

Ouma: Performing the Myth of the Self

By

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an explication of my thesis production *Ouma*, which was presented in December 2008 towards the fulfilment of the degree Masters of Arts in Theatre and Performance (Theatre Making) at the University of Cape Town. The explication focuses largely on what happens when the myth structuring the identity of an individual changes. How does the individual go about re-narrating identity within the context of the new myth? And how might the creation of performance contribute to the re-narrating?

The first section, *Myth of the Self* examines the concept of ‘myth’ and ‘the Self’ and how they intersect and influence each other. I demonstrate how myths and the Self intersect and how, through the telling of stories, we create understanding or meaning.

The second section, *Myth of the Old; Myth of the New*, considers the myth of the old South Africa, the myth of the new South Africa, and the different strategies of self-narration that occur in the one and in the other.

The third section, *Rupture*, proposes that there is a powerful impact on individual identities when a political myth is rupture.

In conclusion I indicate where the continuation of this investigation may lead.

INTRODUCTION

In my work as an artist I focus extensively on my own life. The chronicle of my life has taken several routes and has embodied different personas, first as written narrative and then as performance. Through these auto-biographical explorations - using different personas rather than one linear subjective point of view - I aim to shape and reshape the story of my life.

A personal myth delineates an identity, illuminating the values of an individual life. The personal myth is not a legend or a fairy tale, but a sacred story that embodies personal truth. (McAdams 1993:34)

Pertinent to my research and the processes of my own myth-making, are questions such as: How is the Self formed? What role do myths play in this shaping process? How do political myths give shape to the Self? What happens to the individual when the political myth that makes up his¹ landscape is suddenly ruptured and replaced?

When my auto-biographical explorations began, I immediately became aware of how illusive this Self was that I was trying to pin down with words. I soon gave in to this illusive or layered Self and in the majority of my work I now allow the fictional – often absurd, surreal or dream state – to intersect with my autobiographical reflections. This is clear in my first two novelettes, *Viva Dada!* and *Langs die Neon Via de la Rosa* (Along the Neon Via De la Rosa); and in my first full novel, *Somer van die Wit Haas* (Summer of the White Rabbit). In *Viva Dada!* (self-published in 1994 under the name Jan Afganistan and which received a

¹ Please note that every gender-specific pronoun, e.g. 'his', can just as easily be replaced with 'her'. It's cumbersome to add 'his/her' in every sentence. I write from my own perspective and thus I use the masculine form throughout.

positive review from Antjie Krog in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*) my life in Paarl as Jan Afganistan intersects with a figure such as Liewe Heksie². In *Langs die Neon Via de la Rosa* (written in 1996 and distributed amongst friends under the name Shaka September) I am the mass murderer who has sex with his victims' organs. In *Somer van die Wit Haas* (written in 1998 and distributed amongst friends under the name Sjaka S. Septembir) I have a fictional story running parallel to my autobiographical life story and this climaxes when I fall into my own fictionalized tale. In 1996, after publishing two books of poetry under the name Sjaka S. Septembir, I became involved with performance. In a three-year period of performance art (1996-1998) I worked with the group PORSELYNNKAS. Our entire focus was how to make the myth of fiction meet with the myth of real, everyday, mundane life. A few years later the same theme is still detected in my first Master's project where I performed *The Public Hanging of Oprah Winfrey* (2007), in which Diamandt Wolf (a persona of mine) hangs Oprah Winfrey in public. In my solo Master's project (2008), different personas of mine intertwine in one setting trying to find out *Wie de Fok is Sjaka S. Septembir?* In my thesis production, *Ouma* (2008), the reality of my grandmother's death, my longing for her and the tale of Red Riding-Hood become entangled.

In all this work since 1994, in which the lines of reality and fiction blur, I have encountered many aspects of my Self. There is myself as a neo-Dadaist; myself as a shaman; myself as a rebellious poet, and so on. Through playing these different roles, different voices and personas have come to the fore, and through these various

² *Liewe Heksie* is the title of a popular Afrikaans children's story.

perspectives I get a sense of my 'core being' or my Self. This process has given birth to personalities such as Jan Afganistan, Diamandt Wolf and Soekie X-Ray. Sjaka S. Septembir is the *mother ship* from which these other pseudonyms are currently launched, seeing as this is the name I use to interact with people in my day-to-day life. Through writing, performing and directing I explore questions around my identity. What is this 'I', this Self? How do I impact on my social and political landscape, and how does it impact on me? Why do I create alter egos of my Self? Why do I allow fantasy and reality to intersect in my world?

Could this by chance be a reaction to living in the Afrikaner Nationalist myth and then watching that supposedly solid world vanish like a mirage and transform into what is now defined as the myth of the New South Africa? We, as a nation, witnessed the conscious political myth of Apartheid suddenly turn into the unconscious; the repressed. The rigged rules and way of living of the old political myth were suddenly swept under the table and were replaced by the new political myth with all its promises and uncertainties. What impact does this kind of rupturing have on an individual's psyche? Especially in the world of an artist, who intimately works with the 'psychic content' of his time (Jaffé in Jung 1991: 254)? Could this rupturing have contributed to me interpreting my Self as a fractured bundle of identities, rather than one linear narrative whole? The Self contains each person's meaning and purpose (Von Franz in Jung 1991: 161).

The Self in psychoanalytical terms seems to draw all the parts of an individual to his centre-point. A focused moving towards this centre-point challenges us with individual obstacles, or points of individuation (Hyde and

McGuinness 2004: 57). Despite myself as Karl Gröger (which is my birth name), but through myself as a multiple personal myth (Sjaka S. Septembir, Jan Afghanistan, Soekie X-ray, etc.), I move towards my centre-point in an attempt to find what is true and significant in my life (McAdams 1993:11). Asking these questions, working with my Self and searching for identity means that the core of my exploration is a question of ethics: What gives my life meaning and purpose? And further: How has this search for meaning been influenced by the landscape of the political myth into which I was born and in which I have grown up? How has the change from the Old to the New South Africa influenced my identity, if at all? In asking these questions, I hope to open doors of meaning and purpose for those individuals who are grappling with the same questions that I grapple with.

The two artists with whom I often find myself in conversation, who also battle with identity and a search for meaning through their 'I' or their Self, are Steven Cohen (as a performer) and Breyten Breytenbach (as a writer). These two artists have also been strongly influenced by the Afrikaner Nationalist myth, the latter directly, the former indirectly. They help me put my work into perspective. I make specific reference to Steven Cohen's *Ugly Girl at the Rugby* (1998) for the simple reason that in this intervention Cohen shows off his identity as clearly *other* against a mostly male Afrikaner crowd at Loftus Versveld (De Waal and Sassen 2003: 46). I use *other* in this paper with the following definition:

Just as the sign within Saussure's linguistic field acquires meaning by its difference from its surrounding signs, so too does the image gain its status as object by its difference (and distance) from other objects in space and from the perceived subject. (Phelan 1993: 15)

The performer always differs/is separate from/stands out from his audience in some way. What is included in my sense of *other* is that the performer (or writer) is going against the culturally accepted norm. Breytenbach's work, when juxtaposed against the generally perceived values and morals of the Afrikaner, definitely embraces the *other*. Most of Breytenbach's work is autobiographical:

Through the richness of its imagery, its texture and its resonance, Breytenbach's work holds up a mirror as reminder of the *self-in-metamorphosis*: A form of identity that promotes awareness of the world – and ourselves – as revolutionary centres of renewal and change. (italics in original Sienaert 2001:10)

Out of the countless options in Breytenbach's oeuvre, I choose to focus on *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (1984). I feel this is his autobiographical work that is most centered in reality. The novel focuses on the period in which he was imprisoned in South Africa as a terrorist. Although he is dealing with a difficult time in his personal life, he still writes a work that makes realities blur. His own persona is always one mask covered by another mask in a babushka-doll fashion. On top of that the constant conversation that Breytenbach has with the reader, calling the reader 'Mr. Investigator', makes the reader feel that he is included in the text : "Ah, Mr. Investigator, don't you think I'm guilty?" or "I must plead with you Mr. Investigator, not to stop asking me questions", for example (Breytenbach 1984: 17). In this sense reading this novel becomes a personal and performative act.

A third artist who I have more recently become interested in is Paul McCarthy. I share his sense of aesthetic and I am interested in how he experiences his acts of performance; especially in relation to where fiction (his script-created reality) and reality (the unscripted audience responses and his reaction to them)

intersect. In his early works he took this notion of performing 'the real' to the extreme by, for example, allowing a friend to shoot him (Di Pietrantonio, Rugoff and Stiles 1996:14). I am however more interested in works such as *Death Ship* (1981) which are partly staged and partly real, or improvised.

The theoretical basis of my project draws mainly from the work of Paul Ricoeur, Keith Jenkins and Carl Jung but also from the work of thinkers such as Joseph Cambell, Peggy Phelan and Dan McAdams. I make use of any deliberation that could give me a deeper insight into my own process of understanding myths and the Self. This ultimately is an ongoing process of finding out more about the Self and thus inadvertently a process of intellectual individuation. According to Ricoeur the world is a textually or mythically narrated space in which human beings express their existence through discourse, particularly narrative discourse (Simms 2003:31). Through such narrative discourse human beings invite others to interpret themselves (ibid). Ricoeur echoes my opinion that we create meaning in our world through narratives (Simms 2003:42). Secondly, I delight in Ricoeur's view that the mind and body have a 'reciprocal relationship' (Simms 2003:10). Ricoeur believes that philosophers are only *describing* the world if they contemplate it through the mind alone. True understanding only happens when the relationship between body and mind has been acknowledged. He proves this point through looking at the conflict between the will (the voluntary) and passion (the involuntary) in a phenomenological way. Ricoeur divides the voluntary (the will) up in to three modes: to decide, to move the body and to consent. He then shows how the involuntary (passions, which are connected to the body) is intricately involved with

each of these three modes to some extent. For example *to decide* we have to take into account reason, and reason is bound by motivations and these are usually driven by the body (hunger, sex, etc) (Simms 2003:10-11). Through these terms Ricoeur disproves the Cartesian idea of *cogito ergo sum* (Simms 2003:12-13). This satisfies me as a performance artist, as I use my whole thinking body to create my art.

Ricoeur's view that meaning is created through narrative discourse links with Jenkins's argument that historical text is alive and open-ended. Jenkins suggests that each of us as individuals is always in a state of becoming (Jenkins 2003:3-4). In this way he contributes to my project of working with my own emerging autobiography rather than striving to create one fixed narrative that contains my life story.

Secondly, Jenkins gives depth and meaning to my working with my Self by strengthening the argument that the personal is political (ibid). He points to the importance of such work, and the far-reaching effect an individual can have on those around him. Jung shows how we bring forth conscious thought and meaning through a deep-layered unconscious, and this unconscious reveals itself to us through myths and symbols (Jung 1991:13-15). This strengthens my perception that I am not consciously choosing my life decisions, but that there is also a greater unconscious influencing my decisions. Jung also proposes that when we actively work with our myths (through the creative arts) we go through a process of individuation that helps to integrate the conscious with the unconscious (ibid).

This explication concentrates on my thesis production *Ouma* (Afrikaans word for 'grandmother'), a one-man show I have written and which I also perform³. In the piece I make use of elements of mime, puppetry, story-telling and performance art. In *Ouma*, I am as Jung suggests, actively working with my myth. In *Ouma* I play Sjaka S. Septembir, Diamandt Wolf, and (in the character of *Rooikappie*) Karl Gröger. *Ouma* came to life through the death of my maternal grandmother in 2007. This event shifted my understanding of myself in relation to my past. For the first time that which I thought of as history - being a white Christian male, educated in an Afrikaner Nationalist schooling system - began to confront my present life - as that same white male but now an agnostic, widely read male, with a liberal, anarchistic sociopolitical leaning. This latter understanding of me is set against the backdrop of a New South Africa. Through my oumas recent death I have seen that the Emperor called 'my past', which I had thought of as being fully clothed and decent (and packed away for good) has been here beside me all along and on top of it is stark naked! Her death has revealed the unclothed body of my Afrikaner Nationalist heritage. Although I have actively made all these changes – changing my name, my morals, my religious and political beliefs - my past has shaped my *character* and according to Ricoeur (in Simms 2003:17) this will stay constant. For Ricoeur identity is composed of *idem* - my sameness at any particular point of life - and *ipse* - my sameness-in-difference, the manner in which I change (Simms 2003:102). These two attributes come together in my *character*. So, as I choose to change my Self, whatever changes I make are always in relation to my

³ Directed by Nkosinathi Gaar

original character, my *idem*. This original part of me is part of my finitude. It is not my whole Self, I can still change. Yet, this is my being's original starting point and will always be present and constant within the ever changing Self. This realization puts my current constructed identity as Sjaka S. Septembir (the *mother ship*) up against my Karl Gröger identity (my *character*) that has been constructed through familial bonds.

In section one of this explication, under the heading 'Myth of the Self', I clarify my perception of 'myth' and 'the Self' and I elaborate on my understanding that each individual constructs his own life story and thus makes his own 'myth'. In doing so the individual actively participates in making his own 'Self myth'. To get to this point I firstly make clear my definition of 'myth' and I elucidate on the structure of 'a myth'. I do so with help from Ricoeur, Jung and Campbell. I then explain my ideas around 'the Self' and how my intuitive ideas correlate with ideas within analytical psychology. In the last paragraph of this section I demonstrate, through McAdams, how we can narrate our lives from different vantage points. In my artistic expression of *Ouma* my vantage point is a romantic one and this structures the narrative in a particular way. This choice of vantage point is unconscious, but can be made conscious and I link this with my idea that we *choose how to tell our life story*. We choose how to narrate the myth of our Self.

In the second section I look at the myth of the old and the myth of the new. I start with the myth of the old and the story of my identity as Karl Gröger. I explain the construct of the Afrikaner and how it is tied to me through my grandparents on my mother's side. From here I examine how this myth of Afrikaner Nationalism

impacted on my being. These are the same themes that resonate throughout the work of Breytenbach and Cohen. Breytenbach also explores his past, his identity and his Afrikaner heritage in *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* with which I draw parallels. Cohen's questioning of his identity came to life when he clashed with Afrikaner Nationalism while serving in the South African Defence Force.

I then interrogate the myth of the new, starting with my present myth as Sjaka S. Septembir. I look at my first pseudonym Jan Afganistan and the significant role he played. I place this in the context of the New South Africa myth. Sjaka S. Septembir which is my second constructed identity sparked off my direction as performance artist and strengthened my role as poet in 1996. I examine this construct. I look at the myth of Sjaka S. Septembir and how the narrative of who 'he' or 'I' am, is constructed. I end the section with it being fourteen years later and only now am I in a position to reflect on the rupturing that took place in 1994 and to ask what happened then? What threw our bodies and our psyches into turmoil?

In section three my present idea of living a new me through a bundle of myths, is ruptured. I have believed that meaning, purpose and an understanding of the Self is facilitated by myths. With my various personas, I have gained fractured insights into myself and have made new histories of myself, which are all open-ended and active and that defy a 'definitive closure'. I am a scattering of feelings and thoughts, which I can only frame, or make sense of, through acting or writing my narratives. With my production *Ouma* I suddenly come to realize that I have (as Ricoeur puts it) a *character*; a deeply embedded, personal, cultural, religious and political myth that constitutes my core being, and I find its shadow in every myth

that I have constructed up to now. In this sense my work is a constant examining of myself and a remaking of my own myths, but this making is always informed by how my childhood within a particular mythic construct, impacted on me and how I've impacted on my childhood. *Ouma* is a good example of this. When my ouma passed away my active myth was scholar at UCT and this was interrupted by the impact of her passing away. It gave rise to a lot of vivid childhood memories. Going back to being a scholar gave me the chance to not only remember the rose-tinted memories but forced me to examine those memories. So the death has brought my childhood back to life, or forced it to impact on me; and I impact on my memories of my childhood by questioning their one-sidedness.

In the concluding section, I examine what insight I have gained and what the strategy would be to continue with my work from here within this post-modern, deconstructive framework. As an artist I have largely worked intuitively and I am now grateful to have encountered the work of Ricoeur and Jenkins to support my approach and my ideas and to give me words to articulate them. In this last section I summarize what insight I have gained from them. I also see insight reflected back at me through the work of Breytenbach and Cohen. It is in this mirroring of artistic expression, intuition and thought that I conclude with 'What gives my life meaning and purpose?'

SECTION ONE: Myth of the Self

Myth, *n.* a traditional story concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events. 2 a widely held but false belief, a fictitious person or thing. An exaggerated or idealized conception of a person or thing. (South African Concise Oxford Dictionary)

When I use the term 'myth' I am not singling out the myths of antiquity. I do not subscribe to the idea that myths are something ancient, something from far back in history, or something that is regarded as 'just a made up story'. Myths, to me, are alive, constantly in a process of emergence and therefore always changing in response to circumstances. Modern myths are the *grand narratives* that a culture, or an individual, forms to explain their origins and who they are and where they are heading. For example, the old Afrikaner Nationalist myth could be summed up as the story of a white supremacist race that determinedly lived out what they deemed to be the will of their Christian God in a particular place at the Southern tip of the African continent and in so doing created the legacy of Apartheid. A modern Afrikaner myth might want to put less emphasis on the years of Apartheid and more on F.W. de Klerk's role as an Afrikaner who helped dismantle Apartheid. To the Afrikaner who adopts this story, the aim is to be integrated into the New South Africa. Through this looking back into the past and looking into what the future might bring, we create myths so that our being and the lives of others, will have a purpose (McAdams 1993:91-92). These myths are usually governed by economic, ethnic and religious foundations. We become active within our myth in our teenage years through the shaping and reshaping of our identities. We impose a plan on our lives where no plan existed. This is not new; we often encapsulate and reformulate

central aspects of our own history (McAdams 1993:95). Although myths are repeated, old myths will often show themselves in an unfamiliar guise. We witness this in the Apartheid myth. First the story of the Afrikaners oppressed by the British; then the Afrikaner rising phoenix-like from the ashes. And then this is repeated in an unfamiliar guise with the Afrikaners oppressing the Blacks and the Blacks rising up in response. We can trace the myth all the way back to the Bible and the tale of how the Egyptians oppressed the Jewish people. It's the same phoenix-rising-from-the-ashes myth in a different time and a different setting. This myth is also applicable to individuals (David and Goliath, a school boy standing up against the playground bully, etc.). With a myth being repeated, significance constantly gets added to it and it is thereby constantly transformed (Simms 2003:58). Myths are 'the symbolic exploration of our relationship to beings and to Being' (Ricoeur in Simms 2003: 59). These symbolic explorations speak of the unchanging truths of the human condition. They are stories structured to tell us something that is fundamental to understanding a certain aspect of life. In telling my story of *Ouma*, I show how it is time for young Afrikaners to embrace their culture 'warts and all'. In doing so I believe they will gain a stronger understanding of their 'Self'. The story of *Ouma* gives me a vehicle through which I can say this in an emotionally touching way and this strengthens the story's potential to affect people and to change the way they think and feel.

Looking closer, the story itself is strengthened by symbols within the narrative. In *Ouma*, to name a few examples, Rooikappie is a symbol of innocence, the use of *oranje-blanje-blou* is symbolic of the Old South Africa, the Wolf is the symbol of the trickster and Sjaka breaking through the paper by using the written

word is symbolic of birth. Symbols are invaluable tools, opening up the possibility for going beyond our human comprehension (Jung 1991:20-21). In McCarthy's *Sailor's Meat* (1981) the tomato sauce he uses is always obviously tomato sauce. Yet, it becomes a symbol of blood, of mass-production and of American consumerism (Rugoff in Di Pietrantonio, Rugoff and Stiles 1996:46). McCarthy's work relies on our 'susceptibility to symbolic manipulation': The knife, in *Ouma*, that hangs from the ceiling dripping blood from the beginning of the piece, suggesting death and violence, becomes a symbol of freedom when Sjaka uses it to free himself from his past. In the Afrikaner Nationalist myth 'The Battle of Bloodriver' became a symbol to reinforce the idea that the Afrikaners are 'God's chosen people'. Symbols suggest more than obvious, surface meaning and give us a grasp on things that we cannot easily comprehend (Jung 1990:20-21). Symbols also have the capacity to mutate and alter meanings, as shown with the knife in the above example. Koos Kombuis turned the symbolic image of the Afrikaner youth – clean cut, Christian, supportive of the country and the military and striving towards a bright future - on its head through his name, his lifestyle, his books: *Somer II* (1985) and *Suid-Punt Jazz* (1989) and through albums such as *Niemandslaan and Beyond* (1990). Paul McCarthy inverts the clean Disney image of America through his work by making these mass-media characters dirty, violent, grotesque and overtly sexual.

The basic structure of a myth is outlined by both Joseph Campbell and Ann-Sofie Dahl and their definitions may be handy in the forthcoming analysis:

1. A myth reconciles ordinary consciousness with the universal and the symbolic, which is found in the unconscious (Campbell 1968:4).

2. In myths the shared idealized truth (e.g. the Rainbow Nation) that has risen from the subconscious of a culture must become a shared idea and thus become 'collectively or commonly held *beliefs*' (Campbell 1968:4; Dahl in Buffet and Heuser 1998:29).
3. This shared idea is then repeated (Dahl in Buffet and Heuser 1998:30). This repetition needs to be sustained over a period of time. This is how the enforcement of a social or moral order comes about (Campbell 1968:4,5).
4. Myths need to elicit an emotional response. This is achieved through strong images, words and sounds which open up human associations with religion, literature and our daily life (Dahl in Buffet and Heuser 1998:30). Through this emotional response the individuals centre themselves within their personality, their culture and their universe (Campbell 1968:6).
5. The myth is repeated to the extent that the idea becomes ritualized and it becomes a collective belief shared by the nation as a whole. It becomes therefore an idea beyond itself, bigger than the lives of the individuals who brought it into being (Campbell 1968:6).
6. When an individual repeatedly narrates his life story, within the above structure, he is creating and strengthening his mythical view of his 'Self'.

The South African Concise Oxford Dictionary defines 'Self' as:

a person's essential being that distinguishes them from others, especially considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action. A person's

particular nature or personality.

I don't see the Self as something that can be held. There's no essential being that can be held in the hand like a diamond and be examined under a microscope. The Self is our fulfilled possibilities and also all our unfulfilled ones. The Self is our conscious life and our dreams. The Self is connected to our spiritual side, our material side, and our intellectual and emotional sides. The Self is volatile and constantly changing. I think of myself intuitively as this ball of endless inner mist. My intuition is given substance through analytical psychology when Jung not only describes the Self as the centre of an individual (Henderson in Jung 1990:161), but describes it as 'an intelligible sphere, whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere' (Haule 2004:7)⁴. According to Jung the psyche encompasses consciousness, the ego and the internal regulating process that produces dreams (ibid). 'Self is a collective noun: sub-personalities, archetypal images, internal objects and self-objects: to all of which the Shadow is the opposite' (Mathers 2001:40). To me Ricoeur's view of the Self has a similar ring, yet it is worded differently. Ricoeur sees the Self as made up of a person's *character* and their *humanity* (Simms 2003:17-18). Character is a person's opinions and the way he chooses to behave (correlating with the ego) and humanity is infinite and defined as the human vices and virtues that surround him (the consciousness and the archetypes) (ibid).

How do myths (as the narrative that gives our life meaning) and the Self (as everything inside and outside a human being that he is conscious and unconscious

⁴ Jung seems to have borrowed this from the 12th century hermetic *Book of the Twenty-four Philosophers* (Campbell 1968:31) where this is how God is described.

of, including his fantasies and dreams) intersect to make us here in this global village where we are all connected via satellite? Postmodernism allows myths of the past to mutate into modern contexts of storytelling. For example the myth of Orpheus shows us that 'life comes from death and death from life' (Ricoeur in Simms 2003:26). Movies that can be connected to the myth of Orpheus are *Corpse Bride* (Tim Burton, 2005), *Ghost* (Ryoichi Kimizuka, 1990) and *City of Angels* (Brad Silberling, 1998). In postmodernism myths are freed from the hierarchy of ancient texts and scrolls and are invited to come and play in our everyday media-saturated worlds. Ancient myths live on in adapted form, cloaked in different varieties of pop-culture media, in comics, soap operas, sitcoms, etc. Postmodernism has decentralized pockets of state power – which we witnessed in South Africa with the fall of the Nationalist government and internationally with the fall of the Soviet Union – and has placed more emphasis on the Self. This makes it more important than ever for each individual to take charge of his life. To, as encouraged by Timothy Leary, write your own myths (Leary in Ruthofer 1997:online). The importance of this is emphasized by Rollo May who declares that without myths '[...] we are like a race of brain-injured people unable to go beyond the word and hear the person who is speaking' (in Sherman 2004:8). A friend of mine, Caltex Omega, used to say, *Wie nie raas nie, vind nie plaas nie* (he who doesn't make a noise doesn't take place/exist). Which I interpret as he who doesn't have a story to tell, doesn't exist.⁵ This aligns with Ricoeur who believes that stories are the bridge between the self and the world, and the only way for us to reach understanding

⁵ As well as referring to our saturated media world in which one has to make a noise to be heard.

(Simms 2003:43).

We are all constantly narrating our lives. We do this to bestow our lives with wholeness and purpose (McAdams 1993:50). Myths allow us to interpret the Self through 'a full encounter with our world' and thus provide us with meaning, which without myths would be inaccessible (ibid). Our personal myth will include where we come from, who our family is, what stories we are surrounded by and what stories inform our spirituality. We make an active choice how to see or interpret this world. We resolve, as the overly familiar expression goes, whether we see our glass as half full or half empty and whether it's half full of milk or Jack Daniels. It is to this extent that we are the makers of our own myth.

[T]he individual has had an experience of his own – of order, horror, beauty, or even exhilaration – which he seeks to communicate through signs; and if his realization has been of a certain depth and import, his communication will have the value and force of living myth (Campbell 1968:4)

Further, when narrating our life and thus creating the myth of the Self, we make an active choice as to the style in which to do so. McAdams identifies four genres through which we can choose to tell our life myth (McAdams 1993:50). The four are: comedy, romance, tragedy and irony (ibid). I have realized that I generally narrate my life through a romantic myth. Romance is full of optimistic adventures and celebrates conquest and is seen in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Steven Spielberg, 1981) or in Homer's *Odyssey* and is described as the hero's journey (McAdams 1993:50). The hero's journey can basically be summed up as, 1) The hero receives a call to adventure which he can accept or decline; 2) The road of trials has to be faced

which the hero can fail or overcome; 3) The hero achieves the goal or 'boon' and gains important self-knowledge; 4) The hero has to return to the ordinary world and doing so can succeed or fail; 5) The hero can now apply the boon to improve the world (Jung 1991:117-122). This choice of the hero's journey or the romantic myth shapes the storyline of my production *Ouma*.

Ouma follows the romantic myth in the following way. In *Ouma* Sjaka is called to adventure when he breaks through the real world by using words that physically tear the hymen between the two realities. He writes till he physically breaks the paper and enters into an imaginary space where he can visit his past. He accepts the challenge of entering this imaginary space when he dons the *Rooikappie* outfit and announces that he is going to visit his grandmother. This innocent childlike character enters the *road of trials* which starts with meeting the wolf. This is our hero's first challenge and the first attack on his innocence when *Diamandt Wolf* tries to rape *Rooikappie-Sjaka* or now more accurately: *RooiKarl*. Many trials follow, the final one being *ouma's* blatant racism, which he the childlike *RooiKarl*, can not overcome. This reverts to Sjaka returning to the surface. The *Sjaka-Karl's* hero's journey diverges from the typical hero's journey. This becomes clear when we realise *Sjaka* is also *Diamandt Wolf*, the wolf, and he lands up eating his *ouma*. To return to the *ordinary world* with the gained understanding of himself and his place in this world, he has to cut *ouma* from his stomach and set her free.

In *Ouma* I cast myself as the hero. My story, my perceptions, my dreams, shapes the world of *Ouma*; which becomes a physical ritual of mythical proportions within a theatrical space. *Ouma* serves as a vehicle for me to come to terms with the

death of a loved one, and therefore impacts on and changes my way of seeing this event. In *Ouma*, autobiography and fiction are melded together through the use of Rooikappie but also through my created personality, Sjaka S. Septembir, clashing with my birth name personality, Karl Gröger. In my work, dreams, stories and so-called 'reality' have equal importance. They need each other to survive and give us meaning. I frame this notion, that reality (conscious) and fictional (unconscious) are inseparable, through the ideas of Ricoeur (who I must reiterate works within a phenomenological framework). Ricoeur divides human beings up into the *voluntary*: our will, which consists of (1) decision, (2) action and (3) necessity); and the *involuntary*: our passions, which are divided up into (1) imagination, (2) character and (3) feelings (Simms 2003:10). Ricoeur's involuntary correlates to some degree with Jung's idea of the unconscious (Simms 2003:12). Ricoeur demonstrates how the voluntary (will) and involuntary (passions) are intertwined. That 'decision is tempered by involuntary motivation, the movement of the body is tempered by involuntary motion, and consent is tempered by necessity' (Simms 2003:12). This involves in some sense my body commanding me and thus our thinking cannot happen separate from our bodies (Simms 2003:13). In the same way, I want to argue that our *involuntary* – our imagination, character and feelings (out of which fiction arises) – is inseparable and directly feeds into the *voluntary* – our decisions, actions and necessities. These two concepts (voluntary and involuntary) infiltrate each other. The tale of Red Ridinghood is essential to my going back into my past to find the memory of my grandmother. In this way we can see how the world of the imagination and the world of reason and facts intertwine in my own life as writer,

performer and director and are echoed in my art. The same sense is echoed in Cohen's creation of Princess Menorah. Princess Menorah is Cohen's alter ego and first appeared in *Altered ID Book* (1997). Cohen takes his sense of living fiction to the extreme and allows his drag-queen-like alter ego to attend everyday social functions, such as going to Loftus to watch rugby in drag (De Waal and Sassen 2003:5). In *Ouma* I use my pseudonym Sjaka S. Septembir as a character. I also bring to life a character called Diamandt Wolf and the character Rooikappie who represents myself as Karlie (the name my ouma use to call me). Through the telling of my story I use myths to refigure my own history (my own identity) and I do it in a way which allows others to bear witness. This creative tampering with myths of the Self is echoed by Jenkins when he says:

I hold that for people (subjects) to be inserted into, grow up and live in, any given social and cultural formation, then such socialization or enculturation never runs smoothly, and, more importantly, is never fully accomplished, so that the sometime identity which subjects inhabit is always temporary and thus always becoming other than it is. (Jenkins 2003:3)

When Jenkins mentions the 'sometimes identity which subjects inhabit' he opens up the idea that we put on masks in different situations. We are playing with our reality. I see the same idea throughout the work of Breytenbach. His *True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* begins with the following:

The name you see under this document is Breyten Breytenbach. That is my name. It is not the only one; after all, what is a name? I used to be called Dick; sometimes I was called Antoine; some knew me as Hervé; others as Jan Blom; then I was the Professor; later I was Mr. Bird: all these different names with different meanings attached to different people. Because, Mr. Investigator, if there is one thing that has become amply clear to me over the

years, it is exactly that there is no one person that can be named and in the process of naming be fixed for all eternity. (Breytenbach 1984:3)

Breytenbach does not just toy with the idea of becoming different identities, but by going against the myth that *we are each one of us a singular person with one name and one fixed identity*, Breytenbach connects his own myth with the archetype of the trickster. Breytenbach, in living out many Selves within his life myth, turns his own autobiographical myth into the embodiment of the archetype of the trickster.

The trickster juggles with what is real and unreal. He smashes these two concepts and changes our way of seeing and thinking about this world to such a degree that we soon realize that every in-breath contains an out-breath, every coin has two sides (or three) and everything that is registered by our senses contains a paradox (Ryan, 1999:8). This is essential to our very being. As Jung aptly points out, '[t]here is no consciousness without discrimination of opposites' (Jung. 1972:30). We can not become aware of, or measure up our existence, without weighing up contradictory realities. *Diamandt Wolf* plays the trickster in *Ouma*. He embodies the opposite of *RooiKarlies* innocence. By measuring these two characters up against each other we become acutely aware of how opposite they are from each other. It is as if the one is white and the other black, or tall next to short and near against far. As Jung elucidates in his theory of consciousness: 'Consciousness can only exist through continual recognition of the unconscious, just as everything that lives must pass through many deaths' (Jung. 1972:30). Unconsciously, through performing *Ouma*, and performing my Self, as *Sjaka S. Septembir*, *Diamandt Wolf* and *RooiKarlie*, I also become the trickster. Through *Ouma* I take the audience through

different states of awareness. The whole play climaxes with *Sjaka* becoming aware of the death of his grandmother and at the end he relates to the audience that it is out of this death that this performance piece was given life. The trickster archetype points out that we can not become aware of life without death. The trickster is also the mythical figure that takes the souls of the dead to *the other side*. Is *Diamandt Wolf* only acting in self interest? And even so, is he not - by killing Ouma - forcing nature onto us? Has Ouma's time as a vital living human being not expired? Another aspect of the trickster is one of rule breaker. By breaking society's rules, the trickster confirms society's rules (Zucker in Hynes & Doty 1993:207). By trampling our moral beliefs he exalts them. The trickster shows us that what is mocked is maintained. The moment *Diamandt Wolf* starts breaking the rules is highlighted in *Ouma* by the sudden change of performance style. From a scripted fourth wall style of performing, *Diamandt Wolf* suddenly turns on the audience; the audience is made part of the performance through improvisation and performance art-style antics. *Diamandt Wolf's* aim is to pick on and mock audience members. Mockery often goes hand in hand with the ability to make us laugh. The trickster gives us an opportunity of to let go of our seriousness and our self importance.

In this chapter I have clarified my definition of myth, as stories that are alive and demonstrated how they govern our present awareness. I have also shown how myths are strengthened through the use of symbols. To contain these ideas I have outlined in a basic structure of myths. I have defined 'the Self', best described as a paradoxical (almost trickster-like) state of being and non-being all in one. I have demonstrated how myths and the Self intersect and how, through the telling of

stories, we create understanding or meaning. I have also described the genre through which I tell my story of *Ouma*. I have ended this section by showing how stories (the imagination) can infiltrate our daily lives (the real). The archetype of the trickster demonstrates how important these paradoxes – between fantasy and reality – are to our life. I will now go on to look at the myth of the Old South Africa, the myth of the New South Africa and how the Self acts and interacts within this paradigm or frame.

SECTION TWO: Myth of the Old; Myth of the New

It is now fourteen years since the Old South Africa myth and all that it stood for has fallen. It seems further away than that. Looking at it now it seems absurd that such a world actually existed. It seems like a strange, horrific fairy tale. I lived inside this myth and now I experience this myth as history. This myth was used to help white South Africans to stay in a position of political, economic and systemic power while they enjoyed 'one of the highest living standards in the world' (Fredericks 1986:12). These historical cultural roots lie deeply embedded in one's being. My cultural construct as an Afrikaner is a political concept and a theoretical creation, which is a myth that was built up over decades (Olivier in Du Preez 2005:14). In this section I look at the myth of my own past, starting with my ouma, my maternal grandmother who - along with my oupa (grandfather) - represents the link with my Afrikaner cultural heritage. Du Plessis calls these white South Africans, the Afrikaners, '*Afrikanus albus*, die wit stam van Afrika' (*Afrikanus albus*, the white tribe of Africa) (Du Preez, 2005:74). '*Africanus albus* is lank reeds vas aan die Afrika bodem, en kan ook nie juis elders heen nie' (*Africanus albus* has for a long time been tied to the African soil, and can't very well go elsewhere either) (Du Preez 2005:74). The language and the land are central to the identity of the Afrikaner. Breytenbach reiterates this when he says that Afrikaans 'intimately interact[s] with the specific characteristics of South African life and history, and enriches the land in a dialectic of mutual shaping' (Breytenbach 1984:322). The word 'Afrikaner' is an

ideological construction which in apartheid served as a justification for oppressing others and taking advantage of them (Du Preez 2005:14). During apartheid the Afrikaners inhabited a 'house of suspicion' and from here they wanted to 'prove that the whole world is against them and that they are the only ones who are pure and brave and right' (Breytenbach 1984:30).

What effect has Afrikaner Nationalism had on my work? My identity construct via birth was Karl Gröger. I was born within the Old South Africa myth in 1972. In this myth, by 'retelling the *facts* in a specific way', the Nationalist Government fabricated a world that suited itself. I, as a white South African, believed this fabrication and acted as if this forced separation between peoples was the natural order of things (Morgenthau in Buffet and Heuser 1998:117). With the history books and the dominees (priests) giving credence to the Old South Africa myth, it was difficult for me to understand that this was a fabrication. My experience of the Old South African version of history in school text books of that time, affords me now, a very personal understanding of Lévi-Strauss's belief that history has 'replace[d] mythology and fulfils the same function' (Lévi-Strauss 1978:36).

Insight beyond the political myth was given to me (as Karl) by my mother when she became a school teacher in Mdantsane (a township close to East London). She enabled an awareness to develop in me that this myth with its *oranje blanje blou* (orange, white and blue - colours of the Nationalist flag) and *Die Stem* (The National Anthem during Apartheid) was, in fact, built on many lies. Not that the idea that a myth which turns out to be false is a foreign concept to a child. As we grow-up within a Western Christian framework, we gradually become aware that the myths

of Father Christmas, the Easter Bunny, and the tandemuus (Tooth mouse - equivalent to the Tooth Fairy.) are all fictions! In Karl's head (my head), the shattering of these myths placed me in a position where I was sure that the NG Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church) we attended every Sunday was also such a construct and I waited for the moment when the whole congregation would turn around and declare, 'Surprise! There is no Jesus in a manger! No wise men! No earth made in seven days and no God saying 'En dit was goed' (And it was good)'. This influenced Karl's thoughts and lively imagination even further. 'How far does this construction go?' he (I) wondered. I even went so far as to suspect my parents and sister to have been placed around me on a make-believe planet. I believed that the world I was living in was actually one huge laboratory where I was constantly being watched and observed. Years later this became the content of the movie *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir, 1999) – which still makes me wonder, 'Who was in my head at that time?'

I believe the reason that these thoughts surfaced lay in the segregation under Apartheid that was a large part of what this myth was about. Along with Apartheid came the fear. This tangible fear in our country at that time was not so much about die swart gevaar (fear of the black people), die rooi gevaar (fear of communists) or the fear of 'little men in ill-fitting grey suits'; it was the 'fear that comes from the absence of any possibility of a vital relationship with most of the people around one' (Crapanzano 1986:21). Breythenbach taps into the feeling of that time when he writes:

There's always another language behind the present one; there's always another world living in the shadow of the one we share; there's for ever

another room behind this one and in this room there's another man sitting with a little tape recorder, whispering in his own ears, saying: "There is another world living parallel to this one, there is another language on the other side of the wall being spoken by another man holding a little instrument, etc. etc." (Breytenbach 1984:28)

In 1990, with the release of Nelson Mandela, Karl was still deeply embedded within the structure of the old South African myth. So much so that he was doing his compulsory National Service in 1991. Karl was doing his National service unquestioningly, this is in sharp contrast with Steven Cohen, who's questioning of his identity came to life when he was called up to do his National Service (1985-87). Cohen points out how his time in the army marked him as 'marginal' and 'subversive' (De Waal and Sassen 2003:6). This experience he had as an English, Jewish, homosexual, influenced his first silkscreen's which are filled with Caspers (military style vehicles), images of Paul Kruger and other Afrikaner icons. Cohen's othering is repeated in *Ugly Girl at the rugby*. Here, as opposed to his two years in the army where he had to wear *their* uniform and walk *their* line, he now appears, at the rugby stadium dressed up as Princess Menorah. The duckling of back-then has become a swan – a swan threatening to upset all the sheep flocking to their game.

In 1994 the Old South African myth was officially shattered with the first democratic elections and the start of the New South Africa myth was announced. In this very year Karl Gröger wrote and self published the book '*Viva Dada!*' under the name Jan Afganistan. This was my first alter-ego; my first rupture.

In *Viva Dada!* Jan Afghanistan kills both his parents and himself (traces of the Oedipus myth are evident). Without being aware of it at that time, I feel I was ridding myself of the 'moral claustrophobia' that the white, male-driven, old myth

had fostered in me (Crapanzano 1986:24). The way '*Viva Dada!*' was put together emphasized this breaking with the rules. It was a roughly photocopied punk publication which had to be read unconventionally from back to front. Each book contained a torn out page on which 'the answer' to the meaning of life was to be found. Through this work and within the myth of the New South Africa, Karl (as Jan Afghanistan) joined the camp of artists such as Cohen and Breytenbach, as marginal and oppositional (De Waal and Sassen 2003:6). Breytenbach was a strong influence. His writing inspired thinking about identity, where identity is seen as something that facilitates knowledge of the world and of the Self (Sienaert 2001:10). This Self is something through which Breytenbach's work becomes a dynamic force of renewal and change (ibid). To me Breytenbach shows us that identity is conditional, contingent, dynamic and constructed, and that our 'identities are the names we give to the different ways [in which] we are positioned by and position ourselves within the narrative of the past' (Laubscher 2008:lecture). As our political landscapes and their narratives change, we change. Karl Gröger changed to Jan Afghanistan. Our being is always part of our becoming. Paul McCarthy became a performance artist when he used his work to comment on an America's psyche that had more and more become occupied by a television landscape. This move 'against the deadness of pre-packaged experience' (Di Pietrantonio, Rugoff and Stiles 1996:36), forced him into action. McCarthy adopted many of these well known characters through the use of masks. In his work his own identity vanishes under the guise of these television personas.

Sjaka S. Septembir emerged two years after Jan Afghanistan, at the same time as the world was rejoicing in the fall of Apartheid. The birth of Sjaka S. Septembir was the continuation of the process that started with the birth of Jan Afganistan. This concurred with the new chapter in South African history that was coined as the birth of the Rainbow Nation. In July 1997 the ANC government drafted a document that was called 'Nation-Formation and Nation Building' in which the striving toward nation-building within the 'context of a multi-cultural and non-racial society' is put forth (Baines 1998:online). The idea of the New South Africa started on paper - after the release of Nelson Mandela and the un-banning of the African National Congress in 1990 - with the drawing up of a new Constitution (Krog 1999:vii). The Constitution is a country's foundational ideal. On top of this paper, this official narrative, the foundation of our Rainbow Nation myth was constructed. We gained new heroes such as Nelson Mandela, Zanele Situ, 'Baby Jake' Matlala, Natalie du Toit, Joel Stransky, Johnny Clegg and Sipho Mchunu, to carry our new multi-coloured flag. Television adverts showed us as 'Proudly South African' and proclaimed that we are 'alive with possibility'. In the peaceful swap from one myth to the next, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was internationally hailed as a success and the world was looking at the New South Africa as a little Jesus-in-the-manger myth, as a symbol of hope. It seemed as if everyone was swept up in the euphoria and everywhere the old Apartheid myth was chased away. No one wanted to dirty his hands with the past. The Old South Africa became the enemy and part of our shadow-side. No one pays much attention to what happens to the shadow when ignored (Henderson in Jung 1991:173). Our ways of

dealing with the past seemed rational enough, but what we truly needed to make change concrete and meaningful, were rituals.

In rituals one *lives through* events, or through the alchemy of its framing and symbolings, *relives* semiogenic events, the deeds and words of prophets and saints, or if these are absent, myths and sacred epics. (italics in original. Turner 1982:86)

Rituals can help us deal with our shadow side, instead of repressing it. The closest that our nation has come to a ritual of change was winning the World Cup Rugby tournament in 1995. Through this event people embraced the symbol of the New South African flag. In this ritual there was a celebration of the smooth transition in 1994, a rejoicing in the fact that South Africa had become part of the international community again and a celebration of the magic of Madiba (Grundlingh 2008:17).

This climate of change and an instinctive awareness of the lack of rituals with in our society, drove the performance art group PORSELYNNKAS⁶ of which I was a part. We wanted to make poetry come alive through Happenings. Within this group I started performing myself as 'Sjaka S. Septembir'. Or as Ricoeur puts it, I actively started participating 'in my incarnation as a mystery' (Simms 2003:13) or myself as a myth. A significant point in the birth of this persona was Wednesday, 12 February 1997 when a photo of Sjaka performing at the *Blou Okapi*⁷ was published on the front page of *Die Matie*⁸. This issue of *Die Matie* was vehemently rejected because of this photo. In protest, the students – especially those from the male

⁶ PORSELYNNKAS (porslein cupboard) is the cupboard which appeared in the living rooms of many Afrikaner homes and was used to display crockery. The name was chosen from the idiom *Daar's 'n aap in die porseleinkas* which has a similar meaning to 'there's a bull in the china shop'. The Original spelling was purposefully tampered with to fit the punk roots of the movement.

⁷ Twenty-four hour coffee shop in Stellenbosch.

⁸ Stellenbosch University's official student newspaper.

hostels – strew hundreds of copies of the paper all the way down Victoria Street and over the *Rooi Plein*⁹. Walking past hundreds of photo's of myself as Sjaka staring back at me, completed the rupture of my myth as Karl Gröger and announced that the new myth, that of Sjaka S. Septembir, had now taken over.

The emergence of my new myth of the Self was reinforced by others around me in Stellenbosch at that time. Within PORSELYNNKAS we had Alex van Zyl who became 'Caltex Omega', Bernad de Vaal who became 'Sigmunt (sic) Floyed' and Elmari Cloete who became 'Mira'; and everyone now recognized me by the name 'Sjaka'.

Though I was not aware of it at the time, it is out of the Old South Africa setting with its very specific political processes that my new name was born. My father is Austrian, and if my setting had been Austria, I believe my life story would be radically different, and the birth of personas such as Sjaka S. Septembir, would be unlikely, even impossible. Without a *setting* there can be no story and when the setting suddenly changes under a character's feet, the psychological impact is immense. Just as values and ethics are reborn when a myth changes, the artist by nature, engages with these changes creatively (Mathers 2001:228). Through creativity the artist can create meaning or make sense out of the world. 'Freedom comes through being able to form, name and use internal self-objects, to attribute meaning and have meaning culturally validated' (Mathers 2001:244). So, through my change of setting from the Old to the New South Africa, an unconscious process was put into motion, where my shadow, archetypes and personas where transformed,

⁹ The red-bricked walk-way that leads to the popular student centre.

and my new name was born. Without it being a conscious choice on my behalf, Sjaka S. Septembir - as name – flies in the face of my construct as white Afrikaner. At the same time the name Sjaka mocks the internal contradictions of the New South Africa myth. ‘Sjaka’ was a Zulu king and ‘Septembir’ has Cape coloured/slave connotations. But Sjaka is white according to the racial boxes on the government’s forms. I still regularly experience situations where people are shocked that Sjaka is actually white and not Zulu or coloured. Sjaka S. Septembir as name holds up a mirror in which each South African can see his own Rainbow Nation presumptions.

The myth of Sjaka, just as the myth of the New South Africa, took off with a bang. In order to examine this more closely I will use I’m going to use elements of myth proposed by Campbell and Dhal as listed above.

(1) A myth reconciles ordinary consciousness with the universal and the symbolic, which is found in the unconscious (Campbell 1968:4). In PORSELYNNKAS we wrote out our manifesto. It stated:

PORSELYNNKAS staan vir vuur, water, grond en lug
Dit staan vir beweging, kleur, solidityd en suurstof
PORSELYNNKAS IS DIE KLEED VIR ELKE INDIVIDU
WIE SY LEWE VOL WIL LEEF.
PORSELYNNKAS staan alle dogmas voor en ook geen nie.
PORSELYNNKAS IS VERANDERING
Heil die ewige vloei van die lewe!
Heil VERANDERING!!
heil porselynnkas!!!
PORSELYNNKAS IS DADA EN ANTI-dada
PORSELYNNKAS IS anti-ANARCHISTE en ANARCHISTE
PORSELYNNKAS lag en huil,
Is stil en dans...(Septembir 1998:index)¹⁰

¹⁰ PORSELYNNKAS stands for fire, water, ground and air
It stands for movement, colour, solidity and oxygen

In light of this manifesto we lived our day-to-day existence, we wrote our poetry and we tackled each of our performances. This was our constitution. This gave each artist the power to reconcile their everyday-being with the mythical and universal.

(2) In myths the shared idealized truth that has risen from the subconscious of a culture (e.g. Nationalism) must become a shared idea and thus become 'collectively or commonly held *beliefs*' (Campbell 1968:4; Dahl 1998:29). In Stellenbosch Sjava S. Septhembir, who I believe rose from the subconscious of the conservative Afrikaans town, became a shared idealized truth not only amongst the friends I was making, but also in the town at large. The best example would be the fact that I was banned from selling my poetry at most coffee shops and was barred from performing my work at most venues in Stellenbosch. A play I had written, which would have been performed by Stellenbosch drama students, was stopped from going through after the venue owner had heard that I had written the play. The *collective or commonly held belief* was that my work was Satanic, whereas from my point of view, my work was merely propagating alternative religious values to the dominant Christian ones.

(3) This shared idea is then repeated (Dahl 1998:30). This repetition needs to

PORSELYNNKAS IS THE CLOAK FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL
WHO WANTS TO LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL
PORSELYNNKAS stands for al dogmas and for none
PORSELYNNKAS IS CHANGE
Hail the internal flow of life!
Hail CHANGE
hail porselynnkas!!!
PORSELYNNKAS IS DADA AND ANTI-dada
PORSELYNNKAS IS anti-ANARCHISTS and ANARCHISTS
PORSELYNNKAS laughs and cries,
Is quiet and dances...

be sustained over a period of time (ibid). This is how the enforcement of a social or moral order comes about (Campbell 1968:4-5). Not only was the negative aspect of Sjaka's work, the fact of it 'being Satanic', repeated and spread till it reached two national newspapers¹¹, the strength of PORSELYNNKAS's work also spread and through people talking, it started making inroads into Afrikaans literary circles. The strength of the PORSELYNNKAS ensemble was highlighted when they were invited to perform alongside Herman Wasserman, Gert Vlok Nel and Valiant Swart (Hidden Cellar 1997) and when the poet Toast Coetzer dedicated a whole poetry space to the work of Floyed de Vaal and Sjaka S. Septembir at the Grahamstown Festival.

(4) Myths need to elicit an emotional response. This is achieved through strong images, words and sounds which open up human associations with religion, literature and our daily life (Moller-Jensen in Dahl 1998:30). Through this emotional response, the individual centers him/herself within their personality, their culture and their universe (Campbell 1968:6). PORSELYNNKAS performed thirty-three Poetry-Happenings in less than three years. Each performance was unique and site-specific. Out of the 33 PORSELYNNKAS HAPPENINGS only twelve were held in traditional theatre venues. Even in these cases the spaces were subverted and performances took place in foyers, bathrooms and even on pavements outside the venues (*Cyber Hiku* 9 August 1998; *Verteer Lipstick* 10 August 1998; *Femme Fatal* 17 August 1998); with full audience participation always being strived towards. Happenings to PORSELYNNKAS were in themselves spiritual affairs. Spiritual

¹¹ Die Burger, 6 April 1998. Rapport, 12 April 1998.

ritual held in public was a commitment made to their belief in the irrational. These were rituals that echoed their belief in chaos and surrealism (Gröger 2006:12).

Each performance used live music, masks, figures dressed in wings, gothic make up, colourful clothing, and androgynous characters, religious images and texts were either used with in themselves or within the poetry used in the performance. If we look at the Rustic Café *Slagtand Happening* (22 June 1998) people are in a restaurant that serves pizzas. Suddenly they are confronted with a detective angrily interrogating people at tables, a person cutting all her clothes off her body with a scissors, another person calmly ironing her clothes at another table. A man appears in a red jacket and flashes his nudity to some singled out audience members. A black man dances a strange dance whilst handing out cut up lines of poetry, all this being accompanied by two blindfolded musicians. These frenetic actions culminate in chanting, and a ritual in which two naked performers are covered with food and then mourned in a way that mimics people being laid to rest. These very emotional Happenings are mythically held together through the PORSELYNNKAS emblem which contains a list of religious symbols mixed in with the everyday. Central is an ape sitting in the lotus position. This represents the artist as clown or fool. He holds up two pyramids each containing the eye of Ra, which represents insight into other dimensions. Each publication and poster for a Happening had this logo and the association was that you are now going to experience something that breaks with the norm. The people who witnessed these events truly joined in our vision and our myth. This is echoed in the attitudes of people like the owner of the Dorp Straat Theatre who after one performance gave us a regular slot. Jaap Ysbeert who opened

up his workshop for us to rehearse in, groupies who started imitating our way of dressing and our hairstyles, and at least three hundred copies of each PORSELYNNKAS poetry publication being sold. By connecting emotionally with an audience who were 'the outsiders' or the 'alternative', we as artists and individuals created our own place within the Stellenbosch community.

(5) The myth is repeated to the extent that the idea becomes ritualized and it becomes a collective belief shared by the nation. It becomes therefore an idea beyond itself, bigger than the lives of the individuals who brought it into being (Campbell 1968; 6) In the case of an individual, I believe that the repeated idea has to 'become ritualized and a collective belief shared' by everyone in the individual's immediate community. Everyone in Stellenbosch knew me as Sjaka S. Septembir the poet and PORSELYNNKAS's 'success' was evident in us being invited to perform in a big event in Cape Town, in us being requested to do radio interviews, and interviews for national TV and national magazines.

Fourteen years later and Sjaka S. Septembir has not grown past the myth of the self which was contained with in the PORSELYNNKAS days. He has not become known to the extent that poets such as Breyten Breytenbach are known. So to the New South African myth which has not brought the nation together and now seems further away from its optimistic ideals than ever before. The multicultural Rainbow Nation myth has unfortunately been shattered by the recent spate of xenophobic attacks against foreign nationals living in South Africa. In addition it seems that it is very important for our branded image as the 'New South Africa' that the hegemony of the English language is maintained. I witness unhappiness arise in

the myth of the New South Africa when out of the eleven languages that exist under the rainbow, only one primary language is encouraged, and that is English. As mentioned above the New South Africa has a deep shadow side. 'The shadow becomes hostile only when he is ignored or misunderstood' (Henderson in Jung 1991:173). We are sharing in a world trend that sacrifices our local cultural identities and uniqueness to globalisation (Sardar 2002:80). Yes, we can say that it is simply pragmatic to award English the hegemonic position in the face of eleven national languages. Or are we seeing something more sinister – a stripping of people's 'own tradition[s], histor[ies] and cultural expression[s]' (Sardar 2002:80), whilst the myth of a global lifestyle smiles from the shadows of our Rainbow Nation Myth? The Afrikaners who were elated by change and embraced it, now feel 'alienated from the state symbols and neutral with regards to the new flag' (Grundlingh 2008:17). The New South Africa myth started turning sour at the same time as my process with *Ouma* began. Thus the environment in which I was creating was ripe for the questioning of my own myth as Sjaka S. Septembir. The rupturing of the National myth and the Self myth are mutually reinforcing in that the one confirms or denies the other (McAdams 1993:37). With the rupturing of the New South Africa myth looming, Karl Gröger started peering through the cracks.

In this section I looked at the myth of the old by looking at the Afrikaner as a cultural construct. Then I viewed Afrikaner Nationalism and how this tied in with my first identity construct: Karl Gröger. I then examined the myth of the new South Africa and the emergence of my alter egos. The birth of PORSELYNNKAS grounds this process of creating alternative personas and Sjaka S. Septembir is explained to

have risen directly out of a stand against the traditional Afrikaans values. I concluded by showing how the structure of a myth can be used to view an individual's mythic story using the being of Sjaka S. Septembir as myth.

In the following section, *Rupture*, I aim to investigate what happens to the psyche of the individual when one mythical framework through which we live and view the world, suddenly changes to a new framework, as based on what happened in South Africa after the 1994 elections.

SECTION THREE: Rupture

Rupture, *n*, the action of breaking or bursting; the state of being broken or violently parted; a quarrel, breach of friendship or amity.

If life is as Ricoeur puts it 'a cloth woven of stories told' (Ricoeur in Simms 2003:102-103), then rupture is the point where the cloth gets jolted to such an extent that the pattern undergoes a significant change. Ricoeur enjoys the idea of the Self described in Latin as *ipse*. This is the idea that a part of us is constant, whilst at the same time so much of our being and identity is changing. Rupture is a life-changing event that challenges the part (or parts) of the Self that is able to change, to the highest degree. Our world shifts to such an extent that I feel we can get dislodged from, or bury the previous part of our identity that stays the same (what Ricoeur calls the *idem*) (Simms 2003:102-103). Rupture indicates a break with the old Self and adoption of a new Self. We each enter the world as a Self, which is (as I have pointed out) a circle with a mid-point which is everywhere and a circumference that is nowhere (Haule 2004:7). We form ourselves through telling others (or even telling ourselves through the act of thinking) about ourselves, making meaning of the world around us and constantly revising our position within this world. To envision our lives as narratives gives us each a sense of being connected to life, a sense of purpose (Simms 2003:103). Our theories and myths then constitute 'My story', or 'being Me' (Smith in Marsella 1985:77). Rupture makes us rethink the point from which we tell our life myth. Our story-telling, our personal myth-making, dresses our Self with garments of meaning, and provides us with points of reference that are mostly idealized to some extent, yet measurable in finite terms. In other words a

personal myth is anchored in some sense in earthly reality and has a beginning, middle and end, a developing plot and characters (McAdams 1993:12). Through the fashioning of main characters for our life we can form a manageable cast of characters to form an integrated Self (McAdams 1993:122). This is how 'I', one's *core being* or one's *character* is shaped. With rupture our 'manageable cast of character' is thrown into turmoil and we may choose or be forced to recast roles within our life story.

An important part of one's personal myth, and to me what is the starting point of one's myth making, is when one receives one's name. What's in a name? I believe quite a significant amount, seeing as it forms an important part of one's cultural identity and one's cultural identity is the setting of one's life story. To clarify I will use the surnames Breytenbach and Cohen. These surnames denote two distinctly different histories. It would stand out as an oddity if Breytenbach was Jewish and Cohen was an Afrikaner. The importance of a name is seen in the many cultural rituals around the giving of a name. This naming in a traditional Afrikaans context happens ritualistically when the child is between three and six months old and is baptized in the front of the kerk (church) with the whole congregation as witness. It is interesting that the infant is totally at the mercy of his parents (or others) at this point and does not have a say in one of the most significant choices of his life. I would suggest that this ritualistic event is in Ricoeur's terms, 'an event for others, not for me' (Ricoeur in Simms 2003:17). 'I' am not yet conscious at this stage and cannot remember it. I have no control over being named. To view this baptizing I have to imagine myself as others would have seen me at that time

(Simms 2003:17). Stepping outside of myself in this way, Ricoeur sees as an act of 'transgressing' the restrictions of my own consciousness (ibid). I see this as the first example of the individual making a story or a narrative of his life. We wake up to our Self and to being, gradually. As we get older we become aware of our choices and our participation in life. The reclaiming of this moment of being named (giving yourself choice where you previously had none) and the re-baptism of the Self, the taking on of a new name, is a conscious act which could be extremely empowering. It could announce a more active participation in the making of one's life myth.

Naming lends individual focus to the Self (in opposition to a group). Names point to cultural identity (as we have seen above with the example of Cohen and Breytenbach). Scanning a telephone book we can tell English names from Afrikaans, Malay names from Jewish names, Xhosa names from Indian names, and so on. With the naming of Me, Myself, 'I'; 'I' am placed, or situated within this world. My naming, the vocalizing of my name by others in the world, solidifies the illusive/elusive Self. This Self, the 'sometime identity' which each of us inhabit, is 'always temporary and thus always becoming other than it is' (Jenkins 2003:3). Yet, against this unstable backdrop my name gives 'me' or 'I' a foundation, a starting point from which to answer the question: 'Who am I?' The question 'Who am I?' brings our duality of being into focus and immediately opens up the constant inner battle between self and other, cosmos and void, order and chaos, the known and (the abyss of) the unknown. Once we are a name, we have a character and a starting point for the story-telling of our personal life. Through the act of storying we actualize 'our self' and 'our meaning'. Because any 'actualization is only one among

a myriad possibilities of being' (Turner 1982:84), we are ultimately always making choices. By making choices and participating in life, a whole cast of characters may awaken inside our Self.

How do I tie this with myth? Steven Pinker argues that language is a 'distinct piece of the biological makeup of our brains' (Pinker 1994:18) - a well-engineered psychological faculty which makes language as natural to us as spinning webs is to spiders (Pinker 1994:18-19). It is not just a practical tool but an instinctual faculty of ours, to name things, to form sentences and essentially to make stories. When we begin making stories we soon run across one of their vital ingredients, the metaphor. A 'metaphor is principally a way of conceiving one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding' (Smith in Marsella 1985:74). If we start scratching the surface of metaphors we find that the whole landscape of our ideas is intrinsically metaphoric. The roots of the most objective scientific theories often lie firmly in the ground of metaphor. The illusive/elusive, ever-changing Self thinks in metaphors. 'At a more complex level, metaphor merges with myth in giving meaningful structure to [the] [S]elf and [the] world' (Smith in Marsella 1985:74). When we start telling stories from our everyday-life-myth we do so by infusing *plot* into our scattered metaphoric thoughts (Simms 2003:79). The possibility arises (through our ordering of 'the world by the imagination') for our stories to become complex narratives, and these narratives cross over into myths. Through his whole body of work Breytenbach has created such a complex myth of himself. He is a great example of a person who dedicates his being to being a *living* metaphor. He is always challenging the reader, for example, with the Zen-style *koan* (riddle) in *The*

True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist - 'What did you look like before your father or your mother were born?' - that questions the core of the reader's identity (Sienaert 2001: 22).

Ricoeur also emphasizes the importance of what he calls 'living' metaphors in Simms 2003:

Metaphor is living not only to the extent that it vivifies a constituted language. Metaphor is living by virtue of the fact that it introduces the spark of imagination into a 'thinking more' at the conceptual level. This struggle to 'think more', guided by the 'vivifying principle', is the 'soul' of interpretation. (Ricoeur in Simms 2003: 76 & 77)

To Ricoeur, dead metaphors are stale patterns or metaphors that have become clichés and don't make us 'think more'. If a person could be seen as a metaphor – the correlation here being that a 'metaphor is the part of a language that invites interpretation' (Simms 2003:77) which is the same thing with a person (the people we meet in life invite interpretation) - many people can be described as 'dead metaphors'. They cling to a constant identity for their Self and adopt a consistent appearance and a regular routine, mostly for the sake of maintaining a sense of security. When a person reinvents himself he is often making a change from being a *dead* to a *living* metaphor. Others are now confronted with reinterpreting this new metaphor, or are simply required to 'think more'.

According to Victor Turner, in the reinvention of the Self, 'actuality takes the sacrificial plunge into possibility and emerges as a different kind of actuality' (Turner 1982:84). This is the point of rupture. I am specifically interested in an artist such as Stephen Cohen who does this not to conform or to strengthen the existing social and cultural order, but rather does so to question. How much stronger

a transgression is performed when an artist doesn't just view himself as others have seen him, but remakes himself as he wishes others would perceive him. This is a much stronger use of the imagination and an active participation in making one's own myth. Cohen shows how this is done when going to Loftus dressed as Princess Menorah. He is not only flaunting his own 'mythical life story' as something alive and free from the everyday life stories of the common rugby fans. He is enlivening this moment for each fan whose path he crosses. To each individual this will at least stand out as a day at Loftus that was unlike any other. This is how Cohen, through Princess Menorah, brings what he views as light and truth into the world (De Waal and Sassen 2003: 46). This light and truth for Cohen is to deal with his own baggage of identity and sexuality and to make this 'dealing with my own shit' public, so as to 'rather be the cause of wonder than of conclusion' (Cohen in De Waal and Saasen 2003:21).

My own rupturing took place when I changed my name from Karl Gröger to Sjaka S. Septembir. To form a *living* metaphor of my Self - to challenge others to make an effort to interpret me - has been my aim with Sjaka S. Septembir as well as with my other personas. However, *Ouma* confronted Sjaka with the fact that one has to constantly reinvent oneself as a *living* metaphor, and our own history is often the only fountain from which this reinvention might spring.

In writing and performing *Ouma* I realized that although I have enthusiastically embraced the concept of the New South Africa, this embrace has not implied that the legacy of Afrikaner Nationalism, which I felt I had put behind me, has ever loosened its hold on me and my unconscious. This is realizing what Ricoeur

makes clear through his use of the idea of *ipse* (narrative sameness or that which changes in our life story) and *idem* (that which stays constant). There are always concrete things in life that stay unchanged (*idem*) which influence our told life story (*ipse*) (Simms 2003:102&103). We are all caught in a catch 22 of changing, yet staying the same. I can change every part of my being, yet my *idem* will always remain in place. Whatever rupturing takes place, whatever narrative choices I make with my life using my *ipse*, all changes I make are launched from the springboard of my original *character*, the character which is formed in the first few years of life. I thought that in my personal process of rupturing, where I changed into Sjaka S. Septembir, I had dealt with my past and I could now move on. Through *Ouma* I gained the opportunity to reinvestigate this past and found Karl Christian Gröger very much alive inside me. I discovered with a fright, while writing *Ouma*, that my Afrikaner heritage which I might have made peace with twelve years ago, with its stigma of 'the language of oppression and of humiliation' (Breytenbach 1984:321) can still appear in a fearful guise, the way a policeman, warder, judge or white politician did in the Apartheid years. At the same time, I saw with excitement a new Afrikaans voice bloom; the voice of *Voëlvry*¹², *Vryeweekblad*¹³ and now *Fokopolisiekar*¹⁴, all of which have risen out of the Nationalist past and freed themselves from old Afrikaner or Afrikaans identities. This highlights the fact that the myth of the past – or history - is a story that is very much alive and 'encourages

¹² The name of an Afrikaans rock tour that rose up against apartheid in the late 1980's. *Voëlvry* means 'free as a bird' but can also mean 'being wanted by the police'.

¹³ A newspaper edited by Max Du Preez. It was an extremely liberal Afrikaans newspaper. The name means 'Freedom Weekly'.

¹⁴ Very popular Afrikaans punk band. The name means 'fuck-off police car'.

endless imaginings and rethinking of what our personal and political identities might be' (Jenkins 2003:12). As Breytenbach puts it:

a language [just as a persons identity] is a living organism, not just a reflection of life, but also a precursor and a crucible thereof. (Breytenbach 1984:322)

An indication of the wide-spread impact that this rupturing had on the Afrikaans culture is to consider the spate of name changes that Afrikaans artists have gone through in this transitional period from Apartheid to post-Apartheid. A few examples are Koos A. Kombuis¹⁵, Valiant Swart¹⁶ and Asha Zero¹⁷. A 'name is an important personal attribute, and...in most instances to alter its form, especially under pressure from an external source, would be to incur considerable loss' (Drury and McCarthy 1980: 312). Further research into this phenomenon would be very valuable, but is impossible within the limitations of the current study.

When this rupturing took place, did I consciously choose the name Sjaka S. Septembir or did it choose me? When one decides something one is bound to reason. Deciding is the voluntary action, reason the involuntary. Reason is the small print - as Tom Waits says, "What the Large Print Giveth, the Small Print Taketh Away" ('Step Right Up' on the album *Small Change* 1976). Our decisions are always bound by reason. Secondly, when we will an action and move our bodies, we find that we are tied into unconscious and habitual movements. Our physical limits and bodily idiosyncrasies often run counter to our conscious will. To function as a human being I have to consent to this world's rules and physical laws. This is a necessity over

¹⁵ André le Roux du Toit aka Andre le Toit

¹⁶ Pierre Nolte

¹⁷ Johannes Le Roux

which we have no choice. When I decided to change my name there were factors of reason that played a role. Even within intuition, reason (unbeknown to us) is very much awake. Physically I believe that the way I hold and move my body played a role in how I viewed myself and so also in the name change. The name reflected a aspect of myself – body and mind – which I wanted to bring to the fore. At the moment of consenting to this intuitive process - the ritual through which I gained my new name - it was necessary for me to accept this change, so as to give it value and meaning. In light of this explanation I believe that my construction of my new identity was as much a voluntary as an involuntary deed. To take this further, Jung's presupposition is that the collective unconscious, which is a sea that stores numerous mythical contents, can call up mythopoetic imaginings. Through dreams and visions these imaginings can become real, which highlights that our thoughts are not our own (Hyde and McGuinness 2004: 54-57). In situations of heightened stress, such as when a myth is ruptured, our mythopoetic imaginings take on an intensified role. Through my intuition I followed a ritual that made me tap into this unconscious and flooded my being with images and my name. Yet I do believe that this process was somehow also governed by my own will and reason..

Do other artists who have changed their names, feel the same way? Cohen's alter-ego was born when he became extremely ill. This ruptured his own life view, making him realize how short and valuable life is. He made choices to change his way of life and one of them was to commit to performance art. Cohen suggests that he got his alter ego in the following way:

The Menorah is the many armed candlestick of Judaism. It brings light. My other name is Princess Menorah. I got that name because I bring light and enlightenment. (Cohen in De Waal and Sassen 2003:5)¹⁸

In the wording that Cohen uses he talks about the name in a heightened, almost Biblical fashion and it is important to note that he says ‘I *got* that name...(italics added)’, something or someone gave him this name. The name brings together drag and Judaism. In the same way that Marilyn Manson’s name is constructed by joining two opposing pop icons – Marlyn Monroe and Charles Manson - Steven Cohen’s alter ego joins two ideas that do not comfortably sit together. Furthermore Cohen describes his performance character as a *golem*, a creature from Jewish folklore, a monster ‘rising from Lake Subconscious’ (Cohen in De Waal and Sassen 2003:13). In other words, Cohen’s name and persona were bestowed upon him by his subconscious. As Breytenbach explains this process:

The ‘I’ becomes an observation point, a point of passage, through which the images and the perceptions move. You become part of your work, the way the archer and target and the arrow eventually become one. (Breytenbach in Sienaert 2001:15)

The first point of rupture was the change from the old South Africa to the new. This awakened me to experiment with different personas and I started creating a Self that consisted of a bundle of myths. Through this process I have gained fractured insights into myself and I have made new histories of myself, which are all open-ended and active - they defy a ‘definitive closure’ (Jenkins 2003:6). *Die PorselynkasSeël* and *Cybervaseline* were two zines that gave me the opportunity to write under a variety

¹⁸ It is interesting to me that Cohen developed this persona in 1997, the same year that Sjaka S. Septembir emerged.

of names (Swart Luiperd, Stael Valk en Dr. Adam Chaos), along with writing that still appears under Jan Afganistan and Sjaka S. Septembir. From 2004 I again became involved with performance art and two new personalities emerged: Max Lombaard and Soekie X-Ray. I am a scattering of feelings and thoughts, which I can only frame, or make sense of, through acting, writing or even directing my narratives. My work might be a constant examining of myself and a remaking of my own myths, but this making is always informed by how my childhood, my unchanging core, impacts on me and how I impact on my childhood. With *Ouma* I intended to consciously work with my childhood and set my memories against the personas that I have created and in the richly layered text and performance I feel I achieved this.

In this section I have described what the point of rupture causes the individual to experience. I have shown how naming is an important part of the process of individual myth-making and the starting point of making one's own myth. In choosing a new name we empower ourselves within the process of making our own Self. This choice is a difficult choice to make and the person who makes this choice must realize that many of our roots lie within our original name and myth, these can not just be brushed under the table. The process of choosing a new name is both deliberate and accidental. A performance, such as *Ouma*, becomes a ritual that strengthens this process.

Conclusion

In conclusion I review what **insight** I have gained and what the strategy would be to continue with my work from here within this post-modern, deconstructive framework. I have gained **philosophical** and **psychological** knowledge on the working of **narrative and myth**, and how they shape our being. I reiterate Socrates's truism that 'a life worth living is a life worth recounting' (Simms 2003:104). Life is a story: through existing we create the myth of our life (Simms 2003:104). 'We do not discover ourselves in myth; we make ourselves through myth' (McAdams 1993:13).

This is what fools **people**: a man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by **his stories and the stories** of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them; and he tries to live his life as if he were telling a story. (Jean –Paul Sartre in McAdams 1993:17)

In my own understanding I **have found** that I have many personalities and thus many narratives that make up my **Self**. This is a playful and not a schizophrenic experience. We understand that **all of us** do play different roles – have different personas – in different **everyday situations** (e.g. playing mother, daughter, teacher, wife). With this knowledge **the artist** who focuses on telling stories can relax and allow his inner world and **all the characters** that arise from this world to take over and so give them life.

Presently my **theatrical work** is heading towards strengthening and growing the different personas that I **have created**. Basically Jan Afganistan, Diamandt Wolf, Soekie X-Ray, and a few **others**, need more *air time*. More time to be here in this

world through me. My own question is can I sustain this? An artist such as Evita Bezuidenhout has managed to, yet David Bowie found playing with different personas to be a burden.

Intellectually I am focusing on making the knowledge that I have gained become an integrated part of my Self. As an artist I have largely worked intuitively and I am grateful to have encountered the work of Ricoeur and Jenkins to lend rational strength to my choices. Through encountering Ricoeur I have come full circle. Ricoeur makes me happy about the choices I have made with his view that 'poetic language, the language of intuition and imagination, is the richest language there is' (Simms 2003:74). Jenkins has lent me an almost anarchistic way to view narratives of the past as open-ended and alive, which suits the Jan Afganistan in me (Jan Afganistan is an aging Afrikaans punk rocker). Jenkins views texts as always in a state of play.

McCarthy has made me rethink the way I want to present my work in future. He gives his ephemeral performances an immense longevity by making them into movies. The insights gained through the work of Breytenbach and Cohen are almost of a Buddhist (with its goal of in-dept understanding) or religious nature. Their art amplifies in me the understanding that it is not what you do, but the essence is *your* way of doing it and how *you* grow that is important. Through artistic expression, intuition and thought I can now followed this inward path of adding to the myth of my Self with integrity and a new found clarity and focus. The journey that started with *Viva Dada!* was aimed at finding 'What gives my life meaning and purpose?', 'Wat am I?' or 'Who am I?' Fifteen years later working on my Masters production

Ouma, I find my work has gone from 'What am I!' to 'Here I am!' (Simms 2003:108).

I will use the highest form of language and conclude with a poem that echos the journey that I have to some degree described throughout this explication:

mind and heart

unaccountably we are alone
forever alone
and it was meant to be
that way,
it was never meant
to be any other way –
and when the death struggle
begins
the last thing I wish to see
is
a ring of human faces
hovering over me –
better just my old friends,
the walls of myself,
let only them be there.

I have been alone but seldom
lonely.
I have satisfied my thirst
at the well
of myself
and that wine was good,

the best I ever had,
and tonight
sitting
staring into the dark
I now finally understand
the dark and the
light and everything
in between.

peace of mind and heart
arrives when we accept what
is:
having been
born into this
strange life
we must accept
the wasted gamble of our
days
and take some satisfaction in
the pleasure of
leaving it all behind.

cry not for me.

grieve not for me.

read
what I've written
then
forget it

all.

drink from the well
of your self
and begin
again.

(Bukowski 2006: 278 & 279)

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