

**The Enjoyment of Practice: An Autoethnographic Study of Motivation
Through the Characters of Librarian and Freelancer in Will Eno's *Middletown***

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN THEATRE
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

FEBRUARY 2019

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the concept of external validation in my personal artistic practice as I develop and perform the roles of the Librarian and the Freelancer in Will Eno's *Middletown* directed by Jackie Maxwell in the Winter of 2019. This work is built upon personal observations of myself as I move through this particular artistic challenge. My goal will be to cultivate a deeper understanding of my internal landscape and need for validation through therapeutic research and a consistent acting process. That process will consist of daily journaling and a regular warm-up and cool-down ritual. My secondary research will extend into the career and writing style of playwright Will Eno, the main reoccurring themes *Middletown*, and the characters of the Librarian and Freelancer in the world of this play. With an acute attention to, and notation of, this process of creation and rehearsal, I aim to build a fruitful practice to carry into my professional career.

DEDICATION

It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question.
Eugene Ionesco

To my loving family.

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... the individual [must be] willing to fulfill the demands of rigorous self-examination and self-knowledge. If he/she does this, ... he will have succeeded in deeming himself worthy of serious attention and sympathetic interest. He will have set his hand, as it were, to a declaration of his own dignity (Jung 49).

In the gap between who we wish one day to be and who we are at present, must come pain, anxiety, envy and humiliation (*The Consolations of Philosophy* 202).

1 ARTISTIC CHALLENGE

For as far back as I am aware, I have derived my sense of belonging from my ability to entertain. As a young person, I easily was able to make people laugh with character impersonations or improvised stories and was nourished by the play inherent in the creation and performance of them. Nothing compared to the feeling that I was making others (and myself) happy by performing. Though I had many interests growing up, performing gave me the best return for my efforts. I was in all the school shows, went on to study drama in high school, joined a competitive improv team, and eventually took on an undergraduate and now master's degree in acting. Throughout my life, performance has been my most valued currency.

Over time, sadly, my need for affirmation has become so overwhelming that my natural love of performance has started to slip away. I have limited my own chances to audition for interesting projects, felt frozen in my abilities outside of a learning environment, and rejected the idea of identifying myself an actor. I so long to perform but have avoided it for fear that I would

not receive the positive feedback I strive for. This duality, this intertwined need and fear, has made acting a very fraught and anxiety-inducing practice for me. This thesis is focussed on my developing ideas around this particular artistic challenge. My goal through this work is to become aware of and fundamentally shift my perspective on performing in order to find the joy in it again.

1.1 ARTISTIC CHALLENGE STATEMENT

I propose to explore my need for external validation in the development and execution of my roles as the Librarian and the Freelancer in Will Eno's *Middletown*. My primary interest will be to relocate the heart of my motivation away from my default (extrinsic) to a much more sustainable (intrinsic) practice. I will use a set of internally-focused creation and research techniques in my approach to the text prior to rehearsals, and, throughout the rehearsal process, I will develop warm-up and cool-down rituals (including personal inquiry questions) to focus myself before and after performance. The result, I hope, will be that I may find the love and joy in my craft again and genuinely share my work without the painful need for validation from my peers, superiors and audience.

1.2 RESEARCH

1.2.1 MOTIVATION

When tasked with defining a creative challenge for this thesis, my first line of inquiry was into my need for rebellion. I had noticed a consistent bristling against authority over the last few years which was negatively affecting the projects I was in. I started to discover that the underbelly of this issue was a fixation, paradoxically, on a need for the approval of these figures; whether they be directors, teachers, or accomplished peers with whom I feel the need to compete. I instinctively pushed against this compulsion by showing up late, being underprepared, secretly

criticizing the work of the director or other actors, etc. Unconsciously, I had hoped that by undermining the institution I could hide my own insecurities. I needed the approval of others but, ashamed of that need, continued to sabotage the potential for it. Seeing this, I wondered if my extrinsically-motivated reasoning might have been creating the painful loss of joy in performance.

In his book *Drive*, David Pink discusses three main motivational frameworks in human beings: Motivation 1.0 is the instinct to escape predators and gather basic necessities for survival while Motivation 2.0 is founded on reward and punishment or the ‘carrot-and-stick’ model (18). The carrot provides encouragement while the stick reminds us of the sting of failure. This second tier of motivation saw that human workers were like “parts in a complicated machine,” who would receive rewards when desired behaviour was carried out and punishments when they were not (19). Though efficient for some tasks, these two extrinsically-motivated approaches left much to be desired when it came to creative fulfillment or aspirations of self-actualization, Pink discovered. His research goes on to illuminate how rewards can “transform an interesting task into a drudge. They can turn play into work. And by diminishing intrinsic motivation, they can send performance, creativity, and even upstanding behaviour toppling like dominoes” (37). While Pink’s book feels geared toward an audience of workplace leaders and entrepreneurs, this all sounded very familiar and applicable to me. Though at one time I was filled with an intrinsic love of performance, my motivational core shifted into 2.0 mode when I felt my value as a person fasten itself to my ability to perform. As a result, all of the joy that I had felt originally in exploring, creating, and playing as a young person, was traded in for harsh self-criticism when a specific outcome was anticipated. My fear of not receiving the reward of love and belonging has kept me tethered to the stake of externally measured success.

This is where Motivation 3.0 comes in. In the early 1960s, researchers at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago surveyed students on their work ethic and motivational sources, whether they be internal or external, among other things (45). Twenty years later, another study followed up with these same students to track their progress finding “The less evidence of extrinsic motivation during art school, the more success in professional art both several years after graduation and nearly twenty years later.” (Carney qtd Pink 45). Pink concludes, “For artists, scientists, inventors, schoolchildren, and the rest of us, intrinsic motivation—the drive to do something because it is interesting, challenging, and absorbing—is essential for high levels of creativity” (46). He outlines two types of approaches to work: Type X and Type I, originating from Friedman and Rosenman’s identifying of behavioural Types A and B in the late 1950s (“Oh, she’s so *Type A*”). Type X is extrinsically motivated and is mostly concerned with the external rewards of an activity, while Type I “concerns itself less with the external rewards to which an activity leads and more with the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself, (77)” i.e. with the freedom, challenge, and purpose of the task. Furthermore, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan’s “self-determination theory,” a theory which insists on universal human needs in order to live a happy and productive life, argues that we have three innate psychological needs—competence, autonomy and relatedness. Stemming from these two main theories, Pink’s asserts that the cultivation of a rooted, genuine source of motivation requires three principal ingredients: autonomy, mastery, and purpose (49) and is essential for a joyful and creatively abundant life.

Identifying heavily with Type X myself and seeing that I needed to move myself more into Type I for my enjoyment and satisfaction to improve, I decided I would delve deeper into a personal exploration of Motivation 3.0 to see what I could learn. Perhaps, I speculated, I may be

able to rekindle the love and joy that I had originally felt in performance by relocating the core of my motivation.

1.2.2 AUTONOMY

Autonomy is not something that I would quickly associate with my creative practice as an actor. I tend to approach a text by reading the play several times, doing a character-background writing exercise, actioning my lines, and allowing a lot of breathing room for a character to start to bubble up in rehearsal with a director. I tend to put great focus on what will occur in rehearsal with a leader—despite my discomfort with it. Then, in rehearsal, I will often focus on the end result and spend very little time in a creative state.

The carrot-and-stick model assumes that we need management in order to achieve a desired result. “Management ... presumes that to take action or move forward, we need a prod—that absent a reward or punishment, we’d remain happily and inertly in place” (Pink 88). However, Pink suggests that it is this very role, the role of the manager, that has created our passivity and inertia—rather than the other way around. He reassures the reader that human beings are inherently curious and naturally driven toward personal enhancement and growth (89). Perhaps it in my years of study, in my years of being prodded by teachers to show up and complete assignments, that I have painted myself into a very dependent corner. Most of my experiences in theatre thus far, realistically, have been in an educational setting. It doesn’t seem too far-fetched to me to link my lack of autonomy to my particular need for affirmation from my “managers”. Though not all creatives will experience the same effects, I believe that by essentially being trained to seek out extrinsic motivation, as is often necessary for success in the

educational system, my capacity to perform at a higher level (one that depends on an inner sense of security and enjoyment) was greatly reduced.

This summer, I attended the Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance for the Baby Clown and Mask Intensive, as well as Bootcamp Intensive with instructor and professional clown, John Turner (Smoot of Mump and Smoot). MCCP is alternative education in every sense of the term. The environment is holistic (all but a few participants share a campground, outdoor kitchen, and outhouses) and the content of the classes takes into consideration, in my assertion, not part but *all* of the human experience. Our joy, grief, fury and folly are all invited into the studio every morning.

Though I had had some experience with clown in the past, I had never experienced the Richard Pochinko clown technique and was quickly enamored with it. The process contained elements that were familiar to me: mask, costume, creating turns and performing them, but there were other elements that took me by surprise in their simplicity and depth. In the early stages of creation, for example, John lead us through physical meditations on the seven basic colours of the rainbow. By embodying each colour on their own, we discovered, without much or any conscious decision-making, an entity: the essential nature of the colour red, for example. From that place we would collect the supplies necessary to paint what it was that this character saw when they looked out into their world while in a wild, trance-like state. These seven paintings hung around the otherwise completely bare studio space in the forest, then became the building blocks for six complex mask characters. Those mask characters would eventually become the touchstones for the intricate being who is my clown, each of them containing their own entirely unique body, rhythm, and world.

In Pochinko clown work, I found myself creatively immersed and, until the point where we had to develop turns to present, I was filled with a nostalgic giddiness for creation again. I found myself able to play in a way that I rarely feel in my current practice and was happily able to delve into my imagination through several different artistic forms in quick succession. It seemed to me that the shifting between, and combining of, artistic forms freed my imagination from the confines of the “right and wrong” or “carrot and stick” classification system.

In her insightful book *Big Magic*, Elizabeth Gilbert explains Einstein’s tool of Combinatory Play as: “The act of opening up one mental channel by dabbling in another” (Gilbert 253). Einstein himself, of course, champions the concept stating that: “Combinatory play seems to be the essential feature in productive thought—before there is any logical construction in words or other kinds of signs which can be communicated to others” (Einstein 25), attributing the conception of many of his important ideas to time spent playing the violin. Also of note is Einstein’s assertion that secondary activities be physical as well as mental (25), much like Pochinko’s style of performance creation through physical embodiment and play.

As previously stated, through the use of multiple art forms in clown creation—painting, movement, and sculpture—I was able to circumvent the harsh criticisms I so often held my work accountable to and instead found enjoyment and play. In directing my attention to different, though parallel, artistic mediums, I was able to create characters with complex inner lives, specific physical gestures, and meaningful memories without the overt use of my writing or editing mind. This exciting realization is something that I want to integrate into my methodology in the creation of the role of the Freelancer. Though I will not follow the Pochinko creation approach in its entirety, I have chosen to use a few of the exploratory exercises in preparation for the role. I have outlined this in more detail in the section entitled “Methodology”. The autonomy

in my creative practice, therefore, will come from my ability to repurpose methods which have worked for me in the past and bind them together to form a unique patchwork of techniques for my own use and enjoyment. Once we have started rehearsal, I can begin to refine my understanding of the role within the world of the play in conjunction with the director, having already achieved pleasure, freedom, and success of my own accord.

1.2.3 MASTERY

Through her research in behavioural science over the last 40 years, Carol Dweck, a professor of psychology at Stanford University, has ascertained that “our beliefs about ourselves and the nature of our abilities...”—what she calls self-theories — “determine how we interpret our experiences and can set the boundaries on what we accomplish” (Pink 120). She has seen the reoccurrence of two main personality distinctions, “entity theorists” and “incremental theorists”. Essentially, people who believe in their ability to improve at something and people who don’t. Entity theorists believe that there is a finite amount of intelligence, for example, that they can have—much like having a height or set number of teeth. Incremental theorists believe that they can increase their knowledge or capacity through their own efforts—much like the growth of muscle mass or loss / gain of weight. “In one view, intelligence is something you demonstrate; in the other, it’s something you develop” (121). These two directions, Pink explains, lead down very different paths. Effectively, those of us who believe that our capacity is finite will seek out easily-achievable goals in order to appear masterful; fearing the effort required to gain real mastery will too readily reveal our limited natural abilities, potentially missing out on great opportunities to grow truly masterful in our craft (122); whereas the individuals who allow

themselves to fail and grow will develop a greater sense of mastery and coax their aptitude to expand as they do. As Pink proposes, “Mastery is a mindset” (120).

Armed with this knowledge, I felt that it was essential for me to take a closer look at my own self-theories. I quickly realized that though I have a voracious love of learning, I believed that talent was a quality that clearly lived in the “entity” category. And, as a fixed quality, it was something objective that others would have to tell me that I had. Moreover, I found that these limiting ideas were (perhaps unsurprisingly) extremely amplified in stressful situations. When I feel safe and cared for, my perceptions of myself are much more positive and self-affirming from when I do not. To illustrate this, I will relate a recent experience of extreme performance anxiety and the effect of this particularly stressful situation on my self-perception.

In November of this year, the MFA and 3rd year conservatory actors were asked if we might do a table read of this year’s Shakespeare in High Park (SiHP) scripts at the Canadian Stage Company. I was happy to get a chance to work with directors Severn Thompson and Liza Balkan again and since it also felt like an opportunity to have more visibility before our official SiHP auditions, I signed up immediately. The day before we were meant to do the read through I found out I was cast as Isabella in *Measure for Measure* and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, two roles I have coveted for years. Already downtown and running errands when I heard the news, I scrambled to do as much preparation in the evening as I could. In the morning, I did a warm-up without much structure or any specific check-ins or goals and then rushed to get to the theatre on time. I was one of the last people to arrive and was incredibly nervous. Because I was late, I didn’t get a chance to settle or do a quick look through of the truncated scripts before we started to read. I was so nervous that I fumbled many of Isabella’s lines and wasn’t able to find cadence in the speech; in my perception, dragging the whole piece down. My eyesight felt

terrible, my heart was racing, my hands were shaking, and I didn't know how to calm myself. I started to think: everyone is waiting for me to mess up, nobody wants me to play this role anymore, they are going to ask me not to play Beatrice in the second reading, this is not fun, I don't like acting, I'm not an actor, I don't have what it takes, I'm a failure. I'm just not good enough. The combination of external pressures resulted in a cataclysmic shift in my self-theory. And this occurrence is far from abnormal for me; it is a woefully predictable illustration of my experience in auditions, rehearsals, meetings with directors, and performances alike. After this experience, it seemed to me absolutely essential to pursue an understanding the mechanics of performance anxiety as I forge my path toward mastery.

The performance environment is, I believe, an inherently unsafe one with new, unpredictable variables every night and sometimes incredibly high stakes. When an environment is perceived of as unsafe, our bodies shift into sympathetic mode, which spikes heart-rate and sends blood to the extremities in preparation for fight/flight or freeze responses. In other words, our on-switch gets tripped. Comparatively, when an environment is perceived of as safe, our bodies can subsist in a parasympathetic, or "rest and digest," mode which allows for the smooth regulation of breathing and heart-rate so that the inner processes of rest, nutrient assimilation, and healing can take place (Cazden 136). The regulation of these two processes is crucial for our survival. Consequently, our inability to regulate effectively (e.g., to experience sympathetic response unnecessarily), can greatly affect our sense of well-being, our ability to cope with life's challenges, and can even alter our brain's neurological functioning (Merlin 26).

The act of performing, for me, is rife with self-doubt and self-criticism. As demonstrated by the Shakespeare in High Park example, when I am afraid or doubtful of my capacity as an actor I am not able to be present. "(Anxiety) is antithetical to acting. Most of us love acting

because it gives us a heightened state of presence, a real *in-the-moment* aliveness ... it's impossible to be *present* and to be *anxious* at the same time" (25). If there was anything that I felt would be a game-changer for me at this time in my career, it would be to gain mastery over my fear of performing.

In her careful guide to managing stage fright, *Facing the Fear*, Bella Merlin describes the evolution of a fear from a mere worry (in our imagination), to an anxiety (where our fear response systems start to really kick in), onward still to a stress, and finally a depression. "What happens when we're anxious is that our on-switch becomes stuck ... and the results soon manifest themselves" (25). Merlin goes on to demarcate the mental, behavioural, and physical manifestations of our worries gone awry. I experienced each of these responses in the Shakespeare in High Park readthrough example above: mentally, I was loading myself with negative thoughts about my self-worth and capacity; behaviourally, I was isolating myself from the group as well as jumping ahead in the script while we read; and physically I was managing a litany of fearful symptoms, from sweaty palms to blurry vision. And, as previously mentioned, this was nothing new for me. "...when a challenging situation overwhelms us and we can no longer meet that challenge, our system is chronically and repeatedly exposed to adrenalin and stress hormones (such as cortisol) ...stress doesn't just *affect* our brains, it actually *changes* our brains" (26). Admittedly, it's anxiety-inducing to know that I have been setting the stage (in my brain) for the far more detrimental effects of long-term stress; though it is not a surprise.

In her nuanced description of the qualities of stage presence, speech pathologist Joanna Cazden lists first and foremost the capacity to "tolerate higher-than-normal levels of both sympathetic and parasympathetic activity" (Cazden 141) in compelling performers. This quality, this ability to surf the wave of "dual excitation" as Kinsey Institute scientist and researcher

Stephen Porges calls it, is the crux of his influential Polyvagal Theory to which Cazden refers. In his book *The Pocket Guide to the Polyvagal Theory*, Porges states that "...feeling safe is dependent on unique cues in the environment and in our relationships that... promote health and feelings of love and trust (Porges qtd Cazden 140). It seems that in order for me to surf this wave of safety and risk—to work in a state of flow—I need to be able to track my thoughts, behaviours, and physical sensations. With that information, I can then predict my habitual tendencies toward heightened sympathetic responses and negative self-theories, intercepting them before they can dissolve my love of performing and presence. I will explore this component of my thesis through journaling, conversations with my therapist, and through the warm-up and cool-down rituals I will be creating. This solution, I believe, offers me the opportunity to wrangle the symptoms of my anxiety while building a greater sense of mastery over my psychophysical being; the actor's only real instrument.

1.2.4 PURPOSE

In his memoir and ground-breaking study of human empathy, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Victor E. Frankl reflects how "a human being is not one in pursuit of happiness but rather in search of a reason to become happy ... through actualizing the potential meaning inherent and dormant in a given situation" (Frankl 138). A great challenge for me in my work as an artist, though nowhere near comparable to the struggle Frankl underwent to gain this wisdom, has been to find purpose in what I do. I have often wondered: how could there be meaning in a group of people parading in front of another, attempting to perfectly represent life? What kind of meaning or purpose could be garnered from what seemed to me to be merely a test of skill, strength, or beauty?

The theatre is not, of course, just a parade or a platform. As Daniel Johnston offers in his manual *Theatre and Phenomenology*, “The theatre is a place to wonder at Being,” (3) and, de Botton asserts, in his wonderfully approachable text *Status Anxiety*, is more often focussed on the flaws of human nature rather than its strengths (148). Throughout time, the arts have been marked by their desire to “...correct the viewer’s insight or teach him to perceive beauty, to help him understand pain or to reanimate his sensitivities, to nurture his capacity for empathy or rebalance his moral perspective through sadness or laughter” (*Status Anxiety* 125). Moreover, Johnston goes on to argue that he sees actors as “manual philosophers” who, for thousands of years, have put issues of morality, ethics, and theories of existence into action (4). The role of the artist serves a great purpose in society—for what could be more noble than reminding our audiences of the good in themselves and offering them the opportunity to see the good in others?

I believe that it has been my fixation on being correct and my need to be given proper due and applause as a performer that has rendered my work a show of feathers, has reduced it to its external value. As Frankl might advocate, my search now is not simply to enjoy performing for my own purposes but to have a reason to enjoy performing. To know that what I do is of service to humankind; to the soul of us all which withers and dies when it is not nurtured by story, imagination, and knowledge.

At times, it can feel that I am performing purely to entertain my peers and a select few outsiders; I feel that the scope of theatre is very small and insular and therefore less impactful. On those days, I have forgotten the moments of wonder I have felt as an audience member, the images and thoughts that have moved me to tears, and the grace of creators and performers who allowed me to see their hearts in their theatrical works. On those days, I am perhaps in need of a reminder of what a gift it is to have a voice in this world, what a gift it is to perform the carefully

selected words of others. These days of doubt will inevitably come. My sincere hope is that through building a robust personal practice and set of awareness techniques, I will be resilient enough to know that a life in the arts is crowded with purpose and meaning.

To explore the component of purpose in my journey with *Middletown*, I will integrate into my post-performance journaling practice an additional series of provoking questions: What was the nature of my experience tonight? What did I learn? What did I let go of? Has there been a change in me? My interest is in whether or not integrating a reflective practice will help me on my journey toward full investment in, and enjoyment of, performance.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

With Pink's guideposts to intrinsic motivation as central pillars for my practice, I have designed a methodology that will serve as the jumping-off point for my preparation work in *Middletown* before, during, and after performance. To start with, I have divided my role preparation between the two parts I am set to play. For the role of the Librarian, I will utilize my tried-and-true methods of analysis (mentioned above), character development, and actioning in order to build a rich inner life for this character. In discussion with the show director, Jackie Maxwell, we decided that the Librarian is an absolutely grounded, unadorned, and simple woman. My emphasis, once the early analysis work is completed, will be on stripping away any artifice or tendency toward dramatizing the role in order to allow the true nature of this character to shine through. To approach the role of the Freelancer, I will go into the studio with several key phrases from his (only) scene, use movement to embody him, build specific imaginary worlds and images, and then manipulate clay to form a mask. From this mask, I will start to play within the worlds created which will lead to the discovery of a specific physical and gestural language to be adjusted and manipulated in rehearsal.

The second part of my methodology will be to create a morning ritual, as well as rituals for warming up before working and cooling down afterwards. The morning ritual will consist of a yoga practice (see appendix B, 5.1), a daily meditation practice of 20 minutes, and journaling—inclusive of visualization and Flow Chart (see Appendix B, 5.1.3). My warm-up ritual will pull from learning I have garnered in Professors Erika Batdorf and Sallie Lyons’ movement classes as well as Linklater vocal warm-ups as taught by Professors Eric Armstrong and David Smukler partnered with others I’ve discovered in Linklater’s book *Freeing the Natural Voice*. My cool-down will include a reflective element to do with my intrinsic motivation as well as simple physical and vocal relaxation techniques. I will ask myself prompting questions to reflect on in my journal as stated in Purpose, above. Lastly, a key ingredient will be to make a point of always arriving 30 minutes before rehearsal begins to give myself time to warm-up in studio and feel prepared. What I learned from the Shakespeare in High Park read-through and subsequent audition was that I will feel more comfortable, confident and capable when I am on time and prepared.

1.4 SUMMARY

To assign unanswered letters their proper weight, to free us from the expectations of others, to give us back to ourselves – there lies the great, the singular power of self-respect. Without it, one eventually discovers the final turn of the screw: one runs away to find oneself, and finds no one at home (Didion 5).

When I first began my journey toward isolating an actor challenge to improve upon, I couldn’t get my mind to slow down long enough to look at myself. I didn’t think I had enough challenges to merit any serious consideration. I told myself that I didn’t think focussing on my weaknesses or “challenges” was a positive direction to work in and resented the assignment. I

rejected the idea of writing a piece that only wanted to expose my weakest parts as a performer. “Are we not insecure enough as actors?” I protested! However, as time went on, I began to see a consistent reoccurring theme in my work: that I was very concerned with what others thought and had hardly any fun anymore when I was performing. In starting to get acquainted with my artistic challenge, and in putting energy toward improving myself in that area, I have come to see the huge benefit in being asked to peer into the darkened corners of my practice.

My need for external validation has been such an entrenched pattern that I felt it was part-and-parcel with the gig. Unaware, I believed that performing would inescapably lead to fear which would certainly lead to self-doubt which would absolutely lead to feelings of inadequacy. What I took for granted in this downward spiral was that I was choosing to take this route. However unconscious that choice may have been, I believe that it has been, nevertheless, a choice. It is a choice that has facilitated the continuation of a version of myself that I feel comfortable inside of. Though it has not been enjoyable, it has been familiar.

In becoming aware of my extrinsically-focused motivation to perform, I’ve been able to see a potential trail forward. I can see that, through diligent self-awareness and compassion, consistent resilience-building techniques, and deep, personal inquiry, I will thrive in my chosen profession. I need not run to seek affirmation from others, always wondering if I am good enough to enjoy my art; If I deserve to feel fulfilled or have what it takes to be successful. The heart of why I continue in this work is that it is important, it is meaningful, and it is fulfilling, for me. And, if others enjoy what I do, I can choose to feel proud but not dependant on their approval.

2 PLAY RESEARCH

2.1 PLAYWRIGHT

Will Eno was born in Lowell, Massachusetts and raised in Bellerica, Carlisle, and Westford, MA where, fascinatingly for someone who is known for his candid stage banter, “speech was not a big thing around the house, growing up. So, I developed a kind of anxiety about talking” (Wallenberg 4). As a young man, Eno studied at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst where he quit just shy of graduation. Through his youth he was a highly successful cyclist, landing himself a spot in the US Olympic Training Centre in Colorado until his early 20s (Steketee 2). For several years, Eno worked on Wall Street “making cold calls for six bucks an hour” (2) until he met Gordon Lish, who would eventually become a great friend and writing mentor of his. His career took a serious turn at the age of 35 when he reportedly dropped off a copy of his wry and characteristically introspective one-act play *Tragedy: A Tragedy* at the stage door of the National Theatre, London. “I wrote some crazy note on the first page of the script with my left hand, and I’m right handed ... A month later, Jack Bradley, then the literary manager at the National, called up and said: ‘We’d like to do a reading at the studio’” (3). Within five years, Eno’s work had exploded onto the American and European theatre scenes with the wildly successful run of his one-man show *Thom Pain (based on nothing)* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and DR2 Theatre in New York City, as well as garnering a Pulitzer Prize nomination in 2005 (Waterstone 5). Dubbed the “Samuel Beckett for the Jon Stewart generation” (Isherwood) Will Eno’s career has careened toward massive success with *Middletown* sitting happily at its epicentre.

2.2 STYLE

Reading Eno's oeuvre is much like getting swept up by a Coleville exhibit or tapping into Wes Anderson's trove of average-joe characters and byzantine, relationship-driven storylines. The worlds and themes of his plays are oddly familiar, if not mundane, yet maintain a particular Eno-specific hue throughout. Repeatedly, he tackles matters of birth, death, loneliness, failure, and inevitability, folding them in on each other to the point where it can be hard to see where one existential strand ends, and another begins.

You're working on this fairly virtual sort of thing, this collection of words that is meant to affect a progression of feelings: logic and sound and words and feeling. But your back hurts. Your wrist. You're doing this while you're in a body. And that informs the mental activity. Picture Beethoven writing the Ninth Symphony, getting up to stretch because he was sitting funny (Eno qtd. Sola 10).

One cannot read Eno's work without reflecting on the absurdity of life: that we are in a human body, that we are feeling sensations, being moved by emotions, getting distracted by passing dogs, wanting to feel loved and less alone; as he himself must. And his characters do not stray far from the proverbial tree " ... all you need to know is that I, like the rest, sit here with a serious history, with little and real fears and dreams, a heart and two eyes, looking out, from a body of bones, watching you and the rest of the world for some sign" (*Flu Season 15*). As he so simply put it in his 2015 video interview with Samuel French Publishing about *Middletown*, "It's just humanness and humanness and humanness" ("Will Eno on Playwriting" 2015) a characteristically poetic and frank response from this playwright. Eno helps us to wonder at the minds of strangers, of their real, deep, inner thoughts and complexities, meanwhile interweaving themes that materialise time and again through the lenses of the public, the private and the

cosmic or universal. As the Cop says in *Middletown* “[It’s] just people being human in the night. Inner life meeting outer life” (40).

So, I wanted to write a play that put some thoughts and feelings in the air about the miracle and the mystery and that alluded to deep and unknown forces. But then really just have people going to the store and fixing the sink and going through the normal things of looking for love and getting up in the morning. Because that’s how we live (Wallenberg 2).

In another of his one-act pieces, *Intermission*, Eno assembles a pair of couples in an audience, one young and one old, who then cross examine ideas around memory and loss much like they do in the scene preceding intermission in *Middletown*. Characters in his works share a parallel need to air their existential thoughts and worries, a consistent quality of Eno’s theatrical voice. His works don’t overtly instruct his audiences but instead fool them into reflecting on themselves by seeing deeply into the lives of others. “Small and large tragic things happen, and small and large reactions occur as a result. Eno’s plays are not about explosions (verbal, technological) but about rifts in conversations and human lives, where the chaos stealthily seeps in” (Steketee 1).

Middletown itself does not fit into any category easily. It treads the line between tragedy and comedy, tragicomedy and romcom, never landing one foot in any of these pools long enough to merit classification. With the horrifying and celebratory end of John’s brutal death and the birth of Mary’s child, John, the play stays true to its name and persists “in the middle of all of our different ideas about life” (*Middletown* 70). The themes which surfaced in my investigation into this text have fallen into three main concepts: the lifecycle, failure and language.

2.3 THEMES IN MIDDLETOWN

2.3.1 THE LIFECYCLE

“What, my own birth? Oh, I don’t know. I’m sure it was fine” (55).

The start of *Middletown* is marked by the arrival of a newcomer: Mary, a new wife and hopeful mother who represents life, the future, growth and change. Despite the fact that Middletown contains several deeply existential citizens, two of which actually attempt suicide in the span of the play, Mary’s pregnancy gives the play its timeline. In the second scene, and our first introduction to her, Mary approaches Judith, the town librarian, to ask for books on childbirth and children to which the librarian responds: “They’re in the business section – I’ve never known why. I’ll show you” (14). Upon discovering her pregnancy and sharing her anxieties with John a few scenes later, we learn that she is now, in fact, expecting. In the second act of the show, Mary is described in the opening stage directions as “very pregnant”, allowing the audience to assume with some specificity how much time has come to pass when our two nearly-lovers meet again. This convention cleverly employs Eno’s urge to “...create a play that had a birth in it and a death in it and some other things that just emphasized those two events as parentheses” (Samuel French 2015) and gives the play its clear structure.

Most characters in this piece share the Woman’s distinctly nihilistic perspective that “People are born, people die” (46). John often contemplates his own mortality in conversation “Good argument for death, by the way—shingles” (36), or in asking of his doctor “What happens when you die” (59)? just before his disturbing on-stage death—the result of a failed suicide attempt. The Mechanic comparably considers “I could still make some headlines if I threw it off a bridge, hit some family in their car and killed everybody” (17) and later in the play takes a substantial amount of sleeping pills perhaps resulting in his own suicide. It could be said that

John Dodge's death, and the birth of Mary's child near the very end of the play, are the only events that to come to pass in the span of the show.

However, "Those are just two events. There's a lot in between" (60) Eno's Female Doctor says, with his Cop musing similarly "...I guess we all have a story. Once upon a time, and so on, The End" (20). The references to the middle of life are almost countless, not the least of which being its title. The Freelancer reiterates in a personal revelatory statement "Since you don't know the end, you're not sure what you're in the middle of. Hey" (45). The play seems to ask: What do you want out of this, the middle of your experience of life? Perhaps by allowing us into the minds of characters like the Mechanic, the Cop or John Dodge in the moments before his death, Eno is uncovering for us the opportunity to consider which of these paths toward our inevitability we would prefer, if any.

2.3.2 FAILURE

"Middletown. Population: stable; elevation: same. The main street is called Main Street ... Things are fairly predictable" (10). *Middletown* feels like a kind meditation on mediocrity; which does not necessarily reflect failure but, in this play, I believe it does. The fictional hamlet of Middletown itself is not special; in fact, the name on its own, Middletown, belongs to towns in exactly sixteen states across the US. Middletown, NY in Orange County, in the elbow between Circleville and Mechanicstown, as one excellent example, is named, perhaps as should be expected (and is very similarly described in Eno's depiction of his fictional town), "Due to its location between other settlements" ("Middletown, NY" 1)¹.

¹ "Middletown was built on the ruins of other older Middletowns, and, before them a town called Middenton, which was named for being between two other places (12)."

Most, if not all, of the characters in this play seem to fall short of the trajectory they might have imagined for themselves. The two main lovers, if you can call them that, Mary and John, live modest, lonely existences in which their fears about themselves quietly come true: for Mary, that she will give birth alone, and for John, that he will die in a hospital, lonely and wild, like an animal. “I’ve always been afraid that shame would be the last thing I felt on Earth. And that I’d feel alone, no matter who was there ... And now I don’t just want to die like some dirty animal, with my teeth showing and some crazy look in my eye” (60). And though there is hope for Mary in her new friends and community, the stage directions for John’s accidentally intentional death illuminate his fear as a reality “Suddenly he goes into small convulsions ... He’s dying like an animal. A desperate look toward the audience and then he is still” (79). In the end, John Dodge doesn’t fall from greatness to his tragic finale but from mediocrity. Yet another reminder from Eno that even our death may not live up to the romantic ideal we set out for it.

Two of the three main pillar-characters of the town (as we have come to know them in rehearsal), the Mechanic and the Cop, each have their own private as well as very public vulnerabilities and failings. Craig, the ineffectual mechanic and misanthropic town drunk, publicly menaces the villagers of Middletown while privately managing his addiction and childhood trauma. As he shares in one of his confessional-type interactions with the Female Doctor, “I think I disappointed everybody when I was born ... There was no way I could live up to all that want and need” (63). Robert, the violently unpredictable cop, who similarly menaces the citizens of Middletown, peering into their windows at night, pretending to shoot his brother in law in the head from behind, blinding the audience with his flashlight, etc., privately distresses about his final moments with his dying mother “I just wanted to get her flowers and make her

laugh and help her get back home and feel peaceful” (73). Several characters in this play act out of confusion, struggling to express their true feelings until it is too late.

Judith, the town Librarian, acts as a grounded counterpoint to much of the self-doubt and uncertainty being lived out by the members of her community. With numerous declarations of comically frank truths, she tethers Eno’s drifting world to reality, telling Mary after she requests a library card “Good for you, dear. I think a lot of people figure, ‘Why bother? I’m just going to die, anyway’” (12). Then later reassuring the Cop after the death of his mother that “People know what happens ... it seems so original, when it happens to us” (73). Judith’s musings on the mysteries of life and death through vague Indigenous mythologies paint her as the town philosopher, never revealing much of herself.

A vast majority of *Middletown*’s characters have a similar tendency toward self-criticism and self-revelation. In Eno’s play, there is no hierarchy in characters’ importance and consequently all characters, whether primary or secondary, are given space to air their philosophies. The Female Tourist character, for example, shares “We always sort of want something more ... I guess we like things that are potentially monumental, but that aren’t necessarily monumentalized yet (23)” before her and her husband leave, never to return in the world of the play. Similarly, the character of the Freelancer openly states in his only scene “Originally I wanted to be an autobiographer ... But then I had to sit down and ask myself, ‘seriously, me?’” (41). Not more than a page or two later, the Freelancer has a near existential enlightenment at his discovery that “All that travel, all the cathedrals and wonderful meals and evening light and people dying, and what are my findings? What’s my conclusion? ‘Huh.’” (45).

2.3.3 LANGUAGE

“Language is a public tool for the understanding of private life” (“*Wittgenstein*” School of Life). In speaking of his mother’s playful use of language in his upbringing, Eno told The Toronto Star in a recent interview “I don’t know if it was a fascination with language for her more than it was a desire to get out of an emotional moment and move to the surface of a thing” (Eno qtd. Fricker 3). Perhaps due to Eno’s background in a verbally anxious environment, he revels in the discussion and deconstruction of language. *Middletown* is rife with examples. Inpetway, the original Indigenous name for the town, is one which “no one knows what it means” (12); after discussing her trip to Rome where most ancient Latin descriptions had “just kind of worn away”, the Female Tourist asks of her tour guide “What about when English dies?” (21); while the Mechanic even goes so far as to call his father “a speech impediment” (70) implying that he never quite got things right—especially communication.

Wittgenstein said that if you asked an elephant to draw a picture of God, it would come out looking a lot like an elephant. So, I think we unknowingly use the body and ourselves as the model for a lot of things (Eno qtd. Sola 9).

Wittgenstein, a 1993 Derek Jarman film about the famed prodigy’s life, dramatizes one of Wittgenstein’s philosophical questions about verbal and physical language thusly, quite possibly influencing a scene in *Middletown* twenty years later:

Ludwig Wittgenstein : [*performing a V-sign with his fingers*] What does this mean?

Lady Ottoline Morrell : It's a gesture of contempt.

Ludwig Wittgenstein : A cyclist did this to me as I was crossing the road. I decided then and there to kill myself ... What's the logical structure of this gesture? It doesn't have one! That means I've spent most of my life groping down a blind alley ... Philosophy hunts for the essence of meaning. There's no such thing (Jarman).

A very similar deconstruction of gestural language occurred to the Cop in *Middletown* “I was sitting here visiting, and she asked me, ‘What does this actually mean?’ and she held up her middle finger. It was so funny ... It was on some show that had couples working out their problems ... I told her it means, ‘I don’t like you’” (73). School of Life’s Youtube video on Wittgenstein summarizes his famed *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, and suggest that his work begs the question “How do human beings manage to communicate ideas to one another?” (“*Wittgenstein*” School of Life), something I feel Eno’s work often asks. John Dodge, no exception to idiosyncratic chatter, also plays with onomatopoeia to help convey his complex ideas around time “Time, you know. ‘Buzzzzzzz.’ ‘Plink’ (26). “I don’t mean it as some pointy-headed critique of language. I mean it as a person who is wanting to be understood and anxious that they’re not being understood” (Eno qtd. Fricker 4).

2.4 ACTING TECHNIQUE

Since my early introduction to script analysis, character development and performance, many of the nuts-and-bolts of my work has stayed constant. In high-school, I was taught how to break a scene or play down into units, applying Stanislavski’s objectives and super-objectives throughout, Uta Hagen’s six steps method for understanding and building a character’s inner world, and actioning as a way of bringing the text to life. I have maintained this process to this day, reinforcing it with new information occasionally but for the most part keeping it intact. My experience generally is that I have so many analytical thoughts in my head upon arriving in the rehearsal hall and especially when I get on stage, that performing feels incredibly muddy. I doubt my choices in the moment and am concerned with whether or not I’ve done things right, based on the information I had read or come up with. I am concerned with how my hard work will come across—and sometimes avoid doing it at all. This summer, while at the Manitoulin

Conservatory for Creation and Performance, I felt a long-forgotten form of joy in performing. Because of its combinatory, cross-training style of creation, I believe that clown through mask will serve as a powerfully freeing agent in my process moving forward.

Since I am tasked with playing two very different characters in *Middletown*, I am proposing that I approach one character, that of the Librarian, with a process that is conventional for me (as stated above) paired with a few new presencing and freedom techniques (Rodenburg), and the other, The Freelancer, from a more physical-theatre and clown perspective (Pochinko). My interest is to check in with myself throughout the process to assess whether I can find more enjoyment in the method that has led to so much anxiety in the past by adding a few new techniques, or if using Pochinko-style mask and clown work will bring me closer to the goal of a detailed, alive and mutually enjoyable performance.

2.5 CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

“In rehearsal, all the actors keep talking about how there’s no lying in this play. It’s a grave honesty that society doesn’t usually (Wallenberg 3). At first read, Judith is a stereotypical small-town librarian with sweet reassurance and wisdom for everyone she encounters. After a few more reads she suddenly appeared to me whip-smart and sassy. To develop this character, I will use the six Uta Hagen steps (see Appendix B, 4.2) as well as answer the 25 questions that we received in Professor Paul Lampert’s acting class to develop her personal history and perspective (see Appendix B, 4.3). I will also be focussing a great deal on removing any need to “perform” by using a series of freedom techniques from Patsy Rodenburg’s book *Presence*.

For the Freelancer I will be experimenting with a different performative style and method of character creation. I will use what I’ve learned in clown: build a mask, find a body, movement and voice that will contrast with the Librarian and give me lots to play with. Since this character

is much more presentational, I will experiment with my tendencies to perform through this character.

Eno's play *Intermission* also takes place in an audience in the intermission between acts. I've taken some of the characteristics that I see in Mr. Smith and brought him into the Freelancer exploration. Namely, jingling change in my pockets and being overbearingly sentimental. The Freelancer character is unabashedly self-aggrandizing and loud. He seems to always be speaking to himself unless someone else becomes interesting. In my imaginary backstory for him, the Freelancer writes meandering theatre reviews which he posts to a personal blog and occasionally sells to local papers. He travels around to towns in the area and sees what he can but is often asked to leave when they find out who he is. He can be scathing and unskillful in his approach to theatre though he finds himself to be very interesting and capable. He believes that his voice is necessary in this world of disconnect. He has something to say and it is important that people sit down and listen. He has a general pomp about him and a certain amount of self-importance without much self-awareness. He also sells antique furniture from his travels which he collects in the towns he goes to and is hard to bargain with. He is slightly overweight but doesn't see himself as unattractive. He can be quite romantic. There is a quiet woman who he meets with every so often and shares a night of wine and conversation. He doesn't have many illusions about being in love, but he does believe that he will have a quiet, gentle kind of fame after his death.

3 CONCLUSIONS

We appear to hold within ourselves a range of divergent views as to our native qualities. And amid such uncertainty, we typically turn to the wider world to settle the question of our significance ... Our “ego” or self-conception could be pictured as a leaking balloon, forever requiring the helium of external love to remain inflated (*Status Anxiety* 8).

Through the self-reflection, research, and experimentation involved in the writing of this thesis, I have become much better acquainted with my yearning for external validation. I have come to know it as one knows a blemish—as much a sign of my imperfection as it is a sign of my humanity. It is a companion, neither unexpected nor uncommon. By seeing and knowing this, I believe I have begun the journey toward accepting the fact of my external pull toward approval as I find balance with my internally motivated goals. Moreover, by separating my task into the categories of autonomy, mastery, and purpose I have been able to see a very concrete path toward my personal betterment as an actor and an artist.

To find autonomy has been the most challenging part of my journey. The first moment that I sensed I was coming to understand what that meant for me personally was during our third performance of *Middletown*. That night, our Friday evening show, I performed with enthusiasm. There was a bustle of sustained laughter as I stepped off stage after my first scene; I felt the rush of play and of being seen. I suddenly understood how I had been working under the assumption that everyone else had more authority on the character I was playing than me. What a joy to feel that I was the expert on the subject at hand! (As an actor must be in the moment of performance.) In the autonomy section of my written thesis, I discussed wanting to use Mask and Clown to research the role of the Freelancer in his short scene. Mostly due to time constraints, I only explored a few steps of this process. I moved several of the main emotional statements of this

character through my body, ventured in my imagination to mine out imagery for each line, moulded the clay and built the mask (Appendix 4.3). Unfortunately for me, I did not finish painting and removing the mask from the clay in enough advance to be able to use what I found in the physical work. I did, however, find that the imaginary world that was created in those explorations greatly influenced my approach on the character and gave a richness to my experience of the performance. For the Librarian, I challenged myself to complete the background questions that I felt were most relevant (Appendix 4.2). Though I knew this to be true and it was part of why I didn't do any further written work, I didn't find filling out those questions did anything for my performance. They felt like intellectual works that were more for me, as an actor, to feel I had done the work. Instead, I went for walks in character, attempted to see life through Judith's eyes, and found many fruits in those experiences. The autonomy that I really found, however, was in performance with an audience. Suddenly, I was able to see who this character was to those witnessing her and I allowed my personal flair and my joy of idiosyncratic humour and quirk come through naturally.

The second element that I was developing through this process was a sense of Mastery. In specific, mastery of my body. This is one area where I also found great success. By integrating an invigorating (but not overwhelming) morning yoga practice (Appendix 5), and using the tools I have learned through working with Eric Armstrong, Erika Batdorf, Sallie Lyons and Gwenyth Dobie, I finally began to take my performance warm-up seriously. I could sense a huge difference in my comfort levels when I was not physically and vocally warmed-up by the time this process was complete. I did not, however, stick to any kind of cool-down ritual. More often than not, I would get home around 10:15pm or so, have a snack, and fall straight into bed.

Perhaps one of the best cool-down techniques would be to just let it go. If there were things that bothered me or seemed of note, I wrote them in my journal and tried to rectify them.

On that same Friday night performance, I also realized that I had been making this process, my character, this play, and my function as an actor in its entirety, out to be such a dramatic situation! It wasn't. Or needn't be. Through this process I became more aware of the importance of finding purpose, and also my habit of defaulting to purpose-seeking; flying above an experience and judging it from a lofty distance. When I remove my identity and self-worth from the equation, it became clear to me how much the drama of this being challenging, of not knowing who the role was, of not knowing whether or not I'm an actor or deserving of being on stage, had absorbed me. When I knew I was going to be out there, that I had already been given a role, that I knew it better than anyone, and had every right to make her my own, there came a feeling of satisfaction and enjoyment. I believe that I actually achieved my goal of finding satisfaction and enjoyment in acting—a feeling that grew within me until the end of the run.

Moving forward, I have uncovered a prized few valuable lessons that I will take with me: that I must create concrete boundaries around what I do and do not bring with me to rehearsal—including, but not limited to—insecurities, doubts, disorganized habits, and judgement; that I must spend ample time in preparation (both in the short and long term); that I must trust in the director's decision to cast me and consequently work toward the greater good of the group and the project; that I must keep myself as physically, mentally, and emotionally fit as possible; that I must find the room to play while discovering any and all roles.

The irony of seeking recognition or validation for playing a role like the Librarian, in a play like *Middletown*, has not escaped me. If anything, knowing that I was playing a woman who sought to listen and encourage growth in others inside of a play about our humble humanity, has

taught me to seek simplicity. In the last throes of my research, I came across the work of Eduard Devrient, a German acting manager and historian. I found his thoughts on the topic of acting to offer a striking reinforcement to my own realizations. It is with these words, and the words of so many other thinkers and creators I have become acquainted with over these cherished months of inquiry, that I venture forward:

Quiet, simple acting on the stage is getting rarer and rarer ... Let the artists show the god-like humanity in every character; let him show that this humanity can never be completely obliterated even by the worst perversity or the vilest corruption. Thus, he will endow his characters with the deepest truth and will everywhere point to catharsis.

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5 APPENDIX A: Character Development

5.1 SCRIPT SAMPLES

5.1.1 ACT ONE, SCENE TWO (Librarian): Initial Impressions

what conversation / moment / event has impact?

LIBRARIAN

30 MIDDLETOWN (W) - (P) - (W) - (W) Really clearly different Scene Six

(Lights suggest evening) LIBRARIAN, with her purse and some books, enters. "YESTERDAY IN TODAY'S CITY OF TOMORROW"

LIBRARIAN. (to audience.) That book came back today. I was just reading (Here: (She reads, periodically clarifying terms for the audience.) "Life had gone on. Several moons had passed." (clarifying) Several months. (She reads.) "The medicine man" - a medicine man is a doctor - "The medicine man shook his head. The villagers stood, shivering. A star shone over Inpetway." (That's here) It was. (She reads.) "The medicine man spoke in difficult ways of difficult things, in the worried vocabulary of medicine and night. The villagers listened quietly, and quietly misunderstood. The sick man listened, and quietly got worse." For "sick man," just think of anybody, an average person. A child has written in the margin here: "anxiety, sickness, death, spiritual." (She quickly shows us.) She writes in these wonderful loopy letters in a bright red pen. At least, I think it's a girl. (She reads.) "The medicine man continued - differently, now. His calm eyes sparkled slowly, as he turned to the blushing woman there." The "blushing woman" is probably a bride or a woman falling in love. (She reads.) "He spoke now in simple ways of simple things. He asked the moon to be beautiful. He asked the sun to come to warm the unborn child and the born mother. He asked the people to be human and the animals to stay animals. He asked the Universe to expand. He said, deeply, to all of them, "Great things. Oh, Great things. Someone is born, someone will die, both are you. Unwind, unknow." The same little girl has written a question mark, here. (brief pause) I read once the question mark comes from a musical notation used in Gregorian Chants, to signal that the phrase should have an upward intonation, that it should rise upward, to heaven. Imagine this little red one here - no sentence, no question, just a little red question

mark, by itself - rising up to heaven, to God. Imagine the look on His face. (leafing forward a few pages) Later, she's written the word "atmosphere." And here's a barrette she used for a book mark. Ah, literature. (Brief pause. Looking up:) It's a beautiful night. Whether or not there's anything up there.

more energy to tell the story
Who is the town member?
what is a town member?

story of Mary + John

adeus to read town member

why? girl reference it wasn't working

simple / difficult "wamp"

A Godly woman

what a lesson for me. simplicity

do I believe in heaven?

already saw "atmosphere" Oh, let me share this with you!

area of previous scene

stop and feel this time

is this the action of the speech?

who is this girl?

OF LIFE / LOVE

to be good?

This is so often her narrative.

another connect is where did I read this?

we are all all question marks

remember air, breath, expanse, space

a bath

piece de resistance connecting to the astronaut

is this even true?

5.1.2 ACT ONE, SCENE TEN (Freelancer): Actions and Scoring

PROBLENCEZ.
Entrance: AISIO "I have high expectations of this play."
DOWNTIME, MUSCLE MEMORY

AMANT
Congratulate THAT'S FROM THE PLAY. - SURPRISE, ENJOY, AMALGAMATE

AMANT
INVITE/EMPLOY I'M WRITING A BOOK ON BEING AN AUDIENCE MEMBER. / ORIGINALY, I WANTED TO BE AN AUTO BIOGRAPHER.
IMPRESS NAME, DAZZLE

AMANT
SHAME, CUSTODIE, GLOTFY 'autobiographer'
YEAH. BUT THEN I HAD TO SIT DOWN AND ASK MYSELF, "SERIOUSLY? ME?"

AMANT / adon distract LAUNCH.
AMAZE / OH/GOD, ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING.
I'VE SEEN HORSES BEING BORN, EGYPTIAN TOMBS BEING EXTIMED. I'VE GONE WHALE WATCHING, I WATCHED MY POOR MOTHER DIE, SAW A HINDU BATHING FESTIVAL / A TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE, YOU NAME IT. / MAINLY PLAYS.
DELEAF / SOMETIMES, I HAVE ANXIETY ATTACKS WHEN THE
ENLIGHTEN, CONCERN, DISCOVER

SUPPORT, BOOST, CONGRATULATE, CHALLENGE, ASTOUND,
FLOOR, OUTWIT, MYSTIFY, HALT, UNSETTLE.

SWEET HEART

APPLAUD THAT WAS IN THERE, TOO, RIGHT AT THE
FLAY
BEGINNING. / I HAVE THE WORST MEMORY. / BUT I LIKE
BOOST.
TO WRITE DOWN LINES.
CONGRATULATE
YOUR DAUGHTER HAS AN AMAZING MEMORY.

AUNT

DISMISS

Some kids are smart,
some really aren't.

WELL, SHE HAS A VERY GOOD MEMORY.

CHALLENGE
WHAT'S YOUR FIRST MEMORY EVER? / IT'S HARD,
ADMIT. ~~CONFESS~~ BEFRIEND
ISN'T IT? / I WAS ALWAYS SITTING SOMEWHERE. /
MUSE
I WAS BORN IN THE AUDIENCE.

AUNT

DISCOVER / DEVELOP

IT'S FUNNY, THOUGH, SINCE YOU DON'T
KNOW THE END, YOU'RE NOT SURE WHAT
YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF. / HEY.

SWEET HEART

... AMAZING MEMORY.

EDUCATE
MY BACK IS KILLING ME. / I THINK
IT'S GROWING INTO THE SHAPE OF A CHAIR.
BATTLE

1?
COME
WE'RE
1? "/
) HAS

WOMAN IT'S A REAL GIFT.

IT'S STRANGE, THOUGH. IT'S LIKE A MUSEUM

EXHIBIT ABOUT THE LAST TEN MINUTES. / BUT IT IS —
EXCUSE / FLATTER
YOU'RE RIGHT, SHE'S INCREDIBLE. / WHAT A THING. /
DISTRACT
DEVELOP
LANGUAGE, YOU KNOW. REPENTABILITY. TIME,
GRAMMAR, US. / AMUSE
WEIRD. /

WOMAN IS WAS WILL BE.

GRANT
/ THAT PRETTY MUCH COVERS IT. /
CIRCUMSCRIBE
I'VE BEEN ALL OVER THE WORLD.

RGOT/
/OTHER
HE
DY.

WOMAN STORY OF MY LIFE!
ELECTRIFY.

I'VE SEEN SO MANY THINGS.

Really hit
this.

HUH

MAN COMPLETELY OFF!

BAFFLE
ALL THAT TRAVEL, ALL THE CATHEDRALS

AND WONDERFUL MENTALS AND EVENING LIGHT AND

BE PART,
/MAY I?
SERVICE

PEOPLE DYING AND WHAT ARE MY FINDINGS?

WHAT'S MY CONCLUSION? "HUH."

SWEETHEART "Huh." **AGREE**

YEAH. EXACTLY.

SWEETHEART SO WORRIED.
UPHOLD. **APPLAUD**
THEY DO. RIGHT. / THE COP SAID THAT.

SWEETHEART ... **HAPPENS**

INVESTIGATE
WHO SAID THAT?

FRIBELANDER.

5 EXIT: AC/SC10 Unimpressed w/ not getting everything
written down before needing to go.

LIBRARIAN.

6 ENTRANCE: A2SC7 OBJ: TO GET SOME AIR
STATE OF BEING: EXCITEMENT,
JOY, CURIOSITY, GIVING MARY SOME SPACE

YOU'VE FOUND A NICE SPOT

MEZ
MAYBE IT'S A SIGN } Genuine curiosity

5.2 CHARACTER QUESTIONS (Librarian)

How old am I?

I am 32 years old.

Who are my ancestors?

My mother is of Irish stock, though she grew up on the East coast. My father is from the Midwest, also of Irish stock.

What stock/class am I? Social / Economic / Religious

I was raised lower middle-class. My parents didn't have big dreams for themselves. They were never concerned with what I was doing so much as what I was reading. I was raised going to a unitarian church. I see myself as a Christian woman though I don't need to boast about it. I still attend church every week.

What position am I trained for?

Librarian.

What am I like physically?

Short, under 5'5" and with a curved spine. I have had scoliosis much of my life but still try to work against it as best I can. My father was tall, always spoke of posture as if it was an essential element to being good.

What am I like mentally?

Sharp. Intuitive. Great capacity for research and comprehension. I love to search for the books, articles, films that people are looking for. Every time someone comes in it's like another problem to solve. When someone says: Oh, I'd like to find a book that is kind of like... My heart goes pitter-patter and I get right to finding the perfect read for them. I have a deep love for grammar and spelling.

What are my strengths?

Communication. Though I didn't get to communicate much with my parents before they passed a few years ago. I think I became better at communicating when I let go of being right all of the time.

What do others think of me? Do I know?

Don't know. I hope I inspire them to read and think at least a little more than they are used to! I think I make people laugh at least a little. I love to bring light and joy to people. My main interest is in helping... being of service.

What are my physical quirks?

My spine is a little crooked, though I'm not sure anyone can see it with the clothes I wear. I used to be so concerned with people seeing that but I don't bother worrying about that (or much at all) these days. I like to rest with my hands in my pockets. I suppose that's something, too.

What are my personal patterns of life?

I enjoy slow mornings with lots of reading and reflection. I'm not much of a night owl, morning is when I really shine. I like getting to the library early so that I can start to get things organized before any customers come in for the day. I have a sincere love of clean lines and organization. It can sometimes feel like a real mess in here first thing but if I have a few moments to sort through the books on the carts and get ahead, I feel relieved. I usually bring a sandwich of multi-grain bread and ham with cheese. I walk to and from work in all kinds of weather. I'm lucky that I don't need to take the bus now that I live so close!

What is my emotional range?

I can get weepy-eyed at a movie fairly quickly but I'm not much for anger or being too sorry for myself. I try to keep my heart elevated. The world can be so dark, I just want to provide a little spot of sunshine for others. I know that can't always last though so I let myself have my bad days, I'm sure I have bad days!

What is my basic action?

Super objective: To be of service. My basic actions are listening, entertaining, and developing.

Where am I going?

In life?! Good question! To the moon, I hope! But seriously. I am mostly heading to and from work or to and from the hospital where I am visiting Mary. Metaphorically speaking, though, where am I going...? I honestly do not know.

Who am I talking to? What is my relationship to them?

I speak mostly with the Mechanic and the Cop. My relationship with Craig, the Mechanic, is that we went to primary and secondary school together. I have always seen him around but we've never been close or shared more than a few conversations together. I'm curious about him, he comes into the library all the time, but I'm not too concerned with getting close with him. I am surprised when he opens up to me outside of the hospital and really concerned about him when he leaves. I fear that he needs more of a listening ear in this world. I would like to be that for him. With Robert, the Cop, my relationship is much more complex. I've similarly known him for many years though school and our friends knowing each other. I've always thought of him as a potential love interest but he never pursued me. At one point I even let him know that I was interested in him and asked him to go with me to a movie or a school dance, I can't remember now.

He said he had a girlfriend at the time and that was that. I never heard from him really in that way again. I'm surprised also to hear him open up. When he when into police college I didn't think it would change him but it really did. He became so much more guarded and distant. Harsh. Seeing him open up again reminded me of when we were younger. I hope that something will come of it, honestly.

5.3 MASK CONSTRUCTION (Freelancer)

Step One: Initial Clay Shape



Step Two: Moulding of Clay



Step Three: Lubrification with Vaseline



Step Four: Application of Tissue



Step Five: Application of Newsprint



Step Six: Final Painted Mask



6 APPENDIX B: Rituals

6.1 MORNING RITUAL

Yoga Asanas

2 x Sun Salutations

2 x Moon Salutations

2 x Standing Warrior Postures

2 x Standing Balancing Postures

2 x Core Strengthening Postures

2 x Back Strengthening Postures

2 x Passive Twist Postures

6.2 PERSONAL PRACTICE: Warm-Up

- BODY** Use of Erika Batdorf’s physical warm-up technique with a personal spin. Using my own music in a progression to quicken heart-rate, build internal awareness (interoception), connect to small and large muscles, and to have fun.
- VOICE** Series of Eric Armstrong and David Smuckler’s vocal warm-up techniques to enliven the tongue, jaw, ribs, face, diaphragm, soft palate, etc. Humming through straw, singing favourite songs, opening lower back.
- EMOTION** Running through lines and exploring moments of intensity (if any). Allowing this work to drop in deeply through whispering, vocal release (loud sounds), and visualization.

5.3 PERSONAL PRACTICE: Cool-Down

- BODY** Stretch. Total-body check in and scan.
- VOICE** Humming with hands on body in different places. Vibrational “bath”. Singing of songs that I love.
- EMOTION** Physical shaking if necessary to rid leftover emotions. Affirmations and questions. Journaling.

7 APPENDIX C: Journal Entries

JOURNAL ENTRY #1: January 3rd, 2019

I am feeling a mounting anxiety. It is a bubbling in my abdomen that makes me feel like food is not a good idea and thoughts start to creep in about my abilities and the things I have yet to do. What I can choose now is to: a) ignore the fear, b) fuel the fear, or c) investigate the fear.

Let’s investigate.

I'm feeling fear right now because today will be our first day back in rehearsal after the holidays. I have felt very free from judgement (besides small things here and there) while away visiting family. Immediately, when I walk into the studio – first of all, I never know which room we are supposed to be in, so I'm scared I've gotten to the wrong place or that I'm not warmed up enough or will be late which would be embarrassing and revealing of my work ethic, *then*, I get into the room and everyone is divided into their groups, chatting. I feel isolated, perhaps unwelcome. There are so many levels to the courage it takes to do this work, I'm reminded. Oy. Vey.

What do I worry people are thinking about? I worry people will comment on my appearance, I worry that since I'm not off book people will judge me, I feel a need to be perfect and compelling at the first reading of a line. I want to arrive before I've even started the engine.

What have I done? What has my process been like leading up to rehearsal? I read the play several times in chunks while working on my thesis. I started working my lines but felt disconnected from it. I decided not to “work my lines” as though they were a separate thing. I want to learn my lines *in relationship* with the other characters and the space. Some feedback I got last semester from Eric was that I can get into a groove with how I speak certain things and then stay there. I think that comes from the way I memorize so I've decided to allow the memorization to come from an understanding of the scene, of the trajectory of my character in the scene and my relationship / need from the others I am speaking with.

As an experiment, when I enter the room today I want to smile widely, connect with everyone in the room individually and say happy new year. Demystify things a little (because *everyone* feels insecure sometimes!). Then, I want to center myself. Take some time alone where I can ask myself my provoking questions. I want to really take the time to refill my tank and not

be looking to others to fill it for me. I can notice the fear of being judged, or deemed not good enough, and I can center myself. Feel my body. Feel my butt on the floor and my breath dropping in. These are things that I can feel and I can use to ground myself to the reality which is: we are all deserving of love! And everything I have done has been with intention.

JOURNAL ENTRY #2: January 6th, 2019

Yesterday's rehearsal and Friday's as well felt a lot easier to manage. I felt like I was more trusting of my process but also of the process in general. What helped calm me down was an understanding (in space and time) of what the trajectory of my character is. (As Sallie Lyons would call – the topography of the character.) Suddenly, with that known, and feeling myself in the work much more, I was able to relax and start to feel how my character can move and live inside of that structure.

I need to focus on lines now that I have the topography figured out. I am not sure yet if knowing the space and working in the space had more to do with avoiding the work of memorization while I was writing my thesis or if it is real. It definitely feels easier to learn the lines in the space and with others but I think I still need to put a lot more effort into getting lines really close to known in advance of rehearsals. It's too much pressure to do it now.

Didn't warm up today as much – effect was not huge but I did do yoga which helped. It was also a daytime rehearsal.

Starting to read *Wuthering Heights* as an exploration into the Librarian's inner world and imagination. She's all about imagination, fascination, care, focus, her energy dictates how the room feels and when she leaves it is empty. How does one create an energy field that does that work? Reading the novel is connecting me with the dreamy, thoughtful way with which Judith

may view her world. I also just find it fun and I'm so happy to be reading something that isn't directly related to my studies right now.

JOURNAL ENTRY #3: January 9th, 2019

Rehearsal last night went from six to nine. A short one. I found myself feeling left out in a weird way so I rehearsed outside and worked on lines. I'm getting much more comfortable with lines and my general sense of things is much improved. I feel more confident, capable and present when I am off book. I realize that understanding the physical world of the play and of the arc of the play really improves my ability to memorize but I wonder how I can do this otherwise? I can't always wait until the last minute to get my lines figured out and I know now that it greatly affects my ability to enjoy and find joy in the imagination and work of the show when I'm hands free and ready to listen to my partners. Otherwise I cannot receive.

How is my work on controlling my autonomic responses to fear going? Well, I'm realizing that the more thought I put into the work beforehand the calmer and more capable I feel and the less I feel the need to calm myself further in my preparation to go onstage. E.g.: if I haven't specifically checked on my props, reviewed entrances and exits, or made mental notes of new things to consider, I feel in disarray.

I went to contact improv dance tonight at the Dover court house. In conversation with my friend afterwards he told me that he loves to go as an exercise in acting skills. Staying in contact but being attentive to what is being given, how what we are offering is being received, the effects of our choices and offerings. Moment-to-moment attentiveness.

I danced with him first, we fell into a nice, deep and generous dance. I was very in my head at first but have found that the best way to get back into my body is to take a big breath,

give some of my weight over to the other person and focus on what comes back from them.

Eventually, we started to move with fluidity and take the time to feel what was arising.

Later, I danced with several other people, sometimes one on one and other times in a triad. I danced with someone named Frank for a long time. I felt immediately comfortable and in synch with him. It's amazing how much of that kind of work is trust and feeling comfortable with oneself in physical space. So much of acting (once we start working on a theatre piece) is disconnected from the body, I find. I mean that we are so encouraged to learn from the text but hardly ever play in the body in space, in my experience. If I ever direct, I would want to give my actors the opportunity to learn from their bodies and create from them, too. And/or I'd love to work with directors who use Viewpoints!

In contact dance it is not about performance. There are times when others will be watching but I didn't feel any pull to think about that tonight. For one thing, I wore clothing that I felt comfortable in and could move in easily. Secondly, the group was incredibly welcoming and warm so if even they were watching it was with curiosity and interest. Third, mistakes and falling or losing a rhythm is expected. That isn't a thing that brings up emotions other than curiosity: ahh what happened there? And then we continue. I wonder if I can bring some of those elements in to the rehearsal hall for myself? Mainly an attentiveness to partner, a listening, a playfulness and staying curious when I "stumble".

JOURNAL ENTRY #4: January 10th, 2019

Mask-building:

Painted for 2hrs with coffee

Formed balls of clay

Pick appropriate music and put on repeat

Fela Kuti - highlife jazz and Afro soul album

Moved text through my body and moulded clay into mask form

Today we blocked the “Audience” scene (the last one to block) and ran Act One. We are now running Act Two as well. Our schedule didn’t say that we would be running that far today so many of us are not feeling as comfortable being off book for that.

Anyway, I’m in the hall. I’m writing here and getting all the fluff off the top and it’s mostly fluff underneath, too. I want to say terrible things about myself. I’m in a bit of a feeeeeeling about all of this right now. I want to be seen and I imagine the director looks at me and is bored. I feel really dependent on outside approval right now. I came in today feeling good, feeling capable and nearly off book for this act and now I feel horrible – like none of that was realized or seen. And even though I was told that I am doing well, once I get into the scene I still feel ashamed and unworthy- like what I did (how I performed) was really terrible and unforgivable. Where does this come from? How can I alter it? What is the reason for why I do this work? I have to reconnect with the source from where I get my joy... But that literally makes me want to fall asleep. I get so tired. I want to go to sleep and not do the work and not have anyone challenge me, this is NOT fun. I am not having fun. I do not feel good. I do not feel confident and capable.

Okay, so. How do I reconnect with that? I want to find the character but I feel like I really don’t have any autonomy right now. I haven’t done enough background work, I feel, and I also don’t really feel like I can. Later, I would like to go through this journal entry and find the repetitive issues, not pick out what it is that I am saying and pin it as “real”. It’s my feeling at moment. What can I do about it? I can work on my lines. I can prepare myself for the movement in the space. I can visualize. I can tap on my meridian points, etc. I can meditate.

My goal is to Listen and receive the actual information WITHOUT emotional attachment *if at all possible*. If I hear any of the thoughts circulate that I am not good enough or that I am going to fail, I need to choose not to pay attention to them or fuel them.

JOURNAL ENTRY #5: January 11th, 2019

Today I read some Wuthering Heights with coffee in the morning after my yoga practice. Then I submitted for an audition and finished my CV for submission to York - blanket application. I looked at some scenes for my class and our class ran audition pieces for Sunday (Theatre Ontario Showcase).

This afternoon we worked on the scene between Kelly and me. I feel a bit more comfortable in the smaller studios and with a smaller group. One thing Jackie has mentioned a few times is that I tend to come “under” other people when I respond instead of coming out and over to them. I think she means that I’m quiet but also that I'm eating the words instead of sending it out. This is a tough thing to balance with needing to just “be” which I've been asked to do with this character as well. I think I need to work on just being more comfortable in my skin. Acting is so crazy - how do we pretend to be something that we are fundamentally not? When am I comfortable in my skin most? When I'm with people I feel cozy with. - at clown camp I felt so comfortable and didn't care about how I looked or whether people thought I was funny or “talented” or not. I felt fundamentally good enough most of the time. I want to find that. How? What is it to be comfortable in your skin? There’s no need to impress, not trying to attract people or be anyone else.

JOURNAL ENTRY #6: January 16th, 2019

Last night’s rehearsal was difficult, again. I so often feel like I am “failing” at what is needed to be achieved in the scene or in the play. I’ve heard the note twice now that I am

dropping my lines or eating them, that I am not really sending them out to affect my partner, I guess... I just feel discouraged. I honestly just want to quit this work completely once these plays are done. I find it emotionally and intellectually and physically exhausting and at this point I'm not sure what I'm getting out of it.

One issue I am finding is that warming up consistently doesn't really happen. I did it for the first week of rehearsal but found that we would almost immediately be in a slow zone where we are just sitting around for a long time waiting for things to move (scene-wise). So, I don't actually feel like I am warmed up when I need to be. (A real issue for actors: How can we stay ready when we are asked to wait for hours at a time?) That being said, I've also lost interest in doing that work because I feel the group doesn't warm up, we don't have a group practice and so the half hour or so before rehearsal feels more like time for bonding and/or setting up the space than it does for preparing ourselves for work. Again, I feel the need to blame it on others, saying if they were doing it I would be comfortable doing it. If they asked if we wanted to warm up, I'd feel good about doing it.

Where is the joy? I don't feel it. If my thesis is about finding the joy in the work, I'm definitely failing at that request as well.

When the director comes up to give feedback to me, I feel her looking at me and thinking something that I don't understand... I imagine she thinks I'm stupid and don't understand anything because I didn't speak up much in the table read and initial table work. I didn't feel comfortable – as I so often don't – in the work where opinions are involved. I have zero confidence about my ability to share ideas and to have an opinion that matters. When I'm out in a different scenario, I feel that I have a voice and my ideas are valid. Why is that? I think I am

way too concerned still with how I am perceived of here. I get overwhelmed by trying to imagine what everyone is thinking of what I said or want to say and so I don't say anything at all.

The purpose of the work feels lost to me right now and I want to quit. I don't feel capable of living a life with this much insecurity and precarity built into it. I think I want to switch careers or take an academic route.

“In the gap between who we wish one day to be and who we are at present, must come pain, anxiety, envy and humiliation” (*The Consolation of Philosophy* 202). I have this quote at the start of my thesis paper. I very much feel this pain, anxiety, envy and humiliation right now. I'm exhausted by it but seeing that quote again gives me some peace. Funny how someone putting a feeling we are having into words can help to clarify it completely. Can help to disengage from the pain around it. Words can help to ease the pain of our existence.

Hmm... if a quote that is not even living, is not even animated or alive in anyway but just inert words on the page, if that can affect me so deeply as to offer me solace in a time of destructive self-hatred or dissatisfaction with life and self, then can theatre not do that and so much more? Could I not, in the performing of this role, give people something they have needed or wanted? A moment of peace or solace? Maybe feel seen by seeing themselves in the character I play? The character of the librarian is very accepting, loving, truthful and generous. She teaches me to try to be more secure in myself and to just share my opinion. I've got the opportunity to do this work through her. How can I approach a role that is pressing on the very things that are a challenge to me in my own life?

Just thinking a lot about the reading I've been doing...As Bella Merlin says in her book “Facing the Fear”, we must recondition our brain from this fear. Her first suggestion is to “repeat the thoughts we want to have” (Merlin 120), do we want to experience stage fright or stage

pleasure? So far, I have built a distress – I believe it started in high school when acting started to be linked to my popularity and/or my social success. Because social success has been of such importance to me (ahem, middle child), I was afraid that I would not get what I needed, the love that I needed, if I did not succeed in that arena. My first thought is of impactful male teachers in those early years. Even if I was receiving so much positive feedback from my amazing and super-accomplished improv coach who told me many times that I was one of the best female improvisors she'd had on the team over the years –I still let the male teacher's lack of interest in me as a performer stop me from feeling good about myself.

“Only when the stimuli that are to be linked in the memory have appeared together often enough do new bridges grow in the brain.” (Klein qtd merlin 120) – For the remainder of rehearsal I need to link the play of rehearsal with PLAY with JOY and satisfaction and enjoyment. Isn't it interesting that my character is so joyful and I am struggling to find joy in this work? That Jackie is asking me to find more of the joy in her and this is the very thing I am struggling with? Fascinating.

So, the other option when it comes to reconditioning, as Merlin says is Ask ourselves what we really want. This is linked to my element of “Purpose” in my thesis. I'm in need of finding my purpose in this work. So I'm asking myself: why do I do this work?

I do this work because I love to feel.

I believe we need to learn how to feel compassion and empathy, love and fury and for all of that to be understood as a part of the human experience.

Theatre is a living art that is fundamentally vulnerable.

I have the ability to share my vulnerability

OR to remove the painful element. In this case, acting. Essentially, if it's so hard and painful, just don't do it anymore. "Feelings of happiness aren't a coincidence but the consequence of right thoughts and actions" (Klein qtd merlin 121).

Derek Jacobi: "I had this terrible disease, and the cure anyway, I was told, would actually be to *face it head on* I had to get back on the stage and do a whole series of make-or-break parts. It was touch, and only by creating momentum did I have a chance of blasting my way out of difficulty." (122)

I've started experimenting with building a memory palace for my Freelancer lines. (loci method); Encoding, storing, retrieving (Plato's breakdown of the wax-tablet of memory). Other things to consider when it comes to memorization: Attention, repetition, meaning, downtime and muscle memory. I'm working on my lines now without distractions, finding the meaning and significance in the words, feeling it in the space and then letting it go.

JOURNAL ENTRY #7: January 22nd, 2019

Yesterday's rehearsal was really great for me. I taught in the morning and then we had a gather-up and got suited up in costumes at six and our first tech run at 7:30. Eric Armstrong came as an audience member and it was nice to have an outside eye.

I'm not sure if it was because I took time in the morning and read over all of my lines for the show or if it was because I took a nice 45 mins or so for a physical and vocal warm-up but I wasn't nervous last night. I felt comfortable and at ease—and though I've been feeling good lately, this was a really nice surprise to maintain it while having an audience (even an audience of one!). Jackie said afterwards that I really found the freelancer which was great to hear. I can keep dropping in further for the librarian so that's my continued task, to ready myself for the act of real presence with her. I often notice myself getting presentational with her or not really seeing

and talking to the other characters. I am seeking now to find that slow confidence that I think she has. Today I've read through my lines and will be chilling and reading until rehearsal. Making food for dinner and letting things settle. Feels good to take the time and not feel too rushed. That's the key with this role. I think. To really take in the world through the senses.

JOURNAL ENTRY #8: January 23rd, 2019

Dress rehearsal

Today I didn't do yoga, didn't really have a proper warm up, had a coffee at 4 pm and had a whole mix-up with my friend before going on. I felt really nervous and I'm pretty sure all of those factors need to be avoided tomorrow. I will get time to stretch on my own, will do my physical warm up and vocal warm up before the call at 6. That will help greatly, I think. It's cool though that I haven't been nervous yet though. I've felt quite calm actually. I'm trying to remember to connect and talk to the people I'm talking to but it's amazing what lights and nerves can do. Tomorrow my focus will be on positive inner monologue and positive affirmations pre-show.

JOURNAL ENTRY #9: January 25th, 2019

Opening Night

Last night was opening. In the morning I did yoga, had a Thai massage downtown, got stuck on the TTC for half of a century, made it back and warmed up for at least 40 mins at home and then 20 or so minutes in the studio. Felt comfortable in my body and we had a good audience. I wasn't afraid. Didn't have too much of a racing sensation in my body. I felt in control and also able to play as the night went on. Goal for tonight is to find that earlier on. To be able to pick up my cues quicker (a note from Jackie) and maintain the meaning. I felt in the last scene a

real deepening of the meaning of my character – her need to provide advice and solutions for people, her real need to be seen and wanted.

I felt a little two dimensional most of the process and didn't feel so secure in myself (as is evidenced in this journal). Based on thoughts from the director I found myself taking escape routes and not finding MY version of the character inside of what she had offered. Again, I feel that I need to make more choices before rehearsals start. Again, I felt that taking ownership is key in this process. I need to be confident to choose something and bring it right off the bat. I'm going to do this on Sunday with Balcony – spend a lot of time with the text and make some big choices about what kind of character I am going to play and how I will approach it – then Margaret can pick and choose what she likes of that.

I found myself wanting to hear from the director that I was “good”, that I had hit the mark or something. Reminds me of when Marion came back stage on opening night at intermission (‘*da Kink*) to tell me that I *had* hit the mark, saying he never usually does that but wanted to remind me that I can do it. I need to pay attention to other barometers besides the director. How does it feel in my body? Am I connecting with my partner? Am I learning something new about my character every day? Can I set achievable goals? Sometimes I feel that I wanted to be proven wrong – overcome with positivity to match my negativity.

What was the nature of my experience last night? There were moments of flow, especially in Act 2 when I felt the more challenging bits were over. I felt comfortable playing more and reacting with authenticity – also picking up my cues with Can felt a lot more alive and authentic – like I was trying to fix something, which I was always but have only just seen. Talking about it with Eric I was reminded of how the librarian really book-ends things—har har har—but how she is the town mender in a lot of ways and how to use that knowledge in how I

approach those later scenes. The freelancer is kind of the opposite, all for himself and his own story. I decided last night that instead of him disliking the show, which I had been playing before, he could enjoy the show and be engaged. This lifted my energy up. I was distracted by Lucas moving through the crowd and thought I wasn't being funny enough to take back the focus. I need to slow down a little and allow the audience to enjoy both jokes in sequence.

I drank a glass of wine and had some whiskey last night at the opening party. I woke up at 4am and rolled around with lots of thoughts. Haven't had this kind of bad sleep in a while so I was grateful in a way that I've been sleeping so well lately. It was hard to wake up, but I did yoga today and am going to the studio to do all of my warm up there. I feel more comfortable going into this afternoon's show as a time now to play and explore and share this character and what I've learned from last night. I think I may also try to "read less" as Eric had suggested last night—allow the "reading" part of my first big piece of text to be a little more dramatized and not to follow on the screen but to bring it up and into the space more.

I think I've learned that I'm getting good at integrating notes quickly, especially when I review them before going back on. I've also been early and set props early every time which I have a habit of doing, as well as being attentive and warmed up in advance. I don't have the nerves of not being prepared which I realize is the main concern for me most of the time.

Preparation allows for flow and play. So, off I go to warm up!

JOURNAL ENTRY #10: January 28th, 2019

It has been a few days since closing. It's Monday morning and we closed on Saturday so not that long. I've been reflecting a lot on the things that have changed in myself since the start of the run. At first, I really wanted more affirmation from the director to know what was going well. I needed a final push to say: what you have created is beautiful, but I didn't get that. Good!

It is not her job to affirm me... and I'm realizing that even having that floating around in the back of my head has likely affected my ability to take notes and really *hear* what she is saying.

Opening night was fun, it was our biggest crowd, but still left me wanting. Then, our second show was a matinee – the cruelty of these short runs is that only two of the four shows you do are evening shows so 50% of your audiences are basically in a stupor for the entire show because it was so hot in the studio and it eats up the entire afternoon, hah! I didn't feel particularly out of sorts during the show, I actually felt that I found a lot of play and nuance in that run, but our Assistant Director mentioned before our evening show that myself and a few others were too slow in our monologues. I took this pretty hard because I didn't expect to be getting feedback anymore, it felt like an unexpected power shift and I wanted to defend myself.

When there was a moment to, right before opening the house, I mentioned to her my feeling that it was hard to get that critical feedback right before going on stage. That I already felt the character to be really empty and unimportant and that I felt I had no real encouragement to keep doing what I was doing. In that moment, she reminded me how important the librarian was, how I have made her so lovable and full and to keep doing what I am doing and just keep the pace matching throughout. That really helped to quell my fears! I'm glad I spoke up but realize that I need to be able to hear feedback without it being taken as criticism. And, that I can't always make a thing out of it.