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Blue lies, white truths and grey areas : when layering memory with fictional narratives writes new histories : a multi-dimensional project based in a complex layering of real and fictitious characters and experiences, in order to question and create new definitions of history

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Table of contents

List of figures ii

Introduction 1

Context 1

Method 3

Theoretical Background 8

Characters 15

Chapter 1 18

Chapter 2 41

Chapter 3 59

Bibliography 81

List of Figures (Sounds, Images, Videos and Gifs)

Figure 1: Screenshot from *Scénario du film Passion*, 1982.

Figure 2: Digital drawing from *The Crying of Lot 49*, 2016.

Figure 3: Created sound of Micaiah breathing, 2017.

Figure 4: Screenshot from my video, *Floating and Sinking Simultaneously*, 2015.

Figure 5: Created sound of weak heartbeats, 2017.

Figure 6: Created drawing of Frank pacing up and down, 2017.

Figure 7: Screenshot from my video, *The Night they met the Magician*, 2015.

Figure 8: Created map of Egypt, 2017.

Figure 9: Created sound of speedboats, 2017.

Figure 10: Screenshot from my video, *Green Sedge*, 2016.

Figure 11: Created Gif of Frank, the television, 2016.

Figure 12: Created image of Micaiah's Third Eye, 2017.

Figure 13: Created sound of knocks on the window, 2017.

Figure 14: Created sound of breaking gender, 2017.

Figure 15: Created Gif from my video, *Under The Sea*, 2015.

Figure 16: Image and created sound of Narwhal titled *I dream of the Narwhal, I dream it has feet*, 2017.

Figure 17: Created sound of Micaiah sleeping, 2017.

Figure 18: Created video of colour bars and *Days of our Lives* audio, 2017.

Figure 19: Created image of layers of multi-coloured flag and South African Police flag, 2017.

Figure 20: Created image of Sedgefield Police Station, titled *Purple Lights*, 2014.

Figure 21: Created sound of the start of Micaiah's hallucination, 2017.

Figure 22: Screenshot from my video, *She has lost something*, 2016.

Figure 23: Screenshot from my video, *It will soon end*, 2015.

Figure 24: Screenshot from my video, *The Night They Met The Magician II*, 2015.

Figure 25: Edit from my video *Automated Fish People*, 2015.

Figure 26: Voice-note for bibliography, *Walter Benjamin*, 2017.

Figure 27: Voice-note for bibliography, *Gilles Deleuze*, 2017.

Figure 28: Voice-note for bibliography, *Umberto Eco*, 2017.

Figure 29: Voice-note for bibliography, *Jean-François Lyotard Lyotard*, 2017.

Figure 30: Voice-note for bibliography, Thomas *Pynchon*, 2017.

Introduction

Context

> *In short, what I wanted to construct was a time that belonged to me alone, regulated solely by myself, self-contained: a clock that did not have to report to anyone what it was measuring. I would have liked to construct an extremely long, unbroken shell-time, to continue my spiral without ever stopping* (Calvino 2013: 77).

Italo Calvino was an Italian author who combined twelve interlinked short stories in a collection called *Cosmicomics*, an interlacing of spatial and temporal possibilities, where the beginning and end of reality is always open to transformation. His portrayal of temporal concepts was paradoxical; time morphs into and out of itself and is both present yet absent, finite yet infinite, temporary yet eternal. *Cosmicomics* is a fictional narration of the immateriality of time and space.

Calvino speaks of the construction of time as a fiction. He introduces an ephemeral, ever-changing narrator to this fiction known as a Qfwfq. The Qfwfq, a palindrome, is a mollusc, a dinosaur and a human at different durations of these short stories. Days and nights crash over it, waves rise and fall and the Qfwfq has no realisation of its form or time. The concept of 'time' is measured by the stratification of the Qfwfq's spirals, which allow the 'present' to be distinguished from the 'past' and the 'future'. In essence, Calvino demonstrates time as illusory.

Calvino's concept of time is echoed in this fiction, *Blue Lies, White Truths* which deals with complex and, at times, peculiar disorders and layers of human emotions and variations of realities. It considers the

concept of history and the emotional baggage of the past, a past that is continually present.

It reflects history as a histographic metafiction, a combination of literary devices using metafiction and historical fiction. At moments, the fiction speaks to an instant in history and simultaneously makes this notion complex. It both reinforces and challenges gender norms.

The “postmodern” condition of the characters and storyline highlights the focus on power and hegemony, a questioning of reality, representation and truth. It shapes and alters the characters in this fiction. In Jean-François Lyotard’s work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1979 he defines postmodernism as a scepticism towards all metanarratives and their overall nature. Metanarratives provide a schematic, overall worldview through which our perceptions and experiences are often controlled, altered and ordered. Lyotard suggests that small, localised narratives that consider the events within their context, should guide one’s experiences and perceptions. This approach emphasizes the diversity of human experience (Lyotard 1979: 14).

Walter Mignolo’s rhetoric of modernity places a similar skepticism on the “post modern”. In the text *Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality* Mignolo speaks about the dualistic hidden logic of modernity. He explains the composition of modernity as having a sense of so-called salvation, progress and triumph and simultaneously masking the logic of coloniality. Mignolo explains that:

> *[u]nder the spell of neo-liberalism and the magic of the media promoting it, modernity and modernization, together with democracy, are being sold as a package trip to the promised land of happiness, a paradise where, for example, you can no longer buy land because land itself is limited and not producible or monopolized by those who control the concentration of wealth, you can buy virtual land. Yet, when people do not buy the package willingly or have other ideas of how economy and society should be organized, they become subject to all kinds of direct and indirect violence.* (2007: 449)

This warped rhetoric naturalizes modernity and hides its more sinister side; the reproduction of coloniality. This conundrum exists in the context, form and dissemination of knowledge. Franz Fanon believes this philosophical problem of modernity, coloniality, politics and economics can be solved by decolonizing the mind. *Blue Lies, White Truths* attempts to consider history and knowledge in this same light, by breaking down core modes of thinking about knowledge and history.

The metanarrative *Blue Lies, White Truths* is set in a dichotomous South African landscape; a landscape situated between both ocean and casinos, dry fynbos and television sets, the interconnected green lagoons and strip clubs. This presents a fusion of realities and a reflection on super-modernity and perpetually confused alterations of consciousness.

Method

Blue Lies, White Truths acts as a script or lens through which to see my practice. It directs my filmic and installation matter both physically and conceptually which co-exist in synthesis. It is propelled by its ability to

transform or be experienced as a film, text, installation or performance. The narrative is based on personal experiences, real characters and fictional material. *Blue Lies, White Truths* uses an amalgamation of characters, both real and fictional, to further obscure the lines between reality and fiction.

Grammar, tense and spelling errors are present in the 'faulty' fictional narrative and this process is reflected in my practice. Some videos are looped to infinity whilst others are left blank for certain periods of time. Some can be viewed only in their reflection whilst others exist as drawings on screens. The words used in and subject matter of *Blue Lies, White Truths* manipulates the method of metafiction. The intentional departure from conventional writing has highlighted the artificiality and malleability of the work. The manner in which the words are used and misused in this fiction allow the words to perform (Barthes 1975: 5).

Blue Lies, White Truths, which is digitalised in words, sounds, pictures and gifs, is viewed and heard via a computer. The reader should follow the sounds, pictures and gifs chronologically, as they are performed in the fiction. These sensory elements give the words a form that is endless and closed, repetitious and filled with possibility.

John Rajchman, a philosopher working in art history approaches empiricism in to Deleuzian sense. This method defines empiricism as the belief that all knowledge is based on experience or sensory experience. Relations that are not bound to assumptions and "common sense" is in itself a way of forgetting the compartmentalization of knowledge (2000: 6). This is where multi-modal processes can exist. This openness allows connections to be made between fields of

experience. This kind of thinking is a way of experiencing life in its sensory multitude and a way of connecting it to history.

The sensory experience can only be real or meaningful if the 'flattening of logic' is not imposed on the irregular and spasmodic experience - visual, spatial and sonic. The process of connection involves the thinking of empiricism, 'where "and" always precedes "is"' (2000: 6). In *Blue Lies, White Truths* knowledge is not possible without experience derived from the senses, there are gaps and cracks in this knowledge, where the line between experience and knowledge production is faulty, curved, damaged, some of the path is so well trodden it is dead, while the other paths are painfully rocky.

Jean-Luc Godard's film *Sc*énario *du film Passion*, which exists as a metafiction and performative installation, breaks down the wall between audience and character. It questions narrative, writing, the audience and the creative process in an assemblage that is theoretical, philosophical and personal.

*Sc*énario *du film Passion* is based on Godard's previous 1982 film titled *Passion*, which explores the 'nature of work, love and filmmaking' (Sterritt 1999: 153). The film *Passion* traces a Polish film director, Jerzy, who is in France making a film for a television show. Jerzy's film is comprised of pictorial images from the painters Rembrandt, Goya and Delacroix. He is over budget and uninspired. The film is both static and boundless. Jerzy constantly questions why there 'must always be a story' (Sterritt 1999: 153). Godard, questioning of the nature of narration, mirrors Jerzy's challenges.

In the film *Sc*énario *du film Passion* Godard is seen scripting or performing the narrative. *Sc*énario *du film Passion* and *Passion* were filmed simultaneously and Godard's performances of *Passion* were known as 'video essays'; brief ruminations of the film *Passion* (Sterritt 1999: 162). *Scénario du film Passion* is both the film script and the deconstruction of *Passion.* Godard sits in front of a white screen in an editing suite narrating and philosophizing with the viewers as he makes and unmakes the film. The experience of reality and fiction becomes closely linked to the process of making and unmaking.

Godard did not want to write the script; he wanted to see it. He assumes the role of the mediator, a silhouetted talking head. Employing a tongue in cheek approach, he narrates the film to the audience who watches and reads it at the same time. The performance is composed of a variety of layers - sound, image and performance - that potentially allow the script, film and performance to be viewed and heard concurrently.

In figure 1 below, Godard tells the audience to imagine or 'invent the sea for [their] white beach' (Sterritt 1999: 162). He breaks down the invisible wall between audience and character or audience and camera. He calls upon the audience to create their white beach. In doing so, he questions the very nature of filmmaking and narrative. For one brief moment the audience is expected to create a visual for the film. The audience faces the invisible, a vast white surface, a blank page, a beach to be made in an instant. Go back to your memory of the beach and try to fill in the gap. The performance depicts how Godard constantly redefines the blurring lines between reality and fiction.

In *Blue Lies, White Truths* and the practical component, questions are posed to the reader or audience so as to generate interactions with them. One such example in the written component is when the audience is asked who the donkeys are in their lives. This essentially 'breaks down the fourth wall' between audience and character and the audience becomes a character in the narrative. Figure 1 of *Sc*énario *du film Passion* is one of the many screenshots that have guided the method of *Blue Lies, White Truths*.

Figure 1: Screenshot from
*Sc*énario *du film Passion*, 1982.



Theoretical Background

Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot* 49, Gilles Deleuze's writings on cinema and Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* together form the beginnings of my theories of time, memory and history. These theorists and their concepts are applied to the broken, super-modern, capitalist, social-entropic landscape of the fiction to follow. At points within the fiction, the fragility of memory, the unreality and incongruity of time, and the way in which the characters carry their histories into their present moments becomes apparent.

An important element within my creative process is the malleability and elusive quality of time. This fiction is on the periphery of the past and future. It is an amalgamation of both, while still being in the present. Its setting is both artificial and real, and it is bound to no conventional understanding of time. The art writer Amelia Groom describes how

> *[A]rt can show us how our understanding of time has always been something fabricated and shifting rather than pre-existing or 'natural'* (Groom 2013: 18).

Using time in its linear progressive perspective takes a concept or spatial substance that is both difficult and strange and makes time divisible, monochromatic and neutralised. This dilution is seen in the invention of "clock time" in the Industrial Revolution (Groom 2013: 19).

Time functions in an amalgamation of a temporal dreamtime and a monochromatic, capitalized, diluted time. The characters similarly function within this same fusion. They sometimes seem like a gust of wind, a rotating spin top or a blaring television. At other times, they have human behavioural qualities and emotions. Often they experience time

in either prolonged durations, where the scene is moving in slow motion and there is silence or dialogue so slow that every word is heard with clarity, or time appears sped up in short bursts, where words become sounds and images become colours.

The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze states that time is seen as levels of duration and temporality's potential to make visible the nature of time (Deleuze 1985: xii). Time therefore becomes more about temporality than time itself. It is able to open up narratives and alternative relations to time and space. Temporality is the experience of past, present and future times in all its phases simultaneously.

This temporality relates directly to the aim of *Blue Lies White Truths,* to question and create new definitions of history. The Italian philosopher Umberto Eco coined the term "open work".

> *Umberto Eco opens his favourite book, the book he would take with him to a desert island, and it is a giant list. He flips through a telephone book to create infinite stories of the people within it* (2016: 4min 2).

> *Imagine history as an* open work*. A network of limitless interrelations in which uncertainty is a positive feature. Imagine its openness, its incompleteness. Imagine history as a* work in motion*, displaying an intense mobility and a kaleidoscopic capacity to suggest itself in constantly renewed aspects to its consumers.* (1989: 2).

The internet is the list to end all lists, its an infinite collection of data that Eco calls "disordered" as it can give you information on the diary of a

cat, the picture of an attack by giant ants and a porn video all in one click.

The open work describes aesthetic and conceptual processes where artists or authors do not offer the audience a single finished work where the objective is to generate a pure meaning. The artist or author offers a multitude of possibilities, a work in movement, a freedom of reception where the audience can collaborate to complete the work. If we imagine history in this same light of openness, then history would be set to validate a poetic principal as opposed to a definitive, closed principal.

Blue Lies White Truths cites new definitions of history; this concept is closely connected to the 2015 *Story Within A Story* catalogue for the Gothenburg Biennial of contemporary art, curated by Elvira Dyangani Ose. Histographical evidence is shaped by ideologies, politics and systems of power, which do not always translate into historical truth. (2015: 2). Levels of uncertainty and falsities govern all these elements that form history. Destabilizing these systems of power and adding complexity to it forms part of the re-imagination of history as an open work. *Blue Lies, White Truths* considers collective memories, personal narratives and inner worlds on the periphery of history, in order to create new definitions of history through an open work.

The sounds, visuals and videos in *Blue Lies, White Truths* act as sensory translators of what is real and fictional. Sometimes this sensory data is manipulated to create a fiction. An example of this is the deliberate labelling of sounds and moving images - in the form of videos and gifs – as “figures”. The reader can create an image using the sounds. In addition, the sounds provide a soundscape of the setting and characters to the reader. It is comprised of diegetic and non-diegetic

sound as well as a combination of these two sound components. The source of diegetic sound is visible in the text or implied by the character. On the other hand, the source of non-diegetic sound is neither present in the text nor implied by the character.

The layering of these two components tests the visualizations in *Blue Lies, White Truths*. This sensory data confuses perceptions of reality, fiction and time while creating something new. The sounds stratify the written language in order to create a new time, memory and history. Additionally, this sensory data amplifies the text by providing unwriteable details within the setting or scene.



Blue Lies White Truths is scattered with emoticons. Their presence is a reminder of how an image, gif, short video or voice note has come to represent communication and ultimately altered consciousness. They symbolise “enacting” a condition of permanent disconnectedness.

The nature of this paper, being digital - made up of sounds, images and videos that exist on a memory stick - speaks to the layers of communication and disconnect. There are pathways created to link this paper to a number of digital components. This is an intricate digital process that places moving images and sounds into a word/PDF format that may not always support them. Time moves from reading to listening or seeing and back again. If the digital data does not work properly the reader has to go back to the original pathway and open or play the data manually.

The digitalisation of information and concomitant dislocation of communication is inspired by the concept of shifting reality through miscommunication as found in Thomas Pynchon's novel, *The Crying of Lot 49.* The storyline is about a Californian housewife, Oedipa Mass, who becomes intertwined in a mystery when her ex-lover bequeaths his deceased estate to her. The defective dissemination of information between characters tests the manner in which information is given, received and interpreted. This presents time as non-linear and contingent and asks the reader, "Is this real?"

Pynchon gives the reader both useful and superfluous information, disorientating details in the order in which Oedipa, the central character, experiences them. Pynchon's sudden cuts from one location to another as well as Oedipa's disordered thoughts transform time and space which constantly changes perceptions of the real and the fictional. For example, Oedipa receives the news that she is the executrix of her past lover's estate. Initially the reader imagines her at a Tupperware party, drinking kirsch. The setting changes. Oedipa is in a living room where a green television is staring at her. Then Oedipa transports the reader to a hotel room in Mazatlan, a city in Mexico:

> *Oedipa stood in the living room, stared at by the greenish dead eye of the TV tube, spoke the name of God, tried to feel as drunk as possible…She thought of a hotel room in Mazatlan whose door has just been slammed, it seemed forever, waking up two hundred birds down in the lobby…* (Pynchon 1966: 1).

Pynchon mimics the realistic and often random transmission of information and experiences in real life. His use of language plays with the reader's senses in a way that alters the experience of time into a

different experience of temporality. He manipulates temporality and human experience through a layering and uncovering of details and feelings. Pynchon is able to create fusions between reality, fiction and time through his written novel. *Blue Lies, White Truths* creates its synthesis through sounds, images and videos which are experienced through not only a memory stick on a computer, but also through spatial installations and performances in “real life”.

Concepts surrounding communication, miscommunication and discommunication propel the temporal aspect of *Blue Lies, White Truths*. Pynchon’s muted horn best describes this process. The horn represents an example of existing faults within the transfer of information. The circle at the base of the horn represents the mutability and taciturnity of the horn. The circle acts as a metaphor for filtering and sieving meaning. If one considers the way in which new media has shaped experiences, the circle of the horn can have numerous cellular emoticons within it (see figure 2).

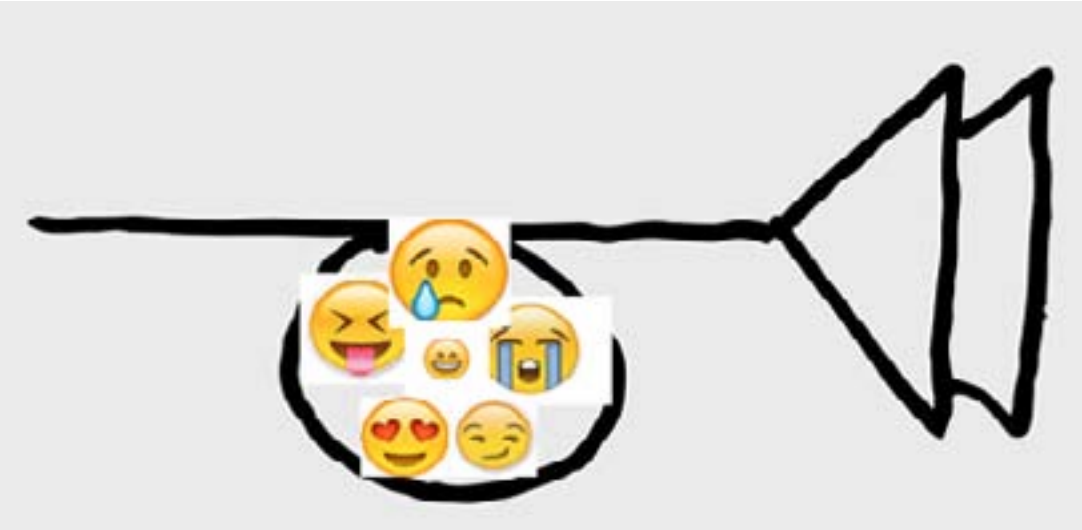


Figure 2: Digital Drawing from *The Crying of Lot 49*, 2016.

Blue Lies, White Truths is a recollection of memories which act as vessels between the past and the present. The setting of the fiction is primarily based in a small coastal town, Sedgefield, where many of my childhood memories were created. Remembering and re-inventing the space, the characters and the histories is closely linked to Walter Benjamin's fleeting concept of history. Benjamin states in his *Theses on The Philosophy of History*

> *To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was". It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment…*
> *For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own…threatens to disappear irretrievably* (Benjamin 1940: 33).

Remembering the characters' memories drives this metafiction and gives birth to a built universe that is removed from the original site of memory. This project, including both the practical and written component constantly works with three sites. These include the original (real Sedgefield), the written (real and fictional) and the more physical manifestation; an installation that is completely fictionalized, but existing in real time and space. The written component scripts the practical and vice versa. The process demands an exit from my consciousness to the characters and a constant attempt to recall moments when the characters spoke to me as real people.

Blue Lies, White Truths is set in an obscure present that often questions itself because of its continual thoughts of the past. The layered, fragmented, constellation of the past, present and future focuses on the loops, greyness, failures and cracks in memory and history. It

transforms memories to “new histories” through layering experiences into a malfunctioning synthesis. In *Blue Lies, White Truths*, the process of recollection and the invention of new “memories” combines the ‘past and present into a constellation that transforms both’ (Fasi, Gallun & Schillinger 2009: vi). It emphasizes a rupture that is able to challenge ‘historical assumptions and ingrained systems…on both a personal and wider social political scale’ (Fasi, Gallun & Schillinger 2009: vi).

Characters

The characters act as signifiers that stimulate and determine the narrative’s communication. They play an important symbolic, thematic and psychological role in *Blue Lies, White Truths*. They do not stick to the archetype of a character and present themselves as multidimensional - always changing based on circumstances and mental states as well as time and their memories. The characterization is often explicit and sometimes ambiguous. To understand the characters, I revisit my understandings of people, perform the dialogue, return back to the space and speak to those who remind me of the characters which brings me closer to them. My practical work attempts to embody and visualize the characters, their individual and collective experiences and emotions.

Frank resembles a television set and a glass of beer spilling over. Sometimes Frank can suck the beer up but often it is preferable that he does not. He is a progressively flawed human whose problems continually affect those around him. His abnormal relationship with and objectification of the female body is unnerving and problematic.

In order to understand Frank, two screens are used as detailed below:

1. Screens act as a surface upon which sounds and images of film are projected. Films show the world by way of screen.
2. The screen is also a barrier to the world. The film screen cuts the viewer from the world.

X is an unwise character. She is ungrounded and acts on impulse rather than thought. She continuously makes the same mistakes and allows Frank to abuse her on a number of levels. She cannot escape or fully see the detrimental nature of patriarchy. This lack of understanding leaves her in compromising positions. Micaiah and the donkey carry her through a lot of her troubles and look after her mental and physical state as much as they can. X is always spinning yet begging for someone to help her to be static. However, once she is stationary she needs to spin again. X survives on expensive champagne and the small amount of attention that anyone gives to her.

Micaiah is like a gust of wind. She is an old spirit and her mannerisms and personality are pure. She acts with empathy, compassion and care. She is perhaps the only character who carries little to no pretenses or barriers; she simply is who she is. One questions whether Micaiah is a real person. She may be a shadow on a wall, a ghost that visits every day or a mythical creature like a narwhal who does not even know she is one. Micaiah's name is derived from the Hebrew word (מיכיהו) meaning, "who is like you?" The name suggests that no one is like Micaiah. In biblical terms, Micaiah was the prophet that told the truth. Her stories and character ring true to the essence of her name.

Tigger is the man with a broken spirit. His life, sadness and passivity present him as being damaged by society and all its vices, particularly the struggle of finding financial freedom as well as ever-deteriorating

environmental conditions. He takes shelter in a police station's holding cell and fishes from dirty water. He survives through the fishing of contaminated matter. Tigger shows the audience how unstable, sensitive and broken the racial relations are in South Africa.

Donkey, who has mainly static qualities, symbolizes female suffering. He has only one dialogue verse that is varied in tone and length and he is never seen. Despite this, he is pivotal to Micaiah's and X's characters and storylines. He emphasizes pain and suffering whilst trying to offer healing. He only voices himself when there is potential harm to a female character. In life, he is a beast of burden and may, consequently, often be abused and over-used.

Chapter 1

The sky flickered with a light that permeated ever so slightly through the cold morning mist. The smell of dry fynbos, brake fluid and strong cigarettes smelt heavy in the atmosphere. The sound of a lost radio frequency crackled softly in the background. A slight but intense warm breeze hit the land haphazardly.

[Winter, June 3]

A slim teenage girl sat on a small piece of chipped rock with her head in her hands. Her wispy short blonde-purple-white hair blew with the dust around her. She and her family had been traveling for close to two days and she had not eaten for those two days too. This was undoubtedly her mother's ideal diet, a mix of starvation and anger. She slowly put her head down in between her bony knees; her hair covered her face like a curtain being drawn on a dark night.

Micaiah's frustration had boiled over and turned to sadness. She silently sat with her feelings. If she did decide to voice those feelings all hell may break loose, adding more fuel to the already wild fire.

Sound of heavy sighing

Figure 3: Sound of Micaiah breathing, 2017. 

Her father, who did not act like a father, lent with force on his broken down Bantam bakkie. Frank, a tall man with a beer 'boep', who resembled the shape of an old school JVC television, revealed a slight

grimace on his worn red face. He smiled because he did not know what to do and he knew that if he were alone in this situation he would not be smiling. Simply knowing he had his daughter and estranged wife with him gave him some kind of pleasure, a comfort. His behaviour hadn't changed during these past years. He lacked any responsibility and was willing to bring anyone into his broken world if that meant he did not feel alone. *[Loneliness is a complex and difficult feeling of disconnect]*

His misogynistic appearance shaped him with a thick moustache that looked as if someone had pasted it on his freckled burnt face and he squeezed into a far too small yellow vomit checked shirt and tight brown dirty leather 'vellies'. He watched Micaiah with sarcasm twinkling deep in his dark eyes, while she sat uncomfortably with her head in her hands. He knew he had fucked up but he found it rather amusing.

Sitting in the passenger seat, waiting helplessly for something to happen, something to help them, like a charged cellphone, X felt a constant fast and slow rotational spinning movement of the dry dusty landscape in front of her. The lack of sleep and hunger induced the confused state of gyrating. As in William Yeats' poem *The Second Coming,* X was '[t] urning and turning in the widening gyre…things fall apart; the centre cannot hold' (Yeats 1983: 187). An alternation of two historical cycles was happening; one of order and growth and the other of chaos and decay. X was in a kind of perpetual motion, a continued state of motion or what appears to be motion (Deleuze 1985: 45). She exists in this state as a hypothetical motion machine. It would seem as if she is moving but rather forces and conditions are moving around her. Perpetual motion distorts the time bound experience.

Figure 4: Screenshot from video *Floating and Sinking Simultaneously*, 2015.



Consumptio˙n= stopsSs and!! thexxx expl/oitive nature of capitali$m is heigh^ened when dead\\\ cellphone767s stay dead_, un##charged and with)(n0 way to mediate" our engagement¤ with the **wOrld. ScreeNs a(GRR)e these ambivale»nt obJ-ects that AcT, as illus§ionistic wind¬ows, sedu:cing us with ¡dancing images~~ @nd! words, yet are still?? phYsical materials in the end. The da*&ncing imaGes and sedu{c}tion of the scrEEns- have slOwly been dimme<<d. Blank[] screEns replaЖce fastʃ movinʃ≈g words and‰…Ω imageS on fancy smArt =phones.

Notes on temporality: temporal techniques exist in hypothetical states, never entirely fitting into either 'reality' or 'fiction'. In transforming narrative there is a perpetual motion between movement and stasis an ever-changing balance between short encounters and long ones in order to shift the experience of time and reality, thereby bringing the audience and myself closer and then a little further away.

X's state was heightened by her intense sense of guilt in agreeing to join Frank on this so-called vacation. She so wished she had listened to her daughter, Micaiah. Agreeing to see Frank that "one more time" made her feel shame and embarrassment for her weak lonely heart. *[Refer to loneliness above]*

[Sound of weak heartbeats]

Figure 5: Sound of weak heartbeats, 2017.



On a hill, like an island where water covered the base and interconnected a lagoon with the ocean, sat their abandoned vehicle with Frank, X and Micaiah. They were completely off the beaten track and it was curious how they got to the apex of this hill in the first place. The island was dry and desolate yet succulent and sweet. The ocean air blew on them with a cold twitch and still no one had a clue of how to get off this peculiar peak.

[Remembering 9 April 2015]

Frank's sarcasm slowly started to fade to worry and guilt when he remembered why he had brought them here in the first place. He remembers snippets of that night, the night he stole Rhodes. In the early

hours of the morning Frank drove from afar to the University of Cape Town with a student card that did not belong to him, but still worked. He had old school cutting equipment in the boot of his car and a fiery desire for a famous male sculptural object. He spent six or so hours slowly and methodically sawing off Cecil John Rhodes from his tall podium. He dragged this heavy man to his car and scraped off his pointy nose. Placing uncle Cecil in the back of his car with his long legs hanging out of the window, Frank sped off so quickly that he realised he had taken the wrong highway off-ramp.



This was a new generation and the most unique style of sex doll he would ever have. This doll was inflated with concrete and colonialism, materials that do not easily dissolve. The hype surrounding the disappearance of such a historical object led Frank to anxious, plunging sexual confusion. His mind was wholly occupied with the operation and mechanics of CCTV cameras.

[Frank paces along the land, up and down and up and down]

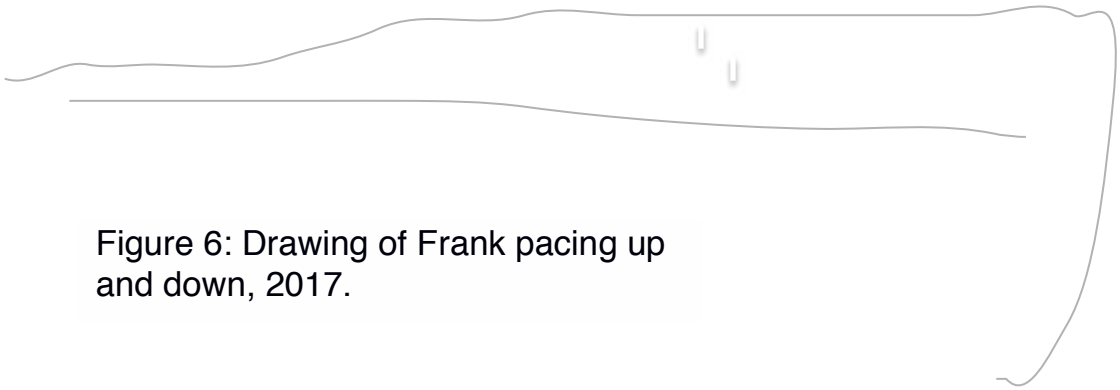


Figure 6: Drawing of Frank pacing up and down, 2017.



Figure 7: Screenshot from video *The night they met the Magician*, 2015.

Micaiah got up slowly, anticipating some change by the way her father's expression had altered from a juvenile child smirking at her to a worried old man. It would be fairly soon before Micaiah uncovers how deep and twisted her father's desires actually went. Her exceptional perception and wise mind made her the only person in her family old beyond her years. Micaiah's name derives from the Hebrew question, "Who is like god?" She is not entirely good, or god-like. She simply has an intangible sense of the unphysical: an incorporeal being that could easily be a

shadow, a word, a sneeze, or a laugh. Micaiah's spirituality is hallucinogenic and affected by bright intense light. She processes information through intensely bright hallucinations and is only able to express these dreams and prophecies to her mother. She is not fully aware of her psychic abilities and she may die before even using them.

[First sounds in script]
[Harsh red light is focused on X]

X emerged from her spinning states and slowly put her head up from the car chair, and then screamed a piercing and hollow sound as if she was in serious pain. Her intense screech made small droplets of tears trickle in the crevices of her eyes. A donkey brayed a strong "hee-haw" sound in the background, as if to tell her he had heard her. He had heard her pain. X got out the car and walked toward Frank. Frank dismissed her, putting his hand up to her and flinging it at her. His body language revealed his harsh and selfish character. He said nothing but his actions and stance indicated that he did not care for her state and that it was her choice to come on this journey in the first place - at least that was her impression of it.

[A bird puppet and a map of Egypt sit at the back of the car]

Figure 8: Map of Egypt, 2017.



The donkey, a small young boy with a limp on his left leg, will take all the pain and sorrow for the female. He will protect and help the female through all her oppressions. He will take the beatings, physically and emotionally, that the man will give to the female. He is the mind, body and soul of the woman in pain. Ironically, he is also a practising capitalist. The donkey only survives because of the abuse by the male.

Who are the donkeys in your life?



Micaiah gets up from her rock and begins to look at the landscape around her standing on the top of a bushy, dusty hill surrounded by a vast body of water below her. She wonders how they will eat tonight and if the land could provide for them. She walks past her father who seems to be enjoying the sun beating down on his red face while he chain smokes, littering cigarette stompies below him. She starts walking down the hill, through the thick bush, rocks and washed up seaweed. It takes

her nearly two and half hours to walk down the steep hill. She is full of sweat and is completely dehydrated. Her clothes are sticking to her like honey on bread. It is a difficult job walking down a steep hill. You always need to prepare your body to run or fall down it.

A cuckoo clock goes off incessantly, "cuckoo", "cuckoo", "cuckoo"
[A Western Germanic sound noting that time has reached its hour]

Micaiah finds a small, flat section of beach sand and lies down for what she thinks is half an hour in a deep trance-like sleep, dreaming continuously and never wanting to wake up. Gently push your hands on your closed eyes and wait for the black to emerge. Slowly, slowly the colours will emerge in different shapes and sizes, with different variations and tones.

She dreams of a place that may or may not exist, a place in the far north east of Africa, a country joining Africa and the Middle East. As the sun starts penetrating through the morning mist the tide begins to change, and the water begins to slowly suck Micaiah in, one wave at a time. The water lifts her small body and she floats down the lagoon, passing another island on her right and ending up on the other side of the desolate hill. The water acts as a kind of break from consciousness something Micaiah's mind craved.

[*Sound of speedboats*]

Figure 9: Sound of speedboats, 2017.



She wakes with a fright. Gulps of water paint her mouth and eyes, as a speedboat zooms past her. The sound of fast splashing water, huge

swigs of lagoon water guzzling through her mouth wake her instantaneously. Her eyes open and suddenly the boat is gone. She hears the donkey calling “hee haw, heee haw”. She swims to his calls. Faster and faster she paddles as the donkey’s sounds get softer and softer, further and further away.

Figure 10: Screenshot from video
Green Sedge, 2016.



[Old white men laughing in a speedboat]

She can’t keep up with the faint sounds of “hee haw heee haw” guiding her to the shore. She eventually reaches the land now on the other side of the hill.

Low hanging trees with threaded thick seaweed and debris hanging on them make the surface area of the land look small. The angle of the hill being so steep and the shore being covered with short dense trees makes it difficult to move or stand up on the shore. Micaiah has to crawl through the branches of the trees to reach deeper into the shore.

Beneath the trees is an infestation of sea spiders: some babies, some big and some mating. She has to rest so she sits down under the trees. The long, low branches cover her entirely. She cannot see the lagoon in

front of her, just slithers of the light shining through the deep-chested trees. Crabs are crawling all over her body: up and down her small, wet body. The water smells different this side of the hill, dirtier and more dense with weeds and sedge.

On the top of the hill in the back of the broken-down Bantam bakkie Frank laid his heavy, stumpy, thick body on X and kissed her thin neck. He held her hair tightly and kissed her with fast superficial tongue movements, like an automated snake flinging its tongue in and out. Undoing his pants and quickly placing himself inside her, he held her neck and arched his back penetrating in and out of her with short, rapid movements. She lay there both in disgust and enjoyment. His climax coincided with a heavy and high-pitched bray from the donkey, “heeee haaaw”. He quickly pulled his pants up and left X lying naked on the back of the bakkie. He grunted and moved along, jumping off the back of the bakkie and landed on a heap of sand. She lay there for a while not putting any of her clothes back on. A mix of shock and repulsion now consumed her thoughts entirely. This made putting her clothes on almost impossible.

The midday light from the sun suddenly darkened as if a storm was fast approaching. She eventually pulled her long black dress down covering her breasts and buttoning up her chest. X lay in the back of the sex-stained bakkie in her black dress in a peculiar mood, feeling stripped of her dignity but also not surprised that she allowed this to happen. It was inevitable; her submissiveness was entrenched in her since she ran away from home as a young girl.

X gets out the car and slams the door. She stands tall and grabs a phallic reminder as a kind of prop for her story to follow. She holds the bird puppet in her hand. She feels like she has to retell a memory. She

needs to get this off her chest and she knows someone is listening. She hears a soft bristle in the heavy brush. It has to be the donkey, carrying everyone's baggage on his back. Frank turns to X and smiles, a patronizing smile that pities her more than anything. He rolls his eyes, while foolishly smiling. He had heard this story before and maybe this time he would hear her words:

[X's monologue to Frank and to you: X is speaking to you and Frank]

I ran away as far as I could. I tried hard not to look back. You know that …I never wanted to look back but I had to because my present is made up of...of my past. I arrived on the outskirts of the Western Cape hungry and desperate for work. I joined the circus! Don't you remember I was even on TV? It was so much fun I began to understand myself and even remember feeling x about it. It was hard at first but I learnt fast and I jumped so high, so very close to the stars I could feel them. I felt so free in such a fucked up system of entertainment…but it made me happy for a while and I'll never forget that.

Figure 11: Gif of Frank the television, 2016.



Animated gif of young Frank falling up and down stairs linked to the action of sex and Sigmund Freud's symbols. In Freudian language the staircase represents sexual interaction and male potency. (Based on Freud's subject Otto Rank) (Crick 1999: 38).

X's hands swing as she tells her story. Her eyes are fierce with emotion and as often as she tells this story, it still feels new to her. Frank sits below her intently engaged in her presence but not hearing a word she says. He is captivated by her beauty but cannot hear her words. She can feel that all he is doing is staring at her. She can feel that all she said was in vain.

[Are you sitting below her? Are you listening?]

X snaps out of her story and looks around the empty sandy space. She scans her eyes across most of the landscape searching for Micaiah.

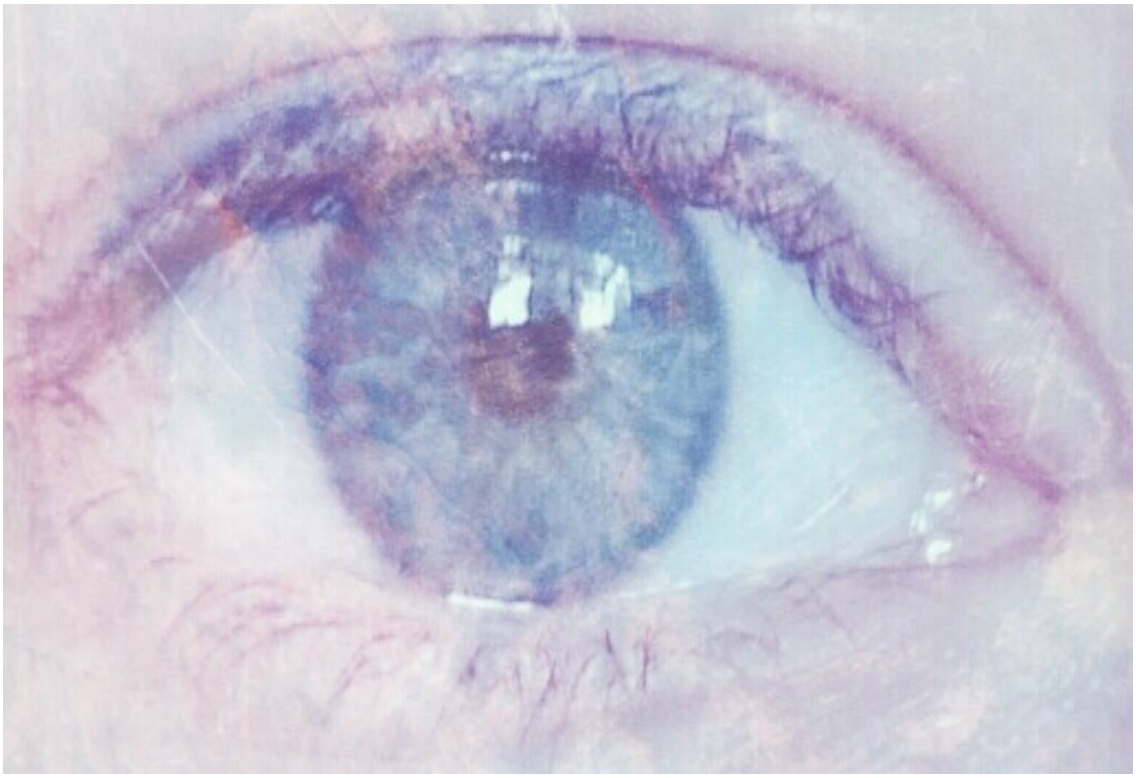
X: You! *Frank! Frank! Listen to me! Where is Micaiah? Where did she go Frank? Tell me! Fuuuuck!*

[Midday Storm is Brewing]

Micaiah crawled through the small seaweed jungle that encased her, creeping on crabs and getting a sand rash on her knees. She crawled for a while, barely seeing anything in front of her. She made her way to what looked like a rock pool area, and the tight, dense seaweed jungle had ended. She was able to stand up properly despite her feet being wrapped with sedge and dried up algae. She noticed empty mussel shells, probably from hungry seagulls, around the trim of the shore. As her stomach sickeningly moaned, she wondered whether there could still be mussels on the deep, dirty rocks. She slowly stripped, taking off all her clothes, hoping that they would dry and that the strange boatmen would not suddenly turn up as she unclothed herself.

She entered the icy water one more time, this time voluntarily, diving in as slowly as she could, trying to anticipate the cold water. Suddenly she felt the tide sucking her in and she grabbed a branch from a tree under the water and held on tight. She was holding the tree so closely that her feet bled from something strange growing from the tree. Wrapped like a naked monkey on a tree trunk for an hour or so, she began to try and piece together what her feet were feeling - something curved with smooth edges that also felt like the shape of eye. The tide halted for a number of minutes and Micaiah pulled her body down the trunk, slowly, using her core. She grabbed onto the eye-shaped creatures below her, tugged hard and nearly lost her balance.

Figure 12: Edited image of Micaiah's Third Eye, 2017.



They were mussels, big delicious mussels growing on an upside down tree in the water. She waited again for the tide to halt and grabbed as many as she could throwing them to the shore. She did this for a while and eventually gathered enough mussels for X and Frank too. Her clothes had dried and she used her sports bra to carry the mussels up the hill. It is a difficult job walking up a steep hill. You always need to prepare your body to fall down it. She knew that this journey would take long and she was hungry and tired. She stumbled, balancing the mussels in her bra and carrying her broken body up the sharp hill to the apex.

[Time passing quickly, rain falling.
Fast colours of the landscape becoming wet]

Arriving at the top of the hill she saw her mother curled up in the car with a thick blanket. Her father was in the same position as before - just

a little less red, because of the drizzle from the sky - smoking and littering cigarette stompies, as per usual.

[Micaiah knocks on the window trying to wake her mother]



Figure 13: Sound of knocks on the window, 2017.

The truth of the past is only visible as a fleeting, tentative image that will soon slip away. This image is present in the continuousness of the past and present struggles. History is not progressing into the future but intruding into the present. Frank pats Micaiah on the head like a dog, gesturing to her that she has done a good job picking all the mussels. She looks at him squinting her eyes and slowly pushing his hand off her head.

[Gender norms are hard to break and even harder to face when you are a female]

Figure 14: Sound of breaking gender, 2017.



She looks at him smugly and walks past him looking for somewhere to rest. Her mother finally wakes up long after the knocks on the window. She woke with a fright and got out the car asking: “Who am I?” “Where am I?” “Who are you?” These questions were typical for her to ask. X often did this when she took her medication to sleep. She was clueless as to who she was and how her body got to this space. The pharmaceutical industry can make you seem like you are not entirely on

this planet, and you are not entirely you. Micaiah hugged her mom and told her it was going to be okay.

[Drinking champagne, sitting on dust, in the dark, braaing mussels]

Frank finally did something productive. He lit a fire and made makeshift tongs with sticks and tape. He cooked the eye mussel one by one and made sure no one ate them until he was finished cooking them. He pushed Micaiah's hands off the mussels as he slowly placed each cooked one on a strip of baby wipes.

It was dark in the night by now and X switched on the car lights to see what she was eating. Frank dished up for himself first, inevitably giving himself more mussels, and then the girls an equal amount each. The only water they had was X's favorite champagne, Verve. She had a huge swig, then Micaiah and then Frank. The bottle was done fairly quickly and they all started to get tipsy. Micaiah closed her eyes and colours started to appear, flashing bright lights through her dark closed eyes. X could sense Micaiah's third eye was emerging. She held her tight but Micaiah pulled away. She did not like to be constricted during these moments. Micaiah was allergic to mussels. They gave her strong premonitions and shone an incredibly bright light in her eyes. She was so hungry that she did not care if she ate something that she was allergic to.

[Micaiah's hallucination: a moment with memory]

Deep colours of blues and greens filter through her vision with strong fluidity. The colours moved like water and changed directions sporadically. Dreaming of an octopus, with eight legs that moved like no other. The octopus was trying to solve a

puzzle. It moved from side to side as if it was a game, or a race to solve the puzzle. Its skills were real. It was able to solve the puzzle and even open a jar. If the octopus has alien genes that are more composite than ours, then the octopus is an alien.

Micaiah woke up and repeated the words “Whale Valley” three times: “Wadi Al Hitan”, “Wadi Al Hitan”, “Wadi Al Hitan”. Her mom asked her what she dreamed of and she told her of the octopus that plays puzzles.

X replied: “Micaiah, there will always be a story within another with you. I wish I could see what you could.”

Micaiah gets up and vomits. Slurping all the eyes in her stomach and pushing them to her throat she spewed up all her third eyes and they splashed softly on the sand. A mix of green, mustard yellow and blue liquid stained the sand.

[Frank has passed out very close to the fire]

X pulls Frank further away from the fire. She lifts his arms and drags him along the sand. She then gestures to Micaiah to come to the car Micaiah walks to her holding her stomach, slightly bent over from the pain of vomiting. X opens another bottle of champagne to help clean out Micaiah’s mouth. She makes sure she rinses all the broken up vomit eyes out of her mouth. “Now drink your tablets my darling... and try go to sleep”, X says. Micaiah swallows her tablets with a loud gulp and, wrapped in her blanket and holding her bird puppet, slowly passes out close to her mother.

[Soft creaks of the night whisper; the donkey only goes to sleep after X]

It is midday already, and Frank screams to wake everyone up. Waking up Micaiah is difficult as she is sleeping to retain some kind of emotional clarity. Frank is impatient and does not allow her to wake up at her own pace. He says he has a plan to get them out of here and that the water will take them where they need to go. Micaiah eventually wakes and trembles at the thought of her father's idea. She knows that, either way, they will need to cross the lagoon.

They take the necessities from the car; a map of Egypt, a bird puppet, four bottles of champagne and a carving knife. They leave the apex of the hill and head down towards the water. It is a steep hill and they have to go slow. After watching the 1968 film, *The Swimmer*, by Frank Perry, I have given them tips below on how to swim in rough water.

1. Head-on wind and chop

Head-on chop is both strenuous, potentially injurious and will slow you down. It will also affect the regular balance of a stroke, making the stroke shorter. During asymmetric, uneven short period waves, there will be no discernible pattern of waves for the swimmer. Sometimes, having broken one wave, you will crash immediately into another. Repeated impact across the head and shoulders can be the main problem. Also, the timing for sighting and breathing is changed - delayed by the fast wave movements.

More specifically, you need to learn to adjust your stroke. In head-on wind and chop I try to drop my head lower than normal, and make a point of keeping low and maintaining rotation. It is difficult, in the circumstances, to go partially under some of the chop

and small wavelets but it helps, which minimises the impact.

2. Tail wind and following chop

During a tail chop I am most likely to swallow a mouthful of water. As I roll on my side to breathe, a wave can come from behind and swamp me. My solution to this is to focus more on my feet as an indicator of something coming - in essence, an early warning system.

3. Side chop and cross winds

I have found side chop to be the most difficult for me. Breathing into side chops is a big problem resulting in both swallowed and aspirated water making it exceptionally hard to breathe. The only solution is to breathe to the other side. But even those of us who breathe bilaterally will have a favoured side. I cannot maintain breathing on my left, weaker side for long periods of time. The strain on my neck, shoulders and biceps is too great to continue so I have to submit to floating.

Figure 15: Gif sourced from video *Under The Sea*, 2015.



[Frank, X and Micaiah hold up their necessities and swim using only their feet as propellers]

Now they are almost halfway across the lagoon and completely exhausted. They have not followed any of the tips.

The family slowly starts floating down towards the liminal space where the ocean meets the lagoon. X rests her champagne on her stomach, Micaiah holds her wet bird and the map of Egypt up to the sky and Frank holds one of X's champagne bottles in the water. Frank sizzles and squeals when the water touches his electric stomach.

They land up on the shores of the harbour where people launch their boats or go fishing. A family of four tries to launch their boat and people are walking their dogs on the sidewalk. They emerge from the water with embarrassment as the small child with the family launching the boat looks at his mother in complete amazement. He asks his mother: “Why don’t those people have swimming costumes?”

Micaiah, X and Frank start slowly exiting the water, Micaiah holding up a map of Egypt and her bird puppet high in the air so as to not further wet her necessities. X exits the water with three bottles of champagne. Copying Micaiah, X holds them up high even when she is completely out of the water. Frank leaves with his knife and one bottle of champagne. He walks with his head down and makes no eye contact with any of the people around him.

They hurry past the boat being launched and walk down the neat sidewalk. Soaking wet and shivering, they drip water stains along the sidewalk. The water stains make their journey traceable, timed by the sun drying up the water.

Now heading south, they walk past a tall, rocky hill, very similar to the hill they had left behind but simply with a road beneath it and no choppy water. They pass a four-way stop and finally arrive at 25 Kingfisher Drive; a large, red house with a long and grassed driveway and a low bricked wall. A multi-coloured flag and the South African police flag are flying up high in the back garden of the house.

Frank forcefully fiddles with the gate, not bothering to look at what he is actually doing. X glares through the long driveway, doing her best to see into the house. Her stance and eye contact was similar to that of a male

watching his favorite soccer team on TV on the brink of either winning or loosing the match. She stood proud, upright and determined. Her arms also seemed bigger than usual.

It seemed as if no one was there and she shouted at Frank to hurry up. Frank, now on his knees, looked back at X, with his mouth slightly open and his eyes wide with fear, he showed his first glimpse of fear towards her. Perhaps the mixture of dehydration and exhaustion have muddled with his character.

Short glimmers of colour appear and disappear through the hot beating sun. A rainbow of harsh lights bounce off one another and X still manages to keep staring through the driveway.

Chapter 2

2 months have passed living in the house. On the surface, it is an idyllic place with a middle class small town flair.

[Living in a stranger's house]

A distant surly voice shouted, "I'm fucking coming". The door swung open and X, gaunt faced, stood in the doorway. She looked both childlike and ancient at the same time. She was carrying a tray filled with hot soup - a mix of baked beans and synthetic soup thickening powder. The food in the house was running low and she was doing her best to scrape together whatever she could for them to survive for a few more weeks.

Her bleached box dyed red hair was long and stringy and softly whispered over the soup concoction. She was dressed in a pale blue button down shirt with faint yellow stains paired with old sleeping pants that were far too big for her. She hastily walked into the television room area carefully balancing so as not to spill any soup. Frank and Micaiah were watching the news on television. The drama surrounding the missing Rhodes sculpture was at its peak. Black students and many liberal whites were happy to be rid of the colonial concrete mass, while other more blinkered students were horrified and upset that the University was not able to trace the person who had stolen the sculpture. They blamed the University for the missing piece of their History. Architecture, sculptures and traditional art played an integral part in understanding their History, the History of the victor.

Frank's face reddened. Small beads of sweat emerged on his disappearing hairline and his leg started slowly shaking, getting progressively more intense. Micaiah looked at him and frowned, wondering why he was so affected by this incident of theft.

X slowly bent down and placed the tray of soup on the coffee table. As she bent down Frank squeezed her left buttock and quickly grunted, "thanks". X turned around and gave him a snarling look as if she was going to raise her hand and slap him. Instead she walked away, muttering to herself.

A news reporter spoke with great care for her words, and said: "we believe this will lead to a greater world-wide awareness to decolonize our education system."

[Ben arrives]

The small wooden gate opened. Ben, an aged white-haired black man with a heavy beard, dressed in a stained blackish overall, who fought the elements of nature so hard that he should probably be dead, shouted "Colin", with a heavy Cape Coloured accent. X ran outside trying to figure out who was in the property. Frank got up from the single seated worn couch and followed X to the outside patio.

Ben, a fisherman with a drinking problem, clearly intoxicated as he was swaying from side to side, came up to Frank and asked, "Where is Colin? Did Colin sell his house? Who are you people?" These questions riled Frank up and he replied, mimicking a Cape Coloured accent, "Who the Fok are you? Passop you stukkende man". He attempted to chase and shoo Ben like a fly, but Ben did not move. Micaiah came out and tried to diffuse the situation. "What the hell did you do, Frank?" she asked. "Why is this man so angry?"

A social darkness, where people see in boxes of colour, gender and size, for it is easier to stigmatize. Mold does not just arrive in the crevices of your shower door. Someone and some condition brought it there, and now it cannot escape. It is meant to stay there like the cycle of poverty, an inevitable circle that tries so hard but often does not break.

Frank looked at X, a look that showed his fury and potential violence towards Micaiah. This precipitated X to tell Micaiah to go inside and shut up. “Micaiah! Get inside now. Quickly my love!” A strong but faint “heeee haaaww” brayed in the background.

“I know what you doing. You don’t know Colin. You have nowhere to go so you are squatting in HIS house,” shouted Ben. Ben threatened Frank and said he had the owner’s number for this house, “25 Kingfisher Drive” and had in fact painted the house.

[Imagine the red lights shining in the already bright, sunny day. Now imagine a layer of anxiousness, anger and violence]

Frank chased him, attempting to smack him but Ben moved swiftly and Frank missed. Ben eventually left, holding his old cellphone in his hands and ranting on about how he knew this was not Frank’s house. “This is not your house, you old ballie. He’s gonna find out!”

Frank walked to the gate and locked it shut, having no idea where the key was to open the gate, but knowing full well that the gate was low enough for him to jump over. While walking from the gate along the driveway to the patio, his anger was brewing inside as if he really

believed that he owned this house. He went inside the kitchen and poured himself a drink, a strong double shot of Johnnie Walker Black.

He walked back into the living room to find Micaiah sitting with her legs up on the couch playing on her cellphone. He locked the door interleading into the kitchen and closed the patio door, knowing fully well that no one could open it from the outside. He pulled up his pants and adjusted his belt over his thick belly. Micaiah finally looked up from her cellphone to see her father looking over her with his crotch in her face. She ran to the door. He pulled her back to the couch. She screamed "Mom… Mom MAAAAAAA… help me". Frank responded laughingly, "your stupid mom can't help you now".

X ran to the interleading kitchen/living room door. It was locked. She banged on the door, screeching "Frank, Frank, you fucking bastard!" She ran to the patio door and could see her daughter, but could not open the door. Her screeches turned to heavy sobbing. She was howling with despair, screaming and crying at the same time.

Frank bent Micaiah over. As she whimpered, he took her baggy pants off. She cried as she knew what was coming. She tried pushing him away, but he was too strong. She wished her mother did not have to see this and she wished so much that she had his carving knife. He took her big panties off and undid his belt, pulling it through each hole until it was completely off his waist. He then folded the belt in half and, while Micaiah was bent over with her buttocks exposed in the air, he beat her with his belt. Then the tears stopped, consciously, and she thought she would never give him the pleasure of knowing that he actually hurt her. She tried hard to close her mouth as he beat her one strike at a time.

[Consider taking a break from reading this, as it is opening]

His crotch expanded and X was now screaming again. “You’re a fucking piece of shit,” she said. “You make me sick”. A strong and loud “heeee haaaw” brayed just before the final sixth whip hit Micaiah’s buttocks. The donkey was nearby and was trying to tell Micaiah not to cry because he was crying for her.

The white picket fence is flipped upside down; the mirror reflects a seagull and the music has stopped playing. The sun is rising in the night because Frank starts to cry. Frank walks away from the bruised and red Micaiah and strolls slowly outside. He cannot hear the pain that he has caused. He is completely switched off from the hysteria of X and Micaiah. He takes his cigarettes out of his pocket and begins to light one. They taste like wet Sedgefield, salty and sandy from the long swim. He crouches down uneasily, putting his heavy body on the bricked carport and cries. He cries with a madness and an excitement to rid himself of the guilt. His knees scrape along the paved carport as his body moves with all his emotions. His hands shake as puts the cigarette closer to his mouth to inhale. He is in a strange kind of pain. He simultaneously wishes he felt more pain yet wants to rid himself entirely of feeling that pain.

For these brief moments, Frank believed that no one had ever felt pain like he was feeling now. He tried so hard to cry but all he made was crying noises - the relief of tears did not come to him. Though he thought he was hurting, Frank’s brain was so conditioned to not feeling emotions that, in reality, he was not feeling that much. Frank had no capacity to conceptualize what it must be like to not be him.

Frank brought himself back to a calm state. He slowly ambled inside to a furious X and a daughter so quiet that she was either planning to kill him or was in complete shock. Micaiah's face was faceless. She had no emotion in her eyes and the lines on her face that normally made her expressions expressive seemed to have disappeared. Her eyes were puffy and her nose was red, her wispy short blondish hair was a straggly, wet mess from the sweat of being in shock. Micaiah was dispirited and felt violated but she knew that Frank's telefucken signal would malfunction and, one day, he would be beyond repair.

Frank attempted to ignore X while she shouted at him incessantly. 'What the fuck is wrong with you, Frank? You're a piece of bloody shit" she said. His silence made her even angrier and she snapped. She desperately wanted to grab the sharp metal stoker from the fireplace and stab him, gouging and cutting his flesh. Instead she grabbed a handful of peanuts from the coffee table and shoved it in his face. She squashed them in his mouth and nose and got salt all over his greasy, wirery, hard face. He did not move as she squashed peanuts on him. He shut his eyes, probably to keep the salt from getting into them.

Often, when one has to deal with the immediacy of trauma one of the best solutions is to sleep which is exactly what Micaiah did. She crawled into a bed wrapped with plastic; obviously the owners of this house were very particular about the moths not eating their mattresses. The single bed was comfy and the duvet was warm and fancy, possibly stuffed with duck feathers. She shut the door and tried to rest. She was having the kind of sleep where you close your eyes and everything is black and you slowly start to see splotches of colour appear on the black surface. She was not really sleeping though. It was more a method to stop her from thinking, a way to block out the pain and humiliation. Her mother

gently opened the door, tiptoed to Micaiah's bed, softly opened the duvet cover and huddled up next to Micaiah, holding her closely. Micaiah could feel the warm dampness of X's tears. She knew her mother just wanted to show her care, but the wetness of her eyes pressed against Micaiah's back, making her think about what she had just experienced.

Eventually they both fell into a deep sleep. This was an important sleep. They both needed it. Micaiah dreamt about a mythical place in Egypt; a place where she could have visited; a place where she may be now; a place where she could be in the future. She dreamt of whales vaulting through the ocean. All they left behind was a giant splash and they disappeared beneath the surface again. A whale that looked like a sea unicorn had a tusk on the top of its lip. The tusk was in fact an overgrown tooth.

Figure 16: Image and sound of Narwhal titled *I dream of the Narwhal, I dream it has feet*, 2017.



(The World Book Encyclopedia 1987: 19).

Figure 17: Micaiah sleeping sounds, 2017.

The dream is like a confusion of truths where the Narwhal does not cross the Egyptian ocean and Wadi Al Hitan is an important fossilized museum that holds the prophecy that whales were bipedal creatures.

Micaiah tussles with the duvet. The thick plastic beneath her sticks to her sweaty body and squeaks. She makes confused sleeping sounds resembling someone either in pain or having intercourse. X calmly moves her hands off Micaiah and flips her body around. X now faces the window and this somehow blocks out the noises coming from Micaiah.

Micaiah's brain composed an image and narrative of Wadi Al Hitan. This was a dream that her memory may not be able to entirely record when she wakes up. A narrative that her brain has already stored, much like a cassette tape that has a written, pre-recorded narrative may create Micaiah's sensory hallucination.

When you awake from a dream, can you distinguish between actually remembering an event and seeming to remember an event? Can dreams of the desert, the vast ocean and whales with long teeth as bipedal creatures illustrate the nature of Micaiah's thinking? Is there an answer to her pain in this dream?

In the meantime, Frank has sunken into the couch watching television, or rather, watching himself. The television is completely out of tune but he is too lazy to fix it. He would rather watch cuts of the SABC soapie, *Days of our Lives* for five minutes until it meshes out into thick reams of rainbow colours. One of his best hobbies is to not think - this is surely his perfect activity.

[Hours pass slowly, purple flashing lights appear. Time is slowed down, every word and image is clear. Frank does not sleep]

[Frank watching *Days of Our Lives* a 2006 episode: Love scene between Hope and Bo]

Sitting on a couch
Bo: Hey where are you going?
Lifts Hope up and places her on his lap.
Hope: Looks up at Bo and giggles… "Did I mention how much I love you?"
Bo: "Not nearly enough."
Precipitates long kissing.

[Cut to colour bars]

Figure 18: Video of colour bars and *Days of our Lives* audio, 2017.



[Frank smiles]

Frank gets up off his chair to find X. He sluggishly lifts his heavy, sunken body out of the broken leather chair. He can't find her in her usual spot, in the kitchen, scrounging some food together. He kicks open the slightly ajar bathroom door and sees that it is empty too. He moves to the downstairs bedroom when he assumes Micaiah sleeps. The door is closed. He quietly pushes down on the handle and opens the door. He finds Micaiah and X sleeping on one single bed, X sleeping

on her side, and Micaiah sleeping on her back, with her third eye facing towards the stars. Frank smiles a sad smile, a smile filled with guilt. The spark that was once in his eyes after watching *Days of Our Lives* is now gone. He stands leaning against the open door watching them sleep. The more he watches, the more remorse fills deep in his insides.
Frank's deep regret, the true realisation of his defects, is like a cup of water being poured into a tall glass. Once it reaches the rim, it simply overflows and it does not stop. Frank, slowly, very slowly and quietly walks towards them on the bed. Micaiah's arm is hanging off over the side of the bed with her wrist exposed. Frank kneels down trying his best not to touch Micaiah's hand and notices small crisscrossed gashes on her little, narrow wrist.

He walks out of the room and gently closes the door. Now pacing, in a frenzy of guilt, he walks to the kitchen to see what food he can put together so that Micaiah and X have breakfast in the morning.

He opens the fridge and sees small plastic containers with rationed out baked beans sprinkled with small bits of hard rice. He now knows that X has been trying her best to make the baked beans more interesting, while at the same time squirreling and carefully distributing any food she finds. Frank's already hurting heart sinks. He digs into his pocket and finds one water-stained crinkled ten rand note.

Frank walks out of the house and into the garden, along the long untrimmed driveway. He unzips his pants and makes a long urination in the dried up bush. He slowly puts his penis back into the homeowner's tight jeans, careful not to catch himself in the metal zip. He walks towards the gate, realising he had locked himself inside in order to chase Ben out. He attempts to jump the gate and clumsily places his

thick leg onto the red-bricked small wall. He waits for a moment to get his thick leg onto the red-bricked small wall. He waits for a moment to get the strength to lift his body up. He pushes himself up and slumps off onto the other side of the wall, stumbling to his feet.

Since arriving here, this is the first time he has ventured outside the house. The sun is peaking through the sky. The colours bleed into one another slowly, slowly getting lighter. He's forgotten how magical the opening of the day looks like. The morning sunrays catch onto the dirty sedge lagoon's water surface.

Frank walks on the pavement passing the coloured street lamps which are still on from the previous evening. He continues walking, not entirely sure of where he is going or what he is looking for. Frank looks down at his feet while he is walking, not really thinking about anything. His eyes move upwards towards a broken bench, where an old man has passed out. The bench props up his body. His feet are dangling towards the sedge water. A perfectly long stick lined with gut and a hook sits at a 45-degree angle next to his body. Frank smells a strong scent of liquor and sees an empty three-litre bottle of Autumn Harvest wine next the man's limp hands. The man's mouth is slightly open and his head tilted. He has left himself open for the world to see. For a number of white reasons Frank does not realise that he has in fact walked past Ben, the fisherman, taking an intense alcoholic nap.

Frank reaches a traffic circle with an island in the middle of the circle. The island is covered in grass and has a giant Christmas tree on top. The Christmas tree is made of wire and decorated with multi coloured lights. A picturesquely silent old age home is on his left. Outside, there is an old woman watering her garden. Frank continues walking until he

reaches large delivery trucks off-loading milk. He follows the trucks into a parking lot where he finds a small Spar grocery shop. The Spar was not yet open. The self-appointed car guard and his skinny dog glared at Frank as he walked past, heading towards the undercover area.

Frank lent against the wall and slowly sat down, waiting for the Spar to open. He staggered up again, but only to his knees so he could get his squashed pack of cigarettes out of his pocket.

The jeans were so tight on him they looked like they were spray painted on his chunky legs. Frank lit his cigarette and sat back down again. The thin dog came running towards him, licking his face and sat next to him. His owner, the car guard, turned to his dog calling him back: “Come back here dog,” he shouted. The dog did not listen and after the second attempt of calling his dog, he flung his arm up in the air, twisting his hand in a signal that told Frank and the dog, “Fuck it! Fuck you both”.

An obese woman with a red and black uniform and a name tag that said “Suzetta” took keys out of her giant pants and began to open the Spar doors. She had a short black bob and thin slits for eyes. They were green and piercing, when you could see them. She had a turned up nose that looked like a pig’s nose and thin lips with pink lipstick smeared on them.



Frank got up and the dog continued following him. As Frank and the dog walked through the doors, the security guard stomped his left foot and shooed the dog away. The dog scampered off and Frank calmly walked into the Spar. He had his hand in his pocket, holding his ten Rand note. He went to the tinned food aisle and picked up a can of bully beef for

nine Rand. The shop was empty. Only Frank and the obese cashier were in the store. He figured that maybe, just maybe, he would be able to put the canned meat in his pocket and only purchase a loaf of bread.

Frank got to the cashier and Suzetta rang up his loaf of bread. He reached his hand into his tight pocket to get his ten Rand note and pay for the white, unsliced bread loaf. As he reached for his money, the tin of bully beef peaked through his faded out white and green zip down jacket. Frank did not notice but Suzetta did. She pretended she never saw a thing. Frank paid for the bread and casually, almost too casually, walked out of the Spar. As he walked out of the doors leading towards the parking lot, Suzetta gave the security guard a look that indicated he had shop lifted.

The security guard held out his arm, blocking Frank from passing. Frank tried moving, dodging past the security guard, but now the security guard stood right in front of him, looking down at him. The security guard asked him to empty his jacket pockets. Frank got angry and replied: “No! I haven’t stolen anything. Now! Let me go, now!” Unwillingly, Frank emptied his pockets and told the security guard he had paid for the bully beef. The security guard asked him for his slip and he said he had lost it. Frank knew this was not going to end well.

As the security guard looked at Suzetta, motioning her to come towards him to deal with the missing slip, Frank took this chance to run. He ran fast, holding tightly to his bread and bully beef. The security guard realised that he had gotten away. Turning his head back to the exit of the door, he could see Frank running through the parking lot. Suzetta shouted at him. “You fucken stupid! He’s getting away.”

Unfortunately for Frank, he had no clue where he was running to, and the self appointed car guard indicated to the Spar security that he had run towards the traffic circle. Frank was caught just past the circle and hand cuffed with cable ties.



The security guard pulled Frank in silence in the same direction that Frank had walked to the Spar earlier that morning. They passed Ben who was now awake and jabbering to himself. They saw the dirty sedge water and crossed the road at the house that Frank was squatting in.

Frank felt a fleeting glimmer of promise that the security guard was going to lead him home. Instead, he led him past the house to the back of the house where the local police station is situated.

Frank was stunned; not that he was being arrested but that he had been living in front of the police station. The two policemen laughed as the security guard brought Frank into the station. The policemen instructed the security guard to complete the usual forms detailing the incident. Frank sat on a white, plastic garden chair outside the small office while the security guard completed the forms.

The policemen did not bother getting Frank to fill in his details of the incident. This would mean that more time would have to be spent on this petty case. The police officers, laughing at Frank, pulled him by his cable-tied hands to the two holding cells at the back of the police station. One was already occupied and Frank was placed in the other adjoining cell. The security bars were rusted and the cells looked like they once housed toilets for the police staff. They had not been painted in a long time - only a small section of a cell wall was painted white. The

rest, stripped by time and use, was a sandy colour, dirty and rough in texture.

[Policemen, talking and laughing]

Policeman one: “We’ll just leave him in here so he’ll get a taste of prison…I don’t have the time or energy to take him to Knysna…it’s too much…for what? Some kuk canned meat?”
Policeman two: “Yaa hey no! Fuck that! We’ll let him sit here for a bit…feed him some canned meat even…haha.”

[The smell of fish]

Frank sat in the dark cell for a few hours. Right now it existed as a fantasy state. The sun was bright and light on the outside of the cell. It glared through the rusted bars. It was so dark inside the cell that Frank could barely see anything. This experience is similar to the loss of time when walking out of a cinema. Time was experienced out of its chronological order; the loss of time changed the light, and the darkness numbed Frank’s perception of reality.

[In the cinema our own sense of time is often replaced by the passage of time suggested by the film. The real world is far more distant in this time.]

Frank could hear noise around him; noise that did not seem like police jabber. He could hear a reel spinning, a man coughing and a kettle boiling next door.

Figure 19: Edited layers of multi-coloured flag and South African Police flag, 2017.



[The wind blows the South African Police flag and the multi-coloured flag]

Micaiah and X, now awake, are in the kitchen making tea and scratching together some eggs for breakfast. X begins scrambling eggs that smell particularly “eggy” as they have passed their sell by date. She adds lots of long lasting fat-free milk into the egg mixture. The addition of extra milk gives the appearance that the breakfast contains more eggs than there actually are. X shouts for Frank, “Frank! Frank! FRANK! Where ARE you?"

Chapter 3

The night grows heavy and Frank's neck bends back leaning against the stubbly concrete wall. His eyes are closed and he is both awake and asleep simultaneously. Footsteps start moving through the bristled dry grass. He wonders, with his eyes closed, who may be up at this late hour walking around his cell. The footsteps get louder and closer. Breaking sticks or twigs make the sound of the steps seem intense, as if someone is looking for something. Frank smells a woody-green burning fire blowing into his cell.

Some time later, the cell is enveloped with fumes of a wood fire intermingled with burnt fish and Frank asks the stranger: "Who are you? You can't be a cop?"

A man with a deep but kind voice replies: "My name is Tigger".
Frank: "Are you…are you a cop?"
Tigger *[with a hint of humour in his voice]*: "No!"
Frank: "Well, then, what are you doing here building a fire and cooking your fish in the police station?"
Tigger: "It's a long story."
Frank: "I've got lots of time."
Tigger: "Hmmph ha…ja you do, but uh do you know this is a holding cell? They'll take you to Knysna tomorrow."
Frank: "Ag fuck…show me what you look like, come closer!"
Tigger: "No!"
Grudgingly Tigger steps forward towards Frank's cell.

Tigger was a short black man with sharp eyes and a bright toothless smile. He gloved his hands into his two pockets. He wore a white stained shirt and dirty brownish chinos rolled up to his mid calves.

Frank pressed Tigger again and asked why he was cooking fish in the police station. Tigger moved backwards towards the fire. He did not reply for some time; it seemed as if he was not going to respond.



Figure 20: Image of Sedgefield Police Station, titled *Purple Lights*, 2014.

Tigger: “You don’t stop boet! No wonder they lock you up. I live here, at the police station.”
Frank: “WHY?”

Tigger: “The location is too much pay. So I stay here and fish. I made this place home. But I have a job here because I have to help Mr. Bernie”.

Frank: “Huh?”

Tigger: “I tell him about the people when they drunk and talk.”

Frank: “And talk?”

Tigger: “Talk about things they did to other people here.”

Frank: “Like crime?”

Tigger: “Jaa man… crime…obvious.”

Frank: “So, do they look after you? What happens if your ‘friends’ catch onto this?”

Tigger: “They protect me.”

An old day. The sun begins to set and the dark winter sky seems slightly brighter and warmer.

X squeezes Dettol soap onto a sponge and cleans Micaiah’s back. Micaiah’s arms are slouched over her crossed legs as she sits in the bath listening to a beautiful sound track – a track that sounds distinctively familiar – but that is not her mother’s taste. The smell of soap and expensive champagne lingers in the bathroom. Micaiah feels like she could be at home.



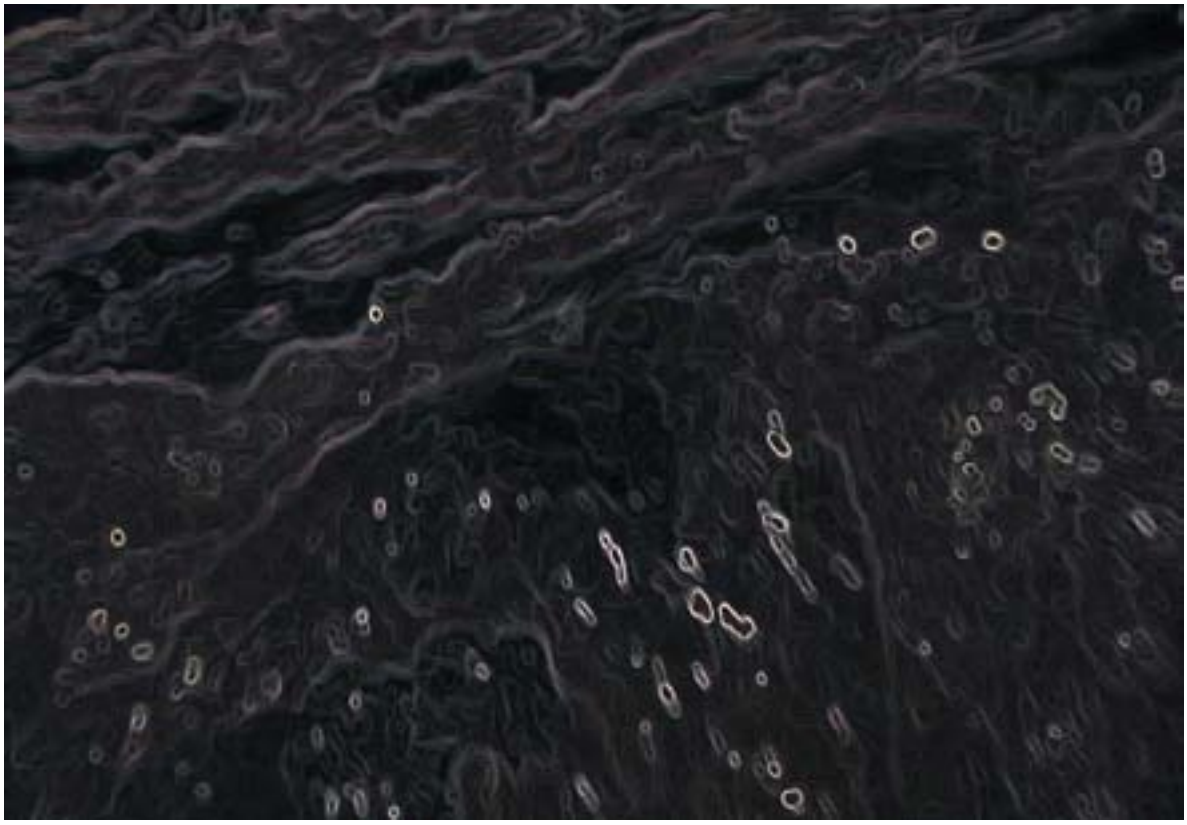
Figure 21: Sound of the start of Micaiah’s hallucination, 2017.

Her eyes close and she begins to see the black canvas appearing in her mind. The canvas gradually starts to fill with blobs of bright colours. Micaiah has the ability to sever from consciousness. She languidly submerges herself in the bathtub, just enough so that her nose sticks

out of the water. She sees a middle-aged woman wearing black pants and a tight lace top. Her breasts are large and her figure slim. Crying, she sits on the toilet right next to Micaiah. Her head is in her hands and her green-yellow eyes well up with more and more tears. Her makeup runs and drips down her lace top. This woman's cries are uncontrollable. It is as if she has lost something; a relationship; a time; a memory. She is on the brink of a panic attack.

The donkey brays a long and intense bray…"heehaw"
"heeeeeeehaaaaaw".
It is as if the house is speaking to Micaiah and its noises and pain open the windows to a narrative of many years of living in this house.

Figure 22: Screenshot from film, *She has lost something*, 2016.



The woman calms down. She gets up and from the toilet seat and walks towards the kitchen, the very kitchen that Micaiah and X had been cooking their breakfast in every day. She wipes her eyes with a dishtowel from the kitchen sink and cleans off the makeup from her top.

She then opens the fridge door and pulls out lettuce, cucumber, tomatoes and olives. She knows exactly where everything is and finds the chopping board. She chops all the salad ingredients and tosses them in a bowl. She walks outside onto the patio and puts on a brave face but which reveals that something is most definitely wrong. This woman reminds Micaiah of X; of the struggles her mother endures and the capacity she has to change her facial masks. Micaiah abruptly awakens from her hallucination and gasps for air, perplexed and mildly out of touch with reality.

Micaiah gets dressed in some old 'jamies' with holes in the pants and a long baggy shirt. They were all she could find without making a total mess in the cupboards. She pulls open the dustbin to see if X had taken her bottle of champagne to bed with her. She had. A note on the counter read:



> "*Gone to bed darling, there's food in the microwave. Also, please try wake up early tomorrow. I must do some washing. Love always mom*".

Micaiah opens the microwave to find a small portion of gooey red baked beans with a fried egg on top. The smell of the egg makes her want to vomit. She carefully scrapes off the egg into a serviette and throws it in the bin. The taste of baked beans has now become a norm for her. She eats the small portion with relish.

[The morning]

The sun beats heavily through the closed curtains. Micaiah drifts from a state of sleep to a state of consciousness. She remembers her mother's note, reminding her that she must not sleep in. She gets out of bed and gathers all the dirty washing scattered on the floor. She can hear X humming a song in the bathroom. She walks to the bathroom and finds her mom on her knees, washing the laundry in the bath. Micaiah stands in the doorway with her laundry, waiting for her mom to realise she is there. "Oh…morning darling. How did you sleep?" X muttered while still focusing on washing the clothing. "I slept fine, thanks mom. Here's my washing…Will you move up a bit so I can help you?" asked Micaiah.

The lathered water was light brown, a dusty dirt that seemed to seep into everyone's clothing. The hand washing soap formed a thin plastic-like layer over Micaiah's and X's hands. It took time to clean and rinse all the clothing that they had 'borrowed'. They got up from the cold tiled floor, aching from kneeling for so long and put each item of washed clothing into a plastic laundry basket.

X: "It's very sunny in the back and it looks like there is a washing line there… please grab the pegs Caiah and bring them to me in the back".
Micaiah: "Sure thing… I'll be there in a sec."

[X walks to backyard, smoking a cigarette]

Micaiah remembered she had no idea where to find the pegs. She began opening each cupboard in the kitchen, looking for the pegs.

Micaiah *[shouting]:* “Mom… do you know where the pegs are?”
X could not hear her. Micaiah asked this in jest, as her voice would never reach from the kitchen to the back yard.

Micaiah opened the last cupboard under the sink. Behind all the old pots, she found a small basket with some wooden and plastic pegs. She ran to the back and found her mom staring at a piece of fabric peaking through a metal bar of a prison cell on the other side of the diamond cut fence. Holding her burning cigarette in a trance state, she didn’t even acknowledge Micaiah’s presence. Her head was tilted as she stared, bewildered, into the police station.

X *[shouting, not taking her eyes off the faded green and white fabric]*: “Micaiah…Micaiah...Micaiah…”
Micaiah: “Yes mom…I’m right here. What is wrong?”
X *[said with shock, still not taking her eyes off the police cell and piece of fabric]*: “That’s…umm…that’s...I think…your father’s ugly jacket caught in that gate.”
Micaiah: “No it can’t be, mom. I’m sure Frank has hitched-”
[X cut Micaiah off]
X *[shouted with a burst of emotion]*: “Frank! Frank!”

There was silence for what seemed to be ten minutes, but only lasted a few seconds. Eventually Frank replied with no emotion: “Oh! Hi X, I’m glad you switched me on. I could hear you two in the back”.
X: “Frank, what the fuck have you done?”

[We are nearing the end]

Frank: “Agggg…I stole bully beef from the Spar.”

X: “Why Frank?”

Frank: “Because I…I wanted to give you and Micaiah food.”

Tigger *[responding from his small room]*: “They’ll let him out tonight, ma’am.”

X: “Who are you?”

Tigger: “My name is Tigger.”

X: “Tigger, do you know if they’ll let him out without bail?”

Tigger: “Naa…they won’t ask for bail. All they’ll get is bully beef.”

X *[retorting quickly]*: *“*Okay. Frank PLEASE don’t cause any more trouble. We need to go home now. Micaiah has missed too much school and I can’t live like this...I want to go back home and you must too.”

Tigger *[now walking out of his room and showing himself to X]*: “Where do you live?”

X: “I live in Johannesburg.”

Tigger: “Yoh…I want to go there one day…to the big city. Make something of my life.”

X: “ Oh no you don’t. It’s hard out there.”

Micaiah hung the washing up, lifting her heels off the floor pegging each garment. Her whole attitude changed once she had heard Frank’s voice. Only a small part of her was hoping he had hitched a ride back to Cape Town and she would not have to see him for another six years. As two policemen walked into the station, the conversation between X, Tigger and Frank had now died down.

X pulls Micaiah close to try and hug her. Micaiah pulls away and walks ahead of her mom into the house.

[Feelings you shouldn’t feel]

X is so conflicted with emotions. She's tired of living in a stranger's house and she's concerned about Frank. A part of her is happy that he is there in prison. It proves to her that she means something to him.

[The donkey brays a squeal of "heehaw", and it echoes in the distance]

Micaiah goes to her room and climbs into bed. She closes her eyes and progressively reaches a hypnagogic state of lucidness, where consciousness is on the threshold of sleeping and being awake. She dreams of home and stability, of forgetting, forgetting this trip and never seeing her father again.

[Time passing slowly and Micaiah sees every detail of her home. Every colour and sound is clear]

X lightly opens the door to Micaiah's room and kneels down next to Micaiah, holding her hand. "I'm so sorry", she says. "I've put you through so much". Micaiah squeezes her mom's hand and asks her to please leave her for a while.

The sparkling bubbles of champagne engulf X in the bath while she wallows in her sadness. She's onto her third bottle after three hours in the tub. She lights a cigarette and the tears start welling up heavily in her deep, dark eyes.

[Loud laughing from the front gate]

Frank opens the small wooden gate while Tigger tries to hold him up. They eventually get the latch open and slip through the gate. The long, dry grassy driveway seems like an eternity to walk, but they do it,

stumbling. They walk through the living room and into the kitchen. Their infectious laughter immediately wakes Micaiah up. She knows that Frank has been released. Frank shows Tigger around and swings Micaiah's door open. "This is Sleeping Beauty", Frank sarcastically snorts out.

He then pushes the bathroom door open, unzips his jeans and urinates all over the seat. Tigger is shocked by Frank's lack of privacy in front of his daughter. Tigger leaves Micaiah's room and waits patiently outside for Frank.

Tigger holds Frank up again as he teeters up the stairs towards X's room. After almost ten minutes of staggering up the stairs, they finally reach the bedroom area. It is covered in a huge vintage Persian rug, thick wooden floors, a large deck area and a massive king sized bed. "Sho… this is the life", Tigger exclaims. "No. No. Just you wait until you see the bath", Frank replies.

They entered the bathroom; green marble floors and stairs leading to a giant tub. X lay in the tub drinking yet another bottle of champagne, completely intoxicated. Three champagne bottles and a pack of cigarettes lay on the side of the tub.

[Frank stood on the final fifth step leading to the tub]

X was almost half asleep in the tub, holding an empty bottle of champagne. Frank signaled to Tigger to come and look. Reluctantly, Tigger climbed up the steps. He saw big bouncy breasts peaking out of

the water, blood red soaked hair, and long silky legs. He stared at X in amazement. “Nice piece of meat she is”, Frank joked, pushing his elbow into the side of Tigger.

[The donkey brayed a long and intense heee hawww” this was the most angry and loudest the heeehaw had ever been]

“Uhhh...ya...neh…” Tigger said softly.

The noise in the bathroom broke X from her trance-like state. She stared at Frank and Tigger for a moment.
X [*her eyes were bright and she had a big smile on her face]:* “Oh my word Frank. You’re out. I’m so happy!”

Frank: “Yeah... well it’s the law, X. They can’t keep me there forever over one bloody tinned beef.”
[Tigger was completely puzzled by this situation]
Frank: “X get your ass up and shake my friend’s hand.”
Tigger *[interjecting]*: “No no…is okay.”

X stood up baring her whole body. There was slight shame on her face as she reached over the bath to shake Tigger’s hand.

X: “Frank, we need to leave tonight. I can’t keep going on like this. Micaiah wants to go home.”
[Tigger and Frank leave the bathroom]

Frank: “Oh shut up woman!”

[The donkey brayed again, this time softer than before]

Tigger and Frank, having sobered up, walk downstairs. X's naked body cleared their heads and made walking down the stairs easier.

They walked to the TV room, flopped onto the couch and opened a bottle of Black Label whiskey. They drank and drank, and laughed together about how Frank had kidnapped some rich person's house and then landed up in a prison cell, right behind the house.

The smell of smoke lit the air, eventually hitting Micaiah's bedroom. She lay awake wondering whether she should stay in her own room or go upstairs to X, where she may be able to sleep. However, there was a strong possibility that Frank would come up stairs and fuck X, not caring whether or not Micaiah was in the room. She knew drunken Frank. She did not want to get in his way, especially since he had just got out of a prison cell, with his new prison friend.

But Micaiah was wrong; she could have gone upstairs to X. Frank and Tigger polished off two bottles of whiskey in two hours. They passed out on the couch.

[Burning smells]

The smell of something burning lingered through to Micaiah's room. She knew this was not simply cigarette smoke. She got out of bed and walked through the kitchen into the living room. She peaked through the living room door and found Frank passed out with his mouth drooling, holding a burning cigarette in between his stumpy fingers and dirty nails. The cigarette set the throw on the couch alight and a small flame was burning.

Micaiah ran to the kitchen and grabbed a glass of water. She threw the water onto the couch. It fizzled out like the sound of an overheated frying pan being placed under cold, running water. Tigger and Frank did not even flinch at the smell or sound.

Micaiah walked back to her bedroom and climbed into bed, finally being able to sleep. She closed her eyes and fell into a deep sleep.

Its 5:00am and X is up. She has packed all of her and Micaiah's belongings, and is impatiently waiting outside to leave. Her plan is to hitch a ride with Micaiah back to Johannesburg. She wants to say goodbye to Frank and Tigger, and waits for her daughter to wake up. She paces up and down the patio, smoking a cigarette and drinking copious amounts of coffee as she thinks this will cure her hangover.

Frank wakes up and stretches his legs. He looks at the burn he left on the couch and holds his head in pain.

Frank: "X what the hell are you doing all dressed up and ready to leave?"
X: "I'm waiting for Micaiah to get up so we can hitch a ride back to Jo'burg."
Frank: "You're fucking joking, right? What the hell do you think I did bringing Tigger here?"
[X looks blankly at Frank and shrugs her shoulders]
Frank: "Tigger knows how to fix cars. He's gonna fix my car and I will take you back home."
X: "Oh no. I can't wait that long. I told you we want to go back home."
Frank trying to wake Tigger, prods him, puts his hand in a stale glass of water, and flicks the water on his face.

Tigger [*sheepishly asks as he opens his eyes]*: “What…what’s going on?”
Frank: “You need to fix my car please man.”
Tigger: “huh… Frank?”
Frank: “Ag I’ll pay you once we’re back in Cape Town, I promise.”
Tigger: “Haibo no… I’m not coming with you”
Frank *[pleading]*: “Please man…just help me out.”

Tigger *[clicking his tongue in his mouth and shaking his head looking at Frank]*: “Nx!…fine. I will look at it…but you better pay me for my time. I’m not stopping fishing for this…NO.”
Frank: “That’s great, thanks.”

Frank goes into the kitchen and fetches a glass of water and a tablet that looks like Panado from the kitchen counter for Tigger.
Frank: “Here you go. Some fresh water and a Panado.”
Tigger swallows the tablets without even thinking.
Frank: “X get back here. Go and make us some eggs. Now.”
X stubs out her cigarette out and softly walks into the kitchen. If she were a dog, she would have had her tail between her legs.

[“Heeeehaaaww” brays the donkey]

Frank *[annoyed]*: “Where’s that fucking donkey? He hasn’t stopped the whole trip.”
Tigger leans back in his chair and Frank sits back down on the couch, waiting for his breakfast. X fries three eggs for the men and saves one for Micaiah. She adds salt, pepper and the milky solution in the fridge.

[Back in the living room, X holds two plates with one egg on each]



X *[emotionless]*: “Here are your eggs!”
She places the first plate in front of Frank and the second in front of Tigger.
Tigger: “Thank you.”
X stares at Tigger as he thanks her for the eggs. While Tigger looks up at X and thanks her, Frank has already devoured his food.

Micaiah has woken up and is already dressed. She must have seen that X had gathered all their belongings and was ready to leave. Micaiah was elated. However, she knew she would probably have to wait for Frank and Tigger to finish eating so that X could wash their dishes.

[Tigger and Frank walk across the road and try to look for the broken down Bantam bakkie. They both squint through the sunrays looking for the vehicle]

Tigger: “I don’t see it…where is it?”
Frank: “It’s there. Come on, let’s go!”
He takes off his ugly checked shirt and walks through the brush of grass into the lagoon.
Tigger: “I’ll meet you there. I must get my tools.”

Frank wades through the water that is now knee deep. His actions are delayed as he is wondering whether Tigger will return or not. Within minutes, Tigger is back and he flings a small old waterproof bag over his shoulders and gets in the water. Frank sees him and waves with excitement. Tigger does not wave back.

Frank swims to zone 6 where the speedboats are. He's weary and sore. It's a long swim that never seems to end and he cannot even see his car. Tigger is faster and far more agile in the water. He is only two meters behind Frank who is out of breath and panting like a hot dog in the scorching sun.

Tigger: "Frank… I don't see it, man!"
Frank *[barely breathing, pausing between each word]*: "Me neither, but I think the sun is playing tricks. Who would take my car in this small town?"
Tigger: "Jo! Anyone, Frank."

Figure 23: Image sourced from video, *It will soon end*, 2015.



Two days pass and X insists on waiting for Frank and Tigger to come home. She packs up all of Frank's tatty clothes and shoes and tries to clean up the house. She makes all the beds and cleans the kitchen. She cleans the toilets and sweeps the floor. The house is almost how they found it – with eggs, milk, alcohol, toiletries and some clothes missing.

Micaiah pleads incessantly with X to leave and hitch a ride back to Jo'burg. She cannot stay here anymore and she knows that if she does they will land up leaving with Frank and Tigger.

Micaiah: "Please mom! Please! I will… I'll do anything to leave here without those two."
X: "Darling, we can't just leave them."

The night is dark and a cat sits outside purring at the door for any kind of left over food. All the beds are made so Micaiah and X curl up on the couch, using dog blankets to keep warm.

Bright lights and a loud “hoooot” wake them. Frank and Tigger have arrived back with his repaired bakkie. They seem to be intoxicated but that would be impossible. Even more impossible is how they crossed the lagoon with the bakkie.

“Come! We’re going”, Frank shouted! Micaiah got off the couch and pulled her mom from her couch. She looked at X with puppy dog eyes, begging her to rather hitchhike than go with Frank and Tigger. X got up and grabbed Micaiah’s hand. She took plastic bags full of items - mostly stolen from the house - and walked towards the car, holding Micaiah’s hand.
“We going to Jo’burg first, Frank?” she asked with more demand in her voice than questioning.

[En route. Frank drives while all three sleep in the car. Tigger snores loudly]

Hours pass and they land up in Oudtshoorn, a small farming town before Beaufort West. Frank stops at the closest open bar leaving everyone in the car to sleep.



Frank sits down. The bar is adorned in garish pink lights, silicone penises and fake cobra snakes. Three fat women dance in a

synchronized, automated manner on a table. Frank wonders whether they are in fact real, and, if they are, whether they are strippers.

The barman has dreadlocks and is wearing giant circular earrings. He serves Frank his cheapest whiskey and attends to his other customers.

[Hours pass but everything is moving fast. Colours bleed into one another and words become sounds]

A man with a magnifying glass inspects the bar table. His eye enlarges and Frank begins to think he may get sucked into the craziness of this place too quickly. He lights a cigarette to come back to reality.



Man with magnifying glass *[magnifying glass still pressed up against his face]:* "Who are you?"
Frank: "Frank."

[Man with magnifying glass is a magician]

Magician: "Frank, do you know you look just like a television set?"
Frank: "Well, yes. I have a big stomach."
Magician: "Yes, a big stomach that definitely screens moving objects."
Frank *[slugging his whiskey and reaching into his pocket for a squashed packet of cigarettes]*: "I don't know… know what you mean?"
Magician *[still holding his magnifying glass, gesturing to Frank to move towards the purple light]*: "I mean that if you stand right there under the purple light, I am able to turn you on - like a television set."
Frank: "Don't talk shit man."

The purple-lit area was embellished with a hand woven carpet on the wall and different sized bells dangling from the wooden slated roof. A projection of the texture of water was visible on the woven carpet.

This water texture was the membrane of the carpet. The skull of a donkey was suspended in perfect symmetry in front of the carpet and water projection. The surrounding walls were decorated with helium-inflated blow up dolls and white cotton candyfloss. A clock displaying the wrong time was placed next to the donkey skull. There were elaborate, broken up sounds of the braying of an automated donkey from that area. These sounds were triggered whenever someone crossed its sensor.

The magician got up off his bar stool and grabbed a wooden chair. He gave it to Frank. Attached to the chair through a chain under the seat, were fluffy, pink handcuffs. “Let’s try it out, Frank”, the magician said.

“Okay, fine. Whatever…” Frank unwilling responded. Frank got up off his bar stool and took the chair from the magician. He placed the chair underneath the suspended donkey and sat down. He slowly handcuffed himself to the back of the chair. The magician beckoned the patrons in the bar to come and watch his magic trick. He turned the television on and Frank’s face started ghosting out.

The purple light brightened as the television showed its white noise. “April the 9th 2015” said the magician to Frank, the television. Frank tried hard not to tune into this channel. His body convulsed slightly and the sound of the automated donkey stopped. The television took a moment to play. Then, suddenly, an aged man, with a square stomach walked through the University gates of Cape Town, holding old-fashioned

cutting equipment. He walked towards the statue of Cecil John Rhodes and started methodically and tirelessly cutting uncle Cecil off his podium. The television blurs to white noise. It seems that Frank was able to control some of this screening.

Abruptly, the television cuts to a moving image of Cecil without his nose. “How about June the 3rd?” the magician asked sarcastically. “What happened on that date, Frank?” he asked again with a grin on his face.

Figure 24: Screenshot from video, *The Night They Met The Magician II*, 2015.



Micaiah's body slowly flashes into water and X is spinning in circles like a child looking at the stars. Tigger dances with the wind that has become X. But soon she is back and her red hair shoots up with the sharp spinning motion. A green money fish is dying but can still eaten. Frank sits in a corner playing his memories on his belly, unconsciously embarrassed and sweating. The magician laughs.

[The landscape radically shifts to a silver room. It sounds like they are submersed under water and everything is reflective from the silver wallpaper. Popeye the Sailor Man plays softly in the background. Television screens reveal short memories and long pauses]

Figure 25: Edit from video *Automated Fish People*, 2015.



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