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The Waiting Room:

Memory and Identity:

A theatrical exploration of identity through memory

Master of Arts in Dramatic Art

By creative and written research

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The Waiting Room:

Memory and Identity:

A theatrical exploration of identity through memory

If my ninety-nine-year-old grandmother thinks she is seven,

how old does that make me?

Abstract:

This thesis, subtitled *Memory and Identity: A theatrical exploration of identity through memory,* uses theatre as an investigative tool and unpacks the idea that we are connected to each other through three different forms of memory and knowledge; namely personal knowledge, family knowledge and genetic knowledge. This written component forms part of a practice-based research performance project.

The practice-based research uses playmaking to draw on these three memory forms and explores the interpersonal relationships of a life lived in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2009. Each knowledge form has been explored: personal knowledge draws on my personal lived experience as a South African citizen and also as a theatre practitioner from 1992 to 2009; family knowledge draws on stories handed down in my family and an exploration into my family dynamics through body memory; and genetic knowledge uses the Portuguese song form of Fados as a way of accessing, formalising and recreating the narrative I tell.

I have used theatre to explore the links between myself and my personal memories, communal family memories and genetic memories. I have explored the relationship between memories of a personal lived experience in Johannesburg in the 1970s and my own social positioning in Johannesburg in 2009 (the year my mother died). I found ways in which old patterns of behaviour were repeated under entirely different circumstances – and through the practice of making the play how

these patterns could be disrupted – and new pathways for knowing and forming an identity could be formed.

In this research document I have elaborated on the three basic stages of my investigation: research into personal, family and genetic memory; my play-making practice; and finally how the process of making and performing the play shifted my ideas about myself, my family and, more subliminally, my place in South Africa – in the past, present and future. My finding is that while memory – in all its different forms – has a key role in shaping identity, identity is a distinct and ever-evolving entity that defies time and place and conditioning. There is a point at which what is given to us is left behind and we are able to imagine alternatives for ourselves that we can grow towards and claim as our own.

Synopsis of Play:

This thesis is written in response to a play I wrote, performed and directed called *The Waiting Room*, staged at The Wits Downstairs Theatre. The play and the thesis form an integrated and integral part of my creative research for the purposes of the degree in Master of Arts in Dramatic Art (MADA). The play is set at the deathbed of the protagonist's mother at the Donald Gordon Hospital in Parktown, Johannesburg. Anna is in a comatose state and is slowly shutting down. By her side sits her daughter, Zini. Trying to get in to see Anna are several of her past lovers. Zini is attempting very hard to keep them out – as well as trying to prevent them from encountering one another. Out of desperation, she elicits the help of a Portuguese nurse who reluctantly acts as her spy and aid. While waiting for her mother to die, she is bombarded with many ghosts from the past. At the heart of these is The Italian, with whom Zini and Ana lived for several years in his mansion in Westcliff, Johannesburg. Throughout the course of the play, The Italian and Anna are present onstage – sometimes commenting on or entering into the action as played out between Zini and her past, and Zini and the Nurse. By the end of the play, Anna dies and Zini has to go out into the world. But her encounters with her past, the death of her mother and her growing relationship with the Nurse have shifted something inside her. Although the end is bleak, the style of the play is often humorous – sometimes manically so – and there is a sense of renewed purpose. Zini leaves with a stronger sense of both herself and her place in the world.

I have included a copy of the play *The Waiting Room* at the end of this thesis.

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Part One

The Question

If my ninety-nine-year-old grandmother thinks she is seven, how old does that make me?

'Your memory is a monster; you forget – it doesn't. It simply files things away. It keeps things for you, or hides things from you – and summons them to your recall with a will of its own. You think you have a memory; but it has you!' John Irving[1]

How I arrived at my question

What role does memory play in forming or sustaining a sense of identity? What is an individual's relationship with her legacy – the legacy of a family, as much as history and politics? What is passed down the generations: what is lost and what remains? What choices do we have in formulating our own identities – and to what extent are our choices conscious?

My ninety-nine-year-old grandmother with advanced dementia would periodically regress to the age of seven. Here she repeated stories from this time. Over and over. She never assumed a girly voice, but simply referred to herself as seven and seemed to be in the moment of that age, speaking to those around her as if it was ninety-two years earlier. One such story was when she had been forgotten at her father's work. She was playing in the back of his office when suddenly she

[1] John Irving, 1989, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, p 102.

realized everything had gone very quiet. The light outside was changing. It was getting dark.

She repeated the story over and over. Her father only realized when he was at home that she had been forgotten. I listened and re-listened to the same story. She would ask when her father was going to come. She described her terror as it became darker. She described his terror at her being afraid and alone.

'He will tell you about it. When is he coming?'

It was easier for me to enter into the past than to try and explain the present, so I would say:

'Just now, he is coming just now.'

That softened her for a time. Then she would begin again, as if it were a new story. Once or twice she would ask who I was. I wouldn't know. I wasn't born yet. Who could I be in the story?

She was distressed. She needed to tell the story. She needed her father to corroborate her story. My grandmother's mother had died when she was three. She had grown up without a mother. I knew the background. They lived on a farm far from the town of Graaff Reinet. It would have taken him at least two hours to drive

home. Another two to drive back to fetch her. She was alone in the office for four hours into the night. Because I knew her circumstances I understood her fear.

But why this story? Was it because she felt fear in her present situation that she remembered a similar feeling? Was she afraid now at being left behind as it grew dark? Was she afraid of her impending death? Or was she simply at the mercy of the mechanics of her aging brain?

I reflected on my own narrative and wondered which part I would replay over and over if I got to ninety-nine. Would the narrative I chose fit my present situation, define me in the moment, cause others to redefine themselves?

A few years earlier, on my mother's deathbed, it was very different. My mother was in a comatose state. She never regained consciousness after brain surgery. After two weeks in this condition she was declared brain dead. Her mind was not there. I sat beside her but it was only her body that reacted. She was operating on her ancient brain. Every now and again her body would contract and she would move. But this was simply old electrical waves responding to an old pathway that was no longer relevant. My grandmother was using old memories; my mother was using old electrical pathways. Neither was in the present.

One thing that emerged during this time in hospital was that I was forced to confront elements of my own past. I was not present either. Just as I adapted my role with my grandmother, so too I took on old aspects of myself with my mother. I too was behaving from old learnt behaviours. I too was operating on old pathways.

The questions I would like to consider are: what role does memory, ancient or recent, play in forming and sustaining our identities? To what extent do we operate on old pathways and how does that impact those around us?

I began to wonder which old pathways I was repeating. Is this something we all do, all the time, triggered by different situations?

I took the question of 'how old am I?' in response to my grandmother's perceived age. Who am I, defined by another's story? I wanted to explore the relationship between the identity of one person and another; one identity so strong and needy that it can't help but shift the identity of another.

But just like my grandmother's growing up without a mother, the distance of the farm to the office, the underlying fear in the present, these events gave the story urgency. It was these known events that allowed me to shift my identity.

What were the events in my narrative? What role did they play in my identity? How would they impact the story that I would tell and retell when I was ninety-nine?

I explored this on a personal level and took it further onto a social level. How are we impacted by those around us, how are we impacted by the social and political landscape?

Why do we shift our roles? If the need is great enough do we adapt our identities to fit in with what is needed?

So my question was formed:

'If my ninety-nine-year-old grandmother thinks she is seven, how old does that make me?'

What is the relationship between another's identity (made up of that person's events or circumstances) and one's own identity? Do we change our own identity in response to someone else's?

So the one part of my question firmly sits with identity and one's circumstances. But the other part of the question sits with memory.

The power of my grandmother's memory had transported her obsessively to a time when she was seven. Her memory gave me a new age. A new role.

To explore the relationship between identity and memory and relationships, I needed to investigate different forms of memory and how they impact on identity.

In his book *Knowledge in the Blood*, Jonathan Jansen speaks about the different forms of knowledge.[2] He shows how indirect knowledge can be carried subliminally and experienced as if experienced directly. From where does this indirect knowledge come from? The collective unconsciousness? The realm of Jungian symbols and archetypes? Some sort of genetic imprinting? I am interested in the line between the public and the private, the individual and the collective, showing how we are both distinct from the collective and yet inseparable from it.

What role do the experiences of our ancestors play in our lives? Are they still potent? Do they affect us? Do we draw on them in the present? It is well known that there is a physiological relationship between our DNA and our forefathers. If your ancestors were exposed for extended periods to malaria, for example, it will affect them physiologically in the very shape of their red blood cells – and that information

[2] Jonathan D Jansen, *Knowledge in the Blood*, p 79.

will be handed down genetically from generation to generation. Proclivities towards high cholesterol, or certain kinds of cancer, will be passed through – as well as a talent for music or gymnastics. But what about the stories, songs and performance modes of our ancestors? Are those also carried with us in our bodies in a slightly different but equally potent way?

In my research I uncovered many different theories of how memory can impact people's behaviour – even if the memories are passed down and are not strictly theirs.

Genetic Knowledge

The first is biological: the structure of people's DNA can alter once they experience a traumatic event – and that different structure can be carried down the generations. This results in a kind of instinctual fear. Memories can be passed down to later generations through genetic switches that allow the offspring to inherit the experience of their ancestors (according to new research that may explain how phobias can develop, which I have detailed below).[3]

It was long thought that memories and learned experiences built up over a lifetime are passed on to later generations through teaching or through personal experience. But now scientist's research shows that it is also possible for information to be inherited through chemical changes in our DNA.

[3] From an article published in 2013 by Gray, R. in *The Telegraph*. 'Phobias may be memories passed down in genes from ancestors.' http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/10486479/Phobias-may-be-memories-passed-down-in-genes-from-ancestors.html November 2014.

At Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta, in an attempt to explain irrational phobias, it was found that mice passed on learned information about a stressful experience to later generations through their DNA. During the study, researchers trained mice to fear the smell of cherry blossom before letting them breed. Their offspring were then exposed to the smell of cherry blossom and a neutral odour. They showed fearful responses to the cherry blossom odour but not to the neutral odour. More than that, the following generation of mice demonstrated the same fear response, even when fathered by artificial insemination. Structural changes were found in the areas of the brain that detects smell. There were chemical changes in the DNA of the genes of the mice in the area affecting smell. Experiences were transferred into the genome allowing them to be passed on to later generations. These results suggested that a possible reason for phobias could be based on the inherited experiences of their ancestors.[4]

Professor Marcus Pembrey, a paediatric geneticist at University College London, said the work provided 'compelling evidence' for the biological transmission of memory ... It addresses constitutional fearfulness that is highly relevant to phobias, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorders, plus the controversial subject of transmission of the 'memory' of ancestral experience down the generations.'[5]

Dr Brian Dias, from the Department of Psychiatry at Emory University, Atlanta, said:

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[4] Ibid.

[5] From an article published in 2013 by Callaway E, in the Scientific American. 'Fearful Memories Passed Down to Mouse Descendants'. http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/fearful-memories-passed-down/ 7 January 2016.

'We have begun to explore an underappreciated influence on adult behaviour – ancestral experience before conception … From a translational perspective, our results allow us to appreciate how the experiences of a parent, before even conceiving offspring, markedly influence both structure and function in the nervous system of subsequent generations … Such a phenomenon may contribute to the etiology and potential intergenerational transmission of risk for neuropsychiatric disorders such as phobias, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.'[6]

In another study, Dr Kerry Ressler, a neurobiologist and psychiatrist at Emory University, was interested in cycles of drug addiction, neuropsychiatric illness and other sicknesses which seemed to recur in parents and their children. 'There are a lot of anecdotes to suggest that there's intergenerational transfer of risk, and that it's hard to break that cycle,'[7] says Dr Ressler.

But one of the clearest studies that genetic changes can occur stemming from the experiences in previous generations comes from a research team at New York's Mount Sinai hospital. A genetic study of thirty-two Jewish men and women who had either been in a Nazi concentration camp, witnessed or experienced torture or who had to hide during the Second World War set out to investigate the impact of the Holocaust on following generations. The genes of their children were also analysed

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[6] From an article published in 2013 by Gray, R. in *The Telegraph*. 'Phobias may be memories passed down in genes from ancestors.' (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/10486479/Phobias-may-be-memories-passed-down-in-genes-from-ancestors.html 7 January 2016

[7] From an article published in 2015 by Thomson, H. in *The Guardian*. 'Study of Holocaust survivors finds trauma passed on to children's genes'. http://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/aug/21/study-of-holocaust-survivors-finds-trauma-passed-on-to-childrens-genes. 7 January 2016.

and compared to Jewish families who were not directly affected by the war.[8] It was found that the genetic changes, stemming from the trauma of the Holocaust, were passed on to their children, proving that one person's life experience can affect subsequent generations.

Inherited Knowledge

The second part of my research into how memory can affect behaviour comes from learnt behaviour – based on your social context: what influences you were exposed to in early childhood, the stories you were told, the behaviour that you mimicked, all makes up inherited knowledge.

'All early learning is based upon the process of association and identification,' writes John McGrail, a Los Angeles-based clinical hypnotherapist with a special interest in inherited behaviour. 'Thus, as kids are developing, especially through age eight, they are like behavioural sponges, associating and identifying all they experience, programming their subconscious, (their) internal computers, where their learned fears will reside.'[9]

This learning occurs through parents' verbal and nonverbal cues to their children, wrote Dr Francine Rosenberg, a clinical psychologist and anxiety specialist at Morristown Memorial Hospital in New Jersey. Rosenberg uses an example a fear

[8] Ibid.

[9] From an article published in 2015 by Carlson, D. Are your kids inheriting your fears? In the *Chicago Tribune*. http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/sc-fam-0414-inherited-fears-20150407-story.html. January 2016.

of dogs. Children who have been exposed to their parents' fear of dogs will feel apprehensive about dogs themselves.[10]

It has been found that family stories carried down generations can also have a significant influence on the receiving generation. In a study involving children with learning disabilities in Atlanta, it was found that children that knew a lot about their families and knew their family narratives were able to face challenges with greater ease than those who didn't. Dr Duke, who works at The Emory Centre for the study of Myth and Ritual in American Life (MARIAL), developed a measure called the 'Do you know scale', which asked children a set of twenty questions. The questions focused on the specific narratives they knew about their families.[11] The more children knew about their family history and family stories, the stronger their sense of self became. Their self-esteem and coping mechanisms seemed to be higher than those who weren't exposed to their family stories.[12] After September 11th, a further study was conducted. 'Once again,' Dr Duke wrote, 'the ones who knew more about their families proved to be more resilient, meaning they could moderate the effects of stress.'[13]

Why does family history and an awareness of what your forefather's narratives were have an impact on your coping mechanisms? Dr Duke attributes this to a sense of belonging, being part of a greater pattern. 'The answers have to do with a child's sense of being part of a larger family,' Dr Duke writes. He explains that

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[10] From an article published in 2015 by Carlson, D. Are your kids inheriting your fears? In the *Chicago Tribune*. http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/sc-fam-0414-inherited-fears-20150407-story.html January 2016.

[11] From an article published in 1999 by Kagan, J. 'The Role of Parents in Children's Psychological Development'. http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/104/Supplement_1/164. January 2016.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

children who have the most self-confidence have what he calls a strong 'intergenerational self'. They know they belong to something bigger than themselves.

Even in the unlikely area of military service, it has been found that by introducing stories a stronger, more committed force can be created. The American military has begun teaching recruits about the history of their service and have found that this increases their camaraderie and ability to bond more closely with their unit. Commander David Smith, the Chairman of Leadership, Ethics and Law at the Naval Academy speaks of how the military taught team work by 'dehumanizing' techniques. 'Think of the bullying drill sergeants in 'Full Metal Jacket' or 'An Officer and a Gentleman' ... But these days the military spends more time building up identity through communal activities.'[14]

At the Naval Academy, Commander Smith encourages graduating seniors to take new recruits on history-building exercises, like going to the grave, to pay tribute to the first naval aviator or visiting a museum showing an original B-1 aircraft.

Why Play-making?

With such existing scientific and practical research taking place in the identity-memory space across a wide range of areas, why am I using play-making to investigate the connection between one person's memory and another's identity? I could attempt to answer this question through the mechanics of the brain, as I touched on above: how the brain functions and malfunctions: Physiology. I could

[14] From an article published in 2013 by Feiler, B in *The New York Times*. 'The Stories that Bind us'. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/fashion/the-family-stories-that-bind-us-this-life.htm. December 2015

also answer the question through Psychology or Behaviourism: if one person has an altered state of reality, does that alter the state of another person? I could also explore the question through Philosophy.

Existentialism comes to mind: if I am turned into an object by another's gaze, how do I reclaim my subjectivity? How do I turn the objectification I receive from others into a vehicle for my own ontological freedom?

But my real interest and area of knowledge comes through theatre, through role-playing, and the creation of fictions to get closer to the truth – and, in the process, to exercise freedom of expression.

My grandmother created a make-believe time in which to live, and I suspended my disbelief and entered into her world. I have uncovered how easy it is to suspend one's disbelief in life. How we all role-play all the time, often without even knowing it. We respond to each other's fantasies, buy into them, and believe them as the truth, and this in turn redefines who we are. What better way to explore memory and its impact on identity and those around us than through play-making? It is in the relationships between each other that we really understand how memory is being voiced or not voiced.

It has been demonstrated that memory can be carried through the generations in our very DNA; it has also been argued that we are not separate from our learnt experiences. But I am also interested in how we play out those memories in the present, how we adapt our behaviour in the face of others' memories – just as in the example of the military, where by introducing recruits to the stories of those that came before them, they were able to elicit new modes of behaviour. We are not

only carrying memories forward for ourselves but also impacting our relationships with our memories – causing them to change too. Theatre and collective storytelling can open the heart and demonstrate this memory leakage and its impact.

There are many different forms of memory or knowledge playing out in us at any given time. I was interested in three: personal knowledge, brought about through lived experience; inherited knowledge, handed down by our forefathers through stories and learning; and genetic knowledge, handed down in our DNA – and of which we are sometimes unaware. I decided to explore how my own biography is made up of these three different forms of 'knowing'.

Biography

Although I was born to a Portuguese Mozambican father, I never lived with him. Nor have I ever been exposed to a Mozambican or Portuguese European culture. My mother was an English-speaking South African, and in growing up my frame of reference came predominantly from her.

In apartheid South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, people were boxed into definite categories. It was important to know which box you fitted into. My surname was Henriques and my appearance seemed Portuguese – but everything about my upbringing denied this. In many areas of my experience, I encountered prejudice towards the Portuguese. To some people, they were seen as poor immigrants coming to South Africa to use apartheid to their advantage. To others, they were exotic, flamboyant, but not trustworthy.

I can remember some of the jokes that did the rounds during the late 1970s.

How can you tell if you are Portuguese? The plastic covering is still on your lamp shades.

How do you find out if there are Portuguese in a crowd of people? You throw a penny on the floor.

Portuguese is like Italian but with a speech defect.

Whenever I found myself having to explain my name, I recall feeling shame or rebellion in relation to it. I was resisting a culture that was somewhere in my blood, but which I knew nothing about. I have since visited Portugal several times and know a little more about that culture, but my visits didn't go very far in explaining what has always been there within me from my earliest childhood: an instinctive awareness of the force that runs through all things. What the Portuguese refer to as the spirit of Fado; the performance style of saudade.

Fado

Fado is a Portuguese song form, about two hundred years old. However, it is thought that its roots go back into the 12th century. It came from traditions of song and poetry brought by Provencal troubadours, the Moors who lived in Portugal and the Jews.[15]

[15] Simon Broughton, 'Secret History' in *The New Statesman*, http: //www.newstatesman.com/music/2007/10/portuguese-fado-lisbon-regime. March 2014

The music or soul of Fado is summed up by the feeling of 'saudade', which loosely means loss: a permanent, irreparable loss; a mix of nostalgia, sadness and a profound connection with fate.[16] The spirit of Fado was defined during Portugal's days as a great colonial power in the 16th century, when generations of men were sent to distant lands – usually by sea.

In the essay *A Secret History*, Simon Broughton speaks of how Fado originally began as a form of protest song: 'The world shall behold the poor, free from oppression/Smashing the butchers/Of the ruling bourgeoisie.' ... I found out that the militant roots of Fado had been airbrushed from history, only to be rediscovered in recent years.'[17]

To Portugal's leading Fado historian, Rui Vieira Nery, the lyrics of 'Fado da Severa' and 'Fado Choradinho' ('Fado of the Unfortunate'), written in the mid-11th century, underline the genre's connection to the Lisbon underclass: 'There are several texts that were clearly written by people who had been in jail for long periods and this zigzag between legal and illegal lifestyles is very present in those early Fado ... By the mid-1920s, when the coup took place, Fado was for the most part a left-wing, working-class, socialist-oriented type of song ... But of course, in a fascist dictatorship, this wouldn't do.'[18]

In 1927, laws were set in place subjecting all lyrics to censorship. Songs that had not been approved could not be sung in public. Nery continues: 'The regime

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[16] Rui Viera Nery, *Towards a History of Fado,* p 11.

[17] From an essay in 2007, by Simon Broughton, *'Secret History'* in *The New Statesman.*

[18] Rui Viera Nery, *Towards a History of Fado,* p 11.

didn't trust Fado. It was originally sung by people of ill-repute - prostitutes, thieves and marginals - and that did not carry great prestige for a song of national identity.'[19]

Fado has now evolved into a more general lament - its political roots forgotten. In *Towards a History of Fado,* Rui Viera Nery describes how the act of singing Fado is part of one's destiny.[20] The song not only uses words to express the lament, but the form the song takes expresses the lament. Unlike rural folk music, where a single culture is often responsible for the evolution of the genre, Fado is an urban folk music, originating in the port city of Lisbon, where many cultures met and merged over centuries. Fado combines elements of Portuguese country folk music with Moorish, Jewish and African influences, among others.

Fado comes out of travel - of people leaving and arriving. It is the art form of the ports, of ships, of epic journeys whose original purpose has often been lost. Fado asks where home is. It is about exile from one's self, one's loved one or one's land. A longing for a resting place, or a resolution, that will never come.

One could say my grandmother in returning repeatedly to the story of when she was seven was playing out her Fado. When I sat at my mother's death bed and found refuge in memory and old behaviour patterns I was playing out my Fado.

The principles of Fado and Saudade speak to genetic memory, personal memory and inherited memory. Fado and Saudade became my methodology and central metaphor. In my practice, however, I tried to draw the 'genetic memory' of Fado into a more private and domestic space. If the journey of my protagonist has

[19] Ibid. p 12.
[20] Ibid. p 55.

broader social or political resonances for the South African context, or a broader context of the Portuguese diaspora, these have emerged organically.

The challenge was whether Fado as a metaphor could survive in the contemporary context? Does it speak to us as directly as it did in the past? Can Fado – and the catharsis intrinsic to Fado – help to make sense for ourselves and each other in the present?

Is there something enduringly Portuguese about me that has survived in spite of it never being taught to me? Could I use Fado to explore this?

When I access my creative self, it seems to find expression through a spirit that I have come to identify with (but perhaps not necessarily) as Fado. It is out of this instinct, this song – which may be little more than a metaphor, a dream – that I have used to create my play.

Using my personal history, I have explored the performance style of Fado. However, it is more than just a song: it is also an action. The act of singing it is as important as the song. It is a song about destiny and it is also part of the singer's destiny to sing it. Dwight Conquergood has argued that there is 'knowledge that comes from doing'.[21] Fado shares the same philosophy. My 'doing' became the act of writing, improvising, rehearsing and performing around my subject. Fado became my doing.

I have used Fado and its underlying philosophy as a way of accessing and formalising the secret yearnings and laments of the heart. The secret desires

[21] From a paper by Conquergood at a 'Cultural Intersections' conference at North Western University, recorded in the book Performance Studies by Richard Schechner, p 24.

that find their way into the light, no matter how we try to suppress them, and their impact on those around us.

Part Two

Practice

'Forms of knowledge' and autobiographical practice

Christiane Alsop, in her qualitative research *Home and Away: Self- Reflexive Auto/ Ethnography* – speaks of the 'concept and method called auto-ethnography ... an attempt at practicing self reflexivity by having a closer look at one's own longings and belongings, with that familiarity that when viewed from a distance can change one's perspective considerably.'[22]

By moving between my personal experience, my known family history and the unknown Fado and Portuguese ancestry I carry with me, I arrived at a more complex understanding of both my private and my writing self. I tried to create a work that draws from a deeper place than my own, limited, self-knowing identity. Alsop's perspective on this provided a useful reference point. Her exploration of the dialectic of home and 'away', of nationalism and 'the foreign', finally suggests that the drawing together of these two apparently disparate 'places' leads to new connections and identities.[23]

In a sense, this is also what Fado is about: a state of longing, longing for home informed by the new destination. By exploring my personal experience, my

[22] From an article published in 2002 by Christiane Kraft Alsop. 'Forum Qualitative Social Research Home and Away: Self Reflexive Auto-/ Ethnography'. http//www.qualitatve research.net/fqs/. February 2014.
[23] Ibid.

familiar communal experience and my genetic heritage, I was hoping to find my Fado and new knowledge. Thus I have divided up my practice research methodology into three areas. Three different forms of memory and of knowledge that I could move between: personal knowledge, inherited knowledge and genetic knowledge. I have applied these three different forms of knowledge to the different parts of my process:

Research

Writing

Improvisation

Play Reading

Rehearsing

Performance

I will explain how I identified each knowledge form below.

Identifying Personal Knowledge

Denzin, in his book *Interpretive Ethnography*, ascertains that the biography of the researcher is part of the research process as it frames how the researcher views and approaches the work. 'The living body/ subjective self of the researcher is recognized as a salient part of the research process, and socio-historical implications

of the researcher are reflected upon … to study the social world from the perspective of the interacting individual.'[24]

Personal knowledge can be defined as that 'subjective self' that Denzin speaks of and its influence on the work. Personal knowledge is made up of the experiences of a life lived and how those experiences inform how the work is created. As I was using my own biography as a springboard into the research, I investigated two types of personal knowledge.

The first was a purely subjective, memory-based knowledge. I investigated a personal lived experience in Johannesburg in the 1970s, together with my own social positioning in Johannesburg in 2009. I examined my role as a daughter and caregiver. I chose to write about a lived experience: the death of my mother. I brought my personal knowledge as a daughter who had experienced two weeks in the ICU at the Donald Gordon hospital – at the deathbed of her mother.

The second type of personal knowledge that I identified came from a reflection on the type of work I had done prior to beginning the playmaking process. I investigated what theatre knowledge or theatre influences I came into the process with and how this knowledge informed my approach to the work. I have used the term personal knowledge because I have been exposed to these influences quite randomly – I didn't necessarily seek them out – and my responses to these influences have also been informed by my own instinctive relationship with my work. I will detail what these influences were below:

[24] Denzin, 1997 *Interpretative Ethnography*, p 20.

Theatre of Praxis

In the early 1990s I worked with an experimental group called Theatre of Praxis at The Tabard Theatre. The Tabard was a fringe theatre in Chiswick, London. I never quite understood what the process was about at the time (perhaps that was the point) – despite having created two plays out of it, namely *Trojan Women* and *Season in Hell*. But the philosophy under the practice has remained with me. Before rehearsals began, the creative team would sit in a group and uncover the processes at work within the group in the 'here and now'. We would sift through our memories and thoughts in a meditative state and then voice them. The group would respond. The idea was to find how the memories and our immediate thoughts related to the larger group. We were trying to uncover what the memory was holding for the group. We were interested if an unconscious synergy was at play. We questioned why we were remembering what we were remembering when and what the memory said for/ about the group.

We would talk through the memories and thoughts, trying to find a common theme or strong response to a theme in an effort to uncover what the group was saying. We then went on to improvise around that shared voice. For example, during *Trojan Woman* we explored notions of imprisonment, gender politics and power. We set the play in a holding cell where Cassandra (whom I played), Hecuba, Andromache and Helen were held. Our 'here and now' sessions, as they were referred to, opened up fiery debate and conflict. It provided a framework for us to improvise around.

I have since researched into the concept of Performing Praxis. Paulo Freire argues that Praxis is about reflection and action and interplay between the two. 'Praxis is a creative act, and dialogic in that both our actions and the world are emergent in the action.'[25]

Although Freire is referring to an active social response, in writing I was trying to do something similar. I was working out of a reflective memory space, but I also needed to uncover what the memories were doing to the other characters in the 'here and now'. I needed to move between reflection and action. An example of this was during the death scene of my play *The Waiting Room*, where the mother character, Anna, was dying. The memory spoken was of thirty years earlier, a moment when Anna and her daughter Zini climbed out of a restaurant window to escape from the relationship between Anna and her lover, whom I refer to in the play as The Italian. The action was climbing out the window – escape – but the real time action was of Anna dying. Because the memory was about escape, freedom, liberation and hope, the mother's death became about the same thing. The memory helped the daughter set her mother free. The memory had shocked the protagonist into action, the memory became active.

Nurse Ward 10 Room B, trouble help. We need some help here.

The Nurse rushes across the stage calling for help. He is picking up on the mood. Help is needed.

[25] From a chapter in the book *Power, Pedagogy and Praxis*. The chapter is written by Warren Linds and Linda Goulet called *Performing Praxis*, p 19.

Zini I finally meet the Italian's children...I am wearing a new dress that I am proud of.

It is the time of punk. It is a white dress with little silver studs down the side and a splash of black paint. I have white, very pointed shoes on.

I have looked at myself all morning in the mirror, waiting for them to come from the airport. I think I look like I have attitude. I imagine myself to be someone else.

I have opinions, I know about music, I go to concerts, maybe I smoke.

When they arrive, I hear them downstairs. I don't know if I should go down and meet them – or wait. I decide to wait.

They bring their suitcases upstairs. Italian words and laughter. I come out of my room and stand in the passage, trying not to smile.

Carla Maria – she is about nineteen. She is blonde. She is proud of being Italian and blonde. Enrico he is about seventeen. He is tall, with curly black hair. Glasses. He watches Carla Maria look at me.

'Hello,' I say.

The Italian hovers in the back ground.

Carla Maria looks at me. Properly. She looks and looks. As she looks, I see who I am. I am fourteen. I have no breasts. My skin is blotchy. My dress looks pathetic. I am South African Portuguese. My hair is

black and curly and wild. I am a clown. I smile and smile. She swings past and they all follow, like her PR team.

From then on, Carla Maria has a difficult time. The house wakes at night from:

'La Luna, the moon, the moon.'

It is shining into her room through a crack in the heavy curtain. It is blinking in her eye, something must be done.

When we go to East London, to look at the Italian's factory, her hotel window blows off.

At East London we eat in the hotel restaurant at night. The Italian goes into the kitchen to give instructions. The Italian and his children speak only in Italian. My mother understands a little and tries to keep up. There is something tragic about this. I can't watch.

Instead I play 'keep as still as I can'. Only moving my mouth. Or I listen to the conversations at the tables around me. Piecing their stories together. Or I stare at Carla Maria. She seems to be the most beautiful person I have ever seen. It's not her beauty. It's her confidence. Her blonde hair, her honey skin, her fat sexy bottom.

I notice Enrico doesn't say much either, he just stares at her too. I can see he doesn't like the Italian or my mother. He doesn't really have an opinion about me. With him I feel let off the hook a little. There is so much going on between them all, I feel safe. And I eat pizza every night.

But my mother's attempts to understand, to be liked, are getting worse and worse. She is losing her laid-backness. Everyone knows she can't keep up. Carla Maria holds court and turns her body away from my mother, cutting her out. The Italian doesn't seem to mind. I am playing 'the try to eat with as minimal movement as possible' when I see my mother is crying. Sitting, looking into the far distance, and crying. At first it is a quiet cry, gentle tears, her lip trembling. But then it gets worse. Carla Maria turns her body to face my mother and looks at her with triumph.

The Italian: 'Zini, do something.'

So we go to the bathroom. I knock my coke into the bread rolls on the way.

In the bathroom, under the yellow light, my mother says:

'I can't do it anymore. No more. I must leave now. We must go'

I completely get it.

Anna gets off the bench and moves towards the bed. She is smiling and breathing.

We can't go back out. If we go back through the bathroom door they will see us.

A low window is the answer.

Anna focuses is on the bed.

Anna So clever of you to think of the window.

Zini Come we can go, take off your shoes. Never mind your bag. We can leave your bag.

Anna No one will find us now. How clever to escape through the window.

Zini Come on, mind your head. Hold my hand.

Anna breathing erratically. A deep rattled breath.

Zini Come on, when they start looking, we will be gone

The nurse begins to sing Fados.

Suddenly, Zini stops and listens. The breathing has stopped.

I wrote the memory and then used Theatre of Praxis to understand the role the memory played in the 'here and now', the real-time story. I uncovered how, by reflecting, the characters were forced into a liberating action. In other words, my memory of escaping out of a bathroom window in East London in the 1970s helped me to switch off the machines that were keeping my mother alive – releasing her and allowing her to escape, as in the example of *Trojan Women* where we, the actors, used our memories as a springboard to spur us into an improvising action. In writing *The Waiting Room*, I was deliberating on my memories and finding how they forced or conditioned the characters and myself into action.

Stanislavsky

My theatre training at the Oxford School of Drama was Stanislavsky-based. I have used Stanislavsky and his exponents' methods throughout the process. But I found the concept of Given Circumstances to be helpful as a starting point. Stanislavsky 's

Given Circumstances are defined as 'the story of the play, the facts, events, time and place of the action...'[26]

The spark for my research investigation was the story of my grandmother repeating her memory of being forgotten in her father's office. It was about noticing how the known events, the context, of my grandmother's situation impacted on her need to tell and retell her story. These known events can be described as Given Circumstances.

Given Circumstances became part of the memory identity equation. It was an understanding of my grandmother's Given Circumstances that made me assume a new role. I entered into her story and assured her that her father would be coming soon. This then impacted on my grandmother's mood and changed the outcome of her story. But it was an awareness of her circumstances that made me realise the urgency of her need.

My grandmother was ninety-nine, her body was crumbling, she had bed sores, and she was lying in a hospital bed in her daughter's home. She had been lying in this same bed for the last five years. On her lap was a tray of mashed up food, it was evening. It was the beginning of winter and cold. Out of these Given Circumstances came her memory of a different time.

Before work on any scene, I considered all the Given Circumstances of that scene as prescribed by Stanislavsky.

Time - Year, Month, Day, Hour.

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[26] Stanislavsky, *An Actor's Handbook*, p 67.

Place - Planet, Country, Town, Suburb, Room, Chair.

Only once this work was done could we begin to understand the scene. I applied the same criteria of Given Circumstances to each of the scenes I wrote, for example:

Time

Year 2008

Month March (End of summer, beginning of autumn, slight chill in the air, leaves dropping from trees.)

Day Thursday (Near the end of the week but not the end.)

Hour Four in the afternoon. (Sun fading, but still light, shadowy. Getting cold. Sounds of cars making their way home. Shifts coming to an end. Nurses handing over to other nurses. Smell of early hospital dinner from the rest of the hospital. Visiting hour. Visitors around patients.)

Place:

Planet Earth

Country South Africa (14 years into democracy)

City Johannesburg

Suburb Parktown (Once an old Rand Lord area, no longer the power house of wealth. A view of the Parktown Ridge, Wits University and the Planetarium.)

Building	The Donny Gordon Hospital. (University training hospital, was once Catholic, statues of Mary still around.)
Room	Intensive Care Unit. (Bright lights, nurse stations, machines beeping, sucking and pushing, twenty or so beds, with very sick people in them. Doctors separate from nurses, pecking order, visitors huddled whispering around patients, anti-septic dispenser. Door with round window at the top. Sucking noise of door every - time it opens.)
Bed	Hospital bed. (With special foam to stop bed sores. A blue sheet, no blanket. Breathing tube, drains, many different machines making noises, steel table at the end of the bed. Chart attached to clipboard at the end of the bed. A photo stuck to the end of the bed, of a happy laughing attractive woman. An open curtain rail. A steel locker next to the bed. Vaseline on the table.)
Chair	Green Easy Boy with slightly cracked arms.

This kind of specificity helped to unlock memories and find their greater resonance.

Uta Hagen, in her book *Respect for Acting*, talks of the Stanislavsky concept of Emotional Memory: 'the type of memory which makes you relive sensations you once felt', being best served when she recalled 'a tiny remembered object, only indirectly connected with an event ... I used these objects as stimuli successfully and questioned their logic only in discussion.'[27] She used these objects to release an emotion that she needed to explore.

[27] Uta Hagen, *Respect for Acting*, p 48.

She goes on to describe these objects in psychological terms, with the help of a psychiatrist. 'This little indirect object was the release object, a release of a censor which moves along with us and says, "Don't lose control." This apparently insignificant object had been unconsciously perceived and associated with the original emotional experience.'[28] Uta Hagen speaks of the actor's need to build up their own storehouse of little trigger objects.

However, the idea of psychological emotional memory associated with a trigger object is a contentious one. In the chapter on emotional memory, Eric Bentley in his book *Did Stanislavsky know any Psychology?*, argues that emotional memory was not agreed upon by leading psychologists of the time: 'Theatre people have been invoking scientific terminology for the sake of its authorative sound on the assumption that anything with a scientific name must have a scientific basis.'[29]

Yet it is interesting to note that a current concept of the trigger object in psychological terms refers to the condition Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), where triggers that the brain perceives flip one into an old memory of a traumatic event. One of the defining symptoms in PTSD caused by the trigger object is that the recipient of the memory is unaware that it is a memory from the past. The emotions experienced are the same as the ones from the past.

Examples of this type of post-traumatic stress syndrome are written about by A Elhers, from the University of Texas, in article entitled 'Intrusive re-experiencing in post-traumatic stress disorder: Phenomenology, theory, and therapy.'[30]

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[28] Ibid, p 48.

[29] Eric Bentley, *The Theory of Modern Stage*, p 277.

[30] This was taken from an article published in 2004 by A Ehlers & Clarke. 'Intrusive re-experiencing in post-traumatic stress disorder: Phenomenology, theory, and therapy.'

A woman who had been attacked by a bull saw a number plate with the letters ``MOO" at a petrol station. This triggered a flashback during which she re-experienced the impending attack, and sprayed another customer with diesel fuel. At this time, she was totally unaware that what she was experiencing involved material from memory.

Another example she gives is:

A car crash survivor was relaxing in his garden when he suddenly became very anxious and had intrusions of headlights coming towards him. Only later he realised that these were triggered by a bright patch of sunlight on his lawn.

And:

A woman whose car had been hit from behind, experienced intrusions of blue and yellow colours accompanied by strong fear when she was washing up and turned to the left to get the tea towel. After the impact, she had turned left to see what was happening and had seen that a blue and yellow bus had hit her car. Turning to the right did not trigger intrusions.

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http://homepage.psy.utexas.edu/homepage/class/psy394U/Bower/13%20Theories%20of%20PTSD/Ehlers%20etal-Intrusive%20re-exper...%20PTSD.pdf. January 2016.

Ehlers describes the differences between trauma memories and autobiographical memories by describing trauma memories as being recorded through the senses and having no sense of time, whereas autobiographical memories have a built-in time frame. It is interesting in terms of my research that a form of treatment for PTSD is to create a narrative structure around the event. By giving the memory a clear beginning, middle and end, the event can be contained. During my process I was in a sense doing the opposite. I was undoing the linear structure of past events, and allowing them to converge on top of each other.

But this research did corroborate my study into the significance that specific objects can hold, of how certain objects could trigger a past event as if it was happening in the present and a way of controlling this was through creating a narrative. I was exploring the past and its impact on the present and giving it a clear overall narrative structure.

Although I am not investigating PTSD or trying to back up my argument with scientific explanation, it was interesting that the role of trigger objects and memory has been long debated across different fields. I found that by examining small details and objects in my past, I found a way to access a new understanding of the past and its impact on the present – and that idea first came to me from Stanislavsky.

An example of this in *The Waiting Room* came from an exploration into watching my mother (referred to in the play as Anna) and her lover (referred to in the play as The Italian) from the main house – lying stretched out in the sun at the bottom of the garden. By exploring the specificity of secretly stealing chewing gum (Stimerol) from The Italian's cupboard and eating twenty pieces at time, I was able to

remember the feeling of being imprisoned and the contrasting feeling of freedom and rebellion that I found in the chewing.

Scene Two

Lights up on the bed. Zini looks at the bed. Anna sits on a bench nearby. She reacts to the scene. The Italian is near the other bench. Anna is breathing loudly.

Zini At the bottom of the long sloping garden is a pool and a house for the pool. Which is the size of a normal house. In it is a sauna, which smells of pine needles. The pool house seems like the most dangerous and creepy part of the house. The Italian's brown Speedo hangs from the dressing room wall, the smell of Coppertone and oil. A Jacuzzi bubbles and curdles in the corner. Warm enough to allow things to grow. My mother and he like to lie on fold-out chairs, reading magazines. She in a little bikini, he in a little Speedo.

They lie so quiet, like two stretched out lizards. I watch them from my window in the big house. Sometimes feeling the freedom from the Italian so safely at the bottom of the garden, I skip from room to room; even go into the darkness of his room.

The Italian has boxes and boxes of Stimerol in his bathroom under his basin. I take ten packets, chewing twenty pieces at a time. My breath blasting and pricking my ears.

Feeling my heart race, I run to the window to check if they're still safely marooned in their sun addiction.

I had never previously understood why I had stolen all that gum, but in recalling all the details it became clear. It was an act of defiance; I was seeking freedom. This then became juxtaposed with watching my mother lying spread out on her hospital bed – searching for freedom.

Barney Simon

The other influence on my creative self was Barney Simon. I worked with him twice – on *Silent Movie*, which we workshopped together, and *Hedda Gabler*. After his death, Irene Stephanou and I tried to interview every person he had ever worked with. It took a long time – seven years. We created a book called *The World in an Orange* in an attempt to capture how he worked. I was immersed in the Barney Simon method of play-making for seven years. And I heard many, many Barney Simon stories.

'Permit yourself what you know' was a phrase that Barney returned to throughout his working process.[31] He advocated the idea that you have more knowledge in you than you realise, which can be found by giving yourself permission to access that knowledge. This was a principle I used again and again, asking myself: what else is there I know but haven't acknowledged?

For instance, when Barney worked with Marie Human on *Black Dog*, she was shocked to realise how interested he was in her own story, rather than improvising a new one. He was interested in her time when she performed for SWAPAC (South

[31] Irene Stephanou, Leila Henriques, *The World in an Orange,* p 249.

West African Performing Arts Council). She was performing *Boeing Boeing*, a popular French Farce translated into Afrikaans. She performed for the soldiers fighting on the Angolan border:

'The Angolan war was heavy then, we would travel up to Etosha Pan, the army would meet us, and then we would travel up to Osshakati and to Rundu in convoy ... they had too much energy. Madness in their eyes, later while we were just sitting there, this army truck came past with guys saying, "Do you want to see terrorists?" And they lifted the canvas off the truck, and there were corpses. Just red blood and black skin – I used that in the play. Barney used that.'[32]

Barney asked question after question.

'He gave me time to speak, he made people listen to me, he was very soft. And that made me very honest. I never tried to be liberal.'[33]

Her descriptions of that time became fundamental to the work. Not just any descriptions but detailed specific descriptions, prompted by his questions. Creating a space where she could be honest.

As Vanessa Cooke said in another interview:

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[32] Ibid. p 143.
[33] Ibid. p 144.

'Barney would say you must never assume that the audience knows what you are talking about. You have to be fair to them, give it to them, even if you think that's being obvious. Is it chicken, or Kentucky [Fried] Chicken, or is it Nandos chicken? There is a huge difference. And if you say chicken, somebody is going to not know what you are talking about really. If you say roast chicken or steamed chicken or chicken that's off. They're going to know what you are talking about. But if you just say chicken then they are not. They may not get the full picture. So you've got to explain yourself, as a character or as a writer.'[34]

'God is in the detail,'[35] Barney would say. I searched for this kind of detail in writing.

I have had many other theatrical influences, but I believe Theatre of Praxis, Stanislavsky and Barney Simon to be my main ones. This research was underpinned by these primary influences.

[34] Ibid. p 165.
[35] Ibid. p 249.

Identifying Inherited Knowledge

In his book *Knowledge in the Blood*, Professor Jansen explores how inherited knowledge has come to shape racial behaviour. I investigated and identified patterns of behaviour that I had inherited from my family. I explored ways of behaving that I had learnt from the stories I had been told.

Sayings that were carried down that have unconsciously become a kind of lens through which I see the world. I recorded some of my grandmothers and mother's sayings and memories. Some found their way into the play, others became part of the tone of the play.

Don't say your father was Portuguese; just say he was born in Mozambique.

I am so pleased we never gave up on this view.

Are we dead yet?

If you change your shoes you can come to my party.

The Bachelor will be there.

The Bounder will be there.

Kingpin will be there.

You are a lovely man. Isn't he a lovely man?

Tell him if he changes his shoes he can come to my party.

How hopeless words are.

The sick can sometimes have that very fragile beautiful look.

People don't have nervous breakdowns anymore.

What's the matter? People don't have nervous breakdowns.

Quite Right.

I only like men whose names begin with V and end in O.

He was always very nice to me – The Italian

Just cancel him, like a cheque.

Fire Fire… Help. Fire Fire. We are going to burn in our beds. Fire. Well thank God for that. Fire Fire. Help. Fire.

The moon was full, we walked her to the station, to say goodbye. It was only polite. I sat on my father's shoulders. You could see the shadow of me on his shoulders on the ground. We were so pleased to see her go.

I don't know when their mothers are going to come. This one is so clever. No snakes on him. Clever clever. Smart. A little king. That one not so much. But a real darling. Do you know how long they will stay? I have been looking after them all night now. I'm exhausted. As soon as one sleeps the next one wakes up.

Have you seen how long my legs are? Let's have a party. We need some sherry. Sherry, please.

Aren't you beautiful? Truly you are so beautiful. Do I know you? When am I going?

Just call a taxi, that will be the best.

Deny, deny, deny.

But what about my children? Who will look after them? It was the last thing my mother said. And do you know he never remarried? Imagine, a handsome clever man like that? With three kids? Fancy.

I am the best dressed woman in Johannesburg.

Women are so clever, much more clever than men, but never let the men know.

Genius is of no use to a woman who can't fix her own hair.

Dusk can kill you.

By recording these fragments and working out their underlying feeling I was immersing myself in my family memory.

Grotowski believed in a theatre aimed at: 'the collective complexes of society ... the myths which are not an invention of the mind but are ... inherited through ones blood, religion, culture and climate.'[36] I was exploring the myths of my family, in a certain context. Exploring the hidden signs and signals we have inherited which rub against each other, causing others to adapt to us, and us to adapt to each other.

Identifying Genetic Knowledge

I explored my unknown Portuguese ancestry as a springboard for identifying genetic knowledge. I used the ancient song form of Fado as a metaphor for genetic knowledge. Throughout the play the protagonist Zini was unconsciously trying to find

[36] Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, p 42.

her Fado, her song. The role of the Portuguese nurse was the link to her ancestral past. At the time of the mother's death, the nurse sings Fado.

> Nurse The Portuguese believe… there is no normal, we are all just homesick. For each other's memories. For our own too. But there is no normal. We are all longing…

Grotowski, who used ritual in his investigations, was a useful source for thinking about ways of accessing ancestral/ genetic knowledge. He speaks about 'rhythmic articulated signs … not common gesture'[37] as a way of finding an elementary expression. Fados became a rhythmic sign and part of the process and the performance.

The music/ 'rhythmic signs' also helped further this theme. I had chosen only Italian music from the 1960s and 70s for the production; the music I grew up with. But at the end of the play the murmuring of the protagonist's genetic memory transports her to a new way of being and Portuguese music is played. Fado as a song form had its roots in protest, a political force in song, mobilizing people into action. The use of Fado is a nod to Fado's own journey from protest song against a regime to personal protest song against destiny.

[37] Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, p 17.

The Role of identifying knowledge

I identified and worked with these three knowledge sources during my process, each of them exploring memory from a different point of view. Each also asked me to consider where memory comes from and what role it plays in the present.

Are we separate from our memories? Can we create without our memory? Are we separate from others' memories? Perhaps this concept has not been scientifically proved but according to my exploration of these three memory forms in my practice and according to Theatre of Praxis, Stanislavsky, Barney Simon and Grotowski memory plays an active and decisive role in the creative process.

However, none of these artists' work stopped there. In creating a new work, it is important that the memories become a part of the immediate action. Otherwise there is a danger that the play will become nostalgic, retrospective, without active present-tense muscle. Barney Simon drew the different experiences of his actors together and out of that interplay wrote and structured *Black Dog*. Uta Hagen in her book *Respect for Acting* writes:

> 'In defining the difference between reality in life and reality in art Tolstoy said, "Something is added to nature which wasn't there before." That something is the artist's point of view and his power of selection, which comes from life and makes for new life.'

Selection, editing and shaping was where the real work lay. As Uta Hagen says: "searching for the new life."[38]

So although my creative practice was formed around memory and auto-reflexivity, I was ultimately creating a piece of theatre. A fiction. A new life in response to memory.

Dwight Conquergood, in his writings around the autoethnographic process, argues that the relationship between text and body becomes redefined in an embodied experience. He states:

> 'The dynamic and dialectical relation of the text and body emerge as a major theme in autoethnographic praxes. In the fieldwork, writing, and performing of autoethnography, text and body are redefined, their boundaries blurring dialectically.'[39]

I needed to start allowing the 'boundaries between text and body' to blur and become redefined. I would have to step into a fictional space and mould memory to suit my end.

'If my ninety-nine-year-old grandmother thinks she is seven, how old does that make me?' I would need to find the new in the 'how old does that make me' part of the question. There is much fantasy in my question. My grandmother was roleplaying

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38 Uta Hagen, *Respect for Acting*, p 12

39 From a paper by Conquergood at a 'Cultural Intersections' Conference at North Western University, recorded in the book *Performance Studies* by Richard Schechner, p 24.

to another time; I was creating a new character from that time. My practice drew on these different knowledge sources to answer that fantastical call and create something new. My practice went through different stages. Just as with memory – genetic, family and personal – these different creative influences appeared when they were needed.

I have identified the different knowledge forms that influenced my process and have given examples of how they ultimately affected the play. I used this knowledge base in all phases of my process. I have documented the steps in my process, again with emphasis on personal knowledge, inherited knowledge and genetic knowledge. I explored these different forms of knowledge as a writer, an improviser and as an actor.

Writing - Starting Point

I had intended to use the memories of my grandmother and to explore how she slipped between the present into the past and played out both realities at the same time. I then intended to show the impact of those memories on those around her. However, these were her memories and not mine and I was unable to understand why she remembered what she remembered. But they have informed the work that followed by giving me an understanding of how active memories can be if we are unable to keep a lid on them. I used this idea to give voice to my own memories at the time of my mother's death.

I then wrote a story of an academic giving a lecture about memory that lapses into past scenes. It turns out that the academic is actually in hospital and

remembering giving the memory lecture. But the play suffered from being too self-conscious thematically and too cerebral. The themes were declared too overtly – rather than being something the audience would have the space to work out for themselves. I was too consistently aware of my research question and was trying to force my story to answer it in a way that was too direct, too programmatic. Even when I was exploring distant inherited memory or genetic memory I did this systematically through my intellect. I then thought back to my own responses during the time of my mother's death and recalled a feeling of helplessness. Helplessness in the face of her deteriorating condition, the hospital system, the confusing and conflicting medical responses, the visitors and their demands, the painful procedures that my mother had to endure, her silent state, and how long it all seemed to take. We had entered into a time warp, a hospital space with no day or night, with no time frame, no obvious beginning middle or end. In that space past realities came into the present.

I decided to try to start writing out of a space of bewilderment. I threw out influences and formulated processes during this time, and tried to capture that hospital experience through writing towards a feeling.

Langellier argues that for a personal narrative told through the body to take shape, it can do so only in 'unstable and destabilizing ways' as cultural relations are 'multiple, polysemic, complexly interconnected and contradictory'.[40]

[40] From an article written by Langelier in Spry, in 2001, called 'Performing Autoethnography: An Embodied Methodological Praxis'. Sage (online). Available: http://halliejones.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Performing-Autoethnography-An-Embodied-Methodological-Praxis.pdf. 11 January 2016.

The way to capture that fraught, confusing time was to work in the dark, with no logical sense of how I was writing. While writing I don't think I was aware of any governing methodology, but on reflection I can see that I developed my own writing criteria. The criteria came from the influences of Barney Simon, Theatre of Praxis and Stanislavsky. I have now distilled them into three principles: detail, dialogue and structure.

Detail

I chose food as an entry point. I found that by exploring food I could easily move between the past and the present. I used my memory to access the detail of food from different ages. Vanessa Cooke's description of the different types of chicken to describe the importance of specificity in *The World in an Orange* was possibly somewhere in my unconscious, I don't know.[41] But I chose food and eating as a theme in which to order the memories. I began exploring the food I had grown up with and contrasted this with the food that was available in the present. I grew up in an Italian house with rich, opulent Italian food. I set this type of food against the food experienced in the present, in the Donald Gordon Hospital. The food experienced in the hospital was the feeding tube and a toasted cheese sandwich. In the play the toasted cheese sandwich is offered to the main character Zini by the Nurse. This sandwich ultimately provides the most comfort.

I found the more I wrote into the detail of the food the more I could get towards something. I don't think I was completely clear what I was trying to get

[41] Irene Stephanou, Leila Henriques, *The World in an Orange*, p 165.

towards – other than a feeling, a series of memories that seemed to be located in my own body, available to me still. For example, the play opens with a type of mantra of Italian food. Zini, the protagonist, is waiting in a hospital corridor, she remembers the food she ate as a child in The Italian's house. She speaks the different dishes, trying out the correct Italian pronunciation; in doing this, she invokes The Italian character in the play. He begins to speak from that time.

Zini	Fritatta, minestrone, pasta pescatore, andiamo andiamo, hey baby you got a body like a coca cola bottle
The Italian	Hey Baby you got a body like a Coca Cola bottle
Anna	Does a Coca Cola bottle have a good body?

A little later, the Nurse is trying to get information from Zini as to what her mother's eating habits were. The decadence of the Italian food is juxtaposed with the brutality of the feeding tube.

Nurse	Her normal diet – what does she normally eat?
Zini	You're not going to feed her. Are they going to feed her?
Nurse	We need an estimate to know the calorie content.
Zini	This is too much. Like being in a feedlot. No way out from the feeding. You can't force food on her. She wouldn't like it.

Nurse	No forcing of food.
Zini	Then what?
Nurse	Through the feeding tube.
Zini	Yes, force feeding.
Nurse	No, not force.
Zini	Force breathing, force feeding.
Nurse	Yes.
Zini	No. She would say no, no there has to be a perk to all of this. So no feeding. Just a drip. No feeding.
Nurse	We can't do that.
Zini	A drip? Why not?
Nurse	No, when a person is in here we have to feed that person just like everybody else.
Zini	Oh of course.

By writing the detail of the food in the story, I was able to chart the story through food. Food and concepts of eating; refusing to eat, shameful eating, body image, food as sustenance, food as control, food as jailer, food and freedom to eat what you want, food and privilege. Food became signals of a life lived - or what Grotowski referred to as 'complexes' of a society.[42] However, it is only on reflection that I am

[42] Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, p 42.

able to see this. By searching for detail I was able to instinctively find the 'complexes of a society'.

Dialogue

Because I was working with memory, dialogue took on another resonance. It took the work into the present tense. I was only aware that I had been writing in different dialogue styles on reflection. Looking back, it seems that when I wrote out of a distant memory space I wrote more detail and more heightened and poetic speech. When I tried to recall the day-to-day happenings in the hospital it was far more pedestrian and the very opposite of what the hospital experience was like. A good example is in the memories of The Italian stumbling into Zini's room trying to wake her mother. The memory has taken on a poetic reality. Whereas when Zini finally meets The Italian in real time it becomes more pedestrian.

Zini	One night, deep into the night with my mother curled in on herself like a shell, so asleep she is almost dead, the Italian bursts in, clutching his chest, and collapses on my bed.
The Italian	Help. I am dying. I am surely dying
Zini	I squeeze out of the bed. Calling out to my mother. She is dead asleep. The Italian screams and cries, his face so red. I shake my mother. But nothing. The Italian is hysterical; her sleep makes him far more agitated. 'Anna, Anna, I am dying, you can sleep while I am dying?!'

The Italian You can sleep while I am dying.

Zini I offer to call his doctor, the ambulance, his friend, but it is Anna that he needs. He springs onto his feet, swaying and rolling on his heels.

The Italian Wake up, wake up.

Zini He shakes her. She groans and stretches, smiling. 'Shshsh,' she says. 'Shsh…'

Anna giggles.

Zini He slaps her and pulls her hair. He shouts in Italian, looking quite fit for someone busy dying. 'You will hurt her,' 'Please stop. Please. Hey!' I suddenly mean business. He looks at me hard. His eyes like tiny little black holes. Then he begins to cry.

He sits on her bed and cries. It goes on and on.

The Italian Why don't you feel anything?

Zini Then he limps off to his room. The house is quiet again.

I lie still, a random dog barking. After a long time, my mother says, completely out of it,

'It's okay, darling.'

Anna It's okay, darling.

Zini The next morning he shoves a thick

bundle of cash into my school blazer pocket.

The Italian Don't give it all to your boyfriend.

But when Zini actually meets The Italian in real time, not in memory time, the language is more domestic, with medical terms being discussed and not much feeling.

The Italian enters. He looks older than earlier and frail. He is wearing an Armani suit and crocodile shoes. He walks very slowly, theatrically, over to Anna. He doesn't look at Zini. She stays back. They both stand very quiet, looking at the bed. Just the rasping sound of Anna's breath. After an impossibly long time, he says:

Italian But you said she looked beautiful.

Zini Yes, she does, doesn't she? She glows.

Italian But her bone structure, you can't see, she is swollen.

Zini Well under the circumstances.

Italian Her nose is running all the time, and

here she is wet around her neck.

She is swollen with liquid.

Zini She has had drains in her brain to try to clear the fluid. But it's coming from the tracheotomy hole. She has a swollen brain.

Italian She was so beautiful. With a proper bone structure.

Another terrible silence, just the breath.

By playing around with the different forms of dialogue, I found I could further comment on whose memory was whose. Sometimes when both worlds collided, the

different characters spoke lines on top of each other. The idea was to catch the words swirling around the space, as well as trying to attend to the present.

Because I had researched the idea of a genetic, ancestral voice, this appeared in the play without me trying to place it there. This speaks to practice-based research, the power of the unconscious in the theatre-making process. I was still working with memory but the memory was now part of my unconscious knowledge base that I could intuitively draw upon.

Structure

On looking back there are different structure shapes happening in the play. Again, I was not aware of searching for these, but in trying to tell three stories at the same time, I must have been aware of structure and written out of that awareness. I have described the three different structures below, in an effort to capture how my three knowledge forms manifested in the structure. The first structure is the present tense story that I was telling; it draws on personal knowledge:

Beginning

A woman waiting for her mother to wake up in a hospital.

Middle

Her mother doesn't, she deteriorates.

End

Her mother dies.

The second is a past narrative. It draws on family knowledge:

Beginning

A child in an Italian house, observing the relationship between her mother and her mother's lover – The Italian.

Middle

The relationship begins to fall apart.

End

The relationship ends. The mother and daughter escape.

The last contains the overall theme of the play. Zini's fight against her destiny, her 'fado'. It draws on genetic knowledge:

Beginning

A woman locked in an old narrative.

Middle

Memories begin to disrupt this narrative.

End

A woman finds a new way of being.

On reflection, structure – and more specifically the three act structure of 'thesis, antithesis and synthesis' – and the play between structure, helped me arrive at the answer to my question. We are linked to our pasts. We have very little control over our interactions because of our pasts, but by telling our story we can change the narrative we play. Although I had not set out to construct these different structures, nor try to answer my research question through structure, it began to speak through its own form. The structure was unconsciously determined by my attention to the different knowledge bases I had explored and my overall research question.

Play-making

Having completed my first draft using the research I detailed above, I now began to explore a different form of memory, or rather a different vehicle for exploring memory. The knowledge that helped me create the first draft was head-bound. Although I tried to write out of a feeling, I was still using my intellect to uncover the influences at play in my knowledge base – my personal knowledge as well as family knowledge and research into Fados, held together by the lived experience of my mother and me.

On entering the play-making phase of my process, I became interested in body memory. Memory held in the body and not governed by the head. I have referred to Christiane Alsop's essay on home and away, where she speaks of the

clarity one can get about home by going away. I had been working with the 'familiar', I needed now to explore the 'foreign'.[43]

The process of creating my play took on the following stages and in this order:

Research

Writing

Improvisation

Writing

Play reading

Writing

Play Reading

Writing

Rehearsal

Performance

Improvisation

For the purpose of experiencing an improvisational process, I spent ten days improvising with actors Jose Domingos and Sue Pam Grant. We explored, through play, concepts of 'Portugueseness', 'Italianness' and 'South-Africanness'. We referred to the text that I had written but we were not bound by it. We used exercises

[43] From an article published in 2002 by Christiane Kraft Alsop. 'Forum Qualitative Social Research Home and Away: Self Reflexive Auto-/ Ethnography'. http//www.qualitatve research.net/fqs/ February 2014

that allowed our bodies to give us the information we sought. Again we applied the three areas of knowledge that I was investigating.

Genetic

Inherited

Personal

However, as we explored these concepts simultaneously, I have decided to discuss them together and not in separate categories.

Yoshi Ouida, in his book *The Invisible Actor*, speaks of how the body of the actor holds universal codes.[44] He draws on Noh Theatre and how the actor will practice, for years, one part made up of small movements. The movements are fixed and are part of an ancient tradition – 1443 AD. One could find the pathway of the character if one finds the movements, like a chorographical score connecting you to an old tradition. This ancient physical (it can also be vocal) score was called the *Kata*.

Rehearsal for Yoshi Ouida was about putting together the small movements in the play. By retracing these movements, your body would have access to memory and to the universal experience of the character. He explains that one would never have to search for tears, or laughter or a pre-prescribed way of behaving during performance. By following the small movements found during rehearsal, your body

[44] Yoshi Ouida, *The Invisible Actor*, p 63.

could not help but connect profoundly and truthfully to the universal circumstances of the character.

Although Noh theatre is more about universal experiences as opposed to personal responses, is it possible that a family could hold the same pattern of movements across generations and by keying into these movement patterns the past could unfold through you?

I experimented with this idea; one example of this was trying to find the exact movement pattern that my mother showed when putting her hand over her food, to indicate that she didn't want any more. By trying to be as accurate as possible, I felt I understood more from this gesture. I recorded the gesture below:

> A tilt of the head to the left, a small apologetic smile, together with a sigh, lifting the hand gently with her fingers turned up, in a combination of stop, no more, perhaps I will have more tomorrow.

This became a choreographical score. I repeated and repeated this movement. In repeating this movement, which I knew so well, I began to understand the power that this seemingly gentle gesture had; I found a deeper meaning. It felt like it was part of the silent struggle between The Italian and her. The Italian was trying to catch her, through food, possessions and sexuality. But she was not being caught.

The more she refused, the more he pursued – and so it went. Whether this was the truth or not doesn't matter; it became part of the fiction I created in response to memory. This moment finally appeared in the play as follows:

Zini Seventies orange counter top.

We sit next to each other. He stands at the end of the counter watching what she eats. She hardly eats anything.

Always putting her hand over her plate.

Anna It's beautiful, Adriano... but no more.

While Vanessa Cooke, who ultimately played the part, found her own way of playing the moment, the improvisation around this gesture became far more than just a gesture, and helped me to understand the nature of the relationship between The Italian and Anna – my mother. The theme of ownership became a theme I would explore throughout the play. During the improvisational workshop we took the idea of embodied cultural codes that Noh Theatre suggests and began to explore more general cultural body understandings, trying to get an understanding of how the body would react to genetic influences.[45]

We used traditional music as an entry point. By playing traditional Fado, Jose – also of Portuguese descent – began to dance as his grandmother. I copied his movements, his dance, in order to try to find a missing link to my 'Portugueseness'. I am not sure whether this was totally successful. The pain of learning to do something new was the most prevalent emotion. My body responded mostly to the

[45] Ibid. p 67.

gap in knowledge rather than accessing some lost knowledge. But that experience of a lost culture found its way into the play and although the character never really feels her 'Portugueseness', the idea of being Portuguese helps her into an idea that there are different ways of being that she could access, and could release her from her outdated ways of behaving. If not actively present, the Portuguese aspect is as important for its absence. A silent bank of untapped voices.

I found expression for this in the character of the Nurse. The Nurse was an entirely fictional character whose essence came from this process. A Portuguese nurse reminding Anna of a lost culture, and helping her to leave behind an out-dated and damaging way of behaving.

However, where the 'Portugueseness' was felt during the process was when I played my father. Using the same Fado music as earlier, I began to dance and assume the role of my father. At certain points, Sue Pam Grant would take the music out and start firing questions at me. I answered as him. I tried to stay in the reality of my personal knowledge of him. Only answering if I knew the answer; if I didn't, I carried on dancing.

Slowly, slowly a version of my father revealed himself through my body and my scattered memories of him. A line emerged that seemed to encapsulate him.

'Hey baby you got a body like a Coca Cola bottle.'

I don't know if this was my father's line, but it came to symbolise what my father was. Again the detail of how it was spoken opened a new understanding. The slight Americanising of the word bottle, not sounding the 'T' s. The line became a doorway to another time – the 1960s. It spoke of sexuality, freedom and irreverence.

We improvised across gender, across understanding, across nationality. In a sense we threw out 'permit yourself what you know'[46] and allowed what we didn't. We gave voice to our imagination and our bodies. In the end I didn't use the father that I had improvised, but I became aware of his voice in me – which was hovering all the time in the fragments of words, strange misplaced memories, bearing no logical sense to the present and yet carrying a subtle influence.

Why at my mother's deathbed did that phrase - 'Hey baby you got a body like a Coca Cola bottle' - find its way in to the room over and over? As I stared at my mother's lifeless body, why were these words anywhere near us? It is exactly that strangeness that I was investigating. The words are irrelevant; they could have been any words. But the way my body moved as I said them, the longing that they invoked – my body understood the pathway perfectly. When at the beginning of the play the ghost of my mother says:

'Hey baby you got a body like a Coca Cola bottle.'

[46] Irene Stephanou, Leila Henriques, *The World in an Orange*, p 249.

The subtext was there. There was no need to search. The character was homesick for the self. Homesick for a different outcome from the past. Trying to make sense of the present through the past.

Alsop speaks of the vision one can create by removing ourselves from the familiar.[47] By being far from home we can see home with more accuracy.

In a sense this is what I was doing. I was removing myself from 'the familiar' and putting myself in my father's unknown shoes, playing his ancestral music and accessing the vague information I had around him and allowing him to speak. Through this process a new form of genetic, inherited and personal knowledge emerged. Again I have only realised this upon reflection. The missing father and 'Portugueseness', although never overtly referred to, is present in every moment.

Nurse	Your father?
Zini	Portuguese. Mozambique.
Nurse	Where is he?
Zini	He was shot by a stray bullet while foraging for wild mushrooms.
Nurse	No!
Zini	No, not really.
Nurse	Oh…

[47] From an article published in 2002 by Christiane Kraft Alsop. 'Forum Qualitative Social Research Home and Away: Self Reflexive Auto-/ Ethnography'. http//www.qualitatve research.net/fqs/. February 2014.

Zini	The bullet wasn't all that stray.
Nurse	Fala Portuguese?

**Then in Portuguese:*

'De mim só me falto eu

Senhora da minha vida

Do sonho, digo que é meu

E dou por mim já nascida.'

Zini	No.
Nurse	Pity. Is beautiful.
Zini: As Italian:	Portuguese is like Italian, but with a speech defect.
Nurse	Oh…
Zini	No, no, sorry.

All of the improvisational exercises were guided in the context of Fado. Fado is a song about fate and longing. It is part of the fate of the singer to sing it. It is sung with a quality of saudade, a sense of homesickness for the self. It is also a song of travel. The travel of the lost one brings about a sense of longing which can only be quenched by the singing of it.

Fado first began as a protest song against a military regime that was eventually squashed out and banned. But the quality of Fado has remained and it has now at its best retained the mood of protest but against the self. It was out of this

mood, this longing that we improvised. The longing for the old authentic self. Fado asks where home is. It is about exile from one's self, one's loved one or one's land. A longing for a resting place, or a resolution that will never come. Once the memory and lament are sung, a path is cleared for true nature to emerge. Fado became part of the improvisational process and a conduit for me to explore these different forms of knowledge that I held, so that a new self could emerge.

Rewriting

Armed with my new body knowledge of how the text felt in the space and our improvisational exercises, I began to rewrite the play. The purpose of rewriting was to take our body knowledge that we had explored during the improvisational phase and honour it in the text. The main change I worked with was making the characters of the mother, Anna and The Italian more present when they were not present in real time. I wanted to embody the past in the present, so I put their bodies in it – like ghosts – commenting on the real time action, with fragments from the past. I was going to have the mother character, Anna, in the bed, just breathing in a comatose state. But instead I left the bed empty, and put Anna next to the bed on one side and The Italian next to the bed on the other. I felt liberated by this decision. It gave me the chance to explore the gap between memory and reality that I had tried to do in the dialogue during my first writing. When The Italian finally enters in real time, he is very different from the memory of him. He is now old and frail and scared, the opposite of what he had been in memory form.

The other addition was the role of the Portuguese nurse. I based the nurse on the character Jose had played during the improvisational process. Jose had been playing his grandmother, but the character seemed to fit perfectly into a male nurse figure. I had fun during this rewriting time. It was liberating to mess up the original text. I took the spirit of the improvisational process and tried to find that in the text.

Play Readings

I held four play readings with actors Robert Whitehead, Vanessa Cooke and Jose Domingos. Once I used Janna Ramos-Violante to play Zini, the daughter. I listened to the voices, found the gaps, found un-thought-of moments and gave them more life. I rewrote after each of these play readings – also consulting at times with my supervisor, Warren Nebe. My choice of actors soon became fundamental to this process. Their rigour, humour and detail became part of the language I was working with. As I was so close to the subject matter, the play readings became an important part of the process. I tried to hear the play from a distance, again exploring the familiar and the foreign. I practiced active listening, listening beneath the words, for patterns to emerge. I was interested in how the dialogue was bouncing off each character. As my process up until my first reading was about exploring the layered different meanings we attribute to the smallest detail, I was interested whether any of this held while being spoken.

It didn't hold. To my disappointment the idea of different meanings playing off each other didn't work. They just became words. The actors searched for meaning in relation to each other, but didn't instinctively find a deeper interpretation. One such

example was where the actor Vanessa Cooke looking out at the view from the hospital window says:

Anna I am glad we never gave up on this view, aren't you?

Vanessa, a very skilled actor, tried to find the meaning in relation to her daughter, to whom she was saying the line; she was really asking the question. For me the line was more about being trapped in a city. The view was of Hillbrow, watching through the eyes of generation upon generation, each having an intense relationship to that particular view. She is at the end of her life, and knows it; she has spent her whole life with that view. As others left Johannesburg, she stayed and now it was over. The line I felt was said with longing, and irony. She never managed to get away. She had not let her daughter get away, and now it was too late. As it had been for her mother, and her mother before. She was saying the same line as they had. There was something brittle in Vanessa's delivery that gave no sense of speaking out of ghosts.

This carried on throughout the play reading – and actors being actors, willing the play to work, concocted relationships to each other. The most distressing was listening to the actress Janna Ramos-Violante play Zini. She played her with brooding intensity. I had been trying to find a woman caught between life and death, at the mercy of the present events but also trying to find sense in the memories she was consumed with. The humour present in my family that I know so well.

'The doctor has such big hands he will be able to open my head no problem.'

'He was struck by a stray bullet while foraging for wild mushrooms.'

So many examples that I thought were so clear, Janna played with huge subtext. The play didn't hold. It felt so self-aware and precious. I realised that the humour in my family was so much a part of me that I took it for granted. It was part of my inherited knowledge. This also gave further evidence to my question: are we free from each other's memories? The answer is clearly 'no'. It wasn't going to help my play. It would take months of rehearsal to try to get the intended meaning across. As a student production there wasn't the luxury of time. I decided it would be quicker and easier to play the character myself.

So the play readings became very useful. The text was tested and a new understanding emerged. What was clear to me wasn't clear to the actors – and consequently not to the potential audience. I needed to change the text to make it clearer. But at the same time still allow the subtle cross-generational relationships more space.

Rehearsal

We rehearsed the play for three weeks, for about three hours a day. It wasn't enough time. We had to work quickly and instinctively. The time pressure and having no real director made us quickly establish a common language. Urgency and fear made us work out of that common language. One could find resonances again with Theatre of

Praxis. Theatre of Praxis asks what are the processes in the group in the here and now. What is each person holding for the group? We each took on different roles in the group for the sake of the play. Each sitting out and playing director when we were not in the scene. My actors were skilled and committed and so were able to do this. They became co creators. The vision of the play became collaborative. However it wasn't a simple process; it took a long time to really craft each moment. Each moment came from discussion and work on the floor. Yet because of this discussion it seemed to up our individual stakes in the play. We each understood and shared every moment.

Our main concerns during rehearsal were to get a feeling of the hospital in the space. A foreign space with different rules. We also focused on the relationship between the past characters and the present characters. We created a pattern of movement that the nurse character knew better than the others.

This is an extract of my journal from rehearsal day one:

Rehearsal - Day 1. 20 January

Jose and I, on the floor moved the piece with ease. It felt good to finally get it on the floor… Feeling out the different beats.

At times pausing to discuss our hospital experiences. I spoke about Tim Winton's piece[48] on hospitals that I found so moving.

My wish to find the feeling of the hospital.

[48] From an article published in *The Guardian by* Tim Winton, Sunday, 9 November 2014.

A place with a law unto its own. A new land. With its own very important rules. Jose spoke of his father in hospital. The experience was very similar. Feeding tube, tracheotomy.

Its own weather, its own time, in fact timeless with its never-ending shifts and constant light. The uniforms to separate the hospital workers from the public. The sick being attended to, stripped bare, bed-ridden. Food with its own tastes and flavour.

The feeling of relinquishing control, the vulnerability of all. The constant threat of unexplained drama. Hospitals give those there the permission to behave as they choose.

The question of faith, how faith can heal.

In trying to find those hospital moments, I felt as if I was underwater, sinking, not quite understanding what anyone was saying. Being caught between memory and the present. Waiting for death. The death of my mother. The death of the past.

The relationship with the mother wasn't present. I scoured our relationship. I found it hard to see my mother independently from the relationship. I found it hard to sum her up. To describe her. But I knew the relationship. What would I be without her?

Jose and I also spoke of the health worker. The attempt to make it feel as if this was a normal thing to be doing, how to make it normal. The different status of the professionals in the hospital, the defined roles.

How to capture them, how it boxes everyone together.

We played around with the text, moving it around. Trying to understand the relationship between the two. What was given to each by the other? How were they changed by the interaction?

All these need to find solutions... find the following answers:

How to bring the sense of hospital into the play?

How to get the essence of the relationship between mother and daughter?

As my notes reflect, the rehearsal process was discursive and experimental in that we tried things out and 'moved the text around'. My notes show how collaborative the process was from the outset. As we were not guided by a director, we had to search for every moment together. Although it was not the most economical way of working, as it was time consuming when we didn't have much time, it helped to shape the play. I don't know if the same freedom to change and explore could have been found if we had had a director. We were searching for a vision as a group and had no larger back up vision to fall back on.

Performance

We had seven performances in The Wits Downstairs Theatre. Our first performance had six people in the audience. The theatre critic Adrienne Sichel, Basil Jones and Adrian Kohler from the Handspring Puppet Company and three drama students. It was harrowing. I felt very exposed and again precious. What relevance could this very personal, tiny story hold for anyone, other than me? The response was good but our nerves were very present and it compromised the performance.

I felt I needed to find a way to separate myself from the play. On reflection it would have been better if I hadn't played myself in the play. I battled with this feeling

of exposure the whole way through. The play also had some setbacks. Vanessa, during a power outage at her home, fell and broke her arm and needed surgery. We were going to cancel the rest of the run, but she said she wanted to continue. As she played a ghost, caught between the past and present, on her way to death, she could have a broken arm. So she performed in a sling and scarf. Ironically, it helped her performance. She had a frail, lost presence. By the end of the run, our play was sold out. Again this speaks to the rigour and commitment of my cast. We had some excellent responses and a few bewildered responses. I do think some people battled with its relevance, especially in a university setting. It felt very white and privileged. It did make me cringe at times, and there are some people who saw my play that I can never see again. Hospitals, death and food are all loaded subjects in South Africa. There was so much going on during the seventies and eighties that I questioned the importance of a white girl trapped in a mansion at the mercy of an Italian trying to feed her all the time, as part of the power dynamics between him and her mother. The play I think needed to address this.

However, on reflection I think this was to do with a failing of courage. It was delicate and brave and I have been altered by the process. I have found my courage, my voice. By the end I learned what it might feel like to be unashamedly myself – for better or worse, and no matter how it might have looked from the outside.

Part Three

Reflection

How did an exploration into personal knowledge, inherited knowledge and genetic knowledge alter my sense of self and my identity?

Disrupting History

'In autobiographical narrative performances, the performer often speaks about acts of social transgression. In doing so, the telling of the story itself becomes a transgressive act – a revealing of what has been kept hidden, a speaking of what has been silenced – an act of reverse discourse that struggles with the preconceptions borne in the air of dominant politics.'[49] Linda Park-Fuller

As a theatre practitioner it was hard to let go of the idea that the play was not the outcome. The play was simply part of the research. It is only some months later that I am able to see that the play was part of a greater investigation. The act of writing this thesis is as important as the creation of the play. However, that

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49 Park-Fuller, L. M. (2000). *Performing absence: the performed personal narrative as testimony.* Text and Performance Quarterly 20, pp 20-42.

realisation would only come once the play was performed and over. It is important to reflect on this because I believe two fundamental processes took place. Somewhere in the middle is the answer to my question.

The first was the discipline of creating a play. Writing, directing, performing. Creating theatre is always fraught, but creating theatre through an autobiographical lens was particularly challenging. 'A revealing of what has been hidden' was a process filled with discovery, heartache and liberation.

In her paper 'Professions for Woman', which Virginia Woolf read to the Women's Service League in 1931, Wolf speaks about her two main struggles as a writer. The first was to fight off the burden of Victorian respectability, which she called 'killing the angel in the house', and the next was to 'truthfully tell the truth of my own experiences as a body'.[50]

I identified with both of these struggles. I was working with my own memories, my mother's memories and my grandmother's memories and a whole hidden sea of ancestral memory. I was trying to find out where my memories began and where theirs ended. In doing so, an avalanche of incriminating voices came into my head.

> How can you be even remembering these past events, when they aren't yours to remember? You don't own these memories. They are not yours. How dare you bring them out into the light and put them on display.

50. Virginia Woolf, *Professions for Woman, The Death of the Moth and other Essays* pp 245-247.

This anxiety was interesting as it answered my question on the nose. Are we free from each other's memories? No, we are not. But it goes further than that. We are not free from them but also we must guard and protect them. Otherwise we are not worthy caretakers. The secrets must remain secrets. I hadn't realized the oppressive weight of ancestral memory and the code of behaviour it carried.

'For me, performing auto-ethnography has been a vehicle of emancipation from cultural and familial identity scripts that have structured my identity personally and professionally. Performing auto ethnography has encouraged me to dialogically look back upon myself as other, generating critical agency in the stories of my life, as the polyglot facets of self and other engage, interrogate, and embrace,' writes Deborah Reed.[51] I felt this over and over again in the many roles I played in the process. The relative anonymity of writing them down, the liberation and ease my body felt in improvising around them, and then finally, as an actress, the delight and horror at my own gall in sharing them. Just naming some Italian dishes in an Italian accent made me blush.

Zini	Fritatta
	Minestrone
The Italian	Pasta Pescatore
	Filetto al barolo
	Lenctile

[51] Deborah Reed, *Danahay*, pp 2-3.

	You are dieting for your boyfriend?
Zini	Sorry?
The Italian	Dietinggg por boyfriend?
	Keepinga trimmy boyfiend a…
Zini	Oh
The Italian	Dietinge dietinge…
	You are dietinge por your boyfriend?
Zini	Oh. No.
The Italian	Truffles is good for the sexiness.
	Eat this, oysters will swim down.
Zini	Seventies orange counter top.
	We sit next to each other. He stands at the end of the counter watching what she eats. She hardly eats anything.
	Always putting her hand over her plate.
Anna	It's beautiful, Adriano… but no more.
The Italian	Pah!
Zini	We eat different things. I eat pasta with a tomato sauce.
The Italian	Pomodoro.
Zini	He cooks this in big pots over a gas stove every month.
	Tomatoes and tomatoes being steamed and mulched on the

orange counter top. Veal Piccata and Ravioli di Astice con Salsa di Radicchio.

The Italian Veal Piccata and Ravioli di Astice con Salsa di Radicchio.

The response of my mother, putting her hand over her plate, gently sighing, ran from me like a bolting horse down the ancestral lines. Food and power, power and sexuality, sexuality and secrecy, secrecy and women… women and power. Our quiet code. Just in that sigh.

The Barney Simon line 'permit yourself what you know' took on a deeper resonance, with the stress on 'permit'. It is not so much: are we free from each other's memories? Of course we aren't. But are we incarcerated in each other's memory? Perhaps.

Then came the next personal dilemma filled with self-incrimination. Editing. Manipulate the past, make it fit into a new narrative, make it work in the space. I was reminded again and again of Barney Simon: 'Find the life – stay on the moment until you find the life.'[52] And the voices started up again.

Who are you to use our memories, and then twist them for your own good?

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[52] Irene Stephanou, Leila Henriques, *The World in an Orange*, p 336.

This battle between faithfully and shamelessly recording, and then even more shamelessly editing again, answers my question. Are we free from each other's memories? No. And definitely not if you are an artist. Or living anywhere near an artist. But there is another missing link in all of this that took a while for me to realise: love.

When my grandmother – after telling me her story of being forgotten in her father's office – asked me when her father was coming, and I went back in time ninety-two years earlier, it was love that made me do it. Quickly, easily assume a different role in relation to her new role. We are all changing our identities all the time, motivated by different reasons. But there does need to be a motivating force for it to happen.

The code carried by the women in my family to protect our secrets often came from a realisation and a pragmatism regarding what we – as with all women – were up against. That to survive and keep our joy we must hunker down together, and pass the invisible baton of memories from one generation of women to the next, so that we could protect ourselves and our joy from the horrors we might – and often did – encounter.

Thus two processes took place during my practice-based research: one was creating a play for production; the other was reflecting on the process of creation.

The play didn't answer my research question. The act of writing this thesis didn't answer my question. Are we all walking memories? Can we function without

our memories? Is the narrative we play or replay in the present an accurate narrative? Are we able to shift our narratives?

It has only been in reflecting on the play and this research that I have come closer to answering my initial research question. After exploring my personal story, putting it through a theatrical process and then reflecting on how my personal narrative had shifted since bringing it out into the light – I have answered my question:

Memory and identity are undoubtedly linked, but by exploring this theme I uncovered that memory and identity can also provide triggers for new possibilities, a new map of being – or becoming. Both memory and identity are fictions, constantly responding to our needs in the present moment. This is cause for celebration because it means we are free, we retain our freedom to do with our past lives what we choose, what we need for the present moment.

In a sense my play had already hinted at the answer. Zini, having gone through the death of her mother, was able to transcend her outdated way of behaving and play with the idea of a new identity. The play ends with Zini choosing a new path, leaving the hospital to Portuguese music. However, a little later The Italian and her mother's ghosts follow. But at least there is now an awareness, an attempt to find a new way, a new narrative to play out.

I found an investigation into narrative therapy useful in this regard. Michael White, founder of a practice called 'narrative therapy', has spoken of how by exploring memories and the stories we tell about ourselves we can heal ourselves. Narrative therapy is an investigation into which of our stories and events take

precedence over others. Once the loudest story is told the teller is encouraged to search for those events that are being neglected. The teller is encouraged to search for subordinated stories of hopes, longings, values and dreams. The teller is coached into seeing that narratives are multi-storied as opposed to single storied or linear. That there are many different stories that make up a personal narrative. By confronting the silenced stories, the teller begins to re-author the stories of their lives.[54]

My process was an act of re-authoring my family's and my story. By exploring them from three different knowledge bases, I was able to create a new story. The main theme to my personal story is of being silenced, of not being able to find my voice. The very act of telling my story went against this. I was very much finding and then using – indeed, actively performing – my voice.

'Art is more aggressive and more assertive than therapy. It is an action, not a reaction. Dipping directly into ourselves as source, we create something new that would not exist without us as origin. For this reason, art is affirming in a way that therapy is not,' writes Julia Cameron.[55]

My action of telling my story and reflecting on the process created a new narrative. Perhaps this is why the Fadista of Fado must sing in his search for home. The act of singing helps him find himself and his home.

I have used Fado as a way of accessing, formalizing and recreating the narrative I tell. I have explored the links between myself and my personal memories,

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[54] Michael White, *Maps of Narrative Practice,* p 61.
[55] Julia Cameron, *Walking in the World,* p 64.

communal memories and my family's memories. I have explored the relationship between memories of a personal lived experience in Johannesburg in the 1970s and my own social positioning in Johannesburg in 2009 (the year my mother died). I found the links and the differences between the two spaces. In the links between the two spaces – the present and the memory – I am singing my Fado. My present becomes visible through my past.

Memory was used as a vehicle through which to connect the personal experience with a broader historical narrative. In writing this and reliving it, I have disrupted the pathways, the histories, that were shaped over the years but that have come to form my identity.

In the book *The Post Traumatic Theatre of Grotowski and Kantor*, Roberta Culbertson, the editor and director of the Center on Violence and Community at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, is quoted as saying, 'When one becomes numbed by or entrapped by one's traumatic memories, a way out of the closed circuit of one's psyche is to able to tell one's story.'[56]

In conclusion, just like the mysterious way in which memory seeps into all that we are, so too creativity does not necessarily follow a linear structure, and can arrive without prompting. This is the power of using performance as research, and by performance I mean *active creating*. My process began with clear rational research and then again followed clear logical writing out of that research; however, it was only once I began to play, through improvisation, rewriting and performance that I was able to actively explore memory and identity. I did this in response to what I had

[56] Roberta Culbertson, *The Post Traumatic Theatre of Grotowski and Kantor, p 44.*

researched, but did not set out to find it; I allowed my research to unconsciously inform the work.

But it does not stop there. The luxury of having my play performed in a theatre meant I could take my research to an even deeper level. I became an embodiment of my research and the research then played out through me.

'If my ninety-nine-year-old grandmother thinks she is seven, how old does that make me?' At the beginning of the process I would answer that question by saying: Whatever age is needed. However, at the end of the process I would say the answer is: Whatever age you choose.

My finding is that while memory – in all its different forms – has a key role in shaping identity, identity is a distinct and ever-evolving entity that defies time and place and conditioning. There is a point at which what is given to us is left behind and we are able to imagine alternatives for ourselves that we can grow towards and claim as our own.

My research has also shown me that we are able to choose not to be defined by our memories or the memories of those around us, but it takes self-reflexivity, courage and imagination.

As the Fadista would say, it takes a lot of mournful singing.

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The Waiting Room

Written by Leila Henriques

Characters

Zini

A woman in her late thirties

Nurse

A Portuguese man in his late thirties

Anna

A woman in her mid sixties

The Italian

An Italian man in his early seventies

Scene One

Two benches. A hospital bed and a chair. Lights up on Zini sitting next to the hospital bed. Looking at it.

Lights down.

Lights up on The Italian and Anna sitting on one of the benches. They are both very stylish. Anna is dressed in seventies dress with platform shoes, sunglasses and perhaps a hat. The Italian is very suave. They both have an otherworldly air about them. Zini is sitting on the other bench.

Zini Fritatta, minestrone, pasta pescatore, andiamo andiamo, hey baby you got a body like a Coca Cola bottle.

The Italian Hey baby, you got a body like a Coca Cola bottle.

Anna Does a Coca Cola bottle have a good body?

A male Nurse enters looking. He is Portuguese. He speaks in an accent. He startles Zini. They are both embarrassed. The Italian and Anna don't react to the scene around them, they are deep in themselves. They are part of Zini's world. Anna is looking out at the view. The Italian moody.

Nurse Ah ah there you are, I have been looking and looking for you.

Zini Sorry. Has he gone?

Nurse No... he is very upset. He has asked for counselling.

Zini Counselling?

Nurse Yes to talk it through. That is what he said. A sounding board.

Zini From where?

Nurse Here.

Zini Here? Can he do that?

Nurse Yes we have a resident councilor.

Zini Oh.

Nurse Would you like to see him?

Zini Who?

Nurse The councilor.

Zini No... no, I hate councilors.

The nurse laughs – he doesn't like the councilor.

Zini So he is at least busy seeing this councilor?

Nurse Well he must wait. The councilor is not here yet.

Zini Oh. So what is he doing?

Nurse Children's sporting day.

Zini No, I mean the upset man.

Nurse Nothing. Just standing... crying. Sometimes laughing, sometimes crying... then talking.

Zini Oh, for fuck's sake.

Nurse Well different people have different ways.

Zini There's no one else there?

Nurse No, I don't think so.

Zini And in the waiting room?

Nurse I don't know.

Zini Would you mind having a quick look?

Nurse Now?

Zini Yes. Sorry.

Nurse Well I am not really meant.

Zini I know sorry.

Nurse I must ask you something very important.

The Nurse leaves a bit grumpy. After a while, Anna speaks softly, but intensely - movie star like. Zini takes a cigarette out of her bag and moves to the other bench. Anna and the Italian begin to smoke in earnest. The Italian uses a cigarette holder.

Anna I am glad we never gave up on this view, aren't you?

Parktown Ridge on one side and Wits University on the other.

The doctor has such big hands he will be able to open my head no problem.

I am going to pretend to be someone else.

The Nurse goes to the first bench looking for Zini, he crosses the space.

Nurse No one there. (*In alarm.)* No you can't smoke here.

Zini I'm not.

Nurse No smoking.

Zini I'm not smoking.

Nurse No, but normally when there is a cigarette there is smoking.

Zini Well this time there isn't – there isn't any smoking. I'm just holding it.

Horrible pause.

Nurse You can go to the smoking room.

Zini What?

Nurse You can go to the smoking room.

Zini The smoking room?

Nurse Yes, you can go to the smoking room.

Zini Have you seen the smoking room?

Nurse Yes. Many smokers.

Zini Yes.

Nurse Yes.

Zini Yes.

The Nurse stares at her, not moving. Zini stares back. The seem lost in the smoking thought for a moment. Zini is aware of the ghosts, The Italian and Anna, smoking.

Nurse I am waiting to ask you something.

Zini What?

Nurse What does your mother normally eat?

Zini Sorry?

Nurse Are you Portuguese?

Zini What? No. My father was born in Mozambique.

Nurse Ahah, me I am also Portuguese.

The Nurse laughs in recognition.

Zini Oh – but I'm not.

Nurse But your father he was Portuguese.

And you can see, you can see.

Awkward Pause.

Nurse Her normal diet – what does she normally eat?

Zini You're not going to feed her. Are they going to

feed her?

Nurse We need an estimate to know the calorie content.

Zini This is too much. Like being in a feedlot. No way out from the feeding.

You can't force food on her. She wouldn't like it.

Nurse No forcing of food.

Zini Then what?

Nurse Through the feeding tube.

Zini Yes, force feeding.

Nurse No, not force.

Zini Force breathing, force feeding.

Nurse Yes.

Zini No. She would say no, no, there has to be a perk to all of this. So no feeding. Just a drip. No feeding.

Nurse We can't do that.

Zini A drip? Why not?

Nurse When a person is in here we have to feed that person just like everybody else.

Zini Oh of course.

Nurse It is a hospital.

Zini I swear when she wakes up from all this and looks like a... Well, you will have to take the blame.

Nurse Are you okay?

Zini Yes.

Nurse You seem...

Nurse Shall I tell the nutritionist to come speak with you?

Zini No.

Nurse She is just there. She can come easy.

Zini No, thank you.

Nurse Her name is Penny. Just through the next door – no problem.

Zini I hate nutritionists.

Nurse Well she doesn't need to speak to you, you could just speak to her.

Zini No. Just tell them she eats hardly anything at all. She follows a liquid diet. Yes, tell her that. Liquid diet. Liquidised steamed chicken.

Nurse nods and turns to go. Then he stops on his way out.

Nurse Fala Portuguese?

Zini No.

The Nurse speaks in Portuguese, while leaving:

Odeia nutricionistas. The coucillor eu entendo. Peixes estranhos.

(*Hates nutritionists, councilor – I understand. Strange fish.*)

He swivels back to see if she understands. She stares at him blankly.

The Nurse leaves.

Zini Fritatta

Minestrone

Pasta Pescatore

Filetto al barolo

Lentichile

The Italian Fritatta

Minestrone

Pasta Pescatore

Filetto al barolo

Lenctile

You are dieting for your boyfriend?

Zini Sorry?

The Italian Dietinggg por boyfriend?

Keepinga trimmy boyfiend a.

Zini Oh.

The Italian Dietinge dietinge.

You are dietinge por your boyfriend?

Zini Oh. No.

The Italian Truffles is good for the sexiness.

Eat this, oysters will swim down.

Zini Seventies orange counter top.

We sit next to each other. He stands at the end of the counter watching what she eats. She hardly eats anything.

Always putting her hand over her plate.

Anna It's beautiful, Adriano... but no more.

The Italian Pah!

Zini We eat different things. I eat pasta with a tomato sauce.

The Italian Pomodoro.

Zini He cooks this in big pots over a gas stove every month. Tomatoes and tomatoes being steamed and mulched on the orange counter top. Veal Piccata and Ravioli di Astice con Salsa di Radicchio.

The Italian Veal Piccata and Ravioli di Astice con Salsa di Radicchio.

Anna No more, no more. It really is beautiful, but

Zini How can food taste beautiful? I hate my mother for saying that.

The Italian eats raw spinach, which he covers with olive oil and smelly vinegar.

He stands, his feet apart, his hands behind him, and chews. His little black eyes darting back and forth. Later I hear him find his way into the kitchen and in desperation eat a level teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda.

He has made his money selling Mercedes parts to Mercedes. The house is old and huge. Herbert Baker on the Parktown Ridge. It has a cellar filled with wine and chocolates. It has two staircases, one tiny pokey one with a yellow carpet, another grand one with wood paneling and a wooden Protea on the bottom balustrade. I spend hours tapping the paneling, wondering which one has the secret compartment to store the bodies.

The Nurse comes back in with great energy.

Nurse Wooh, she has many many visitors now.

Zini Many visitors.

Nurse Many many men.

Zini Many men.

Nurse Men every where. Too many men.

Zini Everywhere men.

Nurse I can't control. You need to.

Zini No, I can't.

Nurse You can't?

Zini Which ones are they? Is there an Italian?

Nurse There is the tall one, the fat one, one with a briefcase, the stockings, the crying one, his eyes are red, I think he has been smoking dagga, then there's a whole group like a club. The one who has a problem with his legs, a terrible limp.

Zini One-legged David. Diabetes.

Nurse Diabetes. Oh, that is terrible.

Zini Yes – terrible.

Nurse They say once one leg goes, it is only a matter of time.

Zini Oh God, this is so awful, so totally awful. Fuck fuck.

Nurse He is okay. The one-legged one. In the waiting room. He is telling jokes to all the other people. He is making them smile.

Zini He tells the same jokes over and over again. Compulsive. Maybe he needs counselling.

Nurse The councilor is still not here. He is having a big problem with his son. Too much sunburn, I think.

Zini Do you know the one about the bicycle seat?

Nurse No.

Zini That's the kind of joke he likes to tell. The nun and the bicycle seat kind of joke. Just rude jokes. To whoever he meets. All the time.

Nurse Oh.

Zini Who is with her now?

Nurse The one in the stocking – still the one with the stockings on - tight, tight stockings.

Zini Jodhpurs.

Nurse Yes. He has caused a surprise with the nurses, his stockings so tight, over his

Indicates to his penis and balls.

Zini Yes.

Nurse Over his.

Zini I know.

Nurse Over his.

Zini Yes, his balls and penis.

Nurse So tight.

Zini Jodhpurs do that.

Nurse He is saying, 'Come on, Anna, come on, Anna,' very loud. I had to ask him please to shshsh.

Zini 'Come on, Anna, come on. Come on, Anna, come on.'

Nurse 'Come on, Anna, come on.'

Zini Like he's riding a horse.

Nurse A horse?

Zini That's what he does. Horses.

Nurse Oh.

Zini But it is very important that if an Italian comes, he must not meet the one with the stockings.

The jodhpurs. Very important. Will you remember? An Italian.

Nurse Yes. I understand.

Zini Italian Adriano Negra... Negra... Negra.

Nurse I will try.

Zini Has the crying one gone?

Nurse No he is returned to the smoking room.

Zini They mustn't come in together, that is the most important thing.

Nurse Yes.

Zini You must stagger them and keep them moving on through.

Nurse It's hard to stop them.

Zini She wouldn't want them to... overlap.

Nurse Some are very upset.

Zini They can't linger, not for long. After a while you must tell them – go home. Only short visits permitted.

Nurse Yes. I tell them already the doctor says you mustn't visit. But they are still there in the passage. They just want to look at her.

Zini But say it will do her harm. They are harming her. With their presence.

Nurse It is difficult to say to someone who is on despair that they are causing harm with their presence.

Zini But there are surely rules about this? Where are the rules when you need them?

Nurse There are rules but they stay, even in the parking lot.

Zini Say she is tired. She needs to rest.

Nurse But now she is asleep. Coma.

Nurse Yes. Okay, I will try.

Zini Remember Negra.

The Nurse leaves.

Zini mimics The Italian answering the phone

Negra.

The Italian Negra.

The Italian listens silence.

The Italian Negra! Why don't they speak? Who is it, that doesn't speak? Perhaps it is your Portuguese lover?

Zini I field the calls of those men needing to speak to her. Some of their shaky voices make me cringe a bit. Their need is so clear. Especially the voices of my friend's fathers, softly asking to speak to her. Often getting my voice confused with hers.

She speaks the phone call. In a desperate seductive whisper for the man.

Anna?

No, it's Zini.

Oh, hello Zini.

Hello.

Can I speak to Anna?

She is downstairs at the moment.

Downstairs meant she was with the Italian.

Shall I say you called?

Yes, please, tell her I will call her at ten tonight.

Ok.

Ok.

Bye.

Bye.

I look down at an outside room where they sit in the night. I can see through a crack in the window, the profile of my mother drinking a glass of whisky in a crystal glass. She is laughy, and all drunk and easy.

Every night, she takes sleeping pills, and those mixed with the drink mean there is no waking her – no matter what. She sleeps in the bed next to mine.

Anna The Italian snores, which is why.

Zini But I can sing aloud at night, read with the light on, walk around like a panther, there is no waking her.

One night, deep into the night with my mother curled in on herself like a shell, so asleep she is almost dead, the Italian bursts in, clutching his chest, and collapses on my bed.

The Italian Help. I am dying. I am surely dying.

Zini I squeeze out of the bed. Calling out to my mother. She is dead asleep. The Italian screams and cries, his face so red. I shake my mother. But nothing. The Italian is hysterical; her sleep makes him far more agitated. "Anna, Anna, I am dying, you can sleep while I am dying?!"

The Italian You can sleep while I am dying.

Zini I offer to call his doctor, the ambulance, his friend, but it is Anna that he needs. He springs onto his feet, swaying and rolling on his heels.

The Italian Wake up, wake up.

Zini He shakes her. She groans and stretches, smiling. Shshsh, she says. Shsh.

Anna giggles.

Zini He slaps her and pulls her hair. He shouts in Italian, looking quite fit for someone busy dying. You will hurt her, Please stop. Please. Hey! I suddenly mean business.

He looks at me hard. His eyes like tiny little black holes. Then he begins to cry.

He sits on her bed and cries. It goes on and on.

The Italian Why don't you feel anything?

Zini Then he limps off to his room. The house is quiet again.

I lie still, a random dog barking. After a long time, my mother says, completely out of it, it's okay, darling.

Anna It's okay, darling.

Zini The next morning, he shoves a thick bundle of cash into my school blazer pocket.

The Italian Don't give it all to your boyfriend.

The Nurse comes in, he looks stricken.

Zini Okay, what now?

Nurse I am sorry.

Zini Is the Italian here? Oh God, I warned you – has the Italian met the one with the jodhpurs?

Nurse No. No one is there. Your mother has had a stroke.

Scene Two

Lights up on the bed. Zini looks at the bed. Anna sits on a bench near by. She reacts to the scene. The Italian is near the other bench. Anna is breathing loudly.

Zini The Italian has boxes and boxes of Stimerol in his bath room under his basin. When he is away, I take ten packets, chewing twenty pieces at a time. My breath blasting and pricking my ears. At the bottom of the long sloping garden is a pool and a house for the pool. Which is the size of a normal house. In it is a sauna, which smells of pine needles. The pool house seems like the most dangerous and creepy part of the house. The Italian's brown Speedo hangs from the dressing room wall, the smell of Coppertone and oil. A Jacuzzi bubbles and curdles in the corner. Warm enough to allow things to grow. My mother and he like to lie on fold-out chairs, reading magazines. She in a little bikini, he in a little Speedo.

They lie so quiet, like two stretched out lizards. I watch them from my window in the big house. Sometimes feeling the freedom from the Italian so safely at the bottom of the garden, I skip from room to room; even go into the darkness of his room.

Feeling my heart race, I run to the window to check if they're still safely marooned in their sun addiction.

The Italian has a factory in East London, where he goes for one week every month. These are happy days. My mother and I eat take-outs and watch Dynasty in bed together.

At the corner of the garden stands a children's Wendy House. It has windows high up, with dainty little curtains. It looks like Hansel and Gretel's cottage. It is locked though and I can never get in. I know children have played there before, but it is very locked-up now. A cupboard outside the Italian's room is also filled with children's things.

A little soft boy, with a hole in his back to store things. A game with Italian markings, with a plastic bubble in the middle that you press for the dice to roll. When he is away I sometimes open the cupboard and finger the toys. I never play with them. Just mess them up a bit.

You would say, "For Gods sake, are you all mad. Leave me alone, bugger off." Actually you wouldn't. You would say, "You are all so very clever, I can't believe how clever you all are. Let me watch a bit at how clever you all are. Thank you so much, I like your earrings too. Boy oh boy," and when they looked in

the mirror to check how good they look in their earrings while saving lives, you would be gone. Vanished. And they would long for you to come back.

It's so quiet,

The Nurse enters.

Zini I thought you were off today.

Nurse I was but I came back. A rostra complication.

Zini Oh taking over from someone.

Nurse Yes, can you believe it. Complications, but let's not talk politics. In some ways it is better. And you have moved. Would you like... I have a toasted sandwich.

Zini No thanks.

Nurse Are you sure? You are out of ICU. You can eat. There is nothing better than a toasted sandwich. Ham and cheese. A very good combo. Whenever I must celebrate here, I eat a toasted ham and cheese.

Zini What are you celebrating?

Nurse Death, an old man died.

Zini Oh

Nurse He was old; he had lived a good life. A champion bike racer in his time. He was suffering and now he died. Come have half. You look hungry.

Zini takes half the sandwich and eats.

Zini The doctor with the very big hands, he says she is brain dead. They have switched off the machines. They did a scan; a doctor, a new, very very young doctor, said she has no brain function. They kept coming and putting needles into her feet to see if she would notice. They put a drain in her brain to help with the liquid; they didn't use an anesthetic because they said she was in a coma anyway. They even used that word "anyway". Anyway is not the word. Like it was a bonus. She did twitch when they went through her bone. But they said that was a normal brain stem response. Should I believe them?

Nurse So you decided?

Zini I felt like it was going to go on forever. The machines. As her blood pressure goes up, a machine put something in the drip; as her blood pressure goes down, a machine put something in

	her vein. It's torture. But then like a miracle, they took all the machines off.
Nurse	You decided to turn off the machines.
Zini	You are a very direct person. Yes, and it wasn't easy, it took a fight. So it is waiting now.
Nurse	Yes, the tubes are gone. Is better. No force.
Zini	The bandage over the tracheotomy. Stuff coming out. All the time, her nose, her mouth.
Nurse	Yes
Zini	Her mouth is covered in sores. Her lips are dry, scabbed. I put on Vaseline. But what can I do now?
Nurse	Hold her hand.
Zini	I don't know what time it is. There is no time here. The machines kept bleeping; then nurses came in and out. They talk so loud. It was all so loud and bright. But now it is quiet. It is so strange what has happened to time.
Nurse	Yes

Zini Just the breath. It is loud. Nurses seem to have better voice projection than most. Why is that?

Nurse They are going about their life. You all come and go, and it is a same story. They are just busy.

Zini Is it really the same story? This is just another story?

Nurse No. Sorry. No offence. Yes, and no and yes, another story.

Zini Nurses don't really know what's going on, do they?

Nurse What do you mean, I think they know more than most.

Zini No that's a myth. Doctors don't know much either. But they are not trying to be nice.

Nurse Well it's hard seeing this, every day. Tomorrow another.

Zini Nurses feel bad for not knowing what's going to happen. It is probably why they became nurses.

Nurse People suffering, people, and it's difficult, it's like you all come to hospital here and behave much more. Feel much more. Much more. It's a mad place.

Zini So you make it up. So that you have something to say. One says it will be fine. She will wake up, you will see. The other: Aah it's

not good, if we can just get the doctor to stop the swelling. Damm this swelling. One of them tried to sell me some earrings. They are just winging it.

Nurse No, I don't think they do. It is difficult, dying day in and day out.

Zini Is that why so many are religious. I have heard nothing but God and Jesus and prayer. Are you praying, you need to pray, you will see. But the swelling is still swelling. Where is your faith? Aah fuck off.

Nurse You don't believe in God?

Zini Coincidences and goodness. Possibly prayer. But you all trade off prayer.

Nurse You sometimes need to believe.

Zini There you go again. It is because you don't know what to say.

Nurse I have seen some amazing things here, you know.

Zini That's what everyone says. But have you really, really and truly? Miracles?

Nurse No, not really, but other things.

Zini Why did you become a nurse?

Nurse Why did I become a nurse?

Zini Yes, why did you become a nurse?

Nurse Why did I become a nurse?

Zini Yes

Nurse Why did I become a nurse? What is your point?

Zini No, I want to know. Why?

Nurse Because that is what happened.

Zini But it's specific. A nurse. As opposed to a land surveyor.

Nurse Because this I know I can do.

Zini You can care? For people like my mother?

Nurse Maybe, yes.

Zini And now? Is it just a job?

Nurse Care is not caring because you like it – or want it. It's something you do. I decide to do. Even when it's the last thing you want to do. It's like love – sometimes love is deciding to carry on loving because you don't feel the love, but you love your way back to loving again.

Zini So you don't care – but you carry on caring until you do care again?

Nurse My father died... like Bruce Lee: aneurism. Very fast. I was small. I remember tweed jackets, linen suits. I can see from photographs we look the same, both very handsome. When my father died my mother sent me to Portugal to be with my grandfather. It was far from LM – Maputo. I didn't want to go. But I must witness his old age. My father had lost his son; I had lost my father. I try to mend him. But he is older, this year he needs more and so I give more, and I am with him, and next year I go, he needs more, I give more, until one year he needs everything and I give everything. Because that's what you do when you care. Even when I'm not in the mood, even when I am tired and want to give up, that is care, that is love.

Zini I'm sorry.

Nurse That is what I do and that is what I am. So eat your sandwich.

Zini eats the sandwich.

Zini Sorry, I didn't mean anything.

Nurse It's okay.

Pause.

Zini Did you see? Her leg?

Nurse No

Zini You see she pulls it up. She pulls up that side of her body. Aah it's horrible, the way she's pulling.

Nurse Like a spasm.

Zini Like it's sore.

Nurse No it's not sore.

Zini You don't know that at all. You say she is not really here anymore. Just on her brain stem. But her body moves.

Nurse	Just twitches, spasms. I mean I don't really know. But in my experience. I have seen that patients sometimes twitch involuntarily.
Zini	Why?
Nurse	Well, I'm not saying that I know know but in my experience I think it is to do with the electricity in the brain.
Zini	Like a star that still shines although it's dead.
Nurse	No that is more to do with us still seeing the star, because of how far away it is.
Zini	Yes, but still.
Nurse	No, she is really twitching, but I suppose from somewhere far.
Zini	For a lost cause.
Nurse	From her ancient brain, her brain stem.
Zini	They say she would not be able to breathe alone. But she can.
Nurse	Yes she can.
Zini	Well there is your miracle.
Nurse	No it's science, her breath.

Zini You see they don't really know. How long will she carry on for?

Nurse I don't know.

Pause.

Nurse *(Very quietly.)* Who is she waiting for?

Zini Sorry?

Nurse Maybe she is hanging on for someone.

Zini Oh God, now you too. Who is she waiting for?

Nurse I don't know, who are you waiting for?

Zini I am waiting for my beautiful, fine mother to stop breathing. For her brain stem to give up. For her ancient brain to lower its light.

There is no way she would still be here with just a brain stem; she wasn't the type. First light and she would be gone, no hanging about.

Nurse Is there someone she is hanging on for? The Italian?

Zini How do you know about the Italian?

Nurse You have asked me about him.

Zini Have I?

Nurse Yes, you know you have. Every time, you ask about The Italian.

Zini Well, I was surprised that he hasn't come, that's all.

Nurse Maybe she is waiting for him. Maybe you are waiting for him too.

Zini I don't think I am waiting for him.

Nurse Maybe tell him to come.

Zini But he hasn't come. I can't ask him to. If he'd wanted to, he would have come.

Nurse Does he even know?

Zini Yes, I have her cell phone and he phoned it. He knew she had had the operation. He thought I was her. He said, 'Anna, Anna,' like it was a joke.

Nurse So you told him?

Zini Yes... No I hung up.

Nurse I think you should tell him what has happened now.

Zini Do you?

Nurse I think it would be wrong if you didn't.

Zini Wrong?

Nurse Maybe wrong

The Nurse leaves.

Zini Meal times become a battle ground. That night after the Italian came staggering into my room.

Italian Gnocchi with slices of raw veal. What do you think?

Zini Very nice.

Italian Very nice is all you say.

Zini He doesn't talk to me at all if my mother isn't there. Not to greet, not to excuse, not even to look at as he storms past.

Italian Baby pig's foot wrapped in sage and butter. So? Very nice?

Zini My head begins to feel separate from my body. I become like a smiling nodding head without a body. Very nice.

Italian Very nice.

Casu Marzu

Italian Stop smiling, It weakens you.

Zini But I can't. I smile and smile and have no opinion about any of it.

Zini (*To her Mother)*

What do you think? Is it wrong not to tell him?

She suddenly scrambles for the phone. And then stops.

She stares at her phone.

Zini Adriano, there has been a medical complication with Anna. A terrible thing has happened. A real thing. Can you stop and listen to the terrible thing? No, he won't get past that word terrible.

Adriano, Anna is not going to make it through; I feel it would be wrong if you didn't know. I can feel him staggering backwards, clutching at his heart.

Adriano, I switched off the machines. She was connected to thousands of machines. There were holes all over her where machines went in. It was very very sore. They were beginning to ulcerate. So I switched them off. But she is still breathing. It

is a mess. If she keeps on breathing, she will live a terrible life. It is just me here. Me and her.

She dials.

Zini Adriano. It is Zini. You must listen to me carefully. You must come and see Anna now. At the Donald Gordon.

You must come. You need to come. Adriano... Adriano... She still looks so beautiful, so incredibly beautiful. She is glowing... And she will wait... We will wait. She is waiting here for you to come... That is what all the... medical experts are saying. She is waiting only for you. They seem convinced. I don't know, they say it's a common thing. She is waiting, we are waiting... Everyone here is waiting... Come straight to The Donald Gordon, Ward 10, Room B. Don't go to the waiting room. It is not sanitary there. Many many germs.

She puts down the phone.

(To her mother.) He is coming, he is feeling weak, he must get dressed appropriately. He must find a driver. But he is coming.

Scene Three

Later that day.

Zini is asleep. Anna still in the bed and is making a very loud rasping breathing sound.

The seated Italian is gone.

The Nurse enters. He puts his hand on Zini.

Zini (*Startled.)* Oh God, what has happened?

Nurse No ssshhh... Nothing – it's okay.

Zini listens to her raspy breath.

Nurse I am just going to tell you: The Italian is here.

Zini Where?

Nurse Here, outside.

Zini Now?

Nurse Yes.

Zini What does he look like?

Nurse Old.

Zini Old?

Nurse Very old.

Zini God. What did he say?

Nurse He said he was told we were waiting. Room 10.

Zini Did he ask to see me? Oh God, I can't do this. What shall I do? I can't do this. Shall I go? But there is no way out of here; I will have to walk past him.

Nurse I will send him in.

Zini No, wait...

She scrambles around in her bag and puts on her lipstick. It is a bit wonky.

Nurse Wait.

He takes the lipstick off her lip. He can't get it off, he spits on his finger and rubs the lipstick. She still looks very odd.

Zini Better?

Nurse Perfect.

The Nurse leaves.

Zini sits down, and holds her mother's hand, then stands, then stands in the corner.

The Italian enters. He looks older than earlier and frail. He is wearing an Armani suit and crocodile shoes. He walks very slowly, theatrically over to Anna. He doesn't look at Zini. She stays back.

They both stand very quiet, looking at the bed. Just the rasping sound of Anna's breath. After an impossibly long time, he says:

Italian But you said she looked beautiful.

Zini Yes, she does, doesn't she? She glows.

Italian But her bone structure, you can't see, she is swollen.

Zini Well under the circumstances.

Italian Her nose is running all the time, and there she is wet around her neck. She is swollen with liquid.

Zini She has had drains in her brain to try to clear the fluid. But it's coming from the tracheotomy hole. She has a swollen brain.

Italian She was so beautiful. With a proper bone structure.

Another terrible silence, just the breath.

Zini I asked you to come because they said she was waiting for someone.

Italian The doctors said that? It is strange for doctors to say that.

Zini Yes.

Italian Is he here? The doctor?

Zini No, but the nurse is, and he also says that.

Italian The foreign nurse?

Zini Portuguese.

Italian He asked me many questions when I came in.

Zini I think he wanted to be sure it was you.

Italian What sort of Portuguesa man would ever agree to be a nurse?

Zini Quite an amazing one. The nurses here are all amazing. Actually, they aren't so amazing. The Portuguese man is the best. The best by far, in fact.

The Italian begins to cry. Now it is just the sound of the breath and his crying. Zini still stands off to one side.

After an age, The Italian suddenly he gets up and with a flurry of energy picks the body up. Anna contracts and moves, curling into him. As this happens, fluid rushes out of her and pours all over his suit. The Italian screams, Zini rushes forward.

He shouts out. There is panic and great energy.

Italian Aaah. But the Nurse said she was brain dead.

Zini Yes, she is.

Italian But that means that she can't move.

Zini Well, she can't.

Italian But you saw, you saw.

Zini Yes it was her body, her brain stem, her ancient brain.

Trying to find tissues to mop up the mess.

Italian She clung to me. She is moving.

Zini Well, her body sometimes.

Italian I thought he said she could not feel anything. He said – the Portuguese man – he said she is brain dead. She is no longer here.

Zini Her muscles sometimes spasm. They follow old pathways. She twitches.

Italian Aaah unbelievable, shocking, it is shocking.

The Italian wails and sobs over the bed.

Italian Anna, beautiful Anna. Cicha. Anna.

Zini moves away to the easy boy. The Italian stays mumbling under his breath at the bed.

Zini, not really knowing what to do, begins to leave.

He quietens down.

Italian Have you tipped the nurses?

Zini It's okay.

Italian You tipped everyone? Everyone?

Zini Yes... I have tipped them.

Italian They need money. *(He looks at her skeptically.)* Do you have money?

Zini I have money.

Italian I will go.

Zini You are going, already?

Italian Let me know.

He begins to cry afresh but softly.

Zini It's okay. It's okay.

Italian It's okay.

Zini It's okay. Go now. Thanks for coming.

The Italian begins to sob really loudly now.

Zini It's okay. It's okay. It will be okay. Go now. I am sure she will die now.

The Italian is now hysterical, swinging his arms, he is wailing.

Zini We want that. She is not there anymore. She is operating on her ancient brain. Her reptile brain.

Quick quick the Italian stops. He is thinking about that word.

Italian Her reptile brain? You are very strong.

Zini Yes.

Italian Her reptile brain, you are very strong.

Zini You mean I am very strange. Yes. Yes, I am.

He starts fumbling with his cheque book and very gold pen.

Zini It's okay. Please go now.

He is writing a cheque.

Italian Can I sit a bit?

Zini moves out of the easy boy.

Italian I just had a pace maker put in.

Zini Don't worry. You will live and live, on and on.

Italian It was quite a scene we had.

Zini You had a lot of fun.

Italian But it was hard for you. I am sorry.

Nurse appears at the doorway; he gestures that the horse rider is here. He mimes a horse, a crop, jodhpurs. etc.

Italian I was always so jealous.

Zini *(Back to smiley mask.)* Were you? Of what?

Italian Of everyone. I don't know. Of Will Thompson.

Zini Oh.

Italian Will Thompson. Of Will Thompson.

The Nurse gestures again, the horse rider is on his way.

The Italian I am sorry it was difficult.

Zini It wasn't that difficult.

The Italian I can't come to the funeral.

Zini No, of course you can't.

Italian It would be too much. Too much pain.

He starts wailing again.

Zini I agree.

Italian Did they really say she had a lizard's brain?

Zini No. It's her ancient brain. It's just impulses. Just old electricity waves. She is not there.

Italian But then how could she be waiting for me?

Zini I don't know. Like an old memory that doesn't know it's a memory.

The Italian is so soft now. He sees the photo at the foot of the bed.

Italian You put the picture up of her and horses. (*Suspicious*)

You know - it was an important relationship.

Zini What? Her and horses?

Italian No – me and her. An important relationship.

Zini It was a relationship?

Italian Well, of course it was a relationship.

He touches Zini face. And smiles. He hands her a cheque.

Italian You know, you are beautiful, you always looked like your father. Ciao.

The Italian leaves. He walks out. As he gets to the exit, he stops. The Nurse stands in front of him. The Italian tries to move but the Nurse won't let him pass. It goes on.

The Italian What?

The Italian, exasperated, takes out his wallet, peels off some notes and gives them to the Nurse. The Nurse, shocked, moves so he can go. The Nurse is trying to stop huge trouble.

Nurse And now right into the jodhpurs. Right into him. What must we do? We must do something. What will happen? Will they fight? I hate fighting. But I can do it. Perhaps we should call security?

Zini No – leave him.

Nurse There is going to be trouble

Nurse *(Indicating money.)* He threw money at me.

Security, we need help here.

Zini It doesn't matter. Not anymore.

Nurse There is going to be a fight, help, security, there is trouble.

Zini It is okay now.

Nurse Ward 10 Room B, trouble help. We need some help here.

The Nurse rushes across the stage calling for help. He is picking up on the mood. Help is needed.

Zini I finally meet the Italian's children... I am wearing a new dress that I am proud of. It is the time of punk. It is a white dress with little silver

studs down the side and a splash of black paint. I have white, very pointed shoes on.

I have looked at myself all morning in the mirror, waiting for them to come from the airport. I think I look like I have attitude. I imagine myself to be someone else.

I have opinions, I know about music, I go to concerts, maybe I smoke.

When they arrive, I hear them downstairs. I don't know if I should go down and meet them – or wait. I decide to wait.

They bring their suitcases upstairs. Italian words and laughter. I come out of my room and stand in the passage, trying not to smile.

Carla Maria – she is about nineteen. She is blonde. She is proud of being Italian and blonde. Enrico he is about seventeen. He is tall, with curly black hair. Glasses. He watches Carla Maria look at me.

"Hello," I say.

The Italian hovers in the back ground. A twisted look on his face.

Carla Maria looks at me. Properly. She looks and looks. As she looks, I see who I am. I am fourteen. I have no breasts. My skin is blotchy. My dress looks pathetic. I am South African Portuguese. My hair is black and curly and wild. I am a clown. I smile and smile. She swings past and they all follow, like her PR team.

From then on, Carla Maria has a difficult time. The house wakes at night from –

'La Luna, the moon, the moon!'

It is shining into her room through a crack in the heavy curtain. It is blinking in her eye, something must be done.

When we go to East London, to look at the Italian's factory, her hotel window blows off.

At East London we eat in the hotel restaurant at night. The Italian goes into the kitchen to give instructions. The Italian and his children speak only in Italian. My mother understands a little and tries to keep up. There is something tragic about this. I can't watch.

Instead I play 'keep as still as I can'. Only moving my mouth. Or I listen to the conversations at the tables around me. Piecing their stories together. Or I stare at Carla Maria. She seems to be the most beautiful person I have ever seen. It's not her beauty. It's her confidence.

Her blonde hair, her honey skin, her fat sexy bottom.

I notice Enrico doesn't say much either, he just stares at her too. I can see he doesn't like the Italian or my mother. He doesn't really have an opinion about me. With him I feel let off the hook a little. There is so much going on between them all, I feel safe.

And I eat pizza every night.

But my mother's attempts to understand, to be liked, are getting worse and worse. She is losing her laid-backness. Everyone knows she can't keep up.

Carla Maria holds court and turns her body away from my mother, cutting her out. The Italian doesn't seem to mind. I am playing "the try to eat with as minimal movement as possible" when I see my mother is crying. Sitting, looking into the far distance, and crying. At first it is a quiet cry, gentle tears, her lip trembling. But then it gets worse. Carla Maria turns her body to face my mother and looks at her with triumph.

"Zini, do something."

So we go to the bathroom. I knock my coke into the bread rolls on the way.

In the bathroom, under the yellow light, my mother says:

"I can't do it anymore. No more. I must leave now. We must go"

I completely get it.

Anna gets off the bench and moves towards the other bench. She is smiling and breathing.

We can't go back out. If we go back through the bathroom door they will see us.

A low window is the answer.

They both climb on the bench.

Anna So clever of you to think of the window.

Zini Come we can go, take off your shoes. Never mind your bag. We can leave your bag.

Anna No one will find us now. How clever to escape through the window.

Zini Come on, mind your head. Hold my hand.

Anna breathing erratically. A deep rattled breath.

Zini Come on, when they start looking we will be gone.

The Nurse begins to sing Fados.

Suddenly, Zini stops and listens. The breathing has stopped.

Scene Four

The Nurse is clearing the bed. Remaking it. Zini sits on the easy boy, watching. It goes on for a long time. He sings Fados as he makes the empty bed.

Nurse It is Portuguese Fados. It comes from the Port. Lisbon. Sailors bringing songs from Brazil, China, Africa, the Arab countries. Listen.

He sings.

I sing with saudade... No, the real singers – the fadista. That is something. You can cry. Fado means fate and it is the singer's fate to sing it. Everything is going wrong, but singing about it will somehow improve it.

He sings.

You sing with saudade. With longing. With homesickness. For something. A land, a woman, yourself. Homesick... for yourself.

He carries on making the bed and singing. Zini looks at her hands and waits.

Nurse My father played, and so we always listened to it at home. As a way to remember.

Don't forget the forms, then you don't have to downstairs.

Zini starts to fill in the forms.

Nurse But all is safe now. No one is here anymore. Everyone has gone. And you can go if you like.

Zini I suppose they are waiting for the room now.

Nurse They are... Yes. And well... you have been here half the day. In fact, I have been asked if you would like the councilor.

Zini laughs.

Nurse Yes.

Zini Here are the forms.

Nurse *Looking at the forms.* She was a... spinster. She never married?

Zini shakes her head.

Nurse Your father?

Zini Portuguese. Mozambique.

Nurse Where is he?

Zini He was shot by a stray bullet while foraging for wild mushrooms.

Nurse No!

Zini No, not really.

Nurse Oh...

Zini The bullet wasn't all that stray.

Nurse Fala Portuguese?

Then in Portuguese:

"De mim só me falto eu
Senhora da minha vida
Do sonho, digo que é meu
E dou por mim já nascida." [1]

Zini No

Nurse Pity. Is beautiful.

Zini *As Italian:* Portuguese is like Italian, but with a speech defect.

Nurse Oh...

Zini No, no, sorry. It is what the Italian would say. Sorry.

Nurse What will you do now? Where is your husband?

Zini I am divorced. I am just a mother now.

Nurse What will you do now?

Zini I don't know... I will fetch my daughter from her father.

---

[1] *Me me me miss only.*

Lady in my line

The dream, I say it is me

And find myself already born

Born of the dream lady.

Nurse A daughter. Look I have daughters. Three. Three girls. Big trouble. Look here.

He shows her a picture.

Zini Aah, I see. I didn't think... that is good. They are lucky. They say Portuguese men make good fathers.

Nurse The Portuguese believe... there is no normal, we are all just homesick. For each other's memories. For our own too. But there is no normal. We are all longing... Come. I give you a hug.

He hugs her.

Zini Goodbye. You have been... Thank you.

She leaves from behind the curtain. Fados plays, after a while The Italian and Anna follow her.

The Nurse pauses for a moment. Then he carries on making the bed again in the waiting room.

- THE END -

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Signature: L Henriques

Date: 3 November 2016

Memory and Identity:

A theatrical exploration of identity through memory

If my ninety-nine-year-old grandmother thinks she is seven,

how old does that make me?

Abstract:

This thesis, subtitled *Memory and Identity: A theatrical exploration of identity through memory,* uses theatre as an investigative tool and unpacks the idea that we are connected to each other through three different forms of memory and knowledge; namely personal knowledge, family knowledge and genetic knowledge. This written component forms part of a practice-based research performance project.

The practice-based research uses playmaking to draw on these three memory forms and explores the interpersonal relationships of a life lived in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2009. Each knowledge form has been explored: personal knowledge draws on my personal lived experience as a South African citizen and also as a theatre practitioner from 1992 to 2009; family knowledge draws on stories handed down in my family and an exploration into my family dynamics through body memory; and genetic knowledge uses the Portuguese song form of Fados as a way of accessing, formalising and recreating the narrative I tell.

I have used theatre to explore the links between myself and my personal memories, communal family memories and genetic memories. I have explored the relationship between memories of a personal lived experience in Johannesburg in the 1970s and my own social positioning in Johannesburg in 2009 (the year my

mother died). I found ways in which old patterns of behaviour were repeated under entirely different circumstances – and through the practice of making the play how these patterns could be disrupted – and new pathways for knowing and forming an identity could be formed.

In this research document I have elaborated on the three basic stages of my investigation: research into personal, family and genetic memory; my play-making practice; and finally how the process of making and performing the play shifted my ideas about myself, my family and, more subliminally, my place in South Africa – in the past, present and future. My finding is that while memory – in all its different forms – has a key role in shaping identity, identity is a distinct and ever-evolving entity that defies time and place and conditioning. There is a point at which what is given to us is left behind and we are able to imagine alternatives for ourselves that we can grow towards and claim as our own.