

A Mouthful of Pins

Questioning Constructionist Therapy Frameworks in Theatre-Making



Margi Brown Ash

B.A.Dip.Ed.

Grad.Dip.Adol.Health & Welfare.

Grad.Dip.Experiential & Creative Arts Therapy

Master of Counselling

Master of Arts (Research)

Creative Industries Faculty

Queensland University of Technology

2009

Key terms

Social constructionism

Collaboration

Therapeutic frameworks

Leadership

Theatre

Performance

Personal agency

Transformation

Abstract

A Mouthful of Pins constitutes the practical component (50 per cent) of a practice-led Master of Arts through the Creative Industries Faculty of Queensland University of Technology. This research reports on the attempt to create a constructionist/collaborative theatre-making process by incorporating postmodern constructs borrowed from the therapy room. The study asserts that, when applied with awareness, therapeutic frameworks can help members of the creative team – including the director, performers, writer, designers and technicians – to fulfil their artistic capacity, thereby enriching their process, their performance and their collaborative relationship with each other.

For this to occur, it is imperative that the director/facilitator stay curious and aware of how they lead their creative team, with particular care around their use of language, as well as an increased awareness of the multiple stories (including the sometimes invisible social, historical, political, theatrical and leadership discourses) that surround and impact the artist's process.

This research is designed to assist students of theatre, as well as established professional practitioners, to find an alternative approach for collaboration that can result in longevity of practice, while at the same time embracing *best practice* for their outgoing creativity.

Note to my readers

If I were to sum up what this research meant to me, I would use the words of one of my actors, in response to the question ‘If this was the absolute best rehearsal process of all time what would happen?’

And new pathways would be opened in our minds and our hearts and our souls that could feed us when we are no longer in that time and place and we would take heart. It will be comfortable and scary and it will be made of the stuff of our hearts ...

– Actor Z, October, 2007 (*PowerDuchess*, Appendix 8)

And so it has been: scary and comfortable. And because of the struggle, it has been *made of the stuff of our hearts*. I have been changed. Evidence of the power of this process is concrete: the collaboration between the main protagonists in this research (Margi as director/researcher and Actor Z as writer/actor) is still just that: we are strong collaborators, having come through the fire of this experience all the richer with dreams that are larger and deeper.

– Margi Brown Ash

Contents

Key terms	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Note to my readers.....	iv
List of figures	viii
Statement of original authorship.....	9
Acknowledgements.....	10
1 Introduction	12
1.1 The research question	12
1.2 An overview of the study	12
1.3 The trajectory of the study.....	16
1.4 The design of the research, 2006–08.....	16
1.5 Document outline	17
2 Literature review	20
2.1 My approach to this review	20
2.2 Introduction	20
2.3 What is social constructionism in the therapy room?.....	21
2.4 Some of the major components of social constructionism.....	23
2.4.1 The role of language	23
2.4.2 Multiple selves/multiple stories.....	24
2.4.3 Historical and cultural discourse	25
2.4.4. Power relations.....	26
2.5 Conclusion.....	27
3 Methodology	29
3.1 Introduction	29
3.2 Practice-led research and how it was applied.....	31
3.3 Action research in Cycles 1, 2 and 3	32
3.4 Methods used in all three cycles of research	33

3.4.1 Group norms	33
3.4.2 Journalling.....	34
3.4.3 Journalling using the MIECAT process.....	35
3.4.4 Psychotherapeutic process.....	35
3.5 Cycle 1: <i>Gone to Earth</i> Auto-ethnography	39
3.5.1. Additional method used in Cycle 1: ImpulseTraining.....	40
3.6 Cycle 2a Creative Development of <i>A Mouthful of Pins</i>	43
3.6.1 <i>PowerDuchess</i> PowerPoint.....	43
3.7 Cycle 2b The field trip or pilgrimage to Bali.....	44
3.7.1 Major methods used in Cycle 2b.....	45
3.8 Methods used in reflective process	46
3.9 Conclusion	48
4 Analysis.....	50
4.1 Introduction	50
4.2 Cycle 1	53
4.2.1 Who am I as leader?.....	53
4.2.2 Take away.....	59
4.3 Comparing process and form	61
4.3.1. Theatre processes	61
4.3.2 Theatre forms	63
4.3.3 Take away.....	66
4.4 Cycle 3	67
4.4.1 <i>A Mouthful of Pins</i>	67
4.4.2 The lens of language.....	69
4.4.3 Rupture.....	71
4.4.4 Meeting of the shameful selves	75
4.4.5 Take away: Making a world.....	79
5 The five learnings.....	81
5.1 Learning 1: Engagement of ritual.....	82

5.1.1 Group norms	84
5.1.2 Check in/check out	84
5.1.3 Goaling	85
5.1.4 Reflective practice as ritual	86
5.1.5 The practice of gifts	86
5.1.6 Use of Miguel Ruiz's Four Agreements	87
5.2 Learning 2: Impulse Training	88
5.3 Learning 3: Zone of proximal development	89
5.4 Learning 4: Valuing joint construction of meaning	90
5.5 Learning 5: Working horizontally, both in leadership style and theatre-making process	92
5.6 Ways of integrating the five learnings	93
References	96
Appendix 1: Adaption of MIECAT process	111
Appendix 2: Interview with Kay Philp	113
Appendix 3: Responses by email to <i>A Mouthful of Pins</i>	115
Appendix 4: Reflections from <i>Gone to Earth</i> artists	122
Appendix 5: Emails and interviews	128
Appendix 6: Excerpts from reflective journal	138
Appendix 7: Script of <i>A Mouthful of Pins</i>	145
Appendix 8: <i>PowerDuchess</i>	175
Appendix 9: Human Ethics Approval Certificate	176
Appendix 10: Statutory Declaration	177

List of figures and tables

Figures

1.1	The design of the study	17
3.1	The interrelationship of paradigm, methodological strategies, methods and tools	30
3.2	A breakdown of the processes of my practice-led research	32
3.3	Mapping of the auto-ethnographic process in <i>Gone to Earth</i>	40
3.4	ImpulseTraining stages	43
4.1	Difference in methodologies used in <i>Gone to Earth</i> and <i>A Mouthful of Pins</i>	62
4.2	<i>A Mouthful of Pins</i> ' vertical structure, with the text being supported by five other media	64
5.1	Creative constructionist ritual	83
5.2	Scaffolding of constructionist rehearsal/performance process	96

Table

4.1	<i>Gone to Earth</i> 's horizontal structure, where all elements are equal	64
-----	--	----

Statement of original authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Date: 10 March 2010

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Margaret Bramwell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned diagonally across the page.

Acknowledgements

Professor Brad Haseman's (2007) emphasis on building on the wisdom of the tribe has encouraged me to be diligently inclusive and extremely grateful to the psychology mentors with whom I have worked, including the late Michael White (who introduced me to scaffolding and Leo Vygotsky's theories); past and present supervisors Kay Philp, Glen Guy and Dr Roger Lowe (who all taught me the importance of social construction, conversation and multiplicity); Dr Warren Lett and Dr Jan Allen (who taught me how potent the world of the unknown is through employing their MIECAT process) and collaborative therapy researchers whose work I have only read, including Dr Harlene Anderson and Dr Sheila McNamee, whose interest in collaborative educational conversations helped me to understand collaboration in relation to theatre-making.

My gratitude extends to the theatricals who have substantially influenced and shaped my framework, including Gerrard Sibbritt, who coached me in the basic elements of movement for many years; Deborah Hay and Margaret Cameron, who at different times taught me the joys of Perceptual Practice, laying the foundation stone for ImpulseTraining; Hayes Gordon, who over a period of eight years instilled in me the need for clean action playing, the importance of having an objective and most importantly generosity on the stage; Dr Jean Houston, who opened my eyes to the enormous potential of the human being; Stella Adler, who for several years imbued me with a deep understanding of theatricality; Stefan Niedziakowski, who taught me the importance of body as language and Dr Leah Mercer, who has journeyed as my primary collaborator during the last six years, constantly challenging my hunches and encouraging me to go deeper, regardless of where we were in the world.

Special thanks must go to all of the artists who contributed to this project, particularly The *A Mouthful of Pins* and *Gone to Earth* ensembles. For confidentiality reasons, you will not be named, but a huge thank you to every one of you. This could not have happened without your dedication, passion and belief that there are alternate ways of working that can inspire innovative practice.

Special thanks also to those academics who journeyed with me, enriching my process enormously, including my primary supervisors, David Fenton followed by Mark Radvan, and Dr Barbara Adkins. All have given their time to make this journey rich and challenging.

Special thanks to my friends and fellow artists for their tireless companionship over several years: Bev Jensen, Scotia Monkivitch (who among many things organised the accompanying DVD), Aole T. Miller, George Valenti, Reilly Smethurst, Moshlo, Rebecca Sherab, Gen Trace, Cathrin Blickling, Reilly Case, Kate Young, Robert Millet, Simon Johnson, Jacqui Vial and Leanne Cronin.

And most importantly, a resounding thank you to my partner of 25 years, Bill Ash, and our four children, Aleema, Houston, Micaela and Travis, who were always there to challenge and support. Finally, thanks to my brother David Brown, a clinical psychologist who engaged in endless conversations around resilience and psychology.

1

Introduction

1.1 The research question

How can I apply a collaborative process, borrowed from constructionist therapies, in the rehearsal room to enrich the process/performance for theatre-making?

1.2 An overview of the study

Three years ago, I was approached by the writer of *A Mouthful of Pins*, also known in this exegesis as Actor Z,¹ to direct *Melancholia*, her play about aspects of sadness. Being a therapist who deals with sadness and depression on a regular basis, as well as a performing artist, I was very attracted to this proposal. After evaluating the initial public reading of the play in my studio at *4change* in the Metro Arts Building in Brisbane, I came to the decision that the script needed to be reworked in order to make it more accessible to an audience. However, it should be noted that the writer did not concur with this perception of a lack of accessibility because, in its New York City season three years previously, there had not appeared to be a problem. To me, though, it seemed obvious after long conversations that a large majority of the audience members – most of them artists – struggled to find the meaning in it. This could have been due to my style of direction (I chose to not read the stage directions out loud as I thought it would create confusion), or perhaps it was due to the difference between a New York audience and a Brisbane one. Regardless, I agreed to undertake the project on the condition that we rewrite parts of the text. To do so required innovative problem-solving: how would we be able to rewrite the script collaboratively while Actor Z lived and worked in another state? And as the project was to be the centrepiece of an MA study, how could I continue my investigation in the interval between the public reading and commencing formal rehearsals?

Because we could not start rehearsals until later in the year, I decided that it would be valuable to create another project as a way of warming to the task, providing myself with an

¹ The playwright/Actor Z is not named in an attempt to maintain a level of confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research. When quotes from the text *A Mouthful of Pins* are referred to, the citation remains *A Mouthful of Pins* (2008) rather than using the author's name. Also, the reference throughout to the 'writer' is a reference to the playwright of *A Mouthful of Pins*.

opportunity to explore and hone my directorial skills and test some of the emerging ideas around collaboration, ensemble playing and leadership that are at the heart of the research question.

An opportunity to direct a show emerged with Vena Cava Productions, the student drama society at QUT. I chose the play *Gone to Earth* by Helen Edmundson, which focused on loss, grief and search for identity – ideas that seemed similar to the themes of *A Mouthful of Pins* and that were also age-appropriate for the student cast. This was to become my first action cycle of research, extending from May until August 2007, culminating in a performance season in Woodward Theatre, QUT. I used this cycle as a means of investigating an aspect of my research question. One of the largest agents of change in therapy is not the techniques used, but the relationship established between the therapist and the client. For this relationship to be helpful, the therapist needs to have a deep understanding of who he or she is and how he or she facilitates. I thought a study of my leadership style as a director would be a valuable exploration before I began *A Mouthful of Pins*.

When *Gone to Earth* closed, it was time to participate in the first creative development for *A Mouthful of Pins*. We reworked the script, making KoKo (originally Koken)² the central character and appointing the original characters, Twin A and Twin B, as her sub-personalities. Sub-personalities are a construct suggesting that the self is made up of multiple aspects (Assagioli, 2000) and I thought it an interesting device to help unpack multiplicity – one of the key elements of social constructionism. The name of the play was changed to *A Mouthful of Pins* and, in addition to its artistic aims, it was to fulfil two practical functions: to provide a performance vehicle for Actor Z, who had not performed for several years; and to be the second action research cycle of my practice-led Masters.

I thought a practice-led Masters would provide an ideal framework to explore how my practice as a social constructionist therapist, along with my extensive professional theatre experience, could be focused on something that has concerned me for many years: the emotional welfare of performers. Having been a performer for over 35 years, it was obvious to me that processes used within the traditional rehearsal room could be extremely wearing on the health of the actor. Sometimes, after a particularly gruelling role, it could take me several months to find meaning and direction again. Since becoming a therapist, I have heard

² Koken is a device used in Japanese theatre. Koken dresses in black and moves props and attends to the actors on stage without acknowledgment from them. In *Melancholia*, this was appropriate; however, in *A Mouthful of Pins*, KoKo did not service the other actors, hence the name adjustment.

similar stories from other professionals. It seems that, because rehearsal times are so short, little consideration is given to the impact of the dramatic process on the actor and reflective time is rarely factored into rehearsal schedules – nor is the opportunity to debrief at the end of the day. Because postmodern therapy, in particular social constructionist therapy, employs reflective practice as a way of making new meaning, I wondered whether an application of these principles would enhance the actor’s health and in so doing enrich their performance.

As I explored how to create this new landscape of meaning, unforeseen difficulties arose. What worked in the therapy room did not always work in the rehearsal space. I found myself dealing with tensions that arose within me unexpectedly and that aggravated my process throughout the entire study (see Appendix 2). I was constantly required to adapt the therapist-within:

It was as though someone was always sitting on my shoulder, reminding me to be reflective in my language; to stay curious; to adjust ... (Interview with Kay Philp, 19 February 2009, Appendix 2)

Sometimes this was infuriating. I also witnessed the tension of the director-within, in particular when I embraced other training techniques suggested by the actors over my own. Although I had refined a successful process called ImpulseTraining in *Gone to Earth*, which seemed to create the aliveness and strong sense of ensemble for which I was searching, I agreed to other rehearsal processes. In an attempt to honour the actors’ diverse frameworks, I dishonoured my own, relinquishing a way of working that I deeply believed would have had an enormous impact on the actor’s process. In fact, on reflection I would not do it again (Interview with Kay Philp, 19 February. 2008, Appendix 2).

Because of these emergent difficulties that sat in my very core, I needed to spend a full year on reflective practice after the final performance to try to make meaning out of this growing discomfort and to try to understand what the relationship should be between me as therapist and me as director. I was feeling like KoKo did: learning new ways of operating in her world in order to survive:

Says sadness to the fly – ‘perhaps she’ll die’
say I to sadness- ‘perhaps I’ll fly’ –
and sadness gives me one of his slow long sighs and the breath
it reaches all the way to the back of my ribs and my lips

come unstuck just enough to release what is high and tight
in my throat....,

(*A Mouthful of Pins*, 168 and DVD attached)

I realised that I would have to learn new ways of collaboration, which included better understanding how I should fulfil the role of leader. Even more importantly, I needed to know myself more completely and to understand how I deal with ‘hot spots’ or critical incidents that can arise through a process, the most critical of which began on our Bali Pilgrimage just prior to formal rehearsals.

Bali seemed an appropriate mid-point destination for the Queensland and Western Australian artists. We had an unexpected opportunity to participate in a subsidised Master Class at Purnati Arts Centre for two weeks. Our days were long, working from seven in the morning until six at night. We then rehearsed from seven often until midnight in a pavilion that was subsidised by The Bali Conservatory. It was here that the critical incidents with which I would deal in Brisbane first became manifest, although it was only in retrospect that I could see them understand how I dealt with them (or didn’t deal with them) in the way I did.

Following our return to Brisbane, *A Mouthful of Pins* was performed as part of the International Theatre Festival at the Brisbane Powerhouse. Seeing the work through the eyes of the audience, it became clear that the dynamics of this production were a reflection of the whole rehearsal process and so problems unresolved in the rehearsal phase manifested as unresolved energies or contradictions in the performance. Throughout the performance (see DVD attached to this exegesis), one can see evidence of the communication difficulties and personal struggles that affected the individual performances of the actors. I have reflected deeply on these, realising that they had strong ramifications for the whole production and for how I could address the research question of this exegesis.

To stay within the scope of this Research Masters, I focused my analysis primarily on the hotspots between the writer/Actor Z and myself, although acknowledging that the experience of collaborative practice has strong ramifications for all involved. Before I submerged myself in reflective practice after the process, the production felt like failure. My process did not seem to work, regardless of the care and dedication given to it by all involved. Through reflection, however, I began to see alternative stories that helped widen the lens of analysis and soften the edges of judgement (see Chapter 4).

1.3 The trajectory of the study

The research question evolved throughout the two and a half year process. Initially it was:

How can I enrich my way of working with actors in the rehearsal room in order to develop in the actor a thickened understanding of resilience, mindfulness and fearlessness and consequently inhabit their potential?

After the first practice-based action cycle, an adaptation of Helen Edmundson's *Gone to Earth* (May to August 2007), the question morphed. In the *Gone to Earth* ensemble, it was the group dynamic that strengthened the artists' performances. There was a developed sense of interconnectedness, which led to an increased ability to take risks. This invited a powerful yet joyful dynamic to be observed on stage (Appendix 4).³ Consequently, because of this exciting discovery, the question became more refined, focusing now on Ensemble building, its effect on the individuals involved and its potential outcomes regarding the actor's process:

How can I apply a collaborative process, borrowed from constructionist therapies, in the rehearsal room to enrich the process/performance for theatre-making?

It was only in the post-*A Mouthful of Pins* reflective year, from February to December 2008, that the full significance of this question emerged. Although much time was spent developing the *A Mouthful of Pins* ensemble throughout the rehearsal process, it became very clear that, despite considerable efforts to support the ensemble with strong practices of reflection and ritual, individuals within the ensemble had enormous power to affect and alter the collaboration. In choosing not to use the processes that worked so well in *Gone to Earth*, we found ourselves moving away from the joy and interconnectedness that had happened in that previous project and moving closer to something that for a long time had no name.

1.4 The design of the research, 2006–08

The flowchart in Figure 1.1 shows the path taken over the last two and half years. Although it appears linear, it was more of a spiral, with each step being informed and shaped by emerging theory and practice; the deeper the study, the more complex the analysis became. A more

³ The most distinct quality on which *Gone to Earth* audiences commented after the performances was the sheer joy of the actors, their ability to fluidly move from one scene to another with highly emotional material and their trusting relationship with each other on stage.

truthful, yet messy representation would be having all of these elements superimposed on each other, with theory constantly deepening and enriching the practice:

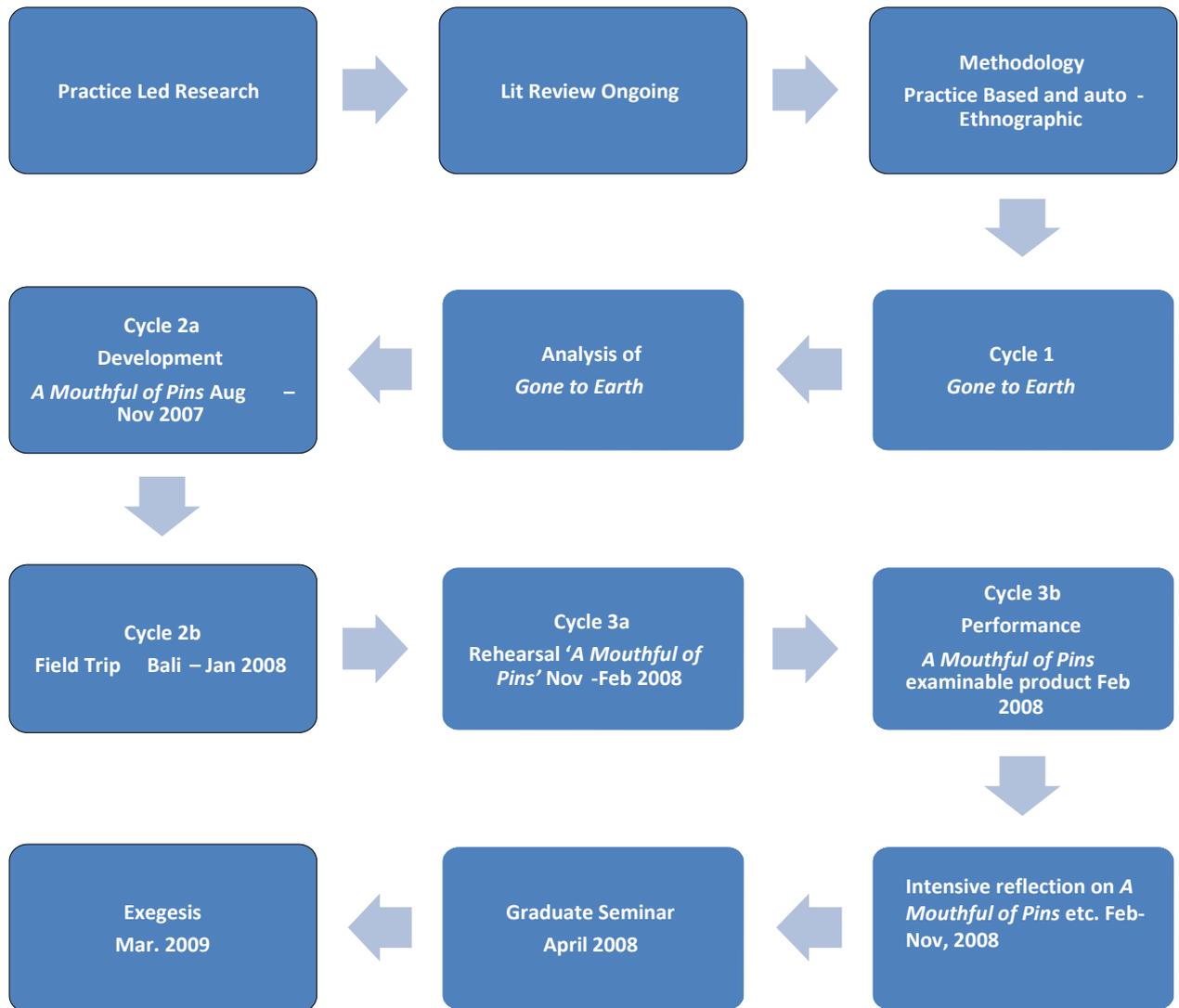


Figure 1.1: The design of the study

1.5 Document outline

Chapter 2 presents a literature review focusing on the psychotherapeutic applications of social constructionism that have guided this research. Initially, social constructionist theory can appear rather dense and the reader may think it is far too complex to apply to something as straightforward as ensemble-building and theatre-making. However, after experiencing the profound changes that occurred for me when switching from a traditional therapeutic

approach to a social constructionist approach in the therapy room, I was keen to see whether the same leaps could occur in theatre-making.

The major constructionist component explored in the literature review is the importance of language and how it creates our sense of reality. The way we use language is largely influenced by multiplicity: our multiple roles and how we change depending on who we are with and what we are doing; the many and varied stories that sit around us; and the huge number of discourses that impact on us. These influences are explored in an attempt to understand the constantly shifting frameworks within which we work. Although to the uninitiated this may seem a complicated approach, it is necessary to understand the components that affect the individual and the space between individuals⁴ in order to develop what we could call ‘best practice’.

It should be noted that the literature review focuses on the primary guiding principle of this research project: social constructionism. As the research progressed, the terrain widened, and I have chosen to incorporate some of these new theories and discoveries within the body of the following chapters, rather than presenting all of the literature solely in Chapter 2. The reader will find some theoretical components relative to our theatre collaborative practice woven throughout Chapter 4. Because of the limitations of time, space and the scope of this study, this is far briefer, and consequently less satisfying, than I would have preferred.

Chapter 3 summarises the various qualitative methodologies employed. The cycles evolved depending on the demands of the research. The outcomes of *Gone to Earth* (Cycle 1) offered me a deeper understanding of my leadership role and the Balinese rituals (Cycle 2b) enriched our *A Mouthful of Pins* rehearsal and performance processes:

- action research (Cycles 1, 2 and 3), including *Gone to Earth* and *A Mouthful of Pins*
- auto-ethnography focusing on leadership (Cycle 1)
- field trip or pilgrimage to Bali (Cycle 2b)
- reflective practice using MIECAT⁵ Process (Cycle 1, 2, 3).

⁴ By the space between I mean the space that sits between dialogue and body movement of both the talker and the listener where meaning is negotiated with an awareness of social, historical, cultural and political factors that may be present (Lowe, 2005).

⁵ MIECAT stands for Melbourne Institute of Experiential and Creative Arts Therapy. It was begun by Dr. Warren Lett in the early 1990s.

The tools used in gathering the necessary research data are then discussed briefly, including:

- *PowerDuchess PowerPoint*⁶ presentations (Cycle 2), used as a coaching tool in the writing process to address the fact that collaborator Actor Z lived in another state
- reflective journal and emails between director and writer/performer (Cycle 1, 2, 3)
- improvisation in the rehearsal room, including clowning and mask (Cycle 1, 2, 3)
- rituals (Cycle 1, 2, 3)
- postmodern therapeutic techniques (Cycle 1, 2, 3).

This is followed by Chapter 4, which focuses on an analysis of the research. Because I have attempted to stay loyal to the social constructionist lens in the writing up of this exegesis, the reader may find that the analysis appears more tentative than they are expecting. I focus on the mysteries that emerged, rather than the problems needing to be solved; by mysteries I mean those things that we did not expect nor anticipate. This does not mean that I avoided unpacking the experience and indwelling the processes deeply; rather, when I did so I tried to step away from the binaries of good, bad, success or failure.

I begin with an auto ethnographic study of my style of leadership in *Gone to Earth* (Cycle 1), followed by a look at how the process and form changed between *Gone to Earth* and *A Mouthful of Pins*, concluding with an exploration of some of the critical incidents that occurred.

Chapter 5 explores the findings of the research: what I have discovered and what knowledge has been co-created as a result of *A Mouthful of Pins*. I outline a way forward, looking at how this research can be incorporated into future work both for myself and also for other theatre-makers who may be searching for a strongly collaborative and strengths-based approach to theatre-making.

⁶ This is a term I devised to refer to this form of collaborative practice.

2 Literature review

2.1 My approach to this review

My relationship to social constructionism, which has become my preferred philosophy, began when I was a trainee social constructionist therapist, then a therapist developing my own creative arts studio using this approach, and finally a teacher of social constructionist therapy. This review of the literature in the field is therefore intrinsically linked with my own unfolding experience of social constructionism, having learned and taught it through an experiential lens. In this review, and indeed throughout the whole exegesis, my aim is to ‘to look at the familiar with scrutiny, with new eyes and ears, to see and hear it differently, to understand it differently, to articulate it differently’ (Anderson, 2007, p. 34). In order ‘to articulate it differently’, I have decided to use language often used by the researchers in the field. The language could be regarded as more poetic than what is usually demanded in academia. Some researchers have described this as being ‘socially poetic’ (Shotter & Katz, cited in Strong, 2002). Shotter explains this when he talks about wedding practical and aesthetic words, providing clients with the opportunity to create useful meaning of difficult-to-express ideas (Strong, 2002). I am reminded of what Hoffman (2007) writes: a person listens not only to the words, but how they see the words being spoken. Johnella Bird (2000) interprets this to include feelings as well as thoughts, visions, dreams and imagination (2000, p. 29). Throughout this exegesis, beginning with this review, you will read things like ‘the dance of connection’, ‘the mysteries that fold’, ‘unpacking’, ‘expanding the horizon’, ‘landscape of meaning and action’, ‘shimmering dynamic’ and ‘dreaming it on’, words that describe and stimulate not only what is happening but also the feelings that surround it.

2.2 Introduction

This research investigates how theatre-making processes could be enriched by the application of the collaborative framework used in social constructionist therapy.⁷ The research question

⁷ Often there is confusion between constructionism and constructivism. Some writers use the terms interchangeably, although the movements originated from different traditions. It is beyond the scope of this study to explore the similarities and differences between the two disciplines, apart from saying that the core philosophy – that *knowledge is a construction* – is similar, and both reject the idea that the mind mirrors reality and endorse the idea that humans construct their own reality through language (Anderson, 1997).

therefore implies that this chapter will cover not only a review of social constructionist research, but also a review of theatre-making processes. Due to the space limitations of this exegesis, I have chosen to focus primarily on social constructionism in this chapter. I will wait and allow the theatrical implications of my question to unfold throughout the methodology and analysis chapters. This could be seen as a direct mapping of my own experience: it was only when I experienced a constructionist way of collaborating in the therapy room that I was driven to explore the traditional ways of collaborative theatre-making and how they could be adjusted to embrace a more constructionist approach.

In order to explore the literature of the constructionist field as best I can, I will first briefly examine the philosophy of social constructionism, followed by an exploration of some of the relevant components of social constructionism, including the power of language, the constructs of multiple selves and multiple stories, the unavoidable impact of social and cultural discourses, and finally the often-invisible influence of power, which proved to be our sticking point in the rehearsal process.

2.3 What is social constructionism in the therapy room?

Before we begin, some readers may not be aware that there are over 400 different types of therapies, so the simple term ‘therapy room’ is really not so simple. QUT academic and lecturing colleague Roger Lowe explains the difference between evidenced-based psychotherapies and social constructionist counselling approaches. According to Lowe, evidence-based approaches to therapy require an expert therapist to direct the client-in-need to find and then reclaim their reality, whereas social constructionist counselling involves entering into a relationship that helps the client reconstruct their own reality and develop a stronger sense of personal agency. Sheila McNamee (2004) also believes that social constructionism focuses on relationships and the ways in which relationships create meaning, and her colleague Dian Marie Hosking has written extensively about relational construction. Hosking and Gergen discuss social constructionism and its relationship to language as being:

in striking contrast to several hundred years of western thought that views knowledge as built up from the individual’s observations and rational thought. For constructionists however whatever there is becomes meaningful to us primarily as a result of our relationship to others. (Kwee, Gergen & Koshkawa, 2007, p. 299)

Their colleague, Harlene Anderson (2007, p. 43) – also a prolific writer in the field – suggests that social constructionism is not even a therapy, but could be seen as a postmodern philosophy of life.

As a postmodern philosophy,⁸ social constructionism was introduced initially by Berger and Luckmann (1966) in their book *The Social Construction of Reality*, where they proposed that ‘the world was socially constructed by the social practices of people but at the same time experienced by them as if the nature of their world was pre-given and fixed’ (1966, p. 1). A few years later, Kenneth Gergen – a pioneer in the field – began to investigate this application of social constructionism to psychology, where he proposed that history and culture (social practices) have enormous implications when it comes to understanding an individual’s life (Gergen, 1973, 1985; Anderson, 1998b; De Koster et al., 2004). Vivien Burr (1995), in her user-friendly book *Introduction to Social Constructionism* suggests that social constructionism could be a way of making sense of these cultural and historical influences and by engaging in conversations they could create other possibilities – new stories to live by. Roger Lowe thinks that the ‘taken-for-granted ways of talking, writing and theorizing’ can keep individuals stuck or fixed in self-limiting behaviour (2004, p. 14). Ken Gergen (2009), Dian Hosking (1999) and Sheila McNamee (2004a) suggest that the individual can, through relationship and conversation, move away from this fixed state and create new behaviour. Rather than discovering ‘who they are’, they can construct ‘who they wish to be’ (Hosking, 2006). Instead of arguing from a platform of facts, judgment and evidence (which is how our modern world often operates, especially in academia), McNamee (2004a) sees a social constructionist approach as an exploration of relationship and the way relationship creates meaning.

All of these theorists agree that knowledge is relational, and it is crucial to challenge the idea of absolute truth or conventional knowledge in order to live a free and productive life. Gergen is well known for his statement ‘I am linked, therefore I am’ as an answer to Descartes’ ‘I think, therefore I am’ (Gergen, 2009). Connection with others is the key.

How then are the ‘fixed’ and taken-for-granted, invisible and deeply embedded ‘truths’ made apparent? One way to answer this question is to deconstruct what social constructionist literature sees as important influences, beginning with language.

⁸ Here postmodernism is defined as an ideology that challenges the universal or meta-narratives, those absolute truths that dominate. In so doing, it challenges the meaning of knowledge and the contribution that language makes to creating knowledge (Anderson, 2007).

2.4 Some of the major components of social constructionism

How do we make explicit these ‘taken-for-granted ways of talking, writing and theorizing’ (Lowe, 2004, 14) in order to transform into who we are capable of becoming? In this literature review, I focus on three aspects that have most application to the creative rehearsal process. I will explore the transformational role of language (Anderson, 2001) and how it can be seen as creating the reality of the individual (Bruffee, cited in Rouster, 1993); look at the notion of multiplicity, including ideas of multiple realities and multiple stories; and examine social and cultural discourses that influence the way we inhabit our world. Finally, I will review the role of power in the construction of self. Of course, this outline explores an artificial delineation of the constructs that make up social constructionism. They cannot be separated in practice; rather, they interweave throughout the dance of conversations that makes up the constructionist philosophy.

2.4.1 The role of language

According to the literature and my own personal experience, language includes not only what we say, but also what we think, write and express through our bodies (Hosking, 1999), as well as vocal rhythm and intonation (Bakhtin, cited in Shotter, 2006). Social constructionist therapists are challenged to ‘expand the horizon of inquiry’ by paying attention to all of these qualities, as well as ‘intuitive, emotional, relational, internal and expressive’ phenomena (Lowe, 2005, p. 66). Johnella Bird (2000) talks about the importance of listening not only to what is said, but also what is partially said and not said, as well as attending to ‘messages conveyed by the body, by feelings, expressions, thoughts, visions, dreams, the imagination’ (2000, p. 29). As social constructionists our attention and focus is on this expanded definition of language, because it is with language that we create our world (McNamee, 2004a).

From a social constructionist perspective, language is not just a representation of an integrated, coherent and ideal self. Through the generosity of listening and talking, individuals have the opportunity to re-create or re-imagine themselves rather than just *discover* who they are in relation to other people (Green & Stiers, 2002; Burr, 1995; Gergen, 2008; McNamee, 2004a; Lowe 2004) and this process can be seen as somewhat disorderly and inconsistent (Gergen 2008). However, it is not enough to say that creating and changing individuals is simply achieved through conversation and relationship, that they can ‘just talk ... [their] way out of damaging identities or oppressive social relations’ (Burr, 1995, 43). The search for meaningful stories is the result of an interaction between people, which includes

what Lowe refers to as the ‘shimmering dynamic’, that space that sits between dialogue and body movement of both the talker and the listener where meaning is negotiated with awareness of social, historical, cultural and political factors which may be present (Lowe, 2005).

John Shotter believes that a good listener sits inside the conversation responding to the space between as though responding to a story, allowing curiosity and anticipation to enter the relationship (Anderson, 2007). When a person listens they not only *hear* the words but they *see* the words being spoken (Hoffman, 2007). This relational space between is where

people interact, it is rather like a dance in which they are constantly moving together, subtly responding to each other’s rhythm and posture. The dance is constructed between them and cannot be seen as the result of either person’s prior intentions.(Shotter, cited in Burr, 1995, p. 28)

The therapist is guided by these rhythms and postures – moments referred to as ‘living, poetic and arresting’, where the speaker is visibly moved by what is happening (Katz & Shotter, cited in Lowe, 2005, p. 65). As the therapist engages in this dance of conversation, he or she is always asking this question: ‘How can ... [we] ... create the kinds of conversations and relationships with ... clients that allow all participants to access their creativities and develop possibilities where none seemed to exist before?’ (Anderson & Gehart, 2007, pp 33–34) For social constructionists to participate in constructive and creative conversations, they need to be aware of the assumptions they make, and this includes a belief in multiple rather than singular realities (Lowe, 2005).

2.4.2 Multiple selves/multiple stories

According to White (2004), this multi-authored framework is an alternative idea to the one true self or the essential self that sits within a more evidenced-based psychological framework. The argument presented by those who hold firmly to a traditionalist view of personality (beginning with Freud and still a strongly held construct in schools of psychology) focuses on the need to have a unified idea of *who we are*. According to the literature above, there is no fixed ‘who’; rather, individuals can recreate themselves depending upon who they are ‘with’ (Green & Stiers, 2002; Burr, 1995; McNamee, 2004b; Lowe 2004). So the question arises: If there are multiple selves, how can the individual ever know *who am I?*

Social constructionist researchers see that multiple *memories* are what can help create some sort of unified *me*, rather than subscribing to the construct that personality is some innate quality within. I return to Burr, who says:

Memory allows us to look back on our behaviours and experiences, to select those that seem to ‘hang together’ in some narrative framework [the stories of our multiple lives] and look for patterns, repetitions and so on that provide us with the impression of continuity and coherence. What we think of as ‘personality’ is thus seen as an effect of memory and our search for meaning and pattern in our experiences. (Burr, 1995, p. 30)

In summary, social constructionists see the individual as being created by multiple relational discourse (expressed through language), co-reflection and patterns of multiple memories. All of these things are influenced and controlled by the historical and cultural discourses⁹ that sit around us.

2.4.3 Historical and cultural discourse

If we believe that multiple discourses – or ‘taken-for-granted ways of talking, writing and theorizing’, as Lowe (2004, p. 14) puts it – surround the individual, each one of these could influence how people see and express themselves in their world. The historical and cultural constructs – or what Burr (1995, p. 59) calls ‘bigger linguistic entities’ – of gender, age, class, ethnicity, sexual preference and religion could create prejudices that may be difficult to define:

The actions, words and thoughts of human beings appear to be reduced to the level of by-products of bigger linguistic entities of which we may be largely unaware. Our hopes, desires and intentions become the products of cultural, discursive structures, not the products of human agents. (Burr, 1995, p. 59)

As products of these structures, certain voices could be omitted, while other more dominant voices such as ‘white’, ‘middle-class’ and ‘heterosexual’ (Green & Stiers, 2002) could influence and shape who we are without us even realising it.

⁹ This can be seen clearly in the performance *A Mouthful of Pins*, where KoKo constantly returns to memory – as do Actor A and Actor B – in a desperate bid to understand.

According to the literature, therefore, it seems important to make visible the multiplicity of discourses that surround us, and in so doing allow for alternative stories to emerge. One of the most influential discourses to be made visible is the discourse of power.

2.4.4. Power relations

Michael White (1990), known for developing narrative therapy (see Chapter 3), was strongly influenced by Michel Foucault, and wrote that power could be regarded as repressive, limiting, containing and denying, shaping our lives and creating truths around which we construct our day-to-day communication. Just like the previously mentioned discourses, the difficulty is that these power discourses are often implicit rather than able to be named, which makes them even more powerful.

It has been suggested by Parry and Doan (1994) that one of the dominant but implicit stories of power sits around desire: people believe that their desires are of their own making, but in fact they often want what they are told they want by the media that dominate their lives. The idea of *them*¹⁰ being in control – or someone else being in charge – can marginalise and victimise the individual even further when it is coupled with the gaze of gender, which is constantly present and one of the most powerful and dominant constructs impacting on who we are (Hoffman, cited in Parry & Doan, 1994).

Another form of power that exists in the world – which is not as obvious as the *them* construct – is a more internalised form of control that has now become the most influential system of power in our modern world. According to Foucault, we have been recruited to control our own behaviour, relationships and identities in order to fit within the norms of our society (Foucault, cited in White, 2004). White reinterprets this by saying that modern power ‘recruits people into the surveillance and the policing of their own and each other’s lives’ (White, 2004, p. 171). This form of power sits at a local level, invisible to those who experience it, yet creating the very fabric of their lives – including controlling desires and needs while dominating bodies and gestures in order to constantly moderate and modify actions and behaviour (Epston & White, 1992).

Therapeutic work (and, after this research, I would suggest theatre work) therefore could be seen as a political act, making visible these implicit powerful discourses that can

¹⁰ Thomas Pynchon referred to the impersonal network of power relations as *them: them wants them to want* (Pynchon, cited in Parry & Doan, 1994, 1)

cause disruptions in people's lives, squashing personal agency and the possibility of transformation.

2.5 Conclusion

Social constructionism, according to the literature discussed, can be seen as a possible and worthwhile way of approaching the therapeutic task of enhancing other people's stories, primarily through careful yet creative use of language. It appears to be a very inclusive approach, celebrating the idea of multiple selves and multiple stories: people are who they are because of their relationship with others, which is constantly in flux. Personalities are not fixed, and because of this there is always the possibility that individuals can *rewrite* their scripts, finding alternate stories that are more suitable for who they wish to be.

Language, both verbal and non-verbal, is seen as one of the most powerful media to create who we wish to be. We are relational beings (Gergen, 2009), sitting in what Lowe (2005) calls the 'shimmering dynamic' – the space between the speaker and the listener. Within this 'space between' sit multiple stories influenced by cultural, historical, gender and power discourses that may or may not be visible. It is only when they are made visible that their influence can be seen and, once visible, can be adjusted or changed. As someone who helps others deconstruct the stories that limit and create problems, it is important to come from an aware, not-knowing and curious position (Anderson & Goolishian, cited in Jankowski et al., 2000) and to share power with the client. This is very appealing because it allows the client the dignity of being the expert on themselves and fully aware of the stories that surround them and their world. This invites a greater personal agency, for in the end that is all we have: our self and our relationship to the world.

On reflection, it is impossible not to be a participant in the constructs of power and knowledge, and it would take relentless vigilance to regularly reflect on how to use language to engage in people's lives safely, exploring the presenting historical and cultural discourses as well as being aware of the dangers and limitations of one's own practices and beliefs (White & Epston, 1990). Social constructionism is seen by constructionists as just one way to help this quest. In a similar way, my research could be seen as just one attempt to help actors and creatives (including the director) move away from their fixed beliefs, those 'taken-for-granted ways of talking, writing and theorising' to engage more safely and more creatively in the theatre world. In the DVD attached to this exegesis, we see an example of this journey of transformation: KoKo immerses herself in sadness, day after day unable to shake the fixed

beliefs that define her. We watch as Twin A and Twin B attempt to awaken in her a desire to seek transformation through making her multiplicity explicit, acting out her outmoded understandings of the discourses that surround her (particularly the medical model of depression that so dominates our culture) and finally shattering her fixed beliefs around the power of language. The performance that you will witness shows a noble attempt by Twin A and Twin B to release KoKo from her past and help her create new stories to embrace and enact. But before we enter into that energetic territory of storytelling, we will need to examine the methodologies employed to achieve this possible transformation of KoKo, who represents the everyman of artists.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

A major question that arose while designing this research was whether or not it should use a practice-led or practice-based methodology. Gray (1996) sees practice-led methodology as a way of improving one's practice through actively exploring it, by action and reflection in and on action, whereas practice-based research has been defined as a more traditional approach to research where one's practice is researched from the outside looking in on the practice (Gray, 1996). It was appropriate for me to do both. I needed to reflect on my practice initially from an auto-ethnographic perspective (practice-based) before I embraced a practice-led approach to *A Mouthful of Pins*, which became not only an *expression* of the research but *became* the research itself (Haseman, 2007). *A Mouthful of Pins* was just that: a difficult and uncomfortable mouthful that was hard to swallow at times, sometimes unravelling in an instant to finally challenge my core beliefs about collaborative practice.

The next issue that came up was how this complex process of empowerment and collaboration could be observed in an actual performance. The answer lay in acknowledging that sometimes performance can be seen as part of the process. This way of working and showing process was made popular by Canadian theatre-maker Robert Lepage:

Lepage calls himself a gradualist, allowing a piece to evolve during its run until it finds its own way to completeness. As a result Lepage has endured the experience of critical and public rejection when a work first emerges, followed by critical acclaim some years later when the work is finished, and that takes toughness of character as well as a strongly grounded personal philosophy (Tusa, 2005, p. 1).

In a humble way, and with apologies to Robert Lepage, I propose that the performance witnessed by the readers of this research is in a similar way to Lepage, an extension of the rehearsal process that took place across six months and three locations (Perth, Bali and Brisbane).

I have chosen to be eclectic in my choice of methodologies to widen the research terrain, relying on the inquiry cycle (action research) and reflective practice as overarching

approaches (Haseman, 2007), enriched by an auto-ethnographic study. Below is a diagram that clarifies how the methodological strategies, methods and tools interrelated.

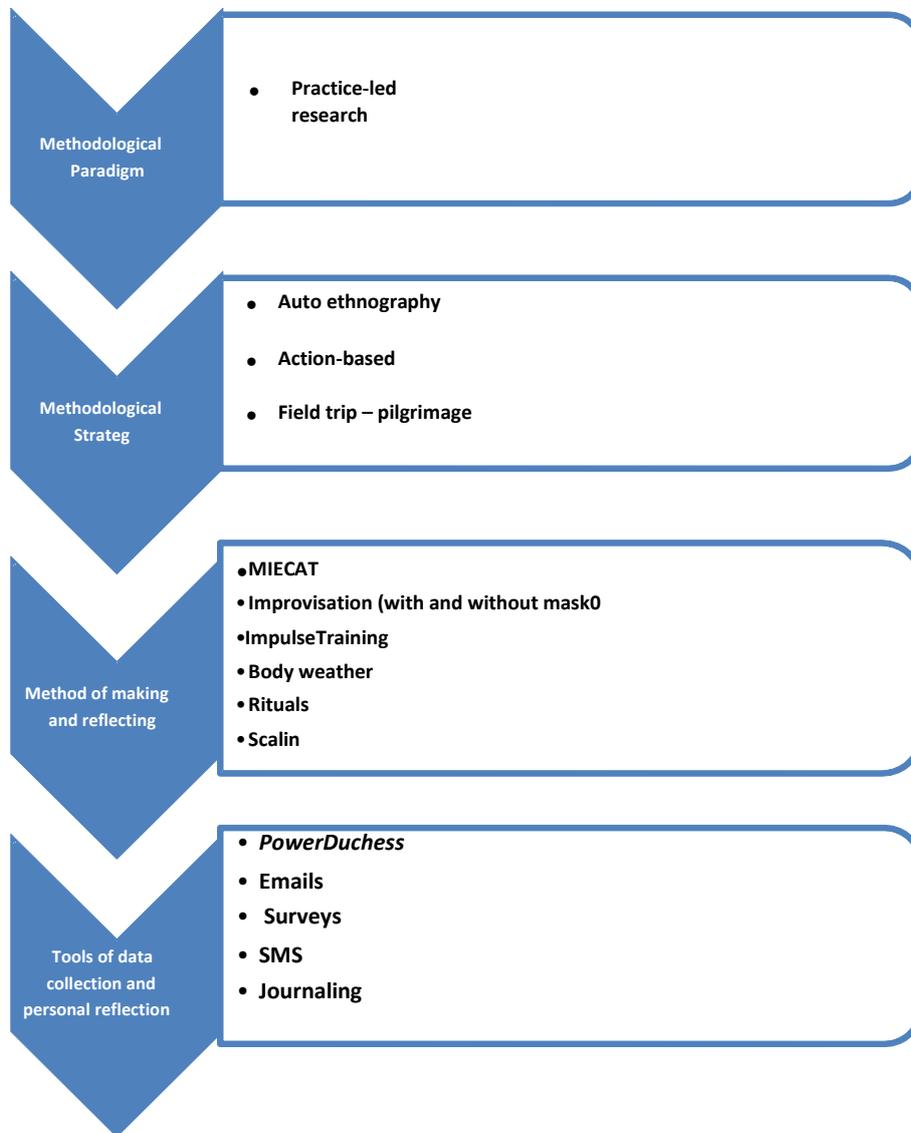


Figure Figure 3.1 The interrelationship of paradigm, methodological strategies, methods and tools

Such an eclectic mix is not unusual in practice-led research. Haseman (2007) refers to practice-led practitioners as *scavengers*, attentive to the research demands that emerge and responding to them in an eclectic way, rather than sticking to a more traditional approach.

3.2 Practice-led research and how it was applied

Practice-led methodology, a relatively new approach to research, is concerned with the improvement of one's practice by examining the situations, complexities, uncertainties, instabilities and conflicts that every practitioner has to address at some time (Schön, 1983). Carol Gray was one of the first researchers to define practice-led research, in which questions and problems are actively explored through methods (see Figure 3.1) familiar to the researcher (Gray, 1996, 3).¹¹ Haseman (2007) builds on this definition, noting that practice-led researchers are actively researching through their practice, rather than just thinking about their emerging issues. This involves detailed reflective practice, both in-action (while the practice is happening) and on-action (Schön, 1983). Through using reflection in-action and reflection on-action, the practitioner can challenge the habits of practice and make new sense of what they are doing (Schön, 1983). This reflection is crucial if one is to challenge the creative and possibly habitual processes that one has employed for many years. Schön calls years of doing the same thing over and over 'overlearning', which can result in practice that is 'narrow and rigid' (Haseman, 2007). This overlearning was a strong contributing factor to my reflective practice taking me a year rather than the prescribed three months. I had to relearn how to listen, bracketing out – or at least making transparent – the habits that surrounded and affected the question; this led me to examine how my devised way of working on the floor should be researched.

Figure 3.2 helps to provide a scaffolding or map for this chapter, as I jump through the cycles, discussing the methods and tools used. I begin with an overall look at my practice-led research and the common methods and tools I have employed across the three cycles. I then look at each cycle and how the approach changed as needs arose.

¹¹ For example, the MIECAT method of inquiry is not widely used, other than by researchers who have trained in the process. It was created by a Melbourne academic, Dr. Warren Lett, in the 1990s. Because I have trained and engaged in this process on a daily basis as an arts psychotherapist, it seemed appropriate to use it in my research.

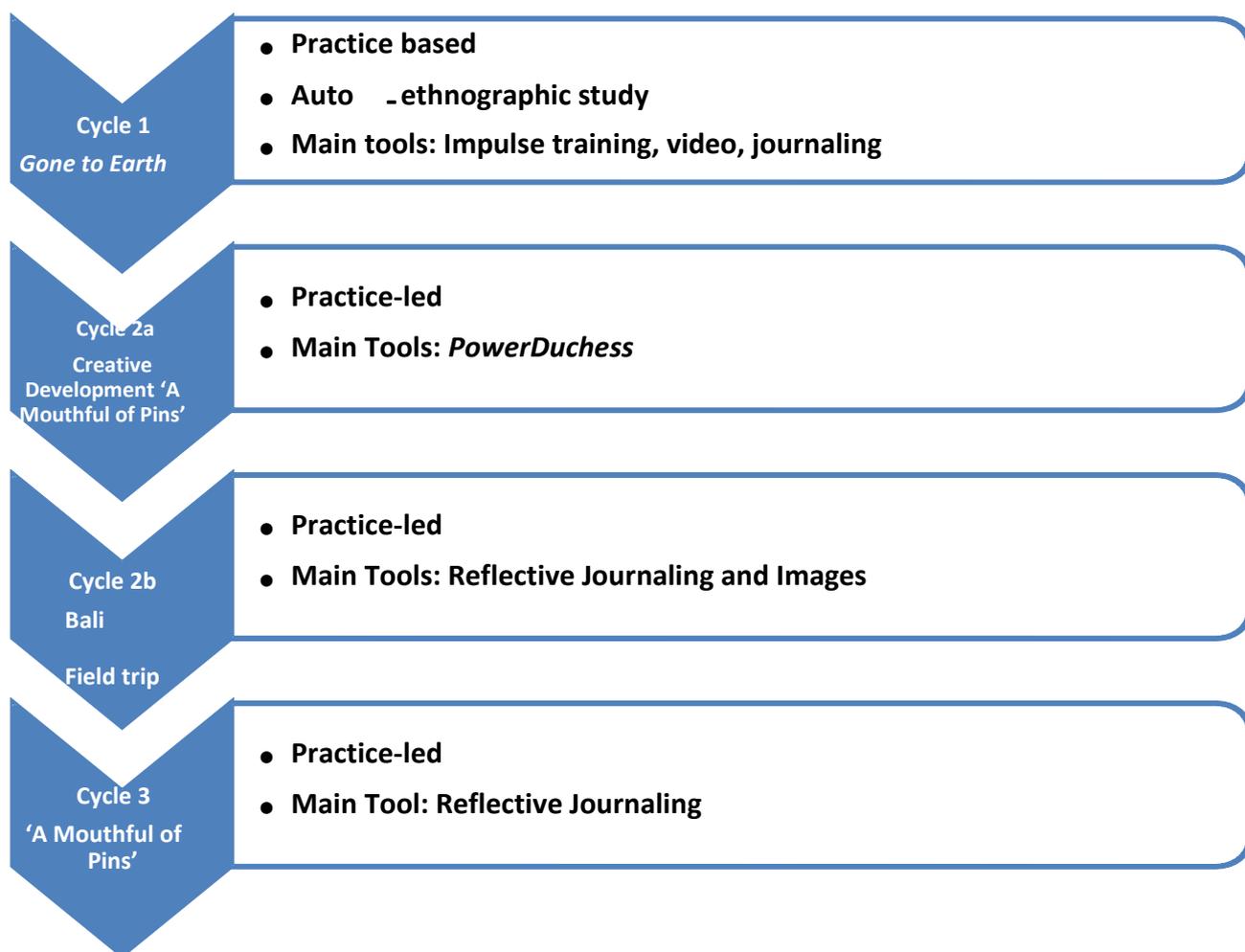


Figure 3.2: A breakdown of the processes of my practice-led research

3.3 Action research in Cycles 1, 2 and 3

Action research embodies good professional practice because it provides the opportunity to reflect on action, and then move the action forward with renewed vigour, consideration and new knowledge (McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead, 2003). The first action cycle (*Gone to Earth*) set up a basis for the development of the second and third action cycles (*A Mouthful of Pins*) by allowing me to ask more rigorous questions. Initially, the question led me to examine how I could harness the power of improvisation and spontaneity using intensive ImpulseTraining, my own devised way of working on the floor with actors to develop resilience and personal agency. As a result of the first cycle, the question quickly moved towards collaboration and how it might develop using a constructionist therapeutic approach: it shifted from a more individual focus to a group focus.

3.4 Methods used in all three cycles of research

Several methods were duplicated across the three action cycles, including the creation of group norms, reflective journalling and psychotherapeutic methods adapted from Solution Focused Brief Therapy, Narrative Therapy and Collaborative Family Therapy, all of which are expanded on below.

3.4.1 Group norms

Group norms are defined as a ‘generally accepted way of thinking, feeling or behaving that is endorsed and expected because it is perceived as the right and proper thing to do’ (Turner, cited in Jetten et al. 2002, 191). In the group therapy clinic and in therapeutic group work, we usually create a list of norms before we begin our counselling work in order to make clear what is acceptable as constructive and safe behaviour. I thought that, in a similar way, group norms would provide a safer environment for the ensemble. We began with my suggestion that we focus on The Four Agreements. Miguel Ruiz talks about The Four Agreements as a practical guide to personal freedom, a crucial element in the process of creating. Based on his Toltec ancestry, they include:

- Be impeccable with your word. (Ruiz, 1997, p. 25)
- Don’t take anything personally. (Ruiz, 1997, p. 47)
- Don’t make assumptions. (Ruiz, 1997, p. 63)
- Always do your best. (Ruiz, 1997, p. 75)

These agreements became the foundation stone for *Gone to Earth*, but it was not until over halfway through *A Mouthful of Pins* that they were introduced. This was a way of challenging the assumption that norms were a crucial tool in collaborative practice. However, as the rehearsals progressed, there was an urgent need to integrate them into the process to stop us falling into repetitive assumptions and taking things too personally. The group norms in both *Gone to Earth* and *A Mouthful of Pins* were negotiated by both ensembles and ended up being similar, although the wording varied. Many of them grew out of discussions about what was effective in the collaborative therapy room. Below is a summary of the group norms used for *A Mouthful of Pins*:

Group Norms for A Mouthful of Pins

1. We need to test assumptions. (derived from Ruiz, 1997)
2. We need to address the problem. (Derived from narrative therapy constructs)
3. We need to speak up when something is wrong.
4. We need to be able to trust.
5. We need confidentiality. (Therapy construct)
6. We need permission to ‘brood’ and then return to the discussion.
7. We need to be able to collage as a way of finding new meaning. (Derived from creative arts therapy)
8. We need to embrace honesty and openness.
9. We need to question.
10. We need to know when we are playing and when we are consolidating.

The last group norm – ‘We need to know when we are playing and when we are consolidating’ – was created by the ensemble as a way of clarifying expectations. After a great deal of frustration on the rehearsal floor, it emerged that some of the actors needed to know the difference between playing on the floor and consolidating our discoveries. Once we wrote down this norm, there seemed to be more clarity and trust in our process, which allowed for more transformative engagement.

3.4.2 Journalling

Journalling, ‘a type of connoisseurship by which individuals become connoisseurs of their own thinking and reflection patterns’ (Janesick, cited in Borg, 2001, p. 159) was used as a way of investigating the hidden assumptions and expectations that I held, as well as dreaming on¹² or generating ideas that still sat in the pre-reflective brain – that place where our spontaneous responses to images, sounds and movements reside (Jeynes, 2006). Bradbury and Lichtenstein (2000) talk about ‘the intangible feelings and background assumptions that are implicated in a study’ (2000, p. 13) and how journalling can help the researcher render conscious the biases that sit around the work, particularly in relation to critical incidents that occur (this is explored in Chapter 4). Journalling was also valuable as a response to the regular meetings with my academic supervisors and professional counselling supervisors, as well as learned relatives and friends. For example, when I was in Bali, I would send SMS

¹² ‘Dreaming on’ is a term I adopted from *Process Oriented Therapy Training* as part of my Masters of Counselling (QUT, 2004) where an idea is developed through creative conversation.

texts or emails to Kay Philp (my professional counselling supervisor) as a way of sorting out what could be seen as a tension between multiple selves: the petulant self, the therapist and the director (for more detail on this process, please see Appendix 5). The ritual of writing on a daily basis for an extended amount of time allowed ideas to take form, ready to incorporate into the rehearsal room the next day.

3.4.3 Journaling using the MIECAT process

As new ideas, pertinent themes and critical incidents emerged in rehearsal (such as interconnectivity or lack thereof, ritual, character work, improvisation, and so on), they were reflected upon using a tool employed in my creative arts therapy studio *4change* called the MIECAT (Melbourne Institute of Experiential and Creative Arts Therapy) process. The MIECAT process is a means of inquiry that uses multi-modal art forms to access meaning. A more detailed description of the MIECAT process is provided in Appendix 1. A MIECAT approach starts by attending to the experience (in my case, the rehearsal), describing what happened and then representing it in some art form (in my case, collage). The collage is then reflected on in order to identify what is meaningful, which is then actioned in the next rehearsal (see the cover of this research).

3.4.4 Psychotherapeutic process

Psychotherapeutic tools and rituals were borrowed from several collaborative therapies, all based on the social constructionist philosophy discussed in Chapter 2. Broadly speaking, Solution Focused Brief Therapy focuses on action, Narrative Therapy focuses on meaning and Collaborative Family Therapy emphasises the transformative power of the dialogical conversation (the power of language).

Solution Focused Brief Therapy

Solution Focused Brief Therapy, known as SFBT, is one of the most popular and widely used brief psychotherapeutic techniques in the world. It was pioneered by Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg as a paradigm shift from traditional psychotherapeutic practices, where the focus was on problems rather than solutions. SFBT is future focused, goal directed and action based (de Shazer et al. 2007), focusing not so much on *meaning* (as does Narrative Therapy) as on *action* and events as a way of accessing solutions. The strengths, competencies and resources of the client are emphasised (Lowe, 2003; de Shazer et al., 2002, DeJong & Berg, 1998). Personal goals are unpacked and the emphasis is on moving forward, supported by

significant others' perceptions of change (Guy, 2003). Because theatre-making is action driven, this way of working seemed most appropriate. We began each rehearsal by following the ritual of check in borrowed from SFBT:

Check in (SFBT)

1. ***'Problem-free talk'***: engaging in conversation not associated with the rehearsal. This way of interacting relaxed the group and provided an opportunity to acquire clues regarding the actors' and the group's resources and strengths.
2. ***'Scaling'***: the scale was 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest you have felt for a long time and 10 being the best you have felt for a long time. Employed as a ritual at the beginning and end of the rehearsal, scaling provided a simple way of gauging the emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual landscape of the individual and the group. If a participant were feeling *wobbly*,¹³ they would score low on the scale. I was then able to adjust my approach to accommodate the daily changes. The same occurred at the end of the session, where I gained an understanding of how the rehearsal had progressed. If there was a large discrepancy, I followed up via discussion, email, SMS or a phone call.
3. ***Goaling***: A clearly planned *goal* is chosen for the session. Within the therapeutic context, when a clear goal is articulated, there is a greater likelihood that there will be successful outcomes. Members of the ensemble formulated a goal for each rehearsal and then reflected on their progress at the end of rehearsal, with the objective of creating a successful rehearsal. This also allowed the actor to develop some autonomy and responsibility for her own process: if her goal was not met, she could follow up with reflection by either journaling or using the MIECAT process.

Narrative Therapy

Narrative Therapy is not defined so much by its techniques – although they have become quite famous (particularly externalisation, where the problem is externalised and personified)

¹³ *'Wobbly'* is a word that is used a lot in my *4change* studio at Metro Arts. When someone is wobbly, they are feeling 'off balance', 'messy', 'sticky' and not as empowered as they usually are, or want to be.

– but rather by a belief system: a *person* is never the problem. The *problem* is the problem, and the person only *has* a problem. Narrative Therapy is constructed around the idea that people link events in their lives and create a story or narrative that relates to time, space and characters (Guy, 2003). These stories are experienced as a way of giving meaning to people's lives and are substantially impacted by family of origin, cultural norms, power issues, gender issues, community standards and values, society, economics, politics, class system, age, religion and vocation (Guy, 2003). Narrative Therapy provides a structure or scaffolding to allow the client to move on with their lives and to re-author their stories (White & Epston, 1990).

The use of a reflecting team as ritual: Definitional ceremony

In the Family Therapy Clinic at QUT where I sometimes work, the counselling sessions often make use of a team of counsellors (the reflecting team) to work with the counsellors and client. The team observes the session from behind a glass partition, and then at some point members are invited into the therapy room to comment on the changes and the strengths that they have observed in the client (White, 2007).

Reflecting teamwork is a unique way of addressing and thickening a client's story. Thickening is a term often used in Narrative Therapy that refers to the uncovering of alternate meanings: often the reflecting team can see something about which neither the counsellor nor the client is aware. They therefore provide extra sets of eyes to help create new meaning. Because I was trained as a reflecting team counsellor, and observed the transformative power of team reflection on the client, I wanted to see whether it would be effective in the rehearsal room.

I engaged the creative team and producers as a reflecting team and called the process a 'Definitional Ceremony',¹⁴ a term borrowed from Michael White (2007), which seemed most appropriate for the rehearsal room. It became a ritual or ceremony that, at the end of rehearsing something new, the reflecting team was asked to give feedback. Team members employed strengths-based language and focused on appreciating what was going right, becoming curious about things that seemed disparate. We created a strong set of guidelines on how to respond in a collaborative and constructionist way. These guidelines, seen below, were derived from my collaborative therapeutic training.

¹⁴ *Definitional ceremony* is another name for *reflecting teams*, but emphasises the importance of the ritual of witnessing the story of the client and then reflecting on the strengths observed.

Guidelines for giving feedback in definitional ceremony

- Language needs to be framed in a curious and positive manner: ‘I wonder what would have happened if ...’ rather than ‘They should have done this ...’
- Language needs to be non-interpretive, allowing the actor the freedom to take on board what the witnesses saw, or to edit it however they wish.
- Witnesses need to talk to the group about what they have seen, rather than talking directly to the actors involved. The witnesses speak in third person about what they have seen, which allows the actors freedom to listen and respond accordingly without undue pressure, in order to take the feedback on board.

According to research done by White (cited in Freedman & Combs, 1996), it has been estimated that a session including a reflecting team is worth four sessions without. If this were true, because of time limitations in rehearsal it could provide advantageous. It also could help thicken the threads of connectedness through deep listening and increased dialogue within the ensemble.

Collaborative Family Therapy

Collaborative Family Therapy, as practised by Harlene Anderson and Harry Goolishian (1988) focuses strongly on the transformative power of the dialogical conversation. The therapist remains curious and ‘not knowing’ about the client’s story (Anderson, 1997a) while providing an atmosphere in which the client is comfortable and feels that he or she belongs. The therapist does not change the client; rather, the therapist creates the space for the client to change by careful use of language and addressing the power construct. Any therapeutic knowledge is preferably expressed in a tentative manner and therapists are always willing to have that knowledge challenged (Anderson, 1997a). The therapist’s function is to facilitate a process for dialogical conversations and collaborative relationships. In doing so, both client and therapist are changed, or transformed, as they develop their relationship together. This

potential for transformation fired an enormous curiosity inside me. What would happen if we borrowed this way of working, and were we up to the task?

3.5 Cycle 1: Gone to Earth Auto-ethnography

The therapist's most valuable instrument is his or her own self (Yalom, 2001; Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988). In other words, therapists need to be extremely aware of who they are: their assumptions, personal biases (Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988), values and ethical stance. As my role in this research was to bring a constructionist way of working into the rehearsal/performance arena in order to invite some sort of transformative process, I needed to be very aware of my own world-view: 'I can see you only through the me I know.' (Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988, p. 41) It was therefore important for me to identify and validate my methods of practice (Haseman, 2007) and understand my own personal philosophy in order to move forward.¹⁵

Auto-ethnography can be seen as a blending of one's personal experiences (autobiography) while working alongside others (ethnography) (Scott-Hoy, cited in Etherington, 2004). It is both a process and a product (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), allowing the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of their subject.

I created a process to help guide my research, a version of the experiential learning cycle (Kohl, 1984) that I employ in my teaching and facilitation practice:

1. Rituals including rehearsal interventions such as SFBT check-in rituals.
2. Definitional ceremonies and ImpulseTraining.
3. Reflection on these rituals and processes, including professional counselling supervision, journaling, academic supervision, collaging, etc.
4. Reviewing relevant literature.
5. Weaving these discoveries with my own emerging theories and practice: praxis.
6. Returning to the rehearsal floor to repeat it all.

¹⁵ According to Tusa ((2005), Robert Lepage survives his process of evolution by having a toughness of character and a grounded personal philosophy.

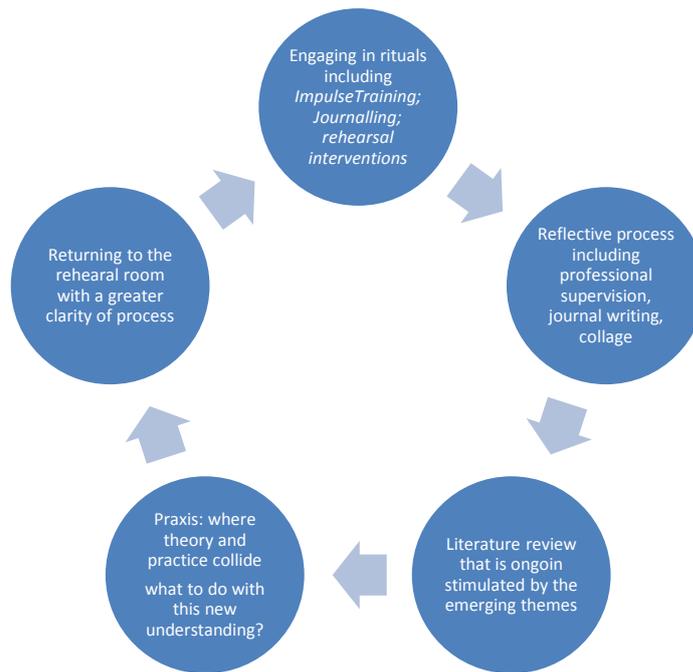


Figure 3.3: Mapping of the auto-ethnographic process in *Gone to Earth*

As an autobiographical genre of research, my processes, habits and personal biases were clarified through collecting collages (see front page), photos and stream-of-consciousness writings about experiences encountered (including the critical incidents) and videos of me conducting rehearsals. These were invaluable data to work through my relationship between ‘action, dialogue, emotions, embodiment and self-consciousness’ – all elements of auto-ethnography (Ellis, Bochner & Etherington, 2004, p. 140):

- action: rituals;
- dialogue: supervision, emails;
- emotions: reflective journalling, supervision, counselling;
- embodiment: ImpulseTraining;
- self-consciousness: journalling, conversations, ImpulseTraining.

3.5.1. Additional method used in Cycle 1: ImpulseTraining

My auto-ethnographic study focused on how I worked with the ensemble, using ImpulseTraining as a major tool to create the performance. ImpulseTraining is a term I coined to encapsulate my preferred way of working with an ensemble. It was the result of a

combination of influences over a period of several decades, but it was the transformative experience I had in a class with Margaret Cameron, a Melbourne-based artist, in early 2000s that stimulated me to document my process. Margaret's workshop propelled me to Denmark where I worked with Deborah Hay, the artist who had influenced Margaret considerably. Again I felt transformed and enlivened – not only my body but also my spirit.

I began to refine this way of working, combining tools I had used in the rehearsal room previously, including the following:

- I incorporated some of Deborah Hay's work, such as her use of language when she is coaching: 'What if every cell was alive and firing?'; 'What if this is where you belong?'; 'What if every cell had the capacity to ...?'. I also adopted her intense focus on tens of trillions of cells, all working at the same time, and the capacity for the body to think, rather than the mind doing it all (Workshop with Deborah Hay, Denmark, 2005).
- I used an adapted version of 'The Basic Elements of Movement', a system I learned from Gerrard Sibbritt (1983) a Sydney-based choreographer with whom I worked for many years. I borrowed his ideas relating to locomotive (straight lines), axial (movements around your own axis), pose (stillness) and isolation (one part of the body moving again and again) as elements of choreography.
- I utilised *Viewpoints*, a map for creating performance formulated by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau (1995). It formalises the viewpoints that dancers and actors use in improvisation: time (tempo, duration, kinaesthetic response and repetition); space (shape, gesture, architecture or the physical environment, spatial relationship); and topography (the landscape, floor pattern or design).
- I incorporated some of French theatre director Adriana Mnouchkine's ideas, such as her belief in having the actor develop maximum interiority and maximum exteriority, requiring that the actor stay very alive, inside and out, with a rich emotional score as well as a rich physical score with which to work (Miller, 2007).
- Colleagues alerted me to how similar my evolving methods were to 'Authentic Movement', an embodied discipline where movement and emotion are one, and what is discovered in the body is not conceived in the head (Koltai, 2007). I thought it

would be valuable to bring this framework into the eclectic and growing body of theory that sits behind ImpulseTraining.

As the training continued to evolve, I needed a name to incorporate all of these influences, and I decided on ‘ImpulseTraining’, a paradox in itself; however, it seemed to sum up what was happening to the actors when working on the floor for an extended time. Their impulses became more refined, with a developed ability to respond in the moment, building on the offers from other actors in extraordinary and surprising ways. This ability had a profound influence on their performative abilities.

ImpulseTraining involves three steps, shown in the box below.

ImpulseTraining

1. Relaxing, allowing the body to be supported by the floor and at the same time supporting the floor; scanning body and becoming aware of tension without the need to change anything; visualizing cellular movement.
2. Slowly, every cell awakening in the body, allowing cells of blood, small muscles and finally large muscles to move body from horizontal to vertical position.
3. Interconnective movement among actors with strong overtones of authentic movement,¹⁶ where actors respond and react to the space between each other, using *Viewpoints* and *Basic Elements of Movement* as a guide. The choreography that emerged was to become the score for the performance.

Because I was developing ImpulseTraining throughout *Gone to Earth* rehearsals, it became a discipline that alerted me to my own process. I constantly tested my way of directing, reflecting daily on how I conducted rehearsals and what I witnessed on the floor, slowly testing approaches to heighten the actors’ process, and ways of integrating the impulse work into the performance.

¹⁶ Authentic movement is an embodied discipline in which movement and emotion are one, and what is discovered in the body is not conceived in the head (Koltai, 2007).

Figure 3.4 maps the working terrain of the rehearsal process. I was developing ways of facilitating improvisations and moving them into the world of the play using these steps. We moved in and out of the world of the play, at the same time moving the actors from interiority (the actor’s inner landscape) to exteriority (the actor’s external landscape that includes fellow actors, architecture, the world of the play, etc.). It was several months before we managed to find the fluidity that was required to incorporate ImpulseTraining into the performance.

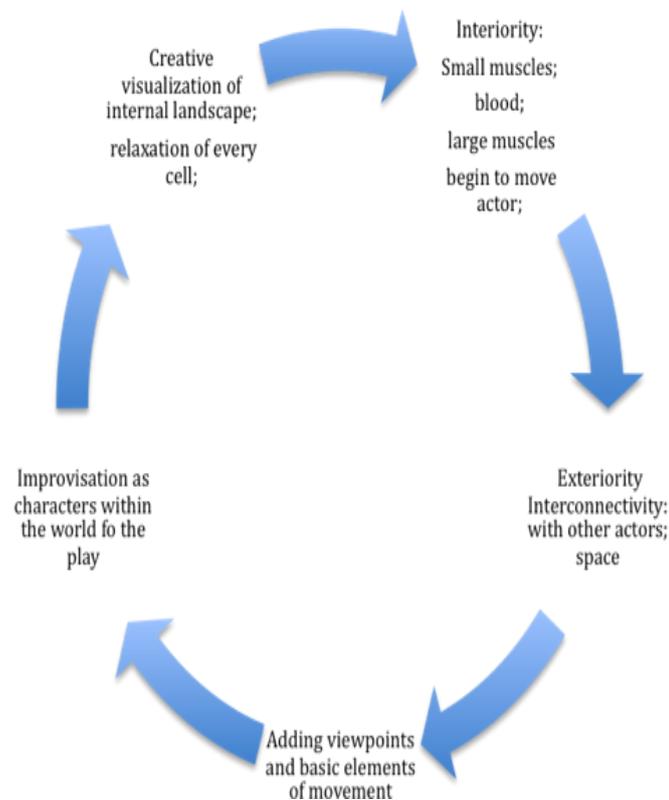


Figure 3.4: ImpulseTraining stages

3.6 Cycle 2a Creative Development of *A Mouthful of Pins*

3.6.1 *PowerDuchess* PowerPoint

The name was derived from an improvisation in which the writer and I engaged while working at Curtin University of Technology in August 2007. The words ‘duchess rising’ were part of a poem written by the writer, and I wanted to use them as the title of Cycle 3.

Although it did not eventuate, the pursuit of an alternate name resulted in the name *A Mouthful of Pins*, which was also a line from a poem by the writer. *PowerDuchess* became the title of the reflective collaborative practice in which the writer and I engaged from September to November 2007. During the creative development, the writer and I lived on opposite sides of the country and for several weeks on opposite sides of the world. Because I had just mastered the computer program PowerPoint, I flirted with the idea of making a presentation for fun to send to the writer, so that I could include images as well as words.¹⁷ The response from the writer was strong, and we continued sending these PowerPoints to each other, developing text and ideas for the show, only stopping when the cast and creatives assembled in November, and had trouble accessing the documents on their computers. The *PowerDuchess* did generate substantial material: the Sadness Poems, spoken throughout the performance (see DVD), came from one of the *PowerDuchess* exercises. I have included two *PowerDuchess* presentations in Appendix 2.

3.7 Cycle 2b The field trip or pilgrimage to Bali

The final methodological strategy that I employed was the field trip, a two-week immersion program at Purnati Arts Centre in Bali,¹⁸ which was a spontaneous yet practical solution to dealing with members of the ensemble living in different locations and knowing we had very limited time to get the show ready. We moved from the day-to-day practices of our ordinary lives and immersed ourselves in the highly spiritual environment of Bali.¹⁹ The spiritual practices to which we were exposed on a daily basis introduced another depth to the inquiry: how could pilgrimage and rite of passage enhance the ensemble's collaborative process? Rather than talking about this conceptually, we absorbed it through practice, adapting the skills and rituals we had learned to our rehearsal process.

¹⁷A year previously, the writer and I had engaged in a Jenny Kemp writing workshop at Playworks, Sydney, where images were used to generate writing. We had also used images as part of the development process of *The Knowing of Mary Poppins* (2008).

¹⁸Robert Wilson devised his show *I LA GALIGO* at Purnati in the same rehearsal space that *A Mouthful of Pins* used. This was most empowering for the ensemble to know we were moving in the same rehearsal space as one of our theatrical 'ancestors'.

¹⁹ Spirituality is difficult to define with precision but Tacy (2000) suggests it is 'a desire for connectedness, which often expresses itself as an emotional relationship with an invisible sacred presence' (2000, p. 17).

3.7.1 Major methods used in Cycle 2b

Rituals

Research could be seen as a ritual, a rite of passage where the researcher moves from a known set of criteria, into the unknown and finally into a territory of new knowledge. This happened on our field trip; the rehearsals were structured around the rituals that we learned at Purnati. The purpose of adapting these rituals for the rehearsal room was to provide a safety net. We were working with deep and challenging feelings in the transitional world of rehearsal, and we needed strategies to stay grounded and focused on the process of discovery, learning and growth (Beels, 2007). Our favourite and most valuable ritual was Thinking/feeling/will.

Thinking/feeling/will

This was the ritual we adopted at the beginning of every rehearsal during and after Bali. Per Brahe,²⁰ the Master Teacher at the Purnati Centre, encapsulated the spirit of the Balinese in a movement ritual using the three sources that he identified as making up Balinese spirituality: mind (thinking), feeling and will. Balinese culture does not sanction sad feelings as public expression; rather, the focus is on enhancing their life force – which the Balinese call *bayu* – where thought and feeling have little distinction:

When misfortune occurs, the expression of sadness and distress is not only reduced one's own *bayu*, but it is also contagious and as such threatens to diminish that of others. Laughter and injunctions 'not to care', 'be happy' and 'forget it' help all concerned to fight the destructive 'feeling-thoughts' of the sufferer and hence sustain their *bayu*. (Howe, 1992, p. 222)

At the risk of being simplistic, this has resonances with the constructionist approach of helping clients find alternate stories to their dominant story of oppression or sadness:

Those aspects of lived experience that fall outside of the dominant story provide a rich and fertile source for the generation, or re-generation, of alternative stories. (White & Epston, 1990, p. 41)

We discovered that the thinking/feeling/will exercise provided us a rich and fertile source of inspiration and energy: we learned how to change our preferred way of being in the

²⁰ Per Brahe has worked in Bali for over 20 years, wedding Eastern and Western theatre forms, primarily through mask: www.perbrahe.com.

rehearsal room. One of the actors preferred to think all the way through rehearsal; one preferred to feel; and the other preferred to embrace the will. By moving across the three qualities of thinking, feeling and will, the actors were able to develop multiple ways of being.

‘Will’ required the actor to move forcefully through the space. This helped to shift emotions and ‘stuckness’, and was employed by the actors whenever they felt blocked in the rehearsal room. Similarly, if the actor was too focused on ‘thinking’, it was of value to move using the ‘feeling’ sequence. This ritual proved a valuable addition to our rehearsal room, not only because it was deeply connected to the spirit, but also because we had learned the ritual together at Purnati, and felt a deep connection to the power of the exercise. We had, in other words, a common vocabulary and understanding.

Improvisation using mask

Throughout rehearsals at the Purnati Centre, and after Bali, we worked with many different archetypal masks, handmade by some of the greatest mask makers in the world. The mask was to release in the actors impulses and movement that enhanced their *A Mouthful of Pins* characters, providing them with a much-needed sense of freedom and a deeper understanding of the multiple selves they were inhabiting in the story. Red wooden clown noses were also sourced in Bali, and they became a strong intervention, helping the actors to find joy and freedom on the stage. Although initially the noses were used as a rehearsal tool, after reflection I thought they could be a means of keeping some sense of joy present in the rather bleak landscape of *A Mouthful of Pins*. So white noses became part of the performance score (see DVD).

3.8 Methods used in reflective process

Because I was grappling with making meaning out of what had occurred,²¹ both during the making of the performance piece and even more so in the reflective year, I sought out numerous conversations with counselling supervisors, either face to face, or via telephone calls or emails, in an effort to understand and find value in the research experience (see Appendix 5). Conversations became an invaluable method of clarifying and dreaming on the context and processes that I experienced.

²¹ Here I am referring to the critical incidents that emerged in Bali and required analysis. See Chapter 4.

During this time (from January when the critical incidents started to occur to November 2008, when my analysis was completed), I sometimes felt despair – such as when I did not understand why one of the actors had left the space:

I need to write this now.

Having finished rehearsal

And my actor walks out of the room.

What do you do when you have

an actor who doesn't recognise that she makes choices that keep her sad ...

I have relinquished

Let go

Will fly with what happens.

A terribly magnificent failure perhaps.

(Email to Kay Philp, 6 February 2009, Appendix 5)

Emails such as this were collated in my research journal and reflected upon. I found much solace in colleagues who had a deep understanding of social constructionism:

After reading your email I was thinking. The only way social constructionism fits as a way of communicating is if you have a loving heart. You deserve this play to be everything it needs to be.

Kay

(Email, Kay's reply, 6 February 2008, 8.18 a.m., Appendix 5)

This gave me the courage to continue to unpack what had happened. The way I understood my process was by engaging in dialogue and then exploring and enhancing the conversation in my journal. An example of this was a discussion with one of my counselling supervisors,²² who was a strong motivator for me to complete this exegesis. His suggestion – to try to enter the frame with understanding and to find a way to contribute the knowledge to my workplace – helped motivate me to continue, to not give up, and create a new story around research: that the pressure to admit failure is but one story. Chapter 5, which looks at all the discoveries and learnings of the research process, was the outcome of this conversation.

²² It is customary for therapists to have regular supervision sessions, one supervision session per 40 hours of face-to-face counselling.

Another tool I used in this cycle of research was a videotaped interview between Kay Philp and myself at the Family Therapy Clinic at Carseldine, QUT campus. Kay asked me questions about how I directed *A Mouthful of Pins* (see Appendix 2) and I reflected on my experience. This proved valuable, because I could re-run the tape later to pick up the nuances of voice and thought patterns:

It was as though someone was always sitting on my shoulder, reminding me to be reflexive in my language; to stay curious; to adjust to the rhythm, tone, speed of the co-researcher's language; to check-in that what I was hearing is what they are in fact saying. (Interview with Kay Philp, 19 February 2008, Appendix 2)

3.9 Conclusion

There is always an element of uncertainty in the rehearsal room (and in the therapy room), due to the mutual nature of collaborative practice, and there is no way of knowing in what direction the story will go or what outcome will be achieved. Due to this level of uncertainty, a rather eclectic selection of methodological strategies, methods and tools were chosen to cover the constantly changing terrain, all the while firmly framed by the inquiry cycle and reflective practice as the over-arching approaches.

I began the research by creating an auto-ethnographic practice-based cycle while directing *Gone to Earth*, where I reflected on my own role as facilitator and director. ImpulseTraining provided the main tool of engagement in order to reflect on my style of leadership.

It was then necessary to gather the *A Mouthful of Pins* ensemble from different parts of the country to develop the newly revised text. A pilgrimage to Bali was organised, and we immersed ourselves in ways of working that strengthened our skills as performers, developing interconnectedness and providing a safe environment to experiment with new ways of working. We then all returned to Brisbane to continue our rehearsals before the short and somewhat ambivalent season at Brisbane Powerhouse in February 2008.

To balance the varying levels of trust and interconnectivity of the group, there were processes and rituals in place that helped deal with the difficulties that arose. The performers had avenues to communicate their dissatisfaction and their joy in the safety of ritual (e.g. check in/check out), which then allowed them to gather their courage and re-enter the

performing space with renewed vigour and passion – or at least that is what I wanted to believe.

The performance over, it was time to reflect on what had happened, how it happened and where to go from here. During the next months, I struggled considerably in my efforts to understand. Something I had passionately nurtured, provided for and journeyed with had apparently come unstuck.

4 Analysis

4.1 Introduction

It is important to remember that the objective of this analysis is not to seek new rehearsal/performance processes but rather, through a social constructionist lens, to ‘look at the familiar with scrutiny, with new eyes and ears, to see and hear it differently, to understand it differently, to articulate it differently’ (Anderson, 2007, p. 34). In so doing, new understandings will emerge to move me closer to my question, which seeks to find ways of enriching the collaborative process in theatre making.

To do this, I will look at the ‘mysteries’²³ that have unfolded throughout the last two and a half years, rather than focusing on the ‘problems’ that needed to be solved (McNamee, 2004a). These mysteries were a series of stories that kept changing due to our use of language, multiplicity of meanings and understandings, and various social/political/power discourses that pulled and pushed us throughout the process.

In therapy, one of the greatest factors contributing to the theory of change is the therapeutic alliance, the relationship between the therapist and the client. For an effective therapeutic relationship, the therapist needs to have a deep awareness of self. There is a belief that, unless the therapist is aware of his or her own mistakes and ways of being, he or she may not be as useful to the client as he or she would like. Unlike some parts of the theatre industry, there is a strong culture within the health sector of using reflective practice as a way of enriching one’s practice (Hunter & Kottler, 2007; Carroll, 2001). Relating this to the research question, it seemed to be of great importance to explore the role of the director-as-leader so as to ensure its effectiveness in the process of theatre-making. While attending a Narrative Therapy conference in Adelaide, I was reminded of Vygotsky’s approach to learning, and briefly considered it as an effective tool for me (as director) to use in the rehearsal room, ‘imitating’ Michael White’s (2007) use of Vygotsky’s ‘zone of proximal development’ in the narrative therapy room. White’s interpretation of Vygotsky’s theories

²³ I am using the word ‘*mysteries*’ because it empowers the participants to be the detective of their own mystery story.

provides a way of helping clients scaffold²⁴ their newly emerging strength-based stories (White, 2007). The concept of a zone of proximal development emerged when Vygotsky researched how young children could move from what they were capable of doing to what they were potentially capable of doing under the instruction of an adult (Coal, 1998, p. 39). I thought this was a wonderful tool to develop personal agency and transformation in the rehearsal room, providing the environment for the actors and creatives to become active advocates of their own process, and thus providing an opportunity for a transformational experience.

Another most effective tool of analysis I uncovered late in the process was stimulated by an article about Moises Kaufman's concept of vertical and horizontal theatre (Brown, 2004). I realised that this crucial distinction was important to explore in relation to *Gone to Earth* and *A Mouthful of Pins* (Cycles 2a, 2b). This then forced me to become more aware of the differences in my approach to *Gone to Earth* and *A Mouthful of Pins*. The choice not to use ImpulseTraining in *A Mouthful of Pins*, for example, was paramount, yet it was only in reflection that I realised the significance of this choice. This provided me the rich (though limited) opportunity to reflect on whether other trainings (such as yoga and *BodyWeather*²⁵) were as effective in encouraging personal agency in the rehearsal room.

I conclude this chapter with an investigation of the major critical incidents that emerged from the production of *A Mouthful of Pins*, in particular the multiple stories that sat around the 'rub' between Actor Z and myself, the director. It was in these stories that I 'caught despair' (Kottler, 2008), a quality that occurs in the therapy room more often than one acknowledges, and is 'invisibilised' in the theatre, hidden under 'the show must go on' spirit of endurance.

It was this sense of despair that motivated me to reflect on the responses from the audiences to the performance of *A Mouthful of Pins* (DVD). There were many responses that were encouraging, such as:

²⁴ By scaffolding, I mean the interrelationship between actor and director that helps develop understanding and new meaning. It was Jerome Bruner who developed Vygotsky's term, believing that knowledge was developed through the joint construction of language and the gradual withdrawal of the teacher once the student had gained independent mastery (White, 2007).

²⁵ A form of dance training.

I will remember this piece ... if we are not going to push the boundaries ... explore ... new forms ... new communication modes ... and new ways to speak and new ways to interact ... I see you both doing this and I thank you. (Email, name withheld by the researcher, 25 February 2008, Appendix 3, 22)

and

I found the play to be [a] visually stimulating, often disturbing theatrical event ... as a theatrical performance it was very successful containing all the elements of good theatre ... it was a night at the theatre that leaves you thinking and discussing that is for sure. (Email, name withheld by the researcher, 25 February 2008, Appendix 3, 59)

Yet I was acutely aware that there was strong pressure to use terms like ‘failure’ when responding to the work. Our show was set up for easy ‘failure’ in the context that its very first public showing was a short professional international season at Brisbane Powerhouse. Some of the feedback from the audience suggested this:

At times I felt like an observer, like there wasn’t a relationship between me and the characters or story. (Email, name withheld by the researcher, 25 February 2008, Appendix 3, 24)

and

Such a context does not allow for failure and since *A Mouthful of Pins* fell short of expectations, what finally occupied my mind was sadness that this work was being seen as representative of Brisbane contemporary theatre. (Email, name withheld by the researcher, 25 February 2008, Appendix 3, 53)

However, thinking of failure moved me into a more traditional or authoritative way of interpreting what had happened. I was reminded of Sheila McNamee (2004a) when she said that social constructionism doesn’t argue from a platform of facts, judgements and evidence (Chapter 2). To stay as much as possible within the constructionist viewpoint, I decided to embrace a more poetic language (see Chapter 2) to unfold the mysteries of the research, and noticed that they fell into two areas of critical incidents:

1. what happened within the relational world of the research: interpersonal relationships (Gergen’s relational space, mentioned in Chapter 2), where language and multiplicity had an enormous impact on the contrasting stories that emerged; and

2. what surrounded the world of the research: we had to accommodate the growing pressure of the ‘real world’: that of producing a finished and professional product (one that was originally only meant to be a research project) by a certain time as part of an international theatre festival at the Brisbane Powerhouse.

Although the second set of critical incidents holds enormous interest, I am (due to time limitations) going to focus on the first set, not only because these incidents were influential in making the second set more pronounced, but because they more clearly supported my research question. I will begin at the beginning, however, and allow the nearly three-year-old story, with all its rich landscapes of meaning and action, unfold as it should.

4.2 Cycle 1

4.2.1 Who am I as leader?

Social constructionist approaches can be applied in a rehearsal and performance space in myriad distinct ways. In the *Gone to Earth* project, I focused on three: a refined leadership model; the application of ImpulseTraining supported by reflective practice; and a prescribed rehearsal ritual process, including a check in/check out procedure.

In order to unpack my working methods as facilitator/director, I turned to Kurt Lewin and his three classifications of leadership: democratic, laissez-faire and authoritarian:

1. *Democratic or participative leadership*: offering guidance but at the same time participating and encouraging others to participate.
2. *Laissez-faire or delegative leadership*: offering little guidance to the group and allowing the group to make the decisions.
3. *Authoritarian or autocratic leadership*: very clear on what needs to be done and making decisions independently (Lewin, cited in Van Wagner, 2008, p. 1).

Ideally, within a social constructionist therapeutic framework, a leader (in this case, the therapist) would be very aware of the implicit and explicit power discourses present in the therapy room. They would embrace a democratic model of practice, would be very cognisant of their language use and would endeavour to help the client find alternate ways of seeing, hearing and understanding. They would start where the client needed to begin and build on the client’s strengths. Finally, by staying curious about what was happening, the therapist would hold the client in positive regard: believing that the client had full capacity to change.

I wanted to introduce this democratic model of practice to the rehearsal room. However, the model was not applied universally throughout the process, as I discovered a way of moving across the leadership styles from democratic to authoritarian and back again, depending not only on the needs of the group but also on my own objectives and perceived limitations (which I will discuss later). Although I seemed to sit in the democratic zone for a large part of the time, I embraced a more autocratic style when it was appropriate to do so, or when my frustration level increased exponentially – though possibly not as much as the actors would have liked.

One of the important objectives of any leader is to inspire the group to operate at ‘peak capacity’ (Jaworski, 1998, p. 66). Jaworski writes:

One of the central requirements for good leadership is the capacity to inspire the people in the group, to move them and encourage them and pull them into the activity and to help them get centred and focused and operating at peak capacity ... (1998, p. 66)

Consequently, my objective for the ensemble was to provide a peak environment that encouraged risk-taking and strong interrelationships. I wanted the actors to work deeply and courageously with each other:

Think with everything we have. We have to think with our muscles. We have to think, as Einstein said, with feelings in our muscles. Think with everything ... just go with it (Bohm, cited in Jaworski, 1998, p. 82).

I believe this was encouraged through my application of ImpulseTraining, where the actors developed an embodied knowing on the floor for at least one-third of the rehearsal time, which initially seemed an extraordinarily long time to some; however, because so much content emerged, it became an integral part of the working fabric. I observed the group becoming more autonomous and self-directive. There was an observable joy in the process and a developing sense of joy in what they were capable of achieving. I also experienced an embodied response as I watched them move on the floor. This had been my own experience when I worked with Hay and Cameron several years earlier. I had felt transformed and reconnected to the spontaneity of my art form. As I conducted ImpulseTraining, I was displaying qualities of the democratic group leader: encouraging spontaneity within the group, participating moment by moment, responding honestly to their emotional and sensory experiences, and guiding the group towards self-supportive behaviour (Donigian & Hube-

Kellachy, 1999). By engaging in ImpulseTraining, the actors were in charge of their process, and through their interactions they created alternate stories for their characters..

I allowed them to make many of the character decision, as well as blocking decisions (relating to how they moved on the stage), deliberately not guiding them too closely. This pulled me into more of a *laissez-faire* model, which was initially hard for them, as illustrated by the following comments:

I felt like I was always fighting for your approval in rehearsals. And what I realised is that your approval, though lovely of course, is irrelevant and I just had to focus on the show and contributing to the group. (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 4, 6).

The process was annoying and frustrating but it enabled me to have ownership of the work. It has made me a stronger actor, trusting my own decisions more. I made my own decisions in the play and they worked. (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 4, 19).

But things changed:

Something has been reaffirmed ... the power of ensemble work ... that without 'we' there could be no 'I' (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 4, 5)

I felt the ensemble was very strong and generous with each other; more so than I have experienced in any other production so far. This has changed the way I work incredibly. (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 4, 15).

In order to test the space between the democratic model and a more *laissez-faire* approach, I often asked 'Who wants more direction?' The responses varied from wanting more direction to feeling annoyed or lost but happy to stay in the unknown:

I embraced the unknown. Some part of me is freaking out; I've allowed myself to become a lot more open to a lot more people. (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 4, 29).

After a month of working this way, the actors appeared to flourish: 'I am free': (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 5); 'We came out and took it into our lives ... our passion

for theatre.’ (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 5); and ‘You couldn’t fail in the rehearsal room.’ (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 5). This social constructionist approach seemed to facilitate a kind of freedom, a sense of equality – what could be referred to as a more *horizontal* power structure²⁶ – rather than the more traditional *vertical* model where the director holds the power and leads the actors to opening night. I wanted to help the actors discover a sense of personal agency, and in so doing provide the opportunity for transformative performances for which they could take responsibility.

Reflective practice seemed to be a strong tool in this process. The actors were constantly asked, ‘What happened?’ after each exercise or scene. It was this constant probing, requiring them to think deeply about their process, that added to their sense of knowing. Despite the difficulty, they learned to accept what was happening, refrain from criticising each other and believe in their own abilities. One of the actors summed this up very clearly when asked what they had learned: ‘Firstly a fierce independence. I say fierce because I feel it has been an uncomfortable transition from the dependence I felt before.’ (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 4, 3).

I also felt an uncomfortable transition at times, questioning myself throughout every rehearsal with ‘What am I doing right now? What is happening for me? How can I dream this on so that the actors continue to feel empowered?’ These questions are typical of a social constructionist approach to leadership

[I felt as if] someone was always sitting on my shoulder, reminding me to be reflexive in my language; to stay curious; to adjust to the rhythm, tone, speed of the co researcher’s [artists] language; to check in that what I am hearing is what they are in fact saying. (Interview with Kay Philp, Appendix 2, 1)

These were my ways of working in order to keep alive a sense of curiosity where I would tentatively²⁷ repeat back to the group what I thought I had heard to make sure we understood each other – a technique I consistently try to use in the therapy room, though not always successfully: ‘I wonder what you mean by that ... do you mean ... is that what you said?’ I also ‘refused’ to give notes at the end of early rehearsals. I thought my reason was

²⁶ In constructionist therapy, the power differential is always addressed. The client is regarded as the expert of themselves and the therapist supports their ability to find solutions through creative problem-solving.

²⁷ In constructionist therapy, a tentative approach is a good strategy for the counsellor to adopt in order to address the power differential.

logical: to allow the actors time to find ways of acknowledging and articulating their own achievements in order to experience a transformative theatrical experience. I justified this choice by holding the members in ‘positive regard’. As a constructionist therapist, one important value is positive regard: the therapist holds the client in high esteem, seeing them as an equal (Bohert & Tallman, 1994). Genuine acceptance of where the client stands is a way of providing a safe and healing space for the client to begin their journey towards personal agency and transformation. I believed deeply that they had every capacity of doing what is required, without my advice. This, of course, was wishful and possibly foolish thinking, and it has taken me some time to realise that I could integrate other strategies (such as embracing a more traditional director/autocratic model when required) without having to forgo my social constructionist philosophy. It is, after all, just another story to consider. But at the time I felt it was important that I stick strongly to my initial concept.

Having said this, the frustration that my actors experienced at times proved to be a learning curve:

I wanted to leave. Hated it, followed by ‘I’m free’. I learned to trust myself.

I wanted to quit. It has helped me be more competent. I would do it again despite the struggles’.

Forced to be more aware of myself. More reflective now.

(*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 10, July, 2008)²⁸

One of my main aims, as I gained a better understanding of the group, was to provide opportunities for the ensemble to experience the ‘zone of proximal development’, that place between action and meaning where new learning takes place (Vygotsky, 1997; White, 2007).²⁹ I applied this framework by supporting and normalising the discomfort that we experienced in the rehearsal room (in the process of not knowing), coaching from the side by asking questions and suggesting ‘obstacles’ to help develop a scaffolding of character development and interrelationship in a rather more autocratic way than I did in the therapy room. I would then switch back to a more democratic approach when we deconstructed what happened (through discussions immediately after the rehearsal).

²⁸ Due to a crashed hard drive on 11 November 2008, I do not have the original entry supporting this data. I have filled out a Statutory Declaration to this effect (see Appendix 10).

²⁹ Vygotsky (1997) was one of the major researchers into the relationship between learning and language, believing that our thoughts are completed in the act of speaking.

I was aware that switching between leadership styles could be seen as a disorganised process (Corey & Corey, 2005). In some ways, it was – especially for me when I was unable to communicate how to ‘fuse our horizons’ (Gadamer, cited in Anderson, 2007, p. 14): the actors were asking for a more authoritarian approach (their horizon) and I was needing to stay within a democratic process (my horizon). Again, some of the actors’ responses were paradoxical. This way of working seemed to encourage extreme states: either frustration and annoyance or brilliance, depending on the day:

There is so much doubt in my mind and a horrible urge to be told that what I am thinking is right and that I am clever. However what has changed is that now there is this voice telling me doubt is good, that I should explore this doubt for myself and that praise from my mentors is not so necessary. (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 4, 3).

and:

The process was annoying and frustrating but it enabled me to have ownership of the world; it has made me a stronger actor trusting my own decisions more.

I made my own decisions in the play and they worked. (Appendix 4, 19).

To encourage this depth of experience despite its paradoxical nature, I repeatedly embraced tentativeness, curiosity and positive regard, but also noticed that I readily stepped across the line into more authoritarian ways of being when my frustration level increased substantially, especially as the opening night moved closer. Choices had to be made. This proved to be one major discovery from the research: that the role of the director and the role of the therapist differ when deadlines present themselves. Therapists have no deadlines, but the director has the opening night. Being the director, it was this pressure that caused enormous conflict within me at the time.

When I did embrace authoritarian leadership, I was surprised by *how* directive and challenging I could be, at one point even telling a confused actor where they could stand. Perhaps this was due to the frustration of always having to keep in check my more opinionated or petulant self. Yet sometimes it seemed to be the only thing to do in order to help the actor feel safe. Corey and Cory (2005) discuss this need to sometimes embrace a more autocratic style of leadership in order to quieten the fear of the unknown: ‘Caring confrontation is designed to help members make an honest assessment of themselves.’ (2005, p. 15).

As the production moved closer towards opening, the tension increased; it seemed crucial that I confront my actors' use of language to aid the group's effectiveness. Comments such as 'Oh, I'm so tired' were banned. Often when one person mentioned that they were tired, the next person did as well. When I confronted and challenged the use of the word, there seemed far less tiredness in the room. Tiredness, it seems, can be a decision. Cohesion in a group can increase after confrontation, because it is a way of testing the freedom and trustworthiness of those in the group (Corey & Corey, 2005), and that is what happened for us. We made up ingenious ways of communicating the quality of tiredness, such as 'I'm feeling vertically challenged'. As discussed in Chapter 2, within the constructionist framework language is seen as the thing that creates our reality and is more than just a linguistic exercise (Anderson, 1997). The group started to monitor its use of language, robustly incorporating a constructionist approach. Soon I was no longer the one who reminded the group about its use of language. Members reminded themselves and seemed to achieve enormous satisfaction from who could translate 'I am so tired'³⁰ with a more positive spin.

4.2.2 Take away³¹

Moving between styles of leadership (from democratic to autocratic) seemed important in order to get things done within the time restraints, yet I also think it developed and enriched a strong collaborative work practice, allowing for freedom then consolidating that freedom with a more directive process. I think I would now be less rigid with my application of what I saw as a social constructionist framework (which seemed to me at first to only embrace a democratic style) and would clarify the need to move between the styles of leadership. But it took me until after the third cycle to have the insight to see this.

Despite my sometimes rigid commitment to what I perceived as a constructionist process, the group felt secure and self-directive, having developed strong language skills, both verbal and non-verbal, coupled with an increased ability to work without the constant voice of the director. They seemed to have a developed sense of personal agency, which was the outcome I was looking for. The following feedback supports this:

³⁰ indeed, the actors were required to rehearse excessively, over three months part time, which is two months longer than a normal production. They moved constantly for four hours each morning before they began their day of study and were then called on weekends.

³¹ 'Take away' is a colloquial expression that I understand to mean 'what I will remember from this experience'.

I felt rearranged, not willing to go back but also conscious of a yearning of the ‘happiness’ I once owned. (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 4, 1)

One of the most important events that happened was when I finally realised that I would only get out what I put in. (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 4, 16)

I learned that ‘uncertainty’ is a key ingredient in contemporary performance making and that it’s important to learn to be friends with uncertainty. (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 4, 6)

For the first time since I was very young I am proud of my artwork because it is my own, the choices that defined it were mine. I am still resistant to calling myself an artist; however, I can hear the whispers of a more confident practice in my mind from time to time. (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 4, 4)

We have to make it inside ourselves. So much forbearance. Being own director. (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 4, 34).

Margi never told ’em where to go. Margi wanted you to find it yourself. Only then does it have value. (Appendix 4, 36)

Indeed, ‘Margi’ did want them to find it themselves. I was convinced that, if I stayed as ImpulseTraining coach/director, constantly encouraging and remaining curious, they would ‘find it’ themselves:

Perceptual Practice [we changed the name to ImpulseTraining] is my favourite thing in the world. It’s like meditating for me. You stop thinking and start trusting. (*Gone to Earth* artist response, Appendix 4, 7)

Perceptual Practice [ImpulseTraining] provides the ensemble with an understanding that extends far beyond the intellectual. There is an immediate kinaesthetic response to each other, in and out of the performance context. (Appendix 10, email, July 2008)

ImpulseTraining became a huge tool in the process ... allowed us to work openly with each other, while constantly taking risks. (Appendix 10, email, July 2008)

Reading these responses, it is clear that the actors developed a strong personal agency, an ability to actively embrace the work and transform or dream it on, not only during the production itself but afterwards (these responses were collected a year later).

I was now ready to embrace the next cycle with vigour, and not without a degree of fear. Little did I know that the change of process would create a whole new landscape of meaning.

4.3 Comparing process and form

4.3.1. Theatre processes

Figure 4.1 summarises the rehearsal process for *Gone to Earth* and *A Mouthful of Pins* to illustrate how the process changed. As already noted, *ImpulseTraining* was not used in *A Mouthful of Pins*. This was a pragmatic choice. I wanted the ensemble members to contribute their strengths to the rehearsal process. This attempt to incorporate participants' ways of working is common in the social constructionist therapy room, with the therapy always starting where the client is at. Actor B was passionate about *BodyWeather*, a form of dance training developed by *butoh* dancer Min Tanaka. Focusing on Eastern and Western dance practices, *BodyWeather*'s intention is to develop consciousness. It seemed an appropriate training in which for us to engage. In addition to this, Actor Z practised yoga, so we decided to bring the meditative process of yoga into the training. On reflection, I realised that both of these trainings were 'solo' trainings rather than involving the group, which I believe impacted on group dynamic; in contrast, *ImpulseTraining* focuses almost entirely on ensemble-making. Lastly, Actor A had a wealth of knowledge regarding mask work so we used masks on a regular basis, as both warm-up and improvisation. Because there was no time for *ImpulseTraining*, I decided to relax and use this as an opportunity to test the social constructionist principle of being very inclusive to see how this would affect the building of the ensemble and whether other trainings develop ensembles as effectively as *ImpulseTraining*.



Figure 4.1: Difference in methodologies used in *Gone to Earth* and *A Mouthful of Pins*

There was much gained from the methodologies and tools employed in *A Mouthful of Pins*, in particular the use of the thinking/feeling/will movement sequence and check in/check out. Our *A Mouthful of Pins* stage manager saw check in/check out (borrowed from the constructionist Solution Focused Therapy) a strong intervention which gave a rather free rehearsal room some structure. One of the *A Mouthful of Pins* musicians felt that check in/check out was good because these processes not only provided a means of focusing on self but also reinforced the group goal. Another *A Mouthful of Pins* creative saw the thinking/feeling/will exercise as a ‘glue’ that bound us together. Because we had learned it together in Bali, it seemed to be a wonderfully freeing way of expressing how we were feeling and what we needed to do to be fully present in rehearsals.

However, it was obvious to me that the absence of *ImpulseTraining* meant that I did not see the interconnectivity on stage that I had witnessed with the students of *Gone to Earth* nor the risk-taking that was so fiercely embraced in that production. I felt the *Gone to Earth* students were able to be witness to the space between, to embrace that zone of proximal development through their embodied knowing, whereas I saw a somewhat more orthodox process when researching the actors’ process in *A Mouthful of Pins*.

4.3.2 Theatre forms

Having since read about Moises Kaufman's approach to theatre-making (Brown, 2004), it became clearer that in *Gone to Earth* and *A Mouthful of Pins* I was trying to work with a less orthodox theatre form, yet at the time was unable to articulate it either to myself or others. On reflection, it became very obvious that the horizontal form was a direct mirroring of the social constructionist approach: democratic, inclusive and with an equal power dynamic between the elements. Kaufman talks about narrative or more orthodox drama having elements such as scenic and costume design, blocking, acting, lights and music – all serving to illuminate the text. He calls this 'the most reductionistic of all conditions of directing or writing' (Brown, 2004, p. 53). Kaufman was interested in challenging this powerful discourse, preferring 'horizontal' theatre, where each element contributes independently to the work in order to create meaning for the audience (Brown, 2004, p. 53). He was able to articulate very clearly what I was wanting to do, yet I still had not found the words to communicate it to my ensemble. Even more than this, I was wanting a kind of collaged theatre process that embraced what was happening in the moment as opposed to having it all planned out. I wanted to build on the strengths of the elements, in the same way that the social constructionist builds on the strengths of his or her clients.

Table 4.1 and Figure 4.2 show the elements we used in *Gone to Earth* and *A Mouthful of Pins*. It is apparent that in *Gone to Earth* the horizontal elements held similar weight, whereas in *A Mouthful of Pins* there was a more vertical structure, where the text was paramount, supported by the other elements.

Our *Gone to Earth* approach of allowing the multiple elements of the piece to inform and affect each other had its roots in collage. As a collagist, I coined the phrase 'rip and stick' for my workshops, where I roughly ripped out images from magazines and other sources, and quickly stuck them on to cartridge paper to observe how they resonated with each other to create meaning. I allowed the images to place themselves – or that was what seemed to happen, which silenced the critical self and allowed unconscious knowing to surface. In a similar way, the elements within the performance of *Gone to Earth* – including acting, text, blocking, lights, music and visual art – fell together, providing the space for metaphors to grow.

Although I wanted to embrace the idea of horizontal theatre in *A Mouthful of Pins*, without the language we were not able to name this way of working, so without realising it we slipped into a more vertical theatre form (Figure 4.2), where everything served the text.

Table 4.1: *Gone to Earth*'s horizontal structure, where all elements are equal

<i>Gone to Earth</i>					
Performing	Text	Blocking	Lights	Music	Visual art
Twenty performers	Text reduced by half Altered when required	Improvisation In most cases, with directorial guidance, performers blocked themselves at the beginning of rehearsals; this was adjusted continually by the director and the performer; it was very loose and could be changed at any time.	Emerging lighting directors creating the lighting plot and then discussions with director and designer	Some improvisation Some set scores	Projected images Set Costume

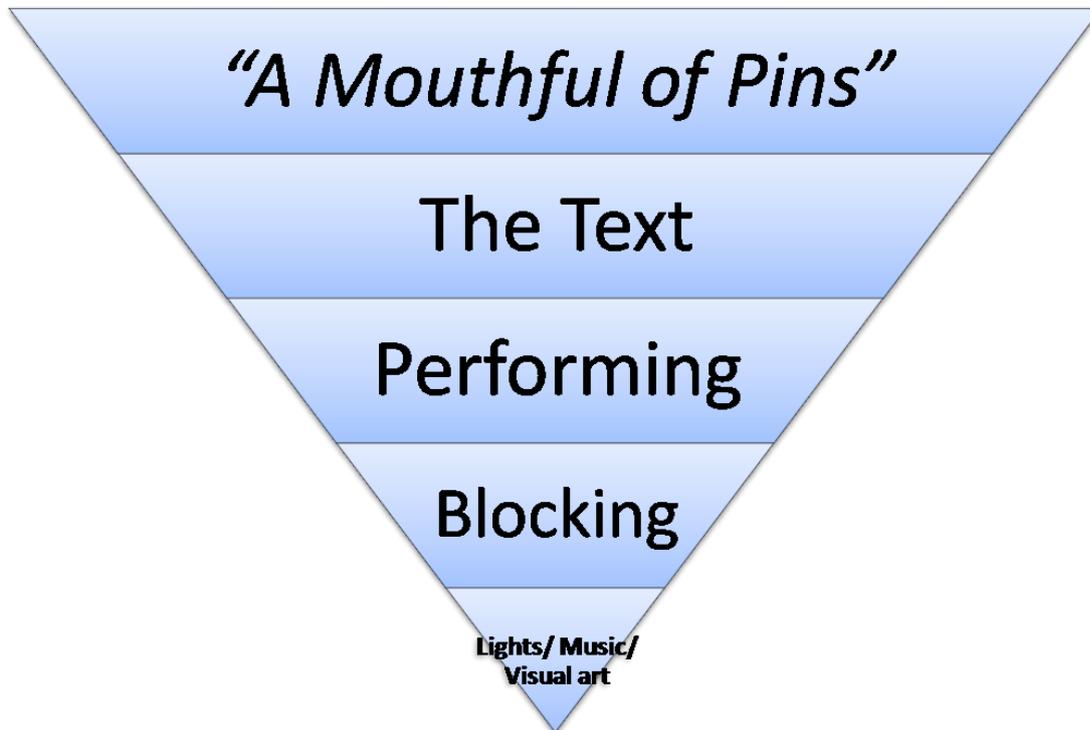


Figure 4.3: *A Mouthful of Pins*' vertical structure, with the text supported by five other media

As a social constructionist, my job was to unpack these discourses and make them explicit, but I did not challenge the ‘status quo’ and I unknowingly accepted traditional theatre discourses that sat implicitly around me rather than risking a more unorthodox horizontal model.

Due to the complexities of having the writer (Actor Z) in the room at all times, any experimentation with the structure of the text was not only limited out of respect for the writer, but even more importantly out of my own fear of stepping into an area that could be seen as non-collaborative or authoritarian. It is important to note that the writer strongly believed that, as a group, we changed the script enormously. I agree that the script was changed, but this was done using an orthodox approach: the writer always had the final say about what would and what would not be cut, which is how I have always worked within the acting profession. Guided by social constructionist principles, I was trying to create ways of operating where actors were given more recognition as creators – in other words, equal power.

As a therapist, it is important to be just a little step behind, or directly beside, your client so that you do not take over and influence the outcome. You are there to help the client develop their story. However, in theatre all our stories need to be heard – the creatives *and* the performers. Whereas in therapy it is all about the client, in theatre it is about the actors, the creatives *and* the director. It was only in reflection that I realised it was crucial that I did not bracket out my own ideas and needs (see Appendix 6).

That said, if the writer had not been present (as was the case with *Gone to Earth*), we would have felt we had the freedom to ‘rip and stick’ the narrative in order to create a more horizontal form.³² However, having the writer present made us pause. It was as though her role was to hold fast to the text. Unknowingly, our group dynamic had set up this tension: we contributed to the writer’s need to hold on to the words, rather than allowing the other elements in the production to also tell the story (Appendix 5):

I guess I felt like the text’s protector and that may be where the conflict came from. I felt that the script itself was already postmodern, i.e. it was not linear, it had multiple sources, it was a collage, it combined both high and low cultural references, yet it still had its own structure and logic, and to mess with

³² It is important to note that when presenting a traditional play, the author may or may not allow this rip and stick process.

that too much might make the whole thing impenetrable. (Confidential email, Actor Z, August 2008, Appendix 5)

If we had worked horizontally (and democratically) with more awareness, privileging *each* form (text, performing, blocking, lights, music, visual art) rather than having the text as something that could not be messed with too much, we would have found a ‘fusing of [our] horizons’ (Gadamer, cited in Anderson, 2007, p. 14), a place of understanding with the members of the ensemble and the audience. By doing this, a multiplicity of narratives would have been generated, and if the writer had had postmodern intentions, they could have been realised within the production.³³

4.3.3 Take away

Two different processes and two different forms were employed to create the two productions, in an attempt to test whether or not social constructionist frameworks were not only workable in theatre-making, but provided an environment that enriched the artists’ process. Using ImpulseTraining in *Gone to Earth* provided an imaginative and surprising landscape: I had witnessed young actors achieving levels of commitment, personal agency and passion on the stage that they had not achieved previously, through playing with text, improvisation and relationship within the framework of ImpulseTraining. I had seen that they had climbed the scaffolding through the ‘zone of proximal development’. I wanted this to happen again. However, because I did not have the language to communicate this, as well as my own feelings of inadequacy, I found myself powerless to apply these learnings in *A Mouthful of Pins*.

On reflection, I think this was due to the invisible discourses that sat around me. I can now name them as:

³³ As well, I would have discovered a way of moving my theoretical understandings of postmodern theatre constructs closer to my newly emerged postmodern collaborative practice. My principal supervisor explained this as allowing the audience to take the responsibility of interpreting the piece, just as in the therapy room the therapist encourages her client to take the responsibility of interpreting their own stories. The therapist’s job is to remain curious about what is happening. What has been revealed is the tension between my ability to sit in a postmodern framework in the therapy room, and my struggle to understand and apply a postmodern framework to my art-making. Just as I succeeded in working collaboratively on many levels throughout the process, I think if I were to be fully cognisant with theatrical postmodern constructs, I would be able to apply more principles of postmodern theatre-making to the production. This, of course, was not my intention for this Masters; however, it interests me enormously for future exploration because I think the results would truly challenge my creativity.

- the discourse of femaleness: ‘needing to please’;
- the discourse of appearances: ‘needing to be seen as a “good” collaborator’;
- the discourse of friendship: ‘friends support not confront’;
- the traditional and often invisible theatre discourses with which I have lived for over 30 years – the position to which I would unknowingly default when things became difficult; and finally
- the discourse of considered response rather than impulse.

The relationship between *impulse* and *considered response* was one of the major discourses that presented itself over and over on the rehearsal floor. Our culture tends to value considered response over impulse. Impulse can be dangerous, yet I have observed that, paradoxically, it can be trained. Because I was often confused with what the writer/Actor Z perceived as impulse and what I perceived to be a more constructed response, I kept thinking that I must be in the wrong, which led to me doubting my own abilities, at times unknowingly compromising the process and form of *A Mouthful of Pins*. The combination of these discourses thwarted my strong directorial impulses right up until opening of *A Mouthful of Pins*.

4.4 Cycle 3

4.4.1 A Mouthful of Pins

As I reflect on these critical incidents it is important to be reminded of the ‘dance of construction’ among the players:

When people interact it is rather like a dance in which they are constantly moving together, subtly responding to each other’s rhythm and posture. The dance is constructed between them and cannot be seen as the result of either person’s prior intentions. (Shotter, cited in Burr, 1995, p. 28)

Although many people contributed to the *A Mouthful of Pins* dance, for the sake of this research paper I have limited my analysis primarily to the relational space between the writer/Actor Z and myself because these critical incidents were the most potent examples of how my considerable efforts to apply a constructionist model in rehearsals were somewhat ineffective. We struggled with our use of language (what we said was not what necessarily what we heard); we confused ourselves with the multiple roles being played out in the

rehearsal room as well as what was inherent in the performance; and we stayed ignorant of the implicit and not so implicit power discourses that surrounded us.

To begin with, it is important for the reader to keep in mind that what I have written is viewed through my own lens. I am very aware that when one focuses on only one of the elements of a performance (in this case, one actor) it is impossible to avoid bias. We see a situation depending upon where we stand:

From here that looks like a bucket of water ... but from an ant's point of view it's a vast ocean, from an elephant's just a cool drink, and to a fish, of course, it's home. So you see, the way you see things depends a great deal on where you look at them from. (Juster, cited in Coale, 1998, p. 42)

If I were one of the above, throughout the process I would have been the ant, seeing the presenting problems as a vast ocean. However, after an in-depth reflection, I have been able to see myself as the fish, at home with the arising difficulties that are unavoidable when creating work with so many people. Interventions can be set in place so that everyone can feel heard, supported and cherished for who they are and what they are capable of doing.

As the director testing social constructionist principles, I felt that one of my jobs was to provide the ensemble members with opportunities to scaffold the 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky, 1997) in order to achieve what they had not achieved before. I had witnessed this scaffolding in *Gone to Earth*, where the ensemble members achieved far more than they thought they could ever achieve. I wanted to explore the value of this constructionist approach with a more professional cast. However, this objective was thwarted on many levels: our various abilities to listen and reflect on what was said; the multiple relationships that happened all at the same time (individual versus group, friend versus friend, colleague versus colleague, writer versus director, director versus actor, and actor versus director);³⁴ all the discourses tumbling down into the space between social, historical and power discourses; family conditionings; training and background – all of these created a sometimes messy and sticky terrain. Initially, I felt overwhelmed by the complexity of this terrain, and felt disorganised in my approach to analysis, spending months reading theory in an attempt to find some path into the territory. I then sent an email to Actor Z:

³⁴ Actor Z and I had regularly worked together, Actor Z as director, while I was the actor.

I am very keen to understand my own place in the hotspots that happened in *Pins*. Not that there were many when I consider how many people were involved including multi generational multi art forms; multi country even with Bali, Perth and Brisbane all part and parcel of it; varying experience of those involved; some new to the game, others not so new. My sense of not being able to function at times, of being less able to organize my thoughts in order to communicate to you what I mean. (Confidential email, sent 14 May 2008 at 2.40 p.m. to Actor Z, Appendix 5)

In my theoretical readings, I had come across an article written by social constructionist Sheila McNamee (2007) and I felt relieved that I was not the only facilitator/counsellor/educator to mention these thoughts of being disorganised and undisciplined:

One can only be disorganized and undisciplined against the backdrop of a correct structure or correct set of knowledge. Being responsive to those I am working with, on the other hand, requires movement through our conversation in ways that create opportunities for our transformation. (McNamee, cited in Anderson, 2007, p. 320)

Everything I have written is framed to some degree by these moments of apparent disorganisation. I hold McNamee's words about the importance of being responsive in conversation in order to experience transformation close to my heart. This opportunity to transform was foiled by my often clumsy use of language when communicating with Actor Z, which seemed to stymie my efforts.

4.4.2 The lens of language

Leading constructionist/collaborative therapist and researcher Dr Harlene Anderson posed a question that highlights what I wanted to achieve in the rehearsal room:

How can practitioners ... create the kinds of conversations and relationships with their clients that allow all participants to access their creativities and develop possibilities where none seemed to exist before? (Anderson & Gerhart, 2007, pp. 33–34)

There were sometimes difficulties creating conversations that built due to the constant shifting of meaning, meanings being contingent on the context (Anderson & Gehart, 2007,

p. 12). In other words, we brought our own historical, social and cultural contexts to the rehearsal conversation (Anderson, 2007) – sometimes with little awareness of the impact we had on others. There were times when there seemed to be so many different meanings and interpretations, all wanting to be the ‘one true way’: moments of multiple meanings and misunderstandings between Actor Z and myself, both in relation to each other and in relation to the script; between Actor C and the Stage Manager regarding assumptions; between Actor Z and Musicians 1 and Musician 2 in relation to the music and the songs; between the all the actors and the Designer in relation to costuming; and finally between the creatives (the production team) and the actors that were interpreted by some as a lack of appreciation. There were times that I wished I were not so aware of the social constructionist framing that sat in the space between us. It felt too potent. I wanted to embrace the model I had grown up with: the director will tell the cast what to do. This multiplicity of meaning was also occurring in the fiction of the play, where there were misunderstandings between KoKo, Twin A and Twin B at various times on stage. Twin B wanted to solve them by getting rid of KoKo:

TWIN B:

away tongue

you are lick-less and cracked

‘a skin too few’

a meal for none

I am growing a book

tending slender pages of skin

to replace you

listen.

(*A Mouthful of Pins*, 2008, 14, Appendix 7 and DVD)

KoKo also talked about replacing Twin A, which is one way of solving difficulties!

KOKO:

I want to grow a book to replace you.

(*A Mouthful of Pins*, 2008, 15, Appendix 7, and DVD)

None of these misunderstandings is uncommon in the creative process (in fact, without tension it is difficult to have drama); however, I was confident that the rituals of check in/check out, scaling and goaling would provide a container to air these misunderstandings

and the thinking/feeling/will exercise would help facilitate the difficulties by working them out physically on the floor, as happened with ImpulseTraining in *Gone to Earth*. However, this did not always happen.

4.4.3 Rupture

Whereas Actor Z wanted to be very consistent with choices for performance, I was more interested in inviting what could be seen as a form of disorganisation into the rehearsal room, allowing choices to change according to the shifting process and form, and encouraging the language (both verbal and non-verbal) to be fluid and creative (Anderson, 2007) in a similar way to what happens in the social constructionist therapy room. I was not so interested in staying committed to what went before. In fact, in some ways that would have been holding on to the original story: the social constructionist's task is to dream up alternate stories as a way of providing a wider horizon – or, as Michael White says, ‘thickening’ the story. It seemed that Actor Z's desire was to keep yesterday's choreography intact, rather than trusting her ability to constantly create in the moment, allowing for the nuances of change to affect her and thicken her performance. As an artist, I valued these nuances and multiple perspectives (the multiple selves and multiple stories) that emerged each time we worked on the floor. Although the overall driving action was not meant to change substantially, the minute-by-minute adjustments would keep the performance alive and firing, deepening the resonances and understandings of both the ensemble and the audience. Over a number of years of working with Actor Z, I have never been able to clearly communicate this impeccable trust I have in the unfolding moment. It is important to note that, on talking with Actor Z after I wrote this (I sent Actor Z a draft of my analysis), it was revealed that it was anxiety and lack of substantial feedback regarding each day's choreography that created this schism, rather than an inability to appreciate and embrace this way of working. Clearly I had not attended sufficiently to what Actor Z needed. In the constructionist therapy room, the therapist constantly strives to understand the other person's meaning. He or she intervenes to see whether the conversation is useful, and whether he or she has understood the client. Yet Gadamer talks about the *inability* to truly understand as part of being human:

a person can never fully understand another person ... The process of understanding is relational, and dialogical; it is a two-way joint activity ... The process of understanding is the process of immersing ourselves in the other's horizon ... it is through this action of immersion – this quest for understanding

the other person's meaning, this quest to make sense of the familiar and unfamiliar – that the horizons are fused. (Anderson, 2007, p. 14)

It was our inability to 'fuse' or 'immerse ourselves in the other's horizon' (Anderson, 2007, p. 14) that resulted in the confusion and messiness, which I believe impacted on our first public showing at the Brisbane Powerhouse. I think one of the reasons for this frequently binary oppositional stance (Thomas, cited in Gergen, 2000, p. 6) was that we may have had different ideas about what made up the self, both on and off stage:

The whole dear notion of one's Self – marvellous old free-willed, free-enterprising, autonomous, independent, isolated island of the self – is a myth. (Thomas, cited in Gergen, 2000, p. 6)

The social constructionist sees the self as a multiple, constantly changing and interdependent being, rather than as autonomous and independent. In retrospect, I wonder whether Actor Z was sitting with this autonomous construct of self, the 'whole dear notion of one's Self' (Thomas, cited in Gergen, 2000, p. 6) rather than allowing the interconnected space (that becomes so enriched when using ImpulseTraining) between her and her colleagues to affect change. Certainly KoKo seemed to sit with this sense of self as an isolated island:

KOKO: ... and the peculiar sense that the top of my head is falling back transports me from this ordinary bed in this ordinary room where I've lain now for longer than I can remember. There is the strong smell of stale sweat coming up from beneath my arms and my forehead is greasy from where my hair has laid unwashed upon it. Every slight, every jibe, every cruelty lays its weight upon me, there is no kindness in the world, no softness, no warmth, it's all stark, burning piercing a hole in my forehead this world out there. I cannot remember when I stopped caring about all the things I used to care so much about, but what to do? Not much when there's a hole in my forehead and the tears will no longer come. (*A Mouthful of Pins*, 2008, p. 6, Appendix 7, and DVD)

Communication is far more than just words. It is embodied knowing (Lett, 1996), that sense of understanding *when* to intervene or respond, what Hoffman (2007, p. 69) calls 'sublingual vocabulary'. Acknowledging an awareness of responding to others in more ways than just words is not as highly valued in our society as logical, linear thinking. Sometimes I

observed that Actor Z required me to be more logical and linear, whereas I was more interested (as are social constructionists) in ‘the underground rivers between people’ (Hoffman, 2007, p. 70). This underground place became evident in some scenes. As Twin B, Actor B seemed to experience an embodied knowing, a deep connection with what was said underneath the words.³⁵ I felt that Twin B represented the ‘sublingual vocabulary’ of the production.

The importance of embodied knowing and the sublingual vocabulary were what I was searching for, having found these things with ImpulseTraining. I wanted to see (and consequently feel) the words spoken, rather than just hearing them (Hoffman, 2007, Chapter 2). Anderson talks about this in communication:

The listener who follows the talker not only hearing the words but also seeing how the words are uttered, will notice that every word is part of the moving of the body. Spoken words and bodily activity come together in a unity and cannot be separated ... the listener who sees as much as he or she hears will notice that the various spoken words ‘touch’ the speaker differently ... some words touch the speaker in such a way that the listener can see him or her moved. (Anderson, 1997, p. 1).

On stage, however, it is a difficult task to bring the sublingual and the lingual together in a coherent manner – evidenced by the many years that actors need to train. I wanted to not only *hear* Actor Z’s words, but also *see* how the words were spoken. I wanted to notice each word in relation to her moving body. What I witnessed was the actor ‘doing’ without ‘showing’. I could not find a way to express this. In *Gone to Earth*, I did not need to express it: it was embedded in ImpulseTraining.

Actor Z and I talked about the relationship between doing and showing: the actor’s visibility. Here is an extract from an email that clarifies what Actor Z and I thought about what an actor does on stage:

³⁵ This is different from what traditional theatre training calls subtext. What I am talking about here is the ‘knowing’ when to respond in this moment right now. As a trainer of actors, I find that subtext often serves to isolate rather than unite or help fuse horizons.

Director: You have mentioned before that you felt invisible in some of the rehearsals and that an actor is always doing something. Is there a schism between what the actor thinks they are doing and what they are actually doing?

Actor Z: There may well be a schism between what an actor thinks they are doing and how it's being read by the director. It probably depends on the level of experience of the actor ... (Confidential email, 4 August 2008, Appendix 5)

Actor Z's response interested me, and reminded me of the need for training the artist to be able to stand still, yet still keep an embodied energy within. This was particularly interesting because Actor Z was not a trained actor (this is not to say Actor Z did not have a huge amount of training – she most definitely did, having studied directing for many years, both locally and internationally, but as an actor she had not committed to long-term training). Ruth Zaporah (with whom I worked recently in Melbourne) calls this *sensing with every cell*, while Jacqui Carrol and John Nobbs, with whom I trained in the Suzuki theatre method in the 1990s in Brisbane, talk about the still actor being like a turbo jet with the brakes on.³⁶ The doing without the showing could be attributed to either a lack of inner conviction or perhaps a fear of performing. It is the *showing* or embodiment of the action that makes it theatre, and 'what makes it show is the radiance of inner conviction' (Scott, cited in Zarilli, 2002, p. 157).

I did not have a cognitive understanding of this at the time,³⁷ so was unable to communicate this lack of inner conviction. If I had used ImpulseTraining, as I did in *Gone to Earth*, I would have communicated this through the ritual coaching in which I engaged while the actors moved (with statements like 'every cell is alive and firing', 'every cell has a tiny little brain' (Hay, 2005) and 'every cell has a tiny little eye'), encouraging the actors to make visible their vibrating energy – or, as Zarilli (2002) states, 'the body becomes all eyes and is able to respond with an inner vibrancy' (2002, p. 157). It is this interconnectedness, these 'underground rivers between people' (Hoffman, 2007, 70) that create radiant transformational theatre, providing multiple perspectives through which the artist and the audience can find deep meaning. This is what I yearned for however there were some obstacles that proved insurmountable.

³⁶ The turbo jet reference originally came from Tadashi Suzuki, an internationally renowned theatre director, who trained John Nobbs in the early 1990s.

³⁷ I definitely had an embodied understanding of this, but was unable to communicate what that was.

4.4.4 Meeting of the shameful selves

As I look at the multiple stories and the multiple selves that were part of *A Mouthful of Pins*, several seem paramount. I have termed one of the stories the ‘shameful selves’ that entered the room on several occasions – obstacles that inhibited the underground rivers discussed above. Shame was, it seems, responsible for some of the major ruptures in the rehearsal room. Here is an excerpt from my journal, which sums up a major critical incident that needed to be deconstructed:

Strong Hotspot: When Actor B was working with Actor Z, she responded as though it was not happening. Twin B physically responded to Actor Z’s character KoKo in a way that Actor Z didn’t like. There seemed to be a blurring and a confusion regarding where Actor Z started, and where KoKo finished and vice versa. Then Actor B hit Actor Z with a washer. Actor Z’s response was ‘I am finished’. She left actor B on the floor. Alone. I have observed that Actor Z steps out of character when conflict occurs that she finds difficult to handle, rather than allowing KoKo the character the task to work it out. This is understandable but difficult to work with. We then sat in a circle for a difficult debrief, where it was obvious Actor Z was upset with herself. (Excerpt from journal, Bali, January 2008, Appendix 6)

As mentioned previously, one of my not-so-hidden agendas was to help Actor Z achieve what she had not achieved before (see Introduction): that ‘zone of proximal development’ (Vygotsky, 1997). It was this expectation that contributed to setting up the situation described above. The shameful selves became paramount, resulting in an impasse that was messy to deal with.

Shame is an interesting construct, because it has different meanings for different people. Mostly, when shame visits we want to hide away, because we:

feel inadequate, in disarray, not comfortably exposable to others; the urge to hide, silence or reform the disturbed self; embarrassment, humiliation, disgrace and the idea of the diminished self ... the experience of feeling ashamed of oneself or viewing oneself as flawed. (Miller, 1996, cited in Kavner & McNab, 2005, p. 142)

I have labelled my involvement in this critical incident ‘shameful’ (rather than ‘guilty’ or ‘flawed’) for the sake of this analysis. Whereas guilt allows for the possibility of making

amends, shame is more focused on the self: rather than apologising for the mistake, the self *is* the mistake (Karan, cited in Kavner & McNab, 2005, p. 142). In my case, I blamed myself for not being able to remedy the situation. I could not ‘read’ what was happening. One of the reasons could have been Actor Z’s powerful ability to control her expressed emotions. Because of this, she was able to bracket her feelings out in order to attend to the task:

Yes I think some of this ... was a hangover from *Poppins*,³⁸ from times when I felt ignored or dismissed by you in the rehearsal room, but where I didn’t speak out about this at the time because I figured it was part of your process as an actor. (Confidential email from Actor Z, 4 August 2008, Appendix 5)

This silence can, however, be the ‘hole where our connection to others should be’, and can inhibit conversation (Kavner & McNab, 2005, p. 143) – in this case, years later.

When the shameful self of the client and the shameful self of the therapist meet, the therapist can get the:

feeling that you are failing your client by not being able to help them shift a fixed narrative ... not a pleasant experience. Such impasses invite therapists to blame themselves for the lack of progress, to question their skills and feel ashamed of their failure ... (Kavner & McNab, 2005, p. 151)

As I think about this incident, I am reminded of when the character KoKo removed herself from Twin A and Twin B after their cutting scene:

KOKO: When it comes there is nothing else that can be done. I hear myself say ‘when I get home I’m going to take off all my clothes, get under the covers and sleep’. When what I really mean is I’m going to remove whatever it is that makes you think I am one of you and put on the winding sheet of gossamer, wrap it tight until the blood had gone heavy and still and my torso drained of life cuts the outline of its shape into the bed. With my eyes closed I fall into that familiar middle space between. (*A Mouthful of Pins*, 2008, p. 19, Appendix 7 and DVD)

In the rehearsal room on the night of this critical incident, it was as though Actor Z felt that: ‘When it comes there is nothing else that can be done.’ (*A Mouthful of Pins*, 2007, p. 19), so she left the floor, none of us realising the unexpected ramifications of this very

³⁸ *The Knowing of Mary Poppins* was Actor Z and Brown Ash’s (and others’) collaboration several years earlier where Actor Z was the director, and the Director (Margi Brown Ash) was the actor.

simple yet defining incident. In an email many months later, Actor Z explained what had happened:

I remember feeling an overwhelming sense of uselessness and inadequacy and that a lot of people were watching me fail. I don't think it was your behaviour that caused it, but I do remember feeling confused by your response because I thought it was all about me and you responded as if I'd done something to you – so this might be an example of me feeling like I was at the centre of things.

(Confidential email from Actor Z: 4 August 2008, Appendix 5)

Actor Z was unable to speak about what had happened, but it was an experience that KoKo sang about in the final song:

KOKO:

See the thoughts behind my eyes that wrap me up, cut me off and drown me?

See how the words form in my mouth, sit first on my tongue, hesitant,
quivering?

Bitten down, they bite back.

(*A Mouthful of Pins*, 2008, p. 25, Appendix 7, and DVD)

At the time, my response was to postpone rehearsals for 24 hours. However, it took me several months to deconstruct exactly what had happened. Once again I turned to theory to help me deconstruct the situation. In the therapy room, 'sometimes our feelings of shame lead to disconnection from the client and what is happening in the room' (Kavner & McNab, 2005, p. 151).

This impasse was the beginning of a disconnected relationship in the rehearsal room – not all the time, but often enough to cause difficulty. The pattern consisted of a hotspot occurring in the room, unpacking it (either in check out or face to face after the rehearsal), resolving it and finally repeating it the following day as though there had been no resolve.

This was also the pattern mirrored within the production: we moved through the days of the week only to return to the same pattern the following week. This was indicated with texts and slide projections of the names of the days of the week, such as:

'There isn't a Monday that would not cede its place to Tuesday' (Chekhov, quoted in *A Mouthful of Pins*, 2008)

'Bad Tuesday' (P.L. Travers, quoted in *A Mouthful of Pins*, 2008)

‘Maybe Tuesday will be my good news day’ (Billy Holiday, quoted in *A Mouthful of Pins*, 2008) or

‘Wednesday Bloody Wednesday’ (*A Mouthful of Pins*, 2008, Appendix 7, and DVD).

The cyclical nature of the play was also acted out by Twin B in her monologue ‘in any given week’:

TWIN B:

In any given week

(let’s call it this week)

I will see the value of

Monday - the nymph, or

Tuesday - the mother

which makes Wednesday the crone

& so Thursday leaves me cold

with no one left to be

I settle down with Thursday’s corpse

watch hours of TV

splatter the floor with stepped-out-of

clothes and unopened mail

cook myself a dinner

chop, 3 veg and no skill

until

newborn

(let’s call it Sunday)

I find myself honouring the mushrooms

the tomatoes

and the clacking of the knife on the cutting

board

a moment when everything’s worth it

when what I've lost is simple
a tomato
your voice
a squandered day
a moment
a life
spent hankering down with one less joy
one more passion picked peeled and
plundered
and then there were none.

(A Mouthful of Pins, 2008, 8, Appendix 7, and DVD)

4.4.5 Take away: Making a world

The utmost importance of language becomes apparent when things become messy. While we struggled to find ways of 'fusing our horizons', it was always insightful to look at KoKo and Twin A and Twin B to see how they solved similar problems in the world of the play. All three used the strategy of avoidance (most understandable!): KoKo preferred to disappear (she was constantly diving under her bedclothes); Twin A preferred drugs; and Twin B had her own rituals to deal with the messiness in her life, including a cutting ritual. Our off-stage rituals were deliberately set in place to avoid this messiness, and to try to make visible the multiplicity of meanings that surrounded us. However, as we have learned, our intentions do not always match our outcomes.

I think the major obstacle we encountered was misunderstanding on multiple levels. Levin talks about this:

In order to interact in a particular community it is necessary to have mutual understandings about what we mean when we talk to each other. Difficulties arise when we fail to recognize that we are using a meaning for a word that others in conversation do not share. (Levin, 2007, p. 110)

There were many times when I felt that Actor Z and I had a different relationship to language, which is the basis of all communication. This needed to be addressed. For me, language is fluid, and the words make up only one part of the communication. Body, gesture,

pauses and utterances all contribute to the meaning of what I am trying to say (see Chapter 2). When I talked with Actor Z, my language did not seem to flow: I wanted to say so much more than words would allow me to, and I felt that Actor Z heard only the words. I felt unheard, and I believe that Actor Z also felt unheard:

We all want, above all, to be heard – but not merely to be heard. I want to be understood – heard for what we think we are saying, for what we know we meant. (Tannen, cited in Levin, 2007, p. 111)

Compared to Actor Z, I was feeling ‘disorganised’ and ‘undisciplined’ (McNamee, cited in Anderson, 2007, p. 320), struggling with expressing what I was meaning. I needed to help Actor Z understand that moving away from the planned nature of rehearsal (or moving away from something known yesterday to incorporate the unknown of today) was an act of respect rather than dismissal. I also needed to incorporate the members of the group in these major critical incidents. Rather than trying to protect them, I needed to allow them to become part of the solution.

McNamee talks about how a constructionist approach leads us to ‘making a world’ rather than ‘knowing a world’ (McNamee, in Anderson, 2007, p. 325), and that is what I would now embrace if I were in a similar situation. I needed to be more responsive to Actor Z’s need to ‘know the world’ of the play. I needed to move through our conversations in ways that opened avenues of understanding so that the world of the play could be re-made every performance, but I did not have to do this alone. Perhaps this analysis has clarified just that: there is opportunity for all the collaborators to leap into the ‘zone of proximal development’ if and when they are provided with a transformative space in which to work. This transformative space requires a ‘fusing of horizons’ (a world where we are heard and understood). Group responsibility comes with this, inviting multiple ways of hearing, seeing and understanding rather than placing the responsibility solely on the shoulders of the director. In this way, we could ‘make a world’ in the theatre that was enriched by the application of a social constructionist framework such as the one suggested.

5 The five learnings

The question that is of utmost importance now is where to from here? How can I articulate the collaborative learnings that have emerged from the research question:

How can I apply a collaborative process, borrowed from constructionist therapies, in the rehearsal room to enrich the process/performance for theatre-making?

In this chapter, I endeavour to provide what I term a map of the collaborative theatre process, with five main components that have emerged from this research. Sheila McNamee has suggested several guidelines for collaborative conversation, suggesting things like avoiding abstract principles, privileging narrative forms, fostering community and blurring the boundaries between the classroom and everyday life (McNamee, 2007, p. 326). My findings seem to dream these concepts on to make them more user friendly in the rehearsal room, such as using language carefully and clearly, and always checking that what you say is as close as possible to what is heard (what McNamee calls avoiding abstract principles); acknowledging and including and dreaming on the multiple stories/multiple selves present in the rehearsal/performance space (privileging narrative forms), and implementing a set of rituals to build community (fostering community). Her blurring of boundaries (between life and the classroom) could be seen as a given in the collaborative theatre world, probably because, as artists, our tools are ourselves, our own stories and habits, our dreams and demons.

In this map of learnings, I am suggesting that we also incorporate several of the theatre-making discoveries as well, in particular employing the horizontal theatre form discussed previously, as well as ImpulseTraining as the core rehearsal tool. I am also suggesting that, as theatre directors, we remain very aware of our leadership style, embracing a more horizontal and democratic approach, which would provide opportunities for artists to move into the ‘zone of proximal development’ (Vygotsky, 1997) in order to develop personal agency (White, 2007) and an opportunity to engage in transformative practice.

It is important that this is seen not as a prescriptive approach to theatre-making, but as a gathering of ideas that may help an ensemble of artists unfold the ‘mysteries’ that emerge in their rehearsal process, and perhaps provide a means of keeping the space between each artist

alive, responsible and transformative. In other words, these offerings may provide an opportunity to do what I was attempting to do throughout this exegesis: to see the familiar in a different way, to hear and understand it differently (Anderson, 2007).

To begin, I suggest we re-examine the concept of respect and good manners – crucial values to incorporate into the collaborative process. The culture of the theatre industry sometimes overlooks respect and good manners, which are often excused due to lack of time, funds and opportunities. We can sometimes forget that:

Using manners reaffirms our basic human connectedness and interdependence despite the hierarchies that compose so much of our professional and personal lives. Therefore manners are a crucial part of the behavioural repertoire of the collaborative life style. (St George & Wulff, 2007, p. 407)

Throughout the collaborative process, I encourage this respect through careful use of language, focusing on constructive use, with no blame and no judgment (using self-referential language such as ‘I think that’ rather than ‘You thought that’). Let us appreciate what *is* working rather than focusing on what is *not* working. In therapy, there is no solid evidence that we need to dig the roots of a dysfunction in order to help solve the problem (Bertolino & O’Hanlon, 2002); in a similar way, if we focus on the strengths of the participants we will perhaps be closer to providing a transformative experience not only for the actors and creatives involved but also for our audience. Here are five steps that may move us closer to this goal. A deeper examination of these learnings can be read in Chapter 3, where I discuss the use of these tools to test my question.

5.1 Learning 1: Engagement of ritual

In the rehearsal room we build community through employing rituals that help us stay connected.

The working terrain in theatre can be held together by a cycle of rituals that provide ‘frameworks of expectancy’ (Douglas, cited in Roberts et al., 2003, p. 12). Rituals are an important part of our theatre culture, providing a fertile creative environment, using

repetition, familiarity and transformation of what is already known (the familiar) into what is about to be known (the creative act) (Roberts et al., 2003). Rituals can be seen as providing the scaffolding to enter the ‘zone of proximal development’ (Vygotsky, 1997), that space where the actors and creatives transform the elements of theatre-making into something new.

The rituals involved in the creative constructionist rehearsal/performance process include group norms; check in/check out (including scaling); goaling; ImpulseTraining; reflective practice; the incorporation of the Four Agreements (Ruiz, 1997); and a new ritual that I discovered in my last review of the literature, which occurred in the analysis stage: the Practice of Gifts (Kinman et al., 2004). These rituals, shown in Figure 5.1, merge with one another and form the container for the rehearsal/performance.

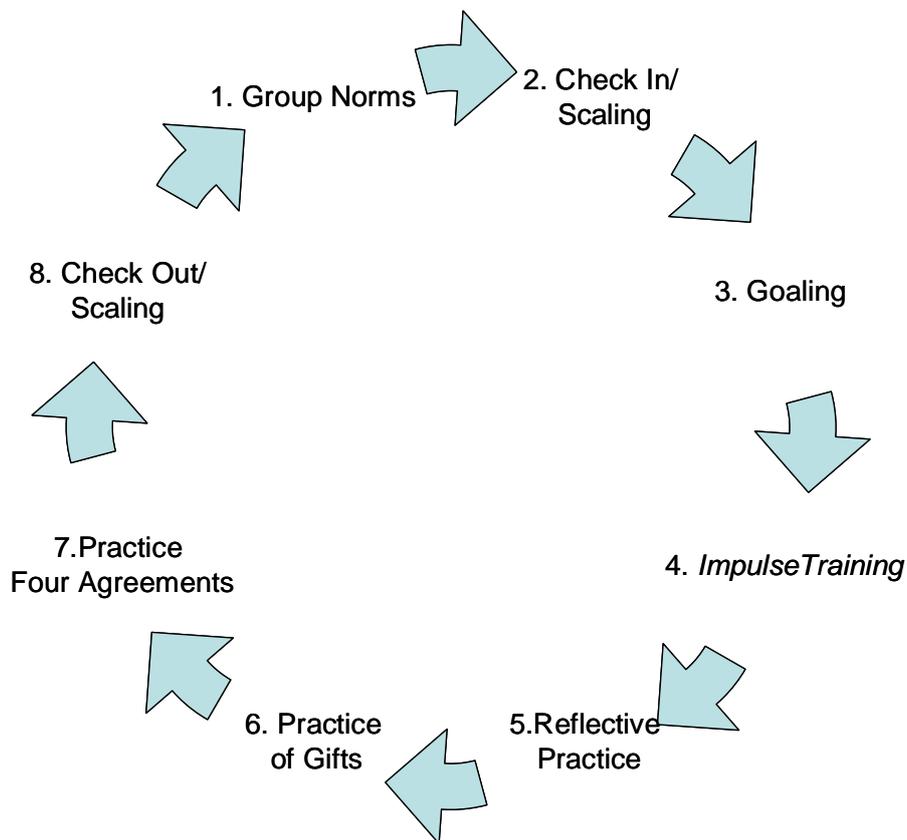


Figure 5.1: Creative constructionist ritual

5.1.1 Group norms

Group norms could be created as a group and displayed on the wall at each rehearsal. I want to add Derrida's idea concerning responsibility as a potential requirement: being responsible, we are required to respond when needed (Kinman et al., 2004). According to Derrida, responsibility insists on response (Kinman et al., 2004), and could be seen as connecting us in relationship to the other. For a community of actors to work together, we could embrace this definition of responsibility: that we are required to respond to the problem at hand. Derrida talks about irresponsibility as being the refusal to look someone in the face, and Kinman expands this:

It is about how we look someone in the face. It is about whether we look someone in the face. And it is about how do we respond, together, in the context of that looking. And it is about how do we respond, together. (Kinman et al., 2004, p. 243)

I think if this had been a primary group norm in *A Mouthful of Pins*, many of the issues that arose during my research would have been resolved more efficiently. Rather than running from them, individuals would be required to face the issues, and in so doing have the opportunity to resolve them – keeping in mind that people can only work to the best of their ability.

5.1.2 Check in/check out

This methodology was highly valued by many of the participants in both *Gone to Earth* and *A Mouthful of Pins*:

I have defiantly [sic] come to value check in and check out as this establishes a trust ... respect ... caring and nurturing ... and ... allows issues to be solved within the rehearsal room. (Student's response, July 2008)

Check in and check out were great because it gave a very free rehearsal room some structure and gave us an opportunity to gauge what we were feeling and to leave it behind. (Student's response, July 2008)

Shakespeare wrote that the truest poetry is the most feigning: in short, I feel that I was able to speak ‘truthfully’ within the ‘false’ construct of check in/out. (Collaborator, May 2008)³⁹

We could start and finish with check in/check out using scaling between 1 and 10: 1 when I am feeling extremely low; 10 when I have never felt better. Scaling allows the group to use another language – the language of numbers – to state succinctly their emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual landscape. It is a way of communicating what is happening without having to move into content; only the speaker really knows what they mean by a particular number, and the rest of the group accepts this fact. If the score is low, a question focusing on what the group could do to help increase the score could be asked (Berg & de Shazer, 1993). When ImpulseTraining follows check in, we witness the ability of the group to care for those who are feeling wobbly, gently *seeing* them and acknowledging *they have been seen*. Adler believes that:

Inherent in being a person in the cultures of the West is longing for a witness. We seem to want, deeply want, to be seen as we are by another. (Adler, cited in Stromsted & Haze, 2007, p. 57)

The use of scaling provides this opportunity for every participant to be seen and acknowledged by others in a very simple yet profound way. Also, employing White’s Definitional Ceremony (2007) on a regular basis could provide an opportunity for everyone to be seen and acknowledged publicly (see Chapter 3).

5.1.3 Goaling

Each day, there could be a goaling exercise where we state what we want to achieve during each rehearsal/performance. This could keep us mindful and on task. Because the process of a collaborative rehearsal could be seen as unpredictable at times, it may be important for the artist to have something to work towards each rehearsal. Goaling provides a rigour of practice that calls on the logical self to commit, providing us with the opportunity to journey objectively before moving into more subjective and alternate stories. It doesn’t matter

³⁹ Please note that due to a crashed hard drive on 19 November 2008, the original emails quoting these responses are no longer available. I have signed a Statutory Declaration evidencing this fact. See Appendix 10.

whether or not we achieve our goal/s; what matters is that we have a starting point to begin the exploration of the collaborative territory (see Chapter 3).

5.1.4 Reflective practice as ritual

At each rehearsal, we could allocate *time to reflect* on what has happened, and how to *dream it on*. This is one of the greatest tools for consolidation of process. As tools for reflection, we can use stream-of-consciousness writing, pastels, clay, plasticine, an assortment of papers, magazines and glue. Actors can use these tools to access what they ‘don’t know they know’ (based on the MIECAT process). Through reflection, the embodied knowing experienced in ImpulseTraining can then be incorporated into the performance. Without reflection, ImpulseTraining remains just a warm-up activity instead of a generative process (see Chapter 3).

5.1.5 The practice of gifts

Although I did not introduce this construct in my practice, apart from the Definitional Ceremony, I found it made enormous sense during my reflections following the production, when I was searching for solutions. It seemed that a simple way of solving critical incidents – or at least reducing their intensity – could be to employ *A Collaborative Action Plan* (Kinman et al., 2004), which provides key discussion points to open conversations up to a variety of strengths-based possibilities – what Kinman calls the language of gifts:

We are suggesting that [we] enter each situation with an attitude or a spirit that receives the person or group being served as an entity bearing gifts. Even when the discourse surrounding the person or group is permeated with deficit and problems, the practitioner sees her work as one of distinguishing abundance and receiving the fruit of that abundance as figs offering enrichment and healing. (Kinman et al., 2004, p. 234)

The practice of gifts, the ‘fruits of ... abundance’, appears to be very useful, helping theatre practitioners move away from the *overwhelmingness* of the dominant story of difficulties that can enter the rehearsal room at times, particularly when time is limited. Kiernan O’Rourke-Phipps (cited in Kinman et Al., 2004) explains what happens:

When two people interact in language in a way that is mutually beneficial, open and transparent, they are exchanging gifts ... two people can begin to

transform the language used by their community (O'Rourke-Phipps, cited in Kinman et al., 2004, p. 235)

Each member would be required to discuss the gifts of the other members of the group, as well as sharing her/his own gifts. Kinman also suggests exploring the roadblocks that could get in the way. My preference would be to propose a discussion around what would amplify the gifts, strengths and potentials of the participants, rather than focusing on roadblocks. I think if Actor Z and I had worked within the context of the group in this way, rather than trying to sort things out alone, we would have had a richer, more transformational experience. We would have been able to identify strengths and build on them, which is at the centre of the philosophy of collaborative therapy. We attempted to do this by utilizing our group norms, always participating in *check in/check out* and reflections at the beginning and end of each rehearsed section, however I think we would have had more to build on if we had an overt and explicit awareness of everyone's gifts, strengths and potential.

This process could then be expanded by asking questions about the characters as well as the artists themselves – questions such as ‘What strengths are visible in that scene? What gifts do you think would benefit your fellow actor? What gift would be beneficial to receive from your fellow actor and what would aid this relationship?’

5.1.6 Use of Miguel Ruiz's Four Agreements

I suggest it may be important to consider what Miguel Ruiz calls The Four Agreements and how they could help create and sustain the ensemble, including taking nothing *personally*, not making *assumptions*, using *impeccable language* and always *doing one's best* (Ruiz, 1997) (see Chapter 3).

If we begin rehearsals with such a detailed framework of ritual, we should have multiple in-built protective factors to deal successfully with any critical incidents that emerge (see Chapter 3).

5.2 Learning 2: ImpulseTraining

**In the rehearsal room we use ImpulseTraining as
the ‘container’ for the work.**

ImpulseTraining is one of the major rituals employed in the Constructionist rehearsal/performance space. It is a way of moving on the floor with others, responding to each individual by mirroring their movement or responding to their movement in some way, constantly building on the ‘gifts’ of the other actor. If we take the premise that to understand someone else we not only need to have self-awareness, but we also need to *see* the other person in a non-judgmental way (Stromsted & Haze, 2007), ImpulseTraining allows each actor to gain a deeper understanding of self and other, and the power of the space between. They are encouraged *not* to create, rather build on what other actors are doing. Sometimes it is important to remind actors that it is not a ‘self-fest’. Initially, some actors can veer to the side of self-indulgence and respond to ImpulseTraining as a dance floor exercise. I have experienced this often, and it always passes once they experience the sense of ‘being moved’ rather than ‘moving’.

By removing the need to be creative, the actor has the potential to find a freedom on the floor, responding minute by minute to what is happening in front of them. The spaces between the actors remain alive, as unconscious material is made manifest. I think it is important to allow the actors time to find that space of surrender to the movement, rather than willing the movement. Whitehouse talks about this feeling of will and surrender:

‘I move’ is the clear knowledge that I am personally moving. The opposite of this is the sudden and astonishing moment when ‘I am moved’. (Whitehouse, quoted in Plevin, 2007, p. 105).

It is this ‘astonishing moment’ of transformation that interests me. The actors surrender to what they ‘don’t know they know’ (Lett, 1997) – what I like to call the ‘spiritual essence’ of the artist. Because the director/facilitator is the witness, watching the practice take place, the actors have a sense of safety. To surrender to ‘being moved’ can be quite scary, and that is why the director as witness is an important part of the process:

Surrender can be stated as a letting go. However, there is fear in letting go. It is risky. Something unfamiliar may happen. Within the safety of a strong vessel held by the conscious witness the mover moves, trusting that whatever she brings can be held. (Plevin, 2007, p. 111)

Once the group develops the culture of ImpulseTraining, where they surrender each time they approach the floor, there is space to transform. This safe place where the actors build and grow the space between each other seems to become the ‘zone of proximal development’ (Vygotsky, 1997) and what the actors thought they didn’t know becomes known.

5.3 Learning 3: Zone of proximal development

Both in the rehearsal/performance space and when engaging in reflective practice we provide an opportunity to cross into the zone of proximal development.

Michael White (2007) was extremely excited when he discovered Vygotsky’s approach to learning. He adapted Vygotsky’s research to the narrative therapy room, suggesting that it is by engaging in careful conversations scaffolding meaning with action that the client can move into a zone of transformative understanding. In reference to the artist, the director/facilitator can coach from the sideline as the actors engage in ImpulseTraining, gently providing scaffolding for the actor to move away from the known (the comfortable place of ‘I know what is expected, I know how to do this’) into the unknown where everything is seen as if for the first time. The actor responds with a beginners mind, *allowing the moments to unfold* rather than consciously unfolding them. This is the polarity of many of the acting techniques taught to actors, where the intellect is engaged to logically make choices before it is translated into the body. In ImpulseTraining, the body is able to find the answers itself.

Through the interconnectivity of the group, the actors are able to experience new ways of knowing and discover things that they could never have conceptualised alone.

5.4 Learning 4: Valuing joint construction of meaning⁴⁰

In the constructionist rehearsal/performance space, we value joint construction of meaning in the rehearsal room.

We strive for clarity of expression: we assume nothing, embracing transparency and commitment.

By avoiding what McNamee (2007) calls abstract principles in conversation, we can embrace a joint construction of meaning. In *A Mouthful of Pins*, we had many abstractions to deal with, both in form and content, and we found multiple incidences where we were unable to come to a joint understanding. Because I was struggling with my own perceived limitations of my capacity to employ the constructionist philosophical model, I silenced my own impulses to challenge the abstraction of the text and also challenge the abstractions sitting between Actor Z and myself – the things that could not be named. Using this model, it was easy for me to edit myself out due to fear of stepping on other artists' processes. It was important for me to remember that 'in a collaborative ... context, knowledge is neither given nor gained': it is 'jointly constructed' (McNamee, 2007, p. 326).

Not only was I was still grappling with the differences between the actor's and the director's processes (I have been a professional actor for over 30 years, often working in a vertical theatre model, which is the dominant way of working in professional theatre; in this model, meaning is not always seen as 'jointly constructed'; the actor is committed to do as the director says), but I was stepping into unknown territory. I did not have anyone to model or imitate; I had to create a new map and, to serve my research question, my only map was collaborative therapy. A very clear example of this difficulty in joint construction happened with Actor Z and the 'digging your heels in episode' several days before opening. Here is an excerpt from my journal:

⁴⁰ St George and Wulff (2007, p. 411) and Roger Lowe (2004) also offer suggestions that are very similar to my findings, including respecting others and using self-referential language (what St George and Wulff call manners), making use of reflective practice each rehearsal/performance (critical self-reflections) and daily gratitude for everyone's efforts (appreciation).

Actor Z said she can't be open with her expression because I will think she has just 'dug her heels in', an expression I used several days ago. (Excerpt from journal, 2008, Appendix 6)

This must have been difficult for Actor Z: on the one hand I was encouraging her to be open with her position, but on the other hand she was not feeling safe. It was outside her experience to accept that I no longer thought that she was 'digging in her heels'. Without trust, there can be no joint construction, only individual stories that do not meet.

Because of my experience in *A Mouthful of Pins* I would advocate that this way of thinking about knowledge – that it is jointly constructed – becomes part of the group norm. Questions that I would now ask in rehearsal to enhance joint construction are:

What *words* would you like *to use* to communicate to me your feelings of being unsafe?

How would you need me to *respond* so that you knew I *heard* that you felt unsafe?

What would I need to *say* to you to show you that I have *understood* what you mean by unsafe?

What qualities would I *show* that convinced you that I now embodied unsafeness?

By asking these questions, I am suggesting that members of the ensemble help each other to respond meaningfully rather than 'miscommunicate', something that affected us profoundly at times. An example of miscommunication occurred when I asked Actor Z more than once to 'react' to the other actors rather than 'act': this direction seemed to be interpreted as a negative comment, rather than a way of staying in the present moment. If we could have asked questions such as those mentioned above, we could have worked out what Actor Z was hearing, and I could then have rephrased the request so that it was heard with positive intention. Also, if we had incorporated ImpulseTraining, we could have lessened this as a sticking point, because of its focus on the embodiment of the actor, rather than initiating action playing. The actor is encouraged to 'react'. I thought it was my sole responsibility to hold the space, to make it a problem-free zone, to make it 'the best rehearsal ever'. I think my agenda actually corrupted joint construction of meaning at times, because I was failing to

place myself firmly in the equation, negating my frustrations in order to stay alert to the group's story. I had quite unknowingly placed myself outside the group. It is important that we stay aware of our responsibility to jointly construct meaning in the rehearsal/performance space by endeavouring to clarify our expression, to invite clarification, assuming nothing and embracing a transparency and commitment to the process.

5.5 Learning 5: Working horizontally, both in leadership style and theatre-making process

In the constructionist rehearsal/performance space we work horizontally, equally valuing each artist's contribution, using a democratic leadership style and a horizontal theatre form and process.

One way of moving towards a more horizontal constructionist process is to privilege everyone's stories, which requires the director to work democratically, encouraging spontaneity, participating moment by moment, responding openly and honestly, and guiding the group towards self-supporting behaviour (Donigan & Hube-Kellachy, 1999).

Looking back, I am wondering what would have happened if I had honoured my growing feeling that I was privileging one story (the story of KoKo and Actor Z's process). Could this have been addressed by adopting a more horizontal theatre form? I think so: it would have provided space for the multiple stories that seemed to inhabit the sidelines – stories of the musicians, the visual artist and the soundscape artist. These stories did not have time to develop to their potential and were required to adjust to support the text. These stories could have provided a stronger connection for the audience to find their own story of sadness.⁴¹ An example of one of these stories that inhabited the sidelines was the story of the soundscape artist, who spent months working on the score only to have it cut severely after the dress rehearsal because it was too strong in relation to the voice of one of the actors. This was something that could have been addressed by using less text and more action, and allowing the soundscape to become the prime score at different times. However, because we

⁴¹ We did do it at times – for example, when the musician moved and played while the three characters slept two-thirds through the production. It was a way of allowing the audience breathing space to reflect on what was happening. What if we had translated even more of the text into embodied movement scores? Would that have created a more congruent piece of theatre?

were struggling so much with the text, the other forms lost focus. This also had much to do with my own lack of experience with horizontal forms.

The feedback that I received regarding the accessibility⁴² of the production suggests that developing these multiple voices or stories may have been a worthwhile exercise. I am presuming here that the reason why something is seen as inaccessible is that the viewer cannot find personal meaning in the story or characters being portrayed. When I asked some colleagues the leading question ‘If you could change the piece to suit your own needs what would you do?’ the responses were interesting:

I’d probably impose a narrative. I think it’s a very intellectual work and I think that many people find that inaccessible. (Anonymous audience member, email, Appendix 3)

I missed having a story and characters I could engage with. Because I couldn’t pick up on what was happening - I felt alienated. (Anonymous audience member, email, Appendix 3)

Personally I found it rather difficult to engage with the story. I couldn’t find the hooks that could help me care. (Anonymous audience member, email, Appendix 3)

However, it is important to note that the need for unified characters, empathic responding and linear narratives could be seen as a more traditional theatre convention. It is possible that the production *A Mouthful of Pins* reiterated the disjunctions or confusion within the work, which was also a direct reflection of my own confusion and anxiety.

5.6 Ways of integrating the five learnings

One way of staying cognisant of the five learnings would be to display them on a large visual map in the rehearsal room. In this way, everyone would stay actively involved in a theatre-making process that was transparent and workable. Everyone has the capacity to be proactive, to notice when things are going amiss so that check in/check out and goaling could invite discussions of potential critical incidents. At the end of check out, one of the ensemble

⁴² As I write this, I am very aware that postmodern works do not operate through access. Such a work’s very disjunction is its position and demands that the audience takes responsibility for what my primary supervisor calls interpretive anxiety.

members could ask whether there was anything to discuss regarding theatre-making processes. Check in/check out then becomes a tool to gauge both the health of the project and the health of the participants.

Figure 5.2 provides an opportunity to initiate the ensemble in processes that can develop collaboration. I am suggesting that the map on the rehearsal wall be a much larger, simpler version of this, with lots of space to add new ideas, images, poetry, responses, suggestions and drawings: it will perhaps cover a wall, and document the rehearsal period. As a starting point, Figure 5.2 suggests a formal process that will remind us to:

- address the multiple stories and multiple selves that emerge in rehearsal and find some joint construction of meaning through careful use of language;
- help members stay aware of the power distribution, not only between people (especially in relationship to leadership) but also between art forms (horizontal form and process);
- make visible those hard-to-identify discourses that can exert covert yet powerful forces on the uninitiated; and
- provide multiple ways of communicating, embracing both vocal language and body language (Impulse Training) to cater for all learning types.

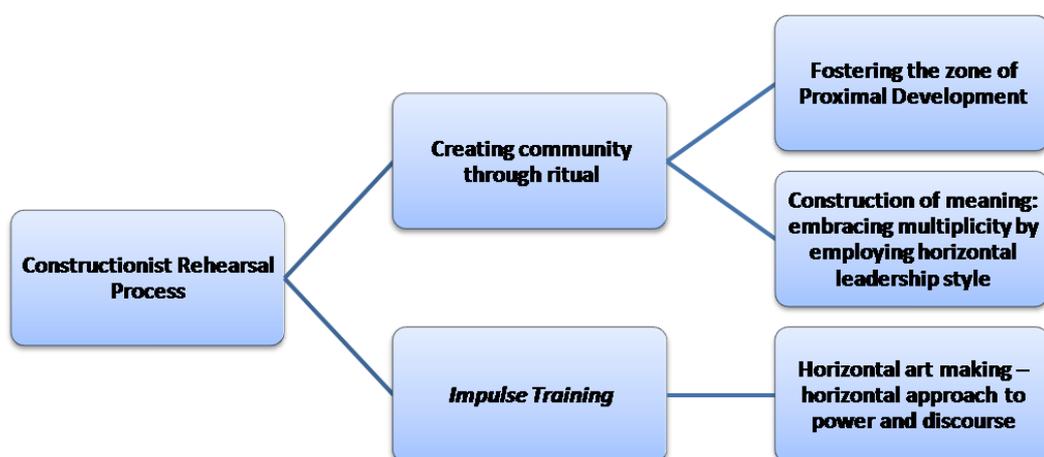


Figure 5.2: Scaffolding of constructionist rehearsal/performance process

Through the use of multiple rituals and a renewed awareness of language, we can provide a solid scaffolding to allow the members safe avenues of communication, enhancing and growing the performance experience. This approach could help actors/artists develop a heightened sense of ‘personal agency’ (White, 2007), an increased ability to understand each other on a transformative level by the ‘fusing of each other’s horizons’ (Gadamer in Anderson, 2007), and consequently creating work that is vibrant, joyful and transformational.

All of these suggested learnings are only that: a beginning stance that theatre-makers can dream on, incorporating their emerging or developed practice into the fabric of collaborative process. There is no right or wrong way; there is just a lively awareness of the space between people, an awareness of the power of language and an acknowledgment of the multiplicity and complexity of the creative act, which can be pushed and pulled by invisible discourses that sit around us. Our job, then, is to seek awareness so that when we are pushed and pulled we understand where this is coming from and we can turn to our five learnings to address it.

One of the first concepts I heard from my lecturer when I ventured into the world of collaborative therapy was ‘With awareness comes change’, and so our job as collaborative artists is to develop our awareness in order to create performances that have the capacity to change the ways in which people view their world, opening up their perceptions and dreams along with our own, and providing a lens that may enrich the journey towards ‘personal agency’. How long will this take? My lecturer finished off the statement above with something like ‘and there are no guarantees how long the change will take’ – possibly a lifetime.

References

- Anderson, H. 1997a. *Conversation, Language, and Possibilities. A Postmodern Approach to Therapy*. New York: Basic Books.
- Anderson, H. 1997b. *Selected Writings: Postmodern Social Construction Therapies*. Accessed October 12, 2008 from <http://www.harleneanderson.org/writings/postmoderntherapieschapter.htm>.
- Anderson, H. 1998a. *Draft Version of: Becoming a Postmodern Collaborative Therapist: A Clinical and Theoretical Journey, Part I*. Galveston, TX: Taos Institute.
- Anderson, H. 1998b. *Draft Version of: Becoming a Postmodern Collaborative Therapist: A Clinical and Theoretical Journey, Part II*. Galveston, TX: Taos Institute.
- Anderson, H. 2001. Becoming a postmodern collaborative therapist: A clinical and theoretical journey. Part II. *Journal of the Texas Association for Marriage and Family Therapy*, 6(1), 4–22.
- Anderson, H. 2007. A postmodern umbrella: Language and knowledge as relational and generative, and inherently transforming. In H. Anderson & D. Gerhart (eds), *Collaborative Therapy Relationships and Conversations That Make a Difference*. New York: Routledge.
- Anderson H. & Gerhart, D. (eds) 2007. *Collaborative Therapy: Relationships and Conversations That Make a Difference*. New York: Routledge.
- Anderson, H. & Goolishian, H. 1988. Human systems as linguistic systems: Preliminary and evolving ideas about the implications for clinical theory. *Family Process*, 27, 371–393.
- Andersen, T. 1991. *The Reflecting Team: Dialogues and Dialogues About the Dialogues*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Andersen-Warren, M. & Grainger, R. 2000. *Practical Approaches to Dramatherapy: The Shield of Perseus*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Assagioli, R. 2000. *Psychosynthesis: A Collection of Basic Writings*. Boston: Common Wealth Printing.

- Avdi, E. 2005. Negotiating a pathological identity in the clinical dialogue: Discourse analysis of a family therapy. *Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 78(4), 493–512.
- Bauerlein, M. 2001. Social constructionism: Philosophy for the academic workplace, *Partisan Review*, 93(2), 1.
- Becvar, D.S. & Becvar, R.J. 1999. *Systems Theory and Family Therapy*. 2nd ed. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Berg, I. & de Shazer, S. 1993. Making numbers talk: Language in therapy. In S. Friedman (ed.), *The New Language of Change*. New York: Guildford Press.
- Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York: Anchor.
- Bernard, J. & Goodyear, R. 1998. *Fundamentals of Clinical Supervision*, 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bertolino, B. & O'Hanlon, B. 2002. *Collaborative, Competency-Based Counseling and Therapy*. London: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bird, J. 2000. *The Heart's Narrative*. Auckland, NZ: Edge Press.
- Bird, J. 2004. *Talk That Sings Therapy in a New Linguistic Key*. Auckland, NZ: Egan-Reid.
- Bogart, A. & Landau, T. 2005. *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition*. New York: Theatre Communications Group.
- Borg, S. 2001. The research journal: a tool for promoting and understanding researcher development. *Language Teaching Research*, 5(2), 156–177.
- Bradbury, H. & Lichtenstein, B. 2000. Relationality in organizational research: Exploring the space between. *Organisation Science*, 11, 551–564.
- Brown, R. 2005. Moises Kaufman: The copulation of form and content. *Theatre Topics*, 15(1). Accessed April 12 2008 from http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theatre_topics/v015/15.1brown.html.
- Burr, V. 1995. *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*, London: Routledge.

- Caldwell, R. 2005. At the confluence of memory and meaning: Life review with older adults and families. Using narrative therapy and the expressive arts to remember and re-author stories of resilience. *Family Journal*, 13(2), 172–175.
- Callero, P. 2003. The sociology of the self. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29, 115–129.
- Carroll, M. 1996. *Counselling Supervision Theory, Skills and Practice*. London: Cassell.
- Carroll, M. & Tholstrup, M. (2001) *Integrative Approaches to Supervision*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Coale, H. 1998. *The Vulnerable Therapist*. Philadelphia, PA: Haworth Press.
- Corey, G. 2007. *Theory and Practice of Group Counselling*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Corey M. & Corey, G. 2005. 7th ed. *Process and Practice Groups*. Florence, KY: Wadsworth.
- Dattilio, F. (ed.) 1998. *Case Studies in Couple & Family Therapy. Systemic & Cognitive Perspectives*. London: Guilford Press.
- Denborough, D. (ed.) 2001. *Family Therapy: Exploring the Field's Past, Present and Possible Futures*, Adelaide: Dulwich Centre.
- De Jong, P. and Berg, I.K. (1998). *Interviewing for Solutions*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- De Koster, M., Devise, I., Fament, I. & Loots, G. 2004. Two practices, one perspective, many constructs: On the implications of social constructionism on scientific research and therapy. *Brief Strategic and Systemic Therapy European Review*, 1, n.p.
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (eds) 1998. *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (eds) 2000. *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- De Shazer, S. & Dolan, Y., with Korman, H., Trepper, T.S., McCollom, E. & Berg, I.K. 2007. *More Than Miracles: The State of the Art of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy*. New York: Haworth Press.

- Diamond, J. & Jones, L. 2004. *A Path Made by Walking: Process Work in Practice*, Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press.
- Dirk, J. 2001. The power of feelings: emotion, imagination, and the construction of meaning in adult learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 89, n.p.
- Donigian J. & Hulse-Killacky, D. 1999. *Critical Incidents in Group Therapy*. Florence, KY: Cengage Learning.
- Edley, N. 2001. Unravelling social constructionism: Social constructionism and its critics. *Theory & Psychology*, 11(3), 433–441.
- Edsall, M. 2005. Moving out of the black and into the blue: The cross-referencing performative metaphor in dancing, psychotherapy, and writing. *Dance Research Journal*, 37(2), n.p.
- Egan, G. 2002. *The Skilled Helper*, Sydney: Brooks/Cole.
- Epston, D. & White, M. 1992: *Experience, Contradiction, Narrative and Imagination: Selected Papers of David Epston and Michael White, 1989–1991*. Adelaide: Dulwich Centre.
- Etherington, K. 2004. *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Feltham, C. & Dryden, W. 1994. *Developing Counsellor Supervision*, London: Sage.
- Feltham, C. & Horton, I. (eds) 2006. *The Sage Handbook of Counselling & Psychotherapy*. London: Sage.
- Finfgeld, D. 2001. New directions for feminist therapy based on social constructionism. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 15(3), 148–154.
- Fisher, R. 2002. *Experiential Psychotherapy with Couples: A Guide for the Creative Pragmatist*. Phoenix, AR: Zeig, Tucker & Theisen.
- Fitzgerald, K. 1999. *Adaptive and Maladaptive Narcissism and Creativity: How are They Related in Professional Male and Female Actors?* Berkeley: California School of Professional Psychology. Accessed August 9, 2007 from <http://proquest.umi.com.ezp01.library.qut.edu.au/pqdweb?index=23&sid=2&srchmode>.

- Flaskas, C. Mason, B. & Perlescz, A. (eds) 2005. *The Space Between: Experience, Context and Process in the Therapeutic Relationship*. London: Karnac.
- Fox, R. 2001. *Elements of the Helping Process: A Guide for Clinicians*, New York: Haworth Press.
- Freedman, J. & Combs, G. 1996. *Narrative Therapy: The Social Construction of Preferred Identities*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Friedman, S. (ed.) 1993. *The New Language of Change*. London: Guildford Press.
- Gattenhoff, S. 2006. Traces: Viewing and responding to contemporary performance. In *Proceedings Drama Australia National Conference: Turning the Tides*, Sydney: Drama Australia.
- Gergen, K. 1985. The social constructionist movement in modern psychology. *American Psychologist*, 40(3), 266–275.
- Gergen, K. 1996. *Social Psychology as Social Construction Emerging Vision*. In C.M. Haslam (ed.), *The Message of Social Psychology: Perspectives on Mind in Society*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gergen, K. 1997. The place of the psyche in a constructed world. Draft copy for *Theory and Psychology*. Accessed June 7, 2006 from <http://www.swarthmore.edu/Soc.Sci/kgergen1/printer-friendly.phtml?id=manu14>.
- Gergen, K. 1998. Narrative, moral identity and historical consciousness: A social constructionist account. Accessed June 7, 2006 from <http://www.swarthmore.edu/Soc.Sci/kgergen1/web/printer-friendly.phtml?id=manu3>.
- Gergen, M. 2000. *Feminist Reconstructions in Psychology: Narrative, Gender, and Performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gergen, K. 2008. Therapeutic challenges of multi-being. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 30(4), 335–350.
- Gergen, K. & Gergen, M. 1997. Toward a cultural constructionist psychology. In *Theory and Psychology*. Accessed June 7, 2006 from <http://www.swarthmore.edu/Soc.Sci/kgergen1/printer-friendly.phtml?id=manu15>.

- Gergen, K. & Hosking, D. 2007. If you meet social constructionism along the road. In M. Kwee, K. Gergen & F. Koshkawa (eds), *Horizons in Buddhist Psychology*. Galveston, TX: Taos Institute.
- Gerhart, D. 2007. Creating space for children's voices: A collaborative and playful approach to working with children and families. In H. Anderson & D. Gerhart (eds), *Collaborative Therapy Relationships and Conversations That Make a Difference*. New York: Routledge.
- Gersie, A. 1996. *Dramatic Approaches to Brief Therapy*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Glauser, A. & Bozarth, D. 2001. Person-centered counseling: The culture within. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 79(2), 142–147.
- Goodbread, J. 1997a. *Radical Intercourse: How Dreams Unite us in Love, Conflict and other Inevitable Relationships*. Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press.
- Goodbread, J. 1997b. *The Dreambody Toolkit: A Practical Introduction to Philosophy, Goals and Practice of Process-Oriented Psychology* (2nd ed.). Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press.
- Gray, C. 1996. *Inquiry Through Practice: Developing Appropriate Research Strategies. No Guru, No Method?* Helsinki, Finland: UIAH.
- Grainger, R. 1995. *The Glass of Heaven: The Faith of the Dramatherapist*, London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Green, Z. & Stiers, M. 2002. Multiculturalism and group therapy in the United States: A social constructionist perspective. *Group*, 26(3), 233–246.
- Hale-Haniff, M. & Paszto, A. 1999. Co-constructing subjective experience: A constructivist approach. *Dialogues in Psychology*, 16.0. Mind-4 conference, Dublin City University, Ireland, 17 August.
- Halprin, D. 2003. *The Expressive Body in Life, Art and Therapy: Working with Movement, Metaphor and Meaning*, London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Haseman, B. 2007. Rupture and recognition: Identifying the performative research paradigm. In E. Barrett & B. Bolt (eds), *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*. London: I.B. Tauris.

- Hay, D. 1996. *Lamb at the Altar*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Hay, D. 2000. *My Body, the Buddhist*. London: Wesleyan University Press.
- Hermans, H. & Dimaggio, G. 2004. *The Dialogical Self in Psychotherapy*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Hillman, J. 1991. *A Blue Fire*, New York: Harper Collins.
- Hoffman, L. 2007. The art of 'witness': A new bright edge. In H. Anderson & D. Gerhart (eds), *Collaborative Therapy Relationships and Conversations That Make a Difference*. New York: Routledge.
- Hogan, S. 1997. *Feminist Approaches to Art Therapy*. London: Routledge.
- Horovitz, E. 2005. *Art Therapy as Witness: A Sacred Guide*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Hosking, D.M. 1999. Social construction as process: some new possibilities for research and development. *Concepts & Transformation*, 4(2), 117–132.
- Hosking, D.M. 2004. Editorial social constructionism in community and applied social psychology. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 14, 1–14.
- Hosking, D.M. 2006. Discourses of relations and relational processes. In O. Kyriakidou & M. Ozbilgin (eds), *Relational Perspectives in Organizational Studies: A Research Companion*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Houston, S. 2001. Beyond social constructionism: Critical realism and social work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 31, 845–861.
- Houston, J. 2005. *The Social Artist's Fieldbook: Book One – Developing Your Inner Capacities* (Working Draft). Portland, OR: International Institute of Social Artistry.
- Howe, L. 1992. Book review: *Managing Turbulent Hearts: A Balinese Formula for Living* by Unni Wikan, *Man, New Series*, 27(1), 222–223.
- Hunter, S. & Kottler, J. 2007. Therapists are socially constructed too. *Psychotherapy in Australia*, 13(2), 22–27.

- Hyland Moon, C. 2002. *Studio Art Therapy Cultivating the Artist Identity in the Art Therapist*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Jankowski, P., Clark, W. & Ivey, D. 2000. Fusing horizons: Exploring qualitative research and psychotherapeutic applications of social constructionism. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 22(2), 241–250.
- Jaworski, J. 1998. *Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership*. Berkeley, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Jennings, S. (ed.) 1987. *Dramatherapy: Theory and Practice I*. London: Routledge.
- Jennings, S. 1990. *Dramatherapy with Families, Groups and Individuals: Waiting in the Wings*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Jeynes, K. 2006. The Possibilities of the Moment: An Inquiry into the Experience of Improvising in a Small Group. Unpublished research paper.
- Kavner, E. & McNab, S. 2005. Shame and the therapeutic relationship. In C. Flaskas, B. Mason & A. Perlescz (eds), *The Space Between: Experience, Context and Process in the Therapeutic Relationship*. London: Karnac.
- Keeler, W. 1994. Review of *Managing Turbulent Hearts: A Balinese Formula for Living* by Unni Wikan. *American Ethnologist*, 21(2), 434–435.
- King, M. & Citrenbaum, C. 1993. *Existential Hypnotherapy*, New York: Guilford Press.
- Kinman, C., Finch, P. & Hoffman, L. 2004. Response-able practice: A language of gifts in the institutions of health care. In T. Strong and D. Pare (eds), *Furthering Talk Advances in the Discursive Therapies*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Knill, P., Levine, E. & Levine, S. 2005. *Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy: Towards Therapeutic Aesthetics*, London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Kolb, D. 1984. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall
- Kottler, J. 2008. When a therapist catches despair. *Psychotherapy in Australia*, 13(1), 14–28.

- Kyriakidou, O. & Ozbilgin, M. (eds) 2006. *Relational Perspectives in Organizational Studies: A Research Companion*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Lahad, M. 2000. *Creative Supervision: The Use of Expressive Arts Methods in Supervision and Self Supervision*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Landau, T. & Bogart, A. 2005 *Viewpoints: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition*. New York: Theatre Communications Group.
- Landy, R. 1993. *Persona and Performance: The Meaning of Role in Drama, Therapy and Everyday Life*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Lapworth, P., Sills, C. & Fish, S. 2001. *Integration in Counselling & Psychotherapy: Developing a Persona Approach*. London: Sage.
- Lawson, D. & Prevatt, F. 1999. *Casebook in Family Therapy*. Toronto: Brooks/Cole Wadsworth.
- Leedy, J. 1973. Poetry therapy and some links to art therapy. *Art Psychotherapy*, 1, 145–151.
- Lett, W. 1996. An experiential procedure. In *Conference on Phenomenological Research*, Oslo, Norway: Trodheim.
- Levin, S. 2007. Hearing the unheard: Advice to professionals from women who have been battered. In H. Anderson & D. Gerhart (eds), *Collaborative Therapy Relationships and Conversations That Make a Difference*. New York: Routledge.
- Levine, S. 1997. *Poesies: The Language of Psychology and the Speech of the Soul*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Lowe, R. 2004. *Family Therapy: A Constructive Framework*. London: Sage.
- Lowe, R. 2005. Structured methods and striking moments: Using question sequences in living ways. *Family Process*, 44(1), 65–76.
- Lund, T. 1999. Playful approaches to serious problems: Review. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 25(4), 538–540.
- MacLaren, C. 2008. Use of self in cognitive behaviour therapy. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 36, 245–253.

- Marchetti-Mercer, M.C. & Strauss, L. 2004. Flying with dragons: Social constructionism beyond the realm of academia. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 25(3), 155–161.
- McGuire, R., McCabe, R. & Priebe, S. 2001. Theoretical frameworks for understanding and investigating the therapeutic relationship in psychiatry. *Social Psychiatry Epidemiology*, 36: 557–564.
- McMahon, M. & Patton, W. (eds) 2002. *Supervision in the Helping Professions a Practical Approach*. Sydney: Prentice-Hall.
- McNamee, S. 2004a. Social construction as practical theory: Lessons for practice and reflection in psychotherapy. In D. Pare & G. Larner (eds), *Critical Knowledge and Practice in Psychotherapy*. New York: Haworth Press.
- McNamee, S. 2004b. Therapy as social construction: Back to basics and forward toward challenging issues. In T. Strong & D. Pare (eds), *Furthering Talk: Advances in the Discursive Therapies*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Press.
- McNamee, H. 2007. Relational practices in education: Teaching as conversation. In H. Anderson & D. Gerhart (eds), *Collaborative Therapy Relationships and Conversations That Make a Difference*. New York: Routledge.
- McNiff, S. 2003. *Creating With Others: The Practice of Imagination in Life, Art, and the Workplace*. Boston: Shambhala.
- McNiff, S., Whitehead, J. & Lomax, P. 2003. *You and Your Action Research*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Miller, J. 2007. *Ariane Mnouchkine*. London: Routledge.
- Mindell, A. 1985. *River's Way: The Process Science of the Dreambody*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Mindell, A. 2002. *The Dreambody in Relationships*, Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press.
- Mindell, A. & Mindell, A. 1992. *Riding the Horse Backwards: Process Work in Theory and Practice*. London: Akarna.

- Moon, B. 2004. *Art and Soul: Reflections on an Artistic Psychology* (2nd ed.). Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.
- Nichols, M. & Schwartz, R. 2004. *Family Therapy Concepts and Methods* (6th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Nims, D. 2007. Integrating play therapy techniques into solution focused brief therapy. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 16(1), 54–68.
- Nobbs, J. 2006. *Frankly Acting*. Brisbane: Frank Theatre Press.
- Novy, C. 2003. Drama therapy with pre-adolescents: A narrative perspective. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 30, 201-207.
- Pallaro, P. 2007. *Authentic Movement: Moving the Body, Moving the Self, Being Moved – A Collection of Essays Volume Two*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Parker, I. (ed.) 1999. *Deconstructing Psychotherapy*. London: Sage.
- Parry, A. & Doan, R. 1994. *Story Re-visions: Narrative Therapy in the Postmodern World*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Parton, N. 2003. Rethinking professional practice: The contributions of social constructionism and the feminist ‘ethics of care’. *British Journal of Social Work*, 33, 1–16.
- Pennebaker, J. 2000. Telling stories: The health benefits of narrative. *Literature and Medicine*, 19(1), 3–18.
- Piercy, F. & Benson, K. (2005). Aesthetic forms of data representation in qualitative family therapy research. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 31(1), 107–120.
- Plevin, M. 2007, Journeying between will and surrender in authentic movement: A personal and clinical perspective. In P. Pallaro (ed.), *Authentic Movement: Moving the Body, Moving the Self, Being Moved – A Collection of Essays Volume Two*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Poznanski, J. & McLennan, J. 2004. Theoretical orientation and the person of the therapist: An Australian study. *Psychotherapy in Australia*, 10(3), np.

- Resnick, J. 2004. The clinical implications of dependency and Counter-dependency. *Psychotherapy in Australia*, 10(3), 52.
- Reynolds, F.C. & Puirton, J. 2005. Depth psychology and giftedness: Bringing soul to the field of talent development and giftedness. *Roeper Review*, 27(3), 164–172.
- Richert, A. 2003. Living stories, telling stories, changing stories: Experiential use of the relationship in narrative therapy. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 13(2), 188–210.
- Riley, S. 1994. *Integrative Approaches to Family Art Therapy*. Chicago: Magnolia St Publications.
- Roberts, J., Evan, I. & Whiting, R. (eds) 2003. *Rituals in Families and Family Therapy*. London: W.W. Norton.
- Rogers, N. 1993. *The Creative Connection: Expressive Arts as Healing*. Los Angeles, CA: Science & Behavior Books.
- Rothschild, B. 2006. *Help for the Helper: The Psychophysiology of Compassion Fatigue, and Vicarious Trauma*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Rouster, W. 1993. A critique of social constructionist thought in collaborative learning: Toward a theory of professional practice. Accessed August 5, 2006 from <http://proquest.umi.com.ezp01.library.qut.edu.au/pqdweb?index=2&retrievegroup=0&>
- Ruiz, M. 1997. *The Four Agreements*. Berkeley, CA: Amber-Allen.
- Russell, J. 1999. Counselling and the social construction of self. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 27(3), 339–343.
- St George, S. & Wulff, D. 2007. Collaborating as a lifestyle. In H. Anderson & D. Gerhart (eds), *Collaborative Therapy Relationships and Conversations That Make a Difference*. New York: Routledge.
- Schirle, J. 2005. Potholes in the road to devising. *Theatre Topics*, 15(1), 91–103.
- Schubach, M. 2004. Process oriented residential intensive on relationships: Looking into a loving face. Conference Notes. Burleigh Heads, Gold Coast, Queensland.

- Shechtman, P. 2000. A comparison of therapeutic factors in two group treatment modalities: Verbal and art therapy. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 25, np.
- Schön, D. 1983. *The Reflective Practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schön, D 1989. *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Shotter, J. 1997. The social construction of our 'inner' lives. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 10, 7–24.
- Shotter, J. 2006. Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Goethe: Consciousness and the dynamics of voice. Paper presented at the Department of Communication, University of California at San Diego.
- Shotter, J. & Katz, A. 1999. 'Living moments' in dialogic exchanges. *Human Systems*, 9, 81–93.
- Sibbritt, 1998. The Basic Elements of Movement. Unpublished manuscript.
- Spinelli, E. 1994. *Demystifying Therapy*. London: Constable.
- Spretnak, C. 1993. *States of Grace*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Stewart, R. 2001. Practice vs praxis: Constructing models for practitioner-based research TEXT 5(2). Accessed March 16, 2007 from <http://www.griffith.edu.au/text/school/art/text/oct01/stewart.htm>.
- Stromsted, T. & Haze, N. 2007. The road in: Elements of the study and practice of authentic movement. In P. Pallaro (ed.), *Authentic Movement: Moving the Body, Moving the Self, Being Moved Volume Two*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Strong, T. 2003. Getting curious about meaning-making in counselling. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 31(3), 259–273.
- Strong, T. 2005. Understanding in counselling: A preliminary social constructionist and conversation analytic examination. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 33(4), 513–533.
- Tacy, D. 2000. *ReEnchantment: The New Australian Spirituality*. Sydney: HarperCollins.
- Tselikas-Portmann, E. (ed.) 1999. *Supervision and Dramatherapy*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

- Turner, V. 1982. Liminal to liminoid, in play, flow, ritual: An essay in comparative symbology. In V. Turner (ed.), *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. London: PAJ Publications.
- Tusa, J. 2005. The John Tusa interview: Robert Lepage, BBC Radio 3, n.d.
- Tuyn, L. 2003. Metaphors, letters and Stories. *Holistic Nursing Practice*, 17(1), 22–27.
- Van Manen, M. 1984. *'Doing' Phenomenological Research and Writing: An Introduction*. Curriculum Praxis Monograph series No 7, Alberta, CA: University of Alberta, Department of Secondary Education.
- Van Manen, M. 1995. On the epistemology of reflective practice. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 1(1), 33–50.
- Van Wagner, K. 2008. Lewin's leadership styles. Accessed October 29, 2008 from *About.com Psychology*, <http://psychology.about.com/od/leadership/a/leaderstyles.htm?p=1>.
- Vygotsky, L. 1997. *Thought and Language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Watson, P. & Culhane, S. 2005. Irrational beliefs and social constructionism: Correlations with attitudes about reality, beliefs about people, and collective self esteem. *Journal of Rational Emotive & Cognitive Behavior Therapy*, 23(1), 57–70.
- Willing, C. 2001. *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in Therapy and Method*. Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.
- Whitaker, C.A. & Bumberry, W.M. 1988. *Dancing with the Family: A Symbolic-Experiential Approach*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- White, M. & Epston, D. 1990. *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- White, M. 2001. Folk psychology and narrative practice. *Dulwich Centre Journal*, 2, n.p.
- White, M. 2004. *Narrative Practice and Exotic Lives*. Adelaide: Dulwich Centre.
- White, M. 2007. *Maps of Narrative Practice*. New York: W.W. Norton.

- Whiting, J. 2007. Authors, artists, and social constructionism: A case study of narrative supervision. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 35, 139–150.
- Wiener, D. 1994. *Rehearsals for Growth: Theatre Improvisation for Psychotherapists*. London: W.W. Norton.
- Wiener, D. & Oxford, L. (eds) 2003. *Action Therapy with Families and Groups Using Creative Arts Improvisation in Clinical Practice*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Wosket, V. 1999. *The Therapeutic Use of Self, Counselling Practice, Research and Supervision*. London: Routledge.
- Yalom, I. 1980. *Existential Psychotherapy*. New York: Basic Books.
- Yalom, I, 2002. *The Gift of Therapy*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Zaporah, R. 1995. *Action Theatre: The Improvisation of Presence*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Zarilli, P. 2002. The metaphysical studio, *The Drama Review*, 46(2), 157–170.

Appendix 1: Adaption of MIECAT process

This is an adaptation of the MIECAT Process, an experiential and creative arts therapy model. I have used Warren Lett's research, 'The Intersubjective Inquiry An Experiential Procedure' as a guide to this process, and have refined and adapted the application to working with groups:

1. Decide on the issue you wish to work on in your relationship. This issue may be decided upon by talking and questioning. It may emerge while '*sitting and sticking*' (Brown Ash, 2004). This is when the group and the counsellor sit and problem-free chat while sticking images torn from magazines. The group is instructed not to think too much about what they are doing with regard to the chosen images and the placement on the page. This keeps their 'critic' at bay. As the facilitator, I am able to keep their attention on our conversation rather than the collage.
2. Creation of texts. Texts are created: they can be in the form of collage, drawings, paintings, movement or free writing. The text is considered, and described in considerable detail, to show what is seen and what is in front of our eyes. It is a factual description, not an interpretive one.
3. The next step is to indwell the materials until key words, key images or gestures or tones emerge.
4. The group then constructs its own response (what is called intrasubjective response, a response from within) in one of the art modes (people choose visual, writing, movement, sound). This is a way of depicting the experiencing of indwelling the first representation. This is then shared in the group. Each member then creates an intersubjective response to each other based on what has gone before. This is a 'deeply empathic-intuitive sense of what is at the heart of the materials' (Lett, 1996).
5. The fifth step is for me, as facilitator, to create an intersubjective response to the group. The depiction takes into account the description, the key words, the images and the group members' voices and body language, which call for attention. The voice of the facilitator can be presented in many ways: multimodally, using any art form, or a combination of art modes.

6. There is now a new step: the group depicts again, taking into consideration the intersubjective responses, its own intrasubjective response, along with new material which may have emerged as a result of the former.
7. The process continues until the energy is exhausted, or the search is completed. All the creative texts are assembled as a way of integrating the process.

Appendix 2: Interview with Kay Philp

19 February 2008 at Family Therapy Clinic, QUT Carseldine, Brisbane

What were the differences between being a more modernist director and a collaborative director?

1. It was as though someone was always sitting on my shoulder, reminding me to be reflexive in my language; to stay curious; to adjust to the rhythm, tone, speed of the co researcher's language; to check in that what I am hearing is what they are in fact saying;
2. Framework of rehearsal was different. We adapted a solution-focused technique called scaling: between 1 and 10 how do you feel today. Different scales were developed by the group: emotionally; spiritually; physically; intellectually; we also asked the question 'what do you hope to achieve in this rehearsal?', in other words incorporating goaling into the rehearsal room.
3. As director, I privileged the actor's story. This was not necessarily a gain. In fact, I would not do this again. I would equally privilege everyone's story. I stayed 'on the back foot' for too long I think, and therefore when I needed to step forward to shape the piece, it was a very different energy that I was required to bring to the floor. This was difficult at times for Actor Z, I think (see her journal).
4. Power issues were addressed: breaking down the power of the director so the relationship is more egalitarian. In fact, perhaps the name 'director' is no longer appropriate. Perhaps facilitator and coach is more appropriate ... or facilitator and co-researcher? It is still crucial to have a role that takes an overall view, due to the fact that we are performing. Without an outside eye, we are unable to stand in the audience's shoes. Videos could help, but I have always held the belief that an actor should not see themselves on video. It is a different medium and can give a false reading. I may need to address this premise if I am going to perform a one-woman show using these same constructs as part of a potential PhD.
5. Responding to crisis and accidents: I felt responsible when things went wrong, even though theoretically I believed that we were all responsible if we are working under a collaborative framework. I spent much time reflecting on episodes that occurred, almost always in connection to Actor Z. Other incidents that arose, such as exhaustion with Bec and Gen, and sometimes feeling unappreciated by artists, were easily solved. We talked, I suggested they take some time out, and we moved from difficulty to ease. This approach simply did not work with Actor X. We always talked about it, created strategies to improve upon it, and then the next day it would fall once more at my feet.

6. I recognised the strengths of group dynamic theory, and it was of benefit when things got tough. I was reminded of the process that I began studying in 2003 when I directed *Too Much Individuality*, an adaption of *The Chapel Perilous* by Dorothy Hewitt. I need to research group dynamic theory once again and see how it can empower this process: how can I incorporate it into my process?
7. This way of working certainly gave me the freedom of not believing that I had to fix everything. This is in direct contradiction to no. 5 where I felt responsible. I think I felt responsible when it came to Actor Z because I had agreed to direct her, even though I was not fully convinced that she had had enough acting experience to warrant a lead role on a professional stage. When it came to the other participants, I felt that they had the skills to fix whatever needed fixing. My job was to support, encourage and provide an environment that was conducive to creative thought. My job was also to coach at times, to help build resilience within the actor. I think I succeeded here (see responses from participants) except on one count, Actor Z.

Appendix 3: Responses by email to *A Mouthful of Pins*

I sent an email to twelve people to respond to the show. The email was tailored to each person – an example follows:

SENT: SUN 17/02/2008 5.17PM.

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear

Thankyou for coming to see the show.

Here are some questions regarding A Mouthful of Pins that I would like you to consider.

In answering these questions you have agreed for these responses to be used as part of my research. Your name is confidential and will not be revealed.

Many thanks,

Some Questions Regarding A Mouthful of Pins

1. What occupied your mind as you sat in the Visy Theatre watching the performance?
2. Were you affected by the subject matter? And if so how?
3. Was there a character with whom you identified? If so, who and why?
4. Did you notice anything of interest in the performance? Did they seem 'different' in any way to tother times you witness performers?
5. What was your relationship to the music and soundscape?
6. What was your relationship to the images and lighting?
7. If you could change the piece to suit your own needs, what would you do?
8. Will you remember t his piece? Is there anything in particular?

REPLIES: I have placed them as I read them from hard copies I photocopied and placed in my Visual Journal.

First one received 18 February, 2008 10:51:57PM

Last one received 27 February, 2008 7.45:30AM

1. I felt there was much to admire theatrically and it was great to see the theatre full on a second night. That's a testimony to the interest in your work and that of the group.
2. Personally I found it rather difficult to engage with the story. When I was walking back to the car I was thinking I had been inside the world of a highly aesthetic sensibility, but one situated within a completely narcissistic personality. I couldn't find the hooks that could help me care. I think that's a problem of the writer, and maybe also of a particular kind of feminism.
3. Sometimes I got flashes of connection with the text, particularly the speech about being a child watching ants. Otherwise I was not affected by the subject matter because I couldn't understand who the characters were, where they were nor why they were acting in the way they were. I could not be affected because it was too puzzling for me to become engaged.
4. I loved Actor A and B's presences on stage ... they were as equally in the moment as any other good performers I have seen. I believe Actor Z may be too close to her material to do it justice in performance at this stage of its development. She was most assured when she sang.
5. The music was well played and entertaining. Sometimes it was very effective pinpointing movements and emotions but again I go back to the script being unclear so the music and lyrics were also often unclear in their intention.
6. I loved the projected images, the use of mask and design images, particularly the black dress, though I believe all images need to be played with more.
7. If I could I would clarify a lot of the writer's intention for the audience. Give them signposts using all the great elements you already have to aid understanding and therefore engagement with the piece.
8. I will remember *Pins*. I congratulate all the artists involved for their obvious hard work and commitment to the piece. I look forward to its continued development. I think it contains ideas that are relevant to contemporary society. I would like to see them uncovered and made more accessible to an audience.
9. The most powerful moment for me was the 50s woman with the knife at her leg, ready to inflict an emotional wound on KoKo by cutting herself, challenging KoKo, locking her gaze in that awful moment. Hooked.
10. The music supported and filled the space but didn't take on a separate characteristic.
11. I only thought of this afterwards. I had a very clear thought about it a few days ago, which isn't entirely clear now. It seems to me in retrospect that KoKo's sexual experience did not liberate her, it imprisoned her, yet the play had her leaving the world of habitual depression and moving off the stage as a result of this experience, and that ought to signify liberation? Was this a case of mixed metaphor: resulting from not enough places to go? With a circle you're either in it or out of it but you had more than two meanings to convey so it perhaps risked confusing the theatre naïve of us who don't know about rapidly substituting meanings.
12. I also wasn't entirely sure about the 'psychological truth' of the KoKo character – that is, would KoKo really have developed in that way through that series of experiences? I wonder if the sexual experience actually took her into depression rather than out of it? Perhaps that was what was meant but its not so satisfying to get an explanation that late in the action.

13. The circle was very powerful and the pages. The dress and the Belle balancing the other women trapped on the wheel.

14. I must admit I was fascinated by how the play was put together. It seemed to me at the time to be differentiating what was happening in the main protagonist's mind and another world outside with the musician walking around and the projected images. Not sure if that was the intention but it seemed to me to be reinforcing what was going on within the room and the separateness of another world.

15. It was a powerful and meaningful representation of the tussle with depression. The self harm scenes were confronting. I actually had to close my eyes as I found this distressing. Even though depression was the central theme for me I didn't come away feeling depressed but feeling fascinated and charmed by how it was all put together. I mean how does one make depression entertaining ... and this play was.

16. KoKo seemed to epitomize the state where depression and humour can sit side by side with the humour nonetheless feeding the depression.

17. The music and soundscape were to me a counterbalance and support to the performances on stage ... the violinist though didn't just play the music, his own performance and his separateness from but still integrated into the whole seemed to create a feeling of 'drawing out' the depressive into another and better world, gently, quietly and totally around. He seemed to be providing a protective cocoon for the tumult on stage. The singing was so very good and moving. The music and musical effects seemed integral to the performances not just providing a backdrop.

18. The lighting and images: very clever stuff. Light reinforced the starkness of the two sides for me. My fascination was drawn to the dark character with the lighting effects.

19. Some of the images and movement sections grabbed me, shook me and resonated with me in a good way. I was confused a bit, which I don't see as a bad thing but often if I did not have an aesthetic gesture to engage with it did make me wander which I didn't want to ... some of the language was absolutely beautiful and some of it pushed me away because I couldn't keep up ...

20. The way the music was used in this show was beautiful for me. I felt the same in *Gone to Earth*. The playfulness between action, text, movement and music is quite arresting and incredible. The focus and skill of the musicians is just brilliant I feel. More than skill is the interaction for me ... the watching and the responding is the beautiful part. I can't wait to see where this goes in your work.

21. My relationship to the music: well I guess through the art being made in front of me ... this is not just a directors perspective ... there is a beauty in seeing the art being made seeing the interactions/call and response/cause and effect that occurs in front of my eyes. The music brings with it a sense of immediacy/play/ theatre/art/performance/ right now. That feels great. There were moments for me when this was not as strong. I think it was when the musician moved through the audience.

22. I will remember this piece ... if we are not going to push the boundaries which I saw in pins then why do it. If we are not going to explore new themes and new forms and new tech and new communication modes and new ways to move the body and new ways to speak and new ways to interact and new ways ... I see you both doing this and I thank you.

23. I will also remember the performance for the incredible interaction between the music and movement and content and images, some of the best interaction I have seen.
24. At times I felt like an observer, like there wasn't a relationship between me and the characters or story. When the characters were given monologues or soliloquies I didn't feel like they were speaking to me, but rather at me.
25. The energy of Actor A was fantastic and brought liveliness to the show.
26. I would like the show to be less speechy. Sometimes it felt like the monologues were just too long.
27. When I view a performance I often look for narrative-meaning until I can just let go and experience. The images created by the performance were unique and unpredictable.
28. The work felt like a meditation: a meditation on melancholia. I was happy to sit for an hour and ponder this topic. I consider it often. The non-narrative nature of the work I think gave the audience a degree of freedom within the performance experience. It allowed a sort of stream of consciousness to emerge in my mind in relating to the themes and image appearing before me. I was not driven to connect plot points. I merely followed a familiar structure, the days of the week.
29. The thematic threads gave the work a political edge which I liked very much. I think the notion of the construction of gender and of melancholy was brilliantly conveyed in the body of the black male actor. Through him, the audience is forced to recognize that gender is performative. Even our emotions are gendered, they are learnt through repetition. So now I'm thinking about genetic inheritance. Do we inherit depression, is that genetic or environmental ... without the black dog how can we possibly know happiness I consider this often. We must learn to relish sadness. Welcome it.
30. I identified with the writer. Her work seemed to be constantly interrupted by her melancholy.
31. The last song was a surprise. Doesn't Anne Bogart have something to say about surprise 'every piece of theatre should have something surprising in it, something frightening ... I forget the quote but I'll try to find it. I also found it surprising and very interesting to have a black male actor with a southern accent on the stage. It enriched the experience.
32. For me violin is the essence of melancholy so I was most hypnotised by its presence. The way the violin stalked the performers through the space. Wonderful choice.
33. I think the physical imagery was one of the strongest elements of the work. Highly imaginative complex imagery.
34. Having enjoyed the non-narrative nature of the work, if I was changing it I'd probably impose a narrative ... I think it is a very intellectual work and I think many people find that inaccessible. It's not everyone's cup of tea. I do feel that this kind of work would have been received more warmly somewhere like Melbourne where form and content of theatre is far more diverse than in Brisbane.
35. I think that I will remember this. I will remember it for the structural qualities, the disturbing mask imagery, the violin and the theme of melancholia which was and always will be immensely fascinating to me.

36. I felt Mouthful of Pins took me to another realm. Surreal. Main 3 performers are great with strong presence and engaging body work. Beautiful imagery: set and projection.
37. That said, a young work needing maturation as the layering is really interesting. The various production elements coming together towards the end of the process just before presenting require more distance in order to make choices particularly for a devised collaborative work.
38. I was captivated by individual moments in the piece and I felt engaged by individual performances. There was never a moment where I looked at my watch or looked away from the stage. At times I was confused. Not sure where my focus should have been.
39. I loved how the musicians were part of the ensemble and moved freely about the theatre.
40. I liked the aesthetic of the images but felt they didn't add to my interpretation of the piece.
41. Visually it was a striking piece. Design was beautiful. The cage like dress of the black woman with all its drawers. The white dressed actor's intensity in the performance ... especially her moments in the shoes with the razor and encircling the stage with all the pages ... the songs ...
42. Clarify and simplify direction and dramaturgy: the three characters are they three periods in time of the same or three different psychological facets of the same ... why do you have costume periods then. Why Bouffon work with the three characters ... I switched off the desire to understand the text which gave me the freedom to watch and feel. Nothing to do with the quality of the text but just not needed for me as absorbed by presences.
43. integrate and intertwine more the projections with the bodies in space. Projections as part of them; projections as part of the set; more voice coaching; didn't see why they were wearing masks. But not disturbing. I would have liked to have a simpler thread to be with the actors fully and to be more surprised.
44. Cut text to minimum required.
45. I was constantly delighted by the visual imagery.
46. Some of the actors did not raise the text to the heightened, performative level whereby it actually provokes a response in the listener, or moves the listener.
47. I found myself considering several things; one was the context that the recorded voice of Margi had created: our experiences gaps between experiences/our attempts to create a meaningful narrative/or a sense of a continuum in life around disparate events. Secondly I was considering the nature of a collage where a number of aspects in juxtaposition/relationship to each other provide the possibility for meanings to be formed. As the performance was progressing I was allowing my sense of meaning to develop in response to the interrelationship between performers, music and image.
48. Without an explicit narrative then it strikes me that the interrelationship/juxtaposition of the characters, scenes sound and image needs to generate tensions and responses at a level in the viewer that provides an opportunity to be affected and to reconsider the subject matter. This for me occurred in more singular and isolated fragments but was not maintained in the overall piece.

49. I identified with the aspects of character where the intensity of melancholia was apparent, and when humour was available as a reprieve.

50. I found a patchiness in the performances, but during the many times of a more potent focus there was a sense of fusion and fullness.

51. The soundscape was an integral and substantial component and provided a reinforcing highlighting function created mood and linked the various components of the performance. Wonderfully skilled, sensitive and responsive musicians.

52. I will remember this piece as an interesting experiment and exploration both in the means of producing theatre and in reflecting on a fundamental human circumstance.

53. To begin with I was fully focused on the work in front of me. What was happening, who were these people, what did the imagery mean and what was the journey we were to undertake together.

54. Before long what began to occupy my mind was the extraordinary importance that context plays in the way one receives a work. A work seldom stands on its own. It is contextualised within a company, venue, program, season, city, country, and qualified by stated or assumed aims and objectives ...

55. This became a major concern for me as Mouthful of Pins progressed, since it seemed clear that the work was not ready for public performance. If it had been billed as a work in progress whose purpose in being shown was to garner response for further development the audience might have received it with greater sympathy. As it was we were being asked to respond as if to a fully fledged completed work.

56. Such a context does not allow for failure and since 'Mouthful of Pins' fell short of expectations, what finally occupied my mind was sadness that this work was being seen as representative of Brisbane contemporary theatre together with a simultaneous appreciation of those places where experimentation can take place (such as one-off independent showings at Brisbane Powerhouse and Metro Arts Creative Development Festival).

57. As the play progressed I felt the text to be a rather cold, academic approach to a topic which is strongly tied to emotions. This could have been a way of turning expectations on their head in order to throw up extraordinary discoveries, but this was not the case. I found myself yearning for a human dimension to the journey and actually wondered how any audience members who had experienced depression were receiving the work.

58. Some of the images were beautiful.

59. I found the play to be visually stimulating, often disturbing theatrical event. I fully support the need for stories such as relayed in this production to be told. As a theatrical performance it was very successful containing all the elements of good theatre: tragedy, comedy, it was a visual feast and included dedicated and extraordinary performances by the three actors. It was a night at the theatre that leaves you thinking and discussing that is for sure.

60. This is a play that makes great demands on an audience. They have to decipher the imagery and the language in order to get at the meaning of the play. I found it difficult to keep my concentration on this task, and sometimes lost some of the meanings.

61. The performance for me was like performance poetry. I got lost at the beginning of the piece and then found it hard to follow what was happening.

62. I could see that the subject matter was of an intense personal nature of the writer and appreciated that. I do think that I was not as affected as I could have been because the specific experience of the main character wasn't stated clearly it seemed to be someone generalised and abstracted.

63. I love the strong physicality that the nest brings to their performances. There is an obvious commitment to the piece from everyone involved.

64. Having a direct interaction with the musicians and the actors on stage was an interesting idea. The last song was good and performed intensely by the singer.

65. I missed the story. Look at the story. I felt alienated.

66. Bold, brave, questioning: that is always good in this uniformitising society.

Appendix 4: Reflections from *Gone to Earth* artists

Recorded September 2007

Written in no particular order

What I learned from my experience

1. **TRUST: I felt rearranged, not willing to go back but also conscious of the yearning of the ‘happiness’ I once owned.**
2. **I learned to trust myself; to trust everyone else.** The ensemble worked for me when I trusted the others.
3. **Firstly a fierce independence. I say fierce because I feel it has been an uncomfortable transition from the dependence I felt before.** I do believe I am on my way to self-assurance but I am caught within the transitional phase at the moment. There is so much doubt in my mind and a horrible urge to be told that what I am thinking is right and that I am clever. However what has changed is that now there is this voice telling me doubt is good, that I should explore this doubt for myself and that praise from my mentors is not so necessary. It is extremely uncomfortable. It is like my self-worth has been stripped naked and is exposed and I am expecting someone to come and cover it for me again, but now one is in sight. I don't know how clear that is but I can only call it an unsupported self worth.
4. **A positive consequence of this process however has been a shift in how I view myself.** For the first time since I was very young I am proud of my artwork because it is my own, the choices that defined it were mine. I am still resistant to calling myself an artist, however I can hear the whispers of a more confident practice in my mind from time to time.
5. **Also something that has been reaffirmed from my own study is the power of ensemble work.** That without ‘we’ there could be no ‘I’. Without the commitment of the actors to illuminate the characters internally and externally my images would not have been created. Without the people around me giving all that they give I would not be writing this reflection now. To put it metaphorically, interpretation is the channel but there needs to be water to flow through that channel, channels simply direct it to multiple destinations.

6. I think I have realised that we, as performers, have fragile egos and are desperate for some kind of positive feedback. We want to be loved. I think when you feel like you are pouring out your soul on the rehearsal room floor you want to feel that you are important that you are valued that you are ‘good’ even. I struggled a lot during the process because sometimes I felt as if one of the other Hazels was in direct competition with me, which I found hard. I felt like I was always fighting for your approval in rehearsals. And what I realised is that your approval, though lovely of course, is irrelevant and I just had to focus on the show and contributing to the group. You made the point that you want to create actors who are self aware and sustainable and who don’t rely on the approval of the director. So to summarise: what I got out of this ‘event’ in the process was:
 - a. I learned that I can’t take it personally or make assumptions in the creative process. That it is important to remember that I am just one member of the ensemble.
 - b. I learned that I need to exist without positive feedback sometimes and that it is important to trust my body trust my instinct and trust myself to be strong and self sufficient.
 - c. I learned that ‘uncertainty’ is a key ingredient in contemporary performance making and that it’s important to learn to be friends with uncertainty, not to waste time and energy fighting it.
 - d. Sometimes you have to sit in uncertainty and embrace it. It was a life lesson and a professional-artistic lesson for me.
7. **Perceptual Practice is my favourite thing in the world. It’s like meditating for me. You stop thinking and start trusting.** I need to apply the above lessons: trust; uncertainty; to my practice of this training so that I switch off the censor more effectively. Its an ongoing battle; but one I think I may have started to win.
8. **Perceptual Practice provides the ensemble with an understanding which extends far beyond the intellectual.** I still believe that our bodies remember each other’s as when I work with artists from *Gone to Earth* even now, there is an immediate kinaesthetic response to each other, in and out of the performance context.
9. **Impulse Training (once called Perceptual Practice)** became a huge tool in the process as every member learned about each other as well as themselves, opening all our senses and being in a way free. This allowed us to work openly with each other, while constantly taking risks.

10. **Check in/check out and I have a love hate relationship. I think it is an integral part of the process** but sometimes I didn't like the narcissistic aspect of it. I felt like I was talking too much or too little and that people were judging me I guess you could say the censor walked in to check in with me. I do think it's an important part of the process and also very useful for developing a kind of 'consciousness' which have found incredibly useful personally and in performance building.
11. It worked because of check in/check out. People could say what they needed to say at the beginning and end. We sensed trust. People would say what they needed to say.
12. **Check in/check out:** I have defiantly [sic] come to value check in and check out as this establishes a trust within the group a respect in regards to knowing how to treat people at a certain time, a caring and nurturing aspect and it allows issues to be solved within the space rather than taking them outside and then create them into bigger problems. It brings the ensemble together and also allows time for reflection and discussion.
13. **Rituals: I loved the rituals;** however I think that they may have been more effective if all the performers had taken more time to imbue them with significance. Check in and check out has been something that many groups I have worked with since have adopted very willingly. Again just as something I kind of believe at the ever changing moment is that it needs to be defined as to whether it is a check in about the work or personal lives or both. **One of the most important for me thought was the Perceptual Practice** and not just in rehearsal but in the lead-up to the performance this was so important.
14. The notion of **ritual** has defiantly [sic] had a healing affect on me during *Gone to Earth* as it helped me personally work through a situation that had happened to me in the past but was brought up during the performance. By working with a ritual process that was put into the performance I was able to cope and help heal myself. It also provided some sort of framework for both performances in regards to giving some stability that people could lean on when they felt like they were lost or not sure where things were going.
15. **Support from the group:** The most important thing that happened was the level of support given and received from the group. **I felt the ensemble was very strong and generous with each other; more so than I have experienced in any other production so far. This has changed the way I work incredibly.** Before this experience I was more interested in what I can offer rather than what the ensemble

can offer. I thought it was my job to do my best and it was up to each individual performer to do the same. **I have learned that supporting each other is a much stronger way of providing growth in the ensemble. I think since *Gone to Earth* I have tried to carry this learning to other projects.**

16. In *Gone to Earth* one of the most important events that happened was when I finally realised that **I would only get out what I put in**; I couldn't go wrong, therefore I had to trust the group and myself as well as the process enough to be able to just throw myself into the rehearsal. As a result I was able to create my own character that was just as valid as everything else in the play. It was the group that mattered and what benefited it rather than what benefited myself.
17. As a result, my way of working has changed in that I have become a lot freer in allowing myself to get into any group work and have the confidence to just throw in ideas without judging them first. I have also become a lot more group orientated rather than thinking what's in it for me. This has helped a lot with the type of work I like doing which is very collaborative.
18. I realised how on stage our ensemble was one and not seen as individual actors, creating a much stronger impact. This was an experience I have never had before.
19. The process was annoying and frustrating but it enabled me to have ownership of the work. It has made me a stronger actor, trusting my own decisions more. I made my own decisions in the play, and they worked.
20. I am learning now to embrace random decisions. I am finding movements and going along with them; it was hard to get into the mode though; I improved because of having done these three months of rehearsal.
21. It was a good experience, even though at times it was frustrating. The process made us family; and it rubbed off in the show; some people told me that it is the best piece of theatre they had seen in this space.
22. I now ask about shows that I see: what is their process? At the beginning I was really shitty. I didn't know what I was doing. It was crap in the crap times, and brilliant in the brilliant times.
23. Symbiosis happening between music and the actors. Going for the feeling; finding all the connections and the patterns;
24. Good experience. Really glad to do it; biggest change: my music now has a context. To have my music performed was daunting at first. The experience made me realise

how inflexible I was. I saw that change was good so my collaborator became my path to becoming more flexible.

25. Improvisatory way of combining music with sounds in the show.
26. Didn't ever want to leave but hated it at times. I realised that the way you attack your character is the way you attack life ... I finally realised that 'I am free'
27. I had fun at the start, then pulled back frustrated. Then I changed: loose, knowing you have permission to do what you need to do.
28. It has helped me be more competent; I would do it again despite the struggles.
29. Great experience. Strange. Great to be part of; I embraced the unknown. I'm allowing my sensitive side to break through. Some part of me is freaking out; I've allowed myself to become a lot more open to a lot more people, so they can see my sensitive side.
30. There was always solid meaning behind everything. Enjoyed the process. Much information was loaded in those three and a half months. Thanks everyone for being so open and accepting.
31. Each of us learned in a different way. We learned not to take things personally.
32. You couldn't fail in the rehearsal room: if you thought I was shit, 'oh well' and move on.
33. Self director
34. We have to make it inside ourselves. So much forbearance. Being own director.
35. Supporting each other; building things up.
36. Margi never told 'em where to go. Margi wanted you to find it yourself. Only then does it have value.
37. I learned a lot. I learned different ways of approaching performance. I was more about product before. More selfish. Thinking of doing the best performance. This time I felt that ensemble was the most important thing. What is good acting? A balance between transformation and truth. Mastery is getting perfect balance between the two. I loved it. The process for me: I am a different performer.
38. It kept flowing. The ideas: I wanted to seek out an ensemble in everyday life!!!
39. The process has been so valuable. Changing all the time. To have new groups and then go away and reflect. More self reflective now. Forced to be aware of myself. Hard, horrible, frustrating but also fantastic and worthwhile.
40. I've learned if you are in creative process, be firm around your boundaries. Know where to stop.

41. Intense process ... we all just worked ... it is not going to happen again so we all need to find ways of working.
42. Complete interiority and complete exteriority: we didn't achieve this but we were on the path ... it will take time.
43. Building on strengths, I liked that.
44. Margi you treated everyone like a Beethoven. We all worked well.
45. We came out and took it into our lives. Our passion of theatre. Our very first perceptual practice was my favourite: there was a spiritual connection.
46. I will bring check in and check out into future processes.

Appendix 5: Emails and interviews

Here are several emails that helped guide my reflective process.

I have underlined the relevant lines that are referred to in the body of my exegesis:

On Tuesday, 5 February 2008, 12.37am

To: Kay Philp

Cc: Margi Brown Ash

Subject: hi wanting to debrief will you read this:

I need to write this

Now

Having just finished rehearsal

And my actor

Walks out of the room

Someone had spent hours making their costume

But they did not like it

my actor walked out

what do you do

when you have an actor

who

doesn't recognize

that they make choices that

keeps them sad

if I was a parent, this would warrant firm words.

I have relinquished

Let go

Will fly with what happens

A terribly magnificent failure

Perhaps

Margi

On 06/02/2008, at 8.18AM, Kay Philp wrote:

After reading your email I was thinking. The only way social constructionism fits as a way of communicating is if you have a loving hart. Words are so powerful and we are choosing to use them in a way that gives efficacy to all kinds of possibilities. When other people aren't able to see those possibilities-that is another possibility.

So staying patient and tolerant and listening and engaged can only come with a loving heart - like yours.

You deserve this play to be everything it needs to be.

Love

Kay

From: Margi Brown Ash

Subject: from margi

Date: 5 February 2008 12:45:50 AM

To: Actor

Cc: Margi Brown Ash 4change@iinet.net.au

Dear Actor

We have a choice
Success or failure
It is that simple
It is not personal
We are making art
Failure comes with resistance
Success comes with surrendering and love

We are heading down a path that may put the production at risk
Please gather your strengths
I need you to work with me.

Lets make this work.
I need you to process.

If you need to talk to someone, please contact whoever you can to clear this.
Talk to them
Then come back

And create
What we need to create

Thanks
Margi

.....

From: Margi Brown Ash

Subject: Trying to Clarify

Date: 14 May 2008 2:40:20pm

To: Actor

Cc: Margi Brown Ash 4change@iinet.net.au

Hi Actor,

It is starting to rain.

It is the fifth anniversary of my mother's death so I feel a bit wobbly today, however I am needing some answers to my questions, not from you so much as from myself, and I am hoping that if you feel like it you could jot down a few responses...as though we are in conversation...I need to find a way of analysing our process without judgement, with a clarity that helps me become a stronger facilitator in order to help artists become stronger artists and create strong work. I think this is why the analysis section of this research paper is difficult: so many different relationships happening all at once: individual/group; friend/friend; colleague/colleague; all the constructs tumbling down into the space between: social discourses; power discourses; family conditionings; training; background; etc. how do we unpack all of that?

1. I am very keen to understand my own place in the hotspots that happened in Pins. Not that there were many when I consider how many people were involved including multi generational; multi art form; multi country even with Bali, Perth and Brisbane all part and parcel of it; varying experience of those involved, some new to the games other snot so new.
2. I think firstly that I mistakeably centred myself in the process (so very modernist of me!!!!); I thought that I should be able to fix everything that went wrong. I was so clear that this framework was very workable, and I think that was the beginning of the trouble I experienced. The role of the facilitator/director is a complex one...but in this context, even more so ... centring is not one of the qualities I should be embracing. I should not have

taken responsibility totally. It needed to be shared. But because I was the counsellor I felt the need to, sit that clear when you read it...??? As I write this I am so aware that as I write this language, it will be translated in a different time, a different space, a different set of eyes (even if there are new reading glasses involved!) [*this refers to lost glasses when performing in Adelaide a couple of months before*]

ACTOR Z'S RESPONSE IN EMAIL SENT TWO DAYS LATER

I think I always felt that I was at the centre of things ... because I wrote it or because I was standing on stage and everyone was looking at me when usually I get to hide in the audience. I'm sure when _____ was fighting for her idea or image she felt she was at the centre. I guess I didn't have a problem with your position in the process and I felt that you set it up in such a way that everyone felt that their positioning was a fluid thing. For example in check in you could say 'I'm feeling vulnerable. I want to hide' and so you could. I never felt that you were central in a negative way or in a way that was inhibiting to anyone else, except perhaps those times when there was friction between us.

3. I asked you about where you stood in the modernist/postmodern spectrum regarding your work. Your answer was postmodern. You were very clear about that. And I understand that. I am also clear where I stand...**now after reflection in my research: I stand in two worlds. The world of some of the great Modernist teachers who taught me acting, and the new world that I have learned over the last fifteen years** (really since my work with Doug Leonard in 1991). So there should have been less conflict for me around the text than there was. I don't understand why I think there was this conflict. I just know it at a bodily level.
4. **I felt that text was privileged:** you have told me this is not the case as far as you were concerned so I wonder if I was transferring some thing from somewhere else. I am very confused about this because I embody that conflict even now: was it because the text was your text and you were performing? Was it because I still think on a psychic level that text is important, and I am still in the process of seeing a horizontal theatre making construct...perhaps I thought I was far more postmodern than I am?

ACTOR Z'S RESPONSE:

Such a complicated question, I'm not sure how to answer it: I guess I felt like the text's protector and that may be where the conflict came from. I felt that the script

itself was already post modern. ie. it was not linear, it had multiple sources. It was a collage. It combined both high and low cultural references, yet it still had its own structure and logic and to mess with that too much might make the whole thing impenetrable. I still believe I was very open about adding to and altering the text (often for the better of the script as a written and performed document as it currently exists) but I was also committed to the writing (ie. The words on the page) and the structure that I had created. I guess I felt that was my job as writer, I also had some very particular attachment to some of the rhythmic choices I had made in the writing. As far as I was concerned each and every word had been chose with care and to hear (for example) one of the actors choose some other word at random or just rearrange a sentence made me very uncomfortable (may be that's just the pedant in me- but if I felt I had a duty to all that writing and rewriting and crafting I'd done of that text in a room by myself, as opposed to in the rehearsal room with lots of other people around coming to the material for the first time).

I'm not sure what you mean in the second part of your question 'Was it because I still think on a psychic level that text is important and I am still in the process of seeing a horizontal theatre making construct' - if you want me to answer that part can you reword it for me?

5. so I am thinking now not about the dramatic frame but he psychological frames that journeyed with us: I am now trying to work out why I felt there was 'sand' between my therapeutic frame and your psychological frame.
6. I felt that your understanding of the individual and my understanding of the individual were different...WHAT DOES THAT MEAN/ why couldn't I communicate to you like I am dong now? Why was there feelings sitting between us: feelings I will identify as 'judgemental' 'fear' 'anger' ...any more?
7. I am still processing all of this, and I look back and I just wonder how it happened, when I don't feel it now...except when I think about the last few weeks of pins...something that we need to unpack probably is the fact that this conflict between us was not new to you...you felt it deeply in rehearsals of *Poppins*. IS THAT RIGHT?
8. Is that something we need to look at in order to gain the most from this research, do you think that there was something in that which then transferred across to pins? And why did we have such a genuine open flow up until Bali? Why did I feel so safe with you, and t hen suddenly so unsafe? That is what is strange for me. What was it that I was expecting from you that I couldn't see? If you could tell me what it was that caused your sadness, what I did , the behaviour I displayed, what would it be?

ACTOR Z'S RESPONSE:

I GUESS I WOULD ALSO ADD 'INSECURITY' TO THAT LIST OF WORDS. YES I THINK SOME OF THIS 'SAND' WAS A HANGOVER FROM ... (Another show) FROM TIMES WHEN I FELT IGNORED OR DISMISSED BY YOU IN THE REHEARSAL ROOM, BUT WHERE I DIDN'T SPEAK OUT ABOUT THIS AT THE TIME BECAUSE IF FIGURED IT WAS PART OF YOUR PROCESS AS AN ACTOR. IE WHAT YOU NEEDED TO DO TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THE ROLE, MAYBE THIS WAS ALSO BECAUSE I WANTED YOU TO FEEL LIKE YOU WERE IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT SO I DIDN'T WANT TO ADD TO YOUR STRESS AND SO I AVOIDED CONFLICT. BUT THEN ALSO, AVOIDING CONFLICT IS SOMETHING THAT I'VE ALWAYS DONE...

IT'S HARD TO PINPOINT EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED IN BALI. I GUESS THERE WAS THE INCIDENT WHERE I WENT INTO 'SELF LOATHING' MODE BECAUSE I FELT THAT I SUCKED BIG TIME AND WHICH YOU THEN INTERPRETED AS AN ATTACK ON YOU AND OR ON MY FELLOW ACTORS WHEN I LEFT THE PERFORMING AREA (I THINK, FROM MEMORY, THAT WAS ALL THE SAME INCIDENT) AND IT TOOK US A WHILE TO WORK THIS OUT, MAYBE EVEN TO IDENTIFY WHAT IT WAS THAT HAD HAPPENED AND WHAT IT MEANT TO EACH OF US AND HOW IT MEANT SOMETHING QUITE DIFFERENT SO I THINK THAT SAT UNRESOLVED BETWEEN US AND OTHER THINGS WENT BAD AS A RESULT OF THAT UNRESOLVED THING. I THINK THAT'S WHERE THE SAFE/UNSAFE THING CAME FROM, BUT AT THE TIME I DIDN'T REALLY UNDERSTAND WHY THAT MADE YOU FEEL UNSAFE, BECAUSE FOR ME IT WAS JUST MY STANDARD 'PUTTING MYSELF DOWN BEFORE ANYBODY ELSE DOES' BUT I GUESS WE REVERT BACK TO CHILDISH WAYS WHEN WE FEEL LIKE WE'RE IN A CORNER AND THAT'S HOW I FELT THEN. I CAN'T QUITE REMEMBER WHAT SPARKED THIS ANYMORE BUT I REMEMBER FEELING AN OVERWHELMING SENSE OF USELESSNESS AND INADEQUACY AND THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE WERE WATCHING ME FAIL. I DON'T THINK IT WAS YOUR BEHAVIOUR THAT CAUSED IT, BUT I DO REMEMBER FEELING CONFUSED BY YOUR RESPONSE BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT WAS ALL ABOUT ME AND YOU RESPONDED AS IF I HAD DONE SOMETHING TO YOU, SO THIS MIGHT BE AN EXAMPLE OF ME FEELING LIKE I WAS AT THE CENTRE OF THINGS.

I THINK WE HAVE UNPACKED A LOT OF THIS BY TALKING ABOUT IT OVER THE LAST COUPLE OF MONTHS AND I ALSO THINK THAT WE HAVE A STRONGER FRAMEWORK AROUND US FOR BEING ABLE TO TALK ABOUT TALKING ABOUT IT.

9. you have mentioned before that you felt invisible in some of the rehearsals and that an actor is always doing something. I guess a human being is always doing something. And on stage that doing needs to be very visible...what do you do to help your actor make it very visible? And how successful are you? Can it be

measured or is it just a feeling? Is there a schism between what the actor thinks they are doing and what they are actually doing.

ACTOR Z'S RESPONSE:

THERE MAY VERY WELL BE A SCHISM BETWEEN WHAT AN ACTOR THINKS THEY'RE DOING AND HOW IT'S BEING READ BY THE DIRECTOR. IT PROBABLY DEPENDS ON THE LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE OF THE ACTOR. I MEAN I THINK THAT WHEN YOU'RE ACTING I CAN READ YOU VERY WELL, AS A DIRECTOR, AND AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER AND THAT'S BECAUSE YOU ARE A VERY EXPERIENCED AND EMOTIONALLY AVAILABLE AND EXPRESSIVE ACTOR. THIS IS ALSO THE TYPE OF PERSON THAT YOU ARE, BUT IT IS NOT NECESSARILY AND NATURALLY THE TYPE OF PERSON OR PERFORMER THAT I AM. IF I HAVE ANY SKILLS AS A PERFORMER, I DON'T THINK THAT THEY ARE IN WHAT I'LL CALL A NATURALISTIC STYLE. I THINK I'M MORE LIKELY TO SUCCEED WORKING FROM THE OUTSIDE IN...I THINK THAT IS WHAT WE WERE DOING IN PERTH AND SOMETIMES IN BRISBANE BUT AS WE GOT CLOSER TO THE PERFORMANCE IT SEEMED THAT THE PERFORMANCE STARTED TO DEMAND THAT THE KOKEN BE SMALLER AND MORE INTERNAL, SHE COULDN'T OR SHOULDN'T COMPETE WITH THE 'BIGNESS' OF A AND B AND THIS MIGHT HAVE BEEN BEYOND MY LEVEL OF EXPERTISE AS A PERFORMER.

I GUESS AS A DIRECTOR IF I THINK AN ACTOR ISN'T DOING ANYTHING I TRY TO FIND THE ACTION THEY'RE INVOLVED IN AND THEN TO FIND BEHAVIOUR TO SUPPORT AND DEMONSTRATE THAT ACTION. FOR EXAMPLE IN PINS YOU DID THIS IN THE MOMENT THE KOKEN WENT AROUND THE CIRCLE OF PAGES AND DISRUPTED THE PAGES AND HAD A KIND OF EMOTIONAL BREAKDOWN. THAT REALLY WORKED FOR ME AS A WAY TO TIE THE INTERNAL AND THE PHYSICAL AND I GET THE FEELING IT WAS A SUCCESSFUL MOMENT IN MY PERFORMANCE?

10. Is this invisibility something that you have experienced in other settings or was this the first time? And did this invisibility only happen after the first point of change: for me the first major point of change that happened in our process happened in Bali in the rehearsal that ended in your leaving. Actor A and B on the floor. Did you have an earlier point of change?

ACTOR Z'S RESPONSE:

YES I GUESS 'INVISIBILITY' IS SOMETHING THAT I IDENTIFY WITH IN MY OWN PARTICULAR AND PECULIAR PSYCHOLOGICAL MAKEUP, PERHAPS THE INVISIBILITY DID FEEL MOST PRONOUNCED AFTER THE INCIDENT IN BALI. I

THINK ALSO IT HAD BEEN TRIGGERED BY THAT INCIDENT WITH (person in workshop) IN THE WORKSHOP WHERE I FELT TOTALLY INVISIBLE AND UNHEARD BY HIM AS A PERFORMER AND I HAD THIS HUGE FIERY RAGE AND CONFUSION ABOUT THAT EXPERIENCE THAT I HAD NOT IN ANY WAY PROCESSED FOR THAT REHEARSAL LATER THAT SAME DAY.. THIS INCIDENT WITH (person in workshop) HAPPENED EARLIER THE SAME DAY I BELIEVE ... BUT PERHAPS ALSO PRIOR TO BALI IN BRISBANE WITH ACTOR B. I OFTEN FELT OVERWHELMED BY HER CHOICES AND INVISIBILISED AS A RESULT AND YOUR CONFIRMATION OF HER CHOICES MEANT

T HAT I FELT A BIT LIKE THE REMEDIAL CHILD. BUT THIS IS MY STUFF AN NOT NECESSARILY ANYTHING THAT YOU DID JUST A CONCATENATION OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

11. I also think I remember some point in rehearsal where it was noted by both of us (or was it) that the best method right now was to let you just 'find it'. So I focused on shaping Twin B rather than you...do you remember that, and if so, how do you remember that ... sometimes I felt that my comments were not the right comments with regard to you and your journey and your needs...also observing myself in rehearsal in *Gone to Earth* I see that I am not so clear in what I say. I communicate on many levels, and words are a small part of that. I notice that my body communicates, sounds I make (other than words) communicate: pauses communicate; held moments ...

ACTOR Z'S RESPONSE:

YES I THINK WE DID HAVE THAT CONVERSATION ABOUT LEAVING ME TO IT. BUT I'M NOT SURE EITHER OF US REALLY UNDERSTOOD WHAT THAT MEANT OR THAT WE EVE REALLY DID THIS IN A CONSTRUCTIVE WAY. IF WE WERE TO DO THIS FOR REAL WE PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE SET UP CHECK-INS ON THE PROGRESS OF THIS. BUT I THINK WE PROBABLY SORT OF TALKED ABOUT IT AND THEN FORGOT ABOUT IT. WE PROBABLY COULD HAVE STRUCTURED THIS BETTER IN ORDER TO REALLY MAKE IT WORK.

Some musings for you to respond to: at times in rehearsal I made a conscious decision to reserve my comments and leave you to it. Did that feel like I could no longer see you, and if this was the case how can a director leave an actor to do their thing without them feeling invisible? I thought I qualified my action at the time, but I cannot tell you what I said. I may have asked you directly do you want direction or do you want to be left along...I feel a bit stumped here...I know that I pulled back from you when I felt judgement entering the room, on both sides that is...sometimes I was scared of the responses that occurred...is

'scared' the word or just not knowing how to stay in the moment safely...I think I was sometimes judgemental of your actions, thought the therapist in me was not...I felt at fault and at the same time I felt blamed in some way...particularly when you said something like 'you think I am a shit actor'...I am not sure why this is still strongly in my head...I think that this is the basis for everything that came after...I felt blamed that you thought that I thought...sort of thing...I felt invaded...yet I didn't understand this when my intention was to help you build your performance into something you have never achieved before...and where did that need to help you excel come from...why did I carry that...that is interesting in itself. My commitment to you 'I promised myself that you would look brilliant'...what does that mean I wonder...

ACTOR Z'S RESPONSE:

AS I SAID ABOVE I THINK WE SHOULD HAVE PUT A TIMELINE ON THIS FRAMEWORK. IE. 'I'M GOING TO LEAVE YOU ALONE FOR A WEEK AND AT THE END OF THE WEEK WE'LL COME BACK TOGETHER AND TALK ABOUT WHAT YOU'VE DISCOVERED 'ON YOUR OWN' AND WHAT I SEE OF WHAT YOU'VE DISCOVERED'. BECAUSE I GUESS IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT EVEN IF YOU WERE 'LEAVING ME ON MY OWN' YOU WERE STILL IN THE ROOM, SO YOU WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO HAVE AN OPINION ABOUT AND NOTICE WHAT I WAS DOING AND I WOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT. ME SAYING 'YOU THINK I'M A SHIT ACTOR' AND ME LEAVING THE PERFORMING SPACE WITH ACTOR A AND ACTOR B STILL IN IT ARE THE SAME INCIDENT RIGHT? I GUESS THIS IS A GOOD INDICATION OF JUST HOW FAR INSIDE MY OWN HEAD I WAS: I NEVER IMAGINED THAT WHAT I SAID WOULD UPSET YOU. IT WAS PURELY TO PUT MY FAILINGS ON THE TABLE BEFORE ANYONE ELSE COULD AND IT NEVER EVEN OCCURRED TO ME UNTIL AFTER ACTOR B SAID IT THAT ME LEAVING THE SPACE WOULD IMPACT ON ANYONE EXCEPT ME. OF COURSE I UNDERSTAND WHY IT DID BUT AT THE TIME I WAS SO FAR INSIDE MY OWN STORY THAT I WASN'T EVEN THINKING ABOUT WHO ELSE OR WHAT ELSE WAS HAPPENING IN THE SPACE. I WAS BLAMING ONLY MYSELF BUT I UNDERSTAND NOW WITH HINDSIGHT WHY THIS WOULD HAVE SEEMED OTHERWISE. I REMEMBER FEELING CONFUSED THAT YOU WERE HURT BY IT, BECAUSE I WAS ONLY TRYING TO HURT MYSELF, AND THAT THEN MADE MATTERS MORE CONFUSING BECAUSE IT MEANT THAT I FELT I COULDN'T SPEAK FREELY BECAUSE I WAS AT RISK OF HURTING OTHER PEOPLE. I STARTED TO NOT TRUST MY RESPONSES TO THINGS. I FELT MUCH MORE PERSONALLY VULNERABLE THAN I EVEN HAVE AS A DIRECTOR AND SO AS A RESULT I WAS MUCH MORE SELFISH IN MY ACTIONS, ALSO SINCE THIS IS NOT USUALLY MY MODE OF OPERATION (IE BEING SELFISH) I KEPT FEELING MORE AND MORE FRIGHTENED TO SPEAK...

I THINK YOU SAYING 'I WANT YOU TO LOOK BRILLIANT WAS A POSITIVE THING TO SAY IT GAVE ME CONFIDENCE. IT MADE ME FEEL THAT YOU

BELIEVED I WAS CAPABLE OF BRILLIANCE. IT WAS GOOD TO HEAR. IT MEANT THAT YOU BELIEVED IN ME.

Thanks, this is important to me to unpack, and probably words are the way to do it, seeing as this is the mode that I have to express myself in now

Big hug

And thanks

margi

Appendix 6: Excerpts from reflective journal

Brisbane

Thursday May 8, 2008

WHAT I KNOW IS:

What I know is that the primary critical incident that affected the play *A Mouthful of Pins* was like a reflection of the whole.

There was tension and rupture between the world of the director (me) and the world of Actor Z (the writer and the actor). This was totally unexpected because we had been close collaborators for five years before we began this work.

We disagreed on many levels, although there were many levels that we agreed upon. The complexities reveal just how subjective and powerful interaction is when one is researching the self in relation to others.

I will take the premise that the relationship that developed between myself and Actor Z is a microcosm of the relationships in the world.

The research is based on relating in a post-modern context, taking into account specific constructs that help us unpack what we mean by post-modern constructionist ways of communication.

If I take the relationship between myself and Actor Z and see it in this light, I can find out what happened, what I learned and where I am now heading.

WHAT HAPPENED: There was a philosophical split between where we were heading. As writer and director we needed to be on the same page.

Because the work was new (even though *Melancholia* was the basis of *A Mouthful of Pins*, the two texts were very different on many levels, so as director I see the plays as different on many levels, though not necessarily better than each other) we needed to be wanting the same from the text, or at least tolerating each other's perspective.

From my perspective the text was too wordy. It needed to be parred down. This is also the opinion of a number of people who responded to the performance. The text was dense, and perhaps too dense to connect on a 100% basis.

Actor Z and I needed to understand each other. It reached a point where it was difficult to hear what was happening. So much so that I had another psychologist enter the room to help sort out what was going on (not as serious as it sounds...the psychologist was my brother, and was there to help film the process as well).

What is understanding? It is listening to your own and other's language.

Bali

January 9, 2008

Balinese dance has soft characters and hard characters. I am trying to work out the most economical and powerful way of collaboration. I am asking writer to soften around the changes that need to be made in the script. So we can collaborate with the text, not fall on older ways of writer's text being sacred.

Frustration. Not being able to rehearse today. Illness, space, heat, nausea, many obstacles but the space is powerful so I am hoping these difficulties will be overcome.

WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO DO DIFFERENTLY:

1. LOOSER ROLES WITH COLLABORATION
2. THE STORY OF THE MOMENT. HOW THE ACTOR IS CREATIVE AND INCORPORATING THAT
3. TONE OF ROOM.

2.30PM. Feelings of not being able to do it.

- Why am I doing it?
- How do we pull this thing together?
- What is collaboration anyway? I know with therapy using a social constructionist framework we can achieve so much: resilience, autonomy, joy, belief in self, awareness.
- How do I apply this in rehearsal?
- Frustration about time. So little time. Make a plan.
- How do we make those little gifts for the gods?
- Where is our temple on stage...or is stage the temple?

January 11, 2008

HOTSPOT:

Scene with cutting.

My language is clumsy. I say 'no, no, no' regarding action of one of the actors.

This was interpreted as not understanding what the actor was trying to say. In a small mistake (which was fuelled with frustration) set up a dynamic that is not shifting.

It becomes a pattern: actor is not understood. Consequently they withdraw.

As a result I feel like I am given the 'aggressor role': I am in building mode and it is though the actor is not. I am trying to stay in the shoes of the collaborator but that is not happening. Friction occurs. Miscommunication.

Sent SMS to Kay Philp this morning:

10am Bali Time 11 January

Hi Kay. Hugs in Bali. Sitting in pergola with breeze. Reflecting on play. I would like a supervision session on return. I need to talk about what feels like being set up as the aggressor...

January 12, 2008

Lots of changes. On Thursday after hotspot I took morning off classes to gather thoughts.

Wed. afternoon Actor A and I had been jostling and they asked how the show was going and I said, 'Well I just find it difficult to move from director to actor and back again.' We joked that I needed another actor. I think I joked with 'Do you want to play a Victorian woman?'

He said 'I'd love to act in Australia. I gave him the script. He gave it back to me, saying its beautiful but it's a woman's text so I walked away. That evening he revealed he thought that we were performing in Adelaide. No, Brisbane. He is interested. Works out a ticket. He is on board. Friday night's rehearsal is strong. The energy is excellent. The play amongst the three actors is very yummy.

January 13, 2008

We are now halfway through the work.

It has been strong.

The ensemble is growing. We have worked together each day involved in many aspects: mask, dance, voice; last night was our first evening off. It was great. We shopped, went to the fabric shop; went to get some Balinese music and then ate at Café Lotus. It was on a pavilion, we sat on floor cushions, ate fried bananas. We watched Balinese dance. Actor Z and I then went and worked on the script: we have completed our final working script for Bali.

January 14, 2008

Heaven. Sitting under pergola under our house. Cooler, though still warm. Drinking tea. Watching Balinese placing the offerings in all the different places: egg and rice for the gods. It seems the spirits are all around us, which is what we wanted. To absorb the spiritual component of Bali into our work. This is a glorious place to create. I want to come again, and rehearse again.

How do we make sure people stay present right here right now?

- What is happening?
- What are you carrying into the room?
- It is not necessary to share content, rather the process you are dealing with right now.

EXAMPLE: ACTOR SAYS: I still have a residue of this mornings class.

DIRECTOR ASKS: What does this mean? Can you work? Bring the energy in. Sit with it comfortably. Etc.

Instead what happens is that stories get told in check in and they take us out of the room. I need to control the actors' stories.

SM is fragile. She is very teary.

We started rehearsal playing with status; wanting to help actors be themselves with status rather than imposing a character on to themselves.

Tell actors to react, not act.

Acting can take the actor out of themselves, not closer to themselves. Acting can alienate an audience. Reacting creates deep interest and joy and sadness.

HOTSPOT

One of the actors not present. Not responding to what is happening on stage. Transference from something that happened this morning in class, perhaps. Actor Z steps out of character when Actor B responds in a way that is not regarded as appropriate (as character, Actor B throws washer at Actor Z). Actor Z steps out of character. Leaves the floor with 'I am finished'.

When questioned, the question is answered with a question 'What is character?'

I am wondering if in the case of Actor Z the character and the actor cannot be separated.

When the actor was triggered on stage, she responded as actor rather than as character. Why does this happen?

Intervention: talking circle, interpreted by Actor Z as 'retard circle'. I notice the reframing that occurs: it occurred several times. Use of language was curious: my note to 'don't act. Just react' was reframed as 'I'm a bad actor' ...

I then conducted check out. I think we survived. I know I need time away from the group. I need out.

How am I?

Good solid 2 feet on the ground.

In my mask work today I was 'The Loser'. I didn't get it at first. It was only with instruction that The Loser entered me. I don't visit The Loser often. In fact extremely rarely. Only in short bursts. So I allowed him to enter. I saw clouds around my eyes. The puffy white cheeks of the mask. I was looking through clouds, looking at the feet, that were not moving, in all different angles and directions.

As I re read this I ask myself is this what I am doing with Actor Z: looking at her feet; seeing her through clouds? Am I not noticing what is happening... am I searching in the wrong places?

January 15, 2008

What is the director's lived experience within the collaborative process?

Layback, violation, confusion, unclear, space, feet on ground, forgiveness, cloud, aloneness, fear, responsibility, is the director a in loco parent ... can that happen?

What metaphors dominate the director:

Facilitator

Dreamer

Good listener

Sense of humour

Runs a tight ship

Guide

Original thought

Create creator

With imagination I can move forward.

With more will

Lots of feeling

Trusting my environment

One step at a time.

It is almost easier to be collaborative with students because the expectations are not nearly so great.

They don't bring enough.

The next actors bring too much.

CRISIS:

In theatre collaboration, when something happens and the director steps in to become more directive just as in therapy when a client is in crisis the therapist becomes more directive. So perhaps crises in theatre happen regularly, not just production week, maybe crisis occur when a scene 'cracks open'.

What does the director do? Is she just a sounding board or an active collaborator offering ideas and suggestions?

Unravelling what the director does: guides, shapes, suggests, strips back, cleaner lines; cleaner direct path to the audience. What are we staying to the audience?

To reconnect to the world after a rupture.

Takes patience, a sense of humour, and friends, albeit internal friends.

The rupture can happen at any time. As a child, or an adolescent, a death, a break up of the known environment, a fracturing of relationships, an illness...and sometimes we are not even aware we have been ruptured. We may only believe we are sad. For no particular day...its just a sad day.

With connections with others; with a sense of humour; with art (in this case singing) we can exorcise sadness.

We show you ten days in the life of KoKo, a woman of middle years who is sad. She explores this sadness from many angles inventing two sub-personalities to visit, to play in order to work out how to get this sadness to settle and get on with her life, at least for now. KoKo wants sadness to dance with happiness. She wants some light in her life. Twin A's archetype is the spoiled princess. Twin B the witch. KoKo is the queen, the queen wanting to get out.

We go through the cycle of depression and the tools used to keep sadness at bay, drugs, bleeding, cutting, studying the depression, action, no action, humour, washing, cooking.

Appendix 7: Script of *A Mouthful of Pins*

Originally commissioned by American director/dramaturg Amantha May for the 2004 Writer/Director's Lab for the Looking Glass Theatre in New York City, *A Mouthful of Pins* (originally entitled *Melancholia*) was then invited back for a main stage production in 2005. It will have its Australian premiere at the Brisbane Powerhouse in February 2008, directed by Margi Brown Ash.

Synopsis

A performance text that integrates image, poetry, music, movement and narrative, *A Mouthful of Pins* exists in the landscape of then and now, of what was, what seems to be and what could be. *A Mouthful of Pins* considers what role choice, circumstance and character play in the construction of sadness.

A Mouthful of Pins is a collage of original and sourced material. For example, Henry Fuseli's paintings *The Nightmare* (1781) and *Nightmare (The Incubus)* (1781–82) and Albrecht Dürer's engraving *Melancholia I* (1514) were influential in the development of the piece's vocabulary of imagery. Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) is quoted and the words of Jeremy Taylor, Edward Abbey, Anton Chekhov, Jane Austen, Billie Holiday, Jean Racine, Nick Drake, Anne Sexton, U2, Paul Williams, New Order, Sigmund Freud, Germaine Greer, P.L. Travers, Meri Nana-Ama Danquah and Amy Levy feature in a patchwork of references woven through my original writing.

Characters

THE KOKEN⁴³: Harbourer of visions of Melancholia, but also skilled in its arts. Since the twins are for the most part unable to move from their costumes/traps she assists them with costumes, props and adjusts the space as needed.

TWIN A: Victorian Melancholic Woman – trapped in her dress. Takes up as much space as her dress will allow.

TWIN B: Contemporary Melancholic Woman – trapped in her dress and her stilettos. Takes up as much space as her stilettos will allow.

N.B. Please note, there is no set as such, but there are simple symbolic stage properties and chalk circles in the shape of TWIN A's skirt and pairs of TWIN B's stilettos nailed to the floor to represent their 'stations'

The changing of each scene title should coincide with the recurring sounds of morning and be followed by the sound of the drone that accompanies the KOKEN. This drone should have in common its connection to the KOKEN's state of mind, the texture, instrumentation and volume should vary according to the context.

⁴³ A convention of the Noh, Kyogen and Kabuki theatres of Japan, the Koken is a stage assistant who aids the actors. An actor by training, the Koken has a thorough understanding of the play and an unlimited amount of patience. Dressed entirely in black (the back of the costume is often decorated with the crest of the acting family to which he 'belongs') the Koken is considered to be aesthetically invisible. In full view of the audience, Kokens can serve as stage hands in the creation of simulated supernatural effects, operate puppet monsters, straighten costumes and wigs, move scenery, perform costume transformations, act as prompters and watch out for the safety of participants. The other actors are supposed to ignore the presence of Kokens, although they may take notice of what Kokens do. For example, if a Koken lifts a book off the table, the actor may notice that the book is floating, but ignores what's making it float.

PROLOGUE

VOICEOVER:

Just as we hear music through intervals, experience is often easiest to understand in terms of contrast. And so despair is often best expressed in terms of what has changed.

‘I used to relish crowds on the street, but now people repulse me.’ Or, ‘I used to wake up with a feeling of expectancy. Now I can only wrap the pillow around my head and pray for more sleep.’

Darkness aches, but light blinds.

We are all natural storytellers. Even as we think we are just seeing a concrete image or hearing a distinct sound, we are in fact filling in gaps, putting material in context, constructing a narrative. But sometimes, for some people, the story is torn. The essential sense of who we are, of what the world means, becomes lost.⁴⁴

When she was thirty-five she carried the torn pages of her story up the stairs of an old apartment building in Brisbane. She thought perhaps she would not leave it again. She knows they are inside for she has sung them.

KOKEN: (*singing*)

Sadness is lying still next to me.

Eyes open, lips humming, buzzing

⁴⁴ Joshua Wolf Shenk. ‘A Melancholy of Mine Own.’ From ‘Unholy Ghost: Writers on Depression.’

Fingers itching, pulsing with the effort
of lying still.

I cover one with the other – fingers over
lips - press - then listen – deafening silence.

Eyes closed – I watch it – sadness –
through closed eyes.

I watch it to the end.

I hold it – but it slips and magnifies,

From a mouthful of pins I pin it into place
– sadness – one in each corner

pinned down mouth. I memorise the shape
and mould it to fit.

Eyes closed. It fits. Sadness.

KOKEN:

Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of
Melancholy*, 1621. Burton says there are
two types of melancholia. The first is
melancholic disposition. It is 'transitory,
that which goes and comes upon every
small occasion of sorrow, need,
sickness...' ...yada, yada, yada... 'Any
manner of care, discontent, or thought,
which causes anguish...' ...yada, yada,
yada... 'Any ways opposite to pleasure...
And from this type of melancholia no
man...'

TWIN B:

Or woman.

KOKEN:

'... living is free.'

TWIN B hands the KOKEN a text.

TWIN A:

What is the second kind?

KOKEN:

Melancholy of habit.

TWIN A:

My doctor, Sir William says this is my kind.

KOKEN:

It is ‘...a serious ailment...fixed...and now being grown to a habit it will hardly be removed.’⁴⁵

KOKEN: (*reading*)

Sigmund Freud’s ‘Mourning and Melancholia’.

TWIN B:

the question is not:

‘have you ever had your heart broken?’

it is:

‘has it ever been mended?’

KOKEN:

Freud says: ‘Melancholics are far from demonstrating the humility that would befit such worthless people (as they believe themselves to be)...’

⁴⁵ Robert Burton. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Vol. 1. (1651).

TWIN B:

‘My depression is the most faithful lover I have known. No wonder, then, that I return the love.’⁴⁶

KOKEN: (*still reading*)

‘On the contrary, they make the greatest nuisance of themselves and always seem as though they felt slighted and had been treated with great injustice.’⁴⁷

TWIN A:

Who is this Freud?

TWIN B:

You would probably call him the son of Burton. He would call us hysterics.

KOKEN:

I feel like the top of my head is falling back, back over the edge of the bed until I no longer recognise it as the back of my head or the bed. I can hear the gecko chirping. Outside there’s a rooster and cars passing and people talking and there the sound of a bird flying over. It sounds like I’m right beneath the wing span. I know that cannot be, there cannot be a rooster flying through my room, but the sound of its wings and this peculiar sense that the top of my head is falling back transports me from this ordinary bed in this ordinary room where I’ve lain now for longer than I can remember. There is the strong smell of stale sweat coming up from beneath my arms and my forehead is greasy from where my hair has laid unwashed upon it. Every slight, every jibe, every cruelty lays its weight upon me, there is no kindness in the world, no softness, no warmth, it’s all stark, burning, piercing a hole into my forehead this world out there. I can’t

TWIN A gives the KOKEN a text.

⁴⁶ Soren Kierkegaard, paraphrased.

⁴⁷ Sigmund Freud "Mourning and Melancholia". (1917).

remember when I stopped caring about all the things I used to care so much about, but what to do? Not much when there's a hole in my forehead and the tears will no longer come.

VOICEOVER:
Monday - the diagnosis.

TWIN B:
in any given week

KOKEN:
(let's call it this week)

TWIN B:
I will see the value of
Monday – the nymph, or
Tuesday – the mother

The TWINS have a fit of hysteria.

which makes Wednesday the crone
& so Thursday leaves me cold
with no one left to be
I settle down with Thursday's corpse
watch hours of TV
splatter the floor with stepped-out-of
clothes and unopened mail
cook myself a dinner
that's all chop & 3 veg

KOKEN:

& no skill

TWIN B:

until

newborn

KOKEN:

(let's call it Sunday)

TWIN B:

I find myself honouring the mushrooms

the tomatoes

and the clacking of the knife on the cutting
board

a moment when everything's worth it

when what I've lost is simple

KOKEN:

Though what I've lost is not.

*The sounds of morning can be heard in the
distance.*

TWIN A:

My dearest husband Edward,

‘For every twelve joys, I have had twenty-five sorrows.’⁴⁸ I count them like sheep when sleep eludes me. Yesterday my doctor Sir William explained to me that what is a flea-biting to one, causes insufferable torment to another. It seems I am one who, without any apparent occasion, have fear and sadness for my ordinary companions. Sir William called it ‘a kind of dotage without a fever.’⁴⁹ I told him I shall call it the senility of my youth, my middle age and my old age to come.

KOKEN:

Monday the 25th, Sadness is caught in the back of my throat.

TWIN A:

I told Sir William of the oppressions in my head. Yesterday I had the sensation of a peck loaf resting on my head, and they talked of cupping me. He says such attacks are frequent for women of my disposition.⁵⁰

KOKEN:

Monday the 12th, My breath skims the surface, it can’t be gulped down deep in case sadness breaks apart – it’s the iceberg beneath the ocean that spreads out and down and down.

TWIN A:

SLIDE: ‘*THERE ISN’T A MONDAY THAT WOULD NOT CEDE ITS PLACE TO TUESDAY*’ - Anton Chekhov.

The lights intensify on TWIN B. She undresses until only the stilettos remain.

⁴⁸ Meri Nana-Ama Danquah.

⁴⁹ Robert Burton. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Vol. 1. (1651). 145, 170.

⁵⁰ Jane Austen’s letters (1775-1817).

Sir William listened to me in confidence and immediately diagnosed another acute involuntional melancholia, this time complicated by insomniac tendencies. He ‘compounded a tincture of opium of which I am to take six drops in a small glass of port wine each bed time. I took the draught last night, but it had no effect besides making my recurrent dream all the more vivid, so I know not whether to halve or double the dosage to-night! At all events, Sir William will bleed me on Wednesday should my symptoms persist unabated.’ I have heard that those who suffer horribly from night-mares, once they seek Sir William’s help, sleep like babes.⁵¹

TWIN B:

a tomato

your voice

a squandered day

a moment

a life

spent hankering down with one less joy

one more passion picked peeled and plundered

and then there were none.

Darkness.

KOKEN:

I’m not afraid of the dark.

TWIN B:

It’s the light that scares you.

The lights intensify on TWIN A. She is writing letter after letter.

TWIN A seals the letter and posts it. It lands on the KOKEN.

TWIN A begins another letter.

⁵¹ Austen.

TWIN A seals the letter and posts it. It lands on the KOKEN. She reads it.

TWIN A begins a new letter.

VOICEOVER:

Tuesday - The thickening

TWIN A:

Dearest Edward,

I wish you were here. I am a prisoner of the rain. I spent the evening by the fire in the company of Sir William and his charming wife, whether it was in fact charm or mere inoffensiveness, it would be impolite to

say. As the invitations to your mother's grand ball were the talk of the evening the wine stood me in good stead. Truth be told, another evening with Sir William's wife would be preferable to one more of your mother's balls, but I see no decent way to decline and so I must aim to be home by then.

With my senses already lulled by the rain outside and the fire and wine within, I added three more drops to Sir William's dosage. Alas, a dreamless sleep was not to be. I fear now that sleep itself has deserted me, never to return.

In my dream I am lying inside a darkened chamber, not my own. Into this strange place comes a procession of creatures who I know to be my own dear Edward, his mother and finally in the rear, Sir William's drivelling wife. How I know their identity I cannot say because they do not resemble their earthly selves in either feature or manner.

Even worse than the sight of them is their intention towards me. This intention, a desire to peer into my very soul and pluck away, equals my desire to flee. When I awake, if indeed you can awaken from that which cannot be called sleep, my head is thick with fatigue and my eyes glued shut with unshed tears.

Tomorrow is Wednesday, that promised Wednesday. Sir William will come again, his visit and what it will bring is much anticipated. To put myself in his hands...

TWIN A posts the letter, it lands on the KOKEN.

Gradually the lights return. The sounds of morning recur, plus the sound of rain.

KOKEN:

Tuesday the 31st, Sadness is a tightness
high up in my chest, shallow breathing, a
breath that can't get past this tight high
place

TWIN B:

only the rain has kept her promise

today I feel your absence

like a great big sucking out of air

I lose my breath and gasp for it

gutted

hollow

nothing in the centre

cut the middle out

I am falling in on myself

& so it begins
again.

KOKEN:

Sadness is a memory of something long
ago, can you call it a memory if you can't
remember it? A memory of something I
cannot quite recall, the unremembered, the
unrememberable sitting there high in my
chest.

VOICEOVER:

Wednesday - the cutting.

TWIN A:

Edward, I could speak to you of the day's
activities, of badminton on the lawn or of

SLIDE: 'MAYBE *TUESDAY* WILL BE
MY GOOD NEWS DAY' - Billie Holiday.

*It is raining. TWIN A has awoken from her
sleep. The clock begins to strike twelve and
continues throughout.*

spending the mornings composing letters in my head which I write to you in the afternoons but I do not have the disposition to share these pleasantries and I fear the habit has long since deserted me.

KOKEN:

Dear Edward, I feel the creatures' hands upon more than my soul, indeed sometimes I feel that I have become the creature itself.

If it is that I am seeing through the creature's eyes it would explain why everything I look upon is tinged with fear and sadness and why horror seems to lurk beneath even the most innocuous beauty. But to think such a thing is surely to give into the creatures' demands and besides I daren't write these things to you, lest you fear for the purity of my mind, for once it has become soiled my body will surely follow. Sir William is my only hope.

TWIN A:

Wednesday has kept her promise. Sir William is come at last...

KOKEN: [*singing*]

When the rain falls the grass is a brilliant shade of green.

Damp but luminescent.

When it stops the world is held like that suspended

just so

damp but luminescent.

There's no going back

It seems

I am

We are

Fresh

Reborn.

Where I'm from the rain only comes when the heat can no longer hold, it is a relief a respite

She stops writing and tells the audience.

She returns to the letter.

She crosses out the last line. She posts the letter. The letter lands on the KOKEN.

A harsh square of light appears on the face of TWIN B.

a release.

Tomorrow it will rain.

Sounds of morning recur.

**SLIDE: 'WEDNESDAY BLOODY
WEDNESDAY'**

*TWIN A throws away the letter she was
trying to compose. The KOKEN picks it up
and reads it.*

VOICEOVER:

Thursday - the release

TWIN A:

Dear Edward,

I am sorry for the long silence. It's only now that I feel I can write to you again. Now, at last, there is stillness, inside and out, a stillness in which things have regained their previous form, where all the world seems solid and dependable again. Silence has replaced the chattering creatures, the tenements which had previously occupied my mind have been razed. There is fresh terrain beneath, new ground, open space and most of all, silence. Here I can graze on my dreams, rather than them on me. My companions now are relief (not fear) and sadness still, but of the weightless kind. This sadness sits on me with as much effort as water on skin, on this sadness I have been washed ashore to you. Listen.

TWIN A: *(to the KOKEN)*

Sadness is just fear, it's just fear of happiness. Fear of trusting that happiness will come and if it does that it will stay. That's what sadness is.

KOKEN: *(to A about B)*

I want to grow a book to replace her.

TWIN B:

away tongue

you are lick-less and cracked

'a skin too few'⁵²

The sound of knocking.

TWIN B dresses the KOKEN as Sir William and shows her how to bleed TWIN A. Once she is bled TWIN B instructs the KOKEN to cut herself. When she refuses, TWIN B cuts herself instead. After TWIN B collapses, the KOKEN sings to her.

⁵² Gabrielle Drake, describing her brother Nick.

a meal for none

I am growing a book

tending slender pages of skin

to replace you

listen

VOICEOVER:

Friday - the ecstasy

TWIN A:

Dear Edward,

You talk about my 'having 'rest' and
'getting strong' before I try anything and
won't see that 'rest' is the last thing I
need.'⁵³

TWIN A:

With the knocking of my brain against my
skull, I concoct a tune.

KOKEN:

Are there any lyrics?

TWIN A:

The rhythm is all I have, but it's enough.
It's instrumental in making a change. And
that is what I'll do.

TWIN B:

First I make a list. Number one, seek out

Gradually the sounds of morning recur.

**SLIDE: 'WHEN THREE THURSDAYS
MEET'**

⁵³ Eleanor Marx. A letter to her father.

<p>the mantra.</p> <p>KOKEN: What's the mantra?</p> <p>TWIN B: Seek it out.</p> <p>TWIN B: Home is where the heart is. Cleanliness is next to Godliness.</p> <p>KOKEN: Be present. Be strong. You really are beautiful.</p> <p>TWINS: (<i>to KOKEN</i>) You really are beautiful.</p> <p>KOKEN: 'As a confirmed melancholic, I can testify that the best and maybe only antidote for melancholia is action.</p> <p>TWIN A: However, like most melancholics, you suffer also from sloth.⁵⁴</p>	<p><i>It's raining.</i></p>
--	-----------------------------

⁵⁴ Edward Abbey.

KOKEN:

I've been doing so much.

TWIN B:

But not getting much done.

Sounds of morning recur.

SLIDE: 'HE WHO LAUGHS ON **FRIDAY**
WILL WEEP ON SUNDAY' – Jean Racine.

In the darkness TWIN A speaks.

Lights come up. Everyone is manic.

*They pick up the pages lying around the
stage and read out the mantras.*

VOICEOVER:

Saturday - the shame

TWIN A:

I once was a rose newly springing from its hood, fair as the Morning and full with the dew of heaven, but a ruder breath has forced open my virgin modesty, dismantling my youth. The rose I was put on a darkness, declined its softness, bowed its head and broke its stalk. Having lost some of my leaves and all of my beauty I fell into weeds and an outworn face.⁵⁵

My dearest darling husband Edward,

That a rose should come to this! Dress me in widow's weeds, you should want to be dead to me now.

TWIN B: *(on losing love)*

in the distance

they are moving round the running track

legless ones (for the distance makes them that)

they are moving as one

under the great uncovered

for all the world to see

though no one is watching except for me

they move on together all alone in their

These mantras get repeated.

The sounds of morning recur.

⁵⁵ Jeremy Taylor. *Holy Dying*. (1651), paraphrased

pack

closer

there's a bike

there's a car and a sprinkler and birds

and there's ants and the heat and there are
people walking by

and a thought

'what's for dinner?'

scratch that itch

'what's the time?'

and a thought

that I've thought this before

and this bench where I sit (when walking
was no longer an option)

is a bench (or one like it) is a bench

that I've sat on before

long ago

and got broken

or broken up with

under the great uncovered

for all the world to see

but no one was watching

'cept me

& he

we went from four legs

down to two

now I am one

legless one

unable to move from this park bench, my

**SLIDE: 'SATURDAY'S CHILD HAS FAR
TO GO'**

*Everyone retreats to their own separate
areas.*

home.

Get me out of these shoes.

TWIN A:

Get me out of this dress.

KOKEN:

When it comes there is nothing else that can be done. I hear myself say 'When I get home I'm going to take off all my clothes, get under the covers and sleep'. When what I really mean is I'm going to remove what ever it is that makes you think I am one of you, put on the winding sheet of gossamer, wrap it tight until the blood has gone heavy and still and my body cuts the outline of its shape into the bed. Then with my eyes closed I will fall into that familiar middle space between them.

VOICEOVER:

Sunday – The Fall

KOKEN:

Sadness is trapped in the roof of your mouth behind lips that dare not open in case you splinter that iceberg and so your breath sits low and shallow in your belly

not wanting to disturb sadness. Tip toe past lest he should wake.

KOKEN:

You know nothing of me and off you skip and mock me.

TWIN B:

Sit still. What have you got to be sad about? You who has it all? Could grab it all?

TWIN A:

What do you know of despair, you who has no rope burn on your delicate neck?

KOKEN:

So I sit still, don't speak, don't peek at sadness. Leave them to it and sit.

TWIN A:

Unattended.

TWIN B:

Unmended.

TWIN A:

That's what sadness does.

KOKEN:

Never was a glass half-full type of girl or a

The sounds of morning recur.

SLIDE: 'THE FURY OF SUNDAYS' -

Anne Sexton.

A clock strikes twelve over the course of this scene. The KOKEN drops twelve drops of opium into TWIN A's mouth.

TWIN A screams and the KOKEN covers her mouth.

The KOKEN chases TWIN B and forces her to take her medication.

The TWINS retaliate.

glass half empty. There is no glass and the water's long gone.

The KOKEN puts the rest of the pills in her mouth.

She drinks and swallows. The KOKEN goes to sleep.

1st SLIDE: 'RAINY DAYS AND MONDAYS' – Paul Williams.

2nd SLIDE: 'or BLUE MONDAY' – New Order.

3rd SLIDE: 'YOU GET THE IDEA'

Everyone is asleep. There is music.

VOICEOVER:

Tuesday - the thickening

KOKEN: (*reading*)

Freud says psychoanalysis is good for converting 'hysterical misery' into plain old 'ordinary unhappiness.'

TWIN B:

the question is not:

'who am I?'

it is:

'Who was I before all this?'

the answer is not:

clear

it is:

'I am made of this'

KOKEN: (*reading*)

Freud says hysteria in men is pathological but it's just normal for women.

TWIN A:

What does Burton say?

TWIN B:

Found it!

KOKEN: (*reading*)

The many causes of melancholy according to Burton. 'God Himself, then there's Devils, Witches and Magicians... Parents...'

TWIN B:

Don't get me started

TWIN A:

Don't tell Edward's mother.

KOKEN:

'Bad Diet...'

TWIN A:

Cook would disagree.

TWIN B:

Chop & 3 veg every night.

KOKEN:

SLIDE: 'BAD TUESDAY' –
P.L. Travers' *Mary Poppins*

The KOKEN and TWIN B are looking for answers for TWIN A who is ailing.

‘Retention and Evacuation...’

TWIN B:

Cod liver oil for breakfast, lunch and tea.

TWIN B and the KOKEN look for Burton.

KOKEN:

‘Then there’s Immoderate Exercise,
Solitariness and Idleness...’

TWIN A:

Yes, yes and yes.

KOKEN:

‘Fear...’

TWIN A:

My old friend.

KOKEN:

‘Shame and Disgrace...’

TWIN A:

My silent companions, but not a word to
Edward.

KOKEN:

‘Concupiscible Appetite’.

KOKEN:

My heart got busted quite soon after my

hymen. My heart laughed with the pleasure of love for the very first time. Who knew a heart could laugh?

KOKEN:

But afterwards, after our open faces had looked into each other with perfect understanding, not very long after that we turned our faces back to the world and when I caught his eye there, a sheath had been drawn between us and I felt my heart stop laughing and a burning shame travel up from that place where we had so recently collided to my face that snapped shut in an instant, causing my heart to fall down from its perch and smash to pieces on the ground.

TWIN B:

even sleep does not deliver you to me now
in my attempt to care less
it occurred to me you couldn't
take care
of mine
I gave it up carelessly
threw it to the wind
yet too cautious to speak of care
and
love matters
love's matter
which you carefully turned to dust
with me
so I'll stop
with what's left
and

<p>I'll take back what's mine</p> <p>this mouth's not big enough for the both of us</p> <p>remove your tongue</p> <p>and give mine back</p> <p>ripped from its roots to rasp around your nipples</p> <p>and flick along your cock as it lay against your belly sitting prettily lit.</p> <p>mine's</p> <p>lolling swollen</p> <p>dripping sticky</p> <p>gumming up my lips</p> <p>lying pink and fat</p> <p>stuffed in fit to choke</p> <p>with no way left to speak</p> <p>there is nothing left to say</p> <p>TWIN A: Tomorrow is Wednesday, promised Wednesday. Sir William will come. To put myself in his hands. I must try for sleep, the sooner he will come.</p>	<p><i>TWIN A violates the KOKEN. There is a rupture.</i></p>
--	--

VOICEOVER:

Wednesday: the cutting.

KOKEN:

It seems I am

‘...A creature maimed and marr’d
From very birth. A blot, a blur, a note
All out of tune in the world’s instrument...
‘There is no place for me in all the world’
You’ve stood my Edward,
‘Where all things else were foes; yet now
I’ll turn
My back upon you’⁵⁶

‘My last word to you is the same that I
have said during all these long, sad years -
love.’⁵⁷

TWIN A:

‘And yet – (Sir William) farewell,
farewell!’⁵⁸

KOKEN:

Says sadness to the fly – ‘Perhaps she’ll
die’ – say I to sadness – ‘Perhaps I’ll fly’ –
and sadness gives me one of his slow long
sighs and the breath it reaches all the way
to the back of my ribs and my lips come
unstuck just enough to release what is high
and tight in my chest, in my throat, in my
mouth and the roof comes off and sadness
escapes out the top where he hovers above
like he will til he comes back again and he
will (perhaps) – that’s what sadness is.

⁵⁶ Amy Levy, ‘A Minor Poet’.

⁵⁷ Eleanor Marx’ suicide note.

⁵⁸ Amy Levy, *ibid.*

I'm not afraid of the dark
or of hankering down with one less joy
because
lurking patiently
praying to be heard
there are moments when everything's
worth it:
the clacking of the knife on the cutting
board;
a rose full with the dew of Heaven;
the grass, damp, luminescent, just so;
putting myself in your hands.

TWIN A:

Scratch that itch. Gather your frailties and
cast them aside.

TWIN B:

Buckle up, we'll be hitting the road of the
brave in no time.

KOKEN: *(Singing)*

Singing is breathing, is thinking, is
speaking.

I could sing breath. See how it rises my
body, how it says I'm alive.

I could sing thinking. See the thoughts
behind my eyes that wrap me up, cut me
off and drown me.

Stitch me, singing, back up and home
again.

The sounds of morning recur, louder
this time, the KOKEN cannot help but hear
them calling her back.

SLIDE: 'RED LETTER DAY'

*From a distance the KOKEN watches a
repetition of the actions of the previous
Wednesday. Sir William cuts TWIN A and
TWIN B cuts herself.*

One stitch, two stitch, home stitch.

I could sing speaking. See how the words
form in my mouth, sit first on my tongue,
hesitant, quivering?

Bitten down, they bite back.

Words jump forward in my mouth, clamp
down, then watch them rush forth, sing
speaking, sing speech.

If I could sing about anything in the world
I'd sing about love.

It's been done before, lost before, 'what is
it with love? Why won't it stay home?'

If I could sing about anything in the world
I'd sing about singing and then I'd be done.

The KOKEN seals the letter and posts it.

There is a song, a musician accompanies.

	<i>There is an ending.</i>
--	----------------------------

Appendix 8: *PowerDuchess*

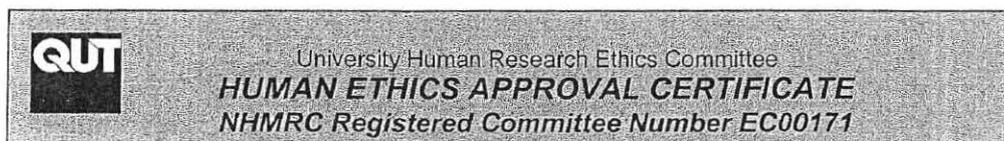
Appendix 8 is the second DVD at the end of this exegesis.

This is a sample page. Please note the image would not copy completely.



Rehearsals sit under the umbrella of social constructionism, that we are social being made up of the various influences in our lives, such as religion, culture, society, education, family, gender, etc. We are multiple selves, different depending on our environment and the people we mix with. When I look at you, under this construct, I know that you have every capacity to do what you need to do ... so there is no need to rescue, to cajole, to placate, but there is a need to encourage, to enthuse, to recognise, to hear, to accept, to have positive regard.

Appendix 9: Human Ethics Approval Certificate



Dear Ms Margi Brown Ash

A UHREC should clearly communicate its decisions about a research proposal to the researcher and the final decision to approve or reject a proposal should be communicated to the researcher in writing. This Approval Certificate serves as your written notice that the proposal has met the requirements of the *National Statement on Research Involving Human Participation* and has been approved on that basis. You are therefore authorized to commence activities as outlined in your proposal application, subject to any specific and standard conditions detailed in this document.

Within this Approval Certificate are:

- * Project Details
- * Participant Details
- * Conditions of Approval (Specific and Standard)

Researchers should report to the UHREC, via the Research Ethics Officer, events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project, including, but not limited to:

- (a) serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants; and
- (b) proposed significant changes in the conduct, the participant profile or the risks of the proposed research.

Further information regarding your ongoing obligations regarding human based research can be found via the Research Ethics website <http://www.research.qut.edu.au/ethics/> or by contacting the Research Ethics Coordinator on 07 3138 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au

If any details within this Approval Certificate are incorrect please advise Research Ethics within 10 days of receipt of this certificate.

Research Ethics Officer 
(on behalf of the Chairperson, UHREC)

Date

17/2/2009

Project Details

Category of Approval: Human non-HREC
Approved Until: 25/03/2011
Approval Number: 0800000048
Project Title: A mouthful of pins
Project Chief Investigator: Ms Margi Brown Ash
Other Project Staff/Students:
Dr David Fenton

Experiment Summary:

This research looks at collaborative practice, and how open collaboration embracing a social constructionist framework, can enhance the artist's creative life and personal life.

Participant Details

Participants:

3 x professional actors, a team of creatives, including Production Manager, Stage Manager, Publicity Officer, Lighting Designer, Visual Artist/Designer, Musicians, AV Designer and Assistant Designer

Location/s of the Work:

QUT

Appendix 10: Statutory Declaration

Please note: I have the original Statutory Declaration, but to fulfil the requirements of this exegesis I was required to cut and paste it into the document so that the page numbers conformed.

If you require the original I am very happy to provide a copy in PDF. Leanne Cronin, Personal Assistant to Dr Paul Makeham, in Performance Studies, Creative Industries, QUT, also has sighted and has a record of the original on file.

Margi Brown Ash

From: wash@wesresources.com.au

Subject: STATUTORY DECLARATION

Date: 20 April 2009 6:39:47 PM

To: 4CHANGE@IINET.NET.AU

STATUTORY DECLARATION

I, Margaret Brown Ash, of 434 Grandview Road, Pullenvale, 4069, in the State of Queensland do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

I refer to my exegesis '*A Mouthful of Pins: Questioning Constructionist Therapy Frameworks in Collaborative Theatre Making*'.

On November 11, 2008 at 434 Grandview Rd Pullenvale in Brisbane, my Macintosh laptop hard drive crashed.

Data on the hard drive were unable to be recovered by computer experts, despite two months of trying.

Many of the primary sources (primarily emails) that were lost have been recovered through friends and colleagues.

However, there are a very few primary sources in my exegesis that cannot be backed up with primary source, such as emails from Gone to Earth actors (page 45) which recorded private conversations with the actors July, 2008.

I declare that the documentation that is presented in my exegesis is true and correct and was documented and recorded before November 11, 2009.

AND I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of the provision of the *Oaths Act* of 1867

Declared at Brisbane

in the State of Queensland

This 29th day of March 2009

Before me:

Name: William Roderick ASH

Address: Level 31, Central Plaza One, 345 Queens Street, Brisbane, Qld, 4000

Title/Qualification: * Solicitor, Qld