



Meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng

Research Report

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Education, Communities and Social Context**

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Abstract

Meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng is a Practice as Research study, utilizing an autoethnographic, autobiographical narrative method to research consequences. Its purpose is to realize the ways in which camouflaging may affect the actors and inhibit them from reaching their greatest potential. This research will also explore performance as a tool to uncover '*meetlo*' which can cleanse the imprints rising out of repetitive, ritualistic theatrical processes. The concern stems from the realization that without comprehensive de-roling methods, actors are left to move forward with imprints carried over from previous processes. These may be harmful to their well-being.

The study focuses on ritualistic theatrical processes that mimic real '*meetlo*'. These are practiced and performed, just as they are in real life, on stage – in the world of fiction. The actors who fail to follow the procedures required by the '*meetlo*', leave carrying with them imprints from previous production. The aim of the research, as described in this study, is to discover ways in which actors can comprehensively de-role and be cleansed in order to un-camouflage the self thus, removing the imprints received during the ritualistic processes of theatre.

It was discovered in the study that; actors do use camouflage to get by in their artistic career. This was discovered through using the four mannerism of the camouflage world and linking them comprehensively to the real world. This established that actors who mimic others while playing in ritualistic theatrical productions camouflage by concealing their own selves which causes a disruption in their well-being. It makes them portray identities from the fictional world, in their real lives, and takes them away from their true selves. They seemingly become stapled to being disguised. This investigation has proved that indeed existing '*meetlo*' of the Basotho can comprehensively de-role actors and remove imprints taken on during ritualistic theatrical processes.

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This Research Report is humbly dedicated to the actors, particularly students who are tirelessly passionate about acting. May this be the beginning of finding many more knowledge containers that will make us more aware, informed, and able to carry on telling our societies stories. To my late grandmother nkgono maMosia *Lesedi*, *kealeboha koko*. May we go back to our roots and remain rooted and not allow ourselves to get lost in the murky realities of others. To myself, Tshepang Moticoe, you are courageous than you could ever imagine, you are life and you are walking in the light. Keep facing your giants overcoming and succeeding.

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Plagiarism Declaration

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Research Report

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Due Date: 31st March 2020

Research title: *Meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng*

Plagiarism Declaration

I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and to pretend that it is one's own.

I have used the author date convention for citation and referencing. Each significant contribution to and quotation in this essay from the work or works of other people has been acknowledged through citation and referencing.

This Research Report is my own work.

I have not allowed and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

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Signature: T. Moticoe

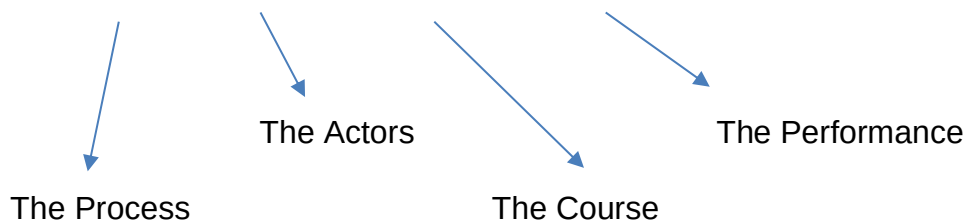
Date: 31st March 2020

CHAPTER: Selelekela sa meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng

A story is a paradox, we indulge in, the playing ourselves and taking for granted the fine line between real and fiction. Ben Okri (1997: 97) warns us:

“it is easy to forget how mysterious and mighty stories are. They do their work in silence, invisibly. They work with all the internal materials of the mind and self. They become part of you while changing you. Beware the stories you read or tell: subtly, at night, beneath the waters of consciousness, they are altering your world”.

Title: *Meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng*



'Meetlo' are the Basotho traditions and habits which are embedded in their spirituality. '*Basotho ba re Sesotho ha se tolokwe*' meaning: The Basotho say Sesotho cannot be directly translated, therefore, the definition given is based on what the '*baholo*' (elders) have defined '*meetlo*' to be over the years, on what I was taught during my upbringing and how it was explained to me at the initiation school. The elders inherently refer to '*meetlo*' as the reason for their behaviour and for the reason why they hold the notion so dear. They say it is deeply rooted in their spirituality. They say that the '*meetlo*' are what gives significance to everything and is a way of living that aims to make an individual prosperous.

One could wonder, what happens then when the real '*meetlo*' are being mimicked in the sacred space of theatre. How could one not be curious when there are numerous aspects which come into play that could affect the self? Robert Cohen (2013) notes how beginners are often led to believe that acting is wholly different from 'real' behaviour, which it is not. He shows how acting takes place in 'play' and is called 'playing', though the words imply deception and non-seriousness. There are, without doubt, differences between acting on stage and the way we behave in life, but fortunately the differences are not so much between 'reality' and 'unreality' or between

'honesty' and 'dishonesty', as about 'reality' in the first place and is a very complex concept to define. Interestingly, whether we speak of what is or what is not, the self remains the base of all that is activated and brought into play when we are acting (Cohen, 2013: 5).

Research is a personal venture which, quite aside from its social benefits, is worth doing for its direct contribution to one's own self-realization. It can be taken as a way of meeting life with the maximum of stops open to get out of experience the most poignant significance, the most full - throated song of research and the reasons why we do it (Mooney, 1957: 155).

This is why *'Meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng'* is an autographic form of research derived from my personal story as an actor and the experience gained from a theatrical process, I was in. It is an evaluation of the self and a call for a response to that phenomenon which is a combination of the 'I' and the 'we' which speaks to what things mean to us as individuals. It is, philosophically, a perspective through which we gain access to relatability via the lens of theatre. This is precisely what Ross Mooney (1957) is speaking about from his experience as a researcher.

This speaks back to me as an aspiring autoethnographic actor. Every actor who aspires to take on the performance of several roles fears the possibility of the fictional experiences being imprinted. The body turns these fictional experiences into a reality by means of embodied knowledge. The brain may not recall, but the body reacts because it recalls the unremembered and constantly manifests the imprints which may be holding the actor back from their "full throated song" (Mooney, 1957: 155). This is the ultimate concern.

Actors are constantly using and reusing their brains and bodies without any form of cleansing. According to Professor Bailey at the Kansas State University "actors are very vulnerable, too. They spend years learning how to get into role, but they're never taught techniques about getting out of it" (Bailey & Dickinson, 2014). Actors then, are being taught how to enter the world of fiction but not necessarily how to comprehensively exit that world.

Figuratively speaking, if actors were a drinking glass and the theatre a restaurant. If, every time a new customer walked in, the customers were served by a different bartender (the director) with the same unwashed glass as the previous customer used,

just a different drink in the same uncleansed glass. Eventually, the glass would change its colour and the dirt would blend in so well that it would be taken to be the original colour of the glass.

This is when the 'self' conforms to the inevitable and learns to adapt and, consciously or unconsciously, moves forward amid the grey left behind by previous encounters. The basic self thus takes on the many impressions of the fictional self. Seemingly it is like the leopard - which is a cat that can be distinguished from other cats by the indelible spots that it has inherited, and which it now uses for camouflage to catch its prey. Perhaps as humans our prey is our passion and the success that we seek. The question is how camouflaged do we need to be in order to catch our prey?

Rick Kemp (2012) could not have defined it better when he said: "... it is the nature of live performance. Beautiful, ugly, embodied, ephemeral, frustrating, blissful, gone...but living in people's memories (when we have done our jobs well). Moreover, we hope that the memories are strong enough to get us the next job." He continues to explain that naturally, actors want to do the best they can, but even more perplexing than the performance itself, is the nature of the training. How does one train in a process that simultaneously combines all the features of living, of real life without there being any form of consequences (Kemp, 2012: 1).

Sesotho sere, se sa feleng se ya hlola loosely translates as everything has a way of beginning and an end. Thus, when tapping into character, tapping out is essential. They are linked just in the same way as 'going' is to 'come'. There is a silent, undeclared notion that comes with this Sesotho idiom, it is that an ending is meant to be expressed in solitude. Perhaps, there has been a mental chaos that has led to an overbearing pain, to the recognition of self; hence, the importance of returning to the basics of who we are for healing.

"De-roling in acting emerges with [a] common purpose - to separate from character qualities and traits" (Bailey & Dickinson, 2014). I personally have been introduced to and practiced a few of the stepping out techniques in my training. The main ones are breathing in and out deeply then sighing out with a sound, shaking it off (this is to release all tension in our bodies by shaking everybody part) and rolling down through dulation and adulation for multiple counts up and down. So, indeed, stepping out

methods do exist in the acting world. In Professor Bailey's de-roling research, she enlarges on how few existing ones which come from various authors:

Susana Bloch (1993), a psychologist developed the 'Step-out' method for actors to counteract the effect of an 'emotional hangover'. The technique entails 'ending each emotional reproduction by at least three slow, regular, and deep, full breathing cycles followed by a total relaxation of the facial muscles and a change in posture' (Bloch, 1993: 128). This is a sequence intended to reset the actor to neutral, and to help the actor achieve physical relaxation and control of their emotions. Mario Cossa (2006) highlights the method of infusing the props used in a performance, with intrinsic character qualities. Treating props in a ritualized way, the actor projects character qualities onto the prop, stating the objective out loud. The intended goal is to leave the character in the studio, where it belongs (Bailey & Dickinson, 2014).

This all acknowledges the need for 'stepping away' as it is referred to in acting. My concern is the difference between stepping away and de-roling. "De-roling can be defined as an intentional, mindful act to create a separation from self and a character played in order to reintegrate into reality" (Jones, 2007). While 'stepping out' according to The Glossary of Arts Terms is "an instruction to an actor to relax and come out of character (step out) or to concentrate and get into character ready to rehearse" (TheatreCraft.com, 2019). According to my personal observation and experience 'stepping out' is a verb, something to be expressed, a movement from the external, an immediate 'in-take'. While de-roling is comprehensively aimed at individuals to help them let go of the character both physiologically and psychologically and to move back into the reality.

I then further asked myself, what is the possibility of stepping away, on your own, without comprehensively de-roling, being enough? Or of there being no consequences when there are no comprehensive 'de-roling' practices? To be comprehensive, there would have to be a separation 'out of' or 'away from' a character, both externally and internally, especially after intensively delving into a character for weeks or even months; repetitively 'being' someone other than the 'true self'.

I strongly believe that the lack of comprehensive 'de-roling' practices to help the actor move out of the fictional character assumed, in the rehearsed moments, and, even

more dangerously, in the unprepared moments. Possibly leaves an imprint on the self of the character being played. Professor Bailey from Kansas State University, also has this concern and asks, “How do actors handle intense parts without becoming depressed or negatively harmed?” (Bailey & Dickinson, 2014).

Suzanne Burgoyne (1999: 157-179) raises the question of what impact acting may have on the student performer's personal life. In the article she tells how, while directing *The Crucible*, she observed what she called, “psychological fall-out” and Richard Schechner (1985) explicates that theatre scholars who have traditionally focused their attention on the production itself suffer from “aftermath,” which he defines as a “long-term consequence or follow through” (Schechner, 1985: 19).

This may or may not be consciously recognized immediately by the actor, even though their personal character attributes may have altered sufficiently for the people around them to notice behavioural changes in their daily life post playing a role. Bailey explains that these intense roles can result in changes in the actor's personality which may range from depression, acting out, to heavy drinking because the actors did not leave their characters behind at the end of the day (Bailey & Dickinson, 2014).

All of this has the potential to have a detrimental effect later in life when those imprints inform a huge part of the actor's personal self. As an actor progresses in artistry, the accessibility to the moments of rehearsal and performances of the past character roles becomes exceptionally high. This accessibility creates a pile of imprints on the unlimited self, real and fictional, and blur the lines between reality and written moments. Thus, this research collected its data not only through literature inquiry but also in an embodied autoethnographic performance titled *The Gallery of Her Imprints* which was a way to enter into both the world of fiction and back into the real in order to investigate using the self.

Sepheo sa meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng

Seeking

Beloved,

this hungry heart

this teeming piece of flash and liquid,
paces the shadowy corridors
in the dark breast of night
seeking a ray of blinking light;
a glow and glimmer
in a sea of ebony,
seeking a more tangible reason for hope
beyond these bars of confinement
lo, night is deep and binding
but bondage, deeper still... (Mattera, 2008: 45).

In an attempt to discover my aims for this research, I had to acknowledge that we all have a brain, which I refer to figuratively, as a bag. We all carry this with us everywhere we go. We put our various things inside, and this causes the bag to change. The advantage, however, is that we can take out the things we put inside. The problem begins, when we repetitively put things inside, so that, in the end, the bag blends with the host that carries the bag and becomes a camouflage.

The problem that arises is that the self- avoids what has been imprinted and this becomes a roller-coaster of concealment. It is the seed of a plant which should not be watered because the bigger it grows, the louder the cry for confrontation becomes. This is how the sub-aim for this study came to be the search for the limitations of camouflaging. It was a recognition of how we exist and perform real narratives as actors. These are the narratives about real people, and they leave us affected by our involvement in the healing of others but with no corner to vomit our burdened bodies to heal ourselves. Therefore, we camouflage and carry on, subsequently, finding that there are limits to the number of times we can camouflage ourselves.

Furthermore, as we are rooted in limitations that disrupt our progress, we find that we must look for the core of the solution and not dwell on the problem. A melody may be distorted but that does not mean it has no potential to be re-tuned. This reasoning totally absorbed me and carried me to the main aim of the research – exploring

performance as a tool to uncover '*meetlo*' which could cleanse the imprints endowed during a ritualistic performance process.

Morero wa meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng

Journey

Sometimes

The soul

Will soar

In flight

Above

The dark veil of night

And

Like an eagle

Hover

Above the quiet plane

Searching for a place

To shed its pain (Mattera, 2008: 29).

My aim was to discover ways in which the actors, by using '*meetlo*', could cleanse themselves and remain uncamouflaged. This became the objective of the study. It stemmed from a belief that an action has a reaction. It acknowledges that a character imprint can be present whether or not the individual is aware that the imprint is occurring. It is based on the basic scientific fact that humans are their thoughts, and these are constantly being recorded and stored, irrespective of fictitious scenarios or not. Yohan John (2016), a PhD neuroscientist explains that thoughts come from nowhere, and from everywhere. They indeed all contain elements of truth, subjectively experienced so that, "objectively we can say that thoughts emerge from neural processes and that neural processes come from everywhere" (John, 2016).

In other words, the form and dynamics of thoughts are influenced by everything that has an explicit or causal connection with you. This means that whether an actor believes it, or not, when they are deeply 'in the moment' whilst 'acting' – the imprint of that character remains with the body, just as the recent past with its imprint becoming a part of your memory criterion. "Your personal identity is usually understood as proposing a "memory" criterion: you are the same person as the one who did or thought things you remember doing or thinking" (Locke, 1689).

The aim of the research was rooted in my willingness to unlearn and at the same time to re-learn with an open mind and a willing heart. I wanted to cement my journey into the discomfort of the mystery. The Gallery of Her Imprints was a journey that required me to shed parts of myself. To honestly allow myself to trace back to what made me camouflage in the first place. To be honest about who I was before the ritualistic theatrical process, during it and afterwards.

A house cannot be built without land, and before it can become a house, we need a solid foundation to build the house on. Whilst we may construct the foundation (actor training) and use the house (characters) temporarily, the more houses we build of unique designs upon the same foundation, the more we may get attached to what was and desire to take it with us as we go forward, consciously or not; however, all that will and should eternally remain is the land (the self). If we cannot return to the land to find it as authentic and as wholesome as it was before then can we, arguably, have ever deserved to build those kinds of houses at all? Which brings me to the questions and sub-questions of my quest.

Lipotso tsa meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng

- In what ways do actors 'un-camouflage' the self by using and reusing '*meetlo*'?
- How do actors learn, from ritualized processes, to recognize that they are camouflaged?
- What do the actors do after they have acknowledged that they are camouflaged?
- What is the process in identifying the applicable '*meetlo*' for the specific actor, as ritualistic processes differ?

To address the above-mentioned questions '*Meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng*' followed a procedural outline that is consistent with the clan of the Basotho specifically *ya Basia*, which is my clan. The study came to the realization that the questions about what was driving the journey were all embedded in the basic question of Who am I? Moreover, how do I heal (myself) so that I may remain un-camouflaged from a ritualistic theatrical process so as to continue in my art and tell the stories that mirror our societies' narratives in their truest complexities. Up to that point 'I', the actor, was unharmed from tapping in and out of the worlds that are parallel or far from my own reality.

During my journey and in the process of understanding this study, I came to realize that everything that delves into traditions has an expectation. They anticipate comprehending the essence of why the rituals are performed and they consciously recognize that what is being performed is composed of an outcome which expects to bring about healing. Thus, I turned to the concepts and or the philosophies of phenomenology. Even though I had not proposed to use these in my research proposal, I found that they helped me with accounting for how the world appears to me with regards to my subjective experiences which are reflexive of my everyday experiences and go back to my roots. These give my world order and structure and help me to make coherent sense of it all.

The findings of this study were presented in a devised ritualistic theatrical performance The Gallery of Her Imprints. It was steered by the processes of '*meetlo*' and the four methods or mannerisms which are used for camouflaging as found in biology and science. These are used by actors as a form of distraction to get through multiple productions. They move in and out of fictitious realities, without de-roling or cleansing, all of which is detrimental to the well-being of 'self'. They are:

- Concealment
- Disguises
- Disruptions
- Mimicry

Performance as Research was the methodology utilized. Its repetitive nature helped me to 'correctly' tap in and tap out of the four ways of camouflage. This methodology, helped me to access both the internal and external bodily experiences as I attempted

to understand the four stages or ways of camouflaging and their effect, not only on the mind, but also on the sensations and the responses of the body, and also the experimental dynamics of probing inner and deeper in every attempt.

My ultimate aspiration has always been to explore my own performance to discover various ways for an actor to self-cleanse, but more importantly to recognize the impressions that are endowed and to acknowledge the need to undergo '*meetlo*' to cleanse the self. A recording device was used in the rehearsal journey to help me capture the moments of discovery in the moment of doing, so, that I could reflect and compare it with what I had journaled of the experience.

The actual performance was meant to be site specific in order to explore the multi-perspectives of the different forms of '*meetlo*'. However, because of the sacredness of the ritualistic practice it was kept in one closed space and was a closed performance, though aesthetically the set-up was multi-dimensional, giving the space the desired feeling of what was initially proposed in my research proposal. The data collection was collected through three significant phases.

- Phase 1: The neutral
- Phase 2: During process
- Phase 3: The post-production

CHAPTER: BACKGROUND

We are all wounded inside in some way or other. We all carry unhappiness within us for some reason or other. Which is why we need a little greatness and healing from one another. Healing in words, and healing beyond words...Art wants to move into silence, into the emotional and spiritual conditions of the world...When things fall into words they usually descend...Art wants to pass into life, to lift; art wants to enchant, to transform, to make life more meaningful or bearable in its own small and mysterious way (Okri, 1997: 72).

This research examines the phenomenon of de-roling in the context of '*meetlo*' ya Basotho' as used in ritualistic theatre. It used literature to look deeper into its purpose though the application was taken from the practice and the words uttered by the *baholo ba Basotho*, *ba ha Mosia* trns: the elders from the Sesotho clan specifically the *Mosia* clan and the teachings received at the initiation schools. As de-roling has historical roots in acting, a therapeutic underpinning was sought in order to define its purpose in a healing context.

South Sotho Traditional Literature stipulates that the necessary thing to take note of with regard to '*meetlo*' is that: "*Meetlo ya Basotho e mengata e amanang le bopohelo ba bona. 'Meetlo' ena e tsamaya e sa tsawane mona le mane ho ya ka hore o wa leloko lefe ka ha meleloko e mengata e bopileng setjhaba sena sa Basotho*" (Ngcangca, 1994: 97). This loosely translates as: there are several Basotho '*meetlo*' which differ from clan to clan. The term 'Basotho' also refers to the Setswana and Sepedi clans which, together, are placed under the Basotho in general terms, in the same way as under the Nguni we find Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele and Swazi; not just one clan.

The English translation of '*meetlo*' could loosely be explained or expressed as customs. However, '*meetlo*' is not only the traditional and widely accepted way of behaving or doing something that is specific to a society, place or time. It is not just a ritual either, that is performed by a solemn ceremony consisting of actions performed according to a specified order. '*Meetlo*' is only performed when there is a recognition or awareness of the need for it to be performed. This has to happen before it can be actually performed.

In theatre, when referring to ritual, we often mean the repetitive acts done as part of a process before, during or at the end of the process. These elements amplify the meaning, depending on the specificities, where it is used, and the intention. When referring to ritualistic theatrical processes, we mean the kind of theatre performances performed either inside a theatre or outside (site specific performances). These are unambiguously real-life narratives using mainly rituals performed in the 'Basotho culture' and often mimicking the actual way in which these rituals are carried out in real life.

There are many theatre productions that commonly do this, for various reasons. An example would be the 2018 Naledi Awards winning production titled 'Tau' by Thabiso Rammala and MoMo Matsunyane. The play was based on the existing '*meetlo*' of boys who are being taken away to initiation school. Basotho cultural beliefs, and the reasons for certain rituals to be performed before and after, were played out in the piece. After one of the productions, in a Question and Answer session the directors disclosed that, in order for the play to be successful, certain rites were carried out, in preparation for the fictitious world of the drama, and this was done solely for the protection of the actors.

The journey was spiritually orientated, both because it was based on a true narrative, and because it was based on the boys who tragically died whilst there. The directors spoke of the importance of them following the specific rituals that are done in real life for the boys at initiation school. Preparation for the re-telling of the fictitious story was done by adopting or mimicking the actual rituals. This was a new, vital notion, specifically for the actors who were about to embark on the journey of telling a narrative so closely embedded in the acts of an existing Basotho '*meetlo*'.

The epistemological assumptions of this paper are that African ritualistic theatrical processes do in fact have cleansing '*meetlo*' for actors. These, unfortunately, have not been documented but have for years played a huge role in the ability of the actor or character to take off what has been absorbed during the process and which may have imprinted 'self-character' on the actor during the process. Alude Mahali (2013) in her doctoral research expresses why the documentation has not been available:

Now that we, as black south Africans, are alive, now that we have a voice and agency, now that we can openly share our sentiments, what have we got to

say? These bodies, these containers, these museums of bottled sentiments are now open for public expression, sharing, understanding, and dialogue (Mahali, 2013: 2).

This is precisely why the ritualistic processes performed by actors and which are informed by real '*meetlo*' need to be interrogated and documented. There is a need to discover what explicitly is done to protect and secure actors while they are mimicking the sacred '*meetlo*' performed in the black cultures. Such information could be used widely by or for actors from all spectrums who may be in need of cleansing. This is referred to as de-roling, academically. All these various ways are firmly embedded in the knowledge we have received from our black upbringing, as the saying goes 'charity begins at home'.

The roles that the self is called to portray are often parallel to the actor self who takes on a specific character during a process. This process speaks to the post-production imprint. The concern is that the characters we have to portray often seem to involve a re-play of our childhood traumas; all that is embedded within the sub-conscious that the child within us never received a chance to confront or deal with. However, it is not just the memories, but also the world of the spiritual - the wholeness of our way of understanding being and the self that is opened for access in those moments of creation. We might not be conscious of this as we practise hence, the necessity to cleanse ourselves after the intense processes.

This may be a call to aware-ness of how to use the already existing '*meetlo*' in specific ritualist theatre making on the host, the actor, who carries all that takes place during a performance. The concept of cleansing, of de-roling, of tapping out comprehensively (horola) through '*meetlo*' requires a new beginning within our consciousness and an acknowledgement of the self by the actor.

Lebaka la meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng

Ritualistic theatrical processes are progressions that use rituals performed in real life and are mimicked in a theatre space using exactly what is done to perform the ritual in real life. Rituals consist of actions and so, it is almost impossible to imagine, a ritual without its attendant material culture. Ritual related aspects are at times treasured and iconic but other times they are not (Grimes, 2006).

In the ritualistic theatrical processes, the theatre itself is the brain while the body is the 'true self'. The body holds the imprints during the process and carries the burden of what has been imprinted on it into the next process. The host undergoes a journey that involves so much 'play' and 'playing'. It is constantly tapping into: the imagination versus the real, and the 'who we act to be' versus the 'who we are'. Unfortunately, while acting it becomes the 'who we are' versus 'who we are instructed to be' (instead of acting like being).

The ritualistic theatrical process that was imprinted on me occurred in my final year of undergraduate studies. I found myself in a process where the fictional world intruded into my real world. My narratives collided with each other, unconsciously. During the process we lit *impheho* which is used, in the Basotho tradition to summon. Even though the act was performed to protect the cast. It also showed clearly what is real and what was not to the ancestral realm. Also showed respect for the different backgrounds and understanding of all the individual backgrounds.

The actor (me) took on the character of a person who possessed the ability to foresee (i.e. the third eye, also known as the 6th sense). I was dressed authentically in what is commonly perceived, particularly in the South African context, to be correct for a person with that ability. During the play, without a professional choreographer, I was instructed to follow an African drum as a person who has the ability to foresee would do. Unfortunately, the clothes I was using, called '*Dipalo masela a Badimo*' were in fact the clothes that I was personally granted by the *Badimo* (ancestors). Unknowingly, by allowing myself to be dressed in those clothes, while taking on an 'actor character', I indirectly opposed what in my real life I had asked of them, through what is known as '*mokete wa Badimo*'. I had asked for permission to delay or perhaps postpone the request to undergo a traditional initiation '*ho thwasa*' till I had completed my studies.

One of the first things we are taught to do when asking from *Badimo* is to be specific in what it is that we are asking for or making them aware of. In the ritual, where the director lit the *imphepho*, she only mentioned, and brought to the ancestors' awareness, the fact that we would be 'playing' even though we would be performing or mimicking what is done in real life. What she failed to specify is that I would be switching on the *imphepho*, the summoning, through the dance to the melody of the drum dressed in their symbolic clothes. This resulted, in an intense and

comprehensive process; I turned 'self with its character' into 'actor with its character'. Self – character versus actor-character is delved into in depth in the performance section.

The problem is that I now remain, years later, with those impressions and am now the host of the implications of the process as I was never as intensely and comprehensively de-rolled 'out of' only enroled 'into'.

When I was introduced to phenomenology it was defined and identified as a form of an act, an attitude of being present through the senses (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 5). Which contributed to my willingness, to find the essence of what I was researching, and which would allow me to break away from the assumption that reality is purely a product of our own subjective understanding.

Phenomenology is an attempt to unite philosophy, science and lived life. This is precisely what Merleau-Ponty (1962), simply puzzled together when he stated phenomenology to be “the study of essence; and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essence: the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: vii). However, most importantly phenomenology is also a philosophy, it is the way in which we give meaning to things; philosophy then is that which puts essence back into existence and aims not at arriving at a specific understanding of humans nor the world from any starting point either than that of their 'facticity'(Meillassoux, 2010: 403).

'Facticity' has multiple meanings from 'factuality' to 'contingency' to the ultimate intractable conditions of human existence. It is literally, by definition, the quality or state of being. Philosophically it is the consideration of one's place, one's body past, and its, position in and the fundamental relationship to the other. It is a collection of facts or labels which are one half of a dichotomy between transcendence of consciousness and a person's facticity. This was a key aspect in Quentin Meillassoux's (2010), philosophical project to challenge the thought- world relationship of correlationism. He called it “the absence of reason for any reality; in other words, the impossibility of providing an ultimate ground for the existence of being” (Meillassoux, 2010: 404).

Nyapurelo ya sengolwa

This inquiry concerns itself with using '*meetlo*' ya Basotho to de-role, referred to as cleansing in the context of this paper, specifically from ritualistic theatrical processes. The performance proclivities are viewed in the light of camouflaging and the trajectories of the fiction blurred into real life as they mimic real '*meetlo*' in a world of fiction.

The tone of the study was influenced by several factors. These came from the elders, the academic milieu, and the cultural and the poetic tone that comes with the language of the Basotho. In the gathering of the data for the study, I realized and learned that the Basotho idioms are not only educational they are equally poetic and academic. They are multi-dimensional as they oppose the notion of reality and what it is associated with. I found this relevant to the study because I am looking into reality versus fiction and what it means to tap in and out of the two as an actor. Therefore, to follow the language and its structure, I used Ben Okri (1997) and Don Mattera (2008) as I feel that their fictional work is truthful and less imaginary and is in the African context and in communion with the spiritual realm. Whilst their work is poetic it also has a descriptive tone that focuses on the latent power of Africa and inspires the world at large to conquer the challenges of the modern times. Overall, I have noted, in what I have reviewed of their work that it is both informed and formally articulated as academic literature.

'Meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng' is an interrogation of how specific '*meetlo*' can be used as a method, not only to 'step out' but also to comprehensively de-role actors who practice what is done in real life on stage i.e. the world of fiction. Similarly, during initiation school, the elders and also my grandmother confirmed that '*meetlo*' ya ba Sotho is procedural, it is aligned with who you are, and the performance is based on your clan.

'Sesotho ha se tolokwe' (Sesotho cannot be directly translated) Ngcanga (1994) states: *'Meetlo yohle e etswa ka tsela tse ikgethileng le tsamaiso ya teng ikgethileng.'* Ngcanga speaks of how each '*meetlo*' is done in a specified manner and Bailey and Dickinson (2014) remark on the same thing regarding the importance of de-roling being done in an applicable and procedurally correct way for it to be effective. So, in

essence, the authors share the same sentiments. They all helped me to find the fundamental reason, why it was necessary for this study to use both the literature inquiry and then to practically carry through '*meetlo*' ya Basotho in order to acquire the parallels and find the balance of the praxis.

“De-roling has roots in the theatre world; yet ubiquitous practice is not standard. Actors endeavour to precisely take on a character and often neglect to procedurally release the character” (Bailey & Dickinson, 2014). By understanding the unintentional common habits which often lead to the common struggle of non-de-roled actors. I find that I agree with Bailey and Dickinson (2014) that there are in fact stepping away methods for actors but the stepping away is not comprehensive enough to fully de-role the actors hence, the need for an inquiry, through '*meetlo*'. These may have comprehensive de-roling methods but for this study it is done specifically within the limits of ritualistic theatrical processes.

Moreover, because of the paucity of documentation on de-roling in the context of ritualistic processes, the paper has followed Bailey and Dickinson (2014) who view the notion of de-roling from a drama therapy perspective. Although they do not speak of ritual, they do speak to the significance of de-roling both physiologically and psychologically. This made me question the impact of stepping away, in acting, and whether I should focus on the external alone rather than the external and internal together.

Richard Schechner (1981) was used to help me understand more about the basis of performance as set out in the book Performance Studies. Which gives his theory of the transportation and transformation process that an actor undergoes. This process was utilized to evaluate other possible perspectives of what tapping in and out during a performance process could mean for actors.

I have engaged with theories from authors who look at the world of fiction in relation to existence and the phenomenology of perception, to understand how the lines may get blurred between the real and fiction and lead to actors camouflaging post-production. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) delves into perception in a way which convinced me that it was crucial for actors to use their perception. It is the ultimate guide, together with the thoughts which are gathered from our own experiences and

which mostly assist actors in articulating or mirroring society with sensitivity and consciously.

The perceived world has no absolute basis outside man confronting his task. Certainty is never achieved, even in the inner life, where we discover our misguided feelings, attitude, etc only retrospectively. We are always in process of self-constitution. We bring to be perceptual and behavioural field, a field which is our own history, and we express ourselves through their union. We choose our world and our world chooses us (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

M. Merleau-Ponty (1962), as mentioned in the introduction, helped me to see that this research with its probing into traditions had the prospect of allowing me to grasp the core of why the rituals are performed in a procedural manner and are specific to my own cultural background, my own roots, and which intends to bring healing.

Alude Mahali (2013)'s doctoral dissertation was a well-rounded complementary referral point. She clearly explicates what the now moment is and what it means to the 21st century theatre makers. It probes into why there is an urgency to perform and express our stories. Her work helped me to comprehend the theoretical meaning behind my research. She uses the analogy of exploring a museum and what it means to a black body whose memories are held in relations to the body which is the museum itself, the container of the memories. Alude Mahali truly was a big inspiration.

I have also looked into *The Human Career* by Walter Goldschmidt (1990), who unpacks the self in the symbolic world. The author considers the ways in which an individual achieves a sense of self and how this is bound to identification with the culture of the society of which the individual is a part. He evaluates dialectics in relation to an individual and the social circumstances. All this is redefined in terms of the other as an individual who needs to alter in response to changing natural conditions. The Author shows that humans have dwelt in a dual universe with the physical reality on one hand and the symbolic world of their own creation on the other (Goldschmidt,1990).

Let's go back to the basics, the baseline of this research, which was rooted in the manifesto question of the journey, Who am I? The fundamentals give us some connection to the pathway of discovery. *Diqatjwa tsa Basotho* has been carefully documented by Ngcangca (1994) and is very explicit. It helped me to understand the

perdure followed by Basotho when performing '*meetlo*' ya bona trns: their rituals. It outlined for me the reasoning behind the rituals, their importance and symbolic qualities, the roots of the beliefs and the themes that drive the beliefs that they have, especially in relation to cleansing. The cleansing processes give a vital description of what de-roling can do in the ritualistic theatrical processes.

Understandably, the theories I have used are connected to studying and understanding the complexities of a body in performance regardless of what the definition of performing means in the study; the commonalty being action and reaction of the human being. Tapping in and out is a horizontal reality that covers what is considered 'normal'. The limitation with ritualistic theatrical processes is that in performance, ritual is considered from a different perspective; one where it is labelled according to the elements of style which are used to identify whether a performance is indeed ritual based or not.

References to ritualistic actions in this study are based on the meaning of that ritual in Sesotho. It is not just custom, it is not a repetitive act performed on a daily basis but rather a specific performance, that is performed for a particular reason on a willing individual at an appointed time. It is performed by *Baholo* (elders) not just anyone chosen randomly by the participating individual. It is performed for a distinct purpose and correct perdure must be followed. Procedures play a huge role in how Basotho do things and part of the procedures require the consent of the individual. This consent must be rooted in the individual's belief system and thoughts about the '*meetlo*' and the reasoning behind that. This understanding led me to look at the concepts of thoughts and the role played by thoughts in an individual's daily life.

I investigated neuroscience, the theories of thoughts in relation to performance. Thoughts are the drivers, they ground our reality but also allow leeway for me to delve into the impact of the conscious and unconscious sensations. This is felt in the moment of 'being', either in the reality or during the fictional. In other words, my study is also rooted in the fine lines between concealment and disruption. Between revealing or not revealing. The overall impact it has on the actor who enters two different worlds with one body, through one mind and with many thoughts. Which come from anywhere and everywhere and which make the bases of what he believes in the moment of doing and being.

Yohan John (2016), a neuroscientist, in his research answers where thoughts come from. Aside from his description that they come from nowhere and from everywhere. He also explains that they contain both an element of truth and making them subjective. He states that objectively, we can say that they occur from neural processes and he shows how the neuronal patterns that mediate and enable thoughts and behaviour, have proximal and distal causes. This means that they are the stimuli and arise from the circumstances we are experiencing. These experiences have causal impacts on our bodies, and are also partly caused by our bodies (Johan, 2016).

Admittedly, the neuroscientist theory has added weight to my research. It refers to the role that thoughts play in what we come to believe and how we act upon what we believe. This theory also justified what was mentioned in the introduction section, regarding the body and mind and the interrelation between the two and how they co-exist with one another as the proximal and distal causes of our being. They form the core of how we comprehend our conditions. The theory helped me to see how our realities can and may get blurred with those of fiction via a mere thought, the mere reciprocation of what we believe or embody whilst believing in it.

‘Acting Power’ by Robert Cohen (2013) shows how blur lines may occur between the world of the fictional and the world of reality; he elaborates on the paradox of ‘play’ and ‘playing’ and its effects on the actor. “The basic principle of cognitive dissonance is what we come to believe in what we find ourselves doing, regardless of the reasons we first started doing it” (Cohen, 2013: 5).

This paper has made use of the work of Robert Cohen (2013) as he points directly at the fact that acting is a form of being. Whether appointed or simply ignored, our minds make sense of reality based on the sensation of the present without distinguishing them from the real and the imagination, proving that it is an impossible expectation to presume that ‘self’ is to be eradicated in the process and duration of ‘being’ a character within the theatrical moment.

Ritualistic theatrical processes, in the context of *‘Meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng’*, refer to the processes adopted from the *‘meetlo’* and which are used in real life. These are the driving forces behind the processes used to create the fictitious world. Theorists such as Grotowski, Peter Brooke and Ronald Grime speak to what ritual means in performance and the actions that identify it as ritualistic. Ritual has several

important, distinguishing connotations that need to be defined. It is referred to in the theatre of the avant-garde, for example, as “the richness of experience lacking greatly attenuated in our society” (Anthony, 1976). Therefore, these respected theorists were used in '*Meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng*' to underpin the concept that theatre is not only sacred but ritualistic.

Peter Brooke (1996), refers to theatre as 'holy', and we acknowledge theatre as spiritual. This requires that the essence of spirituality, with its requirements of vulnerability, trust and transparency are always accessible. Unfortunately, camouflaging prevents and creates a stumbling block for actors who are striving to reach what Ross Mooney (1957) refers to as “a full-throated song.”

According to the context of '*Meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng*', camouflaging is a mechanism which actors use to hide the possible imprints from previous intense processes, without having been effectively and comprehensively de-rolled out of them. Camouflaging is “a theory for how one type of concealment might potentially work” (Martin et al. 2013). Both definitions speak of camouflage as a form or mechanism for some form of survival. Camouflaging can be identified in four ways, and all these serve as distraction strategies. These strategies in the context of '*Meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng*' were used to explore the various ways actors may be prone to using camouflaging strategies due to a lack of de-rolling methods.

Camouflage has not been specifically addressed in the context of actors using it as a mechanism to keep maneuvering from production to production. Biologists such as Ruxton and Kettlewell have spoken of its usage among humans and I have used their understanding of the links between a theory common to animals, and applied it to humans so, that I could find a link in my research to its possible existence among actors.

Due to its vast potential the area of study has been narrowed to the context of the ritualistic processes used by Basotho. These will be derived specifically from already existing '*meetlo*' in the black community, from the *Basia* clan and the knowledge of the elders. Amongst their salient concepts of 'self as the bases of all things' are the key components of the 'self' and a trinity model for the professional actor comprised of 'self, actor and character.'

The processes and methods which were probed into were those of Basotho ritual which were specifically related to the *Basia*, my clan. They were used to cleanse me from a ritualistic theatrical process that had left me dented – *ke silafetse* as an actor. The Mosia clan's cleansing ritual for *batho ba silafetseng* assisted me to de-role comprehensively from the imprints endowed in a ritualistic theatrical process I was in. Ultimately, this was cyclical and showed me the imperative necessity for comprehensive 'de-roling' methods to be developed in the context of the Basotho. It is important to also emphasise that all the theories have assisted me in understanding my research from an academic point of view besides confirming for me the necessity for the cleansing process itself.

CHAPTER: Mokgwa wa ho batlisisa

If the things we face are greater and more important than the things we refuse to face, then at least we have begun the re-evaluation of our world. At least we have started to see and live again. But if we refuse to face any of our awkward and deepest truth, then sooner or later, we are going to have to become deaf and blind. And then, eventually, we are going to have to silence our dreams, of others. In other words, we die. We die in life (Okri, 1997: 42).

'Meetlo' is, as has been mentioned, specific to the clan you belong to. The definition of what *'meetlo'* means, what it is and what it stems from comes from my upbringing as a black child, and what I was taught by my elders both at home and at the Basotho traditional schools. This information became the starting point and a joining thread throughout the study and helped me as I gathered data for this research. The reflection on what *'meetlo'* means, what it is based on and what is done in my specific clan, the Basia, was crucial.

Autoethnographic research is “research writing, [using a] story, and method that connects the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” (Ellis, 2004: xix). I utilized *'meetlo'* ya Basotho, and the specific culture of the Basotho. to look at my interpersonal and inward experience and how, through my personal experience, I could identify the need for comprehensive de-roling methods. “The author incorporates the “I” into research and writing yet analyses him or herself as if studying an “other” (Davis & Ellis, 2008: 284).

My reflection on what I had learned, observed and participated in with regards to *'meetlo'* gave me the primary parameters and from that point I was able to analyse and interrogate the research. My reflection guided by what the elders had taught me and what I observed during my upbringing. My reflection manifested as an understanding of what *'meetlo'* is in the context of the Basotho and of this paper.

The Reflection

My journey of collecting research data for *'Meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng'* began with my reflection on the teachings taught to me during my upbringing. The main

teachings were what '*meetlo*' was about and what it aimed to do. I recognized, as a child, that '*meetlo*' seemed to be sacred, also beyond aesthetically pleasing and very specific. Everything regarding '*meetlo*' was oriented precise, to the time it was performed, who was welcomed, where it took place and who performed it. Everything was done by the elders and was strictly coordinated.

Throughout my upbringing I was aware that '*meetlo*' was occasionally being performed. I was never quite certain if it was a celebration or a protective measure. It was difficult to place the category '*meetlo*' belonged to outside its cultural and traditional criteria. To some extent, '*meetlo*' appeared like a game which was restricted to adults. Only when they wished to did they welcome us children even then they were always the 'headmasters' of the game.

It was only when I got older, that I realised that the sacredness stemmed from respect and protection and that the aesthetics also had a role in the process of the ritual. In fact, everything around the space where the '*meetlo*' took place had a role that added to the success of the ritual. I learned that these rituals are performed by specific individuals among the elders. Grounded on what was being performed, it was procedural and was always performed in an orderly manner.

Furthermore, I realized these rituals were always performed after an important event, tragic or joyful. There was always an event that occurred prior to the specific '*meetlo*' being performed. It felt as though this game had stages and phases, but no one really fell out of the game, it just rotated based on who the game was being activated for. When I was younger, '*meetlo*' to me was the best time to eat as much as I wanted. It always seemed to be part of a huge family gathering that included outsiders who assisted with some preparations but were never part of the actual ritual, just the celebration afterwards.

Reflecting on my upbringing, I realized that the '*meetlo*' were silently teaching me what the prevailing connotation were and how I was involved even though I was just viewing what was being done. Even if I was not participating directly, this was a whisper that said, learn because next time you will have to do this. It was a silent teaching that acknowledged that nothing lasts but that teachings should remain. '*Meetlo*' is a planted seed that is watered from generation to generation. This tree of life is not just for shade

but is rather a symbolic tribute to both the living and the dead. It is special and specific with a melody that is tuned to the base-line 'know yourself and your roots'.

In my older years, I recognized that '*meetlo*' is not as repetitive as I assumed it be. Considering that ritual, in English, refers to those everyday repetitive actions performed daily. In my profession it refers to all the cyclic actions done before, during or even after the performance on stage which are symbolic repetitive gestures that allude to a particular concept.

As I mentioned above, '*meetlo*' felt like a game. In this game, who you are determined how the ritual was executed. The family tree decided when the ritual should be performed on you. With every '*meetlo*', attention was paid to how you dressed, and I noted how, skirts and dresses were important to the women. There are different types of '*meetlo*', and these types are differentiated by the different goals. If there is a funeral there is a '*meetlo*' performed before, during and after, which is totally different from when a new-born is welcomed. The type of '*meetlo*' also seemed rooted in your surname and your parents. The order of your parents and their siblings determined the order in which the rituals were performed on you. '*Meetlo*', in my upbringing was explained and shown to me as a discipline done with consent and belief.

'*Meetlo*' is spiritually oriented and thus some are performed at particular times. It has directions of entry. The procedure to be followed in the performance and post the performance. I also understood that '*meetlo*' *ke bo wena ba hao* trns: it is who you are. Who are you? is the reconnection which can save your life and soothe your heart as well. '*Meetlo*' is performed out of interest for the individual's well-being in the hope that there will be progress that comes from uninterrupted connections with the unseen or external world. The dead in '*meetlo*' play a significant role too, thus, '*meetlo*' is sacred and spiritual.

Tlhaloso le kutlwisiso ya meetlo ya Basotho.

Initiation is a complex journey and confusion varies from individual to individual. It is about patience and willing-ness. The trick is to humble yourself and be attentive to what you have been called to do. I can only speak for myself as the process differs for everyone. However, I believe we can all agree it is about fortitude, humbleness and willingness. I would go as far as to say it is about the believe in the unknown and

trusting that mystery is the guide that will provide all that is necessary for the process. It requires submission and immersing one's self in the far melody of healing.

When several '*meetlo*' from the context of initiation are taught and explained it is quite murky, and delicate but always includes respect for the space, respect for what is being performed and respect for the culture. All of this binds you in a beautiful paradox to the description which is given or explained to someone else, even to one who has not had the experience themselves, better yet, one who may not even believe in the practices all together. Therefore, I have attempted to articulate as full as possible the teachings and how they have assisted me to understand and to locate what '*meetlo*' is for the purpose of this research. Though there is little possibility of covering what '*meetlo*' is all together.

I believe it is only reasonable to clarify who I am referring to by the word 'elderly'. These are the people who are older than yourself they are your mother, grandmother, father, uncle all of whom are crucial for any '*meetlo*' to be performed. It branches out beyond just your family. Traditional healers are elders, ancestors are your elders and even your oldest cousin at times could be recognised as your elders. It all depends on the '*meetlo*' that needs to be performed, the procedures required and the order of the existing people in one's life.

After my own journey of initiation, I understood more fully the elements which make '*meetlo*' what it is, why it is performed and its core essence. '*Meetlo*', at initiation, drives the process. Everything performed is rooted in your clan, who you are is the golden key to unlocking a lot of the procedures which are performed. In essence, '*meetlo*' is what Alfred Kun'u'tsor (2020) during my exam reflection said; it is figuratively an 'umbilical cord' through which messages are transferred and translated. It is where you receive your food for healing; it is a whistle blown to guide and heal you, and it restores your understanding of how you are rooted in the soil of who you are.

The teachings I received at my initiation with regard to '*meetlo*' were very precise, with no room for shortcut, and with instructions of what must be done according to my clan. Nkgono Mametsi (2018) my Gobela, always simplified it by saying, not everything is for everyone. She said that concealment and sacredness are the kernel to your rite of passage, to comprehend the core essence of '*meetlo*' and that unless it is of your clan, it may not necessarily make sense, that does not mean it is incorrect. Every clan

performs '*meetlo*' *ya ba bona ka ditsela tse sa tshwaneng* trns (according to their custom). At the heart of everything regarding '*meetlo*' is the call to appreciate the treasure of you knowing yourself.

She also explains why it feels like a game. '*Meetlo*', like any game has rules and regulations that govern it and has stages, though the stages differ, depending on the reason why that '*meetlo*' is being performed. She explained that '*meetlo*' has stakes; like any game it needs to be done correctly or everything will not be as prosperous as one anticipated. She also explained to me that '*meetlo*' is a shield for progress, it is what we do to de-role out of circumstance, which mostly come from natural causes. '*Meetlo*' is the core reason why Africans never dwell on problems that have no solution. She said that the teachings of '*meetlo*' *ke thuto e baholo* (the teachings that the forefathers) left for us to remain with various possibilities irrespective of our circumstances and what we find in our lives.

'*Meetlo*' is held together by layers of discipline and belief. It is a trust that comes from my ancestors. I am encouraged by the thought that they performed '*meetlo*' too and have not left me to practice it if there is no possibility of starting off again on a better note. '*Meetlo*' is the mother who conceived and birthed who we are and what we stand for. Our attributes and our gratitude for our existence stem mainly from some of the '*meetlo*' performed in our cultures. Perhaps, that is why there are idioms such as *ngwana mahana a jwetswa o bonwa ka dikgapha*. Loosely translated this means, 'if you hear but do not listen to what you are taught, your teacher will be your tears', depending on context the idiom is used. It is not a warning as much as it is a wake-up call for recognition of the fact that there is nothing new under the sun and looking back to what is done at home, may be the cure that saves you from having to prevent mysteries of being lost. '*Meetlo*' is the most precious gifts left behind by our forefathers; it is to guide us away from our current paths to better cleaner roads. It has a silent teaching and hope and possibility.

This reflection on my upbringing as a black child, on what I was taught and what I was told by my elders concerning '*meetlo*' wa Basotho has led to the definition which may help to explain what is '*meetlo*': '*Meetlo*' are the habits and traditions which are embedded in the Basotho culture. They are embedded in their spirituality. '*Meetlo*' is the reason for why the Basotho hold fast to the traditions as they are practiced. It is

deeply rooted in their spirituality. '*Meetlo*' are what gives significance to everything and is a way of living that aims to make an individual prosperous. This information is taken from the elders who have practised these rituals for years, and the teachings from the traditional schools I was initiated.

Through autoethnography I exposed my vulnerability, but I knew that as a director and an actor I have the responsibility to understand what I am asking or expecting from others in a performing space as Ben Okri states: "It is not what you have experienced that makes you greater, but what you have faced, what you have transcended, what you have unlearned" (Okri, 1997: 49). An approach to qualitative research focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. The researcher through this process can give a universal meaning to an event, a situation or an experience in order to arrive at a more profound comprehension of the phenomenon.

The 'what': I realized I needed actual cleansing if I was to continue in my art without feeling haunted by the previous experience or process. I needed to be in a place where I could strive to reach the limitless possibilities of self in my performance. This cleansing was performed at the final exploration for this study on the 14th of February 2020. The cleansing ceremony was carried out by *baholo* (the elders), who slaughtered a chicken, took specific parts from the inside of a chicken called *dikahare* and mixed it with clear water and cleansed me from head to toe while speaking to the ancestors. The *imphepho* was burning from the start of the show to summon the true self that had got lost in the world of fiction.

Autoethnographic is not academic masturbation, and this is not an academic orgy, although it does represent a merging of selves that is certainly pleasurable to be a part of! Through narrative autoethnography, we connect with our readers as our experiences lead them to generalize to their own experiences and as analysing our lives leads readers to analyses their own lives. (Davis & Ellis, 2008: 300).

The plan proposed was to undergo the process of '*meetlo*' and to look at the four methods or mannerisms which are used for camouflage as found in biology and science, which actors unconsciously use as a form of distraction after multiple productions. During the rehearsal phase after finding clarity with regard to '*meetlo*' from the elder's *Ba ha* Mosia. The proceedings did not happen as proposed, although

everything that was proposed did arise in the end product. This became an imperceptible advantage to the study as it did not take anything away from the objective of the study instead it aided in the essence of the research.

The research went through the process of *'meetlo'* wa Basotho done *ka mokgwa wa Basia*. This took place during my final examination as mentioned previously. Due to the fact that *'meetlo'* is sacred the process had to take place in an intimate space. The hours were however a predicament as in the culture ya Basotho, these rituals are performed in the early mornings at three ante meridiem. Because, it is believed that everything on earth, at this hour, is balanced and there is a calmness and stillness which is necessary for the cry for cleansing. It also shows respects as during this time it is dark which gives, the women and men privacy when they are being cleansed. Depending on the reason for the cleanse and who is being cleansed these rituals are customarily performed outdoors therefore consideration for nudity is essential.

Though the ritual is procedural, which is what cements its significance, there was also the need to accommodate the fact that this was an academic examination thus, alterations had to occur. The space used was an intimate room with four corners. The performance happened at night in an attempt to accommodate and replace the three-ante meridiem hour and the balance, was achieved through the symbolic alternative of a square which, it is believed, represents stability, direction and most importantly balance.

Furthermore, the notion of sacredness and concealment also had to be adhered to as it is inherent to the roots of the Basotho. This requirement was met and performed by making the performance a closed performance and by having the elders (my family) as the figures to represent the sacredness. A legitimate sangoma was invited to hold the space as this was not a real but a fictional space and an imperative ethical responsibility to be obeyed. Correspondingly the examiners who had to abide by the law of the ritual and their profession played a noteworthy role too.

With regards to the four mannerisms actors unconsciously use to camouflage, and as a form of distraction, everything went according to the proposed plan. During the performance I tapped into the character. I delved into their discomforts and how they were using the four different camouflage mannerisms. I wanted to find out why we, as actors, use camouflage. I moved in and out of fictitious realities, without de-rolling or

cleansing, all of which placed me in a position detrimental to the well-being of 'self'. This was followed by the cleansing, at the end, which served to highlight the significance of the research - the de-roling aspect.

Due to the fact that the way of '*meetlo*' ya Basotho are not the same as those of the academics there were, inevitably, differences in understanding between African ways of expressing feelings and the academic expectation. Nonetheless, it was hoped that this would be overcome through the production. The performance was a blend of several characteristics that have been defined in science, biology and therapy and have been practiced for years in the African cultures but have not been documented or spoken about out of respect for their enduring the concealment and scaredness, the values they carry and more importantly the roots from which these qualities stem.

According to my grandmother Martha Mojabeng Moticoe (2019), these have been practiced for years for as long as Africa has been Africa and kept sacred because of various reasons, some being that a lot had been stolen from them and so the keeping of their ancestral teaches alive, concealed and never misused became for them a priority with the core essence being to remember who you are.

The types of camouflaging are:

- Concealment: to hide or prevent something from being known.
- Disguise: to give someone or oneself a different appearance in order to conceal one's identity.
- Disrupt: to drastically alter or destroy. An interruption or a disturbance which may be a problem.
- Mimicry: the action or skill of imitating something, especially in order to entertain or ridicule.

Interestingly the four ways of camouflaging, may be used for various reasons in a traditional theatre space and involve the actor in character separation. Generally, they are used for aesthetic purposes and make use of make-up, masks and, costumes. These are all used to give the camouflage effect. Other times these methods are used as symbolic representations of a ritual or of something portrayed in the world of fiction. However, '*Meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng*' prides itself on investigating how the

actors can de-role themselves to prevent having to camouflage during and after the production.

Bernard Kettlewell (1955), defines camouflaging as a way to “break up the appearance of the body, as in some marine isopods.” The author further states:

The importance and history of camouflages research shows that the study of camouflages has a long history in biology and the numerous ways of concealment and disguise found in the animal kingdom provided Darwin and Wallace with important examples for illustrating and defending their ideas of natural selection and adaptation. Thus, various forms of camouflages have become classical examples of evolution. In a broader sense, camouflage has been adopted by humans, most notably by the military and hunters, but it has also influenced other parts of society, for example, arts, popular culture and design (Skelhorn & Ruxton, 2010).

Graeme Ruxton (2010), emphasises further, “Animals use camouflage to make detection or recognition more difficult, with most examples associated with visual camouflage involving body coloration. However, in addition to coloration, camouflage may make use of morphological structures or material found in the environment and may even act against senses other than vision.”

Performance as Research and the repetitive requirement of its nature helped me to ‘correctly’ tap in and tap out of the four ways of camouflaging. This exercise looked at both the internal and external bodily experiences as I attempted to understand the four phases or ways of camouflaging and their effect not only on the mind, but also on the sensations and the responses of the body. These were probed internally and deeper in every attempt. The ultimate aim was always to discover various ways for an actor to self-cleanse, but more importantly to recognize the impressions endowed and to acknowledge the need to undergo *‘meetlo’* to cleanse the self, if necessary.

I used a camera in the rehearsal room to help me reflect and compare what I had journaled of the experience, as stated in the introduction.

The actual performance was site specific. Initially the aim was to explore the multi-perspectives of the different forms of *‘meetlo’* but because of the accuracy of the procedural requirements when *‘meetlo’* is performed I could not perform several types

of '*meetlo*' but rather only one specific type which precisely diagnosed an imprint from a previous production. The data collection was collected through three significant phases.

Phase One: Neutrality

I began as neutral. Neutral refers to me as a person before becoming the actor in the space, i.e. before I start the process of rehearsal and performance. This is part of the data collection that creates the process of the production.

When we have made an experience or a chaos into a story, we have transformed it, made sense of it, transmuted experience, domesticated the chaos. When we start telling stories we gave our lives a new dimension: the dimension of meaning – apprehension – comprehension (Okri,1997: 91).

How does one research without tracing to the roots of the problem? This was how the second part of the journey to collecting data began. I questioned the idea of my inner freedom, particularly in a body that recalls memories which left me with impressions that are stopping me from progressing freely in art. Coincidentally, those memories happen to be what gives me the leeway to look at who we are because those memories are the lessons, the building blocks which then establishes who I will become eventually. So, the predicament was how does one proclaim the importance of knowing yourself if you cannot recall the events that led up to being who you are today, especially because, as Zakes Mda (2002: 280) says, “we are a product of our past. We have been shaped by our history. Our present worldview and mind-set is a result of our yesterday.”

Suddenly I saw my life as a microcosmic example of what Zakes Mda was saying. It ran parallel, to my situation; born in Parys, in the Free State, and raised in the Vaal, my culture and nation had strongly assimilated the morals, values, practices plus a semiotic understanding that came with my socialization during my upbringing. Allow me to elaborate how I traced this back to the particular process that left me imprinted – post-production.

I first noted down the productions I had been in and how I was left feeling after the processes. I recognized that there were several processes that placed me in a position

to play a character who I related to spiritually. None of them had left me with the distinct feeling which I had with this particular process and performance. This process left me heavy hearted, with a foggy mind-set, and unable to express or articulate how I felt. There were a lot of external manifestations such as swollen feet, headaches, strange dreams that felt like constant replays of the performance and a phobia to be on stage again. Internally I felt foreign to myself I could not find the words to describe how unfamiliar I felt to me. There was a shift in me, in who I was, and I was left baffled over the overwhelming emotions as Schechner (1985: 19) explained it. I was left with an “aftermath, a long-term consequence or follow through”. My life became stagnant and blurred.

The analysis brought me to understand the environment where I grew up. Its images and/or ideas that are associated with its own words and phrases that make up sentences with denotative and connotative meaning, gave me my understanding of the world and my-self in the world. This meant that everything else experienced outside of this environment and language, as was my reality now in Johannesburg. Where I was studying acting and taking on roles as an actor essentially became too foreign for me and too far from my historical background. Unfortunately, I did not even realize what was happening to me because I was not forced to, I never noticed the need to.

A person may be moved from one environment to another, but when the environment that shapes the contents of the ‘self’ is dramatically different, a shift will occur in the individual. Thus, in my context, my basic self was not only challenged in my reality as an individual being, but even more so by the demand to assume, through intensive repetition, a fictional identity which existed in a foreign environment, had its own language, values, morals, cultural beliefs and ultimately its own identity.

This left imprints that I carried with me into my daily life; blurring the self with the attributes of the character I was playing so that I could not even distinguish between the character and my-self because now they were consciously perceived as one.

Inevitably I was faced with the inability to identify self in the midst of the many other character selves that I had assumed as an actor. I did not recall my past because when I was on stage as that particular character, the question of me knowing myself was not out of context and not to be questioned at that time. An access card for a hotel

room is used to tap-in, to gain access, in the same way there should be a system by which you just as easily tap-out from the inside or, at the very least, instructions (comprehensive techniques) to let one (self) out. But what happens when that self is a mystery to oneself after the production?

Research within drama and theatre is moving towards the recognition that essentially, without body awareness, we will not be able to organize ourselves in our respective environments. We will not know where or what we are, or even what and how we are learning, there will then be an inability to identify ways to communicate about our feelings, experiences and modes of being. Our bodies organize our 'felt politics' in actions of 'social worlding' (Shotwell, 2011: 145).

The performance way of knowing is, by contrast, active, immediate, on the move, embodied, sensual, fluid, interactional and affectively engaged. It gives rise to the representations but is not of itself 'a project concerned with representation' it is a way of acting in the world 'probing more deeply into it and discovering the significance that lies there.' And the significance is available to those who are attuned to it and transmissible through the interactional relationships of bodies (Kershaw, 2009: 10).

Performance as Research prides itself on being repetitive; knowing is doing, doing is knowing. The actor goes into the process so that they can make discoveries. With Performance as Research as a methodology it is important to note the 'how' and 'what'; how will it be executed or even what exactly can be discovered or be known in the process of doing it.

The 'how': This was to trace where the interest stemmed from to pursue this study. I traced it back to my undergraduate to post graduate training (2015 to 2019). The trace led to the identification of the intense character experiences that remained with me and caused the line between my reality and the world of fiction to become a blur leaving me with an intense need to de-role out of the embodied experience. Later in the process I discovered that I cannot de-role out of the experience as it will forever remain but I have cleansed off the character through the '*meetlo*' of the Basotho which washes away impurities (*ho hlatswa ba silafetseng*) to get out of it comprehensively. However, the memories still remain, the body recalls but the brain may take time to forget.

The Gallery of Her Imprints is the name of the embodied performance that was performed to interrogate '*Meetlo ya ba silafetseng dikalaneng*'. Which was performed at the Wits School of Arts, Johannesburg. The performance used the '*meetlo*' of the Basotho, a ritualistic process referred to as cleansing, as a medium to retrieve the self out of fictional world, using my own personal experience.

Phase two will serve as the reflection of what took place in the performance and include a discussion which will serve as a reflective process. The performance was the main data collection reference point excluding the literature and will incorporate the findings revealed by the performance. The study proved far more complex than anticipated and as a result a lot of dynamics came to play and proved to be worthy of noting without losing the focal point of the research.

The concept of The Gallery of Her Imprints came from a ritualistic theatrical process which is founded on the basic assumption that theatre is sacred together with that which is formed in it. The theoretical framework of the research was not utilized in the actual creative process but instead used the knowledge, embedded in my upbringing as a black child, and which was given to me by the elders and at the initiation schools. All of this was used to unpack what '*meetlo*' ya Basotho means in an artistic realm.

The Gallery of Her Imprints is an exploration of how specific '*meetlo*' may be used as methods, not only to 'step out', but also to comprehensively de-role actors both physiologically and psychologically. '*Meetlo*' exist in the Sesotho tradition but not in ritualistic theatrical processes therefore I used myself (participant) as this is an autoethnographic form of research.

This was a self-exploration process to examine if the process will not de-role me comprehensively from an artistic ritualistic theatrical process that had been imprinted on me previously. In ritualistic theatrical processes we mimic what is done in the reality but fail to de-role by cleansing off what may have been endowed during the process of mimicking what is real. Thus, actors are left imprinted; in Sesotho we say - *re re ba silafetse*, they are defiled.

Kabi Thulo (2008) in his master's research, '*They were silent*' speaks about ritual-based theatre and identifies it as an umbrella that gives expression to an individual's thoughts and feelings. However, problems occur when what is being performed for fiction is closely related to reality. He says the dangers for shamans, such as himself,

is when the character you play, is, who you are. The complications come out of the playing blurring the lines of the fictional and the real. Thulo went “from being called by one’s ancestors to become a Sangoma while being ignorant to the ancestral calling” (Thulo, 2008: 24-25). Hence, there is a need, before performing ritualistic theatrical processes, to be cognizant of the inevitable dilemma that the unknown remains a mystery which we cannot ignore. Thus, the importance of following the correct procedures.

Theatre productions of this nature play a role in contributing towards the body of work that fuses ritual with contemporary theatre performance. The emergence of such performances could relate to Schechner’s (1976) prediction that “... [ritual or] efficacious theatres are on the upswing and will dominate the theatrical world within the next twenty years” (Schechner, 1976: 210). May be this is precisely why there is an urgency for comprehensive de-roling methods that do already exist to be documented and recognized specifically, as Alude Mahali (2013) stated, ‘there is a fire and need for black narratives to be told. Our museums of bottled sentiments are ready to be shared and expressed’. That also comes with the responsibility to take care of those telling our stories.

It is a common belief system among the Basotho people that, an individual is prerequisite to go through a process of cleansing ritual after a sequence of calamities irrespective of their social status. According to the elders, if a cleansing ritual is not performed, the person involved will forever be haunted by unpleasant events in their lives to the extent that they may be faced with dark clouds, making life a hostile experience. The elders, together with traditional healers, are obliged to give necessary guidance, advice and assistance in terms of communicating with the ancestors on how to go about performing one of the cleansing rituals for the purpose of protection.

Another belief among the majority of the user communities at these sacred sites is that misfortunes occur as a result of broken relationships between ancestors and the individual concerned. They would often tell him/her that “*badimo ba o furalletse*” meaning that “the ancestors have abandoned you or they have turned their backs on you.” Upon this particular case, many of the informants have agreed that they themselves are testimony to the significant role played by that kind of ritual performance. Most of the traditional healers and the healer

trainees at Motouleng and Badimong have stories to tell about how their lives returned to normal after a cleansing ritual was performed for them. They truly believe that cleansing rituals have proven helpful on more than one occasion in their everyday lives (Mensele, 2011: 98).

The Basotho belief that the cleansing rituals have not only protected them from unpleasant deeds and catastrophes but have also strengthened their roots in terms of self-image and self-identity, knowing that they can turn to their ancestral rites for protection.

Phase Two: During Process

'During the process' refers to both the rehearsal and the performance phase. I had to be present in the doing, and aware, as it is important to take mental notes. These notes concentrated on both the psychological and physiological effects that occurred during the process.

Welcome to The Gallery of Her Imprints

Her greens are wired in blue skies that rain a hopeful melody.

Her spine shaking a reminder of her, of her fears of silence,
for solitude, for reasons, for choice.

She forgets to cry at times because the hopeful sky does that for her.

It has left her with no mercy to beg for the unforgiving
Melodies of the world.

That substituted her name given by those who birthed her

For a name applicable

A name that best describes they claimed.

She is stuck in the gloomy mists of a joyous celebration
And sings a song of rejected poetry. The poetry of rejection
Where words have become wordless, the melody of their tune has become a
distorted explosion.
Sour sweets tears have thrown themselves a towel of new recipes.
Suddenly, she is an empty vessel, no flowers, no water needed to water the hope
Of His efforts to river through a stream of their noises.
Solitude has lost its purest form. It is a vaporizer, looks coloured
Smells full and feels lighter than the illness She carries.
She is wired in her slimy greens (Moticoe, 2018).

When we enter the space, we are welcomed by images of the paradox of being and we are faced with the complexities of the black body in a space filled with symbols, that forces us to confront self by questioning - Who am I? Walter Goldschmidt (1990: 239) reminds us that the symbolic world in which mankind live and exists, is in every way rich and complex. Subsequently, the grappling process of discovering is cemented in the recognition of the eternal process of self and the elements that make up the progress to self.

The Gallery of Her Imprints embraced the complexities of the basic 'us', our beginnings, which is *bo wena ba hao* trns: your cultural roots. It dealt with the tragedy of being in the midst of the confusion of becoming. It called for the known to be re-learned so, that the root of the problem could be unpacked for what it is and not for what it seems to be. On entering the space, the partaking of one's own body in the space of a body is initiated. The call for community participation, a performance to discover using '*meetlo*' ya Basotho to de-role, to cleanse (*horola*) begins. Kabi Thulo (2008) profoundly explicated why the community partaking being essential for a self-informed ritual:

Ritual is the most ancient way of binding a community together in a close relationship with Spirit. It is a way of communicating with forms of consciousness and beings from countless worlds. It has been one of the most

practical and efficient ways to stimulate the safe healing required by both the individual and the community. Ritual has always been the way of life of the spiritual person because it is a tool to maintain the delicate balance between body and soul. [Ritual] is the gathering with others in order to feel Spirit's call, to express spontaneously and publicly whatever emotion needs to be expressed, to create, in concert with others, an unrehearsed and deeply moving response to Spirit, and to feel the presence of the community, including the ancestors, throughout the experience. (Somè, 1998: 141-143).

Therefor it needed an audience for the celebration to have a fruitful conclusion that was eye witnessed at first hand. The community involvement is actually not essential for the ritual itself but rather for academic purposes. '*Meetlo*' is done, privately, and is for those that are of the family or clan only. Afterwards the community celebrates with the family, but the essence of the gathering is concealed from the community as it is sacred to those of that clan. However, because this was an academic research performance the examiners were present. Although it was assumed to be a closed performance. The celebration with the community will happen when it is read for the purpose of marking or just out of interest, to learn and or out of curiosity.

Tshimolohong

When you arrive at the foyer you are presented with the in depths of the space and its setting. This gives you, as an audience member, an option to either enter the space to watch the show, or not. Your responds will be based on your instincts and personal beliefs. The following instructions where presented by an appointed front of house person and this was the announcement that was given: 'Ladies and gentlemen please be advised that, this is a closed performance. This performance contains real Basotho traditional components and, as this is a Basotho cleansing ritual, it includes the burning of *imphepho*, the slaughtering of a chicken and the burning of a candle. A legitimate sangoma will be present in the space and the performance will contain nudity. The audience will be expected to take of their shoes and wash their hands. Please note that any form of photography or videos will be strictly prohibited throughout the performance. Without any further ado '*le amoheleile*' to The GALLERY of Her Imprints.'

Bare Space

The performance took place in the rehearsal and learning room 107, at Wits school of arts. The space is square. One side of the space has a wall with mirrors on it, another has windows that are covered with black curtains. The two other sides are horizontally divided by a carpet material and a dark blue grey painted wall. The room has a wooden floor. There are four light fittings and an installation of hanging steel bars right around the ceiling.

The intimacy of the space allowed for the sense of concealment and privacy to be heightened and also the feel that goes with the complexities of the ritual that was about to commence. The shape symbolised balance, solidarity, community, rectitude and direction. These were elemental and practical connotations. The space set the boundaries and yet was flexible enough to allow for other dimensions to be created. The limits helped me to focus only on what was happening in the space. Nothing was seen to be more significant than the other; everything within the space contributed equally to the success of the performance. The performance ended in the centre of the space with the actor facing the mirror which encouraged reflection before the final acknowledgement of the journey that was, but now will no longer be.

The mirror was important, it helped to contrast the real and the fiction. Concurrently it became the centre of what I would refer to as a 'life performance'. When I speak of a 'life performance' it is the kind that allows us to constantly look at ourselves but equally speaks to those around us whilst getting a view to us. The mirror was the brain of the room because it shimmered and reflected what was happening in the performance. It was the memories that kept on reflecting. The only difference is these reminiscences where streamed simultaneously as the effect that digested them to be recollections. Self is a constant process of reflection as in the mirror, a metrical mirror; at each reciprocation something new is added, something ancient vanishes. It reflects the perspectives of the now moment. The mirror confirmed that what was happening in playing was real. It added to the play by giving the audience various viewpoints outside of what was directly in front of them. It allowed them to see and understand the dis-ease of the reality. In a sense it was mirroring society.

The setting helped with the unveiling of the mysteries of the process. It concluded the journey in a museum called The Gallery of Her Imprints. It was a process that ultimately was successful because of the setting.

Designed Setting

The walls were covered with cloths (*dipalo masela a Badimo*) with leopard print design on them in various colours. The ceiling in the room was filled with lingering images of agony that made me feel like I was about to dig up a grave, but because of where the pictures were taken, I did not feel as hard or as dead as the grave will possibly feel. Instead, I felt obligated, by the nature in the images that surrounded me and the stillness to dig up that grave so that I could find life underneath it. The pictures felt like a paradise, a protective gear for the mysterious resurrection that awaited me. These images and cloths created a museum and the dimension of the museum, they created a setting which had a purpose together with the bodies that were meant to be in the space, but most importantly they highlighted the performance itself and the audience.

The audience enter and wash their hands with clean water placed in a bowl called *sejana sa ho hlapela* trns: enamel bowl. In Sesotho this is a gesture of cleansing, specifically to cleanse your hands as they are exposed to endow dirt picked up throughout the duration of the day. Similarly, to why the audience had to take off their shoes at the door, the belief is that during the day we step on various dirt which is there after left on our shoes, leaving our shoes dented. Consequently, coming into a sacred space, we ourselves have to be respectful and not add any dirt that might have been endowed during the day into a cleaned space where a cleansing will be performed.

Obviously, the space had been cleaned prior to the set-up but respect had to be shown as mentioned above. Emblematically, we could describe this notion as a philosophical disclaimer. The cleansing plays a role in determining how everything will turn out in the end. Everything was covered in leopard print cloths as already mentioned. The leopard print has multiple meanings both symbolically and literally. Overall it is a representation of who's world, space and story we are entering into: "*Ke Mosia, Ke motobatse ke lebajwa la nkwe*". This is my clan name. We are the cats, specifically, the leopard, *Basia*.

The leopard print speaks to the imprints received during my years as an actor in my respective field. That experience led me to research comprehensive de-roling methods for actors; methods that can de-role actors both psychologically and physiologically after ritualistic processes that mimic what is done in real life. Symbolism plays a huge role in theatre and has for years been part of how we tell stories through dialogue and physical association. Semiotic representation added value and gives the audience the chance to question, conclude and relate. Relatability is the quest to tell narratives that mirror our societies, and which speaks a familiar language, and which offer the audience a different perspective.

Far left, up stage, was the sangoma Gogo Modiehi. Her role was to hold the space because this was a fictional world with a lot of compensations for academic regulations. It was an ethical responsibility to not take for granted what the unknown could be. Her chief role was to protect all the bodies in the space, by keeping a form of the third eye on the whole experience as I would be entering and getting out of two realms in the process to be undergone during the performance. She performed the summoning of the ancestors before the performance. This was to communicate to them what was about to happen, the purpose, and to ask for the protection of myself and others in the space that I would be tapping in and out. There were many symbolic aspects that could arise unexpectedly, if not explained. There was the danger of me imprinting myself further while hoping to undo the imprint which had already been endowed.

Far left, down stage, was my grandmother *nkgono* Martha Mojabeng. She was placed facing the mirror with a grass mat called *moseme* at her feet. It was covered with plastic to stop the blood of the chicken from dripping onto the wooden floor. On the *moseme* *nkgono* placed her knife with which she was slaughtering the chicken (*kgoho*). There was also a *nkgo* (a clay pot) and an enamel bowl *sejana sa ho hlapela*, that was going to be filled with boiling water from the kettle. This was for the purpose of *ho hlotha kgoho* (prepare the chicken). She represented the elders and prepared to perform the cleanse on me, for me.

My mother was present as an illustration of a guardian to witness and make sure that nothing was overly done, or half done. More than that, she was there as my hand holder. The belief in the Basotho culture is that your mother is and should always be

your better half, loosely speaking, in everything culturally, traditionally and spiritually. She was placed as a pillar of strength with the audience. Her presence was a silent prayer for all to go well.

Stones were placed on pre-set in a diagonal line from the door to the far down right corner, where a *moseme* was placed for the audience to sit on while they watched the performance. Because the stones were placed in a diagonal line, they divided the room into two which created two equal triangular shapes. This shape spiritually represented a union of the body, mind and spirit giving a focus and balance to everything in the room. Symbolically the division of the triangles showed the separation of the self that was stuck in the world of fiction. Later in the performance the stones were moved and placed inside a tyre, to break down the two worlds. This allowed the room to be balanced in a square and was symbolic of the retrieval to the self.

In the corner of the room where the performance was taking place was a small triangle making me very 'cornered'. It was two by two meters in size. It is well to note that the triangle played quite an important role in the performance. This was mainly the symbolic trait of a black body crying for an escape into a more balanced less sharp imprint. That was stinging her away from her passion. It also represented a position of urgency; the cleanse was a necessity, hence the choice to corner myself in a triangle. It gave the illusion of being part of a balance but really it was a state of stability; of my inability to face my burdens.

The performance took place right opposite the mirror which gave the audience a view to what was happening around the room simultaneously as the performance that was happening by the corner. This was an important choice as the audience's backs were towards everything else in the room, which, for the audience created a dis-ease and curiosity to look back throughout the performance. There was a tyre on the far up right corner with what we call *bata ya metsi a hlwekileng* (a bath of clean water) where the ritual of the cleanse was going to take place. This was also put in a triangle literally creating a boundary when the cleanse ensued because, as mentioned '*meetlo*' is sacred.

While the external examiners may have been invited, they were not necessarily part of the actual cleanse, neither did they have to hear or see what was happening as

their role was more for the celebration aspect as discussed above. Concealment is the essential and protective base of '*meetlo*'. therefore it was not negotiable. I made sure everything surrounding the room both literally and symbolically made that evident, including the music that was played right through the show.

The Performance

The Gallery of Her Imprints is an autoethnographic devised ritualistic performance. It consisted of four characters, all of whom were played or performed by me. The characters are The Child, The Self, The Narrator and The Character. These characters gave me the leeway to tap in and out comprehensively, creating the illusion of a human guiding the audience through the story and helping them understand the necessity for the cleansing ceremony at the end.

The Child represented innocence. She was unfamiliar with the repercussions that could occur on entering the world of the unknown. (Though the set was made-up, it dealt with the real narratives of real people, in real communities that practice these rituals). In The Gallery of Her Imprints we only see The Child in the beginning as an opening act. She represents the beginning of the problem; the tribulations of Innocence's and being misled by the fine lines between play and playing (fiction vs real).

The Self was the driver. It was the neutral self, coming out of character in the play. We are introduced to The Self in the beginning through a self-reflecting image leaning against the mirror. The second time is at the end of the show, when we see The Self in a contrasting self-reflecting image as Tshepang in the adult phase of self-confrontation into the cleansing ceremony. The Self was a flashing of the now and served as the reminder of the importance of returning to The Self continuously to not get lost in the world of fiction. The Self helped me to tap out and remain rooted in reality.

The Narrator was the neutral thread in the narrative. She appeared between each character tapping in and out throughout the show. She served as the reflection and reflexive quality of the performance. She helped in the tracking of the logic and played the linking force from one scenario into another. She maintained the balance and fluidity and by holding the base carried its lucidity and the core of the narrative.

The Character was seen in the moments which tapped into the world of fiction and when there was a delving comprehensively into previous events within the performance. The Character was there to look into the memories. To find the one that had left the weightiest impact. This left me with the task of comprehending why that one, specifically, had made such an impression on me.

The reason for the choice of the four characters being portrayed by one person is mentioned throughout the paper. It is because this research is about the self. It is an autoethnographic form of research and it is derived from an autobiographical narrative. It concerns the 'I' for the 'we'. It is personal and aimed at the retrieving and healing of the self. It was performed according to my clan's requirements. Adding someone else would have meant rediscovering how to un-imprint them out of a world of fiction, that is based on a real narrative performed using a real '*meetlo*' of that clan (ritualistic performance). This might have been too foreign for them, proving to be detrimental and defeating the purpose of the study which was to discover how to cleanse the self after performing other people's cultural activities in ritualistic performances. This might have impacted the self and placed them in a dilemma in their real life.

The audience meet The Child playing by drawing her footprints with chalk and we hear a song '*Ya thoriso*' playing in the background. She greets the audience and asks them to play with her. She then hands them chinks and demonstrates to the audience how to play. What seems so innocent and friendly soon oozes with deeper meaning when we recognise the symbolic content. The Oxford dictionary defines 'footprints' as the impressions left by a foot or by shoes on the ground or a surface. It also recognizes it as an area which is occupied or affected by something.

The trajectory of discovering who we are includes having to confront who we were. My predicament was that I could not recall the journey that imprinted me so clearly. That made me feel oppressed by the circumstances which held me back from understanding myself and myself in the arts. The strength of my feelings merged the lines. It confused my realities with those of the fiction worlds. It was a nightmare. Nonetheless, I had to understand that nothing comes easy and nothing is so sweet as the thrill of waiting for the sweet that comes after bitterness. "Those who suffer are always in that place that binds roots to the earth...Suffering is their centre, their heart. It reminds them of who they are. The oppressed live within the stomach of their

oppressors” (Okri,1997: 106). My oppressor was the murky memories of a process that created a deep disturbance within me.

Admittedly, the quest seemed impossible because I cannot change the past and so, I played out the irony of my present inability to retrieve the past. Drawing the footprints gave me a visual beginning, having the audience add their footprints gave a middle and so the path to the end was marked out, thus an abstract picture of what I could not repossess, or claim was captured. It is in that moment that you realize that the journey of discovering is the most painful and never ending one. It challenges one to constantly revisit places and memories which are, unfortunately, not always pleasant.

The rhetorical question that drove this camouflage section of the performance was entrenched in the observation of how nature cleanses daily. When we step on the ground or on the sand the wind blows it away, at the beach the waves take it away, when it rains the footprints are washed away. A new beginning is always presented by nature with all we imprint on it as we go about our daily lives. Nonetheless, we ask who cleanses us? Who cleanses the host that carries the experiences that have been imprinted on us, the practices that have left their imprints on our beings?

Intriguingly, we carry on whether we are aware of it or not. The possibility of stopping is the last resort. Living on the edge feels more valuable than wondering what it would be like to live off the edge. Ben Okri (1997) describes the greatest art in ‘A way of being free’:

greatest art born from a profound and terrible silence – a silence out of which the deepest enigmas of our lives cry: why are we here? What is the point of it all? How can we know peace and live in joy? Why be born in order to die? Why this difficult one-way journey between the two mysteries? Out of the wonder and agony of being comes these cries and questions and the endless streams of words with which to order human life and quieten the human heart in the midst of our living and our distress (Okri, 1997: 72).

Who we are is what grounds us, it’s our centre. It is a constant reminder that should always be inquiring into who we are becoming or aspiring to be. The process never ends. It is a journey of discovering ourselves, it is the purpose of the ‘hara’, our core. Possibly, it is the endless ‘eternal’ which is the driver of our existence.

The Gallery of Her Imprints took us into a world of inquiring, yet streams along the possibilities of it all being just a harmless game. The child in us is always ready to discover, to play, to compete...especially for a promised prize regardless of the impact the prize might have in changing our whole lives. The chinks are retrieved, and the audience are told to play the next game, or they will get no further than the door. The question is, who wants to remain at the door when a whole gallery is in front of you, waiting to be recognized by you?

Curiosity drives the decisions. The game is called 'oom piet'. You do not know him nor where he is from or why there is a game about him, but you do not want to be left at the door, so you play along irrespectively. The benefit of understanding one's art, through training and studying the body is that, in a performance you are able to position the body. This, in itself is a performance. Performance is 'an art of body and an art grounded in body' (Sheppard, 2006: 7), it shows up the magnificence of the body which travels in and out through playing in the play.

Walter Goldschmidt (1990: 99) states that a transition into a symbolic world ultimately leads to a true sense of self, a point of transition that may be more or less formalized and is always culturally determined. In The Gallery of Her Imprints this is established in a short symbolic transition after The Child invites the audience to sit on a *moseme* and then instructs them to turn their backs towards the door as she walks away to pick up a tyre which she then spins as she sings *mankokosane*. Symbolically, the tyre, at this point, is the time travelled and an entry into another realm, another era and a version of a self-unfamiliar to its own body.

Mankokosane is a cry, from a child who is in the midst of being seen as adult and is losing their inner child. It is, in addition the cry of a burdened child who is overwhelmed and is seeking guidance. '*Mankokosane pula yana o tla hola neng hosane...*' are lyrics that could be seen as a child telling a higher power that 'it is raining' and asking when she will grow-up as the world awaits her growth. Loosely translated, it is also a song that believes in the unknown and in the hope of finding a better life as it is raining. Which in the performance drove me from childhood into an adulthood. While everyone waited to see me as they sat with their backs to the door, *ba furalletse monyako* not knowing what to expect next.

This led into an image of The Self leaning against the mirror. Reflecting on the self, symbolically it was a representation of a camouflaged self that is drowning in a stillness of denial. Breathing in and out in silence. The Self sat on the tyre leaning against the mirror until she uttered the following:

When love is no longer served on the table
pack your bags and leave.

Maybe that's what I should have done with the only passion I have ever known
packed my bags and left.

Ladies and Gentleman my name is Tshepang Moticoe, not...

This self-introduction gave weight to a soul or being that yearned to return to the self they had lost in a world of fiction. It lacked the ability to retrieve the 'true self' while seemingly being hopeful. It was an introduction that looked back to what The Self felt she should have done and was followed by an introduction of her real name. It all amounted to a denial of how and what was the true problem. Who am I? was shown to be a quest, a journey, once again, appealing to the unspoken roots of recuperate and reintegrate.

The Self picks up the tyre, trembling, as it sends her back in time into The Narrator to speak about The Character in her first year at university. She taps into the significance of the performance; her late grandmother is there to watch. This opens up for her a world of memory, instantaneously she is into playing The Character, and is in a world of fiction where she *mimics* a ritualistic act of a *moporofeta* (prophetess). Here a white candle was switched on as the *moporofeta* was about to *mimic* what was done in real life. The white candle is believed to be a way of asking for *Lesedi* (light) in the Basotho culture.

Interestingly, in this moment, as The Narrator spoke of her late grandmother Gogo Modiehi, the sangoma blew her whistle. Later, in my own self-reflection, I remembered that at initiation I was taught that when things happen intuitively you are ought to not ignore them as it means or is confirming something for you. I thus concluded that the whistle was nkgono maMosia's presence being in the space in that moment. It was an intuitive act that Gogo Modiehi performed and relayed to me as an acknowledgement of my late grandmother's presence.

The Character taps back into The Narrator to link the importance of the ritualistic act to what had just been *mimicked* and also to tap into a conscious mindset to interrogate the effect of that moment. As mentioned, I knew it was imperative to remain aware, to take mental notes of each act, with its physiologically and psychologically impact on the self.

The Narrator moves onto the next event of the investigation and taps into The Character in her second year of university. The Character makes the choice to start by introducing who she is before getting into the process. This was identified as a sign of rooting her real self, of acknowledging her real self before acknowledging The Character thus avoiding the chance of getting lost in the world of fiction. By doing this she was averting having to *conceal* how the process might be affecting her. By returning to the question Who am I? and reiterating who she was to herself she insured that she would still be herself when the process had been completed.

While still in The Character the next character instinctively began to play without being introduced by The Narrator. This blended The Self and The Character so that they become one self-character. This was a *disruptive* act moving away from the *disguising* self, leaving her with no leeway to tap out and into another character. It triggered links that created a sensible reason for the investigation. The links spoke to the *disruptions* that break the shell of *disguising*. She attempted to associate them immediately, in that moment, with her self-character and thus found the link to the dreams, that has caused the sleepless nights which came from an event in a particular moment of a production with an actor-character. The questions were lingering, in this moment, who is she now...self-character or actor-character? can she be both? has the many selves intruded into one body instantaneously?

When these memories were triggered The Self became foreign to her once again. She could not even recognize herself in that mirror, The Self was anxious and bitter. All the memories of the swelling of the feet, blindness from time to time were replayed in that moment causing an intense dis-ease to The Self, in character. She remained wanting to run away, as she recalled the phobia and because she could not run away, she resorted to escapism by stepping out of the tiny triangle were, as The Character, she had been performing. She collected the diagonally placed stones which felt like a collection of all her burdens and heavy data. The Character ran, picking up the stones

one by one and putting them in the tyre which symbolically reflected the state that her brain was in. When she was done The Self was swallowed up in the tyre yet it was sounding like a drowning character, drowning in her own misfortunes, burdens and pains.

There was a moment when self-character turned with her back to the audience and Gogo Modiehi started to sing a lament, a Sesotho song. It was a moment of retrieving The Self it made a silent prayer for The Character:

I am wasting away to nothing;

I am burning up with fever. I am a ghost of my former self, half consumed already by terminal illness. My jaws ache from gritting my teeth; I am nothing but skin and bones. I am like a buzzard in the desert, a cow perched on the rubble. Insomniac, I twitter away,

mournful as a sparrow in the gutter...

It was a declaration to The Self, of its burdens and the need to shed them. She was asking for guidance from the higher power and it was an acknowledgement of the necessity to cleanse the The Self.

When The Self, in The Character, turned around to face the audience again, she had a moment of stillness, of silence just standing there in isolation. Basotho believe in isolating the 'self'. The reason for this is exactly the same as the one Mahali (2013) speaks to with regard to the significance of isolation. The isolation of 'self' from the world is to what re-integrates it. It is an opportunity, as Mahali (2013) states, "deemed to be a daunting but hopeful time because the detached individual uses this time as a chance for self- examination, analysis and search". Withdrawal and separation are a requisite step "it is also about positively and creatively constructing a self, inventing a self whose life can truly be considered a work of art" (Anderson, 2010: 130).

The external acts that the audience were seeing in this moment, were a direct reflection of what was happening psychologically. Physiologically there was a war going on between the impulses to carry on and the impulse to stop. A bag full of everything unwanted was left, to be carried by me, and I realized that all these moments had been embedded in me all along. I had manipulated the brain to forget but the body remained with the truth. It prevailed when I thought I had it under control, only to discover I had camouflaged my truth for a truth more bearable.

This was the point where the realization that the two other characters did not have anything to do with the imprints, just this last one corresponded directly with the imprints from the past.

The Character taps into The Narrator and The Narrator begins a narration of the third year and the university production. This production dealt with African spirituality on an intensive level it showed everything, to the T. Revealing what is practiced in real and explained the memory of the process that imprinted me. The Narrator elaborated on what had happened exactly and tapped into The Character to demonstrate how it had intruded the self's real world, unconsciously. It had created a collision that blurred the real with the fictional. In this moment my family and Gogo Modiehi were singing an ancestral song, clapping softly, as The Character delved in and out of The Character and The Narrator and finally into a trans where a ne a *qoqopela* (she began to dance to the African drum). The Character acts out the aftermath, the swelling of her feet, the confusion; she is distraught, she is in pain and feeling hopeless.

This moment reveals the suffering and the consequences of not performing ritualistic practices in a procedurally correct way. It brings and leaves distress on The Self that is unbearable. It explains why The Self felt the way she did. She should have packed her bags and left behind the only passion she has ever known. Ben Okri (1997) alluded to that when he said either we face our uncomfortable truths, or we are overwhelmed by them (1997: 87). There are consequences in the perpetuation of mendacities. In the same way there is an inescapable faith for all those who refuse to see. If this happens the same experience will keep on recurring unless you face it and change your way of looking at your predicaments.

When we face pain, we allow ourselves to escape from its eternal existence. We free up space for growth and we learn new things about ourselves. The Character leans forward, her back to the mirror, facing the tyre that has the stones inside. She is being pulled by this image in front of her. We see her body resisting and finally giving into the pull. She steps into the tyre and begins to wash herself with the stones. From a literal perspective it looks painful, it seems like she is punishing herself, but not in the symbolic connotation of a black child. The only time a stone is used to wash your body is when it is used to wash your heels in the attempt to clean what we call *ditlhabela*; *ba o hohla ditlhabela*. The aim is to remove the dirt that is visible on the external, and

as it is that could affect the internal and lead to an individual being conscious about the self. It is a cleansing of the external that meets the dented of the internal.

Tlhwekiso ya Tshenolo

The Character picks up the tyre puts it over her neck. She struggles to push it all the way down to her feet. It was symbolically the first step of acknowledging to let go of all the burdens, pain and distractions. She is in pain as she pushes the tyre from one body part to another, she is breathing heavily and looks exhausted. She finally drops the tyre to the feet and screams in agony, 'Tshepang...' this was a re-introduction of The Self to The Self, a recall and a cry seeking a self that is lost. The scream was also a release from all the bottled sentiments as Mahali (2013) express them to be. Mahali also sees it as, tearing of an individual who must give birth to a new identity to allow the process of new selves, to come to life, and put a new breath into this ecosphere.

The exertions is petrifying but shedding brings a new version, with new possibilities which are fruitful and fulfilling to the eternal self. The Character drops to sit in the tyre and in no moment, there is a shift from The Character to The Self who was present. For the first time she sees The Self as she sees herself in the mirror. This is when the self-confrontation of a body that no longer wishes to be camouflaged is expressed. The Self begins to converse with herself. She talks about her journey, reflecting on where she comes from, the extent of her journey, the point of the journey. It is reflexive and acknowledged her attributes. This is the first step in the cleansing - the acknowledgement and recognition of The Self.

The Self gets up from the tyre and picks up a stone. This is The Self picking up her burdens, represented by the stone, as she walks out of the confined space, shaped as a triangle, to the centre, towards her grandmother, where the space is a balanced square. She waits for her mother, grandmother and Gogo Modiehi (sangoma) and journeys with them to go to the cleansing point. The Self is in front, leading, and the family follows. This created a significant image of protection for a vulnerable self that is about to shed her old self for a new beginning without knowing what the fortune held for her.

When they arrive at the cleansing corner, her mother and Gogo Modiehi stand in a straight line creating a triangle once again. Her grandmother leans into the bath of

clean water (*bata ya metsi a hlwekileng*). She takes *nkgo* (the clay pot) which has the *dikhare* of the chicken (*kgoho*) inside it and pours the mixture into the water and uttering soft words that cannot be heard as she mixes everything with the clear water.

The Self is being prepared in the meantime by her mother and the sangoma who are assisting her to take off her clothes. She folds them neatly and places them down. Grandmother turns around and tells her to first step with her left foot into the water in the bath. This stems from the belief that when a cleansing is performed the diagnosed person needs to enter with the least used foot first as this represents the submissiveness of a dented body and spirit.

The cleansing continues with grandmother cleansing The Self from the head to the feet as she softly whispers and speaks to the ancestors. The music in the room at this point is loud and the audience cannot hear and can barely see what is happening as the ceremony is sacred and meant only for those of that clan. When the cleansing with water and the mixture ended her grandmother whispers to her that she must get out with her right foot first. This is a symbolic acceptance of the notion that all will and is well.

The Self stepped out of the bath and her mother and Gogo Modiehi are waiting to cover her precious clean (un-camouflaged) body. The Self walks to the centre of the room after the cleansing while the family remains at the cleansing point ululating and saying her clan names from both the maternal and paternal side. This is a celebration of her completing the process. The Self sits in the centre of the room and looked at herself in the mirror with all the images reflected in it and takes a deep breath of gratitude and appreciation of the journey travelled and prepares to live the life of one who is re-born. The ceremony continues with the community celebration at home. "Maybe there are only three kinds of stories: the stories we live, the stories we tell, and the higher stories that help our souls fly up towards the greater light" (Okri, 1997: 103).

Phase Three: Post-production

The post-production phase I identified the imprints that had been endowed, and I categorized them based on the four means of camouflage and the effects. This consisted of concealment, disguise, disrupt and mimicry. Actors engage with this, to keep from revealing their truest self of their identity. This is because they are so overwhelmed, uncertain and confused by having to frequently add attributes of other

selves or identities. This is without any form of cleanse or comprehensive cleansing or de-roling. The camouflaging effects which were explored in The Gallery of Her Imprints were based on the theories of science and biology. I clarified them and noted those within animals and the minimal existence in humans, I looked at their presence in the aesthetics and the senses and thereafter analysed, categorized and noted those seen in the performance.

Concealment, according to The Gallery of Her Imprints, had to be categorised under all the imprints that served as a cover up for the character, when she was speaking of the self. These were all the moments where self was called for self-confrontation and recognition but chose to camouflage as character, hoping through the character the self-impressions will amount to the self-restoration. Inevitable, I discovered, in my reflection, that there is no self-healing that can be acquired without self-confrontation and self-acceptance.

The moments which were identified in phase two showed that the blend of The Character and The Self, which seemingly were inseparable had to be identified as self-character. It is in these moments' that, as Basotho we say *o ne a ipatile kapa a iphapantse*, we try to blend in or take on a disguise to conceal ourselves. The dilemma was seen in the hiding behind the piled up of the baggage which at the end of the performance was hurled out with The Self having to face it-self.

"Cryptic coloration increases concealment and lessens the risk of visual detection" (Poulton, 1890). Particularly in the cleansing section the position of the essential figures prohibited the external (the audience) from clearly detecting what was taking place, detail for detail, upon The Self. This was all rooted in the significance of the procedural layers of the '*meetlo*' of the Basotho. The entire production came from the seed (idea) of concealment, showing clearly why it was a closed performance. Every vocal and bodily expression suggested that it was a privilege to share in every aspect that contained the sacredness. Caro (2005) explicates that "camouflage appears to be the single most important evolutionary force in explaining overall coloration in mammals."

Disguise - *ke ho ikgantsha*. The fluidity held in balance the aim which was not to take or give any more than what seems applicable. It was the illusion of neutrality. The prominent events were all those that the narrator in phase two used as a linking force

to stabilise the chronological order of the narrative in the performance. These were the deceiving moments of a non-existing order and control.

I found out in the post-production phase, by being reflexive, that - the unfortunate about knowing is in the moment. The only truth is the one subjected to the fictional and because that is your truth the notion of real versus fictional becomes parallelly blurred. The reason for this is that my truth of the real world was narrated in the world of fiction, leaving it unpredictable to as how much exactly of the shedding was truthful or done just to carry out the performance till the end.

Admittedly, “other Species use coloration tactics to highlight rather than hide their identity” (National Geographic Society, 2020). The Gallery of Her Imprints highlighted very distinctively the characters that held the essence of the narrative and who made the point of inclination clear, through the spoken words, the time difference, the environment and the elements of abstract.

Disruptive is the dis-ease, the discomfort, the confusion which is embedded in the internal yet at the disposal of the external or The Self. This confusion is expressed in Sesotho as - *ho ferekane; ho senyeha maikutlo*. This was played out in a literal and symbolic connotation. Symbolically, it was where all the objects emphasised what was happening internally to the body. Example, the image of the tyre, was an image of a body being trapped in their circumstances, in the body, in time, and in the space. Internally vouching to vomit in confession, to acknowledge the conditions and let them go. She pushes the tyre down externally and excruciatingly screams her name as the tyre drops down. It was in the moment of the stillness of The Self, expressed in phase two when the body externally is motionless but everything else in the room is simultaneously chaotic. From the music to the important figures in the space performing their activities that one sees externally. All these were a literal representation of the internal.

There are...two key tenets of disruptive theory: first, ‘differential blending’, where some patches on the individual stands out from the background while other patches blend in; and second, ‘maximum disruption contrast’, where adjacent patterns elements are highly contrasting in tone and some are different from the background. These are effective in disruptive camouflage because

they exploit edge detection mechanism that function in early visual processing (Stevens & Cuthill, 2006).

Thus, in *The Gallery of Her Imprints* the disruptive element was coordinated by sameness and by juxtaposing, using the reflection in the mirror. These were reflecting every element in the room and the sameness was seen in the pattern of the leopard print cloths yet, different in colour. This was a heightened yet deliberate choice to symbolically represent the internal disruption which causes dis-ease while the external is fighting the survival battle to free *The Self*.

Mimicry (*ke ho etsisa*) was seen in the roller coaster of playing in the play, in the going in and out as character in the mimicking of ritualistic acts. In the production of *The Gallery of Her Imprints*, every ritualistic act was mimicked by *The Character*. The Character's roles were derived from real acts practiced in real life. This was identified and categorized as mimicking because there was a 'now' moment which was happening in the world of fiction. As Robert Cohen (2013) surmised that it is not so much between the real and unreal or honesty and dishonesty as it is a reality which remains a complex perception explicated in a place.

The national geographic society (2020) teaches that "animals such as the coral snakes warning coloration is so well known in the animal kingdom that other, non-threatening species mimic it in order to camouflage their true identities" *The Gallery of Her Imprints* adopted this notion, in order to visibly show the process of employing character on the immediate effect.

Mimicking brought alive the daily practical ritualized acts. That have connotations to sacred practises and also bring out the other character or the true self. This was to track back effectively all the ritualistic acts which I had impersonated and which might have created an attachment that blurred the line between my world and the world of the fiction, till I accepted the main one and the reasoning which made it distinctive.

Phase three proved to be the link to everything else in the study, resulting in the whole paper referring back to the imprints endowed. In phase two I go in depth into the classification and how that was portrayed in the moment of the doing. The classifications of the camouflaging were stated precisely, their effects were explained and how these were explored in the performance itself. In the results section below, I will spell out the impact on me and what I received from it which is relative to the how.

It is important to reiterate that the performance was not open to the public at large, and only specific, essential individuals who were involved were present at the actual performance. This was because they had a particular role that contributed to the cleansing ceremony and met the academic requirements and the outcomes of the research. Two cameras recorded the final performance which gave me a chance to reflect on what I had seen and to compare it to what I felt during the process.

A journal was kept specifically to aid reflection and to reflect the experience from the beginning to the end. Pictures (converted into a slide show), documents (all were compressed into a research report) and videos (edited into one video that shows the full final performance) are kept for external record to be used by other academics who may be interested in using African methods to de-role actors. "Autoethnographic and the 'new' reflexive ethnography lets us more fully understand the lived experience and the relationship practices of research participation and the multiple interpretations, experiences, and voices emergent in the culture we study" (Bochner & Ellis, 1992).

My aim was to ensure that the ultimate conclusion of the creative process will be stemmed from all the theories read and the final performance piece, *The Gallery of Her Imprints*. All of these helped me to uncover the praxis and the parallels of the theories used. This was so that I could put into practice the central point in which when it is seen through the focal lens of the study, it is seen as the discovery of the 'I' for the 'we'.

CHAPTER: Sephetho

Bread

I bring new bread

To the altar of your being

Soften with the milk of longing

Baked in the furnace of passionate tears (Mattera, 2008: 39)

The drive of unearthing is eternal. I have found through the process of this journey that a self is quite a complex concept to unpack but certainly it is a constant referral point for understanding what grounds this body. When undergoing initiation, a repetitive question that is asked both indirectly and directly through all the stages always points back to Who are you? It was not a surprise to find that this research as well kept pointing back to Who you are? What do you stand for? What are your roots?

When thinking about a ritualistic representation of '*meetlo*' wa Basotho, the first thing I had to understand was that the blurred line between real and fiction actually came from not understanding that culturally we do not play or *mimic*. It is so sacred that *concealment* quickly became paramount notion. The predicament made the process difficult to reflect upon. 'Respect' was the number one referral point thus, I was constantly questioning what could or could not be shared.

Furthermost as I documented the reason why they were so effective to begin with. I realized the answer was to be found in the sacred characteristics. Not everything has to be shared, not everyone has to know everything about you, except yourself. Thus, we find ourselves, as actors, in danger sharing practices that are sacred, have *always* been *concealed* and are treasured tokens. To worsen the situation, at times, for artistic reasons, we share them incorrectly and this goes against the practises and so we imprint our real being in moments of play, while playing with the forbidden truths.

Un-camouflaging is a solitary experience and can be done in the moment of being. This means that sometimes during the performance when we are 'being in the moment' we the actors allow the ourselves the chance to be truthful. We open up for

vulnerability to take over. We become less restricted by external attributes that make us conscious that we are revealing the naked aspects of our true selves.

In the moment of no return, when an audience is Infront of you. You are faced with the responsibility of not only letting yourself down but also that audience member who could be relating to what you are narrating in that moment. It is in that moment that we fail to camouflage, instead, we just 'be' and by 'being' we un-camouflage the self. This interestingly refers us back to theatre makers such as Grotowski (1968) who states "It is the self-sacrifice in that a performer offers the inner most part of themselves on stage, the stripping process which refrains the actor to act but instead be..." (1968: 35).

Furthermore, what was identified during the final performance of The Gallery of Her Imprints is that when *mimicking* a real '*meetlo*' in a fictional world there must be a clear understanding of what will be done, just for the purpose of aesthetics and what will be done for the purpose of realness and effectiveness. These later needs to be clearly recognized. They take place so that the actor may look back at the incomplete circumventions of actions performed in the fictional narrative, because some may lead to the confusion 'what is' and 'what is not' in the moment of being. This is purely to stop the blurring of the lines between the written (fictional) to the real moments. If any intermission occurs.

One needs to follow the correct procedure, very precisely, when summoning or asking guidance from the ancestors or of the ancestral realm. "De-roling has roots in the theatre world; yet ubiquitous practice is not standard. Actors endeavour to precisely take on a character and often neglect to procedurally release of the character" (Bailey & Dickinson, 2014). Which may cause *disruptions* in the actor's self-daily real life, outside the actor character in a ritualistic theatrical process. I have discovered the powers in my body which, I can use to un-camouflage and de-role from my previous experiences. These are linked to '*meetlo*' and are effective irrespective of time constraints.

It is important to recognise that it is the actor who must take the step of acknowledging the existence of the imprints left behind by previous processes. Having stated that, the question is: In what ways do actors 'un-camouflage' the self by using and reusing '*meetlo*'? We actors can un-camouflage and recuperate and recover from the processes we enter into. Everything we are endowed with remains in the body

because of the repetition and is not received via the brain, thus by allowing a self-confrontation we break away from self-*disguising* yielding and shedding the processes we have entered into. We are letting go of the current imprint so that it may be replaced by another which may grow underneath our endless selves. Figuratively, we actors are reptiles. We constantly allow the process of shedding to emerge within us.

It is important to also clarify that in the process of my research I have only used '*meetlo*' once and did not re-use it. I was advised by the elders that I can only re-use it if I encounter any further imprints from my next ritualistic theatrical process. This is because, according to the *Basia* clan, everything with regards to '*meetlo*' can only be performed and practiced when there is a necessity. In essence, this means '*meetlo*' can only be performed once in the correct, accurate, procedural manner for it to be effective. There are many different '*meetlo*' and these are done for different reasons depending on the occurrence.

You can only identify the specific '*meetlo*' which is needed when you know what was the context of the '*meetlo*' which you performed in the fictional world because some forms of cleansing, particularly in the African context do not require water but soil or ashes. All this depends on the context and the specific clan. The context of the '*meetlo*' is the driving force; unless the context is known, the implications cannot be identified. Which brings us to the next question - what is the best process to use when identifying the applicable '*meetlo*' for the specific actor.

The value for me of having identified the applicable '*meetlo*' for my process was that it became rooted in my being, giving me the assurance that it could shield the 'self' from being imprinted. This was confirmed by the elders from my clan. The applicable '*meetlo*' is a cemented base derived from the origins of who oneself is and where one comes from as an individual, culturally. The acknowledgement of self and the comprehensive reasoning behind the '*meetlo*' of the Basotho has been the drive of my research.

What do actors do after acknowledgement of their need for cleansing? When actors recognize that they have been camouflaged (imprinted by the ritualistic process they were in) it is essential that they are honest with themselves. This takes place in the phase of neutrality before commencing the process. They must, specifically, be honest about what seems to be the main *disruption* (a type of camouflaging) to their real life,

post-production. What is it, about the fictional that is calling for constant attention in the real, as though it was ever a part of their real life to begin with? That is when the elders come in. They are the guide on how to go about the cleansing. It is important to recognize how you can cleanse yourself. It needs to be in the way that the 'self' recognizes to be culturally accurate. The cleansing is done according to your clan specifically. You are cleansing the 'self' out of the character not the character out of the 'self'.

Though the '*meetlo*' that is performed in the fictional may be from a different clan, the vital component is that the person who is affected is the 'self'. Thus, the need for the 'self' to be cleansed according to the clan and not that of the fictional realm. This is solely to retrieve 'self' out of the fictional and so, the cleansing needs to be appropriated to the 'self' which is the root to your whole being. This is why I used my own Basotho roots, specifically the '*meetlo*' of the *Basia* (my clan) to un-camouflage from a ritualist theatrical process that had imprinted my body (the host).

Acknowledgement has historical roots in acting. My acknowledgement process began with being truthful to myself in the context of my interest in de-roling actors. This was the beginning of my own self-healing process which was to un-camouflage the 'self' and carry on reaching for, and living a life which aspired to have passion in performing. Above all I wanted to carry on telling true African '*meetlo*' stories with minimal dangers to the 'self'. This acknowledgment of my concerns paved the way for me to act and research how to assist actors to lay down the heavy burdens' which they are endowed with during ritualistic processes.

I cannot inject what I cannot see nor can I heal without conceding that they are wounds. How do actors learn, from ritualized processes, to recognize that they are camouflaged? Primarily, there will be a huge alteration in the body itself which is the host; it is what stores and carries all that was endowed during the process. This means that the 'self' is left with a heaviness because the process required in the shedding of the 'self' in such a concentrated and comprehensive way leaves both the internal and the external of the host drained. Susana Bloch the psychologist (1993) referred to it as the actors experiencing an "emotional hangover" and Richard Schechner (1985: 19) as an "aftermath" which is seen in fatigue, anxiety that leads to a lack of sleep and for others in the deep sleep where the dreams signify the implication of the process.

This is when the imprints manifest *disruption* in one's life by *mimicking* a weight on 'self'. If the '*meetlo*' was closely related to any of the spiritual abilities. The external of the host will start speaking for itself through what, in the African culture, are obviously signs of a person with a calling (shaman), especially if the individual has in the real life received such a call. For example, there will be swelling of feet, occasional blindness and a constant heaviness of the heart that is unexplainable.

There are many ways to recognize the camouflaged version of the 'self' or, as I refer to it – the *symptoms of disruptions*. If you look into the mirror and try to speak to yourself or perform your daily activities you will find that they feel negatively foreign, as if your own self has been misplaced. If suddenly, your surroundings keep speaking to the process either directly or indirectly you may feel like you are haunted by the previous process. Conversation becomes difficult and it may seem as if somehow you are being drawn back to a particular previous experience when all seems almost stagnant.

This is how I recognized during a ritualistic process I was in, that I had been left imprinted and thus camouflaged. I was in no specific place when I recognized this as far as I can recall. It was rather in the journey of my academics and stemmed from my strong interest in finding ways to de-roling actors. I was forced to interrogate myself in order to establish where the interest was rooted. The overall significance for actors is the assurance you can move on in artistry and reach your "full throated song" as Ross Mooney refers to it, without fear of previous imprints holding you back. What I have come to discover is the importance of recognizing that you can work towards the solution.

These results where all documented during the neutral phase, in the rehearsal the 'during phase' and post-production phase and summed up according to the camouflage phases in no particular order but in the order of the questions of the research. Indeed, more findings came out of the research however, due to the limitations I have focused on the questions proposed in the research.

CHAPTER: Qetello

This research report was a delightful unearthing journey. It disclosed the discomfort and pleasures of tracing back to the roots of who one truly is. It delved into the significance of what seems to be a driving force for those with black bodies who want to tell their narratives and who want to understand why they have certain ritualistic performances even though they know of the possible dangers of tapping into those realms. Our hope is that:

“when individuals find ways to depict, articulate and share moments of pain; when language, vocality and body become outlets for traumatic experiences or are shared with responsive observers and spectators through performance, dance and ritual, psychological repair becomes possible (Stepakoff, 2008: 17).

Understanding the self proves to be imperative even in moments of just wanting to entertain and play. Our bodies are truly the containers. They are the host of our knowledge, therefore all we embody has long been embedded and rooted within us. That is why Mahali (2013) saw our bodies as a museum of bottled sentiments engraved with the beautiful pain syndrome.

The usage of a museum setting to perform a ritualistic performance, stems from the understanding that “museums are a metaphor that accommodates the complexity of blackness and the black body in performance and blackness history. Our memories are embodied” in it (Mahali, 2013: 3). There is much in the stillness of images. They reflect the everlasting irony of time as it progresses. That stillness is a language just as silence. It is in that stillness of the image that a moment remains. It is beyond just being a memory.

‘*Meetlo*’, to Africans, are a medicine, one that constantly blooms from the concealment and respect retained for its existence. The biggest lesson acquired through the ‘*meetlo*’ of the *Basotho* is that there is nothing new under the sun but originality is maintained through the consistency of remaining truthful to your roots and understanding that time does not change the past, it just offers a new opportunity to return to the kernel of your being. The aims of the research were fulfilled through this understanding of Basotho. It was through the realization that research comes with the

mystery of accountability and the importance of understanding that mystery before pursuing it.

The biggest lesson to take from the Basotho is the explanation of why actors should cleanse off their endowed imprints after ritualistic processes. This will enable them to be initiated into just 'being'. It gives them a chance to begin again and resolutely to settle into whatever they want to be (Mahali, 2013: 34). Mahali re-phrases the Foucauldian self as something that is epitomized by incompleteness. He talks about the grit which is motivated by the need or edge to withdraw from the idea of 'a given identity' (Anderson, 2010: 138). This could be the next anxiety actors may experience. They have to get rid 'of a given identity' that is scripted but now resides in their non-fictional identities. This requires various approaches in relation to the performer, to theatre making, directing, even choreography. All these are interwoven, and the body is central to the process of inquiry and to the understanding and knowledge which is linked to its creation.

The study came to the understanding that if embodied knowledge plays a significant role in the human body and it affects its mannerisms, then, in order to make meaning of its surroundings and situations and how it is constituted there must be a basic connection between the creative and the created. The verdict was that it is in the content form, the feelings and the thoughts and they, woven together were an important part of the research. The researcher also noted that drama and the theatre contributed significantly towards the research process.

Research is a process. It is one that aims to discover and uncover. It is about understanding the ultimate objective of the process itself. This, in the context of theatre, parallels the movement towards the 'I' in comparison to the 'what' of the research itself. This mirror's 'creating versus the 'created' and the 'it' which is the final outcome of the process and corresponds to the 'now moment' of the actual engagement of the researcher which aimed at the experience itself. In a nutshell, embodied knowledge is the comprehension of the pyramid effect and how it affects others. So, no researcher does research for himself, but rather for the community and to find out how the 'I' in discovery can match the 'we'.

Daniel Johnston (2017) discusses on how both theatre and phenomenology shared light on philosophical attributes to make meaning and sense of things, he says they

both “Question the consciousness and being” (Johnston, 2017: 4) he further explicates on how, in order to utilize the conscious action for representation, we need to understand it and find the manner in which it works in the creative process.

Having stipulated that and having connected it back to the phenomenology of perception I found that the study of ‘essence’ is the input that is required, therefore the effect on the researcher was that the experience became embodied through the various moments of lived life when doing the research itself. The direct effect on the researcher was to see the importance of attitude, of the need for presence and constant awareness whilst engaging with the senses. This is because the study of phenomenology is important, but the essence of theatre is the ‘now’ of consciousness.

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Appendix: Performances mentioned in this study by title

Tau. 2016. [Written] Thabiso Rammala [Directed] Thabiso Rammala and MoMo Matsunyane [Place] Market Theatre: Johannesburg.

The Gallery of Her Imprints. 2020. [Creator] Tshepang Moticoe [Directed] Bongani Nicholas Ngomane [Cast] Tshepang Moticoe. [Place] Room 107 at The University of The Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

The Gallery of Her Imprints. VCD.