

# A Way Home: Performing Auto-Ethnography to inspire Liberatory Agency and to transcend the Estrangement Effects of Exile

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## Abstract

By and large, not much research has been done around the effects of cultural and political exile on South African citizens exiled during Apartheid. This study intends, firstly, to explore the effects of estrangement on a second-generation South African exile; and secondly, to explore how theatre and performance practice can assist the exile to inspire liberatory agency to regain a sense of belonging/home. The study is conducted through a performance auto-ethnography research paradigm and methodology. The creative performance work chronicles a South African life in exile in search of belonging/home. Aesthetically, it draws from a variety of theatre and performance influences, but more specifically it is rooted in indigenous Southern African performance genres, namely *iiNgoma* (healing rituals), *iziBongo* (praise poetry), and *iiNtsomi* (storytelling).

## Introduction

Between 30 000 and 60 000 people - adults and children - went into exile during apartheid following the banning of opposition political organizations such as the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan African Congress (PAC), and the initiation of the armed struggle in 1961. (De Sas Kropiwnicki 2014: 35)

I was born in exile; a child of South African parents who left South Africa, in the early 1960s, for better education in neighbouring countries. My father comes from a family of isiZulu speakers, with family ties in Swaziland. So, his experience of exile began as a student in Swaziland, where he went to attend High School. My mother comes from a family of Sesotho speakers, with strong family ties in Lesotho. So, her experience of exile began in Lesotho, where she went to attend High School. I was born in the mountain Kingdom of Lesotho; where they met, as students, at the then University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.

My first memory is of a time in Lesotho, a country that I considered home for much of my youth.

### CANTO I - BUTHA-BUTHE: STREAM CROSSING

I am in Butha-Buthe, Leribe. My grandfather and I walk to the shops. We have just crossed the main road. We now walk down a slope, towards a stream. I walk in front of him. My mind races as we near its bank.

ME  
(To myself)  
How will I cross it?

There are stones protruding from the stream.

ME  
I will walk on them. But, they seem  
too far apart for me to handle. I  
might slip, and fall into the water

We get onto the bank; the flow of water is right in front of us. I hesitate, as I haven't figured out how to cross yet. Before I can think any further, my grandfather picks me up and we cross together: I, in his arms; he, walking over the water. In a flash, we are on the other side. He puts me down gently, and we continue on our journey.

I spent my childhood years, mostly, in Lesotho. These early years, as is evidenced in the above Canto I - Butha-Buthe: Stream Crossing, were of discovery, wonder, love, and being nurtured. I have nothing but fond memories of that time, and most of it was spent with family. It was in the later years of my childhood that things began to change. The complexities of lived identities began to reveal themselves to me.

There are many childhood games that I played, as a child, in Lesotho. I particularly remember 'call and response' chant games that we played, that not only helped our cognitive, language, and emotional development; but, also, our cultural and familial development. I remember one of them, in particular, called *O tsoa kae?* (*Where are you from?*) Or *Mantilatilane*.

The game would begin with a call, from a child (or chorus of children) out to another child, who would respond accordingly. The interaction would flow as follows:

CALL

O tsoa kae?  
(Where are you from?)

RESPONSE

Ha 'Mantilatilane.  
(From 'Mantilatilanes' place.)

CALL

Oa jang?  
(What did you eat?)

RESPONSE

Bohobe  
(Pap/Bread)

CALL

Oa futsoela ka eng?  
(What did you mix it with?)

RESPONSE

Ka Metsi a pula  
(With Rain water.)

CALL

Thella he!  
(Flow then!)

RESPONSE

Ke thellemeng ke le...  
(Why should flow because I am...)

What then follows on, in the response, is a poetically flowing recital of the responding child's family, or clan, lineage.



As an adolescent, I found this game uncomfortable because it made me, for the first time, question and probe my identity, and origins. I found that although I was born in Lesotho and was, by birth right, a citizen, I was of another place (South Africa), of which I had little physical or embodied cultural reference. I also found that I could not recite my family praises in Sesotho, a language not of their origin. I would have to recite them in isiZulu, a language I still had to master, and a language my peers didn't understand. This instantly estranged me from my peers, who were mostly Basotho. I was deemed as not knowing who I was, and as not being able to recite my family lineage in accordance with the game.

I would later travel to Europe and America, where I experienced different types of estrangement. I was discriminated against because of my race, and because I was a foreigner from Africa. I began to see myself as other, and to experience life as an outsider. This created a sense of loneliness within me, and I sought ways to overcome it. I tried hard to assimilate into whichever culture I was living in, at any particular time. My appearance and behaviour would change according to which culture I was in. But, somehow, the assimilation was never quite complete; and I always remained an outsider. There was always something that would remind me that I didn't really belong, that I was merely a stranger passing through.

This made me long for the belonging I once felt in my early childhood. I was grateful to the fall of Apartheid because it finally offered me the opportunity to return to the home of my forefathers. I imagined South Africa to be the place I would find the belonging that I so longed for. But, upon my return, I quickly found that it was more an experience of moving to yet another new place rather than an experience of returning home. Once again, I had to navigate and find my place in this new society of many cultures. I now had to assimilate into yet another society, a society I'd thought of as home while I was in exile, but alas, I was really a stranger here too.

Second-generation exiles, who were born and/or spent their formative years in exile, were described as passively being acted upon by their parents and teachers, or as "sponges" simply by absorbing the dominant political ideology-effectively denying them agency and power. (De Sas Kropiwnicki 2014: 35)

After years of being in South Africa, I still had the niggling feeling of being an outsider, a cultural, social, and political exile. This was an extremely disempowered space to be in, and so I began a different search for home. I began to search for ways in which I could inspire liberatory agency into my life, to acquire a lasting sense of belonging. A way revealed itself to me years later, seemingly by accident, in an unlikely place, away from human habitation in the mountainous highlands of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

#### CANTO XXV - CLARITY

**[The horse gallops, takes-off, and is a bird. It flies through the sky.]**

I am on the road to Roma. I'm with my friend; the one I marched with for Chris Hani, the one I got punished with in High School. When we get to Masianokeng, I get overcome by a sense of familiarity, memories begin to flood my mind. We drive up Ha Motlohelo and then head towards Makhalanyane - there is the flour mill (leloaleng), there is the road to Thaba Bosiu. We pass through a mountain pass Ha Maja and I see far into the distance. There is Mikaeleng, the St. Michael's Mission. The age old sandstone church still stands out in the distance. We descend into the Roma valley, and arrive at Hatha Butle.

**[The bird lands, and is a horse. It gallops to a stop.]**

We are greeted with a glass of water. The water in Lesotho is special, most of it springs from the ground. The higher you go the clearer, and tastier it is.

We are served a meal, the food is simple *Papa, Moroho, le Nama*; slightly seasoned.. it's perfect every time. After the meal I leave mother and son alone together, for some quality time.

I take the car keys, and head out.

**[The horse gallops, takes-off, and is a bird. It flies through the sky.]**

I return up out the valley to St. Michaels, and up the road into the mountains. Along the road there are all things familiar; the great aloes, the villages in the distance.

I go up higher and higher.

I pass Ha Ntsi, Nazareth, Khalong la Baroa...

There is the familiar sight of boys selling crystal stones on the side of the road, and the familiar sight of family picnic sites.

I go up higher. I reach the protected area, I pass through the boom gates, and up through the Molimo Nthuse pass.

I can hear the sound of water. Water falls in the distance. Water seeps through the Granite Mountains, and simmers in the sunlight. I also hear the movement of crisp air, and of the area around me.

I am way up in the mountains, and the clouds seem but a stone throw way. I feel I'm on top of the world.

I breath-in deeply to inhale as much of this beauty as I can.

**[The bird lands, and is a horse. It gallops to a stop.]**

I get to a point where I can stop to absorb my surroundings wholeheartedly. I can see far into the distance.

I take another breath, and another, and in an instance I feel whole, I feel present, there is no past, and there is no future. All is clear in this moment.

**[Silence]**

I am in-sync with all of creation.

**[Silence]**

I am Home .

The way, for me, was to be consciously connected with the force of all life. It exists beyond the human constructs of nationality, class, culture, and evolutionary theory. The way, lay in a more heightened awareness of the individual to the presence of life, in each moment in time.

"Home" for these cosmopolitan exiles is not within a particular country, and it does not necessarily entail 'being acknowledged or accepted.' "Home" is far more personal, defined by each individual differently at different times, in relation to relative to varying interests, evolving spaces, and dynamics social networks. For some, home is associated with shifting space "where affections centre," creativity thrives, or attachments form. For others, 'home' is associated with landscapes and sensory experiences. (De Sas Kropiwnicki 2014: 88)

As a drama practitioner, and performer, I have sort to explore this notion of home, further, through a Theatre and Performance practice paradigm. In this study, I perform auto-ethnography to investigate the effects of estrangement on me, a second-generation South African exile; and I explore how this practice research can assist me, and others on a similar journey, to inspirit liberatory agency to regain a more sustained sense of belonging/home.

Practicing ethnography means shifting one's notion of

centre and periphery and coping with the complexity of multiple centres with multiple peripheries. (Alsop 2002:1)

This is one of the reasons why I have chosen performance auto-ethnography as methodology. Through this study, my notions of home and exile, and my agency in exploring these notions, have shifted continually in the process of writing, rehearsing, and performing this research. I have been confronted with a complexity of lived life identities which have challenged my original notions around personal estrangement and political exile; and have been able to empower myself to embrace my cultural, political and professional exiled identities more freely.

Performing autoethnography has encouraged me to dialogically look back upon my self as other, generating critical agency in the stories of my life, as the polyglot facets of self and other engage, interrogate, and embrace. (Spry 2001: 708)

In my case, performing auto-ethnography has allowed me to see and embrace myself as other, and to express and give voice to my exiled identities through the stories of my life. I particularly chose to root my performance in indigenous performance genres as they, too, are exiled entities of self from the mainstream performance and influence spaces in contemporary South Africa.

## **Research Statement**

The experience of exile can be disempowering, at the best of times. The exile constantly negotiates centre, and peripheral, spaces often having to constantly justify her presence,

to self or other, in those spaces. This, over time, leads the exile to a life which lacks social suretyship, and questions one's own validity in these spaces, and even in life itself. The exile lives with little, or no, meaningful agency for affecting change. This research is about the empowerment of estranged exiles. It seeks to identify the cultural and political effects of the dislocation caused by exile, and to encourage exiles to develop, lasting liberatory agency with which they may overcome these effects of dislocation.

Outside the formal political sphere, South African returned exiles, in particular second-generation exiles, have not sufficiently examined ways to overcome the effects of estrangement caused by their dislocation.

... strategies waged by children in exile remain largely unexamined, particularly in relation to second-generation exiles. (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2014:36)

This research serves as one such 'strategy' for exiles, and others who have suffered the effects of estrangement, to engage with, in an effort to assist with a reflective exploration of their experiences, and to provide agency for empowering change. As a pedagogical contribution it serves as confirmation, and inspiration, to the possibilities, efficacy, and validity of this type of research in South Africa.

The pedagogical is always moral and political, by enacting a way of seeing and being, it challenges contests or endorses the official, hegemonic ways of seeing and representing the other. (Denzin, 2006:333)

I began with a list of questions<sup>1</sup> around the themes of Exile, Home, and Performance in South Africa. The questions were driven by my desire to find one central research question that would guide and anchor my research. From the list of thirty questions, I trimmed the list to five questions which I felt were sufficient to provide the focus needed to begin and guide the research. The questions were:

1. How does one find belonging/home from Exile?
2. Is it possible to transcend the isolation of exile through theatre?
3. Is the fundamental role of the actor to exile the self, in order to portray character (other)?
4. In what ways can Theatre and Performance practice empower actor/s and audience?
5. What is the role of the spiritual in performance work?

It became clear, after the trimming exercise, that my focus was rooted in notions of home and exile. Exile would be explored as a place of physical banishment; a place, physical or imagined, of marginality and periphery, or a place of the estranged. Home would be explored primarily as a place of freedom, or liberation, from exile.

As a theatre practitioner, I had long exiled myself from the circles of academia because South Africa had yet to recognise practice as legitimate research. It was a form of liberation, for me, when I re-entered the academic arena after a fifteen year absence, and I was able to use performance practice to achieve my research objectives.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1



For me, autoethnographic texts express more fully the interactional textures occurring between self, other, and contexts in ethnographic research. (Spry, 2001: 708)

Exile researched through performance auto-ethnography leads to empowerment and belonging, and this is because auto-ethnography by definition requires reflection and retrospection. It challenges the researcher, and subject, to reinterpret their past and gain renewed understanding of their memories and experiences.

Performance auto-ethnography, as method, allows an avenue from which to explore research interests in the most effective way available to me, which is through performance and writing. Although, the phenomenon of exile is global, and spans the ages of humanity, it is my experience of it that has led me to the questions for which I seek answers. It is therefore apt for me to reflect on that experience as central to my research inquiry. Through the writing and performing of these experiences of myself, I had a strong hunch that, not only would my questions be answered, but that I would find a more permanent home and sense of belonging than I had experienced in that short visit to the mountains of Lesotho.

... I would suggest that the majority of performers who play themselves display an astute self-consciousness; their representations of themselves are 'knowing'. They are also strategic, and often politically so, using them 'selves' as

vehicles through which to project particular social perspectives, inflected by positions of race, class, gender and/or sexuality. The 'self' is deliberately and perhaps paradoxically used in order to precisely go beyond the self, or the individual. (Heddon 2002: 5)

### CANTO III - FROM DENNILTON WITH LOVE

I'm at my grandparents' home in Dennilton, Transvaal, with my sisters. It is mid-morning and we are getting ready for a trip back home, to our parents, in Lesotho.

As usual my sisters and I, the children, are the first to be readied. In no time, we are washed, dressed, fed, and ready to go. Now we have to wait for the adults to get ready. I'm especially impatient, as I've known about this trip for a long time now, since yesterday. I can't wait to ride in my grandfather's car. I love cars, especially riding in them. As the time approaches for us to leave, we are told that we can go wait in the car. This doesn't quite do it for me, not only is the car stationary, it's parked in the sun, and the heat quickly gets the better of us. The leather seats are most uncomfortable in the heat. We return to wait in the house.

My grandmother, ever so gentle, and soft spoken, is the last to be ready. No one seems to mind, and least of all my grandfather, who is his usual bubbly self. It is only I who seems to be worried about time. My sisters are too young to keep time.

Finally, it is time to go.

We all get into the car and the journey begins. After what seems

like a life time on the road. My grandmother tells my grandfather that she forgot something back at the house. Without hesitation, my grandfather acknowledges her, slows the car down, and makes a U-turn. We head back to the house to collect whatever it is that was left behind. Love.

My story, as auto-ethnography, is relevant to second-generation South African exiles who were born, and lived, in exile. They are likely to have similarly suffered the effects of estrangement, and my story gives voice to their stories. It sheds light on the concerns, and challenges, of a section of the South African population whose stories have, on the whole, been left untold. It also offers them the opportunity to reflect back on their own stories, and how they may have engaged with the specific challenges they encountered in exile. Lastly, it offers them a way to healing the wounding effects of the estrangement of exile.

## **Methodology**

The aim of the research is two-fold: firstly, to understand the experience of exile, and to understand the effects of exile induced estrangement. Secondly, it is to inspire liberatory agency that will put affected exiles on a path to belonging or home.

The primary data was sourced from myself, and it was collected through the writing of memory, rehearsals, and performance. I am a 43 year old Zulu male; born in 1971, in exile. I lived 75% of my years, up until the age of 20, in the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho. 10% was spend in the United Kingdom, and the remaining 15% in the United States. I returned home, to South Africa, in 1991 at the age of 20. I have lived the last 23 years of my life in

South Africa, 30% of those years were lived in Cape Town, while the remaining 70% were lived in Johannesburg. I am a multi-faith spiritualist.

Many academics have questioned the validity of memories as a source of data. As “an artefact that rusts,” memories may distort or fade. (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2014:38)

For me, memories provide a most invaluable data source. I secured a writing studio, and a performance studio, in which to collect the bulk of the research data. In the beginning of the research journey, I spent two hours, at a time, in the performance studio to engage in various warm up exercises for the voice and body. Then I'd engage in various meditative exercises to calm, and focus, the mind towards a state where I could solely concentrate on the task of memory recollection. The best times, I found for recalling stories was in the morning, while the mind is still fresh. In the beginning, didn't censor the type of stories, and memories, that I'd recall. I was pleasantly surprised at the amount of stories I could remember, and recall. I began to filter the stories according to my research themes; namely home, exile, and estrangement. After these sessions, I'd spend 2 to 3 hours at a time, in the writing studio, writing down the stories as I remembered them.

The stories that were best told, in these early stages of data collection, were the stories that were more than just a series of events. The stories that were most captivating were the ones that had emotions attached to them. In order to get as many of these kinds of stories as possible, I made sure that I tuned into the emotion memories of each of the stories. It was important for me to tune into the feelings of any particular event, or

happening. In performance, this would add dramatic value to the stories. For the audiences it would provide more clarity, and authenticity, to each story. A total of 25 stories (Cantos) were collected, written, and performed, each invested in strong emotional memory, and engaged with at least two of the research themes proposed.

In the following

Canto XVII - 1980s South Africa, is about a visit 'Home' from exile. In it, I am confronted by a conflict of events, and emotions, that are not naturally associated with a 'Home' visit. Fear is the central emotion related to the incident.

#### **CANTO XVII - 1980S SOUTH AFRICA**

I now pay more attention to what is happening in South Africa. I am more aware of South Africa, the politics of what is going on there. I have always been, through books, and over hearing adult conversations. But now, it is more personal. Both my parents are Persona Non Grata; their presence in South Africa is mostly through word of mouth, which they get from relatives. We kids are able to slip through border control without being recognised as threats to the state.

I now pay more attention to what is happening in South Africa. I am more aware of South Africa, and the politics of what is going on there. I have always been aware, through books, and by over hearing adult conversations. But now, it is more personal.

It is the mid-1980s: State of Emergency and Jack Rolling

Jack Rolling is a township phenomenon; a group of guys drive up and kidnap a girl in the streets to go and rape her. They will release her when, and where, they please.

I am on a taxi, with my sisters and cousin. We are going to visit my aunt in Duduza, or 'Beirut' as it is nicknamed. The taxi driver is supposed to drop us off at home. He is afraid to enter the township, and drops us off by an open veld, outside the township. It is almost midnight.

I'm afraid for our lives; especially for my sisters. What if they get Jack-rolled? What if we are kidnapped for muti? What if...? We don't know where to stand. Should we be close to the road, or further back into the veld? After about an hour, a group of nuns, in a kombi, stop for us. They ask us our business, and we tell them where we are going. They know my grandfather, and they take us home to him.

On the same visit. We, my cousin and I, are on our way from Mofokeng Street, my aunts' place, in the Sotho section of the township. We are on our way to my grandfather's place in Jacob Street, in the Zulu section of the township. It is dusk, along the way, we see a man being chased by another man carrying a knife.

A crowd follows running, and shouting, behind the two of them. "Catch him, Kill him", the different voices from the crowd shout.

Someone trips the man trying to get away. He is already bleeding. By the time he gets up from the ground, his aggressor, and the crowd, are already upon him. The crowd surrounds him, and the aggressor has his victim where he wants him. He begins to stab him, repeatedly.

There are different reactions from within the crowd, horror, excitement, anger, sorrow. Our view is now blocked by the crowd, we don't make the effort to move to the front of the ring.

We run Home; to my grandfather.

Each story was rehearsed individually. Each story is primarily written in the present tense. The helps bring the memory back closer to the time when the actual events of the story took place. It also, brings back the different ages of me. What would happen in performance is that I would unconsciously start to gesture, as I would have, in the story situation. But what is also interesting is that, I would also be conscious of the present day me, looking on over this spectacle. On the surface of it, Canto XVII is a story of fear, violence, and irresponsibility. The nuns, thankfully, were able to add some compassion to the story. The stories are able to stand alone for research enquiry, but they also offer something more significant when analysed as a group of stories.

Secondary data sources included scholarly articles and books, internet based academic lectures and talks, one-man theatre shows, performance art, iintsomi, and indigenous

song and dance performances. Intuition also played a role in gathering, analysing, and executing data.

The sixth 'visualisation describes the technique of allowing and even training the mind to start pictures and events going, then to follow them in their course. This covers a wide field, from intuition, whether or not ascribed to a spirit, too many healers' techniques, and to the lesser shaman's journey. The latter example, the shaman does not see with the eyes of his body but those of his spirit, Prophecy, clairvoyance, and healing power may result. (Turner 1986:171)

## Findings and Analysis

### Writing Memory

The final autoethnographic text *Cantos of a Life in Exile*<sup>2</sup> is a poetic performance script of memories, of a life in exile, in 25 cantos. Each canto is a complete story of memory. The complete script is divided into three main sections; parenthesized by a prologue and an epilogue.

**The prologue** has two subsections:

1. Introduction: An aesthetic set up of the performance, as a storytelling encounter.

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<sup>2</sup> Appendix 2



2. Mazankosi<sup>3</sup>: A collection of praises for both my paternal and maternal family ancestors.

The prologue proved to be a very powerful way to open the text. It pays homage to two performance genres, which have been 'exiled' from mainstream South African performance spaces, *iintsomi* and *iziBongo*. It then pays homage to my ancestors, and the divine. In traditional African society, before you undertake on a journey, it is customary to show respect to those that came before you, and to ask for them to open the way ahead, and to protect you on your journey.

I found that the prologue proved an extremely powerful example of how performance auto-ethnography can inspire liberatory agency in the exile. The introduction, not only pays homage to *iintsomi*, but it immediately invites the audience into the confidence of the performance, into the aesthetic style of the piece, and it invites them on the journey. In this way the audience become insiders, in the space with me, the performer. In this way we share intimacy, which is an agency of 'home' .

Then, for the non-isiZulu, and non-Sesotho, speakers, that intimacy is partially broken by a language barrier, as the performer recites his family's *iziBongo*. Although, the audience may enjoy the rhythmic nature of the unfamiliar language, they are left in a brief state of exile. For the Zulu and Sesotho speakers they enjoy closer intimacy.

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<sup>3</sup> Ndebele family name

The prologue engages with the research themes quite strongly at the beginning. The feeling of home, exile, estrangement, and transcendence have been engaged with, in the first few minutes of the performance auto-ethnography.

After the prologue we enter the first main section, of the journey is called Foundational Identities.

**Foundational Identities** is composed of three cantos:

1. Canto I - Butha-Buthe: Stream Crossing
2. Canto II - Transvaal: Bus Ride
3. Canto III - From Dennilton with Love

These cantos are fond are memories of childhood. They represent an agency of 'home' expressed through familial relationships. In the first canto, I am with my maternal grandfather; in the second canto, I am with my maternal grandmother; and in the third one, I am with my paternal grandparents. The significance of these memories being of me and my grandparents, who have since passed on, is twofold. Firstly, it is that they serve as a continuation on the theme of homage, which is setup in the prologue. Secondly, it is that they serve to setup the familial foundation from which I navigate my life of exile. Whether it was a confrontation with nature (the stream), or a confrontation with racial injustice (the bus, and driver) it was the familial relationship that helped me cope. Even when I was in conflict with family itself, caused by the perceived delayed departure in Canto III; it was the discovery of the importance of the familial relationship, which was

displayed by making the U-turn, which brought me back to equilibrium.

This section, by igniting memories of childhood, also allows for audience members to remember their own familial backgrounds while they listen to the performer relate his experiences.

## **CANTO II – TRANSVAAL: BUS RIDE**

I am on a bus with my grandmother, a red and white South African railway bus. The bus is in the form of a horse and trailer, much like commercial cargo transport trucks. In this case, we are the cargo.

I am in the back with my grandmother. We, the passengers, have no contact with the driver. The bus is stuffy and overcrowded. It's also noisy; some people have their wireless radios playing loudly, others sing, while others make loud conversation. There is much eating and drinking. I'm amazed that some people are able to sleep through all of this.

I long for some fresh air. I'm uneasy, I feel that I don't belong with this crowd, in this situation. My grandmother stands out from all the others in the bus. She is immaculately dressed, and in control of her immediate surroundings. She is not shy to firmly engage with those closest to us, mostly disapproving of any wayward behaviour.

It is a +/- 400km continuous journey, no shop stops, no petrol station stops. Some people need to go to the toilet.

Grown men and women begin to relieve themselves in empty bottles and containers. There seems to be no scheduled stop.

It's stuffy and overcrowded. We are like livestock in transit. It's inhumane.

Finally, after a major heated discussion, there is banging on the sides of the bus to get the driver's attention. The women, led by my grandmother, demand a proper stop, for those that need to relieve themselves. The young driver stops the bus, at the side of the road, in the middle of nowhere. Men and women jump out. Scatter into the open field, under the night sky, to relieve themselves.

To amuse himself, the driver revs the bus engine and makes as if to drive off, to panic the passengers.

I am comforted by the love of my grandmother.

In Canto II – Transvaal: Bus Ride, the agencies of exile, home, and estrangement are in effect simultaneously. This makes clear the complexities of the spaces of home, exile, and effects of estrangement. Home is not always the space of empowerment, and exile not always the space of disempowerment. What is clear is how supportive, and loving, familial relationships are; they consistently provide empowering agency.

I begin to wonder how the politicization of the notion of home contributes to the estrangement of the exiled citizen. This is to say, a pattern is beginning to emerge, of home existing in exile within solid familial structures. Yet, growing up, I may have took

those for granted, and fixated on the political definition of home and exile.

The next main section is titled Exile Identities.

**Exile Identities** is the biggest section, composed of sixteen cantos:

1. Canto IV - Cambridge: Njabulo
2. Canto V - Cambridge: Manu and I
3. Canto VI - Chicha, Chickens and I
4. Canto VII - AboGogo: Persona non grata
5. Canto VIII - Where you from?
6. Canto IX - Columbine
7. Canto X - Brave heart
8. Canto XI - Pow Wow
9. Canto XII - The Christmas Blizzard
10. Canto XIII - CKHS: Form 1, Day 1
11. Canto XIV - Protecting A Friend
12. Canto XV - On Being Broken
13. Canto XVI - Ndebele, Sit Down!
14. Canto XVII - 1980s South Africa
15. Canto XVIII - CKHS - Strike
16. Canto XIX - Mandela

These are memories of adolescence - they constitute memories of estrangement. The memories span three countries, on three continents, and 7 different educational systems. In performance, this section was particularly challenging to perform. Not only was it the longest; it raised major political issues that confronted me, at a time when I was dealing with my own personal issues of adolescent development. Reliving the experiences is

emotionally draining; and, at times, even painful. The biggest challenge that I had with this section was to not let me, as the researcher adult, interfere with the performance data, by projecting my own judgment on the events of the story. I was also very careful not to want to guide the audience in any given direction. For example, Canto XV – On Being Broken deals with a particularly difficult time in my life where I was severely punished for a small offence that I couldn't even recall as an adult. In the writing and performance for this memory, I was very careful not to over dramatize the events of the incident in an effort to show how much of an injustice it was. It was also important to not try to evoke emotions of sorrow, or solicit sympathy pity, from the audience. It was important to perform the story, as the child experiencing the event.

#### **CANTO XV – ON BEING BROKEN**

I am in the staff room with my best friend; we are about to be punished; whipped with a plastic whip.

We have to bend over the back of a chair, and reach for its front legs, to be whipped. **[demonstration]**

I'm first up, I bend over the back of the chair, and take hold of the front legs. I get whipped again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again.

I stand up from the chair, in pain. The teacher points back to the chair. He continues to beat me, and beat me, and beat me. Tears fill in my eyes, I stand up from the chair again. Tears start coming down my cheek, I try to be strong but

I can't any more. He points to the chair again. He beats me again, and I start to cry.

He stops, and lets me go. The next is my friend, I have to witness, and watch, as he goes through the same treatment, for a longer spell. After his beating, we are allowed to leave the office, to go back to class.

I don't make my way straight back to class. I have too much anger, hurt, and frustration. I find a moment alone. My heart breaks. I let my tears come out. I asked God questions; Why? Why do you let them do this to me? Why am I here? Why do they hate me like this?

Throughout the performance piece, there were vocal transitions, which enhanced the performance in a number of ways. The first transition, which comes after the prologue, is the sound of a horse galloping at high speed. It signifies the journey of story the audience, and the performer, are about to embark on. In the Exile Identities section of the performance the transitions are of a large bird, and then of traditional songs. These transitions help set the mood of various stories; they add lightness to certain stories, and remind us that we are in a world of storytelling, of which fantasy plays an important part. They also serve to break tension where needed; to vary the pace of the performance; and, in the case of the song transitions, they help locate time and culture.

#### **CANTO VII - ABOGOGO: PERSONA NON GRATA**

My one grandmother, my father's mother, gives me 70c, as travel money. I'm about to travel to the United States of

America. I've never had this much money before.

The year is 1980, I'm 9 years old. 1 South African Rand = 2 United States Dollars.

My other grandmother, my mother's mother, bought me my first ever musical recording. A 45rpm LP record of Bonny M's hit single *By the Rivers of Babylon*.

We leave the freezing Roma, Maseru winter, and 3 days later we arrive to a blazing hot Denver, Colorado summer. I'm on top of the world. It's great that our family is reunited again. We are together in a new land.

The next morning I wake up and there is an uneasy energy in the house. I jump down from the top bunk of the bed, and head for my parents' room.

My mother is seated on the edge of the bed, crying. My father is seated next to her; consoling her. I learn that grandmother has died. My mother has lost her mother.

Soon, she is on a return flight home to lay her mother to rest. When she gets to South Africa, the authorities refuse to let her in. She is Persona Non Grata.

She had helped South African exiled students to get scholarships to study in at universities abroad while working for the World University Service (WUS); an apartheid spy, Craig Williamson, had learned of activities during his time as the deputy director of the International University Exchange Fund (IUEF). He had reported her to the authorities. She was now, officially, an unwanted person in the country of her birth.



At Jan Smuts airport, stays in a windowless holding place, reserved for those in her position. Family members manoeuvre and plead with the authorities in Pretoria and, finally, she is given permission to enter South Africa; her home. She has 72 hours in which to bury her mother and leave.

On the day of her mother's funeral, she gets news that my father's mother has passed away. My father is unable to attend. My mother is able to extend her stay, for another week, to enable her to bury her mother-in-law.

It is a great lose, for us. It will be years before we are able to visit their grave sites to pay our respects.

Canto VII - AboGogo: Persona non grata reveals how familial relationships can also add complexity to the strenuous of the life of exile. The exiled family leaves loved ones behind, and is unable to re-enter the home country, even in times of familial crises. In the above case, one family member is allowed in the country for a short period of time to bury their loved one, and then has to leave the country immediately after. The exile is made, even more, vulnerable through family ties left in the home country. At any point the authorities of the Apartheid state, are able to cause the exile pain through however way they may deem fit to treat their loved ones left inside the country. The Apartheid state is able to interfere with family interactions, and cause immeasurable disempowerment to all involved.

Canto XI - Pow Wow, is an example of how belonging, and home, can appear in the most unlikely of places. The exiled South African finds connection with the marginalised

Native American communities of the United States of America. Somehow estranged peoples have capacity to somehow identify with each other in the most unlikely of ways; including through the similarity of their native practices, or through resistance against similar challenges. These situations bring much needed strength to the estranged exile, as in gives voice to the fact that home is a wider phenomenon than the one posed by political exile.

### CANTO XI - POW WOW

I think of home often. I miss home. Something is missing. I can't quite put my finger on it.

Over the summer, on a family road trip to South Dakota, we come across a Native American reservation, in Wyoming, and I witness a Pow Wow.

The Native American people celebrating their being. **Time stands still** for me. Somehow, in brief moments, I feel belonging. They somehow remind me of home. The repetitive nature of their music. The circular nature of their performance arena. It feels like they have a true worldview. They seem a complete people, connected to the world in its entirety. Home!

**CANTO XVI - NDEBELE, SIT DOWN!**, reveals, the extent to which xenophobia can exact itself, even in the most unlikely and unreasonable of ways. A teacher singles me out; to estrange me from his class, and the rest of the learners. He disregards my birth right, citizenship, and right to be at the school, and calls me out as other, because my surname originates from another country. The effects of this, on me, run particularly

deep. I thought that if I was validated by the law, I was safe from discrimination. But this showed me differently. If the people, who are entrusted to up hold the law, ignore them, and enact hate on those they are intended to protect, then it what hope is there for future of man?

### **CANTO XVI - NDEBELE, SIT DOWN!**

One time, in Sesotho class, I am asked. Where are you from? I tell them, 'I am from here, Roma, where I was born. "No", the teacher says, "you are not a Mosotho, No Ndebele is a Mosotho."

This takes me by surprise, why is this man singling me out in this way? I am a Mosotho, I was born here, my passport is a Lesotho one, and most of my mother's relatives are Basotho. The only language that I speak fluently, besides English, is Sesotho.

I feel like the place that I have known as home all my life was rejecting me. I stand my ground and insist knew no other place as my home.

I insist, and say

"Ke Mosotho brother, ke nna enoa, ke Ndebele oa Mosotho"

He laughs, some students join in. He dismisses me

Ag, no Ndebele, sit down!

The third main section is called Home Identities, and is of memories of adulthood and homecoming.

**Home identities** is composed of five cantos:

1. Canto XX - Johannesburg: Take 1
2. Canto XXI - Kaap tu Nou...
3. Canto XXII - Qawe...
4. Canto XXIII - Birth of A Rainbow
5. Canto XXIV - Johannesburg: Take 2
6. Canto XV – Clarity

This section posed a different challenge to the others, in that I, the researcher, struggled to separate myself from the stories. I struggled to identify with the character of me, as the adult, in the stories. I found myself, as researcher, commenting and narrating the stories in a documentary-like fashion. The reasons as to why this happened may require deeper investigation. But, it seems the stories were too close to the present. Perhaps, portraying oneself in a different stage of life is easier, than portraying oneself in present, because it is more difficult to conceive of one's other self in the present.

This section conveys the struggles of homecoming; of not finding home where you thought you would, and of not finding home in the way you thought you would. I pushed particularly hard to overcome the challenge of getting me, the researcher, to stand back and be the inquirer. When I was finally able to construct the stories as in the earlier sections, I was able to see for the first time that I have grown a lot as an adult, and that I may have not travelled as much as I did in my youth; but, certainly my outlook on life has widened exponentially.

The section ends with me finding home; briefly, and by accident, as I mentioned in the introduction. But, on closer analysis, the home that is presence, which I experienced in the mountains, which I revisit in the last canto, is a concept of home that is reiterated through this research. It is the times of silence, presence, and of feeling at one with others/the audience that I felt the feeling of liberation. In these moments of connection, there seems no need for any other moment, as they are moments complete in the entirety. After reaching this moment in the performance, it naturally signified an end to a

journey. What then follows is an epilogue, to close the conventional frame setup by the prologue.

#### **TRANSITION: SOUND**

The Horse, the bird, sounds and leaves.

#### **EPILOGUE**

Were this encounter, between you and I, in the village of my birth; I would conclude these stories in the following way:

I would call, "Ke tsomo ka mathetho"

You would respond, in the way you see fit.

I would then smile, and as my work would be done.

The question of who I was had at last become a personal question, and the answer was to be found in me. (Baldwin 1961: XII)

## **Embodying the Research**

### **The Performer Prepares**

The preparation before each performance is most critical. I had a ritualistic routine that I performed every night before the show. I would arrive at the theatre, to prepare, two hours before the show was to begin.

1. The first task is to set up the slide projector; to make sure that it is in working order, and that the slides are in the right playing order.

2. The second task is to set up the laptop computer, and projector, for the electronic images; to make sure all is in running order.
3. The third task is a light physical warm-up; to work the legs, midsection and arms, to quicken the heart rate, and to get the body alert for the performance.
4. The fourth task is a vocal warm-up; to work on up the vocal cords, the lips, tongue, and face. I do articulation, pronunciation, and breathing exercises.
5. The fifth task is to sing all the songs, and to vocalize all the sound effect, in the performance.
6. The sixth task is to recite the stories that need attention before the show.
7. The seventh task is the up on the costume: Zulu headgear (umqhele), Sesotho blanket (lelakabe) and stick (molamu) and Western style formal shirt – white, formal pants-grey, and shoes.)
8. The eighth task is to sit, eyes closed, in silence and mentally map out the journey of the night's performance.
9. The ninth task is to make a mental note of the two or three main focus areas for the night's performance.

At fifteen minute call I am seated, in costume, back stage ready to go on. I sit on a chair and begin a meditative hum. This hum will be maintained as the audience enters the theatre, right through to the beginning of the show. The humming usually develops into a rhythm, and it is this rhythm that begins the performance.

This rhythmic meditative hum is crucial for setting to tone for the performance. There were days when the rhythm and tempo were too slow, and this caused the performance to begin at a rather lethargic pace. When the performance begins at this lethargic pace, it lulls the audience members into a pensive mood, which in reflects back to the audience in as a rather heavy energy that makes hard for the performer to carry the show. It is important to come in at a fairly mid tempo pace which projects a certain celebratory liveliness, or at certain vocal intensity that allows of the audience to receive the performance energy rather than to have to solicit it from the performer.

The humming continues as the performer sits into the chair.

Then there is the first silence. In this silence it's important to make eye contact with as many of the audience members as possible. It is in this silence that they give me back the energy they received from my entrance.

The storytelling is about to begin.

Just as earth is surrounded by atmosphere, the living human being is surrounded by a magnetic aura which makes contact with the external objects without any concrete contact with the human body. This aura, or atmosphere, varies in depth according to the human being... (Johnstone 1979:58)

## The Performance

Layout: The performance takes place in a box theatre with an intimate audience seating arrangement; there are audience members in front, and on both sides of the performer. The actor is on a rostrum (3m x 1.5m x 0.2m) with a school chair in the upstage side of it.<sup>4</sup> There is a microphone, and a music stand.

I begin the cantos, and the audience is in agreement. The performance is filled with energy. The stories are shared with truth. The audience responds positively. They like my transitions. In my transitions, I am: a galloping horse, I am a rooster, I am a hen in a roost, and I am an albatross. In performance, if I am in truth, I am the animals I've just mentioned, and I am the stories I speak and share – when I am them, I am one. There are no divisions between audience and performer. There are no divisions between story and storyteller. There is no division between the vocals and the vocalist; I am the songs.

The moment I become the performer, I am separate from the audience. The moment I became the storyteller, I am separate from the story, and I am not the chickens in my transitions, I am not the galloping horse. I am the performer making sounds. I am no longer free, I am separate. I am an 'other', I am a stranger. I am in exile. I am estranged from others.

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<sup>4</sup> Appendix 3



This is the everyday struggle of the performer. This is a challenge for of the performance ethnographer. When I am separate, when I am performer in front of audience. I find solace in the silences between the transitions and the stories. I find solace in the presence of the silent gaps between the words. I find home in the presence of the silent gaps between the words.

With each performance I come closer to a longer spell of home. With each performance I experience a longer spell of presence. Presence is the awareness of, and connection to oneness. Oneness is inclusive of both home and exile, self and other, light and day.

The audience connect most in the silence. The silences do not describe themselves. The silences do not explain their existence. The silences don't strive to be perfect. The silences just are.

The natural inclination of our spirit is to make what is not whole, whole again. And if we find di-ease, we must return the ease. - Sharifa Saa (Wade-Gayles 1995:314)

## **Conclusion**

Performing autoethnography has inspired liberatory agency in me. Through performing my stories every night, over ten performances, I was able to understand the complexities of who I am, as a second-generation exile, and more importantly as a human being. As a performer it was interesting how, in the earlier performances, I would be overcome by fear of judgement from the audiences. I had never exposed myself, and my life story; as

publicly, and as detailed, as this before. When I carried the fear onto the stage the audiences were tentative in their responses. It is only when I let go, of the fear, that audiences freely responded, and much of their responses were very positive. I received a number of unsolicited feedback from audience members who came to the performances. It was heartening to hear that they saw their own lives through mine. Some were keen to tell their own stories, in a similar way as they found it inspiring. Others hooked on to the aesthetic presentation of the performance; which, to me, represented affirmation to the performance genres I paid homage to in the performance.

As the performance progressed, not only I did let go of fear, I let go the critical voice in my head that conversed with me during my performances. Once this happened, I became present, and I really got a sense of union with my stories, and I was able to relive the experiences through performed memory. After these performance I would be physically exhausted, but I would feel a deep sense of gratitude and freedom, from having performed. Audiences responses from these performances were most positive. More audience members stayed behind after these performance than in the earlier ones.

I assert that lasting liberatory agency can be obtained through increased presence of consciousness; as evidenced through in a moment in the mountains of Lesotho, and as evidenced through autoethnographic research performances. The effects of estrangement are many and complex, to transcend these is a life's work in progress. Philosophically, it is a journey towards enlightenment. It is a journey to discover one's true self; the all-inclusive self that knows no divisions.

I have discovered, through my stories that my experience exile was influenced greatly by notions governed by international world politics. The perceptions of exile are as crippling as the political actions that govern them. I realise that my story transcends the realm of exile that frames it. It is as much a story of pain, as it is of joy. It is a human story.

This research has raised my awareness to several areas of interest that I hope to explore, in an effort to gain further understanding of how to empower disenfranchised individuals. Firstly, it is to explore the notion wholeness, in relation to a world that thrives, politically, on notions of fragmentation. Secondly, it is to explore individuals' relation to tolerance, is it an embodied trait, and what determines its agency in individuals. Thirdly, is to explore the notions of duality, in relation to empower and disempowerment. For instance, can empowerment exist without disempowerment? If not, then how best do they relate to each other?

At the core of my research is the drive to use, myself and my practice, to contribute to a more cohesive lived environment: to always inspire A Way Home.

I am learning to deal with my new-found spiritual power and, with age, will embrace the spirit which keeps the memory of the ancestors alive - Rosalyn Terborg - Penn (Wade-Galyes 1995:70)

## Appendix 1

### First Questions

1. How does one find belonging/home in exile?
2. How does one find belonging/home from Exile?
3. Is it possible to transcend the isolation of exile through theatre?
4. Can spirituality heighten the actors work?
5. Is the fundamental role of the actor to exile the self, in order to portray character (other)?
6. What is to role of spirituality in research work?
7. How can the spiritual heighten the actors work?
8. What is the role for the actor/performer in South African society?
9. How are the performing Arts regarded by South Africans, as a whole?
10. Is the nature of acting/performance to exile the self from the work of acting/performance?
11. What is the experience and significance of homecoming for the exiled actor?
12. What is the experience of home?
13. Where does the actor experience home? In her highest level of consciousness.
  - a. When does the actor experience home? When he or she is in
14. Where is home for the actor?
  - a. Can an actor find home?
15. Can you find home in exile?
16. Where does an exile find home?
17. Where does a polis find solace?
18. Where does the Afropolitan find prosperity?
19. Does the work of an actor/performer require her to exile herself during her work?
20. What is the experience of exile/ disconnection?

## Appendix 2

# Cantos of a Life in Exile

By  
Makhaola Siyanda Ndebele

## Prologue

Were this encounter, between you and I, in the village of my birth; you would be my village folk, and I would be your storyteller.

We would all know each other. We would probably be outside somewhere: in the shade, or in the sun; around a fire, or under the moonlight.

We would probably interact with each other in the language of that village.

Were this encounter, between nna le lona, in the village of my birth; I would introduce these stories in the following way:

I would call, "Ba re e ne re"

You would respond, "Qoi"

I would repeat my call, with more vigour and intensity of purpose, for emphasis,

"Ba re e ne re"

You would seek to match the vigour and intensity of purpose of my repeat call, and respond vehemently,

"Qoi"

I would then smile, and begin my tale.

I would say...

## Mazankosi

There once was a boy, born of university student parents, in the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho. A boy, born at St. Joseph's Hospital, in the valley of Roma, Ha Maama 5000 feet above sea level. A boy, Born to a father of Zulu decent.

Njabulo Simakahle, son of Nimrod Njabulo, son of Walter Mbalekwa, son of Dindela, son of Bhensa, son of Mahaye, Ndukumbili, son of Ndimande.

E Ndebele Mahaye Ka Bhensa  
Mahaye Ka Mvanande  
O thethela on Mantsinga no Ntsele  
Mwelase!  
Abangaweli ngezibuko  
Abawela ngezintsulungu  
Wena okwasihlathi esihamba ngendlela  
Wena wakwa funisa umuntu inkonzo  
Wena kaMagwaza equqwini  
Wa gwaza intombi ne soka  
Mazankosi!

Nina bakwa Dindela  
Nina bakwa Mgolodelwa  
Ngokuzala unKondlo  
Inkosi yase Mantshaleni

Amashayela phezulu ngokumbindlu  
Amabethela isigogo  
Mabhele balekani imilenze ibomvu  
Ndaba!

Nina abakwa Bhensa  
Nina abakwa Mahaye  
Nina abakwa Makhapazela

UnNtunyelelwa wayeyisifamona  
Ivande lathetwa uMantshinga noNtsele  
UMakeza kaMshido  
Abakwa Ndaba ngokugoba ngamadolo  
Imididwa edidwa ngamabala  
Ndimande!

From the beginning of time: to Ndimande to Ndukumbili, to Mahaye, to Bhensa, to Dindela, to Walter Mbalekwa, to Nimrod Njabulo, to Njabulo Simakahle; the father of the boy -

Makhaola-Mosuo Njabulo Siyanda

Makhaola

A name from the royal house of Thesele  
The ruling house of koena  
People of the high waters  
Crocodiles of Menkhoaneng  
Named for Makhaola  
Father of Theko le Lelingoana  
Makhaola, an Arbitrator  
A settler of disputes  
Finale!!!

Mosuo

The one who guides initiates through their rites of passage  
Makhaola-Mosuo  
Arbitrator-Sage

Siyanda

Through whom we multiply

One who brings forth joy  
The people of his father named him for his father, as is father was also named for his father - Njabulo, Njabulo, uNjabulo, aboNjabulo, NoNjabulo, banoNjabulo, siboNjabulo

His mother's family is that of Taung  
Bataung ba ha Rapuleng  
Bataung  
Namane tse tsehla  
Kings of all they survey - fierce and brave

A traveller, a wanderer, a nomad,  
A child of the wind.  
A soul child.



(CHANT)

'Mamosuoe ngoana ke eo  
Ba e baka taba ngoana mme  
Ngoana ke eo

Bashemane ba kentse motshoho  
Ka mokoting oa linotsi

Ba e baka taba  
Ngoana ke eo

Ramaseli  
Ntata rona ea maholimong  
Mmuso oa hao ha o bokoe

Ke nna Makhaola

Ntata Sisekosethu Londile Makhosazana  
Agomoditswe - Masele le Mazankosi

Mosuoe maloma Mampelegeng

Linyane la Tefo  
Mosoeunyane  
Ngoana mosoeu ha a je le batho  
Hlapha o lule moo re o khaketse

Mosuoe tichere

Sebata sa 'Manako  
Linyane la Ntina

Tsehlana Tsatsi  
Nyloli la thuto

Morena rekhantsetse tsela...

### Transition: Sound

A Horse, Galloping.

## Foundational Identities:

### Canto I - Butha-Buthe: Stream Crossing

I am in Butha-Buthe, Leribe. My grandfather and I walk to the shops. We have just crossed the main road. We now walk down a slope, towards a stream. I walk in front. My mind races as we near its bank.

ME  
(To myself)  
How will I cross it?

There are stones protruding from the stream.

ME  
I will walk on them. But, they  
seem too far apart for me to  
handle. I might slip, and fall  
into the water.

We get onto the bank, the flow of water is right in front of us. I hesitate, I haven't figured out how to cross yet. Before I can think any further, my grandfather picks me up and we cross together: I, in his arms; he, walking over the water. In a flash, we are on the other side. He puts me down gently, and we continue on our journey.

### Transition: Sound

A Horse, Galloping.

## **Canto II – Transvaal: Bus Ride**

I am on a bus with my grandmother, a red and white South African railway bus. The bus is in the form of a horse, and trailer, much like commercial cargo transport trucks. In this case, people are the cargo.

I am in the back with my grandmother. We, the passengers, have no contact with the driver. The bus is stuffy and overcrowded. It's also noisy; some people have their wireless radios playing loudly, others sing, while others make loud conversation. There is much eating and drinking. I'm amazed that some people are able to sleep through all of this.

I long for some fresh air. I'm uneasy, I feel that I don't belong with this crowd, in this situation. My grandmother stands out from all the others in the bus. She is immaculately dressed, and in control of her immediate surroundings. She is not shy to firmly engage with those closest to us, mostly disapproving of any wayward behaviour.

It is a +/- 400km continuous journey, no shop stops, no petrol station stops. Some people need to go to the toilet. Grown men and women begin to relieve themselves in empty bottles and containers. There seems to be no scheduled stop.

It's stuffy and overcrowded. We are like livestock in transit. It's inhumane.

Finally, after a major heated discussion, there is banging on the sides of the bus to get the driver's attention. The women, led by my grandmother, demand a proper stop, for those that need to relieve themselves. The young driver stops the bus, at the side of the road, in the middle of nowhere. Men and women jump out. Scatter into the open field, under the night sky, to relieve themselves.

To amuse himself, the driver revs the bus engine. He panics the passengers, he makes as if to drive off.

I am comforted by the love of my grandmother.

### **Transition: Sound**

A Horse, Galloping.

### **Canto III - From Dennilton with Love**

I'm at my grandparents' home in Dennilton, Transvaal, with my sisters. It is mid-morning and we are getting ready for a trip back home, to our parents, in Lesotho.

As usual my sisters and I, the children, are the first to be readied. In no time, we are washed, dressed, fed, and ready to go.

Now we have to wait for the adults to get ready. I'm especially impatient, as this trip has been a long time coming, since yesterday. I can't wait to ride in my grandfather's car. I love cars, especially riding in them. As the time approaches for us to leave. We are told that we can wait in the car. This doesn't quite do it for me, not only is the car stationary, it's parked in the sun, and the heat quickly gets the better of us. The leather seats are most uncomfortable in the heat. We return to wait in the house.

My grandmother, ever so gentle, and soft spoken, is the last to be ready. No one seems to mind, least of all my grandfather, he is his usual bubbly self. It is only I who seems to be worried about time. My sisters are too young to keep time.

Finally, it is time to go.

We get into my grandfather's car and the journey begins. After what seems like a life time on the road. My grandmother tells my grandfather that she forgot something back at the house. Without hesitation, my grandfather acknowledges her, slows the car down, and makes a U-turn. We head back to the house to collect whatever it is that was left behind.

Love.

## **Exiled Identities: The Lost Years**

### **Transition: Sound**

A Bird, Flying.

### **Canto IV - Cambridge: Njabulo**

It is my first time outside Africa. I am 2 years old, and a bit. I'm in the United Kingdom, Cambridge England. My name is Njabulo. Natives here seem to have trouble pronouncing it. Nayabulo they call me, or Ninjabulo. Everything but what it is. I keep correcting them, to no avail. They just keep getting it wrong.

I begin to introduce myself as Makhaola.

A more manageable option perhaps? Time will tell.

### **Canto V - Cambridge: Manu and I**

I take a photograph with an Indian friend of mine, Manu. The English woman who took the photograph makes a copy for my mother and copy for Manu's mother.

It seem Manu's mother does not want her child in the same photo with an African child.

She cuts the photograph in two to separate me from her child.

She gives me my half to give to my mother.

When my mother receives this gift she cuts her copy in half, and gives me the half with Manu for me to give to Manu's mother.

### **Transition: Sounds**

A Rooster, Crowing.

A Hen, Clucking.

## Canto VI - Chicha, Chickens and I

I am home, standing outside the chicken coop, watching the chickens go about their daily business. I love these chickens, especially the newly hatched ones. I feed them often.

My favourite is Mposula and Mmantwa. Mposula is a rooster, the king of the coop. Mmantwa is a hen, the most short-tempered of all. I appreciate that you always know where you stand with her. She has had a fight with all the chickens in the coop, including Mposula.

I don't like it when visitors from afar, mostly family, come to visit, because invariably one of the chickens will lose its life. I cry each time a chicken is slaughtered. I cry when they get slaughtered.

Maybe naming them was not such a good idea; for the one with no name is easier to kill.

I've been standing outside the coop for a while now, and I begin to get bored. I decide to go and visit a friend of mine, Chicha.

I find him outside his home with a newspaper. He is wringing and kneading it.

ME

O e tsang?

He tells me that he is making the paper soft, so that it doesn't scratch his behind when he wipes himself after taking a dump. He is going to use it as toilet paper. I don't understand this.

ME

I have some toilet paper at home  
if you...

CHICHA

No, you don't understand, this  
is how it is done.

He had been to his home village recently and he had seen older boys there do this. Today is his turn, he is going to shit in the forest. He asks if I want to come with him.

ME

Ah, monna why don't you just go inside the house and use the toilet like everybody else. Besides, there is no forest on campus.

He tells me of the stream down by the campus orchard.

CHICHA

The stream has dried out, we could find a spot along its river bed. There are many willow trees along on the banks of the stream. A perfect spot should be easy to find.

The paper is ready to be used. 'Are you coming?' he asks.

"Wow, this promises to be an interesting adventure, I've never done this before." I think to myself.

ME

But, what if someone sees us? Won't we get into trouble?

"You are scared of nothing" he says.

ME

Okay, fine let's go.

We set off to the spot. We go and go and go, we pass Refiloe, who asks where we are going and if she can come with us. We respond with a firm NO! We go and go and go and finally get to the bottom of the orchard, by the stream bank. We walk along the bed, below the willows. At places the bed is completely dry, at other places the sand is a bit muddy. If you step on the muddy areas, the mud sticks on the bottom of your shoes. Eventually, we find a spot.

CHICHA

Okay, I'll be over there and you  
be over there.

ME

Give me some paper.

CHICHA

No, it's not enough for the both  
of us. Why don't you use leaves?

He goes to his spot. I try, half-heartedly to find leaves to use,  
and I quickly loose impetus. I decide to just stand at a distance,  
and look the away, while I wait for him. He must have really planned  
well for this, as his business gets done quickly. All is pasha-sh.  
Well, not really, all is not done yet, it seems.

CHICHA

What if somebody finds it and  
then decides to bewitch me with  
it. I must burn it.

I wasn't even aware he had matches. He tries to burn it,  
unsuccessfully. I'm rather disgusted by all of this, at this point.  
I tell him he'll find me towards where we entered the stream bed,  
in the sun.

I go get up on to the bank, which is about waist high from the bed.  
I sit on a patch of grass, a shrub, so as not to slide off the bank.  
The sun is great.

Not long after 'Mr Man' comes back. I think his plan must have not  
worked. He doesn't look victorious. His face lights up when he sees  
a hole next to where I sitting.

CHICHA

What's in there?

ME

Someone must have dug a hole,  
that's all.



CHICHA

No, not that I can see. It must be a rabbit hole, or a snake hole. Let's poke a stick in there to get it/them out. No, in fact, let's smoke them out, let's light a fire, around the hole and then they will come out. If it's a rabbit we'll catch it; if it's a snake we'll kill it.

'Wow, this is exciting and scary at the same time.' I think to myself.

He lights the shrub closest to the hole, it begins to burn. The direction of the wind blows the fire away from the hole. Another shrub catches fire, and another, and another.

We try and stomp out the fire, but it is too late. We try to pick willow branches to beat it out, but its' spreading too fast. It's beyond our control, we panic, we are afraid.

We hear women shouting:

Mollo, Mollo, Mollo.

Chicha runs! I run after him! Refiloe must have followed us here, she appears out of nowhere, we run past her; she shouts:

Makhaola le Chicha ba cheselitse!

I run for my life

HOME!

At home, my father is alone, in the sitting room. I enter through the kitchen. I call out to greet him, calmly, as I nervously walk down the passage, straight for my bedroom, to hide under the bed.

While under my bed, I hear distant screams, voices, and general commotion outside, related to the fire.

I hear, Twee-do, Twee-do, Twee-do, the lone university fire engine has been dispatched.

I stay put, for what seems like ages.

Time Passes, Time passes, and passes, and passes.

Later there is a knock on the door. A man has come to see my father, they talk and then my father comes to call me into the sitting room, where they are. "What happened?" They ask me.

I tell the truth.

The man leaves. My father and I have a talk.

**Home**, for me, has always been a place of love and learning.

I later learn my friend got a whipping, from his father.

After the incident everyone seems to know my name; I'm notorious.

### Transition: Sound

A Bird, Flying.

## Canto VII - AboGogo: *Persona non grata*

My one grandmother, my father's mother, gives me 70c, as travel money. I'm about to travel to the United States of America. I've never had this much money before.

The year is 1980, I'm 9 years old. 1 South African Rand = 2 United States Dollars.

My other grandmother, my mother's mother, bought me my first ever musical recording. A 45rpm LP record of Bonny M's hit single *By the Rivers of Babylon*.

We leave the freezing Roma, Maseru winter, and 3 days later we arrive to a blazing hot Denver, Colorado summer. I'm on top of the world. It's great that our family is reunited. We are together in a new land.

The next morning I wake up and there is an uneasy energy in the house. I jump down from the top bunk of the bed, and head for my parents' room.

My mother is seated on the edge of the bed, crying. My father is seated next to her; consoling her. I learn that grandmother has died. My mother has lost her mother.

Soon, she is on a return flight home to lay her mother to rest.

When she gets to South Africa, the authorities refuse to let her in. She is Persona Non Grata.

**She had helped South African exiled students to get scholarships to study in at universities abroad while working for the World University Service (WUS); an apartheid spy, Craig Williamson, had learned of activities during his time as the deputy director of the International University Exchange Fund (IUEF). He had reported her to the authorities. She was now, officially, an unwanted person in the country of her birth.**

At Jan Smuts airport, they make her stay in a windowless holding place, reserved for those in her position. After much manoeuvring, and pleading, by family members with the authorities in Pretoria. She is given permission to enter South Africa; her home. She has 72 hours in which to bury her mother and leave.

On the day of her mother funeral, she gets news that my father's mother has just passed away. My father is unable to attend. My mother is able to extend her stay, for another week to enable her to bury her mother-in-law.

It is a great lose, for us. It will be years before we are able to visit their grave sites to pay our respects.

## Canto VIII - Where you from?

AMERICAN KID

Where you from?

ME

Lesotho

AMERICAN KID

Where, Le who?

ME

Its place, a country surrounded  
by South Africa.

AMERICAN KID

Oh, you come from Africa? You  
seen lions in Africa, you have  
a lion?

ANOTHER AMERICAN KID

Y'all walk around naked in  
Africa? You know how to climb a  
tree? You been on an elephant?

AMERICAN KID

Hey, so do you speak African?  
Say sumthing in African.

ANOTHER AMERICAN KID

What's your name again?  
Mahala?!

AMERICAN KID

You need to relax you hair. I  
ain't African. I'm American! My  
hair ain't nappy like yours you  
nappy headed African! African  
booty scratcher.

They ridicule and make fun of me. They question, comment, interrogate, and theorize about me and my presence. I stand up for myself. I'm quite capable.

## Canto IX - Columbine

At school Mrs Wright is my 4th Grade home room teacher. I don't remember her ever calling me by my name. At roll call, in the morning, she calls others by name as she goes down the class list. When she gets to my name she just looks in my direction to acknowledge my presence. She never calls my name.

Somehow, this make is more difficult to fit in with the rest of the class. They also don't see me, in full. This is to say, I am other!

One morning the class lines up to go somewhere. A girl stands behind me she is taller than me. For some reason, she decides that she should be in front of me. She butts in front of me like I'm not there. When I protest, she tells me to shut up and pushes me. I lose balance and fall to the ground. I get up and strike her.

We end up in the principal's office.

I don't really make school friends, I remain to myself for the most part of the remainder of the year. This helps academically, as I end up more focused on my school work. I get A's for more subjects.

Mr Gail, our P.E teacher, says in front of everybody in class, 'You know who got an A in this class?' He calls out my name (as close to the pronunciation as he'd ever get); 'and Mahaola got an A'. The school year ends on a high for me.

In the 5th grade I get Mrs Johnson. She is a blessings to me. She helps integrate me into the school community. With her assistance I take up the clarinet, and play in the school band. I also run for school president. I learn a lot about black history in the USA: Harriet Tubman and the Underground, John Henry, Langston Hughes, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr. I enter a Martin Luther King Jr. writing competition and win a gold award.

In the 6th grade Mr Bradshaw introduces me to Astronomy. A world beyond our own. I get top marks for final astronomy project.

I'm finally succeeding in this society; or am I?

## Canto X - Brave heart

Outside of school, I begin to get into fights to make my presence felt. It is always after school.

I fight an Arab named Abraham. I fight a Venezuelan twin named Ricardo. I fight a Ugandan named George. I fight a white American named Tim. I never start the fights but I never walked away either. If you provoke me, I fight. I being inducted into the culture:

The land of the free, the home of the brave.

One day my sister comes home, terrified! She is 6 years old. An older boy had shown her his 'thing' and had asked her to show her what *she's* got. I'm enraged, I go over to confront him. He is home with a group of his friends. High whatever, and smoking whatever. There is a strong smell of incense coming from the apartment.

I ring the bell. HE comes over to the door.

ME

What'd you say to my sister? Say  
it to my face.

HE

Get out o' my face 'fore I break  
your neck.

ME

You better never talk to my  
sister again. You better not do  
nothing to talk to her again.

HE

I'm 'o break you neck.

HE

Come on! Come on!

He looks at me then slams the door in my face. VICTORY!!!

### Transition: Song

A Native American Melody.

## **Canto XI - Pow Wow**

I think of home often. I miss home. Something is missing. I can't quite put my finger on it.

Over the summer, the family takes a road trip to South Dakota. We come to a Native American reservation, in Wyoming, and I witness a Pow Wow.

The Native American people celebrating their being. Time stands still for me. Somehow, in brief moments, in feel belonging. They somehow remind me of home. The repetitive nature of their music. The circular nature of their performance arena. It feels like they have a true worldview. They seem a complete people, connected to the world in its entirety. Home!

## **Canto XII - The Christmas Blizzard**

It's Christmas Eve 1982; it snows, strong winds blow, and it snows, and snows, it's a blizzard. The following morning we are almost snowed in, I have never seen this much snow in my life. It's beautiful outside; the two pine trees on lawns in front of our apartments were heavily covered with snow. They are real Christmas trees, to me. I really want to go out and see more, and be in the snow. I am glad when the family decides to go out. We take photographs. We play in the snow. Refiloe, our VW beetle, is covered in snow. We have a great time, as a family, during this time. The TV news reports, that it is the worst blizzard to hit Denver in 26 years. I am experiencing history; I am part of this big event unfolding over the news.

Later, I'm at a Christmas community function, people are in the spirit, they sing Christmas carols. There is a piano there. The lady on the piano asks if anyone of us kids would like to sing along as she plays jingle bells. She makes eye contact with me. I volunteer.

There is a television news crew there to tape my performance. That evening I'm on the news, on TV, on the news, singing. When school re-opens students recognize me, "we seen you on TV", they say. "Now, you see me", I think to myself. I miss home.

## **Transition: Song**

A School Song, Mohokare.

## **Canto XIII - CKHS: Form 1, Day 1**

I'm 12 years old, it's my first day of high school. I'm the youngest in my class at Christ the King High School, an all-boys Catholic School back in Roma, Lesotho. Home! Even in uniform I stand out like a sore thumb. For example, my hair my hair is relaxer softened.

They ask me for my name. Makhaola I tell them. They ask for my Christian name. I give them Siyanda, the name I was given at baptism. It is clear they are looking for a name that appears in the bible. It quickly becomes clear my stay in this school is going to be an uphill journey. I quickly realize that 'subservience to authority' is one of the pillars of the school culture. Difference is frowned upon.

You think you are better just because you are from America. You think you are better just because you live in the university. I am a target, kids steal from me. The teachers turn a blind eye. I am also a target for them, the teachers, they find little reasons to execute punishment on me.

Sometimes, a teacher will just whip us, students, to relieve any kind of personal frustration, or stress, they may be experiencing at the time. When I am punished for no apparent reason, I want to tell my parents. But somehow, the other boys convince me to just take it. We are in this together, and we are tough, we can take on anything.

I agree but, I am hurt, and I begin to rebel in other ways.

## **Canto XIV - Protecting a Friend**

A friend of mine has a beautiful sister at our sister school St. Mary's. Older boys insult him each time they've been over to propose love to his sister and she has refused them.

He is gentle, and feminine, in demeanour. Some say he looks nice, like a woman. Some want to make him their girlfriend. He is a perfect target for bullies. He often gets bullied, and insulted. He almost, never stands up for himself. It's frustrating to be his friend.



We are in the dining hall, writing an exam. Our invigilator has gone out for a smoke, or to the toilets, or wherever. A boy wants to take my friends' exam paper to copy his answers. My friend feebly resists, and is insulted.

I lose my cool, I get up and punch the perpetrator in the face, and he falls to the ground and quickly gets up again. I get him in a choke hold and hold him there for a while, until we get broken off. I have to finish off my exam; my body trembling.

### **Canto XV - On Being Broken**

I am in the staff room with my best friend; we are about to be punished; whipped with a plastic whip. We have to bend over the back of a chair, and reach for its front legs, to be whipped. [Demonstration]

I'm first up, I bend over the back of the chair, and take hold of the front legs. I get whipped again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again. I stand up from the chair, in pain. The teacher points back to the chair. He continues to beat me, and beat me, and beat me. Tears fill in my eyes, I stand up from the chair again. Tears start coming down my cheek, I try to be strong but I can't any more. He points to the chair again. He beats me again, and I start to cry. He stops, and lets me go.

The next is my friend, I have to witness, and watch, as he goes through the same treatment, for a longer spell. After his beating, we are allowed the leave the office, to go back to class.

I don't make my way straight back to class. I have too much anger, hurt, and frustration. I find a moment alone. My heart breaks. I let my tears come out. I asked God questions; Why? Why do you let them do this to me? Why am I here? Why do they hate me like this?

### **Transition: Song**

A School Song, Libente.

### **Canto XVI - Ndebele, Sit Down!**

I'm in Sesotho class. Sesotho class in the only time we are

officially allowed to speak Sesotho. We have this one class a week in which to learn, Lesotho's History, Language and Literature, and Culture. History class is reserved for British, and European History. There is a class for English Literature. There is a class for English Language.

I am asked, "Ndebele, where are you from?"

I answer, "I am from here, Roma. I was born at St. Josephs."

"No", the teacher says, "Where I are you from?"

"What do you mean, brother" I ask?

"You are not a Mosotho, Ndebele, no Ndebele is a Mosotho." He says.

This takes me by surprise, 'what is going on?' I ask myself, 'why is this man singling me out in this way?' I know where my parents are from. But, as far as I'm concerned, 'I am a Mosotho, I was born here, my passport is a Lesotho one, and my mother's relatives are Basotho. The only language that I speak fluently, besides English, is Sesotho."

I feel like the place that I have known as home all my life was rejecting me. I stand my ground, and insist, as I know no other place as my home.

"Ke Mosotho brother, ke nna enoa, ke Ndebele oa Mosotho"

He laughs, students join in. He dismisses me

Agh, no Ndebele, ha o Mosotho maan, Sit Down!

Transition: Song

A Chant, 'Mamosuoe.

## **Canto XVII - 1980s South Africa**

I now pay more attention to what is happening in South Africa. I am more aware of South Africa, the politics of what is going on there. I have always been, through books, and over hearing adult conversations. But now, it is more personal.

It is the mid-1980s: State of Emergency and Jack Rolling

Jack Rolling is a township phenomenon; a group of guys drive up and kidnap a girl in the streets to go and rape her. To release her when and where they please.

I am on a taxi, with my sisters and cousin. We are going to visit my aunt in Duduza, or Beirut as it was nicknamed at the time. The taxi driver is supposed to drop us at home. He is afraid to enter the township, and drops us by an open veld outside the township. It is almost midnight.

I'm afraid for our lives; especially for my sisters. What if they get Jack-rolled? What if we are kidnapped for muti? What if... We don't know where to stand, close to the road, or further back into the veld. After about an hour, a group of nuns, in a kombi, stop for us. They ask us our business, and we tell them where we are going. They know my grandfather, and take us home to him.

On the same visit. We, my cousin and I, are on our way from Mofokeng Street, my aunts' place, in the Sotho section of the township. We are on our way to my grandfather's place in the Zulu section of the township. It is dusk, along the way, we see a seemingly being chased by another man carrying a knife.

A crowd follows running, and shouting, behind the two of them.

"Kill him", the crowd shouts

Someone trips the man trying to get away. He is already bleeding. By the time he gets up from the ground, his aggressor and the crowd are already upon him. The crowd surrounds him, and the aggressor has his victim where he wants him. He stabs him repeatedly.

There are different reactions from within the crowd, horror, excitement, anger, sorrow. Our view is now blocked by the crowd, we don't make the effort to move to the front of the ring.

We go Home; to my grandfather.

## Canto XVIII - CKHS - Strike

I am in the Form 5 graduating class of 1987. Finally, I'm going the graduate, and begin the next phase of my life.

Relations between staff and students have deteriorated. We've organized ourselves into a school sports council, to run student affairs, after the authorities banned the SRC. I am the president.

We've gotten our parents to form a parents committee to assist with overcoming the challenges we face at school. The authorities are determined to make life difficult for us. They refuse to meet with us to discuss our grievances. They say we are small boys, and we must just shut up and learn.

We snap, and escalate our resistance.

It is the morning on Wednesday the 27th of May. School begins as usual. Tensions are high. The parents' committee is due to report back to us, tomorrow, about a meeting they had with the principal.

But there has been some amongst the students who feel that this process through the parents' committee is a waste of time. They want us to go on strike, NOW.

During the 10:00 break. A group of students meet outside the school hall by the volleyball courts. They say that I, Ndebele and other elected student representatives are soft because we are delaying the inevitable, that it is time to strike, NOW! I get wind of the meeting and rush over to try and clam them down. Their emotions high. I tell them that the parents' committee is due to report to us the following day.

There are calls, for me to shut up, that I must choose which side I am on. I call out to say, striking now will be futile as is have not even planned it properly. They insult me, they say I like education and planning too much, that a strike is a strike, that they will see later what happens, what happens must happen. They start singing, when the singing begins I instinctively know that there is no turning back, they have made up their minds and they are going to attack.

A small group of us separate from the singing group.

The singing intensifies as they march towards the staff room. Others go and cut the telephone lines to the school. Someone shouts a command and they begin to stone the staff room. The unexpected happens the teachers come rushing out, some holding weapons (whips, melamu, and a gun), the attacking crowd get cold feet and retreat. They run off the school property.

The teachers order everybody into their respective class rooms and they take roll call.

The Government Criminal Investigation Department are called in to investigate. They suspend our whole year, pending the investigation.

A couple of weeks later I am expelled.

I'm expelled as a ring leader, one of seven others.

I had refused to attend the investigation inquest... I was innocent... the school authorities should been the ones on trial.

### **Transition: Song**

A Hip-Hop Verse: *The Message* (Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five)

### **A Reflective Interlude**

What is happening with my life?

Why do I always end up on the outside? At time, I feel like a failure. I have to find another school. By the time I'm 18 I've been to 7 different schools; 5 different educational systems; on three different continents.

I feel like a nomad, a stranger with no home, in this world.

I manage to write my school leaving exams, and make through to an International Baccalaureate post high school program at Machabeng College, the Maseru the capital. I much more nurturing school, with a truly international student populous. It takes me a while to readjust to this new environment, my past weighs heavily on me. I

fail a grade, for the first time in my life.

I'm crushed. It feels like, I'm destined to be an outsider for the rest of my life.

### **Canto XIX - Mandela**

One evening I am watching television, alone in the living room, at home. I keep getting up to switch between the channels, there is not much choice, there are only three channels to choose from; TV 1 which broadcasts in English and Afrikaans, TV 2 which broadcasts in Nguni languages, or TV 3 which broadcasts in Sotho languages. As time for the evening English news approaches I switch to TV 1, and call for my mother. She is in the bathroom, taking a bath.

It is the evening of the 2nd of February 1990. On the news, they show F W de Klerk making a speech in parliament. The liberation movements are to be unbanned, all political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela are to be released, unconditionally.

A rush of adrenaline is released through my body. I call out to my mother, and tell her the news. She yells back to me to stop lying. This is not something to joke about. She comes out in her gown, the news item is gone.

It's true, I tell her, it's true. Phone calls are made. We turn on the radio. Phone calls come in. The unimaginable has happened.

The tide of change has arrived.

On the day of the release. South African students fill our living room, they sing liberation songs. They are joyous. Mandela finally comes out, with Winne. There is euphoria in the room.

I feel ecstatic. I'm with people I hardly know, who are my people. I feel extreme love for the country, I've only ever visited; which my parents have been banned from, which I will now call home.

**Transition: Song**

**A Liberation Song: Nelson Mandela**

## Home Identities: Finding Home

### Canto XX - Johannesburg: Take 1

I am know in Kensington. The family has found a house to call home. The doorbell rings, there is a man at the door. He greets me in isiZulu, asks me if the whites are home, and tells me to get the Madame. I go and call my mother. When she appears, greets her dismissively, and asks her to call the Madame. He is in disbelief when he learns that she is who he is calling for. He looks her up and down disapprovingly and goes off, grumbling to himself.

I see lots of conflict on the streets of Johannesburg, every day, especially in the CBD. It's mostly between black and white people.

I buy a loaf of bread from the Portuguese corner shop. The shop owner sells me a loaf with a portion of the crust scraped off on the side. I ask for another loaf. He refuses, and gets angry, I stand my ground. He begins to insult me, and all blacks. "What do you want here? You should go back to Soweto where you belong," he says. I suggest that maybe he should go back to wherever it is he came from. The situation escalates, a week later I'm on the cover of the local paper. I'm a victim of racism, and the shop owner is exposed, by the neighbourhood residents' organisation, for illegally selling alcohol from his shop.

Johannesburg is a very belligerent place to be. Racial tensions are high, crime is on the rise, and change is here. Black people arrive in the city, in their thousands, daily, white people leave in their thousands. Even the Johannesburg CBD migrates to Sandton.

I'm at my grandfather's florist business in Soweto. A call comes in, and it's my mother. She's just arrived home, and our home has been burgled. I immediately drive back home. I arrive to find the kitchen door axed open, the house smelling of cigarettes. There are cigarette butts on the floor throughout the house, the cupboards and drawers are open, it's a mess, and almost everything is missing. The family feels violated, vulnerable, and exposed.

The continual aggression and violence of this city prove too much of our family to handle.

The family relocates to Cape Town.

### Canto XXI - Kaap to Nou...

Cape Town is beautiful city, right by the sea. I notice that

pace of the city quite slow, compared to that of Johannesburg. It's far less crowded than Johannesburg, and the people seem far more relaxed than in Johannesburg. I going to love it here.

It's my first week of varsity, there is a class meeting in the Little Theatre. All the black students are given notes; we will have to take special English classes, on Upper Campus, as English is our second language. I wonder how they came to this decision. I get no answer. I ask why the Afrikaans students, are exempt from these special English classes, seeing as English is also their second language. I get no answer. I don't go to those special English classes.

I quickly realize that Cape Town is a deeply divided city; mainly, along race, religion, and class lines. Verwoerd's "policy of good neighbourliness" seems to be in full effect.

#### **Transition: Song**

A Liberation Song: Hamba Kahle.

#### **Canto XXII - Qawe...**

I'm on the way to rehearsals when I hear, on the radio, the Chris Hani is just been assassinated. I am angry and hurt and the same time. I make it to rehearsals, and it seems I'm the only on affected by this incident. Rehearsals go on as usual; my mind in not in them.

A few days later, a march was organized on the city centre Parade. The director says it will be rehearsals as usual, on the day of the march, and he expects us all to be there. I go to the march.

At the march I meet my best friend from High School, the one I got punished with. We march the streets of Cape Town together, singing, from UCT upper Campus, down Woolsack Drive to the Main Street in Rondebosch, then through Mowbray, through Observatory, through Salt River, through Woodstock, past District Six, to the Cape Town Parade. There are thousands of us at the March.

The mood is euphoric; freedom is close and I'm home, a part of it.

#### **Canto XXIII - Birth of a Rainbow**

It's Tuesday the 10th of May 1994. Nelson Mandela is to be inaugurated president today. I'm in Cape Town. I can't really figure



out the mood of the city, it feels like it's a working day and a holiday at the same time. The streets are quiet.

I want to find a group of people the share the occasion with. I end up at a family friends place, in a flat, off Chapel Road, in Rondebosch. We watch it on TV. We cry at the sight of the military fly past.

In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King:

"Free at last Free at last, Thank god all mighty we are free at last."

After the occasion if walk the streets of Cape Town. I can't really feel the change, it feels like just another day. I don't feel Home anymore. I can't wait to get out of here, and to move back to Joburg.

## **Canto XXIV - Johannesburg: Take 2**

The moment I graduate, I'm on the next bus out to Johannesburg to start a new life; on my own.

I am in Johannesburg because it is the most culturally diverse city in South Africa. It is home to many different nationalities, cultures, and identities. South Africa is home to a new constitution that is hailed as one of the most progressive in the world. Johannesburg represents the nucleus of this new national beginning. The place where all those, of whatever composition, committed to building a new nation of boundless possibilities can call home.

My idealist vision is confronted with a harsh reality. There is still major tension in the air, from when I was here 5 years ago. Sandton is now Johannesburg's CBD. Money is on everybody's radar. The buzz words are Black Economic Empowerment, and Transformation.

You have to be connected, to the right crowd, if you want to be part of anything. People group themselves in different ways. Those who come from Exile group together: There have divisions amongst themselves: those from within the movement, and those from without the movement. There are those who were in Exile in Africa, and those who were in exile in the West.

Those who stayed in the country also group together. They have divisions amongst themselves: there are those called the Xhosa-nostra, ama-X. There is the Zulu-Mafia, the Alex Mafia, the Limpopo Connection, the Sowetans... Tina sibase Voslo... Tina sibase... Tina sibase...Rona re ba...

There are many other divisions but what they have in common is that they are based on the past. The new South Africa, in reality, is being built along old allegiances.

I find it hard to fit in, I am in a profession that is really not taken seriously, at the moment. "There is no money there!" people say to me." What are you doing there? Join government papa! You have degree, there is BEE, wake up, Mchana!" they say. "You want to die poor?" I'm adamant that I will stay my course as an actor. A tough profession at the best of times. I find myself between Cape Town and Johannesburg. I'm in no man's land in terms of establishing strong relationships of any kind. I'm finding myself alone, or with family, most of the time.

After, five years of wandering from production to production between Cape Town, Johannesburg, and sometimes Europe. I start my own business. Being an entrepreneur proves far more challenging than being an actor. It is equally alienating.

After seven years in business, I have had some success. But money goes out as fast as it comes in. I feel like my life is a constant race, to get somewhere. I'm constantly in a rush. I'm constantly in a rush. My soul is empty, I'm spiritually unfulfilled. I have lost weight, I'm tired of talking about money, and chasing deals. I'm tired of trying to 'make it'. I'm tired of the war on poverty. I'm tired of trying to belong to a section of society.

I resign myself to the fact that maybe I'm destined to live in this perpetual exile. That I will never find true belonging, or home.

## **Canto XV - Clarity**

**[The horse gallops, takes-off, and is a bird. It flies through the sky.]**

I am on the road to Roma. I'm with my friend, the one I marched

with for Chris Hani; the one I got punished with in High School. When we get to Masianokeng, I get overcome by a sense of familiarity, memories begin to flood my mind. We fly up Ha Motlohelo towards Makhalanyane - there is the flour mill (leloaleng), there is the road to Thaba-Bosiu. We pass through a mountain pass Ha Maja and I see far into the distance.

There is Mikaeleng, the St. Michael's Mission. The age old sandstone church stands out in the distance. We descend into the Roma valley, and arrive at Hatha-Butle.

**[The bird lands, and is a horse. It gallops to a stop.]**

We are greeted with a glass of water. The water in Lesotho is special, most of it springs from ground. The higher you go the clearer, and tastier it is.

We are served a meal, the food is simple papa, moroho, le nama; slightly seasoned... it's perfect every time. After the meal I leave mother and son for alone together, for some quality time.

I take the car keys, and head out.

**[The horse gallops, takes-off, and is a bird. It flies through the sky.]**

I return up out the valley to St. Michaels, and up the road into the mountains. Along the road there are all thing familiar. The great aloes. Villages in the distance.

I go up higher and higher. I pass Ha Ntsi, Nazareth, Khalong la Baroa...

There is the familiar sight of boys selling crystal stones on the side of the road. The familiar sight of family picnic sites.

I go up higher. I reach the protected area, I pass through the boom gates. Pass up the Molimo-Nthuse pass.

I can hear the sound of water. Water falls in the distance. Water seeps through the Granite Mountains, and simmers in the sunlight.

I also hear movement of the crisp air, of the area around me.

I am way up in the mountains, the clouds seem but a stone throw way. I feel I'm on top of the world.

I breath-in deeply to inhale as much of this beauty as I can.

**[The bird lands, and is a horse. It gallops to a stop.]**

I get to a point where I can stop to absorb my surroundings wholeheartedly.

I can see far into the distance.

I take another breath and another and in an instance I feel whole, I feel present, there is no past and there is no future. All is clear in this moment.

**[Silence]**

I am in-sync with all of creation.

**[Silence]**

I am Home

**Transition: Sound**

The Horse, the bird, sounds and leaves.

## **Epilogue**

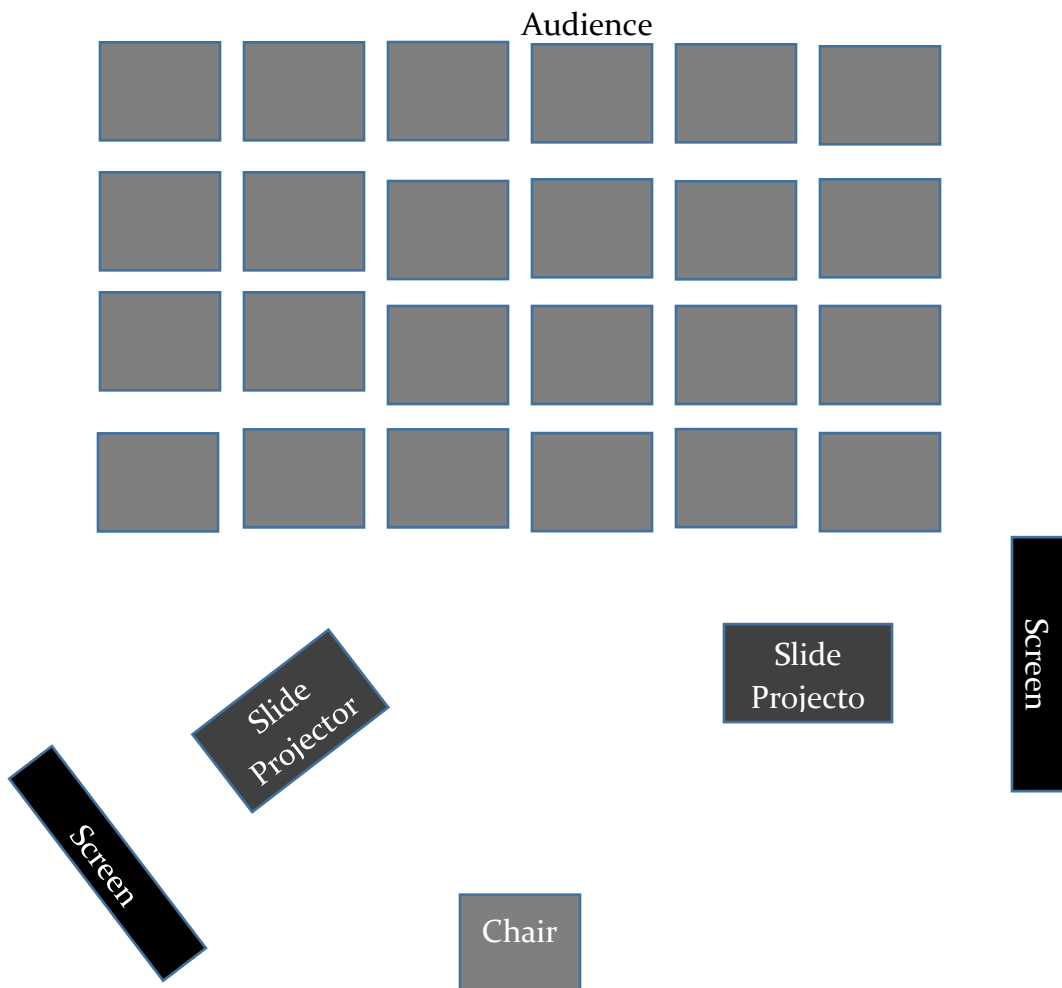
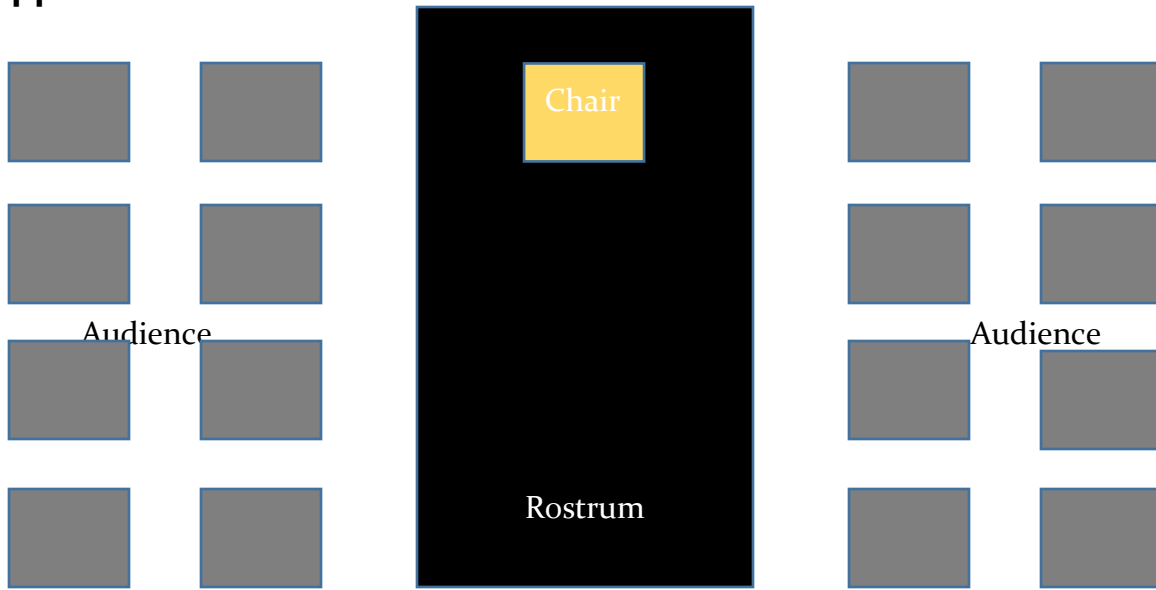
Were this encounter, between you and I, in the village of my birth; I would conclude these stories in the following way:

I would call, "Ke tsomo ka mathetho"

You would respond, in the way you see fit.

I would then smile, and as my work would be done.

Appendix 3



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