 2004:22).

My mother can be thought of as having been *outside* of herself, and implicated in a life which was not and still is not, her own, by taking on another language<sup>39</sup> and culture. However, Butler argues that:

... our very sense of personhood is linked to the desire for recognition, and that desire places us outside ourselves, in a realm of social norms that we do not fully choose, but that provides the horizon and the resource for any sense of choice that we have (2004:33).

My mother – the mother in the script - gives up her family, culture, language, body, womanhood, her very self, by choosing to leave what she knows to enter the foreign unknown, to become a wife and mother.

What could possibly be left of a woman after such a mutilation? Here it is relevant to consider Derrida's words that there is 'no cinder without fire' (1991:37). If a place is 'surrounded by fire ... it no longer is', but 'cinder remains'. Considering this, no matter how much of oneself has been given up, there will still be embers of one's past remaining, a secret place 'where this other memory would speak' (Derrida, 1991:39). Cinders always leave the potential for fire. And likewise the 'mother tongue' has the potential to be once again, to 'grow' back.

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<sup>39</sup> Looking again at the symbol of the handbag in *Part Two* of *Portrait in Pieces*, it represents this internal / external relationship of the self through language. Through the lack of text (as it is a wordless story) the mother's loss of her mother tongue is exemplified.

If a place is itself surrounded by fire (falls finally to ash, into a cinder tomb), it no longer is. Cinder remains, cinder there is, which we can translate: the cinder is not, is not what is. It remains *from* what is not, in order to recall at the delicate, charred bottom of itself only non-being or non-presence. Being without presence has not been and will no longer be there where there is cinder and where this other memory would speak. There, where cinder means the difference between what remains and what is, will she ever reach it, there? (Derrida, 1991:39).

Here lies the rhetoric: '[W]ill she ever reach it there?' Will she ever reach this space 'between what remains and what is'? (Derrida, 1991:39). Referring to Derrida's powerful metaphor, I ask for my mother: Can one find a happy medium somewhere between the past and the present?

There is 'no presence that is not traced and retraced by what it seems to exclude', in Diamond's words (1996:1). In this approach, absence and silence can also be regarded as text / object. Here, I have, despite our difference in tongue, attempted to translate the untranslatable to make meaning of the mother story, of her giving up of her tongue. Now I trace my own personal absence (the *chorismos*) and presence, loss and recognition, within *Portrait in Pieces* in the context of the mother / daughter relationship. Here I discuss myself as the 'special child', an Other to my mother, Other to myself.

We can only think of the otherness of the other's inaudible voice, but our thinking about it is always inseparable from poetic saying, from the audible song, prayer, or hymn that would bring us as close a possible to the silence in which the voice of the Other burns. *Cinders* is situated in the neighbourhood of this haunted crossing, in the nearness of the *chorismos*, near what Derrida call the 'absolute hiatus' (Lukacher, 1987:14).

A 'photograph of the self taken many years before [can be] experienced as [a] distant other' according to Pierre Fouché (2006:50). When looking back at photographs from my youth as the 'special child' whose mother was concerned that she might be 'slightly retarded',<sup>40</sup> I hardly recognise myself. There is a feeling of familiarity when

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<sup>40</sup> Note that the term, 'retarded' is no longer a politically correct definition. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, it is the old-fashioned and now offensive way to say that someone is

viewing the photographs, but it is a sickening familiarity – a trademark of the uncanny. According to Lacan’s mirror stage<sup>41</sup>, when a child begins to recognise itself in the mirror it identifies with its image but the image is also always also ‘the image of another’. This is an alienating mode of identification, according to Elizabeth Grosz in her introductory book on Lacan, as the child experiences her / his image as a paranoid split ‘between a joyful, affirmative self-recognition’ and a misrecognized subjectivity (Grotz, 1990:40). Figure 6, the first illustrated page of *Part One* of *Portrait in Pieces*, demonstrates both this recognition and misrecognition. This page is explanatory of how being in a ‘special class’ for ‘special children’, for two years in a row, branded me a ‘special child’. The children and teacher in this illustrated school photograph have been painted over with an opaque layer of white paint. There is a glimpse of the children through the film of paint, yet it also separates / conceals / hides the ‘special children’, splitting them off from their surroundings and their school fellows, as if they do not belong with the rest of the school.

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less developed mentally than what is normally expected of a certain age group (Hornby, 2005:1248). I use this derogatory term in my practical work and in my thesis because this is the way that I remember these events. This was a word that people used in the eighties and early nineties before ‘mentally challenged’ took its place. I also remember my mother saying to me, on a particular occasion, that I was ‘a little bit retarded’. I have tried to keep my graphic novel as close to my remembered past as possible.

<sup>41</sup> Before the mirror stage takes place the infant will not have a sense of bodily integrity (Salih, 2002:84), but rather a sense that body is one with its mother’s breast, with the mother herself and with the world (Winnicott, 1971:109). The breast is said to be the ‘most profound loss object’ (Sarup, 1993:23).

Before the infant comes to the point of perceiving its reflection in the mirror and gains this awareness of bodily integrity, his / her sense of ‘bodily self-perception’ would have been ‘chaotic, scrambled in pieces’. Lacan calls this disjointed perception a ‘homelette’. When the child actually sees its own reflection, it acquires a perception of ‘its bodily contours and its physical differentiation from others’ (Salih, 2002:84). In this way, the child learns that it is not part of its mother, but rather its own separate being.

The mirror stage is the place which prefigures the tension between elements of subjectivity and alienation (Sarup, 1993:8). ‘The child’s recognition of absence is the pivotal moment around which the mirror stage revolves’, according to Grosz. She goes on to say that ‘the child is propelled into its identificatory relations by this first acknowledgement of lack or loss’ (1990:34). It is only when this lack and loss is acknowledged that the child can differentiate itself from its external world. In this way, the child locates itself to be situated within the world. It is only when the concept of absence is understood that the child no longer considers itself to be merged with the rest of the world (especially with its mother) to form its whole self (1990:34). ‘This marks the primitive “origins” of the child’s separation of inside and outside, subject and object, self and other, and a number of other conceptual oppositions which henceforth structure its adult life’ according to Grosz (1990:34). The initial enunciation of the ‘I’ takes place during the mirror stage (Sarup, 1993:8). The mirror stage is said to coincide with the child’s entry into the *symbolic order* or into that of language (Salih, 2002:84).

Salih poses the question: Does 'subjectivity necessarily rest upon the negation of the "Other" by the "Self"'? (Salih, 2002:20). This is something which is questioned in the work *Portrait in Pieces*. Are we defined by who we are or by who we are not, in relation to others? Is humanity always in relation to those around us? Ilené Jacobs quotes Stuart Hall on this matter:

[He] claims that identity can only be constructed in 'relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside' and therefore, 'identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render "outside", abjected' (Hall in Jacobs, 2006:7).

According to Lacan, however, we always see ourselves through the eyes of others. And, because of this, there is a sense of threat and tension due to the fact that one's identity is determined by the manner in which the other recognises one (Sarup, 1993:13). 'Difference is crucial to the Hegelian subject who must confront and overcome the Otherness of the Other in order to recognize [herself]' (Salih, 2002:35). At the opposite end of the pole, Lacan also 'believes that how we present ourselves is always subject to interpretation by others' (Sarup, 1993:13).

As a child, I felt there was something wrong with me. In the graphic novel, I have attempted to portray the hurtful experience and trauma associated with this negative aspect of self, with a cool detachment. According to Caruth, 'in trauma the greatest confrontation with reality may occur ... as an absolute numbing to it' (1995:8). She continues that 'trauma is a repeated suffering of the event, but it is also a continual leaving of its site' (1995:10). In certain instances within the graphic novel, this distanced emotion is portrayed in a humorous, ironic manner (such as in Figure 33). In the words of Kevin Newmark, 'for Baudelaire it is the essence of laughter to bring us face to face with a radical discrepancy or disjunction within the very compulsion of the human self' (1995:242). From my sense of having something 'wrong' with me, I have learnt to distance hurtful, past experiences, through the satirical humour that I apply to my sequential narrative art. Newmark states further that:

... the language we speak in order to understand the experience of trauma is also irretrievably marked by it. What remains impossible to determine without further

analysis is whether and to what extent such a suggestion could ever be put to use for understanding without leaving its own traumatic residue on it. The name for this impossibility that necessitates further understanding even as it risks proliferating incomprehension is language, though a language that could become accessible as such only once we have learned to listen to all the traumatic events through which, with trembling lips, it begins to speak (Newmark, 1995:254).

To be a child with ‘special needs’ creates a gap between one’s mother and oneself. I, a daughter, was placed in the position of the ‘less valid’ person and therefore located nearer to absence than presence. This is another way in which my mother and I were bound to ‘speak’ different languages – firstly, through my mother’s giving up of her mother tongue and secondly, through the language of her ‘malfunctioning’ child. By being a ‘special child’ and ‘slightly retarded’ (Figure 34), I became ‘lost in translation’. And by being regarded as such, I also become Otherised in the eyes of my mother. I propose that, in this context I, the tainted child, become the punishment imposed on her for abandoning the past – for cutting out her mother tongue. To me my mother might reciprocally pose the question: ‘Who are you?’, in order to avoid the violent act of assumption (Butler, 2004:35). This is also a question which I myself pose to my remembrance of my uncanny, former, ‘special’ self.

Absence and presence exist as a formal device regarding the use of text and image in *Portrait in Pieces*. In the narrative of the graphic novel there are many gaps to be filled in by the viewer / reader. Neither text nor image reveals all. One has to read between the juxtaposing, parallel narratives to be able to reach conclusions. In the words of Smith and Watson, ‘the textual can set in motion certain readings of the image; and the image can then revise, retard, or reactivate the text’ (2002:21). The mode in which text and image have been used to both complement and interrogate one another is known as *relational interfacing*,<sup>42</sup> according to these authors (Smith & Watson, 2002:22). This occurs where text and image are both of equal importance and run alongside each other. In this parallel relationship, ‘their different vocabularies overlay different versions of autobiographical subjectivity’ (Smith &

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<sup>42</sup> Smith and Watson have laid down four ways in which visual communicators can texture interfaces to mobilise the treatment of text and image. These are relationally, contextually, spatially and temporally (2002:21).

Watson, 2002:22). These two narratives, in turn, create a third with its own new meaning. An example of this is the comic *The Other Woman* (Figure 28). The illustration's text speaks of 'a woman who lives inside of me'. This, together with the title *The Other Woman*, causes one to assume that there is a woman in my life with whom I am in competition. Concerning imagery, this illustration is of my own reflection, in a mirror situated within my studio space, which implies the intention of creating a self-portrait. It is only through reading the text and image together that one realises that the 'other woman' is myself. One learns that as the other woman takes over, so my reflection in the mirror disappears. Presence is thus brought to the narrative through the outcome of reading between the distance of the juxtaposing text and image relations.

There are various other visual aspects which refer to absence within the novel. To give an example, the three parts of the graphic novel are unnamed and are objectively referred to as *Part One*, *Part Two* and *Part Three*, creating a paradox as the novel is something highly personal. Leaving these unnamed, signifies the manner in which emotional aspects are kept at bay, thus preserving the distance from which the story is told. To continue, there are illustrated pages of a photo album where it appears that photographs have previously been removed; leaving one guessing about what could have been there before (Figure 35). And lastly, *Part Two* of the novel is without text, leaving the narrative to imagery alone, in turn causing the story to be relatively abstract.

But of all the absences mentioned in this chapter, the greatest absence from the story, is that of my father. Through this rather disturbing realisation, absence in this way becomes more powerful than presence. He does not play a role at all within the novel – or so one would assume. One needs, however, to ask the question: Who was taking the photographs in *Part One* of *Portrait in Pieces*? As discussed in Chapter One, many of the photographs of my immediate family would, most probably, have been a constituent of my father's gaze,<sup>43</sup> his silent presence being symbolic of the patriarchal

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<sup>43</sup> As a term, 'the gaze' fits into the wider spectrum of spectatorship. Resulting from the standard associations connected to the word, the discourse of the gaze is implemented in issues regarding power relations, manipulation and desire. It is believed that notions regarding the gaze were introduced into today's discourse via formalist theories such as painting, as well as feminist theories with regard to

system under which my mother and father existed and had children, and under which society still falls. His hidden gaze metaphorically constitutes the invisible power of patriarchy, thus the father figure in the graphic novel represents both absence through silence and presence through domination. In Lacan's theories, 'the laws of language and society come to dwell within the child as he accepts the father's name and the father's "no"' (Sarup, 1993:25). In accordance with Lacan's theory, 'Name-of-the-Father', the father is a 'third term' in the dyad of mother-child. The father, writes Grosz, in her feminist study of Lacan,

... is not the real, or rather, the imaginary father, who is a person, an other, to whom the child may relate. The imaginary father usually takes on the symbolic function of law, but in any case these laws and prohibitions must be culturally represented or embodied for the child by some authority figure (1990:47).

According to Adalgisa Giorgio, '[t]he ability to say "I" marks the child's entry into the symbolic, the realm of the father' (2002:13-14). This 'entry into language, and into the (patriarchal) social system which we internalise through language, must occur at the expense and repression of the mother' (2002:13-14). Furthermore, the languages which constitute these two women, mother and daughter, are governed by a language that was not written by either of them, therefore they need to find their place in language and reconstruct maternal genealogy (Giorgio, 2002:13). Or, in feminist philosopher and psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray's words:

We must also find, find anew, invent the words, the sentences that speak the most archaic and most contemporary relationship with the body of the mother, with our bodies, the sentences that translate the bond between her body, ours, and that of our daughters. We must discover a language (langage) which does not replace the bodily encounter, as paternal language (langue) attempts to do, but which can go along with it, words which do not bar the corporeal, but which speak corporeal (Cited in Giorgio, 2002:13).

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film. In the words of Michael Taylor, 'the "gaze" implies (being an imagined projection) an awareness of the fact that the art object, as in the case with human subjects, is able to gaze and be gazed at'. The subject becomes the object 'as it falls under the gaze of another'. Here the Other's desire is internalised to be able to attain 'self completion'. In the following, Margaret Olin speaks of the returned gaze (Taylor, 2006:20):

The returned gaze ... rescues the beheld's sense of self. If you look back, you cannot be possessed by the gaze of the other. What is proposed ... is a shared gaze. Rather than emphasizing the power of the gazing one [can] make the one gazed at into an object, the idea suggests responsibility toward the person looking back at one (Olin in Taylor, 2006:20).

Giorgio states that '[the above] passage, with its emphasis on language, encapsulates the seemingly impossible task facing women. How can they symbolise the mother's body and their repressed body with her while they are imprisoned in a masculine corporeal system – the symbolic order – which deprives them of the tools to do so?' (2002:12). In the words of Phelan, 'the image of the woman is made to submit to the phallic function and is re-marked and revised as that which belongs to him'. According to her, woman can only be 'the not-all' (1993:17). Patriarchy, then is the 'real' Other to whom we should be asking the question, 'Who are you?'.

## Chapter Three

### **Mother Script / Daughter Script: Autobiography and Psychoanalysis**

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‘The stories we tell ourselves about who we are – the half-remembered events and places which shape our lives’ are, in the words of Betterton, ‘the foundations on which we build up a sense of self. Re-working what has already happened, we also give it current meaning, for history always represents the present as much as the past’ (1996:172). *Portrait in Pieces* is the story that I am telling myself about the fragments that constitute who I am. Because I am both the creator and the recipient of these stories, I have omniscient power over the narrative. In addition, I am the main protagonist and am thus the self-positioned subject of my own story. The process of creating this book has therefore been somewhat of a theatrical performance. I am the scriptwriter who came up with the original concept for a graphic novel about my mother and I; the editor who has the power to decide what to include and exclude; the stage-manager and photographer who set up the scenes and photographed them to use as a visual reference for creating the comic art. I am the comic artist who saw the conceived artworks from beginning to end. I am the director, who had to co-ordinate the sequence of events. The end result of this process can be regarded as a work of performative autobiography made up of both text and image.

Jacobs suggests that narrative, and more specifically autobiographic texts, are performed. This is so, ‘not only through the act of writing, but also within the intersection created between the narratives of the viewer and those of the artist’ (2006:14). According to Steiner and Yang, writing one’s autobiography is essentially the same as writing one’s identity,<sup>44</sup> which is contingent and constantly changing (2004:16). They state:

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<sup>44</sup> Jacobs makes a distinction between identity and subjectivity. She defines identity as the ‘representation of the self in society and discourse, while *subjectivity* is regarded as the subjective positions which inform representations of identity (2006:3). To continue, the term ‘subject’ can be conceived as the constructed nature of reality as the result of signifying actions which are both unconscious and culturally precise. The notion of the subject brings into question the concept of the

[Today's] concept of identity is quite different from the one that underlay earlier autobiographical research, whose starting point was the assumption of a fully formed identity – a completed self, looking back on how it was shaped over the years. Now identity must be seen as contingent and forever incomplete, continually changing as it generates and regenerates itself. Thus to write an autobiography means, in essence, to write one's own identity (Steiner & Yang, 2004:16).

According to Butler's theories of performativity, identity is a construct; therefore, 'it is possible for identities to be reconstructed in ways that challenge and subvert existing power structures' (Salih, 2002:11), thus giving us the power to challenge or change our life scripts.

Most psychoanalytic theorists agree that the relationship with the mother is central to the ways in which we perform our identities. Thus Winnicott suggests that one's notion of selfhood and sense of identity are affected during infancy by the first object which one associates as a 'not-me'<sup>45</sup> object – the female aspect of the breast (1971:107).<sup>46</sup> The first feelings of selfhood are therefore directly related to the relationship with one's mother, which indicates the vital centrality of the mother in the construction of the self.<sup>47</sup>

Subjectivity is thus culturally constructed from birth in a close relationship with the figure of the mother. When a baby is born and the announcement made, 'It's a girl!', the statement constructs an interpellation that brings forward the practice of 'girling', as Butler calls it. This 'girling' process is based on the 'unnatural', imposed and

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self as one and the same with consciousness. It is seen to decentre consciousness (Sarup, 1993:2). Post-structuralists, such as Foucault and Derrida, are interested in dissolving the subject and therefore do not have a so-called, 'theory of the subject'. Lacan's position is otherwise because of his commitment to psychoanalysis and his background in Heglian philosophy. For these reasons he is dedicated to the subject (Sarup, 1993:2).

<sup>45</sup> The transitional object is the name that Winnicott gives to the primary, 'not-me' possession (Winnicott, 1971:6).

<sup>46</sup> According to Winnicott, '[t]he term subjective object has been used in describing the first object, the object not yet repudiated as not-me phenomenon. Here in this relatedness of pure female element of "breast" is a practical application of the idea of the objective subject – that is, the idea of the self, and the feeling of the real that springs from the sense of having an identity' (1971:107).

<sup>47</sup> Much has been said by psychoanalysts about the manner in which one's identity and sense of selfhood is shaped by one's mother or parent. According to Mary D. S. Ainsworth, '[t]hree terms have been commonly used to characterize the infant's relationship with his [or her] mother: "object relations," "dependency," and "attachment"'. She states that '[e]ach is more or less closely tied to a distinctive theoretical formulation of the origin and development of early interpersonal relations' (1962:1).

perceived differences that exist between the two sexes. The statement, which is based on inherited and internalised notions of femininity, compels the child to conform to cultural and gender related norms of society (Salih, 2002:89).

To the extent that the naming of the 'girl' is transitive, that is, initiates the process by which certain 'girling' is compelled, the term or, rather, its symbolic power, governs the formation of a corporeally enacted femininity that never fully approximates the norm. This is a 'girl', however, who is compelled to 'cite' the norm in order to qualify and remain a viable subject. Femininity is thus not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment (Butler in Salih, 2002:89).

De Beauvoir's statement, frequently referred to by Butler, that '[one] is not born, but rather becomes a woman' (cited in Salih, 2002:10), confirms Butler's notion that being a woman is an 'act that one performs' (cited in McKenzie, 1998:227).

[The] act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again (Butler in McKenzie, 1998:227).

I was brought up as a little girl in a specific time and place – a singular context – as was my mother and her mother before that. This 'girling' performance is passed on from one generation to the next and 'has been going on before one arrived on the scene' (McKenzie, 1998:227). In order to deconstruct my own script, I therefore need to understand my mother's script. To do so I have to take into account the script which preceded her – a script derived from patriarchal discourse. In contemporary theoretical understandings of subjectivity as discursive and performative constructs, this discourse precedes and forms the 'I', and has a structure located within a specific South African context. In my mother's case, the three constituents making up this structure are: Notions of femininity according to her specific brand of Afrikaans upbringing as someone born in 1950; nationality; and class. I will not go into detail concerning these three constituents, as that would make for a thesis of its own. I will,

however, give a condensed summary of the constituents of a woman, born in 1950, within an Afrikaans, South African context.

My mother grew up during the reign of the Nationalist government which had come into power in 1948, two years before her birth in 1950. The Nationalist government was at its strongest during the apartheid era and my mother thus belonged to a community which benefitted from its rule over the country. In addition to her privileged circumstances, she also grew up in a middle-class, respectable family. Her father was a Brigadier in the police, which was a strong, authoritative force in those years. Her mother was a teacher, an occupation which was regarded as a respectable and acceptable for a woman.<sup>48</sup>

Nationalism cannot be understood without taking a 'theory of gender power' into account. In Anne McClintock's opinion '[n]ations are not simply phantasmagoria of the mind, but are historical and institutional practices through which social difference is invented and performed'. As a result, Nationalism becomes 'radically constitutive of people's identities, through social contests that are frequently violent and always gendered'. Gender constructions are central to the formation of all nations. Nationalism stands for unity, yet it historically reinforces gender differences. According to Ernest Gellner, nationhood as a definition relies on the male identification of identity. He states that 'men are of the same nation if and only if they recognize each other' (McClintock, 1993:61-63). In the words of McClintock:

All too often in male nationalisms, *gender* difference between women and men serves to symbolically define the limits of *national* difference and power between *men*. Excluded from direct action as national citizens, women are subsumed symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit... Women are typically construed as the symbolic bearers of the nation, but are denied any direct relation to national agency (1993:62).

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<sup>48</sup> In those days if a woman was not a housewife, her options for occupation were limited to professions 'suited' to women. These, for example included teaching, nursing or secretarial work. Men, on the other hand, were free to do anything they pleased as long as their chosen occupation was not considered 'effeminate' in nature. According to what my mother has told me, the options available to her after she had completed school were not much different. She enrolled for a degree in teaching (a profession which did not interest her) which she discontinued when she married my father.

Central to woman's symbolic role in the formation of Afrikaner Nationalism was the figure of the *volksmoeder* (mother of the nation). This symbol 'on the one hand recognizes the power of (white) motherhood; on the other hand, it is a retrospective iconography of gender containment, containing woman's mutinous power within an iconography of domestic service' (McClintock, 1993:72). Afrikaner women were disempowered due to disregarded historical activism<sup>49</sup> and the fact that they were defined as the weeping victims of the African 'threat'. The *volksmoeder* was a powerful symbol of nation building for a nation where women had little authority (McClintock, 1993:72).

According to McClintock, the family was also ideologically defined in Afrikaner Nationalism: 'The family as a metaphor offered a single genesis narrative for national history, while, at the same time, the family as an institution became voided in history' (1993:63). There was a strong system of a patriarchal hierarchy within the family – in McClintock's words 'the subordination of woman to man, child to adult, was deemed a natural fact' (1993:64). As breadwinner, the husband always came first and possessed the power to lay down the law of the family. He took it upon himself to make all decisions on behalf of his family. Children (especially girl children) were at the bottom of this hierarchy and had to remain respectful towards their parents, only speaking if spoken to.

Nationalism claims to be progressive, yet naturalises gender (McClintock, 1993:66). The following explains Nationalism's use of modernist binary oppositions:

Women are represented as the atavistic and authentic 'body' of national tradition (inert, backward-looking, and natural), embodying nationalism's conservative principle of continuity. Men, by contrast, represent the progressive agent of national modernity (forward thrusting, potent and historic), embodying nationalism's progressive, or revolutionary principle of discontinuity (McClintock, 1993:66).

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<sup>49</sup> To disregard the historic agency of the Afrikaner women means also to disregard their involvement in the history of apartheid. 'White women were both colonized and colonizers', in McClintock's words. They 'were not the weeping bystanders of apartheid history, but active, if decidedly disempowered, participants in the invention of Afrikaner identity'. In this way they were active in forming a 'power of motherhood' in the implementation and legitimization of white supremacy (McClintock, 1993:72).

Branding a woman ‘natural’ reduces her to her biological status. To assume that a woman is, for instance, ‘backward looking’, places her second to man who is ‘forward thrusting’ (McClintock, 1993:66). According to De Beauvoir, woman’s weakness ‘is revealed as such, only in the light of the ends man proposes, the instruments he has available, and the laws he establishes’ (1997:67). Afrikaner Nationalism ensured that men had the ultimate power. Elsie Cloete, writing about Afrikaner identity, quotes Antjie Krog’s inditement on Afrikaner men.

The Afrikaner woman, in my view is a privileged species, unique on earth. We enjoy the limitless freedom at time granted us by cheap, intelligent black domestic help. So we can select the titbits and specialize in entertaining, or designing clothes, or studying, or gardening, becoming a connoisseur in silver, and making our own pots or poetry for Christmas ... I blame men for it. They like it that way. The more idle their wives, the more successful they obviously must be. Most have remained totally unliberated, living the way their ancestors did – complaining about the government, hunting up north, or telling racist jokes in clouds of braaivleis smoke (Krog in Cloete, 1992:53).

My mother, as I have stated, was raised at a time when Afrikaner Nationalism was at its peak, and she consequently inherited a particular system of beliefs. Some of these beliefs would have been influenced by the way in which Afrikaner Nationalism looks to the grand narratives of the past for inspiration (such as the Great Trek and The Old Testament of The Bible). The *Eeufees* (Centenary), or *Tweede Trek*, (Second Trek) which occurred in 1938,<sup>50</sup> was a tribute to and intended ‘re-occurrence’ of The Great Trek.<sup>51</sup> According to McClintock, the *Tweede Trek* ‘invented white nationalist

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<sup>50</sup> This was 20 years after Afrikaans was first recognised as a language (McClintock, 1993:69).

<sup>51</sup> The *Eeufees* was an actual four-month long trek that occurred from Cape Town to Pretoria. For the journey nine replicas of original *Voortrekker* wagons were built, baptised (literally) and named after men who had been heroes of The Great Trek. There were no wagons named after female heroines. Instead, there was one, generically named ‘*Vrou en Moeder* (Wife and Mother)’ (McClintock, 1993:69). McClintock records:

This wagon, creaking across the country, symbolized woman’s relation to the nation as indirect, mediated through her social relation to men, her national identity lying in her unpaid services and sacrifices, through husband and family, to the *volk*. Each wagon became the microcosm of colonial society at large: the whip-wielding white patriarch prancing on horseback, black servants toiling alongside, white mother and children sequestered in the wagon – the women’s starched white bonnets signifying the purity of race, the decorous surrender of sexuality to the patriarch, the invisibility of white female labour. (1993:69)

traditions and celebrated unity where none had existed before,<sup>52</sup> creating the illusion of a collective identity through the political staging of vicarious spectacle' (1993:70). My mother's parents, who were both born in 1926, would have been old enough to have had an awareness of its occurrence even to have taken part. Their perceptions of Afrikaner patriarchy would most likely have been affected by the spirit of this event and they therefore raised my mother with this system of beliefs. A second metanarrative, enthusiastically promoted around the time of my mother's birth, was the ideology of the Afrikaners as 'God's chosen people'.<sup>53</sup> From an early stage in the history of the Afrikaners, the Bible, according to Gerrie Snyman, 'became a text from which models for the ordering of society could be inferred' (2005:3). Tales from the Old Testament became highly influential and 'identity became closely associated with and directly related to the identity of Israel' (2005:12). With regard to this, Bruce Cauthen states:

The classic example of a chosen people is, of course, the ancient Israelites whose epic narratives of election, exodus, exile in the wilderness, and ultimate redemption has been related to successive generations through the Old Testament. As the nomadic wandering of the Jews of antiquity was in preparation for their eventual occupation of the Promised Land, the physical habitation of this sacred homeland by the Israelites was essential for the realization of their election and the establishment of their corporate identity (1997:107).

The Afrikaners compared the travels of the *trekboer* (and later the Great Trek) with the 'nomadic wandering of the Jews of antiquity', which later remained a prominent feature of their 'corporate identity' (Cauthen, 1997:107). Cauthen expounds on this notion and quotes J.H. Coetzee (1978):

In the 1770s, some Boers reached the Fish River Valley [from the Cape] and felt they were physically retracing the historical path of the Israelites. 'Since there was a

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<sup>52</sup> 'Afrikaners had no monolithic identity, no common historic purpose, and no single unifying language' to begin with, according to McClintock. The Afrikaners were a scattered people who spoke a medley of 'High Dutch and local dialects', Nguni, Khoi and San languages. With the 'invention' of the *Volk* in 1910, came the official Afrikaans language and a constructed culture. (McClintock, 1993:68).

<sup>53</sup> This does not mean to say that the Afrikaners were not deeply religious before these years. Christianity was powerful factor, both for the early *Boers* and for present-day Afrikaans people. The Dutch Reformed Church has been predominant since the founding of the 'Dutch colony at the Cape', according to Cauthen. God's name is still evoked and 'biblical and apocalyptic imagery' is employed in the same way as in the past (1997:110).

strong stress on the Old Testament [...] and since the Afrikaners were pastoral people with a strong patriarchal social structure, the analogies even increased in the Afrikaner ethnic consciousness.’ Yet, if there was already a basic identification of the trekboers with the Israelites, the parallels were to assume an even greater relevance when larger and co-ordinated migrations of Boers made their exit from the Colony during the mid 1830s [i.e. The Great Trek] (Cauthen, 1997:117).

‘Afrikaner identity cannot be separated from Calvinist Christianity’, according to Snyman (2005:12). The religious doctrine of Calvinism stresses that all authority comes from God and therefore His ruling has to be followed with regard to all matters, including those of the state (2005:12). The concept of divine election, was emphasised at the time as a religious justification for the racial policies of the National Party, in Andre du Toit’s opinion (Cauthen, 1997:107).<sup>54</sup>

Another aspect that influenced my mother’s belief system from an early age has been the schooling that she received. History textbooks at this time proposed a specific set of moral beliefs and were biased against the majority of the nation (Cloete, 1992:43). These ‘master-symbols’, as Cloete names them, would have repeatedly occurred in school textbooks. They appeared as follows (Cloete, 1992:45):

- legal authority is not questioned
- whites are superior, blacks inferior
- South Africa belongs to the Afrikaner
- the Afrikaner has a special relationship with God
- South Africa is an agricultural country and the Afrikaner *volk* are farmers (*Boerevolk*)
- the Afrikaner is threatened
- the Afrikaner has a God-given task in Africa.

‘Nationalism’, McClintock holds, ‘is a symbolic performance of invented community’ (1993:71). The repetitive inscription of ‘master-symbols’ within children’s textbooks

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<sup>54</sup> God’s will was used as a justification for a great deal, for example, ‘when former State President F.W. de Klerk was recently asked why he had abolished apartheid, his response was that God had instructed him to do so’ (Cauthen, 1997:110).

as demonstrated above, illustrates a performative aspect of Afrikaner nationalism.<sup>55</sup> The ‘girling’ of which Butler speaks would also have had relevance for cultural and patriotic nationalist beliefs. If a girl-child is continuously taught that white people are superior to black people;<sup>56</sup> that ‘South Africa belongs to the Afrikaner’; that men are the leaders of women; and that ‘the Afrikaner has a God-given task in Africa’, the child will most likely believe these statements to be concrete facts or norms. ‘Such attributions or interpellations contribute to that field of discourse and power that orchestrates, delimits, and sustains that which qualifies as “the human”’, states Butler (1993:8). In this case, anyone who is not a white Afrikaans person is outside the category of the ‘human’.

All of the above with regard to culture, politics, religion and class had an impact on the way that my mother was taught to perform her script. However, when she married my father, and chose to ‘convert’ to English, she changed her script. This life alteration was an intentionally rebellious act by which she could break away from her traditionalist parents, both of whom came from similar backgrounds. My father’s parents, on the other hand, came from quite different backgrounds: His father was Afrikaans and belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church (yet seldom attended), and his mother was English and came from a secular background. What both my father’s parents shared was an interest in the country’s political circumstances, yet they never aligned themselves with a political party. Despite their differences they raised my father in a secular, English home.

I was similarly raised in a ‘hybrid’ home, where I was taught to perform the role of an English girl, attending an English school. My mother spoke only English with her husband and children, and in this way partially divided herself from her parental family. It is through both the difference and similarity between my mother and I that I feel bound to her script, seeking the tie which binds us. Although our scripts are different, I have many of her traits and seem to be making similar decisions in my life,

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<sup>55</sup> There are many other performative aspects regarding Afrikaner Nationalism, such as the spectacle of the *Tweede Trek*, which was, in McClintock’s opinion, ‘a triumph of image management, complete with the spectacular regalia of flags, flaming torches, patriotic songs, incendiary speeches, costumes and crowd management’ (1993:71).

<sup>56</sup> When looking at white nationalist history one cannot ignore the fact that there is also a rich history of black nationalism from this time; nor can one forget that apartheid was a factor at this time and one which continued for many years.

such as being in a relationship with a man formed by a different script to mine, an Afrikaans man. His Afrikaans script is one which was denied to me and I am therefore curious about it and drawn to it. The ideological and historical divergence between English-speaking South Africans and Afrikaans South Africans has also been reduced, as more Afrikaans-speaking people take on English as an educational and corporate language. Moreover, the bitterness of the memory of the Boer War recedes deeper into the past, thus narrowing the gap between our respective scripts.

I have lived half of my life in the 'old' South Africa (1981 to 1994) and the other half in the 'new' (1994 to 2008), which contributes to my 'hybrid' cultural identity. In my opinion, South Africa is still in a transitional phase and the bridging of these divergent historical eras results in a nation bewildered with regard to culture, heritage, religion, and accuracy of historical texts. My schooling commenced with a South African sense of history which 'began' when Jan van Riebeeck landed in the Cape and the history I was taught legitimised the colonisation of the Cape, 'The Great Trek', and the victorious defeat over the Zulus in the 'Battle of Blood River.' After the instatement of the African National Congress as political leaders of the country in 1994, we were predominantly taught the history of the Western World, as the educational authorities did not seem to know what else to feed us.

Although I am living in the context of a multi-cultural and trans-cultural society, I am also estranged from it, as a result of my ignorance toward the diverse cultures and languages which constitute the country. As an outcome of both my hybridity and my distance from this multi-cultural society, I would like my children to grow up with a clearer understanding of the languages and cultures of South Africa. In encouraging this multi-culturalist outlook towards my future children, and raising them in the tongue of both mother and father I shall, in turn, be teaching them to perform their 'scripts'. And they may choose to 'rewrite' these just as I am attempting to do by creating *Portrait in Pieces*.

From my mother's script, I have attempted to break away by the application of my graphic novel as a transitional object through the confessional nature of the narrative and through the creative act of play by which the graphic work has been created. Echoing Betterton's word, I 're-work ... what has already happened, and 'give it

current meaning, for history always represents the present as much as the past' (1996:172). What follows here is a discussion on the relevance of confession, witnessing and testimony to a time past, as illustrated in *Portrait in Pieces*, a work which has evolved out of much pain, anger, accusation, guilt<sup>57</sup> and finally acceptance. It is my very personal – yet simultaneously covered up – confession of a secret, and according to Phelan, '[w]oman and performers, more often than not, are "scripted" to "sell" or "confess" something to someone who is in the position to buy or forgive' (1993:163). The novel is a distanced testimony to a difficult time. It is a story of the witnessing of my life thus far. According to Caruth:

In literature as well as in psychoanalysis, and conceivably in history as well, the witness might be – as the term suggests and as Freud knew only too well..., the one who (in fact) *witnesses* – but also, the one who *begets* – the truth, through the speech process of the testimony (1995:24).

The above would imply that the witness is the cause of the truth and, thereby, to a certain extent, responsible for it. In this process I again play various roles: The witness whose testimony it is; the secret holder; and thus also the one to confess. If we are to consider the notion of the secret, it can again be linked to the notion of the uncanny. In his essay *The Uncanny*, Freud speaks of that which is 'homelike' or 'belonging to the house' (associated with the uncanny) as 'something withdrawn from the eyes of strangers, something concealed, secret' (1953:5). According to him, those who were called *heimlich* councillors were officials who would give guidance according to matters of state which had to be kept secret. In his words, 'the adjective, according to modern usage, has been replaced by *geheim* [secret]' (1953:5). In this way, the secret is directly aligned with that which is uncanny. According to Phelan, the secret is also a close ally of the theatrical, and therefore also the performance. 'Enfolded within fiction, theatre seeks to display the line between visible and invisible. Theatre has, then, an intimate relationship with the secret. And secrets contain within them the aroma of seduction' (Phelan, 1993:112).

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<sup>57</sup> There is much irony within these lines of confession, as I have not told my mother about this graphic novel or thesis.

The illustrated end pages of my book, *Portrait in Pieces* (see Figure 36), are useful for the purpose of discussing the subject of confession. The illustrations function as a physical inscription of the motives, pains and regrets I have associated with the creation of this graphic novel. When reading a book one seldom pays much attention to the end pages, which are usually void of content, yet it is here where I expose myself most. However, the revealing factor of this very intimate testimonial loses its transparency through the act of partly covering it up with paint and by ‘hiding’ it in the end pages. This is an example of a palimpsestic narrative, where an image is submerged and seemingly overwritten or erased by another image. However, there will still be traces of what was overwritten or erased that ‘leak through the overlaid surface’. The layers which lie beneath leave behind alternative images or narratives resembling an archaeological spot which contests and competes with apparent or visible meaning (Smith & Watson, 2002:28). The truth exists, but it is only partly revealed in little hints and phrases, causing the plot of the problematic mother / daughter relationship to be difficult to read. It is confessional in a subtle manner.

‘There is some natural hesitation about revealing so many intimate facts about one’s mental life’, according to Freud, ‘nor can there be any guarantee against misinterpretation by strangers’ (Felman, 1995:22). In this way, one always takes a risk when confessing one’s intimate secrets. The question is, can we free ourselves of heavy burdens by having the courage to confess and move forward with our own scripts by the means of transitional objects. Through this process one will, hopefully, reach some point of understanding and empathy.

In *Portrait in Pieces*, the next step in the process of claiming my own script is through the act of play. According to Winnicott ‘playing is doing’ and ‘doing takes time.’ (1971:55-56) – hence we can take control of our personal script by being active and by not simply thinking or wishing, but by engaging. The play that I am speaking of in this case is the creative<sup>58</sup> process of creating my novel, which is an active process that

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<sup>58</sup> In a reference Winnicott makes in connection to creativity, he asserts that he does not want the word to become lost ‘in the successful or acclaimed creation’ (for instance in a work of art). He makes it clear that the meaning instead ‘refers to a colouring of the whole attitude to external reality’ (Winnicott, 1971:87). To him creativity is a separate entity from that of the creation of an artwork. In regard to this, he states that ‘it is true that a creation can be a picture or a house or a garden or a costume or a hairstyle or a symphony or a sculpture; anything from a meal cooked at home. It would perhaps be better to say that these things could be creations. The creativity that concerns me here is a

allows me authority over my surroundings. Furthermore, Winnicott states that psychoanalysis is, in itself, a ‘highly specialized form of playing’. It is a natural thing that we do and it is universal (Winnicott, 1971:56). ‘Playing is itself a therapy’ and is always a creative experience (Winnicott, 1971:67).

I make my idea of play concrete by claiming that *playing has a place* and time. It is not *inside* by any use of the word (and is unfortunately true that the word inside has many and various uses in psychoanalytic discussion). Nor is it *outside*, that is to say, it is not a part of the repudiated world, the not-me, that which the individual has decided to recognize (with whatever difficulty and even pain) as truly external, which is outside of magical control. To control what is outside one has to do things, not simply think or wish, and *doing takes time*. Playing is doing (Winnicott, 1971:55).

In his opinion, it is only in the act of playing that a person has the freedom to be creative (Winnicott, 1971:71) and thereby become able to activate the entire personality. It is in this way, Winnicott believes that one can discover the self (1971:55).

The aesthetics of the graphic novel are relevant to the discussion of transference through play, and therefore an explanation of the technique and medium is necessary. What initially attracted me to the technique of gouache resist<sup>59</sup> is that the end result does not look as if it was made by my own hand. This allowed for an air of otherness and space to distance myself from the work. Working with the technique is obsessive in nature, repetitive and meticulous, yet the result appears dramatic and violent. It has a look of immediacy, yet is a time-consuming, tedious process. I also tend to work further in layers, in mixed media photocopy transfers, acrylics, watercolours and gouache. All in all, it takes time. It is a process of working, washing off and reworking. This physical and prolonged process facilitates a re-living of the past and a re-inscription of my self. This working over and over acts as therapy – like talking things over and over.

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universal. It belongs to being alive’ (1971:91). This creativity which he studies ‘belongs to the approach of the individual to external reality’ (1971:91).

<sup>59</sup> In a nutshell, the technique is as follows: One needs to have a piece of stretched paper, white gouache, paint brushes and waterproof ink. 1. Begin with a pencil drawing on watercolour paper. 2. Paint white gouache paint in all the negative areas (areas which will be white and not black) and allow to dry. 3. Paint over with ink – allow that to dry. 4. Wash ink off under flowing water. The ink sticks where ever the paper was exposed (McGee Kvasnosky, <http://www.lmkbooks.com/gouache.html>).

The use of mixed media and layering is most prevalent in *Part Two* of the graphic novel. As already mentioned in this thesis, imagery of old family photographs has been worked over with gouache resist which has been further layered with watercolours, gouache and acrylics. This process can be frustrating and sometimes it appears to have been created with destructive<sup>60</sup> intent. The time and detail that the process takes can be exasperating, but even though this may be so, the ‘playing is essentially satisfying’ and ‘this is true even when it leads to a high degree of anxiety’ (Winnicott, 1971:71).

Through the process of layering, by washing off and working over and over, I reinscribe myself. This is especially true concerning the working over of the old photographs. The past has been covered up, but there are traces remaining. Here are the cinders of memory, which could fire up at any time. It is through the process of creative play that we can change things, reinscribing ourselves. Furthermore, through this process, cinders can begin to glow once again, since it is only by having a past that that one’s fire can burn once more. Derrida compares this to a hearth: ‘There are cinders only insofar as there is a hearth, the fire or place. Cinder as the house of being ...’ (1987:41).

According to Winnicott, we need to have trust in order to play and be creative (1971:148). As a small child, one needs both trust in oneself and trust in one’s mother figure, because ‘the playground is a potential space between the mother and the baby.’ It is this space which joins the mother and her baby (Winnicott, 1971:64), yet experience also leads to trust and it is through this trust that ‘the individual experiences creative living’:

The potential space between baby and mother, between child and family, between individual and society or the world, depends on experience which leads to trust. It can be looked upon as sacred to the individual in that it is here that the individual experiences creative living (Winnicott, 1971:139).

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<sup>60</sup> According to Winnicott, ‘it is generally understood that the reality principle involves the individual in anger and reactive destruction’ but according to his thesis, it is in the creation of reality that that of destruction has a significant role. This places the object on the outside of the self (Winnicott, 1971:122).

To be able to study the play and cultural life of a person one needs to ‘study the fate of the potential space between any one baby and the human (and therefore fallible) mother figure who is essentially adaptive because of love’ (Winnicott, 1971:135). Creative play takes time, just as working the surface of an illustration takes time. And over time there is a possibility for one to come to a form of understanding and empathy.

The object is a symbol of the union of the baby and the mother (or part of the mother). This symbol can be located. It is at the place in space and time where and when the mother is in transition from being (in the baby’s mind) merged in with the infant and alternately being experienced as an object to be perceived rather than conceived of. The use of an object symbolizes the union of two now separate things, baby and mother, *at the point in time and space of the initiation of their state of separateness* (Winnicott, 1971:130).

As highlighted, above by Winnicott, the transitional object ‘symbolizes the union of two’ things that have become separate, baby and mother; and this has happened ‘*in time and space of the initiation of their state of separateness*’.

The confessional narrative, *Portrait in Pieces*, is a transitional object between my mother and myself. I use it as a tool to mediate internal and external realities through transference. Furthermore, it is within the transitional space that the object of transition can exist. And the transitional space is the place between reality and the internal world. This is the space of creative play<sup>61</sup> and the imagination (Ward & Zarate, 2006:84). It is through the assistance of this transitional object that I am able to break away and to go on with my own life script. I reinscribe and perform my script through the autobiographic graphic novel – it is here where I write myself.

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<sup>61</sup> Winnicott states that ‘there is a direct development from transitional phenomena to playing, and from playing to shared playing, and from this to cultural experiences’ (1971:69).

## Conclusion

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In order to be what it is, purity of play, of difference, of consuming destruction, the all-burning must pass into its contrary, guard itself, guard its own monument of loss, appear as what it is in its very disappearance. As soon as it appears, as soon as the fire shows itself, it remains, it keeps hold of itself, it loses itself as a fire. Pure difference, different from (it)self, ceases to be what it is in order to remain what it is. That is the origin of history, the beginning of the going down [déclin], the setting of the sun, the passage to occidental subjectivity. Fire becomes for-(it)self and is lost; yet worse [pire] since better. Then in place of burning all, one begins to grow flowers. The religion of flowers follows the religion of the sun (Derrida, 1991:44).

In constructing the narrative of *Portrait in Pieces*, I had to adopt a self-reflective gaze, allowing myself the distance to write my confessional narrative, my adult experience of a childhood revisited. Language affirms the possibility and potential for that which is silent to become heard, for a fire to burn once again. Lukacher, in his introduction to *Cinders* states:

Derrida plays with the deadly serious proximity and distance of the fire that burns within language. The ‘continuous, tormenting, obsessive meditation about what are and are not, what is meant – or silenced by, cinders’ moves incessantly from mourning to telepathy, from the most impossible distance to the most unbearable proximity (1991:16).

Language is the very thing that divides us, constituting the ‘most impossible distance’ and the ‘most unbearable proximity’, yet it also possesses healing characteristics. Through language, we can talk things over and reach some point of clarity. *Portrait in Pieces* is my ‘post-talking’ of traumatic events that have occurred in my past. According to Phelan, ‘Freud understood that curing the traumatic symptom required a lot of talking afterward’ and by doing this one learns to rehearse the event which has passed, thus the ‘analyst and the analysand learn how to play the past when it happens again in the future’ (Phelan in Phelan & Lane, 1998:7).

This 'talking afterward' supports communicative translatability, and it is through translation that the m[other] and the 'special child' are able to understand, or misunderstand each other. '[T]ranslation marks [the] stage of continued life' according to Benjamin (1973:72). Even though translation is not a copy – it gives the original a life force. Although languages are different, they 'are not strangers to one another, but are, a priori and apart from all historical relationships, interrelated in what they want to express' (Benjamin, 1973:73). Therefore, adds Benjamin, '[N]o translation would be possible if its ultimate essence strove for likeness to the original'. In this case, one cannot interpret or learn anything by comparing oneself to someone else or by thinking one is a clone of someone else (1973:73). The translation is rather something with an 'afterlife – which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living'. In this way 'the original undergoes change', according to Benjamin (1973:73). In other words, our scripts influence each other. My interpretation of the 'mother script' affects her original, thus giving it new meaning. Her original also affects my script, while I attempt to translate it. In this way 'the mother tongue of the translator is transformed as well', and the translation begins to have 'birth pangs of its own' (Benjamin, 1973:74). Derrida tells us that language is a potential space, a space where cinders linger. But it is through the act of play that our silence is truly heard. 'Play and pure difference, those are the secret of an imperceptible all-burning' (1991:44).

*Portrait in Pieces* is the result of the creative process of play. By means of my graphic novel, I inscribe myself in the attempt to make the transition from the 'mother script' to my own personalised script. And it is through this experience, this talking things over that I am able to reach some form of understanding, to learn empathy, to move forward. One learns through experience and without that experience there would be nothing to write. "Experience" is the process through which a person becomes a certain kind of subject with certain kinds of identities' (Smith & Watson, 2002:10).

It is through language that we decode texts and it is through the act of play that we are able to become individuals. But, what we need to consider is who has written that language, who has built the playground.

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Figure 9. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 28-29. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.

Figure 10. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 39. 2007. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.

- Figure 11. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 9 Detail. 2007. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 12. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 11. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 13. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 12 Detail. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 14. Photographer Unknown. *Tannie Anna*. 1895. Sepia Photograph. 5 x 9 cm.
- Figure 15. **Michals, D.** *This Page is My Proof*. 1976 and 1974. Silver Print. 8 x 10 in. Courtesy Sidney Janis Gallery, New York. (Sayre, 1989:60)
- Figure 16. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces Page 6 Detail*. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 17. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 36. 2007. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 18. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 35 Detail. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 19. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 18 Detail. 2007. Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 20. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 31 Detail. 2006. Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 21. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 11 Detail. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 22. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 18 Detail. 2007. Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.

- Figure 23. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 31 Detail. 2006. Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 24. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 8 Detail. 2007. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 25. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 28 Detail. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 26. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 37 Detail. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 27. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 14-15 Detail. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 28. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 35. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 29. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 41. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 30. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 29 Detail. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 31. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 19 Detail. 2007. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 32. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 3. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.
- Figure 33. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 39 Detail. 2007. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.

Figure 34. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 37 Detail. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.

Figure 35. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 8. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.

Figure 36. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, End Pages. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 1. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 5. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 2. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 27 Detail. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 3. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 36. 2007. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 4. Pages from My Mother's Photo Album. 2008.  
Original Photo Album. 28 x 50 cm.

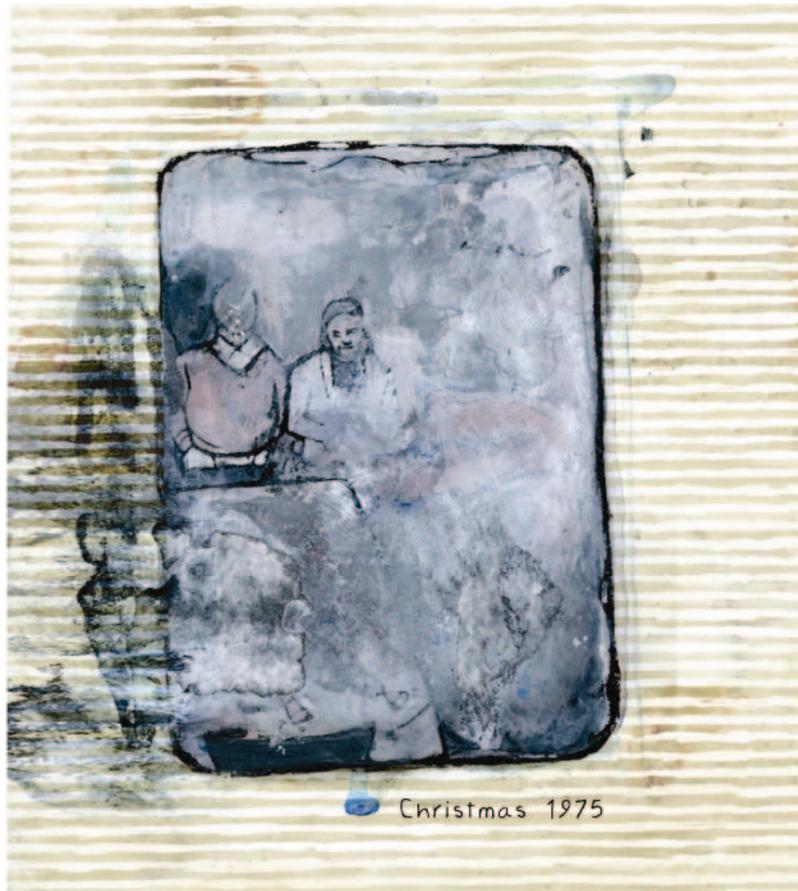


Figure 5. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 7 Detail. 2008.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.

THIS IS ME IN MY FIRST YEAR OF GRADE 2. I SAY FIRST YEAR BECAUSE I SPENT 2 YEARS THERE. WHAT MAKES THE SITUATION EVEN BETTER IS THAT I SPENT THESE YEARS IN A 'SPECIAL' CLASS FOR CHILDREN WITH 'SPECIAL' NEEDS. IT WAS KNOWN AS THE AID CLASS AND I HAPPENED TO BE THE ONLY 'SPECIAL' GIRL THERE.



Catherine, Grade 2. Pretoria

I used to be quite diligent about a lot of things that I didn't understand when I was in Primary School. After that my diligence and family photos were stored in a supermarket packet. I've been meaning to sort them out for the past 12 years now ...

Figure 6. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 5. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.

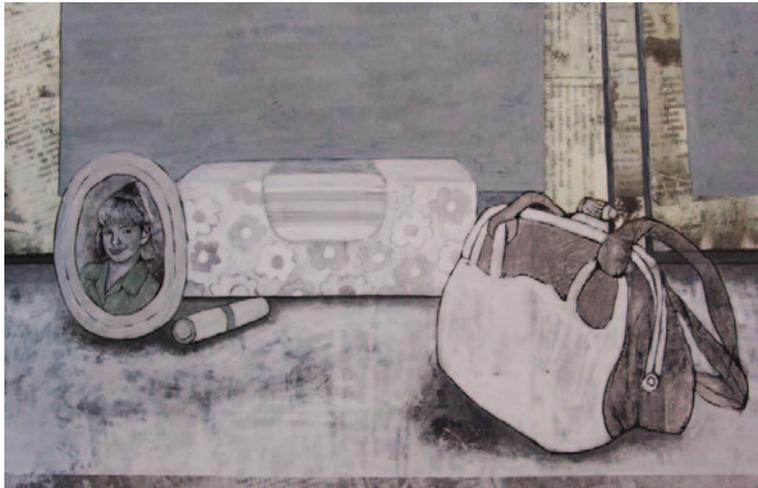


Figure 7. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 18-19. 2007.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.

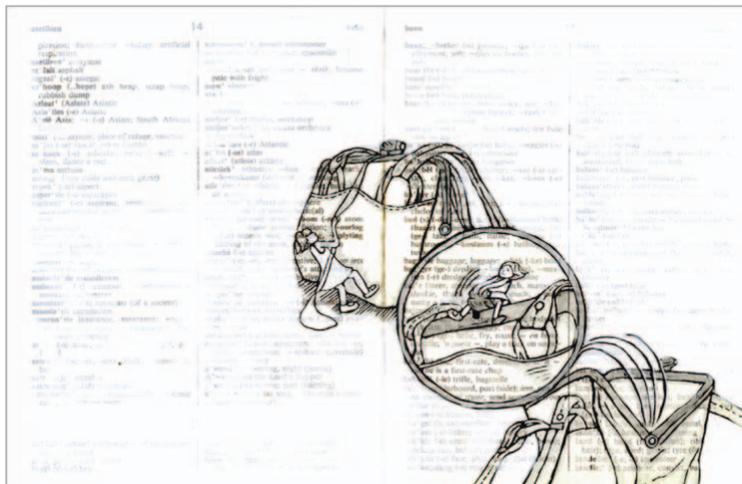


Figure 8. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 22-23. 2008.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 9. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 28-29. 2008.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 10. Catherine Gauché, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 39. 2007. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.

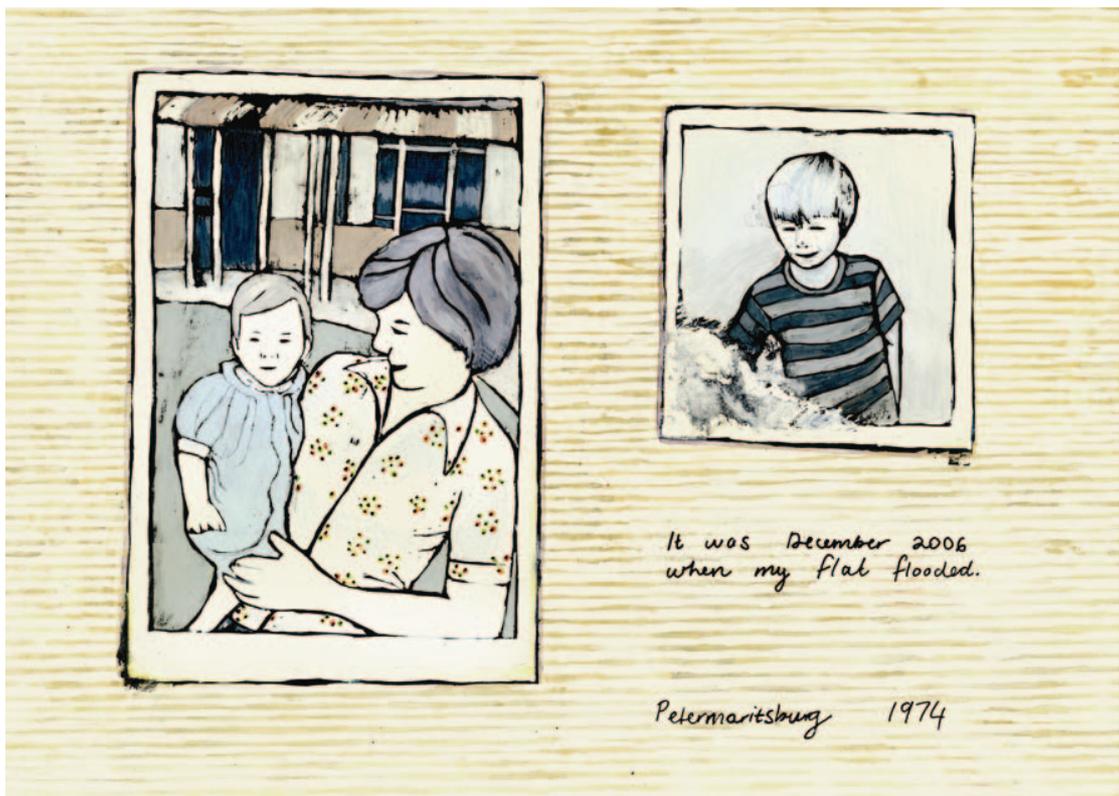


Figure 11. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 9 Detail. 2007.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 12. Catherine Gauché, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 11. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 13

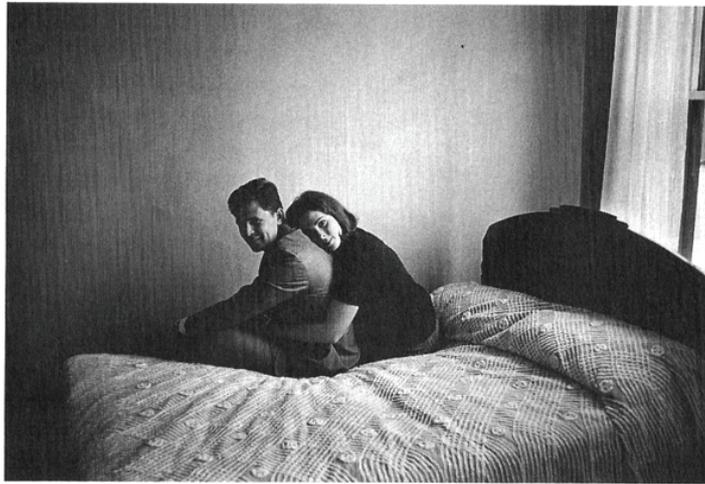


Figure 14

Figure 13. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 12 Detail. 2008.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.

Figure 14. Photographer Unknown. *Tannie Anna*. 1895. Sepia Photograph. 5 x 9 cm.

THIS PHOTOGRAPH IS MY PROOF



*This photograph is my proof. There was that afternoon when things were still good between us, and we embraced and were so happy she had loved me. Look, see for yourself.*

*Dorothea Michals 1975*

Figure 15. **Michals, D.** *This Page is My Proof*. 1976 and 1974. Silver Print. 8 x 10 in. Courtesy Sidney Janis Gallery, New York. (Sayre, 1989:60).



Figure 16. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces Page 6 Detail*. 2008.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.

*That Morning*

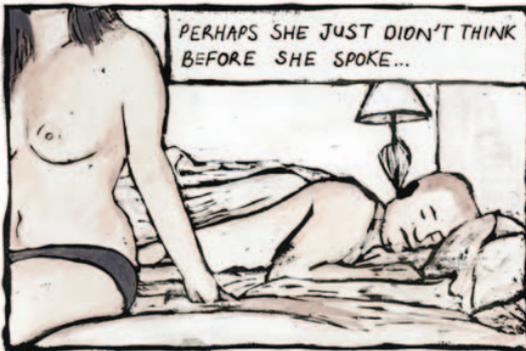


Figure 17. Catherine Gauché, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 36. 2007. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 18. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 35. 2007.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.

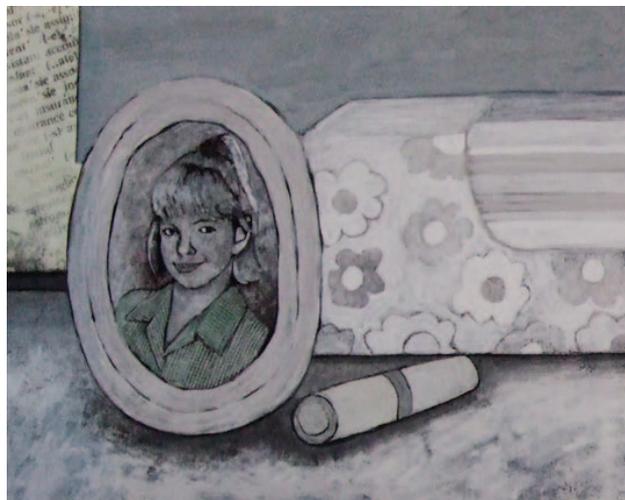


Figure 19. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 18 Detail. 2008.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.

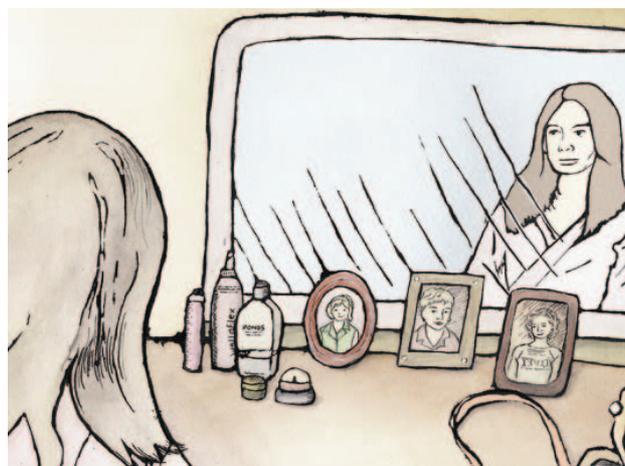


Figure 20. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 31 Detail. 2006.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 21. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 11 Detail. 2008.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.

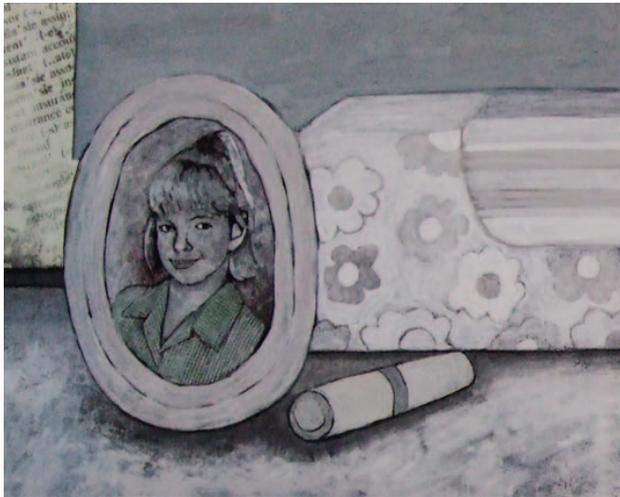


Figure 22. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 18 Detail. 2007.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 23. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 31 Detail. 2006.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 24. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 8 Detail. 2007.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 25. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 28 Detail. 2008.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 26. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 37 Detail. 2008.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 27. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 14-15 Detail. 2008.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 28. Catherine Gauché, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 35. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 29. Catherine Gauché, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 41. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 30. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 29 Detail. 2008.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 31



Figure 32

Figure 31. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 19 Detail. 2007.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.

Figure 32. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 3. 2008.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 33. Catherine Gauché, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 39 Detail. 2007.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 34. Catherine Gauché, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 37 Detail. 2008.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.



Figure 35. **Catherine Gauché**, *Portrait in Pieces*, Page 8. 2008.  
Mixed Media on Paper. 14,35 x 19,3 cm.

This book is my confession. It is my confession of things that I've been carrying around for many years. It was never, never my intention to write a book in my family, I really not my intention. If I have done so, or if this book is ever to be so, I can thank myself.

First of all, I need to confess that I have told my mother that she is a narcissist and am not sure if I ever told her that. She will never, never forgive me if she reads it and I cannot let that happen. One can't be absolutely honest I didn't think about the consequences when I began writing this. It first was just a couple of experimental illustrations that I hadn't thought of in a book format. Now it has become something which has concerned my life. It's all I think of and it gives me nightmares. I feel incredibly guilty about 'Portrait in Pieces'. I often wonder if it has all been worth it. Is it worth the points for my Master's degree? (What is if my marks are decent) And what about my mother's reaction to publishing? Could I ever publish this? What if I shame my family? What if my father finds out? Could I maybe publish it in Romania and use the same name? But can I live with such a secret? Then I can't even show the book off. It will kind of be like acting in a film movie - it's of part of you that you're sold but you don't want people who you respect to know about it. I can't say that because of those predicaments I can't wait to get it all over with so that I can move on and get on with my life. As I said so that it's clear from the start, I love and admire my mother very much but we have a complex and tough relationship for a part of my life. Now that I'm older and have a little more of a perspective, well, many of

the same manner. The book has helped me realise just how easy it is to mess things up. I put myself in the position with this book to be self-reflective. It's given me the chance to see things in a new perspective, especially a special girl to a young adult struggling with potential problems and unresolved anger. And just to clear things up a little for those of you who may be wondering I am not a 'retarded or mentally challenged' or anything like that. I'm not a 'nerd' either. I had a learning difficulty when I was 6 years old. I think that - you didn't exactly write get the whole school concept there, it was a bit of a mess - and as for the drinking issue - I'm still trying to figure that one out. I want to be in control of my life the way it did my mother.

Getting back to confessions... I have admitted that there is one person in this book whom I did originally have a rather thought about but then I realised he is an old ex-boyfriend. The guy from 'When you're in love' really hurt me years ago and in a way I was hoping to somehow deal with that come. But that has changed as I've found myself lucky enough to have a man in my life who has given me a reminder love or palm trees. No, could anything be better than that. He's also prepared to deal with my 'special' child or mother issues that I may have. To be honest I feel bad that I haven't included him in more of this book. He is after all the leading actor of my life. Thinking of which my father will be so my father, where I will be presenting this book. I sincerely hope that my public display of things from our family won't offend him. I don't want to cause him to be disappointed in me. He and my mother are divorced but he may still think I'm being disrespectful. I don't want any of my family members will think of my book... but I hope they will understand that I wasn't looking for sympathy or attention but rather looking for answers. These answers that I've been looking for. These answers that I've been looking for. I am I absolutely capable of being in control of my own life.

Figure 36. Catherine Gauché, *Portrait in Pieces*, End Pages. 2008. Mixed Media on Paper. 28,7 x 19,3 cm.