CHAPTER FOUR: COMING TO

In this chapter I will analyse examples from a synthesis of reflections about the creation process of Coming To through a consultation of the theory discussed in the preceding chapters, in order to demonstrate the centrality of my own personal archive in the creation of this Physical Theatre work, and by extension, Physical Theatre more broadly. Through the discussion of particular examples from Coming To, this chapter will reveal how Physical Theatre improvisations, as complex, holistic processes engage the body as archive. An archive constructed through intersecting layers of personal experience defined by social, cultural, historical and political contexts.

It will demonstrate the ways in which Physical Theatre processes both rely on and reflect the interrelated workings of Physical Intelligence and the body as archive. It will do so by demonstrating that the very same Physical Intelligence, which is responsible for the embodied inscription of the archive, is also responsible for excavating its traces within improvisational strategies that engage the interrelated body-mind nexus of the performer.

It will further consider the mediating role of the filters of ‘technique’ or ‘forming’ in relation to the archive, examining how these filters translate the archive and give it material form. It will also begin to question the role of the archive in the use of technique and forming choices.

Approach and stylistic choices.

This chapter employs a phenomenological approach. The ‘intuitive description’, forming the first level of the phenomenological method, is sourced from the material emerging
from the workbook and the journal kept in the creation process of *Coming To*. This intuitive description seeks to capture the ‘pre-reflective experience’ where ‘consciousness is asked to speak directly and not to mirror itself, mime or perform’ (Fraleigh 2000:59). Within the second level of the phenomenological approach we come ‘to understand what has been discovered through the descriptive process – what the experience itself has uncovered’ (Ibid). In this chapter this second level of the phenomenological method will be facilitated through an intersection with further reflection documents captured at critical points in the research process. One such intersection point is a ‘summative’ reflection document that was written after the first draft of *Coming To* had been created and performed. This document was written during the hiatus between this first draft in July 2007 and the commencement of work towards the final performance in November 2007. This break from the creation process allowed for a removed perspective in which I could assimilate the primary reflections emerging out of the workbook and the journal with a slightly more distanced appraisal of how the work was developing. This document therefore already began to engage the second level of the phenomenological method in how it attempted to make meaning of the experiences within the creation process. Another document that serves as an intersection point within the second level is one in which I logged my responses to the viewing of video recordings of improvisations and rehearsals. This document is valuable because its distanced perspective allows for a different, yet simultaneously first-person perspective on the same phenomena.

The research and writing of the preceding theoretical frame becomes a significant intersection point against which meaning is constructed within this second level.
This phenomenological approach means that many descriptions from the journal, workbook and reflective documents will appear in this chapter. Please note that all such material will be identifiable through its presentation as italicised indented text. This material will be referenced according to its source i.e ‘Journal’, ‘Workbook’, ‘Reflection document’ and ‘Video response document’.

**Coming To: Intention, context and thematic concerns**

The central choreographic intention in the making of *Coming To* was the exploration of the relationship between memory and the body. This intention was designed specifically to facilitate the investigation of the central research claim at the outset of the project: that memory is stored in the body.

I wished to re-construct, re-member and (re)tell something of my late immigrant Greek grandmother’s narrative through an interrogation of the traces of her life that were embedded in my body, both genetically and through my own embodied memory of her.

My grandmother, Erifili Kassimatis,\(^1\) left Greece in 1935 and went to join my grandfather, whom she had not seen for six years, in South Africa. She lived in South Africa until she died at the age of 86. Her life in South Africa revolved around her five daughters, her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She never learnt to speak English fluently and remained devout in her Greek Orthodox beliefs, committed to and involved in the small but tight-knit Greek community in Bloemfontein, where she lived. I deemed the telling of this narrative to be significant as it was one of many narratives of (Greek) immigrant women which has not been told either in the collective archive of the Greek community.

\(^1\) Please note that from this point, whenever I refer to my grandmother’s narrative I will be referring to it as ‘Erifili’s’ narrative.
in South Africa or in South Africa more broadly. In fact, while my grandfather spoke often about the details of his early life, making the stories of his youth common knowledge within the family space, the details of my grandmother’s life were seldom mentioned. It struck me that the narratives of women of my grandmother’s generation generally remained untold in the largely patriarchal Greek-South African family space. The muting of these narratives resonated more broadly for me with South Africa’s historical white Nationalist (and patriarchal) silencing of marginal narratives, which pervaded my upbringing and which were silenced on the basis of race, culture, gender and sexual orientation.

As a counterpoint against Erifili’s narrative I wished to posit aspects of my own life narrative: that of a contemporary gay Greek-South African woman. I chose to bring these two narratives together for several reasons. On the one hand it was in response to the political context mentioned above that I felt compelled to offer aspects of my own narrative; a context – in which I grew up – that valued certain narratives whilst silencing others. On the other hand the juxtaposition of these two narrative strands played a significant role in allowing an interrogation of the relationship between two fundamental yet conflicting aspects of my own archive: my ‘Greekness’ and my ‘gayness’. Both narrative strands contained parallel tensions of otherness within a particular context.

Within Erifili’s narrative this ‘otherness’ emerged through cultural and linguistic difference, where her Greek identity set her apart in 1930s white South Africa. Erifili identified with her language, cultural heritage and belief systems and invested strongly in the Greek community. Like many Diasporic communities, although distanced from their land of origin, this community rigidly upheld their heritage and belief systems. The ‘otherness’ in my own narrative strand emerges in the context of my gayness within this
same predominantly hetero-normative Greek-South African community. Whilst my identity has not solely been constructed in relation to this community its foundational importance cannot be denied, nor can the fact that my present familial relationships play out strongly within this context.

By sourcing these narratives from the body, and thereby relying on the workings of Physical Intelligence to ‘speak’ these narratives, the work sought to challenge and undermine the patriarchal thought responsible for this silencing and muting of marginal narratives.

The ‘otherness’, which emerged for different reasons in each narrative, was the thread that brought the two together but it was simultaneously also the thing that caused a fundamental conflict and rupture between the two. It was through an exploration of these very conflicts, tensions and ruptures in my subject-body, through the bringing together of these two narratives that I had wished to create a work that explored and questioned issues of sexual identity in relation to cultural identity. By sourcing the two narratives largely through my own somatic memory I discovered that an interrogation of the tensions emerging out of the collision between the two revealed a great deal about the ways in which opposing discourses, inscribed in the body, construct a sense of self.

**Anatomical Cartography**

In order to convey the idea of the body as an historical and experiential imprint, I employed the metaphor of *Anatomical Cartography* in conceiving *Coming To*. This metaphor likened the body to a map, suggesting that one’s life experiences leave traces on the body. The ‘reading’ of the body-map, either through tracing pathways along the surface of the body with the finger, stopping at significant points on the body which held
the value of certain geographic locations, memories or experiences, or through the transposition of a map projected onto the body, became a pivotal motif in *Coming To*. It tried to capture the disjuncture experienced within my subject-body where conflicting cultural and sexual subjectivities overlapped at the same co-ordinates. Essentially it was an exploration of the collisions, intrusions and intersections of historically rendered versions of self that became the source for material in the work.

**Plotting the Journey**

A contextualization of the methodological approach in the creation of *Coming To* is essential for two reasons. First, it locates the case study within the praxis of Physical Theatre, thereby grounding its approach in the underlying principles of Physical Theatre which rely on the harnessing of Physical Intelligence, as laid out in the preceding chapter. Second, an understanding of the approach provides the necessary contextual framework for the discussion of the examples that will demonstrate the research claims. The methodological approach will therefore be divided into two key sections that look at methods of preparation or continued training within the process and the range of improvisations employed.

**Preparation:**

*I need to find a new way of working within training and preparation time, to free myself from old movement habits…I need to reconnect from the inside* (Workbook, 2007).

This entry in my workbook at the start of the process captures a clear cause and effect connection between preparation/training and a language or way of moving. I clearly expressed the need to address and change an approach to training that would allow for a range of responses within improvisation that was not defined by habitual movement. I
had become increasingly aware of the fact that my recent choreographic work had a similar and almost predictable aesthetic through the repeated use of the same vocabulary of movement. I feared that this habitual vocabulary of movement had become set for me as a vocabulary of response within improvisatory situations over recent years.

One of my goals at the start of the project was to create an original and evocative movement language that could express the material in the most direct way possible. I therefore re-aligned myself to an integral principle, or perhaps to an ideal of Physical Theatre, which promotes the development of a language of movement specific to the thematic concerns and demands of the work. To this end I committed myself to engage:

*A gentle, mindful and integrated approach where intention, observation, experience and the senses would be foregrounded in training and preparation* (Workbook, 2007).

I believed that this approach, entailing an immersion in psycho-physical preparation methods, would be the best way to ensure a break away from old movement habits as the practice of bringing mind to body and body to mind would stimulate my capacity for an increased inner awareness or the ability to ‘tune-in’ at the level of the impulses. As argued in the preceding chapter a focus on such methods allows for the rendering of impulses or perceptual cues in the most unfettered way. Not only was this important to me for the artistic integrity of the work but it would also create a level playing ground for the research since part of the research question was to address the role of technique, vocabulary and the devices of forming as filters or mediators of my archive.
My first three sessions in the rehearsal room were dedicated simply to this ‘reconnecting from the inside’ without any focus on starting to create material, although it can be argued that this was in fact the start of the work as it laid the foundations for the excavations to come. These sessions were loosely structured by beginning with Feldenkrais exercises, which operate through the repetition of small simple movements placing a great emphasis on ‘sensing’ the postural shifts and realignments that they are designed to effect from within. The sessions then moved on to a series of stretches, self-massage, simple sequences of descending to the floor, rolling and returning up to standing and simple walks through space. I later called these sessions ‘acknowledging the body’ because although these movement sequences were familiar sequences of movement, sourced from longer chains of movement used as warm-up and training exercises within a contemporary release technique, I approached them with a new attitude of ‘returning anew’ to each movement through a process of tuning in and mindfulness.

_A roll over the back has become invisible automatic technique… I would like to regain a ‘mindfulness’ of each movement...to gain a global awareness of each part of the body through space_ (Journal 2007).

Rather than focus on large sequences of movement, which I had habitually been employing, to maintain strength and stamina or set exercises derived from contemporary release technique classes to build strength and gain flexibility, I focussed on smaller, simpler units of movement such as a roll down to the floor and up again trying to stay present through each moment of the movement with a global sense of the entire body. It was therefore largely an attitude shift that marked my approach to preparation. A reflection noted about stretching captures this shift in attitude:
I’d like not to drive and push against the tightness and inflexibility, but sit with it first, acknowledge it, feel it, embrace it – and then allow it to shift (Journal 2007).

I also introduced colour-visualizations into simple stretches, identifying a colour that matched the intensity of the feeling of the stretch and then worked towards visualizing a shift in the colour to a warmer, more comfortable colour, matching a release of the intensity in the stretch.

This approach to preparation thus sought to strengthen and activate the connections between imagination and movement, thought and sensation, without imposing a particular codified vocabulary. This method of work became the basis of warm-ups before each work session. While these warm-ups were loosely structured I would allow for a certain unplanned flow from one activity, or unit of movement, to the next. The warm-ups thus had an improvisatory quality to them in which I allowed myself to be led by the needs of each particular day and session. Warm-ups became a space of ‘tuning in’ which is essential within devised work that operates through improvisation as it offers the opportunity of ‘transformation’, heightening awareness and allowing for a sensitised ‘listening’ to the impulses emerging from within.

Marshal reminds us that:

A good warm-up truly understands and utilises the interconnection of the mind and body. The transformation offered by a warm-up is for the entire entity, not just the physical structure (Marshall 2007:163 – 164).

The warm-ups thus became a time for harnessing Physical Intelligence through a focus on ‘tuning in’. The body-state created by this ‘tuning in’ mirrors the state of rest, or the ‘moment of simplicity, of being present to itself,’ that exists at the most basic level of the
human organism, the cellular level, before it ‘divides to reproduce itself or specializes in one particular area of activity’ (Hartley 1995:11). According to Hartley ‘any act of creativity requires this period of pregnant rest where many separate elements begin to come together in a state of preconscious awareness’ (Hartley 1995:11). I would argue that this ‘tuning in’ further ‘taps into’ the layers of inscription of the personal archive, bringing them together - ‘in a state of preconscious awareness’.

**The Excavations: tools and layers**

The employment of a range of improvisational strategies was important because in the same way that an archaeologist requires different tools to excavate different parts of an archaeological dig, at times moving vast tracts of earth while at other times removing sand particle by particle, so too do improvisational strategies need to shift in the process of excavating embodied memory. If we are to follow the notion of bodily inscription further it can be argued that different lived experiences are etched into the body-mind nexus at various levels. Traces of my own narrative as well as traces of Erifilli’s narrative would have left infinitely complex and layered traces inscribed through spatio-temporal and socio-cultural perspectives. While some of these traces had been inscribed over many years, etched deeply and subjected to layers of re-inscription, becoming complicately embedded within the fabric of my mind-body nexus, others were reasonably new. The excavation of these inscriptions and the eventual development of movement and theatrical material therefore required the following improvisational tools.²

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² The second half of this chapter will address the fact that it was only through the process of reflection that I became conscious of and recognized the depth of some of these inscriptions through an analysis of the effect they had in shaping the work.
Structured and Unstructured Improvisations

These different improvisational tools translated into the use of different strategies and approaches such as the use of both structured and unstructured improvisations. A central differentiating factor between these two approaches is that of the stimulus. Within the unstructured improvisation, which can also be viewed as an ‘open improv’, there is no externally provided stimulus as there is no specifically designed task, imperative or purpose framing the improvisation. Instead, the ‘open improv’, only framed by the space and time in which it is to occur, allows for unrestricted play and exploration in which anything can emerge. Images, movements, sensations, motifs, sounds or text that emerge from within this space of ‘anything goes’ go on to become the stimulus for further response within the improvisation. In this way the stimuli emerge from within the improvisation. I would argue however that engaging in such an improvisation within a process towards a work with clear thematic and conceptual concerns can never be entirely neutral as the concerns of the work will inevitably be present at varying levels of consciousness or unconsciousness. In a sense they too become inscribed in the body and will therefore filter through in moments of exploration. However, such improvisations were included as they seem to provide the tools for excavating material that is present-centred: how the performer is feeling, what they are thinking, their mood, their concerns of that particular day will strongly influence what filters through in the improvisation.

There were also various modes of applying structured improvisations in the process. In some instances this would simply mean that one clear stimulus was to be explored within an improvisation, but the means with which it was to be explored remained unspecified. These stimuli were further sourced in diverse ways. At times they emerged out of research carried out and choices made about a particular aspect that warranted
exploration. At other times I employed alternative means of sourcing. For instance an early improvisation started from an exploration of a very strong body sensation that had emerged within a regressive-hypnotherapy session that I had undergone earlier in the week. The hypnosis had focussed on my position within the matrilineal dynamics of my family. The body sensation that emerged thus held a clear connection to explorations that sought to reconstruct aspects of Erifili's narrative.

Another way of employing structured improvisations was through a focus on structural elements of movement. Several improvisations were based within the structural confines of a Greek cultural dance form called the Syrtos. I selected this dance because it could structurally contain or hold an exploration of the central issues of personal and cultural memory and therefore an exploration of sexual identity against cultural identity. In exploring its circular progression through space through a combination of forwards and backwards steps I sought to explore the dramatic tensions inherent in its structure. I utilised the dramatic tensions structurally embedded in the dance to allow for the parallel explorations of the tensions between my cultural and sexual identity.

Research into the history of this dance revealed that according to Greek tradition, particularly on the Greek islands, the Syrtos was considered as the ‘wedding dance’, the first dance to be danced by the bride and groom on their wedding day. Furthermore it was said to be the last dance that the women of Souli danced before flinging

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3 This dance form became an important metaphor capturing the intersection of the tensions between my cultural and sexual identity in the final work.
4 Souli was the name given to a group of four villages famed for their resistance to the Ottoman Empire in the early 19th Century (Hellenica n.d).
themselves off a cliff-face to escape their advancing Ottoman enemies who had slain all the men of their villages.

Clearly this dance is laden with particular values in the Greek cultural imaginary. Not only is it strongly bound to heteronormative values as a celebratory dance of the union of man and woman, but also to notions of nationhood and cultural pride. As the last dance danced by the women of Souli, giving them the courage to jump off the cliff, the Syrtos enabled their escape from an assimilation into Ottoman life and the dissolution of their own cultural and religious lives. Simultaneously the women symbolically re-wed themselves to their men through the execution of this dance thereby stitching together heteronormative values, cultural belonging and national pride.

Most importantly however, the Syrtos provided an interesting intersection of cultural and personal memory for me. I recall that it was always the opening dance at the Greek parties of my childhood; both in small family gatherings dancing with grandparents, cousins, uncles and aunts as well as at large social gatherings, bringing everyone in the community together despite their bickerings. In the Syrtos everyone held hands and moved together, backwards and forwards but always around and around in one circle. I recall too that it was mostly the men who led the circle and held the privilege of performing variations to the basic steps, such as athletic jumps and twirls, while the women maintained the basic pattern.

From my own reflections the Syrtos emerges as a dance embedded with firm gender codes that somehow reflect the gender dynamics of its dancers. It also engenders a strong sense of social cohesion and a sense of community. Together with the historical and national values attached to the dance in the Greek cultural imaginary the Syrtos
literally became a container for a set of cultural meanings against which I could explore the tensions emerging out my position as ‘other’ in this community because of my sexual orientation.

The dance itself, with its basic twelve-step pattern, thus became a fertile structural container offering the opportunity to explore inscriptions at both deep levels of social and cultural inscription as well as those inscribed by personal memory. Abiding to strict structural rules within an improvisation, in this case maintaining the twelve-step spatial pattern, somehow encourages exploration at a deeper level as there are definitive movement restrictions and patterns that must be followed. The commitment to somatic play in this instance entailed a deep exploration of what lay within these structures. The repetition of these movement patterns through space not only allowed for an exploration of their dramatic tensions but allowed for the filtering through of images, thoughts and ideas that somehow paralleled these tensions.

Collaborative Improvisations

Although Coming To was a solo work I collaborated with both a scenic designer, Naomi van Niekerk, and a Digital Artist, Tegan Bristow. Apart from my solo improvisations which made up the bulk of the creation process, I also had collaborative improvisation sessions with both van Niekerk and Bristow. These improvisations became tools that allowed for various levels of exploration through the presentation of unique stimuli. The concrete external stimuli provided by van Niekerk, in the form of selected objects and sculptured spaces yielded much exploration and play, however it was the interaction with Bristow that facilitated the most unique possibilities in investigating the layering of memory as inscribed in the body-mind.
Bristow wrote a computer programme that enabled the insertion of a live video stream, in real time, into edited footage. The improvisation was therefore set up in the following way. A camera in the rehearsal room, rigged to the computer operated by Bristow, filmed me in real time. This live stream was sent through the computer programme that inserted the stream into pre-edited footage sourced from old cine films of my childhood. Through the mediation of the computer technology an image of my silhouette was superimposed into the footage and was projected onto the wall of the rehearsal room. This allowed me to ‘interact’, as it were, with moving images of myself as a child as well as with images of my grandmother in the present time of the improvisation. The improvisation entailed an exploration of possible interactions in which my actions in the rehearsal space played out with the moments captured on cine footage many years ago on the rehearsal room wall. In a way this improvisation provided a visual manifestation of the intersections of self, as rendered through different points in time, which the work was exploring. Through the intersection of time frames, of my present self with moments from my own history, the improvisation, through this visual interface, allowed me to ‘virtually’ re-enter the world from which I sourced material for the making of the work.

This improvisation enabled the exploration or current responses to visual representations of moments of my own history. These ‘current responses’ are indeed also a part of the personal archive, as Damasio reminds us, in his explanation of the neural basis of ‘self’: ‘what is happening to us now is, in fact, happening to a concept of self based on the past, including the past that was current only a moment ago’ (Damasio 1994:240). Essentially this improvisation allowed for the simultaneous excavation of multiple layers of inscription through the exploration of both the immediate past and the distant past in which multiple versions of self were embedded.
The above improvisation functioned then primarily through a collaboration with multiple versions of self. Another variation of collaboration used in improvisations as specific tools for ‘excavation’ was the use of an improvisation sourced from the field of ‘Authentic Movement’\(^5\) practice. I accessed this improvisation initially through Tufnell and Crickmay’s adaptation of this approach in their book *A Widening Field: Journeys in Body and Imagination* (2004).

Essentially Authentic Movement explores the relationship between a mover and a witness… the mover listens inwardly and finds a movement arising from a hidden prompting, a cellular impulse… The witness brings a receptive quality of clear attention to the mover (Authentic Movement Institute n.d).

The movement improvisation, which is called ‘Moving for a Witness’, involved the exploration of stimuli that had emerged through ‘open improvisations’ earlier in the process. However this exploration was carried out in the presence of a witness. The witness observed a series of improvisations and captured her reflections immediately in writing. These reflections were based on sensory impressions that she perceived whilst witnessing the improvisations, she also captured images that seemed to emerge for her out of the improvisation.

As a solo performer-creator within this work, with no external choreographer or director, I felt that ‘moving for a witness’ would enable me ‘to get to know the life and significance of [my] images more deeply’ (Tufnell and Crickmay 2004:42). I felt that engaging with an improvisation in the presence of another person would offer a valuable external

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\(^5\) Authentic Movement ‘is a completely self-directed form in which individuals may discover a movement pathway that offers a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious’ (Authentic Movement Institute n.d). The practice is informed by ‘developmental psychology, somatic epistemology, Jungian thought, dance ethnology, and mystical studies’ (Ibid) and is used for ‘creative and integrative movement exploration in the contexts of dance movement therapy, meditation and contemporary dance movement improvisation’ (Ibid).
perspective on the images that emerged. A certain danger exists when one is immersed within an improvisation, functioning with a heightened awareness at the level of the impulses. The strength or theatrical possibilities of particular images that emerge in the improvisation can be lost since one is emerged in the experience of attending and responding to further impulses.

As Tufnell and Crickmay go on to explain: ‘what we make, or do, or say, grows and comes more alive for us as it is heard, received by another…’ (Ibid). The responses that the witness offered me after each improvisation were used as the focus or as specific stimuli for beginning a new improvisation. This allowed for a continuation of the improvisation at deepening layers, thoroughly investigating images, movements or motifs that had emerged. One of the immediate benefits of moving for a witness thus entails the continuation of the improvisation, deepening the journey into the material that has been unearthed. This is not possible when trying a similar approach on one’s own through video documentation due to the obvious time delays inherent in this approach. In this instance the performer-creator must break the flow and body-state of the improvisation to observe and extract such information.

The role of the witness proved to be invaluable as the inherent dialogic relationship between my movements and the witness’s reflections allowed for a deep investigation and excavation. The witness’s reflections on the emergent material enabled explorations that I would not have arrived at on my own. It therefore opened up the impulses to be explored. The second half of this chapter will refer to an example emerging from this improvisation.
The cine trigger

The above improvisational tools related largely to the excavation of material relating to my own narrative. Excavating material relating to Erifilli’s narrative proved to be rather challenging. I was attempting to source material pertaining to her narrative through my own embodied memory but my own recollections of my grandmother were somehow limited by my adolescent memory of her.

In attempting to reconstruct something of Erifilli’s narrative, I had hoped to come to a greater understanding of her from the perspective of my present adult self, thereby offering a more nuanced representation of her, beyond that which my knowledge, experience and memory of her as my fourteen year old self, the age I was at when she died, could offer. I was also acutely aware of the subjective nature of familial interviews that I had conducted as part of my research. Although these rendered some information and factual details of which I had very little prior knowledge they nonetheless offered versions of my grandmother defined by the interviewee’s relationship to her. These familial accounts of her were not sufficient for me in constructing a dialogue between our two narratives. I therefore sought alternative means through which I could re-construct aspects of her narrative. The most significant means emerged through the consultation of and engagement with cine footage of my grandmother.

I sifted through reams of cine footage filmed mostly by my mother that captured a great deal of my childhood years between the ages of nine months and ten years old. I isolated footage of my grandmother and through careful observation, began a process of reconstructing her gestural language and movement patterns through a transposition of her gestures, her ways of walking and standing onto my own body. This was achieved largely through imitation, aided significantly by my mime training, through which I was
able to analyse and reconstruct the shape or posture of her body, via an analysis of the relational placement of body parts and the rhythm of her movement. Character work within a particular mime training is based on the interconnected triad of ‘rhythm, shape and attitude’, in which one can begin to form physical caricatures from any one of these three starting points since each aspect within the triad informs the other. In this way I was hoping that inhabiting her movement language would allow for an experience of her ‘attitude of being’ within the world.

Filtering Erifilli’s physical mode of being through my own body in the present was somehow literally the ‘closest’ I could come to engaging with a sense of her from my adult perspective. As previously discussed, certain mannerisms and recurring gestures and traits reflect certain ways of being within particular histories. Hartley affirms this when she states: ‘our movement and postural patterns can offer explicit descriptions of our psychological process and attitudes of mind at gross and subtler levels’ (Hartley 1995:113). I utilized reconstructions of these gestures as short series of movements fully acknowledging that my kinaesthetic ‘sensing toward’ an understanding of her was being filtered both through my existent knowledge of her, and through the agenda of the present work, in which I was perhaps seeking certain readings of her. This mode of ‘re-membering’ or re-living her movements through my body was indeed about my understanding of her from my present perspective.

I gradually allowed these short series of movements to develop into longer and more complex movement sequences through a process of improvisation, to allow for an opening up of their possibilities through stylistic abstraction.

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6 As taught by Andrew Buckland at Rhodes University 1994 - 1995
This exercise in re-construction and its use in improvisation further brings together Grosz’s two notions of voluntary and involuntary inscriptions within my body. The involuntary inscriptions of my grandmother’s daily life in her broader context were manifest in the way in which they wrote her movement. The voluntary inscription of my own training in this instance allowed me to affectively explore her movement patterns and gestures.

The reviewing of the cine material not only allowed for the reconstruction of strings of her gestural vocabulary but it also triggered further memories of other gestures that were part of her movement language. One such example was the way in which as a devout Orthodox Christian woman, the sign of the cross was intricately woven into her gestural vocabulary. I recalled clearly the weight and presence of this gesture through the way in which it often replaced verbal expressions such as “God forbid!” or “If God so wills it”. Since my memory of this was so strongly activated I was able to include an exploration of this gesture in further improvisations which resulted in the eventual development of a scene constructed around stereotypical Greek gestural vocabulary that encoded responses to homosexuality.

Inhabiting Erifilli’s postural and gestural vocabulary allowed me to both remember a great deal more about her than I thought I did as well as achieve a different understanding of her from a kinaesthetic perspective. A strong connection can be seen between the activation of Physical Intelligence; which in these improvisations was harnessed through the ways in which body shape, movement rhythms and patterns, feelings, attitudes and qualities of being in the world were stitched together and the activation of increased memory recall. The kinaesthetic memory of my grandmother that
developed throughout the process allowed for prominent images or memories to sift through into consciousness very strongly. Within my workbook I record:

something about the footage reminds me of her weight, her energy – with this I remember her before her speech impediment.

My grandmother had developed a Parkinson’s disease-related speech problem many years before she died, I had until this point always evoked memories of her with a stutter. It is interesting to note that this kinaesthetic memory allowed me to access recollections from far further back than I thought I could remember.

One particular image that emerged through this activation of memory was that of her kneading dough as she baked. The gesture of kneading emerged fairly strongly within several improvisations becoming a recurring motif throughout the process. A discussion of this particular gesture becomes the central example in the discussion that follows.

The Presence of the Archive

I had set out to create a dialogue between my grandmother’s narrative and my own through the juxtaposition of fragmentary episodes from each of these narratives. This intended structure was to reflect the fragmentary and often non-linear nature of memory recollection and it was through this juxtaposition of fragments of Erifilli’s narrative against fragments of mine, that the work would construct meaning.

However, a central problem emerged within the creation process that had to do with an imbalance in the weighting between the two. It seemed to me that I was developing far more material that related to Erifilli’s narrative than that which related to my own narrative. My own narrative was to deal with my experiences of coming to terms with my
sexual identity in relation to my Greek cultural identity. The imbalance of material became apparent and problematic when it came to structuring and forming the work. This issue was confirmed as problematic through feedback given by my supervisor after showings of the work at different stages of its evolution. For the episodic structure to work, allowing the collision and intrusion of one narrative into the other, there had to be a fair balance of material from both narratives.

The discussion and analysis of the examples that follow reflect my subsequent realisation that my narrative was indeed strongly present, but that this presence was inscribed within the improvisational process and its gestural distillations. This strong presence of my narrative speaks to the ‘embeddedness’ of the personal archive in devised work. An investigation of the key motif of ‘kneading’ will therefore demonstrate the foundational role of the archive in the improvisational process. The subsequent discussion of the recurrent emergence of ‘fixed point’ technique will then interrogate the relationship between the personal archive and technique.

Kneading / Needing
A discussion of the improvisations that explored the image of ‘kneading’ is essential as it was through this central gesture, or motif, that I came to recognize the inherent presence of my own narrative in the creative process. It revealed the fact that this imbalance of material was not due to the fact that I was not producing enough material pertaining to my own narrative strand, but rather that I was not identifying it as my own, or possibly even that I was suppressing it. The discussion which follows will attempt to address the dynamics responsible for this phenomenon in which the double narrative allowed for the emergence of material pertaining to my narrative to be disguised as material belonging to Erifili’s narrative. In exploring the dual relevance of gestures, images and movement
motifs, in how they were relevant to both narratives, this discussion simultaneously makes the case of the excavation of the personal archive through improvisations that rely on the functioning of Physical Intelligence.

*Improvisation A: Exploring the gesture of ‘kneading’.*

As mentioned earlier, the memory of my grandmother kneading dough surfaced early on in the process through a kinaesthetic re-activation of memory. I began to explore this gesture in the rehearsal room simply by reproducing it. Removed from its functional application, outside of a kitchen and without any dough, I simply executed the action with an emphasis on trying to sense, or feel towards, its affective qualities. A process of ‘tuning in’ in the warm-up preceding this improvisation created a body-state of heightened awareness of internal impulses and sensations.

> I began to go into bread kneading gestures – a clear link to the memory of Yiayia\(^7\) baking – a shared image of my mother baking too – memories of helping my mother bake as a child – memories of my grandmother baking for Christmas, Easter, weddings and Christenings, baking for church on Sundays. The effort of kneading emerges strongly – DIRECT, SUSTAINED, STRONG, TWISTING - I feel the link to an emotional state informed by these effort qualities (Journal 2007).

After exploring the gesture of kneading as realistically as possible I went on to stylise the gesture in order to exaggerate the movement so that I could amplify its affective qualities, thereby seeking the connection between the gesture and an emotional state. I also tried to locate the source of the movement within the body, or where it began and then tracked its journey through the body. I observed and kinaesthetically sensed how this journey through the body engaged an energy strongly from the centre of the body.

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\(^7\) Yiayia is the Greek word for Grandmother
and then measured the effort simultaneously outward but also back down towards the source of the action, the centre, with a twisting resistance. Having amplified the gesture’s essential effort qualities\(^8\) through these observations and an attention to the sensations it evoked, I tried to articulate for myself the emotional state that the gesture evoked. I perceived this emotional state to be one of anguish, anxiety and frustration. I immediately stitched these discoveries onto Erifili’s narrative.

\[ \text{Hard effort gives energy to the dough, it rises...hard things / efforts yield positive outcomes / hard things provide sustenance (Journal 2007).} \]

By stitching these discoveries onto Erifili’s narrative, I began to construct a sense of her as a dutiful mother and wife, nurturing and sustaining her family through her efforts. I also immediately sought out the theatrical possibilities of including the image of baking somehow in the work. This improvisation therefore encouraged me to consider what her world must have been like in far more depth than before and opened up questions as to what her frustrations and anxieties might have been.

**Improvisation B: Kneading? Needing?**

I returned to the exploration of the gesture of kneading within the Authentic Movement improvisation, named ‘moving for a witness’, as contextualised previously. The responses from the witness held invaluable insights of the motif of ‘kneading’. On watching a short improvisation, that began through re-inhabiting my grandmother’s gestural vocabulary and soon returned to an exploration of the kneading motif, the witness offered this response in writing:

\[ \text{Kneading – wringing – through unprocessed memory.} \]
\[ \text{Kneading – Needing – possibly sexual longing (Workbook 2007).} \]

\(^8\) I refer here to Laban’s ‘Effort Actions’.
The witness’s signalling of the connection between ‘kneading’ and ‘needing’, through the way that the image evoked a sense of the literal suppression of needs (expressed through the downward push emerging from the centre in an introspectively sustained way), resulted in a further development of the interpretive trajectory that I had begun in the previous improvisation. This interpretation developed to perceive of my grandmother as a dutiful wife and mother who would not only put effort into sustaining those around her but would possibly suppress her own needs in order to do so. With this new addition I re-entered the improvisation exploring the stimulus further. The following improvised spoken text emerged as an interesting additional layer:

She baked…kneaded/needed to camouflage this needing…and she sweated (sweat becomes water for the dough)…water…salt…kneading…so now she pushed everything into the dough…so that she could not see the future…working the dough…making tsourekia⁹…bread for church on Sundays…there’s a regular need to bake…always something to be kneading so she didn’t have to feel her needing’ (Video Response Document 2008).

What followed this text within the improvisation is highly pertinent. The action slowed down, stripping the improvisation back to the basic exploration of the action of kneading, almost as if I was ‘tuning in’ to the sensations of the movement once again. From within this shift in attention and awareness, listening to the perceptual cues emerging through the action I spoke, and said:

I also know needing/kneading but my needing/kneading¹⁰ is not like that (Video Response Document 2008).

I continued the improvisation without text executing a gesture with my hands that seemed to pull my centre open and apart on the vertical plane. This gesture dissolved

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⁹ Traditional Greek breads baked for Easter.
¹⁰ I insert both spellings and their implied meanings as it is ambiguous as to which I was referring. In fact in retrospect it seems that this ambiguity was intentional.
into the gesture of holding someone, which I achieved through the employment of a mimetic fixed-point. With the same subtle mime suggestion I moved as if my hand was being held and as if I was being led through the space. Shortly I returned to the gesture of tracing the surface of my skin, a motif that had emerged as a representation of the reading of the body as a map. This resolved through a return to the beginning of the improvisation. I noted in my reflections:

Does my training and knowledge of forming within an improvisation make it seem that this is a good ending to the improv, or is it perhaps about not going deeper? (Video Response Document 2008).

Through reflection it appears that I had indeed cut the improvisation short when it began to deal directly with my own narrative and returned to a more superficial motif of mapping on the body. I was thereby literally skimming the surface of the body as archive through a return to an established motif that inhibited any further delving into the material that had begun to emerge. The gentle action of holding someone and of holding someone’s hand seems to be directly connected to the preceding text about my own kneading/needling as the sensual quality of the movement evokes a dance with a lover. Within this improvisation, which significantly emerged after reading the witness’ reflections connecting ‘needling’ and ‘sexual longing’, I seemed to manifest the linguistic leap from ‘kneading’ to ‘needling’ in illustrating the suppression (kneading) of my own needs (sexual longing). The question then emerges whether my ‘training and knowledge of forming’ (Video Response Document 2008) allowed me a legitimate escape of further exploration through the identification of a ‘good ending’ to the improvisation.

11 Please note ‘fixed-point technique’ and its relevance will be discussed on page 113.
However within the process I saw this improvisation as a development of the exploration of ‘kneading’ as it built on my perceptual understanding of my grandmother not only as a dutiful mother and wife whose efforts were linked to the sustenance and care of her family, but to the realization that these efforts would often have required the suppression of her own needs. This would have been especially so because of the patriarchal family and community in which she found herself. It is noteworthy however, that in reflection it is clear that this improvisation began to make the parallel connection to the suppression of my own needs even though this was only suggested briefly and, at this point, was not explored further.

*Improvisation C: The Syrtos*

The kneading motif re-emerged within a subsequent improvisation using the Syrtos as the structural basis for further exploration. Within this improvisation there was a marked abstraction and expansion of the motif that bears noting.

*Kneading from above the head…the sense of something un-containable and growing. But there’s a marked shift in the attitude of the action – I take the head away from the kneading…I am not looking* (Video Response Document 2008).

In my workbook I had documented the decision that the Syrtos was to function as one of the structural containers of material dealing with my own narrative. As previously explained this dance form was the perfect structure in which to explore the tensions in my body created through the jarring relationship between my sexual orientation and my Greek cultural identity. Surprisingly however, I still viewed the kneading material that re-emerged in this improvisation as something that belonged to Erifili’s narrative. I saw it as her narrative colliding with my own.
Through reflection and analysis of this improvisation though, it is clear that this motif of kneading was in fact capturing something about my own narrative. Most importantly, this material, which offers a significant permutation of the motif in its exaggeration and its shift of visual focus within the action, emerged out of a structural improvisation that was especially assigned to excavate my own narrative. Read within this context the material emerged as a manifestation of the tensions related to my positioning as a gay woman within this cultural context (as represented by the Syrtos). Here the gestures can be read quite literally to convey the sense of ‘uncontainability’ that had accompanied my experience of coming to terms with both my ‘Greekness’ and my ‘gayness’ in their mutual irreconcilability. The way in which the gesture returned in a much larger manifestation, literally growing in size, also spoke to the importance of my growing need to claim my own sexual identity. At the same time though, in taking ‘the head away from the kneading’ I re-enact my perception of the homophobia of this cultural context, reflecting an unwillingness to see and acknowledge homosexuality by literally turning away from it. The dual tension in performing this gesture – suppressing my sexual identity and simultaneously turning away from it – possibly also captures something about my own internal homophobia, of being unable to see this gesture as directly connected to my own narrative.

The way in which my focus and therefore my attention was cast away from the gesture manifests exactly what was happening in the process: it literally reflects the way in which I simply was not acknowledging my own narrative. What began in the previous improvisation as an acknowledgement of the gesture as capturing something about the suppression of my own sexuality, developed in this improvisation to reflect the way in which I was unable to claim and speak my own narrative as a gay Greek woman.
Analysing the ‘paradox of kneading/needing’

This gesture, as explored through its ‘effort qualities’ as a sustained, strong, pushing down action, therefore manifests a literal representation of the way that I was suppressing traces emerging from my own narrative in the process. I was literally pushing down my own narrative, the narrative of my needs, and disguising it as Erifili’s narrative.

The recurrence and significant repetition of this motif not only manifested literally what was happening in the process, but simultaneously captured and expressed the traces of emotional dynamics which had featured strongly within my experiences of ‘coming out’ to my parents (through the affective qualities signalling frustration, anguish and anxiety embedded in the gesture). These emotional dynamics also extended into my trying to come to terms with my sexuality in relation to my cultural and historical identity, represented in this work by my grandmother. The interpretation of the gesture of kneading as that of the suppression of something vital, of something overwhelming and somehow connected to ‘sexual longing’, of something that could not be looked at, of something that required effort to push it down, was in fact speaking my narrative and giving voice to my own archive very strongly.

In considering the above examples it is apparent to me that the gestures, movements or images that come to the surface in improvisations and remain in the improvisational vocabulary for a length of time through their repetition, express something that reverberates or resonates with the personal archive. In the above examples the image

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12 Freud outlines the importance of the ‘psychic processes of repetition’ in relation to trauma. He claims that it is through repetition that the individual can take on an ‘active part’ in the traumatic event and thereby reclaim control in the event (Gilpin 1996:111). Similarly it could be argued that the repetition here serves a deeper psychological purpose.
of kneading and its associated affective qualities did indeed relate to my grandmother’s narrative. This was rendered so through its resonance with the somatic traces inscribed in my body, through my lived experiences of her, but the image simultaneously related to traces of my own personal experiences. The recurring motifs, in the process of Coming To, such as the gesture of kneading, therefore offered the possibility for discovering the points at which the two narratives intercepted. These intersection points were revealing something about my own narrative. While I had the realization of the dual relevance of the motif of kneading midway through the process, which I journaled as “The paradox of the gestures of Kneading: whose narrative do they belong to” (Journal 2007), it was largely through reflection and analysis that I came to understand that there was indeed a wealth of my own material emerging but that it was being translated into Erifili’s narrative. This reflection and analysis thereby also affirms the centrality of the personal archive in the improvisation process as it was clear that the motifs that emerged most strongly, as in the above example, were those that related to my own life experiences most significantly. Ironically, in this instance, it was exactly these life experiences that I was suppressing.

The Body written and The Body writing:

This analysis now seeks to come to an understanding about this suppression of material from my archive and in so doing begins to examine the ways in which the deep inscriptions of the body-mind nexus, which construct the body-as-archive, have a determining role in the process of improvisation.

I believe my fundamental inability to deal directly and overtly with my ‘gayness’ in the work was largely responsible for the fact that material was only registered as appropriate or relevant to Erifilli’s narrative strand. This is hugely ironic as the drive to create this
dialogue within the work emerged from a desire to give voice to both narratives as previously muted narratives. By not articulating my ‘gayness’ overtly in the work the intended dialogue was not enabled. Recognizing this inability to articulate it overtly, through consultation with my supervisor and through an understanding of the structural problems it was causing, I attempted instead to employ the idea of ‘not telling’, of not being able to speak something or give it voice, as a thematic device and as a motif emerging in various ways. Unfortunately this lack of specificity about ‘what’ was not being told allowed for too loose an interpretative frame for the audience, as it is often through the specificity of the personal narrative that its power is rendered, gaining universal relevance. Therefore this lack of specificity did not allow for a clarity of dialogue between the two narratives. With critical distance, it is almost as if the image of kneading, of suppression, turned into something of a meta-comment on the work in which my ‘gayness’ was never articulated.

It could be argued that the double narrative allowed me an ‘escape’ from overtly making the claims that I needed to make in order to achieve the potential of this dialogue. However an employment of Foucault’s theory of Bio-power (The History of Sexuality, 1978) nuances this argument somewhat and begins to address the reason I was suppressing my own narrative strand in the process. This theory relates to how the body is inscribed by power through the extraction and imposition of knowledge in order to manipulate the dominant discourse regarding sex and sexuality. Within this discourse heteronormativity is posited as the dominant discourse. All other manifestations of sexuality are placed in binary opposition to the ‘normalcy’ of the dominant discourse and are thus posited as marginal or ‘abnormal’.
The gesture of kneading allows us to see the way in which Foucault’s notion of power is enacted gesturally, through the body, making clear once again the connections between our histories and our embodiment. The gesture of kneading literally captured the suppression of homosexual drives which would certainly be located against the ‘normal’ and dominant discourses in the binary explained above. It was as if the gesture illustrated the desire to suppress that which is ‘abnormal’ in relation to power’s construction of that which is ‘normal’. The gesture as a suppression of the homosexual subject position, alongside the way in which I repeatedly preferred to attach the gesture to Erifili’s narrative, tended towards a desire to reproduce or at the least maintain the dominant discourse.

It could be argued that it was due to the inscriptions of the dominant discourse in my subject-body, which in this case championed heteronormativity and which was inscribed in a historically and culturally specific context (the patriarchal, nationalist, Apartheid South African context of my childhood as well as the largely patriarchal Greek-South African community context), that all material emerging from my homosexual subject position was translated into Erifili’s narrative. Her narrative, against mine, represented the dominant discourse in relation to sex and sexuality. Although I set out to give voice to the muted or marginalized subject position, by giving voice to both these narratives, an engagement with Foucault’s theory allows us to see that there was a strong tendency towards maintaining the dominant discourse.

The symbolic repression of the homosexual narrative contained within this gesture demonstrates the notion argued in Chapter Two that the body is not only written, or constructed, through the workings of power, but that it is active in its own construction. It is not only written, or constructed, but it also writes, in this instance through gesture, its
own construction. However it is important to remember that the body is active in its own construction either through the ways it reproduces the dominant discourse, or through the ways in which it resists it.

In light of this it is significant that the gesture kept recurring and that it developed and literally grew to evoke a sense of the ‘uncontainable’. It is possible that it was not only reflecting or maintaining the dominant discourse, through its repetition and development, but perhaps that it was also signalling towards possible resistance to this discourse. The repeated muting and suppression of my own narrative in the creative process reveals the presence and dominance of the inscriptions of power in my archive. However, the continual re-emergence of the kneading gesture itself alongside my subsequent realization of its significance as a reflection of what I was doing in the process (i.e. literally muting my own narrative) could signal the emergence of resistance to these inscriptions. The tensions implicit within the kneading gesture captured the tensions I experienced at the intersection of the broader inscriptions of power in my archive with the inscriptions on the deeply personal level created through my subjective experiences and memories of being the sexual ‘other’ in a society and community. There is as much validity in asserting that it was my lived experiences and personal memories of being the sexual ‘other’, as inscribed in the body, that recurrently provided the impulse growing in the centre of the body, the impulse that then needed pushing down in a kneading action; as there is in asserting the reading of the gesture as a symbolic manifestation of the discourses of power. This dual validity speaks to the possible interplay of tensions emerging out of various layers of somatic inscription.

The subversive aspect of my homosexuality kept reasserting itself through this gesture. Its very emergence was facilitated through the heightened functioning of Physical
Intelligence within the improvisational process, since through the integration of all aspects of the body-mind nexus, Physical Intelligence is responsible for the enmeshment between the archive and the lived moment. The recurrence of the kneading gesture and the realizations that it evoked thus begins to suggest the capacity of the mind-body nexus to offer resistance to dominant discourses. The body-mind’s active role in this resistance and therefore in its own construction signals the potential for offering resistance to these deep inscriptions. While I was admittedly unable initially to explore and express my own narrative, the persistent recurrence of the kneading motif flagged its importance and eventually enabled a recognition and acknowledgement of how the dominant inscriptions were having an effect on the evolution of the creation process. If we recall the argument laid out in Chapter Two, that the body not only archives its unfolding history but also its positionality within that history, it would seem that the recurrence of the gesture reflects the exact positioning within my unfolding history which wanted to give voice to the narrative of ‘gayness’.

The Physical Intelligence that excavated and gave form to both the broader political and cultural inscriptions as well as the inscriptions on the personal level\textsuperscript{13} - as evident in the tensions between the different levels of inscription above – therefore allowed for the acknowledgement of the multiple ways in which the archive is constructed. The process of improvisation allowed for the emergence of the memory of the body at multiple levels, whether through the embodied inscriptions of power or through the inscriptions of personal experiences as the ‘other’ within the discourses of power. The complexities of our lived experience would suggest that the sourcing of narratives from the body, through somatic excavation, would most likely entail the intersection or dialogue

\textsuperscript{13}Of course these personal inscriptions are inscribed within the broader context and are therefore inextricably defined by the political, social and historical inscription of that context.
between our multiple inscriptions. This very dialogue, which gives voice to multiple layers of inscription, quite possibly contains the potential for resistance. While this may not always be formulated into overt and conscious resistance this dialogue would most certainly entail the reconstruction of the archive in the present, thereby rendering the processes of somatic excavation as a process of ‘becoming’.

The above observations speak to the complex inscriptions of the body that encode our bodies and which clearly play a determining role in improvisational processes. They therefore raise the importance of training and call for the scrutinization of preparation methods in Physical Theatre processes. Despite the fact that my own Physical Theatre training functioned through the imperative of ‘freeing the body’ to most efficiently facilitate the unfettered expression of the impulses, thereby aspiring towards the body as a tabula rasa, free from all blocks and personal idiosyncrasies, the experiences of Coming To demonstrate that the inscriptions of the mind-body nexus are always present. While a Physical Theatre training seeks to increase our expressive range beyond the limits of these constructions, its capacity to harness our Physical Intelligence, which constantly facilitates the interface between the archive and the lived moment, nonetheless allows for the voicing of memory through improvisational strategies that functions not only at the level of individual experience but at the level of societal, historical and political inscriptions.

The illusionary fixed-point: technique and the archive

Having discussed the determining role of the personal archive in the improvisational process this section focuses on the ways in which the ‘first utterance’\(^\text{14}\) of the archive is

\(^{14}\) I make reference here to Fraleigh’s claim that improvisation contains the original utterance of consciousness as introduced in Chapter Three.
translated into physical form. It therefore considers the role of technique\textsuperscript{15} and movement vocabulary as a mediator of the impulses embedded in the personal archive. The discussion will interrogate the relationship between technique and the inscriptions of the archive.

Through the realization of the imbalance of material between Erifili’s and my own narratives I began to focus on improvisations that were directly designed to excavate material from my own narrative. An isolation-based fixed-point mime technique emerged prominently in these improvisations.

\textit{I tried a sequence to capture something of my own narrative. Been wondering how my narrative oozes through. Tried a sequence that became ‘mimey’. Used fixed-point but had wanted to find a sensuous sequence – it became a story…(Journal 2007).}

What emerged in this journal entry and was echoed in many subsequent entries capturing improvisations designed specifically to excavate my own narrative strand is the strong presence of a mime influence, centred around the use of fixed point\textsuperscript{16} technique, which operates through independent isolations of body parts. A mime training is indeed a very important part of my training and performance experience and it is therefore

\textsuperscript{15}When I refer to technique here I am referring to the manifestation of the performer’s training i.e the ways in which the performer works to create and perform material. While it has been argued that a Physical Theatre training aims towards a holistic training model that does not seek to reproduce codified techniques this section focuses on the codified mime technique because of the way in which it kept surfacing as a language of movement in improvisations.

\textsuperscript{16}Fixed-point is the principle on which objective or illusion-based mime technique is built. It functions through the isolation of a body part, the hand for example, which is kept ‘still’ in space while the rest of the body moves in relation to the perceived stillness. It is this juxtaposition of stillness and movement that creates the basic illusion allowing the mime performer to interact with imaginary objects. In creating the illusion of the wall for instance, the hand is placed on the imaginary, external, immovable wall. It is kept still while another part of the body, or the whole body moves in relation to the stillness. The hand holds the ‘fixed-point’ of the wall. It is this fixed-point in space along with the performers movement against this stillness that alludes to a fixed object. The spectator is then able to complete the illusion through their own imaginative faculties, seeing the contact with an invisible object in space. This technique requires a high level of skill in being able to isolate various body parts and rests on the control that allows for crisp distinctions between body parts in movement, and those in stillness.
constituted as part of my archive. It should not seem strange then that it emerges as a language of movement within improvisations since the ‘voluntary inscriptions’ (Grosz 1994:142) of a training system or codified technique such as mime will ‘hone the body into…an efficient writer of movement…’ (Brown 1999:16). At the same time however the way in which these techniques inscribe the body will often influence the subsequent ‘writings’ of the body through movement. This makes the interrogation of the emergence of the mime technique crucial in considering how the ‘first utterance’ of the archive is written into physical form.

It is notable that this mime language emerges within sections that were either trying to directly deal with issues of sexuality or that were trying to capture or express a sense of ‘sensuality’. This unlikely and uncomfortable match alongside the constant recurrence of fixed point and isolation-based mime technique begs for closer investigation as it begins to signal something very interesting about the relationship between the archive and technique in this process. While it has been argued that technique can indeed function as a technology of inscription, I would like to consider the possibility that the question is not about how technique expresses the archive but rather how the performer’s personal archive influences the engagement and utilization of technique. I am suggesting a far more complex relationship between the archive and certain affinities towards particular techniques or styles of movement.

*Trying to find a dance that speaks to ‘my story’. Using ‘fixed-point evokes an illusionary mime technique to represent an interaction with the object of my desire. The mime technique makes visible the invisible, but perhaps in this usage it is another way of suppressing ‘my story’ as it is not made visible or referred to directly* (Journal 2007).
The questioning within this reflection is what drives this closer investigation. On the one hand these excavations seek to ‘tell my story’, it is therefore not difficult to imagine the relevance of this technique as it is based within the largely narrative-driven form of mime and therefore emerges as a response to needing to ‘tell a story’. On the other hand however, one cannot evade the fact that it is an illusionary technique. In the objective-mime, or illusion-based mime world, the performer creates an environment that does not exist. It is only in collaboration with the audience’s imagination that this environment comes into being. There then seems to be a certain ‘safety’ in using this mime technique to represent my interactions with the ‘object of my desire’ as the ‘illusion’ serves only as an allusion to a partner. The invisibility and non-articulation of the specifics of this partner allows for an ambiguity about them. What is being alluded to, a dance with a partner of the same sex, is not claimed directly and therefore it remains invisible. In this way the utilization of this technique seems at the outset to continue the muting of this narrative.

It is also notable that I respond in these improvisations through a codified technique that implies and asserts a certain structure and discipline. The rigidity of this technique with its vocabulary of movement could seemingly become a solid intermediary between the impulses emerging from the stimulus of the improvisation and their expression into form. This would further imply the most probable filtering of the impulses through the technique.

However a different analysis of this phenomenon would lead me to refute this reading of this fixed point technique simply as an intermediary that translates the impulses. The fundamental structure or make-up of the illusionary fixed-point technique is based on the isolation of body parts. The illusion of fixed point essentially exists through the counter-
tension of dynamics and movement in multiple body-parts at the same moment. It is the assimilation of opposing forces that creates meaning within that moment. An interesting parallel can be drawn between the counter tensions inherent within the technique and the sense of disjuncture and tension between the conflicting aspects of my personal archive, reflected through the tensions between my sexual and cultural identity. Through these observations I would argue that the technique of fixed-point, in its structural make-up, manifests the archive rather than filtering it. It seems possible that the fundamental structural aspects of the mime technique not only match but begin to carry and contain the tensions within my subject-body.

**Locking**

This argument is further supported through the consideration of a particular scene that was retained as an improvisation within the performances of the final choreographed work. This structured improvisation was included in performance to allow for the real-time excavations of somatic memory in performance. This scene spoke directly to the process of memory excavation in the creation process and further sought to perform this process in the real time of the performance event. It began by explaining to the audience that I had discovered an exercise\(^\text{17}\) that suggested the creation of a map of one’s life in the rehearsal space through the choice of certain objects that would represent significant memories, places, people and experiences. Within the performed improvisation I made use of potatoes, that were lying on the floor from the conclusion of the previous scene, naming each one as a significant memory in my life and placing them on the floor. The point of the exercise was to begin to get a sense of the tensions and relationships between these life-markers by exploring their spatial relationships. The movement emerged from a response to each of the stimuli as represented by the

\(^{17}\) The exercise, *Mapping a Life*, was sourced from Tufnell and Crickmay (2004:180).
potatoes. The journey through the map varied with each performance but it essentially entailed connecting each of the potatoes as separate map co-ordinates by moving through the space. Whenever I encountered a potato I would offer a gestural response to the stimulus it contained. In this way the potatoes served as memory triggers. The memory triggered and its subsequent movement response would further determine the next co-ordinate to move to. In this way the improvisation attempted to navigate the tensions between each of these memory coordinates.

While the response to these stimuli evoked recurring motifs and movements throughout the run of the performances, the improvisation shifted considerably with each performance. The shifts in each of these performances reflected the archive in flux. Each day’s experiences would have reconstructed the archive as different to how it was manifested in the previous performance, and so each stimulus was approached from a different perspective in each performance. In fact, the performance of the work itself and the performance of this improvisation in particular the day before would be largely responsible for this changed perspective through the embodied exploration of the memories evoked. The unpredictable connections and relationships between the memories, through the unplanned pathway through the potatoes, would allow for unexpected insights and observations. Because the improvisation moved so quickly I was not always able to process all these insights and connections at a cognitive level but the juxtaposition of responses to the various stimuli were certainly registered at a somatic level.

The stimulus in the floor map that always evoked the strongest material experientially for me was the one that I had named: *Standing outside a locked door and knocking for five months*. This potato symbolized my experience of feeling locked out of my parents’ lives.
for a long time after ‘coming out’. The material that emerged in response to this stimulus was always defined by a series of isolations throughout the body. Essentially it is these isolations that enable the fixed-point technique. While this material did not employ fixed-point, in that there was no external object that was being mimed, it employed a series of sharp isolations throughout the body, thereby abstracting the structural element of the fixed-point into an expressive movement. The series of isolations would facilitate the closing of the body in on itself moving from large open postures to small closed shapes. The sharpness of the gestures made it feel as though my body was being broken down, piece by piece. This material resonated very strongly with the crux of my own narrative. I described them in my journal as ‘locking into self’ gestures. The sense of ‘locking into self’ reflects a perception that they were really strongly connected to and expressive of my own experience.

In light of this it does seem that isolation technique, at the basis of fixed-point technique, and as abstracted here allowing for greater expressive range, expresses and captures something fundamental about my mode of being at this time. In this instance far from translating and thereby transforming the archive, the technique serves as the most accurate expression of this archive as it captures and manifests the jarring sense of fragmentation experienced in the recalled memory.

However, while the work as a whole focussed on the disruptive aspects of this fragmentation, expressing the frustrations experienced at the intersection of the conflicting aspects of my personal archive, this fragmentation does not necessarily only suggest a ‘breaking down’. Fragmentation is also foundational in the process of ‘piecing together’. In light of the creation process as a process of becoming, in which the archive is constantly being reconstructed, the presence of this fragmentation is mediated via
Physical Intelligence as the most unfettered way of translating stimuli. Through this fragmentation the tensions emerging in the recalled memory are pieced together in a new mode of meaning-making.

Philosophically speaking a further parallel emerges between the archive and ‘fixed point’. The fixed point in illusionary mime technique is not ‘fixed’ at all. It presents a stillness in relation to other moving parts through which we create the illusion, but this very stillness is an illusion as it not only entails a counter-thrust to create the illusion, but the fact is that utter stillness in the living body is impossible. This illusion of stillness however provides us with a reference point from which we see the other movement and thereby construct meaning. Similarly the fixedness of the archive is also an illusion. The archive is rendered as a temporary reference point against which the present moment is constructed, but simultaneously this very construction allows for the re-writing of the archive. While the present is always defined by the past it simultaneously reconfigures the past.

The analysis of the utilization of fixed-point suggests that the relationship between technique and the personal archive, through which all devised work is mediated, is a very complex and nuanced one. While techniques have the capacity to inscribe bodies, they also enable their articulacy and increase their expressive range. My experiences in Coming To however reveal that their role as filters or mediators that translate the material of the archive is often determined by this very archive. Because the performer’s training history is enmeshed within the broader archive, the emergence of a particular technique or vocabulary in order to give form to the impulse cannot be read as value neutral. It would appear that the inscriptions of the archive determine the ways in which they are given form. Even though a Physical Theatre training aims towards providing an
unblocked body that is able to express the impulses in the most unfettered way, with as small a gap of translation as possible, the language of movement will always be influenced by the archive of technique and training. My experience here indicates that the integrated workings of Physical Intelligence, allows for the emergence of the impulse into movement through a technique that resonates with and matches this impulse.