

**HOW THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BLACK WOMEN CAN BE
UNDERSTOOD THROUGH DEvised THEATRE INFORMED BY
PSYCHOPHYSICAL ACTOR TRAINING: AN ADAPTATION OF THE
TADASHI SUZUKI ACTOR TRAINING TECHNIQUE**

By

Linda Makgabutlane

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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ABSTRACT

In this study I aim to use my body as a tool to derive themes for use in performance making and to underpin this in theory. I focus on aspects of Tadashi Suzuki (1986) actor training (referred to as Suzuki training), free writing and the body. I use black feminism, cognitive neuroscience and body theory to account for my lived body, which I then use in performance. Practice and theory informed each other in a cyclical manner in accordance with Practice as Research as a methodology. Therefore, elements that emerged from my practice determined the theory included in the study, as practice was considered a way of knowing. I work to establish a relationship between race, subjugation and some of the multiple implications thereof on the body in the urban context: I draw on limited notions of culture and the body to interrogate how these can materialise in performance. The study also addresses aspects of the performing body to support why I derive value in Suzuki (1986) training as one psychophysical actor training tool. I theoretically discuss this technique as developing expressive abilities in young performers. The primary purpose of this research is to create work that is rooted in the tradition of devising. My research moves between the physical body and the body in performance in a South African context as I worked to conceptually account for the body in both instances. Although limited, this research includes theories that account for the performing body engaged in somatic foot-based practices where these interact with my practice. I further discuss the devising process I undertook with a cast, as a performance maker, my findings and reflection on this process.

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INTRODUCTION

I aim to reflect on two Practice as Research projects, to map a course for my final MA thesis production. These works are regarded as incremental practice projects to chart or inform what will culminate in my thesis production. I have worked on three projects as part of my MA; two form my reflection on the study. The first project is my minor research study, ***From Rules and Writing***, which is a process-based work wherein I allow an audience into a staged training session and installation where I explore a generative process that I proposed from part of layered performance making. The two projects, following on from my minor work, were productions; my one-person show (untitled when staged but referred to here as ***The Kinks and Intricacies of Black Women hood***), as well as my medium project, ***Of Shacks and Yoga Mats***. However, my one-person show, ***The Kinks and Intricacies of Black Women hood***, was a task that by design fell outside of my area of research. It was based on an obsession that emerged from my personal biography. Although created and performed, I hardly include this project in my explication, as it does not directly inform my thesis production.

The creative impulse for this body of work was an interest based on the body as a tool for performance making. I chose to use the theatre training practice of Tadashi Suzuki (1986) acting as my focus for the study arose from my undergraduate training as a performer. I was exposed to Suzuki (1986) actor training as a type of psychophysical technique for use in performance; it places emphasis on the bodymind of the performer. I propose and theoretically discuss this actor training method as a generative tool in theatre making alongside free writing and re-writing.

My work leading up to this point had been located within black womanhood and rooted in context, from a personal frame of reference. My choice to work with black women and to root the study in context was made only after the completion of my minor project, ***From Rules and Writing***. The work I have generated with a cast is close to autobiographical in nature.

In the first section of this explication I discuss Suzuki (1986) training and free writing, followed by my minor project, *From Rules and Writing*, and how it influenced my study. It was after this work that I made the choice to work with black women, a choice I elaborate on through limited theories. I then discuss my choice to include context as a thematic element in my work, a choice, which was also informed by my minor project. I include theories on the geographical spatial planning of two cities in South Africa, namely; Johannesburg and Cape Town as both the cast and myself originate from Johannesburg and currently reside in Cape Town. I then elaborate on my process of creating *Of Shacks and Yoga Mats*. My aims here are to discern what can best be described as the process of creating, which I undertook in this study. This may evolve, shift, or continue to be central to my practice in future. My purpose in mapping my conceptual processes is to think through and begin to develop my final production in line with this study's findings within the methodology of Practice as Research, where practice feeds into theory, which in turn feeds into practice in a cyclical manner.

Section one

Suzuki training and free writing

I value Suzuki (1986) actor training as a psychophysical training technique. It assisted me to shift my attention out of my head, as an actor, and into my body. In other words, it helped me develop a degree of focus on my body that allowed me to embody the images I was pursuing on stage (Suzuki, 1995:155). Phillip Zarrilli (2009:18) describes my problem as common in young actors. While the actor may make cognitive decisions on how to play a character, these may not materialise on stage. Zarrilli (2009:18) further maintains that self-consciousness results in an actor thinking about objectives a character has, instead of participating in the psychophysical process of embodiment.

This type of training is similar to Asian martial arts in that it works to break automatism in the body, which could be considered unconscious acts informed by daily behaviour (Barba & Savarese, 1991:74-94). According to Zarrilli (2009:14), psychophysical training methods adopt the principle of *prana* (breath as a vital energy and life force), which flows within. When Zarrilli (2009: 22-40) draws parallels between, *Kathakali*¹, yoga, *Kalaripayattu*² and psychophysical training, breath energy and life force are seen as one, spread throughout the whole body.

Zarrilli (2009: 25-26) describes a relationship with breath as fostered by action. Through undertaking training in specific styles of embodied practice, the energy connected with breath and its associated power has the potential to animate and accelerate awareness. Breath is seen to have the potential to heighten the activity of the senses and activate the entire bodymind. Zarrilli (2009) can be seen to propose actor training which centres on breath. Moreover, Suze Adams (2013:75-77) also articulates a relationship between breath, bodymind and action in yoga, through describing how the activated yogic breath grounds and secures the body in space. Suzuki (1986) training uses breath differently, specifically for use during a performance. This training, like *Kalaripayattu*, strengthens the relationship of an actor's feet with the stage floor as the performer generates a different relationship to the stage by using their feet (Suzuki, 1986: 5-7).

In Suzuki training with the feet encased in *tabi* (or socks), actions of falling, standing, and rhythmically and repetitively stomping, work to remove the actor's sense of their everyday self (Suzuki, 1986:11). The action of stomping and other exercises within the training is described as giving the actor a sense of the strength inherent in their body and initiates the creation of a fictional space through non-daily activity (Suzuki, 1986:12). Suzuki training can be seen to make use of breath that responds to the moments of chaos and control in the body. There is a contradiction between chaos and control it is possibly at this point of contradiction that the breath responds.

¹A form of classical Indian dance.

² An Indian martial art form.

An awareness of felt perception in the body can be seen to stem from the actor gaining heightened awareness as they pass points of physical limits and enter a crisis state of energy where they can tap into their potential and unknown reserves (Allain, 2009:122). According to Paul Allain (2009:121), this crisis state of energy, created through the intensity of physical actions, reveals patterns of energy close to intuitive or animal reflexes, which he describes as animal energy. My research explores the potential of this crisis state as a fertile space for creativity.

In training, the performer is both emotionally exposed and in open physical positions while evoking a crisis state of energy, which is similar to a state of chaos in front of a presupposed audience. Suzuki asks the performer to develop and control this state (Allain, 2009:96). Conversely, I propose using this approach to the body alongside free writing to derive themes for use in devised performance.

Peter Elbow (1998:13-19) is of the view that in free writing one is forced to write without stopping. This may result in writing with a specific focus, stream of consciousness or writing on several topics while returning to one topic repeatedly. When the writer gets stuck they may write; "I have nothing to write", "no" or "nonsense". When stuck in the middle of writing a sentence it is acceptable to repeat the last words already written, until the next words come to you as the writer. The aim is to keep writing and the process is the goal (Elbow, 1998:13-19). Free writing assists to produce words that will form part of the re-writing process, elaborated on later in this explication. In this research, free writing was used as a tool to generate texts of a suitable form for use in performance.

Elbow (1983) further describes free writing as a form of writing that one can use to help them to silence conscious notions of self, which can get in the way of what it is we want to say, or in the expression of how we feel. This writing is described as focus without the exertion of strenuous amounts of energy. In time this is seen to develop the writer's personal voice, aid in giving more

resistance or life to a writer's use of words or provide the writer with more control over language (Elbow, 1998:13-19). The aim of my minor project was to free write while the body was in an evoked state of crisis.

Even though Suzuki training induces a crisis state, this is not the overall aim of the training, which is to develop technical, spatial and energetic levels of performance through breath (Allain, 2002:140). In yoga, breath control can be seen to be central to the practice. One inhales, exhales, and holds breath in, while moving through poses within the practice. A resting pose is allowed as and when the practitioner feels they require it. This is not the nature of breath generated within Suzuki training, which is more to do with allowing the breath to respond to the crisis state induced in the contradictory space between chaos and control. This resonates with Eugenio Barba's (as cited in Zarrilli, 2009:8) insight into the technical elements of performance as "pre-expressive" levels of performance. Pre-expressive, in this instance, could be viewed as the creative impulse generated through Suzuki training that could be harnessed for the derivation of themes for devised performance.

For the actor, activated breath can result in an inner life, which has felt vibrations at its core (Zarrilli, 2009:19). I interpret activated breath as the breath initiated in the contradictory space between chaos and control. Michael Chekhov's (1991:43) work on psychological gesture aims to "penetrate all parts of the body with fine vibrations". What he appears to be describing is a desire for the actor to play a character in a manner in which it is embodied in fictional space, with the same degree of energy that exists within the actor. Use of energy within Suzuki training is controlled through the use of the performer's pelvic area as the performer has to engage their core as they attempt to control their upper and lower body in space, while working to sustain their energy in a training session (Suzuki, 1986:9). Conversely, breath control assists in developing muscular and nerve control (Allain, 2002:116). Somatic training, while placing emphasis on the body, also affects the brain. This can be viewed in accordance with Antonio Damasio's (2000:72-75) theory, which states that performing physical actions produces neural patterns, which occur in the body as sensation. He further adds that

consciousness transforms sensation into effect in the brain. Thus, breath, physical action, and the brain are inter-related in developing muscular and nerve control.

Suzuki (1986) training can be seen to encourage new behaviours. In support of this view, Zarrilli (2009:39) states that in phenomenological terms, imagination is a psychophysical act, one involving the entire psychophysical self. However, this can be seen as caused by one working in the contradictory space between chaos and control in the body, shifting in and out of control and increasingly towards exhaustion. I also argue that a space of chaos is seen as a creative space as it is unpredictable. It exists in the threshold between control and uncontrollability. This bears resonance with Victor Turner's (1990:12) notion of the liminal, where liminality is viewed as a fructile space of possibility.

Emma Meehan (2013:43-48) describes psychophysical training practices as offering a transitional space that serves to test out new behaviours and relationships, where set identities and formed notions of 'self' and 'other' are suspended. I argue that this is due to the performer entering into a liminal space through their engagement with the training. I am inspired by South African theatre maker, Mandla Mbothwe (2008:12), who draws on the writing of Turner (1967, 1980, 1990, 1991) and describes liminality as a state of mobility; a not-yet-defined space of time, place and character status; a place of ambiguity and multiple possibilities; a time between reality and imagination. I borrow from Mbothwe's view that this space has a transformational dimension.

This moment when set notions of self are suspended is what I am most interested in for the purposes of performance making. Additionally, when actions that involve making contact with objects or the floor are included in somatic practices, they are seen to allow for the establishment of new relationships between self and space (Meehan, 2013:43). I draw a parallel here with the degree of focus on the performer's feet inherent in Suzuki

(1986) training. Moreover, I argue that an alternative self can be seen to emerge through establishing a different relationship to and with space. In my minor project, *From Rules and Writing*, I aimed to free write while my body was removed from daily behaviour. I moved towards a fictional space generated by the action of my feet on the stage floor and activated breath so as to record what I thought, felt or remembered as I passed through my various personal points of crisis. At times the closer I reached to exhaustion, the more my free writing was a record of moving between the real and unreal. The aim of this was to use my body as an entry point into performance making, in other words, 'to listen to my body' and make a work from my body as an entry point.

Section two: A theatre making methodology:

From Rules and Writing

I first made use of Suzuki (1986) actor training in accordance with its design, as an actor. I have also used it to instill concentration, awareness and focus in a cast while directing. In this research, I propose the use of this technique as a generative tool in performance making. I propose making use of Suzuki (1986) training alongside free writing and re-writing to generate texts in a layered devising process. I elaborate on re-writing later in my explication. Once texts are generated, a process of directing, or curating these texts into a performance score begins. The performance maker, in this context, is thus both facilitator and director.

While somatic training places emphasis on the body, it also affects the brain. Damasio maintains that emotions, as neural objects and the consequences of their occurrence as a result of the activation of neural patterns, biologically alter both the body and brain landscape (Damasio, 2000:51-54). This bears significance when considering that in my research I focus on generating images that can be used in performance making. The process of generating images is perceptibly associated with neurological processes.

As mentioned, in the context of this research, the purpose of free writing is to record images that are generated from the body through a psychophysical approach (Suzuki training). Damasio (2010:60) elaborates on his understanding of images in relationship to the body, brain and mind:

A spectacular consequence of the brain's incessant and dynamic mapping is the mind. The mapped patterns constitute what we, conscious creatures, have come to know as sights, sounds, touches, smells, tastes, pains, pleasures, and the like—in brief, images. The images in our minds are the brain's momentary maps of everything and of anything, inside our body and around it, concrete as well as abstract, actual or previously recorded in memory.

Damasio (2010) thus challenges the common perception that an image is primarily a visual sign. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986:15) adds to this argument through establishing image as effected by language. He describes language as carrying culture and states that language imparts and communicates images of and to the world. Wa Thiongo (1986:15) further describes language as how one mediates between "me and my own self; between my own self and others; and between me and nature". This, I argue, means translation from one language to another and can be seen to shift the feeling or bodily experience of an image as one moves from one culture or language to another. The use of language here refers to language in thought, speech, and as used in writing as well as in performance. Damasio (2000:51) notes that even though emotions are biologically determined, learning and culture alter the expression of emotions and give emotions (which work to regulate life in the body to prepare it for a specific reaction) new meanings. This suggests that images created by words in story and/or performance through language, have the potential to alter mood and emotions in audiences watching the work. Thus, use of one language in place of another should not be treated as neutral. This is an important consideration if one acknowledges that performance is often an intercultural act. As performers both my cast and I

speak more than one language. Based on this, I maintain that conveying our intended images requires a degree of sensitivity if we move from the languages we use to mediate ourselves into languages we use to mediate between others and ourselves.

From Rules and Writing, my minor project, was a staged training session and installation. With assistance from Raezeen Wentworth³, I showed part of a process we began several weeks prior to the showing in which an audience was invited. I undertook an adaptation of Suzuki (1986) training and free writing at intermittent intervals, in the presence of an audience. Free writing collected from previous training sessions was hung in the space, as an installation for the audience to read at the end of my training session.

A trainer is a prerequisite in Suzuki (1986) training. However, some elements of the training, for example traditional Japanese music, were difficult for me to access. I therefore adapted the training using what was available. I used Fela Kuti for Afrobeat alongside slower western musicians (such as The Cinematic Orchestra, amongst others) where the training required slower music. Traditionally, training requires an instructor who is more experienced in the practice to make necessary corrections to the performer's misalignment. In this instance, I was more familiar with the training than Wentworth was in control of selecting exercises within a training session, instructing for a change in position within each exercise. She also determined the duration of each exercise within a session, the training session as a whole and issued instructions to free write.

Outside of this showing, training had taken place across several venues on UCT's Hiddingh Campus that had sprung or wooden floors. A typical training session would occur for thirty to forty minutes. While there are several ways in which psychophysical training affects the performer's body, I will attempt to narrow the focus of my discussion to those aspects I believe were encountered leading up to and including my minor project. This serves as a

³ Fellow MA student.

possible explanation of the process my body was engaged in while an audience looked on. I will also discuss what the training activated in me, as the performer and maker and how free writing served to record images generated from this psychophysical approach.

The process of free writing leading up to ***From Rules and Writing*** did bring to light some recurring images I was subconsciously suppressing. I believe I was suppressing these images to focus on 'productive thoughts or positive emotions' to react to fewer elements I encountered in my environment. I have included some of these images later in this explication. Two of the images later served as points of entry into devising a performance, ***Of Shacks and Yoga Mats***, for my medium project. Some of these images were informed by place and my experiences of the city that I was choosing to suppress to feel that I was adapting to living in Cape Town and making the most of my time there.

What follows is a list of some of the images that emerged from the minor project process. For the purposes of this explication, they have been grouped thematically:

Black women

The difficulty of the struggle to survive and trying to be independent.

The notion of the strong black woman.

For as long as you are black and female, struggle is something you have to overcome.

We are both nurturer and provider.

Race

The margin is a heightened space as it is a space of lack of access to money: for basic things one needs in order to live.

Relationships between black males and females.

Time

A sense that time has made no difference, my life seems the same as that of my parent's at my age, despite the fact of democracy.

Johannesburg is home

Longing for home (or Johannesburg).

The absence of black men in suits, in Cape Town.

Memory

Respect for how my parents managed to keep the greater reality outside of the texture of my childhood.

My first bedroom.

Art and music

Photographic work by artist Thandi Msebenzi (from an exhibition I attended).

My relationship with music.

The training

Control of space comes from committing to an action with less thought about myself.

Raezeens's voice helped to create a liminal space.

Slow moments in the training allowed me to feel in control and powerful, where usually I felt as though I was powerless and under Reazeen's control.

When I felt exhausted

Questioning the difference between reality and fiction.

Colour

Colour as symbol, blue – as symbol for esteem, royalty, school uniforms, school chairs, order.

Toni Morrison's *Blue is The Warmest colour*.

Recording images was a way of discovering a theme or subject matter for performance making.

Only in making *Of Shacks and Yoga Mats* could I articulate how Suzuki (1986) training assisted me with free writing. James Brandon (1990:92) states that this training requires the actors to enter a tough and extensive self-encounter. I am cognisant that there are other practitioners who have similar foci, for example; Jerzy Grotowski (1968:37), who through his somatic focus in practice, aimed to uncover what was behind the mask of the everyday; to make evident, through a sacrifice of the body and mind, the core of the

personality. I, however, chose to use Suzuki (1986) training, based on my degree of familiarity with the training as this allowed me a degree of freedom to adapt it for the purposes of my study. As mentioned above, I selected two images from my minor project to use as entry points for devising my medium project. These were:

- For as long as you are black and female, struggle is something you must overcome.
- The absence of black men in suits, in Cape Town.

These images will be referred to as image one and two respectively.

Section three:

Mapping a way forward after *From Rules and Writing*

I view the study through the lens of body theory and cognitive neuroscience. I draw specifically from Lisa Blackman (2008), Roisin O’Gorman (2013) and Maurice Merleau Ponty (2009) on what is common in their notions of the self, Damasio (2000), Allain (2002) and Zarrilli (2009) on commonalities in their notions of the body and mind. I use these theories to resonate with Suzuki’s (1986) training that attempts to integrate physical and mental systems to create the bodymind in space (Allain, 2002:96).

Damasio (2000:22-23) describes the body and mind relationship as one where the body and mind both serve each other. Merleau Ponty (as cited in Zarrilli, 2009:46) argues that the sensing moving body brings the self into the world. One’s sensing moving body is one’s way of knowing and is through which the world emerges to the self. I understand this to mean that Merleau Ponty argues a relationship between ‘I think and I taste’, ‘I feel’, ‘I see’, ‘I hear and I co-exist’. This leads me to understand that the world becomes known to us through our senses because a body in movement has effect on how one exists and co-exists in the world. According to Blackman (2008), body theory locates the body as part of social theory due to the authority afforded to and applied over bodies as part of social activity. This includes; the material body

and considerations of normal and abnormal, the natural body as it merges with the material body, identity and history, as well as lived bodies, where biology and culture meet (Blackman, 2008:10-12).

Additionally, O’Gorman (2013:17) describes an ecological body where an interrelationship exists between the mind and body. Here, body and mind as one is, “continually experiencing its own becoming within a temporal and moving environment, in a constant state of flux, participation and change”. The self is continuously re-established, variable, uncontrolled, in motion with and through the environment. While in performance terms and in accordance with O’Gorman, Allain (2002:90) asserts that through daily practice and endeavour in Suzuki training a space becomes transformed when “the actors body and the space reveal a mutual connection”. This suggests that through dedicated practice in one space the moving body in space can alter one’s way of being or one’s perception of being in the space of training.

The material body within body theory can thus be seen to draw from various disciplines which request that our relationship with the environment be accounted for; the relationship between the real and socialized body to be exposed, and the physical drives of the body and bodily intelligence to be regarded. I return to a relationship between self and environment later in this explication.

This study was rooted in Cape Town where I currently reside, and in Johannesburg where I originate. Firstly, let me attend to accounting for myself (body and mind). After completion of my minor project I chose to use image one to inform my choice to work with black women.

Section four:

Black women

I, both black and female, live in post-colonial South Africa. I chose to locate this body of work within black feminism as opposed to feminism in the broader

sense of the term. My choice is in accordance with black feminist scholar Hortense Spillers (1987:67), who places race and not gender at the fore of social regulatory systems, and acknowledges gender as part of contemporary discourse on the body as argued by Judith Butler (1990:406), amongst others. However, she argues that oppression and racist legislation work to rob black bodies of their will and desire, which has the effect of a loss of gender difference as an outcome. She further describes gender differentiation as a political plot when practiced within racism.

Spillers (1987:67) characterises the body as the meeting point of life sustaining, linguistic, cultural and psychological powers, which are significantly disrupted by racism. My body, within racism thus becomes reduced to a thing, an object, not seen as human, existing in a state of otherness (Spillers, 1987:67). Placing black bodies in a position of otherness gives us the quality of embodying physical powerlessness that in effect shifts into powerlessness in other human and social meanings. Within blackness gender differentiation exists, however, it would be negligent of me to not concede racism as an element in my reality. I regard my body as a site of resistance, adaptation, resilience, and much more, not solely powerlessness.

While black consciousness literature is one mechanism against the myriad effects of racism upon the psyche of black women and men, Pumla Gqola (1991:7) describes how in parts of fictional black consciousness literature, black women characters are often used as symbols of silent suffering who inevitably support black male activism; often denied voice and agency. 'Strength', for the woman character, is seen in her perceived ability to withstand suffering and remain loyal to her children and husband. These characters are framed in parallel with the acts of transgressive women that often result in punishment if not aligned with 'appropriate behaviour'. This is experienced within the constraints and functions of patriarchy and capitalism (Gqola, 1991:79). Gqola (1991:15) describes black feminism as discourse, which places emphasis on black women having agency to engage with the process of self-definition. She contends that, often, fictional black women characters within this literature generally do not reach self-actualisation. They

remain immortalised as an object that receives painful emotions. These characters are often reduced to a single level of symbolism. Theirs is a life used to stand for the state of a country in demise and to justify the fulfilment of the male fight for freedom (Gqola, 1991:75).

In contrast to black men characters who are usually seen to be able to make full sense of systematic racial oppression faced by black people under apartheid, a questionable popular representation Gqola (1991:85) articulates is that of black women as synonymous with the earth. Both of which have no agency yet are productive because they have riches within them. One has a womb that can carry children and the other has deep reserves of gold (Gqola, 1991:89).

While Gqola (1991) describes these as characteristics of women in the literature, she rightfully acknowledges that these depictions are in fact not true to life. Black women are and were political activists. However, black women characters often tend to react, or only have attributes of being a wife and/or mother, seldom acting for themselves while men characters are seen to act for themselves (Gqola, 1991:151). I maintain that this representation of women as 'acting beings', as opposed to 'reacting beings' is one art and performance can contribute to.

Sara Ahmed (2010:250-254) argues that if orientations influence what bodies do, then similarly they would affect how certain bodies shape space. This can be attributed to how the world assumes certain bodies as given in specific spaces. This influences how one is treated or experiences those spaces. Similarly, Ahmed (2010) argues that if spaces extend bodies, then they tend to do so to those bodies that usually inhabit them. Women 'do things' by claiming space, which has not been traditionally marked out for them by both capitalism through discriminatory access to opportunities and pay and patriarchy, as social forces. She further acknowledges race as allowing some to inherit spaces while others must secure a place not given before.

Section five

Performance making and the black woman

Theatre scholar Nandi Bhatia (2006:84) describes post-colonial theatrical texts as tending to accord a “short shrift” to women playwrights, which adds intensity to the parameters of post-colonial theatre to include gender issues. Additionally, theatre maker Lebogang Disele (2015:65) is of the attitude that contemporary representations of black women in Southern Africa are generally disempowering; women are often portrayed as maids and victims; these depictions are focused on poverty. While in South Africa black women do work as maids, I believe a concern of these works could include shedding light on forces at play on these characters that include broader attitudes towards them. In his lecture titled *What Fanon Said*, Lewis Gordon (2015) articulates a sensitivity to not subsume blackness in white thought. This may be the issue Disele (2015) raises in her description of black women representations.

Gordon (2015) argues that one aspect of colonialism was that it kept the subjugated in a position of only having power over their bodies. This, as a form of social practice, has influenced the development and marginalisation of African cultures. The power of citizenry was localised to their bodies and colonial bodies were still further policed. In the same lecture, Gordon (2015) describes culture as seeking to do what the gods would do: control the weather and assist in fertility. Suzuki (1995:155) is of a different view and describes culture as informed by one’s ability to fully extend the expressive abilities of the body. This points to his idea that culture lies in the body. The full expressive abilities of some cultures as described by Suzuki (1995) can thus also be seen to have been disrupted by the agents of colonisation as they disrupted spatial practices of black cultures by dictating where and when people and suppressed indigenous cultures could move. This is particularly pertinent if we consider O’Gorman’s (2013) claim that self exists in relation to environment. Gordon (2015) and Suzuki (1995: 155-160) describe two notions of culture; in a post-colonial context within Suzuki’s and

Gordon' s notion of culture the expressive ability of blackness was also disrupted and limited by policing and racist laws. Blackness (and black women) was subjugated, limiting its ability to seek to do what the gods would do. Both notions of culture were disrupted by colonisation and then apartheid. I see Suzuki (1986) training as working to give the performer a sense of power in their body through developing the expressive abilities of the body through breath moving in the body.

Suzuki (2017) later describes being influenced by musicians, particularly by the breath patterns required to produce different sounds from an instrument. I argue that a parallel could be drawn between the breath patterns a musician makes to produce sound in some horn or wind instruments and those produced as a result of being in some of the positions in the training. The level of difficulty in the training and nature of movement within it create these patterns. I further argue that the idea of Suzuki (1986) training as a way of engaging the body as an instrument in processes of generating material for performance, is an act of finding alternative ways of being, which can be put to constructive use in a rehearsal process. This is a possible enactment of an alternative creative space of strength one enacts from the body, which I describe later. I believe that the black female performer can use this training to use their body as the instrument with a strong sense of expressive ability.

Spillers (2013) in her lecture titled *The Idea of Black Culture* describes a third notion of black culture that is not determined by race, but rather operates as an alternative to capitalism and oppression. As black South African women, this was the nature of culture we participated in under colonialism, then apartheid. It continues in the post-colonial context under capitalism, racism and the tradition of patriarchy within cultures. These persist as forces in our lives and make black feminism a necessity to extend spaces traditionally not granted to us. Musician Muyanga (2018) in his talk on music and the African archive describes apartheid as working towards making the world smaller for black people. He posits liberation in opposition to this, where liberation is viewed as the act of enlarging the world for black people. Muyanga gives the example of Miriam Makeba who travelled outside South Africa and

encountered various cultures, as an example of making her world bigger. Through undertaking Suzuki (1986) training I have found a liminal space which is closer to a space of transformation not liberation and creative space from the feeling of liminality and chaos induced in the body.

Suzuki (1986) is a foot and breath based repetitive, rhythmic training. Arya Madhavan and Sreenath Nair (2013:153-159), Kudiyaattum⁴ performers and scholars, describe performer's bodies engaged in foot-based practices as in a state of constant becoming. They maintain that Kudiyaattam moves the body out of its objective relationships and into the realm of trance with the body embedded in endless movement without falling back into subjectivism. I similarly experience moments of trance durationally within Suzuki (1986) training, which is also a foot-based practice.

Muyanga (2018) proceeds to describe blackness as a site of trauma and creation, this I associate with Suzuki's (1986) practice as the training relies on moving through points of crisis. I draw a parallel between trauma and crisis points as this is perhaps conceptually how I see the method to be applicable for working with black women. What I am interested in is how, or if these various notions of culture and the body can or do meet in performance.

Additionally, following on ***From Rules and Writing***, a second choice I made was based on image two. I chose to ground the study in geographical contexts, in other words, Cape Town and Johannesburg.

Section six: Two cities

Cape Town as a contextual choice

Ahmed (2010) states that orientation matters. I believe this means that if I'm born into a particular relationship with capitalism, this is bound to influence how I see and experience both the world and inequality. This also then means

⁴ One of India's oldest traditional theatrical art forms.

that others are likely to treat me in a manner that is in accordance to my position within capitalism. As a black woman, certain spaces in post-colonial South Africa will thus tend to extend my body more so than others. This is based on the degree to which my body or those of other black women tend to inhabit them and are thus seen as given. My cast members and myself are from Johannesburg not Cape Town, we are arguably seen as a given in more spaces in Johannesburg than in Cape Town. This is due to the fact that the formation of these cities was shaped by different factors and has influenced how black people occupy and move through these spaces.

Image two from my minor project described the absence of black men in suits in Cape Town. I believe this means that black people are visible or inhabit these city centres differently. My cast members and myself see the city as part of our identities. Socially, while we study within walking distance from the city centre, we remain 'unexpected' in some spaces in the city centre. Cape Town city centre is often described as beautiful and clean in comparison to a city like Johannesburg, which is at times described as dirty and passed its prime. Notably, the development of Cape Town city centre was initially funded by the British through compensation to slave owners for loss of property tied to the end of slavery (Miraftab, 2012:285) and not through capital generated by industry, as is the case with Johannesburg. According to Faranak Miraftab (2012:285), the past influences contemporary struggles over uneven development in urban spaces, in relation to peripheral spaces still inhabited along racial lines. Miraftab (2012:293) notes that in Cape Town:

The process of creating an elitist city historically required both discursive and regulatory means. Prior to apartheid during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, British colonial liberalism achieved selective urban inclusion and exclusion through political distortions: a group's say in municipal development and decisions was both tied to individuals' wealth and property ownership and manipulated through a stereotyped discourse of clean/dirty.

My experience of the Cape Town city centre is that those who own properties in it are usually white (suggesting that they are historically privileged) or European, and that property prices are incomparably high to rent or own when set against other provinces in the country. The city centre is still not inclusive although it is well kept. Miraftab (2012:284), amongst others, describes this as a landscape designed to create imageries and realities of superiority, dominance and social control through the built environment.

Achille Mbembe (2008:37) paints a contrasting image of Johannesburg; he describes it as representative of a modern African metropolis. This is a city, which he sees as possessing a form, shaped by production and the social sphere, thus, he believes that this form can in fact be influenced to change. One moment that can result in an alteration of shape is when the cycle of goods circulated as well as the constant cycle of buying and selling results in a replacement of tradition. Tradition becomes replaced with a culture of indifference and restlessness, which cultivates self-stylisation. I would like to argue that this is not characteristic of Cape Town's city centre. In Cape Town, the traditional fabric of the buildings and the city has mostly been preserved while the high costs of property have allowed for mostly only the wealthy few to inhabit the city past working hours. While public transport systems, with the exception of the (city regulated) MyCiti bus, are based at the edge of the city centre.

Conversely, Mbembe (2008:38) describes Johannesburg as either an example or performance of African cosmopolitanism and worldliness shaped by mass poverty, the global logic of commodities and a consumer public. He describes the form of the city as one based on mimicry in terms of modernity, planning, infrastructure, zoning and distribution of wealth. Mbembe (2008:44-45) includes racism and exploitation from the fact of mining as constituent elements in Johannesburg and describes the city as telling a story of conquest and division: "the racial city existed as a dual city one experienced by the settler and one experienced by the native" (Mbembe, 2008:44-45). He further adds that Johannesburg began as a mining town. Those who planned the city designed it for a predominantly white population as racism and

exploitation was legal. The mineworker was thus not recognised as a legitimate inhabitant of the city in the planning of the city centre. Moreover, Mbembe (2008:45) further asserts that the settlers' actions of creating a dual city led the same oppressor to states of delirium. These were made manifest in their overcoming of their "fears, fantasy, faked objects and images in material spatial practices" (Mbembe, 2008:45).

However much the racial city denied the fact of co-dependence on the labour of blacks, this was not reality. The servile labourer performed multiple acts of transgression in areas where their oppressor in fact, needed them. This, Mbembe (2008:50-51) argues, is due to the logic of segmentary planning, living, and crossing boundaries, which became a primary mode of existing for many black people in the city. Acts of transgression became a way of life for many servile or labouring black people. These labourers, Mbembe (2008) describes, include the grandparents and parents of the cast and myself. They have informed a large degree of our interactions with Johannesburg. Their actions allowed for us to appear 'given' in some spaces. The cast and myself thus bring a substantially developed sense of self to our lives in Cape Town, given that we identify as being rooted in the urban experience of Johannesburg and the 'rights to the city' that allows for us to feel we have.

Miraftab (2012:293-295), conversely, argues that the contemporary municipal financial support of the City Improvement District (CID) within the Cape Town city centre protects historical patterns of segregation. The creation of CID has resulted in increased policing, cleaning and marketing at a fee paid to the municipality within special rate areas (a legal term for CID). This development has, in part, resulted in the shaping of the city centre and has largely influenced my experience of Cape Town. I find the city to cater more to the wealthy or to tourists as opposed to its local inhabitants. Coming from Johannesburg, I have noted a difference in how space is inhabited by local South Africans. Miraftab (2012:296) supports this in his claim that the CID perpetuate wealth as a necessity for citizenry in the city centre, given that only landowners participate in designating an area. Miraftab (2012) views landownership in the city centre as a prerequisite to having a voice in the

nature of an area, as a remnant of colonial practice. Many people pay rent in the city centre and remain excluded from this process.

Notably, the Cape Town city centre boasted a thirty percent increase in the number of coffee shops from the year 2002 to 2010 (Miraftab, 2012:296). I have consistently witnessed a few black customers and managers in these places. This speaks to a legacy of economic injustice that is still apparent in this city and exists alongside increasing levels of urban gentrification in the city at the expense of economic justice. In most instances, gentrification is particularly on the outskirts and not the centre of Johannesburg.

Mbembe (2008:51-52) draws a notable comparison between squatting in Johannesburg (in a past and present-day sense) and dreams of upward mobility within the nature of life for black labourers, who are the grandparents or parents of the cast and myself. This was a life he describes as improvisatory, transient, discomfiting in nature and tactical in repertoire. Mbembe (2008:54) further describes contemporary Johannesburg as a competitive site for local government, owners of dilapidated buildings and developers who want to sponsor building projects. Squatting, on the other hand, is not a marked characteristic of Cape Town city centre. This is a city that has a strong presence of municipally supported community policing. This city is typically kept clean to a degree that one could assume there is no lawlessness or that most of the people are well taken care of. However, the fact of crime contests this and the presence of people living and sleeping on the streets of the city is becoming increasingly visible. People are starting to contest the notion of a clean city as can be seen by the Reclaim the City Movement that is gaining momentum in Cape Town. In reality, very few South Africans can afford to reside in the Cape Town city centre, given the differences between the two cities, as examined above. I find that it becomes easy to long for Johannesburg: home.

In my medium project I worked under the assumption that using prompts drawn from Cape Town city centre would result in contrasting images to prompts taken from Johannesburg city centre. Similar to my minor project, I

asked the performers to free write at irregular intervals while involved in Suzuki (1986) training. Their free writing was both prompted and unprompted. For example, in one training session I asked the cast to free write without a prompt, then later in the same session I asked them to free write with a space in Cape Town as a prompt.

Section eight: devising performance:

Of Shacks and Yoga Mats

Included earlier are some of the images recorded from my training leading up to and including ***From Rules and Writing***. For my medium project, I chose to further work with image A and B: “For as long as you are black and female, difficulty is something you will have to overcome” and “The absence of black men in suits, in Cape Town.” These are symbols of success and upward mobility. I wanted to use these images that were generated from my body during the minor project process, to inform the process of devising my medium project. The selection of these images informed my decision to create work with black women and to draw on Cape Town thematically and contextually. O’Gorman (2013) and Ahmed (2010) establish a link between self and environment. I thus specifically chose to work with women who, like myself, are not from Cape Town. ***Of Shacks and Yoga Mats*** was a collaborative project involving myself, and two third year performance students at UCT.

The work was created through two iterations as devising this piece was a layered process; partly informed by a myriad of performances I have watched, my personal sensibilities in the time of making, and what I believed would allow for productive collaboration with the cast. The two performers, referred to as Performer A and B undertook a process similar to my minor project. I then tasked the performers with re-writing their free writing into a form suitable for performance. By this I mean their free writing was used as material to write text in any form of their choice, in other words, monologues, prose or poetry that would be incorporated into performance. These texts formed the script for

the devised piece. Suzuki (1986) training formed part of the process of generating free writing and was returned to in rehearsal as an acting training tool to develop the piece on the floor. I chose the setting of the world of performance, which was a restaurant in Cape Town, then facilitated and directed the performers and their texts. Facilitating the performance included choosing prompts for use in free writing, as well as instructing in Suzuki (1986) training exercises that were engaged in sessions where free writing was generated.

Our process began with a discussion of Suzuki (1986) training and my proposed method that combines Suzuki (1986) training and free writing. Once training began, part of my interest was to see what images emerged from the performers, based on their experiences in Cape Town. My initial choice to include prompts was driven by my desire to thematically link the cast's individual writing. When free writing was introduced I chose prompts based on spaces in Cape Town as well as events that occurred in restaurants in Cape Town that were described on social media and in newspaper articles. The cast read these articles prior to beginning with their training.

Some of the prompts I used were informed by my own images from my minor project. MirafTab (2012) and Mbembe's (2008) research findings were used as lenses to make sense of my felt experiences of two different cities and establish why some events are more likely occurrences in Cape Town, after the rehearsal process had been concluded. What follows is a list of prompts used were during the process:

- A newspaper article where the author discussed King Goodwill Zwelithini dining in a local Cape Town restaurant. Another where the author described how a black waiter in Cape Town chose to describe two patrons as black on a bill he printed and gave them for their meal.
- A post on social media about a customer feeling a sense of attempted erasure while in a restaurant in Cape Town.
- If you are black and female, struggle is something you will have to overcome. This is an image from my minor project.

- Home. Here I worked with Gqola's idea that the black family structure shields one from the stresses of the outside world (Gqola, 1991:159). This is a space where one is always welcome and is partially removed from racism and capitalism. In my opinion, family and home allow one to write about what Wa Thiong'o (1986:87) describes as allowing a person to see themselves clearly in relationship to other selves in the universe. This resonates with how, at times, I believe the more time spent away from hearing the languages I speak and am spoken to at home, the further I move from seeing myself clearly.
- Long and Kloof Street. These are streets one easily identifies with eating, drinking, shopping, bouncers in clubs and some of the attitudes people from Cape Town have. They are both 'social' streets in the city.

Of Shacks and Yoga Mats:

Layer one: text and action

At the end of our rehearsal process I asked the cast a series of questions through email. The questions I asked are attached as an Appendix.

Performer A described that she came to understand that the physical demands of the training served as an entry point into the work. She stated that in time her response to the prompts became more instinctive and impulsive, which she maintains made her writing more complicated. She described the training as removing blocks she would usually have had in a rehearsal space. To her, the training released tensions that were necessary for her to write and assisted her to focus on the task at hand. Conversely, Performer B described using physical exhaustion and the prompts to channel some of her lived frustrations and express stories she had to tell. She felt as though free writing became easier as her body continued to engage in physical activity while training. The first layer in devising was free writing and re-writing.

The second layer in making was turning the performers' texts into performed actions. Writing developed by the performers from their free writing was both prose and poetry; it contained emotive expressive language, rhythm and imagery. As we worked on the floor, I found that characters could be developed from the texts and the performers had written their own characters. Voice practitioner, Cecily Berry (2008:21), describes character, meaning, rhythm and image as intertwined. In other words, a character is seen to be established by the rhythm of words within a text, the meaning thereof and imagery evoked by the words. While director, John Barton (1984:15) describes the need for the performer to discover the character's need to say specific words when playing heightened language. I believe heightened text is similar in rhythm to poetic text, which is the nature of some of the texts developed by the performers; part of our work on the floor was to establish the need for the characters to speak. Berry (2008:6), amongst others, describes words as functioning as action in performance.

Jennie Reznick (2016:150-151), a performer and teacher, describes the performer's body in a present day South African context as more accessible than character dialogue and further highlights the need to refine its language. As a facilitator and maker, my initial task was to interpret the cast's texts into action and facilitate the creation of a performance score. To include a theatrical language in our rehearsals, I chose to work with elements from Anne Bogart and Tina Landau's *Viewpoints* (2005).

Elements of *Viewpoints* I chose to include were: spatial relationship, kinaesthetic response, tempo, duration and topography. *Viewpoints* are described as coming from principles of movement through time and space. This is simply a language for discussing what happens on stage. These serve as points of awareness that performers and makers use while performing and have been translated into tools for training performers, building ensemble, and creating movement for stage (Bogart & Landau, 2005:7-8).

According to Bogart and Landau (2005), *spatial relationship* entails the distance between people (or bodies) in groups or as individuals and things on

stage. A full range of possible distances, or groupings are established that allow for an image on stage to be viewed clearly. Performers work to indicate emotion, event or express a relationship. *Kinaesthetic response* involves the spontaneous reaction through motion to things that occur outside of the performer, and the timing with which you respond to external movement or sound. *Tempo* is the rate of speed a movement occurs at or with which something happens on stage. *Duration* is the length of time a movement continues for: how long performers remain in a certain section of movement. *Topography* is the design or floor pattern performers create through movement (with their feet) on stage, in relation to size and shape of the space (Bogart & Landau, 2005: 7-11). Using *Viewpoints* also provided a language I could use to give input as we worked on the floor.

While working on the floor I replaced the term, 'improvisation' with 'task' to try not to assert any false sense of 'freedom' into the room. The cast and I collaborated on short tasks. In *The Art of Rehearsal* (Simonsen, 2017), I found various directors offered differing views on improvisation as a tool for devising. Improvising can be seen to mean how one would work with text to turn it into a scene, or to create on the spot. Jerome Bel (as cited in Simonsen, 2017:54) describes the success of improvisation as being reliant on the performer having a sense of freedom, which he argues is unrealistic and to some degree impossible. I felt relying on 'improvisation' without a structure would only frustrate the actors. Hence the choice to use 'task'. An example of a task undertaken was playing with one type of prop to convey the meaning/ intention of a specific text. In my experience of working with Suzuki (1986) training, returning to it on my own repeatedly has lowered my levels of self-consciousness, which is an obstacle in improvisation, when working through a performance task. Suzuki training requires an instructor to issue vocal commands and the sound of vocal commands requires a state of readiness for response from the trainee/s. These commands generate a sense of working from impulse in the performer as they ask for quick reflex actions to follow them (Allain, 2002:116-117).

Kate Hunter (2013:166) describes a result of Suzuki (1986) training as an actor working from impulse and not just conscious decision-making. She states that while practicing some of the exercises within this training, an actor responds in shape and form from their core, in reaction to an unpredictable, quick prompt. Parts of the training can thus be compared to improvisation with lower degree of self-consciousness, however, I argue that in training improvisation is momentary and does not have to be explained nor understood, whereas, in performance, the performer feel judged for their choices. I believe that performers can be self-critical or negative about the level of success with which they embody an image in comparison to other performers or the 'degree of creativity' of their choices in rehearsals.

Improvisation within the training also falls within a structure and performers remain aware that improvisation forms part of a sequence (or order) within an exercise. Training and rehearsals have differences as processes; however, I believe that training requires the actor to work from impulse, while concurrently developing the psychophysical processes involved in performing. Lower levels of self-consciousness can occur within the performer durationally through daily practice. I used the training to generate material that was structured into a performance text and in rehearsals that were focused on staging the text. Training began after physical and vocal warm-ups before the cast started with their tasks. Pam Woods (2013:60) states that in improvisational performance, thinking becomes too slow an action. While, listening to ourselves with less attachment (thought) and remaining in each movement is said to help us move outside of ourselves and that which is familiar. Thus, where I believe improvisation is an abrupt request for the performer, I see Suzuki (1986) training, that is driven by physical action, as a strategy to create a rehearsal space where the actor also enters into a liminal space durationally or can work from impulse, which I see as lowering levels of self-consciousness. Performer A earlier described the training as helping her to focus, removing blocks she believes she tends to have in rehearsals and helping her to write more impulsively. She did describe working from impulse. While Performer B described moving closer to exhaustion while training, as what helped her to generate material to free write. I don't think she believed

she was working from impulse. Moving closer to exhaustion may facilitate a performer entering into a liminal space.

The performers would work for twenty minutes, after which I would offer input. At times I would bring in elements I wanted them to consider, such as the inner life of the character. We worked on a score of actions for each text associated with each character. I found giving a contained task and limits allowed for the performer to make choices that improved the work. I think that this was less daunting as they didn't have to explain their choices to me or feel self-conscious. This provided a way to think and do quickly. However, this was no longer necessary once material had been developed. Once the performers were comfortable with 20 minutes of working alone and had created part of the text, I began to leave them alone for longer stretches of time. I believe this created a base set of choices for the work, which we will return to and expand on in the creation of the thesis production.

Of Shacks and Yoga Mats as form:

Layer two: heading towards a formal aesthetic

The final performance score was close to physical theatre in that it was movement based performance. I believe retaining Suzuki (1986) training in rehearsals informed the performance score. Due to the physical nature of the training, the performers had their own views on this. Performer A described the training as influencing how the score was created but not the score itself. I would like to argue that *how* something is made could influence *what* is made. This is in line with Zarrilli's (2009:19) thinking that when the integrated bodymind is engaged in acting, the activated inner energy is present in the form of impulse which initiates actions that later create a performance score. I believe the training influenced the tone of the texts and allowed for moments of creativity and moments of lower levels of self-consciousness in rehearsals while making the performance score. Performer B described the performance score as feeling intentional due to the training and free writing. I believe Performer B recognises that the frustration in her daily life she described as

channelled while free writing and training was expressed through movement in the performance score. This is in accordance with Brandon (1990), included earlier, who described Suzuki (1986) training as a tough and extensive self-encounter.

Of Shacks and Yoga Mats:

Layer three: Narrative

This piece was set in a restaurant, staged in a theatre with costume, props and sound cues taken from the images recorded from Performer A, as well as a sound cue of text translated into the Sesotho language. Stylistically, the piece started close to realism and then became a blend of physical theatre and realism. The piece began with the two performers seated in the chairs that formed part of the audience seating. I made this choice as most women who work in restaurants in Cape Town city centre only have temporary moments of rest and hardly have space of their own while at work. The characters later set up the world of piece, the restaurant, in a style close to realism, paying attention to an established order in the space. Once the shop was 'open', gesture and movement of the characters changed in style to become closer to physical theatre. Within the journey of the piece, the world of the play was disrupted then almost destroyed, and eventually cleared by the two characters that had been through a similar journey. The content and form were interlinked; form was informed by content until we had a base structure to work with. We then used form and content interchangeably to develop the work. The end of the piece worked to show that these events were, however, all in a day's work.

Layer three

Narrative: Influences of and conversation with other black females

This creating process was earlier described as layered. My sense of being in the world, the performance work that I have watched or worked on and the

performers of this project influenced it. Apart from the performers, two artists influenced this work. Towards completion of this work I worked with a contemporary artist and scholar, Buhlebezwe Siwani, on her short film project, which will be part of her 2018 body of work. While reflecting on this research, I was also influenced by an interview I conducted with theatre maker and scholar, Nomcebisi Moyikwa. I will reflect on how this interview influenced the work and the process in the next section of this explication.

Siwani's (2016) area of focus is that of traditional spiritual practices, within African culture and the effects of colonisation thereon. Her current body of work is an extension on her prior work. I had to acknowledge that similarly within my urban area of research, businesses will not remake themselves to become a gentler assault on the psyche of black women. Performing Siwani's (2018) work helped to further mould the feeling expressed within the cast's writing into performable action. The writing I worked with located the cast as being the "other" in the city. While the tone of the writing was heavy, it similarly reflected that existence in Cape Town as contemporary black women is an act of resilience. I found value in working with Siwani as her work depicted black women as taking action. I wanted to also establish the characters as black women who are, in Gqola's (1991) terms, "taking action", which is complicated as we are simultaneously still systematically oppressed while fully cognisant of structural racism. In ***Of Shacks and Yoga Mats***, this was expressed in form through the 'order' the characters work to meticulously set up.

Of Shacks and Yoga Mats

Realised as form

The work is also characterised by a particular sonic element through voice and props. Berry (2008:1) describes rhythm and cadence in words as what moves the listener to the 'other' world of the play. Barton (2009:57) describes an acting style, which carries heightened text as inviting the audience to go along a journey with the characters, achieved vocally through inflection

patterns in speech. Performer B found what Berry (2008) and Barton (2009) describe as necessary vocal play without my direction. In terms of theatrical style, Suzuki (1986:5) states that there can be no words spoken that are not intimately connected to bodily sensations and rhythms. As in the nature of performances his work generates, the actor touches the audience through the rhythm of the inner most parts of their body: words, breath and movement (Allain, 2002:121). I feel the performers did achieve this through embodying images they pursued on stage, use of inflection and playing with duration in and repetition of gestures.

At times, images from the performer's body worked better than my choices. I believe that bodies being more engaged in the process of doing the work, to a degree that mine was not, caused this. An example of this is the music used in the piece that was from images recorded by Performer A while training. The performance score for the piece was similar to choreography in that it played with repetition of gestures, duration, shape, tempo and topography as tools to convey intention in the texts. Additionally, a sonic score emerged through using props as we rehearsed and the props came to be used to express the tone of the content and the feelings of the characters. I believe at time props were used to express the inner world of the characters. On reflection, I maintain that Moyikwa (personal interview, 2018 April 14) best articulates this through describing her own process of making work. She states:

I never know why I choose my props. As a theatre maker I always navigate towards sets and props that have a potential of forming language and worlds. For example, a kettle for me has that it boils, hisses, sweats, emits heat that forms a fog, which then gets swallowed by the coldness of a room. That's one world. Another world is the world of the familiar where we recognise the kettle for its function(s) – boiling water to make tea perhaps? That's another world. I also thought about the relationship that this object has accumulated with the person who put it on.

What Moyikwa (2018) articulates is the possibility for theatre to form a new kind of language. In the same interview, she states:

I borrow the phrase 'farthest meaning' from the "The Return" chapter of Ayi Kwei Armah's (1973:149) *Two Thousand Seasons*. The quest for meaning is depicted as the journeying minds movement through three circles of understanding: the closer, closest and farthest meaning.

In making *Of Shacks and Yoga Mats*, through physical action and props, I now understand the sonic score to have moved the work to further meanings. In collaboration, the performers found the characters within their texts and made further meaning of the world of the piece that came about from the restaurant as a setting. The setting lead to the concept that is an exploration of how some black women experience Cape Town.

The process took us several weeks and was created through an iterative process. It included introducing the training, generating texts, experimenting to create parts of a performance score, returning to the work to extend the piece, structuring the work, and then rehearsing the work as a coherent piece.

Conclusion

Narrative: mapping a way forward

I intend to work with the same performers to develop the medium project into the thesis production. I may return to my own process of training and free writing to search for a theme I would like to include in the work. Alternatively, I will proceed with free writing up to and including my minor project, or use free writing generated by the cast in my search for additional themes. However, in accordance with Spillers (1987) and Suzuki (1986) I may also source prompts that depict black culture as powerfull as this remains necessary and challenging in a post-colonial context. Through making my one-person show *The Kinks and Intricacies of Black Women hood*, I came to learn that I conceptualise work through placing my own body on stage and that I am

satisfied to make work that considers black women as primary audiences as they remain under-represented. I also learnt that I tell intergenerational stories of women who share their lives with me and not just my own. I am unsure how or if this will manifest in my thesis work. These stories inform my everyday life, and this resonates with my assertion and the theories included that describe self as relational. I hope for prompts that in the words of Wa Thiong'o (1986:87) "help us (black women) see ourselves clearly in relation to others and ourselves in the universe". I plan to make use of the relationships established earlier that linked image and language. I intend to retain Suzuki training in rehearsals, as I believe it assists in creating a performance score and lowers levels of self-consciousness through generating a liminal space. I believe this would also allow the performers to continue working from the creative space of breath in the moment of response to the contradictory nature of chaos and control. Which I believe contributes positively to a devising process through generating impulse in the performer, which can then be used in tasks. Additionally, training develops the technical aspects of performance, which performers employ to embody images they pursue on stage. The inclusion of context as a thematic element assisted to generate material in free writing due to the relationship established between self and environment. I found value in discourse such as black feminism and somatic practices as they remain necessary in light of racist history that still informs my experiences of Cape Town city centre, culture, power in the lived and performing body.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Responses from Performer A

1. What was your first response to the process? (Thoughts and feelings)

My initial response to the process, was one of uncertainty in regards to the abstract nature of the Suzuki training method, where we began with just the training of the various positions and exercises, this is because of my previous approach to actor training that related to enacting performance that would result in an end point, you apply that attempt at perfecting, to the same approach to the Suzuki, the rigour of the Suzuki work then became clear to me that it was a means of an entry point of exploration, for both us the performers and for the facilitator/director.

2. Do you feel the training had an effect on your free writing and or re-writing if so please describe this?

Yes it did, it worked at stripping away the blocks that as a performer you hold within the rehearsal space, the rigour, the physically demanding nature of the work forced you to begin to bring your internal mental space, to the same room as your body, this connectivity created as a result of the training, allowed the paths of devising, of creation of exploration to be free of inhibitions, which I believed create depth and personal honesty in the writing, the writing allowed us to confront ourselves. This was granted through the training.

3. Did your response to the process of generating texts change in time?
Please explain the changes

At the beginning I think the way I would generate came from a place of what I thought I should be writing, more cognitive than impulsive, once I got into the training, a process that is highly individual, in response, even though there was a co-performer, I was able to become more instinctive, and impulsive in my response to the various prompts given. I think this is where the writing became more complicated and interesting, a more dynamic starting point of performance making.

4. Did the training influence your choices in the creation of a performance score (set of actions in performing your character) in the process this year or last year. If so, how so

I think the way I would describe it as, it influenced the methodology of the creation of the performance score, but not the score itself, i.e. how the score was made.

5. Can you describe any other elements that influenced your writing or what made it into the performance for example working in different rooms, music or an attitude in the group or personally?

The shift in rooms, how I was feeling as a person in that moment responding to a particular event, idea, thought and feeling opinion. The music used throughout the training has an effect on the writing. The placement of set, when set was introduced, also had an affect, the group dynamic of the day, my partner dynamic with my co-performer.

6. Did the process feel the same this year as it did last year? If, no, describe what was different for you.

No it didn't, this year felt like a deepening and further investigation of the training and the work made from last year. The inclusion of viewpoints and other training exercises allowed me to begin to investigate myself, as a performer, in relation to the space, the objects the performer, the time around

me. Which was then implemented into the character's relation to all those things. I think this only happened at a superficial level last year. My body and mind also had a different response to the training, compared to last year, in terms of how my emotions, responded to the prompts. This showed a shift in the self (time and place) and that then joining to the training.

Interview responses from Performer B

1. What was your first response to the process? (Thoughts and feelings)

Initially, I was curious to explore the Suzuki method and experience how it would translate in theatre. In the early stages of the rehearsal process, I was a bit apprehensive when it came to free writing because I had never regarded myself as a writer. In addition to this, I was not aware of the possibilities that free writing provided or aided to the creation process of the performance. Ultimately, when I began this process, I was not mindful of the challenges that I would encounter both mentally and physically.

2. Do you feel the training had an effect on your free writing and or re-writing if so please describe this?

The Suzuki method definitely aligned my body and mind. As a result, my mind did not behave as an obstruction but rather put my body in a position to be a vessel of the text. In the beginning, I noticed that my environment would have a significant impact on my free writing. Additionally, my thoughts appeared to be very scattered and this became evident to me during the reflection of my free writing. Through editing I was able to organise my thoughts into logical order and add if necessary. The longer the free-writing process was, with the assistance of the Suzuki method, the more in tune with how pushing the physical boundaries aided to the free-writing process.

3. Did your response to the process of generating texts change in time?

Please explain the changes

Yes, my response shifted the further we got into the free-writing process. After our first session, I was doubtful of the fact that I could generate sufficient written material that could aid to the creation process. However, through Linda's assurance that the free-writing process would happen organically, I began to have more confidence in the process.

4. Did the training influence your choices in the creation of a performance score (set of actions in performing your character) in the process this year or last year. If so, how so

I don't particularly think that the training directly influenced the choices in the creation of the performance score. However, I do believe that we tried our best to logically order the free-writing text to demonstrate a conventional theatrical structure. There was more material added this year, therefore the structure of the performance score made more sense. In comparison, the performance score that we had last year was more experimental than this year. The final performance score felt more intentional due to the training and free writing

5. Can you describe any other elements that influenced your writing or what made it into the performance for example working in different rooms, music or an attitude in the group or personally?

The environment of the first room shifted the mood of the writing. The room had large windows and lighter; therefore the mood of the text was less expressive. Whereas when we moved into the bindery, I noticed that the work shifted in mood. This being that the space felt more secluded therefore the space allowed us to look more inward. Moreover, having done the free-writing process towards the end of the year, our bodies were physically, mentally and spiritually exhausted. Therefore our bodies had more stories to tell. In comparison, at the beginning of this year, the prompts helped us channel a similar frustration.

6. Did the process feel the same this year as it did last year? If, no, describe what was different for you.

There was a significant difference in the free-writing processes mainly because the long vacation allowed us to disconnect from the overwhelming environments that we are exposed to on a daily basis. Also, being outside of Cape Town temporarily removed us from the context of many spaces in the city. The process also felt less foreign to our bodies and our minds. Therefore, I believe we were less nervous because we were familiar to the process and the possible end result.

7. Do think or feel the training facilitated or hindered your writing/? If so please discuss, describe your thoughts

I think the training facilitated my free writing because it pushed my body to its physical limitations and it released tensions that were necessary to the writing process. Through the training, I gained a lot of focus and I was able to give my attention to the task at hand. Without Suzuki, I found that it was harder to gain focus and bridging the gap between my body and mind became more difficult.

8. Do you think a varying degree of difficulty in the different training sessions influenced your writing or did they all feel equally difficult?

I found that on days where the training sessions were harder, the quality of free writing was better. Nonetheless, the training was still difficult. In time, I discovered which exercises would allow me to reach my physical limitations sooner and which exercises required less effort. The longer the session, the more material was produced, not because we were doing more but because more stamina was required. In summary, a contributing factor was my mood, each day was different therefore you can never predict what is going to influence your writing.

