

# **FRAGMENTS OF ENCOUNTERS**

**by Nomi Blum**

**(blmnom003)**

**A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Masters of Arts in Theatre and Performance (Theatre-making)**

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## Declaration

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 Date: 07 / 10 / 2019

## Abstract

*FRAGMENTS OF ENCOUNTERS* is an experimental interactive performance project operating within a 'practice as research' (PaR) paradigm—defined as a continually emergent and open-ended process. The participation and interaction of the audience and the feedback received from lecturers and fellow students were central to the development of this research and are integrated in my work. Description of this feedback and its impact will be visible throughout this paper.

I will be engaging with my research through the lens of two performances, *fragments of encounters 1 & 2*, which act as embodiments to my research. The work(s) is a narrative about lives relieved through *memory* and whose *re-narration* gives rise to a new present time—that of the narrative, which is the performance. The subject of my research is fragment(ation) seen through the prism of memory, however, not as a main subject but close to Henri Bergson's shining points, round which other subjects 'form a vague nebulousness' (2002:171).

The making of this project began in the street; from my interaction with people of different ages and from different socio-political and cultural realities. These encounters make up a personal audio archive of oral interviews recorded, which serves as the source material for my project. The recorded material are life—fragments—memories of the people interviewed and fragments of my own.

Overlapping with Herman Parret's (1988) vision, for whom 'life' is a narrative and the narration time is an 'invented' time, the archive I present in my practice is a 'construct', and the re-fragmentation of the fragments of memories in the work opens a field of possibilities of interpretation. Some of these possible reinterpretations are actualised at each re-narration. This in turn opens new interpretations, possibilities or actualisations. By fragmentation and re-narration a mosaic of fragments—memories originate, which are in effect re-narratives...*ad infinitum*. In the same time, the possibilities that remained unactualised, not narrated, but which are virtual real, amplify the state of tension and uncertainty provoked by fragmentation, which in the end can lead to *chaos*.

**Dedication:** This project is dedicated to all the storytellers that I had the honour and pleasure to encounter in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Bucharest.

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**FRAGMENTS**

**ENCOUNTERS**

**OF**

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# Introduction

The participation and interaction of the audience and the feedback received from lecturers and fellow students were central to the development of this research and are integrated in my work. Description of this feedback and its impact will be visible throughout this paper.

The paper was thought in Romanian, partially in French and English, and then translated from Romanian and French to English. Through this translation, the subtleties of the language and even more are lost. What was gained still, is an *intertext*.

*Fragments of encounters* is an experimental interactive performance project, which was set in motion with my arrival in Cape Town as a master student. In this new and different geographic and socio-cultural context my desire to explore became inmeshed with the necessity to do so as means of adapting. With this theme of exploration being so central to my experience it seemed only natural that it should be integrated into my research. My research motivation and interest is constituted around the idea of direct knowledge through communication with another. This way of exploration, in the form of dialogue with people that I encounter in unfamiliar contexts and places, has always been my mode of learning. This is a storytelling mode 'Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990:2-14) and through shared stories we came to understand the world around us and consequently our lives. From this premise I began to gather material from the encounters I had with different *storytellers* in Cape Town with the intention of keeping a tangible memory of them. The material consists of oral interviews recorded that make up a personal audio archive, the source material for my work. I presented fragments from the recorded material in my first work *fragments of encounters 1*<sup>1</sup>, which I later extended in *fragments of encounters 2*<sup>2</sup>, by *bridging* audio recorded material from two different socio-cultural contexts (Romania, South Africa) in a *singular* space. The theme of the archive(s) is memories, lived stories, a collection of micro-revelations about the heterogeneous society in which we live and these recombine, as pieces of a puzzle: as fragments of reality. The memories are fragments (of life), which are enacted *within* the performance through the means of fragmentation. The archive material is, of course, fragmentary, which opens a register of interpretation, but for me this makes the fragment in itself, at an experiential level, an element *vivant*.

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<sup>1</sup> Minor project.

<sup>2</sup> Medium project.

I imagine this *singular* space as an image. By space I am referencing to a 'singular space' in physics and astrophysics terms, where a singular space(time), is a space-time in which an observer would only experience a finite quantity of proper time. In this singular space-time what happens is that the subject would 'run out of world', she would pop in or out of nothingness (Curiel & Bokulich:2018). This apparition, disappearance of an entity in space-time is a singularity. An image as it appears in the Deleuzian-Begsonian premise: "everything is a matter-image" and the conceptual universe is defined as an assembly of images, where "everything reacts on everything else" (Deleuze:1986). Both of which are a support of a co-presence through which an alternative space is reconstituted in the performance. A *fictional* world, not created *ex nihilo* but by an overlaying of realities (Cape Town, Johannesburg, Bucharest). This overlaying constitutes a warp, a dissolution, in Derridean sense (1967), of fixedness, which opens a *portal* to a virtual world. Its actualisation in the time of the performance presupposes an exteriorisation of the imaginary. Flashes (fragmented) of my interior world appear and disappear, an open virtuality that encompass flashes of other 'worlds', of those who *narrate* (in the actual moment of recording), as well as the intersections of these worlds. The audience's intervention (during the performance), in deciphering or enciphering the overlap of the two contexts sustains this *construct*.<sup>3</sup>

The intention of my project is to highlight the fact that by fragmentation and by the act of narration (in fragments of encounters 1&2 the archive material is re-narrated through the participation of the audience) a field of possibilities became open and whose effects or consequences were unpredictable but possible initiators of form-processes<sup>4</sup>, as part of a *game*, of Deleuzian inspiration (2007), between virtual—possible—actual. This *game* pivots around the notion of uncertainty and its effects, as a reflexion of our permanent shift between virtual and actual. As Bergson writes 'every moment of our lives presents two aspects, it is actual and virtual, perception on the one side and memory on the other' (2002:165). The configuration of my entire project was realised as in a *mental montage* (of fragments) as it unfolded.

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<sup>3</sup> The information, the meaning, is obscure, hidden, enciphered because of fragmentation and of hybrid texts. A participation and effort is needed from the receptors to search and find significations, meanings (deciphering), which they can give personal meaning (enciphering).

<sup>4</sup> A term inspired by Paul Klee's theory of form, not as Platonic perfection of shape, but as form-creating: 'Form is the end, death', 'Form-giving is movement, action. Form-giving is life' (Klee cited in Tim Ingold 2008:2). Klee's stand on form, Ingold describes is that 'the processes of genesis and growth that give rise to forms in the world we inhabit are more important than the forms themselves' (2008:2).

This paper is presented in a fragmented form representative of my entire project. In the process, certain things were lost, other were abandoned, some could have been included (or maybe they were) but left only traces and fragments. The fragment breaks apart and in the same time it whole, this depends on what perspective we choose. Through absence, by saying what *is not* a thing (apophatic) the limitations are freed, it can be an opening towards a totality, towards what it can be, of wholeness; through presence, by saying what *is a* thing (cataphatic way) means recognition but not necessarily knowledge. The fragment carries this ambivalence, which I believe is found in my practice and in consequence in this paper.

The theoretical underpinnings of this research are informed by western philosophical questions and concepts. While the undue privilege/authority given to (particularly male) western philosophers should be problematised at all time, the content of the theories used here allowed a useful lens for my work. At the same time, I see this paper as a point of departure for further inquiries, which can in time arrive at what I was unprepared to do at this time. The intent of this work is to build alongside existing concepts new and revised propositions influenced by the decolonial project, a project that I had the chance to learn about in a South African academic context.

In this Explication I will try to reflect on certain concepts that I have come across during my artistic exploration, and which, I believe, set forth a territory for future investigations. In this sense, the paper represents the beginning of a research project and not an ending. It is during this master course that my project's roots were planted and it will require a greater period of time (by engaging with the teachings received during this process) for it to grow and offer a better understanding of its place in the field of performance studies and firmly centre itself within performance literature/theory. For now, I present it in its early phase, in its chaotic form, that brings together notions (seemingly) as distant from performance studies as found in quantum physics, but which nevertheless have influenced visual and performance artists and makers, particularly during futurism (broadly avant-garde) and postmodernism—which broke apart from modernist traditions. The underlying principle of this research is informed by such movements, notably by postmodern/poststructuralist forms and aesthetics—in their absolute refusal of the prevailing conventions and their proposals for alternative narrative structures, refuting positivist's rational certainty. The question of narrative uncertainty animates my project in all the attempts made through fragmentation—to move away from linear structures, in order to suggest other

possible ways of making meaning. In this sense, the methods applied derive from postmodernist views on structure. As Zygmund Bauman argues in *Modernity and Ambivalence*, structure is

‘a normal aspect of linguistic practice. It arises from one of the main functions of language: that of naming and classifying . . . To classify . . . is to give the world a structure: to manipulate its probabilities; to make some events more likely than some others; to behave as if events were not random, or to limit or eliminate randomness of events . . . Language strives to sustain the order and to deny or suppress randomness and contingency’ (1991: 186).

Following postmodernist thinking, in my practice I try to make apparent that what lies at the heart of this research is a structural disobedience exercised by proposing fragmented narratives that present almost random rules of composition.

The lines between certain paragraphs indicate ruptures of thought, moments of discontinuity as they appeared throughout this research.

# fragment/ation

intentionally left out from table of contents

Definition: fragment—breakup / part / isolated / separation / section / piece / detail / unfinished / imperfect / incomplete

Etymology: Fragment—*fragmentum* (latin: broken piece, remnant. *frag*—(stem of *frangere* to BREAK) + *-mentum*—MENT

A fragment has no beginning and no end, and through its rupture from the context, the fragment becomes an open space, an open frame, without borders. It is an absence from the whole, or it can be a presence by itself. For Marjorie Levison, the fragment 'turns on a certain narrative violence' dismantling 'the structural units (beginning, middle, end) into a 'nonreferential and atemporal dimension' (1986:207). This absence or 'full presence' in Levison's words is 'an expression or narration of a (missing) thing' or 'the thing itself' (208). What is provocative at the fragment, is the unknown coefficient. The ambiguity created by the fragment can make space for new conditions of interpretations or variants and because of this infinite interpretability, the fragment *can* be a possible stimulant in the process of creation. At least as it appears in the postmodern world, in which *fragmentariness*, becomes a real generative principle (Mircea Cărtărescu, 1999: 97) considered as the 'direct derivative of deconstruction, the hybrid nature of the narrative and its plural dimensions' (Noemi Bartha, 2014: 34). And it seems to be the *apanage* of any form of art, reason why it can't be utilised as a distinctive criterion. The condition of the fragmented and *fragmentariness* are characteristics of deconstruction, which belong to the postmodern movement. Deconstruction notes that in any text there are points of ambiguity and 'undecidability' which do not permit a stabilising of meaning.

By fragmentation, through a new interpretation that actually reconstructs, new significations are added. In *Pluralism in postmodern perspective*, Ihab Hassan presents eleven aspects of the respective movement, amongst which fragmentation, with the assumption that any discourse possible today is in essence only a fragment made of fragments (1999: 96). Fragmentation suggests 'preference for montage, collage, the found or cut literary object for paratactical over hypotactical forms' (*idem*) Therefore, the 'narrative discourse is a fragment made up of many other fragments. These micro-fragments are assembled into a fractal-structure narrative structure overtly showing its compositional multiplicity as a transitive eliciting of the reader' (204:37) What motivated me to work with fragments was precisely their 'denial of textual stability and determinacy' (1986:212). By fragmentation, things are not given or finale. Their fragmentation indicates a search which can be difficult, confusing at times and equally surprising at others. The ambiguity of the fragment and its association with the aleatory with 'indeterminacy', 'immanence', 'hybridity' that Hassan speaks of, make the postmodern-*fragmentariness* a fertile domaine, which 'generates an intertextual, metatextual, hypertextual, auto-referential exuberance (1999: 104). The profound contextualisation of postmodern text (postmodernism whose ephemeral, transitory character, tied to a permanent recycling is highlighted by Zygmunt Bauman (1995), which implicitly leads to the idea of manipulation and active participation of the receptor. For Hassan, 'the postmodern text, verbal or non-verbal, invites performance: it wants to be written, revised, answered, acted out' (1987:22) The fragmentation, dislocation, reinscription, reassembly are all intrinsic attributes of the postmodern text, which at the end actualises worlds and forms 'possible through a fractal rewind' (1999:102). The mentioned attributes, belong to postmodernism—deconstructionism in general aspects all forms of participative art (*idem*).

## personal Archive

“Mais l’homme n’est-il pas en plus ou avant tout un “animal qui raconte, “homo narrans?”  
(Isn’t the human first and foremost an “animal that narrates, “homo narrans?”)<sup>5</sup>  
(Herman Parret, 1988: 52).

My research began in the streets through my interaction with people of different ages and from different sociopolitical and cultural realities. These encounters make up a personal audio archive. In the making of the archive I had a dual position: I am a listener (of the interviewee), and narrator: of my own narrative. One of the reasons I decided to take this position—of a dialogue, was to attain, in the re-telling of our life experiences, certain specificities that refers to in an embodied and experienced mode, to cross-cultural locales and understandings that are proposed in the vernacular. In this sense, the making of this archive reflects my own personal journey—through which I was able to gain an understanding of a South African locale, by engaging with its inhabitants. Therefore, the process of collecting the recorded material serves as a means of cross-cultural investigation, however, not as a case study but as an intimate learning process, a process that I will continue to reflect on and engage with in time and in another paper. This is to say that I am aware of the relevance and need for an engagement with the localities and cross-cultural inhabitations that this collection of oral recorded material brings forth, however, in this project or at least in this early phase of my project (acknowledging that this paper serves as the foundation for further enquiries and exploration) this archive is not an instrument of observation for the above, instead it embarks from a *live* encounter between myself and others presented as archival objects, which are then *re*-performed to make and negotiate meaning by means of fragment/ation and interpretation(s)— through the prism of memory.

The archive is a collection of oral interviews recorded in two contexts. South Africans and expats from Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, Benin, Tanzania living in Cape Town and Johannesburg formed some of the narratives. Romanians, Roma and Jewish people and expats from Jordan and Turkey living in Bucharest formed others. The majority of the people

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<sup>5</sup> (own translation).

interviewed preferred to remain anonymous. In the project their names and other private information are not made public.

The recorded fragments do not have a description added, such as country of origin, location, year or other relevant details that are presented in this paper. This lack of details, in my opinion, renders them fluid, non-situational, non-representational and subject to interpretation. As a consequence, I am able to reflect on these archival objects through the prism of memory and possibly apply in practice non-linear techniques that can make up a fragmented site, in which meaning can be made in their *re*-narration—which ultimately constructs the performative event. Therefore, the material collected and presented in my work is not intended as a documentary, in the sense that it does not recreate the lives (moments of life) of the people that I recorded. The material I work with is not transcribed and then transformed into a play text, a method applied, for example, in Verbatim theatre<sup>6</sup>.

Another distinction worth mentioning is that I did not record certain characteristics of people in the context of research into a specific subject, e.g, class, race, gender, religion. Therefore, the archive is not an object of study through which a particular phenomenon is being investigated and carried out within traditional qualitative research paradigms. In my work, the recorded material are fragments of memories<sup>7</sup> that are recounted by others, memories of my own and memories of my encounters. Within this framework the archive assumes a double role: it is both a mnemonic instrument and a geography of my encounters.

The archival material in *fragments of encounters 1&2* was gathered over the period of a year and a half. The archive contains at the moment approximately 100h of audio recorded material.

The archive is twofold: as a complete personal archive, which includes the entire duration of the audio-recordings and full transcripts and as a partial archive, the source material for my work, which includes only extracts from the audio-recordings and fragments from the transcripts. My method for piercing together the latter involved three phases: first I broke up the partial transcript (taken from the original archive) in different parts, which I then broke into smaller fragments and these into even smaller ones and I repeat this *zoom in* process till there is only a proposition left on the page.

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<sup>6</sup> Term coined by Derek Paget, to name 'that form of documentary drama which employs (largely or exclusively) tape-recorded material from the 'real-life' originals of the characters and events to which it gives dramatic shape' (1987:317).

<sup>7</sup> Term I will utilise together with life—fragments to refer to the oral interviews.

In the last phase I mix them together and I arrange them in different sections. In this process none of the fragments are lost. With the audio extracts I create a sound montage, which I use as my main sound during the performance. The transcripts translation from Romanian and French to English are literal translations, raw and with errors. This is done intentionally to add another layer to the English language, a foreign way of navigating through English as well as to make visible (on paper) the friction between the language syntaxes.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For example, the occasional misplacement of words, commas, etc.

SOUTH AFRICA: CAPE TOWN JOHANNESBURG ROMANIA: BUCHAREST

Salt River Crângasi Langa Mowbray CBD District Six Cişmigiu Gugulethu Rahova  
Tembisa Muizenburg Unirii Khayelitsha TRAIN Claremont Obor Militari Observatory  
MannenberG Gara de Nord Sala Palatului Vitan Piaţa Romană

nica atunci cand s-a taiat  
si au spus ca aici numai e  
t luata impreuna cu multi  
t de razboi. N si-a mai  
u toate incercariile,  
stituit comisii, multi s-au  
a avut norocul asta. Si-a  
ma avea deja pe mine. Tin  
nica la noi. O chema Maria,  
mica, avea un frate cu 20 de  
a cu 15 ani mai mare. Bunica  
era cu o fata foarte alba cu  
astrii, cu pungi sub ochi asa  
um am si eu, e caracteristica  
ngi care ii dadeau o foarte  
. Era foarte expresiva, cu  
dar lung si facut in doua  
lung. Asa l-a purtat pana a  
negru cum purtau majoritatea  
de. De o bunatate si de o ... cu  
u tot ce i s-a intampalt in  
imul si al doilea razboi, era  
raordinara, desi fara scoala  
venea dintr-o familie foarte  
rea lor era o casa mica din  
in care dormeau toti. Dar, erau  
ca aveau o vaca si vaca ii  
le dadea lapte. Dar, bunica era  
ate...imi povestea tot felul de  
alizatoare cu talc si pline de  
Era o enciclopedie in ceea ce  
le si folclorul romanesc. Era o  
singura cu ea, nu faceam altceva  
ecat sa o ascult.

The memories carry within them irreversibility. No matter how re-lived through evocation, enunciation, (re)narration, no matter how many dimensions we can construct or invent them, the kernel, the bit of lived truth presences once. But the force of memories does not reside in their irreversibility, but in the efflorescence of the kernel. Memories have this power, propriety, immanent quality, I don't know how to name it, not only to re-show, re-appear, but also to be in a continuous becoming, without meaning a total alteration of the events that had happen. There's also forgetting of course, as a gift from God (Jorge Luis Borges), or death (Virginia Woolf) but not this, but all the crossroads and transformations—this route of remembrance was what interested me in this research.

LOUD!

... He was working for a white man earning  
y but with that little salary he did a lot. He  
owned by him that he could rent out to peopl  
pared to...eating normally, nicely, my father  
, yeah that's where he used to...Deliv  
Salt River to Mowbray or Observato  
bike for 15 years he worked there,  
and summer.  
government but it turned out soar  
the 60's.

PL...  
SA PLANG  
ASTA M-A FRAPAI, ...  
VINTELE EI, A SPUS, CUM CE ...  
ATA. AU FOST CUVINTE CARE MIE MI-AU  
OST MOMENTUL CARE M-A FACUT SA INTELEG  
I PE CARE O DUCEM EXISTA SI O LUME  
ORIA SA O DESCOPERIM. MACAR SA  
ENT DE ALEGERIILE NOASTRE ULTERIOARE.  
STARE DE DETERIORARE SI DE INCALCARE  
A...NU CA ERAM PRIVIZATI DE ALIMANTE, DE  
IN PERIOADA DE CRIZA, DE RAZBOAIE, DE  
DURA. VORBIM DE VIOLAREA ORICAREI  
N VIATA TA SI A TI SE DA DIRECTIVE  
CARE NU AVEA NICIO LEGATURA CU VIATA  
E AVEAI DISPOZITIA SAU INCLINATIA DE A  
MAI ALES IN ULTIMII ANI LA CULTUL  
SE PUTEA CANTA, NU SE PUTEA SCRIA,  
I GRADINITE DESPRE NIMIC ALTCEVA DECAT  
AUSESCU SI A PARTIDULUI. ERA DEJA COMIC  
, ERA CHIAR COMIC. CEVA CARE INTRECE  
A ASA E ACUM IN COREEA COMUNISTA.  
ACEASI INDIFERENT DE PE CE CONTINENT  
VINGERE AVEM. SUNTEM TOTI LA FEL. DE  
REPET NU NUMAI LIPSURILE MATERIALE  
, DAR LIPSA ORICAREI PERSPECTIVE DE

R IN HALF!

**SHOUT IT OUT LOUD !**

**SHOUT LOUD !**

the mini skirts with the long boots  
fening. That was the style of that  
le, layers of tulle that they also  
wear underneath your dress so that  
the boyfriends they didn't like the  
much of a hustle. The men used to  
a pearl button, special, garment  
he Tony Curtis hairstyle.

the end of primary school  
be annoyed by the propaganda  
d the idiot tv program  
d cut off the electricity at night  
the movies were from the 60's  
no access to music from the Occident  
n Talking and Jennifer Rush

**TEAR THE PAPER IN HALF !**

**TEAR THE PAPER IN HALF !**

she was studying in Romania  
and I asked her how their furniture looks  
I couldn't even imagine how their furniture looked  
She said it was like ours  
We lived in absolute darkness

**TEAR THE PAPER IN HALF!**

**READ IT OUT LOUD!**

It was me and my sister, my sister and I. We moved from Mahikeng  
and we...because my father was...his younger years working in Cape  
1927 he came to Cape Town so our home town was Mahikeng. He  
ve in and out from Cape Town, going to his parents and  
mother...I was two years. In 1941 I was born here  
with my mother. Mahikeng was not a rich  
long after...People used to farm, use to

TA.  
A TRANI.  
DETENTIE DE  
OBLIGATORIU LA

DE CATE ORI VEDEAM CATE  
AMERICANII SI NE SALVEAZA DE

MAMA BINEINTELES ...FIINCA ER  
PRIMIT SERVICI SI A TREBUI  
DIN TIMISOARA, TATA ERA AC  
A PUTUT. CAND TATA A PLEC  
FAINA, SAU TERMINAT, LUCF  
DE-AL TATALUI MEU I-A SP  
SA NE INVITE IN FIECARE  
CA AJUNGESEM SA FIM DES  
EXPLIC EU COPIILOR CA  
MULT SI SA LI SE FACI  
FOARTE MULT SUFLET, N  
AM AVUT VACA NOASTRA  
VINDEA MAMA, FACEA S  
MAMALIGA. MULT TIMP  
BAZA ERAU CARTOFII  
DE FASOLE, NICI DE

PE ATUNCI ERA PE  
SI PAINEA ERA PE  
MAMA A LUAT O GA  
FIECARE DUMINIC  
CUMPARAM OASE  
MANCAREA NOAST

**IT OUT LOUD !**

be slathered and it was this scarification  
read it for one whole year. It was savage,  
out of that pig. After it was burned,  
re engineering with this tank  
fter that they would put us , the children  
ark a line with the blood on our forehead,  
ly a line to gain courage

**HE PAPER IN HALF !**

**READ IT OUT LOUD !**

I remember our neighbour was sent to jail for long hard years simply because he was inventive, as many others were in that time

He made two electrical resistances

sort of a heater, thing that was completely forbidden even if

we didn't have electricity

and we had a heating device

have any sort of nuclear energy

considered as a theft, you steal

therefore it was considered a

crime today and i can't believe it

at time. And the man not only him

was sent to jail because of that.

the militia would knock on your door

they would break it and search

for nuclear energy that was sent to export

**CHAPTER IN HALF !**

fragments of encounters 1: a minor performative experiment<sup>9</sup>  
(South Africa)

Set-up: circle, no seating

The audience sat in a (semi)circle on the floor.

venue: Playroom

duration 15m

In this experiment I was playing with the idea of fragmentation—as a representation of the archive, in order to observe its possible outcome(s), which is why I decided not to rehearse it. I placed the audience in a (semi)circle to indicate towards the idea of communication, dialogue, a collective space.

The creation-process for this work involved four phases:

the initial phase (the interviews as fragments of memories), the second phase (the dividing process of the interviews into smaller fragments), the third phase (the mixing and blending of the fragments) and the final phase (the experiment).

The archive material was arranged in different segments, for example: fragments printed small in size, (that can be read with magnifying glasses—the lens as a device to show the detail from the detail—fragment), fragments with written instructions ('read out loud and & tear the paper in half'), a video projection and a sound montage of the audio recordings and additional text and music (playing from two sets of headphones).<sup>10</sup>

These segments were added into four actions, we can name them: A,B,C,D.

During these actions, the audience was receiving the material and had to pass them from one person to the next. This implies that they had to read the material, read out loud, listen to the

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<sup>9</sup> Minor Project (first practical work)

<sup>10</sup>What is relevant for my work it is that music indicates certain possible additions in the moment of listening. The musical note, in itself is a fragment of a (phonic) structure. The isolated note is a fragment that belongs to a succession of sounds. (Rădulescu, 294)

music or the recordings, pass the material on and follow the action, all at the same time. Since everything was 'all at once', the audience had to decide where to direct their attention towards. I established the main points that can hold the piece together, the four mentioned parts: A (beginning) to B to C to D (end), which also serve as points of orientation (for the improvised moments). When presented, as a result of the audience's participation and interaction with these points, new configurations appeared that changed the original structure, for example into: Ax to By to Cz to D (x-z appear as probabilities). In a metaphorical sense, A-D *are* constants, while x-z *are* unknown variables. I will describe the new configurations in the following part.

This performance was thought as an experiment where the answer (if there is any) is found *searching*, as I was at that time. I was not sure how the experiment would turn out, I had no expectations, It was an impulse, a reaction, an expression of my experience in a new context (Cape Town). Through fragmentation things remain partially hidden, and for an eventual restoration, it is absolutely necessary a bending over the detail, the search.

fragments of encounters 2: coin aspect<sup>11</sup>  
(South Africa, Romania)

Set up: circle, no seating, on stage  
1 suspended object, projection  
6 microphones  
venue: Little Theatre  
duration 30m

I extended the first experiment by presenting archive material from both countries. I wanted to find out how the archives might interact with each other, if there would be an interaction, and how will they inhabit

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<sup>11</sup> Medium Project (second practical work).

the same performative space. After the first experiment I realised that the lack of clear rules, which at that time was unintentional, can provide space for experimentation and it became my method: no clear rules, no clear instructions. I chose to work with representations of memory and new media (particularly sound), a sort of installation which implies the interaction with the spectators, and a way of creating a (re)narrative<sup>12</sup> together. I was inspired by the words of Deleuze (2007), what is real, a thought, a memory, a dream can become actual, but it is already real and this virtual actualisation is an act of creation.

The creation-process for the performance developed following the same principles as described in the first work.

The archives material was arranged in different segments (with the same instructions as the previous set up as well as new ones), with each segment belonging to an action, for example: fragments in Romanian on one side of the page and in English on the other side (written instruction stating 'read with me'), columns of fragments oscillating between Romanian to English and vice versa, printed small in size (magnifying glasses —to read with) and other combinations between the fragments.

These segments were added into ten actions, we will give them the same naming structure as before: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J.

A (beginning)—J (end). Compared to the first experiment, were the segments followed a successive order (from A to D, with few deviations), here I decided to extract some of the actions from the order, which meant that the points of orientation were: A, B, C, F, H, J. While D, E, G, I, were actions that could take place anywhere between C—J (end). Therefore, the performance was not only impossible to rehearse because of its structure but because it required as well an interdependent relation with the audience in order to function. When the audience interacted<sup>13</sup> with these points (A-J) they changed the configuration. For example, some audiences took initiative and began to read out loud multiple times the same fragment of text, even if there was no instruction. Others chose not to read even if the instruction said 'read out loud', or they read together with others. The material was shared into multiple directions, or sometimes it remained in one place and there was dialogue between the audience. By a series of such interventions a movement was created, a flux, an exchange of new information, new actions, variants and interpretations. With the exception of a few instructions, there were no

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<sup>12</sup> Intention (re-narrative) that was realised in this paper, at that time I was thinking of a shared experience.

<sup>13</sup> I imagine the performance as an open system, where the *internal elements* (A-J) interacted with their *environment* (the audience). Open systems are described by biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy as: 'every living organism is essentially an open system. It maintains itself in a continuous inflow and outflow, a building up and breaking down of components, never being, so long as it is alive, in a state of chemical and thermodynamic equilibrium but maintained in a so-called steady state which is distinct from the latter (1968:39).' In other words, open systems are 'systems maintaining themselves in a continuous exchange of matter with environment' (159).

rules laid out at the start, the rules appeared along the way and ordered themselves, as in a versatile and flexible process of auto-organisation, amplifying the initial action and giving it life.

In the performance, the archive unfolded on three levels: written, sonic and visual. I realised after this experiment that I am interested in media techniques because of the way we relate through them to memory. Zygmunt Bauman argues that 'if the problem of modern identity was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, the postmodern is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open' (1995:81). The new media technology although highly performing presents, nonetheless, this aspect of nonpermanence noticed by Bauman.

On the other hand, any memory is also subject to evanescence. In *fragments of encounters 2*, the relation between memory and technology lays under the sign of this ephemerality. The audio-recordings are heard and then disappear, sometimes only through overlapping. Following the instructions some of the audiences read a text and tore it afterwards (destruction, lost, death). I worked with techniques that overlap and juxtapose, however, these are not strictly tied to the unfolding of the process of remembrance but to the interaction between the two different geographic, socio-political and cultural spaces. These memories from separate 'worlds'<sup>14</sup> intersect in my work.

Beyond the observable differences, some of the audiences pointed out the following aspect: some of the stories told by the interviewees couldn't be identified. They overlapped, in the sense that they could have belonged to any of the two spaces. I consider this feedback to be important for my research, especially since it is a result of research and not an *initium* of it. The lack of a finality of interpretation (apparent or real?) was receipted by some of the audiences, as a result of the multiple viewpoints owed to the fragmentation, as well as to a series of possibilities of (re)interpretation of these *ruptures of text*.

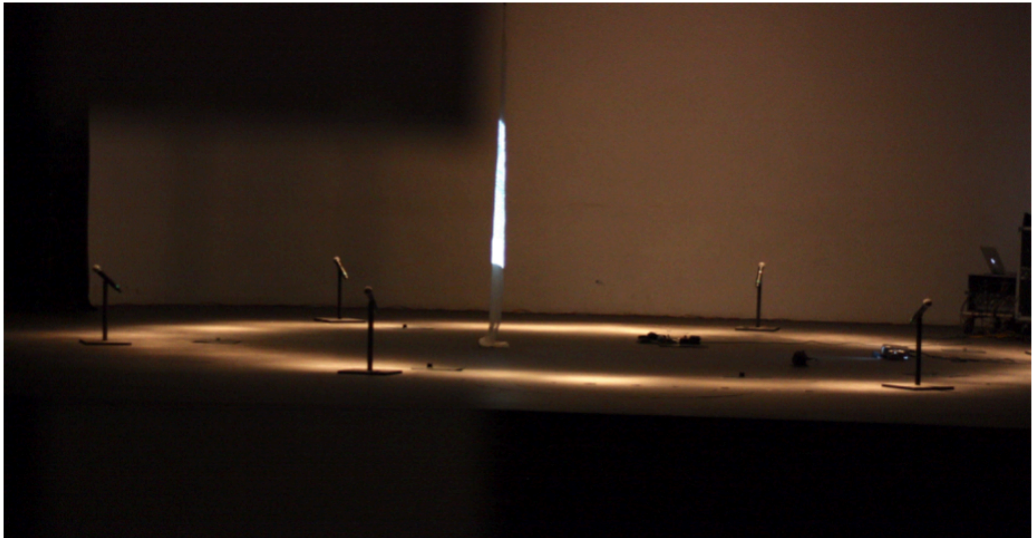
This work seemed to structure itself, as if it had a narrative of its own, dependent on me only to the extent in which *they allowed me* to communicate them. At times I had the feeling that I was only a witness. I tried to capture this *auto-organisation* of memories—words in sequences of time, narrative—time and to present this organic unfolding in order to have an interactive experience with the audience. Nevertheless, the performance did had a structure (un unstable structure) and

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<sup>14</sup> For me at an experiential, perception level Cape Town and Bucharest appear as two worlds, or micro-worlds in one world.

it had a beginning and an end (A-J) but it was dependent on the audience to become actualised, without the audience the experiment was inactive, immaterial, non-existing thus the audience were co-creators. I set up the configuration, which they extended, they added, they diversified it, multiplied it, gave it movement, fluctuation, texture but in a finite quantity time (J). It was organic and yet it was also marked by interruptions and moments of discontinuity, moments when I interjected. The way I see it is that there was an oscillation between certainty and uncertainty, between structure and deconstruction and an interaction that resulted in a sort of auto-organisation, which can happen if the initial system is in a state of disequilibrium, which in our case it was. There was a contraction and expansion happening at the same time between the planned actions (A-J) and the audience interaction, which was unpredictable.

STILLS FROM FRAGMENTS OF ENCOUNTERS 2  
medium project









## inside chaos

In *fragments of encounters* I was interested in the idea of a space where we are not aware of all the information we are presented with. This can produce confusion, or on the contrary, we became aware that we didn't receive *all* the information we were expecting, which can create discomfort. But what happened in the work was more than a simple confusion or discomfort. Chaos was produced. A chaotic state was felt by the audience, in the common sense of the term, of uncertainty, disequilibrium, a sum of unknowns. This was not what I set out to do, it wasn't an intention, but it happened. This brought up a series of questions:<sup>15</sup> what is chaos, from where does it appear, and where does it lead? For physicist such as David Peat, Fritjof Capra and Ilya Prigogine, chaos is an open system. It is a nonlinear a series of 'concurrent fluxes', unpredictable, in which what happens from one moment to another *seems* a pure coincidence. (Peat, 2002:48) However, chaos and uncertainty are elements 'essential to the hidden order of the Cosmos' (*idem*). The theory of chaos, as quantum theory postulates, 'places the limits on certainty' (59). The chaotic systems present 'an order so complex that is beyond any prevision...it is beyond our understanding' and we have to 'learn to live with a dose of uncertainty, paradox and ambiguity' (48).

About my research it can be said that it is placed under the sign of uncertainty. In my practice, I intentionally avoided to offering too many instructions. I anticipated that the overlapping and the lack of clear rules will give the audience a feeling of doubt with regards to what is happening or what they should do. This had the potential to open a bigger register of interpretation or it could have been a blockage. However, too much information received, or too little, or undetected, created chaos. In this case, chaos was experienced. In view with the theory of chaos, which says, 'In the acceptance of a certain degree of uncertainty resides the essence itself of being alive' (53), in the situation created, the performances unfolded on their own. They grew, and through the actions of the audience the performance was enriched. In function of what they understood they must do, what they chose to do, how they interpreted the given indications or the lack of it. It turned out that this game between knowing and not knowing is a dynamic one. After the initial moment of disequilibrium, in the middle of chaos, so to speak, things began to evolve. The lack of clear instructions (intentional ambiguity) was a fertile territory for personal and creative interpretations, and unpredictability. From another perspective, Herbert Read postulates that 'chaos itself, the original absence of forms or limit', can be "a source of aesthetic type of

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<sup>15</sup> The series of gnostic questions, who are we, where do we come from, where are we coming from, where are we going (Henri-Charles Puech, 1978:274).

emotions' (1971:107). At the same time, the fragment of text (Barthes' *lexia*) it ties to the notion of nonlinearity in the sense that Barthes (1973) gives ('the ideal text') is infinite and open, similar to Derrida's 'text without frontiers' (1967), without limits, without fixed borders.

In my approach to fragmentation I am informed by the concept of nonlinearity and post-linearity:

'Postlinearity follows the tendencies of postmodern and post-structural theory as an epistemological break with linear narrative structures. Rooted in modernist revisions of narrative, contemporary post-linearity articulates a radical reworking of previously accepted patterns of time and space, reflecting the influence of chaos theory (a theory of physics in which apparently random and unstructured systems nevertheless obey particular rules' (Sarah Bay-Cheng 2016: 45).

Cheng further writes that if in performance nonlinearity has a long lasting tradition, in contemporary performance the concept of post-linearity is more than just a rejection of linear plot structure, 'post-linearity it is the explicit acknowledgment of multiple, simultaneous, and competing linearities within *and exceeding* the domain of a particular performance' (45). Following the trajectory of post-linearity, in my practice I focus on how (almost) random rules of composition can inform the way we attribute meaning alongside the presence of multiple linearities to suggest that merely a linear connection is not sufficient. In this sense, the methods I propose are based upon the stylistic and dramaturgical choices found in the avant-garde, postmodernism and post-dramatic theatre in their rejection for narrative coherence.

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In poststructuralism any text is an intertext (Barthes, Derrida, Kristeva) in the era of the new media, it can be said that any text is a hypertext, whose main characteristic is nonlinearity (Elena Ungureanu, 2011) because of this aspect, but also because of the fact that 'the hypertext favours the incapacity to discern' (2011:72), that it does not have a beginning and an end, that presents (amongst other characteristics) instability, variability, openness, the hypertext *is* chaos.

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## life—narrative

From the feedback I received after the first experiment, I realised that the idea of a time that is build, invented and invented 'life', as a result of fragmentation and interpretation, are possible constructs that I could work with. In this part I will present Herman Parret's theory, which I found at the moment but I believe it speaks to the idea of (life) fragment—memory. Parret proposes that life is a narrative and the narrated time is an 'invented' time.

In *Le sublime du quotidien*, Parret writes that we live our everyday life as a story and the everyday temporalities as narrative time (1988:134). The author is inspired by the title of Michel de Certeau book, *L'invention du quotidien*, in which the author already suggests the existence of tactic and rhetoric trajectories in everyday practices, and for Parret the ritualisation of the everyday presupposes *memory* and *waiting*, which makes the everyday temporality to be a temporality of a narration (135). Life is a narrative and she who "vit" le quotidien dans des actes de production ou de réception des pratiques est un interprétant qui projette ou 'invente' de la structuration dans le tissu vécu" ('lives' the everyday practice is an interpretant that projects or 'invents' the structuring in the lived fabric)<sup>16</sup> (135). Therefore, within the everyday practices, the human is a *homo narrans* (52). She is a subject of time, and in the same time an interpretant of her own narrated—life, in other words, she is both character and narrator.

'En tant que personnage de son propre récit, il "vit" une temporalité énoncive, une temporalité projetée en dehors de rénonciation comme étant intrinsèquement liée à la substance vitale et opaque; en tant que narrateur de sa vie-récit, il "construit" une temporalité énonciative, "un temps du raconter", déictiquement déterminée (c'est-à-dire déterminée par l'Ici-Maintenant de l'acte de raconter)'

(As a character in his own story, he "lives" an "enoncive" temporality, a temporality projected outside of enunciation as intrinsically tied to the vital and opaque substance; as a narrator of his life-story, he "builds" an "enunciative" temporality, a "narrative-tense") (135).

In this life—narrative, time is both an uttered time and an enunciative time and these two temporalities are generated by the interweaving of the narrated time */ererzahlte zeit/* and the narration time */Erzahlzeit* (135). Between the two temporalities of the everyday, Parret distinguishes a tension that the 'subject—interpretant' can psychologically feel as 'heart-rending', that gives rise to uncertainty and tensivity. The two axes, narrative enunciation and uttered

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<sup>16</sup> (all the translations are my own).

narrative tend to be confused, which amplifies the tension between them and the complexity of the life narrated. However, this 'heart-rending' is due to the fact that the narration time of the enunciation does not correspond with the narrated time, of the utterance.

Parret mentions the fact that 'la vie quotidienne n'est pas opaque et immanente, elle est publique, elle exige une interprétation' (the everyday life is not opaque and immanent, it is public and requires an interpretation) (135). Furthermore; 'pour interpréter la vie de l'autre et ses actions dans le monde implique que l'on constitue cette vie en récit' (to interpret the life of another and his actions in the world implies that we transform his life into a narrative) (134). Moreover, Parret sustains that there is always an interior observant, an interpretant, who is the subject of the 'lived' time (135).

The author speaks of 'narrative-time' (temporalities) arguing that life is a narrative (*récit*) precisely by virtue of this time. It structures the life-narrative through its own properties, and it is a time that is built (134). He makes reference to Paul Ricoeur's refiguration or configuration of time into narrative, to whom 'phenomenological and existential time is a narratological invention' (135). He argues that the narrative as well as its enunciative temporality 'invente' la vie qui, en tant qu'énoncé, reste dépendante de et déterminée par l'énonciation' ("invents" life, which in its quality of utterance, remains dependent and determined by enunciation) and that the 'lived' time is transformed into 'invented' time (134). Therefore, in Parret's vision time is 'invented', by us in the time of the everyday, *homines narrantes*, and life is a narrative because of the everyday temporalities. These temporalities are those of a narrated life, at the same time enoncive and enunciative.

#### 'MA VIE COMME INTERTEXT'

(my life as an intertext)

"Ma vie" est un récit, un discours: que cette vie *soit à moi* n'est qu'un *effet* de discours ("My life" is a narrative, a discourse: that this life *is mine* is only an *effect* of discourse) (48).

Paraphrasing Wittgenstein, Parret says 'toute la vie, la mienne et la vôtre, n'existe que dans cette sphère de l'interprétation qui est celle de la communauté de parole' (all life, mine and yours, exist only in the sphere of interpretation which is that of the community of speech) (46).

Following this paraphrase Parret asks rhetorically, 'ma vie: est ce bien à moi que'est la vie?' (45). The answer is that there isn't a life that is mine but a history of a life, a life that traverses a

sequence of continuities and discontinuities.<sup>17</sup> If the everyday life is a narrative, with different times (temporalities), which generate a 'heart-rending' state, to write your autobiography is a process that highlights the subject (autobiographer) in Parret's vision. The process presupposes a 'je-écrivain' and a 'moi-écrit' in time, in dialectic relation. Therefore, an autobiography, which is defined as a profound restoration of the temporality, is an intertextual work (48).

Life as an intertext presupposes this dialectic relation between the transposed text, subjacent (auto-biographic), that is 'my life' and the text that transposes, opaque in essence; 'cette dialectique est infinie puisque l'interprétation n'est jamais finale' (this dialectic is infinite, since the interpretation is never final) (58).

The principle ideas from this presentation, life is a narrative because of the narrative time, in which the 'lived' time is transformed in 'invented' time, and life-utterance is inventing through the narrative and the enunciative temporalities (and it is determined by enunciation), I consider that they resonate with the archive—memories of lived narratives, which then are re-narrated thus they 'invent' (again) themselves at each *enunciation* in the performance time. Furthermore, in the concept of 'life as an intertext' I found correspondences with my project, which can be seen from an intertextual perspective.

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<sup>17</sup> 'passance et saillance' (Claude Gilberberg's termes cited in Parret, 56).

## reflexions: life–narrative

The archive— memories, the source material for my work is constructed from snippets of quotidian life which are communicated (made public as Parret says) and right through this act they are subject to interpretation. To be able to interpret them, however, the quotidian life must be recreated into a narrative. This transformation into narrative, as Parret argues, I believe is noticeable, at least, at a suggestive mode during the performance. The installation— performance<sup>18</sup>, can be interpreted as an interface of the transformative process.

The life—narrative, as it appears, in my work, is not only subject to interpretation but by fragmentation, it becomes a *field* of interpretation in its own. In this field, each fragment is a sum of probabilities through which a multitude of re-narrations can be actualised, recreated. As well as, equally significant details from the narrative—interview can be lost, or become blurred.

In *fragments of encounters*, life—narrative is in fact a memory that, in my interpretation, but in accordance with Parret’s acception, in the act of narration becomes a construct, however, not a permanent one, but transient and susceptible of multiple interpretation (due to fragmentation ) at each *enunciation*.

The text, fragment in a fragment, the vocal overlapping and the entire installation it is possible to reflect the generative tension of uncertainty that Parret speaks of, but in the performance it might be sensed by the participant—interpretant and not by Parret ‘subject-interpretant.’

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It is well known that memories do not reproduce the event, state or the emotion felt. Memories have a temporal unfolding. When they are communicated as it happens in the work, they can also be linked to this utterance—enunciation relation of which Parret speaks of. Therefore, a construction (in the sense that Parret gives) of narrative-memories, dependent and determined by the enunciation with reference to my work, might appear in the horizon. If this is the case, then we can speak about multiple enunciations: of the interviewee and of the participant as well as others, made possible by fragmentation. Where does this lead us? And how many temporalities can there be distinguished? Is there an end to it? Asking myself these kind of endless questions, for an instant I had in my mind a glimpse of an “invented” fractal (reflecting the “invented” time and life described by Parret). Just a glimpse, yet enough to awake an imaginative

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<sup>18</sup> *fragments of encounters 2*.

curiosity: the question related to our perception of the *limit* is raised. Does the limit exist? For Ken Wilbur (2001) there is no limit, or, if there is one, in Derrida's sense, you can deconstruct it in such a way that you can't get caught in a single definition, question, purpose and 'to deconstruct does not mean to destroy or to abandon' it means to restart the game, to reopen perspectives (Derrida cited by Droit 2011:247).

In this vague context regarding the limit, I felt as Nietzsche's (1997) tightrope dancer, I couldn't reach the limit. The difference lies that his dancer couldn't overcome it, while in my research the answer is not yet known. I wait the feedback of my final production for this research, with the hope that I will find some answer(s).

As I mentioned previously, Parret says that 'life' is an intertext. I will paraphrase him and say that *fragments of encounters* is an intertext. Intertextuality, as defined by Julia Kristeva is the index mode in which a text reads history and inserts itself in it (Kristeva 1986:42). This complex concept doesn't make the object of my research, but I will pause only at one aspect of intertextuality, as I found it at Sollers (1980), namely that of the interaction between all the textual surfaces. This interaction, in a generalised text, 'reactivates the texture' and determines the inscription beyond its limit. As a result we will obtain a 'script' with a never-ending reincorporation and confrontation with an 'infinite' matter.

(flashback)

## circle

The contrast between form and fragment presented interest in the early phase of my research. I started by looking at the notion of fragment(ation), and its relation to the whole (circle). I stopped at the concept of *morphe*, 'a self-placement in the limit', in greek, form (Read, 1965:93). As a visual and symbolic representation of the notion of form I chose the circle, which was suitable as a choice also from a philosophical perspective, as an interpretative model: 'cercul este condiția de posibilitate a devenirii întru ființă' (the circle is the condition of possibility of becoming within being) (Ion Hirghiduș, 1999:44). It is also considered the perfect form and symbol of the absence of 'distinction and division' (Chevalier Gheerbrant 1969,1982;222), and the contrast between perfect(ion) and rupture (fragment) I believed can only be a tense one. In practice, *a performance in a round*, this could also make reference to the philosophical concept of *circular thinking*; this presupposes an order that constitutes progressively, being unfolded in the act of knowing (1999:44). This order that is revealed and the whole that is constituted<sup>19</sup> in relation to the fragment (absence from the whole), I anticipated should generate an effect. The relation between circle—knowledge—order—disorder, I thought could sustain my research. At this point I was looking at concepts, such as: *morphe*—circle (close/open)—sphere, form as limit—'any form is a limitation' (1965:110), form as movement to delimitation and *apeiron*—the unlimited. For the Greek philosopher Anaximander, the limit (peras) is a component of apeiron and form is a limitation of the unlimited. The description the Greek philosopher Anaximander gives to apeiron<sup>20</sup> is that 'which is without internal limits, within which the simple physical bodies, were not as yet distinguish', form (Peters 1993: 39). To the concept of expansion' (form as a limitation of the infinite) in Kabbalah, in which havayot are pre-existents (in Ein Sof, meaning the infinite) with a particular indistinct form of content that suffers a process of limitation of Ein Sof. This limitation is the receiving of forms. The limitation of Ein Sof in 'vessels' (object, form) is an act of rendering in an order. In other words, it is an act of creation. (Idel, 2006)

These concepts, even if creatively stimulating, in relation to the practice highlighted the necessity of other research directions. In consequence, I decided on a few working instruments: fragmentation, (re)interpretation, uncertainty, and the concept of life—narrative, as I recently discovered at Parret.

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<sup>19</sup> Form *is* a whole (1965:106).

<sup>20</sup> 'The term is capable of various constructions depending on how one understands the limit' (Peters, 1993:39).

## conclusion

The fragment is the centre of the research, from which and in which multiple possibilities of interpretation opened by fragmentation unfurl and rebuild. The memory—archive captures the intersection between two realities (sociopolitical and cultural contexts) in a singular space—the performance. This is a space wherein the real and the imaginary overlap. The recorded material are micro-life narratives, whose re-narration in the performance ‘invents’ Life, in close meaning with Parret’s vision. These ‘invented’ lives, virtual real, are probabilities that can be actualised or not, as in a ‘glass bead game’ (Herman Hesse), whereby the beads are fragments of life narrated and re-fragmented *ad infinitum*.

The entire construct is sustained by the participation of the audience, whose re-interpretations, actions and feedback allow the performance to grow.

The paper did not describe what *is* the work but presented possibilities of what the work might be and where it might be going. The past and the future are interwoven in the writing of this paper, by engaging with the two works presented I imagined *fragments of encounters 3* and inserted it in my explanations. This presentation, and I will paraphrase Henk Borgdorff (2012), expresses ‘unfinished thinking’, ‘unfinished reflexions’. The image that describes the position I find myself at the moment, is that of a point that one reaches, but another point follows and another one, and again, an infinite, fractal, nonlinear sequence, which in the end might lead to an *order-by disorder*.



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STILLS FROM FRAGMENTS OF ENCOUNTERS 3

final production

