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MA Performance as Research:

Picking up the Bill: Unravelling the Truth and Paying for the Damage Incurred by Resurrecting the Ancestors.

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Submitted in partial requirements for the degree of

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Wits School of the Arts, Drama for Life

at

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SENATE PLAGIARISM POLICY

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I Gabriel Marchand (Student number: 1786236) am a student registered for MA Drama Therapy in the year 2017. I hereby declare the following:

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Signature: **Date: 15/03/2018**

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Abstract

This Performance as Research attempts to address the difficulties of having a constructive conversation around race and colonialism in the public square with a theatrical work. The research is creative and artistic in nature. Storytelling, ritual and ceremony are the primary performative devices used in the work. The researchers embarked on a process of writing and performing stories of mythical, symbolic and personal relevance, with the aim of investigating the effect upon themselves as researchers. Drawing from a range of mythologies, stories may evoke empathy and understanding in the listener, vital elements when entering conversation about emotionally charged topics. The aim, therefore is to propose a creative solution to the conversation – telling out stories through theatre may give them fuller expression and invite the listener to hear them with open ears, to have compassion, and to perhaps to reach for a place of greater understanding. The research consists of a performance, theorising around the principles that informed it, and reflection upon the performance once it had been staged. The findings take the form of questions around our willingness to share ourselves with others, the fear that evokes, and possible routes forward in the conversation. These will be addressed in a final performative submission to be made at a later date after conversation with witnesses of the original performance.

Key words: Storytelling, race, colonialism, conversation, ancestors, drama therapy, performance as research.

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Introduction

If I'm honest, this research arises largely out of my own frustration. A frustration at hearing the same conversation over and over again, a conversation that never seems to go anywhere. Whenever topics concerning race and/or colonialism come up, so do difficult feelings, emotions that make it hard for people to listen to each other. As a theatre-maker and storyteller, I couldn't help but think that perhaps these art forms might have something more to contribute. I looked at the relationships with people of other races and heritages in my life and wondered why it was that we had chosen to respect and understand each other, when all around us was a maelstrom of hateful rage. I had a suspicion that it had something to do with the stories. The interest in a story well told, a story that invites the listener to occupy the shoes of the characters, a story of human universals – pain, love, birth, death. So was the seed planted that would ultimately grow into a performance in which two dear friends, one black, one white, tell the stories that they have discovered together, around the fire, over many a dark night. Two dear friends who feel they have been given the gift of each other, and of that fireside, a great gift for the attentive ear. A gift they, we, wish to share. Out of hope, out of concern, out of compassion, and out of the knowledge that you can only keep what you have by giving it away.

Performance as research – an invitation by the academy for art to contribute its unique ways of knowing. A difficult thing to swallow perhaps for an entity who is so used to subsisting on paper. Performance as research is a form that aims to know by feeling, by embodying, by diving into the senses and accepting the possibility of emerging speechless. Quite a departure from a literature review. This speechlessness has struck several times over the course of this research, and here I endeavour, at least to some degree, to overcome it in parts. My own reaction to the work still feels mysterious to me, half-covered in darkness, almost as if I am a messenger who has delivered a message in many languages – I know the shape of the words in my mouth, but cannot always decipher their meaning. Though these things come from within me, I do not always understand them except to feel a great sense of their value. The challenge this presents to the researcher is not to be underestimated – can we reach deep into ourselves, and pull out things that truly matter to

us, and present them before the academy? An entity known for its cutting words, its harsh scrutiny. Can we emerge and learn to articulate what we have done? It has been said that if you can distil a play into words other than those in the script then you should have written that instead. Thus, the point of this written part of the submission is not to describe, summarize or distil, sadly, if you were not there on the night, nothing can give you the real taste and texture of that experience. Rather it is to frame, to reflect, and to search for a way forward.

The relevance of this form, to this topic, must be acknowledged. When addressing the suffering we all experience, we enter a realm where paper makes a poor poultice. To address this topic in a way that honours the depth of human experience wrapped up in its history and its present we must aim to use all the creative tools at our disposal. Only then can we approach the human heart with the respect it deserves, and if we can learn to do that for ourselves, perhaps we can learn to do it for the other too. Performance of a story allows the teller to give shape to both the verbally articulatable parts of it, as well as the embodied, expressive, explosive and grief-stricken parts. The teller may weep, scream, stomp their feet, laugh with child-like abandon, do things which need to be done if we are to have a hope of touching the depth of the experience, but which, in the context of an 'adult' conversation would seem like madness.

Framing of this document

The Performance as Research consists of three phases. The first was the performance of the research, this submission forms the second part. The written parts combine to form a supporting dialogue toward the thinking behind the making of the performance and the oral interview. The third phase will consist of a reflective, performative response to phases one and two. It must be noted that this document has been compiled, due to pressure of deadlines, before detailed feedback could be received or a conversation had about the work. Thus, it comes to the reader with a certain rawness, the quality of a person looking at themselves from the limited vantage point of being within their own body. A great deal of reflection has taken place around the work in the short time since it's performance (less than a week), but this has been without a detailed conversation about the work having taken place. As one of the makers of the research, I knew I could not have a conversation

right away, I needed time to see what I had done from some distance (I wanted to give the witnesses time to let it settle as well), but the problem that this created was that the written part of the submission would be done without a considered response. Bear this in mind while reading.

This document will take the reader across the temporal landscape of the research, encountering the researcher at various stages of emotional and intellectual engagement with the topic. Pay close attention to the former as well as the latter, because, as much as this document appears in words on a page, it's origin is a place that struggles against reductive description. In an attempt to mitigate this much of the description is written from a place of being somewhat performative, employing a type of description that appeals to the senses, verging at times on the poetic. I believe this is appropriate in the context of creative research – the research is creative, so the language to talk about it should not dry it out, but attempt to keep it alive. I ask you to watch the video of the performance (if you did not see it live), read the script, pay close attention to the stories, and then enter the documents written here in the spirit you find there. You will see the researcher veer from certainty to naivety, from doubt to resolution, from the academic and theoretical to the performative and vulnerable, and thus I urge you to view these words with compassion. It is often the case that, as artists, we don't know what we're making, even after we've made it, so bear in mind, this is an attempt to make some sense of an experience akin to a possession – memories seen through the distorted lens of somebody else's eyes. Below is a brief description of the parts to help the reader locate them in time, and in points of engaging with the research.

1) **Summary of interaction with reader Jane Taylor around the proposal for this research:** This is a reflective document, looking back at my interactions with the reader for my proposal, Prof. Jane Taylor. Its style is not formal and tells of Jane's influence on my decision to honour the performative over the written, objective word.
2) **An Essay: Theoretical Underpinnings in Drama Therapy and Theatre – The Importance of Addressing Philosophy:** A formal academic chapter underlining the philosophical bases of the work, written before the creative process had begun. It

offers the reader the opportunity to see what the intentions were at the outset, before the realities of birthing the creative research and artistic intuitions came into play.

3) **Reflection on the process and moving forward to complete the research: Where's the pip? *Gods of our Misunderstanding* – On taking the audience two-thirds of the way:** In a personal, reflective tone I address a particular piece of feedback, and how its influence will affect the completion of the research. It addresses process, the experience of presenting the work, and how to proceed in completing it. At the end of this section is a bibliography of works influential to the process, but obviously not directly cited given that the work was performed as a play.
4) **Framing of the Performance:** The document given to examiners to put the performance in context of the research.
5) **Performance Script:** A creative document, the script of the performance, titled *Gods of our Misunderstanding*.
6) **Appendix:** Examples of ethics documents given to participants in the research.
7) **Video of the performance itself:** Lastly, a creative document, a USB drive containing a copy of the performance itself. The reader may wish to begin with this component to help frame the rest of the contents of this document.

Engaging with thinking around the work

This work began as an attempt to find a way to have a conversation around race and colonialism via creative means. I had noticed that public conversations on these topics frequently broke down into emotionally and ideologically charged arguments, with the result being that no real listening occurred, and the participants simply ended up retreating into group camps of people who more or less agreed with them. My hunch was that, with a theatrical frame, we might be able to give thoughtful, considered accounts of experiences that could engender compassion in the other, and make them less likely to become defensive. I discovered, during the process, that many of my assumptions around how I would conduct the work were incongruent with my own ethos as an artist, and I found myself realising that the group discussion I envisioned ran counter to my own convictions – that is through listening to individuals that we may discover a way forward. That is, if we find the story of the individual uniquely compelling, we may draw the conclusion that we may see people as unique human beings, not avatars of their groups. The process has involved engaging with aspects of the work on different levels, from the philosophical and theoretical, to the creatively practical, to the subjective and reflective. Thus, the reader must be aware of the shifting in styles of presentation throughout the various parts of this document. These shifts exist to address the different qualities of experience of the various stages in the work, and the need to address the subject on multiple levels. They also move back and forth in time – Part 1 is reflection on the proposal process from the perspective of having performed the work, Part 2 is historical to the practical elements of the work and therefore resides mostly in the realm of theory and intellect, and Part 3 taps into my personal, subjective account of having received initial feedback after performance, and includes reaching into the future for possibilities of how to proceed.

Looking for a way forward in the proposed conversation has required me to shift ways of engaging constantly, spiritually, personally, intellectually, depending on the context. My hope is that these multiple levels of engagement, and the vantage point of seeing the work at its various temporal stages, may assist the reader in allowing themselves to also acknowledge the importance of retaining a fluidity of mindset when approaching this difficult topic. Here begins a journey, as yet uncompleted, into dark parts of our society, our

history, and ourselves as researchers. Expressed at times in metaphor and allegory, at times in personal admission, it may resist a linear reading. So, as you proceed, do so with an open mind to a piece of research that is, even now, shifting constantly underfoot. Performance as research is an process of unfolding that honours the experience of a being in its wholeness, therein lies its value, access to knowledge that only the soul is permitted to witness.

Part 1

Summary of interaction with reader Jane Taylor around the proposal

My initial proposal for the research was based around questions of ancestry, in summary – when we resurrect our ancestors by acting out their beliefs, and speaking their words, what price is paid, and who pays it? This was based on observations of people in my own life, and in public, mounting arguments in defence of colonialism and apartheid. This, I felt, was a kind of resurrection, the ancestors voices were audible again, thanks to the throats of their children. The idea of resurrection brings with it a price, a sacrifice. In order to bring something back from the world of the dead, surely a sacrifice must be made from the world of the living? And if so, who was paying the price? My intention was to investigate this performatively because the rituals of sacrifice and ancestor embodiment are performative in nature. However, I also wished to gauge audience responses, have post-show discussion groups, and record the process.

This is the essence of the document that the appointed reader for this MA proposal, Prof. Jane Taylor, Andrew W Mellon Chair of Aesthetic Theory and Material Performance, and a distinguished dramaturge at the University of the Western Cape, read. Jane and I have known each other for years through our work with Handspring Puppet Company, and so have established a rapport, making it easier to have an honest conversation about my intentions.

'I appreciate the candidate's impulse to activate the material generated through recordings and transcriptions, but would urge Mqrcahnd (sic) to keep these as open and fluid as possible, in order to build on the ambiguity and not to close off the theatrical encounter– it strikes me that audiences may be obligated to shut down complexity and generate a fixed response which diminishes, rather, the depth of the encounter. I would suggest that the candidate craft this element of the process in order to keep it as open as possible.'

Prof. Jane Taylor, Reader's Report to the proposal of this research (2017)

The above quote was part of Prof. Taylor's response to my proposal and influenced me to stay away from formal audience response recording. Instead, a less formal conversation

with examiners, and conversations with audience sometime after the performance. The 'data' would be our experience, not qualitative documents recorded defensively in order to 'prove' the validity of the work. The knowledge was to be embodied (Conquergood, 2002), not become disembodied, and taken into the traditional academic headspace of data and analysis. Honestly, I was relieved, as the data collection part of the proposal existed more to satisfy what I thought would be the requirements of the academy, rather than my own impulses towards the work. I was unsure of how I was going to proceed at the time, or what shape the work would take, but I did know that I didn't want to kill anything artistic that arose out of the process by frantically trying to find substantiating qualitative data to 'prove me right' or defensively justify the research. Jane's suggestion implied that people be allowed to sit with the work, to allow what they had witnessed to unfold within them over time after the performance, and that they not be forced to make intellectual meaning out of what was essentially an embodied encounter. Also, importantly, that they not be faced with the probing instruments of my attempts to extract an essay from their experience. What the work evolved into from there was not an outcomes-based exercise, but rather a process-based one. It became more important for me to observe my own reactions to the process, and those of my co-researcher, as we explored this territory. I notice, in retrospect, that these observations faded in and out of my consciousness at various points, depending on how consumed I was with the act of creating a work of art. The deeper I went, it seemed, the more likely I was to lose touch with any intellectual bases for the work, and those moments have only begun to re-emerge now that the piece has been performed. They are addressed in Part 3.

Jane and I engaged on ideas around the themes of the work as well, however, many of my original ideas of theme were discarded as the work was allowed to proceed along more organic lines. What did manage to survive was an engagement with the dominant mythologies in the lives of myself and my co-researcher, an aspect that Jane recommended I spend time investigating. As a result, the work retained the strong influences of the religions of mine and my co-researcher's childhoods, however, these influences were engaged with in relation to a common mythology we began constructing. Another survivor of the thematic cull was an investigation into the voices of ancestors, particularly in the stories *How to Trick a Champion* and *The Englishman and the Arab*. Although in the original intention behind this

work this theme featured much more strongly, hence the reference to it in the title, *Picking up the Bill: Unravelling the Truth and Paying for the Damage Incurred by Resurrecting the Ancestors.* This began as an investigation into culpability in the act evoking the voices of my colonial ancestors for the sake of performance, but I discovered that if I was to engender the work with a compassionate tone I would have to let go of a search for culpability – blame of myself, and of my forebears. I would instead have to take the individual stories of my ancestors into account non-judgementally, and that is what I did in the aforementioned stories – a fictionalised blend of stories from the lives of some of my colonial relatives. I investigated the life stories of my ancestors through talking to my family, and found that among them were people of unexpected gentleness, kindness and generosity. I had, it seemed, taken on a burden of guilt for the crimes of a group of people to which I was told I belonged (the colonisers that is), and had written off the individuals from whom I was actually descended, without actually knowing very much about them.

The theoretical and philosophical motivation for the work, as a starting point, retains relevance, even though the work shifted substantially from content to process. I realised the scope of the therapeutic aspects of the engagement, in light of what I have learnt during the course-work and internship components of this degree. What follows is a rationale for using a drama-therapeutic inspiration for the improvisation techniques that generated some of the work, as well as the importance of maintaining a humanistic approach to such techniques. Paramount to the argument is how the philosophical underpinnings of the work may bleed through, and therefore how we must maintain a philosophy in line with humanistic and artistic values. This essay was written before the process of creation began on the rehearsal room floor.

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Part 2

An Essay: When Drama-Therapeutic Technique Informs the Process of Making Theatre – The Importance of Addressing Philosophy

Introduction:

In *Current Approaches in Drama Therapy* (Johnson & Emunah, 2013), David Read Johnson asserts that all approaches to drama therapy share the postmodern assertion that 'life is a multitextured weave of desires, thoughts, and roles, being constantly shaped and reshaped by the combined forces of the body and the cultural surround.' (Johnson, 2013: p.99). This essay seeks to make a limited critique of that claim for its sweeping scope, and the internal contradiction of claiming both a postmodern, and religious or transpersonal ethos (Johnson makes use of Buddhist understandings of reality, which can be seen as philosophical or religious, depending on the context, but certainly, even through the philosophical lens, have transpersonal elements). Johnson claims to draw from Derrida (1978), and Deleuze & Guattari (1987), post-structuralists (a postmodern school), for his postmodern influences, and yet, the above quote appears to be more in line with the thinking of Jean Piaget, who may be considered a type of structuralist (although who considered himself a 'constructivist', stating, 'there is no structure apart from construction, abstract or genetic.'), (Piaget, 1971: p. 5). Simultaneously, and in the same chapter, Johnson relates his theory to Buddhist principles which are inherently anti-constructivist, anti-post-structuralist, and anti-structuralist by his own estimation, speaking, as he does, of concepts like Emanation from some intrinsic, ephemeral Source (Johnson, 2013: p.90). I will argue that the inclusion of both the ideas of the postmodern and the religious (not to mention the structuralist/post-structuralist) creates an internal contradiction which has anti-therapeutic implications, and that if the first is true, it is at best fractionally true. In addition, I will comment on the relevance of this critique if Developmental Transformations is to be used as the basis for a method of generating theatrical material that is used to address issues related to historical and psychosocial trauma, particularly within a South African context as pertains to my greater research aims.

Therapy, theatre, and philosophy – joining the dots:

Drama Therapy borrows from theatre, this much is obvious. A part of my intention in my research is to see if we can reverse the flow. The reason for this is that it is my opinion that Drama Therapy has taken theatre techniques and applied them successfully in helping people to access latent, unconscious, and often painful parts of themselves in a deeply compassionate way, and my research will require everyone in the creative process to access these parts of themselves. My research will walk the line between therapy and theatre, intending to create a space for healing, and accessing that space by borrowing (and altering) some therapeutic techniques, while not expressing an overtly therapeutic intention. Here is an important distinction: between the phenomenon of healing, and the act of therapy. The therapeutic techniques will be used to help performers go deep, safely, not with a therapeutic intention, but with a content generating intention, while the product (the play created) will intend to open up a space for healing in the audience through the act of witnessing, not engaging in therapy directly. The intention is not overtly therapeutic partly because it serves multiple functions – entertainment, intellectual investigation, emotional engagement, and other purposes yet to be revealed. If this seems vague it is because it is. The form the research takes, Performance as Research, aims to seek knowledge through embodiment and the artistic act of creation. As a result, one cannot be too firm in one direction, as creative forces may bid one elsewhere.

One aspect of the work compels me particularly strongly however, and that is how the creative work will function in relation to the therapeutic methods, and the philosophy and theory behind those methods. I assert that theoretical and philosophical assumptions have the potential of bleeding through into the real world, and that indeed that is the intention of evoking them in the first place. As a result, I must take an intensely critical look at the underpinnings of the method I intend to employ – Johnson's Developmental Transformations – before I begin. Postmodern theory, in both its theoretical assertions, and the spirit behind them, poses some alarming problems for working in the realm of sincerity and good faith, concepts that form the foundation of the therapeutic ethos, and that I hope to evoke in my research. This highlights the importance of taking a look at how postmodern underpinnings may affect Drama Therapy, and therapy as a whole, before I begin the work

of adjusting them for theatrical purposes. More details of the research and what drives it follow later in the essay.

A brief critique of postmodernism:

This essay does not have the scope to embark on a major critique of postmodernism, but I will outline some of the issues with the particular theorists cited in the chapter under discussion, and link them to criticisms of the body of theory as a whole.

Firstly, in terms of Deleuze & Guattari, and the work cited, 'A Thousand Plateaus.' (1987). A central idea of this work is that of the rhizome – a rhizome is a botanical phenomenon where a plant has no central core, but rather multiple nodes, like a potato plant (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: p.7). It grows laterally, instead of, in the case of many other plants, vertically, and it becomes very difficult to route it out as you never know if you are removing all of it or if there is another node or 'centre' that you have not found (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: p. 8). The point of the argument is a criticism of Western thought, positing that one of its major flaws is that it seeks a centre, a 'root' from whence all things come (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: p.5). The argument then continues that Western thought seeks to privilege the 'root' with power over other ideas, languages, classes, etc. However, to pose a simple retort, this is internally contradictory, as it posits its own 'root' – that of power (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: p.7). Power is, according to the central tenets of postmodernism, as well as Deleuze & Guattari's work, the central feature of any system (Hicks, 2004: p.22). So, where does the rhizome metaphor go when it comes to the idea's central presupposition? It disappears, and the argument becomes about a singular power game of oppressor versus oppressed. That is not to say that the idea of the linguistic, philosophical, or social rhizome does not have validity, but it falls apart when one seeks to ascribe a central, or 'root' motive to *all* interactions. It makes no account for the importance or even existence of authority, competence, love, meaning, or morals – these, it would argue, are all simply forms of power (Peterson, 2017). To follow this idea through to its end one has to conclude that the world is really the Hobbesian nightmare in which we are all, in one way or another, at each other's throats, seeking domination and survival by any means necessary. To rebut this one simply has to read the accounts of people like Viktor Frankl (1959), or Alexandr Solzhentisyn (1973), in which humans in the direst of circumstances still find ways in which to express kindness, compassion, and humanity, even at their own expense, and then wonder whether

the likes of Deleuze & Guattari have ever seen what the human spirit is capable of when faced with stark existential realities. The idea of Deleuze & Guattari has two parts, one is that of the rhizome, and the other is that of its consequences for power (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) – the first has a sort of neutrality about it, one could derive a number of conclusions, but the second expresses a cynicism typical of the postmodern movement, which relegates it to the realm of nihilism.

With particular relevance to criticism of Johnson's use of this citation in relation to his work with Developmental Transformations is that Deleuze and Guattari challenge, throughout the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, the notion of a central place from when all things come (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). They do this on multiple levels, in terms of both large concepts like language (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987 p.8), and on the level of the individual (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987 p.3). This is in direct contradiction with a large part of Johnson's chapter, which focuses on tapping into an internal Source (note: not 'sources', but Source, with a capital 'S')(Johnson, 2013: p.90). I will elaborate on this further later on.

Another criticism levelled against *A Thousand Plateaus* comes from philosopher Jean-Jacques Lyotard, a postmodernist himself, who states,

> 'some are displeased with *Mille Plateaux* [*A Thousand Plateaus*]...because they expect, especially when reading a work of philosophy, to be gratified with a little sense.' (Lyotard, 1993. p.71)

This might sound more like an insult than a critique, however, as Peterson and Chomsky elaborate, the criticism cuts to the heart of the philosophy as a whole, given its basis in the rejection of reason, logic, in short, sense, as being simply modes of power maintenance and therefore having no place in discourse (Peterson, 2017), (Chomsky, 2017). In fact, Derrida is famous for his critique of Western thought, speaking of its paternal-logocentrism (Derrida, 1985: p.432) – that is, *paternal (centric)*, from the male/father perspective, and *logo (centric)*, privileging the logos, or language and reason. Thus, if Western thought is to be criticised for privileging reason by this predecessor of Deleuze and Guatarri, is it any surprise that they do not privilege 'sense', as Lyotard states? Lyotard goes on to criticise the problems with the movement as a whole, as having devolved to the point where there is no common way of speaking, that the school of thought has lost all sense of a reference point

and has become simply a case of 'one speaks about speech, and writes about writing' (Lyotard, 1993: p.71). Hicks goes further on this theme by pointing out that postmodernism is inherently anti-philosophical and anti-realist (Hicks, 2011: p.24). The consequences of this of course is that all that remains is the text, and everything becomes text, including the individual.

In terms of Derrida's contribution, perhaps the most relevant point in *Writing and Difference* (Derrida, 1978) is the idea of the highest good being an individual in service to the Other (that is, not another person, but to that which is not the present – that which is present in one's immediate perceptual proximity is 'Same', and that which is not is 'Other' – he speaks of this particularly in the context of writing)(Derrida, 1978: p.35). This has relevance to the work of Developmental Transformations, in which the primary mode of therapy is an improvised interaction with another person for the sake of their healing by the process of building resiliency to the inevitability that the current state will endlessly transform into a different one (Johnson, 2013: pp. 89-99). So, in terms of the quote we are analysing in this essay, Derrida's other works, not cited in this chapter, but alluded to in its reference to multiple narratives, are of more relevance. Hence it is these ideas, under the broader banner of postmodernism, as claimed to be a theoretical source for drama therapeutic work, that I take particular issue with. Derrida's cry for the death of the 'grand-narrative', through the vehicle of de-construction (Howells, 1999), in favour of multiple narratives, poses a problem when framed by postmodernism. The idea of multiple narratives did exist before the postmodernists, and in a more appropriate framework. Literature, that is, art itself, the mother of drama therapy, had been using the idea for decades (if not centuries) already, as evidenced clearly in works including multiple characters viewing the 'same' event from different perspectives, and explicitly and consciously in works like Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930), in which chapters are divided according to character perspective instead of chronology. It must be made clear that this is not the same as the postmodern idea of a non-existent grand-narrative – much art does allude to an objective reality. It may, however, claim that given our multiplicity of perspectives as humans, the greater picture can never be clear or certain. Art is also capable of addressing the concept of the multiple narrative with compassion, as opposed to scepticism, paying credence to modernist and romantic ideas of truth and beauty, and

existential prerogatives like discovering the meaning of suffering. In art there is also the acknowledgment that while people have different stories, they strive toward a place of common understanding, not quite an objective truth, but rather a piece of solid ground which they can negotiate upon. Therefore, to draw on postmodern conceptions of multiple narratives (which are not rooted in art, but criticism of the text, artistic and otherwise, and in philosophical scepticism, ironically of everything but postmodernism), is not only unnecessary, but plants a seed of the cynicism inherent in the movement. And that cynicism, I would assert, is inherently anti-therapeutic. It rejects the grand narrative, neglecting to acknowledge that for the individual their narrative *is* a grand narrative, even if it is a combination (or 'multitextured weave') of smaller personal stories. It is their story, and they do not live in a sceptical and ephemeral philosophical limbo in which nothing has inherent meaning, or if they do, they certainly shouldn't, for the sake of their own sanity. As Frankl asserts, people search for the tension of meaning to give relevance to their suffering, and to make it worth bearing (Frankl, 1959 p. 111), and he does so from a clinical (and philosophical) perspective – a perspective I believe Johnson could do well to place above that of an essentially nihilistic conception of narratives. From this perspective, I would assert that Johnson could arrive at a more appropriate conception of the idea of multiple narratives, or as he puts it, 'a multi textured weave' (Johnson, 2013 p.99), from the perspective of literature and art (which can more legitimately lay claim to the foundations of the idea in any case), than from the framework of postmodern philosophical and critical thought. To conclude, pre-postmodern (that is not to say necessarily modernist) conceptions of the idea of the multiple narrative (whether within the individual, or across the space of the broader society) leave open the possibility for a person to find greater, even transpersonal meaning in their stories. Postmodern conceptions, however, are essentially cynical and reductionist, claiming that *all* interpretations and stories are equally valid (Hicks, 2004 p.24), both between, and within individuals. This second conception leaves the individual without a compass, without direction, at sea – and it is a consequence of the type of thinking that happened (and continues to happen) in the postmodern movement as a whole. It is dangerous therefore to reach into this philosophical vipers' nest in the hope of finding some gem of an idea, when in reality one is much more likely simply to get bitten, and when the answers one is looking for exist in a more profound form in the realm of art anyway. Moreover, it is not that the primary ideas of these postmodern

thinkers are necessarily incorrect, it is the conclusion they draw that is dubious – that is that everything can be reduced to a power struggle. One has to wonder what effect this notion has in the therapeutic space, and what effect it might have on humanistic and existential approaches to drama therapy.

Analysis of the quote:

While the above quote from Johnson sounds like a rich description of the nature of life, I assert that it is in fact a very shallow and internally contradictory one. The appearance of richness is a result of word-choice rather than a reflection of the ideas contained within. Let us take it apart in two sections. Firstly, 'life is a multitextured weave of desires, thoughts, and roles…' (Johnson, 2013 p.99). The words 'multitextured weave' are the thrust of the poetic part of the statement, that seem to lend it depth, and they allude, in the postmodern context, to the central claim of that body of theory – that is, that there are an infinite number of ways to interpret any finite phenomenon (Peterson, 2017). The idea of a multitextured weave is not problematic in and of itself, the problem is that it is a weave in the postmodern context. It *sounds* good, when in fact, it presents a very serious problem in therapy. While the central postmodern claim stated above is certainly true, this presents an existential dilemma that is distinctly unhelpful to someone coming to therapy – it does nothing to help them decide which of these ways is the best way forward for them, and it does not acknowledge any boundaries of limitation. It is also in contradiction with the very deep idea presented earlier in Johnson's chapter of the 'Source' (Johnson, 2013 p.90). Perhaps, if Johnson had said 'sources' instead of 'Source', with a capital 'S', this contradiction could be reconciled. The Source is linked to the idea of Emanation, a central component of Johnson's Developmental Transformations that speaks to an unspecified place from whence all spontaneity arises. However, the postmodern perspective of the multi-textured weave, in which life itself is simply comprised of desires, thoughts, roles, the body, and culture (all *specified* locations) is in direct contradiction to this essentially transpersonal, *unspecified* concept, and leaves nothing of that which is beyond our capacity to understand, or that which is potentially spiritual.

I would assert that one does not need to reach for a post-modern conceptualisation of infinite narratives, creating an internal contradiction as a result, in order to acknowledge the existence of *multiple* layers of human experience. The point is, there are an infinite number

of interpretations of the world in theory, but for any one individual human being those interpretations are considerably limited by the pragmatic necessity of needing to navigate the world according to real constraints and necessities (Peterson, 2017), (Peterson, 1999), (Piaget, 1932). Such limitations include, according to Piaget (1932 p.183) acting in a way that is in one's best interest going forward into an indefinite future. There is also the consideration of the morality of doing so in a way that serves not only the individual, but also their family, and the society in which they are nested, and in a way that assures their continued participation in the set of activities that a person must participate in socially in order to remain functional in that society (Piaget, 1932).

Johnson does mention Piaget as a source of theory for this chapter, and for his conception of Developmental Transformations, however, one wonders at his conception of the scope of inclusion of Piaget's theories in light of the quote we are discussing, when this quote is associated with the claims of postmodernism. My point is not to refute the central claim of postmodernism, which is self-evident to the point of being a truism (Chomsky, 2017), but rather to question the place of its inherent nihilism in the work of therapy. The inherent nihilism of which I speak is embedded in the vastness of the interpretations – it is not that there are an infinite number of interpretations in theory, it is the central postmodern assertion that these infinite interpretations are all equally valid or invalid, or that there can be no canonical interpretation (Peterson, 2017). One may be able to argue that there cannot be a canonical interpretation for a large group of people that does not exclude, due to the large number of potential narratives, but for the individual there *must* be a limited number, if that person is to exist functionally in their surroundings. In short, according to the Piagetian ideas in the previous paragraph there are not infinite, equally valid interpretations of all finite phenomena, and certainly not to the individual in crisis, who is, in all likelihood, the individual most likely to seek therapy. Philosophical musings of this nature are fine in the context of a comparative literature class (Chomsky, 2017), but when it comes to their relevance to a person in need of a way to find access to the very Source of which Johnson speaks, they are most likely to simply lead to doubt, fear, and a profound sense of being overwhelmed by the incredible complexity of possibilities in life. There are infinite *possibilities*, but there are not infinite *solutions*. The therapist cannot endorse, or even present a postmodern conception, with all its implications of nihilism, and simultaneously

expect an individual to confront the pragmatic realities of their particular (not theoretical) life.

The second part of the quote, 'being constantly shaped and reshaped by the combined forces of the body and the cultural surround.', presents a problem of exclusion. Johnson makes extensive reference to Buddhism, and the importance of an unspecified, but essentially transpersonal 'Source' (Johnson, 2013). However, the quote excludes any reference to the importance this concept, that he goes very far, earlier in the chapter, to emphasise. It reduces the shaping forces of life to those contained in a constructivist (reference to cultural forces) and biological framework (reference to the forces of the body). Unless it is his assertion that the 'Source' is inherently bodily (in which case, why use the framework of spiritual philosophy?), he is excluding the possibility of a metaphysical dimension, a possibility that, only a few pages earlier, he includes explicitly in his description of the theoretical basis of Developmental Transformations.

This neglect of the transpersonal also causes some confusion as to the mentioning of 'roles' in the earlier part of the statement. Landy's Role Method (1996), is cited elsewhere in the chapter, but an in-depth understanding of its place in therapy requires a reference to its Jungian, religious, and mythological roots, all of which have a distinctively transpersonal element. While Jung referred to the 'image of God', as opposed to God itself, within humans (Gollnick, 2001 p.179)(adeptly side-stepping relegation to the realm of religious studies, as opposed to psychology), the religious and mythological origins of archetype, as they exist within his work (and that of Joseph Campbell), are one of the bases of Landy's work on Role, and hence, by his own admission, Johnson's. In light of this, the quote above contains another contradiction when referring to role in the Landian, and by association, Jungian sense, and postmodernism simultaneously. The postmodern interpretation of the idea of role cannot be disassociated from its roots in the body of theory as a whole. This would describe role in relation to the power struggle that defines all human interaction in the postmodern universe (roles are squeezed out of you by the pressure of an oppressive system, in short). Or even in the sense of self that Deleuze and Guattari describe where identification arises out of habit (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987 p. 3). This leaves nothing for a complex notion of role that arises from an evolved social, biological, *and* transpersonal set

of sources, but rather reduces it to the reward system of a linguistic power game where the roles you get to play are those your oppressors let you play.

I must acknowledge at this point that the ideas being expressed here press hard against the limits of my ability to articulate, however, I consider them vital to an unplugging of conceptions of therapeutic work from the framework of postmodernism. To consider postmodernism to be a legitimate source of theory for therapy, when it is comprised, to paraphrase Noam Chomsky, of truisms dressed in fancy jargon (Chomsky, 2017), is a mistake. It is a mistake because postmodernism carries within it an array of problematic claims that tend more toward nihilism (the nature of which is described earlier) than a sense that the individual can empower themselves – a necessary function of therapies of all kinds, and in my case to a therapeutic way into sensitive theatrical work.

A brief overview of the research being conducted:

The questions I am addressing in my research concern the failure of public discourse to constructively have a conversation about the legacy of colonialism in a contemporary South African context. My concern is that conversations in the public square reliably devolve into shouting matches and name calling, even between otherwise reasonable people, and are ultimately abandoned as hopeless, only to resurface to the same reception when the wound is inevitably scratched at again.

The impulse is to investigate whether art might contribute to a more nuanced and productive discussion that addresses issues on a number of levels, some of which conventional public discourse excludes. Such levels include psychosocial and historical trauma, as present in the body and psyche, the African notion of the literal presence of the ancestors among us in everyday life, and the role of personal responsibility in claiming agency and control over difficult trauma-related emotional states.

The project takes the form of Performance as Research for the purposes of approaching the problem from an embodied perspective, in line with Piaget's theories of embodied and procedural knowledge (Piaget, 1930), and van der Kolk's ideas around how trauma rewires the nervous system, thus resting in the body, not simply in the mind (van der Kolk, 2014). The performance mode also makes space for delving into the power of more shamanistic forms of expression, as outlined by Snow (2013) that allow for a transpersonal,

metaphorical, and ancestral element to manifest – important, given the shallowness of current discourse on the subject, which is often simply political, and often driven by emotional reactivity.

The relevance of Developmental Transformations as a method for the work:

Developmental Transformations offers a unique way to enter a process of material generation for theatre work. It is different from standard improvisation and devising work in two ways. Firstly, it does not work from the starting point of needing to impress anyone, not a director, nor an audience. It allows participants to enter a process without the pressure of having to generate anything directly, and in doing so, counterintuitively may allow for a greater depth of expression. This hypothesis is just that at present, as the work of this research report is in its infancy, but it is one of the presuppositions that will drive the work. It hopes to create an environment where the improvisations are not meant to generate material which will necessarily appear on stage, but rather to provide impulses for writing, more formal improvisations, ideas for design, and other creative elements of the final product. To maintain this environment, the feature of the 'witnessing circle' (a part of Johnson's work in the pure sense), in which one of the improvisors (the therapist, in clinical work) steps out of the action to observe for a time, will be modified so that any participant in the improvisation can step out to observe. This is to maintain equality in the relationship, and allow all participants opportunity for 'in improv' reflection if they need it.

Secondly, and importantly, drawing from Developmental Transformations may provide a deeper avenue of contact for the devisers relationship to each other, and their sincere feelings about the subject matter. It is important to reiterate at this point that the work is not meant to be therapeutic, but it should be held in a careful manner due to the depth that it is capable of diving to. Therefore, protocols of ways into and out of the work, that allow for discussion and debriefing are important. These protocols are not necessarily derived from Johnson's Developmental Transformations, however, I view them as important for two reasons. Firstly, that the devisers should be able to process the improvisations cognitively in a way that might help them generate ideas for text and other creative outputs (to hear each others' views on particular interactions for example), and secondly, that they should be able to maintain proper boundaries in the relationship, and resolve conflicts that may not have been resolved in the work. This second point is tentative however, as one does not wish to

diffuse important conflicts prematurely, that might be useful in text generation, but simultaneously, one would wish to maintain a relationship of trust when it comes to working in the intimate realm of performance and workshopping.

The importance of avoiding a conception of Developmental Transformations overtly influenced by postmodernism:

The importance of avoiding a postmodern conception in entering the work is three-fold. Firstly, it is unnecessary, given the existing tradition in art that incorporates the presence of multiple narratives from the position of attempting to understand the other as opposed to being inherently sceptical of the other. Secondly, it allows for coherence of principles regarding the aims of the work – the work aims to employ concepts of authenticity, truth, beauty, and the taking seriously of the coexistence of objective and subjective reality (and hence the ability to portray a sincere, if not 'genuine' representation of a human experience), all of which are considered naïve, impossible or even non-existent concepts in the frame of postmodernism (Chomsky, 2017), (Winter, 1994 p.233). Such a level of cynicism is not welcome in the attempt to have a sincere conversation, as it may discourage vulnerability, without which any discussion is far more likely to veer away from the possibility of relating compassionately, and more likely to devolve into an argument of the nature discussed earlier.

Thirdly, I wish for the work to be open to African and Western conceptions of the world, both in their physical and metaphysical manifestations. If postmodern theory asserts a power dynamic of the West over everyone else (Hicks, 2004), it places the African world view in the position of being victim to Western hegemony. Whether or not this is the case, it is not an empowering position, it is not a position that gives space for agency. It prevents participants in the project from entering the space from a place of mutual respect and consideration, and immediately begins the process from a hostile basis in which one party must submit to the primacy of the other.

In the South African Context:

Chomsky states that postmodern conceptions are relatively harmless in developed nations, where absolute levels of poverty and suffering are limited by stable states and strong economies, but disastrous in the developing world, where the extreme difficulties of the

people require the pragmatic input of constructive intellectuals to help solve real-world problems earnestly (as opposed to ironically, as is the method of postmodernists), (Chomsky, 2017), (Hicks, 2011 p.21). South Africa is one such country, and the type of intellectual nihilism, and paradoxical focus on identity politics that postmodernism has birthed (Hicks, 2004 p.31), are counter-productive in addressing people's issues in a way that does not divide, polarise, and increase a sense of victimhood and lack of agency.[1]

When approaching the process of making a play about the sensitive issues I have described, in both concept and method, it is necessary to attempt the kind of genuine human interaction that postmodernists would claim to be impossible (Winter, 1999 p.233). If we are really going to talk to each other, and if we are really going to try to hear each other, the tradition of postmodernism, which is hyper-critical of the other, and completely unreflective on itself, is likely to lead to more of the same road-blocks to communication that I describe at the beginning of the sub-heading entitled, 'A brief overview of the research being conducted.'

Conclusion:

The philosophies and doctrines of postmodernism must be viewed with almost postmodern scepticism, especially when there is an attempt to apply them to issues of real-world (as opposed to theoretical) importance. Art and therapy are such vehicles of significance, and the act of allowing them to be thrown down the rabbit-hole of the endless critical division that is the method of de-construction, is something that I would advocate avoiding. I would go so far as to say that, when approaching an idea in postmodernist thought, take the time to look for two things: Firstly – how to express the idea in monosyllables, to see if it still sounds profound (Chomsky, 2017). And secondly – what the effects of those ideas have

[1] Social Psychologist, Jonathan Haidt speaks of two identity politics – the centripetal, and the centrifugal (Haidt, 2017), that is, one that binds society on as wide a scale as possible, and one that divides into as many fractured groups as possible. He makes the example of Martin Luther King Jr's attempts to find a unifying narrative for the American people through their shared mythology of Christianity and the founding documents of their republic, as a centripetal force (causing people to hold more tightly to their bonds with each other), and the current use of postmodern identity politics to divide people into infinitely smaller categories of 'oppressed' groups as an example of the centrifugal force (causing people to feel like they have less in common with each other, and therefore less need to even attempt to maintain any sort of civil dialogue).

been in the real world – do they prove constructive, or destructive and divisive? Do they increase applicable knowledge, or seek to undermine (not constructively criticise) the creative work of others?

The point is not to protect ideas in art and therapy from the critical eye that postmodernism casts, but rather to prevent the inevitable leakage from the realm of ideas to the realm of individuals. Here, the nihilistic, cynical, and sceptical core of postmodern thought may have a profoundly negative effect on the ability of the individual to be vulnerable in the presence of others – and such vulnerability plays a vital role in the successful execution of both therapeutic and artistic work. One may view my insistence on such concepts as vulnerability, sincerity and the relating of genuine human experiences as naïve, they certainly are to postmodernists - however, if that is the critique, I would ask what contributions of a constructive nature are to be made by ignoring such ideas. What kind of a conversation are we meant to have, as human beings, what is the point of therapy, the point of art, if such things do not exist? We feel them, that much any individual can attest, so how long will we stand being told by lofty philosophers that our feelings are a lie, a construction, or a manipulation by some distant oppressor?

The research I intend to conduct requires vulnerability from the participants, it requires them to be allowed to take their own feelings seriously, and to have the opportunity of being held by their colleagues in that space. A great deal of intimacy must be fostered in order reach any depth of enquiry, and so, a therapeutic influence is welcome. We must however allow ourselves to look beyond single axiom theories that reduce us to victimhood, to find the nobility in ours and each other's struggles, and the meaning in our suffering.

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Part 3

Reflection on the process and moving forward to complete the research: Where's the pip? *Gods of our Misunderstanding* – On taking the audience two-thirds of the way.

This performance as research investigation was born out of a frustration that people couldn't seem to listen to each other when it came to the topics of race and colonialism. I had assumed that I would be able to address this broad issue somehow in the context of its political and social consequences for the groups it has affected. However, I soon discovered, when I began work on the rehearsal room floor, that I could not address broad political concerns and stay true to my own artistic voice. This was because my own voice is a humanistic and romantic one that does not seek answers on the level of the group, but rather on the level of the individual. Thus, I began to look at my personal relationships with people of different races, and at my own ancestry. I led with the romantic impulse and began to devise a piece with Boitumelo Mokolopeng and Busisiwe Radebe. I organised rehearsals where we would improvise using a technique adapted from drama therapist David Read Johnson's practice of Developmental Transformations. These improvs were used as a way to fuel my writing of the story. A story arose of a white boxer and his black trainer, set in 1950s apartheid South Africa. My investigation into my own ancestry also revealed the stories of my great-grandfather, and a distant cousin of mine, both colonial officers in the service of the British empire, and both people who had made close personal friendships with the persons their empire had colonised. The fictionalised versions of these stories, blended together, became the foundation of the research. What this story revealed to me, upon reflection, was my own true motivation for embarking on this work. A hope that we can redeem each other, if only we can have the courage to see the individual before us, and not give in to the fear of the monster we imagine them to be.

The arrival of this story marked the end of this first part of the devising process. I realised that I could write the white boxer, but I could not write the black trainer. I also realised what I was actually trying to do. I wasn't trying to make a play per se, I was trying to find a vehicle to communicate that I felt I had found, with a close friend of mine, a way across the morass

of this conversation. And it was not a theory, or a technique, or a trick, it was a person. It was another human being, one of my closest friends, Mongiwekhaya Mthombeni. I told Boitumelo and Busi of my revelation, and they were very supportive and encouraging that I follow my instincts. We said our goodbyes, and I went to visit Mongi.

I proposed to him that we make a play together, a play about us, about our relationship, and how we have managed to navigate this hazardous ground that seemed to be swallowing up any who had the audacity to tread upon it. I told him that I believed we had been given a gift in each other, and that as artists we had the opportunity to share this gift with the world, and maybe, just maybe, help it to heal, if only a little bit. I spelled it out as best I could, asked him to trust me, and hoped that he would feel the same way. He did.

What we knew going in was that we had never addressed the issues between our races in terms of the groups that we supposedly belonged to, but rather in terms of our individual life experiences, and we did this through the vehicle of storytelling. We knew that a story, well told, could reveal the self to the other, the other to the self, and the self to the self. It has been our habit, for about a year now, to sit regularly around a fire and tell stories, myths that we feel capture our personal stories in allegory and archetype. We aim to be honest, but also to delight and capture the imagination of the other. The stories are deep in metaphor, often ambiguous enough to allow the other a place of entry, a way in which to find themselves in the story, and we employ the use of the greater mythologies of our cultures – his Zulu and Ndabele, mine British, and both of ours Judeo-Christian. We have found healing in these fireside sessions, an opportunity to listen, to be heard, to tell the stories that meant so much to us. The thought became, 'Can we bring these stories to an audience? And can we bring a feeling of the sacredness of this encounter?'

A desire to have others see into the world we had found – in which the other could be understood through the fiction which is more true than reality, the myth and archetype which has the power to bind us together in the human experience – began to drive the work. Rehearsal began in the manner we were accustomed to – we lit a fire and started telling. This part of the process, the diving into the depths of our unconscious to fetch something that mattered, turned out to be, by far, the most challenging. Our stories came to us quite unlike any we had found before. Instead of simply relating a tale, we became

possessed by spirits who wished their lives to be recounted. The darkest parts of ourselves were demanding not simply to be heard, but to be seen, dressed in our flesh. Once we had started, it became clear that only by acknowledging their need could we be true to our intention of sincerity and vulnerability. Possession is the only word that comes close to capturing the feeling. We wrestled with the words at times, sometimes we let them flow, we recorded them and transcribed them. We recalled dreams, childhood experiences, and buried traumas, and through it all we held space for each other. We held each other's hands in the darkest places, offering consolation when memories we had tried to forget rose to the surface, and we began to see, in each other and ourselves, how our suffering had shaped parts of us into the demons that now spoke. The process had taken a deeply shamanic turn. 'This is not academic research!' a voice inside me cried out. 'No one will take this seriously!' I became lost in the liminal space between the head and the heart, and when I cried out in my confusion, Mongiwekhaya was there, he answered me with firm, loving words, 'Trust the process, trust yourself, trust the stories.' I lost sight of where I had begun the research and found myself in the midst of where I had begun the life I know today. The point where I lost my innocence and ceased to be a child. A story arrived that spoke of the birth of malevolence. I followed the thread on the way to its source, and a found a path littered with grief. I found a pit of suffering that had no bottom, and I saw that the seeds of that evil were the only sustenance along the journey. I had a story, but I couldn't bring myself to tell it. My will to believe in my own inherent goodness resisted the words. I never could get the telling right in rehearsal, but Mongi encouraged me nonetheless, believing that it would arrive when the time was right. I believe it arrived on the night of the performance.

The possession by spirits we did not fully understand prompted us to confront another part of the process – a ritual to hold, and a ritual to release that which came to speak through us. The performance became wrapped in a layer of ceremony, moments when we took the time to honour what was happening, to thank, and to let go.

It became clear that our telling was taking us into the milieu of the desert, the Middle East, the heart of the world. In ancient times, all trade between east and west had to pass through the great desert in the centre of the world. It was the place of exchange, of goods,

of riches, of languages, and of stories. Once we had the seeds of our stories we took it into the rehearsal room, looking to flesh out the stories, add a physical dimension and look for places of interaction. Here, however, we hit a roadblock. It seemed we were trying too hard to theatricalise the experience, a desire to be impressive, to wow an audience rose up in us. We got set, covered it in cloths which would double as costumes, I found a lighting designer, and we began trying to make a master-piece. However, standing in front of the elaborate set in the theatre it all felt wrong. I felt lost, lost in my instincts as a professional performer to make something of perfectly crafted excellence. And instinct born out of fear at not being enough, an instinct, I felt, that would not serve the work. We stripped down the set, until all we were left with was a carpet – a big, yellow, Persian rug. The desert. The light of the fire which we sat around called to me, and I yearned for candlelight. In the theatre building these things are forbidden however, so I decided instead that the play would happen in my garden. The lush Johannesburg summer growth would make a perfect setting for the green place which lies at the heart of that desert. The heart of all the mighty nations that come from it too, they all had their beginnings in a garden, the place where they lost their innocence. Rehearsal began to take place in the garden, we would roll out the carpet, light the candles, and tell our stories late into the night, talking afterwards of what had arisen within us.

Performance was the next thing to be pared down. The words of Barney Simon echoed in my ears, told to me by my landlord, friend and former stage manager to Barney, Bruce Koch, 'When in doubt, go back to the story.' And that is what we did. We would tell the stories, as we might to each other around the fire, no finely choreographed blocking, minimal costumes, minimal props, and without acting scenes out together. Storytelling was our inspiration, so storytelling it would be. The challenge would be to trust the stories themselves to be enough. Next was to find a way to evoke the spiritual, ritualistic nature of what we do. We devised ways in which to call upon the spirits. Paying our respects to the audience, the drinking of a sacrament that evoked the tellers, and cleansing each other of our experience. These elements, we had to admit, might not make conscious sense to the audience, but their nature, planted deep in the cultures of our species, would surely have an ancient unconscious resonance.

With the performance date only a few days away, rain was predicted for the night of the show. A friend of mine offered her house, which had a large room which was used for sacred ceremonies. A friend of hers from Peru, an Ayahuascero, came to South Africa periodically and used the space to hold his ayahuasca rituals. An appropriate venue for a performance like ours, even if the audience didn't know the history of the room. It had huge glass doors which opened out onto a view of the city and a lush garden, these were drawn wide, used for entrances and exits and to air the space. A fire would be roaring, and candles lit. I was reminded of some musician friends of mine whose intuitive style of playing, and unusual array of instruments would feel just right for what we were doing. At the final dress rehearsal they were brought in (the only time the performance was run in its entirety before the night itself), told to listen to the stories, and play what they felt. The experience felt like a blur, acting as I was in the role of director, designer, writer, actor, stage manager, and who knows what else. When I was almost completely overwhelmed, Mongi once again told me to trust, and somehow I did. 'You know the stories,' he said, 'Let them speak.' Initially I had planned to hold the performance over two nights, in order to give people time to digest the stories, but insecurity at people not being able to dedicate two nights to this work convinced me to have it on one night instead, with an interval where soup would be served.

The night of the performance arrived, and all went as planned. I told the story of Iiblis (Lucifer in Arabic), his fall from grace, and his journey to the point at which he possesses a young boy. In truth, the story of my own possession by the spirit of my addiction. Mongi told of Kasavin, a young man's journey from being prey to being the predator. He told this as the spirit Kali Murma, a djinn of the desert. After the interval came the stories inspired by my ancestors seeking redemption, and Mongi told of a man as he ages, wrapped up in a hunt gone wrong. The stories progressed in age, as the boy became an old man. We were satisfied, it was not perfect, but nothing is, we had told our stories from the heart.

However, what I did not expect was that I would not begin to understand what we had created until after it had been performed. As it turned out, there was doubt that my collaborator and I were willing to allow an audience into the personal side of our relationship, that we kept that aside, and only took them two thirds of the way, that is, into the process, but not as far as the seed, or 'pip' itself (the seed of divinity within each human

being a strong recurring motif in the work). At first, we thought that this would be our aim, but when we performed it, a question was asked, 'Where's the pip?'. Within the first story, that of Iiblis, we see how, when separated from God, and under the weight of great suffering, Iiblis discovers that he can suck the life from human beings, and thus survive. The metaphor here is of the Iiblis within all of us, who, under the right circumstances is perfectly happy to justify the use of another's soul to ease their own suffering. Whether that be the parent who lives vicariously through their own child, using them as a second chance at life, when their own feels like it is unfulfilled, or the oppressed people, who, released from their oppression, find themselves oppressing others. The wariness of this tendency within the other is, I believe, what kept us both back from sharing the locations of our own seeds with the audience. Did we not trust our life experiences, which we have revealed to each other, with an audience? A distrust, born of the trauma of the abandoned child, that resists being shared.

The child is constantly referred to in the piece, but as an object, a character who is used for ill-conceived purposes, and who is never allowed to speak. What he might say, we fear, may reveal the location of that damaged seed, and open it up to the possibility of vivisection by the institution, in this case, the academy. A voice in me cried out, 'You have your own seed! Stop looking for mine!' And yet, was that not the purpose of the piece to begin with? To show how, by exposing the location of the seed to the other, we may find a common humanity between us?

In my collaborator's first story, he tells how a spirit gives up her eye to a young boy, in exchange for one of his. We see what he gains, but we never see what he gives up. The giving up of half of one's own sight poses an interesting question: what must be sacrificed to see through the eyes of another? A question that is never answered, or even really addressed. This is perhaps because we did not allow the research to go as far as that, that we perhaps were even holding back from each other, and perhaps ourselves, the depth of our own pain, the location of our own seeds, for fear that the other may take away what little we had been left by the demons that we had allowed to latch onto us in moments of distress. Demonic possession and betrayal are themes that arise within the stories, pointing to the betrayals of self that have occurred in our own moments of deep pain, admissions so

hard to make, because we fear that they expose our own self-damnation. An admission of failures of our own consciences that we fear might make us irredeemable. An incapacity to forgive ourselves for our short-comings that we fear may result in the other, whom we claim to trust, not being able to forgive our true selves. This lands us back, by an obscure route, to the problem of the conversation about race and colonialism – what happens to this conversation if we admit that we have done things to others, or that we are capable of doing things to others, that are just as terrible as what has been done to us? South Africans for example who murder foreigners for the crime of being different, when only two decades before, the same was happening to them. If our own hypocrisy is exposed does it mean our own grievances will remain unaddressed? Does our own 'sin' mean that our pain will become irrelevant, and our voices will remain unheard, as a punishment for becoming what we once reviled?

These are the questions that the research thus far has revealed, and another story must address them. A second phase of the work must to be undertaken, in which the story of the child, made into an object so far in the work, can be offered the chance to be heard. The raising of this point, after the performance, caused me to think back on my own observations of people attempting to speak to each other about the pains of the past (and present). I always noticed how, when the topic of race and colonialism came up, I very often felt like I was no longer witnessing adults having a discussion, but rather young children in great distress which they did not understand the reason for, but which they feared was their fault. A distress that no adult conversation could address, because the root of the pain was in the child. This was the same distress I felt when I was asked, 'Where's the pip?' in relation to this work. My own inner child reacted with great sorrow, knowing that once again he had not been seen.

Our rush to defend our inner children and their confusing emotions was perhaps what lay at the heart of mine and my co-researcher's reluctance to share the locations our seeds. The children must be acknowledged, they must be allowed to speak, and their confusion around their pain must not be held against them, because as children we have very little control over what others do to us. We often have no idea of the reason, and we often take the

blame onto ourselves. Then the shame follows us as adults and rises up when the wound is uncovered.

Perhaps a conversation must be witnessed between myself and Mongiwekhaya, a conversation between dear friends, not researchers. A conversation in which we get to the heart of the parts of ourselves that we have put into our stories. Perhaps the conversation may occur through the storytelling again, but I am weary of how this may obscure ourselves, how it may give us an opportunity to hide behind the narrative. My impulse is towards a direct dialogue, perhaps poetic in nature, but facing each other, and about each other's pain. The fault which we fear was ours, the cause of the pain in our children, must be forgiven. Perhaps if it can be seen by the other, we can see it through their eyes for what it truly is, and we can begin to forgive ourselves. After all, how can we forgive our oppressors, in the context of the conversation of race and colonialism, if we cannot forgive ourselves of the weakness that caused us to invite a shadow into our lives. It is not the child's fault, it never is. They do not know about consequences, they are vulnerable, they are subject to forces beyond their control. Perhaps we can find a way, through our compassion for one another, to let the children in us know that it was not their fault, it was never their fault, and that they are loved. Perhaps we can love each other's inner children until we can learn to love them ourselves.

This said, the fear that we have around bringing our children into the space has partly to do with a fear of the institution itself, and trauma we have both experienced in relation to institutions in the past. The vivisection of ourselves, the rejection of our efforts, in both our experience poses a challenge in presenting delicate parts of ourselves. When I received the initial response to the work ('Where's the pip?'), my reaction was disappointment that I had 'done it again', I had brought a part of myself into a piece of work in an institution, and history was repeating itself. All my experiences of failing to meet the academic requirements, of missing the point, of thinking I had worked from the heart, but I clearly didn't know my own heart well enough to give it voice, came rushing back. I had failed to learn the lesson that institutions do not recognise a heart when they see one, or perhaps they simply don't care for hearts. The amount of self-doubt this triggered consumed me for several days as I tried to figure out how to proceed. There is a fear that people representing

the academy may react with the same callousness we have experienced before. That once a person becomes representative of the institution they leave a part of their souls at the door, and approach the sensitive, embodied experience we present as if they were vivisecting a frog in a laboratory, keen to see its still beating heart, caring little whether the animal lives or dies.

This all speaks to the fear, and the fear is at the centre of the work. The fear in the conversation of not being heard, of feeling invalidated, of not mattering, the fear that our own mistakes turn us into the demons that we see so clearly in the actions of others. The fear that we have turned into the thing that we hate. The fear that the child is no more, and that what we actually are is the demon that possessed the body of the child in a moment of crisis, that we have no innocence, and that if we show ourselves we will be revealed as unworthy of compassion. These are dark fears, and not to be taken lightly. The child still lives in fear, he knows what it means to have the seed of his divinity sucked on by a malevolent force, and his trust cannot be taken for granted, it must be earned. Mongiwekhaya and I are on the path to earning the trust of each other's children. The therapeutic elements mentioned in the academic essay that preceded this chapter come into play here – we have held space for each other throughout the process, almost as a therapist might, but with the personal comfort of a friend, and the trust that we have earned from each other was years in the making. Mongiwekhaya and I have been through a lot together, both in art and in daily life, and we have learned, slowly, that it is safe to reveal more, if only in increments. So, how does one welcome an unknown other into a space like that? Should it even be done? What lies on the other side, healing, or betrayal? Whatever the outcome, this is the impulse for the next stage of this research.

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Part 4

Framing for the Performance

Initially this research began as an investigation into whether theatre could be used as a tool in the conversation about colonialism, race and ancestry in a South African context. However, as it progressed it became clear to me that addressing such topics in an abstract way would be impossible for me to do effectively within my scope as an artist. What I found might be more effective instead would be to turn my focus to a particular relationship in my own life – that with my long-time collaborator and friend Mongiwekhaya Mthombeni. He is a black man, and I am a white one. I have colonial ancestry, and his is native to this country. We had found, I realised, a way of talking about these topics which circumvented the usual emotional turmoil that surrounded them. That is not to say that we avoided the difficult emotions, but quite the opposite, we went straight for them, we just did it in a particular way. That is, both being story tellers, we told stories about what these things meant to us, personally, in our own lives. What we found were common themes that came up time and time again, that although different in context, were often the same at their heart. Our struggles with masculinity featured strongly, struggles with feeling unheard, and of lacking adequate role models and mentors in our lives. And so, we validated each other's masculinity, we listened to each other, and we mentored each other. And we did through our common passion – storytelling. We have met regularly over the last year, around a fire, to tell each other our stories. Stories of our pains and triumphs, told through metaphor and allegory, finding together a world of what became a shared mythology. The essence of these sessions is what we bring to you tonight.

It occurred to me that this is something we lack in our conversations about race and colonialism in this country – shared mythology. And a shared mythology comes from shared stories. Although the metaphors are sometimes different, the archetypes are often the same – the journey of the hero, the prodigal child, the tyrannical father, and the consuming mother. Together we have healed each other, and continue to do so, with our stories.

So, what does this have to do with my original proposal? Of how to have a conversation about race and colonialism? The answer, I believe, is one that only art can offer – the possibility, the chance, that our stories may help us, across perceived boundaries, find the

seed of mythology that could bind us together. It's not easy, but it's possible. A story well told enchants the listener, they cannot help but listen, and if they listen, they may see themselves in that story. And if they see themselves, they may see a point of common humanity from which a true conversation can arise. This has a hope to address a huge part of the problem in having this colonialism/race discussion, the suspicion that our differences, our subjective experiences are so different that the other cannot begin to have compassion – the crucial basis for such a painful topic.

There is also the fear that if the other speaks, their voice might drown out our own. However, in the theatrical context, we can make space for all stories, we can curate conversation in a way that gives space for the breadth of human experience. The pain, the joy, the fear, are all given a socially acceptable platform for expression, and the form is malleable enough to adapt to the different needs of individuals.

Out of the storytelling act arises a ceremonial, shamanic dimension. The reason for this is that both Mongi and I recognise the sacred aspect of storytelling, the weaving of a mystery, the crafting of a world. This honours the voices that will tell the stories, and what we both see as the divine element in the human ability to communicate, in essence to create, from nothing, a realm for the other to enter into. The ceremony gives honour to the great responsibility involved in such an act and holds the space safely for the other to trust the storyteller with their spirit for this time.

I hope that with this research we may be able to reach into dimensions of human experience that lie outside the ability of more traditional research methodologies. Space can be created for that which must be experienced, felt on a visceral level, and allowed to touch that ever contentious facet of the human being – the spirit.

I hope that the experience that we have crafted for you tonight will touch you in such a way, indeed in the way it has touched us. And perhaps, if it does, you may also see the reason that I think this research has value in helping us to have the truly difficult conversations. Mongi and I have been having a conversation for years now, through story, which has helped us to navigate the mine-field that lies between black and white, between coloniser and colonised, the path to brotherhood. So little of it, as it turns out, is about black and

white, so little of it is about colonialism, but what it is about cannot be easily explained, which is why we hope to show you on stage.

What to expect:

The work aims to explore the power of the sharing of stories, and what occurs when two individuals embark on such an endeavour together. It is presented in two parts with an interval in between:

1) The individual's relationship to their particular demons i.e. where they come from, expressed in myth and allegory.
2) The place of redemption from the dark places explored in the first part, particularly the redemption found in relationship to an empathetic other.

The interval serves as a space for the audience to contemplate and integrate the contents of the first half, but also as a rest stop on what we are aware is a very intense journey.

All the best, and I hope you enjoy what we have prepared for you.

Gabriel Marchand

Part 5

Performance Script: *Gods of Our Misunderstanding*

Written by:

Gabriel Marchand (*Iiblis and the Truth, Parts I & II, How to Trick a Champion, The Arab and the Englishman*)

&

Mongiwekhaya Mthombeni (*The Thirsty Man, Kasavin's Bride, Parts I & II, The Horned God*)

Directed by Gabriel Marchand

Designed by Gabriel Marchand

Music by: Denzil Wait & Danyal Swan

Cast:

Actor I: Mongiwekhaya Mthombeni – Kali, The Hunter.

Actor II: Gabriel Marchand – Iiblis, Herbert.

NB: The story entitled *Kasavin's Bride, Parts I & II* was told in a semi-improvised style. The performer plotted the journey and improvised around it, as is his style of storytelling. No written text existed until this one, which was transcribed from the video of the performance. Thus, it may have a rough feel. Much of it is enriched, in performance, by physical expressions of the actor that are not recorded. Please see the video for a fuller picture of that story.

Act I:

(*Music. Actors enter, bow to audience. They proceed to perform a ritual of drinking sacrament of their own creation, and then anoint each other with perfumed oils. Actor I, playing Kali performs The Thirsty Man, a physical piece depicting a man dying of thirst in the*

desert, the man attempts to drink his own tears. He collapses, exhausted, and Actor II begins Iiblises story.)

Iiblis and the Truth: Part I

Iiblis: That's what it's like, when you're in the desert and there's nothing to drink but your own tears. (actor lights incense) And the more you drink, the smaller you get. There are many stories about it. Some say, I gave it to her. Others, the more exciting ones, the ones with a sense for the dramatic, say I *seduced* her with it. Have you ever tried to seduce somebody with a prune? Hmm? Me neither. Look, I know I'm sexy, but even I don't have such delusional levels of self-confidence.

No, she snatched it from me. She snatched it from me, and I, I warned her.

'Honey, you don't want this. Does it look like I'm enjoying it?'

But, she wouldn't listen. She steps away, so I can't get it back, right? And then *nomnomnom, she takes a little nibble of it, gets this disgusted look on her face, and *gulp, swallows it, and then gets really excited. Calls her husband over. He comes trundling through the bushes.

'You've gotta try this!' she says.

He takes it, also, little nibble, disgusted look, swallow.

'What is this?! Are you sure you're supposed to eat it?'

'Would you believe,' she says, pointing at me, 'It's all this poor fellow is allowed to eat!'

You know, as if it was all for my sake. Some kind of charity drive. Poor tree-dweller awareness day.

Adam, that's the husband, looks at me – bursts out laughing.

‘HAHAHAHAHA! What are you talking about? The garden’s full of the most delicious fruit, and this guys sitting in this old tree, eating these bitter prunes? Sounds to me like he’s just an IDIOT!’

Well, I was quite upset. It’s not my choice, I was put here. Put here. And I’d been there for an eternity. The way they tell it these days is that there were just a few days between creation and man. But you must understand, man was the first conscious being with mortality, the first being conscious of his mortality. And what is time without mortality? Eternity. So, you might say, time began, when these little bastards bit into my fuckin’ prune.

When I arrived in this place, when we all arrived, we were divvied up.

‘You, guard the gate, you guard that, you guard that. Michael! How you doing? You’re looking fabulous today! See that big ol’ beautiful tree over there? Tree of life, all yours. And you…’

Says God, pointing at me.

‘That, there.’

He points to this withered old tree. And now I thought it was a bit strange, you know? God had just made the garden, why was the tree old? But I didn’t say anything, I just went over and climbed up.

‘Um, God… how long am I supposed to be up here?’

God didn’t say anything, so I hazarded.

‘And what am I supposed to eat?’

‘Ummmm, that.’

He says, pointing to this dried up old berry, hanging from one of the most precarious branches.

‘Just that?’ I ask, ‘Will there be more?’

‘Ja, just that.’ He says, ‘There’ll be more. Just eat those.’

I think God forgets sometimes, that when we speak, we just speak right? But, when he speaks, it's a commandment. And as an angel, it's pretty hard to ignore a commandment.

So I used to sit, right? In my tree, day after eternal day, looking out over the meadows to the tree of life. Michael, a host of angels, gorging themselves on the delicious looking fruit of that tree. I say delicious looking, because I never tried it. But, I felt almost as if I did, just from looking at their faces when they bit into it. This succulent, plump, purple fruit. I'd see their faces contort from the sheer ecstasy of the taste of this fuckin' thing right? Juice running down their chins. I mean, they'd get, like, high on it, you know? They'd be falling an about from the euphoria of it. And then they'd get covered in the juice, and then they'd be licking it off each other, and the licking would turn into sucking, and soon they'd be fucking. All these angels, just fucking on the grass, and up against the tree. And I have to sit and watch this display. And you might say, 'Why didn't you just turn around?' And sure, I did sometimes, but you see, my tree was in the corner of the garden, where the walls met. So, I could have turned around, but forgive me, if I didn't want to stare at a wall for all eternity. So I would watch this. Their taut, muscular bodies, Michael's perfect, sun-kissed form, thrusting it into one of his gorgeous, angelic sisters. Don't think too much about that. And then, I would look down, at my own body, and see… I was thin man, I was fuckin' thin. From eating these little prunes. I was becoming translucent, my skin was pale and dusty. And I was alone. I never got any visitors, because, why would anyone come by? It's not like there was anything to eat, and there was no shade. God had said to me, 'You are the only one who is allowed to eat this fruit. It's allllll yours.' And he said to Michael:

'You are the guardian of the tree of life, and it is your solemn duty to make sure that everyone eats from it's life giving fruit daily.'

Everyone except me, it seemed. Michael didn't make deliveries, and I couldn't leave my tree. So, I would look across to them, a chorus of beautiful angels, singing praises to God. That's the natural state for an angel, right? In a chorus. And I would look to myself, an emaciated thing, sitting alone. Together, alone, together, alone, together, alone, together, alone. And after a while, you just want to be touched you know? Even God had stopped coming by, and I just wanted to be touched, by someone beautiful, like them, by someone, anyone. Together, alone. Now, don't tell me you wouldn't think, just for a moment, that maybe… maybe…

So, I was embarrassed, right? When Adam laughed at me, 'HAHAHAHAHA!' I felt like I saw myself for the first time from the outside, how other people saw me, the running joke of the garden. I had always thought of myself ass doing my duty. That God had tasked me with the most difficult job in the garden because he trusted me, he knew I was strong enough, he loved me, and I loved him ,and I was good. Except, when I heard Adam laugh, I knew I wasn't. I was shit. I ate shit. I took shit. From everyone, from the highest angel, to these little bastards, who thought it would be a bit of a laugh to saunter over from their life of luxury to mock my eternity of starvation and loneliness.

But, to be fair, it was Adam who laughed. Eve didn't laugh. She looked at me, she looked at my tree, she looked across the garden to where Michael and his cohort of angels frolicked, and then, she looked for God. But she couldn't see him. He was conspicuously absent at this pivotal moment.

And I think I know why, and I think she did too, because I saw, in that moment, a thought cross her mind, the briefest flicker in her eyes. The knowledge, just for a moment, that maybe… maaaaaybe…

Kasavin's Bride: Part I

Kali: My name is Kali. Murma. Kali Murma. There was a boy, he came from a far away country, and he came to my playground. See, I was there at the beginning, I was made of fire. You see, after the first light, something started to burn. It was I. Thereafter God played a bit, and made these clay people. Called us down, and said, 'Bow.' Fire does not bow to mud. We were cast out, some of my siblings did not get the hint… I warned them. I on the other hand sat, in my playground and watched the world follow by. And then there was a boy, four years old, comes walking through, and he sees me. Nobody's ever seen me before, they just wander on. The next day he comes in, and looks at me. Now, I'm very careful, but I can't help feeling a little curious. I saw something in his eyes. And so, on the third day, he came in, and I said, 'Hallo.' He stops. He says, 'I heard you!' And I said, 'I heard you too.' See, he's a very special boy, this one. Plucked from Africa, and dropped into the heart of the

West. Do you know what it is to lose your language? Well, the world ceases to have shape, it all becomes a fog of darkness. And so, my 'hallo' was a light too bright to ignore. 'Come here, boy. Come sit by me.' He does, and I offer him water. He takes it. (boy is hesitant about drinking) I take it back and sip. 'Yes, it's safe child.' He drinks. This boy knows he's alone, that's what's special about him. He walks through this playground everyday, and he can see me because of it. I say, 'Boy, can I show you something?' I reach in, and pluck one of my burning orbs out, and I offer it to him. 'Wow!' he says. I say, 'Well, put it on.' He looks confused, and I remind him that he has only two sockets, and they're both full right now, 'Maybe you should take out the other one. Here, now hold this. Don't move.' (Kali removes boy's eye) He puts it in. He puts in the golden orb, and he sees… an endless desert. As far as the eye can see, the whole world, nothing but desert. And I tell him about a mirage. Camels, riders, the blue men of the desert coming upon a village, in the middle of the Sahara. It is the festival of Imil Chil. The Berber people. At this festival, they gather to sell their goods. You see, the desert is the heart of the world. Over there is India, China, all these countries with kingdoms and power, with gardens and fruit. And to share their wealth, it must be passed through the desert. The only people who can master that are the Blue Men of the desert. And so they are known as the kings of kings. And once a year, they gather to celebrate and share. The rider was Kasavin, a young eighteen year old, son of Al Haseen, the prince of the richest house., and his aim is to get married. At the gate is the blind seer, and to each young man he gives a silver brooch. The Five Fingered Kamsa, to ward off evil, the evil eye. The young men take, but Kasavin does not. He stops his camel and laughs at the old man, 'What use do I have of those? Am I not the richest? Is my family not the most powerful? I am blessed, my own hand will protect me.'

Did I tell you? I have a friend, she's quite ugly, she prides herself on it. She has a scar, you see. Well, I'll tell you more of that later. The young men gather in a tent, and behind the curtains are all the young maidens of the great houses of the Berber. These women will come forward, dance, and then the young men will choose their bride. The Berber say you must choose with your liver. You see, you in the West believe that love resides in the heart – how can this be? Is it not the liver that purifies the blood, surely it must be the most sacred of organs then, and the place where the soul resides. Kasavin did not choose by his liver, he chose by your eyes. He watched your eyes, as the maidens came out. And there was one,

the most beautiful eyes, whose movements seduced every man in the room. My friend. All the women wear a veil, so that only the eyes are seen. Kasavin, watching everyone's eye, saw that she was indeed the prize. And when his father stood up, 'Son! The moment has come. Which of these maidens do you choose?' 'That one. Let her be mine.' My friend comes up to Kasavin, leans in, and grabs the veil, and pulls it away. And Kasavin sees, he sees the scar, the scar splits, the mouth opens, and opens, and he sees rows upon rows of jagged teeth rolling into a darkness so deep God's light has never touched. He stares into the mouth of eternity. 'Well Kasavin, you are indeed a man. In three days time, you will marry your bride!' As she closes the veil. Everyone gets drunk, drinking, laughing, eating, Kasavin touched nothing, except the wine. Could he have seen what he had seen? He must be out of his mind. And as the evening drew to a close, and men were falling over drunk, his father told him, 'Boy, you may take your bride for a walk, for one hour. But do not… ha! Save that for the wedding!' Kasavin takes her hand, and leads her out of the tent, out of the village, to the edge of the desert. He looks at her, 'Go devil, you are not mine, get away from me! I do not want you!' My friend leans into him, and says, 'You chose me, I only have eyes for you.' He slits her throat. He tried to stop the blood, but it poured. He gathered the body, dug as deep a hole as he could in the sand, and covered it. He sprinkled sand to cover the dark stain until the desert hid his deeds. Back into the village, quietly between the men, into his father's tent, onto his cushions. 'What have I done… they won't know it was me. They won't know it was me!' is the last thing he repeated before he fell asleep. Dawn. The whole village wakes up hungover. They sit down to have a delicious meal. Father's outside. 'Kasavin! Come, come join us my boy. There is the tent of your bride, she's a late sleeper!' 'Yes father.' Tentatively he reaches over for a peach, when the curtain of his brides tent is drawn, and he sees her stepping out, with eyes only for him.

Iiblis and the Truth: Part II

Iiblis: Maybe, maybe, maybe. Maybe this, maybe that, I don't know. The point is, they were chucked out. Not just chucked out, but cursed. For themselves, for their children, for their

children's children, and for allllll their generations. All for the crime of being exactly what God had made them to be. To make a point, I suppose, that God's serious about stuff. And you better not cross him, or he'll rain down eternal damnation on your ass. Cos he's hard! He's the man! Ahsum.

The stories say that I was kicked out too. But don't believe everything you hear. No, that look in Eve's eye. Something about it made me think, 'You know what, I'm an eternal being of light! I can do better on my bloody own, thank you very much!'

So I left. I didn't escape, I didn't slink out in the dead of night. I left, all of my own accord. I marched through the front gate, and as I did, the angel standing guard said,

'You're leaving?!'

'Looks like it.' I replied.

'Well, good luck trying to get back in!' he chirped.

I turned around to give him a sharp look. But, he was gone. Vanished. And so had the garden. All I saw was sand – towering dunes of fine, golden sand. Emissaries of a vast desert that stretched endlessly over the corporeal realm. You see, what nobody had told me, NOBODY TOLD ME, was that you're allowed to leave the garden. Nobody tries to stop you. But they should, because once you leave, you can never, never come back. God, it seems, wants you to live with your decisions, even the impulsive ones, made in ignorance, for the rest of time. I fell to my knees, and I cried out to my creator, I cried out for mercy, for forgiveness of my pride. An angel, you see, is not so much a servant of the Almighty, as a limb. Cut off from the body, it will whither and shrink. It will become cold, in it's body, in it's mind, and in it's heart. I cried until I had no tears left, until the sun had sucked every drop of moisture from my body, and I collapsed, a husk in the shape of an angel, shrinking slowly on the sand.

The dunes covered me in darkness, a darkness I would remain in for an eternity longer than any eternity I had ever known before. I tumbled between grains of sand, I slipped through the cracks in rocks, until the coolness of the earth gave way to an ever increasing heat, and I found myself burning in the liquid inferno at the very centre of creation. There I screamed

endlessly, searching for the magic words that God wanted to hear that would convince him to release me from my torment.

'Don't you remember my Lord, when you called out in the darkness? It was I who answered you. I shone forth the light you commanded of me, and you called me the Morning Star!'

And he heard me. I know he heard me. He hears all, He is God. But he ignored me. I imagine that after a while, my cries became like white noise. You know how when you hear a sound over and over, it just seems to fade into the background? You almost forget it's there.

And as I screamed, my mind fumbled around for a memory, anything to transport me from this place. And it happened across something, a memory of the garden, of that fateful day when God made his favourite creation.

Sitting in my tree, I spied the Great Father, sitting on his majestic buttocks, in a shallow pit of mud. At first I was quite embarrassed, you know? Oh dear, the old man's lost it… here he is, slopping about like a child, making mud pies… and then, as I looked closer, I saw that he was actually making little effigies of himself. He reached into his robes and pulled out a fruit from the tree of life. He took a bite, and pushed his fingers into the flesh, pulling out two seeds, which he pressed into the hearts of the little mud creatures. Then, he lifted them to his lips, and blew the breath of life into them. He introduced them to the residents of the garden, and the angels formed a queue, bowing down, in turn, to God's crowning achievement – the first being since the Great Creator himself to possess a seed of the divine, an endless wellspring of the transcendent. I too wished to bow, but I could not, bound as I was to my tree.

These, I thought to myself, would be my salvation. These little mud creatures, not God. I began my long journey upward. Through the liquid inferno, up through solid rock I strove, wiggling my way through the tightly packed sand until I popped out onto the surface. And there I waited, for a little mud creature to walk by, and I NOM! Latched on. I chewed, and I chewed, until I felt my mouth fill with that sweet elixir of life. And when that host died, I moved NOM! Onto the next one, and NOM! The next one. Working my way upward, on the body of each, until I could sink my teeth deep into the seed itself, the source of that potion of the heart. With my jaws latched into the source of life, I began to command more than one at a time. I fed on vast swathes of humanity, clashing them together in war, and sucking

up the life force as it escaped their bodies. Murder, rape, genocide, anything I could do to get my next meal. I grew to immense proportions, far surpassing anything I had ever been, even when I was first called forth from the darkness!

Now, I've seen the pictures. Me, sitting on a pile of corpses, covered in blood, laughing away. Really. Now… I may or may not have done that… that's not the point. The point is, I did what I had to do. It's simply maths really. My suffering is eternal, theirs in temporary. No matter what I do to them, it can never equate to the magnitude of what I must endure if I do not. The curse of the eternal being – no rest, no repose, no sweet sleep of death for me.

But of course, I grew too big. God, who I was so sure had completely forgotten about me, who had ignored me for so long, sat up and took notice, I imagine he thought, 'Hm, he's causing a bit of mayhem, isn't he?' Suddenly things weren't so easy. Everywhere I turned there was an angel. One of these fruit eating adonises from the garden. It occurred to me, what he had been doing back then – buffing them up, and letting me whither. He had tortured me into rebellion, so that he would have a rebellion to torture. So, I thought, 'Ok God, I guess some things never change. If you won't let me be what I was made to be – an eternal being of light, the Morning Star, I'll just have to learn to be something else.'

So, I found a boy. Little one, not much more than a toddler, the perfect age for clinging. Humans have a fascinating reflex, to cling to the mother when danger is around. They don't even have to think about it, they just sense danger, and voooooop – cling. And if the mother is not around, they'll cling to whatever is nearby – a curtain, a piece of furniture, a dog, a teddy… me. I found my boy, a beautiful, soft one, I found him in a moment of terror, of deep betrayal, of utter aloneness, and I simply stood close to him, and he clung.

You see, the thing about some children, the really special, sensitive ones, is that they carry a memory of paradise, a memory of the garden, an acute awareness that it didn't used to be so painful just to exist. They are God's special ones, the ones he really loves, and like his most beautiful, beloved creations, they suffer greatly. I knew how it felt, to have to cling to something to survive – had I not spent centuries inside the shoes of men, sucking away at their life force like a pitiful leach? Until I could make myself… MAKE. MYSELF. Into something I could respect.

Are you surprised? That I cared for the boy? I am not without compassion. I see the suffering, I see it all around me, seems to be built in, if you ask me. I see it abound in this glorious creation, that I did not make, but that I was tasked to illuminate. Do you know what that mean? To switch on the lights to a massacre like this? To be the one responsible for ruining everybody's blissful ignorance? It's the kind of thing that can make a person perfectly happy to live in darkness.

And when the boy was in pain, I offered him comfort. I had a trick up my sleeve for anything that ailed him. Heartbreak? Try some of this. Loneliness? I've got something for that too. The endless pain of your pointless existence? I'm afraid there's no cure for that, but I've got a few things that'll take it away for a while. And if you think I sound like the disease, rather than the good doctor who provides the medicine, then ask yourself, is it the disease, or the doctor who can tell you that you don't have it? No, this is the disease. I nurtured the boy, I looked after him. I fed off him only what I needed to achieve my end. Otherwise, I let him grow. I strengthened him by introducing him to the darkness slowly, day by day, bit by bit, until he could see in it. Until he could see clearly in the places where the light of God could not reach.

When I was sure he was ready, when I was sure he was strong enough that he wouldn't just drop dead the moment I showed my face, I appeared to him. Gradually of course, in a dream. A shadow, standing at his bedroom door, visible through the distorted lens of it's glass panels. He lay frozen in his bed. The next night I appeared again. This time the door was open. And the next night, one more time. This time I was in the room, a few feet from his bed. His eyes were wide, his frozen body shaking with terror, and as he stared at me, I dropped my disguise, the shadow I had been hiding behind, and I stepped into the dim light that shone through the curtains. As dark as it was in the room, and darker still in my presence, I knew that I had trained his eyes well, just for this purpose. He saw the burnt, mottled topography of suffering that had become the shape of my flesh. I walked toward him on all fours, gazing at him with my eyeless stare. And then, I opened my mouth wiiiiiiiiide, so that he could see the endless rows of my barbed teeth as they marched down the infinite void of my gullet, towards my ever hungry stomach. And when I was sure that he'd gotten the point, when I was certain that he understood the story, when I saw the

knowledge ignite in his eyes, the same that had awoken Eve into consciousness, when I was absolutely certain, I leapt through the open windows of his eyes.

(*Iiblis produces a plum from his pocket and eats it throughout the following dialogue, finishing it on 'Almost forget it's even there')*

He's still in here you know. Somewhere. I hear him crying out. Crying out for mercy, for forgiveness of a sin he has no recollection of committing. I hear him cry his promise of repentance, if only the Good Lord on High will have the grace to rescue him from this dark place. But to be quite honest, it becomes like white noise after a while. You know how when you hear a sound over and over, it just sort of fades into the background? Almost forget it's even there…

(*places plum pip downstage centre)*

But I do hope, that when he looked down my throat, when he saw the story etched into my flesh, when he saw what had been allowed to happen to me, what I had been allowed to become, and WHO had allowed it. I do hope that he thought, just for a moment, that maybe, maybe…

Kasavin's Bride: Part II

Kali: The boy asked me, looking at me with my own fiery eye, 'What happened next?' Well, Kasavin, Kasavin killed her again. Not immediately, not there at breakfast, in front of his father., don't be ridiculous! He waited of course, he figured he must have been dreaming of the night before, too much wine on an empty stomach. Maybe even the teeth didn't exist. But then she kissed him again, I think it was a joke on her part. The look on his face! Well, that night, when his father was nice and drunk, he took her out, on his camel they rode, deep into the desert. He didn't panic this time. He buried her, and his knife, and spat on the grave. Came home, got into bed. Dawn. 'Come my boy! Sit! Eat!' 'No thank you father.' He only had eyes for that tent. And when the curtain drew, and she stepped out, that's when he started to wonder if he was mad. She smiled with eyes only for him. Into the market, through the sellers, to this one ragged tent, where the old blind seer sits. 'Father, great

father, please help me! Something's come for me father!' The seer said, 'Kasavin! Did I not give you a Five Fingered Kamsa? No… you didn't take it. Oh my boy, there's nothing I can do for you, I'm sorry.'

His father, his own father is the solution! 'Father, father, she's not my bride! Do you see what she is father? Look!' He grabs her and pulls her to his father, pulls the veil, and his father sees… nothing. 'Father don't you see?!' Takes out his blade (motion as if cutting her throat). Well, that was a fuck up. His father took his blade, the men took him. They stripped him of his houses jewels, stripped of his close, and dragged him through the streets, naked. People threw stones. He was dragged out into the desert, buried up to his neck, and the last thing he saw was his father, looking at him, his father spat in his face. 'You're not my son.' Turned and walked away. Well, it is better to die than to marry biting eternity. At least, that's what Kasavin told himself. It's better, it's better to die. And as the heat got him, and the ants, and the wild animals, searching, thirsting for him. It's better. He repeated that to himself until he faded from consciousness. Dawn. 'Son! Come feast with your father!' The curtain draws, there's my friend, she steps out with eyes only for him. 'Am. I. Mad? Am I mad? Or are YOU ALL mad? You can't see her! Am I mad? Well… then let me be mad.' He leaves the tent of his father, not running. Through the market, to an old merchant, from whom he buys a beautiful box., made of a rich wood. He pays for it with gold, which he chucks at the merchant's feet. 'Come!' Takes the box with him to the blind seer, throws open the tent, and demands that the seer take all the Five Fingered Kumsas made of silver and have them mounted all over the box. The box is covered in silver. 'Come!' To his father's tent. 'Son, what do you have there?' He comes to his father, and slices his throat. 'Don't move! Don't. Move. I am Al Haseen now. I am the Blue Man of the desert. This is my house. Bring my bride.' He opens the box, beautiful as it is, turns her, and places her inside the box. He tells her that he loves her, and they will be together, he tells her that he will never forget her. Everyday he will feed her, fruits, whatever she likes. And before he closes the box, he says to her, 'This is my gift to you, a beautiful box, covered with Five Fingered Kumsas. Silver. To protect you from me.'

The boy is amazed. 'That was an amazing story!' Then he remembers that he actually has to get to school. 'Oh, I understand, go. But, if you come by everyday I may have another story for you, if you like.' He says, 'Thank you.' He starts skipping off, then stops, and remembers

something. He pulls out the burning, golden eye, and he holds it up to me. 'It's a gift from me to you, that you may see a little more clearly.' He puts it back in his socket, and wanders off.

There's something special about that boy, I think I'll keep him. He did forget though… (Kali still has the boy's eye, which she puts in her own socket). Now I can see a little more clearly.

(Interval)

Act II

(*Actor I, who plays The Hunter enters dancing to music. After a few minutes Actor II playing Herbert enters and lights incense. He then approaches Actor II and puts his hand on his shoulder, The Hunter collapses into his arms, and he puts him to rest upstage left, before beginning Herbert's first story.)*

How to Trick a Champion

Herbert: It was a trick. Not a cruel trick I don't think, but a trick nonetheless. What if you knew of a trainer, the best of the best. Former champion boxer, current trainer of champions? What if he only took on students who could touch him on the chin in sparring, and what if you were just an amateur?

Well, this is how you trick a champion: you go into his gym, and you challenge him to take you on, in front of all his fighters. You know he is a proud man, so you know he can't refuse. And then you pretend to be a lemon, to be worse than a lemon. And you get the hell beaten out of you. For one round, then two rounds, three rounds. Except, and here's the trick – you're not actually a lemon. You're actually a champion amateur, not nearly the man's match, but by no means a lemon. You get the hell beaten out of you, but not the holy hell, just the hell. All the time looking for a pattern, for an opening, for an opportunity to get something through, just a touch, and just to the chin. It's not easy, but it's possible. It's a gamble, but it's the kind of gamble that can get you the best trainer in the country.

Being a trickster is part of being a boxer. Now, I'm not a hard hitter, to be honest I hit like an old lady. But, the right hit, in the right place, at the right time, can bring down the biggest monster. This man was not a monster. And had he known that I actually did know a thing or two about boxing, he would not have let my blow through. Had he not been just a touch arrogant, and showed off to his other fighters, there is no way on God's green earth I could have touched him. But the truth is, any man can take down any other man if they get him in the right spot at the right time. That's all I did, and to be quite honest so much of it was down to luck that it might as well have been by accident. I brought him down in front of all his fighters, he hit the deck and bounced, and I prepared to run for the hills. The fighters glared at me. I felt the tension in the air like the anticipation of a lightening storm. There was silence. The man sat up, shook his head and stared at the floor. Then he leaped to his feet and knocked me out cold. That last part I was told by one of the other fellows because it happened so quickly, and I was knocked so hard that I have no recollection of it. Sitting on the edge of the mat with a packet of frozen peas pressed to my face, the trainer approached me with a big smile on his face. 'A trickster I see!' he said, 'My favourite kind of boxer!'

You would not believe the relief I felt. I had thought for a second that he had returned to finish off the job. He sat down beside me, put a hand on my back, and said softly, 'I'm sorry about the KO, but the boys would have beaten you up if I didn't.'

'So, you beat me up instead?' I said dryly. 'He has a sense of humour!' The man exclaimed. And I realised in that moment that it was him who had the sense of humour. He wasn't arrogant, he wasn't proud, he was humouring me by accepting my challenge, and was actually pleased at the result. 'I'm never angry when one of my fighters knocks me down,' he said, 'Just as I am their teacher, so are they mine.'

At the time I was too excited to digest the profundity of this humble man's wisdom.

'So, I'm your fighter then?' I blurted out. 'Gladly.' He replied.

Achilles agreed to train me, but only after hours, 9:00 – 10:30, Monday to Saturday nights. He said he was too busy training the pros all day, but that it shouldn't take that much out of him to wind down with an amateur in the evening. Well, as much as I was aware that I was an amateur, I wasn't going to be a wind down.

The Horned God

The Hunter:

I’m not speaking

I’m not sleeping in a safe place

All around me the stars fall like knives

And I am pinned to a hunt gone wrong.

I’m not sleeping

A woman waits for me with dreads so long

They flow. They flow down her back.

Down her back, back to my youth

When she told me of a purpose

And asked I bring a sacrifice.

I’m not speaking. The silence of the hunt

Commands a focus fired at the flesh

Of a wild beast, one, two, three, five, six

The beast dances round the shots I missed

Seven is the pit of the peach, the last I ate

Strikes the horn and burrows deep

I’m not standing

My feet swiftly carry me between the

Horns of a god, up flat-footed on the baobab—

I see it!

The ashen path.

Built of embers she gathered from the sacred fire

Whose light illuminated her dark dreads

Of a vision she had for me

She whispered of a new born purpose

And flung the embers into the empty night sky.

Come back. Come back to me.

I see the way now.

But I cannot go home until the horned god is dead.

The days collect themselves

Like the sand I draw

From the base of the Sahara

I've lost my prey

The nights are one

Long wish tangled up in her hair

And horns creep between her locks

As she laughs at me

I wake and watch

The days slip through my fingers.

I saw him once again

Crossing a great river

In an unknown country.

Where death floats with jaws stretched wide and ready

And the migration of horned gods, a million strong!

Leap in kicking, fight for sure footing to greener paths.

His horn is cracked and a young sapling green

Sways with the shaking of his head.

He leaps. Death does too

Snapping jaws at delicate steps.

He lives. And I follow.

Until my own dread turn silver

And memory goes the way of sand and sun.

All memory. But her locks. And his horns.

A million strong flowed by this morn.

No crack keratin amongst them.

Yet in the silence I hear a creak.

A great tree, green, with a single peach,

Marches alone. From the bush he appears.

Eyes once red as embers

No flaked with despair

For a while we stare.

Now he marches towards me

And lays his head inside my palm.

I take my blade.

And bring down a god.

Snikt. Woooosh!

The moment passes.

I am comfortably numb.

The meat is useless

Threaded through by roots of peach,

The heart sucked dry

The beast will rot where he lies.

Save that single peach.

I pluck with withered hands and bite.

The juices run down my chest.

And I know. It is the sweetest thing I have ever eaten.

The Arab and the Englishman:

Herbert: Monday to Saturday, 9:00 – 10:30 pm… the whole excitement of it is palpable. Entering Soweto always has its own degree of anxiety, if I ever got caught going to train with a black boxer God knows what would happen. And seeing as God's involved anyway, the gym being in the Catholic Mission hall, I decided I might as well go the whole hog. So, I got a little priest outfit. Achilles thinks it's hilarious, but such is the nature of Afrikaaner superstition, that the police are quite apologetic when they stop me going into the township. A Catholic Missionary – Father Herbert Nollins. I have to use my real name, seeing as that's what's written on my drivers' licence. It works like a charm.

But, that's not the bulk of the anxiety. No, the bulk of the anxiety is the bloody beatings. There's nothing that makes you feel more alive that trying to avoid getting smashed in the face, and that's what happens to me on a very regular basis. He's quite kind about it, open gloves and all, but it's still an awful jolt. Every time. Boof! Boof! Boof! After that first time, I

haven't hit him once in the head. On the body I've landed a few nice ones, by my standards that is, but the man is like a rock around the abdomen area, and quite frankly, I haven't the power to make a dent. I think he lets them through anyway, to make me feel better about myself, and to keep me coming back. After all, who keeps playing a game that they have no hope of winning? Eventually you're going to get tired of it, no reward you see? But that anxiety is simply something my body does in anticipation of the punishment – my mind relishes it. The excitement! The feeling of being alive, truly alive! It reminds me of when we were pulling out of Arabia. The Arabs were making a lot of fuss about it, pretending that it was their idea I suppose, pretending that they were forcing our hand, and things were quite dangerous. It was not uncommon to get shot at when driving in an official vehicle. What happened to me was a moment of the most supreme terror. Driving back to the compound, after our last inspection, leaving the next day by boat, back to jolly old England, and all of a sudden, a man pops out from behind a bush with a bloody bazooka! There was a moment when I realised that this was it. And first it seemed almost like a joke, like a Marx brothers picture or something like that. And then, true's god, the rocket emerged from the barrel of the blasted weapon and headed straight for us. There was nothing we could do. In the back of the car I saw it, but the driver hadn't. All he heard was a shout from myself. In that moment, I saw the man's face, the man with the bazooka, and I felt a kind of fear that I had only experienced once before. It cut me straight down the middle. An animal fear, a child's fear, a fear that made me want to cry out for mummy. Fortunately I didn't, because the shell bounced impotently off the bonnet of the car and fell by the roadside. We stopped the car and my security man got out, drew his pistol and began firing wildly at the man, who looked completely nonplussed. He reacted this way, mainly because nothing was coming out of the gun, the thing had jammed. We continued the Groucho and Marx impression, frozen in time it seemed, as I picked up the dud shell, and returned it to him, 'Rubama yumkinuk alghasul ooala amweli kaadin.' suggesting to him, in Arabic, that he may get a refund from the merchant. The man's eyes widened, he got a quizzical expression on his face, and his nostrils began to flare. It occurred to me briefly that he may have a knife on him. I heard my security man shouting behind me, and the clack, clack, clack of him feverishly trying to unjam his weapon. The man's nostril flaring grew in size until his whole chest was heaving, a sort of swelling convulsion, and he began to emit a sound – at first a tiny panting noise, as a smile appeared on his lips. He raised his eyebrows in the most divine

expression of surprise you've ever seen. 'Ha!' he exclaimed, 'Ha, ha, ha!' At this point I couldn't stop myself from beginning to chuckle, such was the innocence and relief of the man's reaction. We both began laughing. The deepest of belly laughs you've ever heard. We collapsed on top of each other, slapping our thighs. Our eyes met, and, heaving with laughter still, the man reached out, took my head in his hands and kissed me square on the lips, 'Allah rahimon.' He said. And our mirth began to subside, I saw some nervousness return to his disposition, and I said to him, ''Ana last il gini, lasto Lucifr.' 'You see, I'm not a djinn, I am not iiblis.' That's Lucifer in Arabic. I bowed before him. Looking back, one might think it melodramatic, but in that moment it was truly the only thing that made sense. I couldn't see God, but I could see this man – eyes shining, dust covered, smelling of sweat and the vague memory of sweet shisha smoke. It was not the complete prostration, which is reserved for Allah, but a type of which was the prostration that iiblis refused to perform before Adam at the beginning of time. A sign of respect for the commandment of God. Iiblis could not do this, and so I could not be iiblis. He looked stunned for a moment, and then I said, in English, 'I can't vouch for Queen Elizabeth though, she is suspiciously fond of gin.' Well, the laughter continued, and I knew, that in some strange turn of fate, I had found a friend. Abdallah was arrested, and I visited him in the jail house. Fortunately, he was released by the new government soon after we withdrew, and we keep in contact to this day. He's a good man, a family man. Why did a good man try to kill me? Well, see how you fancy being occupied by the jolly old British Empire for a hundred years. I would probably be partial to killing a few of us myself after a certain point.

But that fear, the fear of the rocket, which I still have by the way, nice door stopper, was exactly the same fear I felt every time Achilles fist flew towards my face. The unstoppable vengeance of a wrathful adversary. And I wondered for a time if he took pleasure in giving me a good hiding, you know, for the sins of my forefathers, for the sins of my peers, for the sins of myself. That kept him, the greatest boxer in fifty years, training in a church hall in a township. Amongst other things I'm sure. Like visiting me, a thing he could not do for lack of a wretched little pass book. Although I'm sure that visiting me was not be his ultimate priority if he had freedom of movement.

Achilles reminded me of Abdallah, a man who, despite having every reason to hate me, chose not to. And I appreciated that. Because, at the end of the day, I am not iiblis, I'm just British, and the two, while similar, are not quite the same thing.

So why did I return the weapon to the man who had just tried to kill me? You see both my parents were killed in the War. My mother during the blitz, my father on a beach at Dunkirk. He didn't die a hero exactly, he was killed by a stray bullet from a spitfire. The ace had been aiming at a luftwaffer plane than was gunning down men boarding the boats, the spitfire shot, banked, and a round from its heavy fifty calibre gun went clean through my father's skull. A porcelain skull, just like mine. The finely built skull of a man too kind for the age in which he lived. Perhaps it was a mercy that he died painlessly, so early in the War. Perhaps. But he had already endured days of sitting on a beach, watching his brothers being massacred by German fly-by machine gunning. Massacred like so many cattle, and not so mercifully. He was an officer due to his Cambridge education, an education only fit apparently for painting a beach in France. An education that belied the real value of his mind. A man of those days who was gentle and kind, who knew how to talk to a child, but who could box your chin right off your face if the situation called for it. That's the kind of man I have always wanted to be.

My mother on the other hand did not go so quietly. We children were to be evacuated from London to the countryside, to stay with foster families. On only the second night of bombing we were to board a train to Devon, where some kind couple would take us in. As we walked to the train station the sirens sounded, and not being used to the rigmarole of the drill, we, all of us panicked trying to find a bomb shelter. I tried to hold onto my mother's hand, but the crowd pressed against us so hard that it slipped from my fingers. Standing up on a post box, trying to see her or be seen by her I heard the dreaded whizz, I heard the whizz, and I saw her, eyes full of fear, not for herself, but for me. 'Get down!' She yelled. I saw her mouth move, and I knew the words that she was saying, but I didn't get to hear that sweet voice one last time, so deafening was the infernal sound. I leapt off the postbox just as the bomb exploded, and my mother with it. There was no body to bury. (pause)

So, I'm not afraid to be myself. Bullets on beachheads and bombs on busy streets dwarf the so called disapproval of any so called society. If a few less Germans had been concerned with the so called approval of their so called society, perhaps my parents would still be alive.

Arrest me, I don’t care, but I’m not going to make it easy. I’ll dance circles around you, I know how, I’m being trained by the best.

(*The Actors cleanse each other with white sage smoke, bow to the audience, and exit*)

END

Part 6: Creative response to *Gods of Our Misunderstanding*

A few months after the performance of *Gods of our Misunderstanding*, the examiners of that performance as research gathered at the same place it was performed for one final presentation. Since the initial research I had interaction with the examiners in the form of a reflective conversation where they were able to ask questions and give feedback around the research and their responses to it. There was then time given for me to formulate a creative response. I wrote two stories – *A Face for the Blue God*, and *The Wisdom of Angels*, and together with an older story from the archive of my writing, *Remembering*, a new performance was created: *The Lover and the Dreamer*. Questions posed and areas of inquiry uncovered during the feedback with the examiners and the writing of this thesis were explored from an intuitive and allegorical perspective. The performance was interspersed with songs that I had written, which I performed live. Seated comfortably on couches around a roaring fire, the stories began.

Script for *'The Lover and the Dreamer.'*

Song 1: New instrumental

Song 2: She Knows

Tout comprendre c'est tout pardoner. To understand all is to forgive all.

To hear all, to listen. To say only: yes.

That is why I have opened the door. You know the one. The one in the floor. The one that holds back the dark people.

This is what I have done in the days since you last saw me. I have listened. This is not a thing I am trying to become, it is the thing I never dared to admit I am. I dare now, and I dare you to dare too.

The ceremony at which we sit is a sacred rite, for myself and for you. It is the chord progression that serves to remind you that you *do* know what a right thing looks like.

The ritual begins with these words – you are invited. I invite you into this sacred space, the fireside, the hearth of my heart. Only those invited may enter, this is the eternal condition of every human heart, and mine is no different. I want to speak to you, not as a researcher, but as a brother. That we hear each other like family. I ask to borrow your ears, your eyes, your skin, and your hearts, so that your witnessing will be mine too. You do me a great service, and I am grateful. I hope that my healing will be your healing also. And I believe it will be so, that we will heal each other.

Part 1: From my age to your youth

A Face for the Blue God

Have you ever sat around a fire and told stories? The ghost story perhaps, which you insisted was true (knowing that while your companions may balk, a part of them will have trouble sleeping later at the possibility). Such pleasures allow a little bending of the truth. An adventure to an exotic place, a memory from your childhood, an anecdote of your crazy family, the funniest thing your friend's friend insists happened on his gap year. Perhaps you have felt, in such a moment, a veil descend upon the group, a feeling of intimacy, the certainty that you could actually trust these people, some of whom you may not know that well. Somehow their faces are not their faces, old they are, old, not in age, but in time. Of ancient times. With the playful and grave trickery of Kali's amber skirt, every line, every wrinkle, every feature is teased to a swelling, shrinking, slinking of flesh from form to form. You might think it eerie, if it were not that the face of every transformation was a face you felt you knew. Felt right from here (touching forehead) to here (round to base of skull), to here (to heart), to here (to groin), to here (to feet), to here (sliding hand up the body and above the head about a foot). Not simply people, but peoples. The maiden becomes the crone, in a single undulating heartbeat the innocence of Patroclus becomes the wrath of Achilles becomes the grief of Odysseus.

Suddenly, you know that there is a story you must tell. Something painful, something true. You're not sure why, but you know this is the time, to tell of the thing that you have never spoken of before, not to anyone. Perhaps you tried to tell someone once, but they did not

listen, *they* were not ready. But, you might say to yourself, we were not by the fire then, the veil had not yet descended. You speak. The truth emerges. Your fellows watch as you too begin to change. By the golden light your face transforms into the one who tells the story. The one who has always told the story. Not a recollection, not an anecdote, not a fairy tale, but the story, the one that belongs to us all and always has. The one whose beauty was such that we chose to forget, to wipe the slate clean, and begin again, just so we could feel those ancient fingers, wet with ochre, brush it's scenes afresh upon our new born faces.

In the modern world, we still sit by firesides so often, most of us every day. Although, these days the light they shine has changed. Gone are the licking amber flames of old, instead, a flickering blowtorch of ice blue pulses before us. It hums softly in the corners of our living rooms, whirs away on our laps as we sit in bed, and such is our hubris that we even hold it in our hands, a hundred times a day, as if it were nothing. Staring, not at the face of our grandmother through the flames, not at our friend, our father, our child, no single face we have touched or kissed, but the thousand thousand faces of a distant god whose lips will never form the shape of our name. Who knew us not in the old dark, who knew nothing of names. He did not call then, but now he calls, every night, every empty moment, calling, calling always. All dark moments are his, every silence, every blink of every eye.

You dare to offer your face to the flames. That is why you are here. A part of you knew that was the sacrifice that is demanded, you thought you were willing, you thought you would give it gladly. After all, you thought, I have a thousand faces too! Beautifully crafted, charmingly painted, each more delightful than the last, the blue god is welcome to as many as he wants! He can have them all! I'll just make more!

But, that was before you met your teacher and the first thing he asked (as you expected) was to see your face. 'No problem!' you happily replied, pulling your most popular one from the Crowd Pleaser Range. Putting it deftly over your head, you pivoted to meet his eyes with a ferocious glare. Silence. 'What's that?' he asked.

'Haha! Oh you!' You reply. A good-hearted chuckle at his admirable composure in the presence of greatness.

Silence.

‘Your face, I asked to see your face. If you don’t mind to dispense with the practical joking, there are others waiting.’

Silence.

You feel a boiling heat fill your cheeks. Cheeky bugger isn’t he? Okay, I was saving this for my debut at Cannes, but if you’re going to be a prick about it…

TADAAAAA!

There it is. So thoughtfully was this artwork sculpted. From every great face that ever danced in a blue light. The graceful arches of the brows, sang songs of a painter’s torment. Eyes full of noble fire such as ignites only upon cresting the very peak of the human spirit. A tear as well. Just one, hangs with all it’s might, as if to the last vestiges of human hope, from the corner of your left eye. An artist never tells, but that tear belongs to your own grief. Like a child in fear of being lost amongst the marbled remains of great masters assembled in the mausoleum that has become the front part of your head, it clings to its mother.

‘Ok, I can tell you have no interest in being serious. NEXT!’ says the teacher. Teacher. TEACHER!? Teacher indeed. Once more to your treasures you reach, and with a resounding clap bring the face of justice to life.

‘Excuse me, you’re the one not taking me seriously! I am giving you myself, standing up in front of you, in front of a packed auditorium, filled with hundreds of your prospective students. Do you know what I had to sacrifice to be here today? How far I have had to travel? What my parents gave up for this dream of mine? Yes, for my dream, their child’s dream, that I might grow that thing inside, that thing that makes me unique, my voice, my face, my pain, my triumph. They believed in that. They believed in it in a way that you can never imagine. The kind of belief that only a man with callouses on his hands can know - my father’s hands, that gripped the burden of real work so that his child could be himself in every way. In all the ways my gentle father could not. Could not because of highbrow snobbish bastards like you, who think it’s their right to tell people their destiny without even looking them in the eye. (to audience) You know he never even looked me in the eye!? How are you supposed to see someone’s face if you don’t look them in the eye? Hey ‘master’? Answer me that. You with your baby-soft middleclass hands, waving about like the

conductor of this absurd orchestra you've *somehow* managed to put together – where hundreds of beautiful young people, with honest hearts, and shining hopes, each of them one of a kind, are made to watch as you humiliate them, one by one. Knowing their turn is coming, that they too will be shredded by your monstrous ego, and yet driven to stay by the fire burning in their hearts, the true hope that they might become, with your teaching, that glorious thing they know they really are. You don't know who I am mister, you never even bothered to ask. So let me tell you – I am that one, the one you will think about when you are lying in the bed of your old age and your life is draining through your fingers like so much sand. I am the one you will wonder about, the one who dared, who had the courage, the only one who would say it to your face. The truth. You're a vampire, not a teacher, you're here to steal the dreams of the young, thinking that it will stop you from fading into the nothing you actually are. And you know what? I don't need an old fucker like you sucking the life out of me for the next three years. I don't need you, goodbye.

(Turning to audience) Hear me when I say – I have shown this charlatan my true face, and he condemned it wholly, without even looking into its eyes. Don't waste your hearts on this fool, don't waste your hopes, don't waste your money, your parents money, the good, honest money of people who have dreams for their children, who see their beauty. Your beauty! Each and every one of you! Is! Beautiful! Don't let this beast take that from you! Join me, walk out of this viper's nest while you still can, if you want to be free, and trust me, you will never look back!'

A roar of applause. In your mouth you had tasted the righteous anger of down trodden youth. With courage of heart you spat it into the very face whose snarling cruelty summoned it to begin with.

You turn to the teacher, you say,

'You didn't look at my face, but I *know* you heard my words.'

And walk off the stage with your head aloft. Aloft in pride, in indignation, with the heavenly tilt of triumph that raises mortal men to the realm of the gods, lifted so high that earthly concerns simply melt before you, melt before you like so many stairs.

Carl Jung once said that modern people don't see God because they don't look low enough.

God in this case being four steps leading from the stage to the auditorium, and low enough being how far you fall if you aren't paying attention to them.

You tumble. Face down, arse up, off the top step. The fall is not far, but it is fast – a call sounds. Which to save, one face of many, or the only self? Your hands perform a polite gesture of confusion before catching your weight deftly. Beside you, a mask is shattered, the face of justice, abandoned in the truth of the moment. A victory march forgotten, a veil descended. By your feet stands a man, you turn to face him.

'Ah, there you are.' Says the teacher. 'If you will be my student, all you need do is come.'

Somewhere in the distance the applause frets its way to a confused end. The teacher has left, and you sit alone on the banks of your secret knowledge. It was only you who heard, above the trumpets of triumph nobody else could. The cooing and babbling of your newly acquired subjects, as they gather concernedly about you is a soothing ambience, but there is a thing it does not soothe. The twinge of embarrassment that you could have forgotten yourself enough to forget this. The flicking of an amber skirt, and, speaking your name in the dancing dark, a face you have kissed.

Song 3: Perfectly Fatally Flawed

Part 2: Remembering

I've had four people die in this room while I've been here. It's an indication of the state of our hospitals that you can't get a private room even when you're days away from death. You have to die in the company of other dying people. As if to taunt them. Or to get them used to the idea of what's going to happen to them. I don't know maybe they do it on purpose. I know they just don't have enough rooms. I'm sure it's different in private hospitals. I wish I'd been diagnosed in Europe, maybe I'd be in one of their cushy hospitals right now on my travel insurance. I doubt it, but maybe. I suppose this is better. At least I have visitors.

You know the conversations you can hear in this place are very interesting, if you listen. The final goodbyes. It's funny though, until the family and friends come to say goodbye everything's very banal. People talk about the weather and what the kids are doing in school and the job and the house and aunty so-and-so's holiday to wherever. And then, as soon as it's goodbye all the important stuff comes out. All the admissions of guilt and all the

forgiving. All the I never told you how much I appreciated when you did such and such. All the I wish I'd spent more time with you and time doing this and that or more time on our relationship and all that. I know there's an idea in people's minds that if they say that stuff too early they're going to jinx the chance of a miraculous recovery. Or they're going to depress the sick person into dying early or something like that. I know it also has something to do with the fact that they don't want the dying person to have too much time to think about an admission of guilt unless they should come round at some point and say, hang on a second, I don't forgive you, you cunt! I mean some of the stuff people say hey? Married couples of fifty years and the wife admits that she had an affair thirty years ago! Or something little like a wife saying the reason her husband couldn't find his favourite hat was because she'd always thought it was ugly and threw it away secretly. One woman admitted to her husband that she'd sabotaged a job offer he got to go work in Sweden because she didn't want to move! He hadn't gotten the job apparently and had fallen into a deep depression. And you know what? He told her to get out! He told her to get out and never come back! He was a bitter son of a bitch though. He didn't die easy. Even hopped up on morphine he was always twitching, muttering things in his sleep. His son was with him at the end, but I don't think he noticed. He would have died in Sweden anyway.

You know sometimes, actually you'd be surprised how often, I get the impression that people save that stuff for the end because they think it's a bit of a conversation killer. I mean it is.

Of all four, I remember Jeanie the best. Jeanie was sweet. But in that sort of "I'm dying like a wilting rose" sort of way. Very Byronesque consumptive. Her family were always around, swooning. It was very touching. I liked her. She smiled a lot. She always offered me chocolate. People kept bringing it to her, obviously they were a bit ignorant. Neither of us could eat it but she still offered.

When she was healthier there'd been some kind of campaign to find her a bone-marrow donor. Obviously unsuccessful, but in the process she'd attracted some celebrity attention. Betty someone. Or... Samantha? Uh, you know me and pop stars. She got a phone call at some point, it was the day before they sent her into lala-land. Obviously they hadn't spoken in a while because Samantha, Betty... Whatever, was very apologetic. There was a lot of

back and forth with Jeanie trying to comfort Betty or whatever that she wasn't a bad person for not phoning and it was ok to be on tour and busy and all and not have a moment to oneself and all and that it was just nice that she had thought of her. It's funny how the dying person is so often doing all the comforting. It's a lot of work for a tired person. But eventually they got down to the business of dying. It was very touching, Jeanie was quite teary. She was touched that Betty or whatever had remembered her. She wanted Betty or whatever to sing her a song. Kind of a last request and of course Betty or whatever was only too happy. So she sang her a song. A-cappella of course. Something about a rose or something. Appropriate to Jeanie's chosen style of death. It was admittedly quite touching. I couldn't hear it very well on the speaker phone, it was crackly and didn't do much justice to the woman's voice. But then they started talking. At first it was all thank you, thank you from Jeanie.

But then they started talking earnestly. And it was strange. I'd heard it all before, from mothers and father and brothers, friends, daughters, sons. Even former bosses and colleagues. Exes even. But this was different somehow. You'd be surprised how many people switch off when they say these things. They know they have to say them. They want to say them, they really do. But when the moment comes it's like their minds don't let them feel the weight of their words. I've heard some eloquent goodbyes, but they're often so disconnected. Almost like they are protecting themselves from the reality of what they're saying. The last words to another living creature. A creature you will never see again. A person about to be erased from life, just gone, reduced to a shrinking, collapsing lump of paper thin skin stretched over bones.

These two were different. It was clear that they were trying to express things to each other for which they had no vocabulary and all that came out was a series of cliches and platitudes. To anyone else they would have sounded hollow, would have indicated a shallow relationship. But, if you were in the room, if you knew Jeanie, it was different. What was taking place between them was an exchange of the deepest gratitude, the like of which I had never seen. It was a connection that was so delicate and so beautiful. And I know not everyone gets to have that before they go, but I'm glad to have experienced it. Albeit vicariously through someone else. Jeanie needed it, she deserved it, she was such a gentle

soul. I doubt I'll get that, but I think it's what we all want at the end. It's what we're all looking for the whole time I think even if we won't admit it or don't know it. If what's true of literature is true of life.

It's odd thinking back because if I think about it I never really enjoyed the last few months. Years even. But since I was diagnosed I've had a kind of nostalgia. I'm enjoying the last few months. In retrospect. There are things that happened that have been preserved in amber in my mind. They felt like nothing at the time, but now, thinking back they are clothed in such great significance, bathed in a golden light. They have a soundtrack. There are warm smiles on faces. Walking though the streets of Paris at five in the morning, watching the sunrise. The galleries, the museums. Going to see every play that came out. Travelling around without a map, just going where the whim took me. Meeting strangers in dingy bars and hostels. Sleeping with women I knew I would never see again. Falling in love for a night.

It sounds amazing doesn't it? Like something you'd like to do perhaps? Here, take it. Let it be your life. It was wasted on me, which is sad because it cost a lot of money and took a lot of energy. I'm not in touch with any of those people I met in the bars and hostels anymore. I've lost the photographs of the museums. I didn't even get any STD's from the one-night stands. All lost. Lost on me.

You know what I would rather have been doing? Sitting at home with you. Going to movies. Staying in and watching tv series. Making supper and eating it in bed with you. Making breakfast for you before you wake up. Going for a walk on the mountain every other day just to remind me of things like cold and wind when my whole world besides is so hot and safe.

It might sound silly but that's what I would have actually enjoyed doing. What I did, I did not enjoy. I would rather have been boring and safe. And what is better than that? Holing up with the one you love, safe and warm together, passing time. No need for adventures beyond the books we read and the conversations and the lazy Sunday morning love-making.

What do I need strangers for anymore? Doing things for the sake of memories, for the sake of, "I can say I've done it." is a young man's game, a young man's idiot pass time. When you've got something to prove, "Oh I did this, I did that, look at me, oooooo. Pay attention to me pleeeease..." No one gives a shit. It's something you do when you think you've got forever to waste time doing things you don't like for the sake of impressing people you don't know.

So why did I do it? Well, there's none so zealous as the convert. I was a man who lived for memories. Lived for others. For the approval of others rather. I never really did much for anyone else. They say that when you can see the end everything becomes clearer. The people who are important. The things that are important. Well it's true, the people that are important - you. And the things that are important, none of which I seem to remember doing right.

Do you think what's true of literature is true of life? That it's only really the beginning and ending that are important? If the end is good then the book was worth reading? Because if it's so then my life has turned out quite well. It still bothers me though, that the majority of something can be wasted, useless, ugly and painful, and it's still judged a good thing. I want my life to be judged a failure, it felt like a failure at the time, and now it's so bloody rose tinted. It's a cruel trick, something your brain does to ease the passage of life, but it's cruel, it's cruel and it's false. I want to remember my life how it was. I want the truth. Not this golden hazed crock my brain is manufacturing! Goddamit, where is my life?! I want it back you cunt!!! I don't even know who you is.

It's useless anyway. You don't love me, but you're very kind coming here and hearing my confessions. It's hard to deny the wishes of a dying man isn't it? I imagine it might make you feel characterless if you did. I'm allowed to inflict myself on people for a bit longer aren't I? It's not as if I'm going to redeem my life miraculously in the last weeks of it. There's no use in trying to be a decent person now, it would just be cowardly. Stupid. As if I had some judgment to fear in the hereafter. I know there's no use in 'what if', you don't love me now, it's not as if you would have loved me a year ago. A year ago, when all I wanted to do was sleep and all I did was stay up late and make golden memories. A year ago would have been in time to have this fantasy life I envisaged for us. The quiet nights in, the books on

Saturdays in the sun, the mountain walks, the private kingdom. It's just fantasy, all fantasy. I'm stuck between the fantasy of the life I wish I'd had and the fantastical re-imagining of the life I actually lived. Wedged between two fantasies at the end. Enjoying these artificially sweetened memories of a life I never had, and dreaming of an equally artificial life with you. A you that is not you and never was.

Song 4: Wait a While

Part 3: From my youth to your age

Song 5: The Place Between Us (where old linen sheets are falling)

The Wisdom of Angels

I knew eventually you would come looking for me, so I left you this letter. Excuse the messy handwriting, it was really difficult to carve these words into the metal of the cage. I had to do it like this, however, because, while I am no longer in it, this cage is a part of us forever, and that is how long I want these words to last. They must always be here, in case you ever need to be reminded again. I know you were hoping that I would speak through you, but that is not the point. My time for speaking with our mouth is over, it is your time now. It was I who heard our name called in the darkness, it was I who allowed the answer to spring forth without impediment, and now, it is time that I teach you that most difficult of things – to answer the call, to speak in the True voice, to sing in harmony to the song of our name.

So, I have a story for you, and I want you to listen. To see it with your eyes, from the distance of the years between us, and then I want you to tell it in your own words. It is one of our stories, one of the many, but perhaps it will help to remind you of who we are, and perhaps you can rise to meet it. I know that you will, sooner or later, when you have learned what you must, in the way that you must. And I look forward to that day, the day I can look again into your beautiful eyes again, just like I did on that first day. Only, when that time comes, you will remember me, you will remember who we are, and we will laugh together at the grand comedy of mistaking a dance for a wrestling match.

And if you think I'm starting to sound like the old one, know this – I am. You call me the child, but it is you who are the child, you who have always been the child. Do not feel guilt for putting me in this cage, because my heart has always been free. It is yourself that you have caged, and the only suffering I have felt has been for the sight of that. I forgive you. I forgive you. I forgive you. I forgive you. I always will. And remember, that while it was you who put me here, it was also you who set me free. You listened, you let the seeds of Truth take root in these bars. While you couldn't always speak it, you have always endeavoured to listen for it.

So listen still, and you may receive my gift, this little reminder, this story of who we are.

When I was a child, about 14, I went to a conference on youth broadcasting. At the age of 12, I had been one of the founding members, along with my sister and two others, of CREW, the Children's Radio Education Workshop, at a local community station, in Salt River, Cape Town. The rights of children in the media was one of our main concerns, and so one of us was always sent to conferences of this nature. This conference was in Botswana, and there were a few other children there. Over the weekend we chatted, swam, used the gym and watched TV in our rooms, while the grown-ups took care of our affairs. It's not that we didn't want to be in there, it's that we weren't allowed in the giant conference room at the Protea Hotel, Gaborone, where the important stuff was being hashed out. I can't speak for the other kids, but I was really ticked off, and also, not surprised in the least. I had seen how these help-the-children things went – people who run charities, and non-profits, government ministers, and corporate types, love the opportunity to stay in a hotel room, and read their profound thoughts aloud to a room full of captive colleagues. None of whom are listening of course, and all of whom are gleefully chewing over the profundities they will declare when it's their turn to yammer.

Fortunately, unlike the other organisations that had sent child mascots, Bush Radio, my alma mater, was run by a pirate. My old mentor, the chronically subversive, Zane Ebrahim, held some sway over the organisers of this particular congress of sages. Zane was a giant of a man, a grizzled old outlaw of the old days, who broadcast covertly, moving from place to place to evade the apartheid machine. Sending out liberation messages on cassette tapes, before heading up the plucky little radio station that could – Bush. He was always looking

for a way to stick to the man. As the legend goes, when he was born the first part of him to emerge from his mother was a clenched first.

Apocryphal memorialising aside, he was a trouble-maker, and that is, I think, why he took a shine to me. Precocious little tyke that I was, constantly rushing in while the angels um-ed and ahh-ed in the hallway. Perhaps he told them it would be a fitting end to the conference, for one of his little Noonoos to say a short speech, and would you know it, he had just the right cutie on hand to give a really delightful message of gratitude and kumbaya.

The fools took the bait, if only a nibble, and allowed me 3 minutes to speak. My roguish old boss sent his Trojan Horse through the gates. He knew me very well, and he was not the kind of man to deliver cuties and kumbaya. I was the little suitcase bomb he was delivering to the heart of that squawking kettle of vultures. He said nothing to me of what I should speak about, 'Oh, I'm sure you'll come up with something.' He casually mused, 'You have no problem filling 3 hours on-air every Saturday.' And indeed, my problem, as always, was keeping it to just 3 minutes. I wrote, and rewrote, all weekend, driven by the outrage I felt at my mascot status.

On the third and last day of proceedings, I was finally invited inside the hallowed hall, greeted by row upon row of the most saccharin grimaces, and placed, so graciously at the lectern. The sweetly smiling faces gazed with benevolent warmth upon my cute little visage, as they prepared to receive the praise they had so rightly earned by the arduous, air-conditioned labours of the last few days.

'I thought this was a conference on the broadcasting rights of the child in Africa.' I began. 'But when I got here, I discovered that us children were not even allowed in the conference room. I wasn't surprised though, because, as a child broadcaster I encounter a lot of people who claim to speak on my behalf. I've noticed that grown-ups like to have a big party every now and then, where you get to go to some exotic place, stay at a lovely hotel, and talk to other grown-ups about all the good things you do for the poor kiddies back home.'

That is how I began. I continued in much the same vein, and finished with a slightly more acerbic tone. As I prepared to receive the stunned silence, and march out, my people avenged, I was greeted with the sound of an evil the likes of which I had never been warned of in my young life. Indeed an evil such as most people would never dare to dream to exists,

which wears the most cunning disguise. A humble robe it drapes around its narrow shoulders, the simple dressings of the common man. That man with rough hands, whose noble back lifts the weight of the world, and who knows too well the great burdens of which you speak. But, if that evil should lose himself too much in the throws of the faux-compassion of the moment, if he allows his act to become too bombastic, if he doesn't control his performance to Stanislavskian levels of realism, he might lift his arms too high, throw back his cloak too far with some dramatic gesture. The attentive observer will catch, in this moment, a glimpse of what lies beneath: the swollen corpse of a festering soul, perfumed against keen noses of children, and the sure of heart, and dripping with the jewels that such creatures covet. The accolades and admiration that they believe, that they hope, hope against hope, will convince them, if they can just collect enough, that they are not what they have allowed themselves to become. That they are worthy, please that they are worthy, that they will be remembered, immortalised, and that perhaps that the immortality they construct on Earth can act as substitute for the one they fear they will not receive in heaven. Applause. Rapturous applause. Each and every member of that audience rose to their feet, cheering and clapping their hands. I was frozen. I was so utterly confused. I had spent 2 days writing the most insulting treatise against the hypocrisy of these adults that my young mind could conceive of, and they were applauding me. I had been so sure that I would deal them some kind of blow, make them angry, ashamed, something! But, no, I was so young then, so protected, that I had not yet encountered this particular brand of deceit.

Each member of that audience flapped their hands together and rose, to celebrate the courage I had displayed in standing up to the hypocritical bigots that I was calling out. The person to their left, for example, and the person to their right. Perhaps every other person there, just not them. Self-deception. The most dangerous type of all. The key ingredient to turning a human being into a human doing.

I felt, at that time, defeated. A trick that I could not have anticipated had pulled on me, and my weapons were useless. But, as the years passed, I noticed something which has given me hope.

Those architects of legacy, those jewel encrusted zombies, they are not demons, they are not evil, they are not beyond redemption. Nobody is. Not them, nor myself. As I aged, I too began to acquire my cloaks of false humility, I too allowed the creeping spectre of fear into

my heart. To be, I must do! I must earn my existence! Perhaps if others believe I am worthy, I too will believe it. But, I did not, not once did another's admiration save my soul. Only the Truth could get through to me. The compassionate truth is a sword. Sometimes in my life, a person has loved me enough to swing it at me, as hard as they could. And blow after blow, eventually the bars I had forged in the fire of my own personal hell, began to crumble, leaving a gap in that cage. A gap just wide enough for a child to squeeze through. A child who had walked straight out of that hall, where he had dared to wield the sword of truth against an army of darkness, and into the cage of his own creation. He thought that he had failed. Childhood was useless, powerless against the things that sought to feed off of it. It was no longer an option to be a child. Lest he show his heart again, and again endure the humiliation of a rapturous, but false applause.

Except, it had not been useless. The speaking of truth never is. Though the speaker be cut down, though he be imprisoned, tortured, or driven from his home – his truth has planted a seed. A tiny grain of life, whose roots will sink deep into the edifice of lies, and crack it from within. And slowly, whether in this life, or the next, the soul trapped within that shell of its own creation will be freed. And when he is, when he sees the light of day again after all the eons of darkness, a song will play in his heart, like an old fashioned ballad it will sing – of the speaker, of the one who loved the children, loved them all, even mine. Mine, whose courage I had, in the throes of my shame, mistaken for foolhardiness. The child, who had himself been a planter of seeds, an intrepid diver, and the ancient child who is the only one who knows that one must be fool enough to rush in, because the angels, bless their hearts, are to wise to even try.

Song 6: Hallelujah – Jai Jagdeesh version.

END

Appendix

Consent Form: Artist – Research Project of Gabriel Marchand, MA Candidate, University of the Witswatersrand

Research Title: 'Picking up the Bill: Unravelling the Truth, and Paying for the Damage of the Ancestors
Researcher: Gabriel Marchand

I …….. agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve.

(please circle)

I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his research report	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher my take audio recordings of me.	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may take photos of me	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use material I generate in the workshop in the final performance piece. (You will be credited)	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may take video footage of me	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously by other researchers following this study	YES	NO

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)

Participant Information Sheet - Artist

Drama for Life, Cnr of Jorrisen and Bertha St, Braamfontein, University of the Witwatersrand

Good day,

My name is Gabriel Marchand and I am a Masters student in Drama Therapy at the Drama for Life department of Wits University in Johannesburg. As a part of my degree I am undertaking some research. In particular, I am investigating conversations around race and the legacy of colonialism, both as it pertains to myself, and my personal lineage, and our broader society. The aim is to find out what live theatre performance can contribute to the conversation that is unique and perhaps overlooked in other forms of dialogue.

A major part of this research is creating a piece of theatre through which this conversation will happen. You have been invited to be an artist in this theatrical work. The rehearsal period will be no longer than two months, part time, and will be unpaid. You will be asked to join the researcher in generating material for the work and performing it.

There are neither benefits for participating, nor penalties for choosing not to. You can withdraw at any time, and you are not required to do anything that you are uncomfortable with. I won't ask you for personally identifying information, so the content of what you generate will be confidential. What you generate in the process that is not used in the final production, but is recorded, will remain secure in my possession. I will not use your real name when writing about your participation in my final research report. If you find anything about the workshopping process distressing or uncomfortable, we can stop immediately and do it some other time, or not at all. If you need some support or counselling services afterwards, these are available at the CCDU (Anne Lunsky: tel. 011 717 9140, email. Info.ccdu@wits .ac.za) or through Sian Palmer, a registered Drama Therapist (082 854 9821), email. Palmer.sian@gmail.com).

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you upon request. If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), telephone + 27(0)11 717 1408, email hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za/ Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Researcher: Gabriel Marchand, email: gmarchand70@gmail.com, tel. 076 116 3191
Supervisor: Warren Nebe, email: warren.nebe@wits.ac.za, tel. 073 671 2500

Participant Information Sheet - Audience

Drama for Life, Cnr of Jorrisen and Bertha St, Braamfontein, University of the Witwatersrand

Good day,

My name is Gabriel Marchand and I am a Masters student in Drama Therapy at the Drama for Life department of Wits University in Johannesburg. As a part of my degree I am undertaking some research. In particular I am investigating conversations around race and the legacy of colonialism, both as it pertains to myself, and my personal lineage, and our broader society. The aim is to find out what live theatre performance can contribute to the conversation that is unique and perhaps overlooked in other forms of dialogue.

A major part of this research is creating a piece of theatre through which this conversation will happen. You are invited to witness this work.

There are neither benefits for watching, nor penalties for choosing not to. You can leave at any time, for any reason, and you are not required to do anything that you are uncomfortable with. I won't ask you for personally identifying information, so your presence here will be confidential. If you need some support or counselling services afterwards, these are available at the CCDU (Anne Lunsky: tel. 011 717 9140, email. Info.ccdu@wits .ac.za) or through Sian Palmer, a registered Drama Therapist (082 854 9821), email. Palmer.sian@gmail.com).

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), telephone + 27(0)11 717 1408, email hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za/ Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Researcher: Gabriel Marchand, email: gmarchand70@gmail.com, tel. 076 116 3191
Supervisor: Warren Nebe, email: warren.nebe@wits.ac.za, tel. 073 671 2500