

**This document consists of two (2) parts:**

**Part A: Thesis**

**Part B: Portfolio**

Part A: Thesis

**Hierdie keer gaan nie maklik wees nie**

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Prosa versameling

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Abstract:

My tesis bestaan uit twee versamelings van prosa wat verwant en in noue verband met mekaar tree. Die prosa is fragmentaries en kort maar verbind met 'n oorkoepelende storie wat in beide Afrikaans en Engels voorgelê word. Die Afrikaanse deel van my tesis ondersoek die verlede, en die Engels die toekoms. My algemene bron van inspirasie vir die struktuur en voorlegging van die tesis word verkry vanaf die klassieke raamverteller konvensie soos gebruik in *One Thousand and One Nights*, hierdie konvensie maak gebruik van raamfragmente wat binne 'n groter geheel gevind kan word. Dit is juis hierdie komplekse struktuur wat dit moontlik maak om tyd, hede en verlede asook die toekoms, te kan ondersoek en uit te beeld. Verder maak dit dit ook moontlik om gekoppelde herinneringe, gedagteneigings, en fantasieverhale te kan gebruik as die dryfkrag van die oorkoepelende storie. Met betrekking tot kontemporêre fiksie vind ek die meeste aanklank en invloed by Sandra Cisneros se boek *House on Mango Street*. Ek het by hierdie verhaal geleer hoe om vignette en kortverhale onafhanklik maar met 'n motief-verbinding aan mekaar te koppel. Tematies gesproke handel my tesis oor herinneringe, nostalgie, familieverhoudings, die dood asook afsluiting en aanbeweging. In terme van hierdie temas vind ek dat Nathan Trantraal se *Chokers* en *Survivors*, en Noudat Slapende Honde deur Ronelda S. Kamfer my die meeste insae gee oor die verhouding tussen Afrikaans en Engels in die literatuur. Verder is Loftus Marais se taalgebruik en die vermenging van taal in *Staan in die Algemeen Nader aan Vensters* ook insiggewend.

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## Huis op 'n Heuwel

Daar's 'n huis op 'n heuwel, en ek het as kind daar gebly. Ek het daar grootgeword. Ek het daar leer stap en val en praat en lag. Ek het 'n deel van myself in die matte en mure en tuin agtergelos toe my ouers die een jaar begin skei het. Toe my ma oornag besluit het ons moet uittrek; my ma het nog altyd haar emosies ontvlug en sodoende het sy my deur haar moedering die tegnieke van onderdrukking en weghardloop geleer.

Die ou huis is die enigste plek waar ek al ooit tuis gevoel het, die meeste soos myself gevoel het. Dit is die plek waar my oupa doodgegaan het. Waar ek rondgehardloop het en as kind gespeel het. Waar ek TV gekyk het. En met my mannetjies in die voorste sitkamer gespeel het. Dit was grootword en seerkry. Dit was huil en lag.

Dis die plek waar ek weggekruip het in die geel kombuiskas in die hoek en deur die gleufies die wêreld daarbuite in stilte aanskou het.

Waar my honde, Ounooi en Husky, en toe Buddi en Husky en toe Buddi en Merlot in die agterplaas gespeel het. Twee honde. Daar was altyd twee op 'n slag.

My voete het die modder van die winter deurtrap op die agterste grasperk waar die honde die gras weggehardloop en uitgetrap het.

Ek het saam met my nefies, Gerrit en Jacques en Beau en en en en geswem, gelag en gekuier en Playstation gespeel en Desemberavakansies gehad.

Desemblers was die beste omdat almal altyd by ons huis kom kuier en bly het. Ons groot huis wat almal omhels het. Ons groot huis wat almal wou beskerm het.

Ons het Strand toe gegaan en sandkastele gebou, wat in hindsight ons geleer het oor transience en die lewe, dis nou wanneer die branders stadig maar seker als wat ons gebou het gebreek het. Hooggety, laaggety. Slakkies wat uit die sand uit borrel en met hulle groen skulpies en wapper-rok pluus-pote die oseaan invaar. Die koue see van die Kaap.

Winters en somers. Tyd. Onbekampete en ongedefineerde tyd. Boundaryless soos die drome van kinders, soos my eie, wat soos kites in die wind vlieg.

Hierdie was 'n plek waar ek nooit alleen gevoel het nie.

Dit was hemel. Dit was heiligdom. Dit was myne, maar ook almal wat daar kom kuier het s'n.

Buite in die tuin het ek die sade van my lewe geplant. Daar is 'n boom wat so oud soos ek is. Onthou hy my? Het hy al kinders gekry? Ek het die boom geklim, in sy arms gesit, en die wilde wêreld van my agterplaas aanskou.

“Kom Buddi, kom Husky, kom Ounooi, kom Merlot.”

Kom. Terug. Huistoe.

Dit het my sewentien jaar gevat om te besef wat ek daar agtergelos het. Dit het my tyd gevat om te besef dat die trauma van die sudden departure my toe laat slaan het. En dat ek op my laaste aand daar 'n tipe spell gedoen het.

Harry Potter het my geleer van die Room of Requirement. En spells. En die mag van kinders en verbeeldings. My kamer was my eie Room of Requirement. Dit was die kamer waar ek die

meeste tyd spandeer het, waar ek met my hamsters en mannetjies gespeel het. En waar ek vir skoolvakke prober leer het, maar meeste op die kaste rondgeklim het. Waar die hanswors onder die bed gebly het – die een wat my onder die bed wou intrek. My vrese kweek verlange.

Die jaar net voor die storm begin het, het ek in Harry Potter se wêreld ingespring, 'n tydelike ontvlugting van die storm op die horison. Ek het hierdie boeke op my suster se pienk, opblaasswembad-Barbie-stoel gelees, in die voorste sitkamer wat op die Helderberg uitkyk. Die dae was lank. Die lug was warm. My broek was nat. My vingers klam.

“Mr and Mrs Dursley of number four Privet Drive ...”

“Kom ons gaan na die huis toe ...” het ek vir my nefie gesê daardie aand. Die laaste aand. Ek het in my kamer gaan sit wat presies was soos wat dit altyd was. Die hele huis was leeg. Maar my kamer het die langste agtergebly. Ek het geweier om my goed te pak. Dalk as ek lank genoeg uitgehou het sou my ma haar mind verander. En dalk sou ek nie hoef die plek wat my styf bewaar het te laat gaan nie.

“Dis reg, let's go.”

Die huis is donker en leeg. Daar is niemand of niks nie. Die ligte en kamers wat altyd so helder gebrand het is dof en dood. Dis net oupa wat nog deur die gange loop en uit sy kamer uitstap en op die drumpel kom staan en vir my kyk terwyl ek TV kyk. Oupa wat 'n swart bol energie geraak het wat lank na sy dood my nogsteeds opgepas het. Hoe kan my ma verwag dat ek al hierdie moet agterlos? My tuiste. My oupa. My geel, soete herinneringe wat die mure soos was bedek.

Ek en my nefie stap deur die huis van buikholte tot in die slaapkamerskouers. Tone: die tuin, buik: die garage. En die donker kamers van die onderste gedeelte van die huis. Maag en pens: kombuis. Borskas: die braaikamers. Skouers: die slaapkapers. Kop: die dak en uitkykpunt wat my toelaat om vry te wees en alles wat altyd in die huis aangegaan het te vergeet.

Ons het eenslag 'n video gemaak waar ons 'n fêke sang kompetisie gehou het. Ons het mekaar bang gemaak in die sonbedkamer. En ons het vir die eerste keer dagga gerook in Jennifer, ons bediende, se kamer. Ons het hotel-hotel in die gymkamer gespeel met geld wat ek by ToyJoy gekoop het. Soveel tyd. Soveel verbeelding. “Ek gaan nooit vergeet wat dit is om te verbeel nie!” het ek myself eendag lank lank gelede belowe.

Ek maak die garagedeure oop en hulle kraak en steun soos moeg mense. Oumense wat nie meer op hulle eie kan staan nie. Ek onthou die tafeltennis toernooie wat ons hier gespeel het.

“Wat dink jy aan?” vra my nefie my.

“Ek weet nie. Niks.” Die trane wat in my oogbanke en traankliere vassit, brand. Ek mag nie huil nie. Ek kan nie huil nie. Ek is uit oefening, want ek het dit te lanklaas gedoen. En wie huil nou oor 'n huis anyway.

Die laaste aand wat ons in die ou huis rondgewarrel het, het ek aan die mure geraak en hulle verfkloppe soos braille gelees. Elke donker oomblik swem vol herinneringe voor my. Deur die garage en by die trappe op. Deur die kombuis waar ek weggekruip het in die kas en verby die sitkamer waar ek met my mannetjies gespeel het. Verby die braaikamer waar my gans Petrus voorheen op die oop blad gebly het.

Verby die TV-kamer, waar ek soveel van my tyd spandeer het op hoërskool, en op by die twee trappies waar Oupa se swart spooklyf my kort-kort dopgehou het.

Trap stilletjies verby Ouma en Oupa se ou slaapkamer waar ek tussen hulle gelê het en stories geluister het op die radio, of by Ouma, of selfs uit boeke.

In my kamer in, vir die laaste keer.

“Kom ons rook ‘n bietjie dagga” sê ek meer as wat ek vra.

My nefie knik en ek vat ‘n joint en steek dit aan. Een trek.

Die mat in my kamer begin helder te brand en ‘n sirkel word uit die vloer gekerf. Helder kleure en wat blyk soos die diepste energieke dele van die huis en my childhood, speel voor my oë af.

“Wat sien jy?” vra my nefie.

“Presies wat ek vanaand moes...”

Dit was in daardie oomblik wat ek besef het dat ek nie deur my hardkoppigheid en wyering om my bokse te pak die inevitable kan vermy nie. My ma en almal anders is klaar uit. Ek is die laaste een wat oorbly in die huis. Die guardian van die huisgeraamte.

My oë glinster met die moontlikheid van die magiese gat. Ek het op daardie selfde plek soveel ure gesit en meditate. Ek het op ‘n punt so goed geraak dat ek myself vir ure lank in ‘n beswyming kon vasvang.

“Is jy oraait?”

Ek knik en onthou die laaste keer wat my nefie daai gevra het, “Onthou jy daai slag toe ons gemeditate en ons daai weird vrou langs die forest en die rivier gesien het?”

“Ja daai was freaky.”

“Die luslet ... ek sien nou ‘n gat voor my ... ek wonder wat dit is”

My geestesliggaam tree van die bruin kis af waarin ek al my speelgoed gestoor het en waar ek al my Playstation, nat-swembroek, Desemberdae saam met nefies deurgebring het.

“Ek gaan vir ‘n tydjie weird wees. Afswitch. Dis nou als net te veel vir my. Kom jy saam?” menende gaan jy saam met my in die magiese droomwêreldgat klim?

“Nee, is jy mal?”

Maar voor ek kan antwoord, raak ek ‘n zombie. Dissociate. Disintegrate. En stoor ek die belangrikste deel van my in die belangrikste plek vir my. Abeliastraat se huis.

Ek het aan die begin gedink dat ek terug gaan kom in die toekoms en die huis weer gaan koop en alles gaan normaal wees. Of dat ek dalk vir oulaas op die dak gaan klim, of blaai en briefies agter my lessenaar gaan uitvis.

Maar ek besef nou dat ek in die toekoms gaan terugkom, al klaar teruggekom het om iets op te tel wat ek vyftien jaar terug in die huis agtergelos het. Myself.

## **Gistergeel**

Agter die skerm van vandag. Kruip daar 'n verlede weg. Tussen woorde se stiltes sien ek myself as kind. Bang. Myself as hond. 'n Ding wat deur ouers se skerp klanke gesny was.

Daar is meubels in 'n ou huis en die jare se terugdink het hulle met vormlose denk-doeke bedek. Die oomblik wat ek die herinnering betree, verruil hulle stofstories en amberglinster verhale.

Ek gaan sit voor die spleet van nou en dan en lok die beelde uit die stowwerige skaduwees uit. Die huis begint raas met skellende ouerlike stemme uit die duisternis stap 'n amper-iemand mens-ding nader. En ek besef vandag se onseker-angs was gister se nodige skuilplek.



## **Skoen**

Rooi leer. Harde rubber sool. Vuil. Ek ruik jou voet vir 'n oomblik in dit. Die reuk, én jy, pis my af. Ek haat jou. Soos 'n pappegaai wat in 'n sekonde sy pupil kan verklein en 'n mens pik, besluit ek so. Emosionele wipplankryer. Dis ek. Vergrotende pupilman. 'n Kalm pappegaai. 'n Kwaad vol-nikke naai.

Jou skoen lê in die ou oom met die verhoringde vingers se yard. Ek lag. Jy huil.

## **Ouma Joefie se Melkkos**

Ek haat my ouma se melkkos.

Twee koppies papgekookte macaroni wat nes dooie uitgeholde sigaretstompies in “n sop van melk en maizena dryf, doen dit net nie vir my nie. As jy dit eet, kleef dit nes houtlym aan jou verhemelte vas en as jy soos ek, dit soos “n honger hond op een slag insluk, verskroei dit die sensitiewe mondmembrane.

Daar is “n sagte, formele klop aan die deur. Ek weet omdat my ore fyn geoefen is. Ek weet dis either: “n dominee, boemelaar of verlangse familielid wat iets nodig het.

“Maak die blerrie deur oop!” skree my ma uit een van die holtehoekies van ons huis.

Die stoom borrel en blaas uit die kombuis uit soos wat my ouma werskaf en macaroni proe: „Mmm ... te hard“, en dan nog papper kook. “n Houtlepel word hard getik op “n pot se rand, drie tikke meen „Not die damn ek nie!“

Die invisible oog van responsibility skaats deur die gang en bollemakiesie oor die bank op my. „Not die blêriewil ekke nie“ dink ek soos wat my lamsakkigheid deur tierlantynjies soos verantwoordelikeheidsin, skuldegevoelens en pligsgetroutheid disrupt word.

Die klop is nou harder, en die skaam timid klop van tevore word vervang met “n „Ek ruik die fokken pypkaneel, maak die donnerse deur oop“ intensie. Die resep vra vir “n kwartlepel sout, maar my ouma meet nie met lepels of koppies nie. Sy meet met palms en die akkuraatheid van “n semi-verwasemde oog. Sy kook op gevoel. En dit is seker hoekom sy twee koppies suiker moet byvoeg om die klier-pekelende soutsmaak te versier.

Tok-tok-tokkelok

My pa is missing in action. Hy slaan imaginary gholfballe en droom van vryheid en visvang. Hy droom van “n lewe sonder kinders. Hy dink aan die pa wat hy nooit gehad het nie. Die enigste vriend wat my ma hom toegelaat het, ons African grey papagaai Wally. En sy broer wat altyd alles gekry het terwyl hy, my pa, ou onderbroke moes dra.

Die skemer verskroei die lug buite. Die lug bloei pomelo. Die televisie ritsel advertensieklanke en knaag deuntjies met visuele flikker-stimulasie wat veronderstel is om jou, die voyeuristiese kyker, se aandag te trek, of dalk breinaanvalle te induce. Oopkyktyd is “n oefening in patience en selfbeheersing, dis waar mense begin leer om hulself in te hou en te straightjacket, en woede vas te byt en klem in “n „Als is okei, glo my!“ fashion.

“Boeta, daar’s iemand by die verdomde deur, waar is jy!” ek wurm myself onder die groot kussings in en gaan lê in die gleuf agter dit sitvlakkussings, met die rugkussings voor my. Nou is ek “n bank.

Die macaroni dryf en kook en simmer in die sout-suiker maizena sop.

“Pis dun” hoor ek my ouma met haarself praat en ek verbeel my dat sy die resep in the moment verander en nog “n eetlepel maizena in water oplos en byvoeg. Na dit moet sy vir volroommelk kompensate en 200 ml by die huidige 1 liter voeg. Koskook is “n balancing act. Dis bietjie van die, bietjie van daai, en „Oh shit“ té veel van daai.

My ma spring finally op en haar tree verstewig die teëls in hulle fondasie in.

“Seker nou weer “n klomp beddaars” brom sy.

Die bank is lekker. Dis warm. Dis soos ons kombuiskas se skuiling, maar net meer gemaklik.

Ons groot voordeur vlieg oop. En die reënboogkleurige gekerfde pelikaan skrik en vlieg vir “n oomblik deur die kleurvolle, verniste reënwood. Die oom wat dit vir ons gemaak het was “n weirdo. Die blonde poniestert oom met sy oorbelle en sweetpakbroek.

“Naandsê mevrou ...” hoor ek die dominee se stem.

Ek boor myself dieper in die bank in. Gaan die dominee my ma vertel dat ek te veel vrae vra? Dat ek geweet het die Bybel 66 boeke in het? Of dat ek Sondagskool al vir twee weke skip?

My ma se stem bloos en sy versoet van “n norsjors na “n kondensmelkfonteintjie van vrolikheid.

“Net “n oomblik dominee ...” wasem my ma se stem oor, dan is sy weg omdat sy die deur saggies toedruk en op my ouma gil.

“Ma ... ma ... die dominee is hier!”

My ouma se gehoor is soos haar sig. Sy hoor soms goed, ander tye, as die wind te kwaai waai, hoor sy niks nie.

“Hoe nou?” roep sy met die houtlepel in haar mond.

Ek hoor hoe sy die houtlepel langs die plaat neersit en dit beteken al die bestanddele het saamgesmelt en Ouma Joef se melkkos is klaar. Die ontrafelde macaroni dryf nou op die gewenste manier in die kaneel-besproete melk en maizena mengsel rond.

“Die dominee ... is hier!” sê my ma weer, sy maak die deur oop en glimlag vinnig vir die dominee.

“Verskoon tog dominee, my ma is “n bietjie ... hardhorend”.

“Nou wat die hel moet ek daaraan doen!” roep my ouma van die kombuis af, en dan onthou sy, en roep my pa wat lug slaan in die garage, die twee loop reg agter die bank waar ek lê en verpapie.

Ek voel “n melkerige hand wat vir my voel en soek.

“Jy ook jou klein bogger!”

Die hele familie loop op die tempo van “n begrafnis optog na die sitkamer.

“Hoe kan ons help, dominee?” vra my ma as die leier en mondstuk van die familie.

My ouma speel met haar valstande, my pa grip nogsteeds “n gholfstok en ek aanskou my vlindervlerke.

Die dominee gee “n onsekere kuggie wat beteken hierdie is nie official business nie. Sy vrou glimlag met pienk deegwangetjies en haar beste floral rok.

“Ek en Magriet wou weet of julle sal belangstel in “n reeks *Wêreldspektrums* vir Boeta?”

Ons almal gee “n verligte sug en belowe ons sal altyd ons Bybel lees en kerk toe gaan.

“Is dit dan so stil by die kerk?” vra my ouma, “verskoon tog die melkkos kort nog so paar tittels kaneel!”

Ek vra natuurlik dadelik “wat’s *Wêreldspektrums?*” en my ma knyp my linkerboud wat beteken dat ek my „bek moet hou“.

Sy sien ’n plaas se geld wat op die Suidooster dans, ’n plaas in die middel van nêrens met geen aanvraag nie, maar nogsteeds.

Later die aand sit ons familie om die tafel, ons bid, en ons eet die melkkos wat dik gekook het met die skaars sigbare macaroni wat al lankal ontbind het. In die sitkamer staan daar ’n nuwe boks ensiklopedieë half-oop op die tafel. Die prys van skuld en ’n paar Sondag se afwesigheid van die kerk af.

## **Kombuiskas**

Daar's 'n balletjie op my tong. Hy sal seker later afbeweeg na my vingerpunte toe. Dalk as ek my oë toemaak, kan ek 'n mot wees, dan sou ek kon wegvlieg, en die familieskeiding sou my nie spin nie.

My ouers hardloop heen-en-weer en skree op mekaar agter 'n geslote kamer deur. Alles is onderstebo. My last refuge is die kombuiskas. Die plek tussen plekke. Die plek waar stilte druis en grits-grits en waar die wêreld reduced word na dit wat ek deur die horisontale gleuf in die kas kan sien.

Ek sien niks. Ek hoor niks. Ek hoor eintlik meer as niks. Ek hoor die geluid wat jy hoor as jy te lank na niks luister. Die geluid wat party mense bang maak en dryf na die blêrende skougronde toe.

Die sagte suig van fokol, 'n self-generated sonbesie sirene.

Die stilte fluister in my oor. Ek hoor nie wat sy sê nie, maar ek weet as sy lank genoeg fluister, en ek noukeurig luister, dat ek 'n sekere gevoel gaan begin kry. Grits-grits, beweeg ek rond in die kas. My asemhaling clutch af van vinnig na stadig.

Gaan my pa my hierdie keer kom soek soos wat hy altyd doen as ek weghardloop en wegkruipertjie in die huis speel. Gaan my ma op my kom skel en my gat kom warm maak, soos wat sy altyd doen as ek nie haar sin volg nie? Of gaan ek net hier staan en voel asof ek 'n klein precious pêrel op my tong balanseer. Dalk, of miskien, beide.

Die blikkieskos en ou spaghetti leer my van stilword. Hulle leer my van meditation en enlightenment. Hulle invite my om na die stilte se lullaby te luister en om daardie gevoel te kry dat ek 'n invisible BB-gun koeël tussen my duim en vinger kan rol en vasvang. Die ding wat ek doen as goed begin ontrafel.

Die ding wat ek doen as angstigheid haar suur asem in my gesig begint blaas.

### **Oop-toe**

Jy loop op en af. Iets pla jou. Die yskas maak oop. Die yskas maak toe. Fok. Die yskas se deur staan al vir 2 ure oop. Jy hoor die borrel van karre buite. Jy hoor 'n homeless wat met homself praat "Ghala ma ghala. MA GHALA MA GHAL. Ghala ma ghala ghamma ghalla maghal!"

## **Kakker-jakkers**

Dis te vroeg en ek raak koud en nat wakker; ek swem en verdrink in liggaamswaters. Die lakens en kussings is besweet.

„Haat sweet, haat bed, haat hierdie huis,“ dink ek terwyl my kop soek-soek vir ’n dryspot op die kussing.

My morsige bure het ’n paar weke terug sak en pak gespat en net ná dit het ek begin middernagtelike visitors onthaal.

Grrrts grrrts, hoor ek klanke wat uit die kombuis uit kom „...dis daai kontlike kakkerlakke wat my wakkerjaag met hulle stokpote en soekende baarde.“ Nes ek dink aan „stokpote“ voel ek hoe iets rondom my tone kriewel. Ek begint gril van voet se hak tot vingernael se hoek.

Ek dink elke aand wat my yskas lewe kry, en beginne brom, aan hulle. Hoofletter Hulle. Die hulle wat in daardie gleuf langs die kombuiskas bly. Ek weet hulle is daar, maar het vir „hulle“ nog nooit self gesien nie. Dalk karjakker hulle buite omdat hulle se slaapskreef volle okkupasie bereik het. „Sies ... kots“

Noudie aand het ek ’n veererige voet in my slaap gevoel. ’n Dwalende herfsmot dalk. Dis either dit, óf my eie fokken verbeelding. Ek kan nie my gedagtes besig hou nie, ek wonder „hoe lyk daai nes van hulle? Dalk is dit ,n hoop stront en eksogeraamtes wat netjies op ’n hokie gepak is?“

My foon lê langs my, ek kan nie my vingers van Google af weerhou nie “How does a cockroach nest look” tik ek net gou, net vinnig, net vir interest-sake in. Hulle wys nie hoe die ding lyk nie maar hulle praat van ’n reuk. My neus replicate die bedompige nat, poef kakkerlak-sweetreuk, en nou ruik my hele kamer (en neus) soos bedompige bedelaar.

“Slaap jy lekker?” fluister ’n papierritsel stem. “n Glimlag kriewel oor my mond en ek wil-wil antwoord “Ja, nogal!” Maar ek raak skielik wakker en ek proe nogsteeds bedompigheid.

Teen die muur flits-vlieg daar iets. Ek spotlight die muur met my foon. „Nie kakkerlak. Nie muggie. Maar mot. Harmless.“ Klik en calculate my brein. Ek het nie ’n probleem met motte of muggies nie, hulle is net sagte veervoete en stofvlerkies.

Grrts grrts, hoor ek weer iets tussen die Pick ,n Pay sakke rond griessel en gritsel. Ek staan op en sit die kombuis lig aan.

“GOEIE GOD!”

Die kitchensink het drie medium-groot ligbruin fokkers wat met mekaar staan en kak bak (dalk naai) om ’n waterdruppel. Langs die rommelsak is daar ’n moerse main-konyn ma ene. Sy kyk op en dan ... onder die sak in.

Ek gryp die *Mortein* en spuit die lewende fok uit dit uit. Als. Die drie dose wat geklets en ouhoer het, spat uitmekaar. Een duik in die drein af. Die ander grrts tussen die Pick ,n Pay sakke in. Die een wat seker die dom een in die groepie is draai onderstebo en maak of hy dood is.

“FOKKEN IDIOT!” gil ek op die bruin blerts. Ek gryp die blikkie en crush die nozzle totdat die bottel uit asem is.

“MOENIE WORRY NIE EK‘T ‘N BACKUP ... BITCH!”

My oë scan en soek alle oppervlakke. Ek gryp die mes op die klam vatdoek en kap die slapende klein stront in die helfde. Middeldeer. „Lekker, jy wou mos!“ Die gewig van die mes voel aangenaam. Sterk. Dodelik. My tong vinger my bo-lip en ek proe insek-inwandige ammoniak.

“Sien julle die fokken mes, ek sny julle van kop tot kont!”

My hard klop en ek suig gifwolke soos “n guppy vis in “n vuil tenk in. Die gif gaan deur my longe, in my are in, dis euphoric. „Te veel asem, te veel gif. Te veel petrol in my diff,” ek dink aan petroldoeke en tequila. My bek raak nat en ek kwyl hongerhond drade.

Dalk praat hulle met mekaar. “En nogal in my plek julle klein wetters! NOU KAK JULLE EERS!” My stem klink bekend, dalk “n tannie of “n kwaai ma wat my nou so possess.

Die kakkerlak wat in die drein afgeduik het, loer op na my. Ek sien in my peripheral sy klein antennas wat scan.

“FOKOF JOU LOERHOER POES!” skree ek soos wat ek die plastieksakke (opsoek na die koningin) met die mes aanval.

Ek kry “n ander verettering en hy doen sy maaitjie se onderstebo-voete-wat-lug-trap technique.

“Nie vandag nie, tjommie!”

Ek kap en spuit wat in die blikkie oor is.

Die donner hardloop sirkels en dan kry hy sy sinne weer terug. Hy duik onder die sakke in, hy lyk soos “n heining-hond. Ek ruk die sakke meteens weg en sien die gat in die drein waarna hy warrel.

Daar is „n koerant net langsaan en ek wil-wil dit druk maar dan maak die ding sy vlerke oop. “Jissis!” skree ek soos „n bang baba bitch uit die kombuis uit.

Stilte.

10 minute later is daar nogsteeds niks. Ek verwag “n army. Ek verwag retaliation. Ek loop terug in die kombuis in en sien my handewerk. Drie dooie kakkerlakke. Ek los hulle net daar. „Dis wat hier gebeur! Laat dit “n les wees“.

“Een – nul, julle dose!” skree ek in die algemene rigting van die dreinpyp in.

Saggies en buite die bereik van my eie ore antwoord die koningin-ma terug, “vir nou, jou tweebeen-soogdier-slet!”



## Hospitaalbed

Ek stap in 'n gang af en kyk na die occupants van 'n kamer. Ek verbeel my ek verstaan wat dit beteken om kanker te hê. Wanneer jou eie liggaam teen jou draai en kak doen wat jy nie kan beheer nie (soos jou eie maag vreet en jou bene laat opblaas soos waterbalonne, kan ek dié bedbeboeideliggaam nog my Oom noem?).

Ek verbeel my ek verstaan hoe dit voel wanneer sekere goed teer en sekere goed pis-geel vergeel, wanneer jy op die precipice van dood is. Dis wat ek verbeel. Want sonder my verbeelding sou ek nie na jou kon staar nie. Ek sou jou nie sonder dit meer as 'n mens kon sien nie. Jy maak my ongemaklik. Jy maak my naar.

“Hello Oom ...”

Jy is die persoon wat eens op 'n tyd lank terug my jou op jou knieg laat spring het. Wat my vertel het van die en daai en wat my hand vasgehou het as ons oor die straat moet stap.

Of was daai Oupa?

Klein Klont.

“Magda ... kom gou!” hoor ek my ouma se stem van die kamer langsaan myne. Dit was die eerste keer in my lewe wat ek my ouma so hoor skree het. Dit was asof sy van haar voete tot haar verhemelte gil. 'n Klank wat my wakker gemaak het en dadelik laat weet het dat daar iets „fokken verkeerd“ was. Dit is wat my oom Daan, en my oom Bennie, sou gesê het as hulle nou hier was. My ma se reaksie was net „agge nee, agee nee, net nie dit nie“ en my pa het dadelik opgespring toe hy my ouma se stem gehoor het. Hy het seker weer niks geslaap nie,

“Wat is dit ma? Wat is fout?” roep hy uit.

Ek het deur die slaapsand my ouma in haar lang, witterige, groen nagrok die gang sien afdwaal. Sy het soos 'n spook gelyk. Dit was die dag wat iets baie erg gebeur het.

## Twee weke gelede

Monica was “n vrou wat daardie Lente daaglik na ons huis gekom het. Sy het elke dag “n ou verfgfekte broek aangehad. Sy het ook haar kwaste in “n mooi ou houtkissie by ons trappe op en af gedra.

“Ek soek “n mural wat my dadelik na Italië toe vat as ek na hom kyk. En ek soek dit net hier in die eetkamer!” het my ma hard aangekondig en met haar vinger uitgewys.

Ek het die dag onder die tafel weggekruip terwyl my ma vir Monica beduie het presies wat sy soek.

“Majestic, duursaam, akkuraat ... hier is “n paar idees!” het my ma vinnig vir die skaam vrou Monica gesê en uitgewys op haar vision board.

Ek het elke dag onder die tafel ingekruip en op Monica gespy. Dit was my duty om seker te maak dat sy niks gesteel het of onnodige tyd gemors het nie. Ek was amptelik hierdie duty gegee toe Georgy-porgy, ons vorige painter, amper drie maande aan ons nuwe braaikamer geverf het. Ons huis het die hele winter soos verf en paint thinners geruik.

Monica het van “n foto af gewerk wat ek kon sien twee pilare en “n laning bome met “n berg in die agtergrond in gehad het. Ek kon sien dat sy met die pilare gaan begin omdat sy hulle eerste met potlood afgeteken het.

“Jy cheat!” roep ek die eerste dag onder die tafel uit.

“Who’s there?!” vra sy soos wat die leer waarop sy staan kreun en steun. Toe sy dit sê toe kry ek dadelik daardie angs gevoel wat mens soms kry as jy wegkruipertjie speel. Dis soos excited wees vir presente maar ook meer soos asof jy uit jou eie vel wil klim. Partymaal voel dit soos miere wat op en af oor jou vel marsjeer en ander tye voel dit soos “n groot gat in jou maag.

Ek het later daardie eerste dag wat Monica begin verf het, my ouers hoor baklei. Hulle het altyd hulle deur toegemaak en eers saggies begin hard praat. En dan na “n ruk het hulle regtig „begin“. Die keer was die geveg oor die mural, “Dis “n verrassing vir my verjaarsdag!”

“Jou pa like nie eers van Italië nie, Magda!” het my pa teruggekap. My ma en my pa het dikwels mekaar met woorde gekap, en ek het dikwels deur die slaapkamerdeur afgeluister met “n plastiek koeldrankkoppie teen my oor. Die koppie maak die klank harder, ek’t dit op die TV geleer by *Harriet the Spy*.

Die tweede dag wat Monica daar was, het ek besluit om “n ander trick op haar te speel. Ek het invisible ink gehad wat ek by ToyJoy gekoop het. ToyJoy is seker die beste plek op aarde. Dit is “n winkel in die Somerset Mall wat alles verkoop wat mens van kan droom. Ek gaan elke Sondag wanneer ons Wimpy toe gaan daantoe. Ek loop letterlik nooit uit ToyJoy uit sonder dat ek nie “n „manneljie“ koop nie.

“Julle moet blêrie ophou vir die kind sakgeld gee, hy’s te jonk, en hy koop dêmwil net mannetjies!” het my ouma een Sondag vir my ma-hulle gesê toe ons by die Wimpy was en ek mannetjies wou gaan koop het. Ek het toe “n lewendige tantrum gegooi.

My ma en pa het natuurlik, omdat hulle nie 'n skrouende kind in die Wimpy wou hê nie, vir my R50 gegee. My ouma het haar „gat weer gewip“ soos my ma altyd sê as Ouma stilstuipe kry. En ek? Ek het ToyJoy toe gehardloop en my nie veel aan hulle verder gesteur nie.

My oupa was op daardie oomblik met 'n besigheidsaak in die Kaap, en hy het beplan om 'n blok grond aan die Strand-kuslyn te koop. Hulle het daarom baie vir ons kom kuier terwyl Oupa onderhandel het.

Anyway. Ek het die invisible ink daardie Sondag gekoop saam met albasters en 'n nuwe ding wat se naam *Puppy in my Pocket* was. Ek het genoeg mannetjies gehad, so ek wou vir 'n slag ander goed hê.

Ek het onder die groot eetkamer tafel, wat ons nooit gebruik het nie, gesit en gereed maak om vir Monica te trick. My plan was om die ink op die mat uit te spuit en dan te maak asof die ink haar skuld was. Maar dit sou obviously stadig verdwyn terwyl mens na dit kyk. Ek kon haar hoor klouter en kriewil op haar leer by die tyd.

Die sagte, eentonige hale van die kwaste wat die muur kam, was eintlik gerusstellend. Ek kon seker heeldag net onder die tafel sit en verf ruik en met my mannetjies speel terwyl ek na die borsel luister en Monica se sagte „hmmmm hmmmm“ deuntjie wat sy onder haar asem gesing terwyl sy gewerk het.

“Oh no look at what you’ve done!” gil ek soos ‘n malvark wat in ‘n slagyster getrap het.

“Oh my gawd, oh my gohd!” sê sy oor-en-oor soos wat sy die blou ink op ons duur mat sien.

“God won’t help you, he doesn’t like material things,” antwoord ek haar terug.

Ek weet sy’t nie vir ‘n antwoord gesoek nie, maar sy het nou maar ene gekry.

“You little fucking shit!” skree sy op my toe sy die ink stadig sien verdamp en verdwyn.

“You’re wasting my time with this stupid mural!”

“You can’t speak to me like that you know, I’m a child. That will get you fired” antwoord ek haar terug.

Ek’t nie op daai oomblik presies geweet wat „fired“ beteken nie. Maar my ma en pa het dit baie gebruik as hulle van ‘n werker praat wat „nou weer kak aangejaag het“.

Dis altyd vir my snaaks as mense daai sê. Wie sal nou poef wil aanjaag. Dit klink stupid.

“What did you just say, you little shit?”

“You heard me” antwoord ek vir Monica.

Ek het net daar en dan besluit dat ek nie van haar hou nie en dat sy ‘n „bitch“ is. My ma het dikwels die vrouens van wie sy nie gehou het nie „bitches“ agter hulle rûe genoem. Monica was ook ‘n bitch.

Sy het my in my eie huis laat ongemaklik voel. Sy’t my ook laat voel asof iemand my in die gesig vat. Letterlik. En ek hou nie eers daarvan as tannies waarvan ek wel hou my in die gesig vat nie. So, sy is ‘n „bitch“.

Ek het later die aand vir my ma vertel van Monica en wat sy vir my gesê het. Monica was toe gefire en my ma het 'n ander oom gekry om haar Italiaanse droommural klaar te maak. Die oom se naam was Guiseppi Luziano en hy het nie gelyk soos die tipe mens waarmee jy sal „stront soek nie“ soos wat my een tannie met die harde stem altyd sê.

## Die oggend voor Ouma se gil-oggend

My oupa hulle het die oggend vroeg by ons huis aangekom. My oupa is nie die tipe mens wat op hom laat wag nie. So. Hy sal altyd voor die son die mis kon wegbrand by sy bestemming opdaag. My ouma het dit seker by hom geleer. Dit kan dalk wees hoekom sy altyd so “n big deal maak van mense wat laat is. Dit nou omdat Oupa dit so verpes.

“Hoe het julle gery, Pa?” vra my ma nuuskierig vir my oupa.

As ek moet sê, sou ek sê my ma is altyd anders wanneer Oupa hier is. Dis amper asof ek haar vir “n oomblik kan sien toe sy jonger was.

Ek hou ook daarvan as Oupa hier is en ek dieselfde voel. Oupa bederf my gewoonlik. Hy hou daarvan om my buite in die tuin rond te vat en al die blomme en plante uit te wys. Ek het toe Oupa laas by ons was, “n klein groentetuin geplant.

“Ek is ingenome met jou groentetuin!” het hy vir my gesê.

Dit was nou nie “n massiewe groente tuin nie, maar dit het darem die nodigste, soos tamaties en pietersielie, chillies en so aan gehad. Dis eintlik al wat dit gehad het.

My ma-hulle het gou klaargemaak en aangetrek en my ma het gesê:

“Ek het vir Pa “n klein verassing as ons terugkom van die Wimpy”.

Ons is toe af mall toe om na die Wimpy toe te gaan. My oupa het gekla dat hy moeg was en dat hy “n steekpyn in sy been het van al die sit. Oupa het “n paar weke terug “n „toon verloor“. Dit moet horrible wees as jy nie jou toon kan vind nie. Dit klink altyd snaaks as mense sê jy“t „jou toon verloor“. Gaan jy hom ooit weer kan vind? En hoekom het jy jou toon „afgesit“. Ek gaan definitief nie te lank sit as jy so jou tone kan verloor nie.

“I would like a coffee with cold milk,” bestel my ma soos wat ons daar sit.

“Tea for me, thank you,” sê my pa.

My ouma en oupa bestel net water.

“I would like some water” bestel ek saam met hulle.

Ek wil soos Oupa en Ouma wees.

Ek besluit toe om nie na ToyJoy toe te gaan nie. Dit sou sleg wees as Oupa moes sien ek spandeer soveel geld op gemors. Ek wou nie hê Oupa moes dink date ek “n slegte boer sal maak wat sy geld op „stront“ spandeer nie.

Ons kom die middag van die mall af by die huis en Oupa sê:

“Ek gaan gou “n rukkie lê”

“Shame, julle het vêr gery, julle moet nie dat ons julle ophou nie” sê my pa vir hulle soos wat hulle na hulle kamer toe verkas.

## Die aand voor Ouma se gil-oggend

My ander ouma en haar nuwe boyfriend, Russell, het by ons kom kuier. Russell het “n rooi gesig. My ma sê dis van „al die drink“. Ek dink nie my pa hou daarvan dat my ma so praat nie, maar hy bly doodstil en my ma kom nie agter dit onstel hom nie.

“Hy het maar „n moeilike lewe gehad,” vertel my Ouma vir ons van Russell terwyl sy aan sy been raak en vir ons gerusstellend aanskou.

Ek steur my nie juis veel aan oom Russell nie omdat hy net Engels kan praat. En my oupa en ouma kan amper glad nie Engels praat nie. Maar Oupa het die vermoë, selfs al kan hy niks sê nie, om jou te laat voel asof jy in goeie geselskap is. Ek weet nie hoe hy dit doen nie. Dis asof hy op “n ander manier kommunikeer. Ek dink dis omdat hy “n boer is dat hy hierdie talent het.

Ek staan en kam oupa se hare. Hy hou daarvan as ek dit doen. Ek kam en kam en kam. En Oupa raak so aan die slaap.

“Nee Pa, jy kan nie so slaap voor die mense nie,” sê my ma, “Ek’t nog nie eers “n kans gehad om vir jou die mural te wys nie!”

My oupa staan op en volg my ma na die eetkamer wat net agter die sitkamer is. “n Mens kan altwee vertrekke duidelik sien omdat ons huis baie oop gebou is. My ma noem dit „open plan.“

“My heiland, Magda, dit lyk wonderlik, is dit die hemel?” vra my oupa soos wat hy nader en nader aan die mural stap.

“Nee man, Pa! Dis Italië,” maak-maak sy asof sy kwaad is.

“Wat dink pa?”

“Dit is baie besonders...”

Oupa raak stil en hy kom weer terug dat ek sy hare verder kan kam. Maar die keer is dit anders. Oupa se gesig is spierwit.

“Looks like you’ve seen a ghost, mate!” sê Russell met sy tamatierooi gesig. Wie’s hy nou om te praat en wat het hy gesien?

Ek gaan staan voor Oupa en ek sien die water loop sy gesig af en hy lyk verlep. My ouma begin die horries te kry en sy sê ons moet dadelik vir Dr. Roux bel.

Dr. Roux is “n baie ou oom wat “n wit jas dra. Hy het my as kind „gevang“.

Oupa val net daar vorentoe soos “n sak patats. My pa en Russell dra hom op kamer toe. En my begin vir Oupa met water af te was.

“Waar is daai fokken dokter?” hoor ek my ouma vir die eerste keer vloek.

“Boeta, kom jy onder ons voete uit, gaan speel in jou kamer of iets!”

Ek gaan toe na my kamer toe en my pa maak my deur saggies toe laat ek dink daar gaan niks aan nie. Maar ek weet dat iets aangaan. Almal lyk asof hulle op spikes rondhardloop, dis asof hulle voor die tyd op nul was en nou is hulle op 'n honderd. Ek kyk altyd vir mense so ek weet wanneer hulle begin snaaks raak.

Ek vat my koeldrankkoppie en druk dit teen my kamerdeur. Ek kan Dr. Roux se stem uitmaak.

“Bloedklont” hoor ek hom sê.

My ma gil en my ouma huil.

En ek wou nog so graag weer met Oupa gepraat het.

## Tussen Tyd

Die TV rits in die agtergrond. Vir “n oomblik word die trauma te veel. Vir “n oomblik verloor ek die naelstring van realiteit en ek verloor myself in die TV se breinbranders.

Clutch uit. Clock af. Daar’s ander ways om realiteit te escape – nie net drank en dwelms en depressie nie.

//

Mense stroom by die klein boks van “n kamer in en uit. Links sit daar twee rye van holle wat wipplank ry uit frustrasie. Die lug is gevul met stofdonse en die klank van ou asem wat dreig om in neuse in, in te slurp en sinusse te lek. Daar is “n foon wat lui. Trieng. Dis altyd so in “n regeringskantoor.

### „VERWAGTE WAGTYD: DRIE URE“

Die „Departement van Samesyn“ is onder die mandaat van die die nuwe regering gestig. Hulle manifesto verplig elke Suid-Afrikaner om “n sekere hoeveelheid tyd in “n diverse Samesyn-kantoor deur te bring. Dis al vyf en twintig jaar later, en party mense wat in die kantoor gebore was weet nogsteeds nie wat die punt van die daaglikse ritueel is nie.

Die foon lui nogsteeds. Trieng-Trieng. (Wag). Trieng-Trieng.

“Tel die fokken foon op,” kners een van die ou tannies wie se blou en pienk curlers net-net vasvloei; hulle hang nes “n melktand wat dringend besigheid wil doen met die tandmuis.

Die lug is dik. Nie net omdat daar geen ventilasie is nie. Dis dik want daar’s ook haat in die lug. Dis dik want mense wat mekaar nie kan verdra nie, word geforseer om langs mekaar te sit. „Die nuwe Suid-Afrika ...“ rol “n wit ou oom sy oë smekend vir “n wit tiener. Dis die geheime ou taal wat hulle altyd gebruik om frustrasie met mekaar te kommunikeer; *onse oogtaal*.

Estelle, wat net so agter die wit omie sit, se Siberian Husky was uit haar voorplaas gesteel, „Fokkers“ suis haar ore soos wat hulle rooi gloei. Langs haar sit “n skraal man wat “n droom onthou.

„Daar is “n slang in “n bos. Daar is eers die geritsel van blare en iets wat soek-soek stilletjies probeer beweeg. Logika sê hy moet weghardloop, maar hy beweeg liewers nader. Die slang is opgekrul. Hy of sy lê en slaap. Pofadder, dis eerste woord wat opkom in sy gedagtes. Sy hand vat nou styf om sy gholfstok, die rubber maak daai klank wat rubber maak (wat hy nie nou kan hoor nie). Dit maak hom naar en laat hom voel asof iemand tandestokkies in sy rugwerwels indruk. Hoekom probeer hy slapende slange wakker slat?.“

“I dreamt of scary snakes,” tik hy “n boodskap soos wat sy eie hol nou wipplank begin ry. Hy stuur die boodskap aan sy boyfriend wat iewers besig is om “n vrou te spyker, nie net enige vrou nie ... sy geliefde trou-vrou. Die boodskap gaan deur, maar niemand antwoord nie.

„Where’s Johan?“ dink hy soos wat die diep donker pit van doubt en despair oopmaak en hy in die blackhole ingesuij word. Hy gaan nou weer vassit in die pit vir “n week. Hy onthou dat die slange hom gejaag het. Ja. Hulle het hom gejaag en hy het die hele aand lank gehardloop, dis presies hoe dit gebeur het. Hy het toe wakker geraak in “n kouesweet net na die pofadder



hom gebyt het. Drome het gewoonlik nie klank nie, maar hulle het baie kere ‘n betekenis. „This dream has meaning“ dink hy. Hy besluit dadelik om sy persoonlike psychic ‘n boodskap te stuur, terloops loop sy presies op daardie oomblik verby die klein regeringskantoor. Sy kyk nie eers in die gebou in nie. Mense mis soms plekke. Jy ry dieselfde pad en dan sien jy na die twintigste keer ‘n boom of ‘n huis vir die eerste keer eers raak.

Die man langs Estelle-die-husky-tannie stuur dan nog ‘n boodskap.

„Wow“ dink Janien wat op daardie oomblik vir die negentiende keer die pad tussen Somerset en Stellenbosch ry. Sy wil haarself oor die kop moer omdat die besef van die nuwe draai in die Stellenboschpad haar bewus maak van hoeveel sy eintlik miskyk. Maar sy ontvang op daardie oomblik ‘n boodskap van haar beste vriend af wat sê, “I think Johan is cheating”. Wat haar ore warm maak, omdat sy die trou-vrou is wat vir Johan gebruik om op ‘n weird manier by haar beste vriend uit te kom. „Sick bitches word gevang“ sing haar engelike jonger self op haar linker skouer. Op haar regte skouer is daar ‘n duiwel wat draad trek en fantaseer oor ‘n engel.

Mense sien wat hulle moet sien, jou filter skakel aan en af en laat jou toe om op daardie oomblik te ervaar wat jy wil ervaar. Dis tyd om die Departement van Samesyn se deure vir die dag te sluit en die daaglikse inwoners uit te jaag. ‘n Klok kondig toemaak tyd aan. Dieng-dieng. Vir eers sit hulle en staar mekaar aan soos diere in ‘n zoo, dan staan hulle voorbeeldig op en probeer op een slag by die deur uit te bees.

Op die TV is daar ‘n foto van ‘n man wat missing is, die ou lyk soos een of ander regeringsgrootkop. Die man agter die toonbank, Pieter Jantjies, wat heeldag gesit en besig lyk het, staan nou op, sit die TV af, en onthou dat hy sy ouma vir haar verjaarsdag ‘n boodskap moet stuur. Hy besluit om haar liewers te bel. Die oomblik wat hy uit die kantoor stap en die sleutel in die slot draai kom daar ‘n man na hom toe aangestap. Die man skiet hom in die kop, sonder om eers „Hallo“ te sê. Hy vat die twintig rand uit Pieter se linkerhand. Hy jaws of life ook die selfoon. Die foon is nogsteeds aan die lui en na twintig luie antwoord Pieter se ouma wat negentig is:

“Uiteindelik, ek wag al heeldag vir jou ... ek’t gedag jy’t vergeet”

Pieter lê op die grond, hy hoor sy ouma se stem dofweg en wonder of sy hier is. Hy onthou die slag toe hy by die Grand West yskaatsbaan geval het. Die bloed het oor die oppervlak van die ys gehardloop soos bang jellybabies. Hy onthou die droom wat hy gehad het die vorige aand, dit was van ‘n slang of iets wat hom op sy kop gepik het. Die straat raak donker en Pieter begin te stres. Hy wonder wie die kantoor gaan kom oopsluit. Hy wonder gaan ons ooit „samesyn“ hê. Hy wonder hoe dit gaan lyk as sy ouma hom so moet sien, „Dankie fok sy’s blind,“ lag hy op die koue sement.

En dan wonder hy nie meer nie.

## **Job interview**

My synapse cauterize soos hulle skiet en straal deur my skull.

„Hoekom kyk hulle my skeef aan en fluister kak met hulle oë vir mekaar?“ dink ek.

Ek muse verder, „Hoekom draai hulle neuse op hemel toe asof my aura Chanel No.5 is?“ lag ek soos wat ek partially realize dat ek dalk mag vrot na laasnag-alkohol scent.

„Hoekom raas my ore soos Sparkles-lekkerpapiere?“Grrts, grrtss, grrrtss. Die fokken allewige gegritsery pis my af.

„Hoekom is die bloed wat by my neus afdrip warm en vriendelik?“ die familiar hitte is seemingly die enigste ding aan my kant.

Hierdie is die sewende keer wat ek steke kry. Die vierde keer wat ek in ‘n kar ongeluk was. Die tweede keer wat ek ‘n concussion kry. En die eerste keer wat ek so kalm voel oor als. Ek is die geskiedenis van my liggaam. Ek was deur elke ander fokop voorberei vir hierdie spesifieke een. Ek is elke liewe mens wat ek al ooit teë gekom het, asook elke liewe pynlike liggaamlike herinnering. Ek is die memories van dronk aande wat my force om vir vergifnis by die mure te smee. Wat my unsexually laat moan sodat ek nie die kak kan herhoor wat uit my bek uitgekom het die vorige aand nie. Delayed dronkverdriet.

Ek is befok maar in beheer.

But dalk is die broken reflection van my in hulle oë nie te ver weg van die waarheid af nie.

## Die Groeba

Ouma weet nou nie so mooi asof sy vir jou al die storie van die Groeba vertel het nie ...  
Ouma verander hoe sy sit in die stoel en vat "n slukkie van haar loutwarm Five Roses.

"Wat's die Groeba, Ouma?"

"Nou ja toe, kom skuif nader!"

//

Eendag lank, lank gelede was daar 'n lelike ou heks wat in die bosse net so duskant die Helderberg gebly het. Jy was al seker saam met jou pa daar, so jy behoort goed te weet hoe dit daar lyk. Die bome is groot en die grond is vol ou, bruin dennenaelde. Die grond knits en kners as jy oor dit loop.

Ouma vat haar hand en kriel die vel agter haar kleinseun se nek.

Julle was nou seker nie in die deel waar die Groeba bly nie, maar laat ek jou bietjie vertel wat drie seuns oorgekom het eendag toe hulle daar gaan stap het.

Dit was eendag lank gelede voor jy gebore was, wat daar drie seuns so na skool in die woud gaan stap het. Willie was lank en maer, Kobus was kort en stewig gebou en die derde, wel die derde was baie soos jy gebou.

Hulle was lus vir avontuur en vir katterkwaad, so toe het hulle in daardie woud gaan stap.

"Kom, ons gaan loop kyk of die ou stories waar is ..." het Willie, die oudste van die drie begin. En hulle het geja en amen soos kinders in 'n boksombende maar maak.

Ouma kan jou nie vertel hoe gevaarlik dit is om so blindelings agter vriende aan te hardloop nie, jy sal tog nooit so simpel wees nie, sal jy?

Die drie het gaan stap in die bos en oral waar hulle getrap het, was daar net 'n gekners van dennenaelde en 'n getjirp van bosvoëls.

Nou, Willie het by sy ouma afgeluister dat daar 'n vrou in die woud bly. Party mense het altyd gesê sy's die Groeba. Maar laat ek jou nou vertel hulle weet nie 'n doilie wat hulle van praat nie. Nog minder 'n dinges van wat of wie die Groeba is.

//

"Maar Ouma ... wat is 'n Groeba?" die kleinseun het by die tyd nou al styf teen sy ouma kom sit. Heeltemal verwonderd deur die storie.

"Man, wag jy nou, ek kom nog daar..."

//

Nou baie mense sê die Groeba is 'n vrou-heks. Baie mense sê sy's 'n boom-ding.

Maar wat die drie seuns die dag gesien het, was nie heks of vrou of boom nie. En glo my, so waar as vet, hulle het haar gesien, hoor!

Hulle het so 'n entjie ingestap en toe vra Kobus:

"Moet ons nie dalk iets agter ons gooi sodat ons nie verdwaal nie?"

Nou dis heel goeie advies om jou pad te merk, soos wat meeste mense weet, kan 'n mens baie maklik verdwaal in 'n woud. En 'n woud! 'n Woud is 'n baie gevaarlike plek. Daar is Bosselosse en Lus-lette en alwatse ander gediertes en gedaantes.

//

Ouma se kleinseun gaap en sy sien hoe die slaapsand hom dieper en dieper en dieper intrek. Hy't nooit verder as die begin van die Groeba-storie kon kom nie.

Sy trek die lakens hoog tot by sy ken en vou die dit onder hom in sodat hy mooi gemaklik kan sluimer.

//

Hulle sê daar was eendag 'n ryk man se vrou wat vanaf Spanish Farm die Helderbergwoud se bome ingewandel het. Dié wat haar met haar kaalvoete en deurmekaar hare uit hulle kombuisvensters uit gesien het, het geweet 'n rykmansvrou wat so verwaarloos is, beplan nie om weer uit die bos uit te kom nie. Dit was ook nie die eerste keer wat sy so in die bos ingewandel het nie.

Daar was sprake, soos wat daar maar altyd is, by Bybelkringe en oueraande, dat haar man ander vrouens agter haar rug gesien het. En dit was waar. En sy het dit geweet. Sy kon laat aande wanneer hy van sy meetings af kom, die sigarette en parfuum ruik. Hy kon nie. Hy was teen daai tyd al te gewoond daaraan.

Sy was eens op 'n tyd 'n laerskoolonderwyser. Haar ouers, lank reeds dood, was haar hele lewe. Dit was alleen in die groot, glas huis waar sy as 'n pragtige tierlantyntjie en trofee uitgestal moes word.

Aan die begin het sy gedink dit was ware liefde. Maar die leemte in haar hart het al hoe groter geraak. Sy't besef dat hy haar nie liefhet nie en dat sy mettertyd 'n hol skulp geraak het.

Die woud het altyd geroep as dit so stil in die huis is en die wind teen die berg rante af gewaai het. Haar oop sitkamervensters het uitgekyk op 'n plantasie en die ritselende wind het haar gesoek. Sy was teen die tyd klaar reeds 'n spook. Sy kon maar netsowel doen wat sy moes doen.

Die kners en maal van die dennenaelde onder haar voete en die steek van die dennepunte het haar vreeslik in die oomblik ingebring. Dit het haar ook meer bewus gemaak daarvan dat sy moes suffer. Dat dit haar lot in die lewe is.

Deur die woud en in 'n oopte in. Die stilte van die oopte het die stemme uit haar kop gelok. Die feit dat daar nie huisgoed en glasgoed en mensgemaakte goed was om die instink te bedemp nie, was goed. En ook sleg.

Uit desperasie het sy op die grond ineengestort. Haar slaap teen 'n rotskerf gekap en 'n druppel of so bloed het op die steen geval.

“Ek wil nie meer alleen wees nie. Ek wil nie meer ongesond wees nie. Ek wil nie meer 'n spook in my eie lewe wees nie! Ek wil nie meer iets voel nie,” het sy uit die diepste deel van haar voetsole die aarde en die lug bemin.

Stilte.

Niks.

En toe is daar 'n kleingotlike bidsprinkaan wat oor die oppervlak van die growwe klip begint hardloop. Sy twee voorarms tas en trek die lug soos snare spinnekopdrade wat gespeel word. Sy kop draai links en regs en op en af soos wat hy die treurende en lêende liggaam van die vrou sien en deeglig aanskou.

Hulle sê as jy werklikwaar in nood is en as jy werklikwaar 'n wens het, dan sal daar 'n bidsprinkaan verskyn wat jou jou eerste wens sal gee. Maar versigtig nou, want bidsprinkane hou van kattedwaad en flousery.

Sy kyk na die sprinkaan en sonder dat sy twee keer dink en sonder dat sy weet van wense en drome en die outannieverhale van die Helderberg en Spookheuwel, wens sy vanaf haar diepste waarste self af.

“Ek wil niks meer voel nie!”

Die sprinkaan gaan staan toe reg voor haar bloeiende voorkop wat lyk soos 'n spatsel rooi drade wat haar gesig oorgroei. Sy twee voorkloue raak aanmekaar en hy vlieg weg sonder 'n woord.

Nou vandag as jy deur die Spookheuwelwoud stap, sal jy iets heel aardig sien. 'n Berg wat op sy sy lê met 'n stroom water wat iewers uit die grond uitspruit en 'n vallende waterval vorm. 'n Nimmereindige tranedal. Hulle sê as jy skemeraand op die regte plek gaan staan voor die Helderberg, dan sien jy 'n vrou wat lê en huil met rooi spatsels oor haar gesig. En dis snaaks want hulle het nooit daai rykmansvrou gevind nie. En daar waar sy gaan lê het, is nou 'n niksvoelende berg van klip ... wat as die wind so oor die Helderberg beginne waai en die dennebome se naelde te begin streel, dit laat klink of iemand trane trek en treuer.

Maar wie sal nou weet of dit waar is, miskien dalk net die vrouheks wat net so aan die woud se sy bly in 'n klein kothuis. Sy sê tog self sy pas die Groeba op, maar gaan kyk maar self, dis hoeka skemer.

## **Timbuk se Mou**

Ek dink baie aan my ou huis. Dit haunt my onderbewussyn. Dalk aspris. Ek pine en pyn vir die ou dae. Ek sit in “n vreemde land en besluit dat die humid lug my laat dink aan somers. Aan die slag wat my nefie aan my piel gevat het in die blou skulpswembad. Aan die tyd wat ek gemaak het asof ek “n pregnant vrou was in “n oranje aerobics broek. Aan die tyd wat ek van die rotswaterval by die ou swembad afgebellyflop het en net daarna soos “n meerman dolfynding geswem het.

Ek is lief vir my ou huis. Ek is 9595 km weg. Ek is 16 jaar weg.

Die doedelsak van drome en herinneringe druk my al hoe nader. Ek dink. Ek droom. Ek praat. Die hele fokken tyd oor 33 Abelia. My ouma sal sê jy’t dit nou van kop tot gat (“as jy mos “n ding in jou kop kry, dan kry jy hom tot in jou gat”).

Ek val rond tussen beddens en broeke maar ek weet dat daar een plek is wat vir my huis is. Tuis is. Sanctuary is. Dis Abelia.

“Ek dink ek wil “n nuwe storie skryf ... ek wil nie meer oor hierdie gay kak, wat nie vir my saak maak, skryf nie!”

“Nou doen dit!” sê my vriendin rondom 5:59 AM my tyd.

Voor ek begin, besluit ek om myself te vermom as Claudius Kruger. My ouma se nooiensvan en my tweede naam. Ek kyk vir myself in die spieël. Wie is ek? Wat is ek? Ek smeer my ou gesig weg en raak “n volvertroude skrywer. Ek trapseer kaal bolyf deur my kamer en met elke tree sit ek nog “n laag van gedragtelike drag op.

Finally is ek klaar. Ek is confident en in touch en my kundalini skiet uit my achilles tendons en verbind met “n oerlike energie.

Ek gaan sit op my groen plastiekstoel, die stoel kou in my rug in ... En dan begin ek.

*Iewers in “n drp in die vange van die Hottentots-Holland bergreeks is daar twee seuns, nefies, wat woorde wissel en kwaad raak oor klein goed.*

Fok. My ou huis kom deur. My kinderdae slaan soos groenspaan aan. Dit wat binne is span oor my oppervlak. Die groen-geel aanpaksel van die verlede groei op my vel. Almal kan dit sien.

Ek raak verlore in “n maniese skryfperiode. Dit het als begin met my wat in my imagination op my ou huis se dak gaan sit en gevra het, “Wat die fok was ooit agter daai gat in die muur wat ons gemaak het met die hammers en beitels daai een jaar?”

Ek skryf totdat my rug kromtrek en ek carpal tunnel dooie pinkies het. Ek eet nie. Ek stort nie. Ek skryf. Net skryf. My oë brand asof ek die hele aand kak gespeel het op my PlayStation. Die hele storie download in “n flurry. Ek kan nie bybly nie.

Die regte wêreld weet dat ek besig is met iets belangriks. Daar is diere wat my herinner om aan te gaan. “n Naaldekoker stamp sy kop oor en oor op my gaasdeur. Hy wil in. Ek het nog nooit “n naaldekoker dit sien doen nie.

“n Week later is daar nog ene wat net teen die mure loop binne my hotel. Ek’s in Malaysia in-transito.

“n Dag later is ek in Cambodia en daar is “n dooie naaldekokker in “n laai waar ek sit en skryf.

Dis snaaks hoe die heelal met jou kan praat deur tekens van toevallighede. Of toevallige tekens.

Ek kom terug na “n maand van travel en trein en toerboer. My stoep is deurtrek met die shongololos, ek het writer“s block en ek steek vas. Die oomblik wat ek die infinite krul van die shongololos sien op die vyfde verdieping van my twee-by-drie stoep, weet ek iets is verkeerd. Ek’t nog nooit “n shongololo hier gesien nie. Nooit.

*Nou shongololos is goed wat niks veel skade r rig kan doen nie, hulle is ook nie wesens wat wit of swart, of lig of donker, of goed of sleg kies nie ...*

Soos wat ek die woorde skryf verdwyn hulle dag na dag. Daar is nie eers “n geraamte wat oorbly nie. Hulle is net gone.

Ek skryf nog meer en meer en eendag kom daar “n jong childhood-ekke in my kop in en vra die ouma-karakter in my boek.

*„Waar“s mypa, Ouma?“ ...„Hy“s in ‘n ander w reld, my kind.“*

Ek hoor die stem en ek huil oor en oor. My pa was nooit daar nie. Sy pa was ook nooit daar nie. Sy pa is dood toe hy vyf was. En my pa het nie geweet hoe om “n goeie pa te wees wat die spasio op die bank met honger ore kon vul nie.

Ek snik en ek treur en ek rook. Ek besef dat ek daddy issues het. Ek besef dat ek na my ou huis verlang en dat ek goeters daar moet gaan doen. Ek moet:

1. op die ou huis se dak klim en “n foto van die Helderberg neem. Daar“s iets in daai klim wat ek as kind so baie gedoen het, wat my gaan help en my dalk iets gaan laat sien.
2. agter my lessenaar krap as dit nog daar is. Ek het altyd gehou van kak wegsteek en treasure hunts. Daar is iets wat vir my gaan sin maak en iets beteken agter die kas.

My ma bel my en vertel my dat my ouma “n noodoperasie gaan moet kry. Hulle gaan haar bene moet afsit. Die persoon wat my leer praat het en resiteer het. Wat my in die huis langsaan 33 Abelia, ek dink nommer 35, leer stap het in daardie nou gang. Sy gaan nou nie meer kan stap nie. Ek wat haar geroep het:

“Ouma Joef, maak vir my kaas-en-tamatie broodjies en nana-koelies.”

Daai persoon gaan binnekort dalk die aarde verlaat. Of dalk net nooit weer kan stap nie. Ou mense gaan maklik dood tydens operasies.

My vingers druk gate in my keyboard. Al hoe vinniger daddy longleg trippe-trappe-trone hulle oor die keyboard. Ek huil en tik en luister Coldplay se Amsterdam. Die liedjie speel seker 10, 20, 100 keer in my ore. Ek huil wanneer ek die woorde “my star is fading” hoor. Dit maak seer om te dink die persoon wat nog altyd daar was, is besig om te fade. Dat hulle so ephemeral en transient soos “n verskietende ster is. Dis sleg. Dis waar ... maar ook baie swaar.

Ek maak my boek klaar, „sy moet dit lees, dit gaan oor haar, dit is vir haar,“ ek vergeet dat ek dit ook vir myself gedoen het. Ek word magneties teruggetrek deur familie en dit wat ek kan verloor. Die boek is die sleutel wat my laat besef ek moet na my ou huis teruggaan. Die boek

is die sleutel wat my laat besef ek moet my verhouding met my pa verbeter en die trans-generational trauma wat soos rippels op die water repeat, gaan regmaak. Dis tyd om my pa te gaan haal in die ander wêreld. Dalk was dit nog altyd my purpose om hom terug te bring na die land van die lewendes toe. En nie syne om vir my te verstaan nie. My purpose is dan om beide my ouers uit die familial trauma se spinnerak te free. Ek kan dit doen. Want as ek dit kan doen, dan kan ek myself ook free. Want ons is saam stuck.

Ek pak my tasse, maak die mure skoon. Gooi alles weg wat ek soos "n muis in my laaie vergader en opgegaar het die afgelope paar jaar. Dis tyd.

My boek se einde speel af in Grahamstown, so ek besluit dis waantoe ek moet gaan. Dit gaan die plek wees wat ek vanaf die ander wêreld myself af gaan losmaak, sal kan vind, waar ek die drumpel gaan oorsteek en die journey na die ou huis toe vanaf moet begin.

*In 'n plek tussen plekke, 'n land tussen lande, is die ie-Kliega-Koninkryk, en daar woon die Santu-sani, die behouers van die balans tussen lig en donker. Hierso en daarso. Die Hede-Wese en die Wissel-ryk.*

Ek weet die plek tussen plekke is Lesotho. Ek weet dat daar "n plek Grahamstown in is wat deur "n waterval lei na "n ander wêreld. Hogsback. En as jy deur daardie waterval stap dan kom jy uit by Semonkong. Die plek van rook. Dis nie waar nie. Maar in my persoonlike fantasie is dit hoe dit werk. Dis ook waar die gat in die muur by 33 Abelia lei. Dit verbind met Hogsback. Daar is "n huis in Hogsback wat in "n woud is. Die huis is verbind met my ou kombuiskas. Daar's "n waterval waar die kleurboogkinders speel en die waterval is by "n rivier. In my delusions word ek na 33 Abelia getrek via fantasie en die magiese moontlikhede en simboliek van beswymings en my eie geestesoog, wat nou vir die eerste keer in jare oopskeur en alles helderder as Heldervue sien.

Ek pak my tasse en ek vat die pad, ek is oppad huistoe, en dit voor Ouma haar bene verloor.



## Vloermatras

“Dis nou klaar, dis nou tyd,” sê hy hardop omdat hy nog nie “n mensstem sedert die dokter se spreekkamer gehoor het nie.

Die dokter. Daai doos. „Hy“t maar net sy werk gedoen,” probeer sy sense of self en hom sus. „Hy“s nogsteeds “n doos,” dink hy verder.

„Wat gaan van my word?”“ Hy dink aan wie hy was en wie hy nog wil wees.

Hy lê op die vloermatras en skuif en skoffel weens maagkrampe en ander liggaamlike cries for help. Drank en sigarette in plaas van kos los hom in agony. Hy dink compulsively aan die toekoms en dan die verlede. Gedagtes wipplank en kinders huil-lag. Die hede is skerp. Dit sny en cannabalize hom.

Die reis vanaf die hospitaal tot by die flat was “n menslike miernes. “n Plek waar motorfietse en karre en bakkies heen en weer jaag. Waar mense bou en afbreek en van plek tot plek hardloop. Die daaglikse vlegsel van goed wat realiteit uitmaak. “n Soet koeksister wat nou vir hom begin vrot en oud raak.

„Raak koeksisters ooit oud?”“ fluister “n stil stem deur die drank en sigaret-as.

Een sigaret kry babas en raak tien. Die babas kry babas en die familie raak dertigsterk. Die klienkinders kry agterkleinkinders en die nikotienstamboom is volmaak. Hy lê en wonder hardop, „... wat doen mense wat stage-4 kanker het met hulle lewens?” Hy weet nie. Die antwoord is drowned in goue whisky poppies gekleed met rookjaste.

Hulle verdrink of verdwyn seker net.

## **Duiwelkont**

Jou glimlag sny soos ‘n Transvaaldiamant. Ek kyk na jou en wonder of hierdie ‘n goeie besluit is, gaan wees, was. My lewe sou makliker gewees het as ek nooit links geswipe het nie. Maar nou ja.

“Die duiwel is lustig,” hoor ek my ouma se spookstem weergalm.

Vir nou fladder my maag en my hart klop. Dis altyd so die eerste keer wat ek iemand ontmoet; my hart spring en my maag verander in ‘n black hole in. Maar jou glimlag bring my terug na die oomblik toe. Ek voel asof als gaan fine wees. ‘n Vriendin bring die balans in hierdie oomblik in. Ons drink. Ek raak dronk. Ek is dronk. Daar is ‘n sekere punt waar ek nie meer my liggaam kan vertrou nie. Wat dronkenskap my vakmanskap raak. Waar die ander „EK“ oorvat en doen wat gedoen moet word.

“I don’t trust this guy,” is die warning wat my vriendin gee. Ek moes na haar geluister het.

Maar ek is hardkoppig en rammetjie uitnek. Ek het ‘n ego wat bragpunte wil wen. Ek besef amper dadelik ek maak ‘n fout, ‘n fout na wat ek vir altyd in die boomringe van my siel en liggaam gaan moet kyk.

## Gesigte in die Wind

Die Croxley-blaaie is imprinted met pendrukbraille. Die huis is deurweek met koffiereuk en eletroniese heater-oksidase. Blou pen. Swart pen. Afrikaans en Engels. Engele en Aliens. Die keer wat jy 'n masker sien kraak het in Amerika; toe jy die gesig agter die gesig gesien het vir die eerste keer.

Die 68 ure op die Greyhound-bus was skrikwekkend. Ek kon vir die eerste keer onder die glans veneer van Amerika se PR sien. Die ware kleure wat so desperately deur Hollywood versteek word.

Die ou brood wat in die ventilation shaft ingedruk is, is barbaars. Die kommen whitetrash Amerikaners wat dagga buite innie Mississippi Bayou rook is witgam-vuilgoed wat my laat goed voel oor my eie land; selfs ons armstes sal nie daal tot dié vlak nie, die vlak waar mense met krokodille en hul trille speel.

„You an angel, you's good!“ praat iemand met my terwyl ek my toersakboekie oor „SOUTH AFRICA“ uithaal en wys. Haar oë glinster „freedom“ en „homeland“.

„What's so good about sOUth Á-frica!“ gil een van die trilspelers van voor af. Die borderpatrol stop die bus, ek word amper uit die land uitgesmyt en gestempel A-L-I-E-N.

Die holruggeryde bus breek 'n entjie verder, daar is 'n groot vet African-American vroumens wat flou val in die bus omdat sy nie water, of asem, kan kry nie.

My kontaklense is al vir twee dae in my oë. Plastiek sandkorrels krap my retinas. Ek het nie 'n bril nie. Sonder hulle is ek blind. Verlore. Gefok. Meer gefok as die hoer wat agter my kom sit en met die man wat soos oom Johan lyk se tril beginne speel het.

New York is groot. Daar is klomp geboue wat die bloue hemel soos sletvingers stukkend try krap. Daar is viskoppe en ou kondome wat bo oorvol dreinpype lê. Alicia Keys sing in Central Park oor concrete jungles. En immigrantse-drome.

Johanna kyk vir my met haar plastiektop oë. Ek sien haar blou eyeshadow. Ek sien haar rooi lippe. Ek sien die swart demoon wat onder haar velmasker wriemel en wraak. Wat wag. Vir my.

## Tannie Lus-let

“Wil jy na my verjaarsdag toe kom, Tannie Anne?”

Dit het my nie lank gevat om vir Tannie Anne na my verjaarsdag toe te nooi nie. Sy was die tipe tannie wat mens kan laat lag. Haar rooi krulhare en haar goue juwele wat gijngle jangle het terwyl sy mens se hare gesny het, was iets wat ek weet my ma sou irriteer. Ek is moeg vir verjaarsdae met my ma se vriendinne en hul mans. Dit was my way om te rebel.

“Sê net waar, dan is ek daar!”

My ma was besig om haar pille by die apteek op te tel terwyl ek vir tannie Anne genooi het, so sy het nie geweet dat ek vreemdelinge of haarkappers na my verjaarsdag toe nooi nie.

“Moet net niks vir my ma sê nie, dis ‘n surprise!”

Nou dit was ‘n leuen. Ek’t geweet as my ma geweet het dat ek mense na my eie verjaardag toe nooi dat my gat in die sop sou wees.

Tannie Anne sou seker die enigste persoon wees wat ek daar wou hê. Niggies en nefies is lekker, maar my ma het hulle ook genooi, „Om nice te wees!”

///

My kind jy moet nooit te lank in ‘n woud bly nie. Daar is goed wat daar binne bly wat ek jou amper nie eers van wil vertel.

Hulle sê as jy jouself in ‘n woud vind, moet jy twee keer kyk, want jy weet nooit of jy in ‘n lus gevang word nie.

“Wat’s dit, Ouma?”

Ouma het haar kleinkind doodgepraat en met vatdoek verder beduie.

Ek was eenslag amper in so ‘n lus gevang. En dis daardie blêrrie Lus-let ve wat jy moet versigtig wees!

Kort, opgedoende hare, vel so bleek soos ‘n spook sin, ‘n gesig met krake en die donkerste vloeistof wat onder die oppervlak bruis. Daai’s ‘n Lus-let.

Nou dit is waar dat hulle almal nie dieselfde lyk nie, maar jy moet versigtig wees as jy iets hoor praat in ‘n woud. Hulle sê die Lus-lette is vrouens wat te veel na hulself gekyk het. Mense wie se siel lankal verlore geraak het. As jy nou deur ‘n woud moet stap, maak net seker jy dra ‘n klein spieëltjie by jou. ‘n Lus-let haat dit om hul eie weerkatsing te sien. Of gaan staan naby water, verkieslik stilstaande water wat ‘n weerkaatsing sal gee. Dit sal jou darem genoeg tyd gee om weg te hardloop.

“Kry mense hulle net in die woud, Ouma?”

My kind daai is ‘n moeilik vraag. Maar onthou jy maar net wat ouma vir jou nou sê: as jy ‘n vrou sien wie se stem soos suiker klink wat jou woord-vir-woord aan die slaap praat of ‘n vrou wat te veel lag selfs al is daar nie ‘n grap nie – hardloop. Maak net seker haar vel is bleek voor jy dit doen, netnou lyk jy ongeskik. Ouma het mos nie ‘n ongeskikte ding grootgemaak nie.

//

My ma het vir my klere uitgepak wat ek móét dra vir my verjaarsdag. Tannie Stiena het “n swart leerbaadjie gemaak spesiaal vir die groot verjaar. En my hare moes ook nog gebloudraai word daarby. Die gedagte van aantrek wat ek nie wil nie, die warm hitte van “n bloudraaier wat in my nek blaas, en die spul mense wat ek nie “n hel ken nie, maak my porseleinpopperig en kwaad.

“Jy beter aantrek en klaarmaak, mannetjie, die mense kom nou!”

In die voorste kamer waar ek altyd met my groen Kiddo-huishemp gespeel het, is daar kerse aangesteek en die hele huis is vol platters en bottels drank. Ek wens ek kon dronk raak soos die grootmense en vergeet van verjaar. Darem gaan ek klomp geld by al die ryk ooms en tannies kry.

Die eerste kar trek by die driveway in en die ligte skyn teen die plafon reg bo die TV. Ek is op deur-duty terwyl my ma haar blonde hare in ‘n byekorfbal in vastrek en mousse en spuit. Haar hare is gewoonlik versteen as sy daar klaar is.

Die eerste batch wat aankom is my nefie en sy ouers, my ma se broer. Ons wil-wil gaan speel en ek hoor my ma wat roep van die boonste trappe af:

“Waarheen dink jy gaan jy, mannetjie?”

My nefie dra sy Sondagskoolklere en sy hare is gegel. Hy lyk net so snaaks soos ek. Twee poppe vir ‘n pop-parade.

Net na hulle kom daar meer en meer mense en ons huis is binnekort “n besige restaurant van mense wat lag en praat en vir my presente gee. Ek versamel die koeverte en gaan sit hulle almal in my laai. Ek lees nooit die kaartjies nie, want ek weet al klaar goed wat hulle sê „Veels geluk, mag daar nog baie jare wees!“ Mens sou dink dat grootmense iets meer kreatief as “n holruggerde deuntjie se woorde kon gebruik, maar nou ja.

My ouma is op die plaas en ek mis die verjaardagkoekies wat sy gewoonlik bak. Dis nou nie asof my ma of ons bediende Jenna die resep sou kry en actually sou maak wat ek wou gehad het nie. Maar darem is daar baie mense in die groot huis.

My pa speel musiek en hy en die manne drink by die huiskroeg en speel pool.

Ek hardloop kort-kort uit op die voorstoep en wonder, „Waar is sy, gaan sy kom?“

Die mense binne klink glase en praat, “Ja dit gaan goed by die skoonheidsalon”

“Ons het sopas ‘n nuwe kernkragmetode vir vuurpyle ondersoek en dit lyk belowend.”

Wat maak mense by skoonheidsalonne? Ek was een keer daar en het my hand in die was gedruk op te kyk hoeveel lae ek kan op my hand kry. Dit het later gelyk of ek Batman is soos wat die trane op mekaar begin bou het.

My oog vang die skoonheidsalontannie soos wat ek onder deur die tafels klouter.

“Kom onder die tafel uit my seun, wat op aarde maak jy daar!” buk my ma af en kners deur “n glimlag.

Die salontannie se gesig glinster beeldglad en spookwit. Ek besef dat sy al heelaand ons huis se doolhof van spieëls vermy.

„Kan sy dalk een wees?“ wonder ek.

“Weet jy wat “n Lus-let is? Het Ouma jou ooit vertel?” vra ek my nefie wat agteraan my kruip.

“Kyk na daardie tannie, lyk sy nie weird of dalk soos “n heks nie?”

Ek besef die tannie kyk vir ons en dis asof sy weet waarvan ons praat. Haar gesig kraak effens en ek sien die swart spookasem wat borrel onder die vel.

“Sy“s definitief een!”

Die voordeurklokkie lui en ek hardloop rats en vinnig want ek is seker dit is Tannie Anne. Dit is.

Sy“t ‘n reusagtige treinkoek saambring.

“Vir jou, happy birthday, krulkopkind!” sê Tannie Anne.

Dis asof die verjaarsdag van “n leë dop na “n vol speelgoedboks verander het. Finally. Iemand wat ek kan sê ek self genooi het.

Ek vat vir Tannie Anne deur die huis en wys haar alles. My kamer. My speelgoed. Ons kombuis. Alles.

“Wat maak sy hier?” vra my ma.

“Ek het haar genooi!”

“Hy het, en toe bring ek sommer koek!”

Van my ma se kant af is die aand suur omdat ek iemand self genooi het. Ek kom agter dat die skoonheidsalon tannie my heelyd dophou en glimlag. Sy freak my uit.

“Weet Tannie Anne iets van Lus-lette?” Ek het seker heelaand die moed try bymekaar skraap om haar te vra, want ek was bang dat sy sou dog ek is mal as ek oor kinderstories praat.

“Bedoel jy nou van die klomp vrouens wat met hulle bleek, gekraakte gesigte so om die kinders by jou partytjie hang ... as dit is wat jy bedoel, dan ja ... jy moet pasop vir hulle!”

//

Daar was eens op “n tyd twee seuns wat verdwaal het in “n woud, Ouma hoef seker nie vir jou te vertel wat hulle daar gekry het nie....

*Gideon en Kobus stap verby die bergie-boom en onderlangs die stormtak verby, “Hierdie boom freak my heavy uit!” sê Kobus.*

*“Ek hou self nie van hierdie boom nie. Dit laat dink my altyd aan “n bouse, krom toewenaarstaf wat uit die grond uitsteek... ons kom stap altyd hier met Ounooi en Husky, Husky hou daarvan om hier op en af te hardloop”*

*Hulle stap toe verder af oor die oop grasperk. Voor hulle is daar nou “n heining en langs die heining is daar “n klein woud. Die twee seuns stap in die woud in. Als lyk*

*normaal. Dis presies soos wat die damwoud altyd lyk. Die swaai. Die boom. Die oopte. Die swaai. Die boom. Die oopte.*

*“Kobus, waar’s die dam?”*

*“Hoe bedoel jy? Hou op my try bangmaak, die dam is net daar.” steek Gideon sy vinger reguit voor hom uit in die rigting van ’n boom in.*

*“Wag, hoe het die boom daar gekom? Dan moet die dam net, uhm, hier wees,” sy kop draai in die presiese ander rigting as wat die boom was.*

*En daar is daar nou ’n swaai*

*“Gideon, ek hou nie van hierdie game nie, kan ons nou ophou, asseblief?”*

*“Kobus ek speel nie ’n game nie, ek weet nie waar ons is nie, daar’s net dieselfde drie plekke om ons maak nie saak waar ons kyk nie. Dis asof ons vasgevang is in ’n lus.”*

*“M-m-m-m-Mooi gedaan seuntjie .... mh-mmmm, honger,” op die swaai is daar ’n vrou met peike vir hare en uitgeholde, donker, swart oë.*

*“Ag toe nou, moet nie vir my sê julle twee het al die pad vir my kom kuier en nie beseef wat ’n Lus-let is nie... skandelik... gruwelik... mh-mh-hahaha... wonderlik!” eindig die Lus-let in ’n opgewonde bese lag.*

*Die Lus-let jaag van die swaai af, en hoe vinniger die seuns probeer weg hardloop, hoe vinniger hardloop hulle oor en oor deur dieselfde drie plekke. Swaai.Boom.Oopte.Oopte.Swaai.Boom.*

*“Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide... toe nou, kom ons speel julle... ag toe.... asseblief ek versmul my aan kinderpride!”*

*Die Lus-let lag vir haar eie rympte asook vir die feit dat die seuns nog probeer weg hardloop.*

*“Uhm, kom ons try gou ...”*

*“Wat nou, julle?” eweskielik is haar gesig reg langs Kobus se ’n, hykan haar vel ruik.*

*Dit ruik soos leer of klein nat brakkies. Dalk ’n mengsel van die twee. Sy haal diep asem en druk haar neus teenaan syne en teug die lug uit sy longe uit. Hy voel hoe iets binne hom uitgesuig word.*

*“Delicious.. .trots... ahhh, ek gaan myself lekker aan julle twee mannetjies verslurp!” suig sy die laaste letters terug in haar verwaarlose mond in en kèkkellag die woud vol.*

*“Vat so, jou vieslike ding!”*

*Gideon tel ’n klip op een gooi dit in die rigting van die Lus-let in en val plat op die aarde.*

*“Eina my fok, daai’s seer!” skree sy.*

*“Kobus kom weg hierso. Gaan terug na die tuig toe!”*

*Met dié, draai hy om en hardloop. Maar hy's nogsteeds vasgevang in die eindelose doolhofagtige lus.*

*"Ek kan nie, ons is trapped hierbinne!"*

*"Onthou jy daai slag wat ons na daai ding in die middel van die Huisgenoot gestaar het, daardie 3D-bladsy ding, hierdie is soos daai. Die enigste manier om dit te sien, is om nie te kyk nie. Ontspan net jou oë!"*

*"Hoe weet jy dit?"*

*"Het jy rêrig nou tyd om dit vir my te vra, kom net hier flippenwil weg!"*

*Kobus ontspan sy oë, hy was altyd goed met daai magic eye stereogram-goed. En dit was nie eers "n paar oomblikke later nie en hy kon die lus-net om hulle sien. En soos wat hy die lus-net sien smelt dit weg en raak deel van wat net 'n illusie was.*

*"Sien jy dit?"*

*"Ja, duidelik, die dam is net daar," Kobus wys met sy vinger en hy voel hoe die bekende greepsarm van Gideon se gedagtes na hom uitreik.*

*"Wys my die pad ek kan dit nie sien nie, ek suck met daai verdomde goed."*

*Kobus wil lag, want dis so waar, Gideon kon nooit die stereogramme sien nie en dit het hom altyd so kwaad gemaak. Maar voor hy kon lag, is die Lus-let op haar voete.*

*"Dis hier, kom ons gaan"*

*Kobus lei vir Gideon deur die bos. Totdat hy self ook die breek in die lus in sy geestesoog kan sien.*

*"Kom hierso julle klein kakkerlakkies!"*

*Die Lus-let spoeg in haar kwaadheid nog lusse in alle rigtings, daar waar sy trap vou tyd en spasie op mekaar in sakkies van drie. Haar hakke klik-klik-klik, maar dis "n dowwe klikgeluid op die klippe en bruin, klam aarde.*

*Voordat sy vir Kobus kan vang, is hy buite die lus. Die skerp son wat nou deur die oopte in die takke skyn is helder. Skoop. Binne die bos is dit donker en dit lyk soos iets wat jy in "n rillerflek sou sien. Die dennehoutsap wat altyd "n deurskynende of barnsteen-kleurige skynsel het, is nou swart en donker en vuil. Dit lyk vir Kobus asof sy eintlik die son en die lig vermy.*

*"Gideon, ek dink nie sy kan in die lig kom nie, kyk, dis asof sy dit ten alle koste vermy!"*

*Hy draai sy kop en staan op.*

*"Ok, bly jy net buite die lus, ek sal nou hier uitkom, gaan solank na die astraaltuig toe!"*

*Gideon hardloop in die rigting van die oopte, hy sien duidelik waar Kobus nou omdraai en by die klein heuwel ophardloop voordat hy by die dam kan uitkom.*

*"Seuntjie, jy gaan beslis nêrens vandag nie, o lekker, lekker trotsheidscracker!"*



*En soos wat sy lag en vorentoe stoot van haar hakke af, val Gideon uit die lus uit. Hy staan nou op die grysgedeelte tussen die woud en waar daar 'n biësvlei is.*

*“Kom hier!” haar naels groei meteens langer en sy gryp 'n skoen.*

*Sy skoen.*

*“Eina, dooie donner, die son brand my moer toe!” skrou sy soos wat sy hom nader trek, sy skoen is nou weer in die Lus-let se skaduwees.*

*“Los my,” hy skop, maar hy skop niks raak nie, die skoen val van sy voet af en die Lus-let se mond raak nou 'n skeursel van 'nbek met klein prikkelnal tande.*

*“Het jou, maatjie!”*

## Slaphoeke

Ek weet nie actually waar ek staan met hierdie nie. Ek voel hoe die rook in my longe ingaan en die whispers van my kundalini demp. Ek voel hoe my gedagtes na mense en na attachment toe sweef en dan rook ek om die desire en die attraction te demp. Te dood. Te vries en dan te ontvries.

Daar is “n sletstring van naaiverhale waaraan ek elke nou en dan raak. Ek rol hulle tussen my vingers en wonder of daardie mense nog aan my dink. My sien. Van my droom. Droom ek dan ooit van hulle, of nie? Ek dink nie ek doen nie. My drome is te intellectual en te complicated.

Maar ek het nou die aand “n droom gehad waar ek in die berg stap met iemand wat ek onlangs ontmoet het. Hoekom droom ek nie meer van jou nie? Hoekom is ek nie meer naby aan jou nie? Is dit die afstand, of is dit, soos wat jy op “n tyd gesê het, dat ons soms verder voel as die fisiese afstand tussen my en jou? Fok weet.

Ek rol nog “n sletpêrel tussen my voorvinger, voorvel, en sluk dit deur die gaping van my piel in. Hoekom het ek nooit met ouens genaai nie? Hoekom stop ek altyd op “n sekere punt? Wat is dit wat my voorkom om in te duik sonder om te wonder hoe warm of koud, of hoe mooi of lelik, die water mag wees?

Ek kry boodskappe van mense af van die jare toet. “Hoe ganit?” “How goes?” “I miss you ... I love you”. Maar dit beteken fokol vir my omdat ek dit nie van hulle af wil hoor nie.

Ek’t gedog dat ek van iemand hou. Maar ek weet nie meer nie. Ek is deurmekaar. Ek is 10 op “n grasperk en ek is besig om in sirkels te draai en te draai totdat ek wil braak. Ek kots die waarheid uit en proe die suur smaak van realization. Van weet. Van besef.

Waar ek nou staan voel ek asof ek fokol soek. Ek voel nie empty nie. Ek voel nie, nie reg, of normaal nie. Ek voel net nie lus nie. Is dit die rook wat in my longe afsak en my diafragma verslap, of is dit die kundalini wat uit my anus uit lek? Is dit die kouete van winter, of is dit dat ek net vir te lank myself forseer het om van mense te hou? Gedruk het. Gepush het. Is ek soos my suster? Is ek ook een wat in verhoudings inspring voordat ek „hallo“ kon gesê het? En waar die donner het ek dit geleer? Ek blameer my ma en my pa en my ouma en my oupa. Ek blameer die wind wat nie genoeg gewaai het toe ek as kind by die gange van ons ou huis op en af gehardloop het nie. Ek blameer myself. En vir jou. Die klein kind wat ophou glo het in homself, wat gesê het „Ek gaan try straight wees“ en sy eie sexuality en identiteit gefracture het.

Klein doos wat jy is. Nou moet ek jare later sit en die ontrafelde tou weer aanmekaar vasvleg. Maar is “n ontrafelde tou nie dalk “n goeie geleentheid om te kies en keur wat jy in jou nuwe tou wil inbind nie?

//

Die deur van die kas slaan toe agter my gat. My knieë raak aan my ore. My asem wasem my balsak nat. Ek wonder of hulle, julle, vir my gaan kom soek. Ek kruip weg omdat ek weet dat dit julle survival instinct gaan laat inskop. Omdat julle dan gaan ophou baklei. Ek is die wedge, ek is die lig, ek is die broken boy wat in kaste wegkruip sodat my familie nuclear mag bly.

“As hulle my kry, het hulle my lief,” proe die souterige woorde een vir een, vokaal vir vokaal.

Familiekak is cross-generational. My pa is absent want sy pa het gedood toe hy vyf was. My ma kannie sê sy's lief vir mense nie omdat haar ouers agt-se-infinity van kinders gehad het.

Dis hoekom ek in kaste wegkruip.

## Nat Swembad

Ek sukkel om in die spieël te kyk. Ek's 'n perverse poes wat maak asof ek aan niks behalwe blokkies dink nie. Fokol van sirkels. Fokol van driehoëke. Net die vanilla. Soos die dekadente gelato van Italië.

In die aande voor ek gaan slaap, dan speel daar 'n drive-through se verhale deur my kop. Ek raak naar. Ek raak kwaad. Ek raak skaam en ek bloos vanaf my wange tot my anus. Jy weet wanneer jy stres tot in jou poephol in, dit double-clutch mos so. Dis daai gevoel wat ek nou voel.

Vanaand speel die swembaddens in my lewe in my kop af. Ek't myself fakdup altyd gebrand omdat ek heeldag in die son rondgespeel het. Dis waar al die vlekke op my nek vandaan kom. Dis hoekom ek lelik is. Dis hoekom ek van mense met mooi skoon, bruin velle hou. Dis hoekom ek daarvan hou om te slaap met mans wat Asian of Latino is. Dis erg. Waar's die tipex dat ek die kak uit my gedagtes kan uitverwit? Kan ek nie net vervel soos 'n slang en heeltemal my demons agterlos nie?

Ek hoor my eie stem. Dis ek wat die een was wat die kaalgatkompetisie begin het. Die een wat oor en oor gevra het as die ander seuns kom kuier, „wat kan ons doen?“ asof ek nou nie geweet het wat die donner ek actually mee besig was nie. Ek's manipulative. Ek's sexual. Ek's verkeerd. Oupa kyk vir my uit die hemel uit en kots op wieokal daar saam met hom is se skoot.

Die seuns het altyd soos curious konyne die broodkrummels gevolg. „Wat van ... dié?“ of „Wat van ... daai?“ Soms het dit lank gevat om hulle op die regte punt te kry dat hulle enige game sal aanvaar. Ek's patient. Ek wag. Dis dalk hoekom ek 'n goeie onderwyser is omdat ek kan wag vir goed om te gebeur.

- i. Die cul-de-sac-seuns het altyd sonder my in die straat gespeel. Leon se vel het altyd gestink. Dis asof sy ma nie omgee het dat hy soos rugby en gras en hondepis ruik nie. Ons hoë mure het hulle uitgehou en my ingehou. Karel en Reinhard het kom swem. Reinhard het sy swembroek uitgetrek en na die anderkantse wal toe gegooi. „Kom ons race vir swembroeke,“ het hy opgewonde gesê.
- ii. Matriek het Reinhard volpunte en sewe A's gekry. Hy het die aand voor die punte en rapporte uit is by Irene afgejaag in sy ma se ou rooi kar. Hy het die kar om die dunste boompie by die straatlampoog omgevou. Hy het op die agterste sitplek gaan lê en verdwyn.
- iii. Hy het daai dag by die swembad heel eerste sy swembroek gekry, as dit saakmaak.

//

Jy weet natuurlik van die kleurboogkinders my kind, of hoe nou?

Agter elke waterval is daar 'n plek waar kinders naak en vry rond dans. Dis moeilik om te dink dat daar 'n plek vol kinders alleen is, kaal is, vir altyd jonk is. Maar dit bestaan! Ek wil jou nie te veel vertel nie, maar dis iets wat jy moet weet.

Jy sal soms hoor as jy gaan swem, dit nou by julle einste swembad, hoe die kinders lag en jou al hoe nader aan hulle Kleurboog roep. Maar pasop, jy moenie na hulle luister nie. Tensy jy kaalgat tussen die gras in “n land ver weg van jou ouers en my af wil opeindig.

Hulle sing en roep jou en voor jy jou oë kom uitvee, is jy uit jou broek uit, deur die gleuf, en vir altyd vasgevang in “n land van gras en water. En al wat jou dae gaan raak, is om seuns deur die gleuf te trek tot in die Kleurboog en dit omdat jy nie meer alleen wil wees nie.

//

Ek onthou die dae wat ons langs die swembad lê en bak het. En wat ek na die tyd Harry Potter op my suster se pienk, opblaas Barbie-stoel sit en lees het. Maak dit my “n moffie?

Regardless, dit was my gunsteling dae. Hemelse swembad-Sondae. Dis nou nie asof ek net Sondae langs die swembad spandeer het nie. Dit was actually “n elke-somer-middag-na-skool storie. Daar’s dieper stories in die blou waters van die swembad. Maar ek wil jou nie vertel nie.

Die ritueel van swembad skoonmaak was iets wat ek altyd saam met my pa gedoen het. Wat ek geniet het. Dis nou moeilik tussen my en hom. Dit kners. Dit druk. Dis kak.

Ek hou van skoon swembaddens wat blou blink. My pa, via my ma, het my seker hierdie obsession laat ontwikkel. Toe ek jonk was, het ek leer swem en verdrink met “n rooi pollyotter. Rooi. Die kleur van bloed as jy jou bek oopval teen die swembadtrap omdat jou tand te gulsig is om die hok van die tande-bazaar wil ontsnap.

Ek en my pa sal altyd kaalbolyf na die woonstel se kant toe stap. Ek sal met my polyotter in die water inspring en teëls skrop. My pa sal dan sout in die water ingooi. Ek skree en skree en skree onder die water, dis die enigste plek waar niemand my kan hoor nie.

“Kom ons skok hom net so bietjie!” sal my pa bylas soos wat hy acid in die water ingooi. Dis die geheim. Of dis een van die geheime van blou waters.

Dis hoe jy jou water mooi blou kry. Acid. Vreet. Skrop en skuur. Stap vir stap:

1. Staan vroeg op en vertel jou ma dat jy en jou pa in die tuin gaan werk. (My ma sou uitfok as sy weet die swembad is groen.)
2. Trek jou ou blou speedo aan. (Wat styf oor jou pubic region span, is dit te klein, ek praat van my piel en nie die speedo nie?)
3. Hardloop verby die honde oor die klippe en stene. (Die twee mansbrakke naai mekaar altyd in die Lente.)
4. Bom in die swembad in. (En hoop sorgvrylik jy verloor jou swembroek.)
5. Praat en bond met jou pa. (“Ja pa. Regso pa. Dadelik pa.” Dis diep en meaningful bonding.)
6. Waardeer dit as hy op jou vloek omdat jy te veel speel. (Vloek is liefde. Stoei is drukkies. “n Klap in die gesig is “n trotse-prestasie soen.)
7. Skrop die teëls met “n ou naelborsel. (Hoe meer jy skrop, hoe minder pla jou piel jou.)
8. Gaan onder die water in elke keer wat jou pa jou roep. (Skree. Vermy die wêreld se verantwoordelikheid. Hoe voel dit om te verdrink?)
9. Beoog en bekyk die Kreepy Krawley en wonder hoe dit sou voel as die Kreepy jou vel suig. (Jou piel in die pyp.)
10. Lag saam met jou pa. Braai saam met familie. En bewaar die geheim van skoon swembaddens. (Stille waters, diepe donkers.)

## **Jags-brakke**

Ek verstaar my aan die roekelose vryheid van honde. Hulle loop na mekaar toe snuif-snuif en fokof as hulle nie like wat hulle ruik nie. Ek wonder of hulle voel soos ek voel as hulle rejected word. Ek wonder asof hulle ook voel asof daar rekkies om hulle balsak gedraai word as hulle die snuif-test fail.

Dalk nie. Omdat hulle met nat snoete en opgekrulde mondhoeke net klaarblyklik verder soek. Hulle is unapologetic en voel nie 'n fok nie. Daar is geen guilt trips en skaamte nie. Daar's nie 'n Adam en Eva ancestral sin nie. Daar is nie volumes van love poems en sulke kak nie.

Daar's net die volgende plek om te lek.

### **Praat straight ...**

“Jou ma wou jou nooit gehad het nie!” het my ouma my inform die dag toe sy 67 singels met die teelepels in die koppie uitgeklingel het. Sy glo 67 is die optimale roertotaal vir tee.

As dit nou my ma se ma was, sou dit my gepla het, maar dis my pa se ma, my pa se distant proxy-papier-poses van “n ma. En ek’t minder ooghare vir haar as wat sy wenkbroue oorhet. Want sy het fokol meer oor nie. Dis al jare lank wat sy hulle aanteken. Sies, ek’s seker nou lelik. Maar ek dink liever „Druk jou gemmerkoekies in jou fokken gat op, man!”

My pa en ek aarsel en sukkel. Ons huppel soos twee drie-been brakkies om mekaar in sirkels. Daar is goed wat ek oor wil praat. Daar is goed wat hy wil vermy om oor te praat. Daar is die waarheid in my mond. En die verdigsel wat hy in sy kop het. Dis die twee goed wat ons aanmekaar vasstring en verstrengel. Maar goed gaan nou beter. Ek moet nou nie weer loop kak opskop just for the sake of speaking nie. Ek doen daai. Ek rehash ou kak net om die silence te fill. Dis snaaks hoe my pa se legacy van awkward silence in my voortleef. Dis snaaks hoe my ouma praat oor familieleden wat ons nooit gaan ontmoet nie, want hulle is dood. Lankal. Fokken gone-zo. Dis seker “n haarkapper gap-fill technique.

My pa praat oor sy besigheid om die spasie te vul. My ma praat oor wat sy vir ander mense doen. Ek praat oor intellektuele kak. Wag. Eintlik praat ek oor planne en drome wat nooit gaan realize nie omdat ek te bang is vir die stilte. My suster praat oor haar leegheid. En almal anders om my praat oor hulle eie version van silence fill. Party mense fill die silence met nog silence. Dis “n goeie manier om iemand anders hulle ingewande op “n tafel te laat uitstort. Bly stil. Kyk diep. Hulle sal praat.

„Ek voel nie “n fok nie.“ Blaker ek tussen sigaretstompies en bierbotteltjies uit. Maar daai’s ook “n laai, “n leeg laai wat fokol inheti, want eintlik gee ek om. Hoekom is dit dat ek en my pa in stilte sit en met mekaar oor die plastiekoppervlak van die lewe praat? Hoekom is dit dat my ma begin huil as dit als net te real raak? Hoekom is dit dat ek mense wegstoot en wil weghardloop? En hoekom is dit dat sekere mense net hulle piele orals wil indruk?

Ek wens ek het rugby gespeel. Dat ek kon glimlag van traanhoek tot traanhoek. Dat ek “n meisie kon spyker soos wat ek veronderstel is om te kan doen. En dat ek 2.3 kinders en drie divorces in my lewe sou kon hê. Maar ek kan nie. Daai’s netjie ekkie.

Ek wens my vel was bietjie bruiner, dat my piel werk die oomblik wat ek dink aan hom gebruik, en dat ek ophou verlief raak op mense wat so ver weg is. Pappa is jy daar? Pappa is dit jou skuld? Pappa, kan jy my hoor?

My pa was “n emotionally absent father. Sy pa was “n physically absent father. Sy ma was “n secret slet met mooi skoene en die begeerte om elke Saterdag te gaan dans en vir al wat ons ooit sal weet, piele te suig (kry ek nou dan my streke by haar?).

Die punt is dat ek deur hierdie legacy van my familie se trauma opgeindig het om fokken aangetrokke te wees aan mense wat nooit vir te lank langs my kan wees nie. Dis sad maar dis waar. Is dit die ding wat ek rondom trippel maar nooit wil noem nie, is dit die waarheid wat ek sou uitblaker onder hipnose of sex therapy? Party mense sê jy spandeer jou hele grootmenslewe om jou childhood uit te figure.

Ek sê, as dit die meaning of life is, is dit ook maar fokken vevelig.

## **Teverneefs**

Ons stap na Elzette se huis toe. Elzette. Blonde hare en leë oë wat dink jou piel gaan haar lewe gee. Wat dink as sy jou kom proe dat haar pappaprobleme gaan verdwyn (vir 'n oomblik). Ek's jaloers. Ek hardloop by die deur uit en in die straat af toe ek Elzette se sletgiggel hoor. Die ene wat klink soos zips wat afzip, en spoegmonde met honger lippe en slangerige slaktonge wat binne hulle rondplak. Jy moet my agtervolg. Ek en jou broer is jou responsibility. Maar jy bly by Elzette. Ek huil. Daai fokken Elslet. Ons rook skelmpies in die boomhuis terwyl ons vir jou wegkruip. Jou ma kak jou uit. Ek voel kort daarna beter.



## Rakpakker

Ek't fokken lanklaas porn gekyk, maar ek is seker daarvan daar is al watse weird shit deesdae wat my heeltemal sal uitfreak. Ek't een aand fokken lank terug birthing videos gekyk. Geen grap. Fokweet hoe ek daarop afgekome het, maar nou ja dit is wat gebeur het. Ek en my pelle het dit die „birthing hour“ genoem omdat ek vir een of ander siek rede in daardie oomblik deur dit aroused was. En ek't toe obviously begin draadtrek.

“Jy's 'n siekfok, Neil!” het my tjom Denis gesê.

Ek't natuurlik net my skouers opgetrek en verder gerook.

Kyk, dis nie asof ek van weird kak hou nie. Daai was letterlik net 'n random one-time-only ding.

“Next customer please ...” is ek verplig om met 'n smile te sê.

Jirre kyk die fokken dom poes wat hier aangestap kom. Stuk kak uitgeblykte hemp en hamwange met 'n borselkop. Die doos bly nog seker by sy fokken ma.

“Will that be all for you, sir?” kont, ek't vergeet omvir die dipshit te vra asof hy 'n „Smart Shopper“ kaart het.

Ja ek werk by Pick 'n Pay en ek weet dis kak. Daar's nie veel anders wat ek kon doen sonder 'n matrieksertifikaat nie. En ek gaan ook nie in daardie hele boo-hoo „die land is gefok“ tirade ingaan nie.

My dag oscillate soos die, van „Next customer“ na kak commentaries en dan fokof ek huistoe.

“Holy fuck. Check dié dude,” dink ek vir die eerste keer in 'n week.

Dis min dat jy aantreklike mans kry. Voor ons aanfok gaan ek vinnig sê: ek mag dalk present of voorkom as straight en ek loop dalk soos iemand wat hulle heel kont lewe rugby gespeel het. Maar daai's fokkel waar nie. Niemand besef nie though. God, ek sal nooit ve iemand daai shit reveal nie. But as ek dit moet admit sou ek seker sê eks bietjie meer as bi-sexual. Ja ek weet daai is 'n kak verskoning en 'n domnaai cop-out maar dis nou wat dit is.

Ek't nog nooit 'n boyfriend gehad nie, wag sorry ...

“No problem madame, would you like a bag with that?” fokken ou tief wat drie sakke katkos koop.

Sy't seker 'n hele fokken hoerhuis van katte wat op haar banke pis en wat kak onder haar kussings.

Anyway. Ek't nog nooit iemand gedate nie maar ek weet waarvan ek hou. As ek porn kyk dan kry ek sensations en ek dit lei my soos daai waterstokke. Slap piel beteken, fokol interested. Semi beteken daar's iets wat my aandag trek. Harde horing beteken probably die meeste. Nou ek het vir 'n lang tyd try myself mislei en oorreed dat ek 'n fout maak of iets misinterpret. Ek was self so fokken erg dat ek afwank op mans en dan oorswitch op die eidne na vrouens toe. Dink daai's 'n form van mindfuck brainwashing wat die kerk jou leer in Amerika. Daai kak werk nie.

Vir nou is ek bi vir die blote feit dat ek nie weet wat die fok om vir my vriende of ouers te sê as ek die full transition doen nie.

So lyk die bra wat ek vroeër sien die gange op en af stap het, is terug. Ek sweer voor die jirre ek't hom al gesien, dalk nog in die fokken gym. Kort bruin hare, nie 'n langman nie maar stewig en fris gebou.

Nou jy gaan dink ek's seker die weierste fokker in die Pick „n Pay of dalk dink jy al klaar so omdat ek daai birthing-hour kak gedoen het. Maar ek hou van weier shit. Okay nou nie super weier goed soos leer en bondage en al daai fancy gimmicky shit nie. Ek't net soos fantasieë oor sekere goed.

“Hi there, um...” fok verloor ek my cool.

My hand gly vanself na my hare toe. Nee fok ek moet cool lyk dit lyk kak as iemand hulle hare vryf. Ek moet dalk try serious lyk. Jirre seriously. Die dude gaan dink ek's 'n malnaai.

“Hi there, can I have two bags?” fok sy oë is intens terwyl hy my die kak vra.

Groen of geel.

“Sure,” letterlik is ek nie 'n dompoes joke nie.

Dit is hoe ek altyd raak as ek met mense deal wat my slightly intimidate.

My gedagtes begint sommer vanself te float na snaakse kak. Partymal dink ek aan voete. Partymal aan reuke. Mens praat tog nie met jou pelle oor die tipe shit nie, dis weier. Mens moet darem slightly normal voorkom.

Die dude doen shit aan my. Ek dink aan die holte van sy arm en die diepte van sy armpit.

“Would you like to donate...” thank fuck ek hoef niks nuut te sê of op te maak nie.

Ek bly net met die standard script.

“No thanks.”

Hy loop weg met sy sakke en ek bly nogsteeds dink. Fok. Hoekom is hy so in my gedagtes in?

Die res van die middag dink ek vir een of ander rede aan die ou se post-workout arms. Die oomblik wat ek by die huis kom gaan ek definitely draadtrek, dis for-fokken-sure.

## Vettie-Hush

Ek lê in die tuin op my rug. Die lig sny deur die blink blare van die hol kriewelbos. Daar waar die bosselose bly. Die tuindienste is besig om die tuin te sny. En ek is besig om aan my piel te vat.

Hoekom doen ek daai? Wat's die aantrekking daarvan om in die bos te lê en amper gevang te word? My hart klop. My mond water. Ek sien iemand kyk vir my en ek kyk terug.

Dis jare later en ek stap in die botaniese tuin. Die natuurreservaat. Die enigste ander groen plek. As ek lank genoeg tussen bome is; wil ek bome klim, my broek aftrek, en my melkerige kom teen 'n boom af laat drip. Die ander dag het ek gestap en ek't my pielkop teen die growwe bas van die boom geskuur. Hoekom. Hoekom rape ek boombas en skaaf my piel stukkend teen plantegroei?

Daar's mense wat behep is met my voete. Ek stuur foto's van my hol, my boude, die sole van my voete. Die sole van my voete en my hol saam. My rug. Ek staan met my voorkop teen 'n muur op my knieë. Ek is 'n stoute kind wat die juffrou haar poes vertel het. Maar eintlik is ek self die onderwyser. En ek word gepunish omdat my piel nie kan styf raak nie. My gat word met 'n ysterliniaal gebliksem. Die einste een wat ek gebruik om die woorde te onderstreep op die kruitbord.

Daar is iets van pyn wat my arouse. Nie noodwendig dat ek hou van seerkry nie. Net die gedagte van my bene strek tot by 'n punt wat dit seer raak. Of om iemand anders se heupe af te druk totdat hulle seerkry. Is dit omdat ek as kind gebliksem was? Is dit omdat ek as kind liefde aan belthoue en pyn gekoppel het?

“Ruik hierdie fokken tekkie!” het my ouma eenkeer vir my gesê.

Dis haar skuld dat ek nou daarvan hou om mense se liggame te ruik, so aandagtig te snuif soos 'n hoërbrak op hitte.

Ek onthou die laaste keer wat ek release het, wat ek free-er gevoel het. Dit was toe iemand vir my gesê het „Pee on yourself“ hulle het gedink hulle was baie oulik. Asof ek nog nooit my eie pis op my liggaam gevoel het nie. Asof ek nie die kind was wat in 'n koppie gepis het en lou-hitte urine oor my piel gegooi het terwyl ek afgejerk het nie. „With your underwear on!“ Nou dit was anders, dit was interessant. Wel gedaan. Ekt gevoel of ek 2 jaar oud was met 'n nappie aan. En nee. Ek het nie baba fetishes nie. Although.

“Hush little baby don't you cry ...”

Nou dat ek mooi daaraan dink besef ek, ek hou nogal daarvan as iemand hard aan my nippels suig. Het ek dan 'n mamma fetish?

Ek kan nie dink aan enigeiets anders nie. Ek kan nie dink aan wat anders ek possibly as 'n fetish beskou nie. Behalwe vir die feit dat ek dit geniet om mense te kry om fotos van hulle piel aan my te stuur. Dit klink maklik. Maar dis soms moeiliker as wat jy dink. Dis juis wanneer dit moeilik is wat dit lekker raak. Party ouens speel sport, party ouens gaan gym toe, ek ... ek hou van kopfok en draadjies span. Is ek dan 'n tannie Lus-let? Of is ek dalk net 'n volgroeiende Kleurboog kind?

Of is ek net my ma se kind wat moes vroeg leer het hoe om kop speletjies te speel?

## Moederbaar

Ek hoor die rukkende eggo van my verlede in skulpe wat ek langs die kus skop. Ek loop op en af met die strand, en wonder hoekom die see so fokken koud is hier. Ek voel die bries wat sand in die lig opswEEP en dit voor my laat uitsprint. Daar's haibaba-sakkies wat uitgespoel lê en stadig verbokkom.

„Hoekom is “n kombes die gemaklikste ding op aarde?“ dink ek soos wat ek my baadjie styf teen my vashou en my hande dieper in my sakke in gawe.

Een keer “n maand voel ek buite my eie liggaam. Ongemaklik en ongepas. Ek voel te groot. Ek voel te klein. Ek voel glad nie soos Goldilocks in die middel-bed, smullend aan “n middle-ontbyt, wat op die middle-stoel staan terwyl die TV Saterdag oggend KTV cartoons speel nie. Daar's niks wat vandag *net-reg* voel nie.

My asem wil nie kom nie; by die huis skuif ek die stoel nader aan die groot houtraam venster. Die bries wat inwaai ruik soos koeimis, die spasie tussen my bed en die kombuis ruik soos “n hotel ontvangs. Die koue lug wat inkom herinner my aan die winter. Buite raas bruin blare ritselrig in die wind. „Moet ek die venster toemaak?“ Ek druk my neus by die venster uit. Seisoensverandering. Dit soen die spasie tussen my haarlyn en nek, sagte donsiehare staan penoerent en my vel verrimpel in see-pampoentjie tekstuur.

Sondaemiddae is die lug warm. Die lug vou en draai om my soos a pasgeborene wat gemak vind in stywe lapdrukkies. Partymaal, soms, voel Sondaes soos “n donkiebyt. Ek het eenslag toe “n vriend my arm soos ou lap gedraai en „donkiebyt“ gegil het, my moer heeltemal gestrip.

“n Emosionele lekkerte het toe, amper soos wolsokkies, my oorweldig.

„Klein doos.“ Dit is die woord wat ek spesifiek gebruik het al was ek te jonk. Ek het mooi gedink aan die woord. Die letter „d“ vet en rond, boepenserig. Die twee „o“s wat mooi langs mekaar pas en lyk asof hulle “n tweeling is wat by “n heuwel af bollemakiesie. En „s“: „S“laat dink my aan slange en mense wat sukkel om te praat. Ek het die eerste keer wat ek die woord gebruik het dit by my pa gehoor, „hy“s “n regte fokken doos!“

Maar ek mag dit nie sê nie want dis “n grootmenswoord.

Na dit as “n stout kind hardloop ek elke keer sitkamer toe as ek kwaad raak. En dan skree ek daardie woord onder die turkoois banke in. Dit raak my magic incantation om die woede uit te kry. Om die warm lug uit my bors te uiter. Soos iets wat in “n skulp weergalm of wat voor my die bries in blaas.

„Kleindoos“ Karel was my bestevriend. Ek het sy potlood uit sy spacecase gevat en dit afgerasper en gevyl en skerp gemaak totdat dit by die laaste nippertjie van my vingerpunt was.

“Hier's jou potlood!“

“Jy's kak!“ Het hy vir my gesê.

Ek dink aan hierdie tipe goed en wonder hoekom ek ophou kak aanjaag het. Hoekom ek ophou kanse vat het. Hoekom ek die een is wat opsoek is na iets wat „net-reg“ is. Die een wat

nie meer ou beskuit aan die bure try smokkel, of toktokkie in die cul-de-sac speel nie. Dat ek die een is wat op die strand gaan stap en my gemoed met sandkorrels deel.

Die aarde plak teen my voete vas. Die sand raak dik en omhelsend. Dit raak insluitend en gevaarlik. Ek val soos 'n toring potlode op my bed. Ek kleef vas aan die duvet. My liggaam is swaar. My liggaam is te groot. Die bed is te klein.

Ek besluit om te reset. Om in my gemakdoos, persoonlike spacecase, in te kruip. 'n Sanderige bruin kombers. Baarmoeders. Een en dieselfde en dieselfde in een. Ek kyk skuldig na die dak. Ek lê. Ek trek die sagte wollerige magicdoek soos siemalabium van hakke tot hare.

Ek krul op en draai en krul verder op. Ek worstel 'n rukkie lank soos 'n kluisenaarkrap wat sy nuwe dop uittry en beproef. Ek raak bewus van myself en van my vel. Is ek 'n kluisenaar of is ek 'n krap? Ek raak bewus van my asemhaling wat in-en-uit en dan bedaar. Die reuk van die see kleef aan die kombers. Langnaweke in Bettiesbaai. Ek maak my oë toe en trek my tone net-net onder die kombers in. Hulle kriel soos klein krappies op die kuslyn.

Die kombers ruik na alles wat ek al ooit in my hele lewe ervaar het, maar ook, soos die eerste ding wat my styf vasgedruk en omhels het.

## Helder Oë

Ek sluit my oë vir 'n kerktiens-oomblik en sien 'n kinderlike weerkaatsing teen die vel skerm.

Stoutgat half-grootte dis 'n mens-wordende. Kruip en kriel deuroorvloed en die Adam-Eva sweetbos.

Groot mure en glinsterende diamantperfeksie'n tiener in 'n mondlose toring 'n oranje gaping wat soos 'n ongeluks-inhaal-aseem, tyd in stilte laat uitrafel. En selfverteer.

Ek voel 'n diafragma-deuntjie. Ek proe droogte. Ek ruik trane. En verwerk hartseer.

Daar's 'n kraak in die muur en 'n man loer deur, verlig.

### 33 Abelia

Ek het “n glimlag wat stadig begint huiwer. Met elke woord wat ek skryf oor die verlede grawe ek “n dieper gat. Dril. Dril. Dril. Tril. Tril. Tril.

Lyk my bolip al soos “n jackhammer? Lyk my onderlip al soos die grond? Lyk die traan wat souterig proe al soos “n mynskag wat van bo tot onder sny en frack? Of verbeel ek my?

In my trauma speel huise “n belangrike rol. In my lewe vat die vier mure van skuiling die vierde trap van vergelyking se plek oor.

Ek skryf altyd met plek ingedagte. Met huis op die vingerpunte. Ek weef woorde met familie as die verbindingsvou; met die boek se gomrug.

“Ons trek die naweek!” skree my ma soos wat sy boeke en borde en baadjies in bokse in smyt. Sy verskeur 15 pseudo-perfekte jare in twee dae. Die “n emergency. Dis die Titanic. Dis: “Ons gaan nie “n fok onder met die skip nie!”

Ek sien bome wat flits en skoelappers met groot oë en glimlagte op hulle ruë onderstebo draai en vrek. Buite in ons perfekte tuin.

Ek vat aan die ou mure waar ek leer val het. Ruik die geur van elke kamer vir “n laaste keer:

Potpourri-kaneel vir ouma s“n. Tienerseun angst vir myne. Opgewonde adrenalien vir my suster s“n. En 18 jaar van asynwoorde vir my ma en pa.

My extended familie het Desember vakansies hier kom kuier. My oupa is hier dood. My suster is hier gebore.

Toe ek alleen was was, was die vier mure my enigste geselskap. Toe my pa my gevra het, „Wil jy hê moet ek jou ma skei?“ het ek eers die omhelsende glinster teëls gevra. Toe ek jonk was, was hulle vier vrouens wat my oral agtervolg en opgepas het. Toe ek ouer geraak het, was hulle oupa wat altyd vir my kyk. “n Ogie hou. Soos wat iemand altyd gesê het.

Vyftien jaar later, hierdie jaar, gaan ek op Google Maps se streetview in en ek sien iets wat my asem wegslaan. Ek sien die dag wat ek met my silwer Toyota Tazz by die groot swart hek uitgery het. Vir die laaste keer. Daardie Vrydag voor die naweek wat als verander het. Wat maak die foto hier?

In die agtergrond is “n huis met vol oë en kamers vol herinneringe.

“n Huis met seuns wat deur krielbosse kruip, wat met swaarde op die voorste yard speel. Daar is twee honde wat blaf en lawaai. En “n groep mense wat rugby kyk en gil en skree van die sitkamer se kant af. Daar is “n huishulp wat “n part-time ma was. “n Ouma wat altyd aan die kook was.

En “n boom wat in die wind waai, soos “n oupa se hare.

Part B: Portfolio

**Portfolio**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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of

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**Deon Claudius Visser**

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Deon Claudius Visser

Portefeulje ter ondersteuning van *Hierdie keer gaan nie maklik wees nie.*

*Die portefeluje is word in drie dele aangebied. in Deel Een plaas ek my kortverhaalbundel, Hierdie keer gaan nie maklik wees nie, binne die konteks van trauma en traumaverwerking en ondersoek presies hóé ek as skrywer die afgelope jaar ontwikkel en verander het. In Deel Twee ondersoek ek hoe my leeswerk en my skryfwerk in gesprek met mekaar is. In Deel Drie bespreek ek die lesersverslag oor my bundel.*

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## **Deel Een**

### **Inleiding**

As skrywer stel ek belang in trauma as 'n tema en in die wisselwerking tussen die skryfproses en traumaverwerking. Trauma beïnvloed die skrywer en sy/haar werk. Terselfdetyd word die skrywer deur sy/haar eie skryfproses beïnvloed. Die afdeling wat volg bestaan uit 'n opstel wat die stelling b6 krities ondersoek en uit nadenkingsjoernale oor my skryfproses en traumaverwerking.

## **Die Skryfproses as 'n Meganisme vir Traumaverwerking**

### **Wat is trauma?**

Elke mens het 'n ander perspektief en uitkyk op die lewe. I.t.v dit het elkeen van ons ook 'n ander manier waarop ons goed prosesseer en verwerk. In ons daaglikse lewens ervaar ons verskeie stimulasies en situasies: d.w.s dat ons goeie sowel as slegte ervarings het. Dis juis omdat ons almal anders is, dat ons sekere goed minder of meer of intens kan ervaar weens ons geskiedenis en sensitiwiteit. Daar is sekere ervarings wat traumaties mag wees vir party van ons, maar vir ander van ons dra hierdie gebeurtenisse geen gewig nie. Dit beteken nie dat die sneller (d.w.s. dit wat die trauma-reaksie begin, die "trigger") as sulks minder of meer beteken nie. Dit beteken net dat dit traumaties vir 'n sekere individu is weens hulle geskiedenis of hulle gesindheid.

Wanneer ons praat van trauma, kan ons ook aflei dat nie almal bewus is van hulle traumas of wat die presiese effekte daarvan op hulle daaglikse lewens mag wees nie. Ons ervaar iets, onderdruk of verwerk dit, en dan vergeet ons weer daarvan. In die verloop van 'n normale dag is daar nie tyd of die instelling om elke aspek van ons psiges te analiseer of te bepeins nie. Dis ook ewe waar dat ons nie altyd presies kan uitwys wat vir ons traumaties was of is nie. Dan kan trauma ook verskeie maskers dra, asook verskeie boksies beset. En dis juis omdat trauma, of wat presies traumaties vir ons is, nie ooglopend of voor die hand liggend is nie, dat dit soms moeilik is om vas te stel wat ons individuele traumas is of mag wees.

Met betrekking hiertoe, kan ons ook sien dat ons trauma fragmentaries is. Ons geheue en herinneringe daarvan is soms verdoesel en agter rooskleurige brille versteek. Die waarheid is soms 'n leuen, en die eintlike ervaring is soms nie so onskuldig as wat dit geblyk het die oomblik toe ons dit ervaar het nie. Ons kan verskeie voorbeelde uitlig – soos die effek van verbale mishandeling van 'n ouer af. In die oomblik is die mishandeling normaal. Die persoon wat dit ervaar weet dalk nie van beter nie, maar soos tyd verloop en soos ons ouer raak, kan ons die ervaring herraam as verkeerd of beledigend.

Dit wil dan verder sê dat ons fragmentariese traumas wat in rooskleurige herinneringe wegkruip, iets is wat aktief uitgesoek, en ondersoek moet word, deur ons as individue. Ons moet die werk doen om hulle te ontbloot en te uiter. Maar hulle maak seer, so ons vermy en onderdruk hulle. Ons bou mure om die plekke wat ons seermaak sodat ons hulle nie hoef te voel nie. Ons gooi matte oor probleme of uiteringe en verdoof hulle sodat ons hulle nie meer hoef te hoor of te sien nie.

Hierdie onderliggende traumas wat wegkruip agter mure en matte, is die dinge wat ons dan in die hede beïnvloed. Dit is die dinge wat ons blok en laat afsny, laat kwaad of geïrriteerd raak met die lewe. Die oomblik dat iets te naby kom aan die doring, bars ons uit om onself te beskerm. Maar mens kan nie so deur die lewe gaan nie. Die trauma moet uit, die wond moet genees, en ons moet ons huis bou waar dit ons pas, en op die manier wat ons wil of goed dink.

En dit beteken dat ons diep moet graawe en die trauma, wortel en al, uitgraawe en baasraak.

### **Hoe gaan mens te werk?**

Almal hanteer goed anders en almal het hul eie maniere om traumas te verwerk. Ek voel dat kreatiewe pogings, soos skryf, ons seker die naaste aan ons traumas kan bring, maar daar is ook ander maniere. Ons kan byvoorbeeld met 'n sielkundige of vriend oor ons probleme praat. Ons kan sport speel en die onderliggende stres en spanning 'n kanaal gee om te uit.

Maar ek glo mens moet meer doelgerig wees wanneer dit kom by hierdie tipe self-kennis en persoonlike bevordering.

Om te praat maak ons bewus, om iets te skeep laat ons met die probleem speel (meeste van die tyd onbewustelik), maar om te skryf doen iets heeltemal anders. Wanneer ons oor ons probleme skryf, gee ons hulle konteks en karakter. Ons gee hulle 'n vorm, 'n lewende lyf wat ons kan aanskou en bewonder.

Ek glo skryf is die werklike poort na die diepere vlakke van ons bewussyn. Daar is natuurlik faktore waarbinne die skryfproses moet plaasvind. Daar is werk wat voor die tyd ingesit moet word om die platform te skeep waarop ons die boksies kan uitpak. Mens kan nie in 'n deurmekaar kamer orde skeep tensy jy nie 'n oop spasie het om te begin mee nie. Jy kort daardie plek om al die goed in vrede en met die nodige spasie tot jou beskikking te kan ondersoek.

Ek sou daarbenewens sê, voor jy die diep-duik in jou persoonlike geskiedenis en die dieper vlakke van die bewussyn (en die onderbewussyn) moet jy jou verstand voorberei. Mens kan dit begin doen met meditasie of bewustheidsoefeninge wat jou na die hede toe bring. As jy hierdie oefeninge doen, behoort jy binnekort die verstandelike spasie en kalmte hê om te werk te gaan.

### **Skryf en die traumaverwerkingsproses**

Nie alle traumas is verstaanbaar as 'n alleenstanende lewensgebeurtenis nie. Sekere traumas is tussen-generasie traumas. Hulle word oorgedra deur die stories wat ons oorvertel of gehoor het as kinders. Hulle word voortgebring in die patrone waarin ons ouers en hulle ouers verval. In baie opsigte beteken dit ons word van vroeg af aan traumas wat ons nooit eers eerstehands ondervind het nie, blootgestel. En dit maak dit selfs moeiliker om hulle te verstaan of te verwerk.

Ek voel skryf, meer as enige ander kreatiewe proses, gee vir ons die geleentheid om struktuur of lyf aan ons probleme te gee. Die eerste stap is om bewus te raak van die emosie of gevoel wat jy ervaar. Tweendes, gee dit 'n naam of etiket. Derdens, vermy die neiging om dit te wil onderdruk of verontagsaam. En laastens moet jy dit laat gaan.

Dis juis hierdie laaste stap wat dit so moeilik, of liever, interessant maak. Hoe laat ons iets net vaar? Hoe kom ons oor iets wat ons pla of hinder? Dís waar skryf inkom. Dis die meganisme wat ons kan gebruik om die tou te ontrafel. So dis ná hierdie bewusrakingsproses wat die vêrdere werk eintlik begin. Hierdie laaste stap is inderdaad die mees aangrypende en mees tydsbesettende deel. Ek wil hierdie die stap verder uitpak en analiseer.

Gedurende my eie skryfproses die afgelope jaar, het ek agtergekom dat my stories se kwaliteit en struktuur verander het. Dis nie net dat ek trauma verwerk het nie. Dis asof ek nader aan myself kom soos ek nader aan die trauma kom. D.w.s die trauma lê só diep dat dit eintlik langsaan my ware self lê. Agter die mure en matte waar die trauma skuil, kan mens dan jou regte self tot 'n mate vind.

Ek wil d.m.v 'n voorbeeld wys hoe ek meer outentiek in my skryfstyl en uitdrukking gegroei het:

**'n Uitreksel uit Opdrag Drie vir die Fierce Writing seminaar aangebied deur die digter, Kerry Hammerton:**

*Ek het die nuus gekry die ander dag. Jou been gaan afgesit word. My hart klop en ek wonder wat gaan gebeur. Gaan jy wat so oud is dit kan oorleef? Gaan jy wat jou drie seuns verloor het kan opstaan, na hiërdie slag? Ek luister dieselfde liedjie oor-en-oor. Dit laat dink my aan jou. Nie omdat jy dit al ooit gehoor het nie. Nie omdat dit praat van oumas en oupas en mense soos daai nie. Nee. Liewer omdat die klavier se melodie net iets vir my fluister en communicate in dié bedompige plek.*

In Kerry Hammerton se seminaar was ek vir die eerste keer bewus gemaak van “n emosie of “n gevoel wat ek het. En dat ek hierdie moet ondersoek en nie bang moet wees vir wat onderliggend gevind kan word nie. In hierdie uittreksel onthou en herhaal ek hoe ek gevoel het toe ek uitgevind het dat my ouma se been afgesit gaan word. Maar as ons die sinne dieper analiseer, kan ons waarneem dat daar “n tipe vrees en teruggetrokkenheid in die skryf is. Mens kan waarneem dat ek die tweedepersoon gebruik. Daar is “n distansie tussen „ek” wat skryf en die onderwerp. My taal gebruik is ook meer formeel en gesensuur. Is dit omdat ek bang is vir wie dit mag lees? Is dit omdat ek wonder wat die mense gaan dink?

Dit bring my dan tot “n ander punt: dit wat mens kan waarneem wanneer jy begin bewusraak van “n trauma. Mens moduleer en verander jou reaksie sodat jy die leser of die gehoor kan bevredig. Mens doen dit omdat jy skaam is, of dalk omdat jy as kind geleer is om emosies te onderdruk. In my geval is laasgenoemde wat ek aan dié tipe moduleering heg.

In hierdie selfde seminaar druk ek myself verder. Ek besef dat ek agter taal en woorde en gekose onderwerpe skuil.

Soos waargeneem kan word in hierdie uittreksel uit dieselfde opdrag:

**Undelivered letter of complaint (Afrikaans)**

*Ons, wat die community is, wag in angs.  
Dis “n tipe shock-therapy of water-torture  
hierdie, dag ná dag.  
Ons, die community, se borste is warm  
En ons koppe is boos befok.  
Ons wat die beacons of hope is  
wag patiently in die skaduwees vani dag.  
Maar dit sê jy, is mos goed.*

In hierdie stuk begin ek woorde aan my emosies gee. “Befok” word byvoorbeeld gebruik om te wys hoe kwaad ek is. Dit is “n woord wat ek op daardie punt nog nooit in enige skryfstukke gebruik het nie. Mens kan weereens aflei en dat ek wegkruip. Ek gebruik “ons”. Die probleme van die gemeenskap is nou myne. Dis nie ék wat kwaad is nie, dis hulle, en ek is tot “n mate hulle mondstuk. Dis waar dat ek as mens kwaad is oor wat in ons gemeenskappe aangaan. Dis waar dat as ek as mens “n natuurlike geneser is. Maar is hierdie probleme werklik waaroor ek moet skryf? Dalk in die oomblik, ja. Maar wat lê dieper en onder die oppervlak? Hulle sê mens moet vyf keer „hoekom” vra voordat jy by die regte, ware, antwoord kry. En ek dink as mens hierdie raad volg, sal mens by die kern van jou probleem of trauma uitkom. Dit is inderwaarheid hoe mens dieper kan grawe en dieper jou eie psige in kan delf.

As ek na die *Fierce Writing* seminaar kyk, sien ek dit as “n lem wat die wonde oopgesny het. Dit was d.m.v skrywers soos Jose Olivarez wat ek in Hammerton se seminaar teëgekom het, dat ek begin besef het wat die rol van taal in skryf speel. Maar dit was ook in sy *Mexican American Disambiguation* dat ek besef het hoe mens persoonlike trauma in jou skryf proses kan gebruik. Die trauma van wat dit beteken om “n Meksikaanse persoon in Amerika te wees, en die eerlikheid wat hy oor sy lewenservaring skryf, was vir my baie insiggewend.

Dit was ook in hierdie seminaar wat ek Vangile Gantsho se *Red Cotton* raakgelees het en besef het hoe mens oor verkragting kan skryf. Hoe mens as skrywer die trauma kan baasraak.

“two beautiful men push me onto a bed. one puts his knees on my wrists ...”

Daar is “n eerlikheid in hierdie uittreksel wat ek nie op daardie punt in my eie skryfwerk gevind het nie. Daar is iets wat so basies en reguit in die aanhaling bo is dat dit universeel raak. Ek het tot-en-met hierdie punt gedog dat mens moet skuil en verdoesel as jy skryf. Dat jy jou woorde moet gebruik en metafore skep waar jy óm jou probleme hardloop, waar jy “n ding uitwys maar nie noem op sy naam nie. Dalk is dit “n wit Afrikanerman ding, “n element wat ingebore is in ons kultuur. Die begrip dat mens ten alle tye Calvinisties en sterk moet voorkom, dat teerheid “n swakpunt is. Maar dit is glad nie waar nie, intendeel is dit die teenoorgestelde wat waar is. Mens kan nie sonder teerheid braaf wees nie.

Dit is dan waar ons as skrywers moet floreer en ons huise bou. Ons moet vreesloos skryf. En as ons dit nog nie kan doen nie, dan is dit wat ons moet oefen. Elke stappie wat ons nader skyf aan die waarheid, elke steen wat ons uit die muur uithaal, bring ons nader aan die waarheid en aan onself.

Die bogenoemde kan “n aanvaardingsproses begin. Ons kan begin leer hoe om trauma te laat vaar. Skryf en lees kan die bewusmaking en realisering wees van presies wát ons pla. Dit is wanneer ons ander mense se traumas en hulle eerlike, outentieke, verslag-lewering lees, wat ons begin leer wat ons sêlf moet doen. Die seminaar *Fierce Writing* was vir my die beginpunt. Ek het hier besef dat ek nie “n idee het waarom ek wil skryf nie. Waaroor ek moet skryf nie. Maar dit het baie gou begin duidelik raak dat waarom ek voorheen geskryf het, nie die regte onderwerpe was nie.

### **Jou gemors is jou boodskap**

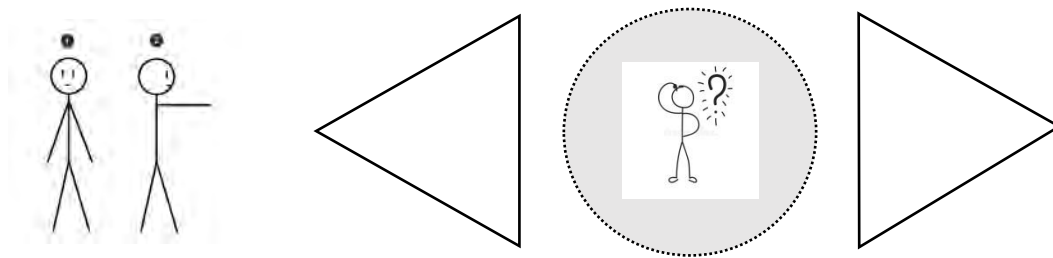
Ek het kort na Kerry Hammerton se seminaar begin om lyste te maak van dinge wat my pla. Dinge wat ek dink my traumas kan wees. Dít is waar ek die eerste stap begin gee het, naamlik: raak bewus van jou emosies of van dít wat jou pla.

Ek het bewus begin raak van die volgende onderwerpe en dit begin oorweeg om oor hierdie temas te skryf:

- My moeilike verhouding met my pa
- My verlange na my ou huis
- Die feit dat ek nog nooit in “n langtermyn verhouding was nie
- Gay-wees
- Algemene angs oor die lewe en my eie dood
- My psigiese toestand en beheptheid met fantasiewêreld
- Die feit dat ek nie kan huil nie
- My ongemaaklikeheid met seks en die verskillende fetishes wat bestaan
- Taal en wat dit beteken om tweetalig te wees
- Wit en Afrikaan wees en wat dít beteken

Ek het verdere ondersoek ingestel en in ou dagboeke begin navors. Ek vind toe “n ou dag boek van 21 Maart 2017 en ek lees “n lys raak. Soos ek genoem het, kan trauma soos dorings wat in ons vassteek wees. Toe ek my ou dagboek lees, begin ek iets op te merk: dít wat my in 2017 gepla het, is dieselfde dinge wat my nou pla. Die ou huis, my verhouding met my pa, langtermyn verhoudinge en seks. Is hierdie my traumas? Is hierdie my gemors wat in my boodskap in verander moet word? Die antwoord was “n duidelike en klinkende “Ja!”.

Figuur a):



As ons na die diagram verwys, kan ons sien hoe die eerste figuur onbewus is oor sy probleme. Kom ons sê die eerste figuur stel “n skrywer voor. Die skrywer in hierdie kondisie skryf bloot oor enige iets wat vorendag kom. Dit mag kom uit lees of klasse bywoon of bepeinsing oor homself dat hy aanbeweeg na die tweede figuur toe. Hiêrdie skrywer begin “n baie beter begrip te kry rondom wat hom pla en hoe dit hom laat voel. Hy begin al hoe meer bewus te raak van sy probleme en traumas en hy kan hulle, soos wat ek voorheen self gelys het, begin uiteensit. Soos wat die driehoek aandui, gaan sy oë oop en sy psige maak oop. Die stap wat ek dan daarna sien, is “n diep-duik in “n groot spasie van kreatiwiteit in – waar die skrywer homself en sy trauma al hoe dieper en dieper kan begin ondersoek. Dit wil uit my eie ondervinding voorkom, dat hierdie fase manies kan wees. Dit kan ook wees dat traumas nie as stories uitkom nie, maar doodgewoon as herinneringe wat op die blad aangebring kan word. Dit kan in “n joernaal-formaat wees of selfs as gedigte of stories wat nog nie hulle ware vorm aangeneem het nie.

In hierdie middel fase begin daar ook al hoe meer konneksies gemaak word tussen vandag en die verlede. Stories se tydlyne mag oorvleuel en dit kan ook wees dat daar “n verdoeseling tussen die bewussyn en onderbewussyn is.

Ek het tydens hierdie proses berading gekry omdat ek besef het dat daar “n psigiese aksie aan die gang was. Die trauma wat nou wil uit, begin al hoe meer uit te spoel en oor die blaai te was. Dit kan te veel te vinnig raak. Dit kan heeltemal oorweldigend wees. En soms kan die emosies wat ontluik nie beheer word nie. En hulle moet ook nie. Dit is juis hoekom berading tydens hierdie fase so noodsaaklik is. Die skrywer raak die medium vir sy eie traumavrylating. Hy braak letterlik dít wat hom vir jare al pla op “n bladsy uit.

Met betrekking tot dit, sien ons ook dat die psigiese toestand of welstand kan verswak of heeltemal kan breek. Ek het tydens hierdie fase my eie ineenstorting beleef en eers na die tyd besef wat eintlik aan die gebeur was.

Maar die stories wat hier uitgekome het, was waar. Dit was ek, dit was die werklike probleme wat my as mens tot op “n diepere vlak pla. My taalgebruik het ook tydens hierdie proses heeltemal verander en die manier wat ek Afrikaanse sinne skryf, het ook verander. Ek het al hoe meer begin skryf soos wat ek dink en praat. En ek het ook probleme en traumas reguit begin uitwys.



Met behulp van die skrywer Stacy Hardy se *Writing the Body* seminaar kom ek nader aan my sintuie.

Ons kan hierdie ondersoek met behulp van die volgende uittreksels uit “n opdrag vir Hardy se seminaar-reeks:

*Hoekom kyk hulle my skeef aan en fluister kak met hulle oë vir mekaar?” dink ek.*

*Ek muse verder, „Hoekom draai hulle neuse op hemel toe asof my aura Chanel No.5 is?” lag ek soos wat ek partially realize dat ek mag vrot na laasnag alkohol scent.*

*„Hekom raas my ore soos Sparkles-lekker papiere?” Grrts grrtss grrrtss.*

*„Hekom is die bloed wat by my neus af drip warm en vriendelik?” diefamiliar hitte is seemingly die enigste ding aan my kant.*

Ek begin om taal te meng. Ek gebruik meer sintuie wanneer ek skryf. Ek herleef die trauma en verwoord dit as sulks op die bladsy. Wat is die trauma hier? Dalk alleen-wees, dalk die verlange na kinderdae. Daar is iets rou omtrent die kwaliteit van hoe die sintuie verweef word met “n storie. Ek het in my persoonlike dagboek gedurende hierdie tyd die verlede intens begin ondersoek. Ek skryf oor hoe ek die ou huis mis. Hoe ek die sorgelose dae van kind wees wil herleef. Ek droom in die aande van my ou huis en oor hoe dit werklikwaar gevoel het om kind te wees. Die trauma bloei en borrel uit die onderbewussyn uit en ek skryf dit neer in my persoonlike dagboek. Ek gebruik dan onbewustelik hierdie as inspirase vir stories wat deur die tema van die week se seminaar aangevuur word.

Die trauma raak as’t ware die brandstof vir “n storie wat ek vir die digter, Mxolisi Nyezwa se seminaar *Writing silence* skryf.

In die volgende uitreksel vir Nyezwa se seminaar sien ons hoe dít wat my pla nog verder en dieper ondersoek word:

### ***Kombuiskas***

*Daar’s “n balletjê op my tong. Hy sal seker later afbeweeg na my vingerpunte. Dalk as ek my oë toe maak kan ek “n mot wees, dan sou ek kon wegvlieg, en die familie skeiding sou my nie spin nie.*

*My ouers hardloop en skree agter “n geslote kamer deur. Alles is onderstebo. My last refuge is die kombuis kas. Die plek tussen plekke. Die plek waar stilte druis en grits-grits en waar die wêreld reduced word na dit wat ek deur die horisontale gleef in die kas kan sien.*

*Ek sien niks. Ek hoor niks. Ek hoor eintlik meer as niks. Ek hoor die geluid wat jy hoor as jy te lank luister na niks. Die geluid wat party mense bang maak en dryf na die skougronde.*

*Die siren se sagte suig van fokol.*

Ek begin om te besef dat ek diep gevoelens van wrok en hartseer het oor die ou huis. Ek skryf oor myself as kind in my dagboek en die stories wat uitkom gaan oor waar ek my laaste veilig gevoel het. Ek verwys na “die plek tussen plekke” en dis relevant dat ek op my skrywersreis myself in hierdie plek bevind. Ek is in die middel van die sirkel besig om in my eie gedagtes te swem. Ek is besig om stelselmatig die boekrak van herinneringe op die vloer uit te smyt.

Hulle val voor my verbeeldingsvoete en ek tel hulle een vir een op en skryf oor hulle. Ek skryf oor “my last refuge” wat noodlottig aandui hoe bang en onseker ek eintlik oor my eie lewe is. Dit is op hierdie oomblik wat ek besef, nog nie ten volle nie, dat ek moet skryf oor my ou huis. Dis eers maande later dat ek “n droom het oor die huis, en rooi energie om my sien. Ek begin besef dat my gevoel van ont koppeling verwant is aan die feit dat ek na my ou huis verlang. Die trauma kom uit op die bladsy en affekteer waaroor ek droom en dink. In hierdie uittreksel skryf ek oor ontvlugting en weghardloop. Dit maak nou vir my al hoe meer sin dat ek daarvan hou om fantasie te skryf. Dat ek myself van realiteit af wil ont koppel want realiteit maak seer. Ek skryf vêrder in die uittreksel hoe ek met al my sintuie die oomblik ervaar. Dit wil vir my sê dat ek in die oomblik van skryf heeltemal aanwesig was. Dat ek in die oomblik was en dit alles weer gevoel het. Dis deel van die stappe wat ek voorheen genoem het. Jy moet jou gevoelens voel, jy moet die trauma herleef om dit te kan baasraak.

In die skrywer, Paul Mason, se seminaar begin ek te eksperimenteer met wat my pla en met my eie traumas – maar uit die oogpunt van my protagoniste. Ek speel met die idee dat ek my eie ondervindinge kan oordra en gebruik om my karakters meer lewe en lyf te gee.

Die volgende uittreksel vir Mason se opdragte demonstreer die bogenoemde:

### ***Tussen Tyd***

*„Mense stroom in en uit die klein boks van ’n kamer. Links sit daar twee rye van holle wat wiplank ry uit frustrasie. Die lug is gevul met stof donse en die klank van ou asem wat dreig om in neuse in, in te slurp en sinusse te lek. Daar is „n foon wat lei. Trieng. Trieng. Trieng. Trienggggggg. Dis altyd so in „n regeringskantoor.“*

...

*“I dreamt of scary snakes” tik hy ’n boodskap soos wat sy eie hol nou wiplank begin ry. Hy stuur die boodskap aan sy boyfriend wat iewers besig is om ’n vrou te spyker, nie net enige vrou nie ... sy geliefste trou-vrou. Die boodskap gaan deur maar niemand antwoord nie.*

*„Where’s Jhan?” dink hy soos wat die diep donker pit van doubt en despair oopmaak en hy in die blackhole ingesui word. Hy gaan nou weer vassit in die pit vir „n week. Hy onthou dat die slange hom gejaag het. Ja. Hulle het hom gejaag en hy het die hele aand lank gehardloop, dis presies hoe dit gebeur het. Hy het toe wakker geraak in „n koesweet net na die pofadder hom gebyt het. Drome het gewoonlik nie klank nie, maar hulle het baie kere ’n bækenis. „This dream has meaning” dinkhy aan homself. Hy besluit dadelik om sy persoonlike psychic „n boodskap te stuur, terloops loop sy presies op daardie oomblik verby die klein regerings kantoor. Sy kyk nie eers in die gebou in nie. Mense mis soms plekke. Jy ry dieselfde pad en dan sien jy na die twintigste keer „n boom of „n huis vir die eerste keer eers raak.*

*Die man langs Estelle die husky tannie stuur dan nog „n boodskap.*

*„Wow” dinkJanien wat nou op daardie oomblik die pad tussen Somerset en Stellenbos ry vir die negentiende keer. Sy wil haarself oor die kop moer omdat die realisasie van die nuwe draai in die Stellenbos pad haar bewus maak van hoeveel sy eintlik miskyk. Maar sy ontvang op daardie oomblik ’n boodskap*

*van haar beste vriend af wat sê, "I think Johan is cheating". Wat haar ore warm maak, omdat sy die trou-vrou is wat vir Johan gebruik om op 'n weird manier by haar beste vriend uit te kom. „Sick bitches word gevang” sing haar engelike jonger self op haar linker skouer. Op haar regte skouer is daar 'n duiwel wat draad trek en fantaseer oor "n engel.*

Op hierdie punt begin ek om werklike gesprekke te verdraai en te verdoesel. Ek begin om my eie drome in die koppe van my karakters in te plant. My vrees vir slange, 'n tipe angs en trauma, raak deel van die storie. Die gevoel wat ek het dat iemand my verkul raak deel van die skryfstuk. In die uittreksel bó is ek besig om trauma wat in die hede plessvind, en waaroor ek reeds in my dagboek geskryf het, in die storie te verwerk. Ek is nie hier besig om te vêr in die verlede se traumas in te delf nie. Ek is besig om wat nou werklik aan die gang is in my eie lewe deel te maak van my eie verhale. Dit bring my dan na die volgende punt: mens hoef nie noodwendig skryf net te gebruik om in jou verlede in te gaan nie. Mens kan dit ook gebruik om wat nou, vandag, aan die gang is te verwerk. Jy kan dit vang voordat dit onder die mat ingestoot word, jy kan dit verwerk en laat vaarvoordat jy dit op jou psigiese boekrak pak. Omdat ek nou my eie boekrak leeg gestort het, kan ek voortaan meer noukeurig wees oor wat ek waar wil sit. Dit kan dus wees dat ek nou gebeurtenisse vinniger kan prosessee omdat ek die spasie het om dit te kan doen.

In elke opeenvolgende seminar word verskillende temas uitgelig en ondersoek. In die skrywer, Chwayita Ngamlama se seminar word ek vir die eerste keer met seksualiteit gekonfronteer.

Hier volg 'n uittreksel uit 'n taak vir haar seminar:

### ***Rakpakker***

*Ek't fokken lanklaas porn gekyk maar ek is seker daarvan daar is al watse weird shit deesdae wat my heeltemal sal uitfreak. Ek't æn aand fokken lank terug birthing videos gekyk. Geen grap. Fokweet hoe ek daarop afgekom het, maar nou ja dit is wat gebeur het. Ek en my pelle het dit die „birthing hour” genoem omdat ek vir een of ander siek rede in daardie oomblik deur dit arouse was. En ek't toeobviously begin draad trek. "Jy's a selfok Neil!" het my tjom Denis gesê. Ek'tnatuurlik net my skouers opgetrek en verder gerook.*

*Kyk dis nie asof ek van weird kak hou nie. Daai was letterlik net "n random one-time-only ding.*

*"Next customer please ..." is ek verplig om met "nsmile te sê; jirre kyk die fokken dom poes wat hier aangestap kom. Stuk kak uitgeblykte hemp en ham wange met'n borsdkop. Die doos bly nog seker by sy fokken ma.*

Hier gebruik ek wat ek van my gedagtes geleer het en plaas dit in die koppe van karakters om my eie seksualiteit en fetishes te ondersoek. My taalgebruik verander ook. Ek voel vir die eerste keer asof ek 'n karakter kan inneem en my eie gedagtes uit die karakter se mond uiter. Dit begin ook te speel op die seksuele trauma wat ek as kind ondervind het. Hierdie onderwerp, en trauma, raak iets wat ek in baie meer diepte analiseer en uitleef. Ek skryf in my dagboek oor dit, ek skryf gedigte en ander kort stukke wat hierdie trauma stadig naam en fatsoen gee.

In die skrywer, Jo-Ann Bekker se *Tell it Slant* seminar voel dit asof ek nader aan myself kom. Ek vertel in hierdie uittreksel 'n ware verhaal wat tot 'n mate gefiksionaliseer word. Maar dit is grooteendeels die waarheiten dit word as sulks geskryf.

“n Uitreksel uit my taak vir die *Tell it Slant* seminaar:

### **Troufoto's**

*Ek't gøsien dis 'n email van my pa se girlfriend af, maar dit het net na haar naam kort gesny. Vreemd. Maar. Dis nie juis buitengewoon dat sy met my kommunikeer nie. Ons het net 'n paar maande gelede op haar verjaarsdag toe hulle vir my kom kuier het hier in Thailand, soos hoere gedans. Ons het die aand cocktails gedrink en toe ek warm genoeg is toe propose ek dat ons by die escalator moet opgaan. Die klink amper soos 'n eufemisme vir iets.*

*Dis presies wat ons daardie aand gedoen het. Ons het saam met 'n klomp ladyboys gedans wat dit vreeslik geniet het toe ek soos een van hulle die paal met 'n aggræssie beklim. My pa se girlfriend het dit gelove. Sy het saam kom dans en geld soos sout rond gegooi om my pa se norske energie te laat wyk.*

*My pa het soos 'n Calvinistiese pruim sy afstand gehou. Hy het geglimlag en sy gholfhemp angstig verstel. Maar ek't geweet daai glimlag was so aangeplak soos my eie liefde vir gholf. 'n Sport wat na jare se struweling stof vergader in die garage saam met die ander nuttelose kersgeskenke wat ek oor die jare stilletjies opgegaar en van „vergeet“ hã.*

In hierdie stuk raak ek diep verstregtel in my eie herinneringe van die tyd toe my pa vir my in Thailand kom kuier het. Ek skryf hierdie storie as “n verdieping van “n gedig wat ek jare vroeër vir/aan my pa geskryf het. Dit was dan juis hierdie gedig wat uit “n oomblik van nood om die kwaad en wraak wat ek teenoor my pa voel die beginpunt vir hierdie storie was. Ek het klaarblyklik die trauma gevat en dit gefiksionaliseer om “n storie te maak. Kort nadat ek dit gedoen het was dit ook moontlik om vir my met my pa direk te praat oor die probleme wat ons tussen mekaar het. Die redes vir die aarseling en sukkel van ons twee se verhouding. Dit wil voorkom of ek die trauma oorkom het. Ek het dit terselfdertyd met “n berader bespreek en het besef ek hou vas aan die idee van klarighied. Die idee om goed te wil voel en die verlede agter my te sit. Maar op hierdie punt hou ek nogsteeds vas aan die idee dat ek klarigheid oor sake nodig het. Ek besef nog nie op hierdie oomblik dat my herskrywing my tot “n mate reeds klarigheid gegee het nie.

In die stuk *Moederbaar* kom ek vol sirkel met my bewusraking van my traumas en die goed wat my pla. Dis my studieleier, Henali Kuit se seminaar, *Motif* wat my bewusmaak van die feit dat daar verskeie motiewe in my skryfwerk is. Daar is goed waaroor ek herhaaldelik skryf of oor wíl skryf. Hierdie is my traumas en ek dink op hierdie punt raak ek ten volle bewus dat ek my tesis oor my ou huis wil skryf, sowel as die verhouding tussen my en my pa, asook my eie verhouding met seksualiteit.

“n Uitreksel uit my taak vir die *Motif*-seminaar:

### **Moederbaar**

*Ek hoor die rukkende eggo van my verlede in skulpe wat ek langs die kus skop. Ek loop op en af met die strand, en wonder hoekom die see so fokken koud is hier. Ek voel die bries wat sand in die lig opsweep en dit voor my laat uitsprint. Daar's haatbaba-sakkies wat uitgespoel lê en stadig verbokkom.*

*„Hekom is “n lombers die gemaklikste ding op aarde?“ dink ek soos wat ek my baaitjie styf teen my vashou en my hande dieper in my sakke in grawe.*

*Een keer "n maand voel ek buite my eie liggaam. Ongemaklik en ongepas. Ek voel te groot. Ek voel te klein. Ek voel gladnie soos Goldilocks in die middel bed, smullend aan 'n middel ontbyt, wat op die middel stoel staan terwyl die TV Saterdag oggend KTV cartoons speel nie. Daar"s niks watvandaag net-reg voel nie.*

Die verteltrant van hierdie stuk dui ook vir my aan dat ek nou "n tipe kalmte in die storm van my gedagtes ervaar. Ek soek klaring asook rustigheid oor sake. Ek dink op hierdie punt wil ek nie meer baklei nie. Ek sien nou myself en wie ek as mens is en ek begin ook te besef dat daar intra-generasie traumas bestaan. Ek besef mens erftrauma by jou ouers kry sonder dat jy daarvoor beheer het.

Die laaste noemenswaardige les wat ek leer, kom uit Stacy Hardy se *On Memoir* seminaar. Ek begin hier met styl te eksperimenteer asook "n nuwe tipe topografie m.b.t die uitleg of uiteensetting van stories. Ek begin te speel met fragmente en diep gekondenseerde stukke. Dit is iets wat ek raakgelees het in die leesstof wat in Jo-Ann Bekker se seminaar was. Die feit dat ons stories nie noodwendig net standaard formate hoef te hê nie, word weereens by my tuisgebring.

"n Uitreksel uit my taak vir die *On Memoir* seminaar:

1. *Rooi leer. Harde rubber sool. Vuil. Ek ruik jou voet vir "noomblik in dit. Die reuk, én jy, pis my af. Ek haat jou. Soos "npappegaai wat in "nsekonde sy pupil kan verklein en "n mens pik, besluit ek. Emosionele-wipplank-ryer. Dis ek. Vergrotende pupil. "n Kalm pappegaai. Jou skoen lê in die ou oom met die verhoringde vingers se yard. Ek lag. Jy huil.*
2. *Jy loop op en af. Iets pla jou. Die yskas maak oop. Die yskas maak toe. Fok. Die yskas se deur staan al vir 2 ure oop. Jy hoor die borrel van karre buite. Jy hoor "nhomeless wat met homself praat "Ghala ma ghala. MA GHALA MA GHAL. Ghala ma ghala ghamma ghalla maghal!"*
5. *Die cul-de-sac-seuns het altyd sonder my in die straat gespeel. Leon se vel het altyd gestink. Dis asof sy ma nie omgee het dat hy soos rugby, en gras, en hondepis ruik nie. Ons hoë mure het hulle uitgehou en my ingehou. Karel en Reinhard het kom swem. Reinhard het sy swembroek uitgetrek en na die anderkantse wal toe gegooi. „Kom ons raë vir swembroeke" het hy opgewonde gesê.*

*Matriek het Reinhard volpunte en sewe A's gekry. Hy het die aand voor die punte en rapporte uit is by „Irene" afgejaag in sy ma se ou rooi kar. Hy het die kar om die dunste boompie by die straatelmbaag omvou. Hy het op die agterste sitplek gaan lê en verdwyn.*

*Hy het daai dag by die swembad heel eerste sy swembroek gekry as dit saakmaak.*

Hier bring ek alles wat ek die afgelope paar maande geleer het saam. Ek gaan met die eerste stuk diep in my geheue in en ondersoek my nefie en my verhouding. Die verteltrant dui ook aan dat ons op hierdie oomblik sukkel om met mekaar te praat. Kort kragtige sinne, asook "n kilheid wys dat ek kwaadgevoelens teenoor hom dra. Ek kan hierdie as "n oomblik gebruik om te besef dat ons oor goed moet praat. Maar ek doen nie. Ek reik nie uit nie. Ek staan in die pad en blok die energie of emosie wat wil uitkom.

In nommer twee in die lys in die uitreksel hierbo, skryf ek oor iets wat presies in die hede gebeur wat my pla. Dit irriteer my dat die mal man heeldag lank en elke dag buite my venster aangaan. Ek skryf en verwerk die irritasie voordat dit "n emosie kan raak wat dieper gaan lê.

In nommer vyf in die aanhaling hierbo, ondersoek ek vir die eerste keer my gevoelens oor iemand wat in my klas was se dood. Ek gebruik dit ook om terselfdertyd my gevoelens oor seksualiteit te ondersoek. Daar is iets van hierdie samevleuling van idees wat vir my interessant en innoverend is. Ek skryf daarna meer stories wat van só 'n aard is. Ek glo dit is vir my makliker om die trauma te verwerk as ek dit saam met iets anders kan ondersoek en ontbloot.

Ek besef op hierdie punt dat Sandra Cisneros se *House on Mango Street* 'n groot rol in my eie skrywersreis gaan speel. En ek begin dit deeglik deur te lees en na te vors. Ek begin uitvind hoe sy haar traumas verwoord, asook hoe sy haar kort hoofstukke struktureer. Ek besef op hierdie punt dat ek d.m.v fragmentariese vignette my eie storie wil vertel. Maar ek het tot op hierdie oomblik nog nie myself aan 'n onderwerp vir my eie tesis gekies nie. Dit is eers toe ek ons laaste seminaar (Stacy Hardy se seminaar) klaarmaak dat alles in plek val.

'n Uitrekseluit my taak vir die seminaar:

### **33 *Abelia***

*Ek het 'n glimlag wat stadig begint huiwer. Met elke woord wat ek skryf oor die verlede grawe ek 'n deper gat. Dril. Dril. Dril. Tril. Tril. Tril.*

*Lyk my bolip al soos 'n jakhammer? Lyk my onderlip al soos die grond? Lyk die traan wat souterig proe al soos 'n mynskag wat van bo tot onder sny en frack?*

*Of verbeel ek my?*

*In my trauma speel huise 'n belangrike rol. In my lewe vat die vier mure van skuiling die vierde trap van vergelyking se plek oor.*

In hierdie stuk noem ek my trauma op die naam. Ek is nou gereed om die proses van vergeet en vergewe te ondergaan en dit is hier waar ek besluit dat ek alleenlik die verlede gaan kan verwerk en verwerp as ek my tesis skryf oor my ou huis met al die ander stories wat kleiner traumas en lewenservarings ondersoek.

## Die storm na die reis

Figuur b):



Ek wil ter slotte praat oor wat na die tyd gebeur. In die figuur hierbo word ons verskeie reaksies op angstigheid uitgelig en geïllustreer. Dit is die punt waar ons die tweede driehoek in *figuur a*) bereik – waar ons die boek oor ons traumas toe maak.

Wanneer ons skryf oor ons traumas, herleef ons hulle. Dit beteken dat ons weer deur die veg of vlug of vries respons gaan. Dit is my eie ondervinding dat ek ná die skryf van my eie tesis self deur hierdie siklus gegaan het. Dit inderwaarheid só intens dat ek ’n senuwee-ineenstorting gehad het wat met ’n psigotiese onderbrekinggepaard gegaan het. Dis nou maar ’n paar weke nadat ek dit ondervind het, maar ek kan wel sê dat as mens begin diep delf in jou eie psige en begin skryf oor dinge wat jou pla of getraumatiseer het, is daar ’n groot moontlikheid dat jy kan ineenstort. Wat die diagram in *figuur b*) vir ons aandui is dat dit normaal is. Ons kan egter die diagram gebruik om ons deur die proses te lei.

Ek wil bylas dat daar ’n sterk moontlikheid is dat die stories wat uitkom geopaard kan gaan met die verskillende emosionele toestande. As jy oor die hede skryf, voel jy goed en deugsam, maar soos jy dieper in jou trauma en angs in delf, kan jy kwaad of paniekbevange voel. D.w.s dat jou stories ook tot ’n mate sal verander. Hoe jy hulle skryf en vertolk sal weens hierdie psigiese toestand die aard van die storie beïnvloed.

Mens sal dalk ook vind dat die stories wat jy uit die vries stadium skryf, meer dissosiatief mag wees. In die geval kan ek *Moederbaar* as ’n goeie voorbeeld uitlig. Wat ek op die eerste lesing as rustig sien, mag dalk eintlik afsnyding van realiteit wees. Die feit dat die storie van só ’n aard is dat die leser voel asof hy en die protagonis in niks en nêrens rondryf nie is van belang. Maar des nie teen staande kan ons (met die regte ondersteuning) die proses vertrou en ook baarsaak. Dit is dalk slegs die eerste keer wat jy die waarheid skryf, dat jy só geaffekteer word. Dit is dalk slegs as jy te veel en te gou tyd wil verwerk, dat jy inmeekaarsak.

Die proses wat voorlê is dan ’n proses van sin-maak asook nadenking. Om aan die anderkant van die driehoek in *figuur a*) op die regterkant te wees, beteken dat jy deur jou vrese en traumas gegaan het. Jy kan hulle gebruik om stories te skryf en sodoende sal jy hulle verwerk. Maar dit is ook net so belangrik om te besef waardeur jy gegaan het en daarvoor na te dink – sodat jy jou boekrak weer kan regpak, by wyse van spreke. Sodat jy die herinneringe, ervarings, en fragmentariese stories wat jy vir jouself vertel, kan regpak en kies en keur wat jy wil behou. Hierdie nadenkingsproses is dan een waar jy skryf oor wat jy geskryf het, en diep dink oor wat dit eintlik alles vir jou beteken het.

## **Nadenkingsjoernale oor traumaverwerking:**

Ek het deur die loop van die jaar, as ‘n vereiste van die kursus, nadenkingsjoernale gehou. Hierdie joernale, wat informeel geskryf is, help my om my eie proses as skrywer te ondersoek. Veral wat traumaverwerking betref. Hoewel die joernale ‘n informele trant het, is hul krities en ondersoekend en help my dus om te verstaan presies hóé skryfwerk die afgelope jaar ontwikkel het.

### **Week 7**

#### **Woensdag, 12 Februarie 2020**

Een van die belangrikste gedagtes vir my tydens hierdie sessie, was hoe mens tolerance en understanding in jou skryfwerk kan incorporate. Hoe mens ook context-shift en in sekere groepe of omstandighede sekere weergawes of maskers van jouself oproep en paradeer.

Ek het ook die klem wat ons op kragwoorde, en woorde wat sekere mense kan seermaak, lê interessant gevind. Ek dink dis belangrik om die woorde neer te skryf en dan déúr hulle te skryf. Om hulle so te sê agter die blad te kry.

Die gedig, *Wit Meisie Trane*, deur Ronelda S. Kamfer, was interessant en dit het my op ‘n snaakse manier laat dink aan Olivia Gatwood se werk. Nathan Trantraal het ons gelaat met die idee dat ons responsibility moet vat vir dít wat ons skryf.

### Week 8

#### **Woensdag, 19 Februarie 2020**

Ek het die Afrikaanse sessie baie interessant gevind. Ons het oor identiteit gepraat. Ons het Adam Small bestudeer as ‘n Kaapse digter – hoe hy van die buite af oor die gemeenskap skryf. Hoe dit ook soms voorkom asof hy half patronising is of disingenuous is. Ons het oor J.M. Coetzee gepraat en hoe hy as „styf“ in sy skryf voorkom.

Ek dink die bogenoemde aspekte is belangrik om te bestudeer want dit kommunikeer baie oor jou as die skrywer en oor jou identiteit. Hoe jy jouself in jou woorde invleg en hoe die leser dit ervaar.

Ons het weer teruggekom na ‘n probleem of konsep wat soos ‘n groot tema bo my skouers gehang het van die begin af van die kursus: vertaling. Ons het *The broken string* gelees en ook die vertaling daarvan deur Antjie Krog. Ons het toe die oorspronklike teks gebruik en vertaal. Dit was baie insiggewend hoe ons almal kon bydra en hoe die betekenis sommer ook verander het en helderder geraak het.

### Week 9

#### **Donderdag, 27 Februarie 2020**

Vandag was ek by my berader. Ons het gepraat oor: commitment issues, traumatiese events, my onlangse argumentmet my ma wat gegaan het oor goed wat ek vir maklik twintig jaar lank onderdruk, die feit dat ek nie juis weet wat ek met my lewe wil doen nie.

Ek dink elk van hierdie is belangrike goed om oor te skryf. Ek dink hierdie emosionele issues waarmee ek sukkel en wat vir my soveel anxiety gee, is juis



waaroor ek moet skryf. Ek gaan volgende week weer vir ‘n sessie en ek wil dieper delf en kyk wat ek kan ontgun of explore.

Week 10

### **Woensdag, 4 Maart 2020**

Hierdie afgelope week voel ek onsettend snaaks. Ek voel by tye asof ek myself van lank gelede is. Ek voel soos Deon van laerskool, of dalk selfs hoërskool. Ek weet nie of dit die stuk wat ons gister gelees het, *Hunt Mountain* deur Alison Townsend, die sielkundige sessies by die counselling centre, of dalk omdat ek griep gehad het is nie.

Die gevoel wat ek het, voel baie soos my ou self. Ek voel lus vir skryf en idees explore. Ek het al vantevore hierdie gevoel in Thailand gehad, maar ek voel nou al ‘n hele week só. Dit is by tye so erg/intens, dat ek rondom my kyk en wonder waar ek is en wat ek „hier“ maak; asof ek wakker geraak het uit een of ander diep slaap.

Ek dink *Hunt Mountain* het my geïnspireer om my gevoel of my herinnering van childhood vas te vang. Ek dink ek moet regtig meer oor hierdie onderwerp skryf. Dit kan dalk wees hoekom ek kinderstories en fantasie skryf vir jonger ouderdomsgroepe. Dit kan ook dalk wees dat ek rondom daardie periode ‘n tipe trauma gehad het.

### **Kaaps/Afrikaans Seminaar**

Ek wil graag memory van plekke en objects explore. Die rede hoekom dit vir my uitgestaan het, is omdat ek die vakansie gedink het aan die volgende: wat as ek sou terug gaan na my ou huis waar ek gebore was, wat as ek daar aankom en die kas wegskuif en al die ou papiere en goed wat ek agter die kas ingegooi het kan uitgrawe? Ek het ‘n baie sterk gevoel as ek dit voorstel. Ek voel asof daar klomp goed gaan wees wat my (in die hede) gaan link met die weergawe van myself uit die verlede.

Ek voel soms asof ek in delay reageer. My klasmaat, die digter Loit Sols, deel hierdie sentiment as hy my werk lees. Hoe beïnvloed dit my skryf? Hoe affekteer dit my gevoelens? Beteken dit ek is altyd laat? Kan ek hierdie eienskap gebruik en ‘n storie daaruit maak?

Soms as ek skryf, wil ek die punt obfusate en twice remove. Ek wil dit aspris vër weg van my af hou. Hoekom doen ek dit? Dít is iets wat ek laasweek in my sielkunde sessie ook agtergekom het. Ek dink dit is omdat ek bang is vir die gevoelens en wat dalk mag gebeur. Ek is so gewoond om alle emosie te onderdruk. Ek dink dit is tyd om deur daardie moeilike onderwerpe te skryf.

Die woord “metamoffies” het by my opgespring toe ek die woord “metamorphosis” hoor. Ek wil iets oor hierdie skryf omdat ek die woord (moffie) gereeld as kind moes hoor.

Ek het ‘n belangrike memory onthou terwyl ons in die terugvoergroep gepraat het. Ek het gedink dit sal iets normaal wees, maar dit het uitgedraai in iets wat almal in die groep uitgefreak het. Ek het vertel dat, toe ek jonk was, het my ma en ouma my geslaan met ‘n tekkie of belt, totdat ek byna uitpass. Gevolglik het Nathan Trantraal vir my die prompt/storie-begin gegee: “Almal wat my gebliksem het as kind, het hulle eie manier gehad (begin dan die storie met jou ouma wat jou forseer om haar tekkie te ruik ...”.

Ek dink hierdie memory was/is baie traumaties vir my en dit maak sin dat ek deur dit moet probeer skryf.

Week 11

### **Donderdag, 12 Maart 2020**

Voor ek onlangs vir ‘n beradings sessie gegaan het, het ek ‘n uittreksel uit *HOGG* deur Samuel R. Delaney gelees. Ek wil definitief hierdie boek kry en deurlees. Dit lyk presies soos die temas waarvoor ek moet oplees. Die topics van seks en fetishes en die lost innocence van kinderdae, is dinge wat in hierdie eerste paragrawe al vir my uitgestaan het.

Hierdie week se beradings sessie het goed gegaan. Ek voel week-op-week dat ek breakthroughs maak by die centre. Wat hierdie week die meeste uitgestaan het, was my eie self-editing en hoe ek myself voorkom om hulp te kry of om myself toe te laat om swak te wees of voor te kom. Een van die groot goed wat ek agtergekom het, was hoe ek deur my kindertyd se speletjies en behaviours vandag nog negatief affekteer word. As kind was ek vreeslik lui vir werk en daar was iets lekker daaraan om nie my werk te doen nie. Hierdie is die muur wat ek voor my sien wat my voorkom om te doen wat ek moet doen, en te skryf wat ek moet skryf. Ek moet deur hierdie muur skryf.

Week 12

### **Donderdag, 19 Maart 2020**

Ek het hierdie week tydens my beradings afspraak frenetic en energetic gevoel. Ek het myself as hiper-aktief ervaar. Dit was asof alles geel en oranje was. Die vorige week was al net normaal en en die week voor dit was als grys en ek’t gevoel asof ek in ‘n ditch is. Dit is moeilik om vas te stel, maar elke week het anders gevoel. Ek dink self dit is belangrik om in ag te neem hoe my moods en gevoelens verander week-tot-week. Hoe affekteer dit my persepsie van my skryfwerk? Skryf ek anders? Sien ek dalk ander goed raak? Belemmer dit op enige manier die tipe werk wat ek voortsit?

Ons het gepraat oor die muur wat ek ervaar. Die blokkasie. Sy het my gevra waar my fear of angs vandaan kom. Ek moes hard dink om uiteindelik ‘n antwoord vir die vraag te kry. Toe ek jonk was, was ek fearless, en nou is ek bang ... hoekom?

Ek het ‘n memory recall waar ek as kind na die Randse Paas Skou toe gaan. Ek was seker vyf jaar oud. Ek het op my swart enjection mold fiets geklim en ek het rondgery. Ek het altyd vir ander mense gaan hallo sê en gevra hoe dit met hulle besighede gaan. (Nou soos wat ek hier sit dink ek, wonder ek ... moet ek nie dalk al hierdie klein familie stories as vignettes saam met mekaar string nie?) Ek het een slag weg geraak. My ma het die polisie geroep. Ek dink daarna, toe hulle my uiteindelik gevind het, die vrees begin voel. Ek dink my ma of ouma dalk het my dalk bang gepraat oor “die mense”. Het hulle vir my hierdie storie vertel? Of maak ek dit net op?

Die sielkundige het vir my juis gevra “wie is hulle?”, wie is “die mense” en ek dink dit was ‘n baie belangrike vraag. Ek dink ek moet meer oor “die mense” skryf.



**Donderdag, 26 Maart 2020**

Ek het vandag Chris Barnard se *Mahala* klaar gelees. Ek het nogal vinnig in die boek ingekom, maar ek het gesukkel om my entoesiasme vir die boek te behou. Dit het vir my van die middel af moeilik gegaan. Ek voel asof die taal ook te oud is. Dit is “n probleem vir my as die Afrikaans in “n boek uit die oudedoos kom. Ek wil glad nie so skryf nie. Dit voel vir my hopelooste styf en formeel.

Die skrywer het nogal baie gebruik gemaak van sintuie behalwe vir bloot sig en gehoor. Daar was nogal baie fokus op tas. En ook die liggamlike gevoelens. Ek moet dit gebruik as “n reminder dat ek moet nie net sig en gehoor gebruik as ek skryf nie.

Die lyn, “jy lewe net twee keer ... jou eie lewe, en die lewe waarvan jy droom,” het vir my uitgestaan. Hoe die skrywer truisms en filosofie in sy storie ingewef het deur dit deel van “n karakter te maak. Ek dink soms ek kan nie hierdie tipe goed ondersoek in “n storie nie. Maar ek dink as mens dit reg gebruik, kan dit werk. Wanneer werk dit nie? Wanneer is dit forced?

Ek het ook van die sin, “niks gebeur te vroeg nie, en wat te laat gebeur, gebeur nog steeds betyds,” gehou. Dit het my dadelik herinner aan iets wat Gandalf in *Lord of the Rings* gesê het, “A wizard is never late, nor is he early ... he arrives precisely when he means to.” Ek hou regtig van hierdie sin. Dit het “n waardigheid en “n krag aan dit.

Daar is “n woord-kombinasie “verdwaalde blankes” wat ek absoluut gefokken love het. Dit amper presies soos ek dit soms ervaar. Ons, as blank Suid-Afrikaners, is verdwaald. Ek voel self verdwaald. Hoe skryf mens oor dit? Hoe asem ek die onsekerheid in “n karakter en in “n storie in? Dit laat my maag kriel om te dink aan hierdie storie. Hierdie introspektive verhaal wat daardie woord-kombinasie encapsulate.

Barnard het cliffhangers effektief gebruik om die storie voorheen te druk. Ek moet dit onthou. Hy het ook die taal op “n snaakse manier gebruik wat leegte en leemte oorgedra het. Ek weet nie presies wat hy gedoen het nie. Maar die teks het dor en leeg gevoel. Daar was ook baie min karakters. Drie of vier hoof karakters. Die storie het meestal oor die protagonis en sy introspeksies gegaan.

Die dialoog in die boek was vir my verskriklik swak. Byvoorbeeld:

“Waar was jy?”

“Ek dink ek was by die huis?”

“Hoekom het jy teuggekom?”

“Daar is niemand mee by die huis nie.”

My vraag is: wat was die punt van hierdie dialoog? Ek dink dis belangrik dat ek so sterk oor dit voel. Dit moet my herinner om my eie dialoog mooi, fyn dop te hou en nie onnodige stront te skryf wat die leser dalk kan verveel nie.

Dit is belangrik dat ek die voël naam „hamerkop” bly raaklees het. Die hamerkop speel “n groot rol in my eie fantasie boek. Is dit “n teken? Dalk “n herinnering of “n aanhutsing?

My laaste idee oor die boek is oor dié aanhaling: “ons is twee, ek en ek”. Ek dink hierdie kon beter geformuleer word. Die einde van die boek het ook afgerammel gevoel. Daar het amper niks gebeur nie. Dit was ’n totale anti-klimaks. Dit laat dink my aan die Margaret Atwood boek *Surfacing* juis omdat dit ook so anti-klimakties eindig.

Week 14

### **Dinsdag, 31 Maart 2020**

Ek het ’n Spaanse series gekyk wat oor hoërskool kinders gegaan het. Die series se naam is *Elite* en dit het my baie laat dink aan *Euphoria*; wat my nou weer baie laat dink het aan die boek *HOGG* deur Samuel R. Delaney.

Ek was nog altyd deur die hoërskool periode gefasineer en ek dink ek moet iets skryf wat in hierdie periode afspeel omdat dit so ’n belangrike periode vir my was. Dit is seker die periode wat ek die meeste aan terugdink. Ek wil graag iets vat wat die rou en lelike dele van hierdie ouderdoms periode explore.

Wat ek interessant gevind het in *Elite* was dat dit baie kontekste saam geveg het. Dit het muslim, gay, ryk, en arm alles saam geveg deur middel van ’n moord. Ek het dit geniet en ek wil dink aan my eie ondervindings en hoe ek dit sal integrate in my skrywerk

### **Vrydag, 3 April 2020**

Ek het die afgelope week die preview vir die film *Moffie* gesien. Ek vind dit interessant dat dit die tweede movie is wat die gay-lewe in Suid Afrika deur die lens van ’n oorlog en soldaat situasie portray. Hoekom? Ek voel asof daar dalk ’n klomp gay mans is/was wat vasgevang was in die weermag in daardie tyd. Dit is amper asof die fliëks daardie ou wond probeer oopmaak. Is dit die rede hoekom daar so ’n groot vrees/haat vir gay-mans in Afrikaans kultuur is? Alhoewel goed verander, kom ek in sekere familie kontekste agter dat hierdie nie die geval is nie. Ek dink dit kom terug na die hele idee van apartheid wat alles onderdruk het. Die kalvinistiese houding van Afrikaanse mense, maak dit moeilik om buite die boks/gemeenskap te lewe. Hierdie sin maak my ongemaklik soos wat ek hom skryf. Dit is amper asof ek vir die eerste keer besef dat ons diere is. Dat ons mekaar sosialiseer en soos krappe in ’n hok vashou.

Dit is tog die punt van sosialisering en kultuur op sekere vlakke. En ek besef nou, asof ’n lig in my kop aanskakel is, dat ek vasgevang is in die Afrikaanse konteks. Dit is die ding wat my bang maak en waarvoor ek soms wil weghardloop of vlug. Hierdie is iets waarvoor ek moet oor skryf, bloot vir die feit dat dit my hierdie week so geslaan het.

## **Deel Twee**

### **Inleiding**

Wat ek lees beïnvloed noodwendig my styl en benadering. Dit is belangrik dat ek hierdie invloed ondersoek. Ek sluit boekresensies en nadenkingsjoernale in die afdeling wat volg in. Die resensies en joernale ontbloot vir my hoe my lees- en skryfwerk integraal van mekaar deel gevorm is.

**Boekresensie: Chokers en Survivors (2013)** deur Nathan Trantraal

Resensent: Deon Visser

Nathan Trantraal se debuut bundel, *Chokers en Survivors*, is meteens biographical asook, dalk opsetlik, anti-establishment. Die bundel spreek familie en die narratief van grootraak op die Kaapse vlakke aan. Die leser word vooraf, deur die voorblad, gewaarsku dat hierdie bundel “dirty laundry” gaan ontbloot en ontmasker. Soos wat die leser in die gedig *Woensdag, 16 Februarie 1988* kan raaklees.

“Jou liewe isse klom dae wat niks gebee nie.  
Ek stap narie wasgoed wat oppie lyn hang,  
ek sit my hand tien “n nat handdoek  
en ek dink ek gan nooit die dag vegetie.”

Dié vuilwasgoed is soms moeilik om te sluk en bitter op die tong en alhoewel die leser “n rof en rou perspektief kry, kry die leser definitief “n outentieke oorvertelling van die skrywer se persoonlike ervarings. Vir on-ingewydes mag die bundel die gordel en skrop sommer terselftertyd gryp, dis tog wat goeie poësie moet doen, en dit mag die leser lank na die tyd nog wakker hou, maar dit is wat hierdie bundel so roerend en ontugterend maak.

*Chokers en Survivors* se fearless styl wat diep grawe en alles op die tafel uitgooi, is hoogs katarsies vir die leser, en seker só omdat dit vir die skrywer ook moes wees. Trantraal se stem is skerp en sy woorde brand en vir die leser kom dit nooit voor asof jy verlei word nie. In die gedig *tot hie en nie vëderie* word die leser herinner aan familiewyshede en word vermaak deur Trantraal se skerpsinnige waarnemings en wyskede:

*“Wies careful van mense wat hulle harte op hulle moue dra wan sukke mense wysie  
altyd vi jou hulle regte hartie. Hulle regte hart is weggevou inne kissingsloep onnerie  
kooi.”*

Trantraal het die vermoë om jou as die leser op “n ongemaklike plek te los, op jou gunsteling stoel.

*“En moenie goed wat jy langsie pad optel hys toe bringie wan somtyds los ieman vi jou  
dai goed langsie pad en da kô jy en dra it in jou hys in.”*

Trantraal is ook uiters bewus van die Standaard Afrikaanse literêre kanon soos bewys in die gedig *Groot Verseboek*, en die standaard tegnieke wat die digter tot sy beskikking het in sy verbeeldingsboks. Hy gebruik hulle en misbruik hulle met “n vernuf wat soms lees as careless of incompetent, maar as jy die strofe oorlees dan kyk jy verby die soms opsetlike slorderige hand.

Dit voel intendeel baie kere in Trantraal se bundel of jy saam met “n pël sit en praat. Trantraal se gedigte vloei in mekaar in met die titels uitsluitlik as pouses of asemsbreke. Kyk byvoorbeeld na die oorskakeling tussen die volgende twee gedigte:

*Carlos* se laaste strofe:

*Hy vetel ôs van toe hy jonk was  
wat weird is, wan dan realise ek wee  
dat ek fokkol van hom af wietie  
en hoe mee hy vetel, hoe mee grateful is  
ek wietie.*

vloei in *gelykenis* se begin in:

*My pa sit een aan saam ôs  
en vetel vi ôs iets fuckin weird.*

En dít maak dat Trantraal se bundel gemaklik lees en dit verdiep die gevoel van gemaklikheid en vertrouenheid met die skrywer en wat hy oorvertel en weergee. Trantraal se bundel is definitief uniek en gedagtesuitlokkend; dit is Kaaps, dit is slim, die observasies is 'n verrissende wysigings, en die perspektief is 'n noodsaaklike toevoeging tot die Suid-Afrikaanse literêre landskap.

Nathan trantraal se slotstrofes, en slotsinne, slaan hard huis toe en soek die plekke uit waar jou ma en pa was. Die enigste kritiek is dat die leser die perspektief met self-bewussyn m.b.t die gemeenskap as 'n geheel moet in ag neem, die stories lees soms doom-en-gloom en die leser moet versigtig wees om nie Trantraal se ervarings en opvattinge te veralgemeen nie.



**Boekresensie: Ons is nie almal so nie (1990) deur Jeanne Goosen**

Resensent: Deon Visser

Jeanette (Jeanne) Helena Goosen is in 1940 in Kaapstad gebore, sy volg “n wye verskeidenheid beroepe tydens haar jonger jare en eindig laastens as joernalis en skrywer op. Sy word deur die jare beïnvloed deur anti-apartheid aktiviste soos Mary Benson en ons sien hierdie onderliggende temas in haar werk. Sy debuteer as digter met haar bundel *Uil vlieg weg* (1971) en as prosa skrywer met *Om ’n mens na te boots* (1975) en in 1990 wen sy die CNA-, Rapport- asook die M-netpryse vir *Ons is nie almal so nie*.

Hierdie belangrike en insiggewende stem vir die Afrikaanse literatuur sterf af 3 June 2020 maar haar werk wat; sosiale klas, rasse verhoudings, en die Calvinistiese patriargiese bestel bevraagteken en ondersoek lewe voort. Haar werk is nog net so relevant vandag as wat dit toe was, gevolglik dien dit as “n bepeinsingsbaken vir die Afrikaner, en die hededaagse Afrikaner mentaliteit.

Jeanne Goosen se *Ons is nie almal so nie* is “n novelle wat in “n gekondenseerde en digte 145 blaaie “n reeks temas en Afrikaner-sake, asook Suid Afrikaanse milieu elemente, ondersoek (soos reeds genoem). Die verhaal speel af tydens die vyftiger jare en vind ditself in die ongemaklike tydperk net na die Nasionale Party aan bewind gekom het in Suid-Afrika.

Die verhaal word in vier dele vertel. In die eerste deel word familie probleme bespreek en waargeneem deur die verteller Gertie van Greunen (5 – 6 jaar oud) en haar jeugdelike perspektief. Dit is deur haar onsensuurde waarnemings en afleidings wat die leser die familie dinamika en sosio-politieke konteks leer ken. In hierdie afdeling vergemaklik Goosen die leser deur middel van die gebruik van die kinderlike perspektief. Die leser word geflous en ingeneem deur Gertie se naïwiteit, met uitlatings en insae soos:

*“Op die ou end het hulle Spider Lady ook gevang. Al was sy sleg, was ek nogal jammer, want ek het van haar gehou, miskien omdat sy soos my ma gelyk het.” (bladsy 48)*

In die tweede deel van die boek vind die leser verwysings na verskeie historiese gebeurtenisse asook apartheidswette soos die Grondgebiede wet, iets wat later sal lei tot die uitlating wat die titel van die boek inspireer:

*“My ma hardloop agterna met die koek en skree: “Ons is nie almal so nie!” maar die vrou draai die venster in haar gesig toe. (bl. 112)”*

Tussen hierdie feitlike agtergrond word die leser ingetrek deur die alledaagse gebeurtenisse van hierdie armoedige werkersklas gesin. Die leser vind Afrikaner kulturele instellings soos die ATKV ((Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging) en verwysings hulle doene en late by Strandoorde in Hartenbos. Op hierdie manier kommentaar Goosen op die eng, en nasionalistiese agenda van die Nasionale Party en vervolgens ook die Afrikaner volk.

*“Sien, dit moet Afrikaans wees. Dit is “n Afrkanerkonsert waar ons ons eie bevorder.” (bladsy 64)*

Gertie bly saam met haar ouers en aan die begin sukkel haar pa Piet om werk te kry maar kry na lank se gesukkel “n werk by die spoorweë. Haar ma Doris werk by die bioskoop en haar vriende Mavis en Tank kom kuier gereeld by die huis, wanneer hulle kom kuier is dit “n gerook en “n gedrink wat Piet nie as gladnie mee saamstem nie.

*“Ek wil jou reguit sê ek is daartéén dat daardie twee mense bedags hier rondlê terwyl ek by die werk is.” (bladsy 36)*

Dit is juis die oomblik wat Piet ‘n werk kry dat Mavis en Tank meer kom kuier. Goosen gebruik ook Mavis en Tank om die vermenging van Afrikaans en Engels in die alledaagse spraak van Afrikaners te beklemtoon. Dit is in die dialoog van hierdie karakters wat ons nie net fisiese rebellie teekom nie, maar ek die taal rebellie en Afrikaans beleid wat deur die ATKV en die NP bevorder word. Goosen kry dit reg om karakters en perspektiewe saam te kook in ‘n interessante en werklike manier. Die leser kan tussen die lyne lees wat Goosen se tong in die kies ondermyning van die historiese werklikheid. Die leser word deur uitlatings soos volg herinner aan idees wat in party dele tot vandag nog voortleef.

*“Jy kan gerus nou daaraan begin dink om die bioscope op te gee. Jou plek is in jou huis. Dis waar ‘n vrou behoort.” (bladsy 101)*

Dit is hierdie druk en Piet se afwesigheid wat lei dat Doris besef haar huwelik is nie so bevredigend nie (die tema van ontvlugting word hier bevorder), en sy eindig op om ‘n buiteegtilke verhouding met een Bernie Truter aan te knoop. Selfs Gertie tel op dat haar ma gelukkig is vir die eerste keer in ‘n lang tyd.

*“Een keer het hy oorgebuig en iets in my ma se oor gesê. Sy het skaam gelyk en rooi geword. Toe weet ek, sy is gelukkig.” (bladsy 98)*

Dit is nie lank nie wat Gertie hulle in die hitte van ‘n seksuele interaksie sien, Goosen se meesterlike gebruik van die kinderlike perspektief en eerstpersoonsverteller verhoog hierdie skokwekkende gebeurtenis, en die leser word uiters met ‘n kriewel in die kies gelos. In die uiteinde is dit hierdie verhouding wat lei tot die tragiese klimaks van die verhaal asook wat lei tot Doris se handomkeer bekering en karakter verandering. Tydens hierdie tydperk sien ons die tema van „godsdienst“ nie net as Christenskap nie, maar ons sien ook mediums, hipnotiste en ander kwaksalwers wat Doris mee te doene kry. Uiteindelik is dit is haar gevoelens van skuld en rou wat haar op ‘n nuwe pad sit, wat op ‘n manier siklus terugkeer na haar kinderdae wat deur haar haar konserwatiewe vader en die godsdienst oordonder was.

In terme van hierdie vind mens ook dat Gertie ontnugter word deur die gebeurtenisse in die storie. Ons kan aflei deur haar stem en haar uitkyk wat effens verander dat sy „grootword“ en dat sy anders is as die Gertie wat ons aan die begin ontmoet het.

Ons word nooit as ter ware vertel presies hoe Gertie lyk nie, en dit is egter die verskil in roman en novelle se eienskappe. Ons leer wel goed waar die verhaal plaasvind:

*“Sy het hom in Woodstock gaan sien, later in Soutrivier, toe in Maitland, Goodwood, later in Parow en toe tot in Bellville”. (bladsy 23)*

Bogenoemde verwys na Doris wat „Gone with the wind“ oor-en-oor gaan flik het. Dit is ook belangrik dat ons weet waar die boek afspeel omdat dit die leser bewus maak van die feit dat Gertie-hulle op ‘n mindergegoede plek bly. Dit bring ook die tema van apartheid en die geforseerde verskuiwing van die Williams gesin, hulle, bure, weens die groepgebiede wet, wat ook die naam van die boek uitlig.

*Ons is nie almal so nie* ondersoek temas wat soms moeilik kan wees vir Afrikaners om in die oog te staar. Dit is deur Gertie se jong oë wat die leser hierdie moeilike tydperk herleef of ervaar. Die interne asook eksterne ontwigting maak hierdie novelle aangrypend en ‘n verhaal wat gekompak en dig gedruk met informasie en Suid-Afrikaanse werklikhede. Van ryk tot arm, van man tot vrou, van Engels tot Afrikaans, en gelowig tot besetene. Jeanne Goosen se *Ons is nie almal so nie* se boodskap is een wat ons nogsteeds vanaf kan leer. Dit is ‘n verhaal wat jou soms sal skok en wegdruk en vergal, maar dis ook ‘n verhaal wat jou sal aangryp en by jou sal bly.

## **Nadenkingsjoernale oor my leeswerk:**

Die volgende nadenkingsjoernale handel oor dit wat ek op die kursus gelees het. Ek skryf oor beide die voorgeskrewe werk en dit wat ek op my eie stoom uitgesoek het. Die joernale wys hoe ek dit wat ek lees krities kan benader en hoe ek dit na my eie werk toe terugbring.

Week 16

### **Donderdag, 16 April 2020**

Ek het hierdie week vir my skryfstuk probeer om so vêr as moontlik buite my gemakzone met Afrikaans te strek. Ek was moeg daarvan om te sukkel met die taal en die woorde te try kry wat my toelaat om te sê wat ek wil. Ek dink daar was “n punt wat ek net fed-up was vir mooi praat en ordentlik wees. So toe het ek die stuk geskryf wat ek op die ou einde van die dag geskryf het.

Ek het dit vir my vriendin gewys en sy het vir my drie gedigte van Loftus Marias gestuur as verdere lees materiaal en inspirasie. Die manier waaropdit geskryf is is moerse uncensored en unfettered maar terselfdertyd is dit ook op “n manier aanvaarbaar. Ek dink mens moet versigtig wees wanneer jy skryf. Nie dat jy jouself censor nie, maar dat jy respekvol bly.

Ek kyk na voorbeelde uit Loftus Marais se werk om hierdie vêrder te illustreer.

Met lyne soos “ek”s gedeeltelik draadtrekker en dief” in *Op Soek* sê Marais moontlik dat wanneer ons skryf, ons goed opmaak en goed steel. Dit wys hoe hy “n relatief-groot konsep, wat ek al baie kere in meer akademiese kontekste gelees of bespreek het, kan afbreek na sy vlak toe. Na sy eie waarheid of gedagtes daaroor toe.

In *Die digter as rockstar* is “paparazzi splitsekondes” só “n goeie manier is om “n glefie tyd te beskryf.

“Ek dra my punctuation as piercings,” het nou weer “n ander kwaliteit wat vir my die vryheid wil-wil gee om werklik te kan skryf soos ek praat. Meng die taal, maar in matige hoeveelhede wat sinvol is.

Daar is klomp woorde in hierdie gedigte wat ek nog nooit gebruik het nie, maar baie like. Woorde soos “loer hoer” was “n brilliant manier om “n voyeur te beskryf.

Die imagery is ook baie sterk in die gedigte. Ek sal oor die algemeen graag meer soos dit wil skryf. Maar ek dink ook nie nêr so nie. Ek wil graag my eie manier van expression vind wat so waar as moontlik aan wat my werklike stem is. Maar ek dink ook ons kan chop-en-change en verander. Dís vir my die lekkerte van skryf.

Week 17

### **Donderdag, 23 April 2020**

Ek het *Die Boek van Toeval en Toeverlaat* deur Ingrid Winterbach begin lees. Ek hou van hoe die boek so vêr verloop. Daar is baie nuwe woorde en uitdrukkings wat ek neerskryf en van notas maak. Ek is nie seker of dit “n goeie boek gaan wees nie, maar ek geniet op die oomblik van die scenes verskriklik baie. Ek hou van hoe sy plekke beskryf en hoe sy iets arbitrêr, soos die protagonist se werk, met die storie integreer.

“Dood is “n drumpel wat ek nie kan oorsteek nie,” was “n baie mooi sin en ek dink dit pas so goed in met hierdie week se skryf opdrag en seminaar.

Week 18

### **Vrydag, 1 Mei 2020**

#### **Gedagtes op *Elders* deur Erns Grundlin**

Ek hou van hoe die whatsapp boodskap deel van die narrative gemaak was. Maar dit voel tog vreemd. Dit voel amper soos hoe dit voel as jy met ‘n Afrikaanse vriend Engels moet praat. Weird. Maar ek dink dit is belangrik om maniere te kry om dit te doen. Hierdie tipe artifacts is deel van ons hedendaagse maniere van communicate. Ek dink as ons kyk na meeste TV series, sal ons sien dat hulle dit ook al hoe meer en meer begin doen het. Die ding is net om die regte standaard te kry.

Dit val my altyd as braaf op as daar Engels in “n stuk ingemeng is. Ek voel glad nie dat dit forced is nie.

Die deel by die lughawe staan uit. ““n Stem maak aankondigings in Arabies en Engels. Die veiligheidsgordel liggies skakel af.” Ek hou daarvan omdat ek vir “n lank tyd gedink het my eie experiences was nie “strange” of “special genoeg nie.

Ek het ook daarvan gehou as daar elke nou en dan van die main storie af geside-step word. Ek voel dat ek dit baie doen in my skryf en dit is lekker om te kan sien dat dit deur gepubliseerde skrywers gedoen word.

Die feit dat die stuk ook sulke menslike gewoontes en vices soos procrastination in het, is ook vir my bevredigend. Juis omdat dit iets is waarmee ek verskriklik baie sukkel.

#### **Gedagtes op *Op pad* deur Dana Snyman**

Ek hou van hoe die stuk sekere South Africanisms in het:

“Jy sien dit aan die plakkershutte buite die Paarl en aan die spesiale aanbieding in die slaghuis op Rawsonville: “Varkkoppe! Slegs R18 stuk!” Jy sien dit aan die ry mans op die sypaadjie oorkant die Golden Valley Casino by Worcester, party met “n verfroller of “n waterpas in die hand, wagtend om weggevoer te word na “n los werkie iewers.”

Mens probeer soms verby die Suid Afrikaanse werklikhede te kyk. Maar ek besef nou al hoe meer en meer mens ontnem jouself en jou skryfwerk as jy nie authentic en real is nie. Dis soos om jouself te misrepresent.

Ek voel asof ek regtig op “n werklike Suid Afrikaanse road trip is as ek die stuk lees. Hierdie is die tipe plekke wat mens sal sien soos jy ry. Hierdie is ook die tipe mense wat jy sal sien. Ek moet meer notas maak wanneer ek travel.

Daar is ‘n groot gedeelte van my wat suiwer uit reis bestaan. Ek het as kind baie gereis. Hoekom het ek nog nie hierdie ten volle embrace en in my skryf ingemeng nie?

### **Gedagtes op: *Wit issie ’n Colour ie deur Nathan Trantraal***

Ek het baie aanklank met die line gevind: “die kôt mensie wie nie wiet hoe om haa gevoelens te wysie.”

Ek het ook baie van die imagery in: “Is te veel gevoelens wat yt hang” gehou.

“Ek sneak weg tewyl ammel slaap,” voel letterlik soos die story of my life. Ek dink hierdie gee my ‘n idee om oor al daai verlore goodbyes te skryf.

Week 19

### **Woensdag, 6 Mei 2020**

Ek het uiteindelik *Die Boek van Toeval en Toeverlaat* klaar ge lees. Ek het amper moed ogeege halfpad deur, omdat die boek regtig waar baie eentonig geraak het. Dit het tussen die protagonis se gesteelde skulpe, haar werk met die biblioteek, en ‘n ander tema heelyd rondgewentel.

Ek het die dictionary en woordelyste aan die begin baie interessant en dalk aanvullend tot my eie woordeskat gesien, maar later het dit net simpel en afgesaagd geraak. Daar het letterlik niks in die boek gebeur nie. En toe naby die einde gaan haar kollega dood. Dit was vir my regtig klaar te laat omdat ek teen bladsy 100 belangstelling begin verloor het.

Ek het aan die begin besef dat sy baie kort sinne gebruik. Dit het ‘n spannende effek gehad. Ek gebruik reeds dikwels korter sinne wanneer ek skryf so ek kan sien watse effek die afwisseling van sin-lengtes op die leser het.

“Skropvrou” was vir my ‘n goeie woord vir ‘n huishoudster, ek het nie voorheen hierdie woord gesien nie. So dit was lekker om te sien mens kan dit anders verwoord.

“Konterige moerskont” – was ook vir my ‘n lekker woord-kombinasie

Dit was vir my goed om te sien hoe sy ander tekste en mediums in die teks inweef. Dat mens ‘n tipe doolhof/maze kan maak van references.

Sy het baie dikwels die kamers en plekke baie mooi beskryf. Ek het nie gevoel asof daar te veel beskrywing was nie. Ek sukkel soms met die soort balans. Ek sukkel ook om aan goed te dink wat nuut of anders is. Ek dink wat ek kan doen wanneer ek sukkel is om ‘n lys te maak van goed en stuk-stuk daarop te bou. Ek het gesien dat Joyce Carol Oates hierdie tegniek gebruik.

Daar was vir my baie dele wat lekker, in die sin van hoe tipies Afrikaans/Suid-Afrikaans hulle was. Ek shy often weg daarvan om South Africanisms te integreer. Daar is ‘n tipe skaamte of denialism wat ek oor my erfenis het.

Die woord “vertroebel” was ook ‘n woord wat ek nog nooit van te vore raakgelees het of self gebruik het nie. Maar ek hou daarvan.

Daar was “n baie kort gay scene in die boek. Dit het vir my onverwags plaasgevind en het by tye bietjie forced gevoel. Daar is baie dele van die boek waar ek nie eintlik verstaan het wat die punt of nut van die scene was nie. Ek dink dit is net weereens “n herinnering vir my dat ek slégs wat nodig is in “n boek moet probeer om sit . Dit kom terug na daardie gedagte van as dit nie bydra nie, wat maak dit in die boek? Hoort dit in die boek?

Sy het baie rase tension ook in die boek ingeskryf. Ek het dit belangrik gevind want ek voel baie dikwels dat ons wanneer ons skryf nie die volle waarheid mirror van die South African condition nie. Ek dink dit is belangrik om die lig op hierdie onderwerpe te skyn.

**Gedagtes op *Die Volk is in die Kak*** deur Toast Coetzer/The Buckfever Underground. (Nathan Trantraal het hierdie liedjie vir my aanbeveel.)

Ek hou dadelik van hoe hy oor die land praat . Ek het al baie hierdie gevoel gehad – dat ek presies weet wat fout is met die land. Dat ons almal om die probleme trippel en regtigwaar net te bang is om ons bekke te rek oor die goed wat die wêrklike probleme is.

“Trippel trappe trone die volk is in die kak,” was vir my “n goeie manier om dit huistoe te bring. Die idee van kinder rympies maar ook die gewig van die werklikheid saam is vir my aangrypend.

Ek dink hierdie stuk wys my ook hoe om oor tipiese Suid Afrikaans artifacts te skryf. Ek dink dit is iets wat my skryf inaccessible kan maak. Maar dit is belangrik om hierdie tipiese Suid Afrikaanshede nader aan die leser te bring. Ek dink ek wil die week wat kom try om iets te skryf wat meer doelbewus die Suid-Afrikaanse milieu inweef in my skryf in.

Week 22

### **Donderdag, 28 Mei 2020**

#### **Gedagtes oor *Die moeder* deur Elisabeth Eybers**

Die titel wat “die” gebruik voel onpersoonlik. Dit wil vir my voorkom asof hierdie gedig die ma op “n afstand gaan aanskou.

“Soos lig deur “n kristal deur my gevloei,” was vir my lig en effektief. Ek het gehou van hoe in-motion dit is.

In “wonderlik gevorm het en gevoed?” val die missing „het“ my op. Dit los my met “n gevoel van longing en deurmekaarheid. Ek weet nie of dit die doel was nie maar dit maak my bewus hoe mens soms met taal mag speel.

“Met die onsigb“re naelstring wat nie breek,” was vir my baie mooi en ek dink dit het baie effektief daardie verbintenis en connection tussen ma en kind oorgedra en gewys.

#### **Gedagtes oor *Ma* deur Antjie Krog**

“Net sommer „n kaalvoetgedig,” is “n mooi manier om te praat van iets wat effortless is. Iets wat kinderdae saamvat met die hede.

Vêrder het die laaste strofe soveel emosie in. En ek kon ten volle by die skrywer se sentiment aanklank vind.

“Ek is so jammer mamma

dat ek nie is

wat ek graag vir jou wil wees nie”

Die feit dat die titel net eenvoudig “Ma” is gee ook “n layer – mens verwag dat die gedig iets serious gaan oordra.

### **Gedagtes op *Gertruida* deur Ronelda S. Kamfer**

Hierdie was tot dusvêr vir my die beste gedig in terme van hoe ek oor my eie ma sou wou skryf. Ek dink die feit dat daar geen leestekens of hoofletters is nie gee vryheid.

Ek hou van al die vergelykings en ek dink hulle is almal nuut op hulle eie manier. Ek hou van hoe van die images van een tot die volgende lyn strek. Dit maak die pas en ritme interessant.

“Met ’n stukkende hart

ek tel die glasstukkies op

en begrawe dit onder my vel”

Hierdie laaste deel het by vêr die meeste uitgestaan. Dit was visceral en lewendig en letterlik onder my eie vel. Ek kon dit voel en sien. En ek kon verstaan hoe ons deel is van ons ouers en hoe ons iets van hulle saam met ons dra. Ek dink die glasstukke wys daar die ongemaklikheid uit.

### **Gedagtes op *Hammie* deur Nathan Trantraal**

Ek vind dikwels aanklank by Nathan Trantraal se werk. Die Kaapse Afrikaans is iets waarmee ek grootgeword het. En daar was altyd “n tipe seperation vir my met Kaaps en Standaard Afrikaans. Ek dink dit is iets te doen met die verhouding wat ek met mense van ander kultuur groepe het. Ek dink die feit dat ek in “n predominantly blank skool, skool gegaan het het dit moeilik gemaak. Maar terselfdertyd het ek as kind grootgeword in ons familie fabriek. En meeste van ons werkers het Kaaps gepraat. So ek het tot “n mate met die woordkeuses van kleins af al te doen gehad.

Nathan Trantraal se werk is baie keer vir my vriendskaplik. Dit is asof ek met “n vriend praat wat vir my iets vertel. Inderwaarheid herinner die digter se observasies en perspektief my aan van my goeie vriende s“n.

Sinne soos:

“It is by haa wat ek gelee et

hoe om te hustle.

Nie dai gangsta-hustle ie,”

laat dink my aan jonger dae saam met vriende by die skool. Ek vind aanklank weens die gevoel dat ek as leser direk in die stuk deelneem. En die feit dat dit in Afrikaans/Kaaps is bring dit nader en maak dit persoonlik.

Ek hou van hoe honest en gespreklik die gedig is met sinne soos:

“My ma het my gelee  
ommie sentimental te wiesie.  
Die eeste ding wat sy gepawn et  
was haa trouinge”

Ek het gevoel asof ek daar was. Ek het gevoel dat trouinge en die feit dat die ma hierdie gedigte moes pawn iets verskriklik intimate was. Dit herhinner my aan goed in my eie familie geskiedenis wat moeilik is om oor te skryf.

Ek skryf dikwels met dialoog in gedagte, meeste van die tyd in Engelse gedigte. In Afrikaanse prosa hou ek gewoonlik die dialoog kort. Ek vind dit help my om my stories so oor te dra. Ek kan sien hoe dit in hierdie gedig ook net “n ander layer by die gedig bysit. In die gedig vind die leser hulself in die oomblik wat die aksie gebeur het deur middel van die dialoog. Maar dan sidestep mens ook amper dadelik terug in die herinnering en bepeinsing/rumination van die ma en wat sy doen. Mens kan jouself verbeel waar die skrywer homself vind, dat hy ouer is, dat hy nie meer dieselfde mens is nie. Daar is “n seperation of skeiding van tyd en plek, maar daar is ook iets baie naby aan die rumination. Daar is ook oomblike wat die stuk advies en meer lewenslesse aandui. Ek dink ek doen nie dit gereeld genoeg in my eie skryfwerk ne. Of dalk doen ek dit maar nie so direk nie. Ek weet nie. Ek sal moet dink daaroor en my skryfwerk dophou.

Dis ook snaaks want ek voel dikwels so oor my eie skryfwerk. Dat ek nie sekere goed kan skryf of sê nie omdat my ma of iemand ander dit gaan lees. Ek dink Hammie is unapologetic. Dit sê presies en direk wat dit is. Ek het die slagspreek “op die nommer” en “prontuit” in gedagte wanneer ek dit lees. No holds barred. Toe ek die volgende lees:

“Sy roek drie pakkies êntjies “n dag as sy het  
en as sy nie hettie, dan tel sy toppatjies op  
en swai vi ôs pilletjies mettie phonebook.  
As jy heeldag nie geroekittie  
dan voel elke puff soese man-sized hit.”

Het ek nogal geskok gevoel. Ek het dadelik gevoel asof iemand hulle “bek verby gepraat het”. Ek dink dit is “n teken vir my oor hoe afgesny en self-censored ek mag wees. Ek moet meer hierdie tipe goed wat my so laat voel explore. Ek dink nie altyd dit gaan oor die emosionele, vreesaanjaende goed nie. Dit gaan ook daaroor om die werklike verlede in so “n manier te kan incorporate dat jy “trots” of ten minste sonder skaamte daaroor kan praat. Ek dink een van die groot goed wat ek nog nooit oor geskryf het nie was die slow motion specatator wat ek was toe my ouers geskei het. Daar is baie memories wat daaraan gekoppel is. Daar is baie gedagtes en mini-realizations wat ek as kind klaar gehad het. Ek dink ek kan presies onthou toe ek elf was dat ons oorsee gaan en dat ek vir myself “n mental nota gemaak het wat sê “hulle doen nou net die om goed te probeer laat werk”. Die rede wat ek so voel is omdat ek vividly kan onthou toe ek agt was dat my pa my gevra het “wil jy hê ek moet jou ma



skei” wat nogal “n skok was. Maar ek dink dit het die onsekerheid van ons familie in my gevestig. Jare later het ek met my pa hieroor gepraat en hy het eenvoudig net gesê dat dit nooit gebeur het nie. Maar ek weet vir “n feit dit het. Ek onthou die plek, die tyd, wat ek gedoen het, en die kleur van die mure self. Ek onthou wat my pa gedoen het. Waar my ma was. En selfs watter tyd van die jaar dit plaasgevind het.

Ek kan ook voel as ek die lees hoe dit verskil van die ander gedigte. Dit is nader. Dit is dalk meer persoonlik?

“My ma groet gangsters en kêkmense dieselle

wan sytie kêkmense geken

voo hulle gangsters geraak et

ennie gangsters voo hulle

hulle harte virrie Here gegie et.

My ma respek nieman te veel of te min nie”

Ek moes die strofe “n paar keer lees omdat daar soveel vir my daar was. Elke strofe is amper soos “n nuwe vignette. Dit is nie net die kulturele insae nie. Dit is die taal. Die plek. Die gewoontes. Dit is wat hy van sy ma af geleer het. Maar dit is ook hoe dit was om groot te word in hierdie tipe situasie. Hoe vergelyk dit met my eie grootword proses?

Ek dink dit het “n vinnige vignette in my kop geskets van “n scene. Ek dink die gebruik van maklike woorde en well-contained vignettes in strofes is wat dit so effektief gemaak het. Ek dink ook die feit dat daar die golden thread van die ma is dat ons hierdie gedagtes kan anker en pen op iets. Dit wys hoe belangrik motief en deurlopende deel in “n stuk kan wees.

Ek kon die kerk met die mense en die neighbourhood met die mense sien en voel, ek het onlangs in my kort verhaal „Moederbaar“ dieselfde vivid imagery gebruik vat bv. Die opening paragraaf:

“Ek hoor die rukkende eggo van my verlede in skulpe wat ek langs die kus skop. Ek loop op en af met die strand, en wonder hoekom die see so fokken koud is hier. Ek voel die bries wat sand in die lig opsweep en dit voor my laat uitsprint. Daar’s haai-baba-sakkies wat uitgespoel lê en stadig verbokkom.”

Ek dink ek het alles wat ek voor bang was wat ek uit hierdie stuk geleer het gebruik in een van my vignette wat te doene gehad het met memory en memoir:

“Die cul-de-sac-seuns het altyd sonder my in die straat gespeel. Leon se vel het altyd gestink. Dis asof sy ma nie omgee het dat hy soos; rugby, en gras, en hondepis ruik nie. Ons hoë mure het hulle uitgehou en my ingehou. Karel en Reinhard het kom swem. Reinhard het sy swembroek uitgetrek en na die anderkantse wal toe gegooi. „Kom ons race vir swembroeke“ het hy opgewonde gesê.

Matriek het Reinhard volpunte en sewe A’s gekry. Hy het die aand voor die punte en rapporte uit is by „Irene“ afgejaag in sy ma se ou rooi kar. Hy het die kar om die dunste boompie by die straatelmsboom omvou. Hy het op die agterste sitplek gaan lê en verdwyn.”

Hy het daai dag by die swembad heel eerste sy swembroek gekry as dit saakmaak.”

Ek het vir “n baie lang tyd gesukkel om te skryf oor die mense wat in my lewe was, maar wat afgesterf het. Ek het die afgelope paar maande gedink aan hulle almal en hoe ek hulle sal kan vasvang. Ek dink ek het besef die oomblik wat ek try om oor hulle te skryf, dat ek uit respek uit die memory sal edit. En myself censor. Maar ek dink dit is juis die waarheid wat die meeste sin maak, en impak het. Ek sal die week meer probeer om daarmee te eksperimenteer en daardie stories te vertel.

Week 24

## **Tuesday, 9 June 2020**

### **Niggie – Ingrid Winterbach**

Ek het onlangs Ingrid Winterbach se boek “Toeval en Toeverlaat” gelees en ek het “Niggie” toevallig uitgeneem toe ek dit in die Rhodes biblioteek gesien het.

Ek het besluit dat ek nie hierdie hele boek gaan lees nie maar dat ek liever dit gaan scan en kyk of dit vir my werk of nie.

Die eerste ding wat my byval wanneer ek die eerste hoofstuk lees is dat ek nie van die taalgebruik hou nie. “Hy dring daarop aan dat hulle ...” daar is net iets van die vorgie sin wat my afsit. Ek voel “n bietjie asof ek die boek dalk sal mag geniet. Daar was iets wat familiar was van die manier hoe die exposition/beskrywing gedoen word. Ek dink dit vat my terug na plaas tye toe. My vraag is of ek met “n meer moderne Afrikaans kan skryf oor hierdie tipe goed. Dit voel soms vir my wanneer “n mens skryf oor plase en sulke Afrikaner plekke mens die taal moet mooi hou.

Ek sien hierdie in my eie skryfwerk, bv. In my familie stories, skryf ek in Standaard Afrikaans. Ek wonder as ek nou daardie stories sou skryf asof ek dit so sou doen.

Vat byvoorbeeld die volgende uittreksel uit “Ek praat maar net Afrikaans”

“Nou wat moet ek daaraan doen” vluister ek saggies maar wel hard genoeg om my eie stem te hoor. Ek besluit toe om te maak of ek slaap, dit werk gewoonlik, mense hou buitendien nie daarvan om slapende honde wakker te maak nie, en ek weet dit goed. Ek was, en is, een van daardie woedende besetene mense as hulle onverwags wakker gemaak word.”

As ek nou na hierdie stem kyk, herken ek nie myself nie. Dit voel nie vir my authentic nie. Dit voel baie soos iets wat ek weens ons voorgeskrewe werk op skool aangeleer het. Ek dink as ek nou moes skryf sou ek die storie anders vertel. Ek sou dit anders geskryf het, dalk meer soos wat ek hierdie week geskryf het in my stuk “Ouhuis”.

“Ek het “n glimlag wat stadig begint huiwer. Met elke woord wat ek skryf oor die verlede grawe ek “n dieper gat. Dril. Dril. Dril. Tril. Tril. Tril.

Lyk my bolip al soos “n jackhammer? Lyk my onderlip al soos die grond? Lyk die traan wat souterig proe al soos “n mynskag wat van bo tot onder sny en frack?

Of verbeel ek my?

In my trauma speel huise “n belangrike rol. In my lewe vat die vier mure van skuiling die vierde trap van vergelyking se plek oor.”

As ek na hierdie taal gebruik kyk wat ek in die aanhaling gebruik het is dit meer direk. Dit is meer soos wat my eie stem klink. Ek sukkel soms om oor te skakel in my skryfstem in. Ek sukkel om die regte woorde te kry en ritme wat ek sal gebruik soos wat ek nou skryf. Is dit omdat ek eers onlangs so begin skryf het?

Ek is baie keer bang dat ek hoe ek nou skryf gaan verloor en nooit weer sal kan regkry nie.

“Na ete skink die boer versigtig vir elkeen “n gemete skeut brandewyn ...” as ek na hierdie aanhaling uit “Niggie” kyk dan voel dit vir my asof ek aan die slaap raak. Daar is net te veel woorde voel ek. Nie net spesifiek hier nie maar ook net hoe sy in die algemeen skryf. Ek dink gladnie dat haar styl iets is wat my can influence nie. Ek dink ek sal wel kan woordeskat optel by haar. Maar ek dink nie haar styl resonate met my nie.

“Talmende verlange” was vir my nogal “n vivid manier om te beskryf hoe mense sou hover of lost in thought wees. Ek dink nie dat ek dit self sou gebruik nie. Maar ek het dit viscerally gevoel en internalize toe ek dit lees.

“Reitz kyk oor sy skouers in die skaduwees.” Ek voel wanneer ek hierdie lees dat ek wil “in” bylas aan die einde van die sin. Is dit dalk “n verengelsde gewoonte?

“Poetsbakker” was nog altyd vir my “n interessante Afrikaanse woord.

Die verhaal word lyk dit my van begin tot einde in die derde persoon vertel. Ek besef dat ek in die algemeen nie derde persoon skryf nie. Ek vind daar is net te veel removed van “n storie wanneer jy dit so vertel. Ek besef dat mens nie alle stories in die eersteverteller kan vertel nie. Hoe maak mens die besluit? Dit is iets wat ek baie oor wonder. Margarte Atwood sê dat sy dikwels “n storie sal herskryf in verskillende vertellers as dit nie lyk of hulle werk in “n spesifieke een nie.

Ek het net “n paar blaaië van die boek gelees toe ek belangstelling in dit verloor het. Dit gaan oor die Anglo-Boere oorlog, en ek dink daar kan dalk “n meer opwindende manier wees hoe om oor dit te praat. Of dalk hoe om so “n storie te vertel. As ek hierdie boek lees dan voel dit vir my asof ek stof asemhaal.

## **Deel Drie**

### **Inleiding**

Die lesersverslag wat ek op my bundel gekry het, help my om te verstaan hoe “n leser my werk ontvang. In die opstel wat volg haal ek die verslag aan en ondersoek my reaksie daarop. Ek weeg die leser se mening krities op en ondersoek of dit my sal baat om sy/haar kommentaar op my werk toe te pas.

## Afrikaans Lesersverslagrespon

Uit die verslages:

*This report aims to discuss the thesis entitled Hierdie keer gaan nie maklik wees nie, a prose collection written by Deon Claudius Visser.*

*At first sight, when glancing through the thesis, the words „pid“, „gay“ and „moffie“ jumped out and I thought it might be a collection of the challenges the Afrikaner man faces when coming to terms with his sexual orientation, but I was pleasantly surprised and delighted by Visser’s sensitive and thoughtful collection.*

Ek voel baie in my skik met die feit dat die leser verbaas was en dat dit iets buitengewoon of dalk liever verassend vir hulle was om die bundel te lees. Ek dink alhoewel die bundel “n versameling van stories is, is dit nie noodwendig gay literatuur nie, en ek dink die leser het op hierdie gedagte opgetel.

*The collection in its entirety is a lovely body of work, and language is treated with respect, while the writer is very sensitive towards what he shares and what he withholds. Overall I believe the writer achieved what he set out to achieve in the Afrikaans part of his thesis. While I cross-referenced the English version of the thesis for context, I focused mainly on the Afrikaans collection and my comments are thus specific to this.*

Ek het by tye gesukkel met die taalgebruik omdat ek nie geweet het watter toon of stem of woorde vir die verskillende vlakke van die tesis te gebruik nie. Ek is tevrede dat die leser dink dat ek die taal met respek hanteer het. Dit was maar iets waarmee ek heeltyd op die backburner geworstel het.

*The themes of nostalgia and longing come across strong and take the reader into the world of a young Afrikaner boy dealing with the trauma of moving, his confusion with regard to the father-son relationship, and his boyish angst and longing for love through his interactions with his grandparents. The reader is allowed glimpses into the boy’s world through his perceptions of the world around him, and the reader experiences him as a young boy hiding under tables and specifically in his „safe space”— the kitchen cupboard, and later as a young man living on his own and even working (in Pick n Pay).*

Dit is heel toepaslik dat die leser die verloop van tyd en verskillende fases uitlig en deel. Ek wonder asof daar “n balans tussen die verskillende fases is, en asof hulle op “n manier oorvleuel met die Engelse tesis. Dit sou vir my interessant gewees het as die leser daarop kon kommentaar lewer.

*The familial relationships and questions with regard to the impact of forefathers’ decisions and actions on their children and their children’s children are also weaved through the narrative. Phrases such as “Familie kak is cross-generational”, “Die punt is dat ek deur hierdie legacy van my familie se trauma opgeindig het...”, “Ek word magneties teruggetrek deur familie” and “Ek weef woorde met familie as verbindingsvou” show that the writer is very conscious of this push and pull of family that keeps him from moving forward, but also provides him with the „tools” to navigate his boyhood and later adulthood.*

Dit is wonderlik dat die leser kon optel op die familieverhoudings wat so 'n groot rol op die protagonis van die verhale speel. Ek sou graag wou hê dat die leser ietwat meer spesifiek kon wees op sekere elemente wat dalk fout gegaan het en presies asof hierdie temas akkuraat en sorgvuldig en deeglik toegepas word in die stukke.

*It is worth mentioning the use of the „kombuiskas“ as it offers a place of comfort for the main character, but also a place from which he views and later continues to view the world. This translates into the fairytale-like story of the Lus-let, where a parallel universe comes into play and a “divide” slices between reality and fantasy. This is used very effectively to communicate the confusion and exploration of a boy’s mind as he tries to interpret and understand the world, and to find his place in the world.*

Ek voel goed dat die leser op die fantasie en magiese realisme opgetel het en kon sien die doel wat dit het in my tesis. Nadat ek hierdie kommentaar gelees het besef ek ook hoe die fantasie elemente 'n tipe coping mechanism is.

*I want to make a few specific recommendations related to areas where Visser can pay more attention, if he so wishes. I interpreted the sometimes (just slightly) sloppy way of using language as a type of device to capture the innocence of the boy. Examples include: “Verby die braaikamer **waar** waar my gaans Petrus voorheen ’n oop blad gebly het” (double usage of words); in “Twee weke gelede” he writes: “Ek kon seker heeldag net onder die tafel sit en verfruik en met my mannetjies speel **terwyk** ek na die...” and in “Rak pakker” he writes: “Ek was self so fokken erg dat ek afwank op mans en dan oorswitch op die **eidne** na vrouens toe.” Love this sentence, by the way, as I did much of Visser’s way with words. This is just a note for the writer to have a good edit through the entire thesis, to ensure the usage is intentional. I will come back to this, as I would like to mention more about his wordplay skills.*

Ek waardeer hierdie nota. Ek sal die hele tesis weer moet deurlees en probeer optel op die spel en tikfoute wat daar is. Ek sal ook moet kyk na waar ek intentionally sekere variasies of konvensies gebruik of dalk liewer misbruik. Ek is ook bly dat die leser gehou het van die manier wat ek myself in woorde oordra. Dit beteken baie vir my dat die leser so voel en dit gee my 'n tipe validation.

*I want to recommend a few cuts, where stories will be more effective if ended earlier. The first one: “Huis op ’n Heuwel” will be more impactful if it ends after “Abelia straat se huis” (third last paragraph), as the subsequent paragraphs are unnecessary as the stories after this follow on the introductory story so seamlessly. We know that he jumps between past and present, and will revisit his childhood home often as a sort of „basecamp“ for his emotions and reflections, and we don’t need to read about it. We know that the writer is searching for answers, where this moment in the first story acts as a type of conduit for lost innocence and the main character’s transition from boyhood to a sort of adulthood (acceptance of the inevitable).*

Ek sal moet mooi nadink oor hierdie kommentaar en ek sal dit edit volgens wat werk in die geheel. Maar ek is heeltemal oortuig dat die leser dal korrek kan wees. So ek sal dit mooi deurkyk en sny soos wat ek moet.

*Also in the story “Nat swembad” — the narrative comes to life beautifully both thematically and emotionally. For more impact, I want to suggest Visser ends the story after the „list’, before “Die GABA dansers dans...”*

Ek stem 100% saam met hierdie. Ek sal net double-check om te kyk asof daar nie iets belangrik vir my was in daardie gedeelte nie. Ek dink ook die lys was die mees effektiefste, so dit maak vir my sin dat dit daar moet eindig.

*The vignettes are very effective, where they feel like moments of pause. Where the writer is taking a slice of breath between the chaos, albeit „chaos” on a small scale, of his everyday family life. These are wonderful moments of reflection. I would like to recommend moving “Helder Oë” to a place earlier in the collection, possibly closer to “Jags-brakke”. I do understand why it is placed towards the end, but it feels slightly out of place here and might be more effective earlier in the collection, or if removed altogether.*

Ek sal dit weer deurlees en kyk waar ek hierdie stuk kan plaas, of verwyder. Ek weet nie asof ek sentimenteel oor die stuk is omdat ek in Heldervue grootgeraak het nie. So dalk sou ek dit nie verwyder nie maar liever nader aan die begin skuif.

*Some further highlights that I really enjoyed about this collection were Visser’s usage of language and his keen sense of humour. He plays with language beautifully and with respect, in phrases such as, “My ma se stem bloos,” “kaneel-besproete-melk,” “... die familie skeiding sou my nie spin nie” and “Ek raak skaam en ek bloos vanaf my wange tot my anus.” He successfully calls on the past and brings it into the future with Afrikaans and Kaapse slang and gives it a twang that is both endearing and entertaining.*

Ek voel verskriklik goed dat die leser hierdie nuutskeppings of woordwoekers waardeer. Ek hou nogal daarvan om myself so te express en dit beteken baie dat dit plek het en gepas is.

*Visser’s tongue-in-cheek ability also makes this an accessible piece of work, with stories such as “Kakker-jakkies”, a hilarious, larger-than-life description of animal/creature and human interactions. He explores the fantastical further in the “Tannie Lus-let” story and his granny”stellings of the witch in the woods-tale, mentioned often and sometimes even unexpectedly, where the everyday family life merge with the fantasy world. I also very much enjoyed the interactions between the young boy and his grandfather and felt the loss of his passing with the narrator in “Die oggend voor ouma se gil oggend” and “Die aand voor ouma se gil oggend.”*

Ek sou graag nog ‘n paar fantasie stories wil by skryf asook om daardie laaste storie te skryf wat ek voel die regte fantasie of verwondering is. Ek sal die tesis as “n geheel moet oorlees sodat ek weet of dit “n plek sal hê in die eindprodukt.

Bygesê wil ek nog graag “n oorbruggings storie skryf wat die twee tesse aan mekaar verbind. Soos n tipe spieël oomblik waar dit deur die hede en verlede, bewussyn en onderbewussyn, gaan.

*I want to commend Visser on this body of work. It is a refreshingly not-gay, intuitive, sensitive, nostalgia-ridden (without being soppy or clichéd, even for a moment)*

*collection of stories that connects with the reader emotionally. I want to suggest that Visser takes a deeper emotional step and allows himself to go to places that hurt most to tell this story. The collection is already good as is, and can be improved with a few tweaks. I suggest Visser keeps writing even after submitting his final thesis, which might take him to a deeper place of acceptance and understanding.*

Ek waardeer die leser se bydrae en wat ek beskou as waardevolle terugvoer op my versameling van verhale. Ek sien daarna uit om die tesis met vars en verfrisde oë te ondersoek en stories te skryf of na te sien wat dalk aandag nodig het. Ek sal graag wil sien of dit moontlik vir my is om nog dieper en meer emotional te kyk, dit voel vir my asof ek reeds myself tot en met die uiterste gedruk het, maar dalk is dit net omdat ek meer geslote was as wat ek vantevore besef het.



**This document consists of two (2) parts:**

**Part A: Thesis**

**Part B: Portfolio**

Part A: Thesis

**When I find home**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Arts in Creative Writing**

of

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by

**Deon Claudius Visser**

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Title: When I Find Home

Deon Claudius Visser

My thesis consists of two inter-linked collections of narrative fragments - one in Afrikaans and the other in English. Structurally and thematically the Afrikaans half of my thesis explores the „past“, and the English half is directed toward the „future“. Stylistically, my overall source of inspiration is the classic frame-narrative, or nested stories, used in *One Thousand and One Nights*. The complex narrative structure of this text enables an exploration of past, present, and future, as well as the expression of inter-linked memories, ideations, and flights of fantasy. In terms of contemporary fiction, my greatest influence is Sandra Cisneros“ novel *House on Mango Street*. From this work, I have learnt how to make my vignettes and short stories to both stand alone and work together to form an over-arching narrative. Thematically, the thesis deals with memory, nostalgia, familial relationships, death and closure, as well as the art of storytelling. In exploring these themes, I draw inspiration from Nathan Trantraal“s *Chokers en Survivors*, and *Noudat Slapende Honde* by Ronelda S. Kamfer, both of which are written in Kaaps. These texts inform my own exploration of the complex relationship between Afrikaans and English, and in this regard I also draw on Loftus Marais“ mixing of languages in his book of poems, *Staan in die Algemeen Nader aan Vensters*.

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## chrono\_Logical

0. A mechanic introduces my mother to my father.
  - a. My father is an electric technician that lives with his mom. He has car tires under his bed. His room is a mess. He loves to DJ and play music. He loves making things. He loves flying his pigeons on weekends.
    - i. An absent father dies. This man that will be my father one day disconnects from his core, he becomes emotionally distant, and he guards his mouth and morphs shyly into anxiety.
  - b. My mother is a farm girl that works at the bank. She is one of 8 siblings; the rest are all boys. She loves organizing things. She loves fixing things. She just came out of a toxic marriage. She needs something to fix.
    - i. A mother and father are too busy to love. 8 siblings compete for the thin dust swirl of love. Her mother never says “I love you” her father is never there. My mother bolsters her confidence and becomes morbidly independent.
  - c. My father sees my mother and feels like she’s a fit. My mother sees my father and thinks; *He is distant, and not emotionally present. I can fix him, I can help him, and I can make him less pathetic.* (But perhaps I see my father in him and this draws me towards him)
    - i. The DNA of anxiety strings together with avoidance. It curls perfectly together like two eels doing the yin-yang dance. He will prove and test love. He will be anxiously-avoidant, probably the worst type of attachment style.
1. I was born after 11 hours of labour. The doctor had to do an emergency operation to bring me into this world. I think at the last minute I ...
  - a. I feel the cold air of the metallic room on my head. I turn around and plant my feet firmly in my aquatic warmth.
    - i. *This time is going to be difficult.* – My first thought
- 1.1. Just before my birth the oxygen canisters run out. Dad has to make a plan. Gran comforts mom. *There now, shhh.*
  - 1.1.1. It makes sense that I struggle with anxiety.
  - 1.1.2. It makes sense that I like to be alone.
  - 1.1.3. It makes sense that I ...like ...
- 1.2. I wish I was born on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Then I could be 8-8-88. I would’ve liked being six 8’s more.
2. Our house is being built. Our house will be big. It will be big enough for three families. It will have enough space so that my mom doesn’t ever have to see my dad. It will have space for that.
  - a. There will be a swimming pool with a fountain and lush gardens around it. I will play and swim and pretend to me a mermaid, a dolphin, and a shark with my cousins. We will play every summer. We will swim every day.

- b. There will be an apartment for guests and family right next to the pool. I will move into this apartment at the age of 13 because I am angry at my parents and maybe my distance will save their marriage.
  - c. There will be four garages. The one on the end will be where I make movies and videos with my cousin. I want to be a movie director.
  - d. Four bedrooms. One will be mine. I will stay in it for hours and play and listen to music. My grandmother's room will be next to mine. I will sleep there after my grandfather dies. I will learn childhood songs, listen to stories, and learn how to tell them. My grandmother will become my substitute mom. On the other side of my room will be a green room with big clouds. I will convince my mom to get another child. I will have a sister. That will be my future sister's room. It will.
    - i. I push a pillow under my shirt. My mom laughs. The idea sticks and takes root when I'm 7.
3. I learn to walk in the house next door. My father and mother are somewhere "making money" and my grandmother and grandfather teach me the walkies and the talkies. I run up and down the hallway. I fall on my head. Gran puts butter on my bruises. "The butter helps" she says as she gives me a freshly stirred glass of sugar water.
- a. We move out of 35 Abelia and into thirty three. 33 will become my home for 18 years. I will weave myself into the walls. I will embed my soul into it. Yes, I will.
  - b. At number 35 a new guy moves in; a gay guy whose father recently died and left him the place.
    - i. Drugs and alcohol and naked men. The house has evolved from a family home into a fagadelic whore-oasis.
4. My cousin touches my dick in a plastic shell pool when I'm 4. He is older. I am younger.
- a. Did he make me this way?
  - b. Did I like it or not?
    - i. I suppress the urge to think about it. I suppress the urge to dream about it. I re-wire my brain and learn how to stop thinking about it.
5. I play in the living room with my toys every day. I hide in the cupboard and look out at the world. My grandmother is cooking. The maid is cleaning. At the kitchen table my mom is biting her nails and pulling tufts of hair, roots and all. She bites the root, tastes it, and swallows it. Dust is floating in a shaft of light. The cupboard smells like old oil. The world is honey and giggles.
6. The kindergarten smells like pee. The boys run around and I stand there watching the cacophony of kids. A girl in the sandpit is making perfect sand spheres. I sit with her and enjoy the silence. The perfection and the OCD-analness of it all. The meticulous focus of doing something with your hands. Sand. Compress. Smoothen. Set it down and start again.
- a. Story time is good. I nap while the rain hammers the old building. It is cold but comfortable to sleep on the floor.
  - b. Outside on a sunny day a few boys are looking at Christopher's dick. He shows it to them proudly. I avoid the dick-watcher-boys.
  - c. I miss the time I can spend at home. I am tired of children running around. I am tired of boys and girls looking at each other through the tiny peepholes in the bathroom stalls.

7. I go to the big school. There are even more kids. I hide in the cement tubes in the play park. The teacher comes outside to get me after the bell rings. I stare out of classroom windows. I listen to imagination stories and make them more interesting. I help a boy with his writing homework. I see his dick in the toilet. He is circumcised, it looks strange.
8. I still sleep between my mother and father. I am the wall erected high. I am the wall that keeps my dad's erection at bay. "Do you want me to divorce your mother" he asks. I shit in the water. The conversation is done.
9. I make friends with the bad boys. We are three in the group. We disrupt the class by being "too noisy" but this is only the beginning:
  - a. Stealing money out of backpacks
  - b. Spraying milk bags around the class
  - c. Stabbing holes in ring binders
  - d. Dissolving classmates' rulers in paint stripper
10. I feel the prickles of sexuality on my dick. I start thinking and obsessing to figure out what would do the trick. In after-care I get undressed with a friend. We touch and explore. Is grandfather seeing this shit from heaven's door?
11. Dudley throws a rock at a friend.
  - a. The same friend I made on my first day by grinding his pencil to the stub-end's quick.
  - b. I get angry and beat Dudley up. I hate when people pick on the underdog.
12. Girls:
  - a. The girl sitting next to me teaches me German.
  - b. The girl sitting behind her kisses me.
  - c. The girl behind me is nicknamed "Die man" because it is her name rearranged and knifed „just for fun“.
  - d. The girl across from her is the tallest in class.
  - e. The girl sitting next to her is the one I like. I write my first poem and hide it under her desk. She looks at it and revolts. Disappointed and sad. My heart is broken. I retreat.
13. I am almost expelled for hitting a girl with a broomstick. "What does that dumb bitch expect for writing my name on the board!"
  - a. We are ready to perform. We have a school play. If I seem too interested, does that make me gay?
14. I start high school. There are even more kids than before. We sleep at the school on our first night; we undergo orientation. I hate the school and retreat deeper and perhaps even down the basement trapdoor. I have like three friends. Is it time to get more?
15. The last December that everyone, family and cousins and Gauteng friends, visit. The last time our happy family invites extended family. I don't feel anything. I don't even know the time. The TV lulls me. I'm subconscious sublime.
16. "My parents are divorcing" I tell my stub-end pencil friend
  - a. My evil sponger uncle and his ex-stripper wife with her long nails come and live in grandma's room.
  - b. We move to the Strand
    - i. My mother and I fight every night. I throw my new i-pod just to get her to shut the fuck up. I break the cupboard door off. I cry. My cat licks my tears; that selfish cat that didn't care until I cried.
  - c. We move back to the old house but not for long this time.

- i. The last night I'm there I smoke weed, a perfectly circular hole opens up. I enter and drift and fly through my subconscious. The world of dreams.
- ii. There's a feeling of floating, teabag-float, of teabags in air. A place between places where I can be not fully there. Here. There are people and things and I am all of them now. It is a town filled with memory, intention, and possibility somehow.
- iii. I am a girl. She is me. I am a thief. Then I am back to me. When I focus enough I can walk around. I can walk to the square building where all the memories can be found.
- iv. A memory is a square that can be opened. A memory is infinity of all variables. I spend hours looking at them. I spend hours refracting and analysing every possibility of them, of every story and every soul essence I find. In them.
- v. When I return to the here and now I sleep and I sleep. My brain feels burnt and seared to the deep.

17. The school psychiatrist says ... "That's interesting" and taps a pencil on a clipboard.

18. Fracture

19. (see „Face Tide“)

20. No memory

21. "I'm gay!"

22. (see „Bloodletting“ refer to Margo)

23. Thailand

- a. James

- b. Bank

24. No Memory

25. Thailand

- a. Lee (see „Leaps“)

26. No memory

27. Working with father

28. (see „Journal-sub-stream“)

29. Thailand

- a. Jerry

30. Thailand

31. PGCE

32. You



## A start

The sky is clear and cutting. The blue of my eye is reflected in the vast and endless marbled space of the horizon. I drag. I inhale. I feel a rush of green crawling up my skin, from lungs to head. It burns for a split-second infinity. I jump off the ledge, into the sky. I see my room. I see the house on the hill. I see the town nestled between the Helderberg Mountain's toes.

My navel is pulled, and guitarred. I vibrate and resonate with the universe and the timelines that encapsulate the present.

Anxiety blows harshly against my face. The air is hot and putrid and smells of decay; of durian. My shadow detaches from my feet. Free. I fly higher, still, into the void. I can see the world as it really is, a hustle and bustle termite tussle.

The higher I go the less I think about me. And you. And us. And. Family. Fathers. And grandparents. I am a kite. I soar to the edge of what I can understand. I touch the membrane. My shoulders rub against the bubble-esque surface. It gleams with sticky dew. I am caught at the edge of presence.

My head is connected to my ass by means of my vertebrae. Each of them twists and dials and unlocks in a complex configurative array. I hear the click. I feel the release. My umbilical cord is taut. I release. I am born again and scratch out of my body via the seam of vertebrae that are open.

"Mommy, mommy ..." my voice morphs. A girl. In me. Is me. I am her and she is me. I forget the first letter of my name.

She walks through a house that has too many rooms. The walls are cold. I caress the juices and sediments and odours imprinted by time; the brown grease of dogs sleeping in a favourite spot.

The palm of a child growing, bigger and bigger, like the life rings of a tree.

## **Been here before**

“I have been here before.” The words flutter through the air. His father hears them and just shrugs.

The night before he swam in the pool and imagined it was a lake. An ocean. The sky. “... want me to divorce your mother? I’ll sure as hell do it!”

Dogs bark left and right. The city breathes between the crashes of staccato waves.

The grey tree lies emaciated next to the road going to Firgrove. A magical name for a place that is so bleak and sparse and naked.

The boy touches the bark and he feels it, the presence of it. His skin inks black and fades to brown, and then the sun bleaches it white again. From tortured to supple and erect.

Sundays are spent bicycling. The air is fresh and the road is free.

## Journal\_sub\_stream

2/1/2020

I thought I would feel sadder when we finally broke up. But I don't. My ideal-self works hard, smiles more, and de-procrastinates.

//

### A NEXT LEVEL LIFE

I have worked hard at perfecting all my skills this past year. What will the exchange hold for me?

I check and double-check the manifest of the past few months. I nod. I am ready for the exchange; every year we are allowed to trade. I strive to go up, but I often go down.

This year I will choose more freedom and mobility. Will I lose friends and family if I commit to this?

"I'm sorry sir, in this round you have not met the minimum benchmark" the replicant woman smiles, twitches, and runs through her "sudo apt\_get = (*considerate; caring*)" protocol. She reports back in a voice dripping with high-octave-auto-tuned sweetness, an artificial motherly soothe.

"What can I get then?" I,m not being nice. I don't have to be with *them*. It is oddly liberating to be able to tell someone to "go suck your cunt" without the usual repercussions.

"Let's see ..." the computer terminal clicks and whirs and purrs "... you are eligible for Teacher at your old High School, or you are eligible for waiter at Milky Lane; are any of these choices suitable?"

I walk away without answering. Fuck. Another year in this body. In this skin; in this sub-standard untradeable life.

I will have to work harder than ever before to upgrade, to be ready for the next cycle. I am content with being a weaver for now. Even if it means bending the rules, even if it means [REDACTED] [auto\_redactive\_assistant!^17:52-31|05|20]

3/1/2020

You don't like things easy. You don't like things plain.

You look at life from the fishbowl and dream big guppy dreams. Siamese-fighter fantail-fantasies.

You are the common denominator of your future. You are the change rattling in a little girl's pocket. You are the dog smelling human faeces in the garden, eating it with a petulant grin of brown satisfaction.

You are the famous rock star with period pains and a sick mother; lying on the bed below the stage wondering who her husband is fucking. That's part of who you are.

4/1/2020

I read about other people's lives and forget to live my own. I dream about their success and rub my dick on the possibility, the chance, that life will be easy.

I have spent so much time on education. Have I become what I hate? The epitome of stuck. An idea keeper watching school children achieve more, dream bigger, dripping with privilege. (Check your privilege).

I am stuck in a system; living life on reset each year.

Be kind. Rewind.

5/1/2020

Enough now. Time to shine. To be what you want to be. A wannabe. A spice girl. A loser like me.

Everything that has been buried has been let out. You are free. You have closure. Don't cling on to these things.

Crushed answers from rocks make for hard truths.

6/1/2020

EMOTION	THOUGHT	ACTION
Anxiety about writing.	I'm not good enough. I don't know what I want to say.	You are good enough. Write what you don't want to say, and you'll get to what you want to say.
Uncertainty	I don't know what is right and wrong.	...

(See: METAL – My Emotion Thought Action Loop)

13/1/2020

Does long distance love work? Can people meet online and not go cat-fishing?

My heart is full. The piano is playing.

I remember the Bible songs of childhood; an ancient Mrs Bezuidenhout with her wispy grey hair and smoker's rasp, and her witchy cackle, that soothing grate of a carefree teacher. She massages the keys with her orange fingers. She is in a feverous state. Her coiffed beehive jiving like excited ghost breath. The blue carpet impresses on my foot and I lie down to imagine what space may be like. She tells a story of forests. She tells us to imagine what she says.

My brain feels absorbed. I try to be cool and add swear words like „Shit. Piss. Fuck.“ After each word. The boy next to me laughs. I get sent to the principal's office for swearing.

14/1/2020

I went to bed late last night. I couldn't stop chewing on a new book idea.

“Seven girls and one guy who meet in Thailand become friends. They quickly realize that they’ve been fucked over, and penetrated, by the same guy. One is pregnant. One is abused. One has HIV. One wants a daddy. The point is they are all linked. Golden threaded together by Bobby. Bobby who likes to fuck lady boys and go to the gym. The girls plot to teach him a lesson. He dies on the beach while he is fucking Annah, in her ass on the beach. She elected to be the honeypot because she hadn't tasted his dick yet. She just wanted to be part of the group. The Bitch Clique. (The Cunt Coven). They're all fucked now. Or are they?”

###/###/###

The transcendence to ALTERNATE was easy. I floated through the hyper-interstellar space. A tear in REALITY allowed me to slip through and reach the boundary line.

“You can't go straight” the roots of trees and souls of krill whispered to me, “... you have to turn around and rub your shoulder blades on it, in it, you'll know when you do it right.”

It felt like thick air. Like womb-space. Like birth without breath.

My meditative practice has prepared my HUMAN mind for the workings of ALTERNATE. I am everyone. I am everything. I am everyone and everything and every possibility of everything and everyone. Not god. Not anything. Just a soul infused and intermingled with the INTENTION and ENERGY of ALL.

I still feel umbilically connected to REALITY. Each moment here. Each REAL-MINUTE is an infinity there. The longer I stay the more difficult it gets to remember who I was. Who I am. I am a teabag slowly steeping into the ALTERNATE.

Before I occupied OLD\_LADY\_WITH\_CURLERS, I jumped from GAY\_MAN\_WITH\_ANOREXIA to TEENAGE\_ANGST\_RIDDEN\_BRIAN.

It is difficult to control the consciousness stream now. I can't focus on me. Only on WE.

In the distance I see the metallic façade of a square building. „What is this place?“ I think for a second.

I forget and enter the STREAM. I FLOW. The next time I am present I am inside the cool-warm interior of the vast SOUL\_ARCHIVE:LIFE\_LIBRARY: AKASHIC\_RECORD.

## Schoolboys

*The air is ethereal. It is dense. It chokes but frees. Multiple identities collide and intertwine and grow on the sidewalk.*

*In the distance there is a big building; a spherical square that glitters silver translucence. Opulent. Grandiose. Towering and casting a shadow over the town. Or the place. Or whatever this is.*

*I walk closer but I shift and clutch left and right. Frenetic memory streams tug at my toes. My lips. And the tip of my dick.*

The classroom is sardined with boys wearing grey pants and blue blazers; girls wearing white shirts and blue skirts.

I stare out of the window and wonder what happens after this. Where will I go? Or do?

“Are you here?” A stick raps on my table.

“You’re annoying” the words flutter out of my mouth and shit on the teacher’s ears. Mrs Ross. Mrs Style.

What if I was a girl ... would a teacher be like this, aggressive.

If I was a girl and my name was Simone I would be sitting in the bathroom under the clubhouse smoking meth from a gutted light bulb. I’m glad I’m not a girl. I’m glad I’m not Simone.

The lighter clicks and clicks. She makes sure the lighter’s heat melts and vaporizes the crystals. Her legs are open. She rubs her scarred thighs. „How will I tell my parents that I’m pregnant?”

Outside the window, the sun burns through dust and rubs heat on the leaves. We flit and birth in the forest. Bower bower, fairy power.

*I know a bank where the wwwww-wild thyme blows,*

*Where oxlips and the nnnnn -odding violet grows,*

*Quite over-canopied with llll -uscious woodbine,*

...

---

...

*Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight.*

We read Shakespeare. I stumble and stutter. I find my voice deep inside and lift it to my left and then right shoulder. There's a fine line between confidence and revelry; in faggot-ing through the lines and jock-ing through them to impress girls. Can I find the balance and not reveal myself?

We run through the forest and for a moment I forget teenagerism.

I'm 17 and I get high in another forest, that thread is linked to this moment, me at 14 is me at 15 and me at 30, the „all of us“ are connected in the now. If I listen carefully I can see myself then and now.

“Have you ever gotten high?”

“ ...”

I haven't but the bong is sweet and chokes my breath and sears my intact tonsils. „Does this fucker know what he's doing?“ the left tonsil nudges the uvula to pass the message to the right. He just shrugs and I swallow a desert of spit.

Ring-a-ring-a-rosy plays loudly as I walk in circles. I'm glowing green and yellow. The sun makes the leaves shudder.

“Haven't we been here?”

Over and over we walk in a loop. We walk in circles. New circles. A rat-race spirit walk. In the corner of my eye I see some bitch sitting on a swing. Backwards and forwards she swings. She wets her lips and sticks a finger into herself. Ecstasy. Double-take. She's not there anymore.

We walk around and we're trapped in a loop. That slut-bitch is widowing us. We go in circles closer to the centre of her web.

I am back in the classroom, I stare out at the forest, there are two people pointing back at me in the classroom and the one looks ... like an older me.

//

Today we see the dawning of dread. The mistress of shadows sits on the bed. Her web of lies has been woven and spun from Andy's overeager soul. She folds her pretentious legs into herself, under her ass. She has cast away the empty husks of her previous suckling zealot slaves. Purged. Barfed. Squelched.

She has assembled a new pageant of cunts that comb her hair and caress her brittle aura. She's the most cunning temptress harlequin widow-bitch. That Sam.

She rocks back and forth adjusting her glasses, her sweet words pickling and priming their shiny eyes and pearly prefrontal cortexes.

On the surface she is the Maiden Mary, Theresa incarnate. But inside she is hungry tar, an insatiable dominatrix with sin whips.

Our dearest widow and lady of shadows, Sam.

Her gorgonic eyes entrance and enslave. Poor us. Poor me.

“Andy would you go get us some beers?”

He jumps up. Her wish is his command.

My weapon is sarcasm. My strength lies in dicks and the fact that her cunt doesn't flatter me. That it doesn't give me flutters. But she doesn't know that, yet.

I won't be her “mine” and I won't get licked and sucked by her “you”.

//

Our primary school. The place where I poked holes into ring binders. Somewhere in the distance behind the shower curtains a boy called Lu touches another boy's dick. He spreads a rumour that the boy is gay. Cover your own ass.

We finally escape the forest.

“Let's go drinking at my house?” a girl nicknamed Syringe asks us in the back of Biology.

It is me and the girls. The phone rings. We're fucked.

“Is Miss Grobler there?”

Later that night we're writhing and wriggling over each other. We pretend we know what we're doing. We're three boys and three girls. I sit and play music and wish I could be home.

*Me is in a building. I is on the floor. I am drunk on memories in the square-space. In my hand is a square of liquid that sticks like cum to my fingers. The floor is cold. The air is warm. The library of memories and experiences twitches and glitches.*

*I open the memory square and see a girl sucking on a light bulb. A boy sucking a dick under the bleachers next to a swimming pool. Two boys and three girls fornicating in fake fubulant fashion. A little boy in a closet saying “IF they really love me, they'll come and find me!”*



## Bloodletting

The Leatherman glides smoothly over the plastic box of my new toy. It chews and chews as I cut and cut. Grrts. Grrts. Grrts. I saw and hack the box. All of a sudden and without me even noticing it. My finger secretes blood. Not actually my finger. The space just behind my index finger and my thumb.

It cries tears of blood and for a moment I see the blue and white insides. I immediately cry and think. "I have broken myself."

The carpet in my room has been stamped into my skin. I'm even more broken now.

I run to get tissue paper and I dab and dab. I call my aunt. She'll be here soon.

At the doctor I cry even more. "I have broken myself good, haven't I?"

My sister is a little attention seeking bitch. I shouldn't say that or think that. I shouldn't think that of my dearest sister that I wanted and wanted over and over. I was the one that paraded with a pillow under my shirt for weeks. I was the one that incepted my mother's mind.

I love my sister.

We play horse-horse as mom cooks the food. That's probably why my knees are so fucked these days.

We play with our bicycles outside in the front yard. I follow the brick pavement and I go faster and faster. My sister is jealous that I am having so much fun. She pushes a tennis racquet into the wheel spokes. I fall down and I break myself again.

The upside down L on my right foot flaps and flaps. Doctor says, "You're a wild one aren't you!" I know what that means. It means. "You're a real boy aren't you?"

No. I'm not. I'm a closet homosexual dressing up in neon ski-pants pretending to be pregnant, putting on make-up and being caught by the maid.

An L-shaped cut on the foot, means you're a loser...doesn't it?

Margo is the moon and I'm the sun. Margo is the girl I'm, I was, meant to marry. It was written in the stars the moment that her and my mom arranged the marriage in the clothing boutique. I was the one crawling underneath the women's dresses. She was the one crawling under the men's suits.

We did everything together. I have known her since I was 8. This one time we went to Knysna and I tried to touch her third nipple. But I ended up calling her mom "a slut".

Another time we went to Grand West and I fell down because some asshole ice-skated upstream. I fell down and my blood danced across the cold ice like little bloodlet ballerina balls; they jumped and skated across the ice much better than I ever could.

A tooth through the lip should be a reminder to stop talking shit.

The doctor stared at me as I complained about my dick, and my urinary tract. For the past seven months I haven't been able to urinate. The pee came in drops. Painstaking drop after drop.

He wore a brown fuzzy coat that reminded me of homeless beggars; the type of coat that you could rub your face against and be left with a carpet burn. His sunken cheeks were also strange. Had digging in men's anuses left him sucked dry.

It was my turn to have my anus fondled.

"Lie down. Turn left."

I felt uncertain, am I doing this right. Is this how sex is?

"You're going to feel a cold sensation"

His fingers were in my ass, he was touching my prostate.

I imagined what his face might be doing under the mask. Was he smiling? Was he frowning? His eyes told the story of someone that was tired of looking at other men's assholes.

"We'll have to operate by Friday"

It took 30 minutes, and I left the hospital with a 15 cm cut stretching from the base of my penis to just before my hip bone.

A cut in the pubic region means your dick might not ever get hard.

## Homo Serpentinus

*At night I fly high. I shed my skin and leap through the restraining walls of reality. I find myself in the ethereal alternate that I have come to learn is the subconscious. Is erratically structured and frenetically fractured.*

*The squares are warm to the touch. My eye catches. My fingers caress. A square of writing. A confession. A reflection. A dump of conscious experience.*

I don't do drugs or anything like that. I am still a virgin and I think for the most my thoughts are pure. I try not to drink too much or associate with people that might be a bad influence.

Last night a friend and I encountered people that mom and God would say are from the wrong side (what is grandfather thinking in Heaven).

I feel as if my soul has been corrupted. Their mental affliction tastes like sin. Smells like shit. Has the consistency of infant excrement captured in Pampers.

1. Dante steps into the inferno and traverses the nine circles. I control him with the PlayStation remote. Jump. Hit. Kill. Maim. Limbo. Lying on the couch and waiting for life to happen. For things to change. Shackled to the seat of the sofa by lack of will and massacred motivation.  
The unfamiliar; the dangerous strangers with perfect stepford smiles. I met them the day I visited my cousin. Screech. They were certainly homosexual. They seemed so nice in the beginning, after we got drugged and drunk, things changed. Topsy turvy Christmas cake.
2. My dick softens and turtles into my body. The lust leaves me sour. Dante leaps and journeys to a tower. We find Beatrice. But a succubus is in the way. We kill it.  
Gay porn, drugs and alcohol, and the droopy fornicating mouths of married sluts.  
I did nothing bad or irresponsible; at least I pray to God that nothing happened. Gender construction and sexual pageantry. My overthinking mind rationalises the advances. My friend vanishes. "Omg I have to tell you something, but not now!"
3. I eat and purge and sniff cocaine. What if I did enough to be so jacked up that I'm not here? Dante fights the Cerberus; the three-headed beast. We kill. My thumbs are sore from playing all day.  
It was just the way these people looked at me and my friend. And the things I did out of respect for them and their hospitality that has made me sick.
4. Slithers on my neck, smells my blood –  
My vibrant spirit.

Fangs peak out, and in, under my skin.

Sucks and sucks more and more.

Insatiably more.

I feel like crying. I feel like throwing up. I feel like bursting into flame and killing them. I am docile, I am sweet. I am kind. Salem burns my ears. Apartheid bubbles in my gut.

5. Before you speak in anger let your words pass through three gates. Is it necessary? Is it true? Is it kind? But fuck that and these „poese“!

I must admit that I think I was given cocaine in my drink. And it resulted in me feeling very good, almost the entire night. I couldn't sleep. We see the sun coming up. My eyes burn red from no sleep. My mouth is cotton and my lips taste like a married older man.

“We have to get out of here. We have to get out of this hell!”

6. I stop playing the game. I am over it.

My mind ticks and clicks. I make myself sick when I'm somewhere I don't want to be. Yes. That's it. The key to freedom. My fingers slide into my throat and I hit my gag reflex. I open the bathroom door and make sure I vomit all over the floor. My sick stains the tiles yellow. Chips and nuts stare back at me proudly.

The bald dickhead stands at the microwave cooking his cocaine. Tring. Ding.

We leave. It is urgent, oh how sick I am.

My friend and I go for breakfast and he tells me ... “that little psoriatic fuck took me downstairs and made me suck his dick and remove a cockring with my teeth!”

“What the fuck!”

But also thank God nothing happened to me.

I visit a friend and collapse on the sofa. The cocained up dopamine receptors give in. I cry and choke and vomit the truth in neatly clipped batches of vowels.

*[The railing steadies me as I read the reflection. I twist the memory. I am there. I am it. I am psoriasis and bald. I am empty and sad. My soul needs to feed on young boys because I hate my husband. Because I hate my skin. Because the drugs don't work anymore. And the mirror looks like something hollow and Zombified.]*

## Leaps

*The square is soft and translucent. The image of a man shines holographically within it, twisted to the left the man jumps, twisted right he retreats. An endless possibility. Move closer to the filament and the man,,s dick shrinks and inverts into a vagina.*

*Touch it and become one with it.*

//

The balcony is littered with cigarette butts and the wet nicotine juice that steeps and dams up in the corner; a putrid monsoon rain puddle, a faint yellow infusion is creeping toward the drain. A man stands on a ledge. His brown hand grips the green balcony railing. The wind is quiet, his mind is not.

“No I won’t go with you!” the phantom voice cuts his ear and pops through the tympanic membranes. Over and over. Replay.

A car screeches and the echoed sound sands down the speckle-bumped wall. The bed is an unwashed yellowed mess. Faecal matter and piss are layered kaleidoscopically like coffee stains. One angle it looks like the face of a woman, a sad mother. Upside down, from the side, it resembles a dead elephant with a limp trunk.

Unclean. Unwashed. Dirty. Black. White. Thai. Cocks and anuses have rubbed this bed. Married men and tenderfoot initiates have crawled ecstatically across his bed.

The moans flood in and the open tympanum perceives the past and hears it as present.

“I wonder where that little cunt is ...” a tear squeezes free through the tight tear sphincter. Help me. Love me. Fuck me. Free me.

//

“I think this might be the best fabric option for the chair in terms of the wood colour.”

My job is boring. My job is being a bridge and connecting clients with sales people. I meander through the dust-caked factory where the shrill sound of saws herniate my skull. My hands flit up to my ears and I want to cover them for a second but the eyes are watching. I endure the sound. I am strong.

Inside my red blood there are minerals and vitamins, and nicotine dancing on my erythrocytes. I am tired I am drained. The bathroom smells like blue cleaning chemicals. The half-light fluorescence above my head licks the black bags under my eyes. I look like shit.

“Daar’s phone vir jou, is jy available?”

“Ek is”

//

His finger swipes left and right in a stupor and he matches with Lee. They start speaking and immediately have a shared connection. South Africa.

Loneliness can hide beneath the surface. It can stretch out like stickly branches and grasp at whatever fills a space. It isn't love. It is comfort.

They meet and drink. Lee has fake dimples. They have been punctured and sutured into place by a surgeon. The first warning sign. The first noticed warning sign.

The smile is alluring. It is all he can see. The drinks flow. Leo beer. Why Leo and not Chang? Because he is a Leo, horoscopically speaking, and Chang gives you a Changover which is to say that you feel like crap the next day.

"More, more, more ...!" both shout emphatically but only one is innocent. The other is a predator.

Warning signs:

1. Paying for drinks
2. Deep lustful stares
3. Clown-curved lip corners
4. Suggestive words peppered into conversation

School doesn't teach you the warning signs. Baddies are dressed up as delinquent drug addicts operating at the borderline. Mothers and fathers don't tell you that you should be careful of the nice girl that doesn't know her tongue is a slithering snake. Girls are never bad. Only boys are bad. Nothing is ever told of gay boys. They are blanketed as bad but the subtle permutations aren't laid out. Discovery and experience are the only guardians and teachers. Boys can look after themselves. Girls can't. That's what they think.

„I am the conglomeration of all my programming. My mistakes exist because of my conditioning.“

//

His finger scratches the green peeling paint on the balcony, a flake of paint razors the space where the nail connects.

He remembered that night. Vaguely. There was a string of boys visiting his, as the receptionist downstairs called it, "farang fuckhouse". Behind her smile she knew that this man was trouble. That he had a big black hole that couldn't be filled by life.

//

"Well I said you should give the customer a discount."

Today I don't feel all that well. The doctor says that I should be ready to go on ARVs in a month. Ready. Ready for what. Why must you emaciate and become a ghost before you could qualify for medicine.

Fuck it.

"I need to go somewhere; I have a meeting with a client"

The rear-view mirror reflects a humid country. A night that scratches the surface of my heart and runs up and down my nerve fibres, fraying and wearing them down.

A dick lunges in and out. A shove allows me to escape the slithering sex.

“Another drink?”

“Yes”

Warning sign.

//

The tanned man drinks some painkillers. His sweaty palms rifle through his memory shelves. He sees the face of every man and woman he has ever been with.

“Will you go with me to the hospital?” he asks one of his cornered concubines.

“No” he replies with a harsh and thin crumpled-up voice, “I did this by myself, you’re a big boy, so you can too!”

Taken aback he jumps on his bike, rushes back to his slut sanctuary and locks himself in his room for months.

//

The trip to Cape Town is faster than I expected. I wasn’t prepared to sit in a dingy broken down clinic waiting room within 30 minutes of leaving work.

My palms are sweaty and the tenth cigarette is just another ring-a-rosy in the nicotine chain.

//

He walks down to the 7/11 for some supplies.

Thoughts. Racing incoherent thoughts.

The night he drugged a boy and raped him comes to mind.

The night he forced his dick in and fucked a sedated corpse.

Nightmares. Realities.

//

“The doctor can see you now sir ...”

I lay out my life story, “27, Male, no sex the last year, eating fine, not smoking at all”

The terse words are flung out. I know that I will start heaving soon. That I will start vomiting the moment that I get the government issued blue bottle and Vitamin C tablets.

*I wonder whatever happened to Lee, that fucking piece of shit, Lee.*

//

“Hey Andy, how you been?”

“I’m well, what a surprise to speak with you, it has been ages”

The voices chatter and flutter and there is a clipped uncertainty on the one side.

“Uhm, when last have you seen Lee?”

There is a pause that comes full circle much like birth and death, much like in the closet and out the closet, much like innocent date and sinful rape.

“Oh ... he leaped last week”

“What do you mean he leaped?”

//

The tar is warm and smells like musty feet. The warm blood rushing over his skin is soothing and calming. The hole that was inside is being filled with blood. Also warm. Also soothing.

A final breath escapes the brown man, and at the top of his balcony with the flaky green railing, there’s a shadow moving, smiling. Looks like the poisonous alter-ego fucking him from the subconscious, the manky mantra monkey gnawing at his temporal lobe.

Lee sighs and embraces the gristly gravel; his legacy lives on in his diseased concubine children. He will remain a footnote in everyone’s retelling, of their night with the devil.



## Mirrors Stare

The mirror's edge, and the „they“ inside, stare back blotchily. The splintered image refracted all over the surface is a reflection of a ghost staring into a mirror. A woman; divorce-drained. Her hair is a faded whitish blonde; her roots are a pathetic greying black.

Her wrong hand gropes at the faucet, misses it, tries again. Left, right, up, down. A nervous tremble vibrates and takes a hold. She walks into the shower door. Accidentally. Laughs. On-purpose. Laughs.

Neither. No laughs.

The warm blood sucking her fingers makes it difficult to concentrate. Makes it difficult to balance and not look into the white.

The dried shit on the back of her knees feels like a little boy hiding behind her, his mom. Feels like yesterday and the orange washed memories of perfection.

“I ... I ... .... gggggggggghhhhhhhhhh” struggling words and fractured syllables. She looks at herself in the mirror and tries to

## Under the Conscious

I have:

Worked as a waiter and spilled wine over the elderly couples that profess their love once a year.

“Here’s your change Madame ...” I finger the five rand around the bill holder. 200 Rand bill. R5 tip. You can stick that shit up your ass.

“No dear that’s for you”

“Oh no, I can’t ...”

Looking back I wonder if my leafy dry words rustled and cracked in her ears or were they as sweet as I intended them to be. Faux intention. Faux satisfaction. Faux pas.

The beach crashes and bubbles next to him. He walks in the moonlight. Sickly moon. Waning crescent. The stars are there but he doesn’t see them. I don’t see them.

I am married. I have a wife. She is lost. I am looking for her in the silky slosh of waves, in the finest granules of sand. I comb the sand with my eyes. Grain = memory. Have I forgotten her?

The city sprawls and farts fumes and coughs and putrid garbage odours into the air. Filthy home. Derelict derriere. I am a piece of garbage that flies around the town aimlessly looking for things.

My boots indent the sand and the waves wipe my existence away as quickly as I have proven that I exist. A woman in a trench coat stands next to the water. She is investigating the granules of grit with a spyglass.

“I’m looking for her too” she says matter-of-factly before I could even taste the question word on my tongue.

“She’s here somewhere; you’ve come to the right place.” She meticulously continues combing, and points and shuffles through infinity.

Why sand? Why a beach?

“Try to forget what you remember ...” she says.

Behind him, me, the some-thing clanks and walks closer. The cloak scratches the corner of my peripheral.

“They killed me.”

I try to say something but I realize that I can’t speak. I am only a viewer. I am not meant to speak. I have spoken enough.

She is rusted and creakily corroded. Under the cloak there is a TV screen.

A happy family runs through a house. Mother is beautiful and blonde. Father is tall and dark. The floorboards whine with each family footstep. A baby boy touches the walls of a house. He is short and plump and has blue eyes. He laughs and giggles as he runs in circles. Kitchen, living room, hall, kitchen living room, hall.

The giggles and laughs grow louder and louder. They become so loud that I cover my ears. The mechanical droning of canned childhood laughter. Joy and ecstasy remembered over and over become. Torture.

I remember the faggot that lived next to us. I remember him and his whore friends jumping into the swimming pool and revelling in the water with their naked dicks. I remember my name being Tom, peeping over the vibracrete wall.

A happy family is at a pool. A happy family swim. A happy family has fun and watches movies together every Friday night. A happy family falls apart.

*I put a spell on you and now you "remine.* The witches run through a dark town singing and snatching children. The TV is old. It looks like the one we had in our old house. Brown box. Khaki sand knobs. Screen. Within a screen.

“Would you like to join our stokvel?”

My colleagues make me uncomfortable. My shoes press and squeeze and burn my feet. Are they too small, or am I too big. I go to the gym and shower barefoot. I hope to catch planter"s warts. The logic goes Planters Warts -> Operation -> forced bed rest -> no work

I walk closer to the beach and I hear the sand scrunch. The water breaks into lacy pearls on the shore. The daylight refracts and blinds my eyes. Day turns to night, turns to day, and then to an eclipsed twilight. I hear the voice of my grandfather. “Turn around ... you can't walk forwards till you've turned your back and ventured ass first into the unknown.”

The water licks my ankles and I feel Atlantic wet dreams. The moment I stop worrying about where I'm heading I feel a staircase and I step down carefully into a submarine chamber. „What"s this?“ The light diminishes and the hole I stepped down from is now a peephole with water veins dancing hairily on the surface.

A plaque reads, *Chance to take the Time to follow your Fate - The Office of the Lucid Imperative*

## Disconnect

I am numb. I am scared. My brain swirls in circles and the mind's dust whirlwinds and tornadoes like the sand swirls of the Kalahari Desert. I am from there. My roots are buried there. The yellow grass and the quartz crystals slicing the landscape are the places I used to visit as a child, as a piece of DNA waiting to be born into the earth, as a toddler crawling over thorny sands and bristling buffalo grass.

"Breathe deep" my friend tells me every time I worry or if the mental bookshelf collapses and spills its contents over the floor. The house is on the outskirts of a ghost town. It has two stories, a big fireplace and leather couches. There is a white room, it is empty, and there is nothing until I imagine something in it. It is a blank 3D canvas that allows me to remember everything.

Out of the front door and into the woods. I walk to the edge of a river. If I dive in I swim with the solo siren, she tries to drown me and force the air out of my lungs with her eager hands. I propel myself to the waterfall. The one where the naked boys dance and sing and play, if I dive through the waterfall I am back where it all began. In a swimming pool. I am the watcher in the mist. I look at the three boys swimming and playing.

Benjamin Hartley found a book one day, he wrote his dreams in them, from whom till what, and from where till when.

Two Nigerian women walk around his house. His beautiful house; the one on the hill where he learned to walk. Where he learnt to play.

"This house is absolutely horrendous in the summers." His sister belches out as they show the two women the house which they grew up in.

"It's perfectly devious in the winter!" he adds to his sister's idea.

"Definitely not a place where anyone would love to live!" they both sing as the two ladies become more and more sceptical about the intentions of their tour guides.

Ben, or is it me, breaks away from the group and approaches the cupboard where all the crockery and plates and cups and finest collectibles are displayed, "can I have my favourite plate before we leave?" he asks his mom. "No, they want everything as is!"

He opens the door and touches the plate. His hand becomes a taffy stick melting in the summer sun. His body becomes taffy and his hands dissolve into crystal dust.

The feeling of red. The colour of blood. The pulse of the root chakra rings in tuning fork tines. „I am safe. I am home. I am centered. I am grounded“

But am I though? Am I safe, and rooted and grounded and home? What is home? Where is the center that holds everything together? I am stuck in grey and the interstitial space between TV channels; electronic snowflakes dance and lull me into submission. I have to go home.

Benjamin Hartley dreams every night, and sometimes his dreams end up giving him a fright.

A car escapes from a garage. It runs wild. It travels the streets. It decides to go places it has never been before. A wild car. A wild heart. A sense of not being in control.

A house. A big house. A house that looks like my grandfather. Under the house there are roots and networks of mycelium growing into the earth. Nutrizants. They drain the life-force of the inhabitants. And feed on the memories and unrealized intentions of us.

There was once a tree here.

People change, leave them behind.

Sometimes the people we know keep us the way we were.

I am everyone I've ever met, and I drag them along with me, everywhere.

Benjamin Hartley is stuck in his dreams; all we can hear are his silent screams.

A man guards a rickety skeleton of a gate. He's dressed in a suit. A tattered worn-out Cristian Dior suit. Aegis, son of time, brother of Fate and Chance.

In his hand there is a list. He ticks and tacks and scribbles and scrawls. It is a list, naughty and nice.

"You're late" he barks at an old lady with curlers in her hair. She's approaching slowly, feeling her foot snaking its way across the path.

"There's no need for make-up here!"

She immediately snaps the compact shut. One eye shadowed blue. One lip coloured red.

"You could be nicer about it all!"

## Emotional Sediments

From the deepest deep I feel an emotional cancer growing on my pelvic floor; bottling up emotions and pushing down and sedimenting what doesn't need to be compressed and condensed into the core. My core. It just isn't necessary. It is stuck. I am stuck.

A short list of possible causes:

- “If you realize what a slut your mother was you’ll also want a paternity test” – a heated realization from a flustered father.
- “Just don’t do too much cocaine, I care about you.” - Me speaking to someone else and substituting their attention for yours.
- “Hey boss, hey chief, my man, don’t you have a few coins” - People begging me for money.

I speak about my emotional blockage and it travels to the solar plexus. I gently fish it out. I coerce it from my navel to the shelf of my lungs. Now I can work with it. I can write from the shelf of my lungs, I cannot write from the seat of my pants.

My intention is to be closer to you. My dream is to meet you. My wish is to be. Just be. Whatever that may be. With you.

In a garden there is a house. There are children playing in the front yard. Two boys. They are cousins. They see each other every day. And they do the worst and best of things together.

“Let’s build a base” they decide one December summer holiday.

They take hammers and other tools and start by demarcating and pencilling the area meant for demolition.

They hit softly. They hammer lightly. They are afraid their grandmother will hear the noise and pluck them from the garden by their ears.

They make the hole. They cover it up. They forget that it ever existed. Until.

In a garden there is another house. My childhood home. You fuck your Brazilian friend and my childhood self, kicks you out of our shared innocent space. You don’t deserve to be here. For now.

I sit in a room that is the size of my old bathroom. It is my bedroom. The air is wet and sticky here. The air smells like tropical mould and sweat. Nivea and Axe infused sweat.

„I wonder what was ever behind that hole ...“ I sit and think and muse for a second or two while I meditate. I am centred and I am calm at the highest peak of my old house’s roof. What if ...

The information downloads at 1500 words per second into my fingers. I manically catch and write everything that I can. In seven days I have a book. I walk away realizing that my

protagonist is missing his father. He asks his grandmother “where is my father ...” even though his father is there. The grandmother looks and sees that he needs the truth, “He is stuck in another world my dear.”

My protagonist is like me. My own father is stuck in another world too.

From the sill of the window a little moth stares at me. He twitches his antennae and he looks at me. He sees me. His orbous multi-faceted eye observes me. I should release him so that he can find you.

I invite you back to the stone wall gate of our shared space. You’re allowed to talk to me at the gate. But you cannot step on the property. Not yet.

## **Journal\_not\_worth\_it**

26/03/2018

I sail forward. Sadness. A blessing. Anxiety. A curse.

It is within my control to make a decision and to figure out what needs to be done. I have what I need. But why did I never finish that story I started? Why do I always ask why?

I saunter backward. Vices: smoking and drinking and neurotic neuroning.

I should shout and scream and put my face in a pillow. It is within my power to take control and stop or pause what needs to be ended. In a way it already has. The ending of a time.

Will going back home to South Africa save me. Will it help me think clearly again. The roots of the tree grow round and round. Round and round. Round and round. The bark of the tree scratches and slowly picks away dermal layers. Round and round, in and out.

28/03/2018

The flow:

- have a willingness to be surprised
- trust where the river takes you
- no worrying about the past or the future
- exert no effort
- there is no right or wrong within the flow
- I must not care what anyone else thinks about what I have written

It is a warm afternoon, the cicadas are shredding the air with their high pitched echoes. There is a river by a park. A shitty river. Next to a shitty park.

There are dogs smelling each other's anuses and defecating in dribs and drabs. Big dogs. Small dogs. Big shits on top of little shits.

Broken glass and plastic jellyfish swim and gleam in the waters of the river. I walk closer and wonder what is in the murky darkness. What if I walk in and my toe impales a corpse's eye. What if it was a woman? What if I knew her?

I shake my head and forget about the river. And the woman. The sand is dirty under my crossed legs. It rubs on my ankles and reminds me of the sandbox days. The days when I could swim in a river without thinking too much.

I should walk in and just do it. Just submerge myself.

I'm afraid of the flow and the current that trickles slowly over the rocks.



A few steps away a little girl walks in and splashes around and walks deeper until she can't stand anymore. I remember Lu's birthday party, when the boys called him a faggot. When I listened and did nothing ... I remember Lu.

"Let's go up here and see what we can find!" Dudley shouts. He was the ringleader and the boy that liked pulling down, or up, girls' skirts.

We walk up a pine infested hill. We will leave soon. We can't stay here all day.

The night before we sat and braai'd and our clothes still smelled like smoke. The morning of the day of the braai we built forts and bases and attacked each other like boys do. I stuck sharp sticks into the ground and one boy. (Murky memory. His name evades and sidesteps my thoughts.) This boy. He steps on a sharp stick and screams out loud.

That night we tell ghost stories, we are in different rooms and we are organized according to social class and school hierarchy.

I get in bed with a friend. I forget what happened.

At the top of the hill we see a rundown bakkie and some dodgy-looking people.

"Do you think they're killers?"

One foot in front of the other. One small step at a time.

The story will take me where it needs to go. The moment I forget about writing I will be drifting down the flow.

29/03/2018

I'm thinking back on the past. I ask myself the same question over and over. What happened to me, what happened to the little boy playing in the big house? But then I have to go back to work and cook food and do all the dumb shit that I need to do.

He plays in a big house. He has two dogs. His mom and dad are unhappily married. His grandfather died when he was 5.

It was the last time he really cried. He has forgotten how to feel. Not really forgotten, but more forced the feelings into a cramped space deep down inside ... forgotten.

Now less than a month later. Less than two weeks. I have found him hiding timidly in the shadows; his eyes are sunken in and I can see his ribs. My ribs. My emaciated childhood self's ribs.

I have found myself through writing. The experience of re-writing childhood makes me cry. I have tears and they burn.

I am writing closer and closer to the truth. I am walking and edging nearer to the wild boy caught up in a dark and damp cage.

Set it free here. I'm here. Set it free.

8/05/2018

I wake up and I have everything. I feel myself in this moment. A mojo moment. I see Bank. We talk. We drink. We laugh.

The yellow tinge of beer turns and turns the looking glass. The present refracts to the past.

He has progressed a lot that Bank. He has developed sexually and is now sitting comfortably in his chair. His ass firmly rooted in his chair. He is himself in a way that I am not myself yet.

“I love you ...” the words echo from 2016 and hunker down and dig their toes into 2018.

Silly me.

10/5/2018

I fall in and out of love and I ride the horse until the saddle sands away the flesh and I am left only with bone. I get over it. It gets uncomfortable. I run. I hide. (A young boy runs away and hides in closets; if they look for me ... they love me)

I count the times.

First. Maddening crush love.

A kiss in a nightclub. Nights drinking beer on the roadside night-shift becomes dayshift. (I see you sitting in front of me)

Second, unrequited distant love.

You found out the truth about me and ran away. (I see myself in you)

Third, force-fed and empty pit love.

We travel. We speak. Facebook and social media consume you. (I see myself in your screen's reflection)

11/5/2018

I can't. I won't. The needle sticks the thread, the thread chokes the needle. They fuck and copulate and become a mess of thread and needle that only have one eye.

13/5/2018

I'm not „love“ enough. I'm not worth it. I don't deserve this. I'm not good enough.

The past sits inside and scratches the present. My 2018 snakes into my 2020. My uncertainties lick my certainties. I collapse when I realize that I will someday regretfully RIP.

My hands are frozen. They're not my hands. They're the hands that were shackled by words and lingering looks. They're not mine. They are the hands my parents made.

I stand at the precipice. The shelf of the lungs. The wink of the tear. I am standing at the edge, my toes want to jump into the subconscious abyss, and my legs want to find the little boy stuck in sub-conscious paralysis.

## Sensicles

You sit on me every day. You wrap your arms and caress me. Your skin touches me and I shudder and shake. I creak and groan when you move around and when you buckle my legs. When you ride me. What am I?

A chair:

From your cold wintered apartment I sit and I stare. I wait for you to come back and wonder if you ever will. You probably won't. I miss you. I need you. I love you. (Wood)

You are pretty. Oh so pretty. You are witty. And ditsy and bright. I will marry you. If any girl wasn't you tonight. (Metal)

The pre-fab slats and slit and fall into place. The step 1 is tighten screw. The step 2 is make sure you have all the parts. The step 3 is to buy the box. The ... oh ... my steps are jumbled. Just sit and enjoy me. Heat me up. (Plastic)

You make my heart skip a beat. Your name is cherry in my air. Your sound is caviar cornflakes sprinkled on my breakfast. When your sound waves and voice and timbre and talk penetrates my air I come. Come. Come. Into your world.

A speaker:

In your eardrum I whisper the secrets of long-gone forlorn far-away babies. I hear your voice and memorise your sound every day. I speak loud and I speak soft. I am whatever you want me to be. Within the parameters of my qualifications (I am your phone\*repeat)

Stand up straight. Look to the front. Hands up. Now shoulders. Now legs. Knees and toes. Knees and toes. Shutup. Be quiet. That's not nice. Apologize to your friend. Prathed Thai. National Anthem. I said sit up straight. You're not listening. That means you won't have lunch and I don't care. (Teacher's voice over intercom)

I scratch. I follow moon shadows to the dark side of the moon. I take you down the rabbit hole, to follow the white rabbit. I-ga-tehhhhhh. Yes the white. Not the black. I am nostalgia and memory and past and present and sometimes future. I am everything and every word. Locked into rhythm and beat. (a speaker)

You taste like cigarettes and smoke dipped into honey. You taste like Sunday afternoon roast stuck in my teeth spaces. Your buds are flowers of molecules dancing on the cusp of my tongue. Every time I brush my teeth the electric freshness of fluoride bleaches you and stuns you to sleep.

A liquid:

I sit on the couch and swirl you around my mouth. Johnny Bravo is trying to be handsome. My toys are having sex on the floor. You are fake chocolate. You are raspberry syrup mixed with milk. You are the nana-koelies that I drink to feel comfort.

Lavish lumps of liquid ooze and gush from prostate peaking penises. You are sweet. You are sour. You are the aftertaste of sex.

You burn my retina and you blaze across my mind. You light up my prefrontal cortex. Birds streaking across the sky. The orange-red of blossoming coral trees. The green of Thailand. The white of eye. The pink of flesh. I see you.

## Finding Sanctuary

There is a warm wind rolling in over the mountains. I struggle to breathe. The choking warmth reminds me of the possibility that life can be tough; mine isn't though. I have an easy life. I have a mom a dad and a sister. I have a big house. "Perfect" that's what my mom calls it. Our life is perfection. But I feel empty. I visit friends and realize that there is something there, in their houses, that is missing from mine. Love. The adhesive that keeps the whole thing together. That's missing. My family is floating further apart. We are like dust particles swept up in the wind exploring the world wispily.

The mountain gusts of the Helderberg make me aware of my own existence. I am an outsider. I am the bad-boy-popular kid who has no friends. All for one and one for all.

Sport.

I hate sport. I hate standing in the field. I hate playing cricket with my father after school. I love spending time with him. But I hate sport. If I could choose I would be doing something different. Dance. Sing. Act. Fuck knows. Just not sport. The cookie-cutter boys pass balls and whistle at each other. "Oy pass it here".

I distract myself by narrating the game and kicking the Egyptian geese shit. The afternoon sun bakes my back. I focus on the sensation. My legs. My ass. My back and my hair. I love it. The sun peeps over the school's red roof and streaks through the forest next to the field. What if I could just sit there all day and not do this.

I frown. I always frown. My dad punched me in the face once. I stopped smiling after that. "Could you just be happy and smile!" my mom tries to coerce a smile. "If I smile you'd think that you were doing a good job."

My daydream is interrupted by the eyes licking my skin. I am the centre of attention. "Dude, what the fuck are you doing ... you playing or not?"

I walk off the field, the crunch of grass makes me forget that I am ostracizing myself. Why can't I be like my mom? Why can't I scream like a crazy bitch when there is a rugby game on the TV?

The tension is building and I am getting more frustrated. The wispy family dust particles are growing ever more apart. The bedroom door is closed more often than it is open. I take a plastic cup and put it against the door. I hear the shouts and things being moved around angrily. Chair legs can be angry. Clothing can scream. Pillows can be silent. Bed sheets can scratch and claw and choke and bind. Our eyes can cut like knives. The corners of our lips can lie. We can mediate our emotions through our bodies and the objects we touch.

I retreat. I go deeper. The physical world. The present. They are all my enemy. They will eat me. I retreat into memory. Past becomes present and future becomes past.

First comes Z. She likes to draw. She likes to paint. She is a coming artist. She will one day be a clothing designer. That's what she really wants to be. A designer. We take the desk pad calendar pages and we turn it around and draw on the back. She draws flowers and plants and patterns. I copy her. Monkey see. Monkey do. Her

family visits us every year, December holidays. We swim and draw. I don't speak to her anymore. Her name was Z.

Second comes M. She likes to laugh. She likes to sing. She likes to dance and be carefree. She is the happiest person I know. We play every Friday. We are supposed to get married. We are supposed to get married that M and I. I call her mom a slut. We will no longer get married. Her name was M and we lived together for two years, she fucked my best friend behind my back. I was relieved but pretended to be angry. Her name was M.

Third came J. She is smart. She likes numbers. She likes to figure people out. I am a puzzle that needs to be figured out. We get drunk. We take a bath. We have sex. My dick is soft. I finger her cunt raw. We are best friends. Her name is J and we are best friends.

The doors start shouting. The boxes start coughing.

"I forgot my credit card at the restaurant" my dad says at 8:30 PM. By 10:30 PM he hasn't come back yet. He is gone and my mom calls me to their room. Soon to be only her room. "Go switch off the garage doors!" she instructs calmly. "But then dad won't be able to get in." Eyes cut. Lips curl.

I retreat to my bedroom and I sit on the floor. The bedroom light shines bright and casts an exact circle on the floor. Why do fags like witches? Because they can do whatever the fuck they want, that's why!

We draw a pentacle on the floor. We will communicate with our dead cousin. My favourite cousin and I will speak to our dead cousin.

Close your eyes. Watch this. He makes a fireball and I am amazed. How did you do that? Magic. I have powers.

I want powers too. Well then you have to train very hard. My favourite cousin can do magic. He can fuck girls. He is a superhero and a role model. He likes Goth girls. I am jealous that he doesn't pay that much attention to me anymore. Should I become a witch?

The cold summer wind lashes our face in the back garden. Candlewax is used to inscribe the pavement. We pray. We offer. We will talk with our dead cousin.

This summer I started reading Harry Potter. For a moment I can escape the real world. I can crawl through the cracks of 33 Abelia and go to Hogwarts. Wet swimwear. Pink Barbie blow-up chair. I sit and read and drink juice all summer. This is the last normal summer. But I don't know it yet.

We run and dive into the pool. The water is salty and clean. My dad and I clean it every morning. My cousins and I dive into the pool. Go to the beach. Get lobstered in the sun. We open our presents and we eat ourselves fat. Summer is good.

I lie on the pavement behind my parents' bedroom. The sun burns. The concrete is hot. My friend C says that I have a big imagination. I travel to other worlds wherever I go. I am a traveller, and I can go anywhere.

All my toys belong in a box. I walk to the brown upholstered box and feel the textured surface of the durable fabric. Batman. Cat woman. A dikey Barbie with a buzzcut. Batman's airplane. Rafiki. Simba. All of them belong in the box. But when I play with them they belong in a golden sheet that I sling onto my shoulder. We play all day in the living room. We watch television, drink milk, and we play all day.

I watch „The Pirates of Dark Water“ I want to be like Ren. Ren is a hero. He is looking for his father. We are similar. I am like Ren. I am looking for my father. He is here but not. Present. But not.

In the Alternate there is a floating kingdom. The floating kingdom is where the mages live. On the ground lives the working class. They are called the Srei. The Srei are all women. They have tattoos on their hands that light up when they collect the soul essences that bubble up from the spring. The soul essences are called Intention.

In the floating kingdom of the Alternate there is a man. He is the leader of a faction of mages. His name is Joash. He has a son that he is not aware of. His son lives in Present-Reality. He lives in the Alternate.

He doesn't know he has a son, but neither does his son know that he has a father.

I watch „Conan the Adventurer“ and I make Catwoman put her face in the space where Batman's dick is supposed to be. My favourite character is Greywolf of Xanthus. He is a wizard that can do many wonderful things. I pretend my gold blanket is the same as his cape. I can fly away on it.

Between the Present-Reality and the Alternate there is a place in-between. In the place between places, the land between lands lives the Santu-sani; the mythical women that are the keepers of the Intentional balance.

I watch Darkwing Duck and Tailspin and Gooftroop and Animaniacs and everything else that TV has to offer. I like to sit and watch things for hours. My grandmother says my eyes will become squares someday.

A boy hears a knock behind a wall in his garden. He ignores the knock for many years. He is gifted a glass egg from a strange man. He starts seeing spirits walking on his balcony. He ignores them. He starts moving things with his mind. He



blames the wind. He slips out of his body at night. He realizes there's more to life than the reality around him.

I want to start my own TV channel. I use our video camera and I start recording TV shows and designing my TV guide on Microsoft Publisher. I record my own news programmes and shows. I want to be a director or a producer someday.

My eyes hurt from the glaring sun on the back pavement. I stand up and walk back to the house. I love the summer and I love daydreaming. I love the fact that I can read things. Watch things. Create things. What if we made a hole in the wall? I ask my cousin one day as we play in the front garden next to the cherub fountain.

My cousin G goes to a New Year party. It is supposed to be a big one. The new millennium is starting tonight. All computers are meant to crash. M and I watch Cruel Intentions with my cousins. We decide that we want to be sluts like Sebastian.

I turn on my computer and I start dialling up the internet. I don't use my internet login. I use JP's, the boy next-door's. The password is = wpwpwp. Pee. Pee. Poe. Pee. Pee. Pipi. Ggghhsssss. Shhhhhhhh. HHHHHHHHHHH. The internet connects. There is always that possibility that it might not. But this time it has. I am connected to the internet and I have everything that early 00's internet has to offer.

I search for: meditation

I find: guided visualization meditation

Sit upright. Relax your shoulders. Relax your face. Relax every single part of your body step by step. Part by part.

Open your third eye. See the world through your mind.

I focus on my mind's eye. I push my intention into that space.

You see a forest. You hear the birds twittering. You see an open grassy field surrounded by trees.

My forest meditation has a waterfall and a river. At the edge of the forest there is a small town. A house with roman pillars in the front is where I find comfort. A bookshelf. A fire. A white room that can make anything materialize.

I am safe.

I sit in the classroom and I stare out of the window. I see two men walking through the forest. Wouldn't it be weird if that was me? Me staring at myself. The present converging with the past. The future bleeding into now.

## Face Tide

I have seen faces crack and morph and ooze. I have smelt lies on breath. I have felt the bubbling sensation of failing trust. Of disconnect. These things are visceral and real. They occupy a space fuelled by my intuition, coloured by my senses. If I feel dishonesty your face melts and disfigures. But not always. Sometimes the face cracks and I can peer inside. I sometimes see a bruised cloud of air. But other times I see a thread of black soul operating a perfectly fine human body.

He had a smile. It stretched from corner to corner. His built up muscles hid a damaged boy. "You shouldn't date him" I said. But she continued dating him for 10 years. Sometimes it takes longer than expected to see what my third-eye picks up.

I wasn't always able to do this. But there was this extra-sense from a very young age. First comes at 8.

To the left lies my mother; peaceful and serene. To the right lies my father; a taut ball of tension self-medicating into release-pristine. They are my parents. I am their son. We are a perfect family of two + 1. But I can't help but feel that something is missing. That the space I occupy between them on the bed isn't the space I should occupy. But rather. Or maybe. Instead. A way for my mother to wall off my father. I am the curtain drawn every night. The glue that keeps our family connected and tight. But I can't help but feel that I am in the way. That I am an alien, an adopted stray. I look at their faces, now gaunt and sucked dry. I look at their faces and I almost, but not, start to cry. I look at their faces and they crack and recoil. I look at their faces. Not mine. Not related. Not love. Not truth. I am their alien. They are for me. What some kids call parents and love and family. But not for me. I am the out of windows starrer, waiting to be abducted. To be transported.

"Do you want me to divorce your mother" he screams. I splash and I play and think we are perfect. A perfect father and son.

Then comes 12.

He smoked and fucked and drank and lived. I saw his face crack the day he fucked Elzette. "What happened?" *Nothing*. We were two cousins that spoke every night. We spoke every time I visited Pretoria. But we don't anymore. A lie breaks the trust, but the face gives it away.

My birthdays were never about me. I was paraded and trophied around and around. My mom's barren friends would laugh and pinch cheeks. It was the night of my twelfth that I saw her; she was angelic and beautiful. She was the beautician lady that made other women look their best. She was also the first full-on face crack that I ever saw; behind her perfect complexion hid a tattered deep-dark witch that stole souls and sucked intentions.

My light flickers. She knows that I am talking about her.

The origin of Lus-let and a fantasy world.

That same night another woman tried to convert me to Christianity, “would you like to give your soul to God?” it seemed okay. But why was she asking a tummy-ached boy. Why did the transaction have to be mediated by her? Another crack, I can see a demon hiding inside.

I go through puberty and my edges start to split. My forest meditation is my shelter. But one night I see something that puts me off completely.

An open field of grass. Trees line the perimeter. A waterfall to energize and re-fill my energy. A siren in the water ready to drown me.

Is she the doubt I hear in my ear, “you’re not good enough!” she urinates and spits in the clear waters of my mind now brewing with fear.

I’ll go to university. No fuck that idea. I will go to America and be a Camp Counsellor. Yes what a great idea!

I hate this camp I can’t bear another day. I make myself sick with my mind. I vomit every day.

On the bus I see America’s worst. I see a prostitute jerking off some guy.

I see a pothead peeing in the woods when the bus breaks down.

I see a black lady that walks up to me, “You are good, believe it!” and for the first time a face cracks and the light shining through is white.

New York is smelly. New York stinks. There are many people but I feel alone.

“You could stay here forever!” Johanna tells me. But her face splits and out spits the black tar. The deepest and darkest soul I ever did see. I go to the airport and I’m back home with my mother.

But her face looks weird. Like its cracking. Shit and then fuck.

## Journal\_emotional\_thorns

20/3/2017

What do you want in life? (or five journeys I could take)

The all-encompassing sensation of happiness every day. (The adventures of Hero, from his hedonistic treadmill)

To be smart, an expert, to rule the world from a throne of books. (The chronicles of Chaos, and his tea stained musty fart smelling pile of books)

Family. What does family look like? Vines of issues and emotional walls stud this path. (The lord of the Things, from his suburban home)

Wealth. Beyond money and work. (The tales of a Rat escaping the race)

I want to be a good teacher. High up in the foothills of some faraway mysterious mountain a man strokes his beard. (A series of events on the way to making sense)

Travel the world. See different places. (Oh the places you'll go)

What are your standards for yourself?

I should not could not do what I want ... I cannot won't not be who I am.

I am a conglomeration of my parents. I am a clone that has been stringed and stitched together from their DNA. I am who they were or are. But now. Along with that I have my own shit. That means I am carrying the weight of their generation and my own. Heavy.

My dad didn't have a father. I was reminded of that every day. The answer would be. Neither did I, because my dad was too busy worrying about not having had a father to be one for me.

My mom grew up in a house of 8 siblings. Two parents working all day. Not a lot of love to give. In a midnight confession my mom told me that "she never said I love you" referring to my grandmother. Who raised me in turn ... is that why I always mistrust love? IS that why I am insatiable and never feel good enough?

emotionally\_absent\_father + loveless\_mother = damaged\_me

I need to overcome myself. I am standing in my own way. I go and come ... I find myself running back to Thailand all the time. Is it my secondary womb? The place where I can become myself. Emergence.

21 March 2017

Become the grownup in the room

What is that supposed to mean? Am I supposed to just leave all my shit behind and not give a shit? Like. Oh dad. You're forgiven. I am good now, so are you. Let's be besties. No.

Maturity = the ability to realise the confusion often caused by people not understanding cause and effect.

We are not always our most awake.

Our minds are not potty trained.

We should try not to carry events with us -> mature

Maybe today isn't the day to feel, to know, to think, to start, to stop, to hope, to dream. And that's fine.

We need to be willing to work with emotions.

I don't know what they are. I was never taught to deal with them and unpack them. I feel them bubbling up and then blocking me. They are an adhesive that overwhelms me and then gets stuck as they dry. I choose to run away. I choose flight not fight.

I need to understand emotions better.

Core Principles Course – How to Free yourself from all Emotional Blocks and Fears

Emotional state determines all aspects of life

- Your thoughts
- Your physiology
- How people respond to you
- Your belief system
- The amount of money you make
- Ability to progress

The surface level changes, we have to work from inside out.

It makes sense then that I choose to hide myself in my own sub-conscious. Me who's learning to deal with life is me coming out from within.

The moment I experience a block or a fear I have to embrace it and experience it fully. And then. Only then. Can I decide what to do ...

We have to pull out the thorns that govern our lives. (Choose to build your life around your thorn, or choose to build the life you want.)

My thorns:

1. Issues with my father (Even though I want my mother's love and acceptance more.)
  - a. Switching off ... not feeling or thinking about it.
    - i. Not the right place or right time for this (fast forward to 2020 for a resolution)
2. 33 Abelia, or the house I grew up in (My fucking bitch mom sold my sanctuary)
  - a. Which led to self-destructive behaviour to avoid feeling anything.
    - i. "But to feel nothing, as to not feel anything ... what a waste" Andre Aciman, *Call me by Your Name*
      1. Which led to me going back to the house and picking up my memories and childhood self.
3. Always alone (the fact that I am scared of relationships. What if ...)
  - a. I don't know how to love.
    - i. I am afraid of what I don't know. I don't want to disappoint anyone.
      1. Will I ever be good enough?
        - a. What is hurt?
4. Mortality, death ... waking up on my last day with regret.
  - a. I don't want to be like my father. I don't want to be like my mother. I want to be awake. I want to be the "captain of my own ship."

How to emotionally regulate:

1. Become aware of the emotion
2. Label it
3. DO NOT DISREGARD OR SUPPRESS IT
4. Let it go

Forgive and forget:

1. I forgive my father for not being there.
2. I forgive my mother for not showing love and affection.
3. There was good. There was positive. My obsessive thinking thought loops have devoured and made what was there hollow.
4. I forgive myself. My culture. And the place in time I occupy.
  - a. Forgive the words
  - b. Forgive the actions
  - c. Forgive my weaknesses
  - d. Forgive my fear

31 March 2017

The breath is the anchor of the boat that is the mind. My world is a storm and I am the eye.

## The 1st Chakra

Sometimes we can only find what we're looking for, while we are lost, and often in the places where we least expect.

I am overcome with dreams and nightmares. Memories and meditations. I should go back. I need to go back.

The road down to Cape Town is long. Canola fields splash the countryside with Irish and yellow. I sit in a car and my knees ache. The joints feel like they are stiffening and calcifying.

My dad's house is strange. Unfamiliar. My stepmom has made it her own, it feels like the last time I will be comfortable here.

"We're going to the old house on Thursday." Nothing. Silence. Not even a peep from him. Fokol.

I am anxious. We drive up the hill at Lobelia. There it is, I see it as we approach the T-junction. It is almost just like I left it.

Let's go walking at the house. The shadows eat and corrode the light. There are people living here don't you know. Dead things like grandpa. Little boys like me.

But not really. I notice the tall bushes are gone. The bushes I used to crawl around in with my cousin. The walls have been built higher. They are cracking though. The house is old now. It is tired.

Mr C, the new owner, is nice. He tells a story of true love and how he met his new wife K. She is nice. But young. When he tells the story of how or when they met I feel awkward. It is awkward. A dirty old man in my tired old house.

We walk up the stairs where I used to leap down two or three at a time. The front door is still there. The pelican wood multi-colored bird. The yucca plant is gone.

The yucca that was in my mom's clothing boutique. Krizia. It saw me dress up in girl's clothes and approved before my mom spanked me and turned my arm upside-down and made it snap and creak.

The house doesn't smell the same. The insides have been gutted. The walls are there. But the insides have been flayed and cleared out. But I notice something when I touch the wall. Under the 16 years there is still something there. An imprint.

My mom is speaking too much. She is trying to suppress her feelings with all the words that she could possibly muster.

SHUT. THE. FUCK. UP. I think for a minute.



It is my first time back here and I just want to breathe it. Remember it.

We walk to the room where we used to swim in the Jacuzzi and drink alcohol behind the bar where nobody could see us. The tool closet still smells like it used to, grease and grime and sawdust.

Up the stairs we go to gran's room. It is different. The bathroom has been changed a bit. Everything is dark. The room, this one, but also the whole house is all so dark.

I remember granpa's photo and hat on that table. The one by the window. I remember shouting at the dogs busy fucking each other from that window.

I skip over to my old room. I go to mom's, her big bathroom, then sis's room. I can't do this. I don't feel comfortable. The smells are different. This isn't my house. It looks like it, but something is off. Like looking at a set of twins and realizing that you are speaking to the „wrong“ one.

My room is different and feels like a favourite jersey that doesn't fit. The room is filled with shit. Cluttered. When I lived here my room was in immaculate condition. My mom was a stickler for order.

I take a minute alone. In my room. I look at the place where the hole in the floor was that night.

Just come in with me. I beg and I beg my cousin who is looking at me as if I am crazy. I see a hole and I bury myself in it. My essence. My spirit. Me. It becomes part of the house. I feel like I am in a womb.

But that was long ago. It has been 16 years. Surely that was just a little boy escaping reality and the harshness of having to move.

I go in and embrace a gender-neutral light figure. "See you in a few years!" I say to my cousin.

I look at the built-in cupboard that takes up the whole wall. I always lied down on my bed and threw playing cards against the wall. I always threw a lot of shit behind that cupboard. I wonder.

I stand on top of the cupboard and I feel like 6 or 8. I feel like 10 or 12 playing PlayStation with a wet swimsuit. Six or eight feels like I can touch my toes. It also feels like strawberry milk. It smells like pre-pubescence. Like innocence. It looks like that circumcised boy's dick I saw at the urinal in Standard 1.

I remember that I came here to do two things. First. Fish behind the cupboard for clues. Second. Stand on the roof.

"Is everything going okay here?" K pops in through the door.

We speak about me growing up here. We speak about my childhood. "So whose room was this?"

Mine. Obviously.

“I have a question, this might sound weird. When you were living here did you ever see ... things” the „things“ is inflected. It is swaddled in disbelief but also possibility.

“Yes”

I tell her about the old man that walks up and down the stairs. It is my grandfather.

“Michael sees him!”

I gesture toward the cupboard and tell her I want to fish things out. She runs off and goes to get; a ruler, braai tongs, and another device that can be used for retrieval.

She is nice. If this were my mom it would’ve been awkward. I would’ve oystered up.

We fish, we struggle. Mr C’s son is there. I feel like he is invading my personal space. My sanctuary. But this is his room now. But. But. If he looks long enough he will know that it is really mine.

We find an old golf game score card. We find two playing cards. My score is 59, Neil’s is 48. I remember that day. I chased him out of the house. I can’t remember why.

The two playing cards are five of hearts and nine of clovers. Coincidence. Maybe not. Five is for transformation. It also symbolizes magical gateways. Like the one I walked through to womb myself in the energetic basement of our house?

Nine is for enlightenment. It is for bird’s eye view level stuff. Perspective. They both make sense to me. I feel my aura protruding through my skin. Gooseflesh.

I stuff my collectibles in my pocket and we go down the hall.

“And what did you do down here?”

Without me being able to stop or rein myself in I jump over their sofa and I go sit in the exact same place I used to sit every Saturday. My voice changes and modulates to younger me.

“Well here we used to play, and watch KTV every Saturday”

I shake my head and apologize about it. About me sitting on their floor forgetting it was 2020. I feel for a moment as if a part of me is outside again for the first time. A lonely part that has been locked up and forgotten.

In the kitchen the same thing happens. I open the kitchen cupboard door and go stand inside.

“We use to spy on people from here ...”

“Very strange, you know my son Michael also does that!”

We walk and walk and I feel like the boundary between then and now is breaking. My memories are jogged at every corner I turn. Here used to be a jungle gym. Here used to be two dogs. There used to be a fountain lady. Here, outside my bedroom window, there used to be a pigeon nest.

K loves this. She is living for this rich little boy remembrance. This is where I used to climb on the roof from!

And this used to be my vegetable garden.

I feel euphoric and dazed and confused. I feel yellow and blue. The swimming pool also looks different. No more waterfall feature where the naked boys lived. No more shiny-leaf bush where I jerked off in natural isolation.

At the front of the house it is almost time to go. Michael has just arrived with his grandfather. I am curious to see this boy that plays in the cupboard where I used to play.

I walk over to the area where we used to play treasure hunt. “This used to be our fort”

K’s eyes widen, “that’s exactly what Michael calls it!”

“Do you think I could go on top of the roof?”

“It’s your house, you damn well do as you please.”

It isn’t my house, not anymore. The tired bones don’t look like the plump fat house I grew up in. The walls that used to shine yellow and light and bright, they are sallow and sunken now. This isn’t my house anymore. But there is something here that is mine. I left it on top of the roof I think.

Up the silver ladder I climb. My hand gropes and misses the railing. I struggle and swerve. What? Why? I reach the top and I finally catch myself. I touch my own hand for the first time in sixteen years. It feels weird but very familiar. It is solid and certain like concrete. The past sixteen years have been cotton wool in comparison.

I land with my two feet on the wall and I run past the desolate wasteland that used to be my bountiful vegetable garden. I open the gate that our dogs could open with their noses. The same gate I used when I propped myself up to peep at our gay neighbour and his cockly concubines.

I run to the small alley, open the gate, close “wait not too hard, mommy and daddy will hear you!”

I hear the voice and immediately reply “Don’t be silly it isn’t Saturday, and besides we don’t live here anymore!”

But more importantly, who is this speaking so loudly in my ear for the first time in years. Me? Is he disappointed? I am too shy to even think of it.

At the top of the roof I see the world as I used to see it every day after school. I see it the same way I saw it in my mind’s eye the day I asked “what was ever behind that hole in the wall”. I see it as it was then but also as it is now. I feel calm, but excited.

“Look at this!” I take a picture and send it all the way to you in Spain.

“Boeta” my mom shouts from the driveway. I am home. I am safe. And I have both of you here. You of the future, and you of the past.

I jump and shimmy down the wall. And then I see Michael he is shy. He wants to ask his mom something.

“What did he ask?” I ask he but she doesn’t know. I am so happy to be here in this moment. I have come to do what I was supposed to do. I have seen the view, I have extracted two of my treasures. All is well.

“Say that again Michael the uncle can’t hear you.”

Michael is shy behind his mom’s long legs. He is five or so now. She nudges him.

“I want to go play with that other Boeta?”

I laugh and think „cute boy“.

“You mean your stepbrother?”

“No”

“You mean this man here?”

“No”

“Then who?”

“The Boeta that lives in my brother’s room, the Boeta that runs up and down the hall and plays in the kitchen cupboard, the Boeta that taught me about the fort, and the Boeta that I speak to when I’m afraid of the dark.”

I stand and look at him, my mouth agape. I fall down to my knees and look this boy deep into his eyes, “Michael, can you tell me more about the other Boeta?”

“He has blonde brown hair and he always wears a green shirt, he likes to play with his toys in the living room and he can run really really fast”

I want to cry, but I suppress my emotions. I want to say something but I don't know if I should.

“That Boeta is me Michael ...”

But he immediately retaliates with, “No you are too old”

I take off my glasses and then he looks at me with a confused face, and then one corner of his mouth flicks up and slowly lifts higher as if being pulled by a string.

„I'm home.“ I think and collect what I hid and kept here for safe-keeping so many years ago. Myself.

Part B: Portfolio

**Portfolio**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Arts in Creative Writing**

of

Rhodes University

by

**Deon Claudius Visser**

November 2020

## English Portfolio

Introduction

Reflective Journals Part One: Weeks 5 to 14

Poetics Essay

Reflective Journals Part Two: Week 15 to 24

Response to Reader's Report

Book Reviews

*The Tiger's Daughter* by Bharati Mukherjee

*The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros

## **Introduction**

This portfolio begins by presenting my reflections on writing exercises that took place during the opening week of the course (Week 4 of the academic year). These reflections, which set in motion the Reflective Journal (RJ) component of the course, are followed by reflections on the seminars that took place from Weeks 5-14. In these RJ entries I focus attention on what I have gained from each seminar in terms of research interests that I consider worth pursuing, as well as insights that could prove useful in planning the content and structure of my thesis. The next part of this Portfolio contains my poetics essay in which I address a number of complex issues that pertain to creative writing on a general level, as well as on the specific level of bilingualism which pertains directly to my own writing project. The poetics essay is followed by RJ entries that respond to the seminars that took place from Weeks 15-24. Thereafter, I present my response to the reader's report on the first draft of my thesis. The portfolio concludes with two book reviews.



## Reflective Journals: Week 5 to 14

### Week 5

Monday 27 January 2020

I especially liked the idea of “telling the truth, and telling it slant.” There is something about the way these words are stitched together that has shifted my perception of writing. Authentic. Truth. Me. Inside. I won’t have a breakdown or an emotional reaction to this course. Is this me being that young stubborn boy again? My younger self stripping away emotion and expression. The one that doesn’t want to show ANYTHING because he doesn’t want to get hurt. Why is he so persistent? And will this be the person I will be grappling with on this journey.

Tuesday 28 January 2020

We wrote through four prompts. One of the members of the group read something and became emotional. I feel myself shutting down. That’s not going to happen to me. Again. Childhood. Protection. Hiding. The opposite of the word vulnerability and what it means to be courageous enough to walk through the things that scare you.

I write in blue pen. My hand hurts. I know that I’m going to switch over to Afrikaans. So I do. I start writing in black pen. Later in our discussion I mention that this is the way I compartmentalize the languages: with colour coding or with different pen nibs.

English is academic and pensive and the language of thought. And Afrikaans is raw and imperfect and the language of FEEL.

The line “Ek wonder soms wat oupa sal sê as hy sien ons bly nie meer in die huis waarin hy dood is nie” grabs and unbalances me. I feel as if I have just stepped off the beaten path; into the air. It’s the first thing I write in a long time that makes me FEEL. And not THINK.

Next to me someone writes in Kaaps. He uses the word “Poes”. It’s the first time I hear this word in a university setting. He isn’t chastised or condemned. Can we really use the words that our mouths feel comfortable with? Could we really unpack the things that scare us?

We read “Instructions on how to cry” by Julio Cortazar. I realize that I will be exposed to styles and ideas and ways of writing that I have never imagined. I hear Stacy Hardy saying “...find your writing family” and I see how this process is unfurling and happening and becoming in front of me.

Perhaps ANXIETY or something like ANXIETY ANONYMOUS. I’m thinking of a vignette that captures my struggle with this and turning it around into something humorous or factual or something in line with what Cortazar has done.

We read a poem by Antonio Machado, “One summer night”. I like the sentence “Death crossed the room, not looking at me, in silence”. I react to the third line of the poem with discomfort. The word also is stuck in there and it feels awkward and

stupid. I loop up the original version in Spanish. How will translation affect me writing in Afrikaans and English. How can we lose subtle meanings and feelings and ways of expression with words? Should I write in both languages? I think I have to try and write in such a way that is more authentic to me.

“The last words of my English Grandmother” by William Carlos Williams makes me think of my own two grandmothers. It makes me see personality and contrast. Behaviours and rituals. How will it be if either one of them dies? How will I be? I know that the false alarm and fear of death with my grandmother’s amputation last year was already emotional. At the same time this poem reminds me of getting old. My parents, my friends and eventually me too.

Week 6

### **Monday, 3 February 2020**

We started our first seminar this week, titled „Fierce Writing“ and it was presented by Kerry Hammerton. The first poem we read was “To the man who shouted „I like Pork Fried Rice“ at me on the street” by Franny Choi.

This poem brought to light racial slurs. It made me wonder about the words we use and the impact they could have on the recipient. Am I using words that have an unintentional effect on another person? What are some experiences I myself have had with these types of words? This poem felt stifling and choking at times. Short lines. Bite-sized pieces of text paired together. The syntax and diction changes a bit further down the poem; how can I use this to set a mood or to create a feeling within the reader. Something about this poem feels quick and fast, cheap and disposable.

Later in the session we touched on the idea of “What is the truth of a piece/poem?” while we were reading “Man without arms” by Hirata Toshiko. The poet uses repetition, is it effective in this piece? How do I know if I am effectively using repetition in my own work? Read aloud and perhaps record the reading and listen to it after a day or so. Another question that came up for me in this poem is “How do we know when to stop a poem?” When is the real ending?

My favourite piece of the day by far was “Mexican American Disambiguation” by Jose Olivarez. This piece answers some of the questions I raised in week 5. It speaks about being Mexican-American and how that is different from being a “real” Mexicano. This piece inspires me to write about the White-European element of being South African. It answers my questions to the different Africans we get. I like the mixing of language. The writer mixes Spanish and English and this is something I can use in my own writing. In a way it has given me permission to try writing like this. More authentically. More like I speak in casual settings.

There was also something interesting to note in the way we can create intimacy or distance in our writing. I have to think of when to use this device and when not to.

### **Wednesday, 5 February 2020**

I took out Sandra Cisneros’ book *The house on mango street* and I enjoy everything I have read so far. I like how this novel is broken into short vignettes and stand-alone

pieces. There are lines in this that have completely changed my perception of how I can explain something. Lines like “windows so small you would think they’re holding their breath” just shows how simple and clear language can communicate an idea so vividly and almost cause a bodily response of holding one’s breath. She also uses a line “a house that I could point to” to communicate the idea of being shy of your house or of your own poverty. This simple line is something that I am thinking about a lot; it makes me wonder how I can express my own feelings or ideas as simply and unapologetically as possible.

In the introduction the author mentions that we should “name our otherness”, it isn’t good enough to only be aware of it. We should name it and look it straight in the face. I think this is brilliant advice. It focuses my attention of finding that which makes me different or that which I hide from. It gives me the sense that the only way to go about this is to go deep and then through.

Week 7

### **Monday, 10 February 2020**

„What level of accountability should we take for our own writing and the effects it may have?“

I especially liked what Stacy Hardy mentions related to punctuation and how we can control the breath of the reader. How we are able to make the reading visceral and real and actually have an effect on the reader and their body. I have always liked the idea of writing being a means to transfer ideas and being able to “infect” the reader and plant seeds for new ideas.

The seminar got better after our break when we did the exercise in „body mapping“. The exercise forced us to think of the body as a biological, chemical, political, economic, and social entity. By writing down our personal histories and illnesses and other experiences we can uncover deeply personal stories. I chose to focus my effort on the marks, scars and traces present on my body. I chose to catalogue all the scars I have ever gotten due to various knife accidents. Stacy Hardy mentioned that we could compile a “Book of the Body” where we can collect and write stories informed by our body mapping.

### **Tuesday, 11 February 2020**

I went to a screening of *Waiting for the barbarians* at Amazwi this evening.

The movie also conjured up images torture and „othering“ and outsider-ness. It takes me back to some of the things I reflected on in the first week. Namely identity and feeling as if one is on the outside. The torture made me think of whether or not there are certain things that make me uncomfortable that I shy away from in my writing. I would like to explore these topics that are triggers for me. I will try to write about them as fragments in this week’s assignment.

The viewing reminds me of something that was mentioned in the seminar, in reference to Samuel Delany, “... challenge every dichotomy on which our culture is

based. The distinction between dirty and clean ...” Bringing these two points together I would perhaps like to read the book *Hogg* by Samuel Delany.

Week 8

### **Monday, 17 February 2020**

“Writing Silence” is by far my favourite seminar up until now. One of the things that Mxolisi Nyezwa mentions is that we should “write now ... things won’t improve or get better as you age ... in fact you might lose some of your ideas.” I think this was an important thing to hear because I often feel like I will be better when I’m older; more mature and in a way easier to write down what I’m trying to say. So this has acted as a sort of wake-up call and I am going to try and write more often, even if it just ends up being me sitting in front of a blank page or screen and rambling.

Mxolisi talks about the voids and emptiness around us. He expands on the things that should’ve been there, or should’ve been said, but weren’t. I like this idea. I feel that there are quite a few things that I can point to or look at related to this topic. I think one of the big things I have been struggling with was/is an absence of love. I have recently confronted both my parents about this because I have realized it is something I struggle with. I think this week I should explore the absence of emotion, not only love, and figure out why I’m like that.

I should further try to explore my silences and the things or the times that I have been silent. As a child I was very quiet and at school I was an outsider. Is this something that I can explore and perhaps write about in the assignment?

I have to also try and think of the things that worry and bother me? Make a list and really name the things that bother or frustrate me.

A note to self that I made during class, “think of being less cerebral and inhabit the place and person you are ... if you write authentically „from“ within yourself you will always be novel and innovative and genuine”, struck me while I sat there and we discussed being novel in our writing. I think what I tried to capture was that if we find our voice and we write about the things that mean something to us, we won’t have to think of writing and finding the right topics or words.

While we were reading “Blind Panaroma of New York” by Garcia Lorca I realized that I don’t have to understand everything. We should also find the best way to express our confusion.

I think we first have to start by following the motion of the writing, as Garcia Lorca does in this poem. He follows and inhabits the spaces that the writing takes him. But we also have to edit and present those ideas in such a way that communicates our intentions effectively.

I liked the way that Mangaliso Buzani structures and presents some of the stories in *A naked bone*. I’m seeing more and more examples of work that is structured unconventionally. This gives me a better idea of what I can do with my own writing.

I also appreciate that the three pieces we read were not necessarily written at the same time, or meant to be strung together. But as Mxolisi mentioned to us, they were

from a range of short pieces that Manga decided to string together. I liked this idea as I sometimes struggle with ideas and sometimes feel like I have to force a beginning or an end.

„Where or what should I write from?“ is something I am thinking of every day now.

### **Tuesday, 18 February 2020**

We read “The man in pyjamas” by Eugenio Montale that came out of the Anti-story anthology.

I think the absence of plot made it easier to identify what I need when I write a short story. This answers the question I had, “What can I learn from anti-stories?”

“Which personal stories evoke shame or cause discomfort for me?”

I struggle exploring that question. It is as if I am avoiding to open a box, or tear down a wall.

We read a short story by Jaclyn Dwyer called “Biography of a porn star in three parts”. I would like to explore stories from mythology and religious texts, I think they can give an extra layer to a story.

## Week 9

### **Monday, 24 February 2020**

This week’s seminar was “The only writing is re-writing” which comes from an Ernest Hemingway quote.

I found the topic interesting. I initially thought that it would be along the lines of re-writing our own work. But I quickly realized that it was about re-writing what has already been written. Nathan elaborated on the topic by showing us how J.M. Coetzee used an old text by Heinrich von Kleist namely „Michael Kolhase“ to write „The life and times of Michael K. He then further illustrated how another writer used the character and wrote another book, and then finally how he himself used that to build and write his own story/prose.

This seminar has reminded me of something that Margaret Atwood says in her writing Masterclass. In this section of her presentation she speaks about the bible as a source for stories and settings and plotlines. In terms of what we covered this week I feel less apprehensive and realize that inspiration can come from other sources.

We also have to realize that the world around us is rich with details that we can use and re-write into our own prose or poetry pieces.

### **Tuesday, 25 February 2020**

During this reading session we read “motherlogue” by Ann Quin, “The powers of the Dead” by Stephen Watson, “Baba Iaga and the Pelican Child” by Joy Williams, “The misfit child grows fat on despair” by Tom Piccirilli and “Hometown” by Stuart Dybek.

I have never read something like „motherlogue“ before. It was really strange to see how the spaces and only hearing one side of the conversation forces the reader to imagine the other side of the story. This also made me aware of the value of listening more closely to conversations. The way that the writer wrote this was really true to how a telephone conversation would go. I think there is a lot to learn from paying closer attention to other people and noting the small details down. If we can do this we can add layers that are authentic and realistic to our own writing.

„Baba Iaga and the Pelican Child“ reminded me of a story my mom told me long ago. It was of her and her bushbaby one winter. I think I would like to re-write or re-tell that story and explore it. I want to capture the feeling of fixation, desperateness, and of having to keep the bushbaby alive. I don“t feel like this piece pushes boundaries and it plays quite safe. Is this a useful technique? Is it something that I would do? I“m struggling to remember children“s stories that I was told as a child. Perhaps I should consult with my grandmother.

„Hometown“ resonated with me the most this week. The line “not everyone still has a place from where they“ve come“. This piece is forcing me to think of „home“ and what it exactly means for me. Can our home be in someone else, a place, a thing, ourselves? I think these are feelings I need to explore with writing.

Where can I find a new sense of belonging?

#### **Thursday, 27 February 2020**

I went to the Rhodes counselling department today. I went there because the past few weeks I have been experiencing anxiety and it has gotten worse and worse. We unpacked various topics that I grapple with and the psychologist urged me to write about these topics. It might be cathartic and put the emotions to rest. These might be topics I could explore in my thesis.

Week 10

#### **Monday, 2 March 2020**

I found this seminar fascinating because it dealt with topics that I think will be quite beneficial to my own writing. The first point we opened with, „The Hero“s Journey“, was something that I am familiar with.

I think one of the major things I learned from this seminar was when to bend or break away from conventional structure. I think sometimes we stick to structure and the work we produce becomes rigid and stale. To point out and illustrate unconventional structure Paul Mason presented several texts and extracts. *The House of Hunger* by Dambudzo Marechera, Lucky“s speech from *Waiting for Godot*, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* by Ayi Kwei Armah, and „The Sanitorium under the Hourglass“ by Bruno Schulz.

My favourite extract by far is the one from *The beautiful ones are not yet born*. After we read this I really feel like I would like to read this novel. The writer uses objects and focuses in on them to the minutest detail. I liked how the narrative voice changed half-way through the text. What I got from this is that we can change the narrative

voice. We can also introduce a way of telling a story that doesn't follow the conventional arc but rather focuses on a slice of time. We don't always have to have a beginning, middle, and an end. I found some of the imagery a bit gruesome like „the after-piss and the stale sweat from fat crotches“. What I got from this was is that we shouldn't be afraid to go into these realms with our writing.

„The sanatorium under the hourglass“ is the text that I would most likely emulate and incorporate into my own writing. I liked how the writing operates on different levels and how it sometimes becomes philosophical and pensive. This is something that I often do in my writing and I think it was effective in this piece of prose. This story is cyclical but it comes back with a realization that adds a layer to the piece that leaves the ending open to speculation. This has shown me that prose pieces don't need to end. They can be about the journey only. I'd like to write something that cycles back with a realization, that has some sort of metaphysical reflection component, and that doesn't follow a typical viewpoint or narrative structure.

I have finished reading Margaret Atwood's novel *Surfacing* and I found it strange how similar it was to what we covered this week. The book spent a lot of time covering the mundane like fishing, walking in the woods, and the interaction between the four characters in a cabin. The ending was also quite open. I learnt to appreciate the journey and not always getting a neat ending.

The line, „I can't get here unless I've suffered“ made me aware of my own struggle with writing and finding inspiration. I also relate this line to my emotional states and that I always feel like I don't deserve something unless I've suffered. I think this is something that I can explore, perhaps as a driving force for a character? The protagonist also always refers to her father as “He/him” which I noted because I also do that when I speak about my own father. It creates a distance. I think I should write a story or short piece of prose exploring this strained relationship.

### **Tuesday, 3 March 2020**

I have started experimenting with this style that I saw in *The house on Mango Street* and other texts that we've been reading and I now feel more comfortable with writing shorter stories/prose. I think fragments/vignettes are what I would like to focus on for now because they give me the room to tell the story I want to tell.

In this week's reading group we read; “A candle melting all the way down until it's nothing but a wick” by Keegan Crawford, „Hunt Mountain“ by Alison Townsend, „I'm here“ by Ludmilla Petrushevskaya and an extract from *The Palm-wine drinkard* by Amos Tutuola.

My favourite piece by far was „Hunt Mountain“ I could not stop speaking about this with friends. The opening line, “When the night my stepbrother put his wrists through the window became the summer wad to hide all the sharp objects in the house ...” really played into the feeling I have this week. Since last week I have felt closer to my childhood. I have felt in many ways that I have woken up after having gone asleep at twelve or sixteen. When I read this first line it sparks notions of loss of innocence, children on the cusp of growing up, and warm yellowed summer memories. This piece reminded me of two memories: when I was at Llewellyn's birthday party in

Grabouw and we went up the mountain and saw a bakkie and ran back down because we said it was trying to catch us; and it reminded me of a night in Groblershoop when me and a few of my cousins walked to the shop past an old hospital and a car was following us. I would really like to use this piece as a guide to write a similar story. It has spoken to me on various levels and I think short slices like this are what I should really be writing. The writer really captured childhood and her choice of words and scenes slot in with typical children's adventures and narratives.

Week 11

### **Monday, 9 March 2020**

In this week's seminar we discussed poems within poems with Marike Beyers. She gave us two interesting articles to read that framed her seminar: an extract written by Joseph Brodsky called "From a poet and prose" and an extract written by Kenneth Koch from *Making your own days* called "The two languages"

The first extract talks about the relationship between poetry and prose. I especially thought the reflection on what a prose writer and what a poet can learn from each other (and their crafts) useful. According to the article the prose writer can learn from the poet the dependence of a word's meaning on its context, how to focus their writing and thinking, to omit the obvious and self-evident, and also what dangers an elevated mind may hold.

The poet can learn the following from prose: attention to detail, the use of common expressions, and the know-how of the craft.

The second article was about poetry being "a language within a language" and I found this statement fascinating. I think this line alone is what reinvigorated poetry for me and made me want to learn how to write poetry better now. I also liked the idea of speaking in symbols and using imagery and musicality. This article made me critically aware of the gap that poetry addresses and tries to bridge in our own minds. I see it as two rock faces with two people trying to communicate their innermost thoughts. Poetry is the smoke or the air that bridges these two people's minds.

### **Wednesday, 11 March 2020**

We went to the play "Lalela Ulwandle" (listen to the sea) which was about three different narratives taking place around Kwazulu-Natal. The three perspectives were each very rich in their own way. The stories were rich and made me think of all our stories as linked by immigration, traveling from one place to another place. This story made me think of my own family's connection with the sea and summer holidays when we used to go to the beach every year. I'd like to write more about these stories because I often think about childhood and growing up. It is a theme I should explore in more detail.

In all three stories there were very vivid images and narratives. All three narratives also had varying degrees of fantasy and magical realism in the storytelling, bringing together traditional healer stories and traditions, the scientific world with a touch of magical realism, and the colourful Indian stories about gods and goddesses. This production really made me realize how rich South Africa is in culture and history. We



have no need to write outside this country and our contexts. The stories around us are very interesting and layered already. There is a story I would like to explore and it is about my great-great grandfather being jailed in Grahamstown. My grandmother told me about this. Perhaps I could start the story in the present day with my grandmother relaying the story she had heard and then I could fade into a story that is present in the history. I will have to go to the Cory Library to research this ancestor and try to figure what had happened and also why he was jailed.

Week 12

### **Tuesday, 17 March 2020**

There were some stories that we didn't finish in previous weeks and I don't think we are going to get back to them. I decided to read them. One of these stories was "Little Pot" by Ilya Kaminsky. This story was very different to other stories or pieces of prose I have read. The narrator brings attention to the writing and in some parts rushes through the story almost. There is also a type of introspection and reflection of the writer and the person telling the story. The narrator comments on certain things like "the pot cooked into the next paragraph" which breaks „the fourth wall“. It kind of jars you out of the story. But I think in this case it really works to support the story. It is as if it mimics how you would listen to another person telling you a story in real life.

I like what the author says in her own note at the end "Imagination is just remembering from the other side".

### **Poetry Group Meeting:**

The poetry class this week was sparsely attended due to the corona virus frenzy, which was quite reflective of the topic or poems we did today. We did poems of survival. Most of these poems in the selection were written by Eastern European writers like Attila Jozsef, Miroslav Holub, Zbigniew Herbert, Tadeusz Rozwicz, Vasko Popa, Wislawa Szymborska, and Nina Cassian.

The first poem that I enjoyed was "Never about you" by Zbigniew Herbert. He writes „I would really like to write about the knob of the gate of this house about its rough clasp and friendly creak and although I know so much about it I repeat only a cruelty common litany of words.“ I think this is an excellent way of thinking about things that you are not sure about, things that you haven't quite found the words to write about yet.

I often find myself struggling with this idea. I don't feel like I can write about some of my childhood memories or fantasies because I don't have the exact words to express my feelings yet. But I think that even this is a good starting point. And not all writing has to follow the same voice or tone. I can use different forms to write different things. "I would like to write about ..." (make a list).

"Pigtail" by Tadeusz Rozewicz really stood out. It was horrific. I shared this with several friends just because the feelings and imagery it evoked was something that I haven't felt, and perhaps wasn't prepared to feel in that moment. It shows how the mundane and everyday things can become emotionally loaded and charged and become a carrier of emotions. They are a tool for us as writers to show and present

our feelings and ideas to the reader. We can use them also to point to things we ourselves might not feel comfortable with. Like certain life experiences that might be too traumatic.

Week 13

**Monday, 23 March 2020**

Books I have read this week:

*High-rise* by JG Ballard

I read this book after I read Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*. I think the language usage was very powerful and to the point and the topic interested me. I watched a movie called "Platform" and it ties in nicely with the same topic of people stuck in a building and a form of anarchy breaking loose.

I was thinking to use the idea of this book and relating it to South Africa. How can I write a post-apocalyptic Afrikaans story, a post-apartheid chaos. I have to think how I would structure a story like this. What story would I be telling, why? What will I be trying to say or depict? Which story would I like to tell, in this context, the most?

*Little Monsters Remix* by Chuck Palahniuk

This book was random. It had an entirely unconventional formatting style. The chapters did not run sequentially or linearly. So when you read you have to jump between the front and the back and the middle of the book. I get what the author was trying to do with this structure. He was trying through the structure of his narrative to create non-linearity and confusion. But I think this detracted from the effectiveness of the narrative. At times it gave me a form of distress and discomfort. Was this perhaps the point? The structure constantly gave me the feeling that I was missing something, that I wasn't comprehending the book as a whole. I think that one of the best pieces of advice that I extracted from this book was to "do the things that scare you the most".

There was a part at the end of the book (in this case it was the middle) in which the author experiments with flipping a fairytale narrative. He talks about Cinderella and Snow White being boys rather than girls. He continues talking about how the traditional elements like the birds and other fantastical elements are "doing surgery" to transition the character. This idea was bizarre, but also appealingly vivid. It provided an interesting twist that enabled the writers to steer clear of cliché.

Week 14

**Monday, 30 March 2020**

*Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* by Sandra Cisneros

I like the way she mixes language. She often mixes Spanish and English to get her point across. This is something that I have to become more comfortable with. I often feel that I can't do this on the basis of thinking that Afrikaans and English need to be pure and clean. However, this reading has made me realise that for me the two languages need to live together. I detract something from myself and my writing if I

don't include the two languages in my prose pieces. Another thing that I could do is work by translating. I often find that when I write in English my fingers flow quicker. When I revisit these pieces with English I tend to colour them differently.

I don't think I would've had the courage had it not been for reading Sandra Cisneros' book *The House on Mango Street*. I think this has probably been the single most interesting discovery for me in the past few weeks.

In *Woman Hollering Creek* Cisneros also speaks about getting a cabin or a place to live while she was writing. I never thought about this before. This idea evoked questions in me of how a place can affect our motivation levels. Sometimes when we are writing we need a new and unfamiliar place. I wanted to explore this idea while I was writing my thesis but I am uncertain of what will happen in the next few weeks due to the corona virus. But I still think it is a worthy pursuit to break away before I start writing the longer piece.

"Peel a scab and eat it" was something Cisneros she mentions later in this book. I completely forgot that this was something we used to do as children. I like the feeling of nostalgia that this evokes. I really resonate most with these types of ideas and sentiments. Memories. I do feel that childhood and nostalgia should be what I am writing about.

One thing that I got from reading this collection was that you should begin like you end. I like things ending in a circular fashion. You don't necessarily have to get closure or a resolution. But I like the idea of bringing the reader back to the beginning at the end of the journey.

In the piece „Eleven“ she writes “when you wake up on your birthday you expect to feel that age, but you don't”. I love lines like this. It really throws me back to my own childhood. It takes me back to an age that I relish and often go back to. The truth in this simple line is something that I thought about and shared with a few friends.

I should use this style and write childhood vignettes!

At this moment I am thinking of going to the movies as a child. I am also remembering the death of two high school classmates. I haven't thought of them in a long time but I am remembering them now. Another thing that I am learning from Cisneros's style is to summarize scenes or ideas into two pages or less.

## Poetics Essay

### Introduction

I am standing in an in-between space. A place where I know what I want to say, but at the same time I also do not. I am almost immediately confronted with anxiety the moment I think of having to write. Why is this? Why is it that the only thing I can think of doing evokes such fear in me? I can't seem to find the right words and I stand at the edge of the river stream waiting for the muse to push me in. I look for flow somewhere outside; will the angels and the muses be my guides?

The most important question for most writers is related to the idea of „flow“. It is something that writers tend to look for and it is quite often the primary quest that occupies practicing writers. The flow is that mythical and magical moment when all writing pours out of us and time doesn't seem to exist. Some may call it *duende*, some may call it inspiration, and others may have another word for it. But the point of the flow is that we are in a zone and we are transported to a place where there is almost no resistance to our efforts. It is only the speed of our fingers and hands that hold us back

In this essay I will talk about the flow and how we can write towards our own identity. I will also discuss the idea of *duende* or writing with feeling and embodied emotion that is close to our true self.

I will then move away from the internal space, toward the in-between space that is occupied by language and the words we use to communicate our ideas. Furthermore, I will explore the issue of bilingualism and how we process and structure our minds according to the languages we use.

The last idea I will discuss is how we can string all these ideas together and see writing as a form of „drag“ or identity subversion.

## Where is the flow?

In my own writing practice I have gone searching for the flow in the things I fear and also the memories that I hold most dearly. I think in my entire life there were two occasions where I entered the flow completely. The first was spread over time and occurred while I was making music, and the second was a bit more abrupt and manic and was when the *duende*, the muses, and all other creative deities took a hold of me for ten days and I ended up writing a complete novel. But in both cases I can't explain what exactly happened. In both cases I was never trying to enter the flow.

Perhaps if we look closer then we can find the flow somewhere external in the palms of a muse, or maybe we can find it deep inside us in the illuminations of our traumas and life experiences. On the other hand we may even find the flow simply in the words filling our mouth or in our own communal identities.

However, I don't think the flow is anywhere specific, waiting to be found like a damsel in distress. I think it is everywhere and nowhere, but I think it starts with the self.

It's a matter of coming closer to home then, to the place we are too afraid of looking into, to the "interior space", as Lu Ji (3<sup>rd</sup> century) refers to it. It appears that we are all troubled by our internal worlds. A sense of not being at ease when looking at ourselves or the intricacies of our minds often fills us. I think all writers have this feeling of fear and anxiety, and perhaps even a general loathing of the voices in their heads.

But the point is to come to terms with this state of being, because the flow is somewhere in this unease.

The moment we start to analyse this fear we realise that we might also be afraid of what „they“ might think of our writing. Because "what others think of my writing is more important than what I think of my writing", isn't it?

The moment we become aware of this and write from here, the *duende*, as Federico Garcia Lorca (1998) refers to it takes a hold of us. If we don't, the *duende* immediately and abruptly exits our body through our feet. The muse then takes a break and whispers in another's ear. And the angels go back to church and sing in silence with the select few that occupy the pews.

The *duende*, or the flow, is a form of **play** but at the same time the *duende* is also a **struggle**.

## How to get into flow, or evoke the duende?

The first thing that we have to do is to come to terms with ourselves and we must overcome this fear that we all, as writers, share. We are imperfect. We are going to fail. This imperfection and failure is the process.

It doesn't go away; it always comes back in another form. It is like the story of the girl that wishes so much to be rid herself of fears and pain that she desperately wishes and calls for a magical fairy. The day the magical fairy appears and says she will take away the fear and pain, the girl naively agrees. But the condition of this exchange is that the fear and anxiety will manifest as trauma in different parts of her body. We all have had this moment of wishing the pain away, but some of us have re-encountered our fears and desires as we grew older. We have fought with the traumas that are embodied within and outside us.

The point is that this embodied trauma and the process of writing goes hand in hand. We cannot grow up unscathed. Writing and other forms of creative expression are the tools we

use to uncover but also work through our traumas. Part of our life purpose then is to catch the insights that filter through the cracks of our being. The light that shines in through the places we were damaged or bruised or hurt.

But we can't stop there because we are more than just people with personal problems. We are beings that relate to one another; we use language, we tell stories, and we hope that what we feel is captured into what we write or codified in some creative way. The other thing then as writers we need to do is look at the language we use. How does language mould us? How does it affect other people?

The language in which we speak and think can change our perception of the world. The very words we write are therefore the filters with which we see the world. We need to be masters of our language and the words, idioms, and images and sounds that comprise it. If we are bilingual that might even complicate the issue more. What about translation? Does our writing lose some of its force or energy, or *duende* when it is translated or re-interpreted? Does it matter?

So first we have to know ourselves and our internal spaces, and then we have to play and become aware of the language we use, and then what?

I think the third most important thing that shapes our identity is our context or culture. We must understand our context and our place in time, in history. What does it mean for me to be a white African, and why don't I know already. My generation feels disconnected with their skin mostly because they are not in Europe or another typically Caucasian zone. Are we European? Or are we African? I think at the moment we are neither, we are in-between waiting for someone to tell us where we are. But we're not unique in this. Craig Santos Perez (2015) talks about living in a separate and colonised space and Taiye Selasi (2019) muses on what it means to be sufficiently „African“.

All of these aspects together form our identity: the internal, the external, and the language with which we can relate our experiences to one another.

## The self and writing

“Sometimes the words will come hard, and sometimes you will see it all in a flash” writes Lu Ji (3<sup>rd</sup> century) and this is exactly what it is all about. Sometimes it will be easy and other times it will be tough. Sometimes you will be at loggerheads with yourself, other times with your own tongue and fingers, and other times you will feel like an outsider in your own context. And all of this is fine, because the more you write and unearth and dig into the rich soils of these worlds the closer you will get to making sense of your own identity; the closer you will come to the flow state, and embodying the *duende*.

We have to allow our imaginations to run free and wild, as Gary Snyder says in an interview in 1996. Our language is culturally shaped and we have to realize that the English we speak in South Africa carries this weight. It is embedded with cultural markers like *ubuntu* and *boerewors*. We do not need to be apologetic of our context. We need to celebrate what makes our version of English unique. That’s the point of embracing language. We need not only decolonise, but we absolutely have to re-Africanise our mouths and give ourselves permission to write like we speak.

When we allow ourselves to play with language we will unlearn what we have been taught, transforming the ways in which we have related to our internal and external worlds. It will allow us to discover our childhood selves and the inner truths we hold. “Poetry is whatever I think I am. I think I can be anything I can”, writes Amiri Baraka (1959). He further comments that you “have to start and finish there, with your own voice, how you sound”. He thus alludes to this aspect of writing as play, and the process of playing is what uncovers the self.

Mxolisi Nyezwa (2015) asserts that “everything begins in the dark past, and goes back to where it came from”. I think we should therefore realise that we can find ourselves in the moment, but also in the past. Our childhood and our traumas are the things we should explore. The dark things that bother us are the landmarks that illuminate our way. If we write about what we care about, then the *duende* will fill us. If we write about our roots we will be grounded and enter flow without a doubt.

I find it difficult to know myself and to hear my own intuition at times. My mind is too crowded and there is no space for silence. But if we cannot silence the noise, we cannot hear the truth or the intelligence of our own ears, as Marina Tsvetaeva (2010) insists. She eloquently summarises it as follows “The only book of information is your own ear. There is only one teacher: your own labour. And only one judge: the future”. We have to sit down and put in the time. We have to trust. We have to believe that going into ourselves and writing what we know will be good enough. The only way of finding out is doing it, and then seeing what comes of it in the future.

If we can cultivate stillness and silence the noise of our bodies will slow down. This is important. We need to be present and in the moment to accomplish this. The flow, and the self, need space. If we would like to achieve this we can rely on ceremony and symbology. There is power in ritual and habit for us as alluded to by Amina Cain when she talks about *Slowness* (2015). We should “stare at a blank wall, to stare at a blank moment” and this idea comes to life when we stop worrying about what should be in the story and whether or not the reader will be able to follow it. We can’t control accessibility. When she says this “trying to see it” is why I write the novel in the first place, she is referring to play. She is referring to the *duende* and she is assuming that you are in the flow because you are playing while you’re “trying to see it”. For me then this „trying“ nods at childhood, which means that our current self is somehow intimately linked to our childhood self.

I think through the process of growing up we forget who we were. We need to go back to these childhood versions of ourselves and write towards them. The two identities, then and now, need to merge and fuse to become our whole self.

Linh Dinh (2010) says, in giving advice to her students, that you “shouldn’t try to pass off crap you yourself are not interested in” and that you should be as “peculiarly you as possible”. For me this points to the fact that you need to bring together your two identities to achieve this. When Tim Seibles talks about this he says it is writing with an “absence of trickery”. He goes on to point out that we live “against our authenticity”. I think a large part of growing up then is to distance you from yourself. You end up forgetting yourself because perhaps you don’t want to go through your trauma again; forgetting is better than feeling. But if we perpetuate this dichotomy our writing won’t connect, and it won’t have *duende* because *duende* is about feeling.

We can use our own writing to re-parent ourselves. We can also use our writing to connect with other people and to love ourselves. I know the idea of loving ourselves sounds cheesy and melodramatic but I really believe that’s what we need to do. As writers we need to go through our traumas publicly, on paper. We need to be as “crazy and perverse as possible” as Linh Dinh puts it. We should write what we like, and write about the things we feel most deeply.

If we can do all of this we will be able to tap into our own frequencies, as Rupaul Charles refers to it, and once we have located this feeling and the thing that makes us unique, then we should cultivate it. For Federico Garcia Lorca the *duende* is a mysterious force that everybody feels. It is a “force not a labour, and a struggle not a thought”. But I think this *duende* is what we feel when we are so in touch with ourselves, feeling our frequencies, that we cannot but create. It is when we shed our fears and jump into the river that we experience the flow. It is when we enter our inmost depths that we find ourselves. And it is through writing, or creative expression, that we harmonise ourselves and our external worlds.

We can’t write unless we have taken back our own voices, but once we have our voices we need to express ourselves. We need to resonate with other people and for writers we do this with words. So now let’s move away from the flow and the self in order to discuss language.



## Language

If I were from another country that spoke a different language, one that was perhaps less intricate than English, what would I be producing as a writer?

The language we think in, and live in, interacts with us and it affects the way we see the world. For a Thai person there is no future or past tense. Everything is merely stated in the present tense, but with a different time marker. Today I walk. Yesterday I walk. Tomorrow I walk. Simple. Right? The problem with the Thai language comes in when we want to rhyme. How would I rhyme if I have five different tones, meaning I have five different inflections of saying the same word. Strange. But possible. This fact influences the way that Thai writers write and perceive the world. Most books are present tense and most prose pieces operate in the here and now. The reason why the Thai experience is important for us is because the here and now is the only place we can be if we really want to enter the flow. We can therefore learn from these writers and choose our language carefully. We might start our first novel in the present tense through one narrative point of view, and as we progress we could add more and more layers to our writing.

We need to be here. We need to be willing to take the leap and go to the space between “promise and fact, the known and the unknown” as Ann Lauterbach calls it (2005). In my own experience this space frightens me. I would much rather write in English (the known) than in Afrikaans (the unknown).

We need to be able to allow ourselves “unfettered play”, notes Ann Lauterbach and with this I fully agree. As we’ve already discussed, play is an integral part of the process. We are at times so completely concerned with results. For example, I will do this in order to achieve that. But in actual fact the magic only happens when we “risk failure and allow ourselves to make mistakes” as Lauterbach states, and this is the exact moment that we enter the flow as well.

This „unfettered play“ is the thing we have seem to have forgotten during formal education. We are so afraid of mistakes that we don’t even venture to try at all. We fear the teacher’s dreadful red pen that will crucify us and make our fragile writerly hearts bleed. This is unfortunate because we have allowed schooling to box us in. Our formal language instruction has resulted in most of us losing our identities and even becoming afraid of using our own languages and mother tongues. In my case, I used to love writing Afrikaans stories, but when I ended up in high school I had a teacher that failed every story I’d written. Why? I don’t exactly know but I think it could’ve been because she absolutely abhorred language that played with the world and itself. Words had to be spelled absolutely correctly at all times. Sentences had to make sense. And stories had to, by all means, be normal. In the Afrikaans literary canon fantasy is considered anti-Christian and dangerous. It comes as no surprise that the Afrikaans section in a bookshop doesn’t have fantasy novels. They simply do not exist as they do in the English language. There was probably a time where some people tried and succeeded in writing purely Afrikaans science-fiction and fantasy, but that must’ve been somewhere before apartheid, because these days Afrikaans writers largely shy away from the magical and the fantastical.

There is a big problem with this lack of fantasy in the Afrikaans literary canon. We need fantasy. We need to be able to go into words and worlds that rely on “abstraction, intuitive logic, and normalized magic”, as Kate Bernheimer says about fairy tales.

But we often find in Afrikaans that mystery and murder novels are the mainstay, or that dry literary fiction is the order of the day. Standard Afrikaans fiction is, in one word, boring. Or

perhaps that is what we are taught to believe during our formative school years. The reason for this is that not a lot was allowed in the Apartheid days. This means that Apartheid's censorship had a very firm grip on what might be said in the language, and how it might be said. If you didn't subscribe to what was mandated it would simply be erased from existence. It comes as no surprise that many Afrikaans writers started writing in English.

Regardless of language censorship, Afrikaans, and I'm sure many South African languages, are seen as second-place to English. Who wants to read about someone from Benoni in Afrikaans? Stories have to be set far away and in English. There is this feeling of being extracted or removed from personal context that the Afrikaans writer experiences.

My first real Afrikaans stories came out of me, and the flow's ether, only a few years ago. In more than twenty years of writing, even the notes I write and the letters I send to friends are in English. As an Afrikaans speaker I, and more generally we, often feel shy of our own language. Doubtless there are some of us that beat the Afrikaans drum loudly and proudly, but there is also a huge cohort of us who do not. So my first real experience with Afrikaans was not even in Afrikaans, so to say. It was more a channelling of Kaaps, which is a completely different language, almost. But I used Kaaps as a gateway to move closer to my own tongue, to feel at ease with writing with my own voice.

When I read Sandra Cisneros I see that there is space for both languages in a text. We can violate the rules of standard language practice and step away from the idea that things must absolutely make sense. But just as language in the sense of Afrikaans or English or isiXhosa plays a role, the language we use in our texts and writings also matters. In this regard, we can discuss Barbara Guest's idea that poets and prose writers are "on a high wire" and it is as much about the journey between these "separate selves" as it is about mother tongue or not. The language I use when I write a poem is different than the language I use when I write prose. We can even digress further and say that our emotional state affects our words and the language we choose.

When I write angry the text reflects that, when I am more pensive I might use more imagery and vague abstractions. My language changes as my context or my mood changes. There is a "pleasure in language" as Kate Bernheimer posits in her essay on fairy tales. Take for example these two extracts:

As a man sat alone ...  
He scratched the crystalline  
constellations  
of salty sweet memory from his eyes,  
his hand moles to the place between  
places  
where something else,  
perhaps another eye,  
once was

Bit by bit, piece by piece,

Watch the clock, Madam  
the tick-tock, madam  
take your time, Madam  
Hurry up, Madam  
Are you mine, Madam?  
Or I yours, Madam?  
Are we ours, Madam?  
Yes sir, no, Madam.

The piece on the left differs markedly from the piece on the right. I would say that the piece on the left lends itself to abstraction and vagueness. There is a possibility to swim in the emotion and the thoughts of the text. But in what ways is the piece on the right different from that on the left? Typographically it is aligned to the right. Why? To subvert standards or conventions maybe? To indicate that something is going to be communicated from a different point of view? It could be either, or something else. But the words are also different. The tone in the piece on the right is brisk and to the point. There is a tension arising from the simple repetition of the word „Madam“. This is where language and feeling and tone, and perhaps even some form of *duende*, comes to life.

But what if I told you that the piece on the left was written in 2019 and the piece on the right was written in 2016. It could be that the person I was on the left was more mature than the person on the right. Can you see how my identity at that time affected my writing? Is one better or worse than the other, or does it matter? I don't think it does because, as Picasso said, "It is always something else in the end."

I could however digress even further and state that the piece on the right was written while I was reflecting on my childhood, growing up without my parents and having only our housekeeper as a substitute mother. In fact, the first title I gave this piece was "My other mother". Does that mean that the piece on the left has less *duende* or that I wasn't in the flow? I don't think it does. But it goes to show how language and identity intertwine and intermingle.

The language we use is therefore informed by our identity and whether or not we were channelling our inner self and resonating with our frequency. But we can't see this all as linear and sequential. Life, and therefore narration, should also not be linear, as Raymond Federman points out in „Surfiction“ (1993).

In this section we have discussed language and the usage thereof in general. In the next section I would like to have a closer look at bilingualism and translation.

## Bilingualism and Translation

### The Zen of Bilingualism

Being bilingual in South Africa is rather common-place, and because we live in a country that has 11 official languages, many people are multilingual. If this was to be interpreted by means of science or physics I would say that each language adds a new dimension or perspective to our experience. It layers both the writer's experience and writing itself.

But the problem with bilingualism in a country like South Africa is that we have, due to Apartheid, internalised the idea of keeping things separate. This certainly applies to me, and is reflected by the fact that I use differently coloured pens when writing in English or, thereby keeping these two languages separate. We are obsessed with keeping things in their compartments or boxes. This appears to be the structure of our cultural heritage as well as the day-to-day world we all inhabit.

Mxolisi Nyezwa states that "languages are neither rich nor poor" in his dissertation. I fully agree with this. In fact, we can consider a constructed language like Toki Pona, which only has 123 words, and can easily see that you could express meaning in this language albeit arbitrary and with a lot of circumlocution. But it is possible. Afrikaans therefore does not need to feel any shame or inadequacy when it contends with English. Neither does any other South African language. They are each different and have a unique context.

But the real fun, or play, begins when we start mixing these languages, when we get over the fact that things need to live in boxes.

I think we need to get over ourselves and our own hypocrisy. We need to go into ourselves and the way to do that for most of us is through multiple languages. Mxolisi Nyezwa further points to *Inkenqe* which relates rather closely to *duende*.

I think we could even take the idea of bilingualism further than just language and words. We as writers are artists; we can rely on other works of art and other mediums to inform our writing. In fact most of us watch movies and series, and these can also be called languages, as are poetry and prose, also being separate languages and styles. We are not only bilingual in tongue, but perhaps bilingual or multilingual in experience.

For Vicente Huidobro (2020) the fundamental precept of humankind is the law of duality. We project the subjective world on the objective experience and vice versa. We have the thinking self and the emotional self, and perhaps somewhere between these two is the normal self (whatever that is). He continues with feeling in opposition to thinking or imagination. If I relate this to my own experience, I think more easily in English when I write, but I feel more deeply in Afrikaans when I reflect on my writing. I will explain this in more detail in the next section.

What Vicente Huidobro finds even more interesting is "the special power that surrounds poems written in a language one is only beginning to stammer." The idea of bilingualism or multilingualism or some form of duality is all around us. In his poem „Mexican American disambiguation“ José Olivarez explores this idea.

**Mexican American Disambiguation By José Olivarez**

after Idris Goodwin

my parents are Mexican who are not  
to be confused with Mexican Americans  
or Chicanos. i am a Chicano from Chicago  
which means i am a Mexican American  
with a fancy college degree & a few tattoos.  
my parents are Mexican who are not  
to be confused with Mexicans still living  
in México. those Mexicans call themselves  
mexicanos. white folks at parties call them  
pobrecitos. American colleges call them  
international students & diverse. my mom  
was white in México & my dad was mestizo  
& after they crossed the border they became  
diverse. & minorities. & ethnic. & exotic.  
but my parents call themselves mexicanos,  
who, again, should not be confused for mexicanos  
living in México. those mexicanos might call  
my family gringos, which is the word my family calls  
white folks & white folks call my parents interracial.  
colleges say put them on a brochure.  
my parents say que significa esa palabra.  
i point out that all the men in my family  
marry lighter-skinned women. that's the Chicano  
in me. which means it's the fancy college degrees  
in me, which is also diverse of me. everything in me

When we look at this poem we see all the elements of language and subversion I have mentioned in the section related to languages. We see “i” not being capitalised. This communicates something to us as the reader. We also see the use of Spanish words in the text. Why are more South African writers not embracing styles like these? We are mostly bilingual, so why is our writing identity not more bilingual?

Raymond Federman, in „Voice within a voice“ talks about being a bilingual being. He asserts that he often dreams in both languages. Now in my experience my dreams don't have language, and neither do my thoughts. But there are moments when I can only express certain ideas in one language and not the other, and this is the same for Federman. As bilingual writers we may also face the dilemma of choosing a language to write in. Often we get stuck on the question of which language would be best suited for this story. But why not both? Or why not first the one and then the other, and perhaps even back again to the first, as is the case for Federman. This is play. This is struggle. And this is what we have to learn to do as bilingual beings. We have to navigate the space between the languages in our mind.

In South Africa we have heard the word diversity a lot. But our writing does not embody this diversity. Our prose does not bridge the gap between cultures and identities yet, between past and present. The Art of Translation/Re-writing

Raymond Federman speaks a lot about translation; he often jumps between texts because of his bilingualism. He says that as a translator you have to be given some freedom, so again we see the idea of play. There is a sense of excitement when one starts translating one's own work. You start seeing yourself differently, and you can see the mechanisms at work behind your thoughts and ideas.

Federman sees translation as an opportunity for correction. I wholeheartedly agree with this but I would say that when I translate I don't necessarily correct. Instead I colour in the black

and white English structure with Afrikaans feeling. In the two texts below I have translated a piece of writing that was originally in English. The Afrikaans has a completely different energy. There is a different feeling and a sense of urgency and idealism in the Afrikaans. But I don't think I would have arrived at this point were it not for the English version. The two versions go hand-in-hand. They inform and enrich each other. This, for me, is yet another example of cultivating your identity and bringing the idea of play into writing. So we can say that the original act is „operating through the dark“ whereas the translation knows where it is going. In my opinion I feel that the original work is the excavation and the second is the ordering of the blocks or pieces I have excavated.

But I think all work is a form of translation or re-writing. You don't need two languages to translate your own writing; you might just need two genres or styles or perhaps even viewpoints.

**Undelivered letter of complaint**

We, the community, wait.  
For shock-therapy and water-torture  
Day by day.  
We are the shit-talking shadows  
hiding in unplain sight.

We, the community, speak loudly in streets  
So that 'they' can hear  
And mend the unfixd.  
Our fists are clenched white and  
Like lightning  
Our hopes vein through the night.

We the community appreciate your rain.  
This deluge of dampness clouding our streets.  
For this we thank the rain dancers  
Or whoever needs sight.  
We the people,  
Appreciate our government's fat purse.  
We even thank murder's bloodying hearse.  
We are the satisfied hungry children  
Of this wonderful regime.

But.

We, the community, have been forgiving and  
forgetful;  
Up until now.  
Us, the people, as you can see  
are mildly peckish for change,  
We no longer wish to be  
The puppets of our society that is  
Ever so slightly deranged.

**Undelivered letter of complaint (Afrikaans)**

Ons, wat die community is, wag in angs.  
Dis 'n tipe shock-therapy of water-torture  
hierdie, dag ná dag.  
Ons, die community, se borste is warm  
En ons koppe is boos befok.  
Ons wat die beacons of hope is  
wag patiently in die skaduwees vani dag.  
Maar dit sê jy, is mos goed.

Ons, jou community, is dankbaar;  
Ons appreciate die reën  
En die ineffective efforts van 'n onderstebo  
regering.  
Ons appreciate selfs die koue bloed  
wat crustily lé opi sypaaitjie se randsteen.  
Jy sien.  
Ons velle is nat, die gras is mooi groen,  
Maar ons kani help om kinda te voel  
dat die vet straat koeie  
Agter ons rue vir ons gatte lag  
En ons lull om fokol te doen.

Ons, jou community, praat kak op die stoep.  
Dat 'julle' ve ons kan hoor  
Whoever 'julle' mag wees.  
Ons vuiste is witblits  
Ons are is bliksem.  
And.  
Don't be mistaken.  
Ons is klaar gebekstom.

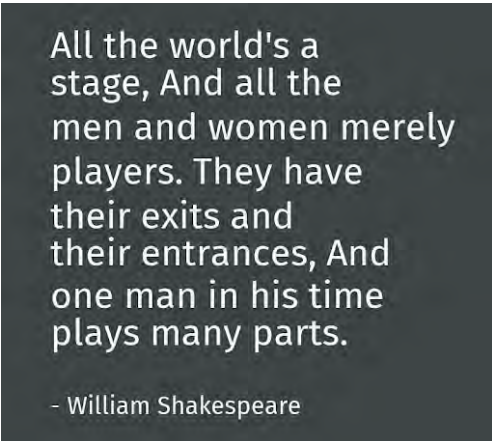
Ons, jou mense, is ietswat peckish ve change.  
Ons vergeet en vergewe al te maklik  
Ve jou en jou shortcomings  
Ve onsse society deranged. ...

Thus far I have looked at the self and at language and at bilingualism and the possibility of diversity in writing and creative expression. This brings me to my final point, writing as „drag“.

## Writing as ‘Drag’

What do I mean when I say that writing can be a form of „drag“? When I talk about drag I am referring to the art of men transforming themselves into caricatures of women. For Rupaul Charles, probably one of the most famous drag queens in the world we are “all born naked and the rest is drag”. I think this is a profound statement. Everything we do is affected and adjusted. We modulate and moderate and censor not only ourselves but the image we present to the world. But what does this have to do with writing?

As we’ve seen so far identity plays a big role. The idea of “playing” is also very important; both these ideas are essential to the art of „drag“. And I think they are just as essential to writers. When we write we go back in time. We imagine ourselves as different people in different places experiencing various plot twists and developments. Writers need to be „drag“ performers because they need to be able to know their own identity but at the same time they have to be able to disguise their identity and inhabit other characters and situations. Or if we go for a more classical example as expressed by William Shakespeare in the piece „As you like it“,



All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely  
players. They have their exits and  
their entrances, And one man in his time  
plays many parts.

- William Shakespeare

I think it is only after you’ve mastered yourself and the language you use that you can completely break the rules and experiment in a meaningful way. But this doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t „drag“ from the beginning or the start. When we write towards the past we are forced to wear our childhood identity again. When we relive a past trauma we dress up in emotions that are traumatic. We „act“ and we have many „parts“ or roles, as Shakespeare put it.

This idea of „drag“ allows us to re-parent our own identities and crystallise into a whole that resonates with our true self, but it also allows us to play and not take life and writing and creative expression so seriously. It might even give some of us the opportunity to connect with their *duende*.

If we look at Monty Python’s Flying Circus, the whole thing is a drag performance. Genders are fluid. Characters are misrepresented. This is in essence the type of play we did when we were young, when we pretended and used our imagination. By drag then I might as well just

say that we should write with our true voices but also experiment and have fun and be silly. In actual fact I think the only real way we can get into the flow is by being silly, by mixing languages and doing whatever feels right. This gives us an opportunity to “break down the fences” as mentioned by Craig Santos Perez, but also writing and re-writing and telling and re-telling our stories in different and exciting ways.

Njabulo Ndebele says that South African society is all about suppression and repression of the self in favour of the group. But „drag“ flips this repression on its head and that’s exactly why I think „drag“ as metaphor is so important, specifically in our cultural context.

### **Redefining the ‘African’ writer (a promising conclusion)**

In this essay I would’ve liked to explore the idea of the „African“ writer, specifically re-writing and re-interpreting the idea of African in relation to white African. I do feel that there is no space for this discussion as it might be too elaborate at the moment. But I definitely think that this could be one of our writerly projects and perhaps even the transcendence of identity through language via the art of „drag“ or acting that we need to pursue.

I think that this re-thinking of concepts and changing of perceptions from the self to the communal might be one of the most important things that we as African writers could do. This is a necessary part of the decolonisation process but also an integral part of outlining what is „sufficiently African“.

In this essay I have discussed the self and identity and spoken about *duende* and flow. I have also spoken about language and the effects it might have on readers and writers. In the last section I spoke about „drag“ as a way for all of these ideas of identities and play to be woven together.

I hope that these ideas have illuminated or presented some new ideas and that it has given you the courage and freedom “to feel and say what you want” (Taiye Selasi).



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## **Reflective Journals: Week 15 to 24**

### Week 15

#### **Monday, 6 April 2020**

I watched Rupaul's Masterclass on self-expression and authenticity this week. I thought it would be an interesting topic to pursue and dig deeper into because I struggle with self-expression. I find that I frequently shelter behind various different words and veneers. I am aware of it but I sometimes feel that if I really live authentically and inhabit and present myself in a different way, that the world might judge me. This is something that I also discussed with the psychologist a few weeks ago when she asked me the question "who are they?" This started thinking of the ominous „them“. I realized that they are a construct of childhood that persists to this day.

In his „Masterclass“ Rupaul says, as noted earlier, that we are “all born naked and the rest is drag”.

One of the things Rupaul mentions is that if we should call something what it is it completely changes the perception and experience we might have with it. This could in writing refer to actually using the words we want to use; painting the scenes or pictures we want or need.

I think one of the most important questions is to figure out what is my unique and special point of view. What do I have to say that is completely my own ... something that I resonate with, the thing that I really need to express or say that I'll regret if I don't say it? He says that we should “locate it and cultivate it”. Now for me this is easier said than done because I have been really trying to find it for a long time. I hope that this year, by being exposed to different genres and voices and styles, that this will come to light.

### Week 16

#### **Monday, 13 April 2020**

*Cotton Comes to Harlem* by Chester Himes –

I was quite excited initially to read this book because I love mystery and crime novels, but I was quickly disappointed by this book. One thing that I could possibly learn from this book was that the author used his writing to express social issues, for example race relations or police violence.

I think the idea of racism was something that I could relate to in the South African context. I felt at times that it tended toward stereotyping, but I do think it was more relevant in the period it was written.

The idea of poverty and being exploited or conned is also explored in detail in this book.

Something else that I noticed was the whole idea of black Americans not belonging and either trying to go back to the South or to Africa, to their homeland. I think it is very important because these were issues that were prevalent at the time. I liked the fact that the narrative is true to the dramas of the time, and I would like to write about things that bother me now in the South African context. This is the whole point of writing for me: to disrupt and subvert and to shine light in dark and uncomfortable places.

### **Friday, 17 April 2020**

I started reading the reading group work we had for this week. I made some notes on the piece by Daniel Coshear:

I think this piece was very interesting. I like the fact that it bent and broke my idea or conception of narrative structure. I would really love to play with this idea when I write in Afrikaans. I think it is something that hasn't been done before; I most certainly haven't read anything like this in Afrikaans.

Week 17

### **Monday, 20 April 2020**

Reading Group Prose Notes:

#### **Mia Couto – The Stain**

I found this story extremely enticing. It reminds me of a short story that I read by Neil Gaiman called the wedding present. I just like stories like this that are ominous and mundane, but also spectacular and unique.

I loved the fantastical elements in it.

#### **Julia Escoria – Dust Particles (re-read it)**

I like how this starts. I am fascinated by writing childhood and I think the author has done a great job here. She talks about baking cookies and Ninja Turtles.

I like how quickly it transitions to the sex and kissing part. Sometimes I find it difficult when I'm writing. I tend to do a long run-up to the story instead of just starting it.

The peer pressure of going through with things because one doesn't want to be alone or on the outside

“I wanted to pretend as if I was asleep. Not even asleep, but dead”

“Even if I left right now and never came back some of me would stay right there in that carpet”

The childhood longing for wanting things to be normal when you know that they are not.

#### **Ibrahim al-Kuni – Shrapnel**

“Everything we like seems to us as if we have seen or heard it before, although we never have”

### **Tuesday, 21 April 2020**

#### The New Yorker Fiction Podcast - John Cheever – The Reunion (Short Story)

Richard Ford reads John Cheever’s *The Reunion*. He mentions how compact the story is. He talks about the setting and how you can have anything happen anywhere.

I liked the feeling of the father-son relationship especially because it was so strained and reminded me of my own relationship with my father. It made think of writing a story about this; some of our encounters. I find that I complain about some of our encounters a lot and I see now that I can use this as a rich source of inspiration for my writing.

“He put his arm around me, and I smelled my father the way my mother sniffs a rose. It was a rich compound of whiskey, after-shave lotion, shoe polish, woolens, and the rankness of the mature male. I hoped that someone would see us together” – I loved this description and I think it communicates so much but by really saying so little. It points to how desperately the son wants acceptance from his father or even just a semblance of a relationship; regardless of the fact that his father is a drunk.

The father is absolutely a character in this piece. He is boisterous and over-bearing and really rude at times. The father is also witty and says things that are highly inappropriate like when he says “I should have brought my whistle” to the waiter that isn’t responding to his requests.

I like the fact that the piece is almost wholly driven by dialogue.

The ending how the dad embarrasses the son and the son is trying to get away from his father. He must have been really disappointed. But I love that this is not EVER told. It is just pointed to in the tone and the timbre of Charlie’s voice.

\*\*\*This story made me think of writing about a botched reunion with someone.

\*\*\*It also made me think of tapping into my strained relationship with my own father.

Week 18

### **Monday, 27 April 2020**

#### Reading Group Prose Notes:

##### **Armless Abelina by Kate Bernheimer**

Just reading the first few paragraphs there already is a sense of foreboding. An anticipation that things might go wrong with their new arrangement.

“I spooned hot batter into my mouth” this image was so striking because it really takes you to the scene. It reminds me of my own failed baking attempts. It spurs a sense of embarrassment but also disgust. It is also a weird image because it is so mundane. I think it is the way the narrator speaks about it.

### **Excerpt from Green Girl by Kate Zambreno**

I like how this excerpt talks about the masks that people wear. This is a topic that I myself, because of my experience with retail jobs, have experienced. I have always found it fascinating how people know that these people, sellers etc., are lying or being disingenuous but they allow it to happen. In fact some people adore being waited on by sales people. They make it a daily outing to go from shop to shop and waste the time of sales staff.

“you are a good girl” this is so strange and yet so true because as a retail person you can ask someone, within reason, to do or give you anything and they will just oblige. Some of them might be slightly uncertain but with a friendly smile and reassurance they will follow every direction and command.

The idea of faces and masks. I have wanted to write about this for ages. But as yet I have not yet written it.

### **Thursday, 30 April 2020**

Amiri Baraka said we can use play to “Rediscover of the childhood self and inner truth”

Ann Lauterbach also mentions this as “unfettered play” and to be more “experimental”

It is as if I see that now. Writing for me for such a long time was a chore. But this week I felt fresh and new and it is as if I was given free rein to fool around.

What I found interesting is that Nathan Trantraal noticed that both my English and Afrikaans stories were essentially telling the same story ... but in a really different way. I hadn’t noticed it until he pointed it out. So it was really nice to be made aware of that.

Week 19

### **Monday, 4 May 2020**

I’ve started reading Virginia Woolf’s „Moments of Being“. I chanced upon this because Joyce Carol Oates mentions it in one of her discussions online. These were autobiographical writings that were published after Woolf had passed away. It is interesting to note how different her autobiographical writing and her fictional writing is. Her fictional writing has a different quality; for me personally it is often unreadable, but the autobiographical works are gripping and I feel perhaps much more accessible.

She describes these moments as “moments in which an individual experiences a sense of reality ... in contrast to states of non-being that dominate conscious life ... in which they are separated from reality by a protective covering.” These types of moments can be spurred on or ignited by some shock, discovery or revelation.

### **Tuesday, 5 May 2020**

I have dipped into some short films again this week.

The first I watched was *Apricot* by Ben Briand  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIV-TjNEEVc>)

It is about two people that meet in a restaurant and talk about boyfriends and past relationships. They also talk about their first love. I think writing about love is difficult for me. What I really like about this short is that they go from the present moment into memory.

The story jumps into the childhood of the woman that is narrating who her first love was as a child. IT takes a while but as she speaks it jumps into her memory. The restaurant sounds fade away. The quality of the film changes to yellow and more memory sepia tones. The story focuses on key sounds when she remembers. This is important. How can it be integrated in writing? Focusing on key details. Bringing only the most important things to the front.

There are times when the memory elements flow into the present moment. Like the kids running through the restaurant.

Throughout this scene she sketches how this boy was. She is giving us highly specific details. I like this. Write more like this. Describe your characters in story. Highlight their peculiarities. The music in the short also throws you back. There is a very distinct connection and power of music in film. What is this device for writing?

Week 20

### **Monday, 11 May 2020**

#### **Seminar notes:**

Do I recognise myself in this piece? // What makes you, you?

“Take what is worthwhile and discard the rest.”

I think the question of voice is something that I often struggle with. I think this is my main obstacle when I start a new piece. I don’t seem to „know“ what my voice is. But at times I can easily click into the voice and write in it. But it is just about sitting and starting. I don’t necessarily like the voice I use for journaling that voice seems to be mostly neutral and bland. It isn’t what I would normally use when I tell a story. I think one of the most important things that I have learnt was during my process of writing the Poetics Essay. There was a moment when I couldn’t get out of that academic speech. So I ended up just speaking loudly while I was writing and typing the essay. I found that this technique, speaking loudly while writing a story is something that helps me a lot. It also makes it easier for me to follow my train of thought. I am a serial procrastinator so I often need to work myself up to actually start doing something.

I also think that apart from focusing me, it actually makes me hear my own voice while I write. It makes it easier to answer the question “Do I recognise myself ...?” referring to a piece of writing.

I found Nathalie’s technique and interpretation of Masande’s seminar very useful. I really think that this level of study and thorough analysis of voice is what one needs to

do. You actually have to go and sit and write in another voice. It is like trying on clothes ... seeing how they look .... And then deciding whether or not you like it; at least that is what I think.

### Jereme Dean - In retrospect

List structure is something I haven't read or seen in writing yet. I have been thinking of writing a few short stories that all have some form of an experimental structure.

Mom is called by her first name. The immediate effect that has on the reader.

The list goes pretty rapidly from one fact or historical event to the next.

Week 21

### Monday, 11 May 2020

#### Seminar notes:

When we are communicating with another person we can either win, punish, or keep the peace.

In terms of this we have to see writing as a conversation, and we have to think what the text is trying to communicate. What is the text's motivations? The other side of this is that we should think if a text should consider the insight or opinion of a reader? OR whether a text should to what the reader *wants*.

We can write to a reader but this may have a negative influence on the writing. Think of when we try to speak in a specific manner to impress a listener. We should therefore not approach a text with preconceptions and pre-processed plans. The reader should be taken out of the equation.

The most important point is to write for the sake of writing!

Our writing can mirror reality.

“As jy nie die storie verstaan nie, dan is dit nie vir jou bedoel nie” – Nathan Trantraal

We can use motifs in our writing. Repetition. Small events. The motif serves as a golden thread. There may also be certain character motifs. All of this may assist in creating cohesiveness in a piece. It improves and builds on the story and augments what is being presented.

#### „The use of force“ by William Carlos Williams (see addendum)

Joyce Carol Oates discusses this short piece as a miniature narrative that we may use when we are practicing short story writing.

This piece seems to be a slice of life, flow of consciousness, memory. It is a type of experimentation of miniature or shorter narrative. I think this is a useful way of expression, especially if you have an idea for something but you aren't sure if that thing will develop into something longer. I often struggle with writing not because I don't have ideas, but because I don't feel like extrapolating everything from the short



stub of an idea to a long piece. This piece serves as a reminder that even a memory scribbled down quickly could be some form of channel or conduit for getting the writing done.

Joyce Carol Oates expresses that we should start with these shorter forms and then build our way up gradually. I think it is something that I need to remember because I often think that all writing needs to be epic and impactful and fully realized.

This piece is very contained. There are four characters. It describes and centres on a singular event. This event was unpacked and made into the motion/driving force around the piece. It also quickly goes into the “story” portion; there is not a lot of prelude or prefacing.

The language is also very simple. There are no embellishments. The words don’t call attention to themselves.

The piece also has a bit of a delicate ending. There isn’t something really stark or over-the-top that happens at the end. It lands softly. I think in these shorter pieces we can’t leave the reader reeling physically ... they need the space and the breath going out that helps them internalize or absorb the piece.

“I had already fallen in love with the savage brat”

### **Reading Groups:**

2\* Lina Mounzer – “The Meaning of Being Numerous”

“The man who sets up the bomb is long gone before it goes off. “ What a great opening line! Sharp, quick, to the point. It is also very gripping. It gives away what will happen but I think if the piece is told well and not only relying on this opening line it could be a great story.

“I think often about those two words: casualties and complications. The first is so flippant – it can’t help but bring to mind a whole host of other associations” this embodies that quality of telling it slant/obliquely.

“Unable to work after that, he dies three years later of a heart attack caused by immobility and an increasing number of arguments with his wife, who has to take care of the kids and the house and all their various” – I loved following this line of thought. I often feel that the small things make a difference. What we were taught by our parents when we were young may seem innocuous or innocent but what if what we were taught ends up completely fucking us up. Each small lesson we learn makes us into the human that we end up being when an event occurs. Rape. Murder. Crash. Alcoholism. What are the tiny threads and nudges that have led up to these types of events in our own lives? Can we tell them in a slant fashion by digging for the origin?

It jumps between what happened to the victims and the technical considerations of the bomb itself.

3 Janet Mitchell – “The Creepy Girl”

I thought that the approach to describing the father was different and interesting.

I found it strange how the father and daughter don't have names. But the Chinese dolls and the two guys working in the garden do.

I was a bit confused at the end. I think I understood it but I was a bit baffled. I will have to re-read it and think it over.

4 Kathe Koja – The Neglected Garden

I enjoyed this story very much. It had the same quality as a Japanese anime for me at the end. Starting out with the real and moving to words the magical realism by the end.

Throughout this piece I found myself unsure of which character I should pity more. In the beginning I hated the man, I think by the end I still hated him but there was a softening towards him because of the extremeness of the woman.

We don't ever really know what happened. Were they married? Was she just a girlfriend? And I think the story centering on this one location, the garden, was very effective.

Week 22

**Monday, 25 May 2020**

**Stacy Hardy – Memoir/Auto-fabulation/etc. Seminar notes:**

I found the extract from „To Be in a time of war“ very fresh. I have never seen a piece written in the infinitive and I think that it is something I would like to experiment with. How would you tell a story? Sequence events? Think of what to say and express with this type of structure? “To compare what’s going on with what’s always been going on”

I especially liked the notion of looking at the world through the puddles in the street.

Biomythography:

This sounds like an interesting concept. I am wondering how it can be/will be utilized in my thesis. I am sure that this in a way is what I am planning on doing. I like the fact that it strings together multiple genres and styles.

“What only I imagined, bent over a photocopy of a photocopy of my great-great-grandfather’s diary”

“there may be several versions of the same events. None may be true but all could have been ... web of omission, legacy and myth.”

“my father leaves a psychic print on me, silent, intense, and unforgiving”

Unstable multiple identities:

“Who else am I?”; this question is one I would like to ponder, the moment I read it I became immediately aware of me the thinker, me the body ... but also me the historical development up and until now.

Autobiography = language writing on itself and thus becoming „alive“

“There’s always some of us left behind”

Fragmented self / life as a list:

Carmen Gimenez Smit – focuses on general cultural references (What is the culture I find myself in? How would I write it?)

Writing your life as a list! (re-read page 11 of the reader for inspiration)

“35. ... I am working on a catalogue of my scars”

“43. ... I am scared of my childhood” (could I use the list of memories I have tabulated to write like this?)

Auto-fabulatory:

“It’s a pack of lies. I’m repressed. I’ve never had anal sex.”

The repetition of “That’s a lie.”

The diary:

I found the poem that she wrote to her future self deeply unsettling. I find it jarring that we can write something and then revisit it and almost tie these two times together with a diary, which in a way acts as a wormhole.

How close is too close, how real is too real?

Tell-all mentality

Life writing bleeds it is unrestrained, unapologetic.

**The First Bad Man – Miranda July (Highlights)**

I decided to start reading this author after last week. We read „The Metal Bowl“ and something about the language and the tone caught my attention.

Chapter One

*Who is that middle-aged woman in the blue Honda?*

I liked how mundane and down-to-earth this line was. It was direct and effective. It was so specific which made it immediately relatable.

*elevator, pressing 12 with a casual, fun-loving finger.*

The underlined part was something that made me chuckle, it was also something that I see myself doing. I love making up words and combining different words to get a certain effect.

*casual, fun-loving finger. The kind of finger that was up for anything.*

We can carry our own imagery on, we can build on them. This extension made me as the reader live with this imagery and it made me internalize the concept. Which one of

fingers is up for anything? How would I describe my fingers if they each had to have a persona? This also takes me back to the Afrikaans rhyme related to fingers “Duimpie, duimpie se maat, langeraat, fielafooi, piepie in die kooi.” This is something that my grandmother would repeat to me when I was young and about to sleep.

*then put it down again before I could smell it.*

In this highlight she is referring to a man-that-she-has-just-met’s foot that was cured of athlete’s foot. I found my own nose curling up when I read it. Why? What was so effective about it? Was it striking, very quick?

*I checked to see if he and I had a special connection that was greater than his bond with his mother. We didn’t*

I remember when I was younger I did the same. I used to think I could have a deeper connection with a person than a family member or a mother or a father. It was almost as if I would purposefully spend time with them and ask myself „Do they love me more?“

### **Friday, 29 May 2020**

It was a struggle to find inspiration for this week’s piece. I decided to take things that I have been sitting on for many years and just writing them down. I took my personal journal and scanned the entries for lines that were fun. Or for lines that jumped out and wanted my attention.

For the English piece I used my personal journal and I started writing the story loosely jumping between thoughts and ideas that I had written about in January.

For the Afrikaans piece I referred back to notes I made in January while I was reading Judy Blume books. These notes were memories and life events that were remember while I was reading the Fudge series. When I read these books I started remembering my childhood. I ended up jotting down all the ideas in a notebook because I thought that I would be able to use them somewhere.

It was out of desperation and not being exactly sure what to write about that I went to these resources. I thought that this was an amazing push in the right direction for me. I can now see how helpful and useful my journals actually are. Many times I think the things I remember or write about in them are garbage, but I can see that they can be used to inspire and inform things I write.

I think the biggest realization for me this week is that I don’t have to come up with something new and novel and creative on the spot. I don’t think it is bad to do it. I just think the writing will be less grounded. If I am not allowed to use my lived experience what or where will my stories take place?

The second thing that I realized is how much more enjoyable my pieces are to others when I use my lived experiences and write about them or use them as a starting point or inspiration for fiction. I think much of the reason that I haven’t done it up until now is because I was afraid of what will the people say. OR what will they think if they read this. Does it matter? IS it really that close to reality? Doesn’t it make our writing richer to add our memories and thoughts and ideas? I think it does. When we write in

some vacuum where we create new people out of thin air I think it reads like air. Things need to be grounded into reality. And I honestly don't think what I write about will even be remembered by the people it may entail. Just as when I read something and highlight things which may be completely different to the person next to me, so too is our memories. Isn't it?

Week 23

**Monday, 1 June 2020**

Reading done this week: Amos Tutuola – The Palm-Wine Drinkard

The reader is quickly thrown into action with two people dying in the first few pages. I sometimes write as if going up a ramp. I have seen with some of the shorter pieces that I have read, that this technique of starting in the middle of something is quite effective.

The deaths are slightly underplayed. The narration rather focuses on the obsessive thoughts and ruminations about the lack of palm-wine. Does this illuminate an addiction? Or does this merely give us insight into the character?

I liked the mention of „fair-weather friends“ it has sparked exploration of ideas related to friends and our relationships with them.

There is a break from the narrative style or tone that we have gotten used to. I pick up how the author is using the standard fairytale structure, by this I mean “Once upon a time ...” but not exactly. Is this a fairytale I wonder?

I think I can learn from this author that uses brackets when he is speaking to or about someone. It makes it easier for the reader to follow what is being communicated. I think especially in something that is a bit experimental or not standard that we have to use other devices to support the reader.

Another note related to structure: I think the use of shorter chapters that are demarcated by headings also make it easier to know when or where you are in the story. I'm not sure if this was a convention at that time or if it is something that the author explicitly wants to include. But I felt as if it was quite effective in keeping things straight.

I liked this first story “The Complete Gentleman”. It was very vivid and bizarre. I don't think that I would write something like this but liked the creativity and the colour palette that is being used. I enjoyed its methodical presentation as well, how everything is narrated in a step by step manner.

Is this a story within a story? This could be a very good example of the framing technique used in narrative.

\*\* Write about dying grandmother with vignettes and fragments.

\*\* Write about going to America for the first time.

\*\* think of writing a story that uses many short stories that rushes through without much plot. Fast Forwarded fiction.

Week 24

### **Monday, 8 June 2020**

#### **Seminar Notes:**

Write about your deepest emotion or thoughts that have influenced your life the most.

- Perhaps moving out of the old house
- Be honest with yourself
- If you are going to flip out, don't write about it. You are not ready yet
- DO not let others read it
- DO not evaluate yourself

Listen to the healer within you

#### **Reader Report and Initial Response**

When I read the opening line of the reader's report I immediately feel more settled and at ease with my collection of fragments and vignettes. It didn't even occur to me that the Sandra Cisneros reference "that she wanted a reader to pick up the book, open it, and without knowing what came before or after, still know what the story was about" would be so meaningful for me. I think throughout both the Afrikaans and English theses this was something that I was unconsciously channelling and keeping in mind. I appreciate that the reader thought that my collection was able to capture this essence or quality of Cisneros' book. It came as quite a surprise to me that the grandfather character was mentioned by the reader. I had no idea that this protagonist/character, silently watching in the background, would have such a tangible and dramatic impact on the reader. I'm also happy to read that the reader points out that each story is independent but that together they form a sort of „photo album“.

The reader's comment about „chrono\_Logical“ related to the no memory segments was something that I myself have thought about and I am glad that it is pointed out by the reader. In terms of this I don't know what I would actually like to do here but I feel to a certain extent that the remainder of the thesis fills in these blank memory periods. Perhaps I can use other words, or even references to specific chapters that would direct the reader to the story that fills in the gap? I'm not yet sure. My initial thought was to have a story that summarises the first few years and then shows the blank spaces which will be filled in the thesis. How could I make this more obvious to the reader? I like that there is also some light in the remark that the pacing makes it more hopeful. The main thorn in my side with this story really is how to make the significance of the spaces of „no memory“ more linked to the thesis as a whole.

I agree with the reader's comments related to varying sentence lengths and tonalities. I also agree that the say vs. tell notion related to "I'm not worth" comes across as over-written and self-indulgent. I think with regard to this I should allow the work to stand more freely and do what it needs to do by itself. I don't necessarily have to explicate everything. I will also have to take a look at other aspects that are repeated throughout the collection of fragments so that I can balance them more evenly.

The reader picked up on how touch and sound and taste were used. I initially wanted to cover all the senses but I am glad that it was effective without delving into those senses. I think it would have been too structured and formulaic if I had done it in that way. I am appreciative of the fact that the reader thinks this piece is „potent“ as it was something that I had almost not added to the collection of fragments.

I wholeheartedly agree with the reader on the repetition of “I retreat” in this piece. Upon a second reading of it I actually didn’t like the repetition myself. So I am happy to actually do this edit and cut back on the repetition here. I like that the reader points out that the image itself is already strong enough; this is something that I need to keep in mind when I’m writing, or perhaps editing. “Am I over-explaining or detracting from the imagery?” is something I should bear in mind when I am re-reading a piece. I will have a look at the note about the last two sentences of the paragraph and their placement. It might be true that I need to rearrange it a bit and attach them to the previous paragraph.

I agree with this and I am sure that I will cut this line from the piece.

I wasn’t aware that a „complicated relationship with females“ would translate from the collection but I find it interesting and would like to re-read the collection with this kept in mind. I was aware that some of the facts are repeated throughout the collection and wasn’t sure whether or not I should re-read and cut them when I come across them. But after reading the reader’s comment it seems like they work in a strange way. I think I should just read the collection again in one sitting and see what jumps out as repetitive or redundant and cut or add as I go along.

I will have to analyse these pieces more deeply and see why they don’t work in the greater context of the collection. I think I could edit them down or re-write them in a way that fits the overall tone. I think it is only with fresh eyes and an understanding of the whole that a cohesive and sensical edit can be done. In terms of the “Leaps” note I think it touches on that element of omniscience or possibility of what might have happened or occurred. I’m not sure how this can be edited or changed to achieve a greater effect.

*“The title “subconscious Paralysis” is not as strong as what I think it could be. It feels like the stories are all very much linked to the subconscious and the paralysis implies that the main character is not able to access the subconscious. Or is it that the character is only aware of his emotional paralysis in subconsciously? I have been told I am too cerebral, so I am sure I am probably overthinking it.”*

I agree with this comment and this was just a working title; perhaps something like “Breathing Subconsciously” or something in line with that would work better. I could also think of a longer title that is more fitting, such as “Muddling through Memory”, “When I ... think”, “Memory snare loops”. I’m not really sure of a title here but I think this is something that could emerge as I re-read the collection as a whole. Perhaps “Nothing means forever”// “Nothing is forever” // “I see nothing in forever”

I will pay attention to this as I re-read and make the necessary corrections.

I have delayed editing my thesis as I’ve been waiting to forget enough of it and attempt to read it again with fresh eyes. Reading back some of the notes of the Reader I have made the necessary adjustments. I see the reader’s point when it comes to Leaps. I think within the

context of the thesis it doesn't quite fit and it is something that can only be picked up when reading the thesis as a whole again.

The title issue is something I have really been thinking of the past few weeks. I realized after reading the whole thesis over again I figure that it is about finding identity but also home. I opted for the title "When I find home" to show that journey and that exploration process.

There was a moment when I thought of inserting another far-flung fantasy story but I realized that it wouldn't work or land for me in this context. I did however continue feeling that there was still something missing from the thesis so I ended up writing a final story that documents my journey of actually going back home. I initially wanted to use this in my Afrikaans thesis but I figured that the ending of the English thesis wasn't as strong or personal as it could be. I think this final story brings it all together well. And it reflects on some key points and key locations in the rest of the thesis. I also think that it is able to communicate the lessons learned and the journey that the protagonist undergoes throughout the thesis.



**Bharati Mukherjee**

In *The Tiger's Daughter*, Mukherjee explores a period of civil unrest in Calcutta, India. The novel peers over the shoulder of Tara Banerjee Cartwright, the daughter of the tobacco mogul „Bengal Tiger“ Banerjee. Tara is returning home for the first time in seven years and we follow her re-discovering her native Calcutta.

The novel not only explores the unrest in India but also takes an introspective route as Tara returns from the USA where she was sent to continue her schooling at fifteen, and where she eventually got married to a white American. She is an outsider in her own country, city, and family (due to her marriage to a *mlecha* or casteless person). The novel expertly oscillates between her disgust for present-day Calcutta and the disgust of Indian civil society. The new Americanised Tara struggles to reconcile the old Calcutta of her memories with the one she finds upon her return.

*The Tiger's Daughter* opens with a brief exposition of the Catelli-Continental hotel and all its dated opulence and grandeur that was once considered “the navel of the universe” in Calcutta. Although the hotel is a veritable symbol of opulence, and also a central location in the novel, Mukherjee quickly defaces this hotel with “walls painted with obscenities and political slogans”. She occupies the front of the hotel with vendors and beggars and so from the first page contrasts wealth with poverty, and insiders with outsiders.

We meet Tara as she is making her way back to her hometown and we transition, with her, from the outside to the inside as we move closer towards Calcutta, a city from which “there is no escape, where family after family moves to be absorbed and digested...” Through the entire novel we only meet David, Tara's husband, by means of their written communication. She struggles to explain the finer nuances of life in India and the customs and traditions he finds so “alien and foreign”. David's questions are often a way for Mukherjee to introduce brief digressions or enlightenment and also reveals the complications of explaining one's culture. It allows us to question the sights and routines that we take for granted. In this sense the novel allows the reader to reflect on their own context.

Mukherjee weaves and quilts together strong and vibrant images that dance from the page into the imagination. Tara is a strong character that is fully formed and realized and it is her conviction and self-awareness that breathes life into the „immigrants return to the homeland“

narrative after being voluntarily exiled. It is through her consciousness that we are forced to reflect on identity and belonging and the true sense of „home“.

Her family is filled with vivid, and at times eccentric, personages that bring to mind “My family and other animals” by Gerald Durrell. These well-dressed and manicured characters starkly contrast with the outside world. They have parties and tea time at the hotel while there are buses burning outside the Catelli-Continental.

But these contrasts and contradictions also create a problem in the narrative. The narrative loses its footing about halfway through when it breaks away from the normal and erupts into a lacklustre montage of riotous scenes that are awkwardly placed next to each other. It climaxes where we find Tara “trapped in a car that is surrounded by rioters, wondering „whether she would ever get out of Calcutta“”, which begs the question „Does she even want to get out?“

Although the novel does not deliver a strong plot, it does deliver vibrant characters and settings. The introspective qualities and existential “returning home” contemplations and Tara’s journey gives the reader what they came for.

**Sandra Cisneros**

For *House on Mango Street* Cisneros initially started out with the idea of writing a memoir, but it soon grew into something different. In *House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros explores notions of family and shame. She writes about her otherness and the things that have caused discomfort in her own life, and places emphasis in her introduction to this collection, on the idea that it is crucial to name one's otherness: "it isn't enough to only sense it; it has to be named and then written about from there". It is this „otherness“ that layers and folds intricately, exposing details and grit, in almost every piece in this collection.

In *House on Mango Street* we meet Esperanza, a young girl who grows up to be a woman, and in 43 meticulously crafted short stories and vignettes Cisneros explores the ideas of home both emotionally and physically. Other characters and family members are gradually introduced to the reader and the street slowly becomes more and more present in the reader's mind. The stories vary in length. Where some are one paragraph in length, others are several pages long. It is this variation and portioning of her pieces that makes it easy for the reader to breathe and process the sometimes uncomfortable, but illuminating stories.

Cisneros builds her stories in a seemingly carefree and self-reflective manner. There is a childlike innocence to her earlier stories; they are accepted and ingested by the reader without pause. Cisneros then peels back the curtain, but only after her ideas and stories have been allowed inside.

In the titular piece, „The House on Mango Street“, Cisneros builds an image of the family's ideal dream home. A montage of the places they have stayed is where Esperanza starts:

*“We didn't always live on Mango Street. Before that we lived on Loomis on the third floor, and before that we lived on Keeler. Before Keeler it was Paulina, and before that I can't remember.”*

And then the family finally get their own house but it isn't even close to the ideal:

*“But the house on Mango Street is not the way they told it at all. It's small and red with tight steps in front of windows so small you'd think they were holding their breath”*

It is with lines like these that Cisneros triggers a bodily response within the reader. In this piece she has loaded us, as readers, with anticipation and longing for home and safety. A vivid place is built in our mind's eye. But when the nun asks Esperanza where she lives and whether it's "that place" we immediately feel the unease and shame. But the desperation and melancholy hits the chest and clutches the throat when Esperanza expresses:

*"I knew then that I had to have a house. A real house. One I could point to."*

This is exactly what Cisneros excels at doing: she often strings together different collections of things in her stories, such as houses, types of hair, names, shoes, and other mundane aspects of life. I think it is exactly because the things she writes about are so mundane, so insignificant, that they compel us emotionally and engage with our insides so powerfully.

In the piece „My name“, she speaks about her great-grandmother, the person whose name she inherited, the person who was so filled with hate and resentment that Esperanza realizes:

*"But I didn't want to inherit her place by the window"*

These short effective lines not only give us a sense of Esperanza and her environment, but also of her age and background. Cisneros sets up Esperanza's growing up process effectively in the beginning and allows for Esperanza's older voice to occupy a different space and time. It is Cisneros' own realization and self-awareness that informs this process. Cisneros realized that before she could write where she was at that moment in time, she had to write her own childhood and past, and it was exactly the fact that she was writing in a younger voice that she gave herself permission to name that thing without a name.

In the introduction, referring to what she wanted to do in terms of a novel or collection, Cisneros says "I knew I wanted to tell a story made up of a series of stories that would make sense if read alone, or that could be read all together ... like beads in a necklace". And I believe that is exactly what she has achieved with *House on Mango Street*.