

**TRAUMA'S HIDE AND SEEK: AN EXPLORATION OF
AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC PERFORMANCE AS A THERAPEUTIC
PROCESS, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO WOMEN'S
TRANSGENERATIONAL TRAUMA
AND PERSONAL AGENCY**

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Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted for the degree Master of Arts Dramatherapy at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been admitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.



Margaretha Charlotte Pankhurst

June 2018

Date

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- ❖ To Miyo, Noire and Lucia: one day I will dance these feelings as there are not enough words in any language to truly express what I feel. Know that you are brave, strong and wise. I am honoured by your commitment, dedication and trust.

ABSTRACT

This creative research was a qualitative exploration of the therapeutic value of creating and presenting autoethnographic performance to a carefully selected group of witnesses, with specific reference to women's transgenerational trauma and personal agency. Three women worked with the researcher/aspirant drama therapist/director exploring whether autoethnographic performance can be used as a form of Drama Therapy.

A performance-presentation to carefully selected audience-witnesses was developed using Drama Therapy principles, creative writing and journaling, and visual art installations. This written report is a reflection on the therapeutic discoveries and insights gained through the creation and performance-presentation process.

What emerged through post-performance reflection was primarily an increase in personal agency, understanding of personal relationship patterns through exploring ancestral ties and the beginnings of healing of deep personal trauma. The importance of incorporating body-based therapy in relation to trauma recovery and Drama Therapy was central with embodiment forming a portal to unconscious processes. This study asserts that Drama Therapy is uniquely placed to be able to incorporate holistic mind/body/spirit recovery using symbolic, verbal and physical expression.

KEY WORDS: trauma and complex trauma, Gender Based Violence, embodiment, body-based approaches, autoethnographic performance, Drama Therapy.

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IMIZIMBA YESIKHUMBUZO / BODIES OF MEMORY:

The noise of silence – in process.

WHERE TO START (Introduction)

Structure of this research report

The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity.

Carl Jung quoted in Nachmanovitch, 1990: 42

The relevant “inner necessity” for this research project came from a need to conduct research that is not entrapped in language but rather engages with the deeper levels of women’s lived experiences which, in relation to trauma, demands the inclusion of embodiment beyond words. Conquergood (2002: 146) speaks of the academia’s focus on “...knowledge that is anchored in paradigm and secured in print.” He proposes a ground level view: “...in the thick of things.” (Conquergood, 2002: 146). Knowledge resulting from practice, delicately nuanced and embodied. In relation to lived experience of specifically trauma, which defies spelling out in neat check-boxed-chaptered research dissertations, a different approach is appropriate: one that honours the profound depth of women’s histories and the effects thereof in the present. Histories that do not engage in academic theory, but rather demands acknowledgment of the individual within a community which came to be thus through countless oppressive influences. In ‘multi-cultural’ South Africa the complexity weaves a web with many strands necessitating a careful telling of stories about self and significant others, to self and significant others.

[Miyo after reading the research proposal: “Margie, do you HAVE to use that language? I need to buy a dictionary...” *I realise she found the academic language alienating.*]

Initially this writing sought to comply with formal academic research. But the depth of the personal narratives which the women shared and my own need for integrity in practice soon claimed a different approach which values emotional

and embodied knowledge as highly as the intellectual academic, validating an approach which, as Performance as Research and as research report, does not rely exclusively on theory, but acknowledges that to be meaningful, theory is the result of experience and not the other way around. Whose story is it anyway? In this case ownership certainly is not vested in this researcher. "...women and their bodies, certain bodies in certain public spaces, are always transgressive – dangerous, and in danger." (Russo quoted in Carver, 2003: 17). Kaminer and Eagle (2010: 4) speak to the need for a profound comprehension of abuses and inequities when engaging with trauma. This writing seeks to honour the profound experiences of three women and myself.

This report gives an overview of theory and research regarding trauma with specific focus on recovery approaches and on mindful body-based therapy which seeks to dispel traditional psychology's cognitively verbal methods. It briefly looks at autoethnographic performance as an embodied research investigation of self in relation to cultural experiences.

This is followed by the story of the research process and its effects on the three women and myself. The integration of mind/body trauma therapy, embodied autoethnography and Drama Therapy is explored. Because of the imperative to honour the women who shared deeply personal stories, this report ends with a short narrative of their experience of the process.

Because of my belief that research is as much about the researcher as it is about the research, it is at times necessary that I add my personal voice: this is indicated by italics.

This is the story of...?

The first sentence is always the hardest one to write. Once there is a clearer idea of the outcome of the journey, is it best to start at the end (no matter how tenuous the destination is) or at the very start?

In the beginning there was the Word
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

A recurrent phrase in the drama therapeutic and autoethnographic process leading up to *Imizimba Yesikhumbuzo/Bodies of Memory* was: "This is the story of...?" That is where I will start. This is the story of... four women and a journey to an attic, to the margins. "What moves at the margin. What is it to have no home in this place" (Morrison, Nobel Lecture, 1993). Their journey was like a diving within: deeper and deeper inwards where there was a hunch that the margin might be waiting to be found as well as insight into the space around it. They discovered deeply buried memories which had been banished to the outskirts, but which, as trauma will, had dragged the margin further and further to the centre of their beings obscuring the page for possibilities; and standing in a long line behind this was a veritable Greek chorus of women, noisily silent pointing at the marginal veil. Heddon (2007) writes in *The Politics of the Personal*: "You can see this sometimes in our actions when without even knowing it is happening, we replicate the actions of our grandmothers. We repeat, tell over, similar stories but in and for different times and places. ...ancestral pasts circulating in a living present, rooting and routing futures." (Heddon, 2007: 126). The journey we took validated this statement.

Right at the start of the journey, I had a dream. I am standing with my back towards a precipice, in the crucifix position. Without fear, at peace. I fall backwards and continue falling for a long time. My body glides through the crust of the earth effortlessly and without anxious pain, continues to its (the Mother? Mother earth?) core.

Miyo 'wakes' in her dream to see her grandfather, the aspiring healer married to the most powerful healer in the village, standing in the doorway watching her as she lies in bed.

I ask, "The feeling was...?" The other oft repeated question.

"Nothing." (Pause) "I must phone him." (Long pause) "Us Xhosas are not supposed to tell our dreams."

Note to self: Lesson for the aspiring drama therapist/researcher/director of autoethnographic performance: cultural sensitivity prescribes that dreams are off limits with Miyo and possibly/probably other Xhosa-speaking people.

Lucia has a chaotic dream: sick puppies on and under her bed. Chaotic journeys, landing she knows not where or how she got there. Her great grandmother's (*the wise one?*) smell gives comfort.

Noire? Un-silently, supremely silent.

In the beginning there was the Word
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

In the beginning there was the Body
and the body was...?
Created. Creation?

I ask the women "This is the story of...?" The story they want to tell with this work.

Lucia: "The story of the chaotic repercussions of silence and secrets. And 'why' me, 'why' this? And ??????"

Noire: "This is the story of lost thoughts and feelings, but also of the unspoken."

Miyo: "My story is the story of many stories. Of all the hurt, shame, love and secrets buried in our dark closet. Most importantly my story is a story of all the female souls in me. The women that made me, me."

Margie as researcher/director: "This is the story of 'rootless' women who were / are firmly placed within specific and binding traditions which were meant to give identity, but which kept them silent without explanation. In their quest to understand, they found that silence has been following them for generations. And the silence equalled injury: sometimes from others, sometimes to self. But the noisy unspoken secrets are like a haunting. Ever present. Their quest necessitated a speaking they know not of what, and a wash away of the pus and blood: a cleansing of the wound; so that they can find the hero within. But also, a story of love, strength, resilience and beauty. *In honesty I also have to add: this is my story. The story of learning to be a drama therapist and facing my own identity past.* This last sentence echoes Nebe (2012: 157): "It is about brutal honesty, a conscious ownership of the detail of your own story, and a chance to practise self-reflexivity." *Indeed. I often wished it was not so.*

Margie using a more academic research tone: The journey started with a question: In what ways can performance autoethnography be used as a therapeutic tool for women reflecting on transgenerational trauma? This demands an unpacking of the terms and their direct lived meaning to the women. And what they discovered.

Words that are difficult to separate as they thread together in an almost predetermined way (aka key words): trauma and complex trauma, body and embodiment, Drama Therapy, autoethnographic performance (ancestors), embodied knowing and cognitive understanding, witnessed or audience. Choice forming an umbrella over all of these.

The women (or sample)

The 'sample' consisted of three women and a researcher/aspirant drama therapist/director. *From the outset I found it difficult to think in the research terms of 'data' or 'participants', as the material we uncovered was so deeply personal: it felt invasively unethical to think of this as 'data'. For the purpose of this writing, I will call them either by their pseudonyms or 'the women' and 'story' rather than 'data'.*

The women were selected according to non-probability purposive sampling or judgment sampling (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012: 93), based on my partial knowledge of their histories relevant to the research question. I had worked with them previously and a trusting relationship had already been established which facilitated the exploration of the deeply personal subject matter. They are:

- ♀ A 26-year old Xhosa woman, living in Khayelitsha (Cape Town) with strong ties to rural Eastern Cape. Pseudonym Miyo;
- ♀ A 27-year old so-called 'coloured' woman. She does not identify herself as 'coloured' and speaks of being colourful. Pseudonym Lucia. (Lucia replaced a 27-year old mixed race Angolan woman who fell pregnant after having originally agreed to participate. Together we decided that excavation with a focus on trauma and growing a baby at the same time would not be wise.)

♀ A 25-year old Muslim woman, living in Ottery (Cape Town). Pseudonym Noire.

“I realise that I am telling a story not just about these women, I am telling a story about myself...” (Nottage quoted in Narbona-Carrion, 2012: 64). As the research methodology was based on autoethnographic performance, with the women acting as co-researchers of their own histories and ancestors, it is appropriate that I include a short introduction of myself:

♀ I am a woman, 56-years old, white and born into an Afrikaans family, now living in Observatory (Cape Town). No pseudonym needed, my name is Margie. *Similar to Lucia’s difficulty, I would not necessarily identify myself as white or Afrikaner (and would prefer to drop the 56-years as well)*, but deep reflection was needed on my role in the process and the power implications of the words ‘research’ and ‘researcher’, ‘director’ and ‘therapist’. It would also be blinkered to not address white and Afrikaans in relation to the women who originate from very different cultures to me, and whose ancestral experiences were undoubtedly strongly influenced by colonialism and apartheid.

The research and final presentation took place in Cape Town, Western Cape on 13 April 2018.

UNPACKING SOME THREADED WORDS

It is necessary, before discussing the process this research followed, to give a brief overview of the theoretical texts that were important to the design with adequate attention of paid to complex trauma, with an emphasis on the body-based recovery that current research and treatment is highlighting (Curran, 2013; Damasio, 1999; Dayton, 2005; Herman, 1992; Levine, 2010; Van der Kolk and Van der Hart, 1995; Van der Kolk, 2014). It also highlights why an embodied autoethnographic presentation to witnesses was appropriate.

Complex trauma

Who can find the proper grave for the damaged mosaics of the mind, where they may rest in pieces? (Langer quoted in Van der Kolk & Van der Hart, 1995: 158)

In terms of trauma, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Complex Post-Traumatic Stress, the main theorists used as a basis for the process were Judith Herman (*Trauma and Recovery*, 1992) and Bessel van der Kolk (*The Body Knows the Score*, 2014). Although drama therapists are not mandated to diagnose, an understanding of these theories was necessary as trauma forms a significant aspect of the research title and question. It is within this context that I include the discussion below.

For a diagnosis of PTSD, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 5-Revised (DSM 5-R) proposes that an individual be exposed to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways: direct experience, witnessing the event(s) as they occur to others, learning about event(s) occurring to loved ones or repeated exposure to the aversive details of traumatic events (for instance emergency personnel who are first responders to accident scenes). The person further needs a minimum number of symptoms spread over the following categories: intrusion symptoms (involuntary memories, nightmares and/or flashbacks, psychological distress at reminders of the traumatic event), avoidance (of memories or reminders related to the trauma), negative alterations in mood and cognition (distortions in memory of the event, beliefs about self or others, negative world-view, persistent negative emotional state and disruption in ability to relate to others), and finally alterations in reactivity and arousal (self-destructive behaviour, sleep disturbances, hypervigilance and difficulties with concentration). There are time-frames attached to the onset and duration of the symptoms. (Lake, 2015: 134-135).

Van der Kolk (2014) and Herman (1992) point out that there is an urgent need for Complex Post-Traumatic Stress (for example prevalent in survivors of ongoing childhood abuse) to be included in the DSM. Van der Kolk (2014: Kindle

location 4593) emphasises the difference in impact between discreet traumatic events in adulthood and the effects of chronic childhood trauma. Herman (1992:119) points out that responses to prolonged trauma need to be viewed as a spectrum of conditions, as opposed to a single disorder, in that they differ significantly from single event trauma. She proposes that this syndrome be called Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Complex PTSD) – which can account for the cumulative developmental jolts as a result of repeated childhood trauma (Herman, 1992: 121). Her criteria are based on: a history of exposure to totalitarian control which includes being “...subjected to totalitarian systems in sexual and domestic life, including survivors of domestic battering, childhood physical or sexual abuse...” (Herman, 1992: 121). The symptoms she outlines are in the main relational: to self, perpetrator, others and systems of meaning. (Please see Appendix A for full criteria of Complex PTSD.) These symptoms became relevant in this research project as well as the final presentation.

Herman (1992: 116) takes issue with finding vulnerability to Complex PTSD in the victims of abuse: a predisposition is sought in abused women and not in the men who abuse, leading to victim blaming which potentially can take extreme forms (Herman, 1992: 117). She says (Herman, 1992: 118) that attempts to fit people who have suffered chronic abuse into the current diagnostic criteria leads to an incomplete understanding of the problem and a dissipated treatment approach with some of the psychological side effects (Borderline Personality and Major Depressive Disorder as examples) being treated rather than the trauma induced reactions to abusive conditions.

Trauma recovery: mind, body and brain

When you activate your gut feelings and listen to your heartbreak - when you follow the interoceptive pathways to your innermost recesses - things begin to change. Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 4279.

For Herman (1992) recovery needs to be framed within the stages listed below. These are not necessarily consecutive, but rather form the basis without which recovery will be difficult.

The first phase is: safety: relationship and therapeutic alliance. The focus is on functioning and well-being in the present and restoring a sense of control (implying agency and choice), and immediate safety (Herman, 1992: 155-174). "In order to recover, mind, body and brain need to be convinced that it is safe to let go." (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 3734). The second phase focuses on remembrance and mourning, so that the traumatic memories can be transformed and integrated into a life-narrative (Herman, 1992: 174). Choice remains important, with the therapist being a witness and ally to facing the horrors of the past. The third and last phase concentrates on reconnecting with ordinary life so that the future can be faced with the consciousness of the past (Herman, 1992: 196).

These phases were implicit in the planning of the sessions after the extent of personal trauma experienced by the women became apparent. (A fuller description is given below in the *Research process: Telling the story* section.) With regards to the second phase (remembrance and mourning): Clarissa Pinkola Estes (*Women Who Run with the Wolves*, 1992) presents an activity which relates directly. She calls it *descanos*: looking at your life and marking the little and the big symbolic deaths (Pinkola Estes, 1992: 365). It consists of a life graph to be reflected on. The events that still need to be mourned or that have been put out of memory are marked; as well as those which have been forgiven and released. In terms of this research process, this exercise was hugely valuable for finding the structure for the presentation, as well as prioritising what currently needed to be focused on as the process was time limited and everything to be mourned could not be addressed at once.

Bessel van der Kolk's approach to recovery in *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma* (2014) became extraordinarily important in the work with the women. It is also one of the clearest accounts of some of the difficult symptoms connected to the manifestation of trauma symptoms like dissociation and numbing, highlighting body-based approaches and mindfulness as important to recovery moving away from the Cartesian mind/body separation by stressing holistic integration.

In short: the human brain consists of three structures: the reptilian brain (fully developed by the time an infant is born) which governs basic bodily functions needed for survival; the mammalian brain or limbic system (the next to develop) implicated in basic emotions, hunger, sex, and memory (Colman, 2009: 424); and the last to develop is the neocortex or rational brain – the frontal lobes which make us capable of abstract thought and language. Van der Kolk calls the combined reptilian and mammalian brain the emotional brain (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 986). The rational brain is tasked with interpreting and integrating information for the emotional brain, but the stronger the signals from the latter, the less able the rational brain is to process (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 1041).

The amygdala is located in the limbic system (mammalian brain) and responsible for relaying sensory input from the environment both to the rational brain and the reptilian brain. The messages are relayed to the latter faster, ensuring physical survival. By the time we realise what has happened during threat, our bodies probably have already responded (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 1056). The rational brain is tasked with organising our responses to 'normal' situations: the part that tells us that we cannot just hit somebody every time we lose our tempers. It is also responsible for autobiographical memory and a full-life narrative which includes a beginning, middle and end. But under extreme negative emotion (like fear) this capacity is impaired. When the emotional reaction from the reptilian and mammalian brain is extreme, the rational brain becomes deactivated and the individual has no means to contextualise what is/has happened. Subsequent contextualising of the event requires the ability to be fully present in the here-and-now and for the rational brain to not be dragged back into the overwhelming emotions from the past thereby strengthening the inability for the neocortex to function optimally (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 1213). As long as the rational brain does not have access to the emotional brain it has no means by which to integrate the information, which results in the emotional brain reacting in a similar way to unrelated environmental stimuli as it did with the original threat: it literally is not able to know that it is now safe and that the stimulus (in some way similar to the original threat) is in a different context. This then leads to the many symptoms of PTSD and complex-PTSD. Trauma's hide and seek: the reptilian

and mammalian brain need to release the intense emotions and physical sensations; and the rational brain (which under normal circumstances would facilitate this), is unable to assist by contextualising.

For recovery the implications are multiple: that the individual is able to be aware of their physical sensations in the present and be mindful that these are transitory and not permanent; that the body's reactions are released so that the impetus at the moment(s) of trauma can be completed (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 3892); that the rational brain not be overwhelmed and therefore is able to integrate the traumatic events in a full-life story which states 'this happened' and not 'it is still happening'; that the emotional reactions be acknowledged and given the weight that they need: a mourning for what was lost (Herman, 1992: 175-195; Pinkola Estes, 1992: 365-366).

Van der Kolk (2014: Kindle location 3608-3613) outlines the goals of working with survivors as being: 1. Being able to remain calm and focused; 2. Maintaining that calm during reminders of the past; 3. Being able to be fully alive and connected with others in the present; 4. Not needing to keep secrets anymore – breaking the silence. He says (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 3648) that recovery needs the executive function (frontal lobes) of the brain to be restored, so that as self-confidence increases, playfulness and creativity will follow. To be able to achieve this the limbic system needs to know that the danger has passed. To counteract hyper- or hypo-arousal (becoming overwhelmed by the emotions and either shutting down or becoming overemotional), and encourage emotional self-regulation, he speaks to the benefits of techniques which include breathing, meditation and movement (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 3687). Mindful body awareness creates contact with our inner-world. Through mindfulness the emotional brain can be kept calm enough for the flight/fright/freeze (related to trauma) response to not be activated.

Because so many victims are abused by those who were supposed to be their caregivers, the impact on their ability to trust is vast. Forming relationships becomes a risky business. And, as for Herman (1992), the reparative

therapeutic alliance is key to recovery (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 3782).

Pendulation is described as mindfully accessing internal sensations and traumatic memories which are located in somatic sensations, and gently moving away from them again which results in widening the window of tolerance for these sensations which can counteract being overwhelmed (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 3883). With regard to the importance of body-based approaches which facilitate rational integration, Van der Kolk (2014: Kindle location 4459) says: "Our sense of Self depends on being able to organize our memories into a coherent whole. This requires well-functioning connections between the conscious brain and the self system of the body-connections which are often damaged by trauma." No body needs to become some body. Avoiding feeling bodily sensations increases our vulnerability to being overwhelmed by the sensations (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 3692). Because traumatic sensations are situated in the reptilian and mammalian brain, and become inaccessible to the rational language brain, a 'bottom-up' (rather than emphasising verbalising memories, starting with the physical manifestation of those memories) approach to recovery is suggested (Levine, 2010: 45) which focuses on facilitating expression of the physical responses that were thwarted during the event(s) and simultaneously acknowledging the emotional burden which will enable the rational brain to start making sense of what happened. Levine (2010: 58) states: "The interaction of intense fear and [physical] immobility is fundamental in the formation of trauma, in its maintenance and in its deconstruction, resolution and transformation." The traumatised person is imprisoned, frightened and restrained, by the persistent physiological reactions and the fear of these reactions (Levine, 2010: 66). But accessing these physical responses need the mind to remain calm which points to the importance of mindfulness: knowing that I am safe in the here-and-now, that what I am experiencing is from the past and needs to be acknowledged, but there is no immediate threat. Change is only possible with mindfulness, and mindfulness only possible with body awareness: meeting the body without fear or judgment (Levine, 2010: 338).

The techniques pertinent to this research design were breathing and meditations, body awareness and scanning, and very simple yoga exercises. Whenever one of the women seemed to be experiencing extreme discomfort, her attention would be invited back to the breath and body: what is your body asking for right now? These cues became vital to the work. Yoga is an excellent way of gently focusing on the body without undue demands (again choice remains vital: "Adjust the position if you need to, be aware of any discomfort. This is not about 'getting it right'.") facilitating befriending physical sensations. It also promotes grounding in the here-and-now and centring. Throughout the process Emerson and Hopper (2011) *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga: Reclaiming your Body* became an important resource. They state (Emerson & Hopper, 2011: 24): "Yoga practitioners are able to cultivate the ability to remain present, to notice and tolerate inner experience, and to develop a new relationship with their body." Added to this is learning to trust and accept physical sensations in the moment, without a need to change or deny – being mindfully present in the moment. The role of acceptance here is key when considering that some of the outcomes of childhood abuse is shame, guilt and a pervasive self-blame. Consciously accepting whatever sensations are present in the moment is a powerful antidote to feelings of always being 'bad'. A structured trauma-sensitive yoga practice "...helps foster an internal sense of safety, personal agency, and choice..." (Emerson & Hopper, 2011: 39).

Autoethnographic performance

The sins of one generation are visited on the next; that is the human situation, and to the extent that parents are unconscious, their children suffer. Woodman, 1982: 23

Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012: 128) describe ethnography as an appropriate approach to understand the social, cultural and political structures affecting attitudes. An ethnographic case study is "the analysis of a case set in context" (Wagner et al, 2012: 270), with autoethnography being a reflective self-examination by a person in context (Wagner et al, 2012: 268). Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011: 273) describe it as a research approach that aims to describe and analytically engage with personal experience to enhance

understanding of cultural experience. *With regards to this research I would add, to enhance understanding of personal patterns in relation to a specific theme: trauma.* Spry (2001: 719-720) tells us that autoethnographic performance "...reintroduces the body to the mind in the process of living research." In other words, an embodied investigation of self in relation to cultural experiences: What did I learn from the specific familial culture that I grew up in. Culture here is seen not necessarily directly related to a languaged group of people (as in French culture) but rather those unique behaviours that all close-knit groups like a family practise in specific circumstances.

The motivation for engaging in autoethnographic enquiry is encapsulated in the following quote: "... (it is an) artful articulation of how we became to be who we are, because of the touch of another along our body of memory." (Pineau, 2003: 45-46). The impetus was to access transgenerational memory regarding the women's experiences of womanhood in relation to their first-hand experiences of personal gender practises, reflecting the social and cultural interactions that produced these. Simply put: how did the women who came before unconsciously influence my experience as a woman now. To what extent did past personal and collective experiences influence attitudes to death, risk, survival, sex and interpersonal relationships (Motseme, 2007: 376). The research investigated women's unconscious drivers in terms of their personal sexuality and gender, the relationship between cognitive knowledge and the liminal which encompasses cognition, culture, previous generations and body memory, and also trauma. Ingrid Mason (quoted in Gqola, 2015: 71) asks: "What happens to that collective trauma" of Gender Based Violence? Spry (2001: 713) states that an autoethnographic exploration needs to take the self as a spectator somewhere it would not otherwise be able to get to. In terms of trauma recovery this can be likened to mindful self-regulation.

Autoethnographic performance also speaks to embodied knowledge. "Knowing refers to those embodied, sensuous experiences that create the conditions for understanding." (Denzin, 2003: 192). Speaking on emergent research methodologies Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2008) write that embodiment theory places the body, physical reality, as central to knowledge production: the

inscribed body as the site of sociohistorical knowledge (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008: 6).

Embodiment is a key concept across trauma recovery, autoethnographic performance and Drama Therapy. The integration of these three disciplines begged further investigation. Inchley (2015: 276) speaks to performance being able to access "...a reality or truth that was not otherwise available." A deep knowing. Gaining "...a conscious understanding of the roles we have intrinsically learned to play in order to cope, to defend and to survive." (Nebe, 2012: 157). The role of 'knowing' and embodied understanding reverberates through much of the writing on autoethnographic performance. A 'knowing' that might prove crucial for understanding the transgenerational imprint of gendered trauma. Davis and Ellis (2008: 285) describe autoethnography as allowing for a fuller understanding of lived experiences and how personal reality is constructed, resisting an academic impulse to view people as "spiritless, empty husks with programmed, managed, predictable, and patterned emotions" (Davis & Ellis, 2008: 283) which can be explained by theory. For Bhattacharya (2008: 306) it seeks to link academic scholarship to the 'real world'.

Lanzman (1995: 200-220) in a presentation entitled *The Obscenity of Understanding* interrogates the difference between deep knowing and cognitive understanding: he believes that the transmission of knowledge through the written word has no strength, it is abstract. Performance artist, Marina Abramovič (2016), speaks of liquid knowledge – that moment when cognition 'checks out' and the body knows (Abramovič, 2016: 138). Leavy (2008: 344) tells us that performance, by its very nature, is experienced and therefore is not cognitive knowledge to be consumed implying that because emotions and sensations are also involved, performance can lead to a different way of knowing. Experience is embodied and therefore the lived body imparts experiential knowledge (Leavy, 2008: 345-346).

The intersections between autoethnographic performance, Drama Therapy and trauma recovery seemed organic and will be addressed more fully later. For the moment, Bessel van der Kolk has the last words: "Telling the story is important; without stories memory becomes frozen; and without memory you cannot

imagine how things can be different.” (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 3917).

RESEARCH PROCESS: Telling the story

Healing begins where the wound was made. We find that we have only ourselves. Our experience. Our dreams. Our simple art. Our memories of better ways. Our knowledge that the world cannot be healed in the abstract. Walker, 2000: 244

First steps: Journaling

The process started not on the floor of a rehearsal room but using journal questions sent to the women on a weekly basis in starting January 2018. I was available for them should they have questions or need to discuss anything. The rationale was to start the excavation process for each in privacy giving them time to reflect on their personal relationship to the research question and topic, which had been explained to them verbally and the research proposal had been given to them prior to commencement. (The journal tasks are included as Appendix B at the end of this report.) As I had personally experimented with the research method during 2017 and understood the emotional, physical and psychological demands it had made on myself, it was important that the women knew what they were agreeing to be part of. The journaling afforded them control over what they wished to address directly, as not all the journaling tasks were intended to be shared either with each other, me or the eventual witnesses; but rather as an opportunity to take the time to reflect on self and own patterns.

Trauma defeats the heroes

However, not long after the start of the journaling tasks (week 2 in fact), I could sense that the women were starting to struggle. Week 1 had focussed on how they feel about their gender in the present: what does being a woman in 2018 mean to them? Week 2 started excavating memories from the previous generations. Lucia sent a message on 22 January 2018 which read: “Margie, I need to see someone. I can’t be waking up with these feelings and tears

streaming down my face like this.”. Although the journal questions were not focusing on trauma specifically, but were asking general questions, I realised that most of the excavation work will need to be done during contact time to promote emotional containment. The next week’s journal tasks therefore moved away from memory and rather focused on resilience: invoking the hero within who is able to face the quest ahead. But also personalising this hero in that each of the women certainly would need to face her own obstacle and have very personalised internal guides and resources available to them. All three women sent me a message to say that they were struggling to complete this task. It became apparent that there was more trauma present than I had originally anticipated. Marion Woodman: “Out of habitual abuse, comes a sense of shame and guilt. I am wrong, I am guilty, I am victim, I deserve to be punished.” (Woodman, 1990: 43-44). Judith Herman (1992) states that trauma leaves restrictions on the individual’s inner life and outer range which lack drama. Attention should be paid to what is missing (Herman, 1992: 49). For the women, finding their inner hero was difficult. At this point the journal tasks were decreased and a definite decision was made to address these questions during contact time.

Invoking the hero archetype remained central during the autoethnographic process and became an important aspect of the final presentation: Bessel van der Kolk (2014: Kindle location 3792) instructs that it is important when working with trauma to remember how we survived as well as what was broken, affirming agency. To me this meant remembering the heroes who ensured survival and honouring this aspect by keeping in mind that they have had our backs for a long time; and that this internal hero “has my back” (Miyo during session, 31 January 2018) all of the time. The hero archetype is able to kill the dragon and release the ‘princess’, so that she can face real life. The hero has the courage to face the patriarchal world moving away from regression with a sense of mastery over reality (Stein, 2006: 207). One of the strongest symptoms of trauma is the inability to move forward exactly because of the inability to integrate the memories related to the traumatic event(s) and sufferers are “...stopped in their growth because they cannot integrate new experiences into their lives” (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 913). As

Levine (2010: 31) states: "...trauma defeats life." Therefore the hero archetype needed to be mindfully included.

The hero needs wisdom though, to not just blunder forth into dangerous spaces blindly. This aspect of the work became crucial when working with Lucia who seemed to be challenged not to push herself into unsafe psychological spaces. It became important to find ways for her and Noire to develop the internal nurturing self: that aspect of the psyche that knows its own safe limits and will respond with love and kindness: the sage. Invoking the hero and wise one became ritualised during the sessions using containment meditations (Curran, 2013: 22-27), writing stories, sharing wise words and, eventually, as the beginning of the presentation on 13 April 2018. It became imperative to consciously remind Miyo that she has her own back as she started facing the fear of breaking the silence surrounding historic trauma in front of witnesses. The silence which surrounds her own as well as her ancestral stories formed a central theme in her autoethnographic excavation. This silence was tangible and a strong defensive wall had been built around it. With regards to silence Van der Kolk (2014: Kindle location 4157) writes: "Silence about trauma also leads to death, the death of the soul." Being able to break that silence and speak of the violation is a signal that healing can begin. Being listened to and understood, can light up the limbic system enabling integration (Van der Kolk, 2014: 4167). Keeping secrets, especially about painful experiences and core emotions, requires vast energy preventing the ability to face a future and leaving the person shut down; eating away at a coherent sense of self (Van der Kolk, 2014: 4177).

Starting the journey in earnest: stumbling into trauma and body work

Although, as said earlier, I had an inkling of the histories of all three women, what emerged during the autoethnographic excavations revealed deep historic and personal trauma; what I suspect could be diagnosed as complex-PTS.

During the autoethnographic excavation and exploration, body and embodying were central both as Drama Therapy techniques and working towards a performance. Once the depth of personal trauma became clear body mindfulness became relevant as a therapeutic tool.

What follows is not necessarily chronological but gives specific examples of what transpired in the sessions. It examines some of the themes that emerged for the women individually. There were points of clear intersection where I will address more than the individual woman.

Miyo

Women have died a thousand deaths before they are twenty years old. Pinkola Estes, 1992: 315

Finding the personal 'wall'

On 13 January 2018, the small group of women engaged in a projective activity aimed at identifying the metaphoric walls that prevents them from breaking the maladaptive patterns in their lives. The wall Miyo drew and wrote about, was a low wall. She could see across it, but not step over. On the other side was the village, a kraal, people and HIM. To the question "This is the story of...?" she narrated the story of her cousin: a mentally disabled woman in her twenties who had been raped by a family member for more than a year. He threatened harm to her family should she speak up. The rape was disclosed when her grandmother discovered that she was pregnant. Twins babies were born, both passed away shortly after birth. "She fell pregnant. With twins. This is how everyone knew of what has been happening to her. For more than a year, she had been living in fear just to protect her family." (From transcript 13 January 2018). Miyo also said that this was the story she was comfortable telling at the moment, suggesting that there was another story she wanted to tell but was scared that she was not ready yet. *I note my reaction: can I face that story?*

The body remembers: child-woman shivers

In terms of trauma therapy, in his book *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness* (2010), Peter Levine explains that he starts work with clients by exclusively focussing on physical sensations. Using various techniques (mindful body scans, physically cradling and touching own body) the somatic sensations are explored to discover where in the body the energy is located, but also importantly which parts of the body are numb. Levine (2010: 76) invites clients to let images and feelings evoked by the body

awareness come into consciousness. Emerson and Hopper (2011: 295) use trauma focused yoga in a similar way to reactivate a tolerance for physical sensations which might be manifestations of trauma memories, in order for clients to be able to access memories and sensations without being overwhelmed. An added benefit is that learning to tolerate the physical sensations increases agency (Emerson & Hopper, 2011: 295).

As a process example of the above: 29 January 2018: Miyo reported that her hands are aching and it feels as if she has a red ball sitting in her tummy. She was invited to use materials as a projective technique to describe these physical sensations. She instinctively chose to embody as a means to describe. I gave her a couple of minutes of privacy and when I turned around she was sitting on a red cloth, squashed into a corner, her body as small as she could make it, holding on to a baby doll. The injured child had entered the space. I sensed that the moment was too vulnerable to immediately explore further – this physical expression was as much as she could tolerate. Miyo started shivering. Levine (2010: 406) describes shivering as an essential component to restoring the psyche after trauma. Shivering or trembling releases the physical energy which was first activated and then, if not possible to complete, was stored during the threat: the body literally needs to shake it off. A coming back down to earth, and for him this is at the “core of self-regulation and resilience” (Levine, 2010: 16). *Although I had read Levine’s book (In an Unspoken Voice, 2010), I had never consciously experienced this shiver with a client before. It came as a surprise.* The same shiver happened with Lucia during a crucial session subsequently. At moments of breakthrough memories, Miyo would tremble again. I invited Miyo to not try to stop the trembling, but rather be aware of it, notice what is happening in her body and breathing, and allow the shiver to recede at its own time. It was clear that by embodying the child, Miyo had accessed and acknowledged powerful memory emotions and sensations.

The body tells the story

One of the grounding and explorative activities we used was to invite the women to write their names using their bodies – quite literally embodying themselves. The activity is grounding at the start and end of each session (especially when the previous generations have been embodied), to bring the person back into

his/her own physicality and identity. Miyo and I started exploring this activity on 1 February 2018 with the intention of ritualising it for future sessions, but also to explore her relationship with her own body. After she had written the whole name, we explored the actions in slow motion mindfully focussing on the physical sensations of each letter. She reported that during one of these letters her body was numb from her waist to her knees and the associated feeling was connected to self-harm. I asked her to use objects to further describe self-harm and she embodied the following image:



Woman standing with hanged doll around her neck.

(From Research Journal, 1 February 2018)

Note to self: I opened this door. I have to enter. I cannot leave her standing on the threshold. Be brave. I asked: was this an image of a suicidal self and she responded yes. Levine (2010: 48-49) speaks to a collapse into overwhelming helplessness, defeat and loss of the will to live as seated in the core of deep trauma. It was possible that the wounded child who had emerged during the previous session was linked to this image and that this child was asking to be acknowledged. Once that door had opened, I could not simply shut it adding another layer of silencing. It was important to bring this child into the room after this session. She had remained unacknowledged for so long, that it was essential to have her participate in the journey and to greet her almost every day for the duration of the process. *This was difficult: I am only starting to 'see' my damaged child-called Kita-who often responded noticeably to Miyo.* Van der Kolk (2014: Kindle location 2321) speaks to an adult conspiracy of

silence that surrounds child abuse and its effects on stigmatisation, helplessness and self-blame. I could not be part of that conspiracy. He also (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 2499) explains that ongoing childhood sexual and physical abuse is a strong predictor of suicide attempts. *Even writing this four months later, I feel my body respond: wanting to hold and comfort and knowing this is not my role. Wanting to save.*

Beginning of integration and reparative cradling

Miyo was invited to repeat the name-writing activity using the name she had chosen for her inner child. This child was initially playful and happy, but soon turned dark. When asked which parts of her body she was not directly aware of, she said her left hand is asking for attention and that for her this is the child's hand: the injured child was asking to be acknowledged. I asked whether she was prepared to recreate the red cloth and doll image from the previous session. This time, not only the image arrived but also the start of verbalising the emotions. She verbalised this as a "wanting to play but being aware of the reality of my home life." She reported that the area which earlier had been numb (waist to knees) was now cramping. At this point she started shivering again. Once the trembling subsided, Miyo told of ongoing sexual abuse from the age of 5-years until she was 9-years old. *Kita responds.* This abuse was separate from her violent home situation. For complicated reasons she was unable to speak up at the time: she did not want to burden her mother who was caught in an abusive marriage, and it was culturally unacceptable to speak out against 'an elder' entrenching the conspiracy of silence. She was intensely emotional during this testimony and the session ended with what Veronica Sherborne (2001) calls cradling and describes as offering security and containment (Sherborne, 2001: 92). Sherborne is speaking specifically of children living with profound disability, but the effects are similar in people who are experiencing deep emotion and who need comfort. Basically, the caregiver sits behind the client, forms her body into the shape of a chair, and invites the client to lie back against her. The position is ideal in that it is not as restrictive as a hug, offering the client the choice of resting completely against the other person or maintaining some distance, preventing a feeling of entrapment so often associated with childhood trauma. Van der Kolk (2014: Kindle location 3863) speaks to the importance of reparative touch and how it is the most

elementary tool to calm someone (think of the effect of holding and rocking babies). *The silence during the cradling also offers me the opportunity to calm and collect Kita. Reparative for both of us.*

Re-enactment: the child demands reparation

In accordance with Herman's (1992: 121) explanation of how chronic trauma manifests in subsequent relationships, Miyo had verbally identified the personal pattern she wants to interrupt as maladaptive intimate (sexual and non-sexual) relationships: relationships will be good for a while, and then she gets enraged "for no reason". Often this escalates into violence and physical abuse. It feels like she invites the violence into the relationships and she does not understand why. She further spoke of self-blame, guilt and shame. In terms of child abuse Woodman (1990: 43) writes that out of habitual abuse comes a sense of shame and guilt for the child. Miyo stated that she wants to be rid of self-doubt (I'm not good enough), aggression and abuse, and maladaptive sexual relationships which harm her psychologically. Then she can feel normal. She hates it when men are 'proud' – when they do not say what is happening. One of the casualties of trauma is the individual's ability to form healthy relationships: traumatic events "shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others" (Herman, 1992: 51). For Miyo, the abuse/aggression is not only related to intimate, but to all relationships. Van der Kolk (2014) speaks to this: "Being able to feel safe with other people is probably the single most important aspect of mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives." (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle Location 1366-1367), but through abuse a belief of "I am wrong, I am guilty, I am a victim, I deserve to be punished" (Woodman, 1990: 44) is fostered. In Miyo's case she often demanded to be punished. Herman (1992) speaks of how re-enactment of aspects of the trauma unconscious attempts for resolution and spontaneous healing could be ("This time it will be different.") (Herman, 1992: 40). Re-enactments could also be attempts to master overwhelming feelings (Herman, 1992: 40). Dayton (2005: 217) states "...helplessness asks for a culprit" and that unassimilated traumatic experiences stored in the body/mind have a tendency to repeat contents of the events in representative ways which drive behaviour (Dayton, 2005: 218). Emotional distance and the reversal of caregiver role (in which the child is taking care of the parent for instance) is

linked to aggressive behaviour towards self and others in young adults (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 1531).

Speaking about the sexual relationships, the body trembling started up and Miyo was visibly emotional. She reported the 'red ball' had shifted to her chest. She expressed difficulty with needing to speak to me in English and felt that she struggled to express herself in this language. We agreed that in such moments she must speak isiXhosa and I can ask for translation if I need it – I am not necessarily concerned with the exact meaning of the words, but rather with the emotions which I am (usually) able to sense non-verbally.

At this stage it became clear that we had touched upon historic trauma both in relation to herself, but also her mother and cousin. The challenge, once this door had opened, was how to remain within the parameters of the research question (the therapeutic value autoethnographic performance in relation to transgenerational trauma) and simultaneously honour her personal process of healing. Herman (1992: 12-13) says that pioneering psychologist Janet (1859-1947) discovered that uncovering the recent traumas facilitated exploration of earlier events. The earlier events in relation to the research involved previous generations. *I needed to reflect deeply on my own role in this process and realised exactly how complicated the researcher/aspirant drama therapist/director triangle can be. It felt like a very thin tightrope to walk that asked of me to be fully present at all times if I was going to achieve a semblance of balance between these three. The immediate solution was to introduce containment and mindfulness activities as central to all sessions for all of our benefit.*

What the adult-child mourns

On 8 February we did the Pinkola Estes (1992: 367) *descanos* exercise. The aim was to establish and prioritise what it is that Miyo felt needed to be mourned in her own life. It was clear that we would not be able to address the full extent of her personal trauma during this research process. Because her hands were aching so much, she wrote with difficulty, and I invited her to build the story using materials. Powerful images emerged (most of which were incorporated into the final presentation). The suicide doll reappeared. The wounded child

was represented by a soft toy encased in plastic netting. Miyo called this image the 'boxed child': boxed by abuse. There were three pertinent points of mourning and together we explored which would be the most urgent and decided that the child who had entered the space would be the focus. This also focused the autoethnographic excavation as an exploration of the previous women in relation to the child. Miyo expressed wanting to forget about her story and a desire to move on with her life. She asked what the difference would be between hiding away and moving on. There seemed to be a need to gain distance from the intense emotions of the previous week, and we spoke about the need to integrate traumatic memories into a full-life narrative where they do not dictate the course of our lives anymore. This session brought an Anais Nin quote (cited in Carver, 2003: 46) to mind: "What you burnt, broke and tore is still in my hands. I am the keeper of fragile things and I have kept of you what is indissoluble." *I cannot remember my perpetrator's surname. This worries me.*

Restoring what trauma denied: offering choice

Although the writing above is in relation to Miyo, Lucia and Noire were displaying similar issues in different ways. Miyo was the woman I had most contact time with as the other two were only available periodically, but it was clear that the journal and autoethnographic excavations had touched very tender spots. Van der Kolk (2014: Kindle location 4284) explains that writing is an excellent way to silence the inner critical voice and so doing access the world of feelings. Lucia clearly had accessed that world, but I had not yet realised what 'feelings' meant to her. She continued to have sleeping difficulties because of nightmares, and Noire became physically sick and emotionally reactive. The word choice became important with all three women. The very nature of abuse implies that choice was removed: the victim perceived herself as trapped in this situation either physically or emotionally. This entrapment results in a psychological imprisonment from which it is difficult to find release. During trauma the perpetrator becomes the most powerful person in the victim's life with the psychology of the victim literally shaped by the perpetrator with whom choice was not a possibility (Herman, 1992: 75). Herman (1992: 133) goes on to say that empowering survivors means offering them the space to "...be the author and arbiter of her own recovery" by affirming the right to making choices within the therapeutic safe space relationship. Emerson and Hopper (2011: 43):

"Trauma is the experience of having no choice." Affirming the women's right of choice is promoting personal agency: the right to take care of myself. Making choices for self-care is a big step in trauma recovery. *I regularly asked the women to send me a message on what it is that they will do to be kind to themselves. I never received those messages. Self-care seemed a difficult concept for all three, and I have to admit for me as well.* This seemed to be especially pertinent for Lucia who struggled to not push herself into psychological danger. Choice of participation in this research was affirmed: "Do you think you want to continue with this work? Is it helping you? Please think about it and tell me tomorrow? I promise I will understand and respect your choice to stop should that be your decision. I am grateful for the work we have done up to this point." This was regularly offered to the women. The theme of choice was further acknowledged by offering them the choice of warm-up and closure to sessions, and the choice of where they would like to focus for the next session; affirming that they have control in the process. *There were important lessons for me to learn as aspirant drama therapist: what is the meaning of the words leading and following, and how does it affect the therapeutic safe space relationship?*

Lucia

When trauma survivors begin to contact the real story, they may want to retreat into their heads rather than experience the disquieting body sensations of painful emotions associated with their traumas. (Dayton, 2005: 222)

Feeling is the enemy

Almost at the start of the process (16 January 2018) I made a note that reads: "Lucia: overthinks rather than feeling. She focusses on thoughts". This remained true for the duration. During this session the women were asked to set their personal goals for participation by choosing an object to symbolise that which they want to release and another as symbol for what they want to gain. Lucia chose a baby shoe to release: "Finding my feet which are disconnected from the ground"; and a stone: "Standing on my own feet solidly". (During the final reflection session on 2 May 2018, it became clear how profoundly symbolic

that baby shoe was.) *Research journal 6 February: "Lucia: 'Feelings are the enemy.' She becomes overwhelmed when feeling any emotion and will numb (using an internal punitively critical voice or substance) rather than feel. She has (and is fighting) feelings of powerlessness."*

Lucia arrived visibly emotional on 18 January 2018. The planned aim of the session was: To identify obstacles related to gender and relationships (the metaphoric wall), to imagine what through the wall will be for her. It became clear that this aim was not going to be possible without addressing the feelings she had entered with. *Research journal, 18 January 2018: "Fundamentally important to be the therapist first: to be able to find the stories the women want to tell, it is vitally important to first create the safe space. Gently does it."* At the same time, addressing what is in the room left little time to address the session plan in a contained way. *The thin line tight-rope between researcher/director/aspirant drama therapist again.* What did emerge during this session was the extent to which feelings (the enemy), were making themselves known somatically. Lucia has an extremely difficult relationship with her mother, which the images and sensations that emerged clearly reflected: water, slime, dark, seeping in, womb cramping. She also found physical release difficult. The wall she imagined seemed to unconsciously related to this relationship: "I passed through the wall. There was a dark, wet, slimy passage." But there was optimism: "For once there was no fear of what I'd find inside but absolute optimism of what lay beyond." (free writing in relation to the wall, 18 January 2018). Damasio (1999: 3) speaks of birth as a passage through a threshold that separates a protected shelter from the world of possibilities.

She expressed a need to understand (back to thoughts rather than feelings) why she becomes so easily overwhelmed when faced with any emotion. There was a tension with this aspect of the work: an urgent need to understand, coupled with firm banishment of any emotion that might be sparked by understanding. A wanting to be numb which seemed to reflect Herman's (1992) statement that the denial of reality makes traumatised people feel crazy, "but acceptance of the full reality seems beyond what any human can bear." (Herman, 1992: 185). Lucia and Miyo expressed strong desires to understand what is happening to them. Miyo asked "Why do men rape children?" and "Why does the community

blame a raped child?" and at one point (heart-breakingly): "Margie, I think I have that post-thingy." She was becoming aware of her own hyper-vigilance and once the first memory was allowed expression, was experiencing intrusion from more memories. We explored different ways for her to contain these: breathing exercises, containment meditations (Curran, 2013: 22-25). She found the most effective method on her own: chewing.

I felt that it might be helpful for both women to gain some cognitive understanding of trauma and its effects and started answering these questions as explained by Herman (1992) and Van der Kolk (2014). I also gave Miyo a copy of the Pumla Gqola's (2015) *Rape: A South African Nightmare* which gives a comprehensive account of the South African environment with regards to Gender Based Violence.

Regarding why men rape: I have long held a suspicion that rape is more than a crime of violence and power, or a sexual violation; colonialization and patriarchy notwithstanding. If it was about power only, why not beat somebody up? Why rape specifically? My own theory (unsubstantiated) is that there is a far more basic link to the womb and women's ability to create and sustain life. Marion Woodman (1990: 21) offers similar explanation: Creativity is seen as a threat to manhood which denies the phallic power. She says that male fear of the feminine is linked to the dark mystery of the female body (Woodman, 1990: 19-20). Stevens (1994: 76) says that women have an awareness of themselves on the creative plane itself, a sacred place unknowable to men. Nottage (2009: xi) says men rape to strip women of their wombs.

A missing child...

Lucia asked: "Why can't I remember playing as a child? I have no memory of ever playing." Throughout the process Lucia was unable to find her inner child (healthy or wounded), something which disturbed her. She would become frustrated, and then the emotion would overwhelm her. Pinkola Estes (1992: 352) speaks of the need to build a tolerance for every emotion, even the raw and messy ones. She says: "All emotion..., carries knowledge, insight, what some call enlightenment." (Pinkola Estes, 1992: 352). The challenge with Lucia (*for both of us*) was how to build resilience for emotion and sensations when the

very initial sparks of these are rejected or numbed? Towards the end of the process, I planned to ask her to simply 'play in the mess of not knowing' for the presentation: quite literally sit in the space with materials playing at trying to sort through them. However, Lucia withdrew from the presentation a week before the date and I suspect even this would have been difficult for her: with the child missing, any form of play was a challenge.

...results in an isolated hero

Lucia wrote a beautiful hero's story: a warrior queen named Zaria who is sent to earth by the Praying Mantis without clear instructions as to the quest. After many internal battles, Zaria discovers that her quest is to 'just be': "That she, Zaria warrior queen was only here to remember; not to heal, not to save, but simply being. Being love, being kind, being joy, being compassionate, being patient, being gentle and being peace. That was her memory quest and contribution." (*Imizimba Yesikhumbuzo/Bodies of Memory* script draft 4). In this quest Zaria was completely alone without any resources. Even the Praying Mantis who had sent her, declined to answer any questions. There was also a strong element of self-blame in the story: Zaria could not find the quest because of herself and her internal battles. An apt metaphor for the pattern in Lucia's life. In the same session, she reported being completely stuck with finding: "This is the story I want to tell..." as a journal task. She could not find the words and became overwhelmed reflecting Marion Woodman quoted in Van der Kolk: "We can hardly bear to look. The shadow may carry the best of the life we have not lived." (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 4127). In her book *Addiction to Perfection* (1982), Marion Woodman goes on to say: "It takes great courage to break with one's past history and stand alone." (Woodman, 1982: 28). Lucia was driving herself to stand alone (Zaria who believed that she was sent to give people back a sense of self-sustainability and ownership), but could not break with her history because she could not access it. How does one break from something if you do not know what it is? Woodman again: "Nothing can change until we accept what is." (Woodman, 1982: 133).

On 23 February 2018, after not having contact for a month due to her work commitments, Lucia and I met. I offered her the choice of withdrawing: I sensed that she was truly exhausted, also that she is finding our work very

difficult. The questions had opened a door that she could not enter, but at the same time could not close again. (She had started seeing a therapist paid for by this research project. Because she was unable to attend the research sessions, it was important to offer her whatever support in the most responsible way.) Choice affirmed her agency and being offered choice was (in the end) empowering in itself. On this day, she chose to continue and we managed to schedule sessions which would not clash with her work commitments. We would only be able to meet again on 13 March 2018.

Silence calling for a voice

I spent the interim thinking about how best to work with Lucia: I was truly concerned about her psychological safety and was questioning myself regarding whether this was the right process for her to be going through as focusing on body was difficult in the extreme for her. However, I had to honour her choice which challenged me to find the right way of working with her. When we saw each other again, I proposed that there are two ways we could approach the presentation (the date of which was set for 13 April – a month away): self-revelatory theatre (Emunah, 1994: 225) which would focus on her experience as a woman in the present time or continuing with the autoethnographic excavations. I favoured the first, as it would be easier to contain, would not involve trauma memories whilst offering her an opportunity to explore where she finds herself in the present. Lucia however, chose to continue with autoethnography. Although I accepted this choice, I asked what her reasons were. “I want to find the missing pieces that will start to make sense of my own life. Why were these women dethroned? What is the silence and the secrets about? The self-destruction? Silence calling for a voice.” What emerged from the stories of Lucia’s great-grandmother, grandmother and mother was a long history of displacement, women with children fending for themselves, Gender Based Violence including rape, substance abuse. A history of trauma. To a large extent Lucia has been successful in breaking away from this history and creating a different life for herself, but there have been specific points (Gender Based Violence and substance use) where similar patterns re-emerged. During the sessions of 13 and 14 March 2018, I was struck by her rage against and complete lack of empathy for these women: why had they not chosen different lives for themselves? They should have recognised their own strength and

power. Their perceived lack of agency enraged her. Beneath that rage was a deep sorrow and self-blame. "Why did I choose my mother? My liberation lies in her silence." The child blaming herself for choosing the parent which leaves very little space for self-acceptance. Herman (1992: 103) speaks of how the victim searches for the 'fault' within their own behaviour so that she can make some sense of what happened in the past.

At this time, Lucia's insomnia and chaotic dreams became extreme. *Researcher's notes: "Lucia: the image that is sitting with me: the emotions are desperately wanting to come through and the only way she can stop them is by thinking and thinking and thinking. So, in sleep her defences are down, emotions can come through and the way to stop them is to think. And this is no longer achieving what she wants to achieve. In fact, the opposite: the more tired she becomes, the fewer defences there are, the more the thoughts tire her. And so on."*

Judith Herman (1992) in the introduction to *Trauma and Recovery* writes how some violations are too terrible to utter aloud. They are unspeakable. But at the same time these violations refuse to be buried. As powerful as the will to deny might be, denial does not work. "The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma" (Herman, 1992: 1). When secrecy prevails, trauma's story is told not through narrative, but as symptom (Herman, 1992: 1). Secrecy certainly prevailed with the previous generations of women on Lucia's maternal line. A silence that she felt tied her to an invisible umbilical cord of disempowerment.

Autoethnographic exploration an opportunity for choice

On 21 March 2018 Lucia and Miyo had their first joint session since January. The session focused on invoking the hero archetype and in a distanced way looking at the previous generations of women's contribution to personal identity thereby refocussing the autoethnographic excavation. Essentially an exercise in empathy: for the ancestors before as well as for self. The women were invited to use objects and material to symbolise their ancestral women and write next to these what they feel they now understand these women had contributed to who they personally are in the present. The intention was to create distance,

specifically for Lucia, away from the intense emotions into a more cognitive thinking space where she could potentially gain the understanding she so desperately craved. However, Lucia found this activity almost impossible. She wrote: "Ok, so in this very moment I am so goddamn frustrated. I want to scream and cry and I don't know why. It is not the question that is the problem but the way the question makes me feel (feelings are just visitors). I just end up asking more questions and it breeds more doubt. None of this makes sense. It is a simple question, could be deep but it is still simple. Why can't I just answer the question for what it is. I guess that in every situation even the smallest idea of there having to be more that kept me alive and being alive is what lead me here." Lapadat (2017: 594) cites Bochner as saying that telling the personal story can be like "opening up one's veins and bleeding an agony of suffering." Such writing can be therapeutic for the authors as it helps them make sense of their lives (Lapadat, 2017: 594). *In that moment I seriously doubted the therapeutic potential of this activity for Lucia.*

I also sensed that Miyo, although not overwhelmed, was saddened. *At this moment, research and research questions left the room, the director had been silent for a couple of days already and the aspirant drama therapist opted for authenticity.* I expressed that as a human being and a student drama therapist, if I am to have any integrity (*which I value above all else*), I have to live by the motto: first do no harm. And that I seriously needed to address this question with these women: do they feel that this process is harming them? If so, then it is time for all of us to step away in a responsible manner. *The research would be completely meaningless and unethical if it was doing harm, and I would struggle to forgive myself.* Speaking on transference Herman (1992: 154) says: "Integrity is the foundation upon which trust in relationships is originally formed, and upon which shattered trust may be restored." It felt important to speak to this directly. Miyo expressed that the process had activated the memories in a powerful way but that she had learnt ways to contain these. She wanted to carry on because she feels it is important to find closure. It seemed that Miyo had become the author of her own recovery (Herman, 1992: 133). Lucia was not sure why she was participating. She expressed it as putting herself in the line of fire of these previous women. I asked them to think about this overnight and I again reminded them of the voluntary nature of the work as well as the

fact that withdrawal would in no way negatively impact on my impression of them. In fact, I was truly grateful for their commitment and courage up to this point.

The next day both chose to complete the project. Lucia said that she does not understand why she becomes so overwhelmed. We spoke of the effects of trauma, and the necessity for building a tolerance for emotions, feelings and physical sensations: to reach a place where these can be contextualised without being overwhelmed. This is where the healing lies. Not in denial but in understanding that there is an ebb and flow (Levine, 2010: 81; Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 3698). The fact that they had made a conscious choice to stay with the project was empowering in and of itself: choice which had been removed through trauma had (in a small way) been affirmed.

The rest of the session was spent focussing on the material that had been excavated and exploring different ways of presenting this to witnesses. The sense of moving towards some kind of 'performance' and approaching the stories as characters created emotional distance for both women: a way of relating to the material not as part of myself, but rather as part of something to portray. Choice was emphasised in that both had the complete right to decide on which stories they felt comfortable with telling.

Journey interrupted

Afternote on Lucia: she had to leave Cape Town for work shortly after this session. I was comfortable that she was in a psychological safe and contained space. But during the time she was away, a lot happened in her life which stretched her internal resources. On 5 April 2018 she sent a message: "Margs, I am going to be honest with you. I want to finish this project with you but it seems like things are caving around me. But I am exhausted, emotional and sore. I am freaking out as I don't want to hinder your process. Please advise me. My being is screaming in this moment." We spoke telephonically, I emphasised that she has not only every right but a duty to look after herself. She asked to think about it for a couple of days and on 7 April 2018 made the choice not to be part of the presentation. A choice which was accepted with gratitude that her sense of agency had increased to the point where she could

make safe choices for herself. Although her withdrawal scared Miyo and Noire, both gracefully accepted her choice. Lucia and I met to bring closure and she agreed to participate in the reflection process post-presentation. Snyder-Young's (2011: 947) words that the participants' involvement is already an outcome no matter the end result, rang true. Through being one of 'the women' Lucia had the opportunity to reconstruct her public and private identity (Snyder-Young, 2011: 948), and although she did not complete the process, she gained a new perspective on the women who came before and on herself currently.

NiCarthy, Merriam and Coffman (1984: 29) speak about the fear of stepping into the future and facing the unknown and that many women never have the opportunity to ask: what do I want to do. This is the significance of the choice that Lucia finally made: the ability to not put herself at risk and honestly answer what would be best for her at that specific time. It is possible that this process is not the right fit for her. We also had very few sessions together and because we were working towards a specific presentation date, the work was intense. With Miyo it was possible to follow a far gentler process which possibly contributed to her developing resilience for the discomfort that followed and gave her the time and skills to find containment. Herman (1992: 94) speaks of the survivor triad: insomnia, nightmares and somatic complaints. These certainly were present for Miyo and Lucia. Acknowledging the trauma is central for recovery (Herman, 1992: 127). Because there was more contact time with Miyo this could be approached (by her and by me) with great care. Whereas with Lucia there was an urgency (from her and me) which prevented us from reaching this point. Pinkola Estes (1992: 353) tells us that recovery needs constant practise with regards to containment and healing. As we approached the presentation date, the process of 'rehearsal' and preparing for the presentation afforded Miyo the opportunity to practise containment.

"By realising we are more than our thoughts, we can become more fully sentient and alive. Thoughts are poor surrogates for experienced aliveness." (Levine, 2010: 274).

Noire

She is afraid because “letting go” means falling into an abyss, falling into blackness which is total chaos and the tragedy is that the harder she tries, the more she is closing herself off.

Woodman, 1982: 149

The process was very different with Noire. As a visual artist who prefers to work with fabric as a medium, we soon discovered that working with the body or verbally was not ideal. Initially, when I invited her to participate, the focus of her work was to add visual elements to the performance presentation. She, spontaneously, decided to physically be part of the presentation and to represent some of her own material. I accepted this choice as I felt that her impulse was coming from an authentic place and therefore should not be blocked.

During the first session with the women together (13 January 2018), they were asked to create a landscape for the person in “This is the story of...” writing they had done. Noire’s landscape was a vortex which she described as: “I am not sure whether it is inside, or outside, how small the space is, but there is one exit. One entrance, one exit. It feels like that entrance slash exit is taped up. As if to keep her inside.” (Transcript 13 January 2018). During subsequent sessions she would express being sucked into the vortex and had very little tolerance for body-based work. It felt that to keep attempting the somatic focus (as with Miyo and Lucia) would be counter-therapeutic. For her working with visual image came far more naturally, and given the time restraints we had, almost no further excavation was attempted. We focused on visual elements which incorporated her own ‘voice’ and that of the other women. *The lesson for me was that the moment I let go of any attempts to steer the process in a certain direction using a specific methodology, was when she decided she wanted to be part of the presentation as the themes of silence and secrecy resonated strongly for her.* She became the (Muslim) burden of silence. She also generated very personal work using image: the vortex being one of these.

I dream: I am standing across a chasm across from him. He is vulnerable, younger. He says, "Not yet. I am not ready yet." I say nothing. I watch.

Autoethnographic performance and transgenerational trauma: the site of the first wound?

Only by getting in touch with your body, by connecting viscerally with your self, can you regain a sense of who you are, your priorities and values. Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 4449-4454

Body awareness and mindfulness became central to the process of this research: both in relation to the discovered personal trauma and for the autoethnographic excavation and presentation performance. Performance by its very nature (whether autoethnographic or theatre) demands the ability to physically occupy space in the present moment, the ability to free the personal body to the extent of being able to 'embody' the other, be this a character (theatre) or self (autoethnography). Denzin (2003: 193) stresses: "Performance approaches to knowing insist on immediacy and involvement."

The enquiry of this research investigated body further: embodying the generations who had come before and what the meaning of that experience would be for the self using autoethnographic performance as a methodological basis. What wisdom can be gained from inhabiting the bodies in a way that asked the performer to suspend personal judgment? Is it possible that by doing so, the individual can gain new perspective not only of the other, but also the other's impact on the self? (Dayton, 2005) (221): "The body has to lead the mind to the truth." Allowing the senses to partake and share in the healing, is according to Dayton (2005: 222), more effective than talking and links to autoethnographic performance moving away from reciting what happened (a cognitive activity), because the very nature of performance necessitates visceral engagement.

Webster and Dunn (2005) in *Feminist Perspectives on Trauma* speak of three types of trauma: 1. Direct trauma, 2. Indirect (or witnessed) trauma, and 3.

Insidious trauma. Insidious trauma is salient to marginalised groups of people as it becomes part of the collective unconscious leaving generations of people traumatised as a result of their ancestors' direct suffering (Webster & Dunn, 2005: 133). Autoethnography is perfectly placed to address this as it requires the individual to investigate the personal within the broader context of those who came before.

I sensed from early in the process that Noire and Lucia struggled with the embodying aspect of the work. With Noire this was abandoned due to time restraints and her personal mode of preference, but Lucia chose to continue with this work. *Research journal 18 January 2018: "Lucia: elbows locked. Womb cramping. Resists release and gravity. She feels as if there is a stone in her tummy." (I noted the similarity with Miyo's red ball in her tummy.)* During this session we had explored her memories and feelings in relation to her mother. The work was painful: "...there is a pain and swelling in my womb." This pain became more pronounced when she seemed agitated – her womb cramped. I observed that her chin was clasped down to her throat, suffocating her voice box. *Silence calling for a voice.* "...the body has reasons that reason cannot reason..." (Levine, 2010: 157).

Womb was a thread throughout the work both in relation to her own body's trauma and when working autoethnographically with her mother. During the verbal autoethnographic discussions it emerged that Lucia had very little factual knowledge of her ancestral women including her mother. The theme of silence around these women echoed. We worked with trying to re-member the bodies of the women. On 13 March 2018 the focus was on her great-grandmother. From this process came strong images: "...breath stuck in throat and feels like pus" (recording 13 March 2018). She was invited to find this woman's body: what did she walk like, where is the energy placed and where is this specific body feeling blocked. Embodying this woman (based on her memory of her) almost immediately connected Lucia to emotion: tears flowed and her womb throbbed. At this point she released the great-grandmother's physicality and her own body locked: she wanted to break free. I asked her what it is her body is needing in the moment. The answer: to run. We ran.

I dream: A very clear image of my feet, close up. They are covered in sores – a carpet of pus-filled spots. Especially the right bridge spreading to the toes.

Up until this point Lucia had spoken of these women with a sense of anger and rejection: "Why did I choose to be born into this family?" *Note from research journal reads: "All these why's which lead to self-destruction and judgment. Is she judging the women she is seeing inside herself?"* Nebe (2012: 159) speaks of the power of "...immersion of self in the 'other'...". For Lucia immersion in the body of both her great-grandmother and her mother was powerful. On 14 March 2018 when we verbally excavated memories of her mother in relation to gender, the need to run reasserted itself. The next day she was invited to find her mother's body. For the first time trauma was mentioned in passing whilst finding the body ("He cracked her spine"). This mother construct was filled with very complex emotions: fear of being like her, firm rejection, enormous need for mothering and "I don't understand". In relation to autoethnographic performance, we discussed how best to portray the mother. What is the physical image that immediately comes to mind when thinking of her? Lucia settled on sewing and smoking, and whilst embodying that image the full impact of the emotions struck. *Research journal 15 March 2018: "It felt like she suddenly 'knew' through the body and it was very sore".* The Sherborne (2001: 92) cradle hold helped by allowing her to experience some of the emotions, whilst feeling safe. Emerson and Hopper (2011: 274) say: "People who have never been safely and securely held lack the visceral experience of a calmly abiding centre: a deep sense of being absolutely all right and absolutely safe." *My research journal reflection pondered the applicability of this to both Lucia and Noire: the vortex which lacks a calm abiding centre.*

Stevens (1994: 51) cites Jung as saying that the factors that were essential to our near and remote ancestors will also be essential to us as they are embedded in the inherited organic systems. In relation to the three women, this was the clearest with Lucia: chaotic silence, rejection of other (and by implication self), throbbing wombs. The trauma that has no voice. Leavy (2008: 346) speaks to the body as a microcosm of the world and the venue for understanding its meaning. Lucia's world in relation to autoethnography and self was filled with question marks.

Relating to Lucia's embodied autoethnographic experiences, Emerson and Hopper (2011: 107) cites Levine as saying that a common denominator of trauma is a disconnection from body and a reduced capacity to be in the present and that trauma is an aversive state in the body (Emerson & Hopper, 2011: 164). When Lucia accessed the previous bodies followed by the resulting emotions, the same aversive state presented itself: a throbbing womb and an urgent need to run. The running motif echoed an earlier session with Miyo, she too made a strong emotional similarity between herself and her mother (although their relationship is very different to Lucia's). The physical reaction was clear. When asked what her body was needing to do, the answer was run. Her body clearly needed to express the need to escape: both for herself, but escape was a strong theme for her mother as well: running for her life. Levine (2010: 164) explains that helping clients to follow their sensorimotor impulses to completion when they come out of the 'freeze' trauma reaction is central to unlocking the binds of PTSD. This running from both Lucia and Miyo, seemed to be validate this statement. Dayton (2005, 225) aptly says: "The body moves, and the heart and mind follow." After the session where Lucia accessed powerful emotions with regards to her mother through embodying her, she was invited to write a letter to further release and bring into consciousness what had taken place. The letter was angry and basically stated that she wanted nothing further to do with this woman. An extract: "So please give me what I need so I can finally burn the umbilical cord and give me a choice. A choice of not running from you but walking away from you. To walk away from you because I choose life. I will never get the love and validation from you that every child seeks. On that note I want to thank you... Thank you, through all your opposition and arrows of hurt life teaches me that I am more than enough on my own. Before all that you give, take and deprive me of and that I am responsible for what I make of all this chaos."

I dream: I become aware that I am lying in a foetus position and undulating my spine painfully. It feels like a 'getting away from' movement. A getting from under and out. It is the kick (knee drawn up all the way to my chest and a forceful kick down and away) that wakes me to an aching body and firmly in the chaos of the Freudian id.

However, that evening she asked her mother about her life. Her mother responded by writing what she titled *A Short Version of My Life*. Lucia handed it to me without having fully read it. I asked whether she wanted me to read it to her. After the reading, for the first time a spark of empathy emerged, an acknowledgment of her mother as a woman separate to herself who carried her own history; an objectivity.

All three women (in relation to autoethnography as a method) realised how sketchy their knowledge of the previous women (who had influenced their personal experiences so powerfully) was. All three spent time finding out more about their ancestors, opening up avenues of a shifted communication in difficult relationships. For Miyo this was an arduous task as her personal history was clouded in silence and secrets which she did not want to disclose to her mother.

Completing the *descanos* (Pinkola Estes, 1992: 367) activity with Lucia resulted in the opposite side of the spectrum to Miyo who used objects to represent aspects of her life. Lucia chose to write, and her writing was strictly linear with bullet points. In exploring this, she acknowledged very little that needed mourning, which belied her own strong emotions during the autoethnographic exploration. "We use our minds not to discover facts but to hide them." (Damasio quoted in Levine, 2010: 180).

Miyo explored the physicality of the previous women with relish and care. What was discovered was a recurring theme connected with hands and feet. Their names reflected this: signifying to hold, or to keep. Their lives confirmed it: they were keepers of many children (most of whom did not belong to them biologically), holders of family secrets and silence. Beautiful strong matriarchs, holding the traditions of patriarchy. In relation to women carrying ancestral centuries of shame and self-hate Woodman (1990: 43) says: "Domination is domination and the body that has been tyrannized has learned its lessons well."

Interestingly Miyo's grandmother is a powerful healer, a Cassandra like character who sees the truth but knows she will not be believed for speaking her mind. She refuses to keep other people's secrets: "I am not a cupboard. You cannot store your secrets in me."; and will find ways to reveal these in such a

way that the community still respects her as a healer. But the other side of her coin is that she is an alcoholic who swears words that youth in the city townships would blush at. A holder of truth, breaker of silence, revealer of secrets who is unable to protect herself. This theme repeats itself in her daughter: the woman who is 'mother' in the old tradition to the whole community, who loves a man and teaches him that he can love his wife, so doing losing the father of her own child. The woman who is unable to speak of the great violations done to her body and mind. And this is reflected in her daughter: Miyo who fights tooth and nail for the rest of the family calling the police to report Gender Based Violence, but who is only starting to learn to reveal the extreme violations to her own body. A conspiracy of silence that has been passed down generations of women. A cultural injunction which they will risk breaking for others but cannot do so for themselves.

Noire excavated only one woman: a great-grandmother. As time passed the memories became more detailed. She visually represented this figure with great love and care. Again, the theme of silence reverberated: this woman came from India (nobody who is still alive knows how or why) as a young woman who only spoke Hindi. Her husband only spoke English. She lived in Durban until a ripe old age, unable to verbally communicate with her family, yet much loved and fondly remembered. *I kept wondering what that must have felt like: unable to say your say and be understood for so many years.*

I dream: A woman on a rocking chair with her feet in the sun. She rocks, embroidering trees.

Bhattacharya (2008: 310) "...directs us to the possibility of the research moving to help those researched, to transform their world and experiences." The focus should be mindful of the reality altering impact of the inquiry process which is determined by the relationship, extent of transformative potential governing the researcher, and how far the participants can gain self-understanding and direction. This seemed to be important goals especially in relation to trauma where self-blame and guilt plays such a big role: examining personal patterns in relation to trauma and the actual role the individual (should they choose to

ignore culture and ancestry) played. "Patriarchy really inculcates self-hate in women like all violent oppressive systems do" Pumla Gqola (2015: 177) tells us.

Personally, I struggle with the words victim and survivor. In South Africa, largely as a result of the much-publicised rape of Charlene Smith in 2009 when she refused to be seen as a victim and actively sought to be viewed as a survivor, the word victim specifically in relation to GBV and women, connotes a weakness. Whilst it is psychologically important to get to a place where I can see myself as survivor, being a victim seems to take on a new form of victim-blaming as opposed to an acknowledgement that somebody had done me some harm in which I had no choice: I did not choose to be abused or assaulted, it was done to me. In terms of transgenerational trauma, women have learnt the silence, the acceptance of the fact that harm will be done as opposed to asking whether harm will be done, negating the outrage they should feel at the possibility and isolating them to deal with their own responses to these events: I will not admit to being a victim, I will not speak against elders, because then I can be blamed. And (as the autoethnographic process clearly highlighted) I have learnt this imperative from almost before I was born: all the way back from my great-grandmother. Part of the heritage of being a woman is bearing crimes committed to your womanhood in silence (the character of Sally who as an ANC cadre accepts that part of her role as soldier is to extend sexual favours to her male counterparts in Zoe Wicomb's (2003) *David's Story*. Notes: 20 Feb: Miyo: She spoke about how the child would be blamed: "The community would say 'You could have said no, you actually enjoyed it.'" I asked what she would say: "No, you are just a child. You are not to blame." I invited her to please tell her inner child this: she needs compassion and acceptance. We spoke about the cycle of secrecy that she grew up in: in terms of the sexual abuse and also in terms of the physical abuse. She was caught in a cycle of secrecy with no way to process what was happening: she quite literally did not have a developed brain yet to comprehend. And it is in moments like these that there is potential for self-understanding, insight into personal patterns and direction.

However, healing starting at the site of the first wound? It sometimes felt like no matter how deep and far we excavated, that first wound was impossible to

find. But at least some excavation can bring relief from owning that wound in isolation.

Van der Kolk and Van der Hart (1995: 170) tell us that memory fits into pre-existing schema into which new related experiences are placed: the pattern is the message. The question then is (in terms of this research) whether, by examining personal patterns and those of the previous generations, insight can become available in relation to self and in relation to the ancestral voices?

Levine (2010: 192): speaks of the "...deep transgenerational re-enactment of ... unfelt experiences and unprocessed emotions" and Woodman (1990: 23) states: "A mother who cannot welcome her baby girl into the world leaves her daughter groundless." In all likelihood the mother's mother and grandmother also lacked the roots that connect the woman's body to the earth and therefore "instinctual knowledge [linked to body] is not available to her." This seemed so very evident for Lucia as well as Noire. The little 'knowing' of 'mother' leaves them in vortex of chaos: the chaotic repercussions of silence.

Final thoughts on transgenerational influences come from Levine (2010) and from Howard Stein quoted in Opperman Lewis (2016). "...not only did our neuroanatomy evolve as an elaboration but so did our behaviours...the most primitive forms of our ancestral past dwell deep within us today" (Levine, 2010: 256) and "...what cannot be contained, mourned and worked through in one generation is transmitted, for the most part unconsciously to the next generation." (Opperman Lewis, 2016: 28) which cross references both the Herman (1992) and Pinkola Estes (1992) thoughts on the importance of mourning and grieving what was lost.

In reference to culture more generally (as opposed to familial culture) Miyo struggled with her feelings of disconnection to the culture of origin. The object she chose to represent culture on 7 February 2018 was similar to a calabash which evoked for her: the hair of a goat, and the texture of a cow; both symbolic of the Eastern Cape. When it came to the sound of the calabash she noticed that when she brings it close to her ear she cannot hear clearly, but as it moves away it becomes louder (*the need for distance from...?*). She privately struggles with this culture: she wants to get away because as part of that

culture, she must just follow injunctions to “do rituals without understanding why or what will happen if I don’t.”

Margie: “And that makes you feel?”

Miyo: “Incomplete.”

(From audio recording 7 February 2018).

Research journal of the same date: “This answer is really sitting with me. It is such a strong image. Not being a complete...?”

On 8 February 2018 Miyo brings a poem she wrote called *Mourning for my lost virginity*: “I weep for my origins.” I ask her to elaborate. She answers: “It is about how the community reacts to certain things. Like rape. What they say. They blame the victim. It also tells about trust that is there before the rape.” The questions around culture makes her head ache: “I want to vacuum the memories out of my head.” Pagelow is quoted in NiCarthy et al (1984: 18): “People who find themselves in a violent domestic situation cannot totally and by themselves either create or alter the situation in a vacuum. Much of their response depends on the social and cultural environment within which they live.” Woodman (1982: 23) says “It is the task of mature individuals..., to differentiate what was wholesome in their heritage from what was destructive, and to forgive.” This seemed to be the point Miyo was moving towards.

Autoethnography as embodied therapeutic distance

It is pertinent to explore the importance of autoethnography with a performance outcome. Why not just autoethnography as writing? In relation to the complex trauma which became apparent during the process, the reasons for persevering towards a witnessed presentation were two-fold. Finestone-Praeg (2007) cites Heathfield as speaking of the embodied event which has generative force “...to open a different kind of engagement with meaning...” (Finestone-Praeg, 2007: 211). I would add “with knowing”. The logical outcome of the embodied autoethnographic research process which was engaged in, was a presentation for witnesses, rather than a performance to an audience (the reasons for this is explored in the *Therapeutic choices in relation to witnessed presentation* section). Knowledge of presenting the work to others, brought an added dimension to the work: a need to do justice (performatively) to the embodied women. Interestingly, this created an added layer of therapeutic distancing:

this specific woman was my great-grandmother, but she is also a woman I need to explore as a character. Specifically, for Miyo, there seemed to be a comfort through a focus on how to 'perform' this woman. When she needed to create some distance from potentially overwhelming emotions and sensations, the focus shifted to the relevant character. The emotional quality transformed from the relational (my great-grandmother) to a more objective exploration of who this person is/was which added a deeper layer of understanding of self and of other. *Research journal 22 March 2018: "It is truly amazing the safety that this creates: the thought of this becoming performance to be witnessed creates safety."*

Autoethnography demolishing the silence walls

There was also an imperative in relation to the silence that permeated all three women's stories adding to the self-blaming guilt. The opportunity for a witnessed presentation implied breaking the silence and telling the story honestly. Herman (1992:9) says that for traumatic reality to be held in consciousness a social context which will both affirm and protect the victim (and the witness) in a mutual partnership, is required. This indicates the therapeutic potential of a witnessed presentation. This potential exists not only for the performer, but also for the audience: a public permission to speak personal truths. Phelan (2007: 83): "Performance remains a compelling art because it contains the possibility of both the actor and the spectator becoming transformed during the event's unfolding. It is only through the witnessing of the performance that this transformation is possible." Through presenting to witnesses the power of the stories (using autoethnography) as a way of knowing and of teaching was possible (Lapadat, 2017: 589).

As Butler (2007) highlights: "...the performance (of gender) renders social laws explicit." (2007:193). Spry (2001) cites Langelier: "...a story of the body told through the body which makes cultural conflict concrete" (Spry, 2001: 710). Herman (1992: 221) speaks of the therapeutic value in trauma recovery of being witnessed "...giving it social as well as personal meaning". She states (Herman, 1992: 200): "The power of the disclosure rests in the act of telling the truth...". This truth was relevant not only in relation to own story, but finding

the story of the previous women and asking the question: what was their truth and how do we honour it?

The day before the presentation (12 April 2018), the reality of breaking this vortex wall of silence struck Miyo. She was ready for the presentation in every way, but suddenly the knowledge that she will be speaking these truths in front of others threatened to overwhelm. She was nervous of the judgments that might follow: judgments which she reported to have witnessed many times over in relation to Gender Based Violence. At this point of the process, the director had become subsumed by the aspirant drama therapist: the women being safe and contained during the presentation was far more important than what was presented. Miyo's fear offered the opportunity to further affirm choice and agency: I sent her a message which read: "There is NOTHING that you can do wrong tomorrow. The only 'bad' thing will be if you do not arrive. And the only reason is that I need to be sure that you are safe. If you sit in silence for an hour, so be it." I emphasised that her safety was more important than anything else: if she felt that she could not tell a story or embody an ancestor, that is her choice.

Roles and Transference/Countertransference

The unconscious dynamics that keep the feminine a prisoner of patriarchy are the marrow of our bones. Woodman, 1990: 10

To do justice to the process it is necessary to add some reflection on my own role within the research, and to discuss the (*thorny as it feels to me*) issue of transference. As said earlier, the complexity of the researcher/aspirant drama therapist/director role became apparent early in the process. This is reflected in the research journal again and again. 9 February 2018 reads: "The tension is between therapist (following, gentle, holding) and director (who takes the lead and acts as an 'expert' eye). But in there is also sitting Margie who wants to save and be seen (countertransference), who does not trust that the floor is as far as she can fall." A later note reads: "And I see there is no mention of the researcher in here", reflecting the difficulty with treating the work as 'academic research' to be written and captured. On 19 February 2018: "The very fact of

autoethnographic 'research' creates a power imbalance which asks the sharing of deeply personal stories. By implication I have to take responsibility as a drama therapist. But where does 'choice' sit here for the women when the researcher is steering them to look at trauma? Answer: with the drama therapist. There is also the knowledge that I am not responsible for their lives and must respect their ownership of their stories. The personal story here is that added to everything else I have to acknowledge the role my ancestors played – my autoethnography." Somewhere in the back of my mind was Herman (1992: 135) as a reminder: "...constantly remind herself that the patient is in charge of her own life, the therapist refrains from advancing a personal agenda." In this context, the personal agenda was a research question asked by me. Research journal 6 February 2018: "I am really struggling to find the balance between research, my degree and what is good for these women."

Using autoethnography as the core method (indeed the word is used in the title of the proposal), necessitated deep reflexivity on my part in terms of my multiple roles: aspirant drama therapist/director/researcher. I needed to question my own positionality on an ongoing basis. Again, this was multiple: I am a woman as well, but I am middle aged, I am white, I am Afrikaans. These facts cannot be denied and the unconscious impact on the participants demands personal acknowledgment regardless of whether I consider some or all of them as part of my identity. To further complicate matters, I am also a rape survivor and was a victim of childhood sexual abuse. Ironically, these facts of patriarchy are the ones that close the gap between me and the women. This obfuscates matters in that my ability as an aspirant therapist was (sometimes) potentially compromised in terms of psychological distance in relation to the women. Their well-being necessitated extreme self-reflexivity. There were clear moments where I was aware of my own emotional reactions to the stories which emerged: research journal 2 February 2018: "The big emotional moment came when she said "I have to meet this child (meaning her wounded inner child)". Both Kita (my own wounded child whom I struggle to meet) and I responded inside. Kita is very sad now: she sees Miyo."

To unravel these transferential threads, mindfulness practices (breathing, meditation, yoga) and journaling became essential. These helped me to make

sense of what is mine and what was coming from the women. Before each session my own internal state was reflected on, yoga and breathing were often included in the session warm-ups in which I participated, and immediately after the session I made extensive notes not only of what happened during the work, but also of what was sitting inside of me post-session. Even this was not without its pitfalls: 20 February 2018: "I have been using yoga to take me out of myself, not into myself. That is okay, but I have to face the sadness at some stage. Yoga can help me contain, but not hide."

To reflect on transference, I am using Judith Herman's (1992: 136-147) description as a basis. Herman (1992: 136) says in relation to trauma therapy: "The alliance of therapy cannot be taken for granted..." Therapy needs to be a "collaborative working relationship in which both partners trust the value and efficacy of persuasion rather than coercion, ideas rather than force, mutuality rather than authoritarian control." Added to the role dilemma was the issue of trust which like choice is a big word in relation to trauma. Herman (1992: 136) speaks to the way trauma damages the individual's ability to enter into a trusting relationship; and the indirect but powerful impact on the therapist. As someone who experienced childhood abuse, I am keenly aware of my own difficulties with trust, which also affects my ability to trust myself, potentially confounding any relationship, let alone the therapeutic one. As a trained LifeLine Western Cape lay counsellor (a firm Rogerian approach), authenticity became key: having the courage to say: "I am not trusting myself in this moment. How do you feel about...?" Herman (1992: 141) warns that the therapist could start underestimating the value of her own knowledge and skill, (even lose confidence in the power of the therapy relationship), as well as lose sight of the client's strengths and resources. I deeply examined my own relationship with the concept therapy. The way I found to work with this aspect of the transference was by placing a strong focus on internal wisdom for me and the women, invoking the hero and the warrior who could see this through. Each session started with: "What is the message from the wise one today?" In this way, my own skill and wisdom was brought into consciousness, as well as facilitating the women accessing their internal resources.

Herman (1992: 136) further states that trauma transference has an intense life or death quality to it which cannot be compared to other therapeutic transference. After two weeks of intense autoethnographic excavation during which the extent of Miyo's personal and transgenerational trauma emerged, we decided to take a week's break. My sense was that she was becoming emotionally exhausted. I looked forward to this time to read as opposed to engage directly, as I sensed that I had been absorbing a lot as well. But rather than gain emotional distance, I found myself crying for three full days without any obvious reason; feelings of intense grief. Herman (1992: 141) speaks of the therapists heightened sense of personal vulnerability. In the light of my own history of abuse, this became difficult to manage and I had to mindfully unravel the threads after each session.

Herman (1992: 137) highlights that in the transferential relationship there is in fact a third person present with the client and therapist. The perpetrator and victimiser who "...demanded silence and whose command is now being broken..." which can lead to sheer terror. This was plainly evident in Miyo and my terror the day before the presentation to witnesses. In terms of autoethnography, this was even more complicated: we were breaking silence not just for self, but for others as well thereby defying multiple perpetrators. I needed to summon considerable resources (as well as a visit to my therapist) to fully unpack this and, again, authenticity and the reminder of choice was able to bring us through the intense fear: sharing control with Miyo freed us both. By that time, it was clear that my role had become one of 'holder of the safe space' and containment. The director who could potentially demand artistic quality had been asked to vacate the premises. The presentation was focused on therapeutic goals and not artistic excellence. Herman (1992: 142) speaks to the importance of the client steering the therapeutic progression according to her own pace, with the therapist's role being a witness to this process who can hold the client in a contained way. This became paramount as we moved closer to the presentation date. It was important that the women presented what they felt they could safely tell, and imperative for me to trust their inner resources to know the way. Interestingly, Miyo reflected on 2 May 2018 (after the presentation) that she is now better able to deal with intrusive memories without numbing or suppression. When the memories come, she knows that she needs

to address them (even if that means crying and grieving) but she is able to create the required safe space for herself to be able to do so.

Herman (1992:137): "The traumatic transference reflects not only the experience of terror but also the experience of helplessness." This was most clearly reflected between Lucia and me. I was often left with a feeling of "I have no idea of what to do!" *Even in writing this report and reading over my notes: I have the exact same feeling.* This also relates directly back to the ability to trust: neither of us was able to trust, seemingly especially ourselves. "The protracted involvement with the perpetrator has altered the patient's relational style, so that she not only fears repeated victimization, but also seems unable to protect herself from it, or even appears to invite it." (Herman, 1992: 138). It is possible that this statement is an accurate reflection of Lucia's involvement in this entire process: an intense fear of feeling, and then pushing herself beyond her own safety boundaries to face. For me this relationship was fraught: I needed to honour her agency by giving her the choices and not shirking the strong emotions, but at the same time promote her ability for psychological safety. Added to this, we both have strong punitive internal voices: I am acutely aware of mine: she even has a name (Hester). Again, authenticity and a focus on the here-and-now ("What are you feeling right now? What was that thought?") enabled both of us to bring these voices into consciousness and to (quite literally) banish them from the space. (They often went for coffee at The Waterfront). This meant that we could explore what was there in reality, not what 'should' be there if 'we were getting it right'. Herman (1992: 146) warns that the therapist might feel guilty for causing the client to reexperience the pain of trauma. This was clear in the session where I asked the question: "Is this harming you?" Both Miyo and Lucia had started the session peacefully and when looking at their respective 'cultures' became uncomfortable.

Herman (1992:140) warns that the emotional fluctuations of the recovery relationship are bound to be unpredictable and confusing for patient and therapist alike. Van der Kolk and Van der Hart (1995: 179) echo this: "Trauma will be relived in the therapeutic relationship in the form of irrational perceptions and fears." This required me, as aspirant drama therapist, to be keenly aware of what was happening in the moment, and to abandon session plans or include

activities to address whatever was presenting itself. There were specific Drama Therapy exercises that were incorporated to bring the relationship back on track: Emunah's (1994: 150-154) Mirror exercises and variations were adapted to include me and the specific woman. Sometimes, I found the women misinterpreting the instructions in illuminating ways: during one session Miyo seemed angry, but verbally reported that she was "fine". I invited her to do a physical mirroring activity 'with' me, which she interpreted as an activity 'against' me: pushing against my hands. This had the desired outcome though: she was able to express her anger in a safe physical way and we could continue with the session. Another helpful intervention was inviting each woman to choose a specific piece of cloth as a 'safe space'. The rules were that when they are sitting on that cloth, they have exited the process (stepped out), and that (other than being sure they are contained) I am not to interfere until they choose to step back in. All three women enthusiastically chose their cloth, but only once did Miyo choose to occupy it. For the rest, she sometimes chose to wrap it around her body, but reported that she did not need to step out. These pieces of fabric were available to the women at all times as a reminder of their agency.

I also experienced what Herman terms survivor's guilt: feeling guilty for not having suffered as much (Herman, 1992: 145) as the women. "My pain was not as severe as Miyo's." And then the acknowledgment that their stories would probably have been very different if it had not been for my white Afrikaner ancestors and their cronies. These were important questions for me to face, however. I had to investigate my power position within the process, and ultimately that led to some of the most therapeutic decisions relating to choice and acknowledging the women's innate resilience. It became imperative that they be aware of their strength as well.

Reflecting on the importance of the therapeutic relationship, Herman (1992: 153) cautions that "...no one can face trauma alone." In terms of acknowledging my own resilience, I realised that this is exactly what I had done when I decided to break my own silence using autoethnographic performance in 2017. And that I had discovered much internal strength through that process and I needed to trust that.

Therapeutic choices in relation to witnessed presentation

...be loyal to life, don't create fiction but accept what life is giving you, show yourself worthy of whatever it may be by recollecting and pondering over it, thus repeating it in imagination: this is the way to remain alive. Hannah Arendt quoted in Woodman, 1982: 134

As the 'performance' date of 13 April 2018 approached, I was faced with clear choices relating to the process and where specifically Miyo was placed in relation to her stories. Although the idea of performance had created a therapeutic distance enabling her to explore the stories and their meaning to her life, it became necessary to hold on to the authenticity within which these memories had appeared. There was a fear that placing her in a theatrical context would over-distance especially the child who was only starting to make herself known. *Research journal 23 March 2018: "This young woman (Miyo) has grown into one powerful performer. The challenge is to keep her with the integrity of the stories she is sharing and not 'what is the audience thinking of me' self-consciousness, which is when she loses her power."* When we were jointly negotiating the guest list for the 'performance', she proposed inviting only theatre experts: possibly unconsciously disowning the story: "This is an acting exercise and not my personal story." It felt therapeutically important that we remain with the truth of the stories at this time and not rush to place them within a theatre context. The work was simply too delicate. Finestone-Praeg (2007: 209) quotes Lepecki as saying there is a "...lack of interest in defining the work within formal ontological or ideological parameters of something." This resonated deeply with a need to see the presentation (which was what the performance was eventually framed as) as a moment in a therapeutic process as opposed to placing it firmly within theatre or performance studies. It also felt truer to the research question of exploring autoethnographic performance as a therapeutic tool.

Keeping this in mind, I made specific choices (*an example of a moment in which the researcher/aspirant drama therapist/director concurred*). What was needed was a process which invited the 'performer' and the audience witnesses into honest engagement, doing away with any element of spectatorship. Carver

(2003: 15) in a chapter entitled *Risky Business: Exploring Women's Autobiography and Performance* writes: "To write/perform the I, implies an acknowledgement of I history as important enough to warrant listening." Deep listening in line with witnessing as explained by Herman (1992: 136) which is able to restore trust in terms of relationships was therapeutically needed. Levine (2010: 154) says that trauma is as much about the facts of what happened as it is about what remains inside in the absence of an empathic witness. Herman (1992: 2) speaks to the power of being witnessed whilst saying the unspeakable and that creative energy is released when the barriers of repression are removed.

Added to this is the importance of community response in the development of PTSD symptoms: therefore it became important to invite an empathic community to witness this initial public offering as a "...reconstruction of public as well as private identity" (Snyder-Young, 2011: 948). In *Performing Gender* Hernando-Real and Ozieblo (2012: 145) say: "Whether a performance matters then,..., depends not only on the matter of its content, but also on...who witnesses it, where and when." *Research journal 5 March 2018: "The challenge: finding the authentic therapeutic way to story for the participants, which is not You Magazine sensationalism, not reducing them to victims, but which creates an opening for witnesses to also break their silence. In short: remaining authentic, not sugar coating the stories, not victimising."* On 6 April 2018 I asked myself: "What am I creating? A platform for women to share their painful stories safely to a group of witnesses so that the the chain of chaotic silence can be broken. And exploring the therapeutic value thereof." At that time there was a thought to frame the presentation more formally as a workshop during which the witnesses could share their stories should they choose to. This idea was abandoned as I needed to be realistic regarding how much stress I could place on myself on 13 April 2018: seeing that there were examiners present, will I be able to hold the women, witnesses and myself? I decided that the women needed my full support. Using the work as an entry into a workshop process is still a possibility for the future.

The breaking of Miyo's silence required care in terms of her psychological safety whilst honouring the process we had engaged in. During the two weeks prior to

the performance, a further emphasis on agency took the form of strengthening her internal director. We had negotiated the structure of the presentation together; she had written the material and the focus became preparing her for outside witnesses whilst remaining honest; finding the level of vulnerability that was safe for her. Emunah (1994: 122) speaks of developing the internal nurturing parent in relation to the wounded child: the part of the psyche who can, through gentle acceptance, nurture that child. As part of the pre-presentation process, this aspect of the work took the form of invoking the caring inner director: after each scene Miyo was invited to give herself notes first before I added mine. I was mindful of keeping her punitive voice at bay, focusing on how to achieve the moments rather than 'it should have been...' or 'I did not ...'. When she struggled with specific embodiments, we would work on what the block was rather than a technical 'acting' aspect. An example would be when she struggled with the story of her grandmother. Rather than focus on 'changing her voice', we went back to body: find her body and from there her voice and feelings will follow; honour the story and the rest will fall into place. (This was the story that she struggled with as performer and the one she had the most fear regarding breaking the silence.)

Almost complete control of the 'script' had been handed to Miyo and Noire. This was important: these are their stories and their cultures. *I do not have the right to put words in their mouths if I am proposing that the focus is their therapeutic process. I also have superficial knowledge of living within their cultures of origin and therefore cannot impose 'theatrical' elements; to create theatre which is acceptable to a white audience as one of the women put it.* My role became less director, and more facilitator therapist. I would point out where transitions did not flow, but the writing of those transitions were left to them. With Miyo this challenged me in terms of notions of control: most of her script was in isiXhosa which I do not speak. The therapeutic benefit of this was that trust in her ability and integrity was affirmed: I relinquished control in favour of her authentically representing herself. This was an important risk to take in that I would not have any idea of what she might be saying during the presentation: rather saying "I trust you to be able to tell your story in whichever words or language you choose." My role became that of the one who is able to contain should her or Noire become emotionally unsafe, and as experienced witness who can hold the

safe space for the first-time witnesses. I believe that much of the therapeutic value of the work rested in exactly this point: facilitating the process whereby specifically Miyo learnt to monitor her own responses thereby gaining confidence in her ability to direct the course of her own life.

A quick word on language: during the process it became clear that speaking in a language other than her mother-tongue, removed Miyo from her own life-story. It was important, in terms of remaining honest to her story, that she speaks isiXhosa. From a purely performative point of view, I could clearly notice the difference in vocal quality between her communicating in English and isiXhosa. *This was significant learning for me for the future: participants need to be given permission to work in their language of choice whether I understand it or not.* If I need to, I can ask for translation, but the importance of allowing people to tell their stories in their way takes precedence. Miyo and I translated her stories into English quite early on, so that I could have a sense of the thematic content, but that was the only reason. From that point on, the focus went back to body and feeling, sensations and emotions.

After the Pinkola-Estes (1992: 365) *descanos* activity with Miyo, many of the visual images she unearthed remained, representing that which cannot yet be spoken. Visual symbols were almost all the child Miyo could expose of her personal story at this time. It is possible that as that child heals, she will find her voice to speak with. On 13 April she was able to reveal herself and share the repercussions of her story. Miyo had spontaneously written two poems: *Mourning for My Lost Virginity* and *We are the Foundation*. Both were included. When we were exploring her aching hands, her feelings about her culture of origin and the repercussions of the silence she held for so long; Miyo identified the need for a cleansing ritual to enable her to release some of the harm done to her. A ritual during which she can invoke self-forgiveness and restore her body to herself. As the focus was a therapeutic process, this was important to include although it is not strictly autoethnographic. The ritual also gave Noire (as a Muslim woman) opportunity to represent the difficulty in breaking the silence which comes with that specific culture. *Research journal 13 March 2018:* *"Cleanse me of these sins in the name of the father, the son, the cousin, the*

uncle so that my spirit can breathe again.” The sins of the fathers are visited on their daughters.

The major negotiation was around the guestlist. The clearest choice I made as authority figure was related to the fact that the process should be witnessed and not ‘audience’. During the reflection session on 2 May 2018, Miyo offered that she finally understood why I had been so insistent on this point: that much of the value of the presentation would have been lost for her had she not felt safe with the witnesses. The word audience connotes an element of spectatorship leaving a choice to critically engage with theatrical material as opposed to journeying with in a specific moment. In terms of the therapeutic witnessing of trauma this was important: this is Miyo’s story and it would be counter-therapeutic to allow for anybody to criticise the way in which she told it theatrically. The honesty of the telling needed to be honoured. “A life story begets a life lived.” (Pineau, 2003: 45). Van der Kolk (2014: Kindle location 4384) validates the decision for a carefully selected witnessed process by highlighting the internal challenge of finding a safe enough place to express the pain of trauma.

On 13 April 2018 *Imizimba Yesikhumbuzo/Bodies of Memory* was presented to a group of ten witnesses. The site-specific presentation was in an old Victorian building in an almost inner-city somewhat rundown area of Woodstock, Cape Town. The building has been beautifully restored. Two spaces were used: the workshop room (for warm-up of the witnesses and two of Noire’s installations), and the attic. This choice of site was inspired by a Marion Woodman quote: “The shadow may carry the best of the life we have not lived. Go into the basement, the attic, the refuse bin. Find gold there. Find an animal who has not been fed or watered. It is you!! This neglected, exiled animal, hungry for attention, is a part of your self.” (Woodman quoted in Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 4127-4130). The “animal” spoke directly to Miyo’s recently acknowledged inner child. The attic also firmly broke away from any conventional theatrical space offering an invitation to witness the work in a different way. Finally, the architecture of the building speaks back clearly to colonialism in South Africa: a fact that could not be ignored when listening to the stories and provided a

metaphoric glimpse into what had been hidden in many attics in this country's history.

After framing the presentation as a moment in a much longer process, the witnesses checked in and warmed up using an adapted Emunah (1994: 154) activity: Circle-mirror-transformation. The group forms a circle with one person in the centre who initiates a movement expressing what s/he is feeling at that moment. When s/he is satisfied with the movement, s/he passes it to somebody in the circle who receives it and gradually transforms it to express what s/he needs to; until everybody in the circle has had an opportunity to express themselves. The idea is to 'see' or witness another person, but also to authentically express yourself in the present moment thereby gently bringing the witnesses to a mindfulness as well. Emunah (1994) uses sound and movement. For the purposes of the presentation I chose to invite only movement as I wanted the theme of silence to be present from the outset.

The witnesses were then led to where Miyo and Noire were sitting on the floor facing each other, silently looking into each other's eyes. It was important to have the silence settle for witnesses, but also for the women to experience the feeling of supporting each other. Furthermore, it gave them time to mindfully focus on the breath and body, and notice what is happening inside at that moment: to be fully present to self and witnesses.

The presentation ended with the witnesses finding the two women in the same position as at the start: looking into each other's eyes. This time the distance between them was closed and they were holding hands: they had both completed this part of the process together. The space was closed with the women and witnesses breathing together and brushing any leftover dust from the attic off each other. Finally, there was paper and art material available if any (or all) of the witnesses needed to express anything more, before leaving the space. I was also available for anybody who needed to talk.

For the purposes of this writing I am not including a full presentation description and script. This can be read in Appendix C.

THE LOGIC OF USING AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC PERFORMANCE AS DRAMA THERAPY IN RELATION TO TRAUMA

Our sense of agency, how much we feel in control, is defined by our relationship with our bodies and its rhythms: Our waking and sleeping and how we eat, sit, and walk define the contours of our days. In order to find our voice, we have to be in our bodies—able to breathe fully and able to access our inner sensations. This is the opposite of dissociation, of being “out of body” and making yourself disappear. It’s also the opposite of depression, lying slumped in front of a screen that provides passive entertainment. Acting is an experience of using your body to take your place in life. Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 6030-6034

The logic of bringing Drama Therapy, autoethnographic performance and trauma recovery under one umbrella feels so organic that I struggle to find the exact words to explain. But I am also fully aware that saying “It feels right” is not sufficient. I will therefore mainly focus on why telling the story is important for integration in relation to all three disciplines, the importance of witnessing and on the therapeutic core principle of embodiment Phil Jones (2007) identifies in his book *Drama As Therapy* as applicable to this tri-union of autoethnographic performance, trauma recovery and Drama Therapy.

The definition of Drama Therapy that is relevant to this research is taken from Jones (2007: 8): the intention was for healing facilitating change and using the potential of drama to reflect and transform life experiences enabling the women to express and work through problems. Jones (2007: 8) states that clients seek to achieve new relationships towards life experiences using Drama Therapy. Both these statements were applicable to the process of this research: how to understand life patterns in relation to transgenerational trauma. Keeping these descriptions in mind, the question remains: why use autoethnographic performance in relation to trauma as Drama Therapy?

Autoethnographic performance is implicitly about telling the story of self to both gain and impart knowledge: embodied knowledge as opposed to sterile written knowledge. Furthermore, Miller, Taylor and Carver (2003: 3) say: "Creating an autobiographical narrative reconstitutes the self, the audience, and surrounding cultural contexts. It makes sense of the self, gives each part a voice and a body." In relation to trauma recovery Levine (2010: 17) stresses the importance of creative therapies with their focus on the integration of mind and body for healing. For recovery, as stated earlier, it is important for the client to reach the place where she can say 'it happened to me' as opposed to 'it is still happening to me' in that symptoms like intrusion, avoidance and numbing have the potential to disrupt lives long after the traumatic event. Levine (2010: 240) emphasises that a future in which the past is dominant is not future at all.

Drama Therapy is perfectly placed to engage in this process as it is able to facilitate the integration of traumatic events into a full-life narrative in a way that does not only rely on verbal recitation but includes body and unconscious processes. Van der Kolk (1994: Kindle location 6013) cites Tina Packer as saying that acting is about more than putting on a character. It is rather discovering that character within yourself. This statement links perfectly with an embodied autoethnographic process which focuses on the previous generations: what will I discover about myself through embodied 'acting' of my mother? And how this can help me in terms of integration of experience into a life-narrative. What happens to the collective trauma? (Mason cited in Gqola, 2015: 71). Van der Kolk (2014: Kindle location 3917) stresses the importance of being able to tell the story for it not to be frozen in memory; and he expands this to speaking to the importance of memory to be able to imagine how things can be different. Psychodramatist, Tian Dayton (2005: 222) accentuates the significance of the senses being involved in the healing process circumventing endless verbal repetition without engaging the core emotions and feelings.

Drama Therapy through the use of projection and free writing to engage the unconscious is able to access not only hidden memories safely, but also to elicit powerful symbols. It does not rely only on the spoken word for efficacy. This was clear in the 13 January 2018 session, when Lucia chose a baby shoe as a symbol for what she wants to release during the process, but then later discovered that

she cannot find the feet (her inner child) to fit into those shoes. Drama therapeutic techniques such as projection (using objects to represent key moments) facilitated the psychological distance for Miyo to contextualise the magnitude of certain events. The *descanos* activity used by Jungian therapist Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1992: 365) could easily be adapted to include projection, symbol and embodiment.

Drama therapist Renee Emunah (1994: 291) states that the client actor must “undertake an act of self-penetration, unravelling exterior masks and discarding social roles until she arrives at the essence of truthfulness.” Again, the correlation between the honesty required for autoethnographic performance and Drama Therapy is clear. Emunah continues to cite theatre innovator Grotowski in saying that it is a question of “giving oneself...totally in one’s deepest intimacy...” (Emunah, 1994: 291) and that the actor’s work is an offering aimed at transformation. Pinkola Estes (1992: 370): “The old healer of the psyche understands human nature with all its foibles and gives pardon based on telling the naked truth.” Autoethnographic performance requires the telling of the naked truth. It focuses on transforming the way we know through personal lived experience, breaking down Cartesian mind/body divisions in much the same way Drama Therapy does in that the latter also acknowledges that people are more than words and for healing to occur, all aspects of a person (mind, body, spirit and creativity) need to be engaged.

Dayton (2005: 225) reminds that the “...deepest pain has no words.” Miyo’s boxed silent child sitting in the cupboard of the suitcase is a clear example. She could not yet speak the pain, but she could be present with it using symbols. Trauma specialist, Van der Kolk (2014: Kindle location 4356) speaks of the aptness of using arts therapies to “...circumvent the speechlessness that comes with terror...” He further cites Pennebaker and Krantz as saying that their research verifies that health does not appear to require the translation of experience into language, pointing to verbal recounting not being enough for psychological integration (Van Der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 4366). Body therapy specialist, Peter Levine (2010: 276) concurs: “Thoughts are poor surrogates for experienced aliveness.”

Renee Emunah (1994) has created a drama therapeutic model called self-revelatory performance which she defines as performance focussed on current life issues in need of healing (Emunah, 1994: 225). Although the word current is relevant, she does not discount the fact that the present will be coloured by past experiences. Although autoethnographic performance is looking specifically at cultural influences, the two models are not far removed from each other and in many ways overlap. The autoethnographic question this research engaged in was related to trauma, but I wonder whether asking that question in relation to self-revelatory theatre would have produced a much different presentation. Another difference between the two forms is that self-revelatory theatre is situated in Drama Therapy and the other more broadly in the social sciences.

My hunch is that it is within the framework of embodiment and presenting to witnesses that the therapy rests. I wrote extensively regarding the role of witnessing in the *Therapeutic choices in relation to witnessed presentation* section of this report. But it is appropriate to explain the importance of witnessing in relation to Drama Therapy. Phil Jones (2007: 101) gives the following definition: "Witnessing is the act of being an audience to others or to oneself within dramatherapy." Within the context of this research, it required that the women first be witnessed by me, then by each other enhancing the breaking of the silence, and lastly by selected outside witnesses. "The job of the director/therapist and other group members (witnesses) is to provide protagonists with the support they need to delve into whatever they have been too afraid to explore on their own." (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 5446). But the Jones (2007) definition also speaks to being able to witness self: referring back to the internal nurturing parent that Emunah (1994: 122) refers to. Through the rehearsal process this was extended to the internal director or supervisor: that part of self that, although fully present, is still able to observe and monitor the internal state of the psyche. There is a direct correlation to the trauma recovery concept of mindfulness as explicated by Van der Kolk (2014), Levine (2010) and Emerson and Hopper (2011): the ability to be aware of the present moment whilst accessing traumatic feelings and emotions. In drama therapeutic terms: the ability to step in and step out.

Levine (2010: 241) quotes Sandra Blakeslee: "We are exquisitely social creatures... Mirror neurons allow us to grasp the minds of others not through conceptual reasoning but through direct simulation. By feeling – not by thinking." This enhances our capacity for empathy, which furthers the positive effect of witnessing both for the woman telling her story and the witnesses. The previously mentioned Emunah (1994: 154) Circle-mirror-transformation exercise is an excellent drama therapeutic example of mirror neurons at work.

The most applicable core drama therapeutic principle rests with embodiment. Jones (2007: 113) describes embodiment in Drama Therapy as involving "...the way the self is realised by and through the body. The body is often described as the primary means by which communication occurs between self and other." This point is key in relation to trauma recovery. Levine (2010: 279) describes embodiment as the physical sensations which are key to our being in this world through which interaction between instinct and reason is possible. "Without access to the feeling sense, through bodily sensations, our lives would be one-dimensional, black and white. Both our physical life and feeling life, from our most primal cravings to the loftiest artistic creations, depend upon embodiment." (Levine, 2010: 279). The body is the gateway to memories, emotion and importantly the identification with self and that which is not self. Recounting autoethnographic memories (even through writing) is primarily a cognitive activity, but through focussing on the body non-verbally, a psychic portal opens which can deposit the person within another's identity. This was clearly evident with Lucia who could find the beginnings of empathy, forgiveness for other as well as self by exploring what embodying them feels like. Leavy (2008: 344) writes in relation to autoethnographic performance that it is implicitly experiential as opposed to only cognitive knowledge which creates a different understanding because experience also involves emotions and cognition. In relation to trauma recovery Levine (2010: 157) quotes Alexander: "When psychologists speak of the unconscious, it is the body they are talking about." This has interesting implications for exploring the role of the unconscious in terms of creativity and a deepened understanding of embodiment.

Drama therapist Riccio (2010: 156) is allowed the last words: "Human life begins and ends with the human body. Human life is defined, and would be inconceivable, if it were not for the corporeal, sensual, and aware body in relationship with an environment, the spaces around us."

LEARNINGS AND CONCLUSION (Where does a circle start and where does it end?)

During March 2018, I participated in Expressive Movement Facilitator training.

Sian Palmer (trainer) asked the pertinent question: Where does a circle start and where does it end? In terms of the process of this research this question is probably the most important learning for me as aspirant drama therapist.

Where does a circle start and where does it end? With trauma recovery there is no clearly defined beginning and I am not sure that an end is possible: possibly the process of recovery expands and contracts. But life, like recovery, is a process.

Many of the 'findings' of this research has been discussed in detail:

- ♀ The importance of incorporating body-based therapies in relation to trauma and importantly in relation to Drama Therapy;
- ♀ The value of offering choice and control as a reparative measure;
- ♀ The value of performance to witnesses: breaking the silence, creating therapeutic distance, demolishing isolation for both performer and witnesses, and breaking the silence (*the repetition is intentional as this cannot be overstated regarding historic and childhood trauma*);
- ♀ The value of incorporating mindfulness practices for Drama Therapeutic process;
- ♀ Developing the inner nurturing parent in the form of the inner director who is able to ensure the safety for both 'performer' and integrated self;
- ♀ The role language (verbal and physical) plays in the therapeutic safe space.

Possibly the biggest learning was regarding the nature of trauma therapy itself: where does the circle start and where does it end? Working with trauma requires time in terms of building resilience and integration whilst mindfully allowing the person to steer the pace of their own recovery. Autoethnographic excavation is salient for insight into personal patterns and experiences but needs to be approached carefully and in such a way that the most immediate traumas

are first contained. Thereafter it has the potential to illuminate and also (*this is important to remember*) to illuminate: showing the strength and resilience of those who came before. As such it can build bridges for understanding self and other in new ways.

Lastly, this process gave me (as aspirant drama therapist) a deepened understanding of the meaning of 'embodiment' away from a general description of the physical. A description which needs to consider the role of the body in relation to unconscious processes which might well contain memory sensations related to self and also from other. Drama Therapy is ideally situated to work with body-based approaches in that it addresses the verbal, the as yet unspeakable, the metaphor and image; and can offer expression both in the therapy room and (if appropriate) performance space.

Science tells us that our DNA contains up to 14 generations from the past (Klosin, Casas, Hidalgo-Carebo, Vavouri & Lehna, 2017: 321). Bill Bryson (2003: 20) invites us to consider that during the 3.8 billion years of the earth's history, each of our forebears were "healthy enough to reproduce" and lived long enough to do so. "Not one of your pertinent ancestors was squashed, devoured, drowned, starved, stuck fast, untimely wounded or otherwise deflected ... of delivering a tiny charge of genetic material to the right partner at the right moment to perpetuate the only possible sequence of hereditary combinations that could result ... in you." (Bryson, 2003: 20). Bodies of memory.

REFLECTIONS AND LAST WORDS

How to end? Is there an end? Healing and life are both a process and not an outcome, we are told. So possibly the best place is exactly where the women are placed in this specific process now.

Autobiographical performance does not call selves into existence so much as it calls them into significance in a moment remembered and a memory embodied. Pineau, 2003: 45

Although the quotation above is in reference to autobiographical performance, it holds true for this research process as was reflected in post-presentation

meetings with the women on 2 and 5 May 2015. Without wanting to go into too much detail, the section below takes some quotations from the voice recordings of these two sessions. (Again, it is important to allow the women to speak for themselves.)

"Come to the edge" he said.

They said, "We are afraid."

"Come to the edge," he said.

They came.

He pushed them.

And they flew.

(Apollinaire quoted in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008: 1)

Agency

In terms of agency, all three reported that they are aware of shifts within themselves, even if it just an awareness of whether and when they can take control and to what extent.

Miyo: After the presentation, I felt armed. In a better place than before. I learnt that I am strong enough to deal with stuff, and that I can ask for help when I need it. I am brave enough to ask for help. I learnt that I can find solutions and when I can't find the answers, to let go of what I cannot control.

Lucia: By embracing victimhood it can be transformed into being a victor. I became conscious of the fact that I have a choice. I don't have to just 'suck it up', I get to choose what I suck up. The choice to step out of the process was a humble teaching: being responsible for myself strengthened me. I had to be honest with myself. Not having to measure where I am at according to others. But being able to take care of myself. I also realised that I have a choice in what I do not want to deal with.

Noire: I became more aware of the fact that I have choices, open to other possibilities. And I realised that I can make those choices.

What was the value of the work for you?

All three women identified that being part of a collective was hugely meaningful. This is interesting because there were rare moments with all three were together in the room but still the theme of "I am not alone" resonated.

Noire: The value was becoming part of a collective and pulling others in. Some witnesses spontaneously created vortexes after the session which left me with the feeling of 'they get it'. My experiences contributed to something.

Miyo: We stand for each other. I have people who have my back and I am not alone. There are people I can reach out to. As women we talk past the issues, and we camouflage personal truths. But many of us go through similar experiences and can help each other. Be there for each other.

It also gave me ownership of my story. Did I tell my story? Did I tell other people's stories? I am proud I did it. I am ready to face the exposure of telling these stories. I feel empowered.

Lucia: There is a commonality that comes from being woman. A compassion for the fact of woman. It has opened understanding for me. A validation of woman without any agenda. There is a lot of talk about suicide and depression: information is accessible, but there is not access to the actual work that needs to be done - actually noticing things and not just washing over them.

Did you learn anything about your personal patterns through this process?

Miyo: The previous women and I, we are somehow linked. I had always thought of them as just another generation. But now I see a lot of myself in them, it is just a different time. I am a lot like my grandmother and my mother. They are part of me. I have a different understanding of who they were.

Lucia: Lies and truth. I always thought that I was the reason that my mother is who she is. I now realise that no: she is accountable for herself. I thought that if she did not have me, she would have had a life. But now I think, no, her life was out of control already. I probably saved her life.

Noire: Nothing about a personal pattern. But I discovered that my warrior in progress is painful to wear. And it is true. We build walls around us for a purpose. They are restrictive, but we feel it has to be done. The most value was to find a unified voice with other women. My grandmother showed her strength through actions. She symbolises strength and motherliness to me. She was not a victim. She was in control. She did not need spoken words. I found just a little bit of peace. I am not alone anymore, others understand.

Miyo: Life is not better. But I am at peace and happy. I discovered acceptance. Self-acceptance and forgiveness.

Lucia: F..k it, I am not alone. I am at peace.

What would you have wanted to be different about the process?

Noire: More time. Visual art needs time to create, space for expansion.

Miyo: Not these big western buildings to find the memories in. I needed to be in nature.

Last thoughts

Lucia: It felt like when you have moved house, and you are unpacking boxes. Some of them you just ignore, others you open and close again immediately. And then there are the ones you open.

Miyo: There is a choice for me as to which box to open. Some I think I should open, but not yet. And others I want to. The child's box: I want to open it, but I am not ready. I first need to be stronger.

After the presentation the witnesses were given the opportunity to use art materials to express what was sitting with them. Silence and breaking the silence was a common thread. One powerful drawing was of a face with HELP written across the forehead, a sewn-up mouth with SILENT written underneath it. And below that: "The pain in me will someday come out. Free me."

Three big paintings of vortexes were done by three different women. The vortex of silence....

Miyo and I are still deciding how this work can continue. We are both excited about developing it as a way for other women (and men) to break their chaotic repercussions and burdens of silence.

The last last words belong to Miyo: I became a hero to myself.

To the women:

I see you

in your questioning,

questing, completing

completely.

I offer you to the light.

*Your pain becoming
rivers of iron flowing lava
to create soil and rocks,
for others to build on*

And you to rest in.

I see you.

(Research journal 20 March 2018)

GLOSSARY

Agency: Van der Kolk (2014, Kindle edition: 6030) defines agency as the individual feeling in charge of life as something within their control: echoing Reznick (2012: 30) in saying that agency rests with being able to have a say in what happens to you.

Autoethnography: A research approach that aims to describe and analytically engage with personal experience to enhance understanding of cultural experience. Both process and product. (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011: 274).

Autoethnographic performance: Performance which is not only a theatrical flourish but can take the self as spectator somewhere it would not otherwise be able to get to, "by reintroducing the body to the mind in the process of living research". (Spry, 2001: 719/20).

Distance: including over and under distance: Distancing encourages engagement with material which boosts thought, reflection and perspective. (Jones, 2007: 95). An example would be to embody a role, and then reflect on whether perspective has changed as a result. (Jones, 2007: 101).

Under-distance: Becoming emotionally overwhelmed by the embodiment. "...primary mode of experience is affective." (Emanah, 1994: 10).

Over-distance: Being uninvolved with the embodiment and not allowing the self to engage on a holistic plain: mind, body and thoughts. "...a state of repression in which the primary mode of experience is cognitive." (Emanah, 1994: 10).

Embody and embodiment: "Embodiment in dramatherapy involves the way the self is realised by and through the body. The body is often described as the primary means by which communication occurs between self and other." (Jones, 2007: 113). Embodiment also states that physical sensation is central to our being in this world, through which interaction between the instinct and reason is possible (Levine, 2010: 279). "Without access to the feeling sense, through bodily sensations, our lives would be one-dimensional, black and white. Both our

physical life and feeling life, from our most primal cravings to the loftiest artistic creations, depend upon embodiment.” (Levine, 2010: 273)

Emotion: “*n* Any short-term evaluative, affective, intentional, psychological state, including happiness, sadness, disgust, and other inner feelings.” (Colman, 2009: 248). A feeling state involving physiological changes, thoughts and an outward manifestation (Curran, 2013: 200). Linked to the limbic system. (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 791). Intense emotions involve not only the mind, but link to the visceral and is often expressed in language in physical terms “broken heart, butterflies in my tummy, etc.” (Van der Kolk, 2014: Kindle location 1302.) Linda Curran (2013: 80) calls this ‘felt sense’: The feeling of a combination of physical sensations and emotions (often experienced through the body). (Curran, 2013: 80)

Projection: in terms of Drama Therapy: “...projection creates a vital relationship between inner emotional states and external forms and presences.” (Jones, 2007: 83). “...process by which clients project aspects of themselves or their experience into theatrical or dramatic materials or into enactment, and thereby externalise inner conflicts...” (Jones, 2007: 84).

Self revelatory performance: Performance focussed on current life issues in need of healing. (Emunah, 1994: 225)

Therapeutic safe space: “Within the therapeutic context, a safe space is defined as a free-from-harm environment between therapist and client where the latter can explore his/her inner conflicts with freedom; without fear of being judged or hurt in any way.” (Loza, 2017: iii).

Transference: Unconscious repetition of the past in the present (Corey, 2013: 69), directly linked to the therapeutic relationship and what is experienced by both the client and the therapist. “It reflects the deep patterning of old experiences in relationships as they emerge in current life.” (Corey, 2013: 69).

Witnessing: "Witnessing is the act of being an audience to others or to oneself within dramatherapy." (Jones, 2007: 101). "vb 6 to see, be present at, or know first-hand." (Collins English Dictionary, 2009: 1869).

APPENDIX A

COMPLEX POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

1 A history of subjection to totalitarian control over a prolonged period (months to years). Examples include hostages, prisoners of war, concentration-camp survivors, and survivors of some religious cults. Examples also include those subjected to totalitarian systems in sexual and domestic life, including survivors of domestic battering, childhood physical or sexual abuse, and organised sexual exploitation.

2 Alterations in affect regulation, including

- Persistent dysphoria
- Chronic suicidal preoccupation
- Self-injury
- Explosive or extremely inhibited anger (may alternate)
- Compulsive or extremely inhibited sexuality (may alternate).

3 Alterations in consciousness, including

- Amnesia or hypermnesia for traumatic events
- Transient dissociative episodes
- Depersonalisation/derealisation
- Reliving experiences, either in the form of intrusive post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, or in the form of ruminative preoccupation

4 Alterations in self-perception, including

- Sense of helplessness or paralysis of initiative
- Shame, guilt and self-blame
- Sense of defilement or stigma
- Sense of complete difference from others (may include sense of specialness, utter aloneness, belief no other person can understand, or nonhuman identity)

5 Alterations in perception of perpetrator, including

- Preoccupation with relationship with perpetrator (includes preoccupation with revenge)

- Unrealistic attribution of total power to perpetrator (caution: victim's assessment of power realities may be more realistic than clinician's)
- Idealisation or paradoxical gratitude
- Sense of special or supernatural relationship
- Acceptance of belief system or rationalisations of perpetrator

6 Alterations in relations with others, including

- Isolation and withdrawal
- Disruption in intimate relationships
- Repeated search for rescuer (may alternate with isolation and withdrawal)
- Persistent distrust
- Repeated failures of self-protection

7 Alterations in systems of meaning

- Loss of sustaining faith
- Sense of hopelessness and despair.

REFERENCE

Herman, J.,1992. *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basic Books.

APPENDIX B

Journal tasks

Week 1: 9-13 January 2018

Day 1

- Please write, draw, find a gesture or body posture, create material that expresses your feelings and thoughts about being a WOMAN in the here and now?
- Do you feel powerful and like you own your body?
- Have you always felt this way?
- Find a metaphor or image that would capture what being a woman feels like currently.

Day 2

- Write a story based on the previous question (the metaphor you created above) that answers: "This is the story of...." Just freely write, whichever words come are good, there is no judgment and try hard not to censor yourself. There is no right or wrong. It is what it is.
- Reflect on what the free writing felt like. Was there an emotional response? Was there a physical response? Where is the energy sitting in your body right in this moment?

Day 3

- Find a metaphor or image that captures what being a woman felt like in times of crisis in the past. Again, use free writing, and don't censor yourself. No judgment, it is what it is.

Day 4

- If you could change gender (i.e. be a man) would you make that choice? Please reflect on the reasons. What is good about being a woman? What is not so good about being a woman?
- If you could change one thing about your experience of being a woman, what would that be?

PLEASE ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO RIGHT OR WRONG. IT IS WHAT IT IS AND YOUR EXPERIENCE IS YOUR EXPERIENCE.

Nobody has the right to tell you that your life is 'wrong'! So, please do not censor yourself....

Week 2: 14-20 January 2018

Cool. We are now going to be moving away from you, yourself (for the journal) just a little.

What is the first memory you have of a woman in your family? A woman far back in the past, as far back as you can go. The very oldest woman you would know (if she was still alive).

Day 1

- What is the first story about this woman that comes to mind? You don't have to have been in this story, it can be about her and other people. (For example: as I child I remember somebody telling of how my grandmother on my father's side used to love to iron. She actually lived in a time and place before electricity, so it was one of those irons which the women needed to heat on a stove or put coals into. She had 12 children, my grandmother. And every afternoon before supper she would iron. If and when my grandfather (who absolutely adored her) would interrupt her or make a noise in her ears, she became absolutely furious. So much so, that she sometimes would throw the iron at him. I can only imagine that this ironing time must have been like a meditation to her: the one time a day where she could be alone in her own head without her husband and 12 children. This happened way before I was born. By the time I came along, she was already an old woman with Alzheimer's Disease.) So, just write the very first story you can remember about this woman. The woman from waaaaaaaaaaaaay back in the past.
- Is there a specific artefact that you can remember as connected to this person, or that you imagine was connected to this person? (For example, in my grandmother's case it would have been an iron.) But it can be anything: a doek, a ring, glasses, anything. Write down a description of this object.

Day 2

- Write about the important relationships in the woman above's life? Who were important to her or very directly connected to her? What was that connection and what was it like? If you are not completely sure, see

whether you can remember any stories about her in connection with other people, or even in connection with yourself.

- Like before: write “This is the story of...”. Don’t censor. Your story can be as direct, or as symbolic as you choose. But really focus on this ancestor that you are remembering.

Day 3

- Repeat Day 1 writing, but this time in connection with a different woman ancestor. If you like, you can start moving closer in time. So: if you had written about your great-grandmother earlier, now you could write about your grandmother. So, very much: what is the first story (even if you were not part of it) that you remember in connection with this person. And is there a specific artefact that you connect with her. What were the important relationships in her life like? And write: “This is the story of...” Again: don’t censor. Just write.
- If you like or feel the need to: write about any feelings or emotions, body sensations that come up for you when you are remembering these women. (Again, an example: every time I was writing with regard to my June 2017 project, my left shoulder would literally feel like it was screaming. I still don’t know what it was trying to say, but it was wanting to be heard.) So just notice. You don’t have to change it, just notice it.

PLEASE PLEASE ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO RIGHT OR WRONG. Don’t censor yourself: just write. It does not have to be beautiful or poetic or ‘right’ – just do it. And remember to breathe....

WEEK 3: 23 – 27 January 2018

Okay. I have a sense that there is a LOT of stuff coming up for all three of you at the moment. Please be incredibly kind and gentle with yourselves. Send me a private message of exactly what it is you are going to do to be kind and gentle and look after yourself: you are going for a walk, you are going to eat..., you are going to take a nap, or visit a friend who makes you feel good about yourself, whatever it is that you do that feeds your soul. When the stuff comes, notice it, don't criticise or force or necessarily try to change it, just notice it. Sometimes it is just stuff that needs to be acknowledged.

I want to focus a little just on you (not the previous women) this week: you and your strength and resilience. You have all three come this far as whole people who are achieving things in your lives, and that means that there is a lot of strength in you. Let us acknowledge that and not only the hurt and the pain....

DREAMS: Every morning (or in the middle of the night if that is when you wake up), write down your dreams. If you cannot remember the whole dream, but only have an image or feeling, that is fine. Don't necessarily try to understand it immediately (that might just stress you out) just put it into your awake mind by writing it down.

DAY 1

- ✚ Before you do anything else, find a quiet spot (or as quiet as you can), be comfortable, be safe and close your eyes. Become aware of the rhythm of you breathing as it is right now. What it feels like to breathe in and out. When you are ready, breathe in slightly deeper and breathe out slightly longer. Just gently and a *little* more. If it does not feel comfortable, then go back to your own rhythm – that is also fine. In your mind, count 30 breaths whilst you are sitting comfortably. Just focussing on the counts and the breath. Really feel what that air feels like going in and what it feels like going out. If worries or the outside world wants to interrupt, just tell yourself that right now you cannot change the past, and the future is but a couple of minutes away, so it can wait. For these few minutes of this now, you are taking time out to just breathe and be quiet.
- ✚ When you are done, notice what you feel like. What is happening to your body? What are you aware of right now. Just aware of right now. (You

absolutely do not have to change it or force it, it is you, it is part of you, it probably just wants to be seen.) Write it down. The sensations, the emotions, the sense.

- ✚ Write the very first thoughts that come into your head. (Even if it is about breakfast...)
- ✚ If you could choose a superpower for the day, what would it be? What would it give you that you don't have right now? Write it.

DAY 2

- ✚ Start with the breathing again. Same as yesterday. Write down all and any thoughts, feelings, sensations when you are done.
- ✚ Write the first thought that comes into your head.
- ✚ What is the story you want to tell today? What do you want to say to yourself? Write yourself a letter.

DAY 3

- ✚ Start with same breathing again. Remember, just stay with the breath: thoughts will come up in your head. That is natural, our minds are busy places. When the thoughts come, just let them pass through. Don't try to block them or keep them away, just let them through on their journey and then bring your attention gently back to the count and the breathing feelings. Write down all and any thoughts, feelings, sensations when you are done.
- ✚ Write the first thought that comes into your head.
- ✚ Who is the wise one you want to call up for yourself today? The one that nurtures and comforts you. Really get a very clear picture in your head of her: who is this person? What is her name? (Could also be a man, or a creature, or)
- ✚ Write her story: what is her calling/mission for the day? For you? She is there to serve you.
- ✚ What is her message to you today? Write it down and if you need to, put it on your phone so you can remember it.

DAY 4

- ✚ Start with same breathing again. Remember, stay with the 30 counts and the breath. When the thoughts come, just let them pass through. Don't try to block them or keep them away, just let them through on their journey and then bring your attention gently back to the count and the breathing feelings. Write down all and any thoughts, feelings, sensations when you are done.
- ✚ Write the first thought that comes into your head.
- ✚ Say hallo to the wise one from yesterday. Just see her. Is she the same today? Did she manage to stay with you yesterday or at least for a part of the day even if it was only for a couple of minutes. Was there another voice that kept her away? If so, who was this voice? Can you give her a name? (Mine is called Hester.) What does she say to keep the wise one away? Write it down. All her words or thoughts or actions that keeps the wise one from being seen. All of it.
- ✚ Read what you have just written. Is it true?
- ✚ What is the wise one's response? What is her answer to the critical voice above? Write it. Read it as often as you need to. Put it on your phone. Remember it.

DAY 5

- ✚ Start with same breathing again. Remember, just stay with the breath: thoughts will come up in your head. That is natural, our minds are busy places. When the thoughts come, just let them pass through. Don't try to block them or keep them away, let them through on their journey and then bring your attention gently back to the count and the breathing feelings. Write down all and any thoughts, feelings, sensations when you are done.
- ✚ Write the first thought that comes into your head.
- ✚ Right now, you are a hero: you are a hero and you have a quest. Write a description of you as a hero. If you want, play with this. Find the hero's body: how does s/he walk, sit, stand, move around. Don't just think about it, do it! Give the hero a name. What do others call this person? And then the fun thing: every hero has a quest, right? So, what is this hero's quest. (Don't censor: really just play with it. It can be as outlandish or weird or wonderful as you want it to be.) And then the last

thing: the hero has magic to help or assist: what is it? Can be anything, a tool, a weapon, a spirit animal, anything. Write the story of the hero, the quest and the magic. Don't have try to finish the story (it's a journey) – unless you want to - just the story of who this hero is, what they need to do, and what helps them to do it.

DREAMS: At the end of the week, read over the dream images that you have written. Is there a theme or a through line that you can recognise? Something that is coming up regularly. Don't try to analyse, just notice – understanding takes time and we cannot rush it as much as we might want to....

(Interesting thing about dreams: one of the many theories is that all the characters in our dreams are a part of ourselves. So, if you are dreaming of a man – that man is a part of you. E.g. if a dog bites you in your dream, it is a part of you that is 'biting' you. Does it help to think about your dreams in that way?)

WEEK 4: 29 January – 3 February 2018

Dreams: Read through the dreams (or dream images or feelings) that you have written so far. Is there a theme, or something that stands out for you? Make a note of it if there is.

Continue writing and noting your dreams. Even if it is just an image or a feeling; just stay aware of them. Dreams are an important part of our beings – they are a way for our minds to communicate with us.

DAY 1

New Breathing exercise: Breath in for 4 counts, out for 4 counts x 2. Then in for 5 counts and out for 5 counts. Keep adding a count up to as far as you can go. If that is 20 – excellent. If it is 12 also excellent. If it is 6 also excellent.... As high as you can go comfortably.

- ✚ Say hallo to the hero. Find her/him/it again. Remember how the hero moves and try it: walk, sit, etc. Really see if you can find the body for this being. Add some voice. Is there a specific song that the hero sings or likes? A dance? Write her/his/its name with your body. Your whole body. (If you feel silly – and hopefully you are not – remember you are alone where nobody can see you. You are allowed to be as silly as you want. Silliness can also be good for us.) Add the song or music or sound. There the hero is! Wow! Your hero-that is just so cool!
- ✚ Think about the quest: hmmm. What is it that the hero wants to achieve or go in search of or do? And the exciting thing: what is the magic that is available to this hero? Maybe it is a tool, or a person, or an animal? Say hallo to this guide helper.
- ✚ NOW: unfortunately, every hero's adventure has an obstacle. This is just the way adventures work. What is this (your very own) hero's obstacle? What is in the way of achieving what the hero has to do on the quest? Write it down or draw it. Try to be as specific as you can: like the wall journey we went on: exactly what is this obstacle? What does it look like, or feel like? Be very clear on what the hero needs to overcome to fulfil the quest and adventure.

- ✚ As always: check in with yourself and your body. Where is the energy sitting right now? Is there a sound you want to make, or a movement? Or maybe you just want to sit and breathe again. Do it! But please be absolutely sure that you are back in the here-and-now again. That you have left the hero's world for now.

DAY 2

New breathing again. Or if it is easier for you or feels more appropriate/right go back to the 30 counts breathing or even the one where you close one nostril: breathe in for 4, hold for 4, breathe out the other nostril for 6 and hold for 2. It really does not matter which breathing exercise you are doing, as long as you are breathing and your mind knows that you are calm and safe.

- ✚ Your hero: how is s/he/it doing today? Say hallo and how are you and listen! Write her/his/its name with your body. Your whole body. Add the song or music or sound. Is it the same as yesterday? Maybe a new song, or the same song with a different feeling, or it could be the same.
- ✚ Read over the obstacle you focused on yesterday. SO: to recap: you have the hero, the quest or adventure, the magic or helper, and the thing that wants to prevent the hero from doing what needs to be done – the obstacle. What happens next in this story? How does s/he/it deal with the thing standing in their way? Does s/he/it overcome it? How? Again, be very specific, not just: "I climbed over the wall", but "how did I climb over the wall". (If you understand what I am saying...?) Write it.
- ✚ Check in with yourself and your body. Where is the energy sitting right now? Is there a sound you want to make, or a movement? This movement thing is really important: our bodies often feel and message the stuff our thinking brains do not yet know, so it is healthy for us to listen to what the body is saying and really hear it. And remember, you don't have to try to force change. Sometimes all that is needed is the awareness and nothing more.

Maybe you just want to sit and breathe again. Do it! But please be absolutely sure that you are back in the here-and-now again. That you have left the hero's world.

DAY 3

Breathing again. Whichever breathing exercise it is that quietens your mind (even if just a little) and brings some calm (hopefully a lot of calm).

- ✚ Your hero: how is s/he/it doing today? Say hello and how are you and listen! Write her/his/its name with your body. Your whole body. Add the song or music or sound. Is it the same as yesterday? Maybe a new song, or the same song with a different feeling, or it could be the same.
- ✚ On with the adventure: you have now covered the quest, the magic or helper, the obstacle and either overcoming or not overcoming the obstacle; so: how does the story end. What is the last part of this adventure? What does the hero do?
- ✚ Write the story of this adventure as a story with a beginning, middle and end.
- ✚ Check in with yourself and your body. Where is the energy sitting right now? Is there a sound you want to make, or a movement? Or maybe you just want to sit and breathe again. Do it! But please be absolutely sure that you are back in the here-and-now again. That you have left the hero's world.

DAY 4

Breathing again. Whichever breathing exercise it is that quietens your mind (even if just a little) and brings calm.

- ✚ Remember the wise one from last week. If you need to, go back in your journal and find her again: who is this person? What is her name? And most importantly: what is her message to you today? What does she need to tell YOU today that will support you? Write it down, say it, put it on your phone, whatever will help you remember.
- ✚ We are moving a little closer to you today, so it is really important that you keep the wise one close. Tell the critical one to please go play somewhere else, because right now she is of no use to you whatsoever. Do it! Tell her!

- ✚ Read over the hero's story that you finished yesterday. Does this relate to your life as a woman in the real world? Again, try to be as specific as is safe for you to be. Try and see how this quest, the helper or magic, the obstacle and the end of the story, relate to your life now. Please write down all the thoughts and feelings that are coming up for you. Listen to yourself. Listen to your body. Take your time, be gentle and patient with yourself. Keep that critical voice away, she is not part of this process at all.
- ✚ Check in with yourself and your body. Where is the energy sitting right now? Is there a sound you want to make, or a movement? Or maybe you just want to sit and breathe again. Do it! But please be absolutely sure that you are back in the here-and-now again. Read the wise one's message again – as many times as you need to.

DAY 5

Centre yourself again: breathing, or a dance, or a song. Do whatever it is that brings calm. Just find that quiet spot inside where you know you are safe, and you are in touch with all of your being.

- ✚ Find the wise one again. Remember her name.
- ✚ What is her message to you today? what is her calling/mission for the day? For you? She is there to serve you. Write it down and if you need to, put it on your phone so you can remember it.
- ✚ Read yesterday's journaling. Is there anything you would like to add? Go for it. Now: does what you wrote in any way relate to a pattern, or way of being in relationships (any relationships – it does not only have to romantic relationships) that really bugs, that you know needs to change, but for some reason you are unable to change it. Before you know it, there you are in the same old situation again. It feels SO awfully familiar: you were sure it was going to be different, but nope, here it is again and you did not want it to be here. In some way that hero's obstacle keeps making its way back. Write it down. (For example: I am really good at and automatically fall into a pattern of rescuing or serving. And it gets me into all kinds of trouble: because other people become very used to Margie the rescuer who will do everything she can to save them. Which is all very fine and large, until I become exhausted and realise that I have

spent all my internal energy on other people and quite literally have not kept a reserve with which to rescue myself... and yes, it is tied into me being a woman. From the moment I was born, I was given that role; and for a long time, I pretty much measured my worth by it: if I was not rescuing someone, my being was worthless.)

- ✚ Find that wise woman again. One sentence: what does she have to say to this pattern of yours. NOT critical words: wise words that soothe the vulnerable side of you, because she understands.
- ✚ If you need to (and really be honest with yourself here: ask yourself what is happening for you right now) go back to the breathing or if your body is telling you something, listen to it. What does it want to do right now? Do it.

DAY 6

Give a good stretch. And a decent, good energetic shake out. Add the sounds that go with the shake, the ones that want to be heard right now. Breathe if that is working for you. But find the calm quiet place inside. Don't force, it is possible that it might take a while to get there, that is okay. Right in this moment you are safe. You can just be... whatever it is that you are.

Today, please be sure that you have enough time with nothing urgent waiting to be done. And that you are feeling safe inside. Know that you have the strength and courage to face all your demons: you have come this far in your life and that is pretty amazing! You do have the resources needed – remember the helper or magic in the hero's story. That is a part of you and who you are.

Please take your time today.

- ✚ If you were your own best friend, what would you say to you right now? Can be as simple as "It is so cool to see you", or it can be longer. Write it down. And please keep this best friend with you for the rest of the journaling. Also keep the critical voice away. She has no place in this process. She can take a rest for a while. Maybe even go on a holiday.
- ✚ Read over yesterday's writing. Add something if you want to, but the reading is not to censor or change – this is your truth and you have the right to it.

- ✚ And now the tough question: In terms of being a woman: what is your untold story? The story you struggle to tell. It is very possible that you know somewhere inside of you that it needs to be told but finding the courage to say it to somebody else can feel impossible. That is okay. Right now, just write it down (you can choose to share it or not share it with me later, that is your choice.). Write your truth: it is yours, and nobody have the right or can change it.
- ✚ Please be very aware of the emotions that come up in this process. Acknowledge them. They are part of your truth. If you feel safe that these feelings won't overwhelm you, allow yourself to feel them. They are important and the story you just wrote is part of what made you who you are: both the good and the bad. If you need to continue writing because of the feelings, then do so. They might need expression and acknowledgment.
- ✚ Be very gentle with yourself: what do you need to do right now that will be nourishing for you? Sing a song, draw a drawing, lie down and stare at the ceiling? Whatever it is, please do it? And keep the critical one away. You need to wise best friend right now. Be kind and gentle and grateful. You were very, very brave. Say thank you to yourself.

APPENDIX C

Script:

BODIES OF MEMORY / IMIZIMBA YESIKHUMBUZO:

The noise of silence – in process.

Margie: Good evening. Welcome. We are grateful that you are joining us as part of this specific moment of a journey we have been on. But before we start travelling, it is necessary to give you a little bit of a map of what this journey has been about up until now.

So, let me introduce the adventurers to you: **Miyo** (body name) and the child (body name) and... (indicates the 'ghost of silence' - **Noire** - dressed from head to toe in a black shroud reminiscent of Muslim women's 'jilbab' with her mouth covered in black cloth: the embodied 'Burden of Silence' who follows Miyo through the space with specific moments of self-representation.)

Separately and together we went on a journey to find some understanding for the patterns and (often) chaos in our lives as women. Those walls we all tend to walk into again and again even though we decided we will never put ourselves through this again. I open my eyes one day: and what do you know: here I am again and I have no idea of how I got here. The question we asked was whether looking at personal, family and ancestral culture (in the broadest sense of that word culture), could lead us to a deeper understanding of ourselves as women, helping us to make peace with our very personal histories. The walls each face: thorny barriers that will not give access, or low walls we can see across, but not climb over. The thinking is that maybe, just maybe there is wisdom to be gained from our ancestors and for the purpose of this process the women who have come before: who possibly, probably in some way faced the same questions and experiences. Those women who, science tells us, are part of the DNA of our cells. Memories we house in our bodies, in our cells, in our very beings. Maybe, if we grasp their impact, we could find some knowing of our personal patterns.

But how to listen to silence, and how to make sense of it when the cores inside scream silently with a deafening din that answers no questions, but deposit us in a vortex of no sense. When the only answer to urgent enquiry is more silence (indicating Noire).

So, tonight you are here not as spectators or audience members, but as witnesses to very personal truths. Truths we discovered in our bodies, which necessitates that they be expressed and shared through our bodies. And importantly, to see whether sharing some of the deeply personal stories to people we trust and love might break some of the silence that have kept these patterns hidden even from ourselves. This is the very first step we are taking in that direction, the first time that witnesses will accompany us into the attic. Is this intended to be theatre? No. It is intended to be a sharing of a specific moment of the process that we have embarked on. What will come after this, we do not yet know. We are hoping that tonight's experience will help us understand where to go next.

We want to share this moment of going into the attic with you: that place where the shadow lives. The poet tells us only those who dream can have nightmares. The storyteller implores us to throw a burst of light into the unconscious so that we may know what we are doing: what we really are doing, not what we think we are doing. And Jungian feminist, Marion Woodman, invites us to look into the dark, the scary places, the attic for the scared animal who has not been fed for a long time and own her as part of ourselves.

Keeping that in mind, the invitation is to honour the women who have come before, and the women we now are. And to respect the dignity they deserve.

So, before ascending into the attic, it is appropriate for us to get ready. Please can we form a circle, not too wide, it is okay we know we will not harm each other. Miyo please can you help me explain. Somebody is going to step into the circle and make a gesture which can be repeated. (Miyo demonstrates this, giving her a chance to 'read' the witnesses and to check in with herself.) That person will expand that gesture until they are sure it is expressing what they are feeling right now and then they will offer the gesture to somebody in the circle. This person receives it, they swap places, and the new person steps into the

circle and transforms the original gesture so that it expresses what they need to right in this moment. When they are satisfied, they offer it to somebody else in the circle and so on. (Miyo starts and passes her gesture to Margie who transforms it and passes it to another witness. Each witness has the opportunity to enter the circle. During this time, Miyo and Noire move off to two cushions on the floor. They sit facing each other and simply look into each other's eyes.

When all the witnesses have had the opportunity to transform and share their gesture, Margie leads them to this place.

Miyo and Noire look into each other's eyes for a long time (The silence settles and the witnesses experience it.)

Miyo: (low whisper): A child in me and you

Silenced

On her back she carries love, laughter

And hurt.

Silence.

Breaking, hurting, crying.

Culture ruling.

Limits

Self-limits

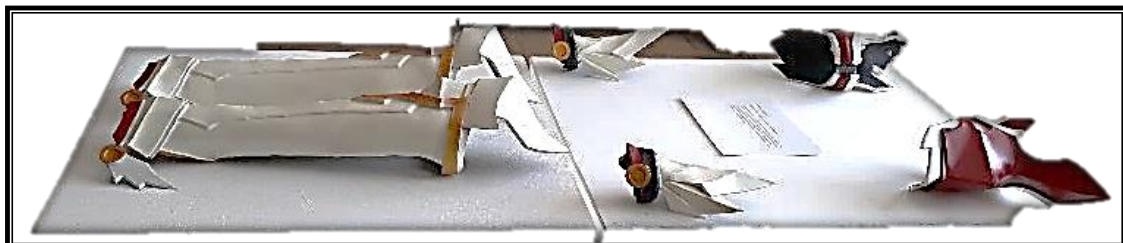
Roots.

The search for roots.

(She repeats the above embodying the specific gestures relating to the themes.)

THE HEROS

Noire: her hero is represented by an installation in the workshop room called *A Warrior in Progress*. This was true of Noire's exploration of the archetype: her hero was a work in progress and often too tired to emerge at all.



“As a woman we are always at war: with society, our families and ourselves. We have to build ourselves up as warriors of our own kind, ready to fight against whatever life throws at us. But we are works in progress, a warrior in training. Our armour is self-made: it buckles, it breaks, it doesn’t always work. But when it fails us, we start again and build a new, better set of armour to take into battle with us.”

Miyo: (During the story, she leads the witnesses up the stairs into the attic.) I would like to tell you a beautiful story. A story of a young bold beautiful girl. She stayed with her mother and siblings; and father. At home everything was quiet, lot of house rules. These were less fun times. Because they stayed far from family relatives, they were not allowed to go out and play with other kids.

So, this girl found joy in helping other people. She started by helping old people with carrying their bags and going to the shops for them. She later realised that there were children of her age who needed her help as well.

She then thought of a name for self. Hmmmm... Asiphe the hero. Her mission was to help and save people from self-hate and self-blame. Each and every day she would go around with her strong muscular body, her back strong and firm, carried by rooted giant legs. Lead by a sharp energetic head. Sharp enough to spot even little troubles. She gives hope and support and even solutions if possible. And if she can’t help, she takes you to where you will get help. She has connections you know....

So, whenever you wake up in the morning and see that the grass or sand in your yard is damp or wet as if there was mist... just know that Asiphe the hero was there, to see if you, her little friend, is still safe.



By the end of the story, Miyo has lead the witnesses up the narrow staircase and into the attic.

THE PROMISED LAND: Mother

Miyo: (As self but during the following she transforms into 'the mother' by putting on her soft towelling dressing gown and finding this woman's unique body): My story is the story of many stories. Of all the hurt, shame, love and secrets buried in our dark closet. Most importantly my story is a story of all the female souls in me. The women that made me, me.

Physical piece: 'The mother', pregnant, arriving in Cape Town with a new husband. The promised land. The relationship becomes violent and ends with her first hiding the 5/6-year-old, Miyo; and then fleeing. At the end of the piece, she puts Miyo into her red suitcase and hides her under the stairs. Miyo releases 'the mother's' body and embodies the child in the suitcase holding the suicide doll. After a long pause, Miyo gets up and hangs the doll over the staircase banister.



Miyo's corner

Back into 'the mother' and into "Dream": gathering beads, trying to put them into the bath, spilling them and collecting them. This gathering and spilling becomes more desperate: trying to hold it together and trying to find healing. Eventually she hangs a string of beads around the suicide doll's neck. She passes a second string to Burden of Silence who leads the witnesses to the vortex.

Vortex:



“The vortex speaks of the mind, a landscape plagued by the swirling mass of thoughts of feelings of the past, present and future. The speed at which the vortex moves differs from slow to fast, and it never rests. The action of being spun, being so caught up in your own head, brings about a feeling of dread and helplessness, and a fight to want to get out of the space. There is a longing for observation and clarity, plans of action and the ever popular “getting over it”. Forward, backward, the pattern stays the same, forcing you to complete never ending cycles of a going around and around while attempting not to be consumed by the darkness that plagues the vortex.”

Noire enters the vortex, walks it slowly and slowly exits. She invites Miyo to do the same and leaves space for any of the witnesses who might choose to do the same.

**GOING BACK IN HISTORY: Great-grandmothers:
a bird, an elephant and a monkey.**

Mossie - instinct



"A glimpse into the memory of a woman only remembered as "Mossie". The veil speaks to the maternal instincts, the want to hold, protect and shield from the harm of the world. It also speaks to the original safe space: the womb. The warm colours symbolize the colour of her fabrics, along with the colour and feel of the womb. The size speaks of the presence she had while alive. The feeling of being removed from the chaotic vortex to be I - the eye of the storm: an opportunity to stop, breathe and reflect."

Invitation to the witnesses: Lift the veil and step under it, let it engulf you. You may stay under the veil for as long as you want. Lift the veil again while stepping out.

THE CHILDREN: Innocents wounded.

Miyo: During the witnesses' experience of the veil, Miyo moves back to the red suitcase. She embodies a different child: her cousin, the woman child who is living with mental disability. She has a woman's body, and the mind of a 6-year old child. The emphasis for the child-woman's body is her neck and head: she looks with wonder and then sharply turns away as if what she sees is painful. When the witnesses complete the journey through the veil, Miyo attracts their attention: she is packing red and green knitted squares into the suitcase – the different pieces of herself – examining each carefully. Packing her secrets into the child Miyo's place of remembering. When she is done, she carefully closes the suitcase. Her secrets are packed hidden.

Next Miyo embodies her grandmother. She wraps a towel over 'the mother's' dressing gown, looks angrily at the suitcase, grabs it and drags it to the middle of the floor, in front of the cleansing bath.

Miyo as grandmother: (English translation of isiXhosa text): They keep coming to this house. I woke up with a dream. And I have been dreaming the same thing for a long time now. I am dreaming of a big rat, coming in and out of the house and eating my food. And then I tell you something is wrong. But then I know no one ever listens to me. (She opens the suitcase and starts emptying out the cloth.)

I normally see C's reaction when he is here. Something does not sit well with me. And then I realise that all along C has been threatened. One morning she was taking a bath and I looked at her breasts and I could see that they were big. And her stomach was also big. And then I asked, "C, what is happening?" and she started crying. And then when I took a closer look, I saw that it was already done. I asked, "C, who did this to you?" And then she said, "Ubuti B, Mama." I ask her, "If I called people, would you say that in front of them?" And she said, "Yes". (The grandmother is affected by this news: this is a family member she loves who stands accused of sexually abusing her granddaughter whom she has raised from early childhood.)

All along B has been watching my moves. So, he comes to the house and makes C his wife and now that C is pregnant, he is quiet. He has nothing to say. (She angrily empties the contents of the suitcase, all the while swearing.)

So, now to show that this is a disgrace, and it is a curse; here there has never been twins. These are the first twins in our family. Even now, there is the grave of the twins, C's babies. next to our house. I get so emotional when I think of you, C. (She continues to swear, closes the suitcase and takes it back to Miyo's space in the corner, but leaving C's secrets and shame scattered on the floor.)

Miyo: (Adding a big headscarf to 'the mother's' dressing gown and grandmother's towel): I was 5 years when I went to the Eastern Cape for a funeral, and I remember seeing my great-grandmother for the first time. She was nothing like the women in Cape Town. She was strong and her feet like an elephant's. She had this big doek - she used to hide the tea bags in there - and lots and lots of layers. And I remember her first look.

(She embodies her great-grandmother, taking her time and moving slowly, eventually fixing her gaze on somebody specific and looking at her for a long time.)

She looked at me for a very long time. And there I was just standing, frozen. (She embodies her 5-year old self.)

(Finding the great-grandmother's body again): "Ngunomdakazana kabana na lona endlini yam?" She asked, "Whose dark child is this in my house?"

Then one of the uncles replied, "She is your great granddaughter, 'the mother's' daughter. She is from the amamfene (English translation: baboon) clan, remember they paid lobola."

(The great-grandmother stares at the child for a long time and finally says): Ngoku angayi kwezinye imfene nje? (English translation: Well, then she must go and live with the monkeys.) And then she just turned and walked away. (At the end of this Miyo embodies the child fearfully staring after her great grandmother.)

Miyo: (Starts the following as the 5-year old child, but slowly releases the body and moves back to the red suitcase corner whilst delivering *Mourning my Lost Virginity*.)

Isikhalo sezomini senza intsholo ekrexezqyo ezindlebeni zam

senza umdintsi nobumnyama ebusweni bam

Mhla ndiziqenya ngobumbejembeje bezivatho zobuntombi bam suke wena
wabukrazula

Savakala isithonga sokuqhekeka kodonga mhla nditsitsho isijwili ndilamla isenzo
kwizenzo zakho

Ewe ungumenzi mna ndingu menziwa

Mhla kwakuhlokoma ilali ingcewenga amagama entetheni besithi ilala kwantaba
ngentaba ndaqala ndaqondo nakweyam intaba efikile lenkungu

Ndadliwa zizagweba ngokuvuka mva babe sebumnkile ubuntombi bam

From that day till now I have been afraid to release the secret in me

Facing the impediments of this dark life blocking my journey through happiness

In my mind I still have questions that no spoken word can answer

Kuba ndingathi maxhalanga ndidleni ngingekonganyelwa zintshutshiso

Mhla le inyembezi zingqamlezu mbombo ndakvanga ukuba

I am that widow mourning for a long-lost virginity

Intliziyo iyakukhweba tu uxolo lwam kuwe

I weep for my origins

I am that widow

Izikhalo zamaxhoba zivusa amanxeba asele apholo

Bayaphaxulana abaphambi baxela oxam xa ndibuza iphi na inyathi

Ziyakrutha khuthana ingcinga ayanxanwa amaxhalanga

Intliziyo yam ihlabela umhobe ndakucinga ngobuntombi bam

Inene ndiqhawuka unobathana ndakucinga ilishwa lam

Xobula inzondo entliziweni yam

Ukhulule izila emphefumleni wam

Ubeke ithemba endleleni yam

Uwavule ngenkathalo amathanga am

Ubuyiselse ubuntombi bam

Izoxola intloko yam

Akujonge amehlo am

Ze ikulhembe kwakhona itempile katata

(English translation: The cries from those days are making a terrible noise in my ears and a darkness on my face.

When I was proudly shown the beauty of my virginity, you tore it apart.

We heard walls cracking, when I was crying out loud, stopping you from your doings.

I was the victim and you were the doer.

The day when the village started saying things: "today is my day and tomorrow will be yours." Then I realised that this was my day. I suffered the consequences of waking up last and my virginity was already gone.

From that day till now I have been afraid to release the secret in me. Facing the impediments of this dark life blocking my journey through happiness.

In my mind I still have questions that no spoken word can answer.

I wish I could say the vultures must kill me before I face the consequences.

Every day, tears cross my face when I think

My heart totally wipes my forgiveness for you

I weep for my origins. I am that widow.

The cries of the victims now bring back the wounds that I thought have healed

The elders can't say where this started. No-one has answers for my questions.

My thoughts are playing hide and seek

My heart sings an anthem when I think of my virginity. I break into pieces when

I think of my curse

Peel the hate from my heart. And take off the mourning of my soul

Put hope in my journey

And gently open my thighs

and put back my virginity

So that my head can find peace

So that my eyes can look at you.

Then my father's temple can trust in you again.

Miyo: By the end of *Mourning my Lost Virginity*, Miyo has removed all the pieces of clothing of 'the mother', grandmother and great-grandmother. As the child she opens the suitcase and sits down in it. She one by one takes out the

symbols of her childhood and places them on the floor next to her. First a yellow cloth on which she places a baby doll with a halo of white flowers, next the boxed child and lastly the calabash: the symbol of culture.



She takes her time to register each object and its meaning to her life. Finally, she picks up the baby doll and sits with it. She picks up the boxed child, slowly gets up, removes the suicide doll from the banister whilst wrapping the string of white beads she had earlier placed around its neck, around her wrist. She walks to the cleansing bath and places the two dolls in front of the bath. She lights three candles – white, blue and yellow; and performs a cleansing ritual for herself. (This was never formally scripted as it was important to allow her the space to ask for the cleansing she felt she needed at that moment.) At the end of the ritual, she picks up the candles and looks at Noire who has followed her.

Noire: (Opposite Miyo with the witnesses between the two women): She lights three sticks of incense and sits down on a stool as a Muslim woman would. She bows her head so that the hood covers her face. In contrast to Miyo, the *burden of silence* is still very present for this woman.

Miyo: (Leading the witnesses out of the attic): We are the foundation of life and some would say *thina sishlahla sobom*. (struggling to open the doors for those in need).

We were born with empty hearts, no eyes to see, no mind to think fearing nothing but listening to the beat of my heart struggling to open doors for those who are in need. *isiXhosa sithi intaka yakha ngoboyabenye* (we help each

other) with their voices delivering the rhythm of sadness. Tears and fears as well.

I gave birth to a baby I once was pregnant with. A philanthropist, love, unity uxolo (peace), numanyano (humanity). Ndiyincambo (I am the root) a foundation of life. Sandla sam sibukhali etafileni (My hands are sharp on the table, so I cut off hunger). Ndiyagakatya ngebozo indlala, ndiyigqhebi iduma endoseleyo (I beat whatever strife). Madoda asemzini (men), we are not here to offend you. But we are here to emphasise the power of amakhosikazi ngoba singamatshijolo, nama tshijolokazi (by nature, we are rocks. We are unbeatable) by nature. We are the foundation of life and some would rather say thina sihlehla sobom (struggling to open the doors for those in need).

Noire: (Back in the workshop room): She takes the covering off the last installation: a wedding dress which has small pieces of paper pinned to it.

"What she once aspired to be vs What she should aspire to be"

Definition of bride: a woman on her wedding day or just before and after the event.

Instruction: choose a piece of paper from the dress and break it off from its thread. Let the words written on your piece of paper go with you beyond the space.

"Every girl dreams of her wedding day at some point or another. It is her biggest dream/goal in life: this fantasy wedding with the man on her dreams. But that bride, that person, isn't all one should aspire to be in life. She's an out of reach fantasy for many. Instead, the focus should shift on what we could be and the life lessons we have learnt so far to shape us into better human beings. These lessons should be shared with others to pull them out of a fantasy and into the reality of being alive, into the dark and hurt, but most importantly, into a space that allows them to transform themselves with advice and truths that can be passed from person to person."

Noire and Miyo: When the witnesses have explored the wedding dress, the find Noire and Miyo back on the same cushions as at the beginning: facing each other but this time holding hands.

Margie: As an end to this part of the journey, it might be appropriate to get rid of some of the dust that might have filtered down from the attic. Please can we form a circle again.

Give yourself a big hug, and we will take three deep breaths together.

Now please place a hand on your heart and the other on your tummy. We are going to take three deep breaths together again.

Please turn to a person standing next to you. Each partner takes a turn to dust the other off.

We thank you for taking this step of the journey with us. I thank and honour the women who have shared deeply personal stories with us tonight. There is paper and writing material available for anybody who would like to express anything further. And if you need to speak about the experience, I am available to talk. Thank you.

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