Discovering NyaDenga

Reflexive Essay

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Declaration

I declare that this essay and the novel, *Discovering NyaDenga*, are my own unaided work. They are submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Writing (Research) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Neither has been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university. I declare that *Discovering NyaDenga* is a work of fiction and in no way represents or reproduces any person or incident. Any likeness or similarity is coincidence.

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The purpose of this essay is to illustrate and reflect on the creative writing journey I embarked upon when I was accepted into the MA Creative Writing course. I shall be looking at a wide range of topics, all of which have had an influence on the final product (third draft of my novel, Discovering NyaDenga). These will include a discussion on the narrative itself; the resources utilised; the metamorphosis my work underwent since its original conception, the writing process. Other points of discussion will include ideas about feminism in the narrative, corrective rape, the African oral tradition and language. I will also endeavour to illustrate how I managed to translate into practical terms some of the material which was laid out in the proposal, for example, the use of research.

What is it about history, culture and heritage that I found attractive?

I have asked myself this question at the beginning, the middle and the end of my writing process. It has been relevant to do so because my narrative depended mainly on written, remembered history, working alongside the present for its existence. A clear grasp of historical context – for the narrative is composed of two stories, separated by nearly a century – was imperative. This enabled me to journey into history, to explore the kind of cultural spaces that existed then, and to compare them to those presently in existence. The best way, I felt, to achieve this was to have a young, modern woman protagonist tell the story of NyaDenga. However, I also wanted to give NyaDenga, whose story took place close to a hundred years ago, her own voice, even though her narrative was written in the third person, so that the perspectives of both narrators carried equal weight and credibility.

I saw the historical and cultural contexts, within which the story functioned, as an opportunity to engage with a past time period, with the activities, the language, day-to-day issues and daily life of villagers who lived far away from me. The young protagonist in the narrative, Chuma, was observant of challenges, both in her personal life and in the

life around her. The story of NyaDenga and Chuma's journey was about the agency of women, emphasising the notion of the universality of women's experiences through time. Even though Chuma lived in a different time, she was able to get into the life of NyaDenga, at first out of curiosity, but later she began to identify with her as an artist. NyaDenga made figurines while Chuma was a writer.

In his essay, "Why we tell stories: The narrative construction of reality", Allan Parry writes, "Humans, as intentional, are narrative by nature. We become the stories we tell ourselves then believe as the truth" (Parry 11)." On his website story-teller Barry McWilliams writes: "We embark on this endeavor because stories are ways in which we pass down information from one generation to another. Words and language are the threads of life…stories are a way to engage the imagination of a reader or listener." The website www.umass.edu/wmwp/DigitalStorytelling states: "And in the end, we tell stories to understand ourselves a bit better. By exploring our inner selves through words and stories, we come to understand the "real" us that lives inside this body.''

By selecting this particular narrative, I hoped to focus on elements of story-telling reminiscent of the old African tradition of oral culture. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, in Decolonising The Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature suggested that oral forms of narrative include the "use of conversational tone, proverbs, fables and traditions" (Wa Thiong'o 77). I have attempted to incorporate these elements into my writing and as such will discuss them at length in the essay.

I wanted to look at the past and present simultaneously. I wanted the past and present stories to draw from, and feed each other. It was not only for reasons of variety that I wanted this, but also because I had always wanted to tell this kind of a story. I am reminded of the novels, Map of Love, by Ahdaf Soueif and The Blind Assassin, by Margaret Atwood. What these narratives have in common was that both were written from the perspective of a protagonist whose life began to make sense once she learned of the past. In the case of my narrative, Chuma looked to a past figure, NyaDenga, in order to realise her dream and potential as an artist who wrote and told stories.

Of particular importance is that this is an African narrative, situated in an African context. In Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature, Wa Thiong'o wrote, among others, about the oral African tradition. As a multitude of African children might have experienced at some point or other in their lives, he too recalled a time when stories were told around the fire. In the same chapter, Wa Thiong'o noted that animal stories, as well as the human-centred stories in the oral African tradition, were epitomised by two types of characters: the courageous, unselfish, altruistic hero interested in the welfare of his community and another exhibiting the opposite characteristics.

An example of this in the narrative of NyaDenga could be seen in the story of Sankambe the jackal, reminiscent of the African oral tradition, a tradition no longer as widely practiced in the current modern, urban space. This story was actually a common one known by many as it would have been told to younger children by older members of the family. My use of this story came from a need to further emphasise a past, in which story-telling was an integral part of family life. On the opposite side of this was Chuma, who lived in a modern era, in a city where she did not have family. She knew of the value of story-telling (that it brought families together to share information and to teach the younger generation of family and or community values). In the absence of this manner of story-telling, Chuma thought it important to recapture this old tradition. She wanted to learn what it stood for and also wanted to give it meaning in her own context.

At the beginning of her book, To My Children's Children, Sindiwe Magona (1990) succinctly wrote:

> As ours is an oral tradition, I would like you to hear from my own lips what it was like living in the 1940s onwards… However, my people no longer live long lives. Generations no longer set eyes on one another. Therefore, I fear I may not live long enough to do my duty to you, to let you know who you are and whence you are. So I will keep, for you, my words in this manner…(1)

Chuma lived in an era where at her disposal she had the magazine for which she worked, as well as a computer, which she used to write her own stories - these may or may not have had anything to do with her work.

Story-telling in NyaDenga's time and Chuma's interpretation of this illustrated the point of culture being dynamic and subjected to change through time. Admittedly, my original intention with NyaDenga, the woman whom I learnt, upon getting married, had endured the death of her family, was different. My curiosity about this woman, who was my husband's great-grandmother, began when I started asking questions about her. The only story I had (told to me by vhoSarah Bhidzhiwe, my husband's aunt) initially about her was:

She (NyaDenga) had been forced to marry her cousin, Malise, but made a choice to leave him to be with a different person. Eventually she married the man of her choice. What had been scandalous about this story when I first heard it from my husband's aunt was that NyaDenga, at her own instigation, had left the marriage of her parents' choice. Women in that period were known to be independent and forceful. When I asked questions about where NyaDenga had come from, who her own parents were, there were no answers. So, NyaDenga was an enigma that I was determined to demystify. The fact that there were no answers to questions I had about her was the reason I decided that I wanted to work on a fictionalised account of her life story. I had been accepted to do the MA Creative Writing degree at Wits and had decided that NyaDenga would make an interesting enough subject for my project. I got permission from my father-in-law to work on the fictionalised version of the story. I wanted to work in the fiction genre as I believed it would give me the creative license to weave and make sense of the story in my own personal way.

What I found most appealing about this story was that NyaDenga came across as a strong-minded woman in a community that was predominantly patriarchal. As a young girl Denga found herself caught up in the mechanics of such a society, without even realising what it was – it was what was normal to her, her familiar life. This was despite

Helen Chukwuma's argument in her essay, "Women's Quest for Rights: African feminist theory in fiction", which stated that African women had, in pre-colonial times, been the centre in their homes, and they had a voice (Chukwuma 1). This notion was easily illustrated in Avhashoni's role, Denga's first and non-biological mother, at the homestead. As a first wife, Avhashoni was powerful and could make many of the family's decisions. However, her inability to bear children rendered her powerless when her husband, Mulamuleli, and his family, took a decision, spearheaded by his sister, that he should marry a second wife, Nnyambeni, who would bear him children. When Denga grew and it was time for her to be married, it was not something she wanted, her own mother Nnyambeni was hysterical, as was Avhashoni. There was nothing they could do as it was incumbent upon Malise to decide what should happen with the life of his daughter. After all, he was the man and the leader of his family.

I conceptualised NyaDenga as an artist. In a conversation that takes place between Ikem and Beatrice in Chinua Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah, Ikem says: "Contradictions are the very stuff of life… [and] if well understood and managed can spark off the fires of invention (100)." Ikem goes on to say, "Every artist contains multitudes… Because a genuine artist, no matter what he says he believes, must feel in his blood the ultimate enmity between art and orthodoxy." The young Denga was an artist who made figurines, although this is initially a pastime she enjoys and uses to escape her daily life. Ultimately her art provides a space for her to ask questions, thus she finds herself in a position where the art and orthodoxy exist in enmity.

In her feedback, Dr Michelle Adler from Wits University, one of my report readers, while giving feedback on my work wrote: "There also seem to me to be some missed opportunities for illuminating the nature of the novel… such as the possibility of reading the novel as a 'female Bildungsroman (even, perhaps, a 'double' Bildungsroman, given the two narrative strands, each tracking the 'coming of age' and self-fashioning of a female protagonist."

I considered my writing and realised that the novel was indeed a coming of age story for both NyaDenga and Chuma. In their respective eras, both women were very sensitive individuals looking for answers and experience. In the beginning, both protagonists were at a loss emotionally. As a child, Denga did not quite fit in and she used her art both to escape and to stay sane. How she felt when she did not want to get married, was not recognised in her community because of the assumption that young girls would be married eventually. There were no questions asked. Both characters experienced conflict, particularly NyaDenga, both inside and outside of themselves. Chuma's path to growth only took place when her father died and she discovered the story of NyaDenga.

My own novel, as a variation of Bildungsroman, draws from works such as Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah. When the character of Beatrice emerges in the novel, she becomes central to the story. It is her voice, which gives an interpretation of the current politics of her society, and her observation of the role of women, which I found inspirational for my own female characters. Beatrice is also an artist and a writer (this is discussed elsewhere in the essay) - like Chuma and NyaDenga. In my writing, Beatrice's voice served as a source of strength and inspiration for both of my protagonists.

Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions provided another point of reference for me as I attempted to write strong female characters. (Her work is also discussed in the essay). In their own way, Tambu and her cousin Nyasha, could be seen as Bildungsroman artists (as they helped create their own realities of the present), whose strong feminine voices challenged the way in which things were done in their society. Chuma, as a young, modern South African woman, fashions her strength from the resources of the past.

It was from discovering NyaDenga that Chuma found herself as a writer and an activist.

When I first presented my project proposal to the workshop group, I had narrated the story of NyaDenga and my decision from my personal perspective. The result of this was that many felt that the 'I' voice would merge well with story, that it was interesting enough on its own. I thought this an interesting challenge and considered ways that I

could make Chuma's narrative enrich NyaDenga's. I found this exercise exciting, especially as my writing at that stage was highly experimental. This I found a daunting task because I had to think of, and develop a brand new story with a purpose and merits to run alongside NyaDenga after I had presented my proposal. As I crafted Chuma's story, I was constantly aware that her story was by no means mine. It had to be hers and in no way modeled on my life. I simply did not believe I had an exciting enough life to warrant volumes written on it. Chuma, on the other hand, could have a life filled with its own meaning, purpose and possibilities, in line with the development of the narrative. As Neil Phillips argues:

> Great storytelling is not just about satisfying a base curiosity about what happens next in a yarn. Storytelling is about weaving a web that entraps the reader – or listener or viewer – inside the tale, and then offers them a way out of it, enlarged and renewed. A true story furnishes its audience with meaning, with consolation, with insight, with vision (Harris).

However, I did find that I occasionally used my own personal experiences, but only as inspiration. Personal experience did not help further the story as such, but it helped to make the character's experiences as human, believable and as credible as possible. Why would it be necessary to have believable characters in a work of fiction? In Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft, Sixth Edition, Janet Burroway quotes: "Almost any reader can identify with almost any character; what no reader can identify with is confusion. When some or several of the fundamentals of type are withheld from us – when we don't know whether we're dealing with a man or a woman, adult or a child – the process of identifying cannot begin, and the story is slow to move us" (122). An example of where I borrowed from my personal experience was that Chuma worked for a magazine, which I also did a few years ago. I did not, however, try to recreate my working experience there in Chuma's life.

Chuma's artistry was as a writer. In the beginning she was passionate about telling stories and when she left home to begin her new job, this was all she had in mind. In a sense she

was nostalgic and wanted to tell these stories in order to recapture the old African tradition of telling stories. In Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah, Beatrice, one of the prominent female characters in the book says of her need to write: "… It is this truly unjust presentation that's forcing me to expose my life on these pages to see if perhaps there are aspects of me I had successfully concealed even from myself" (84). Chuma's need to write could be similar to Beatrice's because she too exposed things she did not know about herself. Chuma's writing (the writing she does for work, as well as the story she writes about NyaDenga) forced her to think and to navigate uncomfortable spaces, particularly with regard to ideas on gender.

In the character of Chuma, my wish was to follow up on, and to understand - through Chuma – the kind of progress made in highlighting the struggles of women.

In the book Reclaiming the F-word: The New Feminist Movement, Katherine Redfern and Kristin Aune argue that "feminists today are not necessarily going to come up with dramatic new feminist theories, and a lot of the issues that were current then are still with us now. Women are still being raped, paid less than men… Thus new feminists are not heard because the messages they're putting forward seem not as radical or new as they were then. (13)."

Chuma's narrative attempts to engage with the argument made above through the issues that she finds herself having to deal with. Chuma lived in South Africa, where there is legislation to protect of the rights of women, the vulnerable and minority groups. As a student, she was introduced to feminist thinking and writing in Africa, by African women, and had since become acutely aware of the struggles of women in the continent. Also, she lived in a country and in an era where there were annual commemorations of women's achievements and struggles. Her move to the city from the village was necessary because it was an opportunity to present a different form of struggle for her; the struggle to make meaning, or to come to a new understanding of stories and where she stood with ideas around women. As Redfern et. al. argues (13), Chuma did not set out

to come up with radically new ideas, but that through her curiosity, she managed to realise that struggles women faced were continuing.

Chuma used the space in the city to seek her individuality as well as self-realisation. An illustration of this, where a character leaves her familiar surroundings in order to achieve self-realisation, can be seen in Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions. Tambudzai, who had longed for an education realises this dream upon the death of her brother, Nhamo. Her society had prescribed that, as a woman or girl child, it was useless educating her because then instead of helping to support her family upon landing a job, she would help improve somebody else's family as she would marry. Tambu, so called by her family, moved to the mission to live with her uncle, aunt and their family, who had come back from the United Kingdom, to settle in Zimbabwe. It was at the mission that Tambu became exposed to some British culture, brought back by her uncle and aunt. It was also at the mission that she was exposed to different thoughts. For example, her cousin Nyasha, also a female, said: "It's not England anymore and I ought to adjust. But when you've seen different things you want to be sure you're adjusting to the right thing. You can't go on all the time being whatever is necessary. You've got to have some conviction and I'm convinced I don't want to be anyone's underdog… But once you get used to it, well, it just seems natural and you just carry on. And that's the end of you" (Dangarembga 117).

Nyasha made this point in what could be a reference to what Tambu's life, and a representation of other lives like hers, had been before moving to the mission. Tambu's felt sense of vicitimisation based on her gender had also been normal to her. It was in Tambu's move from her village that she became aware of the differences in gender.

Chuma's move to the city, although it was not an entirely new thing to her, prompted her to learn, discover and to come to a new understanding of ideas she had known. She wanted the struggles women faced for decades to have new meaning to her. Granted, there were many other things that happened to her in her journey (for example, the corrective rape of her lesbian friend, Kate, a kiss she shares with Jinja and her

relationships with Shandukani and Harry), things which could render her as having been side-tracked, but these were relevant to her development as a character. Redfern et.al. write that LGBTs [Lesbians Gays Bisexuals and Transgender] are still subjected to death threats, hate crimes and extreme social sanctions…at the root of homophobia lie deeply entrenched sexist attitudes about what is acceptable behaviour for men and women (63)." The issue of corrective rape, therefore, was pivotal to Chuma's character development because it was through this that her own awareness about some of the injustices women faced was realised.

A South African lesbian woman quoted by Redfern et.al states: "We get insults every day, beatings if we walk alone, you are constantly reminded that… you deserve to be raped, they yell, if I rape you then you will go straight, that you will buy skirts and start to cook because you will have learnt how to be a real woman (63)."

In the same way that Nyasha refused to be categorised and to be taken advantage of, Chuma too refused to 'be whatever [was] necessary'. She did not like the idea of waking up, going to work and receiving a pay cheque at the end of the month. She sought more in the way of contributing meaningfully to the magazine for which she worked. Her work was against the background of her being able to make her own choices, instead of somebody else deciding things on her behalf. The novel was the space in which Chuma lived out these choices. Her narrative was mainly about how she negotiated and gave new meaning (her own understanding) to the struggles of women, both in an old (as found in the narrative of NyaDenga) and modern society. Chuma's story gelled with Beatrice's idea about the traditional role of women in society when she said: "The way I see it is that giving women today the same role traditional society gave them of intervening only when everything else has failed is not enough… It is not enough that women should be the court of last resort because the last resort is a damn sight too far and too late" (Achebe 91). This argument is based on the idea that women should be involved in narratives and be given their own voice from the very beginning.

Before I began my writing process I drew up a table, outlining or summarising in a line or two, what happened in the chapters. These were mostly the chapters on NyaDenga because I already had a very clear idea of how this story would go. This was inspired by the characters I had already imagined as inhabiting the story. As Burroway suggested (118), "human character is the foreground of all fiction." I believed possessing a basic understanding of the two protagonists would help guide my writing process and also enable me to see, very easily, what I was trying to achieve. In order to develop the characters further, I wrote background chapters dealing with the main characters and these took the form of questionnaires, which the characters had to complete. Although this helped me understand the characters better, the downside at times was that there were things I knew about the characters, which did not necessarily surface in the actual narrative.

Burroway (158) wrote about four methods of direct presentation, considered in the process of the creation of characters. The first of these was appearance. In my writing, the first thing that struck me about NyaDenga was not her outer appearance; I had no photographs to link to her, but how I perceived her to be on the inside. It was as I worked through her narrative that I began to think of her outward appearance, and yet, to me this did not seem as important. Where I thought this counted was in Chuma's narrative because she lived in a world where there were choices and the choices one made gave ideas about the kind of person one was. Not only this, but that dress choices Chuma made, sometimes easily alluded to her moods. In this way, the outward appearance helped the agenda of the narrative.

The second method mentioned by Burroway (160) was the character's action. This was most important to NyaDenga's story especially because her actions, which were predominantly perceived to be contrary to the norm in her community, were responsible for how her story progressed.

Dialogue (the third method) was very important in both narratives as it helped situate the characters in their environments. Burroway (162) wrote of dialogue: "Like fiction itself,

human dialogue attempts to marry logic to emotion." This will be discussed a little further in the essay, particularly when I deal with the issue of language.

Lastly Burroway discussed thought as one of the methods of presentation. "Fiction has a flexibility denied to film and drama, where everything the spectator knows must be shown. In fiction you have the privilege of entering a character's mind, sharing at its source internal conflict, reflection, and the crucial processes of decision and discovery (Burroway 175)". Sharing the character's thoughts was crucial in both the stories of NyaDenga and Chuma as it was one of the major ways in which the characters could reveal themselves.

After outlining the chapters, I drew up production schedules. By outlining all my chapters in a table, I could see how I would be able to write the synopsis of the whole narrative at a later stage. However, I realised that I was not faithfully following my schedule when I managed to update my outlines only after I'd written the chapters and not before. I noticed that sometimes, even though I had written out something that was supposed to happen, things did not always work out as planned. Sometimes, the writing took on a life of its own. Ikem, (Achebe 124) said of the story: "… neither do we own the story; rather it is the story that owns us and directs us." Ikem made this observation as a story-teller and as one from a community out of which stories arose. Furthermore, his statement that: "It is the story that outlives the sound of war drums… It is the story that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence…" (124) implies that stories have an ability to endure through writing and literature.

Mostly, I did not know what was going to happen in a chapter until I began writing. Eventually I stopped updating the chapter outline. I think I stopped because I felt more confident of the narratives, both the old and the new. It was enough that I had an understanding of the big events in the story. Once I got the hang of these I felt as though all other detail would fall into place too.

From the beginning of the project, I faced challenges. The major one being that I was attempting to write about a time of which I had little knowledge. I read anthropological books such as The BaVenda, by Hugh A Stayt, The Independent Venda by Rau/Benso and others (which will be mentioned in the bibliography at the end). These gave me a sense of the time – the early 19th century in Venda. Not only that, but I also learnt about the life, rituals, marriage, birth, death, belief systems, how relationships worked, social groupings, the chief, the family structure, et cetera. In addition to my reading, it became useful to visit Venda occasionally as this gave me some contact with the subject matter; I walked the same ground and breathed the same air that I hoped NyaDenga also breathed.

I chose to keep many of the actual names of the villages in my narrative (both in the old and modern stories) because I wanted to create a sense of the real, believable world. It was this real world which inspired the stories of Chuma and NyaDenga. In a sense, I pay tribute to my world. However, be that as it may, I did not find it necessary to limit my imagination to only what existed in the world around me. For example, even though I wrote about Phungoni, NyaDenga's village, my descriptions of it were not entirely true to life. What ended up existing in the fictitious world of NyaDenga was largely influenced by what her story needs. I may have written about a stream close to the homestead, but in the actual village, there was no stream nearby. Today, the reality is that one has to walk a distance to get to a stream. In addition now, most homesteads there have water tanks and although the government has tried to provide free access to drinking water to rural places, this has not been achieved everywhere.

I was also inspired to use the village of Phungoni, because the first time I visited the place, it was alive with history. I saw the grave of my husband's great-grandfather, Nemukula, who was married to NyaDenga. I saw their old dilapidated homestead, whose foundations were covered with grass and were as high as the ground. The homestead overlooked a meadow, which I later learnt was once the actual village itself. It was eerily quiet the afternoon I visited and seeing Nemukula's lonely grave invoked sadness in me. I wanted to know where NyaDenga's grave was, and once again, nobody in my husband's family knew. I asked two old men in the village if they knew what happened to

NyaDenga, but they too did not have any recollection. This fuelled my curiosity about her. At this stage, the story of NyaDenga's life was beginning to shape up in my imagination. Her story was slowly forming in my mind because of questions I began asking; questions about her personality, what she liked or hated, what she loved doing, et cetera. I thought about these in relation to the end story (the story that she had been married to Malise, unhappily so, and that she ended up leaving him and that eventually Malise ensured the demise of her chosen new life). I also continually asked myself *why* all the time. What was interesting was that as soon as I found clues and only when I could answer some of the questions I had been asking, the story also developed. So, developing well-rounded protagonists became central to the development of the narrative itself. I must admit that I was at an advantage when I began the process of developing characters, particularly NyaDenga's, because I did not necessarily have to create the character from scratch. Her basic outline pre-existed, but I had to expand her to the fullest.

Developing Chuma's character, on the other hand, presented an unexpected challenge. Although it was also an advantage that Chuma's story took place in an era familiar to me, I soon discovered that developing her character and narrative would take much more than simply observing the world around me in order to position her as a character. The trouble was that her story 'was a little too easy', as some of my fellow workshop group members pointed out. Although I readily agreed, I worried because as I wrote some of the chapters in Chuma's narrative, I did not feel any excitement, and if anything, I sometimes felt that I was just pushing myself to get through them. I wouldn't say that this was done deliberately, but it is a retrospective observation. I worried that even I, the writer of the chapters in question, was not moved by them. I was able to draw this comparison because I thoroughly enjoyed writing every single chapter of NyaDenga's narrative, and I found I still enjoyed reading them a second time! I congratulated myself on them. In comparison, when I read Chuma's chapters they felt laboured and made me feel that something was missing from them, although I could not say what that 'something' was. I tried to get a trusted colleague (I sometimes finished writing my chapters at work!) to read through these chapters as well. He was thankfully honest in his feedback, and told me that he found the story a little boring, although he could not explain why. At first he thought it

was because Chuma's world was too ordinary and dull, although he did not know why it was. I knew exactly what he was talking about, but was still frustrated because I did not know how to identify the problem. I thought I might redeem myself by justifying that I did not need excessive drama in the narrative. In other words, it was enough to have drama in NyaDenga's story, and I did not need the same in Chuma's story. For a good few months I was satisfied with this validation, but deep down, in the most honest part of my being, I knew I had managed to satisfy myself with a lie. I knew that if what I told myself was the truth, there would be no need to justify it. It would have felt right. I continued to write because eventually I wanted to get to the end so that I could complete my first draft close to the end of the second year of writing (I was guided by the length of my MA Creative Writing course and had two years to complete it).

However, I just could not get to the end before having to face the reality of Chuma's narrative. I read the chapters on her from the beginning and was satisfied with the first two or three chapters. However, it was when Chuma actually settled down in her new job that I felt I had lost the grip. Why was that when her intention, as stated in her diary entries (Chapter Three) was to find a job and earn some money for herself? Clearly, the money factor was not going to give Chuma answers to her life and exactly what she wanted to achieve. Certainly, Chuma's money was not going to give me the answers I needed about her life either. I did not read and re-read these chapters because I resisted it. What was needed was not a thorough read through, but to understand how I could initially enjoy the chapters. I could not verbalise what it was that needed to change, only realise that I needed to add spice. Spice. Suddenly I realised that the word I was looking for was *bland,* a word which describes what I thought about the chapters in Chuma's narrative. It was a relief to find this word as it gave me an idea of what I needed to change. Whether my solution would be a working one for someone else, I did not know. All I knew was that I needed to help myself enjoy what I had written. I did not want to fake the pleasure of reading, so the change I thought I needed to make had to be as genuine as possible. I decided to re-think how I had presented Chuma in the first place.

When I re-read the first chapter on Chuma for the third time I realised that I made a mistake in introducing her the way I did. Her introduction, initially, was with Chuma lying in bed, listening to her mother's footsteps approach her bedroom. The effect of this was that throughout the first chapter, Chuma's mother's voice seemed to be more emphasised, whereas Chuma's voice was almost drowned out. I noticed that this made Chuma seem almost reluctant to own up to her voice and her story. This was what weakened the story. I decided to rework that chapter so that it began with Chuma lying in bed, reflecting on her aspirations and dreams. In this way, I was more aware that this was Chuma's story and that she did not need to be apologetic to use her voice. She also did not need to apologise for being first in her life. She needed to be first. Once I made this switch of focusing on Chuma as the protagonist in her story, I found that I had a better idea of how I would improve this narrative. It was her decision not to live a dull life in one place, doing the same things. When Chuma became mobile and showed an interest in things outside of her office and work life, I was able to add a little more depth to her character.

For example, the rape of Chuma's lesbian friend, Kate, was something that touched a nerve with her. Although the society from which she came claimed to protect the rights of women and minorities, the rape of Kate, and her subsequent treatment at the police station, did not reflect the existence of such protection. Kate was raped because of her sexual orientation. When she went to the police station to report the rape, the police officer who dealt with her was not particularly sympathetic as he asked Kate questions like what she had been wearing. When Kate mentioned that she was a lesbian, the officer seemed to lose interest in her case all together. He ended up telling her he would no longer be the one to deal with her.

According to Wikipedia, in South Africa the term 'corrective rape' was coined in the early 2000s by human rights Non-Governmental Organisations. It describes rapes committed against South African lesbians and homosexuals. Vasu Reddy, Cheryl-Ann Potgieter and Nonhlanhla Mkhize in the article, "Cloud over the rainbow nation" Human Science Review (March 2007:10-11) add that in the case of corrective rape, rapists claim

to act in the interest of the lesbian female by 'teaching her to behave like a woman'(10-11). The criminal practice of corrective rape is most prevalent, but not limited to the black townships.

Also most perturbing, according to Reddy et al, not only did black lesbians face marginalization by their families and communities because of their sexual orientation, but also that the violence showed "stigma, machismo and masculine power combined with heterosexism [suggests] that violence is somehow normalized in our communities."

Following the rape of Kate, Chuma became angry and felt almost powerless. The only thing she could think of doing was to write about it so as to bring awareness on the issue. In the end, she, Kate and Jinja began an activist group that would deal more with these issues. Through this process, Chuma began to see that just because she knew about the struggles of women (based on things she read) did not automatically mean she understood everything. And also, just because gender violence, particularly corrective rape, was not as widely reported as other crimes, did not mean that it did not exist. This issue in the end provided her with a platform to feel, understand and know something of these struggles. In a way, this experience gave this particular struggle, faced by marginalised lesbian women, a face, and therefore personal meaning to her.

While Reddy et. al. praised the South African government's efforts in addressing gender-based-violence, they also raised a concern that the issue of 'corrective rape' was one not readily in the public eye. The report argued that this could be because, like many cases of abuse against women, these cases often went unreported and unnoticed.

Corrective rape is still not considered a hate crime in South Africa, although there has been a call to make it one. Spokesperson for the Justice Ministry said, after meeting with activist groups, that the ministry would consider making corrective rape a crime. (Sowetan newspaper, 15 March 2011). At the moment, activists are currently pushing for the establishment of a commission, which will develop and implement a national plan to

address sexual violence that targets the gay and lesbian community and hate crimes (News24, 15 March 2011).

From the onset I was faced with a decision about how I would write out the two narratives. I had two choices: the first, to write the narratives separately and complete each one on its own or to write them as alternating chapters. I could imagine how the first option would simplify the writing. I would not have to divide my attention as I would write out chapter after chapter in each of the narratives, until I had finished. The second narrative would simply follow the first. The very first chapter, which was NyaDenga's narrative, was nearly ten pages long before editing. After this, I felt I needed a break from writing in order to have a break in my concentration. I needed to let the chapter breathe, so to speak. During my break, I thought a lot about Chuma. I realised then that she needed to be a part of NyaDenga's narrative in an active manner. I did not want to spend extended amounts of time on NyaDenga while ignoring Chuma. The only way I felt I could literally create a sense that the two narratives co-existed and were co-dependent was to ensure that I alternated the chapters. I thought that this would help me physically live the experience I was intending to create. The next chapter I wrote was based on Chuma's narrative, which was not necessarily the second chapter. The second chapter I wrote is what currently stands as chapter eighteen. In fact, this chapter was based on the night Chuma got engaged to Shandukani. However, from this point, I had to work her story backwards, all the while answering questions about who she was, where she was from and where she was going. When I reached the beginning of her story, I had to go back to the engagement chapter, to rework and focus on the developments in Chuma's narrative accordingly. Alternating the two narratives worked. I felt re-energised when looking at the work again after a break. However, I had to be careful to pick up where I had left off. I had to read what I had done in previous chapters so that I could continue.

Much has been written on the subject of dreams in psychology. Influential neurologist and founder of the psychoanalytic school of psychology, Sigmund Freud, said that "dreams are the royal road to the unconscious" (The Interpretation of Dreams, 1899). This means that a dream often will give an indication of the issues that an individual

deals with in waking life – an issue which has been dropped into the unconscious by repressive and oppressive forces of the conscious mind. Freud believed that understanding one's dreams, and the ability to interpret these, was key to understanding one's needs.

Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav, founder of Jungian psychology and a friend of Jung for six years, emphasised "understanding the psyche through exploring the worlds of dreams, art, mythology, religion and philosophy" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dream_interpretation). He saw dreams as the manner in which the unconscious mind relates messages to the conscious mind by using what he called the collective unconscious. He argued that the collective unconscious was based on the collective experience of humans and that what individuals remembered on waking was remembered in the form of archetypes (parts of the collective unconscious whose purpose is to organise, direct and inform human thought and behaviour).

I raise the issue of dreams at this point because I want to justify or better understand how a dream I had bore an influence on how I wrote and interpreted one of the female characters in my story. When I began to think about the family of the young Denga (note that she only begins to be referred to as NyaDenga at the end of the narrative), I understood that she was raised in a polygamous family. This was the norm. Many families in Venda during that period were complex, with the man having more than one wife, also with one or more of his relatives living in the same homestead. Denga's father's first wife, Avhashoni, was meant to be the typical jealous, angry and unreasonable woman. She was meant to be mean, especially to the younger wife, Denga's mother, Nnyambeni. In fact, when I began writing the first chapter on NyaDenga, I did not doubt that Avhashoni would turn out to be an appalling character. I knew I was going to dislike her. However, this changed one night after a dream I had. I dreamt my husband and I lived in a village up on a mountain in Venda. In my dream, my husband had a second wife, whom he also said he loved. I remembered, still in the dream, walking around the homestead perpetually sad and jealous. Everywhere I looked for opportunities to solicit an explanation from my husband about why he had to go and love somebody else. He wanted children and I was unable to have them for him and this, he said, was the

reason he had to take somebody else, whom he loved. I was still feeling hurt, grieved, angry and betrayed when I woke up. It was then that I became more aware that Avhashoni was not to be the stereotypical character that I sought to portray in the beginning. I became more sensitive when writing her character and even though she seemed bitter and hateful towards her co-wife in the beginning, her story opened up, thus explaining her attitude. The dream had essentially corrected my own attitude, and through it I learnt more about what I was doing in my writing.

Using my imagination in order to further the story worked in a similar manner as dreaming, only on a conscious level. At an Imaginative Education Research Group (IERG) conference held in Vancouver, BC in July 2003, speaker Susan Barber said: "Imagination is the mind in flight, soaring on the wings of memory, emotion, association and perception. Our mind struggles to create order, and imagination offers a structure. In writing down how we see what we are imagining, we gain control and can return to these visuals and emotional ideas again and again to discover ourselves"("Imagination in Writing and Teaching", Simon Fraser University, IERG Conference, Vancouver, BC, 18 July 2003). I could not agree more with this notion. I cannot imagine a body of creative fiction writing that would not rely on the imagination.

My narrative has, to a large extent, depended on the imagined, fused with knowledge gained from research work and experience. I remember the first time I faced a blank page, about to write the first chapter. This could not happen without having thought, which conceptualised or imagined the story as a whole first. Having broken the story idea up into chapters, I still needed to actively envisage the beginning, the middle and end of each chapter in relation to setting, plot and characters. I remember mostly sitting at my computer with an idea for a chapter, what happened and who was involved. At first making a simple note (sometimes extracted from the chapter outline) such as, *Here Chuma, Chuma is at work… it is her first day…* I would then ask questions like; *did she have an eventful morning while preparing to go to work? What did it take for her to prepare? What surrounded her? What did she think of her surroundings? What made her angry, happy, and annoyed? What was on her mind? Was it important? If so, why? Would her thoughts help in the development of her narrative?* I found that thinking up

answers to these questions gave me points to narrate and think about. While this was a useful exercise, there were ideas that I decided to stick to, and some that I dropped. It was important that I stuck to ideas I felt would be true to the narrative. That is, once I knew exactly who my protagonists were, what their fears, dreams and aspirations were, I was comfortable to let them drive their own stories so that I was constantly writing about who they were and what they were doing. Reflecting on this now I cannot say with absolute certainty that this was a completely flawless approach. The opposite of this compromising approach would have been to be vicious and ruthless in my dealing with the characters, perhaps throw every kind of hardship their way and be ruthless with happy resolutions. I do not know what conclusion I would have ended up with eventually. What I do admit is that I might not have written at all if I set out to write a completely unhappy story.

It must be said that my conclusion was a process which was completed after the first draft. There were many things that unsettled me at the beginning of my writing process. Chief among these was to develop a voice for each of the protagonists. Developing a voice was inextricably linked to the development of the characters themselves. I was mindful that the voice of the protagonists needed to represent them in a fair manner. I needed the voices to be strong enough to tell believable, convincing stories. My initial plan was that I was going to write both narratives using the first person voice. When I began to write NyaDenga's story (before presenting my proposal to the workshop group and to my supervisor), it was in the first person. By the time I reached the end of the chapter, I was uncomfortable. I felt that the story sounded slightly contrived, especially as the story sounded like it was a mix between contemporary life and the old. I think when I used the first person I took full advantage of reflecting honestly on NyaDenga's interiority. Unfortunately, as I was to discover later, I had made no effort to ensure that the "I" narrator would be able to speak in the kind of language and understand, live and represent the kind of culture I was trying to capture. With that narrative voice, the story sounded as ordinary as me telling somebody I was going to the kitchen to make a sandwich. I was disappointed that I did not achieve what I thought. I had hoped that the end result would see me having written a story that sounded true to life. I was looking to

have the young Denga guide me through her world, but instead I had her face me with a shrug, as if she was saying: “I don’t know, do you?” I did not know how I was going to solve this problem so that the story would sound like something I wanted to read.

The thought of shifting the narrator to the third person omniscient crossed my mind instead. I reasoned that it might help me to create distance between myself and how I saw NyaDenga’s story and the actual story. Furthermore, the distance which the third person narrator would create would ensure that I was able to write about NyaDenga in a more holistic way. It was going to give me a better chance to reflect on her circumstances. At the same time, I did not want to take away the focus on her as it was her story, which needed to be told from her perspective. I realised that this was the correct decision to make given that I had limited knowledge and access to NyaDenga’s time period. I knew there would be things, such as language (to be discussed later) and cultural traditions that I might be able to explain better in the third person.

When I began Chuma’s story, I knew right away that I had to use the first person perspective. It was meant to be convenient because Chuma was a modern character, who also lived in my time. I had access to her story, and the resources I would employ in her narrative were abundant, including the fact that I believed I knew her language. Her story was written with ease, although there were concerns, noted previously, about the ‘easiness’ or lack of challenge in her story.

Throughout the process of my writing, I was constantly aware of the inter-textual relationship that I believed needed to exist. I needed to make the stories relate in order that they could give each other meaning. I could not think of ways to make this happen quickly, and was more interested in writing. I did not wait until I had it all figured out, rejecting the ideas I had at the time. However, I was baffled by how I was going to achieve this because my original idea was not to write two stories. Chuma ended up being the one to write NyaDenga’s story and her doing so became an answer to how the stories were related. I might not have been able to see things this way had it not been for the colleague who told me that Chuma’s narrative was dull and ‘too ordinary’.

The two stories interlinked as they both had a thread of feminism in different eras. NyaDenga, through her art, had an enquiring mind and constantly asked why she should unquestioningly do what was asked of her. Her achievement was realised at the end when Nemukula went to ask her father for NyaDenga's hand in marriage. His response to him was that he did not care what Denga did as he no longer had a daughter. It was Denga's friend, Talu, who explained to Nemukula, as he left their homestead, that there had been a rebellion of young girls not wanting to be given in marriage when it was not their desire to be married. This had been blamed on Denga, whose stories about her leaving her marriage to Malise, always made their way back to Phungoni. What was unclear was why parents no longer enforced their marriage rules on their daughters.

Talu suggested when she talked to Nemukula, that perhaps they feared the embarrassment. Denga's father was ashamed of what his daughter had done. Because of it, some villagers said that he had failed in raising his daughter correctly; as a result, Mulamuleli was seen as a weak man. There were those who excluded him from village functions.

Chuma learnt, through NyaDenga's story that one needed to question and need not be satisfied. Also from the story, she drew the strength to face challenges in her own life. As an artist, she realised, as Ikem (quoted earlier) in Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah, that there should exist enmity between art and orthodoxy.

The use of language in the story was another interesting factor. In Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature , Wa Thiong'o further suggested that through oral traditions, children could learn not only their own language, but also the power and magic of words. This exercise also introduced children to their own view of the world. However what he laments are the introduction of colonial education and the introduction of the English language. "Language and English literature," writes Wa Thiong'o, "were taking us further from ourselves to other selves, from our world, to other worlds" (Wa Thiong'o 12). He also says that "the African novel as an extended narrative in the written form had antecedents in African oral literature…" (Wa Thiong'o 69). The

suggestion here is that the English language in Africa created a disturbance in the African oral tradition.

I was constantly working between three languages – isiXhosa, TshiVenda and English. This was because I believed that the African languages, used in mainly in dialogue and occasionally used to refer to certain objects, would be representative of the characters' African way of being. I had always been curious about how African writers wrote about an African story in the English language. I remember once attending a discussion in which Ama Ata Aidoo, a prominent woman writer from Ghana, was on the panel in 2002, at the Time of the Writer festival, held annually at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I asked her what her thoughts were on African writers writing in English. Was she comfortable doing it? She replied that she did not see anything wrong writing in English because it was the language in which she was mostly educated. It was easier for her to use English, and many readers could still access it. In fact, Wa Thiong'o wrote at length about this issue. He wrote of a time when African writers embraced writing in English and were only concerned about the English language's ability to carry the weight of an African language. As a result, the writing relied on African proverbs. For example (in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart, the narrator said: "As the Ibo say: 'When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk'". (Achebe 10). There are many similar examples in the text which demonstrate Wa Thiong'o's point. English in my narrative is the most predominant language used, followed by Venda and isiXhosa. When I first conceptualised the work, I never imagined writing in a language other than English. I think a part of it had to do with me having read African writers like Chinua Achebe, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Sindiwe Magona et cetera. Although African, they had successfully written their stories, some winning awards, in English. Yet there was never any question about whether or not the stories were African enough.

My reasons for choosing the languages that I did were based on where the stories were taking place (setting). I thought the languages would enrich my use of setting in the story. I'm an isiXhosa first language speaker with reasonable fluency in English. I only recently began to learn TshiVenda. I required some assistance with translating some of the TshiVenda dialogue from isiXhosa to English. I found it difficult translating from

English to TshiVenda because it was a challenge to imagine NyaDenga's thought process, in the early 19th century in Venda, taking place in a language other than that of her land. In fact, at one point, I recall using the word 'deflower' when Denga attended the Vhusha ceremony. One of the lecturers in the workshop group pointed out that she did not think the term was suitable in the African context because it was one that was strongly associated with English culture. When I reworked the chapter and thought about how I could make what I was trying to say sound authentic when I used the word 'deflower'. I ended up with the words, "you must not sleep with a man." This sounded a little flat, although it was authentic. Interestingly, I found it easier to add English to Chuma's dialogue given her culture, education, and influence of the English language in her life.

Research played an important role in the narrative. However, most of it tended to focus more on NyaDenga's world. I read books written on Venda at that time; books on Venda folklore, music and tales. I visited Venda and also had an opportunity to visit Noria Mabasa, a Venda artist, in her art gallery. Mabasa is a self-taught artist who began moulding clay sculptures back in 1974. "I started because of a dream. It took a very long time because I didn't understand it well. This was in 1965 and in 1974, I started the work" (http://www.vgallery.co.za/2004article6/vzine.htm). She was first recognised for her clay figures, which were covered with enamel. "Her work combines the figurative and the functional in a more earthy way; pots in the shape of the female body or characterized faces, demonstrate the command she has over the medium" (http://www.vgallery.co.za/2004article6/vzine.htm).

I kept a diary in which I wrote all the important ideas I had had during the course of the day. I did not write in it daily, only whenever there was something interesting, or something I thought could be of use at a later stage. Some of the dreams I had went into this. I was bad at writing in a single diary (hard cover notebooks), so I ended up with several of these. The result was that in the end I remembered some of the ideas I had noted earlier only vaguely as I could not easily find the information. I ended up improvising when I needed to use the information. I took photographs of people,

landscape, architecture and buildings when I traveled to both Venda and the Eastern Cape. I found this to be stimulating and an alternative way to keep a diary. Not only did these inspire me, but reminded me of the places I was writing about. They helped me retain a level of accuracy about the places where the stories were set.

As part of my research, I also held informal interviews with some of the people who might have known something about NyaDenga. Among those I spoke to was vhoAlilali Mavunathanda, who was Salani's (NyaDenga's child) second wife. This interview was conducted at Shayandima Township, Venda, before I began to write the novel. vhoAlilali still lives with her first-born son and his family. Although she confirmed vhoSarah's account of the story of NyaDenga, there was little additional information. She also did not know much about her. However, she gave me more information on the family tree and spoke of individuals and their contributions in the family. I paid attention to her descriptions of the villages, not understanding everything she was saying, but my husband helped to translate everything. This was a frustrating exercise because often he gave me a summary of what vhoAlilali was saying, based on his own interpretations. For example, vhoAlilali very often and easily got distracted and would speak about the speed of the wind while trying to recite one of her poems to us (she's a poet). I promised myself a tape recorder so that when we went to do more interviews I would be able to handle them on my own and would enlist the help of someone willing to translate word for word.

In my proposal I had mentioned that I would set up interviews with a historical expert from the University of Venda. I was a little unclear at that stage about why I would need to do this, except that I wanted to get as much information the region as possible. This did not happen because I managed to get most of my information from books, the internet, the characters, imagination and dreams. I only researched when I needed to verify facts.

One of the purposes of the writing workshops (the Master's class) I attended was to provide a space in which the participants could access an audience which would read, critique and give feedback on individual projects. I found this useful because for as long as I had been writing, I had never had an audience that was able to read my work when I

was in the process of writing it. I remember receiving mostly positive feedback about my work, and that I should keep going as the story was taking shape. Some of the feedback was not harsh but was honest and frank. What I appreciated about it was that it came from people who were also from different backgrounds. There was always a wide variety of issues – some were to do with the narrative, words or ideas that worked, or not. It was the kind of environment that offered advice where it was possible to get suggestions on how to move forward with a plot when one was stuck. There were probing questions asked and ideas on how to further characters. In addition, there were books suggested by the workshop participants, which related to individual projects. The workshops sometimes pinpointed specific problems in the text and this was helpful. There were times, however, when I tried not to show my sensitivity around my work, especially when I thought the feedback I received was harsh (for me it was harsh when someone said they did not like what they read and could not say exactly what was wrong). At times I found I could not easily face my work without hearing, in my mind, the voices of some of the strongest critics telling me what I was doing wrong, or what I was going to do wrong. I drank a lot of wine on these occasions, although I did end up getting used to the kind of pressures involved.

The biggest influence this workshop had on my writing resulted in the structure of my narrative being completely adjusted. I have already mentioned that I had planned to write a simple narrative based on the life of NyaDenga. However, when I set this out in my proposal, and having written it from the "I" perspective, there was a general feeling that it might be interesting to include the "I" in the story. The result of this was that I ended up with two narratives, as mentioned already.

I eventually completed my first draft after two years. For weeks, months, I did not look at the narrative again, although I knew I had some work still. There were loose ends which needed to be tied up. A friend from class asked how far I had gone with the writing. When I mentioned that I thought I had finished, she was excited and requested to read the manuscript, assuming that I probably did not have much work to do on it. Apart from tying up the loose ends, I thought there would be just minor editorial errors. We met two

weeks after she had read it and told me her concerns. Had I read the work as a whole, she asked, and I admitted that I had not. I had not considered her input before reading my work; I had not decided what I wanted to retain. Reluctantly, I began to read my work and to my distress discovered many errors, not just typographical and grammatical, but also discrepancies in some of the names. Where I had begun with one name for one character, I ended up using a different one further on. I was reluctant because I felt like I could not face my writing with the aim of judging it. I was sensitive enough when others judged it yet could not avoid reading it at that stage. That for me felt like the beginning of my writing process. Someone suggested that I read from a hardcopy so that I would not change things around so much. I tried this, but it proved laborious. I ended up saving the original draft as a different file (as I had is saved in different locations on my computer and flash disc) and began editing and re-writing on the soft copy. Somehow I felt as though I needed to rework every sentence. I left the material which I was happy with and worked on everything else which I was dissatisfied with.

I had edited nearly six chapters when I learnt that I would be one of four MA students on a panel in an evening event organised in May 2009 by the head of the school of languages, Professor Leon de Kock. I panicked as I did not think it was possible to pull out. I did not know what to expect when I had to read my work in public for the first time. I selected two excerpts to read from the different narratives and chose from those chapters I had corrected. The opportunity to read my work on a public platform, nervous as I was, changed the way in which I did my editing and re-writing. For a start, I remembered for a long time how my voice sounded when I read out loud. In fact, it was when I was in the process of preparing for this event that I practised reading out loud. Suddenly I found punctuation that was not correctly placed and words that were not functioning properly in dialogue. I could hear the characters speaking. Reading out loud brought them to life. And so I continued to edit after the reading, by reading the whole story aloud. After completing my first edit and re-write I submitted it to my supervisor to read, who made further corrections and suggestions.

The aim of the project, in my case a novel, was to create a body of writing that would be of publishable standard. I think I have managed to achieve this because Pan McMillan publishers have requested to read my manuscript. The course has helped me to be more focused in my daily life, particularly on small details, and I am now more critical in my thinking.

I have had an opportunity, for which I am grateful, to revise both the novel and the essay, in light of the readers' reports. I am also aware that should my work be accepted by a publisher, more revisions will still take place. The advice I received from the readers was honest and helped me a great deal as I re-read my work. For example, one of the readers, Dr Adler, while appreciating the reflection on the actual process of writing, pointed out, among others, that I could enrich my essay by engaging more with feminist thought, especially given that I wrote about two female protagonists. Failure to reflect on other issues related to my writing was as a result of understanding, from the creative writing course, that the reflexive essay required only writing about the process of writing. Dr Adler's advice gave me an opportunity to draw from and make use of sources and materials relevant to my writing. Through this process, I managed to articulate better some of my ideas in the novel.

I also took into consideration feedback given by Ms Marguerite MacRobert, from Stellenbosch, as I edited the novel. I came to understand some of her concerns, which she mentioned through detailed text references, that some of the writing watered down the story. When I re-read from the first page, it was with an awareness that there were areas I needed to watch out for, areas which were overly explained, and as a result clashed with some of the dialogue. In fact, it was my assessment that the redundancy easily lead to a situation where the narrative 'told' rather than 'showed'. I edited thousands of words out of the novel, while also trying to ensure I lost neither my writing voice nor the story.

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* Please note that some of the internet sources and books I have quoted were used as a means to gain knowledge during the course of the writing of the novel, therefore, they might not be quoted in the essay above.

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Reference to Acknowledgements

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