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Physical theatre and experimental documentary: creating authentic representations of subjective memory

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Introduction

"One need not be a chamber to be haunted-
One need not be a house.
The brain has corridors-surpassing
material place.
Far safer, of a midnight meeting
external ghost,
than its interior confronting-
that cooler host.
Far safer through an abbey gallop
The stones a' chase-
Than unarmed, one's self encounter
In a lonesome place.
Ourself behind ourself concealed-
should startle most.
Assassin hidden in our apartment
be horror's least.
The body borrows a revolver-
Bolts the door
O'erlooking a superior spectre
Or more."

–Emily Dickinson as extracted from *Poems by Emily Dickinson*, published by Hayes Barton Press (1950).

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The haunting of the body

My body is my chamber, my house, and the world in which my haunting exists. I cannot run away from myself: my body runs with me just as your body runs with you. The ghosts of our lives live in the cells of our bodies and in the locked up coffers of our unconscious minds. It is with this knowledge that my investigation into the unconscious began.

Emily Dickinson's (1830-1886) passage begins to poetically expose, for me, the 'o'erlooking' of, indeed, a superior spectre. This superior spectre I am interpreting as

the unconscious, the true psychical reality of the mind, as proposed by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and later expanded upon by Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961). Dickinson's extract, written between 1855-1865, exposes the clear dichotomy of the external, and the internal world, the internal being the 'superior'. I read in this passage a warning about the nature of the unconscious, about 'ourself behind ourself concealed'. The dangers and perils of the external world can, for the most part, be seen and avoided but the unconscious components [internal world] are like invisible ghosts: we cannot see them but we feel the effect that they have on our lives. Dickinson begins to investigate in this poem what Freud and Jung later solidify in the area of psychoanalysis: that the unconscious is what we should be concerned with.

"Because by definition the shadow [ghosts] is unconscious, we cannot gaze at it directly. Because it is hidden, we need to learn to seek it" (Zweig & Wolf. 1997: 39). The important influence of the unconscious in waking life is not a contemporary phenomenon but a study that is, in my view, inexhaustible because of its illusive nature. The fundamental fact that the unconscious happens below the surface of consciousness makes it difficult to access through cerebral investigations and perhaps its experiences more difficult to articulate. If one accepts that two opposite but equal states of mind exist in every individual, as echoed in Newton's 3rd law of movement i.e. the law of relativity, then a particular set of questions arise about the way in which we perceive and make sense of the world.

When we regard ourselves as conscious, cognitive beings are we not then dismissing our lives and our memories as half-truths by ignoring the world of the unconscious? Does this not require an investigation of the unconscious as well as the conscious in order to arrive at a 'more authentic'[1] re-membering? If our realities are founded on the levels of both the conscious and the unconscious, as proposed by Freud, can we not then deduce that our memories also share this double-layered consciousness?

[1] By 'more authentic', I suggest that we can never arrive at a true authenticity as the knowledge we have of the unconscious and its working is limited.

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This research calls into the question the authenticity[2] of memory and re-presentations of memory by investigating how two originally avant-garde practices - Physical Theatre and Experimental Documentary - can possibly access parts of the unconscious. I am, in this research, setting out to question traditional Western models of thinking about truth and testimony by investing in Michel Foucault's post-structuralist approach to history and truth, as opposed to Rene Descartes' subject/object model. John McGraw states that Descartes' subject/object model is the backbone of all Christian theology and Western culture (2004: 16). The concept of *Cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am), Descartes most important philosophical contribution to science and Western thought, proposed a Cartesian split between body and mind.

> "…I have a clear and distinct idea of myself insofar as I am just a thinking and unextended thing, and, on the other hand, I have a distinct idea of my body insofar as it is just an extended and unthinking thing. It's certain, then, that I am really distinct from my body and can exist without it." (Descartes as sited in McGraw, J. 2004: 16)

An investigation of the body as intrinsically connected to the working of the mind (particularly the unconscious) and vice versa, will begin to offer a plausible, and very valuable, alternative to the latter Western model of thinking about 'truth'. As Descartes' philosophical strategy for the Cartesian split is based on a system of doubt, I will cast some doubt on this Western model by highlighting the constructed nature of all meaning. Rosanne Kennedy's work on the *Stolen Generations Testimony* will prove vital in the latter discussion. Even if Descartes' statement held some 'truth' it is as useless as the 'if only' statement, in the sense that, whilst we are able to engage with this kind of rhetoric we are irrevocably intertwined with our bodies as we are alive, what happens beyond life is not set in stone or philosophy but remains the ultimate mystery. We have no knowledge or, ironically, evidence of ourselves when, and more importantly if, this split occurs.

[2]Authenticity as utilized in this research is understood in a Jungian sense where something only becomes authentic when both its conscious and unconscious components are illuminated (Zweig & Wolf, 1997: 56).

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Re-presentation, in this research, takes on the characteristic of not trying to 'represent' the past as it happened, or even memory as visualized by my co-creator performers' in the performance component of this research. Instead it offers a re-presentation of that which we investigated and came across in this research. The realizations and manifestations of my performers' own physical investigations into their unconscious and how they reconciled this with a conscious recollection of the past, is presented as a creative collaboration, a version of their memories respectively. We do not claim to epitomize and 'represent' the past [memory], but offer an alternative investigation thereof. The 're' in re-presentation does not allude to an objectively correct version of the past but to an investigation of the unconscious in that past and thus a re-presentation thereof.

Through this research I will illuminate how Physical Theatre and Experimental Documentary function both theoretically and practically in creating authentic re-presentations of reality and how these re-presentations possibly appeal to both conscious and unconscious levels of understanding. The avant-gardist undertaking of the body begins to function on numerous levels as a departure from traditional Western modes of thinking about memory and becomes a practical gateway into the unconscious as it is laden with memory consciously, unconsciously and physically. The particular appropriation of the body in the arts, as well as Experimental Documentary's roots in the avant-garde practices of the 1920's, also becomes an essential tool through which I begin to argue for the importance of the unconscious when attempting to re-present memory more authentically.

In this practice as research-based report[3] I will explore and expose both Physical Theatre and Experimental Documentary's investment in the unconscious by uncovering their avant-garde philosophies of anti-establishment (rejection of traditional Western modes of thought[4]) and alignment with psychoanalytical theories

[3] By practice as researched based-I wish to imply that this research had no preliminary or predetermined set template or formula but that I, thorough a heuristic process of investigations, arrived at a prototype for creating and researching this work.

[4] Traditional Western thought is referred to throughout the body of this document, as speaking specifically to the notion of Descartes' subject/object model where the lines between the self and the 'other', the rational and the irrational are firmly and permanently in tact (2004: 108). Traditional Western thought thus represents in this research the rational, the logical and the linear.

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of the unconscious. In this research I respond to Dickinson's (1950: 766) extract through negotiating the fissure between the conscious and the unconscious, theoretically in this report and practically through a Physical Theatre performance.

I will enter the theoretical framework from two positions: that of Physical Theatre and that of Experimental Documentary. When discussing the key concerns of each discipline respectively I will also begin to illuminate a common ground of theoretical concepts shared by each discipline: specifically concepts such as authenticity, 'truth'[5], testimony, and the body. I will begin at the bottom of the stairs…

Section1
Testimony and 'Truth'

The foundation of this research is built on my personal and academic inquiries about the unconscious and on the question of what constitutes 'truth', and for whom? My research depends on an interrogation of the memories and archives of my two co-creator performers, Anneke Villet and Roberto (Rob) Pombo. A validation of the importance of these testimonies, when considering 'truth' and history from a post-structuralist position, becomes important in justifying an academically feasible investigation of their stories through Physical Theatre and Experimental Documentary.

The importance, for me, in opening this report with a questioning of 'truth' and testimony is personal, as well as theoretical and practical. Academically it will frame the approach I have taken in reading testimony and 'truth' and how I have argued for its importance in this report. Practically it informed my philosophical approach to working creatively with my performers. Personally, 'truth' and testimony became an interesting point of rupture as my own work on the unconscious aspects of myself began. I began to realize with more and more clarity how my unconscious was shaping my waking life and how my own memories became more and more illusive. From many discussions I had with my sister about our shared past, I began to notice

[5] 'Truth' is this report is placed in quotation marks as to highlight its ubiquitously problematic nature. The slipperiness of 'truth' for me is fundamentally echoed in concepts of testimony and authenticity.

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my own as well as my sisters' inconsistencies with regards to memory. These inconsistencies were not only physical and factual but emotional as well. The scarily evident 'truth' of the reconstruction of memory, and this reconstruction happening both consciously and unconsciously, prompted my initial investigations into notions of 'truth' and testimony particularly when considering memory.

Rosanne Kennedy's writing in the field of the *Aboriginal Stolen Generations Testimonies*, which she addresses in great detail in her paper *Stolen Generations Testimonies: Trauma, Historiography and the question of 'truth'* as published in the *Oral History Reader Second Edition,* becomes a key text and forms a central part in this argument. I will utilize this text to illustrate the challenging nature of memory and testimony in qualifying as reliable and valuable historical information.

Kennedy's approach to testimony and memory is that of accepting personal testimony as sophisticated interpretative narratives that incorporate sharp social, historical insights that don't simply function as historical evidence to be interpreted by historical experts. Although my research is not directly related to the *Stolen Generations Testimonies* or the place of testimony in history, it fundamentally supports the principle that testimony and memory are important and valuable sources of information This is information which could only be made available by the people who were engaged in that history personally, and not from the appropriation offered by an interpreter of facts and evidence.

According to Kennedy, Bain Attwood, a major theorist on history, proposes that testimony becomes problematic for any historian who is keen to provide factually authoritative accounts of history (2006: 507). It is the relationship that the historian has to the testimony, which becomes the first point of investigation for Kennedy and which begins to comment on a post-structuralist need for interpreting history, as suggested by Foucault.

The relationship between the historian and the testimony (text) is not an unfamiliar concept within the theory of this research. The Montaignian proposition of the

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essayistic[6] reading of a text and the subject being 'embroiled in history' springs to mind when I am reading the work of Kennedy. Narratives of separation (testimonies) during the 1970's had been produced in a collaboration between the historian and the interviewee but in the 1980's and 1990's had taken on a far more autobiographical nature and became increasingly more symbolic (2006: 507). This symbolic nature occurred when the historian was removed from the aforementioned collaboration, creating the assertion that testimony is more interpretative rather than functioning as evidence.

The symbolic spoken of here are the over-arching symbols, tropes and literary figures that the narrator uses to interpret their own experiences. Bain Attwood argues that these symbols give false meaning to the past because it obscures and neglects details and events that do not fit the narrative pattern and thereby denies historical complexity (2006: 508). I would argue that this proposition invites an inverted rebuttal as the narrative pattern, as proposed and imposed by the historian, denies the complexity of the impact this history has had on the subjects who were present and experiencing that history, thus making history an empty shell of facts and dates which fit neatly into a traditional Western expectation of history and evidence.

The denial of the symbolic denies the importance of the unconscious as a part of history, a part of the historical subject. If we disregard the over-arching symbols, tropes and literary figures in the symbolic then we would lose the detail present in Rob's memory, that his mother always called him a fish, or the potency of the Oscar Wilde quote in Anneke's youth and how this shaped her interpretation of society at large[7] because it does not make logical sense and is too symbolic.

Kennedy further argues that by labeling certain narratives as symbolic, Attwood is denying the metaphorical nature of history itself (2006: 508). James Young, as cited in Kennedy, argues that when narratives are presented as simple fact it produces a style. This is a style of rhetoric of fact of which the aim is not to write unmediated facts but rather to convince the reader that such facts have been established (2006:

[6] The concept of the essayistic is discussed in section 3 of this report.
[7] This quote can be found on p. 154 in Wilde, O. 2003. *Best Known Works of Oscar Wilde*. Kessinger Publishing's rare re-prints.

508). I am almost ashamed to admit the following folly, but feel that it speaks directly to the heart of what Young is suggesting in this passage. In the program note I made an academic error and only realized this once the program had gone to print. I stated in black and white the following: "For every action there is an opposite but equal reaction-Einstein"

What is remarkable though, is that only one audience member questioned me on this, I had this program note proof read by family, friends and my supervisor none of whom spotted the mistake. The theory of relativity is Newton's 3rd law of motion. This proved to me, when reading again through Young's proposition, the power of presenting theories as facts that have been established, not calling into question how or why, but by accepting it as 'truth'. I had unknowingly suggested an incorrect fact to the audience who may have noticed it but did not openly confront or acknowledge the mistake. Kennedy further argues that if all experience is discursively mediated, as illustrated in Young's argument, then why is the literary or symbolic nature of testimony a cause of concern for historians?

Testimony, in my view, threatens the authoritative hand that claims the power to write history whilst undermining the symbolic nature of testimony as interpretative narrative rather than fact. Kennedy goes one step further in leveling the playing field between what is considered evidence and what is considered symbolic narrative (testimony), by unpacking Attwood's analogy of 'law', in producing evidence for history (2006: 509).

Attwood's suspicion of testimony stems from the fact that these testimonies require forensic checks against other historical sources in order to validate them. Although this does not seem like a problematic feature for information to qualify as historical evidence, what is problematic is that these 'other historical sources', as suggested by Kennedy, are protected from the skepticism placed on testimony and memory. These 'other historical sources' are treated as if they do not need to be interpreted which is similar to the style of rhetoric of fact that Young was alluding to. Kennedy refers to a Derridian language of philosophy that implies that concepts are not pure and always involve metaphors and histories of metaphors. It is in this sense that Kennedy argues that the meaning of all evidence is constructed and that there is nothing intrinsically

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different about testimony (2006: 509-511). The law analogy of evidence as 'truth' in history is seen by Kennedy as a rhetorical move by Attwood to remove history from literature, but this only brings the focus back to its literary roots.

What is at stake for Attwood is the status of the historian, the hand with the power to write history. Kennedy argues that by taking an authoritative and judicial stance in historiography the historian is protected from the need to consider his/her own subject position in relation to the events under consideration (2006: 511). Descartes' subject/object model does not account for the responsibility the historian has in shaping history, whereas a Foucauldian post-structuralist interpretation of history does.

It is when considering the argument by Dominick La Capra, a contemporary historian and theorist on history and memory, that Kennedy illuminates, for me, the true power of memory and testimony. La Capra, according to Kennedy, suggests that memory poses special problems for history because it points to a problem which is still alive, or invested with emotional value (2006: 514). Memory becomes more challenging than other evidence because it is not something of the past, but something of a continuing past, a past that is still alive in the memories and bodies of the subjects who are remembering.

Kennedy concludes her argument for the validity and important nature of testimony by stating that it is the specificity of the subjective nature of memory, the fact that the testimony is situated and embodied, that makes it valuable to the historian and critic (2006: 514). I would argue that it is the direct acknowledgement of the historian and the history being intertwined in testimony that makes testimony a valuable source of information. The way in which testimony is negotiated by the historian, a historian who considers his/her own subject position and by the interviewee who embodies his/her own history would result in what I believe to be a more 'truthful' account of history. Although I agree fundamentally with Kennedy's argument I still feel that a greater investment of the unconscious, perhaps through an embodied state, needs to be addressed and considered in a negotiation of what constitutes 'truth'. What is important in her argument, for me, is the fact that there lies an alternative means of

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interpreting 'truth' and testimony than that conventionally proposed by a Western mode of thought.

Having said this I will now discuss the practical alternatives to this Western mode of thinking about truth and the unconscious by highlighting my use of archive and Experimental Documentary in *Fissure*.

Section 2 A

The use of Archive in Experimental Documentary

I specifically selected Experimental Documentary for my research as it is considered the 'enfant terrible' of documentary genres. Experimental Documentary is barely acknowledged or even regarded as an actual genre of documentary, as witnessed in the writing of Bill Nichols, the most widely referenced theorists in documentary discourse. I believe that this is due to the fact that its roots stretch back to the avant-garde practices of the 1920's and because of its appeal to less conventionally logical principles, such as the unconscious.

Experimental Documentary, also known as Poetic Documentary[8], was created as a reaction against commercial cinema at the height of the avant-garde period of the 1920's. Erick Barnouw suggests that artists? were beginning, during this period, with actuality and then creating their own synthesis thereof, meaning that they would take elements of the natural world and offer their own artistic expressions of it (1974: 71). It was Jean Pianleve, a scientist in the 1920's, who paved the way for avant-garde practices into the sciences with his pioneering experiments in filming underwater life, often at very close range, speeding up and slowing down the footage. This became an important shift in the arts because it allowed for a transition and play between art and technology. Another important feature of Experimental Documentary is the shift in focus from the paramount importance of the propositional[9] character of a

[8] Artists were creating abstract expressions about physical aspects of reality, as witnessed in Experimental Documentary films in the 1920's e.g. Joris Iven's *Rain* (1929).
[9] Dymphna Callery describes this moment in the avant-garde movement as a shift in focus from what we see to how we see (2007: 9).

documentary to a concern about the ability of documentary to evoke sensory experiences.

A concrete example which I drew on in this research, is the work of Joris Ivens, an experimental filmmaker in the early 1900's. Ivens' *Rain* (1929) gave me the impulse in crafting and appropriating the archival footage gathered from my performers, with the focus on evoking sensory and emotional experience rather than eliciting a logical propositional theme. In *Rain* (1929), Ivens depicts a passing shower in Amsterdam and although this does not sound groundbreaking or particularly interesting, it is the way in which he made the film that becomes intriguing. Ivens apprehended a crucial feature of the physical world in a way only possible through the cinematic eye. He documented every aspect of rainfall in Amsterdam over four months, investigating all possibilities and angles and then condensing it into what seems to be one passing shower (1974: 78). This resulted in a documentary, which focused on Ivens' artistic interpretation of rainfall in Amsterdam. The film is deeply atmospheric and poetic, but according to Renov, is also imaginary in the sense that it was concocted from over 10 different rainstorms (2004: 102). The audience thus enjoys firstly a film about a physical aspect of reality and secondly a poetic investment of this physical aspect.

This example of an Experimental Documentary informed my investigation of the archives I had available to me. I explored the footage from multiple visual perspectives, allowing me to observing the footage from different angles and manipulate the original axis of the visuals. I also began exploring what repetition and juxtapositioning does to the way in which the archives are read. I recognize and acknowledge the fact that I have not actively (personally) filmed the footage used in the performance of *Fissure*, but insist that I have approached the editing of the footage in a similar sense as to how Ivens presented his work in *Rain* (1929).

I have integrated the theoretical approach to poetic expression in Experimental Documentary in this research by editing the archival footage so as to evoke emotive responses in the audience as well as the performers in a way truly only possible in the filmic medium. By exploring the phallic nature of 'the obilisque', an image discussed in more detail later on in this report, I create a visual representation of a penetrating penis evoking arousal, discomfort and even disgust in both the audience and the

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performers. I do this by physically manipulating the image when I change its vertical axis to a horizontal axis and by playing rhythmically with the pan up and down the statue by either speeding it up or slowing it down. I personally responded quite viscerally to this image, welcoming the discomfort, as I knew it would resonate with others as well.

This appropriation (selection and editing) of footage did not precede the physical investigations but grew out of them just as the themes and impulses of the performers began to emerge. The crafting process of this research hosted a very intimate dialogue between Experimental Documentary and Physical Theatre[10]. The viewing of archival footage unconsciously influenced the generation of the physical vocabulary, whereas the editing of the archival footage was strongly influenced by the emotional themes emerging in some of the physical investigations. Evidence of this will be discussed in relation to two specific scenes: 'the obilisque story' and the 'by the sea' section.

The initial rehearsal began with the three of us viewing a whole range of photographs and sifting through hours of archival footage, picking out, purely instinctively [unconsciously], the images, which mostly appealed to us. At first the archival footage very subtly [unconsciously] seeped into the physical explorations we were engaging with. The specific sequence that I will refer to is the story of the obilisque. The obilisque is a tall sculpture constructed by the artist Gustav Vigeland and portrays the struggle of man/woman to reach the good things in life. The sculpture consists of bodies piled on top of each other forming a kind of human ladder to the top of the structure. The dead bodies are at the bottom of the sculpture but as one looks more towards the top one can see the living bodies trying to climb their way to the summit, where finally at the pinnacle of the work there is youth.

We arrived at this story whilst playing and experimenting with what we now call the 'jersey game'[11]. We borrowed this game from the archival footage and began to play

[10] This term and its appropriation in this research, both practically and theoretically, will be further discussed in the next section of this research report

[11] This storytelling game is a scene extracted from Rob's archive. Rob and one of his sisters squeeze together inside one jersey. One sits in front with their head sticking out of the jersey and their arms folded inside the jersey, the other sits concealed in the back of the jersey with their arms in the sleeves. As the one in the front tells a story the one behind creates gestures

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with a set of gestures in order to arrive at a non-verbal equivalent for the story being told. Rob represented the non-verbal, gestural counterpart, which accompanied the archival footage. I placed him back in that position and afforded Anneke the opportunity of being the voice of the story. Initially I had her just improvise random text with Rob reacting impulsively to what was being said. This was done to create a physical relationship with the text, for Rob to become synchronized with Anneke's speaking pattern and for Anneke to assimilate what gestures Rob were offering. The text became more focused once the relationship between the verbal and the physical experience was created. This was the first step in the archive influencing the physical vocabulary. Although the footage is from Rob's archive it became a device through which Anneke told one of her memories whilst Rob had the opportunity to physically return to that mode of play he was engaging in, in his archive.

In this story, during rehearsal, Anneke remembered herself as a 16 year old experiencing the obilisque for the first time in Vigeland Park in Oslo. She recounted her thoughts and impression referring specifically to her shyness about recognizing the obilisque as a phallic image. This story had triggered another memory, a memory which was also associated with the phallus. It was specifically her recollection of seeing a shrub in Oslo that reminded her of the image of the 'Mexican Rape Tree', a story that deeply upset and intrigued her for reasons that were only later revealed.

In this example we begin to see the delicate weaving that is happening between the archive and the physical work. We see how archive begins to physically influence the generation of stories and how these stories create new memory associations with their own internal logic. These associative memories later influence the appropriation of archive in Experimental Documentary. What I discovered, and what we worked on in this game, was the bizarre suspension of disbelief accompanying this image. As I watched Anneke speak, Rob's arms and gestures became fused with Anneke, and although I knew I was watching two performers, I was seeing only one. This connection does however take a lot of practice and time, when Rob is not connected to Anneke's breath (her rhythm of speaking) or listening to her with intense focus, the gestures seem out of place and disjointed. With the nervousness of performance Rob,

for the story with their hands. Please find an in the Appendix Video Clip 1 and Still Image 1 of this game.

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on the first night of performance, did not fully connect with Anneke's breath and could thus not appropriately improvise when she forgot some of the set text. In the following performance they regained their connection and flowed in conversation.

These gestures were also revisited in the rehearsal process when we physically investigated one of Anneke's sub themes: not wanting to be touched. The reason for inserting the jersey game within the context of the obilisque story came from the rehearsal process, whilst the gestures acquired from this 'jersey game' were used in investigating Anneke's sub theme, particularly because of the associated memory of the 'Mexican Rape Tree'. It spoke to me of memories seeping into and bleeding over each other. The audience had to actively recall images they may have seen before in the performance and then understand these images in a new context. This new context was not a linear or easy to digest structure. Instead, it was a complex web of interactions between various memories that require the audience to actively draw connections in the work. This activation of the audience in constructing their own meaning supports the theoretical approach of Experimental Documentary in offering an alternative and artistic interpretation of what we uncovered during rehearsal, instead of a linear recollection of shared memories.

What was particularly appealing about the obilisque story was that Anneke's recollection of the story differed from the tour guide's illustration of the obilisque, making it an actual example of the fissure present in all memory. I chose to keep Anneke's interpretation of the obilisque and juxtapose it with the tour guides account of the history of the structure. This, to me, heightened the fact that we did not adapt the memory to match the archival version of the story. Instead I chose to keep this subtle discrepancy as a comment on how our contexts and emotional states influence the way in which we remember and that a verbal recollection is not necessarily an authentic memory.

We then, by looking specifically at the binary nature of memory, worked with two distinct intentions: remembering and forgetting, but more specifically with a desire to either remember or forget. The archival footage available to us guided me in indentifying a specific intention for each performer. Rob's footage instinctively

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veered to a wanting to remember; Anneke's archival material evoked a desire to forget certain aspects of her life.

As they engaged in a contact improvisation[12], with each performer's specific intention guiding them, the physical aspects of the bodies on the obilisque filtered through in the exercise. Although not clear at first, the physical vocabulary began mimicking the piled bodies of the obilisque the more we explored with the devise of power positions and the transitions between these power positions. Without consciously acknowledging or referencing the obilisque, Rob and Anneke's bodies began to speak this out unconsciously, piling and climbing over each other. It is only in following rehearsals that I started seeing the similarity and began creating a cut for this physical vocabulary[13]. I created an edit that explored the phallic nature of the obilisque whilst at the same time investigates the quality of these piled bodies in the sculpture. I slowed the footage down in order to match the physical quality expressed by the performers, and in some instances manipulated the footage to match the emotional overtone of the story being told.

I worked quite honestly with visceral and guttural reactions. I honored these responses in the edit in order to arrive at a cut that could speak to or further illuminate the emotional/irrational/unconscious parts of the story (memory). I played with the sexual connotations of a phallic image by stroking the structure up and down, by placing it at different angles, looking at the invasive and penetrative qualities of the image. After the first cut was made we played it whilst Anneke and Rob were rehearsing the physical vocabulary generated from the material and the visual echo jumped out at me. What was important for me when crafting this piece was to abandon feelings of logic, comfort and safety, and to really allow myself to feel how I was physically and emotionally responding to the footage. When experimenting with the phallic nature of the obilisque in edit I often felt invaded, repulsed and scared and I could feel the awkwardness in my body[14]. Anneke's memory of the 'Mexican Rape Tree', within

[12] Contact improvisation physically disallowed the dominance of one body over another in the creative process, a sharing and taking of weight and constant contact between two or more bodies allowed for organic improvised movements to occur (Katlenbrunner 1998. p. 23).

[13] Please find in the Appendix Still Image 2-3 of this sequence.

[14] Please find in the appendix the Video Clip 2) the tour guide's explanation of the obilisque and Video Clip 3) the cut I created for the contact scene accompanying this story.

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the context of the obilisque story allowed me to use Experimental Documentary to create an edit that would respond poetically to this story.

Another example of the archival footage influencing the physical vocabulary is the 'by the sea' section of the performance. In watching the archival footage of Rob's family holiday in Balito, Durban, I began to relate Rob's recollection of his memory to my own in the sense that our memories are strongly influenced by our perceptions. Before we watched the footage, Rob narrated the experience of asking his father to go on a jet ski, to which his father replied 'No'. Rob recalled this as being quite harsh and offensive but as we watched the footage, the actual context was revealed. Rob inquired about the jet skis, to which his father replied "no my boy we don't have any money for it" (quoted form Roberto's home video footage). What he perceived and remembered was not what had actually happened, his recollection was thus not entirely 'truthful' but clouded with other underlying family politics between his father and himself.

After this experience Roberto noted that he felt that he wanted to perform a song to this footage (as he is also a vocal artist), about his experience from his current position in life in relation to that specific incident[15]. I listened to the song and really connected with Rob's feeling state but also knew that this does not, on its own, articulate enough of the experience. In reviewing the footage I created a cut that explored a kind of nostalgia and melancholy. I achieved this by rhythmically allowing for long takes of open sea and then closing the sequence with Rob and his sisters' collecting shells on the rocks. Rob's affective memory, his feeling state was coupled with a sensory experience, which we explored within the context of this image. Sharon Marie Carnicke (1998) highlights Theodule Armand Ribot's[16] (1839-1916) understanding of concrete affective memory as something that can be felt through the entire body (1998: 132). Rob's original recollection of his father being mean to him was filled with passion and heartbreak; he recalls mostly his emotional state of being but does obscure some of the facts due to this affective recollection.

[15] Please find in the appendix *By the Sea*, the song referred to in this paragraph.

[16] Theodule Armand Ribot was the director of the first psychology laboratory at the College of France where he founded French experimental psychology. His particular area of study was around affective memory, which directly influenced Stanislavsky's method acting techniques (Carnicke, 1998: 131)

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What I chose to do in this sequence was overlay this sea footage with Rob singing his song. This presented him with the opportunity to physically, if not literally, 'be by the sea'. In a sequence of contact improvisations that were later set, Rob utilized Anneke as a re-presentation of something other than herself. She became the rock on which he sat and the water in which he swam[17]. The archival footage offered me the visual backdrop for the physical exploration of Rob's sea experience, as revisited in our rehearsals. This example illustrates again how the appropriation of archival footage in Experimental Documentary influenced the physical narrative.

This example also illustrates one way I went about integrating both performers in the performance space by affording each individual a platform to communicate their own memories, and the possibility of the performers in assisting each other in their re-presentations. A practical reason in choosing two performers instead of 1 or 15 is due to the binary nature of memory as alluded to previously. In order for memory to be possible there has to be a forgetting and for a forgetting to be possible there has to be a remembering, with each performer re-presenting one of the two strands of memory. The binary is however not as clear-cut as suggested. Forgetting and remembering do not meet each other half way, but rather negotiate a third liminal space of blurriness where the recollection or suppression of memory ebb and flow according to the stimulation available. One might remember more when stimulated by other's accounts of the same or similar events or by ones' senses. On the other hand one might fight to recall certain details when there is anxiety present or no external stimulus prompting one to remember in more detail.

The focus is situated in the fissure between forgetting and remembering and more deeply in the fissure between the conscious and the unconscious and how a negotiation of this fissure can bring us to a more authentic remembering. In this research, and through the appropriation of archival footage, Experimental Documentary begins to offer us the opportunity to investigate this fissure artistically so that we might arrive at a more authentic remembering. The next section of this

[17] Please find in the appendix Still Image 4 of this scene.

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report will discuss the theoretical and practical use Experimental Documentary and Physical Theatre in accessing the unconscious in this research.

Section 2B

Utilizing Experimental Documentary and Physical Theatre in accessing the unconscious

Experimental Documentary becomes immensely influential in this research when considering both the arguments for 'truth' and the unconscious. In *"Charged Vision: The place of desire in documentary film theory"*, Michael Renov begins to illuminate the important role of this specific strand of documentary, calling into question the more sober discourse of documentary theory. In this text Renov argues that documentary theory can be responsive to less rational principles than those encompassed by rhetoric and epistemology (2004: 93). As Renov is one of the main theorists in my research please allow me to indulge the reader in a short explanation of how Renov comes to make this statement.

The word *'desire'* as utilized in Renov's text becomes the main driving force in re-joining documentary theory with its avant-garde roots[18]. Desire, as used in Renov's context, is not situated in the erotic but is rather positioned firmly in the gaze of the spectator. This gaze is of an epistephilic nature, a nature that Nichols identifies as deep pleasure in knowing, ineluctably intertwining desire and knowledge (2004: 98). Nichols, according to Renov, states that this epistephilia aligns documentary in the conscious rather than the unconscious. Desire, according to Renov, is fixed in psychoanalytic theory, acting as the destabilizer of knowledge. Renov further states that psychoanalytic theory has been largely neglected by documentary theory because of its conventionally accepted understanding as a logical and rational discourse. The desire of the knowing subject, a subject charged with an epistephilic gaze becomes the driving force of some strands of philosophical discourse, behind destabilizing conventional Western concepts of knowledge.

[18] Renov refers specifically to non-fiction filmmakers such as Dziga Vertov, Joris Ivens and Jean Vigo but also recognizes a contemporary re-investment in experimental documentary in the work of Harun Foraki, Johan van der Keuken and Marlon Riggs (2004: 96).

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Renov highlights, in this regard, Foucault's concept of the 'morphology of the will to power'. He states that Foucault was interested in the contrast between an Aristotelian exploration of the genesis of the desire to know[19] and a Nietzschean model that discusses a primordial conflict between elements in the latter (2004: 99). Renov highlights Foucault's note on Nietzsche's *The Gay Sciences*, in that knowledge is an "invention", behind which lies something completely different from itself. In knowledge there lies the play of instincts, impulses, desires, fear, and the will to appropriate (2004: 99). By reading desire as the destabilizer of knowledge we are asked look beyond the sober, beyond the rational into the river of the unconscious so that we may realize that conscious knowledge and conscious life is only one side of the coin.

When one considers Sigmund Freud's argument for the unconscious and the preeminence of consciousness in Western thought, as cited in Renov, it becomes clear where the challenge of Experimental Documentary, and for that matter Physical Theatre, and any notions of 'truth' and testimony lie (2004: 98). How do abstract and unconscious re-presentations of memory and testimony qualify as equally valuable sources of information or 'truth' in a conventionally Western[20] mode of thinking and writing where the focus clearly favors the conscious?

Freud, according to Renov, argues that the unconscious is the true psychical reality and preliminary to all conscious thought. He argues that conscious thought is based on structures of misrecognition[21]. This need for unification is denying, in my view, the call of the unconscious in being regarded as equally valuable and important to the conscious. This theory of the opposites being equal forces in their own respective ways is not an improbable proposition as it is one of the fundamental principles in

[19] In this understanding of 'the desire to know', knowledge, truth and pleasure share a harmonious coexistence (2004: 99)

[20] Traditional Western thought, as is referred to through out the body of this document, speaks specifically to the notion of Descartes subject/object model where the lines between the self and the other that rational and irrational are firmly and permanently in tact (2004: 108). Traditional Western thought thus represents in this research the rational, the logical and the linear.

[21] Freud argues that consciousness thought is based on structures of misrecognitions because conscious (ego) arranges our perceptions orderly to conform with our expectations of an intelligible world giving us a sense of false unicity (2004: 98).

science when considering the law of relativity. For every action [unconscious] there is an opposite but equal reaction [conscious].

If we accept Freud's proposition of the unconscious being the true psychical reality and that consciousness is founded of structures of misrecognition, because of a need for social unification, I would argue that in a Freudian sense we only know half of ourselves when approaching life from consciousness. In order to recognize reality in a way that would satisfy a Freudian understanding of reality, we would have to become more aware and accepting of the existence of the unconscious. What resonates in my research is an alignment with the unconscious in order to arrive at a more authentic or truthful version of reality and memory. By accepting Freud's theory of the unconscious I am assigning memory, and, for that matter testimony, with a double layered consciousness, and utilizing the practices of Experimental Documentary and Physical Theatre in order to arrive at unconscious expressions of these realities.

Another important argument Renov makes in *The Subject of History: New Autobiography in Film* as sited in *The Subject of Documentary* is for the validity of the unconscious when considering knowledge and 'truth'. Renov makes an elaborate discussion of the Montaignian and later Barthesian concept of the essayistic[22]. The essayistic, in my understanding, offers an approach to reading a text from multiple points of view, by placing the subject and the object in a mutually configuring relationship to one another. This section of the report is used specifically to highlight alternative ways in which to read a text [performance/documentary], which is 'other' than the conventional Western models of interpretation. The importance of reading texts from an essayistic approach, according to Renov, is a construction of subjectivity at odds with the Descartes subject/object model.

Michel Eyguem de Montaigne and Roland Barthes, respectively, suggest that the subject and object organize each other, but only in a temporary way. If the subject and the historical field are mutually configuring the essayistic discourse, so too are the author and the work (2004: 105). This point illustrates, to me, the relationship between the author and their work as mutually dependent on each other. The

[22] For a more elaborate explanation of the essayistic please read Renov's *The Subject of Documentary* (2004: 105-108).

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subjective background of the author influences and shapes the writing [creating] of the work, just as the objective world shapes and influences the author [creator], they are not mutually exclusive but irrevocably intertwined. Renov notes this moment as 'the subject becoming embroiled in history' (2004: 105).

The essayistic approach is relevant in this research in two ways. Firstly, I, as the author of this report, am not writing objectively about the work in *Fissure* but rather writing reflexively, as I shaped the parameters of the research as well as its physical explorations. I am thus not separate from the subject of the research, as I am configuring its manifestations, just as the manifestations and findings in this research configure my understanding and negotiations of these experiments. As the author of the work, building the pieces of the research and of the performance, I am met with my own intellectual and emotional conflict, as I too have to challenge my own beliefs and memories in order to reach a personal space of integrity with the work. Secondly the personal narratives and archives of my co-creators are actively shaping the subject of the performance, just as this research is configuring their understanding of the appropriation of these personal narratives within the context of the performance.

The importance of viewing a text from an essayistic point of view, as favored by Renov, is the agency given to the subject [creator] of the story [performance]. The narrative does not have to follow a linear and rational thread in order to be interpreted, but rather invites an investigation from multiple perspectives annihilating the narrow approach conventionally suggested by Descartes, and allowing, perhaps, even for unconscious interpretations of a text. The 'subject embroiled in history' is also a post-structuralist approach to interpreting history, which becomes very important theoretically in my use of both Experimental Documentary and Physical Theatre. Foucault's favoring of the historical discourse as a discontinuity and the threshold of rupture and transformation rather than a lineage and continuity begins to offer me a solid foundation from which to interpret theoretically the use of Experimental Documentary, as analyzed by Renov, in this research.

Post-structuralist versions of subjectivity and history, according to Renov, are at odds with Western tradition (2004: 110). Renov argues that Descartes posits the, *I* (ego) of the *cogito* as the anchor and foundation of the being, the locus of centrality. This

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statement is vital in understanding the importance of an essayistic approach to reading a text, especially when we consider Freud's argument for the unconscious. I would argue that the *I*, as proposed by Descartes, only constitutes one half of the subject. The other half, which in a Freudian explanation is the true psychical reality of the subject, is unacknowledged and unaccounted for. An essayistic reading of a text would then offer the reader [interpreter] the opportunity to access the text from a more authentic perspective, in the sense that both states of mind are acknowledged and accounted for. The reader is offered an alternative to the Western conventional reading of a text, by implicating the subject within the object and vice versa, blowing open the space for interpretation and the possibility of exploring the mostly uncharted territories of the unconscious.

In *Fissure* the multiple presences of the creators are intrinsically connected to the work. Our physical bodies are in the space, either performing or operating the technology within the piece. The traces of our unconscious expressions and investigations are also present with the performance of the work, as well as in the editing of the archival footage. In the work I have chosen to explore the *I*, not in a Cartesian sense but more with a Freudian approach. The multi-layered approach to the work requires a deep investigation by the audience in order to construct their own meanings from these re-presentations both consciously and unconsciously.

The ability to interpret the unconscious content of a text is however only the secondary phase. There is a preliminary engagement in this research with sourcing, from Experimental Documentary and through the body, the material of the unconscious. I will now illuminate how the physical work inspired various appropriation of the archival footage in my Experimental Documentary interpretations and also acted as a gateway to the unconscious.

If the unconscious lies beyond the realm of the conscious then how do we manage to access these unconscious thoughts and feelings? This question is answered for me within the practice of the arts and more specifically the avant-garde arts. Physical Theatre and Experimental Documentary, on a fundamental level, share their roots in avant-garde practices of anti-establishment and a fondness for a unique rationale, not similar to conventional linearity or logic. Experimental Documentary challenges the

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cognitive and traditional aspects of a seemingly rational discourse by illuminating the place of desire, knowledge and the unconscious in this practice. Physical Theatre has a more physically practical approach in achieving this goal.

The primacy of the body and its capacity to recall memory organically is encouraged for me by Ana Sanchez-Colberg's interpretation of the progressive devaluation of language within the literary arts toward a form of non-verbal idiom (1996: 22). Sanchez-Colberg ascribes this devaluation of language to the inability of the form to convey the condition[23] of man/woman in the world (1996: 22). One might suggest that this 'condition' is similar to the 'fissure' in the human condition as proposed by Althusser in Renov's reading of experimental documentary (2005: 98). It is perhaps the fact that we cannot adequately understand our unconscious selves in a way that articulates a more holistic view of ourselves (rather than just the one sided consciousness re-presented in almost all conventional spheres of rational waking life, as Freud would put it) that we turn to abstract and alternative ways as a means of expressing our latent unconscious.

Marita Sturken in *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering*, interestingly also draws on Freud's account of the unconscious being the preliminary phase of the conscious (1997: 6). Sturken believes that it is the subjugated knowledges of the unconscious that are essential in understanding the past. A wide spread acceptance of the necessity of the unconscious in arriving at more authentic remembering is not uncommon, but it is how we arrive at these knowledges that is peculiar and not well written about. Freud, I believe would insist on psychotherapy, but as this is not my area of expertise, I will offer another avenue of accessing the unconscious: the body.

"Throughout history the body has been perceived as the receptacle of memory, from the memory of bodily movement such as walking, to the memory of past events in physical scars, to the memory of ones generic history in every cell" (Sturken, 1997: 12). Sturken begins here to express the physical qualities the body has in storing memory on a cellular level. This is a highly appropriate statement for this research but falls short of the

[23] The condition of man/woman in the world is referred to in this document as the emotional and unconscious worlds of these subjects.

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complexity of the unconscious which I am unpacking. Our bodies not only store and trap physical and biological information and memory, but also retain deeply emotional and unconscious memories.

Wilhelm Reich was a pioneer in the study of memory and the unconscious during the 1930's and 1940's, claiming that memory is physically stored in the bodily vessel, joining psychoanalysis and the body into a practical investigation and therapy for his patients. Although various psychoanalytic institutions, because of his method of analysis, rejected Reich, his work was groundbreaking for the early 1900's.

Reich believed that the ego has a need to defend itself against instinctual forces. These instinctual forces are in turn associated with specific patterns of muscular armoring [tension]. The character of muscular defenses has a corresponding pattern of physical gestures and patterns (1999: 3). Although Reich was more specifically interested in releasing these tensions, so that the physical resistance blocking the free flow of energy (Orgone energy), within the individual could dissipate allowing the person to reach an orgasm. By actively loosening the muscle armor the patient would release emotions locked into this muscular armoring, which was forged in earlier childhood years. This release, of chronically rigid muscles would be accompanied by various physical sensations such as hot and cold, itching and prickling and emotional arousal.

Alexander Lowen, a former student of Reich whose studies were also grounded in sex and orgasm, managed to stretch beyond Reich's sexual fascination by studying the body as a whole. His interest and investigation in these subjects, which were considered taboo in the sciences, brought forth the concept of Bioenergetics. Lowen's theory of bioenergetics had a similar approach to Reich's method suggesting that emotional trauma, anger and suppression cause blocks in the flow of energy in the body, resulting in muscular tension. The difference in approach between Reich and Lowen was that Lowen analyzed the body as a whole and tried to restore the natural motility of the body, whereas Reich focused on specific points of tension and an ultimate release through orgasm (Gass, M 1997: 115).

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In my view Reich and Lowen did for somatics what Pianleve did for Experimental Documentary, by bridging the gap between science and accepted scientific practices and the unconscious. Reich regards the bio-energy[24] as a universal aspect present in all things in that it governs the entire organism, expressing its emotions and purely biophysical movement as well (1976: 393). Reich believed that energy flows parallel, up and down the sides of the spine, and that the rings of armor [tensions] are formed at right angles to the spine. He gives a quirky example of the free flow of energy physically manifesting in the 'yes' [nodding the head up and down, allowing the energy parallel to the spine to flow freely] and the blocking of energy to manifest physically in a 'no' [moving at right angles to the spine and thus blocking the flow of energy]. Reich's research paved the way for various physical techniques still used in Physical Theatre training. The better-known techniques being Alexander technique[25], the Feldenkrais Method [26] and Rolfing. Ida Rolf however discovered that emotional and physical trauma result in subtle but permanent changes in the body, displacing muscle tissue with the thickening of connective tissue locking these changes into the body (1978: 12).

My experiments in Physical Theatre and the body is however not for therapeutic reasons, although some form of purging and release is always noted when I have worked with performers physically. The elaborate explanation offered in the work of Reich is to acknowledge the biological and psychoanalytic potential of the body to store, release and even heal old memories and traumas. I chose my performers with their specific background training in Physical Theatre and their understanding of these techniques so that I could be offered the opportunity to work with 'knowing' bodies.

This 'knowing' functions on multiple levels. It functions practically on the physical ability of the performer but also draws on their personal intelligence of the connection between their bodies and minds, placing equal value on both elements. This kind of

[24] The result of movements of freed biological energy.

[25] The focus in this technique is to break habits, which directly affect the way we function physically, mentally and emotionally. This 'habit breaking' is achieved through lengthening the spine, releasing the free flow of energy, which occurs naturally parallel, up and down the spine when these tension and habits are released.

[26] Focused on find the most economical way of moving, eliminating muscular tension and insufficient habits, through a distinct awareness of movement.

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body awareness is essential, as I have stated that we are working in opposition to Descartes conception of the Cartesian split between the mind and the body. We are looking more towards finding the connections between the mind and body, the conscious and the unconscious, by finding value in this impulse when driving the creative work forward in this research.

"The idea that memories become cauterized, sanitized and obliquely forgotten or lost in the body allows for the body to become a prime site for remembering" (Finestone-Praeg. *2001*: 122). I began working with the body in very specific ways, although there was no set template, I needed to start at a practical as well as a theoretically integrated position. I look specifically at improvisation and contact improvisation in beginning an exploration of the unconscious stories locked in the bodies of my performers. The body became the physical site of investigation in this research.

Lynne Ann Blom and Tarin Chaplin, contemporary theorists on improvisation, suggest that little has been written about improvisation because it is so elusive, it is ephemeral and a constantly changing phenomenon (2000: xi). They argue that trying to pin point what an improvisation is in words is at times a betrayal of the medium itself. In my opinion a purist definition of improvisation would inhibit improvisation in the same way that an institutionalization of avant-garde practices ironically traps the medium from that which it wishes fundamentally to escape. By evading fixed definitions, improvisation keeps itself at a distance from Western linearity and logic, not allowing conventional models of thought to strip it of its potential to work impulsively.

Improvisation, for Blom and Chaplin, is a way of tapping a stream of the subconscious as the performer simultaneously originates and performs movement without pre-planning (2000: x). The tapping of the subconscious allows for a break from intellectual censorship and reasoning, allowing for spontaneous explorations and performances. These improvisations in movement is analogous with free association in thought, implying, according to Blom and Chaplin, a lack of conscious constraint and an acknowledgement of all realities. These realities I would interpret as both the conscious and unconscious realms of expression. I then decided that improvisation,

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and particularly contact improvisation, would be the next practical and theoretically valuable point for the research to continue.

In the physical rehearsals, before we began engaging with the technique of contact improvisation as a mode of generating movement vocabulary[27] as well as with motif development, we engaged in a process of play. I designed certain exercises for us to play with in rehearsal and also framed discussions or rather memory-sharing sessions. It was important for me as a choreographer/creator/facilitator, especially because I was not dealing with my own archive, that the performers retrieve the most detailed recollections of the memories they were sharing. Whether or not the specific stories engaged with in the initial rehearsals made it to the performance was not as important, at that stage, as training the performers to remember as close to a conscious 'truth'[28] as possible so that we may begin to play with the unconscious 'truths' still hidden in their bodies.

I started by having them, individually, describe a place where they most enjoyed being. They had to describe from memory as many details as possible. In the second phase of this exercise I had them physically map out the room using objects as markers for space and distance. Although these exercises sound very simple it was astounding what happened with their memories in the next phase of the exercise. They each had to explain to their co-performer, exactly how the room was spatially, as well as what was in the room. In turn they each had to reconstruct the other person's room according to the instructions given by the person who described the space. The person who described the space was only allowed to make corrections to their space after their co-performer had placed the markers. As each individual started making corrections of their respective spaces, memories and details began to flood back. The physical restimulation of the space evoked certain objects and emotions that were not present in the first telling and sculpting of the chosen space, not because

[27] Contact improvisation, a term coined by Steve Paxton in the 1970's, physically disallowed the dominance of one body over another in the creative process, a sharing and taking of weight and constant contact between two or more bodies allowed for organic improvised movements to occur (Kaltenbrunner, 2004: 21).

[28] By more conscious truth I mean to say the most accurate articulation of the event described, factoring in, as objectively all the variables, present in this recollection.

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it didn't exist, but because they could not remember these things until they were physically restimulated.

Through spatial reconstruction and being able to correct these re-constructions the performers arrived at a heightened awareness of the gaps in their own memories. These exercises, in particular, were very useful in bringing my performers to an awareness of the ability of the body and movement in accessing forgotten memories and emotions. Blom and Chaplin propose that communication involving aesthetic or emotional experiences can be greatly augmented by physical input, especially when it is spontaneously told (2000: 5). I would also ascribe Rob and Anneke's remembrance of these spaces to muscle memory, which Dymphna Callery describes as the process whereby memory images and meaning are encoded into the muscles of the body. By restimulating physical pathways in imagined familiar spaces more detail of these spaces and associated memories emerged for both Anneke and Rob. Callery further notes that the fact that rhythmic, sonic and emotional realms reside within the body and can be accessed spontaneously and directly through somatic rather than cerebral means is a fundamental principle in somatic work (2007: 117).

"Movement is both expressive and practical. As instinctive forces, intuitions, rhythms and passions drive us, our bodies respond to the unspoken needs and desires [the unconscious thoughts], the continuous flow of internal and external signals and determining the appropriate form of action " (Blom and Chaplin, 2000: 3). Blom and Chaplin in this quote epitomize, for me, the reason for my selection in improvisation and particularly contact improvisation as a means to uncover unconscious drives and expressions through movement. There is a certain focus and preparation required before beginning a contact improvisation as there is a set of very complex muscular activities which takes place in the body of each performer when engaged in this contact. A focused connection of the breath between the performers as well as a disciplined awareness and attention of impulse become vital in a successful contact improvisation session.

Blom and Chaplin describe the neuro-muscular system, muscle contraction, nerve stimulation, touch sensation, adrenalin formulation, muscle fatigue and oxygen depletion, as providing a parallel flow of feedback within the body (2000: 3). This feedback, according to Blom and Chaplin, along with our sensitivities to gravity,

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pressure, breath, tension and verticality, gives our bodies a complex and comprehensive set of information by which we then physically apprehend and adjust movements accordingly. By focusing in on the breath and by being sensitive to the changes happening in the body the performers are placed in an altered state of consciousness, allowing for the free flow of physical movement without preconception, as well as an 'openness' to creative interpretation of physical expression, which is free from the conscious and the logical.

The physical work of contact improvisation began to lead to truly remarkable images and unconscious stimulations. What is noteworthy for me in Steve Paxton's exposition of one of the impulses towards creating contact improvisation is the concept of non-dance [29]. By engaging in 'everyday' pedestrian movements he created a sympathetic link between the performers and the audience (Kaltenbrunner, 2004: 21). Because it is difficult to judge pedestrian movement such as walking it made the audience feel as though their own movements were worth exploring. These statements highlight the importance and relevance of individual stories and the bodies, which carry these stories. Apart from the poetic philosophy of contact improvisation the actual mechanics of the practice hosts a range of theoretical investigations into the unconscious, as I have begun to illuminate.

Fundamentally, contact improvisation works on the principle of democratizing the body, not allowing for a process of domination or hierarchy to shape the dance. What emerges is an organic negotiation of countering and supporting of weight within the system of gravity. According to Finestone-Praeg in *Physical Imaginings: The translation of memory in the danceplays of First Physical*, improvised responses given to source material can provide a catalyst for unleashing unconscious responses to material that emerge through a dreamlike logic (2001: 118). This dream state is a notion that is echoed in the Surrealist work of the early 1900's avant-garde period. Andre Breton describes Surrealism as "Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one

[29] Non-dance was being explored by various practitioners in the field of dance, such as Steve Paxton, David Gordon, Trisha Brown, Barbara Dilley, Douglas Dunn and Nancy Greene (Kaltenbrunner, 2004: 21). It was particularly the movement by the Judson Dance Theatre, a theatre company in the 1960's, which paved the way for more collaborative endeavors across the arts when creating work allowing for various investigations and experimentation, which were not strictly dance, to enter the world of movement (Kaltenbrunner, 2004: 18).

proposes to express…the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern" (1972: 26). The theme of the unconscious in avant-gardism is a common thread shared by various disciplines including Physical Theatre and Experimental Documentary.

I engaged my performers in a session of contact improvisation with a specific physical restriction and impulse. The task was to connect only with the head and for each performer, individually, to keep in mind, even if not actively or consciously, their specific impulse for the performance. Through just keeping contact with their heads, which for me serves as the locus where memories are processed, they began to explore the space moving through various planes[30]. This connection of the head speaks of a sharing of ideas and memories between the two performers. Finestone-Praeg states that the journey for the choreographer to source an authentic response from their performer/s involves, via the body, a return to the repressed [unconscious], becoming an attempt to allow the body to remember that which it has forgotten. The free associations and lack of preconceived physical movement allows for authentic expressions of what ever emerged within the context of the improv.

I will now illuminate specific examples of how Physical Theatre began to dialogue and structure the experimentation and edit of the Experimental Documentary footage. The selection and the appropriation of the archive developed simultaneously with the development of the physical vocabulary as well as in conversation with the stories and themes, which were emerging as I began describing previously in this section of the report. This head contact improv[31] was revisited in many rehearsals, until there were certain physical qualities, which were being repeated unconsciously by the performers. We then locked these down into a set movement sequence. This sequence kept recalling, in me, an image that Rob and I had discussed before I even considered the concept for this research. The image is of a person, with a knife and fork, suggestively cutting into and eating his/her own head. The connection here, for me, was the ability to possibly share the pieces which were being carved from the head with another person, just as the two performers were connecting and sharing memories through the literal contact of their heads.

[30] A term used to describe the low, medium and high levels of a space.
[31] An abbreviation for improvisation.

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I chose to combine this sequence, now named 'the dinner table scene'[32], with the head contact improv sequence. I then began creating a first cut of archival clips from both performers. I would have clips of Rob and Anneke, intercut, playing over the physical vocabulary. I could sense that we were creeping closer to what this scene wanted to express but it needed more from the performance and the edit. I asked my performers to source, form their memories, expressions of universal emotions such as happiness, anger and grief, each finding their own personal memory attached to the emotion. Now as they shared the carved sections of their heads they erupted with impulsive emotions heightening the emotive quality of the physical expression.

It was during a rehearsal viewing, that it was suggested that I take more risks with the physical vocabulary and the edit, that I was playing it too safe. I allowed for this feedback, not to dictate the progression of the piece, but rather to release me from rigid thinking I was experiencing. I then began exploring the emotional worlds of the performers and their archives more critically. I created a cut that compressed around 200 images into 48 seconds of footage, squeezing approximately four different images into every 1 second of footage[33]. I also mixed an archival audio tract that switched randomly between various scenes and played this as the two performers engaged in their contact improv sequence. This sequence had grown its own set structure but still had an element of improvisation as the audience, as I will later describe, were present within the performance space, making the actual space available to the performers unpredictable and demanding of them to improvise new pathways for the sequence. By layering 'the dinner table sequence' with the edit, the literal cutting of the heads was heightened by, the intercutting of the footage. The range of intercut clips playing over the performers, also then commented the sharing of memories via the contact of their heads.

Another example of the physical exploration guiding the appropriation of archival footage is the closing sequence of the performance. In rehearsal we started working with actual VHS tape, experimenting with its quality and physical attributes, as the performers played and improvised with the tape they began tangling each other in the

[32] Please find in the Appendix Still Images 5-6 of this scene.
[33] Please find in the Appendix Video Clip 4 of this footage.

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tape. This image resonated for me how caught up we get in the past. I exploded this idea by asking the performers to begin entangling the entire space with the VHS tape, creating a whole web of memory. It is from this image that I created an edit of our favorite scenes from the archives of my two performers. As they searched through the meters and meters and meters of tape, physically drawing out these memories and commenting on them, I projected the edited scenes over them. These scenes were more playful and light than the very rapid and intense intercutting witnessed in 'the dinner table sequence'. This sequence closes with Rob physically taking a selected piece of archive, which he had been looking for, and putting it in his pocket[34], speaking to me of our conscious and unconscious selectiveness of memory.

The VHS tape also spontaneously gave birth to what we call 'the tape monster[35]'. This 'tape monster' becomes re-presentative of all the things we wish to forget but which persist to haunt us.

Through working with Physical Theatre and Experimental Documentary I began to uncover an unconscious world of play and expression, which had its own logic, manifesting in non-linear structures. The performers began engaging with an alternative world of expression than that expected in a conventional Aristotelian 3-act structure, a world that did not require rationality or conformity but allowed for authentic expression. Although Physical Theatre and Experimental Documentary were the main theoretical and practical points of focus and were in a constant dialogue, the one influencing the other, it is the performance space that really began to tie this work together conceptually.

Section 3

Climbing the stairs to the archive

> *As I walk up the stairs in my minds eye, I remember everything so vividly I can almost smell and touch and taste it. But the more steps I climb the darker, the more faded these memories become. I am engulfed by the dark and although I can no longer see, I still feel.* - *Fissure* Program Note, 2010.

[34] Please find in the Appendix Still Images 7-10 of this scene.
[35] Please find in the Appendix Still Images 11-12 of the 'tape monster'.

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I wrote this program note for the performance of *Fissure* (2010), my final practical component of my MADA, only later realizing how the space in which the performance was manifesting was unconsciously guiding my framing of the work for the audience. Although I was not working with my own personal archive, my own unconscious formed and actively influenced the construction of the performance. My own understanding and instinctual feelings guided me in making many of the choices relating to the crafting of this work.

There is a literal ascension of a staircase that the audience needs to make in order to arrive in the performance space. As one makes this journey up the stairs to the performance space (mind) of *Fissure*, one is presented with archive. These archival images consisted of photographs, letters and a few personal items from both my performers. Rob's archives were mounted on one side of the staircase wall and Anneke's on the other side, providing a collection of photos, old love letters, memorial service programs and art from youth to present. This was done for both practical and theoretical reasons. The photos are typical of those one would find in one's own family albums or similar to the portraits on your parents' walls, the difference being of course the beautiful faces occupying these stills.

The photographs are at first neatly framed and nostalgic but the further one climbs up the stairs, the more erratic the photo placing becomes. The photograph's frames are abandoned and prints are montaged with old love letters and memorabilia. The spaces separating the photos are discarded for a mesh of personal and random collections of more recent archives. The staircase functions metaphorically as the spine leading up to the mind where memories are processed, and also as a physical and visual point of access for the audience before entering the performance space. Before the ascension up the stairs are made, the audience waits, at a closed door on the street, at the foot of the staircase. They are made to wait on the street until we are ready to receive them in the space, asking the audience to surrender their control for an invitation.

In knowing that I wanted to explore memory and the unconscious, I ironically chose a rather logical and concrete starting point in archive, as archives are tangible aspects of history and memory. I felt justified in doing so as the argument which I am making

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for the unconscious, as an equally valuable and essential component of authentic memory, does not compel me to refute the importance of the more logical or the conscious interpretations of memory. I am asking to rather find a negotiation between these two aspects of the mind in order to arrive at a more authentic remembering, instead of favoring one and not acknowledging the other. In this sense I am inviting the audience to journey from the visible evidence (the archives in the fully lit staircase) to a more complex negotiation of the conscious and the unconscious (in the darker performance space).

"All images become documentary images once their original contexts are stripped away; in being repositioned within another serial organization of images, they document an *Other* time and place. (Russell, C. 1999: 271)". In this quote Catherine Russell stabs at the heart of documentary and, for that matter, archive as well, in the sense that a document of the past can never be the past. If one could hypothetically conjure an identical copy of a past event with all the facts, the feelings, and perhaps even the time it happened in, one would still have a copy of the original. In his discussion of metaphor, Roland Barthes in *Roland Barthes Par Roland Barthes* states, most clearly for me, the point I am making about archive and documentary, in that one can never get to the heart of a refrain but simply substitute another one for it (as sited in Renov, M. 2004: 106). This does not imply the apocalypse of archive and documentary but rather states what it is capable of and what it is not.

There are a variety of practical and theoretical concerns around why I chose to incorporate archival material into the work. Practically, the archive encountered on the staircase was to invite the audience into parts of the performers pasts through literally seeing the performers at various times in their lives. Simultaneously the audience is invited to remember their own pasts as they draw personal parallels with these photographs remembering their own pre-school days, matric dances and bad hairdo's. From the onset there is an activation of memory happening in the audience actively drawing them into the experience of memory as well as into the performance space. Before the performance has started the audience members are engaging in their own subjective performances of memory. I requested some of these photos specifically for the purpose of allowing the audience to identify with certain socially shared experiences, such as the nursery school photo's, family portrait photos and

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matric farewell photos recalling their own memories and associations, performing their own personal recollections and emotions.

One of the qualities which archive material claims to own is that of unmediated 'truth' or visual fact and although arguments have been made about the inability of archive to illustrate context and cause and effect by documentary theorists such as Stella Bruzzi, there is lasting impression of 'truth'. Bruzzi argues that the appeal of archive, particularly that of home footage and family photos lies in the fact that there is a certain naivety and spontaneity in the footage. Because the documenting is of the trivial and the inconsequential it also indicates to Bruzzi the absence of a film auteur or conscious creator of the images (1995: 146). The fact that there is no conscious social or political agenda imposed by a filmmaker, the footage becomes useful only to the subjects involved and thus trivial in a larger socio-political sense.

Bruzzi further argues that the absence of beauty or aesthetic reconstruction yields a greater quotient to 'truth' (1995: 14). This statement becomes important because of the fact that theoretical writing on documentary, according to Bruzzi, is contingent upon representing the 'truth' as objectively (unobtrusively) as possible. What I find troubling about Bruzzi's statement is the fact that 'objectivity' and 'truth' are statements, which are taken for granted. The fact that 'truth' must be re-presented as 'objectively' as possible firstly implies for me the denial of a subjective 'truth' and a simultaneous denial of its validity as 'truth' altogether. Bruzzi acknowledges a 'truth' contained in these archival images but also ascribes to them a burden of 'truth'. This burden is explained of the two levels of 'truth', which Bruzzi highlights as, firstly the 'truth' of the fundamental image we see, and secondly the 'truth' to be extrapolated from these images (1994: 16). An archival image can carry a 'truth', fundamentally, in its visual presentation but cannot offer, fundamentally, an explanation of its provenance. The 'truth' of the context of the archive is inaccessible purely through the archive.

This duality of 'truth' present in archive does not make it a nihilistic process but again forces us to acknowledge that in a Barthesian sense everything is a re-presentation. I agree with Bruzzi when she argues that documentary has always implicitly acknowledged that the 'document' at its heart is open to reassessment, re-

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appropriation and even manipulation without these processes necessarily obscuring or rendering irretrievable the provenance of the document. Just because I have arranged my performers' archive in a particular manner in order to elicit a response from the audience does not mean that the images used lose their original context. Instead they join a new simulacrum of meaning and context.

The persuasive nature of archive as 'truth', particularly home footage, allowed me to tactfully lure the audience to the performance space and contextualize the performance and the audience within a specific reference of memory. Now that the ascension of the stairs has been completed, I can illuminate how the performance space commented metaphorically on the unconscious.

Section 4
The Canopy as metaphor for the mind

I had begun the writing of this report by offering an extract by Emily Dickinson, in which she very eloquently and poetically exposes the dangers and the importance of the unconscious. I have in the opening sections of this report explored and described how one could possibly arrive at an expression of this unconscious in order to enter a more authentic remembering and will now highlight the theoretical and metaphorical use behind the space. The staircase becomes re-presentative of the spinal chord of the space, as described in the previous section. When one is ascending this spinal chord (staircase) it eventually leads to the brain (mind) of this performance, and more specifically the minds of my two performers.

On entering the space the audience is met by a large dark room with an elegantly illuminated bar counter. The bar person invites the audience to enjoy a complimentary cocktail at the *Remem Bar*. The *Remem Bar* served a range of memory cocktails[36] for the audience to enjoy. The catch is that there is nothing in the glass to drink; instead they are presented with a gift, appropriate to the cocktail. An example of this is a 'Cry Martini on the Rocks', which is served with blue pebbles and a dash of eye drops, or a 'Bloody Scary Bloody Mary' which is served with a miniature voodoo doll. The

[36] Please find in the appendix Still Image 13 of the cocktail menu.

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reason for the bar was to engage the audience in their own associations and memories of these emotions re-presented by the cocktails, playfully luring them into the world of memory.

The actual performance space is quite vast for only two performers to utilize and also for an audience to arrange themselves in, as there was no seating made available. Conceptually I decided to work with light in the space as a devise in negotiating, not only the performers in the space, but the audience as well. The play of light and dark as well as the many shadows also began speaking to the notion of the unconscious in peculiar ways. We worked specifically with bedside lamps, emergency lights and the luminance from the projectors in lighting the performance. The options for projection surfaces did influence the placing of specific scenes as the projector had to be accompanied by a white background. I added texture to some of the projection surfaces by allowing the projected footage to bleed over a stack of boxes, or to distort the projection surface by placing it in a corner, making the aspect ratio of the image oblique.

Light became an essential guiding tool for the audience, as they were physically present within the performance space. Light would pull their focus from one scene to the next, as one scene's light disappeared into darkness another scene's lighting would appear from darkness. The mechanics and technology of the work was never hidden but always revealed to whom ever cared to observe it. This became personally important for me, as there is no element in the performance that is sold as magic or seamless, everything from the moving of the lights to the transitions within the performance space was exposed. I did not want there to be any secrecy between the process of the performance and the audience within this performance. Because we were re-presenting our attempts at uncovering authentic memory, through Experimental Documentary and Physical Theatre, I felt it disrespectful and dishonest to try and hide the process and constructedness of the work. I chose to stay with the integrity I felt present, in both my selected mediums in their approach to the unconscious. The audience was given the choice of where they wanted to position themselves in relation to the performance and in what they chose to see, or not see.

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The fact that the audience was being guided through the space by the light made it very interesting for the performers to decide how they would then negotiate the space. This was one of the first considerations we acknowledged when we knew what the lighting design would be. The performers knew that the space they had to perform in would be different each night, depending on the charge of the audience. This required them to be absolutely present in the work and to trust that the audience would instinctively follow the light. What was powerful for me about the lighting design was the fact that although the audience was drawn to the light they were still able to negotiate the space in the fissure between dark and light, as they were never fully illuminated themselves. By virtue of the light they were literally being positioned in a fissure.

The challenge of the lighting in this performance in this particular space also gifted us various elements that we would not have discovered in rehearsal on the dance floor of University Corner at WITS University. As we begun illuminating the scenes in specific tonal qualities with the minimal amount of lights we chose to use (due to practical reasons), the play of shadow in the space emerged. There is one specific gestural contact scene, which we decided to break the contact of, and place the performers at a distance from one another. In doing so, and by positioning a light on each performer, a choreography of shadows began to emerge. We tweaked the lights and the angle of the chairs so that, although the performers were not physically touching, the shadows were. The shadows become the surrogate connection between the performers. Metaphorically it also began to speak of the traces of memory and although something is past the traces remain. In this case the trace remains in the shadow, in the unconscious[37].

Shadows became re-presentative, not only of memory and of the unconscious, but also began to evoke and even insert the emotional worlds of the performers into the space and into the archival footage, which was being projected. The traces of the performers were burned into the archive, like a black charcoal, as re-presented by the

[37] Please find in the appendix Still Images 14-16 of this scene.

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shadow. This commented on how the past seeps into the present through our physical beings, we are both the shadow and not the shadow[38].

I chose to only illuminate the space fully once the performers had finished the piece, allowing the audience to absorb the space for the first time from a conscious and more logical perspective. This was done for two reasons. Firstly, although this research focuses on the unconscious as the missing link needed for a more authentic remembering it does not disavow or deny the importance and use of the conscious. Secondly it would ask of the audience to negotiate their own fissures about the space, having experienced it from a more abstract and irrational encounter [in the dark], to a conscious reconciling of the experience [in the light]. The irrationality and abstractness referred to whilst being in the dark, is contingent on the fact that the audience is demanded to physically negotiate their own positioning in relation to the work because no seating was provided. It asks of the audience on a fundamental level to do what is suggested in the theory and practice of this research.

The audience is not just asked to do this through reconciling their conscious and unconscious experiences through the mind, but have also been initiated physically in this negotiation though their bodies. By actively walking in the performance space and making choices about the performance the audience has created a physical pathway and memory in their bodies of the performance. Another way in which the audience was drawn into the performance was not only through ordering a specific cocktail but also having to negotiate their own subjective self to one of the stories told in the performance. The bar person, at 3 separate occasions, enters the performance space with 3 different drinks from the bar. The audience members who selected the same drink before the performance has started, now has to renegotiate their relationship to what they are seeing, dealing I feel, more personally with the emotions and associations the scene evokes for them.

The role of the bar person within this work, is to metaphorically and quite literally shed light on certain sequences (emotional sates), bringing to light aspects of the unconscious which were re-presented within the work. The bar person ties together

[38] Please find in the appendix Still Image 17 of this scene.

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the audience within the performance and also begins to tie together the performers within the work as well as in relationship to the audience. By having had a shared encounter with the bar person as well as being able to identify with the cocktails as a structural device within the work the audience is seated within the performance rather than observing it from the comfort of a distanced chair.

It is again the importance of individual subjective stories and memories, which become valuable in this research, whether it is happening in the performance or inside the psyche of the audience member. This research considers the impact on both the creator-performers as well as the audience when offering a negotiation of the fissure between the conscious and the unconscious. I am curious to know what other interesting elements would have come from the space had we had the time and luxury of rehearsing in the space, from the onset of the rehearsal process. I do feel that we were not able, within the time frame that we had to rehearse in the performance space, to explore all the options and possibilities of the space. The performance space did however present us with interesting and poetic locations for the sequences, such as the shadow dance, which was made possible through lighting into corners in the room, and some of the projection being able to disappear into the windows of the space.

The fact that the archive is sometimes not presented as a whole and fully contained image, but is distorted by the surface on which it is projected, such as the boxes, corners and windows[39], speaks to me of the gaps in our memories, that fact that we cannot consciously recall all the details. The elements of the staircase, the bar and the actual space, lent itself to what I felt to be an intriguing investigation and activation of the space and the concept.

Conclusion

In the right frame of mind

I have, in the various sections of this report explored the practical and theoretical elements of my research topic and have adequately described and discussed the application and influence of the theoretical approach to my creative process, as well

[39] Please find in the appendix Still Image 18, an example of a 'broken projection'.

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as how certain concepts in the creative process have guided my understanding of the theory.

I do not claim to have conquered the unconscious as that is a process of individuation, as suggested by Carl Gustav Jung, but I have begun a practical exploration of these unconscious expressions and feelings by negotiating them in a dialogue with more conscious concepts. By working on a very personal and physical level with my performers we discovered various elements which seemed to work within this process, and suggestions of elements which could possibly be investigated in a further exploration of this research.

When reflecting on the work Rob noted that it was quite difficult for him to connect with the work at first, especially because we worked extensively on generating and setting the physical vocabulary of the work. He felt that the initial concept was too abstract for him to connect with, but as we started engaging more with the relationship between the two mediums, and as his particular impulse in the piece emerged, he discovered a very intimate connection to the work. Rob's desire to remember was unconsciously manifested in his childlike play, which he only realized at a later stage. He recognized that he had lost the spontaneity of childlike play, and that this had been missing in his life for quite some time. In speaking with Rob, after the process of the performance was complete, he stated that he has, because of his unconscious realization, regained that sense of playfulness in his life and in his work.

Anneke's process was quite different in the sense that through re-presenting a traumatic experience in her early adult life she was able to articulate through this performance what had happened to her without using words. As the audience consisted of invited guests only, it was quite emotional for her to engage with family and friends after the performance. Anneke did state that she has experienced emotional release and took the opportunity to share this information verbally for the first time with a close family member.

I am intrigued with our investigation and with its manifestation, but in retrospect I feel that the work could have benefited from involving Rob and Anneke more in the editing process of the archival footage. Finding the connection to the work might have

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happened a lot faster if they had been making active choices in the edit. Their opinions, however, were not excluded as they were shown many versions of the edits before the final cuts were assembled. When re-editing certain sequences I relied on the feedback and responses Rob and Anneke had given in the previous cuts. I did this so that the edit did not become a foreign part, imposed on the performance but grew into the performance through the performers, and through my own responses to the footage.

I do still feel that having a facilitator/choreographer in this process is valuable because of the fact that it is difficult to separate oneself from our conscious appropriations of memory. Being an external eye, but also an internal co-creator afforded me the space to recognize where certain discrepancies were taking place, such as Anneke's version of the obilisque differing from the tour guides account as well as Rob's misconception of his fathers attitude in the jet ski story. I was also able to pick up on the unconscious manifestations of the archival footage in the physical rehearsals, as illustrated by the contact improvisations which included the exercise of power position, in which Anneke and Rob were piling and climbing over each other just as the bodies of the obilisque are doing.

The potential to explore the possibility of Physical Theatre and Experimental Documentary in both accessing the unconscious and then negotiating this unconscious with the conscious in performance is vast. In this first exploration I have cracked only the tip, a very important tip, of the iceberg of possibility. I have illustrated both practically and theoretically the value that these two disciplines bring to the understanding that the unconscious is an equally powerful and valuable component in re-presenting more authentic memory. That it is indeed the 'cooler host', which will bring us closer to a more authentic remembering.

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