

**Finding the Spaces Between Forms:
An inquiry into memory work
through the intermedial interplay between media and presence**

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Abstract

This study sought to explicate my intermedial performance praxis as a theatre-maker, filmmaker, and researcher and to discuss the frameworks and thinking behind *Stages, Screens, and In-betweens* (2022). While intermedial performance practice was a productive way for me to continue making work as a multidisciplinary artist in the context of the gathering restrictions implemented in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, it also became a meaningful practice through which to carry out a self-reflexive autoethnographic study into the frictions between embodied and recorded forms of memory. What emerged was an inquiry into the interplay between media and presence in memory work defined by Annette Kuhn as the “conscious and purposeful staging of memory” (2000:186).

Through a self-reflexive and responsive practice-as-research approach, I sought to frame and articulate the handling of my intermedial performance practice. Working within a worlding premised on specificity, multiplicity and plurality, I draw on Walter Dignolo’s idea of empowering the utterance (in Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014) as a mode of placing the subjective self in all the work I have generated throughout the course. I frame the utterance using Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s notion of *planetaryity* (2003; 2015; 2017) and Donna Haraway’s motion toward *Staying with the Trouble* (2016), complex networking, alliance, and entanglement, through engagement in worldings and through play to open up possibilities.

My formal inquiry into my intermedial performance practice began mainly in response to the alienation caused by the global pandemic. I thus interrogated ideas of intimacy and tactility at a time of physical distance. This inquiry took the form of an online process with Hlabi Moetanalo and resulted in the output of an interactive zine that unlocks digital performances through QR codes. This investigation gained scope and sought to reflect on how continued separation affects community. Through an online process with Shameelah Khan and Geoffrey Diver, the possibility of gathering in the age of digitality was explored through an intermedial performance practice. This project resulted in a live-streamed telematic performance (or what I call a *Zoomformance*), now remediated into an Instagram exhibition. These projects were titled, *Hybrid but Human: Vol 1*. (2021) and *Hybrid but Human: Towards a digital dramaturgy* (2021).

As gathering restrictions started to ease, my focus turned to an autoethnographic study into memory work, made in response to the repository of personal family home videos. While autoethnographic performance and autoethnographic filmmaking are well-theorised fields (with reference to Catherine Russell and Tami Spry), I sought to generate an autoethnographic text through an intermedial performance praxis. I wanted to probe the possibilities, frictions, and fissures between the memories stored in my family's home videos and the memories stored in my body. Thus, I created a 20-minute autoethnographic intermedial performance work about my relationship to the stage, screen and utterances of self titled *The Camera and I* (2022). By explicating the aforementioned projects, I gesture toward how the findings accumulated therein, lay the groundwork for the final thesis production, *Stages, Screens, and In-betweens* (2022).

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The fallibility of memory,
where the edges bend and blur
into new or different experiences
of what they once were

Before I look directly at them
there are events in the corners of my eyes,
on the peripheries,
that seem conjured from a cocktail of remembrance, retellings, and residues
of what no longer exists

Imaginations
forged from the pixels
from the celluloid
from my cells
from smells and sensations that occur just off screen
from the silences
from the shadows
from the spaces in-between

Obscurity
gives me permission to breathe
to resist the concrete
reveals to me
that which my gut already knows
and conceals
making it strangely, disproportionately alive
to dissect and
distort ideas
of what I want the past to be.

The past
is a bewildering place
An abyss filled with the potential to remember
differently
that is both within and without
a doubt
Where the nothingness is rich
with compositing events that have nowhere to live
or perhaps belong
like a ten-year-old eating a warm peanut butter sandwich
watching the others play games with rope
and realising that nowhere is home anymore.

(Initial writings for *Stages, Screens, and In-betweens*, Pilkington, 2022)

Introduction

As a theatre and film practitioner I am interested in the frictions, interplay, and entanglements of medial forms. *Intermedial performance* has thus been a rich framework for me to investigate this interest. This explication intends to trace the dialogical relationship between the making, thinking, reading, and writing of my research which culminates in my autoethnographic intermedial performance, *Stages, Screens, and In-betweens* (2022). This paper intends to articulate “what has emerged or what has been realised through the process of handling materials and ideas” during the MA course in Theatre and Performance at UCT, thus gesturing toward “what this emergent knowledge brings to bear on the discipline” (Bolt, 2007:34). The practical outputs for the course were incrementally the Minor, Medium, Solo, and Final Projects.

My original line of questioning sought to explore intermedial performance practice in the South African context with a primary focus on form and method rather than a particular subject matter. Due to the gathering restrictions implemented in March of 2020 to mitigate transmission of COVID-19 between theatre-makers and spectators, interpersonal exchange in the same spacio-temporal site was minimal. I was aware that intermedial performance research was urgent in the context of the pandemic and its consequential effects on the live performance sector due to the associated gathering restrictions. Like many, I was making work at a physical distance from my collaborators and audience, using various telematic platforms to keep connected. However, it was not until the Minor and Medium Projects that a more subjective point of inquiry emerged: Intimacy, touch, and gathering in response to the alienation and persistence of separation at the time. How can an intermedial performance practice house an enactment of intimacy? How do we touch without physically touching? How do we gather without physically gathering? I applied some of my praxical knowledge to other topics of interest through these projects. During the Solo Project, I shifted from my inquiry into proxemics and intimacies to the subject of memory. Namely, how an intermedial performance practice may frame the tensions and interplay between memory imbued in media and the body.

This shift gave me a constructive obstacle - permission, perhaps - to move away from reductive and utilitarian explanations of the usefulness of intermedial

performance at a time of social distancing and instead lean into a reflexive approach to working with media and my body in a research project. The notion of *memory work*, as proposed by Annette Khun (2000; 2002; 2007; 2010), opened up the possibility to sift through and sit in the intricacies of the interrelations *between* media and presence - focusing on the space *between* the forms as a rich source of meaning-making.

In the first section of this explication, I briefly discuss the field of *intermedial performance* research and place my own intermedial practice within it. Here I expressly point to the ideas of intermedial performance offered by Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbalt (2006; 2010). While this field of study precedes them, Chapple and Kattenbalt suggest that the prevalence of new media technologies and the Internet contribute to the continued emergence of intermedial performance. I draw on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of *planetarity* (2003; 2015; 2017) and Donna Harroway's motion toward *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) as a praxis toward complex networking, alliance, and entanglement; through engagement in worldings¹ and through play to open up possibilities. Working within a worlding premised on *specificity, multiplicity* and *plurality*, I draw on Walter Mignolo's idea of *the utterance* (in Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014) as a mode of placing the subjective self in all of my work. And last, I outline the methodologies that guided this research, namely *practice-as-research, improvisation, bricolage, and care practice*.

In Section Two, I apply these frameworks and methodologies to the Minor and Medium Projects (herein referred to as the *Hybrid but Human* projects), analysing the practice in direct response to the concurrent pandemic and the effects thereof. Here, I locate my methodology within the notion of intimacy in the context of proxemic distance: as a friend, live performance artist, and filmmaker.

My discussion highlights noteworthy findings during the process and the implementation of resulting intermedial vignettes assembled into intermedial outputs. The Minor project took the form of an interactive zine that unlocks digital performances through QR codes, made in collaboration with Hlabi Moetanalo, and in

¹ Worldling, as per Spivak in "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archive" (1985) and advanced by Harroway, I am advocating that "It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories" (2016:12).

a live-streamed telematic performance (or what I call a *Zoomformance*), now remediated into an Instagram exhibition, made in collaboration with Shameelah Khan and Geoffrey Diver. These projects were titled, *Hybrid but Human: Vol 1.* (2021) and *Hybrid but Human: Towards a digital dramaturgy* (2021). In this section, I introduce the notion of *haptic visuality*, as per Laura U. Marks (2000), as a way to negotiate touch through the screen surface. And I refer to *residual ephemera*, as per José Esteban Muñoz (1996), as the consequence of working in an online studio, resulting in rich source material from which I bricolage intermedial vignettes.

In the final section of this dissertation, I expand on my findings regarding the Solo and Final Projects by introducing the methodologies of *memory work*, as per Khun and *autoethnography*, as per Catherine Russell (1999) and Tami Spry (2001; 2007; 2007; 2009; 2010; 2016). *The Camera and I* (2022) and *Stages, Screens, and In-betweens* (2022) both sought to excavate my early years as an intermedial performance artist and the documentation thereof, set in the backdrop of a crumbling family in post-Apartheid suburbia. I extend my inquiry to include an autoethnographic methodology through discussing the interplay between presence and media when making a performance with my family's home video archive. I take time to analyse the form and content of *Stages, Screens, and In-betweens* (2022), and refer back to my findings from the previous projects and the cumulative groundwork in which I have framed the Final Project.

1. Intermedial Performance: Context, Frameworks, and Methodology

Intermediality has a long history of usage in the West and broadly refers to the interrelations between different media. However, there are contending paradigms of how to understand intermediality. First, it is proposed that medial relations are intrinsically intermingled, and naming *borders* between mediums is reductionist. Peter Boenisch challenges notions of medial specificity and essentialism, arguing that there has “never been a separate history of theatre and media in the first place”² (2006:113), and that borders “pit various arts and other media against each other, as if they all presided over their own distinctly defined aesthetic realms” (ibid).

While Irina O. Rajewsky and Lars Elleström agree with Boenisch’s idea that borders essentialise mediums, they add that acknowledging medial boundaries is a way to transcend or subvert them. For Rajewsky, recognising medial margins is a way of

highlighting their presence, or probing them, or even of dissolving them entirely. At the same time, it is precisely also through these acts of transcending, subverting, probing or highlighting which draws attention to the conventionality and the (relative) constructedness of these boundaries. (2010:64)

Christopher Balme, too, advocates for the acknowledgement of boundaries but qualifies them as fluid and malleable (2004:8).

It is important to note that this analysis places a focus on theatre and live performance discourse as a means to discuss intermediality and *intermedial performance*.

1.1. Intermedial Performance

Within the theatre and live performance fields, intermediality refers to the interrelations between theatre, performance and media, and is especially concerned with interrogating the media relations, interrelations and interfaces that are often defined within three main categories. Balme (and later Andy Lavender, 2010) puts forth the idea that intermediality can be understood in three ways. Firstly, as a “transposition of diegetic content from one medium to another” (2006:7) which often results in a hierarchy of mediums in which one dominates the other (Lavender,

² While not as thorough as Boenisch, Susan Sontag makes a similar argument in her 1966 essay, “Film and Theatre”.

2010:133). This category is referred to as *transmediation*, as per Kattenbelt (2006:22), or *remediation*, as per Bolter and Grusin (1999). This model of intermediality is exemplified in the much-referenced theories of Phillip Auslander (1999). Then, as “a particular form of intertextuality” (Balme, 2006:7) or the *inter-relational model* as proposed by Chapple and Kattenbalt (2006). This model is structured by “spaces, gaps and ‘fissures’...the notion of the ‘in-between’” (Lavender, 2010:133). While Balme’s definition highlights the reflexive nature of transmediation, Kattenbalt’s definition of intermediality highlights the *in-between* space and the interaction therein (2008:26), which notably implies an assumption of perceptible media borders.

And finally, as an attempt to realise “in one medium the aesthetic conventions and habits of seeing and hearing in another medium” (Balme, 2006:7) or as “combinations and integrations” of media (Makhumula, 2017a:¶10). Lavender frames this approach as entailing a productive fusion between media and the hybridised model. This approach seeks to produce an “effective (affective) inscription through (new) mergings” (2010:133).

Robin Nelson subsequently adds to the *inter-relational model* by proposing a *both-and* perspective (2010:17). He emphasises “the multiple” and “inter-relational” effects of intermediality while adding to some of Chapple and Kattenbelt’s conceptions. Namely that which is influenced by the relational structure of the digital age “where devices, events and activities are formed out of relationships, necessary interdependencies, and mutually co-relating entities” (ibid). When considering intermediality and theatre, Nelson states that the production “may be both physically based and on-screen; experiences may be both actual and virtual; spaces may be both public and private; bodies may be both present and absent” (ibid). Where *filmed theatre*, for example, remains within the realm of transmediation, or the first category stated above, *intermedial theatre* includes the mutual effect of the theatrical in combination with filmic or digital medium, resulting in a unique *hybrid* experience (Jensen, 2007).

While my practice glides between all three categories, I have been particularly interested in the hybridised and inter-relational models throughout this Master’s course. I am drawn to the intermedial tendency toward “overlaps, doublings, and

fusings - phenomenal configurations in time, space and perception, whereby the operating principles of different entities, ontologies, and media are simultaneously in play to produce a richness of effect” as Lavender so appetisingly describes (2010:133). Out of the plethora of potentialities in the intermedial performance field, my practice has been concerned with what these ‘new mergings’ and ‘spaces in-between’ forms have offered me in my thinking regarding dramaturgical processes.

My research specifically focuses on the inter-relations *between* media, exercised in relation to the four projects realised during the period of the Master’s course. These projects act as case studies that I use to identify and inquire into my practice as an intermedial performance maker. The first two projects (the *Hybrid but Human* projects) used live performance techniques during the process of making and curating but were largely implemented through digital means. Mobile phones, computers, telematic technologies, and the Internet were the vessels in which the remote audience engaged the performances. The second two projects (*The Camera and I* and *Stages, Screens, and In-betweens*) incorporate digital and electronic media into the live event that entails the co-presence of an audience. Video and sound are integrated into the *mise-en-scène* and are used as storytelling devices to emblemise the complex ideas around memory. These performances excavate my early years as an intermedial performance artist and the documentation thereof, set in the backdrop of a crumbling family in post-Apartheid suburbia. These works indeed fall under the field of *intermedial performance* and are linked to the ubiquity of digital technologies and new media, particularly the emergence of digital culture within the Southern African context, but also form a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Before I discuss the handling of the projects, I will place my research context.

1.2. Placing my intermedial performance practice in context

In March 2020, a state of emergency was declared due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and South Africa went into a hard lockdown. For nearly two years, the globe faced an imminent threat of the spread of the virus and regulations to control the infection rate were implemented. The gathering restrictions (social distancing and venue capacity limits) devastated the live art sector. An interpersonal exchange in the same

spacio-temporal site is essential for a theatrical performance to occur, yet the restrictions disrupted the possibility of bodily co-presence. The gathering restrictions necessitated that many performance-makers revisit conventional ways of making theatre. While some theatres remained open at half-capacity and observed strict COVID protocol, or offered alternatives like outdoor or intimate theatre, online or virtual platforms were a means by which live performance workers continued to make work and gain an income (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2020). This was achieved with greater and lesser success.

This turn to intermediality can be further understood within the larger context of *digitality*, in which the field of intermedial performance is historically placed. The proliferation of digital technology in contemporary life - and the political, cultural and educational effects thereof - has fundamentally changed the way in which we make and think about theatre. “The capacity of digital technologies multi-modally to integrate sound, visuals, words and temporal dynamics (in respect of the ease of digital editing in both real-time and during recording) have, perhaps radically, extended the multimodality of theatre” (Nelson, 2010:14). Mobility, speed, immediacy, interaction and the “apparent erosion of distance” are core principles of digital culture (Lavender, 2010:125).

Intermedial performance practice has been experimented with by theatre-makers since the advent of recording technologies (Kattenbelt, 2006). And with the proliferation of the digital, the margins between live performance, screen media, and the Internet have intersected and fused. *Digital*, here, not only refers to the effects and possibilities of particular technologies on live performance, but also defines “the ways of thinking and doing that is embodied within that technology”, and the culture that emerges in that context (Lavender, 2010:127). Digital technology is entangled in the subject matter, techniques, aesthetics, and delivery of contemporary performance - both implicitly and explicitly (Dixon, 2007). This has given rise to what Klaus Bruhn Jensen terms the *intermedial turn* in theatre and performance (2009). Even beyond the context of the pandemic, the notion that *live performance is implicitly or explicitly impacted by digitality* is notable. Thus, the paradigms from which we create, exchange and learn about performance may require an understanding of this impact.

The International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) founded the Intermediality in Theatre and Performance Working Group in 1998, from which two notable texts were published. The first, *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance* (2006), edited by Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt, argued that theatre should be reconstituted as an intermedial phenomenon³ or a *hypermedium* (a medium that can contain all media). And later, *Mapping Intermediality in Performance*, edited by Sarah Bay-Cheng, Chiel Kattenbelt, Andy Lavender and Robin Nelson (2010), highlighted the intermedial turn due to the prevalence of digital culture and the Internet. In the latter case, it is essential to note the political implications of digital culture and the Internet, especially when read from a Southern African perspective.

Here, I mainly refer to Catherine Makhumula (2017a, 2017b) and her discourse about media interrelations within the context of (Anglophone) African theatre. To frame the political implications of intermedial performance in Africa, Makhumula draws on Jens Schröter's article, "The politics of intermediality" (2010), where it is argued that questions concerning intermediality are by no means purely theoretical or aesthetic. Instead, they have already been laden with massive political connotations for some time (108). Schröter advocates for approaches that consider how different cultures understand the differences between media and their interaction in a given historical moment (121).

Makhumula expounds on the scepticism of intermedial performance practice within Africa, primarily due to the power relations imbued within digital and technological media (2017a). She primarily does so with reference to David Kerr's research in *African Theatre 10: Media & Performance* (2011), who observes that "electronic media were introduced in Africa through colonial importation and therefore discussions on it are bound to carry aesthetic and ideological baggage" (in Makhumula, 2017a:¶40).

Regarding current domain ownership, content input and data utilisation, Africa still remains the least visible continent on the Internet (Kemp, 2021). While Africa is the continent with the lowest Internet usage proportional to population, South Africa is just over the worldwide median at 64% to 59,5% (28). However, Africa had the

³ Lars Elleström agreeably argues that theatre combines and integrates other media to varying degrees, such as: text, audio, visuals, and performance (2010).

highest Internet usage growth in 2020 (30). South Africa is ranked third worldwide for mobile connections per capita (198). Despite this, content, data, and cyber traffic is still disproportionately bent toward the Global North (Rezaire, 2014).

It would be dangerous not to acknowledge the skewed epistemologies of digitality, new media and the Internet toward a mostly-male Western perspective within a neo-liberal capitalist context (Whose Knowledge? “Decolonizing the Internet” Summary Report, 2018). Whose Knowledge?, Wikimania SA and the Goethe-Institute in South Africa have launched a series of “Decolonise The Internet” projects. These projects intend to raise awareness of the impact the algorithms have on our interaction with the Internet; launch more Internet servers around the Global South; translate Internet articles into African languages; and use WikiData and WikiCommons for oral citations (“Decolonise The Internet” project, Goethe-Institut ZA webpage). These projects duly note:

During its inception, the internet was seen as a vital instrument for democracy and equality. In 2020, amidst a global pandemic and racial inequalities that are very much still alive, it is time to ask: Whose stories are told and who is telling these stories on the internet? And how do Artificial Intelligence, Algorithms and Bots shape our view of the world and perpetuate racisms? (ibid)

Due to urban diversification and the burgeoning of digital culture, I draw on Tegan Bristow’s contrapuntal contemporaneous research regarding digital media circulation in cities like Johannesburg and Cape Town (2014:332). While this cultural engagement often involves mobile banking or IPTV⁴ broadcasts, contemporary artists have been highly influenced by “digital aesthetics” (338). These “digital aesthetics” combine the materiality and the aesthetics of the Internet and are further imbued with ‘street level’ exchanges through mobile phones and the country’s socio-political climate (Govender in Bristow, 2014). While Internet access and speed are still a challenge, it is clear that digital know-how and culture are on the rise.

Bristow’s ideas are advanced by Lizelle Bisschoff’s research regarding the rising *techno-optimistic view* of digitality from the African continent, particularly in terms of democratisation, empowerment, communication, and resistance through the Internet (2017:9). She notes that through digital interfaces, we can connect with diverse and

⁴ Internet Protocol television, or television content broadcasted over Internet Protocol (IP) networks.

far-reaching geographical locations, cultures, histories and people that may previously have been much less accessible. Artists use the digital space to create, reclaim and disseminate subjectivities and historically less-represented images in inventive ways (ibid).

Regarding intermedial performance in particular, Makhumula demonstrates the rich possibilities of intermediality in theatre with reference to a handful of case studies but essentially attests to this scepticism due to a lack of research in the field within the African context. While she notes a handful of scholars⁵ that have previously touched on this field, I cite Makhumula (2017a; 2017b) and Sanjin Muftic (2019) as notable contemporary researchers whose work has helped frame my own research - noting that this precedes the circulation of intermedial ideas and methods due to the pandemic.

1.3. Frameworks: Specificity, Plurality and Multiplicity: Self-reflexivity, planetarity and the utterance

My intermedial performance practice is rooted in practice-led, collaborative methods of research and making. Core to this thinking are the ideas of responsiveness, specificity, and plurality. These ideas punctuate the reflexive quality of my practice and the consideration of my positionality as a maker, researcher, and collaborator. Furthermore, I use the ideas of *planetarity*, as presented by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2003; 2015; 2017), and *the utterance*, as per Walter Mignolo (in Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014), to frame these praxes.

In “Intermediality in Performance and as a Mode of Performativity”, Kattenbelt proposes that intermedial performance is very much about the self-reflexive staging of media for which theatre as a *hypermedium* fundamentally provides a platform (2010). This further “facilitates a liberating confrontation with one’s own experience, which is made perceivable through engagement with the aesthetic object” and the larger cultural life-world (32-33). Here, performance, intermedial performance, and practice-as-research are intentionally framed as self-reflexive in order to centre what Donna Harroway refers to as *situated knowledge* within the research endeavour (2020).

⁵ Hauptfleisch, 1999; Molema, 2008; Lukasz Pater, 2011.

Self-reflexivity regarding the subject matter, the methods, and the form are evident in the responsive generation of ideas from the position of the self. These “entanglements of bodies and knowledge and selves and cultures in relations of power” emphasise the methodology as a thoroughly *relational practice* (Jones, 2018:10). Here I am leaning towards Dwight Conquergood’s ideas regarding the

critical and heuristic power of a performance-focused approach to the study of culture as a ‘bridge’ that links “segregated and differently valued knowledges [practical, analytic, and political], drawing together legitimated as well as subjugated modes of inquiry”... Such bridges refuse a binary division of labor between thinking and doing, interpreting and making, intellect and common sense. We see the importance and power of these bridges in our efforts to bring together selves, cultures, stories, and pedagogies in complementary, meaningful, and complicated ways. (Jones, 2018:9)

I am drawn to the notion of this methodological approach as it invites the researcher to act as a ‘bridge’ between different ways of making and thinking, thus offering rich connections between forms of research. This idea can be more eloquently reframed in the words of Harroway as a *situated self*, where profound relationality, intra-activity, complex contact zones for other ways of knowing material, transformation, and entanglement (paraphrased in Young, 2019). Here, I place the position of the situated self in relation to the planet.

I use the term *planet* instead of *globe*, intentionally. Spivak argues that globalisation “attempts to impose a singular gaze upon all of the world and negates different experiences, thereby discounting the immense differences that exist between people and their experiences” (Muftic, 2019:16). *Planetary* rejects the ideologies inherent in modernist capitalist globalisation by endorsing “new, different, and diverse planetary orders of angles and gazes onto the world” (Gaafar, 2011:360). I am interested in intermedial performance as a platform for planetary exchange rather than globalisation. A planetary reading of intermediality challenges us to reject a singular view of the world and to embrace the *plural* and *multiplicity* within a network of reciprocity instead. With a planetary framework in mind, *plurality* has been an intentional guiding principle in my practice.

Further, this method of plurality and multiplicity takes care to be *specific*. I draw on Walter D. Mignolo’s ideas regarding the ‘utterance or enunciation’ as a means to enact

a planetary practice. Mignolo argues that “representation presupposes that there is a world out there that someone is representing” rather than a world that is in constant invention through enunciation (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014:198). The utterance invokes a worlding that is constantly and consciously invented rather than presupposing a modernist epistemology that posits that the world is outside of the speaking subject. This is echoed by Harroway and her rejection of knowledges that rely on “humanist patriline and its breath-taking erasures”, and rather that “we are obligated to speak from situated worlds” (2016:132). The utterance imbues situated specificity and deliberate reflexivity of the subject and the maker.

This is reiterated in Kattenbelt’s proposition of reflexivity within the intermedial performance methodology, where “aesthetic utterances and textual forms along with the aesthetic and quotidian orientations of experiencers... are imbricated within each other in the contemporary ‘performative culture’, (and) not separable in a historical sequence” (2010:29).

The care to name specificity through the utterance is emboldened by Mignolo and Rolando Vázquez’s motion toward a *decolonial aestheSis*, as a means to draw attention to the worlding and deliberate entanglements of the utterances have in the larger Global-order. Namely, decolonial aestheSis is

an option⁶ that delivers a radical critique to modern, postmodern, and altermodern aestheTics and, simultaneously, contributes to making visible decolonial subjectivities at the confluence of popular practices of re-existence, artistic installations, theatrical and musical performances, literature and poetry, sculpture and other visual arts. (2013:II)

The act of ‘delinking’ from inherited colonial aesthetics and ‘creating critical interventions’ through a decolonial aestheSis is pertinent when considering my practice. Here, subjectivity and authorship are critical, namely, an explicit awareness of the positionalities of my collaborators and I, the context in which we are working, and how we frame our ‘utterances’ thereof.

⁶ The notion of “option” here is important regarding Mignolo’s deliberate opposition to the notion of ‘truths’ and ‘missions’ as perpetuated in colonial and modern world-orders; but rather a call to action and the subtle announcement of agency of persons within the planet (as noted in Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014:198).

Including an embodied and contextualised self in the *Hybrid but Human* projects was critical. I will later reframe this self-reflexivity as autoethnography in relation to *The Camera and I* (2022) as well as the upcoming final performance, *Stages, Screens, and In-betweens*.

It is within the convergence of self-reflexivity, planetary and the utterance through intermedial performance practice that my research takes place. In the case of this research, I have sought to respond to two core concerns: The notion of *intimacy* through an intermedial performance practice in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and intermedial performance as a productive site for *memory work*. Through these frameworks, I situate how I make intermedial performance work.

1.4. Methodology: Practice-led research, improvisation, bricolage, and care practice

As a theatre-maker, filmmaker, and facilitator, I am partial to process-led work which emphasises the development of a work more than the end-product. This method usually takes the form of a fluid, studio-based process largely reiterated in the following pattern:

1. Setting the container, naming intentions or creating a manifesto for the project, and naming a safe-space agreement.
2. Generating material from a set of multi-modal prompts or an array of response-based games, depending on the project. This process is repeated several times, using the material generated as prompts for subsequent games/experiments.
3. I assemble, collage, sculpt, and edit the media from the body of material we have generated. Much like the process of documentary editing, I am interested in the act of assembling preceding footage or material to resemble shape, story, or feeling. This is shaped either into deliverable 'outputs', or into prototypes on which the 'output' will be based (as in a dramaturgical 'script'). I will momentarily employ *bricolage* to frame this process.
4. If we can afford it, we will hold open screenings or studio sessions to interface the work with an audience. We may re-frame the work depending on the response before a 'final' exhibition.
5. A debrief in the way of a shared meal and closing the container.

This process design is the result of over a decade's worth of personal collaboration with other artists, and is especially informed by my creative engagements with Lindiwe Matshikiza, Mwenya Kabwe, Hankyeol Lee and Sarah Roberts; as well as from having emulated the processes of Robert Lepage, Barney Simon and Jenna Bass. These experiences have traversed the stage, the screen, and the *in-between*; and has seen the germination of the methodology for this research - or, perhaps, could be framed as part of it.

It is worth noting that for the Minor, Medium, and Solo Projects, I intentionally delivered a series of vignettes (Step 4) that were almost all made up of the original material generated from the prompts (Step 2) without much reframing. While this is attributable to the care practice imbued in the process (which I describe and analyse in further detail in the first section of this paper), I set out to fold the work in on itself in a self-reflexive manner. Much like a documentary film is the culmination of responsive, often spontaneous footage, I was attentive to include footage and material of the process, both implicitly and explicitly, as a 'playful staging of media' in the final outputs (Gruber in Bay-Cheng 2010: 256). It was only later that I learned that self-reflexivity is a common characteristic of intermedial performance work (Nibbelink and Merx in Bay-Cheng 2010: 224).

As a maker-researcher I am particularly interested in the findings that emerge out of this process design; in why this process design may offer me rich insights into ways in which I engage an intermedial performance practice; and in articulating what has been realised through the process of *handling* materials (Bolt, 2007:34). My preference for a process-led approach and the emergence of ideas and methods therein can be understood within the methodology of practice-as-research (hereafter referred to as PaR).

Estelle Barrett describes this as the entanglement of positivist and hermeneutic approaches that are "not only on the basis of explicit and exact knowledge, but also on that of tacit knowledge" negotiating universal laws and subjective, plural interpretations (2007:4). Emergent theories of PaR are often supported with reference to *material thinking*, as per Paul Carter (2004), and advanced by *materialising practices* as proposed by Barbera Bolt (2004).

Carter suggests that “the malleable material is subservient to the dream of the artist; it is the artist’s fantasy that matter serves” (2004:186). Or in other words, materials (and in our case, bodies, the mise-en-scene, electronic media, written text and so on) possess their own intelligence that comes into play in interaction with the artist’s creative intelligence, rather than passive ingredients solely puppeted by the artist. This interplay is framed as an “intellectual adventure peculiar to the making process” that notably resists closure (xi). Here, productivity is “located neither after nor before the process but in the performance itself” (Carter, 2007: 19). The emphasis is thus placed on the studio process, where a record thereof creates new relations of knowledge after production (Barrett, 2007:4).

Bolt points out that this is often limited to an intellectual adventure based on *talking about* the process, and there should additionally be thinking about the ongoing, iterative process of the “particular responsiveness to or conjunction with the intelligence of *materials*... in practice” and reception (Bolt, 2007:5, own emphasis). She extends Carter’s ideas by suggesting that the focus is placed on the studio process and “the moment of consumption” (Barrett, 2007:4). The methods of generating and framing my work are that of *play* and *bricolage*, primarily based on a *responsive* way of working.

I am drawn to the often slippery, incomplete, and intentionally obscured experiments carried out in my various devising processes and have strived towards a clear rejection of fixity. My approach to this has been through structured *play* and repetitive, responsive *improvisation* as a means of generating material - techniques which may be understood through the ideas of *spontaneity* and *reciprocity*, as per Kieth Johnston (1979). Frequently I have witnessed this whimsical practice give rise to profound and complex material that resists easy definition and provokes active interpretation from an audience. Two particular examples of these improvisational methods are free-writing in response to prompts, and a version of *dérive*.

When working with the Internet or digital video footage, I usually begin with spontaneous engagement through ‘surfing the web’ or engaging the material on a Premiere Pro timeline, which often leads to a series of connected and free-flowing ideas and images. I frame this as a form of *digital dérive* where I guide an unplanned

“passage through varied ambiances” as proposed by Guy Debord’s *Theory of the Dérive*⁷ (2006:66).

Next; I would begin all the projects with a set of questions that would initiate the research, such as : “how can we create a sense of intimacy at a proximal distance?”, “what are the implications of community when we are unable to gather?”, and “what are the implications of reading childhood memories when intentionally overlaid, distorted, reframed?”. I would give myself five minutes to free-write in response to these questions, offering a pragmatic way to ‘warm’ into the process. Resulting in raw material that I would later reframe in the bricolage phase. This material is often read as stream-of-consciousness responses to ideas, highlighting enunciations or utterances as a basis for working.

This methodology often accentuated subjectivity and situated knowledge that came out in the form of the utterance. The other artists and I offered our own particular mediums, expressions and impulses toward the digital in the making process, and as a result, the *Hybrid but Human* projects became a repository of the expressions of all the collaborators, the dynamics between us, and a response to the context itself. While I largely maintained my role as primary facilitator and overall curator of the content produced, it was important that I could engage responsively with the offers made in the sessions, beginning both processes without a final mode of output in mind. The zine, the Zoomformance, and the Instagram exhibition all emerged from this devising process.

Out of these initial impulses, I curate and organise the collection of utterances into considered assemblages or *bricolage*. This practice recalls similar thinking to documentary editing or multimodal collage in music or fine art. A secondary set of improvisations often initiates the bricolage step: spontaneous juxtaposition, overlaying and approximating the initial gestures that start to offer shape to a performance. These assemblages often result in remediation or the merging of mediums, depending on the reception site: whether it will be engaged via a screen or stage, for example.

⁷ I was introduced to *dérive* by Aryan Kaganof in 2014, where we were invited to drift around Braamfontein and converse with the standers-by as our ‘new masters of knowledge’ as part of a film theory lesson. This methodology can also be seen in my film [Double Negative](#) (2014), made in collaboration with Themba Twala.

In “Creating New Stories For Praxis: Navigations, Narrations, Neonarratives” (2007), Robyn Stewart defines bricolage as a “hybrid praxis” that “places the researcher’s discourse and practices within another space, between artist and product, producer and audience, theory and practice so that it becomes the space for reflection, contemplation, revelation” (128). It is a complex, reflexive practice that outputs a collage-like creation: an amalgamation of the researcher’s utterances that makes up a whole. Here, bricolage refers to the assemblage of material generated through improvisation and the practice itself.

Stewart eloquently adds that the artist-researcher, or bricoleur, seeks to expound on their practice as emergent knowledge in their field. In this sense,

The bricoleur is positioned within the borderlands, crossing between time and place, personal practice and the practice of others, exploring the history of the discipline and it’s changing cultural contexts... The bricoleur appropriates aspects of research methodologies which best suit the task at hand, travelling between various research disciplines in an attempt to build the most appropriate bridge between aesthetics and experience through processes of production documentation and interpretation. (ibid)

This recalls Conquergood’s ideas of PaR as a significant bridging between ourselves, our practices, our cultures and our stories in “complementary, meaningful, and complicated ways” (Jones, 2018:9). Here, the method of bricolage enfolds into the larger methodology of PaR resulting in dense and complex entanglements in both form and content. Here, the utterances of the artist-researchers are staged as self-reflexive, plural and multiple.

After the Minor Project with Moetanalo, I wanted to place a more emphasis on care practice as a significant part of my methodology, both in response to the pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and as a conscious unlearning of toxic practices revealed as unnecessary within a neo-liberal capitalist climate (Chatzidakis, 2020). During our debrief, Moetanalo reflected on the unproductive pressures of delivering content for the zine prompts while maintaining a full-time job; all within the lingering socio-political, emotional and economic pressures of the pandemic.

I was surprised by my own perpetuation of neo-liberal capitalist ideals, particularly regarding the intention of the zine, often working until the early hours to deliver the

final product, for example. This behaviour was in contention with my resonance with adrienne maree brown's invitations in *Emergent Strategy* (2017); Tricia Hersey's provocations in *The Nap Ministry*; Walter D. Mignolo's notion of "decolonial love" (2018, 223); The Care Collective's proclamations in *The Care Manifesto* (Chatzidakis, 2020); as well as having deliberately practised care as resistance as a curator in the Priority Mail Process Lab for Africa 2020 (Kabwe, 2022) and as part of the MMMcollective as noted in our *mmmxfest*. I wanted to hold myself accountable for this unlearning for the rest of the MA course, as a deliberate variable in articulating my practice and integrating it into the next project's process design.

During the process with Khan and Diver, I was careful to integrate embodied practices, regular check-ins and debriefs, an ethos of generating work economically and efficiently as well as invitations to fail. The embodied practice took the form of continuous mindful embodiment, body scans, pranayamic and coherent breathing sessions to engage the parasympathetic nervous and reticular activating systems to reset the vagus nerve during the process (Brown, 2012; Menakem, 2017); self-made rituals of lighting candles or sharing homely food off of the same plate; and frequent negotiations of output in response to capacity and availability. We noted these practices in a sort-of manifesto of our own: a living Google document stating our agreements. This practice offered us useful guidance when faced with load-shedding or when we had to change the form of performance a week before the final version due to yet another wave of COVID-19. We met these obstacles with calm adaptability, which felt pertinent in the greater context of the pandemic and what it meant to make live performances in a nebulous and unstable landscape.

Care practice will later be significant when working with memory and autoethnographic methodologies, and will be further discussed in section three.

In summation, I have expounded upon the notion of planetarity as a framework for practice-as-research and bricolage techniques that produce specific, plural and multiple utterances. In the following two sections, I will continue to unpack these ideas through application to the two *Hybrid but Human*, *The Camera and I* and the forthcoming *Stages, Screens, and In-betweens* projects.

2. To touch without touching: Toward an intermedial performance practice in the age of COVID-19

In response to the personal alienation I experienced during the global pandemic, I was prompted to interrogate ideas of intimacy and tactility at a time of physical distance. This took the form of an online process with Hlabi Moetanalo and resulted in *Hybrid but Human: Vol 1*. (Appendix B). My inquiry gained scope for the Medium Project and sought to reflect on how continued separation affects community, thus prompting an exploration of connection through digital means. This also took the form of an online process - this time with Shameelah Khan and Geoffrey Diver - paying more attention to my methods of facilitating and curating content. The online devising process resulted in a live-streamed *telematic performance* over Zoom titled *Hybrid but Human: Towards a digital dramaturgy* (Appendix D) now remediated into an Instagram exhibition (@hybrid_but_human).

In this section, I will demonstrate how the aforementioned planetary praxis framed the process and the output of the *Hybrid but Human* projects and what was realised through handling the materials and ideas of my intermedial performance practice. I note in particular the importance of play and bricolage in realising these projects and the responsive and reflexive manner of working therein. These findings lay the vital groundwork upon which I approach *autoethnographic intermedial memory work* in the final section.

2.1 Reflections on an intermedial performance practice: The *Hybrid but Human* projects

Intermedial performance has been a subject of study and experimentation for theorists and theatre-makers since the advent of recording technologies (Kattenbelt, 2006). The pandemic, however, added a new layer of urgency to these investigations. When I began this research, my work stretched over continents and time zones and moulded itself into novel forms. I was working in embodied isolation, and perhaps I am still negotiating the residues of that alienation. The distance between myself and others stimulated a thirst to gather and be intimate with strangers. To reach out and touch.

In April of 2021, I approached my close friend and fellow theatre-maker, Hlabi Moetanalo, to explore ideas of proximity and digital performance during the lockdown using our own long-distance friendship as a starting point. What emerged was *Hybrid but Human: Vol. 1*, an intermedial performance zine that sought to reflect on our acts of platonic intimacy. The pocket-sized zine housed a series of audio-visual vignettes and interactive prompts that could be unlocked using QR codes via a smartphone.

The zine houses a total of six digital vignettes: 1) a sound journey titled “[I am \(not\) a cyborg](#)” made from remixing and layering a spoken-word poem; 2) “[How to touch without touching, a recipe](#)”, a webpage poem in the format of a cooking recipe; 3) a film-poem, “[you, me and technology](#)” which combined call-and-response video footage between Moetanalo and me; 4) a Zoom-performance titled “[we are connected.](#)” which was the result of a performance poetry experiment recorded during a Zoom rehearsal; 5) an interactive [wordcloud](#) which exhibited the cumulative answers given by the audience when invited to express how they ‘[touch without touching](#)’; and 6) a YouTube playlist titled “[Intimate at a Distance](#)” which was secretly folded into the inside of the zine. The vignettes are a bricolage of writing, performance, filmmaking, sound design and digital art.

Moetanalo and I have been in a ‘long-distance’ friendship since he moved to Japan for three years, starting in 2015, and has continued with my migration to Cape Town. In our many Skype calls and WhatsApp conversations over the past eight years, we have shared an ongoing rumination about how we have remained close friends and collaborators despite the great physical and temporal distance. The Minor Project became a vessel for us to gesture toward this conversation and conjure our thoughts into materiality. I designed a four-week online studio process that combined weekly Zoom rehearsals with ongoing prompts for material generation; references; and reflections via WhatsApp.

In the initial stages of the project, we spent time building an intermedial way of working: discussing language, form, and process (doing a lot of ‘translation’ work from our shared theatre language). From this, we generated a living manifesto via WhatsApp that was added to and negotiated throughout the process. Here I wish to note three points from the manifesto. First was the commitment to creating through improvisation and play; spontaneity and reciprocity formed the generative basis from

which we worked. Next, to integrate a care practice into our process. Again, this project emerged from an incredibly tumultuous time on a macro and micro scale. We therefore discussed how we wanted to make work economically - referring to both material and mental resources - and lean into the potential of 'failure' and non-delivery. And last, to generate work specific to our lived experience (or utterances), aware of our respective positionalities and pluralities.

We developed material through free-writing⁸; *dérive* sessions around our neighbourhoods, free-styling poetry via voicenotes, and sketching using pen and ink. The result was a bank of short pieces of text; digital collages; spoken-word poems; and an array of video footage from our daily lives. This specific and responsive way of working lays the groundwork for my experience of entangling the self in one's work, which I will later identify as *autoethnography*. While I was focused on generating material through play, the assemblage of material found its form in intermedial vignettes, thus organically prompting the methodology of *bricolage*.

For the first project, however, I was particularly interested in probing and extrapolating the idea of tactility in relation to the digital and telematic, through the form of the output itself - housing the digital performances in a form that could be physically handled. The interactive zine emerged as an economical approach to exploring proxemics. We experimented with the act of 'virtual touch', prompted by the question, "how do you touch without touching?". As a way to engage this question, I made use of Laura U. Marks' proposal of *haptic visuality*.

In *The Skin of the Film* (2000), Marks offers a new reading of spectatorship theory, namely how film as a visual medium can transmit an embodied sense of place and culture in a postcolonial, transnational world. Marks argues that film has the ability to trigger physical memories of smell, touch, and taste through the image. She names this contact between the perceiver and the object represented, *haptic visuality*. Haptic visuality links the spectator's eye to "an organ of touch" (162), or how the spectatorial encounter may affect the body and produce subjective effects like those that arise from physical contact or proximity (Marks in Chateau, 2018:258-259). Marks proposes that this effect could be caused by certain formal or textural qualities in the film, such as grainy or illusive images, changes in focus, over- or

⁸ A tool also cued from the Story Strategies Studio sessions with Mwenya Kabwe in 2021.

under-exposure, or sensuous imagery that may evoke memory (2000). She posits that the haptic image is “less complete”, thus inviting the viewer to contemplate its material presence as opposed to an easily identifiable beat in the filmic narrative (163). Haptic visuality is notable in “you, me, and technology” and “we are connected.”. The conversation between the tactile materiality of the zine and the haptics in the digital form started to offer fascinating reflections and juxtapositions between the page and the screen space.

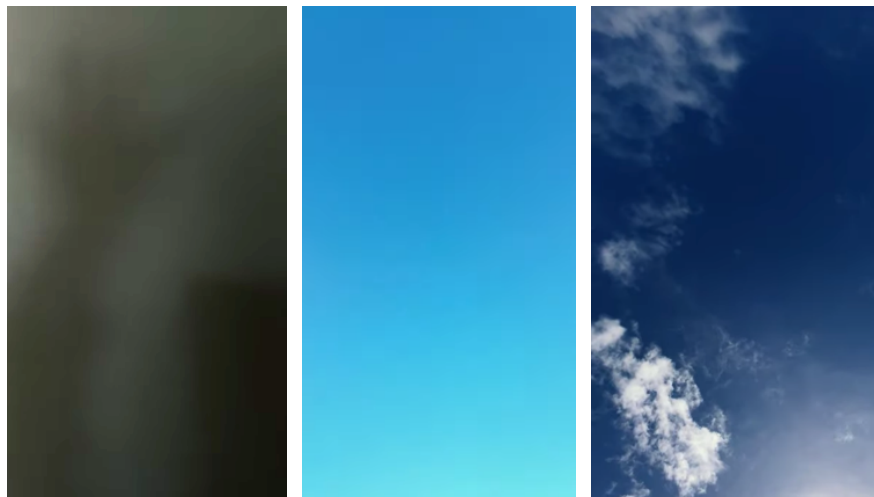


Figure 1.1 - 1.3: Stills from “you, me, and technology”, demonstrating the textural, evocative and illusive quality of haptic visuality as proposed by Marks. Figure 1.1 is the image of my obscured shadow waving on my bedroom wall. Figures 1.2 and 1.3 are the skies in Johannesburg and Cape Town that was a result of a call-and-response video exercise.

Hybrid but Human, 2021, Moetanalo and Pilkington.

Advancing Marks, Moetanalo and I turned to questions about audience engagement. To what extent could we offer an intermedial performance that could also sit in the space of physical intimacy with an audience member? To what extent could we prompt spontaneous and reciprocal engagement from a digital platform?

We designed the zine to physically fit into a purse or a pocket, and approximately mirror the size of a smartphone (size A8). A zine that could fit into a pocket - “a performance in your pocket”, as Moetanalo once called it. The pages of the zine were made of various compositions of QR codes⁹ and minimal text. The idea was that an audience member needed both the zine and their own smartphones to unlock the digital vignettes. I was interested in the breaking of the miniature ‘fourth wall’ of

⁹ We were inspired by *Ghost Stories* (2020), a self-reflexive digital zine about the making of an illustrated anthology of poetry between Moetanalo and Hankyeol Lee . We were inspired by the accessibility, multimodal and self-referential quality of the project.

the smartphone screen. The beholder, much like the audience in a dark auditorium, is invited into the role of participant.



Figure 2: An audience member scanning a QR code on the day of the Minor Project showings in May 2021. Note the similarity in physical size between the zine and the mobile device.
Hybrid but Human, 2021, Moetanalo and Pilkington. Image by the author.

Here, the interactivity and tactility between the user, the zine, and the smartphone intend to parallel the corporeal co-presence of an audience during a live performance. I will momentarily discuss this in relation to the second *Hybrid but Human* project and how the digital interface of the YouTube window (and the live comments therein) gesture towards a placefulness of exchange between the audience members and the performers. Here, interactivity and liveness become important ingredients to indicate presence during the performance.

The time between the Minor and the Medium Projects saw another wave of COVID-19 and the spread of the Delta variant around the globe. My contemplations around touch and isolation developed into thinking about gathering as an antidote to the continued brutality of separation. The inquiry around touch and intermedial performance grew into questions around communing. I also wanted to hold radical care practice central to the process and to hone the online studio model in the context of a collective.

In October of 2021, I approached two artist friends based around South Africa to collaborate on a telematic performance for the Medium Project: writer and filmmaker Shameelah Khan (then beaming in from Johannesburg); and sound artist, illustrator, and performer, Geoffrey Diver (then beaming in from Mpumalanga). Over the course of six weeks, our collective generated a wealth of audio-visual material in response

to the central prompts on gathering, intimacy, digitality and making live performance work in the age of COVID-19. The result was a self-reflexive Zoomformance called *Hybrid but Human: toward a digital dramaturgy*.

Much like the process with Moetanalo, the Medium Project saw a set of independent intermedial prompts that Khan, Diver, and I shared over WhatsApp and Google Drive and responded to during our online studio sessions. We were particularly interested in generating material from found footage, free-writing, and a series of 'exquisite corpse'-type exercises with the intention of a final live performance. The content generated took the form of written and oral poetry, videos, sound experiments, and a series of real-time performances on the Zoom and Google Docs platforms. As with Moetanalo, it was our intention to prompt specific responses or 'utterances' to form the material. The self-reflexive aestheSis was threaded into the content generated. I then began to bricolage these audio-visual vignettes into a hybrid performance that we imagined would be broadcasted live via Zoom to an audience on Hiddingh Campus.

Hybrid but Human was initially conceptualised as a live, co-present performance using telematics and smartphones as a central device. The audience was set to gather in the Playroom on the 8th of December and engage in the performance through the portal of their smartphones. Due to the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergence of the Omicron variant, we swiftly pivoted the performance to be streamed in real-time via YouTube. And as soon as the performance concluded, the live stream link was removed and deleted as a nod toward Peggy Phelan's ever-quoted definition that performance "becomes itself through disappearance" (1993:146).

The Zoomformance consisted of nine vignettes: 1) "[Exquisite Corpse](#)", a fragmented screen dance live over Zoom; 2) "[How to Gather in the Age of Gatherlessness](#)", a self-reflexive film poem about the project; 3) "[Connecting, in between](#)", a prerecorded dance film; 4) "[We Are All Connected](#)", a film made from sampled footage; 5) "[Wiki Holes](#)", a live exquisite corpse experiment; 6) "[To Touch Without Touching](#)", an interactive exquisite corpse poem performed live with prompts from the YouTube Live audience; and three short interludes using the live-typing mechanism on Google

Docs. I will be extrapolating the processes and the materiality of some of the vignettes as a means to collate some findings of how this project offered an intermedial method of making live performance or has pointed me ‘towards a digital dramaturgy’¹⁰.

At the start of the process, I was relistening to a Complicité webinar titled “[Ways of Listening](#)”, in which experimental composer Brian Eno remarks on improvisation and chance as a way of generating material. Eno recalls the exquisite corpse technique used by David Byrne, ‘a game which results in a poem or image that is collectively created, where each collaborator adds to the sequence only having seen a small part of what was just previously contributed’ (2020). I was inspired to add the game to the toolkit of improvisation prompts that I had already started to hone with Moetanalo during the Minor Project.

The exquisite corpse game found its way into the prompts, the online studio sessions and into the Zoomformance itself. This is particularly notable in the “[Exquisite Corpse](#)” vignette, and also features as a visual refrain in “[Wiki Holes](#)”. We applied the call-and-response technique developed during the zine process with Moetanalo, as evident in “[you, me, and technology](#)” and “[we are connected.](#)”, to a non-verbal movement exercise during one of our Zoom rehearsals, where we would offer and respond to physical gestures of another team member, making a sequence of movement via the various blocks on the Zoom interface. We then combined this exercise with another prompt of adding multiple cameras¹¹ to each space, each of us using both our embedded webcam on our laptops, and the cameras on our smartphones. What ensued was choreography for the screen that organised our bodies from various perspectives in a single Zoom window, and a cubistic creature was formed. Our three bodies collapsed into magnified body parts forming a single image on the screen. The audience was invited to see both a close-up or a particular angle of body parts (from above and below), and simultaneously see a long-shot version of the performers handling our cameras. We played with unison and

¹⁰ In retrospect, this should have been phrased as ‘towards an intermedial dramaturgy’, for ‘digital’ doesn’t fully articulate the mediums that my practice traverses.

¹¹ This strategy was the result from a live performance experiment over Zoom, during a Master’s Studio session with Nelisiwe Xaba in 2021.

responsiveness within the composition of the Zoom link to connect our choreography, although enacted so at a physical distance.

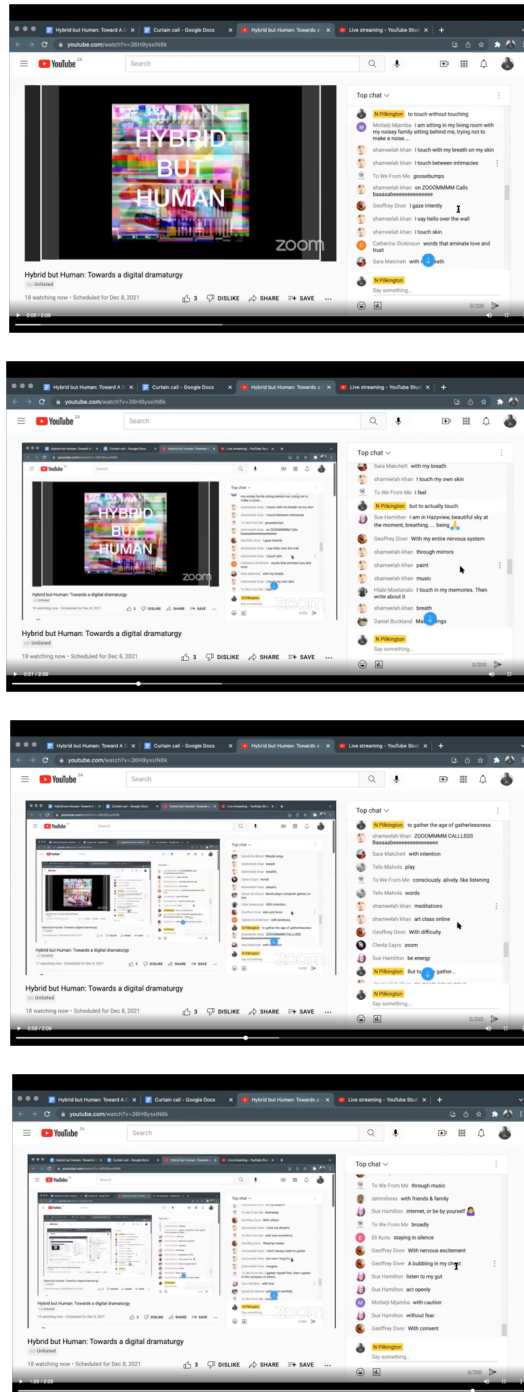
The “Exquisite Corpse” vignette whimsically offers a version of the game in the form of fragmented perspectives on a single screen. It made me think of the cyborg, as per Donna Harroway, and the fusion of the bionic and digital to hybridise into a single creature through telematic and video technologies (1991:5). Izabella Pluta posits that Harroway’s notion of the cyborg subverts and transcends the boundaries within Western dualism, beyond the symbolic bionic-cybernetic metaphor (in Bay-Cheng, 2010:187).

The ingredient of *immediate and simultaneous temporality* was an important factor in the process. The vignette that really punctuates the immediacy of the Zoomformance encounter is “[To Touch Without Touching](#)”. The vignette is a performance poem written in real-time in collaboration with the audience through the YouTube live chat function. They were asked to respond to prompts like, ‘how do you touch without touching?’ And, ‘how do you gather in the age of gatherlessness?’ So when I performed, I integrated their responses into the poem. Furthermore, the visuals of the vignette were a screen-share of the Chrome window where the audience would see the whole YouTube page, including the video and the YouTube comments, within their own YouTube video interface. A progressive visual feedback loop ensued, where the video became a video of a video and so on, resulting in the *infinity effect* (see Figures 3.1 to 3.4).

In this case, the vignette, which inherently relied on reciprocity, would not be able to happen without the audience actively engaging in the chat function, and we, therefore, faced a more considerable risk of ‘failure’ if they did not do so. Here, interactivity epitomises liveness within the performance.

The visual feedback loop also turned a mirror onto the Zoomformance form, where the form becomes the subject in question. As noted in the first section of this paper, PaR, intermedial performance, and bricolage fundamentally enfold reflexivity into the method of paraxial research. Here, the visual feedback loop demonstrates the playful staging of the intermedial form, where the output results in rich entanglements in both form and content. This can be noted in both the *Hybrid but Human* projects, where traces of the process, the product and audience interaction are staged within

the final outputs. The utterances of the artist-researchers and audience are staged as self-reflexive, plural and multiple (Kattenbalt, 2010:32; Stewart, 2007:128; Jones, 2018:9).



Figures 3.1 - 3.4: Stills from “To Touch Without Touching” demonstrating the progression of sharing the YouTube window via the same YouTube live feed, resulting in the infinity effect. *Hybrid but Human*, 2021, Diver, Khan and Pilkington.

Further, as demonstrated in the zine and the Zoomformance vignettes, the intermediality of the projects relies heavily on digital technology and the Internet - as

subject, as stage, and sometimes even as collaborator in developing the content. Drawing on Bisschoff's convivialist proposal creating, reclaiming and disseminating subjectivities and historically less-represented images (2017:9), I was interested in reading the Internet and digitality from a planetary perspective.

Here, I highlight the Internet as a stage that embraces the network of exchange of ideas. The Internet entangles syntheses, dialogues and negotiations of alternate planetary views that

may appear to resemble 'in-between-ness', the oscillation between identifiable points of reference... where devices, events and activities are formed out of relationships, necessary interdependencies, and mutually co-relating entities. (Nelson, 2010:17)

I draw on Harroway to more aptly name my position, not as a "blissed-out techno bunny, technophile" type, but rather a considered engagement with a worlding through play, and "opening up capacities for pleasure, and bonding, and making kin in new and wonderful ways with both humans and nonhumans - including technologies" (in Young, 2019).

"Hybrid but human" refers to a line spontaneously offered by Moetanalo during the digital devising process of creating the "[I am \(not\) a cyborg](#)" vignette for the zine, in which he poetically deliberates and celebrates one's reliance on the Internet in the age of Digitality. He ends the performance by stating: "... Yes, I'm hybrid. But I'm human". The notion of *hybrid*, here, was less a reference to Homi K. Bhabha's proposition (1994) and more toward the contemplation of *plurality*.

While Bhabha points toward a transcultural syncretic identity within Postcolonial modernity, I am inclined to appropriate Robert Young's reading of a "deliberate disruption of homogeneity" (1995:21). I take care to particularly reference *hybridisation* regarding the lens of late-Capitalist organisation of the Internet. Again, with a nod to Bisschoff and Harroway, I am interested in reclaiming and constructing plural and subjective experiences through digital performance as a planetary practice.

I am not opposed to Bhabha's point, but as aforementioned, I rather locate negotiations of 'representation' within the planetary and the utterance with an emphasis on *plurality* and *specificity*.

A planetary reading of cyber connection is intriguing regarding the possibility of complexifying relations that transgress the inherited baggage of the neo-liberal Capitalist framing of the Internet. As

planetary life consists in an incessantly thickening, historically unprecedented web of relations among people, cultures, and locales... If planetarity is the cultural-discursive matrix of innovative art, then the dialogical and the relational may well encapsulate the planetary (aestheSis). (Elias and Moraru, 2015:xii, own addition)

It is here that I propose that the interactivity between the collaborators, and between the audience and performers embodies planetary exchange. Moreso, the aestheSis of framing reflexive, specific and plural utterances as a bricoleured intermedial performance embodies my planetary practice.

2.2. Ephemeral residues

When considering the cases of documenting the Minor and Medium Projects for research purposes, it is notable that the form I delivered my projects in were intrinsically recorded. However, for the Medium Project, I took care to *remediate* the vignettes into an [Instagram page](#) (or what I call an Instagram exhibition). The result is an archive of both the final audio-visual offerings, as well as interjected annotations, behind-the-scenes footage, and documentation of processes that resulted in the live performance. While this perhaps undermines the initial nod to Peggy Phelan (2003:146), it holds up the notions of *residues* of evidence through an ephemera as proposed by José Esteban Muñoz (1996).

There are notable limits to translating live performance into screen media. The ephemerality and *aura* (as per Benjamin, 1935) of live performance cannot possibly be captured and reproduced by the digital 1s and 0s. As Phelan argued, performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or entered into the circulation of 'representations' (ibid). Philip Auslander counters this by stating that there is "no ontological difference between the live and the *mediatized*: that in fact, live events are becoming more identical with *mediatized* ones" (Auslander, 2008, cited in Makhumula, 2017b:3). And that liveness is not necessarily a metaphysical concern

but a contextual one¹². Auslander, however, acknowledges Walter Benjamin's point that mass media allows for an audience to become *closer* to a work of art (2008:39). While mediatisation may not strictly require *co-present bodies* to function, digital performance does allow for amplification, spatio-temporal transcendence, multiplicity, interactivity and immersion (Robin, 2010).

In "Performance Remains" (2001), Rebecca Schneider succinctly charts the tensions between the ephemerality of performance and the motion toward recording, capturing or saving it as an archive. While it is important to note that I am not advocating for an intermedial practice that seeks to 'solve' this tension, I am rather interested in the side-effect of working with a collective in an intermedial performance project and the resultant unintentional documenting of the process - documentation by default. In both of the projects, the prompts (whether written, audio, movement-based or video) needed to be documented so that we could send to and respond to each other whilst working online. This resulted in a large repository of documents and source materials that have subsequently been edited and curated into the projects themselves, and stand as rich material to reference within the research of my practice.

In "Ephemera as Evidence" (1996), José Muñoz echoes Auslander's point about context by observing that a large part of cultural production is located outside what is material and immediately available to experience. His resistance to accepting 'performance disappearance as loss' points toward the possibility of its distinctly visible *residues* (Wilson, 2021). Muñoz proposes that *ephemera* - "traces, glimmers, residues, and specks of things" - are proof of a performance (or what he calls "queer acts", in particular) (1996:10). He frames ephemera as "alternate modes of textuality and narrativity like memory" that does not 'forget' the performance once it has 'disappeared', but rather refashions it (*ibid*). Here, I am drawn to the notion of *residues* of audiovisual utterances, which index space, time and 'spectral' bodies during the *Hybrid but Human* processes, interwoven with the 'evidence' of digital

¹² In the "[Ways of Listening](#)" webinar between Simon McBurney, Laurie Anderson, Brian Eno and Nitin Sawhney, Eno equates theatre's quandary of mediatization and the supposed 'inauthenticities' that arise from reproducing live performance to that of music's congruity between the live and the studio. Like Auslander, Eno makes note of the socio-political context that gives rise to recording and distributing music; and the advantages of digital technology in music-making history. This, of course, does not reduce the intrinsic bias embedded in the act of recording and archiving.

dérive or responsive spoken word poems. This rich repository of residues serves as the basis on which I curated and collaged the vignettes that make up both projects, and perhaps gesture toward my proposal of intermedial dramaturgy.

In his chapter, “What do we Document? Dense Video and the Epistemology of Practice” (2017), Ben Spatz proposes a process described as *dense video*. Dense video is a bricolage that includes carefully placed citations and textual annotations “to guide the viewer towards a richer understanding of the documented (performance) practice by enfolding multilayered, nonlinear content within the overall linear structure” (241, own addition). Spatz notes that the density of the image intends to parallel the density of prose in academic writing, through “the use of footnotes, parenthetical annotations, citations and references, specialized language, longer or more elaborate sentence structures, and other textual complexities” (246); or the crafted composition of various embodied and dramaturgical materials by a theatre director or choreographer, is condensed into a repeatable performance score (241). The document reads as a ‘video essay’ of the process and performance itself, with evidence from other academic sources and embodied knowledges.

I am interested in using Spatz’s notion of a *dense document* when considering the *Hybrid but Human* projects. Dense documentation is present in all of my outputs for this course, and it is perhaps most pronounced in my [performance presentation](#) as part of the Research Day symposium in February of 2022 (see Appendix E). Further, this strategy is self-consciously applied to this very paper through the use of hyperlinks; placing my practice in deliberate entanglement with the theory. I note Fleishman’s reminder that practice-as-research indeed escapes textual conventions (12), and that this repository needs to intentionally leave gaps and fissures, and draw on a density that sits in a complex negotiation with the performance and this paper. I am inclined to read the dense document form as a gesture toward *writing in the intermedial performance form itself* as a dramaturgical practice; but also, as in the case of the *Hybrid but Human* Instagram exhibition, a repository of residues which evidences the live event or the rehearsal process as a metonym for a production.

To conclude, I posit that the generation of utterances from the online studio improvisations in both *Hybrid but Human* projects resulted in a dense bank of residual ephemera. It was through the prompt of responding to this material that the reflexive

staging of the process in the final output; the entanglements and negotiations between makers, mediums and process; the interplay between the performers, interfaces and audiences places the bricoleur as the bridge between forms and discourses (with reference to Stewart, 2007). Here, the culmination of the PaR projects are framed as a dense assemblage of praxes that I delivered as the *Hybrid but Human: Vol 1. zine* and *Hybrid but Human: Towards a digital dramaturgy Zoomformance*.

3. Intermediality and the self: Negotiating memory through the interplay between media and presence

The *Hybrid but Human* projects saw the critical articulation of frameworks and methodologies through the handling of my practice. As noted, the projects were generated responsively - to the context, the form, the research, the fellow collaborators, and so on - resulting in a bank of reflexive intermedial utterances that I bricolage into two distinct intermedial performances. The following two projects turn to the subject of memory; staging sequences made up of a bricolage of my family's home videos and oral and embodied performances regarding how I remember those events differently. *The Camera and I* and *Stages, Screens, and In-betweens* sought to develop my methodologies articulated in the Minor and Medium Projects, however additional theoretical frameworks were required to understand the negotiation of memory through media and presence. In order to frame these projects, I have drawn on the ideas of *memory work* by Annette Khun (2000; 2002; 2007; 2010) and the methodologies of *autoethnography* offered by Catherine Russell (1999) and Tami Spry (2001; 2006; 2007; 2009; 2010; 2016). Here, I expand on my findings noted between the projects' videographic, sonic, and theatrical forms; the rich interplay between memory and presence; and the potency of staging the *personal as planetary* when considering an autoethnographic intermedial performance practice.

3.1. *The Camera and I* (2022): Towards an autoethnographic intermedial performance practice

The Camera and I was a personal interrogation of how memories are produced, moulded and maintained. A probing of the self as an intermedial performance practitioner through the way memory is stored in pixels or cells. The PaR project was born from the prompt of generating work in response to an object that has great meaning for me - an object that holds great symbolic importance - rather than a response to the context of the pandemic as per the first two projects. For me, this was my family's Sony Video 8 camcorder, which I rediscovered nestled within a tangle of obsolete cables in my father's garage.

This camera was the vessel with which a variety of family memories were captured, from my arrival home from Parklane Hospital in 1992, up until my pre-teen years around 2005. This amounted to over 100 DVR tapes that housed almost 27 hours of

readable footage. In the backdrop of my disintegrating family in post-Apartheid suburbia is early evidence of my exploits in performance and film work, arguably the beginnings of my practice as an intermedial performance artist. The footage documents dance recitals, living-room variety shows, documentary experiments around my family's home, and personal self-discoveries through the mirrored LCD screen.

From the handling of the camera itself and the 27 hours of footage, I began to write and respond to the relationship my current self (as filmmaker and performer) has with the past. I wrote in the poetic spoken-word form; the videographic edit of the material, and through written text, recalling and reframing the memories conjured from the prompt. What began to emerge was a tension between the embodied memory and the mediated memory, and thus resulted in an intermedial solo performance, that combined video and projection mapping into the *mise-en-scène*; fx'd and looped oral storytelling; mime and physical performance.

I wanted to probe the possibilities, frictions, and fissures between the memories stored in these family home videos and the memories stored in my mind and body. And thus I created a *memory text*, an intermedial performance work about my relationship to the stage, screen and utterances of self therein. So, I began to excavate the hours of footage and my memories of my relationship to the stage and the screen, resulting in a [20-minute performance](#) on the 8th of April in the Playroom on Hiddingh Campus, titled *The Camera and I* (Appendix F).

The result was a spoken-word performance, modelled on the style of Laurie Anderson's monologic live albums¹³. My performance included incrementally looped layers of breathing, oral sounds, and poetry. The spoken-word performance bookended a series of embodied scenes in the heightened physical comedy style of Jaques Lecoq. These embodied scenes integrated storytelling, mime, and multiple-characterisation techniques; counterpointed by the bricolage and heavily fx'd layers of the home video footage projection-mapped onto the back wall.

¹³ With particular reference to Anderson's 1995 live album *The Ugly One with the Jewels and Other Stories: A Reading from Stories From the Nerve Bible*. The album is a collection of autobiographical monologues that combine an electric pitch-shifting voice filter and ambient synthesised sound. She famously used a MIDI keyboard and performed in her idiosyncratic deadpan voice.



Figure 6: The final combination of vocal looping and the projection in the space.
The Camera and I, Pilkington, 2022; image taken by Thato Mosiuoa.

My different roles and mediums of fx'd vocal performance, embodied performance, and projection were invited to be read in negotiation with one another. Through the practice of memory work, the project resulted in a deepening of the inquiry into presence and media. The interplay and frictions between the mediums offered fruitful insights into my intermedial performance practice, namely the spaces *in-between* the forms as a rich site for meaning-making. This delineation refers to Chappell and Kattenbelt's proposal of an *inter-relational model* of intermedial performance structured by spaces, fissures, and the interrelation between the mediums (in Lavender, 2010:133).

I further advance this by framing the locus of meaning-making within the *spaces between forms* by referencing Catherine E. Walsh's section "On Decolonial Cracks and the Praxis of Fissure" (2018). Beyond the gaps or 'cracks' between mediums, she draws our attention to the praxical questions of one's positionality within the artistic and research endeavours as *spaces of possibility*. Regarding Gloria Anzaldúa¹⁴, Walsh proposes that these fissures

¹⁴ Anzaldúa's additions are framed within the Latinx concept of *Nepantla*, refraining the notion of in-between-ness (Walsh, 2018:83).

enables us to reconfigure ourselves as subjects outside the us/them binary... to construct alternative roads, create new topographies and geographies... look at the world with new eyes, use competing systems of knowledge, and rewrite identities. Navigating the cracks is the process of reconstructing life anew. (83)

Here, the *relational I*¹⁵ is read as an agent on the planet. The spaces “enunciate, reflect, and construct another place and postulate” possibilities of plural and reflexive praxes (ibid).

The Camera and I initiated an additional methodology of autoethnographic practice. Namely, how an intermedial performance practice may accommodate the tensions and interplay between memory imbued in media and the body. I propose *The Camera and I* as a first iteration of *Stages, Screens, and In-betweens*, where groundwork in the thinking, practice and content generation will be developed further.

3.2. Memory Work

In “Memory Texts and Memory Work: Performances of memory in and with visual media”, Khun probes the notion of how the past can be re-enacted in the present through performances of different kinds, or what she terms *memory work*. My interest is what she proposes regarding “performances of memory *in* and *with* visual media, and the ways in which these may embody, express, work through, and even unpick, interconnections between the private, the public and the personal” (2010:229). While Khun focuses on the institution of cinema as a site for memory work, there is value in what she offers regarding embodied performance through and with visual media.

These performances of memory, or *memory texts*, often construct or negotiate the past through a “conscious and purposeful staging of memory” (Kuhn, 2000:186). This seems to prioritise subjectivity rather than some kind of objective remembering and further prioritises the self-reflexivity of this act. This undercuts any assumptions about the authenticity of what is remembered, “taking it not as ‘truth’ but as evidence of a particular sort: material for interpretation, to be interrogated, mined, for its meaning and its possibilities” (303). This offers a sort of permission to rework the

¹⁵ Walsh references Glissant’s notion in *Poetics of Relation* (1997).

pixels, to reframe that which is captured in order to uncover that which may be invisible or to focalise that which appears in the margins.

From the 27 hours of footage, I selected a total of 15 minutes, focusing on documenting myself engaging the camera - both in front of and behind the lens. The result was a collection of short clips from my childhood, ranging from profane re-enactments of my school plays with my siblings, to glimpses of almost phenomenological acknowledgements of existence through seeing and being seen through the camera. I then collaged these clips to overlap and play simultaneously through a series of split screen and overlay effects, and a bricolage of memories emerged (see Figures 5.1 - 5.3).



Figures 5.1 - 5.3: A selection of stills from the video, demonstrating the treatment of the footage, eventually resulting in largely obscured shapes and colours with impressionistic glimpses of figures.
The Camera and I, Pilkington, 2022.

I felt affirmed reading Khun's description of memory work as often having a distinct organisation of time, typically taking the form of "a montage of vignettes, anecdotes, fragments, 'snap-shots' and flashes", generating a sense of synchrony of occurrences that exist beyond logical temporality (2010:299). She describes this collagist, fragmentary, timeless, almost dreamlike approach as having a poetic quality in its use of construction to capture a feeling (303), as opposed to a narrative that relies on a causal structure (299). Paul Carter proposes that working with memory as the material process of "re-membering" scattered pieces to make up a body of work (2004:195). This, says Carter, is remembering "beyond nostalgia", where the accumulated re-assembly of memories leads to a new reading (5). I have situated this new reading in my methodology as bricolage.

This methodology deepened my leaning toward the notion of responsive utterances evident in the *Hybrid but Human* projects. But unlike those projects that were made in response to the COVID-19 social climate, *The Camera and I* sought to focus on the evidence of self on stage and screen through memory work.

When considering memory work in relation to the performance event, it felt essential to consider the element of the audience's collective presence. Or rather, how "personal or individual memory connects with shared, public forms of memory... figures in, and even shapes, the social body and social worlds" (Khun, 2007:283). Khun states that "negotiation and intersubjectivity are key features of memory work" (284), offering productive insights into the entanglements evident during the reception of the performance.

Kuhn advances the notion that memory work is more than a personal process of experiencing memory. Rather, it is a practice with broader socio-political implications. The treatment of my family videos in my writing and editing process through the poetic reorganisation of time through the fragmenting, overlaying and collaging of footage starts to make links with the act of communing around the memory text.

Khun states:

The gaps in the story, the fluctuating or uncertain enunciative source, the 'aesthetic distance' all provide non-identificatory points of entry for the viewer, spaces inside which (their) own memories and processes of remembering may be activated, in a process of gathering the film-maker's particular, even personal, memory-images and memory-stories into a broader seam of collective, shared remembering. (303)

Here, the enunciation (or utterance) of personal or private memory is entwined into collective memory. Through specific and subjective memory work, hegemonic remembrance is destabilised and a planetary reading is ushered in.

Regarding the theatrical or performative encounter, I was interested in placing *memory work* within the realm of the flesh: embodiment and presence within the writing, making and the performing body in relation to the co-present audience. Or, as Tami Spry eloquently describes, as being:

about the moisture of bodies under the hot lights of the stage, theatrical or everyday... This is a place where the politics of private knowledge are presented for the purpose of witness, for the necessity of copformance, for the possibility of communication or dissolution... a place where epistemologically en fleshed methodologies are consummated, and collide, publicly, politically, pedagogically, personally (and planetary). (2010:234, own addition)

Notably, this reiterates Khun's notion of personal memory work as intrinsically interwoven into collective acts of remembering.

Catherine Russell furthers this assertion by proposing that autoethnography locates the maker's positionality in relation to broader historical or political contexts - a staging of subjectivity (1999:276). Through autoethnographic work,

the politicization of the personal identities are frequently played out among several cultural discourses, be they ethnic, national, sexual, racial, and/or class based. The subject 'in history' is rendered destabilized and incoherent, a site of discursive pressures and articulations. (ibid)

Khun and Russell's ideas point toward the significance of memory work within the collective. Or, in other words, how the personal is political. How the personal is planetary. To further the framework of Khun's ideas, I will briefly unpack notions of autoethnography as per Russell (1999) and Tami Spry (2001; 2006; 2007; 2009; 2010; 2017).

3.3. Autoethnography

Autoethnography is both a method and a text of diverse interdisciplinary praxes (Reed-Danahay in Spry, 2001:710) that uses 'personal experience ("auto") to describe and interpret ("graphy") cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and practices ("ethno")' (Adams et al., 2017:1). It is also an explicitly reflexive methodology that is in deliberate opposition or conversation with the epistemologies of ethnography which largely privilege, and make 'natural' (Russell, 1999:277) "the researcher over the subject, method over the subject matter, and maintain commitments to outmoded conceptions of validity, truth, and generalizability" (Spry, 2001:710). It resists representation and an objective facade and relies on deliberate subjective 'self-staging', where the self or the body is the main site of meaning-making (ibid; ibid).

In her chapter "Autoethnography: Journeys of the Self" (1999), Russell expounds on the methodologies of autoethnography in video and film and notably places it in counterpoint to the ethnographic origins of documentary filmmaking. In the case of using and restaging my family's home video footage, I am offering an autoethnographic bricolage of the familial construct. And further, I am acknowledging and deliberately destabilising the self within a historical context. I appreciate the

tensions between the subject, maker, and researcher roles, gliding between them during the process, or, as Russell notes, the “subjective space that combines anthropologist and informant, subject and object of the gaze, under the sign of one identity” that is read by the viewer (312).

Regarding an embodied autoethnographic methodology, namely *performance autoethnography*, I draw on the oeuvre of Spry. She echoes Russell when she notes that

Personal narrative performance gives shape to social relations, but because such relations are multiple, polysemic, complexly interconnected, and contradictory, it can do so only in unstable and destabilizing ways for narrator *and* audience . . . a story of the body told through the body which makes cultural conflict concrete. (2001:710)

I am interested in the ruptures and entanglements that become present through this destabilisation or intentional obscurity. Here, I propose a planetary reading of the subject through the locus of the reflexive, specific and plural utterances. Here, the co-presence of an audience, the plural roles of subject-researcher-artist, and the bricolage of memory texts are invited into an intra-active web of dialogue and negotiation.

Spry also notes that the dialectical relationship between the performance, the text and the body often emerge as a significant theme within autoethnographic praxes. As with the video image itself, the performed memories not only display the genesis of my relationship with the camera, filmmaking and performing; it becomes the enfolded subject itself. Here, not only are the medial interrelations in negotiation, but also my body and the performance itself. “The living body/subjective self of the researcher is recognised as a salient part of the research process, and sociohistorical implications of the researcher are reflected upon ‘to study the social world from the perspective of the interacting individual’” (711).

Another notable feature of an autoethnographic text, as per Russell and Spry, is the organisation of time. It is the temporality of the text which is often fragmented, collaged, dialogic, and partial (Russell, 1999; Spry, 2017:51). This indeed echoes Khun’s aesthetic proposition of time in a memory text as applied to the treatment of the video projection, but can also be read in the aural layering of my voice and breath through the loop pedal, as well as in the conjunction of the bodied storytelling

and the projection. While this forms part of my method of bricolage, it also invites the intentional obscurity of the image (as noted in Figure 5.3). This echoes Édouard Glissant's idea of deliberate obscurity, or what he calls 'opacity' to destabilise and resist neocolonial and modern readings of the subject (1997:120).

Regarding the inter-relational model of intermedial performance, and the *relational I* therein, several points about the role of memory work in my praxis can be observed. First is the tension between the body and media which I will briefly explicate with reference to how memory is signified as a metonym. Or in other words, the tensions and interplay between memory as evidenced through the media of video, my performed recollections, and the presence of my body in the performance space.

By *presence*, I refer to notions of theatrical presence in a material sense¹⁶; embodied presence, and residual presence, as evidenced by residual ephemera.

As noted in the first section of this paper, my methodology intended to frame the materials of *The Camera and I* to include bodies, spaces, design elements, media and dramaturgical composition. And further, the methods of bricolage and intermediality enfold a self-reflexivity of the performance itself. Here the performance stages text, image, and bodies as and through media, making visible how the text "not only describes (the text as image) but also inscribes bodies (the body as text); how images have more to do with what we think we see than with what is there before our eyes (the image as imagination)" (Nibbelink and Merx in Bay-Cheng 2010: 225). This is further marked by the reception of the performance by an audience.

Unlike the *Hybrid but Human* projects, *The Camera and I* relied on the variable of corporeal co-presence of an audience and a performer in a space to be defined as existing. This can be exemplified by the mime techniques used as part of the embodied storytelling. Here, I draw on Lecoq's idea of *figurative mime*, where "objects, furnishings and architecture" are conjured through gesture and sound, and my bodily articulation in handling the invisible and imagined items by an audience (2002:108). "This gestural evocation of images" alters or combines the orality

¹⁶ Although I am also inclined to briefly reference Bert O. States' phenomenological ideas in *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms* (1985), with particular reference to his proposal of the 'collaborative' and 'self-expressive' pronominal modes in which the performer is read from the presence of an implicitly active audience (157-206).

through storytelling and thus is defined as *storytelling mime* (110). The illusory presence of items and places within the story being told is brought to life in the mind's eye of the spectator. This collaborative act (as Bert O. States would propose, 1985) could not exist without an audience in the space.

Further, I note Sanjin Muftić's proposal that each audience member can be thought of as a receptacle of media that they have consumed in their lifetime (2019:20). He posits that minds and bodies carry with them a saturation of media images, that take on personal associations through a process of negotiations and entanglements with already received media content (14). Thus, the presence of the audience can be thought of as an important variable within the bricolage performance event: as an additional layer of dense imagery that needs to be read in negotiation with the video, sound, and performer's body.

Space, time, media and audience punctuate the notion of theatrical presence, further accentuating the idea of situated presence as anchored through the body. Meditative breathing and mindful embodiment practices were central to my way of working from the Medium Project (noted in the Note on Care in Section One). These practices often found themselves bleeding into the outputs and are perhaps most notable through the use of breath and breathing in *The Camera and I*.

An important impulse for me was to transmute the calming and mindful attributes of the process into the performance itself. While this can perhaps be noted in the warm muted lighting, or in the church-like configurations of benches to demarcate the auditorium, I deliberately integrated breath and breathing into the performance text. Using a loop pedal to amplify and record several layers of my breath in real time, I created a breath soundscape - a breathscape, if you will - to underscore the whole performance, where the final beats of the performance were made up solely of the sound of my breath during the blackout. I would later frame this impulse as a way to 'tincture'¹⁷ my bodily memory into materiality. So, the staging of breath becomes the vessel in which the bodily, tacit, forgotten, disputed or evanescent memory can be expressed.

¹⁷ I extend Zara Julius' idea of capturing sound in water through a fabricated 'tincturing' process, as discussed in her presentation at Reframing Africa 2020. In particular, she articulates the effect sound waves have on molecules in liquid. She thus parallels the effects of sound on blood as it is carried and inherited through bodies.

In *The Body Keeps the Score* (2014), Bessel van der Kolk unpacks the material, muscular, hormonal, neurological and cellular effects that past experiences (namely trauma) and genealogies have on the biological body. This is the memory that is intrinsically corporal: remembered by and through the body, encoded into the body; opposed to memory stored in the mind through sensory or narrative memory. Where the body relentlessly stores memory in our tissues, bones and cells, where the mind may falter. In other words, the body keeps the score (101). This offers useful groundings for my final words in the performance:

I search the pixels
For some sign or slippage
Of how I remember things used to be,

My family
My body

(The final performance poem in *The Camera and I*, Pilkington, 2022)

Here, I am particularly interested in the tensions between memories stored in our cells or in pixels - where repositories of family documents are complexified or countered by memories stored in the body. Where the natural clefts in the body offer potential to house an Internet's-worth of experiences past and experiences to come. Where the fissures between body parts and the spaces between forms offers one a rich site to contemplate memory, this tension between embodied memory and the memory stored in the home video footage recalls Muñoz's proposal of 'ephemera as evidence' (1996). The haunted spaces and spectral bodies of a past event are captured in the home videos staged as it corresponds to the invisibility or the silencing of that which is enacted behind closed doors. Sometimes it is in the zooming in or repetition of the footage that this is revealed, or, as Muñoz notes, it is precisely what is *not* captured.

In the first two sections of this paper, I note the importance of a care practice in the context of working during a global pandemic. It was curious, then, that this practice of care was not applied to the Solo Project. I was directly engaging my family's videos and memories of often difficult times in an almost impulsive manner often aggravating my vagal nervous system. I take a moment to note some findings to avoid the same emotional burnout for *Stages, Screens, and In-betweens*.

In *Doing Memory Research*, Carolyn Birdsall and Danielle Drozdzewski emphasise an approach to *memory work* that is guided by an *ethics of care* (2019). I particularly note the “importance of critical self-reflexivity” in “intuitive and situated knowledges”, specifically with reference to the idea that trauma and “it’s immaterial traces and its affect, is in itself a sensory involvement in research process” (12). And in the case of autoethnographic memory work, one’s simultaneous roles as ‘researcher’, ‘participant’, and ‘subject’ requires that the process be handled with iterative consideration, reflexivity and “playful remembrance” (19). However, during the Solo Project process, the ‘researcher’ and ‘facilitator’ roles were peripheral. This resulted in often uncontained, impulsive, and relentlessly unreflexive ways of generating material - private and oftentimes traumatic material - resulting in burnout and further aggravation of my still-inflamed vagus nerve. It’s important to note, therefore, that the care practice enacted in the *Hybrid but Human Zoomformance* project must, as a fundamental part of my praxis, be applied to the upcoming solo devising process.

The weaving of bricolage vignettes of residual utterances from the playful studio process, and the extended investigation into an autoethnographic intermedial performance practice through the engagement with my family’s repository of video footage, will be the basis of my final output for the course. The production will expand on some of the initial gestures of the Solo Project, with particular experimentation using the DV and VHS video formats; the inclusion of bodily and projection interplay in the Live Projection Painting form (which I describe in more detail below); and an offering of storytelling and embodiment that is aligned with reflexive utterances. This process will be handled with care, and I will be mindful of the notion that I am creating from the position of researcher, maker, performer, and subject.

To conclude this chapter, I note that *The Camera and I* ends with a poetic reference to all of the theoretical groundings in which the praxes mentioned above took place and wish to extend into the final production. An autoethnographic intermedial performance about the interplay between presence and media is epitomised through the tensions of embodied or recorded memory.

Dusty tapes, traces of the truth and residues of what's to come.
It's all there, the progress of how I got here:
Stages, screens, and in-betweens,
Dykes in dresses, pimpled puberty, and private school privilege,
Gender crises.
Pluralities.
Hybrids.
Humans.

(The final performance poem in *The Camera and I*, Pilkington, 2022)

3.4. *Stages, Screens, and In-betweens* (2022)

Stages, Screens, and In-betweens (2022) intends to be an autoethnographic intermedial performance, and the second iteration of *The Camera and I*, that will excavate my early years as a performer and filmmaker and the documentation thereof. The 60-minute one-person performance will weave video, sound, and body into a tapestry of memory texts - an amalgamation of my praxes during the course. The production intends to explore the tensions and interplay between embodied, oral, and documented memories through a bricolage of embodied storytelling, spoken-word poetry, vocal looping, radio collage, television and video art, live camera feeds, and projection play. The performance will take place in a preambulatory configuration in the Playroom on UCT's Hiddingh Campus in late-November 2022.

Stages, Screens, and In-betweens intends to re-stage recollections and familial documents in a reflexive, subjective way, drawing on the practical discoveries made during my previous projects, and the *Camera and I* in particular. Founded in personal and lived memories in the videographic, sonic and embodied form, I intend to reshape and reassemble fragments of my childhood. I will do this, not to capture or define a slice of history, but rather to reinterpret or interrogate a feeling of the past from my present-day self; a deliberate self-reflexive staging as means to frame my research into memory work and intermedial performance.

My hunch is to initiate the devising process by revisiting the 27 hours of family videos, which will prompt a set of textual, audio, and video sequences. As in *The Camera and I*, I am interested in the footage that documents my relationship to performing and curating performance for both the stage and the screen. Additionally, I am intrigued by the moment where the footage is glitched, accidentally overlaid;

and interrupted by the colour bar and grey frequency grain, perhaps as a nod to Marks' haptic visuality evident in the previous projects. These sequences will curate the residual evidence of my childhood into a one-person performance, staging the ephemera in a series of intermedial storytelling vignettes, that may be read themselves in a logic that parallels memory; refashioning the texts to punctuate particular content (with reference to Muñoz, 1996:10). The assemblage of footage, embodied recollections, and audio and visual media will be organised in the live performance event with reflexive staging of my role as bricoleur: the present 'bridge' between forms and discourses.

These sequences of video and vocal bricolage sequences will be staged through a collection of television and radio sets placed within the space. I want to play with the tensions between the analogue and digital media for this production, and my physical real-time manipulation therein. I am curious about the transcoding of DV footage into the digital form for ease of editing and visual manipulation, to then transcode it back into VHS form for playback. And similarly, making use of a cassette tape recorder to record sound and then play it back as a layer of sound on the loop station, to then transmit its feed using the FM frequency to play it back via radio waves. This approach to recording and playback blends the analogue and radio mechanisms used in the late-1990s and early 2000s (the time in which the original footage is largely contextualised), and the digital technologies of today, before being staged for a live audience. The physical presence of the camcorder, radios and televisions, in negotiation with the digital technologies and my body, make purposeful references to time.

I am curious about the refrain, or perhaps the reprieve, of the moments between the footage – what is evident in the residues *between* the scenes of home video footage. Further, I intend to extend the modalities as seen in *The Camera and I* by including analogue audio and visual forms and the intermedial device of *Live Performance Painting*.



Figure 7: Behind the scenes of a Live Projection Painting performance, *Homecoming* by Estabrak Al-Ansari, in Kingston upon Hull, UK. 2019
The image is available on Ansari's website estabrak.org.

The storytelling sequences will be organised to juxtapose form and content, building toward a climactic vignette of *Live Projection Painting*. Live Projection Painting is an intermedial performance practice created by Estabrak Al-Ansari, Athena Anastasiou and Emily Campbell-Burdette (the members of the Thre3 Strokes collective) in 2012. I was introduced to the form by Al-Ansari during an artist's residency in 2019. They described the form as a “unique multidisciplinary process that involves projected (video art), live performance and live (gestural) painting” and as that which investigates memory, touch, and “dialogues of disappearance” (estabrak.org, 2021). Evocative video is projected onto a transparent plastic screen, where a performer manipulates varying consistencies of white paint, resulting in an optical effect of the projection being painted into existence (as seen in Figures 8.1 and 8.2).

The Live Projection Painting form offers a rich site of medial interplay, where the intersection between the video projection, paint and body collapse into a single image; and are simultaneously interpreted as separate layers by an audience. They will be invited to view the image in several layers: The impressionistic video imagery made visible by thicker and more diluted paint, the hand manipulating the paint onto the back of the screen, and glimpses of the performer and the buckets of paint behind the screen. The audience is offered the simultaneous image of the painted video projection and the mechanics behind its making, resulting in a dance between the product and process in their mind's eye. One can note striking examples of Live Projection Painting in Figures 7 and 9.

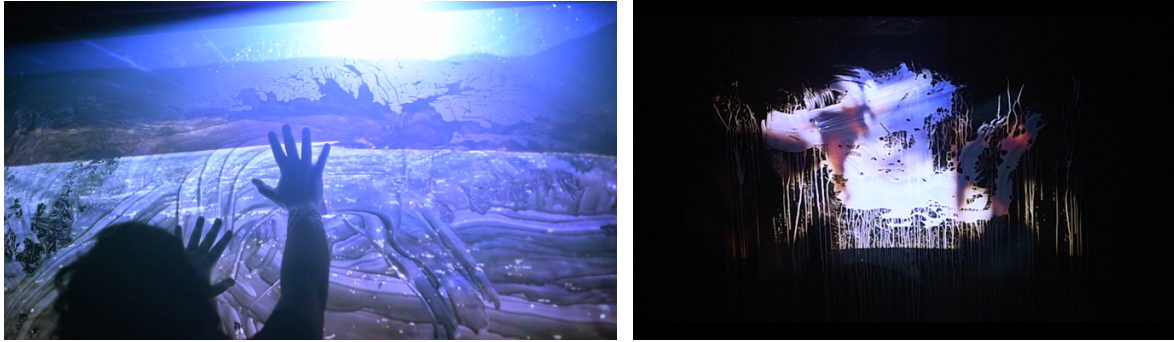


Figure 8.1 & 8.2: Behind the scenes of a Live Projection Painting performance, where in 8.1, one can note the view from behind the screen where the performer manipulates the paint; and in 8.2, where one can note the front view of the screen where the impressionistic quality of the projected image is made visible to an audience.

The stills were taken from the “[Live Projection Painting \(LPP\) Promo](#)” on Ansari’s Vimeo page.

Further, I note the haptic quality of Live Projection Painting. The bricolage video footage will be extended further when projected onto the multi-layered surface, where the combined elements of the paint, light, and hand result in a dense, textured image. Again I recall Marks’ (2000) motion toward a haptic visuality, where the textured image intends to evoke the sensation of corporeal touch within the audience’s imagination. This is perhaps emblemized through the actual manipulation of paint with the bare hand. Again this may evoke a contemplation about the handling of the materiality and the motion toward ‘touching’ memory (in this case, the projected images of the manipulated home videos).

The physical manipulation of the paint makes visible the pixels that vessel my family’s home videos, and intends to capture the notion of ‘touching’ memories. Here, there is a deliberate interplay between the memories ‘vesselled’ in my fingertips, interfacing with the memories stored in the footage; the present self negotiating the past.

I am further drawn to the form of embodiment inherent in Live Projection Painting. The almost pragmatic act of painting a surface with a bare hand - the leaning down and cupping paint before stroking onto the transparent plastic - is appealing to me. As aforementioned, I recognised that the Lecoqian mime form does not successfully uphold my deliberate resistance to a symbolic aesthetic and rather relies on the body to house a particular Modernist form of embodied signs. In Live Projection Painting, however, the almost meditative and repetitive action imbues subtle utterances in the form of embodied mannerisms and idiosyncrasies that I do not need to tame and

order for an audience to read. Rather, they are invited to read the body within a decolonial aestheSis, countering any conclusions of a completed sign that needs decoding to be understood. The body's presence is framed (and obscured) as a complex, plural and specific proponent of identities.



Figure 9: A Live Projection Painting performance still from *Eid Fatima*, by Thre3 Strokes at cinealt in Marrakech, Morocco, 2013. The image is available on Ansari's website, estabrak.org.

The culmination of the intermedial storytelling sequences into the Live Projection Painting beat intends to emblemise the central materiality of my praxis: a performance beat that is about the staging and obscuring of autoethnographic memory, made through a fusion of body, video, projection and painting that is simultaneously about reading the final image and revealing the mechanisms that create it.

An important discovery from the Solo Project in April that I wish to develop further is the significance of embellishing the storytelling sequences with historical contextual information that perhaps no longer serves the causal trajectory of the account but rather intends to resist simplified and vivid representation. Such as, the “hole that my mom kicked in the door after their noisy, noisy fight” during the re-enactment of my SABC reports around my home as a child; or the mention of M-Net’s Open Time or the “Hansie Cronje scandal”, pointing to a particular cultural memory of a socio-economic and cultural group in South Africa in the late-1990s. In retrospect, these details serve as utterances that intend to complicate my family’s performance of unity evident in the videos; and further, destabilise the historical representation of whiteness in South Africa in the era of post-1994 “Rainbow Nation” bliss. While the story vignettes centre on my relationship with the camera and performance, the

backdrop to the stories offer a reflexive ethnographic inquiry into the particularities of *whiteness*, and the performances of gender and family therein, that I intentionally and consistently critique and obscure. Again, I emphasise the invitation to read the “multiple, polysemic, complexly interconnected, and contradictory” social relations as unstable, ruptured, and entangled through the site of my body, my personal documents and the encounter with the audience (Spry, 2001:710).

As in *The Camera and I*, this encounter will be framed as a live, co-present event with an audience. I intend to configure the placement of the audience to disrupt the front-on, prosaic dynamic between my body; the placement of the media; and the other people in the Playroom space. I imagine the audience sitting around the room's perimeter on couches as a reference to my childhood TV room. The various media sources will be placed at multiple angles around the room and amongst the audience.

There will constantly be simultaneous sources of the story: either from my embodied retellings, from the projection or television sets, from the loop pedal or radio sets, or from the Live Projection Painting rig. The audience will thus need to negotiate where they are looking and, depending on the angle in which they are sitting, will be aware of the deliberate interruption of their gaze, in order to invoke Glissant's call to obscure and Spivak's proposal of the planetary, or in our case, the masking of the set and the multiple image sources, in order to destabilise a singular reading.

Again, the deliberate obscuration and bricolage of the memory texts links back to Khun's notion of “aesthetic distance” (read as the distance through decolonial aestheSis), where the utterances and gaps in the story, and the gaps between media, allow for space in which the audience's own personal processes of remembering may be activated and thus open “a broader seam of collective, shared remembering” (2010:303). Again, I reference Walsh, for whom the spaces “enunciate, reflect, and construct another place and postulate possibilities of plural and reflexive praxes” (2018:83).

Stages, Screens, and In-betweens thus motions towards a dense amalgamation of my thinking, reading, and handling of my intermedial performance practice, as articulated in the previous projects.

Conclusion

This explication articulates what has emerged in iterative engagements with different materials and ideas during the span of the MA course in Theatre and Performance at UCT, namely, a practice premised on a practice-as-research, responsive methodology that results in a bricolage of self-reflexive, specific and plural utterances. While my initial investigations sought to explore intermedial performance in the context of COVID-19, an inquiry into memory emerged in the latter half of my experiments. I trace the findings that surfaced, which have ultimately framed my inquiry into an autoethnographic intermedial performance practice, and which will result in the final thesis production, *Stages, Screens, and In-betweenes*.

Through the grounding of planetarity, I made use of responsive and reflexive dramaturgical methods when approaching my praxis. This offered a generative site for an intermedial performance practice that served as an inquiry into intimacy and touch in response to the personal alienation caused by the global pandemic. First, an inquiry into intimacy between two friends, and then an inquiry of intimacy and gathering among a collective.

During the *Hybrid but Human* projects, I articulated an approach that resulted in intermedial performance bricolages of utterances generated throughout each process. I have made use of Marks' notion of *haptic visibility* to imbue the corporeal experience of touch throughout the projects, as a gesture toward connection and communing at a time of physical distance. Of the discoveries made during these projects, one of the most important is the articulation of a process design that results in a repository of responsive, reflexive, specific and plural utterances, generated through a set of improvisations during an online studio process. I curated and bricoleured the residues of these improvisations into vignettes that were finally housed in an interactive zine and Zoomformance.

Beyond investigations into the possibilities of intermedial performance in the context of COVID-19, personal memory emerged as a rich site for investigation in the latter half of the course. When prompted to create a work that was deeply personal, the threads of my thinking regarding subjectivity and relationality expanded to the notion of investigating the personal as planetry. Thus during *The Camera and I*, I included the frameworks of memory work and autoethnography. For that project and in the

case of *Stages, Screens, and In-betweens*, my responsive approach is grounded in the utterances created regarding my relationship with my family's home videos and the tensions between memory captured on celluloid and the memory stored in my body's own cells. Khun's proposal of memory work offered me valuable insights into the rich interplay between media when consciously staging embodied, oral and documented memory in an intermedial performance. And further the considered staging of the particularities of whiteness within a motion toward a decolonial aestheSis.

For the upcoming performance, my hunch is to continue to negotiate the praxes of intermedial autoethnography with a particular interest in a dense aestheSis through the bricolage of media and corporeal material. These assemblages of personal utterances intend to frame a destabilised planetary subject within the work in which a larger collective could gather and participate in an act of shared remembering. The work toward generating these utterances intend to be handled with care: through playful acts of remembrance, mindful embodiment, and aesthetic obscurity to allow for gaps to deliberately remain so, in order to dream into *possibility*.

Thus, *Stages, Screens, and In-betweens* intends to consolidate my findings as an intermedial artist-researcher, bricoleur, and autoethnographer by materialising the interplay of media and bodily presence through a memory text. My use of reflexive utterances, as framed through transcoding analogue-to-digital and back again and through Live Projection Painting intends to materialise my thinking regarding my autoethnographic intermedial performance practice. This project seeks to engage the fissures present between the bricolage of video, audio, body, and paint, as a locus for investigating the potential interplay between media and new, planetary readings of the self and the collective.

Herein, I note the *potentiality* evident in these fissures: the spaces between medial forms; between my roles as researcher, artist, and subject; between the iterations of practical research during this course. These *spaces of possibility* offer potential entanglement in unfolding worlds.

Appendices

Appendix A:

Research Day 2021, [performance presentation](#); as a part of the Research Symposium at the Centre for Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies at UCT in March, 2021.

Appendix B:

“Hybrid but Human: Vol.1” zine, Hlabi Moetanalo and Nicola Pilkington (May, 2021): Residues available in as part of the [Instagram exhibition](#).

Below are links to the various performance vignettes for convenience:

- 1) [I am \(not\) a cyborg](#)
- 2) [How to touch without touching, a recipe](#)
- 3) [you, me and technology](#)
- 4) [we are connected.](#)
- 5a) [How do you touch without touching?](#)
- 5b) [Wordcloud](#) (or the encore)
- 6) [Intimate at a Distance](#)

Appendix C:

‘The intimacies and distances of “Hybrid but Human”: Reflections on an Intermedial Performance Practice’. A first seminar [performance presentation](#) by Nicola Pilkington (September, 2021).

Appendix D:

“Hybrid but Human: toward a digital dramaturgy” Zoomformance remediated into an [Instagram exhibition](#), Shameelah Khan, Geoffrey Diver and Nicola Pilkington (November-December, 2021):

Below are links to the various performance vignettes for convenience:

- 1) [Prologue](#)
- 2) [Exquisite Corpse](#)
- 3) [How to Gather in the Age of Gatherlessness](#)
- 4) [Connecting, in between](#)
- 5) [Screen within Screens](#)
- 6) [We are All Connected](#)
- 7) [Wiki Holes](#)
- 8) [To Touch Without Touching](#)

Appendix E:

Research Day 2022, [performance presentation](#); as a part of the Research Symposium at the Centre for Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies at UCT in February, 2022.

Appendix F:

[A 360-video archive](#) of “The Camera and I”, a solo performance by Nicola Pilkington (April, 2022).

Appendix G:

‘Finding the Spaces Between Forms: Reflections on an intermedial performance practice’. A second seminar [performance presentation](#) by Nicola Pilkington (June, 2022).

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