



Behind the Words: The Art of Documentary and Verbatim Theatre

By

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Summary

Documentary Theatre, and its more recent iteration, Verbatim Theatre, has been a vital theatre form in the West since the early 20th Century, notable for its preoccupation with socio-political issues and its reliance on the actual words of those who witnessed or participated in a particular event or phenomenon. This thesis examines what puts the ‘art’ into Documentary and Verbatim Theatre, while considering its relationship with and roots in journalism. By exploring the influences on practitioners and how these impact their work, the question asked is: What position does the writer take in terms of placing themselves in the text and how does this influence the work? To inform this, it is asked: Is the writer speaking *for* or *with* the story-owners. Related questions include: To what extent does the writer have an outsider/insider positionality; what is the intersectionality of the writer with the subject; and what role does empathy play in the creation of such work? This critical reflection provides practitioners, participants, and the audience of Documentary and Verbatim Theatre with new ways of engaging with this arts practice.

To establish the form’s development from journalism to art, the historical influence of journalism is explored. Ethnographic methodology is also employed to analyse the subject positions and working methodologies of two of the great practitioners of this form, Anna Deavere Smith and Moisés Kaufman. Auto-ethnographic techniques are also utilised, drawing from the experience of working as personal assistant to Smith and participating in Kaufman’s professional training in Moment Work.

The practice component of the dissertation is the full-length Documentary Verbatim Theatre script, *The Death of Kings* (Keen, 2016). This work has been created as an example of a writer speaking *with* the story-owners and positioning themselves in the audience. The play focuses on the experiences of self-identified white gay men in Sydney, Australia and the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic by the gay community.

The result of this research is to offer an analytical framework for mapping out the influences on the writers of Documentary or Verbatim Theatre, demonstrating how they create an artistic element not found in documentary and journalism practice. By understanding how Documentary and Verbatim Theatre go beyond journalism, we are given the opportunity to better appreciate and more deeply query the nature of the truth being presented and the art inflecting and underpinning the stories told by the creators of these works.

Keywords: theatre, documentary, verbatim, journalism, ethnodrama, ethnographic, auto-ethnographic, arts practice based research, positionality, intertextuality, empathy, multiple narratives, storyteller, story-owner, bearing witness, HIV/AIDS.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. K. H.', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Signed

Date 24 August 2017

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DEDICATION

For my love Rod Duncan and my best friend and brother Steve J Spears, both of whom sent me on this journey. As they would say: Even a blind squirrel has to find a nut every once in a while.

And the last word will always belong to my dear friend Malcolm Leech. Malcolm your words are the heart of this work:

Life is a gift, and you must cherish and hold onto every moment as long as you can and never let go of it, just keep it there. And in order to do that, it's about protecting yourself. And make sure whatever you do in life is through an informed choice or an informed decision, so that you have the power, whatever path you go down, whatever road you take.

(Keen C. F., *The Death of Kings*, 2016, p. 69)

1. Introduction: Tracing the Words

“Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth.” (Aurelius, 2014)

1.1 Introduction

This thesis examines what puts the ‘art’ into Documentary Theatre (DT) and Verbatim Theatre (VT), while considering its relationship with and roots in journalism. The difference between DT and VT is subtle nevertheless it is important. DT focuses on a particular event and the story can be told from interviews, existing documents or Found Materials (FM) including, but not limited to, newspaper reports, diaries, letters or photographs. ¹ Montages can be created using various sources that are only limited by the available technology. As stated by Paget (2010), “Documentary theatre is... always event- and issue-centred in terms of its functions. It is, in Stourac and McCreery’s resonant phrase, part of a ‘broken tradition’ of activism that tends to resurface in difficult times” (p. 173). VT is derived from DT and is based on the spoken words of individual people. In its truest form the use of individuals’ words is exclusive and no other forms of material are used. Part of the reason for the newness of the form is that it relies on the use of recording devices to record exactly what is being said and the invention and low cost of the early cassette recorders are central to the early stages of VT. By exploring the influences on practitioners and how these impact their work, the question asked is: What position does the writer take in terms of placing themselves in the text and how does this influence the work? To inform this, it is asked: Is the writer speaking *for* or *with* the story-owners. Related questions include: To what extent does the writer have an outsider/insider positionality; what is the intersectionality of the writer with the subject; and what role does empathy play in the creation of such work?² This critical reflection provides practitioners, participants, and the audience of DT and VT with new ways of engaging with this arts practice. Providing a foundation to the development

¹ Found Materials (FM) are items that are already in existence before the play e.g. photographs, media releases, film or video footage, news articles, artefacts, court transcripts etc.

² The role of empathy is addressed in Chapter 5.3.

of DT and VT through journalism, Chapter 2 will take us from what is acknowledged as the first documentary pageant, *The Pageant of The Paterson Strike*, performed in 1913 (Dawson, 1999), through to the influence of journalism and this earlier form on current writers. The works of two prominent DT makers, Anna Deavere Smith and Moisés Kaufman, will be used as examples with strong links to journalism. Anna Deavere Smith is described as being able to “blur the lines between theatre and journalism, using text from real-life encounters to create gripping portraits” (2005). The work of Moisés Kaufman and Tectonic Theater Project is explored with particular reference to *The Laramie Project* (2001), which is a group-devised work that includes the performers as interviewers/characters. Their work is described as:

Unlike reality TV, the most common form of “reality-based” entertainment we consume in this country, documentary theater’s goal is to try and represent the truth of an event and in doing so, raise awareness, open up dialogue, and educate and inform an audience about the subject matter at hand. (Freeman, Kempeskie, & Barrow, 2013)

The work of Smith (b.1950) and Kaufman (b.1963) also demonstrates how the positionality of the storyteller³ affects the tale that is being shared. I contend that the questions of authenticity in DT and VT arise because audiences are still seeking clarification as to the artistry involved. Thus, in Chapters 3 and 4, by utilising an auto-ethnographic approach, I seek to identify the positioning of these creators of DT with respect to their contributors, to their audience, and to themselves as creators. Utilising auto-ethnography, multiple layers of understanding will be revealed by using both the personal and cultural influences on Kaufman and Smith’s work. My own experiences working for Smith and studying Kaufman’s ‘Moment Work’ will further allow me to garner insights into the larger culture that impacts on documentary and verbatim practice.

³ The term storyteller is used to encompass the writer or writers of a particular piece.

Smith has been chosen as an example of a solo creator with a particular process that guides her work. Smith's methods are the foundation of many of the current popular forms of DT and VT, particularly 'playback'.⁴ The use of the term DT re-entered the lexicon in the USA in the 1990s, with Anna Deavere Smith's one-woman shows. Premium examples of this are *Fires in the Mirror* (Smith, 1993) focusing on the New York City (NYC) *Crown Heights Riots*, and *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (Smith, 1994) about the Los Angeles (LA) Riots. Essentially Smith focuses on an event, for example the LA Riots in 1992, records interviews with individuals and then recreates these interviews while minutely mimicking the interviewee's voice and physical movements. This includes learning individuals' words verbatim, patterns of speech, cadence, and physical tics and then presenting these interviews on stage as 'chapters', usually with Smith playing all roles.

A well-known example of DT that has achieved both critical acclaim and, at the same time, brought focus to the issues facing the gay rights and anti-discrimination movements is Moisés Kaufman and Tectonic Theater Project's *The Laramie Project* (2001). For many individuals *The Laramie Project* may well be the only DT or VT play they have ever seen. There is no doubt that it is the most popular in terms of production and classroom study in the US and Australia. The background to *The Laramie Project* was the murder of an 'out', 21-year-old, gay student, Matthew Shepard. In 1998, Matthew Shepard was tied to a fence outside the small university town of Laramie, Wyoming, brutally beaten, robbed and left to die. He was discovered a day later and, after remaining in a coma for five days, died in hospital. The members of the Tectonic Theater Project (Tectonic) went into the town in the weeks following the murder and interviewed individuals about the crime and from these interviews created a DT play. *The Laramie Project* has been chosen as an example of group-

⁴ Playback Theatre is a form of improvisational theatre where group members or audience members relate their stories and then watch them being re-enacted.

devised work that evolves differently to single-author works. As described by Saldaña (1999), in this specific type of group work:

...theatre practitioners, through the nature of their training, possess several prerequisite skills for qualitative inquiry and thus ethnodrama and ethnotheatre, including (a) the ability to analyse characters and dramatic texts, which transfers to analysing interview transcripts and field notes for participant action and relationships; (b) enhanced emotional sensibility, enabling empathic understanding of participants' perspectives; scenographic literacy, which heightens the visual analysis of fieldwork settings, space, artifacts, participant dress, and so forth; and (d) an aptitude for storytelling, in its broadest sense, which transfers to the writing of engaging narratives and their presentation in performance. (p. 68)

Though a company such as Tectonic certainly has this range of skills, as well as members with experience as working journalists, I would argue that in order to achieve success they also need to be highly trained theatre practitioners who are willing to subjugate their creativity for the greater good of the work while leaving the ultimate decision-making to Kaufman. Chapter 3 will set out how Kaufman has been influenced by the work of Mary Overlie and his experiences with Talmudic scholarship.

While Smith and Kaufman fall under the label of Documentary or Ethnodrama Theatre (Saldaña J. , 2011),⁵ I refer to my own practice as Documentary Verbatim Theatre (DVT). DVT serves to both document and tell the story of the experience of individuals affected by the event. When combining both forms, I choose an event and examine the impact the event has had on individuals from differing sociological perspectives. By taking a

⁵ Saldaña (2006) describes Ethnodrama and Ethnodramatic Playwriting as a specific genre of dramatic literary writing where significant selections from a qualitative study's field notes and interview transcripts are carefully arranged, scripted, and staged for an audience to enhance their understanding of the participants' lives.

‘now and then’ perspective, the story-owners⁶ are given the opportunity to not only tell their experience of the event, but also re-tell the event through the eyes of their older self, thereby sharing what they have learnt from that experience.

The practice component of the dissertation is the full-length DVT play, *The Death of Kings* (Keen, 2016). This work has been created as an example of a writer speaking *with* the story-owners and positioning themselves in the audience. The techniques that I use and the effect of journalism will be discussed in Chapter 2, which focuses on the processes and creation of this work. My experience as a journalist in radio, television and in print has provided me with valuable tools that have enabled me to facilitate interviews with the story-owners. The capacity to see events within the wider context of current affairs has enabled me to identify issues that have currency but have not been explored to their full potential. It is the combination of current affairs and drama that offers the opportunity to present a reflective narrative that connects the audience to an event in a way that is not otherwise available. When DT concentrates on a disaster, tragedy or scandal, it allows us to look further into the heart of these events. The role of multiple narratives is also reflected in my practice with the use of FM.

The Death of Kings (ibid) focuses on the experiences of self-identified white gay men in Sydney, Australia and the response to the HIV/ AIDS epidemic by the gay community. The toll of being surrounded by constant death is explored, along with stories of survival, while considering the nobility of individuals facing the devastation of their community. While many people over the age of 40 are aware of the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, many younger people are not aware of the huge impact it had on Australian society. While this work is an opportunity to record and share these stories with a wider community, it is also envisaged that a diverse picture of the times, as perceived by members of the Sydney

⁶ The story-owner is the person relating the story of their experience of an event.

GLBTIQA (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Ally) community, will be created. The processes used in the creation of this work will be examined in Chapter 5.

1.2 Problem/Gap/Methodology

While DT has been in existence for over a century, it is still a matter of discussion as to how much the writer, writers or creators contribute to the final product. Is it simply that the creators or writers are editors with an instinct for a good story or is there a traceable development of the form that provides and supports the argument that it has gone beyond being a craft and become an art? I believe that the influences on the life of the storyteller are key to understanding the artistry. What sets DT and VT apart from other forms of playwriting is the starting point is another person's words and experiences. This is where the confusion about the difference between documentaries, journalism and the art of the storyteller occurs. The DT and VT playwright is creating a story from what is essentially inflexible text. While there are opportunities to edit sections of text it is the placement of the text which creates the rhythm of the piece as does the choice and placement of FM. The choices made are additional layers to the original words. Using the analogy of a symphony orchestra this is not a single instrument being played as while there are solos there are also many instruments being played at the same time. As the playwright/conductor we act as both servant to the text and leader to the play's tempo and shape. As servant we must stay true to the story-owner. As leader we place our own experiences in the choices that are made. Just as with the conductor in DT and VT this is an enigmatic role which will be broken down by examining the work of other playwrights in Chapter 3, 4 and 5 (Issokson, 2011).

Both DT and VT are ideal for the telling of stories shaped by current events (Fischer A. , 2011). The responsibility then entrusted to the creators is that the artistic work generated is both accurate and authentic. The use of the actual words of individuals who experience an event, a characteristic feature of the form, can offer perspectives undistorted by the

mainstream or so-called ‘alternative’ media. Ellis and Bochner (2003) argue that it is vital for the creators of DT and VT to understand “the viewer’s perceptions as [sic] important as the artist’s intentions...The project of research whether ...a play, a dance or a painting was not something to be received but something to be used, not a conclusion but a turn in conversation” (p. 507). In DVT, the form goes on to include the role of the storyteller bearing witness to the story-owner. Through the act of bearing witness, the writer becomes a memory keeper for those who have been alone in their personal trauma as “[t]here is no agony like bearing an untold story inside you” (Hurstun, 2006, p. 175). By becoming the listener to these stories, the storyteller provides a blank page and also takes the responsibility of writing the experience to be shared, often for the first time, publicly. Unlike the dynamics of a confessional or a psychiatrist’s couch, in this capacity, I am asking individuals to trust me with the story and to allow me to share it with others. Thus:

the listener of trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his [sic] very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma himself...The listener therefore has to be at the same time a witness to the trauma witness and a witness to himself. (Felman & Laub, 1992, p. 26)

This ties directly into the discussion of how much the storyteller contributes to the final product.

Whilst much has been written about DT and VT, there is still confusion with perceptions of the form. There are excellent guides, including Brown’s (2010) *Verbatim: Staging Memory and Community* and Tectonic’s online resource guides. However, these do not detail the influences or positioning of the creators or the intended impact on the audience. When an audience attends a DT or VT production, they understand that some or all of the words are from interviews or FM, but they do not know how that reflects the contributions of

the writer/creators. The audience might reasonably ask, ‘Is all that is required to create this form good interview and editing techniques, basic journalism techniques, and a good instinct for a story?’ In responding to this question, I argue that the creation of these works is far more complicated and intricate than simple journalism. This question can be addressed by showing the impacts that are both personal and cultural.

Just as the writer of fiction decides what information is important for the audience to know, the same applies to the writer who is using verbatim techniques. Decisions are made as to which sentences, paragraphs etc. will best convey the story that the creator wants the audience to receive. While these details may not be of importance to an audience that is not tuned in to the larger historical context of the story or aware of the predominately socially progressive stance of this form, my view is that it is the responsibility of the writer to render accessible both the information itself and the process so as to respond to questions of veracity by those interested. By providing this transparency, the writer serves to clarify the truth being presented in a particular DT or VT production. It is also important to the larger practice to be able to identify these influences and positions as while an audience is being told to expect ‘verbatim’ transcripts they are, with the exception of Anna Deavere Smith’s work, receiving a ‘verbatim’ that has been greatly mediated and influenced by the writer or creators. This is particularly the case with Kaufman and *The Laramie Project* (2001), where what is presented to the audience is the result of a conscious choice, just as what is not chosen or used is excluded with equal deliberation.

Ellis and Bochner (2000) describe and define auto-ethnography as “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (p. 733). As the researcher and writer of the play, *The Death of Kings*, and this thesis, my subject position follows Denzin and Lincoln’s (2007) idea of a “socially constructed nature of reality” that acknowledges the “intimate relationship

between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints which shape inquiry” (p. 8). There are few things more personal than death and dying and the processes of grief and survival. Working in theatre, journalism, NGOs and community and social justice forums for more than 30 years has provided me with opportunities to interact with many of the individuals and subjects discussed in this thesis and the play. The resultant auto-ethnographic approach to this work reflects my desire to be “producing meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 733). Saldaña (2003) echoes this understanding that both the qualitative researcher and the playwright are similar in their desire “to create a unique, engaging, and insightful text about the human condition” (p. 8). By seeking to identify the influences on the writers of DT and VT, a deeper understanding of the form is sought.

The auto-ethnographic methodology enables authors to hear their own voices and as it is employed in this thesis auto-ethnographic methodology provides the opportunity for me to hear my own voice and thus make my work more transparent and rigorous. Wall (2006) states:

auto-ethnography is an emerging qualitative research method that allows the author to write in a highly personalised style, drawing on his or her experience to extend understanding...the intent of auto-ethnography is to acknowledge the inextricable link between the personal and the cultural and to make room for non-traditional forms of enquiry and expression. (p. 146)

Having worked for Anna Deavere Smith and participated in Moment Work training with Kaufman’s Tectonic Theater Project, I am similarly able to apply an auto-ethnographic methodology to their work. As American philosopher Richard Rorty observes:

Human beings, like computers, dogs, and works of art, can be described in lots of different ways, depending on what you want to do with them – take them

apart for repairs, re-educate them, play with them, admire them, and so on for a long list of alternative purposes. None of these descriptions is closer to what human beings really are than any of the others. Descriptions are tools invented for particular purposes, not attempts to describe things as they are in themselves, apart from any such purposes. (Rorty, 1998, p. 14)

Having had the opportunity to play with and observe Smith and Tectonic Theater Project, I am able to apply these auto-ethnographic experiences to this study, one grounded not in rehashing what we know about these creators, but seeking to uncover and understand how and why they create what they create. Through this process, I am then able to turn the mirror on to myself, employing a fully-fledged auto-ethnographic methodology.

By documenting the process of the creation of the practice component of this thesis, *The Death of Kings* (Keen C. F., 2016), the methodology operates on the two levels set out by Holt (2003) by creating “a genre of writing and research that connects the personal to the cultural, placing the self within a social context” (p. 18). This methodology, which places the creative work, the personal, and the social context into productive conversation, also creates possibilities for a greater fluidity of language than is found in traditional academic writing, making it more accessible to a wider readership. *The Death of Kings* (2016) seeks to understand the reality of a situation as lived by its participants. A goal of this research is to record unknown oral histories and reactions to the events of this time and then to utilise the experiences of these individuals to create a novel record of events; as such, this research also contributes to existing academic knowledge through oral histories of this period. Following from Wilkinson (2007), this research involves “the use of contextualized and vernacular language, the promotion of empathy, the presence of aesthetic form and the personal signature of the research/writer” (p. 30), all of which collectively support this inquiry.

The result of this research is to offer an analytical framework for mapping out the influences on the writer of DT, VT and the related forms, demonstrating how they create an artistic element not found in journalism practice. By understanding how these forms go beyond journalism, we are given the opportunity to better appreciate and more deeply query the nature of the art being presented and the art transforming and underpinning the stories told by the creators of these works. By providing this transparency, we serve to clarify an understanding of truth as it “both acknowledges a positivist faith in empirical reality and underscores an epistemological crisis in knowing truth” (Martin C. , 2013, p. 14). DT and VT can show this ‘truth’ in a way that offers an alternative voice to mainstream news reporting, while also providing audiences with the opportunity to connect with and experience the authenticity of the storyteller.

1.3 Personal Motivation

As a former journalist, playwright and author of several works of DVT, my initial interest in the form began in 1995 when I started working for Anna Deavere Smith, who is considered to be one of the most important creators of DT in the United States. I was also fortunate to have been able to spend from 1996 to 2000 in San Francisco and Palo Alto during the period of the Initial Public Offerings for Amazon, Yahoo, Netscape, and other internet giants of today. During this boom time in Silicon Valley, I became increasingly interested in how individuals were turning away from mainstream media and seeking alternative sources for their news. In current times, we can clearly see that sources that were traditionally not seen as reliable are now used by many as the basis for understanding what is occurring in society. Martin (2013) illuminates this point in *Theatre of the Real*:

User-generated sites such as Facebook and YouTube feature images and videos posted by ‘real people’ who want to share their experiences, and sometimes even their most intimate selves, with so-called ‘friends’ as well as

with the general public. Add to this the professional videos and images made by a host of agencies, organizations, institutions, and governments, and the result is an unregulated mix of homemade and professional performances with different ideological aims served up on the same platforms. (p. 14)

With widespread access to technology allowing anyone with a mobile phone to broadcast what they see, this glut of information has not necessarily increased access to reliable information.

This phenomenon makes it even more difficult to resurrect the recent historical past and to present and interrogate it. This was especially true of the subject explored in the practice component of this thesis, the experience of self-identified gay men in Sydney at the time the AIDS/HIV epidemic hit the gay community in the mid-1980s. My personal connection with that world, as well as my family history, has led me to a desire to bear witness and understand how some individuals have the capacity to survive great tragedy. This has taken me on a path on which I have had to make sense of stories with which I empathise, even though they are not my own. This empathy, or what I describe as ‘Tags of Empathy’ or TOE, means that the artwork is not just the story told by the story-owner, but is also my experience of the story as storyteller. As Holloday (2005) observes, this leads to an artistic and academic “interactive process in which she [sic] tries to untangle and make reflexive sense of her own presence and role in the research” (p. 134). This applies equally whether wearing either the hat of a writer or of an academic. Making sense of the role of the writer in DT and VT is thus at the heart of this study.

1.4 Influences: We Ourselves⁷

As writers of DVT, DT or VT, we bring our own life experiences to the work which, in turn, is what transforms it from documentary to art. This starts with the incident that is the focus of the work. The storyteller develops a relationship with the story-owners. Once the storyteller has completed the interviews and they have been approved by the story-owners the storyteller takes control of the work and begins to craft it. It is at this point Kaufman's experiences of the Yeshiva, his sexuality, and his sense of isolation as the 'other' begin to feed into his work, as does Smith's reflections on race, community and social constructs. This section looks at the influences that shape my choice of subject and the way I approach my work.

I am particularly sensitive to the constructs embodied in many of the ideas of Greek philosopher Epictetus. In particular, my approach to writing leans on his theory of the 'purple thread'. While Epictetus proposes that people who 'fit in' are the white threads of a toga, I think that, as individuals, we are the toga and we each have a "purple thread" in us, a unique story to tell. In his Discourses, Epictetus describes the purple thread as that small and shining part that makes the rest appear graceful and beautiful:

Go then and act your tragedy, but I will not do so. You ask me, 'Why?' I answer, 'Because you count yourself to be but an ordinary thread in the tunic.' What follows then? You ought to think how you can be like other men, just as one thread does not wish to have something special to distinguish it from the rest: but I want to be the purple, that touch of brilliance which gives distinction and beauty to the rest. Why then do you say to me, 'Make yourself like unto the many?' If I do that, I shall no longer be the purple. (1994)

⁷ Sinn Féin is the oldest political movement in Ireland. It takes its name from the Irish Gaelic expression for 'We Ourselves'. Since being founded in 1905, Irish Republicans have worked for the right of Irish people as a whole to attain national self-determination (Sinn Féin Online, 2004).

I see us all as wearing Epictetus' toga. It is a utilitarian garment and I believe my role as a writer of DVT is to pull out the 'purple thread' of people's lives through their stories – the something that makes them special. Through these 'purple threads', I seek to bear witness and become a memory keeper for those who have been alone in their personal trauma.

While my positionality as an activist in the fight against HIV/AIDS gives me an entrée into the world of HIV/AIDS, I am not part of the story contained in *The Death of Kings*, as this work looks at a specific aspect of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Australia as experienced by self-identified white gay men. By setting out the processes of research, ethics, interviews and the development of the play, this thesis will serve as a guide for others who wish to explore DVT and this DVT play. A major motivation for writing the play was to share with a young audience how the 'old guard' reacted to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The work achieves this by showing the toll the epidemic took on the community and the sacrifices made. *The Death of Kings* shows the heart and soul of the times, without lecturing. In his book *A Whole New Mind*, Dan Pink (2005) observes:

We compress years of experience, thought, and emotion into a few compact narratives that we convey to others and tell ourselves...But personal narrative has become more prevalent, and perhaps more urgent... many of us are freer to seek a deeper understanding of ourselves and our purpose. (p. 100)

My personal sphere and much of my working life have been structured by a desire to bear witness to individual lives, particularly those affected by trauma. I am inspired by the capacity we have as human beings to survive the most terrible of situations, often with grace and humour. The greatest inspiration for this was my mother, Josephine. In 1929, she was born of a French Jewish mother and Irish Catholic father in Quetta, then part of India, prior to partition. Shortly before Josephine's first birthday, it was discovered by members of the British garrison that my grandfather was a member of the Sinn Féin. He did not live to see

her first birthday. My widowed grandmother took the children to France and scattered them among convent schools. It was easier to be Catholic than it was to be Jewish.

My mother would tell the story that at the age of 12 it was the custom of the convent school, when girls reached maturity, to gather the girls in the school courtyard, lay them on the central stone and remove their tonsils with just a local anaesthetic (a needle that we experience at the dentist today). The story of the tonsils is the one she loved to share as a badge of survival. It was her telling of this story with drama and humour that made me aware, at a young age, that even the most horrible of things can be survived and, as in this case, be told with humour and pathos. It also gave me a new understanding of what it was to be a survivor. The French family was wealthy and, though practising Catholics, they were Jewish on the female line of the family. On June 14, 1940, the Nazis entered Paris and my mother and her family escaped France to England, penniless but alive.

I remember as a child the wonderful stories my maternal grandmother and mother would tell of love, betrayal, murder, death and bitterness; however, it was always punctuated with a form of guillotine humour, something that seems to be a key aspect for survivors of tragedy. My mother escaped from her harsh reality into films, literature and theatre, and her favourite characters in fiction were Jean Val Jean (Hugo, 2015) and Scarlet O'Hara (Mitchell, 2014). She would often say that people were at their best 'when their backs were against the wall and that this was when true character was shown'. I have instinctively been drawn to those 'whose backs are against the wall' and this is followed through in my first major DVT work, which focused on the unknown survivors and life heroes of 9/11.

The other great influence on my life has been my father. Harry Keen started as a copy boy for media mogul Sir Frank Packer, at the age of 15. His work and championship of journalistic ethics inspired me to follow him into journalism. I believe my own experience as a journalist in radio, television and in print has been an invaluable tool enabling me to

facilitate interviews with the story-owners. By being very aware of current affairs, I have been able to identify issues that have currency but have not been explored to their full potential. It is through the combination of current affairs and drama that DVT provides the opportunity to present a reflective narrative connecting the audience to an event in a way that is not otherwise available. The convergence of news in the digital age means that journalism can rarely connect to an audience, but when DT, VT or DVT concentrates on a disaster, tragedy or scandal, we are able to look further into the heart of these events.

The creative writing process is a very personal one. As creators of DT and VT, we owe the story-owners and the audience a transparency not always evident or available in more traditional forms of theatre. My pathway into DVT is having worked for one of the foremost individuals in the field, Anna Deavere Smith, and it is also very personal in my friendship with the Australian playwright Spears (1977), author of *The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin*. In 2007, Spears died from cancer. A few weeks before he died, he encouraged me to start writing again and asked me to fulfil a lifelong dream of his to live and write at the Chelsea Hotel in New York City.

In the 1980s, Spears and I had both despaired over the death and illness of so many of the creatives in Australian theatre due to HIV/AIDS. The list of those involved in the arts that had died as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic reads like a 'Who's Who' of Australian theatre and the arts. Like many, I had given up creative work to fight for this and other causes. Spears wanted me to see if there was a space for theatre in my future. So, with his words in my heart I headed for New York and saw plays that were uplifting, plays that were average, and plays that made you wonder who had put the money up and why. While in New York, I talked with a friend about her walk from her office by the World Trade Centre to her home in Queens on 9/11 and her humour and story connected for me the ideas of survival. I returned to the Chelsea and started writing down notes and ideas.

My first full-length DVT work looked at the events of 9/11. For *A Beautiful Day aka Windows on the World* (Keen, 2017), 9/11 provided the background to stories of friendship and survival and became the reference point that allowed me to discover more about the people whose lives had been affected. In *Discourse, War and Terrorism*, Hodges and Nilep (2007) observe that much VT looks at the idea that “fear” is a major issue underlying many of the discourses on war and terrorism. I agree and would say that VT helps us to explore narratives around trauma and allows us to entwine these narratives to make compelling drama. With *The Death of Kings*, I am again looking at a war, a fight for survival, the terror that infected communities and the acts of courage and friendship shown by both survivors and victims. While at The Chelsea, I also started thinking about the type of writing I wanted to do and realised that a combination of DT and VT – DVT – was the answer. It was an opportunity to pursue my passion for bearing witness, my desire to create, and my admiration of the human spirit when faced by horrendous situations – in other words, survival. In 2010, I returned to New York and started three weeks of intensive interviews for *A Beautiful Day aka Windows on the World* (Keen C. F., 2017).⁸

In late 2010, while I was working on the edit of *A Beautiful Day aka Windows on the World*, the dramaturg, a self-identified gay man in his 50s, and I discussed how many of the first responders and residents in and around the Twin Towers were now dying from ‘weird’ cancers and the lack of US government support for them. He commented that the stories of the first Australian HIV/AIDS sufferers were coming close to also being lost. I realised that it had been almost 30 years since the first people started to survive and now they were beginning to succumb to the radical treatments they had received. With advancements in

⁸ *A Beautiful Day aka Windows on the World* (Keen C. F., 2017) was a semi-finalist in the Eugene O’Neill Playwrights Conference 2012 and featured at Noah Wylie’s Blank Theatre Company in Los Angeles for the ten-year anniversary of 9/11.

treatments in Australia, what was once a potentially fatal virus is now a chronic ailment. It was this conversation that led me to develop the idea that was to become *The Death of Kings*.

1.5 Thesis Structure

By understanding this positioning, along with the subjectivity and influences on two well-known creators of DT, Smith and Kaufman, as well as exploring the creative process employed for the piece created specifically for this investigation, it will be possible to identify and appreciate the ‘art’ in DT and consequently VT. As this is an auto-ethnographic investigation and I have experience with both Smith and Kaufman, they have been chosen over other writers. They also represent the stronger influence of documentary rather than verbatim theatre in my own practice. This examination of how our subject positions, research and writing methods overlap and differ will facilitate an understanding of why our stories are being told in the way they are, who is being represented, what the ‘truth’ is for the creator, and what the intended ‘truth’ is for the audience.

DT and VT’s development from journalism to art is explored in the following chapter. Chapters 3 and 4 respond to those foundational practices by employing an ethnographic methodology to analyse the subject positions and working methodologies of two of the great practitioners of this form, Anna Deavere Smith and Moisés Kaufman. Auto-ethnographic techniques are also utilised, drawing from the experience of working as personal assistant to Smith and participating in Kaufman’s professional training in Moment Work. These two chapters, in turn, will provide key points of reference and departure in the final chapter which sets out my practice by investigating the process behind the creative project, the full-length script of my DVT play, *The Death of Kings* (Keen C. F., 2016).

2. Theatre Meets Journalism

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an historical perspective on the influence of journalism and the Labour movement on the creation and practice of DT and later, with the advent of recording technology, of VT. In 2002, Australian journalist Chris Masters stated, “I have come to the view that in order to reach the deeper secrets we may have to invent a new form that converges [sic] current affairs and drama” (p. 208). Political theorist Ober’s (1989) observations about the necessity of interactivity as a cornerstone of free speech, drawn from his work on ancient Athens, would appear to remain relevant today:

Freedom of public address led them to recognize a more generalized freedom of speech (*parrhesia*) which implied the necessity and validity of individual freedom of thought. If one was to be free to offer one's advice to the Assembly, one must be free to think through that advice and to discuss it informally with others. (p. 296)

Ergo public communication and freedom of speech are essential to argument and debate. With an expanding media, many now see social media as both the defender and the destroyer of truth and the prime source of fake news in the twenty-first century. In his discussion of concepts of freedom and democracy, political scientist Beetham (2004) argues:

If people are to have any influence or control over public decision making and decision makers, they must be free to communicate and associate with one another, to receive accurate information and express divergent opinions, to enjoy freedom of movement, and to be free from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment. (p. 61)

If knowledge and truth are the foundation of a free democracy (and the belief among many is that journalism fails to provide this), then DT and VT is the place where a larger picture of an event can be found. Subsequent chapters will elaborate on this by looking at examples of

current practice to illustrate the role of the contemporary writer who also acts as a social commentator and historian, and as influenced by journalism and cultural workers' movements.

As previously noted, I first became interested in the form in 1995 when I started working for Anna Deavere Smith. Even at that time, it was clear that individuals were increasingly seeking out alternative news sources. On reflection, we can now see how the development of social media during those years led the public to turn towards other voices for their news. We can also see that sources that were traditionally seen as unreliable, for example The Comedy Channel's *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* (Stewart, 1999-2015), have subsequently become staple sources of news and information in the post Web 2.0 world. The passion of broadcasters such as Stewart appears to have converted many in a younger demographic to the new breed of journalism, who increasingly turn to it for their news (Cogan & Kelso, 2009). In an article for *Rolling Stone*, news anchor Maureen Dowd (2006) writes, "A recent Indiana University study found that *The Daily Show* was just as substantive as network television news during the 2004 election....They faked it until they made it. Now they may truly be the most trusted names in news". This transfer of audiences to alternative media sources can also be seen to have emerged alongside the rising popularity of VT.

DT and VT are ideal for the telling of stories shaped by current events (Fischer, 2011). They use the actual words of individuals who experience an event and can offer perspectives that are "not the crudely distilled version of TV news, not the legalese of the official inquiry, but something more closely resembling what people near the heart of the matter might want recorded...as history" (Brown P. , 1995, p. 459). Martin (2006) sets out six major functions in the historical role of DVT that I find valid and useful:

- 1) To reopen trials in order to critique justice...;
- 2) To create additional historical accounts...;
- 3) To reconstruct an event...;
- 4) To intermingle

autobiography with history...; 5) To critique the operations of both documentary and fiction...; 6) To elaborate the oral culture of theatre in which gestures, mannerisms, and attitudes are passed and replicated via technology. (pp. 12-13)

Paget (2010) speaks more directly to DVT's unique function with his observation that, "Documentary theatre is... fundamentally discontinuous in terms of its history and its characteristic forms, but always event and issue-centred in terms of its functions" (p. 173). In 2017, as the world is facing challenges to democratic models along with shifts to other forms of communication, this exploration of DT and VT is particularly timely as people increasingly seek out the larger story behind current affairs and recent history by turning away from traditional news sources to forms of social media such as Twitter.

2.2 In the Beginning

The relationship between journalistic techniques and DT and VT can be observed in what is acknowledged as the first documentary pageant, performed in 1913. This was then followed in 1918 by the rise of agit-prop theatre in the Soviet Republic, which led to the development of the Living Newspaper and the Federal Theatre Project in the US (Dawson, 1999). While there are earlier examples of DT, such as Büchner's *Danton's Death*, written in 1835, the major changes that influenced and led to the development of this form in the early twentieth century were the rise of the Labour movement, as well as F. T. Marinetti's *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism*, published in *Le Figaro* in 1909. The manifesto was a dismissal of the sentimentalism of the Romantic Movement and claimed that "Up to now literature has exalted a pensive immobility, ecstasy, and sleep. We intend to exalt aggressive action, a feverish insomnia, the racer's stride, the mortal leap, the punch and the slap" (Marinetti, 2014; Pioch, 2002). What the manifesto sought to do was to free artists from conforming to current and past practices and rupture the status quo (Marinetti, 2014; Pioch,

2002). The Futurists believed that the divide between art and life needed to be bridged and a ‘natural’ alliance was created with the political movements that represented rebellion:

Marinetti’s concept of *arte-azione* (“art-as-action”) gave Futurist aesthetics a strongly performative quality. This became most conspicuous in the political action theatre performed in streets or public buildings, but it also applies to the *serate*⁹, which Marinetti regarded as an effective medium to influence the Italian spirit. (Berghaus, 2006, p. 254)

As the manifesto gained currency, the Futurists developed a performance style for their political protests and demonstrations, often choosing to stage them in theatrical venues. Berghaus asserts that as news of these activities spread from Europe to the US, the Futurist form of ‘action theatre’ was increasingly discussed within labour movements and artistic circles (p. 254). This was solidified in the US with the New York Armory Show of 1913 that connected modernism with revolution and saw some journalists become artists, including John Reed, a journalist with socialist political magazine *The Masses* who would later become well known as the author of the 1919 book *Ten Days That Shook The World*. In the few years prior to World War I, America was “flooded with ideas that had been developing in Europe for more than a century” (Rosenstone, 1979, p. 131) and DT was born in the wake of the 1913 New York Armory Show.

The dramatic presentation of the *Pageant of the Paterson Strike* (Reed & Boyd, 1913) saw the alliance between modern art and labour radicalism given voice. The Armory Show and the *Pageant of the Paterson Strike* helped form a new world view for Americans (McNamarra, et al., 1971). This was achieved by opening the minds of academics, artists, politicians and workers to the possibility of an alternative voice and form of expression for their ideas, beliefs and causes. Dawson (1999) observes that Reed’s play “defines

⁹ A political meeting with an artistic format (Berghaus, 2006, p. 254).

documentary theatre as a dramatic representation of societal forces using a close re-examination of events, individuals, or situations” (p. xii). This demonstration of societal forces in action is at the heart of DT in the US.

The story of how the *Pageant* came about is intriguing and involves many colourful players, including Mabel Dodge, who was one of the leading art patrons of the day. Dodge hosted regular salons in her New York apartment. The salons were created “just when a revolt against business, industrialism and narrow definitions of human potential was taking middle class people from small towns and provincial cities to major urban centers” (Rosenstone, 1979, p. 4). It was at one of Dodge’s salons in early 1913 that William ‘Big Bill’ Haywood, leader of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), joined the discussion about artists and the revolution. While at first he caused rancour by announcing that “artists ‘thought themselves too special and separate’” (Dodge, 1936, p. 89), he caused outrage when he went on to say that, in the new world envisioned by the IWW, there would be plenty of opportunity for people to practise art in their leisure time. This did not go down well with the bohemians and artists in attendance. Sculptor Janet Scudder informed Haywood that it took many years to become an artist and, following intense discussion, Haywood was swayed by her stance (ibid, p. 91).

Attending Mabel Dodge’s salon for the first time with his union leader friend Haywood, was John Reed, a recent graduate of Harvard University, young journalist, poet and revolutionary activist. Although he is best known for his book, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (Reed, 2007) and the portrayal of him by Warren Beatty (1981) in the film *Reds*, which has its own interesting DT touches, such as the use of real-life witnesses of events depicted in the film providing oral testimonies, this research will focus on Reed’s work on the *Pageant*. On leaving Harvard, he had become a contributor to *The Masses*, “a monthly magazine devoted to the interests of the people” (The Masses, 2012). In early 1913, Reed was

sent by *The Masses* to cover the workers' strike at the Paterson Silk Factory, New Jersey. The Paterson Strike occurred as a protest against changes that were being imposed: instead of running two looms the workers were being asked to run four looms at a time (McNamarra, et al., 1971) and there were concerns that this would cause unemployment and a reduction in wages. Haywood, along with other members of the IWW, ran the strike. To imagine the environment of the New Jersey mills and factories, one can simply draw on Fitzgerald's description of the valley of ashes, in 1922, between New York City and West Egg:

This is a valley of ashes – a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of ash-grey men, who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. Occasionally a line of grey cars crawls along an invisible track, gives out a ghastly creak, and comes to rest, and immediately the ash-grey men swarm up with leaden spades and stir up an impenetrable cloud, which screens their obscure operations from your sight. (1995, p. 26)

Further reflecting this bleak environment, the IWW, or 'Wobblies' as they were also known, were renowned for their love of protest songs. Such songs added drama to strikes as workers burst into song whenever the opportunity arose. The songs sought to be both political and inspirational for the unionists and the workers.

While covering the Paterson Strike for *The Masses*, Reed was arrested for speaking out for the striking workers. While in gaol, he met Haywood and the two became friends. Reed also became something of a hero to the gaoled 'Wobblies' as he would lead the striking workers in rousing renditions of the 'Marseillaise' using the words of the song to the tunes of Harvard rallying songs (Green, 1988). The new friends, Reed and Haywood, met Mabel Dodge at her salon in late April 1913, and it was at this salon that Dodge initially suggested a

pageant to bring the strikers' plight to the attention of New Yorkers. Reed formed a committee to devise the event that included Dodge, Haywood and Reed's friends from Harvard, Walter Lippmann and John Sloan (Green, 1988). On May 19, Reed returned to Paterson with Dodge, Lippmann and Sloan to consult with the strikers about which episodes of the strike should be included in the *Pageant*. Initially, 200 workers were going to participate; however, with less than three weeks to go before the performance, this number swelled to 1200.

On the day of the performance, Haywood described 1200 strikers crossing over from New Jersey into New York City and marching up to Madison Square Garden (McNamarra, et al., 1971). This was not the Madison Square Garden of today; in 1913 it was an impressive Renaissance-style building, with an amphitheatre used for political rallies, and it was large and open enough to suit the scale of the *Pageant*. The Garden was transformed for the *Pageant* by a 200-foot-long stage and a huge backdrop that represented the mills. The performers did not limit themselves to the stage. During *Episode Three*, the featured funeral procession moved through the audience, which was composed of 15,000 fellow workers from Paterson and New York (Green, 1988). Dodge (1936) wrote in *Movers and Shakers*:

For a few electric moments there was a terrible unity between all of these people. They were one: the workers who had come to show their comrades what was happening across the river and the workers who had come to see it. I have never felt such a pulsing vibration in any gathering before or since. (p. 61)

The *Pageant* did not have a script, but rather consisted of a series of episodes with scenarios that had been chosen by the *Pageant* committee and the striking workers. Reed had rehearsed the strikers but essentially they used their own words. IWW strike leaders also recreated their own speeches at specific points in the program. The scene was set in the official program of

the *Pageant* with separate episodes: The Mills Alive – The Workers Dead; The Workers Begin to Think; The Mills Dead – The Workers Alive; The Funeral of Modestino; Mass Meeting at Haledon; May Day; Sending Away the Children; and Strike Meeting in Turn Hall (McNamarra, et al., 1971).

The *Pageant* was lauded by reviewers from the socialist newspapers, but was condemned by more conservative publications such as the *New York Times* (Kornbluth, 1964). Rather than raising money for the striking workers, it incurred a loss, with the costs involved outweighing any money made by ticket sales for the actual performance. The last words on the *Pageant* belong to the IWW's Elizabeth Gurley Flynn who, in a speech on the strike and *Pageant* given at the New York Civic Club Forum on 31 January, 1914, said, "Bread was the need of the hour, and bread was not forthcoming even from the most beautiful and realistic example of art that has ever been put on stage in the last half century" (McNamarra, et al., 1971, p. 70). At this time, the connection made between the artistic communities, the striking workers and the IWW broke down, as the artists retreated to their salons with the satisfaction of a performance delivered and the workers and union were left with depleted finances.

What Reed did as a journalist and dramatist was bring together all the elements of the story and storytellers, binding them together in the telling of the *Pageant*, to create a remarkable moment in the development of DT. Some scholars suggest that the *Pageant*, with its dramatic re-enactments and Robert Edmund Jones' huge sets, anticipated 'epic theatre' and 'theatre of fact' as devised and then inspired by Piscator and Brecht (Stourac & McCreery, 1986). The use of the pageant form of labour protest was repeated in the US, UK and Australia for many years to come. It should also be remembered that the bringing together of Dodge and Jones, the journalist Reed, and Jig Cook, Susan Glaspell, Neith Boyce and Hutchins Hapgood inspired the formation of the Provincetown Players, which led to the

‘discovery’ of Eugene O’Neill and the premiering of six of his works along with works by Reed. Another consequence of the *Pageant* was to give hope to Provincetown Playhouse and Players founders Cook and Glaspell because it provided a model in which “theatre could not only serve as entertainment but as a means to regain the deep connection to community” (McLaughlin, 2006).

2.3 The Living Newspaper

The Great War of 1914–1918 significantly influenced the direction and style of entertainment in Europe and the US with a focus on nationalism and escapism as countries increasingly used entertainment to extend ideological and cultural wars. Turning away from familiar and popular international productions by their new enemies, theatres focused on home grown material, often rewriting classics to fit the jingoistic rally cries of their ‘side’ (Krivanec, 2015). Towards the end of the war, the Futurists lost favour by aligning themselves with the Fascists and many artists distanced themselves from the movement because of this. However, in 1917 this was not the case in the new Soviet Republic where “inspiration was drawn from the futurist interest in music hall and variety theatre” (Stourac & McCreery, 1986, p. 16) and the biomechanics work of directors Vsevolod Meyerhold, Sergei Eisenstein, Mikhail Pustynin and Nikolai Foregger (Leach, 1994). By the time of the 1917 Russian Revolution, the followers of Futurism in the Soviet Republic moved to the more politically acceptable values of avant-garde Constructivism. For the Constructivists, art had to have social meaning and practical application with accessibility for the masses. The influence of Meyerhold was far reaching. Joan Littlewood and Ewan MacColl, co-founders of Britain’s Theatre of Action and Theatre Union in 1934 and 1936 respectively, were hailed by *The Manchester Guardian* as “the nearest thing to Meyerhold the British Theatre has” (Walker, 2017). Indeed, Littlewood’s later resurrection and sly repurposing of historical material and period songs in her famed production of *Oh, What a*

Lovely War! with the Theatre Workshop (1963) was built on her and MacColl's earlier work, which included BBC radio plays that used the actual words of the working classes.

In Russia, initially, the Bolsheviks encouraged artistic freedom and poster art; drawing from multiple artistic influences and backgrounds, this was the main form of communication with the masses. However, Lenin wanted greater communication of ideas and ideals with the masses and felt that theatre was the ideal place to showcase "quotations from the written works and speeches of Lenin, Trotsky and Zinoviev...to point out the political significance of the events on stage and to relate them to as wide a context as possible" (Braun, 1998, p. 189). The first incarnation of the Living Newspaper was created under the auspices of Mikhail Pustynin. Pustynin was the Vitebsk director of the Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA) whose brief included the demonisation of Judaism and the education of the masses in accordance with the Central Committee's ideas. To facilitate a political agenda, Pustynin set up the Theatre of Revolutionary Satire (Terevsat):

Terevsat came to Moscow in 1920 and a number of groups were soon to be found performing in streets, factories and stations. Its short sketches, in which music had an important role, drew largely on review, operetta, vaudeville and the tchastuchka (rhymed popular songs with a monotonous rhythm). Initially one major aim of Terevsat was the diffusion of information and it evolved its own forms of Living Newspaper. (Bradby, 1978, p. 46)

Following this, under the auspices of The Moscow Institute of Journalism, teacher and journalist Boris Yuzhanin founded the Blue Blouse Theatre in 1923. Blue Blouse performances would form a central mechanism in distributing information to the masses throughout Russia.

Blue Blouse Theatre and their Living Newspapers flourished when the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic realised it was facing a huge problem: the large number of illiterate comrades.¹⁰ The republic was faced with the question of how to disseminate propaganda and information to an illiterate public. The Central Committee decreed that there be “public readings of the news, illustrated with ‘demonstrations,’ illuminated by cinema and public lantern shows, and ‘concert numbers’ to ensure the dissemination of news and revolutionary propaganda” (Casson, 2000, p. 108). It is Yuzhanin, with his journalistic influences, who can be credited with the development of the Living Newspaper and, particularly, the establishment of the Blue Blouse Theatre in 1923:

[P]erformances offered skits, verse, monologues, and avant-garde oratory among an uninterrupted montage of scenes, songs, music, dance, mime, acrobatics and gymnastics. Messages were punched home with bold visual effects. Blue Blouse offered a model on which countless variations have been devised by agit-prop and guerrilla theatre groups ever since. (Drain, 1995, p. 157)

The Blue Blouse was named after the blue blouses that the performers wore as a gesture of solidarity with factory workers, who wore a uniform of blue smocks (Leach, 1994). We can see the practical orientation of Constructivism in Liubov Popova’s designs for director Vsevolod Meyerhold’s production of Fernand Crommelynck’s 1920 play *The Magnanimous Cuckold* (Crommelynck, 1998) (Figure 1). These designs that were later used as the basis for the Blue Blouse uniform (Law, 1982, p. 67).

¹⁰ A similar challenge was faced, centuries earlier, by the Catholic Church, which used re-enactments of biblical stories to achieve similar results.



FIGURE 1: Production clothing for Actor no. 5 in Fernand Crommelynck's play *The Magnanimous Cockold* (1921) (Popova, 2009)

Blue Blouse was developed using any materials that artists could access, with the goal being to reach as many individuals as possible. Trained artists and untrained enthusiasts combined to perform what became known as Living Newspapers:

Yuzhanin aimed to offer the group's audiences, many of whom could not read, a "living newspaper" - a concept which spread to left wing groups internationally. Yuzhanin refused to use professional writers, but practised "lit-montage", i.e. the scripts were cut-ups, principally of material from papers and magazines. He staged them in revue style, performing in factories, workers clubs and in the open air. (Drain, 1995, p. 183)

According to Stourac and McCreery (1986), the Blue Blouse groups performed to over 80,000 people in the first two months of their existence, using newspapers and official documents as their text. The techniques and practices of the Blue Blouse spread from the republic throughout Europe, to China and Japan, and to the United States. Casson (2000) states that "Such spontaneity and creativity was not, however, attractive to Stalin: within a

year of their successful 1927 German tour, Blue Blouse was officially disbanded. It was a year of forced collectivization and massive, often brutal, social reorganization” (p. 109).

The use and practice of Living Newspapers and agit-prop theatre in the Soviet Republic concluded with the *International Olympiad of Revolutionary Theaters* in 1933. This was an event drawing theatre groups from Europe and Asia, all of whom had been influenced and inspired by Soviet agit-prop theatre (Mally, 2003). The irony behind the *Olympiad* was that the Soviet Union was then moving away from agit-prop and returning to conventional theatre styles: “Soviet critics began to fault agitational theatrical works for their primitive artistic composition, predictable messages, and stereotyped characters” (Mally, 2003, p. 324). This occurred just as its popularity was beginning to take off in other countries. In fact, Living Newspapers continue to be practised today as a dramatic recreation of newspaper stories, relying on FM such as court proceedings or news reports.

2.4 On the Street and in the Theatre

In the 1920s, it is Erwin Piscator who was most identified with and responsible for major developments in DT which, along with Living Newspapers, were components of the new objectivity movement that dominated Weimar theatre in Germany and were reflected in the Federal Theatre Project in the 1930s. In 1920s Germany, the political climes saw Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht create what has become known as Epic Theatre. A foundational model that has been used for much of what we now know as DT and VT is Brecht’s *Street Scene* (Brecht & Bentle, 1949). Written in the 1930s, Brecht employs a process of observation and examination at the scene of an accident. He asks us to consider the accident from different perspectives: the initiator, the victim, the onlooker, and those affected by the incident. The *Street Scene* shows an ability to embody and express multiple perspectives on the same event and, I would suggest in addition to offering a template for use in actor

training, is a useful exercise for writers of DT and VT.¹¹ As with John Reed's 1913 *Pageant* and Meyerhold's constructivist biomechanics theatre, Epic Theatre was concerned with what were considered radical social ideas, such as workers' rights and communism. Scholars such as Zazzali assert that Brecht was strongly influenced by Meyerhold and that they transformed modern theatre as they "boldly defied convention and redefined the way we experience time, space and text relative to performance" (Zazzali, 2008, p. 304).

Other significant figures responsible for the growth of DT in the US were Hallie Flanagan, whose influence will be set out later in this chapter, as well as Mike Gold, Elmer Rice and Jacob Levy Moreno. Playwright Elmer Rice, perhaps the best known of the four to theatre historians, wrote the screenplay for *Street Scene* (Vidor, 1931), a movie that encompassed many of the ideas expressed in Brecht's *Street Scene*, and was adapted by Kurt Weill as a musical in 1946. Moreno established his 'Theatre of Spontaneity' using news as the base for a form of improvisation that he called the 'dramatised newspaper', paralleling the work of Russian journalist Yuzhanin. Moreno, however, claimed that DT had no direct influence on or connection with the Living Newspapers movement. Yet he, like Flanagan, Gold, and Rice, had in common their exposure to the Blue Blouse Theatre, and their embrace of the cultural values of the infant Soviet Republic. Like Rice and Moreno, American leftist writer, Mike Gold worked with Piscator, Brecht and Ernst Toller on Living Newspapers in Germany. In 1927, he returned to the United States with the aim of setting up a workers' theatre. Workers' theatre groups, such as the Boston Blue Blouses, the Rebel Players LA, the Vanguard Group and others, all created Living Newspapers inspired by the Blue Blouses (Cosgrove, 1982). Gold's Workers' Theatre existed for twenty years and was "deliberately created to meet a specific cultural ideal and productive of its own particular theory, literature, and style of production" (McDermott, 1965, p. 65). As this style of theatre was regarded as a

¹¹ Brecht's *Street Scene* will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

tool of the Communist Party it has often been relegated in US history as a weapon rather than an art form. I would assert, however, that it was the work of Gold and Rice that encouraged and brought about the next major development in DT in the United States: The Living Newspapers (LNP) and The Federal Theatre Project (FTP) (Stourac & McCreery, 1986).

The FTP was initiated in 1935 by the US Federal government. Hallie Flanagan, director of the FTP and a producer and playwright, was perhaps the most significant pioneering figure in the field in the US and as a woman was, like Anna Deavere Smith, from a family that taught her to regard herself as capable and able to achieve whatever she set her mind to, while also being imbedded with a sense of responsibility to provide a service to the wider community (Bentley, 1988). Flanagan established the Vassar Experimental Theatre¹² and produced well-reviewed and inexpensive productions, which brought her to the attention of Washington D.C.'s political elite. Her ability to create these productions without great expense made her a good selection to run the FTP (Bentley, 1988). With this background, safely conservative but experimental, she was appointed as the head of the FTP in 1935.

As a government-funded program, part of the New Deal-era reforms, the FTP was created at a time of high unemployment. The concept was that unemployed theatre professionals and journalists could collaborate to educate the masses – not a new idea elsewhere, but certainly new in the US. As a result, in the 1930s, the LNP developed from the FTP and drama started to be recognised as an instrument of education and change. The LNP not only dramatised current news and events, it took on controversial issues and offered solutions. Orson Welles, Arthur Miller and Clifford Odets were among notable artists who came into the public eye through this initiative (Casson, 2000). In 1937, while reporting on the project, and evoking the rhetorical style of the IWW, Rohan quotes Flanagan:

¹² Vassar was established 1861 as a college for women who were not able to attend Ivy League colleges, such as Harvard and Yale, which at that time only accepted males.

Our Federal Theatre, born of an economic need, built by and for people who have faced terrific privation, cannot content itself with easy, pretty or insignificant plays. We are not being given millions of dollars to repeat, however expertly, the type of plays which landed 10,000 theatre people on relief rolls. By a stroke of fortune unprecedented in dramatic history, we have been given a chance to help change America at a time when twenty million unemployed Americans proved it needed changing. And the theatre, when it is any good, can change things. (1937, p. 36)

By virtue of this, while the US government charter may have been to employ artists, it also provided a platform for ideas supporting the more radical and left wing New Deal philosophies. Early reviews were favourable, with one stating, “the dramatization of the news stories had liveliness and vitality...skilful intensifications of social problems” (Casson, 2000, p. 112). Despite this, and generally favourable receptions, the FTP ultimately became controversial. Its productions were seen as too left-leaning. In 1939 the project was closed by an Act of Congress.

At the same time the Federal Theatre Project started, the Federal Writers’ Project was also created. One of the project’s writers, Louis ‘Studs’ Terkel, describes how in the “‘30s, an administration recognized a need and lent a hand” (Rothstein, 2008, p. C1). Terkel has had a tremendous influence on the work of contemporary DT creators, in particular Anna Deavere Smith¹³ and Murakami Haruki. Terkel, a Pulitzer Prize winning author and oral historian, was a daily radio broadcaster from 1952 to 1997. On PBS¹⁴ for 35 years, Terkel slowly introduced his listeners to interviews with both famous and unknown characters (Grimes, 2008). When

¹³ Matsouoka (2002) observes that Anna Deavere Smith, “Dissatisfied with the official explanations of devastating social incidents ... take[s] an approach inspired by such oral history writers such as Studs Terkel in order to reveal the truth – the destructive hidden forces which lie beneath these incidents. They interview common people to get at this truth” (p. 311).

¹⁴ PBS is the Public Broadcasting Service in the US, similar to Australia’s ABC and the UK’s BBC, though greatly reliant on the financial contributions of local subscribers.

he died in 2008, Harvard Professor of Psychiatry Robert Coles described him to the *Los Angeles Times* as “the most extraordinary social observer this country has produced” (Rothstein, 2008, p. C1). Rothstein (2008) also observes, “if you look closely at these oral histories, you can never forget who has shaped them and to what end” (p. C1). This lack of division of the storyteller from the story-owners is reflected on and discussed in Chapter 3, which focuses on Anna Deavere Smith.

By rejecting the idea of ‘us and them’ or ‘us vs. them’, the modern DT and VT storyteller owes much to John Reed and also to Terkel, who is not well known outside the US. Reed and Terkel had similar methods of approaching their interviews. They employed what is now known as ‘man on the street’ style interviews or ‘vox pop’. Once their topic had been identified, they consulted with those involved with the story and actively listened to the concerns of the story-owners. This consultative approach opens the door to a point of view that otherwise may not be shared. Terkel was asked how he got people to open up about their lives and, in what can be construed as a mini lecture in ‘man on the street’ journalism, he describes to Moser:

They’ve got to believe you’re interested. If it’s a writer of a book, you’ve got to have read his book thoroughly. Or a person who is just an anonymous person—say for one of my books, say this guy is a carpenter—I’ll ask him about his life and as he’s talking I’m *listening*. I don’t have written questions. It’s a conversation, not an interview. ‘And then what did you do?’ No! ‘Just tell me about...’—and you start, sort of like you’re having a cup of coffee or a drink, so it’s informal and very easy. Out of that things are revealed. (Studs Terkel on How to Interview Someone, 2011)

Terkel’s influence on oral historians is profound. His methodology differed, from the oral historian who records and stores, in that his recordings were made public through

the avenue of his daily PBS broadcasts. He let the audience know what the people on the street were thinking with an immediacy provided by his daily broadcasts.

2.5 The Other Places

In the late 1950s, what came to be known as Theatre of Fact emerged, the most referenced piece in this genre being Eric Bentley's (1974) *Are You or Have You Ever Been?* In this work, Bentley drew on the testimonies delivered before the US House Un-American Activities Committee (2017).¹⁵ Piscator's direction of Rolf Hochhuth's (1997) *The Deputy* in 1963 can also be seen to have led to Theatre of Fact and the new wave of DT in the late 1960s (Dawson, 1999, p. 9). This method was made popular in the 1990s with Britain's Tricycle Theatre's series of 'tribunal plays' that were based on public inquiries in the UK into the sale of arms to Iraq, Nuremberg and Srebrenica (Billington, 2006).

The late 1930s in Britain saw the introduction of Documentary Theatre and its influence can be seen in the early work of Stephen Joseph, and partners Ewan MacColl and Joan Littlewood. Joseph's main focus was introducing theatre-in-the-round and using it to break down cultural barriers. His ideals were based on the similar desires of MacColl and Littlewood to "face up to contemporary problems" and to "play an effective part of the life of the community" (Walker, 2017, p. 2). Joseph, who founded The Studio Theatre, also hired and was mentor to Peter Cheeseman. Cheeseman focused on local issues affecting the community that surrounded the Victoria Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent. He was artistic director of the theatre for 36 years and his work included eleven documentary musicals, including *The Knotty* (1966), that were based on interviews conducted by actors in the company. Cheeseman's goal was to be "political and truthful" (2010) and to create a theatre that broke down the walls between artist and audience (Elvgren, 1974). In 1963, Littlewood's *Oh, What*

¹⁵ In 1938, The House Un-American Activities Committee was created to investigate alleged disloyalty and subversive activities on the part of private citizens, public employees, and those organisations suspected of having communist ties (House Un-American Activities Committee, 2017).

a Lovely War!, inspired by radio documentary drama, showed war from the perspective of the ‘common’ soldier. Derek Paget describes a 1964 performance of the work where the “Brechtian/Piscatorian ‘collision montage’ took my breath away... The show was, for me, a brilliantly conceived and executed introduction to an essentially European theatre tradition till then largely marginalized (sic) in the United Kingdom” (Paget, 1990, p. 244). In South America the widespread influence of the Documentary Theatre and the Living Newspaper is found in the work of Augusto Boal, the creator of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO). In 1964, following the Brazilian coup d’état, which saw the overthrow of the João Goulart government and the Military Junta assuming power, Boal presented Newspaper Theatre, drawing content from daily newspapers to create a new play each night. The goal was “to help people understand the news. The military did not like that, that’s why they sent me to prison” (Brown R. , 2002). Prominent writers such as Sartre and Arthur Miller petitioned for his release, and later after his release and deportation from Brazil, he went on to develop the techniques used for TO. Boal’s later methodology in Simultaneous Theatre also reflects his work on newspaper plays (Boal, 1997).

More recently, the development of VT has been greatly affected by advances in technology that made it possible to gain direct access to full accounts of court reports and proceedings. This incorporation of existing materials within VT is now known as the use of FM. As previously noted, both the FTP and VT developed along with the emergence of new technologies. Just as the FTP had grown out of the popularity of cinema, VT benefitted from the ability to record conversations with portable equipment, such as tape recorders. The most commonly used FM from the 1970s through to the 1990s were newspaper reports, court transcripts or inquiry transcripts, music, poetry, and literature – fundamentally anything that exists prior to the creation of a work. It is important to also ask why, apart from advances in technology, VT began to assume increased visibility onstage in the 1990s. Michael

Billington, Samuel Adamson and Stella Duffy (Billington, 2006) argue that it is a reaction to the shadow cast by the conservatism of Thatcher's Britain and Reagan's US. This, as well as the growth of the internet, created an environment where theatre practitioners have reacted by challenging standard practices and expressing alternative views to the status quo. As Hare (2005) argues in *On Factual Theatre*:

What we are witnessing is one of those moments at which theatre excels. Once again the art form is looking outside itself – and more profitably than any other – to try and expose the way in which we all, as individuals, are or are not connected to the great moments of history... And if this kind of work does not appear even more necessary and affecting at this particular time, doesn't that tell us something about the time as much as the work? (p. 113)

Sir David Hare has been described as “the best journalist ever to find work as a playwright” (Billen, 2009). His 2009 play *The Power of Yes* focuses on the financial crisis in 2008. For this work, commissioned by The National Theatre of Britain, Hare conducted interviews with many of the major players in the UK financial scene. His eminence as playwright opened many doors that would otherwise be closed. He also does something that is unusual in VT in that he inserts himself into the text. He creates a character that represents himself, called The Author, and this character guides the action and prompts the other characters. In the *London Times* review of the play Charles Spencer observes:

We get a glimpse of Hare's technique he (sic) assumes an air of bewildered ignorance, as this always tends to get the best answers and at the end of this verbatim drama he allows his indignation to show as he contemplates how the greed of the finance industry has blighted so many lives. (2009)

Sir David Hare's work in *The Power of Yes: A dramatist seeks to understand the financial crisis* (2009) is about his own reactions to the Global Financial Crisis and leaves little room

for any interpretation outside of his own experience. One of the failings of Verbatim Theatre is that often the writer pushes the interviews in a particular direction to promote their own agenda whether that agenda be motivated by funding, politics or many of the other influences around us. Conversely, the most frustrating thing is that it is very hard to know in which direction the piece will take you unless you push. While Hare is completely open that this technique of pushing back from a particular point-of-view is central to his method, such methods can result in the questioning of the artistry and validity of Verbatim Theatre, both among the general public and within the wider theatrical community.

Affordable and accessible technology continues to challenge the formal lines of journalistic practice. Hare, at a 2002 talk for senior media executives, said “It is my impression that when as artists we fail, as we often do, it is because we have imagined insufficiently. But my impression of great swathes of modern journalism is that it is not even trying” (Lloyd, 2005). This failure in journalism gives weight to Tribunal playwright Robin Soans’ belief that “The normal channels of reportage, wherein we expect some degree of responsibility and truth, are no longer reliable... Only in the arts is the study of the human condition considered more important than ambition or money, so it is left to artists to ask the relevant questions” (Norton-Taylor, 2014).

Paget (1987) is credited with conceiving the term VT as “a form of theatre firmly predicated on the taping and subsequent transcription of interviews with 'ordinary' people, done in the context of research into a particular region, subject area, issue, event, or combination of these things” (p. 317). Martin (2006) expands on this:

Those who make DT interrogate specific events, systems of belief, and political affiliations precisely through the creation of their own versions of events, beliefs, and politics by exploiting technology that enables replication; video, film, tape recorders, radio, copy machines, and computers are the

sometimes visible, sometimes invisible, technological means of DT. While DT remains in the realm of handcraft—people assemble to create it, meet to write it, gather to see it—it is a form of theatre in which technology is a primary factor in the transmission of knowledge. (p. 9)

Anderson and Wilkinson (2007) argue in *A Resurgence of Verbatim Theatre: Authenticity, Empathy and Transformation* that the wave of media mergers and acquisitions from the late 1990s to the present “has created an environment where shareholder interest and economies of scale dictate an increasingly homogenous media context” (p. 153). This homogenisation, I would assert, is the primary contributor to the current popularity of VT in Europe, the US and now Australia.

With the growth of ‘real life’ and current affairs magazine style programming and the immediacy of news through the internet, the luxury of an in-depth look at an issue has become a rarity in the media. In Australia, the mainstream media “aren’t there to capture reality, so much as to represent a formula that satisfied other television market and brand objectives” (Bowles, 2006, p. 67). These ‘values’ have not changed, rather they have become amplified with the popularity of programs such as *The Kardashians*, *Real Housewives* etc. The larger story is not as marketable for programmers who allow the advertising dollar to inform what is seen. As is evidenced by the OzTAM ratings¹⁶, it is clear that the advertising dollar is situated squarely with the 18 to 35-year-old market. Realising this, it is possible to see the crossover of journalism and DT and VT and the capacities of DT and VT in seeking to address the failings of mainstream media to tell the stories of individuals and communities facing unprecedented events.

¹⁶ OzTam is the official source of television audience measurement (TAM) covering Australia’s five metropolitan markets and nationally for subscriber television (OzTAM, 2011).

2.6 Documentary Verbatim Theatre

The use of the term DT re-entered the lexicon in the USA in the 1990s, with Anna Deavere Smith's one-woman shows. Prime examples of her work are *Fires in the Mirror* (Smith, 1993), focusing on the NYC Crown Heights Riots, and *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (Smith, 1994), about the LA Riots. Smith's methods are the foundation of many of the current popular forms of VT, particularly Playback and Headphone or Recorded Delivery, which are currently the most popular forms of VT in the UK. Smith's methods were initially introduced to Britain by Mark Wing-Davey¹⁷ after he attended a workshop by Anna Deavere Smith. He then, along with Alecky Blythe, developed these hybrid versions of Smith's method where an actor is on stage and has the actual lines, spoken by the actual person delivered to them on headsets and then redelivered by the actor to the audience. I would argue that this technique acts as a showcase for the actors rather than for the subject or those whom I call the story-owners—the people who share their stories. UK actor and writer Alecky Blythe observes of herself that her “aim was to make a play that would showcase my talents as an actor and secure me an agent... I have now made a total of seven shows, and currently have three more in the pipeline” (Hammond, 2008, p. 79). That these hybrids create an environment where the writers and performers are speaking *for* their subjects rather than *with* them will be elaborated on in later chapters using the work of Smith and Kaufman (Gibson, 2011).

It is only with recent productions such as 1991's *Aftershocks* (Brown, P., 1995) that Australian audiences have started to embrace VT. While the New Theatre, established in Australia at the Sydney Workers Art Club in 1932, was inspired by and had similar philosophies to the US Federal Theatre Project, it relied primarily on scripted works rather than using the style of Living Newspapers, so it does not fit squarely within the field of DT or

¹⁷ Wing-Davey, Professor and Chair of Graduate Acting at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, is well known for his portrayal of Zaphod Beeblebrox in *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* (Wing-Davey, n.d.).

VT. It should be noted however that the New Theatre did share the ideals of its European and American labour counterparts, using slogans such as *Art is a Weapon* (New Theatre, 2017). The first major production of the New Theatre in 1933 was an adaptation of Robert Tressell's 1914 novel *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, which was a call to arms for workers. Thus, although the company, which spawned similar companies in major cities such as Melbourne, fought censorship and advocated for workers' rights, it was not built on the same interconnection between journalism and the arts as the FTP in the US.

I describe the type of theatre I write as DVT. It is a combination of the US practice of focusing on an event and the VT practice of using the verbatim dialogue of the story-owners. DVT relies on the writer, or storyteller, negotiating with the story-owner. The storyteller needs to be flexible in order to be led by the story-owner. While practitioners like Anna Deavere Smith appear to speak *for*, rather than *with*, those who are the subjects of their projects (Gibson, 2011), it is talking *with* those that have experienced the event that enables the storyteller to develop the ability to negotiate rather than appropriate the work. It is through the combination of current affairs and drama, one facilitated by my background as a journalist, that DVT provides the opportunity to present a reflective narrative connecting the audience to an event in a way that is not otherwise available. When DVT concentrates on a disaster, tragedy or scandal, it allows us to look further into the heart of these events. My work follows this identification with the topics that interest me: survival, grief, friendship, the nature of friendship and how events can change the way we approach our lives.

As DT and VT are now part of the cultural landscape, it is time to seek further clarification of the forms. They are taught in schools, performed and developed at institutions such as England's National Theatre and Royal Court Theatre, and have even been part of the Australian Higher School Certificate. DT and VT provide the opportunity to get a clearer picture of what has happened in the world. If our experiences are not recognised, we need to

question what use can come of great tragedy. As Martin (2006) points out, “Contemporary documentary theatre represents a struggle to shape and remember the most transitory history—the complex ways in which men and women think about the events that shape the landscapes of their lives” (p. 9). By allowing ourselves as creators and audiences to get closer to a subject rather than distancing ourselves we have an opportunity for greater understanding of how our lives are affected, locally and globally, by current events. By understanding the history, methodology and creation process involved in DVT we can also further advance our knowledge of a story.

In this century, we have experienced an explosion of all forms of media and while the influence of journalism on the practice of DT is strong, it is not necessary to be a journalist to become this type of storyteller. It is, however, useful to negotiate the tools of journalism to create this work. By learning the skills of listening and following the lines of a story and drawing out the detail, all traditional journalistic skills, a larger story can emerge. The following chapters continue to explore the resurgence of DT and VT by looking specifically at the work of Anna Deavere Smith and Moisés Kaufman and at my own work, *The Death of Kings* (Keen, 2016).

3. A Genre of One's Own: Anna Deavere Smith

“My work is about giving voice to the unheard, and reiterating the voice of the heard in such a way that you question, or re-examine, what is the truth. And we have to be able to tolerate more than one voice.”

(Smith, qtd. in Proffitt, 1993)

3.1 Introduction

In the world of DT and VT Anna Deavere Smith is regarded as having developed a new form of theatre that serves as a hybrid, as she is part performer, writer, journalist, and chronicler of the American character. In 1995, while living in San Francisco, I answered an advertisement for an assistant to a Stanford professor – Anna Deavere Smith. While I had already been a writer of comedy and documentary programs for radio and television, I did not realise that there was a theatrical form which would enable me to incorporate the skills I had learned as a journalist. Smith has received honours and awards, including the 1996 MacArthur Fellowship, (known colloquially as the ‘genius grant’); an OBIE for her work *Fires in the Mirror* (Smith, 1993); a TONY nomination; and a Pulitzer Prize nomination. In 2006, Oprah Winfrey named her as one of the new generation of black women who had followed in the footsteps of ‘legends’ Rosa Parks and Alice Walker, listing her alongside individuals such as Michelle Obama and Judith Jamison (Kelly, 2010, pp. 404-406). In 2012, she received the National Humanities Medal; and in 2013 received one of the largest prizes awarded in the arts, the \$300,000 Dorothy and Lilian Gish Prize. She is also an educator who has held Chairs and Professorships at Stanford, Harvard, Yale and New York Universities. It is through Anna Deavere Smith’s work that I was first introduced to DT.

Smith is not the originator of what came to be known as ‘Ethnotheatre’¹⁸ but is rather the undoubted “‘superstar’ who crystalized the genre and demonstrated its artistic possibilities and social impact for both the academic and commercial world” (Saldaña J. , 2011, p. 17). If an internet search is performed on Smith’s name, approximately 300,000 results are generated. Searches on academic library systems turn up over 4,500 academic articles relating to her. However, mention her name to people outside DT and VT theatre circles and there is no recognition. Despite this lack of ‘name’ recognition, in the world of DT and VT, Smith is, as Saldaña states, a ‘superstar’. Alternatively, many recognise her as the hospital administrator in Emmy Award winning series *Nurse Jackie*, or as the National Security Advisor in the *The West Wing*. Knowledge of her theatre work is limited to those who have seen her perform live, primarily in the US and on Broadway, film production of her work *Fires in the Mirror* (Wolfe, 1993) and *Twilight: Los Angeles* (Levin, 2000), TED Talks and lectures.

While working for Smith in 1995–1996, I was able to sit in on rehearsals and see how the script was developed for the remounting of performances of *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (Smith, 1994)¹⁹ a solo piece about the 1992 Los Angeles riots based on interviews with a wide range of individuals who constituted parts of the larger ‘story’ behind the event.²⁰ Smith, who played all of the roles herself, was then working with Berkeley Repertory Company, which remounted the original production and prepared the new version for a

¹⁸ As defined by Saldaña (2011), Ethnotheatre “employs the traditional craft and artistic techniques of theatre or media production to mount for an audience a live or mediated performance event of research participants’ experiences and/or the researcher’s interpretation of data” (p. 12).

¹⁹ *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (Smith, 1994) premiered at The Mark Taper Forum, Los Angeles in June, 1993.

²⁰ In 1991 Rodney King was beaten by LAPD officers after a high-speed chase through Los Angeles County. George Holliday videotaped the beating from his apartment balcony. The video shows King being struck by police batons more than 50 times. Over 20 officers were present at the scene, most from the LAPD. King suffered eleven fractures and other injuries due to the beating. On April 29, 1992, the four white LAPD officers were acquitted of beating King. The riots extended over five days following the verdict. During the riots ten people were killed by law enforcement officials and 44 other people died in homicides or related incidents. More than 2,000 people were injured and 1,000 buildings were destroyed or damaged in the Los Angeles area. *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* focuses on these 1992 riots in Los Angeles (Los Angeles Riots Fast Facts, 2016).

subsequent national tour. I was also party to her interview process from start to completion, and then beyond as she still maintained contact with many of those she had interviewed in the past who would call the office on a regular basis. Connecting this to my own practice, it is clear that at that time I learnt that when people bare their souls and you bear witness, you are gifted with a very special part of that person. The ongoing respect with which Smith treated the story-owners has had a lasting impression on me and is something I have sought to duplicate in my own work.

The years 1995-1996 were also the time of the O.J. Simpson trial in Los Angeles, which was a turning point in Americans' perception of their culture, class, and legal system, where racial and class conflicts became daily television viewing. Smith had created a performance piece with her Stanford University students from the Simpson trial transcripts, with interesting touches, such as the famously unflappable Japanese-American trial judge, Judge Lance Ito, sitting cross legged like Buddha hovering over the court room. In his *New Yorker* article "Thirteen Ways to look at a Blackman," Louis Gates Jr. (1991) quotes Smith in what she describes as the climactic moment of the trial:

Just after the verdict was read I will always remember two sounds and one image. I heard Johnnie Cochran²¹ go 'Ugh,' and then I heard the weeping of Kim Goldman.²² And then I saw the image of O. J.'s son, with one hand going upward on one eye and one hand pointed down, shaking and sobbing. I couldn't do the words right now; if I could find a collaborator, I would do something else. I feel that a choreographer ought to do that thing. Part of the tragedy was the fact of that 'Ugh' and that crying. Because that 'Ugh' wasn't even a full sound of victory, really.

²¹ The late Johnny Cochran is best known as the lead defense lawyer in the trial and acquittal of O. J. Simpson for the murder of his former wife, Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend, Ron Goldman.

²² Kim Goldman is the sister of Ron Goldman who was murdered alongside O. J. Simpson's ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson.

By focusing on the time during which I worked for Smith, which was also a specific time of upheaval in race and culture in the US, this chapter will afford a distinctive insight into a unique performer, writer and educator. The focus will be on the processes she employs to create her work; the influences on her work that have affected so much of her practice, and the impact her work has had on the wider theatrical community.

3.2 Influences

Anna Deavere Smith grew up in Baltimore, Maryland. Her mother was a school teacher and principal and her father, a shopkeeper. Her parents and their siblings were college educated and after high school, in a desire to break with family tradition, she chose to go to Beaver College, a private women's school where she was one of 12 blacks among over 500 students (Tannenbaum, 1999). Following her college experience, she auditioned and enrolled in an Master of Fine Arts at the San Francisco American Conservatory Theatre (ACT) and it was here that she learned to "listen carefully for the natural pausing and parsing of speech" which is the foundation of her 'organic poems' that she says are the result of everyday discourse (Saldaña, 2011, p. 72).

There are a substantial number of male influences in Smith's wider life and work. Whether this is because the nature of the theatrical world is male dominated or due to a leaning toward male figures, they are certainly at the starting point for her work. She quotes her grandfather:

So my grandfather told me when I was a little girl, "If you say a word often enough, it becomes you." And having grown up in a segregated city, Baltimore, Maryland, I sort of use that idea to go around America with a tape recorder — thank God for technology — to interview people, thinking that if I walked in their words — which is also why I don't wear shoes when I perform — if I walked in their words, that I could sort of absorb America. I was also

inspired by Walt Whitman, who wanted to absorb America and have it absorb him. (Smith, 2005)

Other hugely influential men in her life include George C Wolfe, then Artistic Director of the Public Theatre, 1993–2004, and Gordon Davidson, then Artistic Director of the Mark Taper Forum, 1967–2005.

As a teenager, Smith discovered she had a gift for mimicry and while she had considered becoming a linguist after completing her arts degree, she instead successfully auditioned for and enrolled in American Conservatory Theatre's (ACT) MFA actor training program. It was during her time at ACT that she was first exposed to actor training in Shakespeare:

Like countless actors, she was afraid of the Bard, afraid of giving voice to 'that thick, antiquated language that seemed totally irrelevant to the world around me.' Her teacher instructed the class to 'take fourteen lines of Shakespeare and say it over and over again to see what happened.' Smith picked a speech from *Richard II* in which Queen Margaret bitterly laments the devastation wrought by Richard, "That foul defacer of God's handiwork, / That excellent grand tyrant of the earth..." (Crampton, 2015)

The repetition of the word exercise was revelatory to Smith and she threw herself into the study of acting. This Shakespearean exercise enabled her to understand what it was to become the words. She further describes, of her experience at ACT, how text can fall apart rhythmically and, "as an indicator of a character's psychological state," she cites "King Lear, who says at one point, 'Never, never, never, never, never!'" (Smith, 2000, p. 36). On graduation from ACT she started interviewing people and collecting their stories and characters. In her 2000 book, *Talk To Me*, Smith describes that at this time, rather than being subject-driven, her practice and teaching focused exclusively on developing and expressing

character. She built a reputation as an academic and was hired by Princeton University to create a piece about the lack of women in the history of Princeton, both as students and as academics. While at Princeton, she met a linguist at a party who advised her that there were three questions you can ask an individual to be sure their syntax changes during an interview. These questions are: “Have you come close to death? Do you know the circumstances of your birth? Have you ever been accused of something that you did not do?” (Smith, 2000, p. 54). By following the syntax change, she was able to observe how vocabulary was used differently by individuals depending on the nature of the question or conversation. This shifting of patterns is translated into her word poems and Smith has subsequently used these or similar questions in order to evoke responses from interviewees that subconsciously force them to break with comfortable or established patterns of oral communication, creating linguistic fissures that seem to simultaneously bring out greater emotional depth. The standard methodology I have observed her employ is to interview someone around a topic, generating a narrative of the event as seen by the interviewee, and then exploring the tape with a ‘fine tooth comb’. By exploring the idiosyncrasies of text, narrative, the sound of a voice, the rhythm and timbre of a voice, she believes the character will be revealed. Remarkably, this process parallels her grandfather’s advice that “if you say a person’s words enough they become you” (Smith, 2005). This is part of her technique for learning her characters; by repeating and repeating their exact words and expressions, they become her.

One of the most important individuals to influence her style and direction of interviewing was Studs Terkel. As noted in the previous chapter, Terkel was a member of the Federal Theatre Project’s Writer’s Program and was himself strongly influenced by the ‘man on the street’ interviews of John Reed. For many years, he has served as her ‘go-to’ individual for performing when she presents at universities and TED Talks. Both Smith’s TED talks and her more recent word poems, exemplify what Saldaña (2011) describes as

“suites of poetic verse,” (Saldaña J. , 2011, p. 205) combined with Terkel’s probing insights into humanity. These twin qualities are reflected in this excerpt from her TED Talk that speaks to how words and phrases coalesce in her work:

It's an accretion of moments that add up to where we are now, where trivia becomes news. And more and more, less and less awareness of the pain of the other. Huh. You know, I don't know if you could use this or not, but I was quoting Wright Morris, a writer from Nebraska, who says, ‘We're more and more into communications and less and less into communication’. (Smith, 2005)

Terkel would often call Smith’s office to share an insight or the name of an interesting person. The gentleness of his demeanour is replicated by Smith when she is with her subjects. She creates a generous and supportive environment for her subjects, giving the impression (and indeed this is the case) that at that moment you are the only person in the world, just as:

Terkel managed to communicate a closeness, an intimacy, with those he was talking with “he sought the ‘essence’” in his subjects and suppressed his role in the creation of these accounts, it is as though the subjects are speaking directly to the readers. Removing himself from the final product seems to empower his subjects: these prose narratives read like autobiographical literature and appear to be the unmediated memories of the speakers.

(Gustavson, 2012, p. 111)

One of the major differences between their work is that Terkel was never seen, as he was on the radio. Smith has such a powerful stage presence that as she presents the words of others you cannot but help see her before you see the individual she is sharing.

In 1991, Smith was an Associate Professor at Stanford University's Drama Department when George C. Wolfe, Artistic Director and producer for the New York Shakespeare Festival, invited her to perform as part of the Festival of New Voices in New York. He suggested the focus of her work be the recent riots in Crown Heights, New York. The Crown Heights riots occurred over three days from August 19–21, 1991, after a young African American child, seven-year-old Gavin Cato, was killed and his cousin injured by one of the drivers in the motorcade of Lubavitcher²³ Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. The death of Cato provided a lightning rod for the sense of social injustice felt by the African American community and in the ensuing riots a group of young black men murdered Yankel Rosenbaum, a 29-year old Australian Hasidic scholar.

Smith set out with a cassette tape recorder and interviewed those who she later identified as representing six key elements or themes around which individual stories clustered: *Identity*, which refers to racial identity; *Mirrors*, which referred to the distortions of literature and science with respect to identity and difference; *Hair*, which touched on how different attitudes toward hair are reflected by race and religion; *Race*, which looked at the changing roles of women and the concept of race; *Rhythm*, which brought in the rhythms of rap; and *Seven Verses*, which considered race relations (Gale, 1992). In each of these sections, or chapters, different voices contribute to the topic of the 'chapter'. This is a breaking down of subject voice that I also employ in my work. Multiple points of view that reflect a similar subject are grouped together and delivered as a package for understanding and interpretation. While working on *Fires in the Mirror* (1993), Smith employed the technique of asking each interviewee who they recommended she speak to next, and through this practice she was able to gain the 'credentials' that opened the door for the next person

²³ The Lubavitchers are a sect in Hasidic Judaism and have a strong presence in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn. Orthodox Jews, African-Americans, and relatively recent migrants from the Caribbean all live in this densely-populated, geographically compact neighborhood, and it is the tensions between these communities that are ultimately explored in *Fires in the Mirror* (Smith, 1993).

she interviewed. This is a journalistic technique that provides the interviewer with a form of ‘reference’ for the next interview subject. The use of this technique feeds into creating a TOE, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. In addition to the women and men from the African American and Hassidic Jewish communities of Crown Heights, she spoke with many high-profile individuals, including playwright Ntozake Shange, former Black Panther Angela Davis, and Rabbi Joseph Spielman, who was one of the best-known leaders of the Orthodox Jewish community in New York during the 1990s.

Fires in the Mirror is less like the organic poems that Smith was later to create, and more a mosaic of characters that can almost be seen to be having a dialogue between each other, which is a direct result of the chapter grouping that she employs. Maufort (2010), who writes on the hybridisations of dramatic realism, points out: “...the fragmented vignettes of this work could be regarded as a long string of distorting mirrors reflecting the labyrinthine aspects of multiculturalism in the contemporary US” (p. 57). This technique also serves a larger socio-political function; as what this work does is “show the relativity and limitations of our perspective of historical truth” (Maufort, 2010, p. 57) while also acknowledging the failure of the American dream.

Initially, due to lack of financing, this work also saw Smith enacting all characters and while she had mused it would have been interesting to alternate performances with an actor such as Sandra Bernhard, a Jewish American comedian, singer, actress, and writer (Sherman, 2015), this never eventuated. This idea is particularly interesting, as in *Fires in the Mirror* Smith is seeking a better understanding between the Jewish and Black communities. As Maufort (2010) observes, “she indicates the desirability of crossing cultural boundaries in an attempt to overcome the distortions of mimetism” (p. 57). Indeed, this crossing of cultures through the singular embodied presence of a light-skinned African American woman enacting multiple roles while retaining her own sense of self is one of the defining features of

Smith in performance. *Fires in the Mirror* was a critical success, receiving a Pulitzer Prize nomination. It was not until Smith's next major work, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, that the boundaries between journalism, documentary, and theatre were tested.

In 1992, while performing *Fires in the Mirror*, what became known as the LA Riots were triggered by the verdict of the Rodney King trial and acquittal of the police officers involved in King's beating. This high-profile court case in which a jury failed to indict police officers who had been caught on video savagely attacking King, an unarmed black motorist, revealed racial fault lines in the city, as well as widespread racism within the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). Gordon Davidson, Artistic Director of The Mark Taper Forum, commissioned Smith, suggesting she take her cassette tape recorder to the streets of LA after the riots to record the stories and characters. Smith describes her approach at this time as, "I come at this more like a lawyer, who would say that everybody has a right to a fair trial. Or a journalist, or a priest, who would hear the confession" (Sherman, 2015). Gordon Davidson was a hugely influential figure in Los Angeles theatre and a strong supporter of Smith's work. Through him, Smith gained access to prominent figures such as LA District Attorney Gil Garcetti and Chief of the LAPD Darryl Gates. On Davidson's death in 2016, Smith described him as "an emblem... He not only believed in artists but also his community" (Ng, 2016). She also spoke to Davidson's "belief that theatre works best when its concerns are anchored in community" (Drake, 2016), pointing to Davidson's clear influence on her own journey as an artist.

While Davidson commissioned the work, influential African-American theatre director and playwright George C. Wolfe directed it. A group of dramaturgs from various non-theatrical backgrounds were also recruited. When the work transferred to New York it was also transformed. Wolfe brought in playwright Tony Kushner as dramaturg and, as a result, an intermission was added which made it possible to expand the material, have

characters reappear, and create a more theoretical base to the show. Anyone who has not seen the production live and relies solely on the play's script as a guide to Anna Deavere Smith's work, will find it difficult to understand the importance of these changes, as the script does not clearly set them out. This points to the ongoing difficulty for others in reproducing Smith's work. More fundamentally for our purposes, however, is an understanding of her process and what makes the live witnessing of her work a powerful experience for many.

3.3 Process and Pointillism

In *Talk To Me*, Smith (2000) states, "My search was specifically to find America in its language. I interview people and communities about the events of our time, in the hope that I will be able to absorb America" (p. 12). Smith's work is focused on trying to create the conversation about race that has not yet happened. Her conversation is focused around current topics and incidents, such as race relations, gender, health care, and violence against women. As suggested earlier, Smith finds people to interview by using a snowballing technique in which each subject generates the next contact. She is very good at asking, 'who can I talk to' or 'who should I talk to' and people always have a suggestion. She observes that she becomes interested in an interviewee when the character becomes challenging for her to encapsulate, "when I see how complicated a person is, the very moment when I think I can never capture this" (Kondo, 1996, p. 323).

Once an interview is completed, the interviews are collated to find a driving narrative. This continues even during a performance, where she will work until she finds the story. Through this repetition of words and rhythms, the organic poetry that people speak is revealed, providing insights into why the voice hesitates or why the voice does not hesitate. Insights are gained into what is happening inside a person that makes them scared to speak, silences them, makes them stutter, and makes them search for words, make mistakes or talk non-stop. Smith (2005) describes this as 'verbal undress' as the individual's character is

revealed. By learning something of one character she learns something about the character of America; hence Smith's ongoing journey, encompassing all her performance work since the early 1980s, is aptly named, *On the Road: In Search of the American Character*.

The performances I attended of *Fires in the Mirror* and *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* are not necessarily the same performance you would see from Smith today. Even though a show is 'up,' it is still a working document. Smith's work and process allows the art to remain a working document so it has room to keep the conversation fresh. This can be seen, for instance, in the difference between performances, the published script, the film version of *Fires in The Mirror* and the audio recording. While the poems and the sequence of the scenes may change, the text remains exactly verbatim. Sometimes the text will be moved to place it in conversation with another character, but the integrity of what the person said remains intact, contributing to the overall coherence and beauty of the work. The 500 'ums' remain, every swear word is in there, as well as pauses and coughs. As Smith's artistic associate for the last 20 years, Marcos Najera (2014) observes:

The truth of the matter is, we're human, Anna's a human too and it's part of my job with her in the last 20 years to serve as her dramaturgical line coach. I'm kind of the keeper of the text and I will drill her for hours...there's a line in *Twilight* that we still fight about to this day. It's *Twilight's* line – 'in order to be a true human being' or 'in order to be a full human being' we have to check the text...I'm always fighting with her to do it correctly because for whatever reason her brain wants to say the other one...It is needlepoint minutiae.

This attention to verbal accuracy is one of Smith's great strengths, and, perhaps ironically, it is also why what is performed continues to subtly shift.

The artistry of Anna Deavere Smith is hard to describe. Audience members do not see or understand the process of what happens to get a show up and on stage. There are many

parallels between the work of Smith and pointillist George Seurat. If you can imagine the work of Seurat and his famous painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (Seurat, 1884), you see a beautiful painting presenting a myriad of individuals in the last days of summer. What you are actually seeing is a composite of several Seurat paintings composed to create an effect, a scene. Hutton (1994), in his book *Neo-Impressionism and the Search for Solid Ground*, observes that, “Social conditions do not produce art; people do. But artists make their art for something or someone, and they produce it as part of an over determining web of social and cultural conditions” (p. 6). Hutton goes on to say that Seurat and his fellow artists moved from “antiquated Romantic Impressionism, grounded in intuition and spontaneity...to optical theories in pursuit of a grand synthesis of the ideal and the real, the fugitive and the essential, science and temperament” (pp. 36-37).

As with Smith, Seurat found his subjects in the common places of Parisian society. He was also, like Smith, a very private individual, an observer of humanity who did not turn the eye on himself. Seurat never mixes his colours but relies on the viewer’s eye to create lines and mix the colours. On close examination of the canvas, all that can be seen are small dots, but when the viewer steps back, the picture comes into focus. Part of the beauty of Smith’s work is that only a handful of people ever see what she actually does. In her work, the audience member never sees the dots, only the larger picture. Smith gathers the dots and then Smith and her team identify the dot, document the dot, teach Smith the dot, drill the dot, and then ensure that the dot gets shared – placed and shared every night.

A trained actress, Smith has the skill to use her voice, her body, and her imagination to craft compelling narratives. Part of the art is lost and is indeed unachievable when actors try to replicate her plays or work while claiming to be ‘doing it in the style of Anna Deavere Smith’. Much of this attempt at translation of process fails because, for the most part, people do not really know what she does. They only see the show or read the text, so they do not

understand her deep preparation prior to her interviews, and then the complexity and larger world of the interview itself. When Smith interviews her subjects, a wider contextual process occurs that includes the place in which the interview occurs, the time of day, and all of the other circumstances impacting the embodied encounter. A great deal of thought is put into how the interview manifests itself in time and space. Smith creates an opening that enables the person to come forward. She does not force anything. Every interview is unique. She does not have a set question list. Having listened to and transcribed some of her interviews, I can testify that her interviewing technique shows some of the best journalistic interviewing skills I have ever witnessed, even though she has never been trained as a journalist. “She calls herself an actress who's moving through the world as a journalist. She hasn't been trained as a journalist but a lot of people call what she does journalism” (Najera, 2014). When Smith asks a question, even if it is a difficult question, it is unapologetic because it is clear that she is not trying to push somebody to say something they do not want to say. It is almost like she is creating a space for people to say what they really want to say but that otherwise no one has bothered to hear.

When *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1994, the committee disallowed the play for final consideration on:

the grounds that its language was not invented but gleaned from interviews.

That it was even being discussed by the Pulitzer jury was an indication of how high the play had soared in the minds of some critics, while the decision to disqualify it for technical reasons might have been puzzling to anyone aware that the previous year's Pulitzer jury had judged Smith's earlier show ‘Fires in the Mirror’ a legitimate runner-up for the 1992 prize. (Mitchell, 1994)

Indeed, this was not the first time that the debate over whether or not the DT form is theatre, journalism, or journalistic documentary has raised its head. *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*

caused confusion within the arts community, many of whom were all too willing to categorise it as journalism. This is despite influential playwright Wendy Wasserstein describing *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*:

...as a work of art. There is an individual voice there, the eye of the observer. It's constructed in a theatrical way. It moves. It's documentary theatre but it's different from 'docudrama' because she's dealing with character. It begins with character, which is what it has in common with a lot of other plays. (Mitchell, 1994)

The rejection of *Twilight* by the Pulitzer Prize Jury for drama was centred on the question of whether or not Smith qualified as a dramatist (Fischer, 2008). In a letter explaining the jury's decision, William A. Henry III states: "Her work cannot be treated as a contribution to the body of stage literature because it is not reproducible by anyone else" (Fischer H. , 2008, p. 384).

I can attest to the difficulty of reproducing Smith's work. In 1996, the audio cassette of Norman Rosenbaum, brother of Yankel who was killed in 'retaliation' for the death of Gavin Cato and whose death sparked the Crown Heights Riots, was lost. Rosenbaum's reflections are a powerful part of *Fires in the Mirror*. As I am an Australian, Smith asked me to re-record the interview as Norman Rosenbaum.²⁴ While I tried my best to perform an educated Australian Jewish scholar, I feel that I lacked conviction and authenticity. It has been remarked to me that the Australian accent that Smith has used since 1996 does not work. I confess that my attempt to replicate the accent is at fault rather than the performer.

In the first months of my work with Smith, she lost two of the most influential figures in her life: her father, Deavere Young Smith, and Barney Simon, playwright, director and co-

²⁴ Let me mention here that I was brought up in a French Irish household and while there are 'twangs' of an Australian accent, there are also 'twangs' of my schooling in Britain

founder of the Market Theatre, South Africa's first multiracial cultural centre and birthplace of the country's Indigenous Theatre movement. In an article written before his death and published in the *American Theatre* magazine shortly after Simon's death, Smith (1995) describes her experience of visiting him in South Africa:

I found myself lying awake nights in terror. When I describe this terror, people assume I mean a terror of black people (generated by events such as the murder of several police officers by a group of blacks the week that I arrived). But the fear I experienced was more profound than that. It made me realize that my own psychological life had been created as a strategy to cover a deep, fundamental fear of race relations. My adulthood was basically a victory over the psychological fear, although certainly not a victory over racism. Being in such stark surroundings, where apartheid was a visual reality, allowed the dread and panic to loom in its magnitude. When I described these feelings to Harvard ethnographer Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot, she said, "It must be like arriving in America just after slavery."

A deeply personal observation of this nature is not usual for Anna Deavere Smith and is related to her positionality of being an African American woman dealing with race and class issues, something that also impacts the choices she makes when examining the American character.

3.4 Caging the Lioness

When Anna Deavere Smith first comes out on stage to perform or lecture, she is usually greeted with a round of applause. People are keenly aware of the primacy of the artist, as no characters except Smith are present. As Dolan (2005) writes:

By allowing a multiplicity of characters to speak through her African-American female body, Smith foregrounds the notion that gender is socially

constructed and performative, as well as allowing a hopeful dialogue of difference that may lead to a more compassionate sense of common humanity.

(p. 68)

Smith initially takes the position of outsider but, on examination, she is actually both insider and outsider. Smith is firmly on stage speaking *for*, not *with*, the story-owners.

While there are rumours that Smith will be releasing a book setting out her methods, the question asked over the years has been why she has not already documented them. People who see her performances do not understand her huge process; they only see the product of this exploration. This is a form of theatre that is not easy to categorise. I suspect that it is precisely because of the unique nature of her theatrical performances and her ongoing journey of discovery, that Smith is not yet ready to stop and review or explain her techniques, except in a teaching environment. She is still finding new stories and new avenues for her theatrical journey and, as such, guidance and ways to interpret her work are limited.

When Smith was granted the prestigious MacArthur Award, her work was described as “a blend of theatrical art, social commentary, journalism, and intimate reverie” (MacArthur Foundation, 2005). It has been celebrated simultaneously for its journalistic detail as well as its empathic treatment of the people she portrays. David Richard wrote in the *New York Times* that Smith “is the ultimate impressionist: she does people’s souls” (1994). A key question remains: Will her work survive beyond her only in libraries for the occasional researcher to discover or seek out? This would represent a great loss of important theatrical history and material in my view. If she were to pass on without recording her methods in a transferable way, her work, as the Pulitzer Prize Jury suggests, will be lost. In the wider field of Verbatim and DT, it seems as though everyone is keen to put out articles and books documenting process in great detail. Hopefully Anna Deavere Smith will engage in a similar

documentation of her process for the community of artists, African Americans, women, and social questioners who so admire her work and wish to share it.

Having had the opportunity to watch and learn from Anna Deavere Smith for the year I worked with her, I consider myself to be very fortunate. Her interview techniques and her treatment and respect for her story-owners have been sources of inspiration for me. I do not share the pointillist nature of her work, however, and I believe that this is because I do not perform my own work. Unlike an actor presenting a monologue or series of monologues, Smith becomes the person, and therefore everything about them is equally important; she is talking *for* them in every conceivable way. By contrast, my aim is to speak *with* the story-owners while positioning myself in the audience. The process behind this positioning will be set forth in greater detail in Chapter 5. The next chapter sets out another influential practice for creating DT, one largely associated with the work of Moisés Kaufman and Tectonic Theater Company.

4. The Vast Kindergarten: A Moment with Moisés Kaufman

“The truth is rarely pure and never simple.”

(Kaufman, 1998, p. 1)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the work of Moisés Kaufman with particular reference to Tectonic Theater Project’s *The Laramie Project* (Kaufman, 2001). Kaufman’s exploration of the ‘other’ and the development and practice of what he has named ‘Moment Work’ will be examined, explained and placed in context with his role in the development of DT. For those who wish to explore DT using the methodology of Kaufman and Tectonic Theater Project, understanding Moment Work is also an entrée into Kaufman’s multi-faceted world. By tracing Kaufman’s early life and theatrical influences, including *Living Newspapers* (Dawson, 1999), the Epic Theatre of Brecht and Piscator, Mary Overlie’s *Viewpoints* and, specifically, early experiences as an Orthodox Jew in Caracas, it is possible to reach an understanding of the processes he uses to create the extraordinary work that Tectonic Theater Project achieves.

Moment Work is the foundation of Tectonic’s work, so it is necessary to understand the basic principles that apply to this creative process before discussing Kaufman’s background and influences. Pierotti, co-author of *The Laramie Project* and member of Tectonic and Workshop teacher, observes that Moment Work looks at “using all the elements of the stage to carry the lines of narrative” (Keen C. F., 2014). Also referred to as ‘sketching in the studio’, this is how Moisés Kaufman’s Tectonic creates its work. As Kaufman describes it in Brown’s article, “Moisés Kauffman: The copulation of form and content:”

Whenever we do a play, we have two interests in mind: form and content. This is something that happens not only in our theoretical meanderings but in our

work. Whenever we're in rehearsal, we deal with both of those issues and pose questions about both. We do exercises that explore subject matter, and we do exercises that explore form. (2005, p. 51)

This chapter will detail how a Moment is created. Drawing from my experience attending Moment Workshops Levels I and II with Pierotti as the teacher, I will examine how this work is reflected in *The Laramie Project* (2001).

4.2 Early Life

Trying to pin down a practical explanation of Kaufman's process is extraordinarily difficult. From interview to interview his background story varies until his time at the Experimental Theatre Wing (ETW) at New York University's (NYU) Tisch School of the Arts and training with Mary Overlie. Gaining an insight into his character and upbringing is equally difficult. Kaufman is a chameleon who adapts himself to the audience he is addressing and ergo part of.

Kaufman maintains he has "always been interested in how society deals with the 'other,' and how one survives in the world when you don't belong in it" (Pfefferman, 2011). He finds subject matter in the role of 'the other', the outsider or the persecuted, and this is unsurprising in light of his background. Research for this thesis is based on the interviews he has given in the Jewish, Latino, New York, and theatrical media, as well as in academia, and even here the stories vary. There is, however, a piece Kaufman (2008) wrote for a book titled *A Memory, a Monologue a Rant and a Prayer* that can be taken as his own truth about his background. In this book, published in 2008, his chapter entitled "7 Variations on Margarita Weinberg" tells the story of how his maternal grandmother moved from the Ukraine in 1937 to Venezuela, married, and gave birth to Kaufman's mother Margarita, whose Jewish name was Miriam. Kaufman's father, who was still in Eastern Europe during World War II, told of how he survived the war by painting, sewing and selling the yellow Stars of David that Jews

were forced to wear. His father, who Kaufman describes as despotic, arrived in Venezuela in 1956, met and married Miriam. Through this story, the contrast between Kaufman's parents is highlighted, with his mother brought up in relative safety and comfort, while his father was focused on survival.

Kaufman was born in Venezuela in 1964, growing up in Caracas as a payot²⁵ wearing member of a small orthodox Jewish community in an overwhelmingly Catholic country. Kaufman was terrified that his family and the members of his Yeshiva (college) might realise that something was wrong with him. At this young age, he did not have the language or understanding of his feelings and that they meant he was gay. Not even sure what 'being gay' meant, it was not until, as a teenager, he saw a San Francisco production of *Torch Song Trilogy* (Fierstein, 1982) that he understood that his feelings were normal (Hoffman, 2000). Kaufman is acutely aware of being an outsider, an experience that continued on his move to New York in 1987.

Kaufman's childhood served him well in his position of being the 'other' as he learnt lessons of survival, including the story of his father painting Stars of David for the Nazis. That his father did this so the family could eat is an example of how, when applying Talmudic Scholarship, you do not seize on the 'wrong' of helping the Nazis but you apply situation and perspective to it. He understood that his father was doing this to feed his family. The influence Orthodox Judaism has had on Kaufman's life and on his work cannot be underestimated. The study of the Babylonian Talmud is the first theatrical influence on his life and involves the interpretation of a single line in many different ways and this has carried through to the analysis and creation of theatrical moments in *Moment Work*. Separate from the Torah, where you look at sections repeatedly until you uncover explanations and understandings of passages or text, the Talmud is the interpretation of laws and a record of

²⁵ Payot is the Hebrew word for side-locks or sideburns worn by some male Orthodox Jews.

debate that has happened amongst rabbis on particular laws. On every page of the Talmud, the rabbis have taken a piece of biblical text and then recorded their debate and discussion about it, generation by generation. Discussion of their discussion is included and then, around the edge of the page, are the rabbinic commentators, often many years later, commenting about the comments. Each page is thus a historical tour back into different perspectives and interpretations of a passage of the Torah (Ninio, 2015).

The Talmud is studied with a partner, at least one other person, and involves a process of discussing, debating and grappling with the text. It is not a solitary pursuit and the study halls in very traditional communities are very noisy places. Perhaps the best portrayals of this atmosphere can be seen in the film *Yentl* (Streisand, 1983) or Cedar's (2011) *Footnote*: in the study halls, people discuss and debate, and add their voices to that page of text, even though not all comments will become canonised into law. It is important to note that each point made in the Talmud should not be taken literally, as there are many different ways to see each passage, verse, sentence, and word. The work of the scholar is to explore the different meanings and different understanding that can grow from a text. The Talmud is an interpretation of the laws of the Torah; e.g. the Torah says you shall not murder but it does not say you shall not kill. This raises the question of 'what is murder?':

The rabbis ask 'what if someone kills someone accidentally does that violate that prohibition' or 'if someone does something that results in the death of someone else by negligence is that considered murder?' Where do we draw the line? (Ninio, 2015)

The application of Talmudic scholarship and what a student would do when confronted with a statement on a subject can be seen in Kaufman's (1998) writing debut, *Gross Indecency*. Kaufman's play draws primarily on the transcripts of the three trials of Oscar Wilde that followed when in 1885 he brought a libel suit against the Marquess of

Queensberry, who was the father of his lover. Wilde was publicly named a sodomite in a series of trials that saw Wilde on the run and eventually imprisoned. In this play, Kaufman is relying on FM written by individuals who were not necessarily sympathetic to Oscar Wilde's cause. What Kaufman was able to do via Moment Work was interpret and dramatise how Oscar Wilde's prosecution and imprisonment for homosexual behaviour became a public referendum on Victorian England's attitudes about sex, gender, money, class and education (Shewey, 2000). Following Talmudic scholarship, this allows Kaufman to follow Jewish and Arabic philosopher Wolfson's idea to:

raise a series of questions before he satisfies himself of having understood its full meaning. If the statement is not clear enough, he will ask, 'What does the author intend to say here?' If it is too obvious, he will again ask, 'It is too plain, why then expressly say it?' If it is a statement of fact or of a concrete instance, he will then ask, 'What underlying principle does it involve?' (Wolfson, 1929)

The Jewish way is always to grapple with and debate a subject and to discuss it in the belief that this is how learning, understanding and knowledge occur. Kaufman has shown in his work and with Moment Work that you cannot act as an artist on your own and there must be a discussion.

While still in Venezuela and on his family's wishes, Kaufman initially enrolled in university as a business major, which is understandable when you consider his unerring commercial instinct, as well as his ability to understand what is palatable for theatregoers and sponsors. He was, however, drawn to the theatre department and an experimental company called Thespi. He has often stated that working with Artistic Director Fernando Ivosky and in the Thespi Theatre Ensemble "taught me what theatre can do" (Kaufman, 1998, p. 5). Ivosky was strongly influenced by the work of Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski and in 1987

Kaufman, needing to get away from the strictly Catholic and homophobic culture in Venezuela, moved to New York and joined NYU's ETW as a student of directing.

ETW is where he met his future husband and co-founder, in 1991, of Tectonic Theater Project, Jeffrey LaHoste, and it was also in New York that he met the third great theatrical influence in his life when he came under the tutelage of Mary Overlie, the originator of *Six Viewpoints*. Overlie describes the foundational principles behind her "Six Viewpoints" as follows:

The seed of the entire work of The Six Viewpoints is found in the simple act of standing in space. From this perspective the artist is invited to read and be educated by the lexicon of daily experience. The information of space, the experience of time, the familiarity of shapes, the qualities and rules of kinetics in movement, the ways of logics, that stories are formed and the states of being and emotional exchanges that constitute the process of communication between living creatures. (2106)

As Overlie is a choreographer, *Six Viewpoints* was initially conceived as a tool for movement-based performance.²⁶ The journey to *Viewpoints* starts with the followers of the Judson Church experiments that involved artists such as Jasper Johns, dancers inspired by their teacher Robert Dunn, and the "fundamental agreements that united this group was their belief in a nonhierararchical (sic) art..." (Bogart & Landau, 2005, p. 4). On her website, Overlie states that by "Her leveling of the creative hierarchy by focusing on the materials has conceptually and practically infected the performance worlds of both theater and dance" (Overlie, "The Six Viewpoints," 2016). By deconstructing the process into six parts, it creates a methodology for creating work using improvisation. Overlie explains the

²⁶ Anne Bogart and Tina Landau later developed three additional *Viewpoints* that incorporate an actor's processes.

elements of the stage that have always existed, even though their importance has not been recognised: “Observe the ingredients, the materials of performance, contemplate the particles. Once you find them, train yourself to listen, allow them to become your teachers, embrace them as profound partners. Allow them to create” (2016). Kaufman’s initial ideas for Moment Work appear to come from not only his exposure to the Talmud and Fernando Ivosky, but also his experiences with ETW and Mary Overlie. Overlie codified what Kaufman wanted to achieve in a theoretical and practical way by enabling him to also be narrative-based and narrative-directed. The giving of equal value to each *Viewpoint* is reflected in Kaufman’s desire to create a non-hierarchical structure to the elements of the stage rather than the traditional hierarchical structure. Overlie believes that this approach creates a bridge so that the artist can approach each element on an equal basis.

Tectonic Theater Project was founded in 1991 by Moisés Kaufman and his partner Jeffrey LaHoste (GLBTQ inc, 2004). Its immediate repertoire included the works of Samuel Beckett, Franz Xaver Kroetz, Sophie Treadwell, and Naomi Iizuka. While these artists were already challenging the accepted norms of theatre, Kaufman wanted to build on this and further explore his own theory and practice. In Rich Brown’s (2005) article, *The Copulation of Form and Content*, Kaufman describes his desire that:

Theory and practice should fuck, and their children should be the plays... The way we think about it in Tectonic is that we want form and content to copulate. We want the offspring of that copulation to be the play. We think about it in binary because we like to devote time to each one individually. And that is a theoretical as well as a pragmatic way of working. (p. 51)

Kaufman uses this and Overlie’s concept of creating a bridge between the artist and the work as the foundation for Moment Work.

4.3 What is ‘Moment Work’

Moment Work has been described as “a method for analysing and creating work structurally”, “sketching in the studio”, and as an “experimental way to answer dramatic questions (Keen C. F., Pierotti Interview, 2014). When reading the text of *The Laramie Project*, apart from a short description in the introduction to the play text, no context is given for how Moments work. This is a deliberate act on the part of Tectonic:

one of the dangers of ‘Moment Work’ is that you, as a company, can make a dramaturgically sound event because you're using all the elements of the stage to carry the lines of narrative but then if you publish the text you realise that a lot of what you're doing is not within the text and it doesn't hold together as a script. So, we were very committed to making sure that it was a publishable clear script that could be staged by anyone. We didn't want to impose, ‘We did it like this and you have to do it like this because otherwise it's not *The Laramie Project*’. (2014)

While text is still a primary element in Tectonic’s work, there is the strong belief that it is too easy to give the text power, so Tectonic explores and gives equal emphasis to other elements in the stage rather than putting everything in service of the text (Pierotti, 2014). Kaufman and Pierotti describe traditional theatre as looking like Figure 2 below:



FIGURE 2. Traditional Hierarchical/Vertical Theatre diagram sketched by Greg Pierotti (2014). Reproduced with permission.

Tectonic’s process is designed by Kaufman to allow the elements to be non-hierarchical with each element sharing equal consideration in the creation of a Moment, as shown in Figure 3.

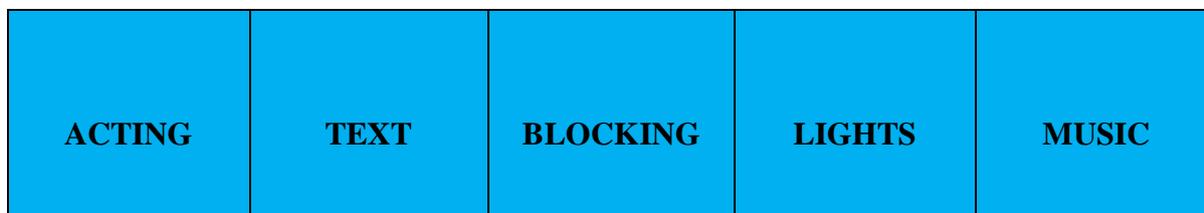


FIGURE 3. Adapted from a sketch by Moisés Kaufman (Brown, 2005).

How Figure 3 is adapted from Overlie’s *Viewpoints* can be seen in Figure 4.

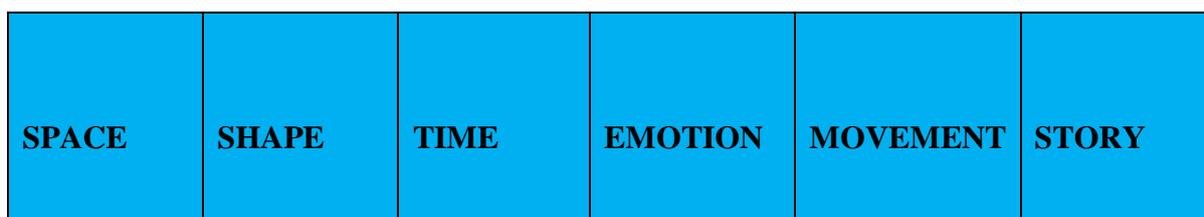


FIGURE 4. Based on Overlie’s (2016) description of the act of breaking down the elements of the stage into *Viewpoints* also known as SSTEMS.

In 2014, I was able to take Levels I and II Professional Moment Work training in Los Angeles conducted by Greg Pierotti, an actor and associate writer of *The Laramie Project*. As a writer, I was immediately confronted by the fact no one was encouraged to focus on their specialities. Carol Martin observes of this style of theatrical creation in *Dramaturgy of the Real on the World Stage*, “the playwright as a single individual is displaced or even replaced” (Martin, 2010, p. 3) and this was brutally apparent in the Moment Work workshops. The workshop group in which I participated was comprised of academics, high school teachers, professional actors and a small group of professional writers. My experience of Moment Work

was that the writers in this group became a ‘non-voice’ in the creation of Moments as there was a fear that they, the writers, would dominate the process. This fear is also translated into Tectonic’s own practice. Instead, we were all thrown into acting, directing, lighting and other unfamiliar areas which led to an interesting and challenging experience. As Pierotti (2014) states:

We do feel like text is a primary element beyond what most dramatic theatre makers want to do and at the same time we feel like it's very easy for it to get too much power so we do try to heighten the use and explore the use to the other elements in the stage rather than just feeling like we're putting everything in service of the text.

Despite this disclaimer from Pierotti, my experience suggested that Moment Work is a method that favours the actor and in turn serves itself up to the director, in this case Moisés Kaufman.

When starting to learn about or practice Moment Work, it is necessary to first recognise and list the discrete elements and forms of the stage. Each element or form has its own part in the composition of the Moment. These consist of, but are not limited to, acting, costume, darkness, gender, light, movement, music, pace, sexuality, silence, tempo, text, voice, and volume. These elements are then manipulated to construct the story being told. In the texts of *Gross Indecency* and *The Laramie Project* there are no scenes, the only definitive ‘stop points’ are the end of each act. Rather than clearly delineating scenes, multiple Moments can take place in a section of the text and while the audience is not aware of it, there are transitions within sections that are part of the move from one Moment to another.

While there are opportunities for improvisation and exploration, when not starting from the text base that traditional theatre dictates, Moment Work gives the opportunity for an artist to discover what can happen when a light suddenly turns on, a piece of music plays, a

can of food is set on a dais, or a performer stands up and then exits. These simple actions or elements are what Tectonic calls a Moment.

My approach to DVT is to think of each line of dialogue as a note in a symphony. Each note contributes to the movement or act to form a complete story. Similarly, when Moments are being created it is, as described by Pierotti (2014) like “digging into the elements of the stage and trying to look at them as separate instruments in an orchestra”. This works by the actor entering the space and saying, ‘I begin.’ The actor then does something. Or does nothing. The actor can choose to use the voice, body, and imagination in concert with costumes or props to make something, or nothing, happen on stage. When the actor is done, he/she simply says ‘I end’.

Moving to Level II of training, students were encouraged to continue exploring ways to build a link between the theatrical ideas in their minds and the elements of the stage. On a more advanced level, the best way to describe the creation of a Moment is by using an example of a Moment created as part of the workshops I attended. In these workshops, small groups of 2-4 people were given the same small piece of text, which in this case was: “It was a far cry from his childhood, when he was forced to attend a boarding school and punished by the teachers for speaking Navajo” (Stapleton & Carter, 2014).

Marcos Najera, a Stanford Journalism School graduate and friend who had also worked for Anna Deavere Smith in the 1990s, was in my group. Najera is also part Navajo. We both immediately recognised these lines to be about Chester Nez, the last of the original Navajo code talkers of World War II, who had just died. In a small barren dance studio, like children with an incomplete set of building blocks, we had ten minutes to create a Moment. Najera had an iPod that included haunting Navajo Rap music, so we decided that this was our soundtrack. We found costumes that we shaped into the wings of an eagle and the third member of the group became mother earth. With a tutu that we had reformed as wings,

Najera used two portable studio barrels to fly and dance with the wind. We presented to the other groups with a mournful Navajo rap in the background as mother earth gave birth to this American eagle, played by Najera. The feeling is best described as tribal with the thematic idea, devised literally in moments, being that he had broken the bonds with earth and gone into his spirit animal.

As a writer, one of the confronting things about presenting a Moment is how the presenter is allowed to interact with the audience. In terms of teaching drama, the following practice is a fantastic exercise, but from my point of view, as a writer I find it confronting and, more significantly, disempowering. The presenter/s of the Moment is/are not allowed in any way to explain what their intention is with the piece. The audience gives feedback on what they like and do not like, as well as their interpretation. The presenter is not allowed to respond. The idea is that your intentions for the Moment do not matter; only what the audience interprets is of importance. This also applies to Kaufman's role as director of the final product. Only what he sees as relevant is kept. He makes the final decision. There is no consensus, as it comes down to what Kaufman decides works and what does not. As a creator/artist the comments can be taken on board and potentially used. Even if the audience has spotted something that has been created unintentionally that can be used, at no time is disclosure of your intent permitted. As Najera (2014), who also works at the Centre Theatre Group of Mark Taper Forum, observed:

My only concern about 'Moment Work' is how Tectonic chooses to talk about, discuss and dissect the moments each artist creates. The vocabulary is a bit punitive. Not intentionally I'm sure. To put it succinctly, after an actor or group of actors share a 'Moment' with the whole group a facilitator asks these two questions: 'What did people love about that moment?' And also, 'What did people feel was less successful about that moment?' I hate this vocabulary

quite a bit, because it accidentally implies more success/less success...good/
bad, and right/wrong. (p. 3)

In 2014, the training of non-Tectonic members in Moment Work was a new project for Tectonic. That it was so confronting for many of the participants was, in part, because, with a few exceptions, they did not know each other. When working with its own members, Tectonic has the advantage of familiarity. The simplicity of 'I begin' and the lack of voice in feedback sessions is something Tectonic members would be used to; they know that it is allowable to make bad or unsuccessful Moments and that they can say anything without consequence. Another important note is that while on the surface there appears to be a form of consensus making, as Kaufman makes the final decisions, this is a false impression. As work is developed, other members of the groups can take and manipulate what they want from your Moment as once you are involved in creating a Moment under the tutelage of Tectonic you have no personal ownership of an actual Moment. Over the course of two weeks, hundreds of Moments were created and, by stretching ourselves from our comfort zones, we created some interesting work.

Creating work as part of Tectonic is "fast. You have all these Moments, you have Moments with text and then you have text that you're still interested in that is not yet a Moment" (2014). All of these Moments need to be whittled down to a performance text. Considering the amount of process that went in to the creation of these 'Moments' and transitions it is hard to understand why Tectonic do not provide greater detail on the elements of the stage that are used in individual Moments in *The Laramie Project*:

...because people don't know the Moment Work and how the movement of the elements of the stage is all part of the performance when we make work ...
you'll see a Moment then everything will stop and they'll move, lights will go down, they'll move somewhere else, then lights will come back up and they'll

start the next Moment and the drive just drops out of the show. (Keen C. F., Pierotti Interview, 2014)

Without Moment Work being clearly explained to those who create independent productions of *The Laramie Project*, much of the ‘why’ of the play is lost. This lack of explanation is because:

We wanted people to be able to take it and make it their own and I think if we hadn't done that it wouldn't have become the phenomenon that it did... I think if we had been, ‘you have to go like this’, ‘you have to move these chairs and do this thing’ it would have felt too constrained. (2014)

Despite this stated intent of Kaufman, as described by collaborator Pierotti, in the next Acting Edition of the play, Tectonic plan to place advice about the importance of transitions between Moments and, according to Tectonic’s website, tectonictheaterproject.org, there is also a planned Moment Work training book to be published in 2017.

4.4 The Laramie Moments

In what has developed into a thematic trilogy, the first of Kaufman’s (1998) copulations was *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*, which was based on FM from the transcripts of the trials of Oscar Wilde, including letters, articles and commentary from the time in which he was thrown in gaol for his ‘acts of indecency’. The most recent work in the trilogy, following the success of *The Laramie Project* and *Gross Indecency*, was produced in 2005 when Kaufman directed and helped in the development of Wright's (2004) Pulitzer Prize-winning drama, *I Am My Own Wife*. This is the story of the survival of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, a transvestite, who navigates her way through the Nazi regime of World War II and then communism in East Berlin, to be later hailed as a heroine. These plays reflect Kaufman’s own experiences of isolation and the ‘other’, with the masks adopted to shield the ‘other’ a recurring theme throughout his work. As Nietzsche (1998) wrote in

Beyond Good and Evil, “Every philosophy conceals a philosophy; every opinion is also a hideout, every word also a mask” (p. 229). Describing himself, Kaufman opines:

I am Venezuelan, I am Jewish, I am gay, I live in New York. I am the sum of all my cultures.... I am not a gay writer. I am not a Latino writer. I am not a Jewish writer. I am a writer whose experience of the world has been tainted by all my experiences of it. (Jewish Currents, 2014)

After working for two years on *Gross Indecency*, Kaufman revisited Brecht’s *Street Scene* (Brecht & Bentley, 1949).

In October 1998, the media was dominated by stories revolving around the horrific murder of a young gay university student, Matthew Shepard. Kaufman turned to the *Street Scene* (Brecht & Bentley, 1949), which is described as the foundation for Epic Theatre:

In it Brecht uses as a model the following situation: “an eyewitness demonstrating to a collection of people how a traffic accident took place.” He goes on to build a theory about his “epic theatre” based on this model.

(Kaufman, 2000, p. 17)

Matthew Shepard’s murder was ripe for interpretation through the *Street Scene* (1949). The twenty-one-year-old studied political science, foreign relations and languages at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. On October 6, 1998:

two men, Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson, abducted Matt and drove him to a remote area east of Laramie, Wyoming. He was tied to a split-rail fence where the two men severely assaulted him with the butt of a pistol. He was beaten and left to die in the cold of the night. Almost 18 hours later, he was found by a bicyclist who initially mistook him for a scarecrow. (Matthew Shepard Foundation, 2015)

Shepard died six days later. From this hate crime, *The Laramie Project* was born. While Kaufman (2000) believed the model of Brecht's *Street Scene* could be used when looking at the events of Laramie, he also questioned the role of theatre in history: "Is theatre a medium that can contribute to the national dialogue on current events?" (p. 17).

The events in Laramie provided an opportunity to explore this possible role for the company. An ensemble was brought together that included actors, under the guidance of former journalist and playwright Steven Belber, and Leigh Fondakowski, who served as head writer and dramaturg, making up the company of travellers to Laramie. Armed with tape recorders, the group wanted to answer the simple question 'What did the 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard do to the town of Laramie?' The assigned writers in the ensemble, which included Greg Pierotti, put together the full-length stage play using transcripts of over 200 interviews, personal journal entries and other sourced text, including the television coverage by the media outside the hospital from the time when Matthew lay dying. As Kaufman observes, "In the end, the best any interviewer can hope to do is to be as unobtrusive as possible, and to retell the story as faithfully as possible" (Sullivan, 2009). With this material, they created Moments like building blocks and, under the direction of Kaufman, the play was created. While Kaufman is represented as a character in the play, he is not an actor in the work and remains firmly in the audience as director and final arbiter of what is in the play and what is not.

In Hoffman's *New York Times* article (2000), Kaufman describes *The Laramie Project* as having "Talmudic arcs [that] fuse into a coherent circle". There are three narrative arcs in *The Laramie Project*: Matthew Shepard and the role of media in reporting the crime, including Shepard's hospitalisation and eventual death; the town of Laramie and the reactions of its inhabitants to the events; and the experience of the company, Tectonic, as it interviewed people about the crime and observed events. In the play, Moisés Kaufman and his team take

on the role of outsiders, while Matthew Shepard becomes the unseen²⁷ ‘other’, and the townspeople represent the shattered status quo of a small town thrown into the world spotlight. All ultimately become outsiders and experience being the ‘other’ in the aftermath of this brutal act of hate and murder. There are approximately one hundred characters represented in *The Laramie Project* who are played by eight actors. The characters can, like the narrative, be grouped into three categories: the members of the company that went to Laramie; the individuals in Laramie who knew or were impacted by Matthew’s murder; and the media.

The person who does not speak in the play is Matthew Shepard. This is ultimately not a play about him, rather it is about the act of violence and the reaction of the town, the Tectonic group, and the media that are the focus. An attempt was made to represent Shepard on stage in ‘Moments’ created during the sketching in the studio. Shepard collected blue glass bottles and these were ‘played’ with in various ways to try and include Matthew in the play. The company:

talked a lot about how you represent Matthew ... Matthew collected glass bottles and blue glass so we had all this blue glass and we made moments with that...And then ultimately he just sort of became like a presence in the empty space. (2014)

Ultimately, the idea of the blue bottles was discarded. However, there are Moments in the play when the audience gets to sense Matthew. A memorable Moment is when 20-year-old Romaine Patterson, best friend of Matthew Shepard and now a gay activist, and her friends don seven-foot angel wings so they can encircle anti-gay Fred Phelps²⁸ and his ministry of

²⁷ Productions such as the 2001 Company B production of *The Laramie Project*, directed by Kate Gaul, did use images of Matthew Shepard. This is something that Tectonic Theater Project never does in its own productions.

²⁸ Phelps, the founder of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas. He was a homophobe who encouraged the picketing of the funerals of homosexuals. He organised a picket at Matthew Shepard’s funeral in the belief that his death was the result of God’s hatred of America’s “bankrupt values” and tolerance of homosexual lifestyles.

hate who have come to support Matthew's killers. Romaine's actions and her Angel Action group left the picketers silent and invisible (Patterson & Hinds, 2005). In addition, at the end of the play as she leaves the stage, Romaine hangs her jacket on a chair, "she's talking about Matthew and so when she leaves, there's a person there because clothes are so evocative of that" (Pierotti, 2014). As the group could not talk with Matthew, it was not possible to understand his experience; thus the company was forced to focus on their own reactions, the media's response, and the shifts that had taken place in the town since his murder, while the major player in the drama is absent, creating echoes of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

In the play notes for *The Laramie Project*, Kaufman (2001) states, "The set is a performance space. There are a few tables and chairs. Costumes and props are always visible" (p. 24). The chairs and tables provide an additional line of narrative to the play. They offer a line of discourse that starts at the beginning of the play with the actors sitting behind the tables 'teaching' the viewers about Laramie. This use of the tables and chairs occurred because of a Moment created for the end of Act I describing how Matthew Shepard was found, barely alive, tied to a wooden buck fence outside the town of Laramie. A passing cyclist thought he was a scarecrow. The image of the fence portrayed in the media gives the impression of the fence being more remote than it actually is, but there is a feeling of desolation surrounding it. Moisés Kaufman says his first impression was of concentration camp wire while others say the vision of Matthew evokes a crucifixion.

The Moment from which many of the visual cues of the play are taken is at the end of Act I and revolves around the fence. The only clues given as to the look of "The Fence" are found on Tectonic's website and in verbal descriptions of the original production. However, it is a look that is much replicated because of the clues given in the dialogue which evokes a perfect Moment of the elements joining together to create one meaning. Pierotti (2014) describes the creation of the Moment for The Fence:

We pose ourselves dramatic problems and then we use the ‘Moment Work’ to try to solve them so we were saying ‘how do we represent the fence on stage given that we don't want a fence on stage?’ I had noticed about the people who talk about the fence or in my interviews or in many of my interviews and in the media was that it was very analytical and theoretical...it felt very distanced from the emotional impact of the fence itself. So I made a moment where an actor would come out and they would set a chair down and they would sit down in the chair and they would speak one of these heavy texts about, ‘the fence’ like ‘it isn't really in the middle of the prairie, the media made it look that way because it's a better media image’, that kind of thing. And so six actors came out and did that...then somebody lit a clip light and put a little light spill on the chairs and the actors all filed off and the chairs were sitting there in this column of light. At this point Steven Mede Johnson, a company member from Tectonic, comes out and says: “The fence—I’ve been out there four times, I’ve taken visitors. That place has become a pilgrimage site. Clearly that’s a very powerful personal experience to go out there. It is so stark and so empty and you can’t help but think of Matthew out there for eighteen hours in nearly freezing temperatures, with that view up there isolated, and, the ‘God, my God, why have you forsaken me’ comes to mind.

(The Laramie Project, 2001, p. 34)

The reveal of *The Fence* is very powerful. When I first saw a stage production of *The Laramie Project* in 2002, the only DT work I had been familiar with were stories presented as individual blocks, as in the work of Anna Deavere Smith. It had not occurred to me that a dialogue could be created with DT. Since that time, the way that I approach my work has been affected by the experience of seeing this play. The bringing together of Moments to

create a play has been described as stringing together a pearl necklace in much the same way that I regard every sentence as a note in a piece of music that becomes the piece. It is here that the similarity between our respective styles ends.

Each writer of DT and VT has different standards or definitions of what ‘verbatim’ actually means. For Anna Deavere Smith, every word and repetition is represented. Headphone Theatre literally repeats the actual lines that are being spoken. I regard ‘ums’ and ‘ahs’ as punctuation and, unless it will change the intent of the text, they are cut. Generally, though, an individual sentence is sacred unto itself and represents a note in the music of the play. In *The Laramie Project*, Schmit (2001) states: “And I will speak with you, I will trust that if you write a play of this, that you say it right. You need to do your best to say it correct” (p. 104). The writers are actually characters in the play, so there is a certain amount of freedom with the verbatim text. This can be seen in the ordering and structuring of the play. While still maintaining the integrity of a sentence, they, like myself, remove the ‘ums’ and ‘you knows’. This cleaning up of the text presents the individuals in a way that does not make them seem repetitive or inarticulate, although this can also be used as a device. The company also maintained close contact with the interviewees and the first performances took place with them in the audience. Afterwards, the cast consulted with the interviewees to make sure that they were happy with the representations of themselves; an open and constant dialogue was maintained.

4.5 It’s Good to be the King

Tectonic Theater Project and the creation of *The Laramie Project* can be likened to the United States government. Company members creating Moments are the Congress, the audience is the Judiciary, and Kaufman is the President. The Congress formulates the legislation, the Judiciary checks that it is palatable and then passes it on to be signed off by the President. By placing himself in the audience, Kaufman gets to act as the Judiciary and

President and can veto anything that is presented to him. He has ultimate command of all the material. This is also reflected in his experience of Talmudic Laws and scholarship; as Rabbi to Tectonic, Kaufman gets to decide who has made a contribution worthy of inclusion.

That Kaufman has a sharp business instinct is shown by the decisions made about the film, and also that he knows what is palatable for audiences. The only control the creators of Moments have is by withholding Moments. Whether this has happened is unlikely and a matter of conjecture; nevertheless, there have been issues relating to personal ownership among the key writers:

It gets more difficult when it becomes contractual and billing and point distribution and all that stuff because it's just hard stuff ...one of the things we say as a company that we want to really shift the way people think about making work in America or in the theatre...I don't think you can do that without shifting the business model...I don't think you can ask people to participate fully and create fully and then use an old school, this is the writer, this is the director model of distribution. (Pierotti, 2014)

The opportunity to take Moment Work classes was invaluable to my understanding of how Kaufman creates his work. In *Creative Spaces for Qualitative Researching: Living Research* by Joy Higgs, et al, describe how taking part in the practice you are examining can allow the researcher to take on the “The task of creative approaches to researching living practices... to reveal and symbolically re-present them” (2011, p. 7). What I discovered in Moment Work classes was that by relinquishing myself to the process I lost control of my own artistic experience. By becoming subject to criticism without the ability to defend a Moment was alienating and manipulative. During the workshops, I kept remembering the line in Tennessee Williams’ 1958 play *Suddenly Last Summer* when the character Catherine quotes Edwin Arlington Robinson, “We're all of us children in a vast kindergarten trying to spell God's

name with the wrong alphabet blocks” (Williams, 1986, p. 119). We were shown the elements of the stage and, like children, were trying to recreate Kaufman’s magic. This is a magic that has come from years of study and specialisation by the company members who already know and trust each other and are comfortable with the risk of making ‘bad’ art. The goal of the workshops was to “engage with the non-textual elements of the stage – exploring lights, sound, costumes, movement, text, character, and architecture – to discover their full theatrical potential and inherent poetry” (Project, 2015). As an exercise for students of theatre, Moment Work is something that needs to be handled gently, as there is a lot at risk amongst peers, particularly when discussion of success and failure are in play. However, by students using their basic toolkit of voice, body, and imagination it does provide a window onto a new way of creating work. I would suggest that, as teachers, we avoid the penalising language Tectonic uses when discussing others’ Moments, but use the exercise to teach that, regardless of the intent of a Moment, the audience may interpret it differently.

There is no doubting Moisés Kaufman’s genius, but the creation of Moments is arduous and confronting. While there is a freedom to be found in creating work that does not come from text, as a writer of DVT this is alien to everything that I work with: words and found material narratives. What Moment Work does provide is an opportunity to build a bridge between the theatrical ideas that already exist in our minds and the elements of the stage. Regardless of whether or not as creators we are willing to go on this journey, it is still important to understand how the journey is made.

5. Seeking Dorothy in the Land of OZ²⁹

“...and when we speak we are afraid
our words will not be heard
nor welcomed
but when we are silent
we are still afraid
So it is better to speak
remembering
we were never meant to survive...”
(Lorde, 1995, p. 32)

5.1 Behind the Curtain

The Death of Kings (Keen C. F., 2016)³⁰ is a full-length DVT play created as an example of a writer speaking *with* the story-owners and positioning the writer in the audience. It is also created as an outline for those who may wish to make work using the same DVT practices. The play focuses on the experiences of self-identified white gay men in Sydney, Australia, and the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic by the gay community during the 1980s.³¹

This chapter offers an auto-ethnographic framework for mapping out the influences on the writer of a particular piece of DVT. Understanding the influences on the storyteller as playwright is as important as appreciating the story-owners’ or interviewees’ tales. The play cannot be separated from the storyteller, just as the work cannot exist without the story-owner, as once the story-owner passes the story to a storyteller, the message becomes “larger

²⁹ The title of this chapter is a tribute to Judy Garland’s image within the gay community and the character Dorothy, from the film *The Wizard of Oz* (Weinstein, 2009), a name that is often used to identify an individual as gay. This is derived from a scene in the film when the somewhat effeminate Cowardly Lion is asked if he is a “friend of Dorothy?” (Weinstein, 2009). *OZ* is the colloquial name for Australia. This was also the ‘working title’ for the play *The Death of Kings* (2016).

³⁰ The play is included in this thesis as Chapter 8.

³¹ The Centre for Disease Control upgraded HIV from an epidemic to a pandemic in 2001 (CDC, 2006).

than the individual incident” (Shuman, 2010, p. 6). By providing an auto-ethnographic view to the motivation, inspiration, ideation and creation of the work, it is possible to further demonstrate the presence of an artistic element not found in journalism practice. A goal behind the development of the play has been specifically to outline the importance of the positionality and influences on the writer of DVT and to seek to understand the reality of a situation as lived by its participants. The narrative of the play is derived from FM and from interviews with self-identified white gay men who experienced the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Sydney, Australia, from different perspectives. By utilising these components, an innovative record of events is created.

As discussed in previous chapters, the style of my work and primary introduction to DT and VT has been the work of Anna Deavere Smith, and Moisés Kaufman’s *The Laramie Project* (2001). Where DT is grounded in journalism, VT has only emerged since the development of recording technology (Paget, 2008). Verbatim is practised in Australia and the UK and is different from DT as it does not necessarily focus on a particular event. While VT dates from the 1960’s (Paget, 2008), and the roots of DT can be traced to the early 1900’s (Dawson, 1999), the lines between the two forms have now become blurred.

As has been seen in Chapters 2 and 3, Smith’s approach to her subjects and her positionality places her on the stage. Kaufman’s work places him both on stage and in the audience. To show how my practice is different, I would like to draw on the imagery of Brecht and Bentley’s (1949) *Street Scene*. The story-owners are part of the event of witnessing and being involved in a car accident. Smith is the ‘policewoman’ recording each person’s interpretation of the ‘event’. She arrives on the scene and as they relate their impressions, separates them from the crowd and talks with them one on one. The person is sharing their story with just her. This allows Smith to place herself at the front of the story and be part of the story when reporting the incident in court by speaking *for* these individuals.

Our second ‘event’ is being recorded by ‘policeman’ Moisés Kaufman. As the stories unfold, Kaufman repositions the witness to be closer to the car and victim. It is the impact that the car and victim is having on those relating their stories, including Kaufman that is important. The victim is never mentioned, but all are discussing and interpreting their reaction to the accident. This is *The Laramie Project* (2001). The victim is the protagonist, Matthew Shepard, who never speaks in *The Laramie Project*, and it is the expanding ripples of experience from witnessing the car accident that constitute the story. Kaufman, as the policeman, is also a witness, which places him in the audience and on the stage of the court. He is speaking *with* the participants. Both Smith and Kaufman as police officers are as important as the story-owners in the retelling of the tale in the court of public opinion – the theatre. In my practice, I place myself firmly in the audience as an observer, a gumshoe unnamed third-party journalist who has come on the scene with a photographer called CHORUS. I record the witnesses’ impressions and then share them with my readers. This places me as speaking *with* the story-owners and also *with* the audience through CHORUS.

The intertextuality represented in this work is represented by FM, a concept set out in the introduction, which in my application of it in *The Death of Kings* includes the use of a newspaper article featuring discussion of what was to become known as HIV/AIDS, music of the time, poetry that reflects the era, and recorded demonstrations of safe condom use as presented by the AIDS Council of New South Wales (ACON). FM can be seen in Kaufman’s work with the use of court transcripts and, specifically, media conferences in the text of *The Laramie Project*. Smith also uses media briefings as FM, which reflects the intertextuality shown in Tribunal Theatre³², Theatre of Testimony³³ and DT. Until recently, the use of FM was not as common in VT practice (Paget, 2008). The use of FM and the verbatim

³² Tribunal Theatre features edited court transcripts.

³³ A writer works with a subject’s personal testimony e.g. Wright’s (2004) *I Am My Own Wife* that is based on his conversations with German transgendered woman, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf.

presentation of interviews conducted specifically for this work reflect both DT and VT practice, which is why I refer to my practice as DVT. Unlike Kaufman and Smith, my practice actively reflects a belief that our lives have multiple narratives provided by music, media, visual representation and poetry and that, along with the stories of a time, the historical essence of a place and period of time is found in the cultural intertextuality of these multiple narratives.

Through this work, a greater understanding of the time is created and shows how the level of acceptance and safety for gay men, and particularly HIV positive gay men, are not things to be taken for granted. Using the latest data, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reports that since the start of the epidemic 70 million people have been infected with HIV and approximately 35 million have died (World Health Organization, 2017). AVERT³⁴ reports that in 2017, of the 36.7 million globally with HIV, 40% of these are not aware that they are carriers (AVERT, 2017). The need for ongoing awareness and visibility of the virus is imperative, as “An estimated 25,313 people in Australia live with HIV. In 2014, 1,025 people were diagnosed with HIV, with the majority of new cases (68%) occurring among gay and bisexual men” (Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations, 2015). These statistics reinforce the need to continue to inform and share stories of the virus as a warning of what still constitutes a threat to the gay and bisexual communities. By bearing witness and presenting these stories, informed by statistics and current thinking, the goal is to utilise the entertainment value of DVT to educate.

5.3 Research: Dorothy Lives in Kansas, but OZ is Australia

Prior to embarking on the research for this work, I was initially conflicted that my positionality as a straight woman was not appropriate for this story. What right did I have to

³⁴ Founded in 1986, AVERT is one of the first charities to provide people with knowledge about HIV to protect themselves and others from infection, reduce stigma and break down barriers to treatment and support (<http://www.avert.org/what-we-do/about-avert>).

proceed with this work? Was empathy and the loss of many friends to this disease enough to honestly tell the story, let alone get individuals to talk with me? I decided to start with research on the times and see if that led me into a story. I quickly discovered that in Australia there is a wonderful selection of oral histories in the National Library as well as multimedia collections all over Australia, though unfortunately these are usually only accessed by scholars. I then turned my attention to theatre of the time. The 1980s were a vibrant and exciting time. The Australia Council found its funding 'legs' and Indigenous Theatre; Women's Voices; Political Theatre; Multicultural Drama; Puppetry and Visual Theatre; Theatre For Young People; and Community Theatre flourished. The bicentennial year of 1988 saw the premiere of Louis Nowra's (1992) *Capricornia*, Michael Gow's (1988) *1841* and Jack Davis's (1987) *Honey Spot*. The 1980s also saw the completion of the Melbourne Theatre Company's (MTC) Arts Centre and Melbourne also had the first Fringe Festival (1983); the Next Wave Festival (1985); the Spoleto Festival (1986) and the Comedy Festival (1987) (Milne, 2014). It seemed that for everyone but the gay community it was a vibrant time for theatre in Australia. What was apparent is that in the 80s, the stories were still too raw or the story-owners were dead or dying. People were literally fighting for their lives. Looking beyond the 80s, there is still not a lot of Australian theatrical representation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic to be found. *Holding the Man* by Timothy Conigrave (2009) was written in 1995 as a reflection of the 80s and then adapted for the stage in 2006 by Tommy Murphy (2010), followed ten years later by a film version. *Champion Decent's Three Winters Green* came out in 1993 but, apart from these, the number of published theatrical works focusing on the white gay male experience in Australia during the epidemic are few.

In the 1980s, Australia was pervaded by American culture. Films such as *The Band Played On* (Shilts, 2007) and *Longtime Companion* (René, 1989), and plays including *Angels in America* (Kushner, 2013), *The Torch Song Trilogy* (Fierstein, 1982), and Larry Kramer's

(2011) *The Normal Heart* provided a backdrop to the HIV/AIDS epidemic that was also occurring in Australia. Thus, as with many aspects of Australian culture, we were being spoon fed our culture from America; it was good food, but the story we were told was America's response and not our own. This influence is pervasive, as shown in the 2014 Mardi Gras production of Campion Decent's (1993) *Three Winters Green* (1993), which featured poster art work of the actors wearing angel wings, alluding to *Angels in America*. As recently as 2016, Black Swan Theatre company in Perth, Western Australia, staged a production of *Angels in America* (Kushner, 2013) and, in 2014 when Australia hosted the World HIV/AIDS conference, Belvoir Street in Sydney mounted a production of *Angels in America* while MTC put on an Australian play, *Playing Rock Hudson* (Lukey, 2013) about Rock Hudson's lover's court battle after the star's AIDS-related death.

What is obvious is that, despite the lack of artistic coverage, Australia is widely regarded as having had the world's most successful response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. As William Bowtell AO, who was senior advisor to then-Health Minister Neal Blewett,³⁵ relates in *The Death of Kings*:

We believed in prevention. The idea that prevention was better than cure, was cheaper than cure and the mobilising of people around, behaviour change, modest behaviour change, backed sometimes by law, but by education and discussion, all of the things that work for a highly literate educated society were a good idea, were a good public policy. (Keen C. F., 2016, p. 32)

Bowtell, regarded as the architect of the Australian response along with the Hon. Dr. Neal Blewett AC, and then Treasurer Hon. Paul Keating, knew education and prevention were the

³⁵ Health Minister Blewett (1983–1990) played a significant role in the introduction of Medicare. Medicare is the Commonwealth funded health insurance scheme that provides free or subsidised health care services to the Australian population (Parliament of Australia, 2004).

most cost effective way to deal with the epidemic and so a set of policies was quickly implemented.

When embarking on research, understanding the time leading up to particular events can provide an important additional context for those events. The first known case of HIV/AIDS in Australia was recorded in 1982, with the first known AIDS death occurring in 1983. It was two years after this that Australia developed its response to HIV/AIDS (Bowtell, 2012). There is a misconception that, prior to this, the gay community in Sydney was united. As with most communities, the reality was that there were sociological, socio-economic, political and cultural divides. The joining together of the communities in Australia to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic is reminiscent of what transpired with gay rights activism in the wake of the Stonewall Riots of 1969.

On June 22, 1969, actress and gay icon Judy Garland died from an overdose of barbiturates. What followed was a two-day funeral, culminating on June 27, which drew over 20,000 people to the Frank E. Campbell Funeral Home in Upper Manhattan. There is much debate over whether Garland's death sparked the Stonewall Riots, or was merely a catalyst. What can be taken from the funeral is that there were crowds of gay men recognising each other as such on the streets outside the funeral parlour. In the early hours of the following morning, a riot erupted which continued for two days. The epicentre was the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street in Lower Manhattan. At the time, the feeling in the gay community was "they had nothing to lose" (Weinstein, 2009). It is this riot that marks the start of the Gay Liberation Movement.

In 1983, the need to rise with 'nothing to lose', was brought about by the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. While the Stonewall Riots were many decades, even centuries, in the making, the Australian response to HIV/AIDS was formulated and successfully implemented within a matter of years. As Australia is regarded as the leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS

and the reaction of the community in the early and late 1980s is still held as the most efficient in containing and addressing the virus, it is appropriate to consider how, 30 years on, the gay community regards the events of the 1980s and to explore the political climate and attitudes towards HIV/AIDS during this time.

5.4 Tag of Empathy (TOE)

For a story-owner to trust you, they need to feel comfortable. This can be achieved in many ways: environment, selecting a suitable time of day, discreet recording equipment, and creating a safe place for both the story-owner and storyteller. It is vitally important to obtain trust at the stage when you are first reaching out for interviews. In order to facilitate this, I employ what I call a Tag of Empathy (TOE), which provides essential reassurance to the story-owner at this key foundational moment in the process. I want the story-owner to know it is only a TOE not 'a foot in the door' type of experience that we will share. With the play on 9/11 I was able to share that I had lost a friend, a stewardess on UA175, the second plane that hit the Twin Towers. Also, after a visit to Australia, I had landed in New York on my way to Atlanta, which was then my home, at 7:30 am on 9/11. With my one-year-old son in my arms, I watched the devastation unfold. I was not wanting to tell my story, or my friend Alicia's, but this TOE made me a safe person to talk with.³⁶ I would explain my background with the event to the story-owners by way of introduction as part of my desire to spread the enormity of the tale further and tell stories that had not been heard. If the story-owner was interested in then telling their story, without any persuasion from me, it is possible to see that the TOE had made the story-owner more comfortable. This is enforced by the tenet of psychology that, by bearing witness, the story-owner, the person who experienced the trauma,

³⁶ The story of Alicia Titus is told by her father, John Titus, in the book *Losing Alicia: A Father's Journey After 9/11* (2011).

gains a sense of validation by sharing their story. By sharing their story, the story-owner becomes acknowledged where it may have otherwise gone unnoticed. When I explained the project and my TOE, the story-owner was welcoming and happy to talk, even when the interviews had not been prearranged. An example of this was when I met with a group of New York firefighters. In an interview that lasted three hours, one of the firefighters had not said a word. Just as I was beginning to wind up, he leant forward and shared his story. This is part of what he shared:

And it was at that moment, we were about to enter the South Tower, and what I heard was the pancaking of the floors. I heard the sound of the floors, it was very methodical. [*shouts each 'BANG!' while clapping hands*] "BANG! BANG! BANG!" I could hear the noise. I knew what it was, I knew what it was. Well like I said, I had jumpers coming down around us.

I had a prior brush with international terrorism in my life. So actually I...when the Trade Center came around, I...well, I think I dealt with it pretty good, for a while. But back in 1988, my younger sister, was a College student, was killed in the terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, over Lockerbie, Scotland. And that uh, killed a piece of me, when that happened.

So, you know, the losses were so severe, and I lost so many close, personal friends across the board. Not just guys that I went to, that I worked at the firehouse with... kids that I grew up with, guys that I went to high school with, guys that I knew my whole life, were gone. They were my neighbours. Not only did I work with him, but he was my *neighbour*. Gone. And ah ... how do you deal with that? You know? I had, like I said prior experience dealing with it, and ah...maybe I was a little bit better prepared? Or I had a little different perspective on it, maybe?

My concern is that fifty years from now, a hundred years from now, that the story should be told the way that it happened. That it should not be revised or changed. Tell it the way it is. Tell why it happened, and what happened, and what the firefighters did. What everybody did! We...the firefighters weren't the only ones who suffered! Everybody suffered.

But...tell it the way it is, and there is an element that does not want to do that.

They want to change it already. They want to spin it. And ah, tell a different story. I have no time for that. (Keen, 2017, pp. 46-49)

This is how retired firefighter John Jermaine ended his story. The other two firefighters got up and hugged him. One said “That’s the first time you’ve told us that” – it was nine years after 9/11 and he finally was able to testify to his experience. To wait so long to share stories of horror is not unusual. It can either be because the survivor cannot share the memory or because there is no one ‘safe’ to share it with. As a child in Auschwitz and Buchenwald, Elie Wiesel was unable to speak of his experiences for ten years after liberation. In his 1958 book *Night*, he explains that the reason he broke his silence is “For the dead and the living, we must bear witness” (Wiesel, 1993). This is also central to my motivation for *The Death of Kings* (2016).

When I became aware that many of the stories of the gay community in Sydney could soon be lost due to the ageing of the population, the research and play gained a sense of urgency and, since 2011, I have been researching the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s in both Australia and the USA. So, what gave me an entrée to the story of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s in Australia? Without a TOE, it is difficult for the story-owner to understand your interest in their story. It may be that they would love to have someone ‘bear witness’ but if they have not already shared their stories before, opening up to someone without a TOE is unlikely as, without empathy, without connection to the subject, you are liable to be seen as

being invasive. Having worked since the mid-1970s in community radio, as vice president of Community Radio 2XX at the ANU, and for various NGOs, I have strong contacts within the GLBTIQA and HIV+ community. During the 1980s and early 1990s, I was also involved with the initial set up of the community response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. My work as a community activist is well known and has provided me with the TOE that has enabled me to draw on contacts within the GLBTIQA community. I also drew on a wealth of friends who were at the forefront of the fight against HIV/AIDS and having these friends has certainly made this journey easier.

5.5 Interviews: Can We Talk

The initial reaction I had from older members of the gay community was that no one wanted to hear their stories. There is a divide between what is called the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ guard that comes from the ‘old’ guard believing that the ‘new’ guard has no interest or respect for what the ‘old’ guard did. This feeling, as will be discussed later in the chapter, made a great impact on many of the creative decisions taken in the creation of the work and who the target audience of the play would be. I assured the ‘old’ guard that the advantage of talking with me was that I had no agenda. I was not associated with any particular group and would not play politics with their stories. I believe that this is what made many of these stories fresh. The story-owners were excited to tell their stories to a new audience and here I was, a first-time listener to these stories. I was able to enter this subjective world of the story-owner by “taking them seriously on their own terms and thereby providing first hand, intimately involved accounts of life” (Plummer, 2003, p. 18) and as I had no agenda other than to provide a place for their stories, I believe the story-owners felt freer to express their memories of the time.

Whether you are writing as part of an academic exercise or for independent production, ethics play a vital role in DVT. Initially, I met with ACON, the Bobby Goldsmith

Foundation, Positive Life, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), the Albion Street Centre (Australia's only major multidisciplinary medical centre with a primary focus on HIV management), and other individuals and organisations. I used my TOE and outlined what I wanted to do, which was to bring the voices of the 'old' guard to life for a younger audience and have these stories become fresh and show their relevance in the current times. The positive response from these organisations was overwhelming. The support of these groups verified my TOE for story-owners and others who wished to be part of the project. This support formed the foundation of my ethics clearance from Monash³⁷ and Flinders Universities and gave me access to applying for ethics clearance from ACON³⁸ and the support of the National Association of People Living with HIV (NAPWA), Positive Life NSW, and Living Positive NSW. These organisations provided much of the funding for this work's development and early public presentations.

During my research, I found an article by Ross Duffin, who was responsible for creating the educational response to HIV/AIDS for ACON in the 1980s. I had known Duffin in the 80s through my work in community radio. We had last seen each other at the 1987 Mardi Gras when *Dykes On Bikes* made their premiere appearance (Dykes On Bikes, 2016) and when he officially became a postulant for the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.³⁹ I tracked Duffin down and he was the first to be interviewed for the work, as well as a great educator on the time. He spoke of 'survivor guilt' (Duffin, 2012), regarded by some as a pernicious term, but it is something that came up often in interviews:

There would be a full page of obituaries every week, and we would know half of the people in the obituaries every week. So, you know, all you would do is that you'd get the paper on the Tuesday, you'd go down into the garage.

³⁷ Monash University Human Research Ethics Clearance (see Appendix 1).

³⁸ The first arts-practice project to receive ethics approval by ACON (see Appendix 2).

³⁹ Founded in San Francisco by Jack Fertig, the aim of the Sisters is to make the world a better place through equality, respect, patience and tolerance <http://www.universaljoy.com.au/Hist-SomeHistory.htm>.

Together you would open the pages and see who was going to be dead this week. You'd spend ten minutes reading and grieving, and then you'd go back to work. It was just mad. We weren't equipped for that sort of craziness (Keen, 2016, p. 53).

Duffin called me the day after our interview and told me that he had run into a mutual friend from the 80s, Malcolm Leech. Leech and I had worked together in theatre in the 80s. In 2012, he was President of Positive Life NSW. Leech is the heart of the play. His words start and end the play. Sadly, my desire to capture words that would soon be lost became prophetic when Leech, who had been HIV Positive for more than half his life, died from cancer on Friday, 20 September 2013, at the Sacred Heart Hospice in Darlinghurst. He was 57.

After talking with Leech, I employed Smith's technique and asked him who he thought I should speak with next. This led me to nurse and poet David Crawford and the interviews started to build up. As alluded to with the TOE, when constructing a piece of DVT, one of the temptations the writer must address is the desire to push the interviews in a particular direction and therefore promote an agenda. We all have agendas, which is why it is important to understand influences on the storyteller. For *The Death of Kings*, a series of very open questions were designed to circumvent this. The same questions are asked of each individual. They were:

- ✚ What was it like to be young and gay, in Sydney, and in the early 80s?
- ✚ When did you first realise that something was going on?
- ✚ What would you say to young people now?

Asking the same questions to everyone also allows the breaking down of the interview into separate sections, an easier task as everyone stays on similar topics. Another important process to follow when interviewing is to make a note after the interview on the atmosphere, location, body language, clothing and other general observations. I use the senses of sight,

sound, touch, smell and taste as prompts in the interview and for notes on it. The emotions of happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise and disgust can be used in a similar manner. By evoking these senses and emotions you can bring a storyteller back to the time of their story or recreate your experience of the story. Taking these notes is useful on several fronts, as it may be helpful for the director and actors, and it may also inform later writing decisions. Time may have passed and these memories are better written down immediately rather than trying to recall them at a later date.

Once the interviews were completed, transcribed, and checked against the recordings for any errors, they were sent, intact, to the story-owner. At this point the story-owner has the opportunity to delete sections they are uncomfortable with. This stage requires a great deal of patience and understanding from the storyteller as the story-owner grapples with the reality of their ‘voice’ on paper and any vocal tics they may have—for example the constant use of ‘you know’ or ‘reckon’. Transcripts are offered by journalists to ensure that comments are not taken out of context and I include this as part of my practice as ethical consideration to the story-owners who may never have publicly shared their story previously or are unfamiliar with the process.⁴⁰ To rearrange text within a sentence destroys the verbatim nature of the work, so it is important that the story-owner understands this. By way of explanation, I discuss with the story-owner how I regard each sentence or fragment as a single musical note. The note is either in or out. The writer’s placement of the note sets the tone, the musicality, of the final work, and it is at this point that the transformative moment occurs when the text stops being oral history and starts to become theatre. The next transitional moment of ownership can be seen when the play is finished. Tectonic Theater Project handed over the *Laramie Project* (2001) for anyone to perform without explaining transitions or Moments, thereby allowing other directors and companies to form their own interpretations, while

⁴⁰ Consent form can be seen in Appendix 3

Smith hands her work over but does not provide the recordings that are so much part of her interpretation. In both these cases a clear path of artistic discovery and interpretation of the piece can take place through the director, actors, designers, and other artistic collaborators. While the writer still has ethical responsibilities to the story-owners in terms of changes to the text, most arts practitioners respect the integrity of a verbatim text.

5.6 Choices: To be, or not to be

Once the interviews are complete, the process of constructing the play takes place. Choices are made, reversed and remade. The following section will detail the process from ‘page to stage’ for *The Death of Kings*. A constriction that applies to many theatre productions and their ability to travel beyond their initial productions revolves around the number of cast members that are involved. With this in mind, I did not want to go beyond five cast members for the play. I had conducted twenty interviews and had ten that I wanted to work with, as well as a lot of FM that were relevant to the story. The interviews and stories had developed such that the storyline had become a narrative on the impact of the disease on the community through the results of diagnosis to the impact of diagnosis.

Ultimately, only eight interviews were used. Two interviews were dropped, the first of which was with Rev. Fred Nile, a member of the State Parliament of NSW and nationally-known homophobe who continues to vilify the gay community. His voice was so negative that its inclusion would have changed the entire tone of the play. The other interview not used was with Tony Creighton, a Wiradjuri man who started working on ‘The Wall’ in Sydney while still in his teens.⁴¹ I feel strongly that the indigenous gay story of the response to HIV/AIDS should have its own work and it could not have been properly represented in *The Death of Kings*. Creighton was also much younger than the other story-owners and regarded as part of the ‘new’ guard. Tony lost his battle with AIDS in 2016.

⁴¹ ‘The Wall’ is located on Darlinghurst Road and is the location where young male prostitutes could be found.

To determine what content can actually be found in the interviews, I employ a process I call Paper on the Ground (POG). This is my favourite part of the entire process because I can start to solidify my place as artist rather than witness. I start by assigning each story-owner a colour either by highlighting or paper colour for example: blue for Malcolm; red for Ross. Then I take one of the interviews and cut up the interview into themes, literally placing this on the ground. The themes that ultimately developed for *The Death of Kings* were: pre-AIDS in Sydney, people becoming aware that ‘something’ was happening, anti-gay sentiment from others, going for testing and being diagnosed, people wasting away, people dying, funerals, and the survivors. From this point, I start to cut and paste to create a flowing dialogue. POG, as shown in Figure 5, is just as it sounds; you get a large space with a lot of floor area and you set out the scenes. This is followed by a series of casual readings with actors to help me see how the flow of the words is working and then I start making adjustments. This is also an opportunity to get feedback from different sources, such as actors, directors, dramaturgs, and designers. There can be multiple POGs before a final working script is achieved.



FIGURE 5. POG in action 3 January 2013 (Private Collection of C. F. Keen)

The subject matter was grim, but there were many funny anecdotes and a realistic picture of the time needed to show the lighter side of life. One of the FM items I was playing with and that was referred to by some of the story-owners was The Hanky Code. Introduced to the general public in the Friedkin's 1980 film *Cruising* in which Al Pacino is introduced to the code as part of the gay sub-culture, the Hanky Code is still used and came into fashion when the loud music of clubs back in the 70s, 80s and 90s precluded discussion (Andrews, 2008). The Hanky Code dictates the colour and position of your hankie, which indicates if you are a 'giver' or 'taker' and what your preferences are. While researching for the play in the ACON archives, I came across a historical reference to Richard II being the originator of the Hanky Code. This led me to Shakespeare's Richard II and the wonderful passage "Let us sit upon the ground and tell sad stories of the death of kings". It would have been cliché to change this to 'queens' and I was inspired by the beautiful portrayal of Richard II by actor Sir Derek Jacobi, who is an out gay man. At this point I knew I had the play's title. It also gave me an avenue to create a narrator who in the play is called CHORUS. By doing this, I took the FM away from the actors who would portray the story-owners and, with the addition of CHORUS, this also gave me the availability of a person who could directly interact with the story-owners and audience.

CHORUS is a fictional device who is present in the past and the future and who wants to be part of the action, even though everything he says is 'real' in the sense that it is either drawn from interviews or is FM. His primary function is to bring life to the story-owners' stories. For example, direct transcription of a story would be told like this:

MATT: I went to my doctor and I was seeing a gay doctor and he was on holidays. So I went up to the 24 hour clinic where I'd never been before, and this doctor just kind of went: "Wow". Okay. So this is a bit scary. He drew a line around the inflammation.

“I want you to look at that every couple of hours. If the inflammation goes outside that line, I want you to go to hospital immediately...” and he gave me these antibiotics. “You need to take them, we’re doing a whole lot of tests and you come back and I need to tell you now, I’m pretty sure you’ve got AIDS.”
So *[laughs]* that was, you know, a pretty scary experience.

With the addition of CHORUS, the opportunity is there to make the experience come alive by adding an interlocutor to break up and respond to the story:

MATT: I went to my doctor and I was seeing a gay doctor and he was on holidays. So I went up to the 24 hour clinic where I’d never been before, and this doctor just kind of went:

CHORUS: Wow

MATT: Okay. So this is a bit scary. He drew a line around the inflammation:

CHORUS: I want you to look at that every couple of hours. If the inflammation goes outside that line, I want you to go to hospital immediately.

MATT: and he gave me these antibiotics:

CHORUS: You need to take them, we’re doing a whole lot of tests and you come back and I need to tell you now, I’m pretty sure you’ve got AIDS.

MATT: So *[laughs]* that was, you know, a pretty scary experience.

(Keen C. F., 2016, p. 29)

It is through CHORUS that the past and the present connect. He is our guide through the play. He speaks the FM of the play, sings the songs and, as shown above, plays characters in the stories the other individuals are telling.

The concept behind CHORUS is inspired by and loosely based on the 55-year-old character of 'Man' in Steve J. Spears' *The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin* (1977) and the character of Host in *Cabaret* (Fosse, 1972). CHORUS is hosting a party for us, sharing the stories of his old friends. In my mind, he is a faded but seasoned cabaret performer from the 80s, who adopts personas as they suit. He also considers himself a great actor and uses lines from Shakespeare's *King Richard II* with abandon to illustrate his lost potential. This is again a reflection of Spears' character Man talking to the bust of William Shakespeare. The role was created with the breaking of the fourth wall in mind, as occurs in the plays and films about HIV/AIDS, notably *Jeffrey* (Rudnick, 1995) and *Torch Song Trilogy* (Fierstein, 1982), both of which provide additional intertextuality to the work. As the link between the audience and the contributors, he has no boundaries and he allows the rest of the players to be the age they were at the time of their stories. This decision about age came about when, in February 2013, the Sydney Mardi Gras invited me to present a rehearsed reading of the play as part of Queer Thinking, which is an annual gathering and fusion of academia, literature and ideas. The reading featured five actors, four of whom were in their 20s and one aged between 40 and 45. This actor played a story-owner and a younger man played CHORUS. It was this reading that enabled me to see that the story-owners needed to be the age that they were at the time the stories originally unfolded, while CHORUS would work best if he were of the current era, looking back through time, and connecting with it. This was not only an artistic decision, but was also driven by the desire to make the material more accessible and ensure that the target audience for the show heard the stories from people of their own age.

While CHORUS is played by one actor, the other four actors each play two individuals. The breaking up of who played who was simply a function of the script so that actors were not having to play one character after another. This doubling up is deliberate and increases the tempo of the work while ensuring a small cast. The way the play is written, it would not work with a full representation of nine actors.

At the conclusion of the creative process, the playwright is often expected to pass over the script, the ‘baby’, to the director and producers. My view is that this should not happen with DVT. The responsibility to the story-owners never ends and it is the writer’s ethical responsibility, after bearing witness, to ensure that the integrity of the work is maintained. In this sense, I can understand why Anna Deavere Smith does not encourage other performers to recreate her work, something which is rendered practically impossible as she does not share her recordings of interviews, which are the foundation of her performance. In the same way Kaufman has sent *The Laramie Project* (2001) to the theatrical world without instruction so that others can find their own truth in the script.

By combining DT and VT we, as creators of these works, are given more flexibility in what we can do while still using the banner of these genres. However, ultimately as shown by the creation of *The Death of Kings*, with all of these forms it does come down to artistic choices that are dictated by the chosen genre and the positionality of the pervading influences on the storyteller.

5.7 Postscript: My Valentine

My goal with this thesis is to be transparent in my influences and processes and to investigate the influences on other creators of DT and VT. While my admiration for survivors and the influences on my life has already been set out, two other individuals have motivated me in the creation and subsequent development and staging of this play. For the second of these individuals, his participation in the work has had lasting repercussions.

In 1979, I knew a beautiful boy called Ken. I thought he was gorgeous, quiet and mysterious, with great hair and a drop-dead smile. One day, at the beginning of my heavy involvement in community radio, I was alive with ideas and hosting a collective youth meeting of young feminists, Marxists, gays and lesbians at my house. Ken dropped by. He had never done this before. I was 16. He was 17 and I did not understand why he had come by ‘just to talk and listen’. My naive heart trembled. This was the first time I had seen him without his cohort of tough-talking boys. He sat down, watched and listened as we talked about ideas for radio shows and what we could do with them. At the end of the meeting he left, with a smile, and said ‘keep up the good work’. My heart skipped a beat. Two days later, Ken died. It was 1979, and he felt that the only way to tell his parents he was gay was his suicide note. Since Ken died I have met many other ‘Kens’ and ‘Barbies’ – beautiful boys and girls who are seeking a place in the world but do not know how to reach it. I hope this work can help some find a place in their world and know that they are not alone.

With Sebastian’s permission I share the following story. I met Sebastian the day he graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts in November 2013. He had come to audition for a reading of *The Death of Kings* to be presented on World AIDS Day 2013 at MTC’s Lawson Theatre. It was raining, he was soaked through and he, like Ken, was simply beautiful. One of the individuals Sebastian was to play was David Crawford RN who, when I first met and interviewed him, started by saying “I knew nothing about sexually transmitted infections and got very sick with gonorrhoea in the throat” (Keen, 2016, p. 12). This was to become prescient. From Melbourne, we went on to become part of the 2014 Mardi Gras. The cast is shown backstage in Figure 6, in Sydney.



FIGURE 6. 2014 Mardi Gras. Cast of *The Death of Kings* (Keen, 2016) backstage at Gingers at The Oxford Hotel. L-R Standing: Joseph Simmons, Greg Iverson, Mark James Dessaix, Sebastian Robinson. Seated is Tyson Wakely
(Photograph by William Yang reproduced with permission)

While we did not have a full stage production and timing dictated that we mount a cabaret version of the work, it was exciting to be an official part of Mardi Gras. We rehearsed at ACON. At this time, Rapid HIV testing became available and, as a matter of course, all the younger members of the cast took the test and came back clear. Initially,

On February 14, 2014, we had a break from performing and I was on the train home. I got a call from Sebastian just as the train arrived in the outer suburbs of Sydney, NSW. He told me he had a call from the hospital and that ‘Guess what! I have gonorrhoea of the throat’. We laughed, as this was his character’s initial problem. I felt myself go cold inside with fear. He called a few minutes later and told me ‘they want me to come in and bring

someone'. I jumped platforms back into the city. It felt like an eternity but all I knew was I had to be there for my young friend, this was my chance to help Ken. We met and he was given the diagnosis of HIV positive. Sebastian knew how much had been achieved in treatment from his work with the play, but that does not take away from the knowledge that your entire sexual identity has been compromised with regard to how you have intercourse and the potential obligations relating to disclosure to a partner. To have spent that day and night with Sebastian is an honour and to know he had learnt so much from the play to inform his own experience is, I believe, a true testament to the work's worth.⁴²

I mentioned earlier in this chapter that I had an internal conflict about writing this work. The second motivation to create this work is simple: it is that I know that the person who should have written this story probably died in the 80s or 90s from HIV/AIDS, and it breaks my heart to think how different our world, our art, our lives would be if these talents had not been lost.

⁴² If you would like to know more of Sebastian's story it is told in the television documentary *Transmission: The Journey from HIV to AIDS* (Hildebrand, 2014).

6. CONCLUSION

Let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings.⁴³

(Keen C. F., 2016, p. 51)

This critical reflection provides practitioners, participants, and the audience of DT and VT with new ways of engaging with this art practice. The question of what puts the ‘art’ into DT and VT has been asked, and the relationship of this practice to journalism has been explored. To understand the influences on practitioners and how this impacts their work, two writers in this genre, Anna Deavere Smith and Moisés Kaufman, have been discussed. The practice component of this dissertation, *The Death of Kings* (Keen C. F., 2016), has been written as an example of a development of the form of DVT. To understand the influence of the writer on texts, the question was asked: What position does the writer take in terms of placing themselves in the text and how does this influence the work? To inform this, whether the writer is speaking *for* or *with* the story-owners and to what extent the writer’s positionality and intersectionality influences the work have been examined. To extend this investigation, my own practice of DVT and the role empathy and ownership is explored.

Tracing the development of DT through journalism and union movements has provided a clear picture of the influence journalism has had on the form. It has also shown how the development of journalism as a form with the ‘man on the street’ style interviews of John Reed in pre- and post-revolutionary Russia and later in the work of US broadcaster Studs Terkel has played an important role in providing an avenue and style for current DT and VT writers. The freedom that developing technology has provided individuals, not just in media but also in the practice of VT, has also been discussed. That technology has provided

⁴³ William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, III, 2.

the means for anyone to record what is going on in their world makes it even more important to understand the skills and artistic component that are required to develop DVT. Utilising an auto-ethnographic methodology, this thesis has sought to show how the life influences on practitioners impact their work and contribute to its artistry.

Anna Deavere Smith takes the position of outsider; however, upon examination, she is actually both insider and outsider. She places herself on the stage, speaking *for* the story-owners, and her intersectionality lies in her role as a performer, woman and as an African American. Smith also has a substantial number of male influences in her wider life and work. Whether this is because the theatrical world is male dominated or because of a personal leaning toward male figures, they are certainly at the starting point for her work. While Smith is a self-described performer going through life as a journalist, her background of theatre training at ACT, where she learnt to “listen carefully for the natural pausing and parsing of speech” (Saldaña, 2011, p. 72), and her interest in linguistics have contributed to her self-described ongoing journey in search of the American character, through their own words, and her creation of poetic verse or chapters from these words.

The influences on Moisés Kaufman have been shown to be theatrical, cultural and also religious. That his training under Marie Overlie is of great influence is well known, as is his focus on the exploration of the ‘other’. As with Anna Deavere Smith, Kaufman is simultaneously an insider and outsider, while always playing the role of the ‘other’. In *The Laramie Project* (2001), which is the focus of Kaufman’s work in the present study, he is a character on stage, though his primary influence is off stage as director. Kaufman speaks *with* the story-owners and inhabits an intersectionality as he stands as a participant in the action, a gay man and the ‘other’. This thesis has also shown that the study of the Babylonian Talmud is the ongoing theatrical influence on Kaufman’s life. Talmudic scholarship involves the interpretation of a single line in many different ways and this has carried through to the

analysis and creation of theatrical moments in Moment Work. Again, with the use of auto-ethnographic methodology, it has been possible to show how Moment Work is created and the effect it has on the individual and on the work created.

By utilising auto-ethnography, multiple layers of understanding have been revealed by considering both the personal and cultural influences on Kaufman, Smith and on my own work. My own experiences working for Smith and studying Kaufman's Moment Work have further allowed me to garner insights into the larger cultural practices that impact DVT, documentary and verbatim practice. The work of Smith and Kaufman has also demonstrated how the positionality of the storyteller impacts the tale that is being shared.

A goal of this research is to record unknown oral histories and reactions to events and to utilise the experiences of these individuals to create a novel record of events; as such, this research also contributes to existing academic knowledge through oral histories of this period. The practice component of the dissertation is the full-length DVT play, *The Death of Kings* (Keen, 2016). This work has been created as an example of a writer speaking *with* the story-owners and positioning herself in the audience. The play focuses on the experiences of self-identified white gay men in Sydney, Australia and the response to the HIV/ AIDS epidemic by the gay community.

Further study could be undertaken in various areas that have arisen from aspects of this research. By further exploring the influences on writers of DT and VT, such as Sir David Hare, Caryl Phillips and Alecky Blyth, the research can be extended to explore their positionality, intersectionality and whether they are speaking *with* or *for* the story-owners. Study could also be further conducted into tracking the development and introduction of various technologies into DT and VT. Finally, taking the position of speaking with the story-owners, supported and facilitated by a TOE, creates a different relationship with the material

for the audience. This may be a productive area for future audience-based research by considering the impact of various styles of Documentary, Verbatim and DVT.

As outlined in Chapter 5, the form of DT and VT that I practice differs from that of Smith and Kaufman, and I call it DVT. DVT represents the evolution of DT and VT practice and builds on the work of activists and proponents of the different forms. Where it differs from works of the early twentieth century, and the foundational work and structure put into place by Anna Deavere Smith and Moisés Kaufman, is in the way writers accept ownership of the story by the storyteller, and do not seek to insert themselves in the final play. Collecting and writing the stories requires TOE, the use of FM providing multiple narratives, and the recognition of the integral ownership of the story by the story-owner.

This study shows that as storytellers representing the story-owners, it is necessary to demonstrate a responsibility to the story-owners. It is through transparency and the clear ethics represented in DVT that this can be achieved. Without these devices, the script can fall under the agenda of the writer during script development, as it does in many ways in the work of Kaufman and Smith. At its heart, DVT comes from the plaintive cry of the story-owners and those within wider society who would see the voices of those who are marginalised recorded and presented for posterity.

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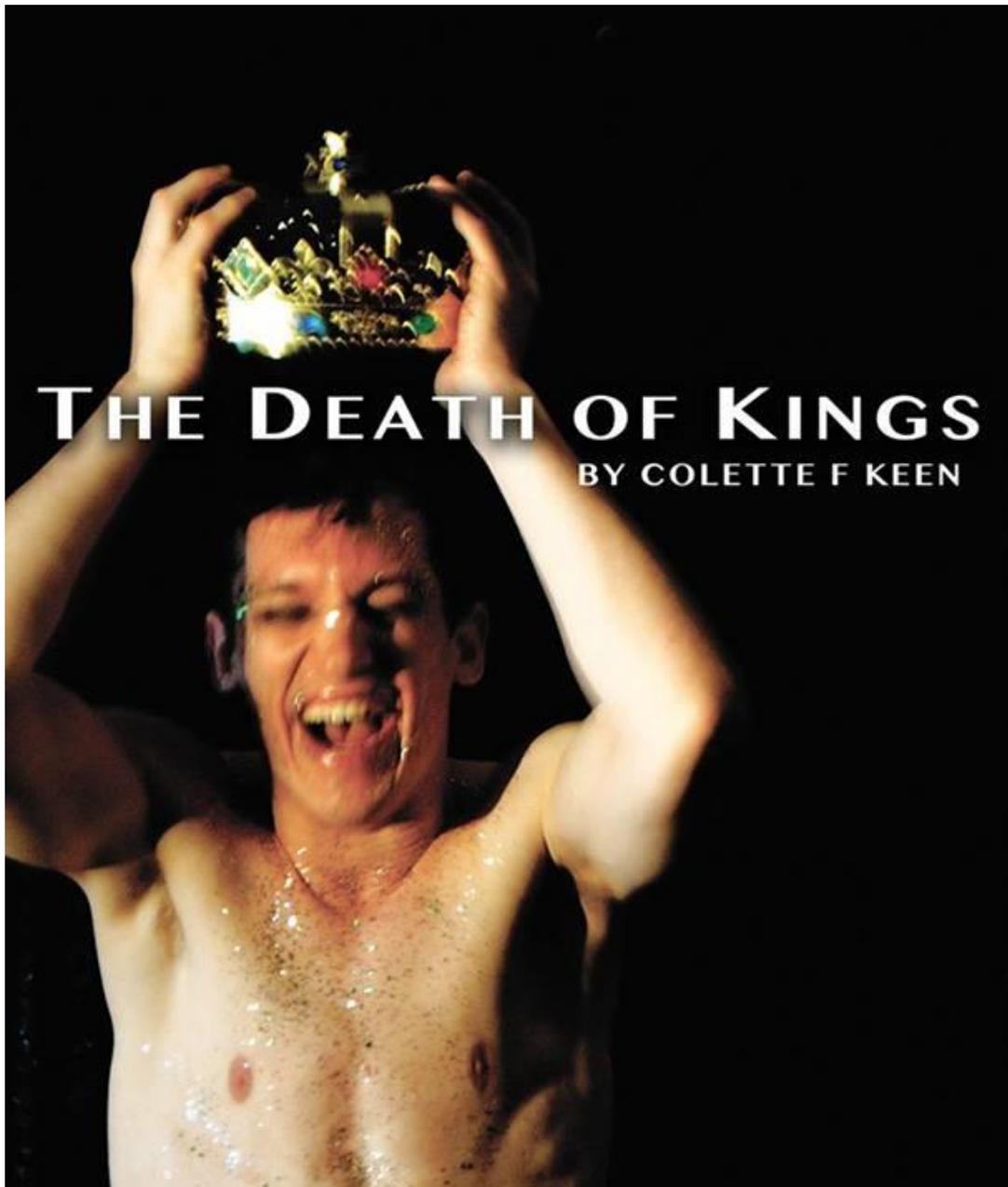
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7. Links to Performance Videos



The Death of Kings (2016) promotional photograph. Photograph by Joseph Simons.
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The Nurses Story from pp. 50–53 of the play can be seen at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HE1UX2ePUVc&t=64s>

Blue Boy from pp. 29–31 of the play can be seen at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaYQzsVApMo&t=12s>

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8.

The Death of Kings

By

Colette F. Keen ©

This work is dedicated to a charming and generous man -- my dear friend Malcolm
Leech and to the individuals who have contributed their words -- gentlemen you are
an inspiration.

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The work has been seen as a cabaret in development but has yet to receive a theatrical production.

This work would not be possible but for the kind assistance of the following individuals and organisations: Dr William Peterson for amazing guidance; NAPWHA; ACON; Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, Living Positive Victoria; Positive Life NSW; Monash University Centre for Theatre and Performance; and Flinders University (Drama & Creative Writing).

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For further information on the play contact:
c.f.keen@gmail.com

40 **PERMISSIONS & NOTES**

41

42 **To be included in all programmes:**

43 "An Afternoon Shift" by David Crawford

44 Used by kind permission of David Crawford

45 Copyright © 2013

46

47 "Funeral Blues" by W. H. Auden

48 Used by permission of Curtis Brown, Ltd.

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51

52 **Notes:**

53 The work has been written and developed by Colette F. Keen as part of doctoral
54 studies at Flinders and Monash Universities titled *Behind the Words: The Art of*
55 *Documentary and Verbatim Theatre* (PhD Drama and Creative Writing) utilizing
56 GIPA principles and with the full endorsement of the ethics review committees of
57 ACON, Monash and Flinders University. The play informs a doctoral thesis on the
58 role and influence that the writer holds in the creation of documentary and verbatim
59 theatre.

60 **Further Permissions:**

61 Depending on the theatre/venue APRA permission is required for the following:

62 *I'm not like anybody else* by Ray Davies as performed by Jimmy and the Boys

63 *Mad World* by Roland Orzabal

64 *Fever* by Eddie Cooley and Otis Blackwell

65 *Chain Reaction* by Barry, Maurice & Robin Gibb

66 *I Will Survive* by Freddie Perren and Dino Fekaris

67 *Dance Me to the End of Love* by Leonard Cohen

AUTHOR’S NOTES

68

69

70 With the exception of CHORUS, the actors should appear to be in their mid-20s,
71 early 30s. This is the age the individuals would have been during the 80s. They are
72 speaking with their young voices not their “old” retrospective voices – this is a living
73 experience, not nostalgic.

74

75 While this is an Australian story, Australian accents are not needed – they are
76 suggested by speech patterns and the individuals represented are generally “well
77 spoken” rather than “ocker”. “Ah”, “Um” etc. can be regarded as punctuation guides
78 and not always expressed. Likewise a simple glossary would cover the few terms
79 that may require explanation for overseas performances.

80

81 This play has been devised with the following “doubling” of cast members in mind:

ACTOR 1	ACTOR 2	ACTOR 3	ACTOR 4	ACTOR 5
CHORUS	NEIL	MALCOLM	ROSS	DAVID
	MATT	BRENDAN	BILLY	WILLIAM

82

83 Verbatim Theatre & Found Materials

84 All of the words that you will hear are verbatim transcriptions from interviews
85 conducted between January 2012 and August 2013. Additional materials in this play
86 are what is known as Found Materials. This is material that existed prior to the
87 writing of this play e.g. media releases, songs, extracts from other writing.

88

CONTRIBUTORS

89

90 **CHORUS:** CHORUS represents an every-gay-man, a seasoned cabaret
91 performer from the 80s, who adopts personas as they suit. He also
92 considers himself a 'great actor' and uses lines from Shakespeare's
93 *King Richard II*. As the link between the audience and the contributors
94 he has no boundaries and it is through CHORUS that the past and the
95 present connect. CHORUS also plays the voices of characters that the
96 others are quoting and as ringmaster he provides the interlude
97 "entertainment" between some sections. This character is played by
98 one actor and is older than the rest of the cast. (aged 45+)

99 **BILLY:** Musician (aged between 20 – 30)

100 **NEIL:** Artist (aged between 20 – 30)

101 **ROSS:** Educator (aged between 20 – 30)

102 **MALCOLM:** Theatre worker (aged between 20 – 30)

103 **MATT:** Community worker (aged between 20 – 30)

104 **BRENDAN:** Community Media (aged between 20 – 30)

105 **DAVID:** Nurse (aged between 20 – 30)

106 **WILLIAM:** Public Servant (aged between 20 – 30)

107	SECTIONS
108	
109	1 ~ BEFORE
110	2 ~ EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT
111	INTERLUDE 1 – The condom and the banana
112	3 ~ FEAR & LOATHING
113	4 ~ DIAGNOSIS
114	INTERLUDE 2 – Fever
115	5 ~ WASTING TIME
116	INTERLUDE 3 – Chain Reaction
117	INTERVAL
118	INTERLUDE 4 – I Will Survive
119	6 ~ DEATH
120	INTERLUDE 5– Funeral Blues
121	7 ~ FUNERALS
122	8 ~ GHOSTS
123	9 ~ THE LAST DANCE

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1 ~ BEFORE

[The action takes place in CHORUS' apartment. This is CHORUS' party and he is inviting his friends of the past to participate in his cabaret. The room features a piano and various picture/photograph frames that can be used as multimedia devices to show videos, pictures, and posters (such as Condoman and images by William Yang) to reflect the action.]

[CHORUS – is preparing for his party – practicing his come on lines – direct address to audience – they are also at his party]

CHORUS: There's something wrong with your legs – they're not around my neck.
Can I buy you a drink or do you just want the money?
I may not be the best-looking guy in here, but I'm the only one talking to you.
Do you believe in love at first sight or should I walk by again?
There are 206 bones in your body...do you want another one? ⁱ

[80s nightclub feel -- smoke, thumping background music evoking sticky floors and drinks with umbrellas. I'm Not Like Anybody Else by Ray Davies performed by Jimmy and the Boys.]

Music fades]

149 **MALCOLM:** We are talking about that period when the sky was sparkling and it was
150 all blue.

151

152 **BILLY:** To me it was a perfect time. You know, I was young, pretty and, and I
153 had no fear.

154

155 **NEIL:** It was this wonderful, um, joy of living, and experiencing and growing
156 and being yourself and being part of a community.

157

158 **ROSS:** The early 1980s was extraordinary.

159

160 **CHORUS:** This precious stone set in the silver sea. ⁱⁱ

161

162 **MALCOLM:** Coming to Sydney was like coming to the party town.

163

164 **WILLIAM:** The most abandoned time of partying.

165

166 **NEIL:** You know, it was considered bad manners if you didn't sleep with
167 someone on a first date. It was true!

168

169 **MALCOLM:** It was just that Sydney had more opportunity to go out and have fun. It
170 was like, you know, being a kid in a toy shop.

171

172 **BILLY:** I felt liberated.

173

174 **MATT:** You know there's -- the number of times I have, kinda you know,
175 finished having sex, pull my pants up and people go:

176

177 **CHORUS:** I'm John

178

179 **MATT:** *[laughs]* Nice to meet you! *[laughs]*

180

181 **ROSS:** The American style was to create ghettos. So you had the Castro
182 District and you had Christopher Street. The gay men's ghettos were
183 based around venues, and particularly sex venues. If you walked, if
184 you stood on Oxford, say the corner of Crown and Oxford, which was
185 the peak area, you know, and 100 people walked past, 95 of them
186 would be gay men.

187

188 **MATT:** I was at a beat and um I got together with this guy who had a van
189 parked up the top of the park so we went and got into his van and we
190 were having sex and lo and behold the police turned up. So they're
191 shining torches in and they get us out of the van and they've separated
192 us and we're you know, they're asking questions and the guy who's
193 interviewing the person I was with um, kind of was going:

194

195 **CHORUS:** What's going on with this bloke mate? What is he deaf or something?

196

197 **MATT:** And I said "what?" And he said:

198

199 **CHORUS:** What's wrong with your mate? Is he deaf?
200

201 **MATT:** And I went "I don't know! *[laughs]* And you know how much
202 communication and negotiation can go on before you work out that
203 someone has no hearing? *[laughs]*
204

205 **ROSS:** You know, sexuality had, you know, had seen such a change, gay men
206 congregated together -- and to be a gay man was to generally have a
207 voracious sexual appetite.
208

209 **WILLIAM:** I wouldn't say it was abandoned freedom; it was the freedom that came
210 about by being in a very subterranean culture.
211

212 **NEIL:** It was sort of like busy, busy, busy! Um, but, yeah, it was, there was, uh
213 it was all out there, it was happening, it was um, there were new gay
214 clubs opening up and there's this fabulous open gay scene that I could
215 stand up and be as mad and as girly and as over the top as I wanted to
216 be and, um, I had all these accepting people around me who just went:
217

218 **CHORUS:** Oh, sweetie darling.
219

220 **NEIL:** The whole scene was such an affirmation and, you know, it was sort of
221 like you go to a dinner party and if there wasn't one or two gay people
222 at the dinner party; sweetie darling it wasn't a dinner party.
223

224 **BRENDAN:** There was a big process. If you wanted to come out, you really had to
225 identify with the community that was made up of people that were
226 stigmatised.

227

228 **DAVID:** Twelve months after I arrived in Sydney I went home and my Mum
229 asked me that day if I was gay. Well, she asked me if I was
230 homosexual and her reaction was quite explosive. She really kind of,
231 she was going to have me treated and all of that sort of stuff.

232

233 **MATT:** I was openly gay in Sydney and didn't have family around, I developed
234 a different kind of family and I was very conscious of that. And that
235 family became more and more diverse, I think. I was lucky in that.

236

237 **CHORUS:** This happy breed of men.ⁱⁱⁱ

238

239 **BRENDAN:** Many of those attitudes towards homosexuality, the homophobia that
240 was in the general community was also deep within gay people
241 themselves.

242

243 **DAVID:** It took a while to come to terms with being gay.

244

245 **BRENDAN:** I was married, I was married at that stage which a lot of gay men were.
246 I think it was a bit of a shock when I, you know, told her - my wife. But I
247 mean, it had to be, and I had to be honest.

248

249 **WILLIAM:** It was certainly very free and easy within that small subculture of
250 people who were gay. In a technical sense gay sex was illegal. There
251 was a great deal of homophobia and discrimination and so on in
252 society. Organised homophobia.

253

254 **BRENDAN:** Wherever you worked there was prejudice against you.

255

256 **WILLIAM:** But within that, there was tremendous creative drive and energy and
257 freedom.

258

259 **BILLY:** I'm just trying to remember when I started going to the sauna. I think it
260 was around about 1980 or '81.

261

262 I used to go to the Roman Bath in Pitt Street and I remember some
263 other gay friends who sort of turned their noses up at people going to
264 sex on premises venues, saying:

265

266 **CHORUS:** Oh, you don't want to do that! You'll, you might catch more than a cold
267 in there.

268

269 **BILLY:** That was the first thing that I can actually remember and me thinking,
270 "Oh God, they're prudes," aren't they.

271

272 **BRENDAN:** We were forced to hide and the music was so loud.

273

274 **CHORUS:** Ah Hankies...they just made life so much easier. Remember that the
275 clubs were noisy and “it” was illegal. We needed a way to
276 communicate.^{iv}

277

278 **BRENDAN:** You were either very fem or you were butch. There was that, you know,
279 either you’re a giver or a taker. There’s this sort of exaggerated
280 masculinity as in leather bars and developing your muscles, or low
281 femininity. You know the drag queen style. Every one of those bars had
282 drag shows, so that was considered the normal thing.

283

284 **CHORUS:** So I just want to flag, I’m flagging, that outside the Wild World of Gay
285 not many people know the Hanky Code exists. It’s how you express
286 yourself! You wear hankies to tell people what turns you on, what gets
287 you off, and what can make you scream! ^v

288

289 **BRENDAN:** I can understand gays having to communicate by non-verbal signals,
290 but to have a cue for “sucks cum out of condoms” is a joke no matter
291 how you look at it.

292

293 **CHORUS:** It was the first time someone talked to me about fist fucking – I laughed
294 my head off at the thought.^{vi}

295

296 **MATT:** There’s too much to memorise.

297

298 **CHORUS:** You only memorise the colours you’re interested in.

299 You memorise what you want.^{vii}

300

301 **MALCOLM:** We were going out, we were partying, we were having sex, we were
302 doing it all, even though there was the element outside. The cops
303 hated us, the homophobes were there, but it was different. Somehow, it
304 wasn't as dangerous.

305

306 **WILLIAM:** There was a cloud out on the horizon

307

308 **MALCOLM:** And then it was during that time of all this partying and all this madness
309 and all that whatever, and working hard and you know, doing both, I
310 read an article:

311

312 **CHORUS:** *New York Times -- July 3, 1981*

313 **RARE CANCER SEEN IN 41 HOMOSEXUALS**

314 Doctors in New York and California have diagnosed among
315 homosexual men 41 cases of a rare and often rapidly fatal form of
316 cancer. Eight of the victims died less than 24 months after the
317 diagnosis was made.

318

319 The cause of the outbreak is unknown, and there is as yet no evidence
320 of contagion. But the doctors who have made the diagnoses, mostly in
321 New York City and the San Francisco Bay area, are alerting other
322 physicians who treat large numbers of homosexual men to the problem.

323

324

The medical investigators say some indirect evidence actually points

325

away from contagion as a cause. Dr. Curran said there was no

326

apparent danger to non-homosexuals from contagion. "The best

327

evidence against contagion," he said, "is that no cases have been

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reported to date outside the homosexual community or in women." ^{viii}

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~ END 1~

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2 ~ EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

WILLIAM: I was ah, overseas as a diplomat in the Department of Foreign Affairs with José, my partner. We came back in '81, '80, '81 back to Australia. So we were down here, and as we turned out, as things turned out, who would ever know, we were in Sydney at the time of the most abandoned time of partying and carrying on. Ah, the really, the peak of it.

ROSS: A friend and I went to the States together in '82. We went to the Canadian National Gay and Lesbian Conference.

WILLIAM: There was no Internet, there was no Google News. There was no YouTube, there was no ah, there were no twenty-four hour news channels. There were very, very restricted ways of communicating anything.

ROSS: And you know, people were all starting to talk about it.

WILLIAM: So, the way in which information about anything was transmitted or came to Australia was rather slow and I think I must first have read about something happening that subsequently turned out to be HIV in the Daily Press or the Weekly News magazines in 1982.

356 **ROSS:** and it was getting a lot of publicity, this strange disease that was
357 happening amongst the four H's: Homosexuals, Hookers, Haitians and
358 Heroin Addicts *[laughs]*.

359
360 **WILLIAM:** This was serious. Something was going on. It was reported as
361 attacking gay men and it couldn't be identified and didn't look very
362 good.

363
364 **ROSS:** Anyway, so um, so these two doctors put on a special night-time thing
365 about this new disease. And they put up these stats of this new disease
366 and it went up and it went down. They said:

367
368 **CHORUS:** It's going to go away.

369
370 **WILLIAM:** So I went from being with him all the time. I went to Canberra to be
371 involved with the new Government and the implementation of Medicare
372 and as it turned out, the response to this new disease. And that
373 suddenly took all my time. So as fate would have it, I was out of the
374 place at a time that I would have been most riskily, at highest risk of
375 acquiring it. But José, my partner, was here.

376

ROSS:

I remember sitting with and talking with
this doctor on the steps of the Town Hall
in San Francisco.

There's a park or square opposite, there was some big event going on. And the hit at the time was that song...

But it's sort of like, the impact of the words is our world is gonna change completely. And um, I remember that song going over and over in my head..

[laughs]

So yeah I knew at that moment that our lives were going to change and I came back to Australia and no one was really aware.

[CHORUS begins to hum Mad World

by Rolando Ozabal]

CHORUS: *[sings]*

All around me are familiar faces
Worn out places, worn out faces
Bright and early for their daily races
Going nowhere, going nowhere

[Sotto voce or hum]

Their tears are filling up their glasses
No expression, no expression
Hide my head I want to drown my sorrow
No tomorrow, no tomorrow

And I find it kinda funny
I find it kinda sad
The dreams in which I'm dying
Are the best I've ever had
I find it hard to tell you
I find it hard to take
When people run in circles

[Sotto voce or hum]

It's a very, very mad world

Mad World

Mad World

377

378 **CHORUS:** It's going to go away.

379

380 **WILLIAM:** It was the great misfortune of the world that this problem turned up in
381 the United States at the beginning of the Republican Revolution and
382 fell into the hands effectively of this toxic bunch of desperados around
383 uh, around the Reagan administration who then took it and labelled it a
384 gay disease.

385

386 **ROSS:** I remember coming back to Australia and I thought, we're just going to
387 be in denial as to whether this is real or not. And of course, we were.
388 And anyway, I wanted to go to Sydney because I knew it would hit
389 Sydney because of the geographical links with San Francisco.

390

391 **WILLIAM:** And they labelled it for their American domestic political purposes. They
392 branded it, and in doing that, they, they virtually guaranteed that what
393 would have been a manageable problem, susceptible to the raising of
394 evidence, analysis and swift and effective measures to counter it,
395 instead of it becoming a reasonably small and manageable problem, it
396 became a worldwide pandemic that killed millions.

397

398 **ROSS:** So we had another 18 months to 2 years of denial in Australia before
399 people accepted that this was um, real and significant.

400

401 **WILLIAM:** And my hunch at that time was if it was attacking gay men for some
402 reason in New York, then it must have potential ramifications.

403

404 **ROSS:** I don't think there's any easy way to describe it. You know, when
405 you've got this external threat that might wipe out a community.

406

407 **WILLIAM:** I thought then it didn't sound, good.

408

409 **MALCOLM:** Guys were getting sick and dying from it!

410

411 **WILLIAM:** They labelled it.

412

413 **MALCOLM:** And I was thinking how can this be?! But you know, they kept saying it
414 had to be gay.

415

416 **WILLIAM:** They branded it.

417

418 **MALCOLM:** So, if I'm realising it's not gay and there's an underlying problem there,
419 why is the medical profession going down that road? And of course, it
420 stayed that way because then GRID came along. Gay – Related –
421 Immune – Deficiency.

422

423 **ROSS:** We made a joke about how, how could a cancer be gay, what a
424 ridiculous concept.

425

426 **MALCOLM:** How can an illness be gay? What is going on here?

427

428 **NEIL:** The energy and power and love of being a gay man, wasn't any
429 different, everyone loved it and, and was enthralled by it and excited by
430 it and wanted to live it and explore it.

431

432 **MALCOLM:** It was just this fear and chaos, too, I think, to think that there were
433 people who didn't want to know it.

434

435 **ROSS:** There was a lot of behaviour that wasn't very good.

436

437 **MALCOLM:** There were people who didn't want to believe it. They saw an article
438 there, but no, "we're going out and partying." And there was the rest of
439 us thinking, hang on. There's something about to happen.

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~ END 2~

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INTERLUDE 1

[This is taken directly from a script given to ACON HIV/AIDS education officers to teach about the use of condoms – all performers can participate in a Herb Albert musical style presentation evoking airline safety demonstrations.]

CHORUS: Get ready.

Make sure your condoms are fresh -- check the expiration date. Throw away condoms that have expired, been very hot, carried around in your wallet, or washed in the washer.

If you think the condom might not be good, get a new one. You and your partner are worth it.

That dick has to be hard before you put a condom on it.
Open it. Tear open the package carefully, so you don't rip the condom.
Careful if you use your teeth.

Get the banana.

You'll see it is rolled down onto itself, with just a fingertip-like piece sticking out of the middle. The "roll" should be to the outside, just like if you rolled your socks down on your legs down to your ankles.

466 Once you know which way the roll should be on the condom, very
467 gently pull the fingertip-like section so that it is not stuck to any other
468 part of the condom.

469
470 Hold the banana between your knees - it will be easier to have the
471 curve go away from you.

472
473 Place the fingertip-like piece right at the top of the banana, but do not
474 pull that part over the banana.

475
476 You want the fingertip-like part sticking out and off the banana.
477 Move the rolled part over the banana. Try to do it evenly, applying both
478 sides/all sides straight and even - a crooked condom is hard to get on.
479 Once the rolled part is snugly on the first part of the banana, gently roll
480 the condom down the banana. It will probably seem baggy, and ill-
481 fitting, since the banana is skinnier than an erect penis.

482
483 Guys, practice putting on a condom in a comfortable place where you
484 have plenty of time by yourself. You know what we mean! Practice
485 makes perfect, and you'll impress your partner. ^{ix}

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3 ~ FEAR & LOATHING

DAVID: I knew nothing about sexually transmitted infections and got very sick with gonorrhoea in the throat. I didn't realise it, I mean I didn't even know that I actually had gonorrhoea in the throat. The doctor, who treated me just said, when he gave me the antibiotics, after the throat swab came back:

CHORUS: Just be careful what you do in future.

DAVID: It was only later on that I learnt about sexually transmitted infections and I realized that that was what I actually got.

MATT: I caught the moment when, the moment before safe sex was the norm and so I, certainly wasn't consistent about safe sex at the time, um, and so, yeah, I just remember, it was a very confusing time I guess but it might've been for anyone that age I guess.

ROSS: Our initial advice was because there is no benefit out of testing, and because there was harm because of notification - you had to name all your sexual contacts -so it was just don't get tested. Just assume everyone's positive. It's flawed advice though, because really what people were assuming was that everyone was negative, instead of that everyone was positive.

512 **MALCOLM:** It's making younger guys sick, what's going on?

513

514 **ROSS:** So testing produced a different reality. For many gay men, they didn't
515 know anyone who was tested. So if you didn't play in those scenes and
516 you were just well behaved and professional, and you might have five
517 or six gay friends, then it didn't affect you. But if you were in those
518 playing networks, it was just devastating. And so, you know the first
519 wave of horror was when thousands of people got tested and
520 thousands of people were dealing with positive results.

521

522 **BRENDAN:** The most distinctive thing that I remember is that fear of it, personally,
523 and the fear of getting tested, in case you have it.

524

525 **MATT:** It was very confusing

526

527 **MALCOLM:** If we look at our behaviour, because it is in something that we do, even
528 before we knew for sure that it was actually in the blood stream, if it is
529 coming from a behavioural thing, so sex or whatever, you know, some
530 of us do similar things - so, why am I not sick? Why is he sick? Why
531 am I not sick?

532

533 **NEIL:** In all the gay venues, in all the gay magazines, constantly reinforced;
534 every drag queen had the microphone up there

535

536 **CHORUS:** blah blah blah blah blah

537

538 **ROSS:** Then venues in Sydney just shut, almost, like, they went from being
539 packed and everyone was having a party - and then people started
540 saying:

541

542 **CHORUS:** What the fuck has hit us?

543

544 **BRENDAN:** And even the clubs, the...the...sex on premises clubs, would have a
545 nurse or a doctor who would come once a week and you could get
546 tested there.

547

548 **ROSS:** and like for about a week *[pause]* or a month, people stopped having
549 sex. Just stopped in their tracks.

550

551 **MALCOLM:** It doesn't make sense, and the thing that was confusing people like me
552 was, why are some people getting sick and others not?

553

554 **NEIL:** What happened was that instead of getting invitations to all the parties,
555 it became a little more cloistered so, gay people tended to spend more
556 time with other gay people rather than uh, you found um, your straight
557 friend or some straight people you knew just step back a little bit;
558 because no one really knew.

559

560 **BRENDAN:** It put back gay liberation which began with Stonewall and the Gay
561 Pride marches throughout the world and the Mardi Gras in Sydney. It

562 put back a lot of the tolerance that had been built up, and acceptance,
563 because normal people were coming out, coming out of the closet.
564 They had family members who accepted them as people, and more
565 and more people got to know people who were gay. And then all of a
566 sudden there was this disease.

567

568 **NEIL:** I mean you could get it by breathing the air around you or whatever.
569 You know and that's the fact that we didn't know but I do remember that
570 you know you were out and part of everything and then it was; I think
571 we sort of collected back. But then, we weren't included as much as
572 before. It was a strange time. And then it became difficult.
573 Walking down the street and um you'd have a car come past with
574 abuse screamed at you:

575

576 **CHORUS:** Fuckin fags.

577

578 **WILLIAM:** It was not then; it never had been, was not then and never has been
579 only related to gay people.

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581

~ END 3~

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4 ~ DIAGNOSIS

DAVID: I think around 1984, I had my first test and you know, I said to the doctor, tell me what I already know. So my first test for HIV came back positive. I remember him asking me:

CHORUS: What sort of difference will this make to your life?

DAVID: I said, well, none, really. So yeah, in those days it was kind of like, every cough, every kind of thing was, you know, is this my time to die, sort of thing?

CHORUS: The ripest fruit first falls.^x

BRENDAN: You had to wait a few weeks for your results, and that was a very nervous time, because whilst that was happening we knew of people who were sick. And when there was this sort of fatalism about it, once you were sick you were dying of all these other diseases. Um, and there were no drugs available.

ROSS: I'd had the test done cause I thought, yeah I'd been to America la la la la, um, I'd had the test done uhhhh and then I didn't go back and get the result and I only got the result quite by accident. I went back to see the doctor for something else and he said:

607 **CHORUS:** Oh by the way
608
609 **ROSS:** "fuckin' "by the way." *[laughs nervously]* Well, that changed my life; it's
610 like "Oh, fuck." *[intake of breath]*
611
612 **MATT:** I went to my doctor and I was seeing a gay doctor and he was on
613 holidays. So I went up to the 24 hour clinic where I'd never been
614 before, and this doctor just kind of went:
615
616 **CHORUS:** Wow
617
618 **MATT:** Okay. So this is a bit scary. He drew a line around the inflammation:
619
620 **CHORUS:** I want you to look at that every couple of hours. If the inflammation
621 goes outside that line, I want you to go to hospital immediately.
622
623 **MATT:** and he gave me these antibiotics:
624
625 **CHORUS:** You need to take them, we're doing a whole lot of tests and you come
626 back and I need to tell you now, I'm pretty sure you've got AIDS.
627
628 **MATT:** So *[laughs]* that was, you know, a pretty scary experience. It turns out I
629 wasn't, but yeah, that was a real eye opener as well, because for a
630 good kind of, in those days I think the test was two weeks. So, it was a
631 good fortnight where I had basically been told to expect the worst.

632

633 **DAVID:** The thing was I was still working in a very kind of male, like straight
634 dominated rural background. You know. Fencing, I mean, that sort of,
635 and I am gay. It's like ew.

636

637 I wanted to be a nurse, for as long as I can remember. I'd been
638 hospitalised with appendix when I was, I think around about oh, 9 or
639 10? And I saw that, there was a male, male nurse, I think he'd come
640 back from Vietnam and he'd been an orderly or something like that
641 and, he was kind of, he was dressed in green and he was very dark
642 and sort of, I don't know, in my mind kind of creepy but sort of kind of,
643 he was quite handsome and attractive for some reason. But, um and I
644 just liked the way he was caring and then I thought, wow, I'd really, I
645 think I'd really like to be a nurse and that kind of, that's where it
646 spawned from.

647

648 So I wanted to be nursing. I had all those altruistic kind of things about
649 'this is the way I want my people to be cared for' and how I want those
650 people to be cared for. It could be me in that bed one day. I was going
651 to care for patients like I would want to be cared for if I was in that bed.

652

653 **ROSS:** There was this lovely, lovely boy called David. Uh, he would have been
654 20 or 21 at the time; he was a dancer. Um and he was fated for um, a
655 very good career as a dancer. Like he was being groomed to be you
656 know, a very good dancer. He was already very good and he was

657 beautiful. Absolutely beautiful. But you know, and he was the sort of
658 man who, he had stunning blonde hair, naturally very blonde. Bright
659 eyes that sort of, bright blue eyes that sparkled; extremely handsome,
660 good body, blah blah blah. Anyway. You know, he was the sort of man
661 who'd go in the room and all these lecherous older gay men would go:

662

663 **CHORUS:** *[intake of breath]* Who's he?

664

665 **ROSS:** You know -- dancer's body.

666

667 Anyway, David had uh, got diagnosed with AIDS, not HIV, when he was
668 20. Uhhh and he had a condition which was gonna kill him, but he still
669 looked beautiful. Anyway, the moment I remember was, I was
670 Education Manager, used to run, uh groups for young men about
671 negotiating sexual life with HIV, right? So David used to occasionally
672 attend some of the groups cause, you know quite often the, the, one of
673 the dominant strategies that young men thought they could use was:

674

675 **CHORUS:** We can tell people with HIV cos they look sick. We'll just avoid them.

676

677 **ROSS:** So avoidance was one of the dominant strategies. David would sit in
678 the group, the group would all be in love with him and want to talk with
679 him, and they'd all sit around and David wouldn't say much and la la la
680 and they'd play these games about how do you tell if someone has
681 HIV. You know David would play along like he was a negative gay man

682 and then they'd go and have a break. And then after a bit of a break it
683 would be revealed that David was actually HIV positive and then the
684 group went into complete shock and didn't know how to deal with it and
685 they suddenly went:

686

687 **CHORUS:** Oh fuck. Avoidance doesn't work.

688

689 **ROSS:** And, you know I sat and watched one of those groups; it was
690 extraordinary. Just, you know to see the light come on and go okay:

691

692 **CHORUS:** Oh. We actually need some real skills to deal with this stuff.

693

694 **ROSS:** Some people were really resentful about what had happened to them,
695 they thought they'd been tricked. Cos they thought it was a safe HIV
696 negative group, it's like oops! *[laughs]* And this person that they'd
697 wanted to be nice to and get into bed; they'd revealed all those
698 attitudes which said they didn't like people with HIV, it was like:

699

700 **CHORUS:** Oh fuck. There go my chances.

701

702 **ROSS:** *[laughs]*. He was a complicated person. He caused heaps of drama,
703 that boy. *[laughs]*

704

705 He died.

706

707 **WILLIAM:** I think it helped that the Labour Government was elected in March '83,
708 that Dr Blewett and his advisors were not wedded to the idea of um,
709 just care and treatment as being the public health response to
710 anything.

711

712 Ah, I think Australians are, whether you think about them as being
713 descended, or think of us as being descended from convicts and cops,
714 there is a great tolerance for bad behaviour in Australia and a general
715 view that ah, people are not perfectible on Earth and you cope with
716 what goes wrong in a pragmatic, sane and sensible way -- trying to
717 minimise the harm that's being done, particularly when it comes to
718 young people to get them through the most vulnerable times of their
719 lives and keep them alive and keep them healthy and keep them
720 happy.

721

722 So the argument that Dr Blewett said to Mr Keating was yes, if we do
723 all of this, we can keep the caseload down. So he was arguing the case
724 for prevention, and as custodian of the National Finances, Mr Keating
725 as Treasurer would say, fine. It's a better investment to invest in this
726 rather than to take on twenty thousand cases of people with HIV or
727 thirty thousand or forty thousand that are a drain on, on,
728 on...resources.

729

730 We believed in prevention. The idea that prevention was better than
731 cure, was cheaper than cure and the mobilising of people around,

732 behaviour change, modest behaviour change, backed sometimes by
733 law, but by education and discussion, all of the things that work for a
734 highly literate educated society were a good idea, were a good public
735 policy.

736

737 **MATT:** We'd get, you know cold calls from people about HIV information and
738 this woman came on the phone and said that she was worried about
739 um, HIV and essentially what she said was that she and her husband:

740

741 **CHORUS:** had had anal sex.

742

743 **MATT:** and she was concerned that she was gonna get AIDS. And I kind of
744 went "what is she on about" and then it finally clicked that, you know
745 there's this association that the act itself, it's not, it's not a full
746 understanding that it's a virus that's transmitted in certain ways. It's a
747 monogamous relationship, it's not gonna emerge from this 'strange'
748 and 'hideous' thing that you've done.

749

750 Um, and that really drove home for me that this isn't just about gay
751 men feeling guilty. It's a, you know it's a psychological thing that
752 happens for people that it was, I think, it was the amazing thing about
753 this. Because it was a sexually transmitted illness, and it was
754 associated with gay sex that um, this alignment of morals and guilt and
755 disease was so much more possible and to hear; I remember saying to
756 her, do you think you husband's been unfaithful?

757

758 **CHORUS:** Oh no, absolutely not!

759

760 **MATT:** It's a virus darling. *[laughs]*

761

762 **DAVID:** I know that one night I was out and I met this guy who sort of tried to

763 pick me up in a bar. And he said:

764

765 **CHORUS:** Oh, I've sort of got to go and say goodbye to my friends

766

767 **DAVID:** and he disappeared. When he was coming back, I saw that he was

768 leaving a group of people and they were all looking at me. And one of

769 the guys in the group that he was with knew that I was HIV positive and

770 when he came back, he said:

771

772 **CHORUS:** Oh, I'm not going home with you anymore.

773

774 **DAVID:** So it was obvious that someone in that group had actually told him that

775 I was HIV positive and he had then kind of, you know. It was kind of

776 like I was outed. It was destroying in terms of my kind of, um, my kind

777 of ideas of meeting someone and you know, sort of having a

778 relationship.

779

780 **BRENDAN:** There were people who were HIV who went to gyms just to build the
781 body to make it look as if they didn't have it. I mean, they couldn't deny
782 it, um, but they had to pretend that they didn't have it.

783

784 **MATT:** I remember it more as um, this growing sense that everyone was
785 affected. Initially it was just them, like I can remember a guy saying:

786

787 **CHORUS:** you keep an eye out for um, for someone whose collar's too loose
788 because they've probably got AIDS you know, don't pick up those sort
789 of people.

790

791 **NEIL:** I remember the first time I went for a, uh, to get my blood test done and
792 I went to the doctor I'd been seeing all the time and uh I remember the,
793 four days? Five days? I think it was, it wasn't the same week, so it must
794 been longer than, you know it was sort of like five days and I remember
795 those being the most horrible five days ever. Um, and I came in
796 because at that stage a number of my friends had been um, diagnosed
797 positive, uh, and we, and, yeah, it was considered a death sentence,
798 which it was. Um, and mine came back:

799

800 **CHORUS:** No, it's negative

801

802 **NEIL:** and I immediately asked him to do another test, I said well it can't be.
803 It's not like I've been sitting around doing nothing, I'm, you know, hello
804 I've been a bit busy and it's just ridiculous, I mean you know if,

805 everybody else has caught this bug um how in God's name have I
806 been lucky enough to miss it. So we did another one and it also came
807 back negative. Um and you, and sort of you changed your behaviour
808 but there was a certain amount of change in behaviour but not an
809 enormous amount. It was you know it was also that thing that uh, sort
810 of you're young, there's a whole big bad world out there, I want to
811 experience it, I want to play, I want to enjoy it and now you're saying I
812 can't.

813

814 **ROSS:** Thousands of people were dealing with positive results.

815

816 **DAVID:** I had to make a decision about going onto treatment myself. So that
817 was difficult, that was very confronting. But anyway, I went in to them
818 and they put me onto a couple of drugs that were pretty foul actually,
819 and the first one I think I took it two mornings in a row and I went back
820 to the doctor and said, I'm not going to take these. I'll die before I take
821 these again. He changed me onto another drug called D4T which
822 actually gave me peripheral neuropathy, which attacks the nerves in
823 your feet.

824

825 I remember going to have my hair cut one afternoon after work in
826 Oxford Street, and then sitting down at a bus stop and bursting into
827 tears because I couldn't walk any further because of the pain in my
828 feet. The doctor had kept on encouraging me to take my medication
829 and he said, "no, I've got to get over it." ^{xi}

830

831

Then they put me onto AZT. That was another big thing, because I'd

832

seen AZT kill people. So I had to come to terms with the fact that I was

833

taking a really toxic drug and I didn't like it.

834

835

~ END 4 ~

836

INTERLUDE 2

837

838 *[CHORUS & Ensemble sings Fever by Eddie Cooley and Otis Blackwell. This is*
839 *chosen to evoke the lazy sexuality of the time and the night sweats and fevers*
840 *experienced by HIV+ individuals.]*

841

842 **CHORUS:** Never know how much I love you

843 never know how much I care

844 when you put your arms around me

845 I get you fever that's so hard to bare

846

847 You give me fever

848 when you kiss me

849 Fever when you hold me tight

850 Fever, in the morning

851 Fever all through the night

852

853 Sun lights up the day time

854 moon lights up the night

855 I light up when you call my name

856 and you know I'm gonna treat you right

857

858 You give me fever

859 when you kiss me

860 Fever when you hold me tight

861 Fever, in the morning
862 Fever all through the night
863
864 Everybody's got the fever
865 That is somethin' you all know
866 Fever isn't such a new thing
867 Fever started long ago
868
869 He gives me fever
870 With his kisses
871 Fever when he holds me tight
872 Fever, I'm his missus
873
874 But what a lovely way to burn
875 But what a lovely way to burn
876 But what a lovely way to burn
877 But what a lovely way to burn

878

5 ~ WASTING TIME

879

880 **MATT:** I'd gone out, had sex with someone and it wasn't safe um, and I can
881 remember going home um, taking a shower and I remember sitting in
882 the shower just balling my eyes out in the shower, just beating myself
883 up for how stupid that was. How could I be so stupid. I knew, I knew
884 the risks, I knew what I had to do and I messed up.

885

886 Rational decisions do not translate to emotional behaviour, you know.
887 The heat of the moment is not a moment where you draw on your, your
888 rational knowledge.

889

890 **WILLIAM:** José was here, and over that period then, '84, '5, '6, sometime at that
891 point, then he acquired it.

892

893 **NEIL:** The energy and um, power and um love of being a gay man, wasn't
894 any different. But there was a very obvious pall hanging over
895 everything, and you, because the person that you met today could be
896 in hospital tomorrow. It, added a level of, *[pause]* sort of a black cloud
897 that was hanging around there all the time.

898

899 I think the thing about the experience of seeing people die was, I had
900 friends who were my age and I suppose what was I, I was in my, uh,
901 late 20s early 30s um, that these friends who were dying were looking
902 like old people.

903

904 **WILLIAM:** So this was just random chance. Yes, it was shocking. Yes, I loved him
905 very much. It was a shocking thing to uh, to watch it happen and to
906 know that you couldn't do anything about it. The most appalling thing.

907

908 He was one of many friends, all in their twenties, I think, yes, and here
909 one day and gone the next, almost. Within months, within ten months.
910 People would be okay, and then you wouldn't see them for a little while,
911 and then they'd turn up, and you'd say how are you?

912

913 **CHORUS:** Oh, not very well. I've got this thing.

914

915 **WILLIAM:** and at that moment you knew that they were gonna be dead. No
916 question. They were. The moment they told you that they had acquired
917 something and they looked like they were sick, then that was it. And it
918 was extremely difficult to come to terms with this. I had no concept --
919 no idea. I think really at that time I had no idea that people actually
920 died.

921

922 **ROSS:** Thousands of people were dealing with positive results.

923

924 **DAVID:** I remember one friend of mine, you'd have good friends and then you'd
925 not hear from them for a while. You'd wonder how they're going, or
926 whatever, and then one day I ran into this friend of mine.

927

928 He came around the corner and I looked up and I knew why I hadn't
929 heard from him. He had lost so much weight and he was very sick, and
930 that's kind of why, there was just this kind of like, wow, you know? This
931 is one of my best friends and he didn't tell me.

932

933 **NEIL:** Their skin, their skin went grey, their uh, cheeks dropped, they were
934 using walking sticks, they were in wheelchairs, um, they were in
935 hospital with uh cages over them because they couldn't have blankets
936 or things on them. It was seeing someone break down before you. And
937 in old age, you know, sort of certain things don't work but suddenly your
938 friends just looked as if everything was just being dragged out of them.

939

940 **BRENDAN:** People became like scarecrows.

941

942 **WILLIAM:** The idea, the idea that people died was about forty or fifty years off in
943 the future, but not, not your friends.

944

945 **MALCOLM:** I thought my friends are dying. I'm supposed to grow up with them, I'm
946 supposed to grow old with them. I'm supposed to play with them. I'm
947 supposed to get drunk and argue with them and then kiss and make up
948 the next time we see each other because it was all piss and bad
949 manners. And that's what friendship's about. I'm supposed to be able to
950 have those opportunities, and so should they. My friends are being
951 taken away.

952

~ END 5 ~

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INTERLUDE 3

[CHORUS sings Chain Reaction by Maurice, Robin & Barry Gib. This takes us right into the glamour and glitz of the 80s disco scene and the words are actually quite naughty.]

CHORUS: I'm in the middle of a chain reaction
You give me all the after midnight action
I want to get you where I can let you make all that love to me
I'm on a journey for the inspiration
To anywhere and there ain't no salvation
I need you to get me nearer to you
So you can set me free
We talk about love, love, love
We talk about love
We talk about love, love, love
We talk about love

You make me tremble when your hand moves lower
You taste a little then you swallow slower
Nature has a way of yielding treasure
Pleasure made for you, oh
You gotta plan, your future is on the run
Shine a light for the whole world over
You never find your love if you hide away

978 Crying, dying, all you gotta do is
979
980 Get in the middle of a chain reaction
981 You get a medal when you're lost in action
982 I want to get your love all ready for the sweet sensation
983 Instant radiation
984 You let me hold you for the first explosion
985 We get a picture of our love in motion
986 My arms will cover, my lips will smother you
987 With no more left to say
988 We talk about love, love, love
989 We talk about love
990 You let me hold you for the first explosion
991 My arms will cover you
992
993 All you gotta do is get in the middle of a chain reaction
994 You get a medal when you're lost in action
995 Don't pass me by
996 I want to get your love all ready for the chain reaction
997

998 **INTERVAL**

999
1000
1001
1002

1003 **INTERLUDE 4**

1004

1005 *[CHORUS sings I Will Survive by Fekaris, Perren, Midori, Satoru, Suzuki & Yoshino.*

1006 *This is not a reference to "Pricilla" this is a bitter, hard rendition that is sung by a*

1007 *survivor of horror – who fought against a horrible disease and survived]*

1008

1009 **CHORUS:** At first I was afraid I was petrified

1010 Kept thinking I could never live without you by my side

1011 But then I spent so many nights

1012 Thinking how you did me wrong

1013 And I grew strong

1014 And I learned how to get along

1015

1016 And now you're back

1017 from outer space

1018 I just walked in to find you here with that sad look upon your face

1019 I should have changed that stupid lock

1020 I should have made you leave your key

1021 If I've known for just one second you'd back to bother me

1022 Go on now, go walk out the door

1023 Just turn around now

1024 'Cause you're not welcome anymore

1025 Weren't you the one who tried to hurt me with goodbye

1026 Do you think I'd crumble

1027 Did you think I'd lay down and die?

1028
1029 Oh no, not I. I will survive
1030 Oh as long as I know how to love
1031 I know I'll stay alive
1032 I've got all my life to live
1033 I've got all my love to give and I'll survive
1034 I will survive, Hey hey
1035
1036 It took all the strength I had not to fall apart
1037 Kept trying' hard to mend the pieces of my broken heart
1038 And I spent oh so many nights
1039 Just feeling sorry for myself, I used to cry
1040 But now I hold my head up high
1041 And you see me, somebody new
1042 I'm not that chained up little girl who's still in love with you
1043 And so you felt like dropping in
1044 And just expect me to be free
1045 Now I'm saving all my lovin' for someone who's loving me
1046
1047 Go on now, go walk out the door
1048 Just turn around now
1049 'Cause you're not welcome anymore
1050 Weren't you the one who tried to break me with goodbye
1051 Do you think I'd crumble
1052 Did you think I'd lay down and die?

1053
1054 Oh no, not I. I will survive
1055 Oh as long as I know how to love
1056 I know I'll stay alive
1057 I've got all my life to live
1058 I've got all my love to give and I'll survive
1059 I will survive, Oh
1060
1061 Go on now, go walk out the door
1062 Just turn around now
1063 'Cause you're not welcome anymore
1064 Weren't you the one who tried to hurt me with goodbye
1065 Do you think I'd crumble
1066 Did you think I'd lay down and die?
1067
1068 Oh no, not I. I will survive
1069 Oh as long as I know how to love
1070 I know I'll stay alive
1071 I've got all my life to live
1072 I've got all my love to give and I'll survive
1073 I will survive
1074 I will survive
1075
1076

1077 Go on now, go walk out the door
1078 Just turn around now
1079 'Cause you're not welcome anymore
1080 Weren't you the one who tried to hurt me with goodbye
1081 Do you think I'd crumble
1082 Did you think I'd lay down and die?
1083 Oh no, not I. I will survive
1084 Oh as long as I know how to love
1085 I know I'll stay alive
1086 I've got all my life to live
1087 I've got all my love to give and I'll survive
1088 I will survive
1089 I will survive

6 ~ DEATH

1090

1091

1092 **DAVID:** The first time that someone with HIV was admitted. You know, there'd
1093 be lots of visitors and friends and then you'd see in subsequent
1094 admissions that people would actually start to become more isolated
1095 from their friends and things like that. And so then, you know, there'd
1096 be less visitors and things like that. One really powerful kind of story,
1097 one that really got me the most was that one night there was a young
1098 guy dying. *[clears throat]*. One afternoon I'd come on and there was
1099 one guy dying. The family had said:

1100

1101 **CHORUS:** We think we might go home.

1102

1103 **DAVID:** I said, well, I'll call you if I think you need to come back in. By this stage
1104 we were getting pretty good at figuring out how long someone would
1105 have left before they died. Sort of, you know, we could, I mean we
1106 weren't that good, sometimes we missed completely. But you know,
1107 we'd get an idea of someone, how close they'd be to dying. And so I
1108 rang the family and said, look I think it's time to come in. And they were
1109 only at Rockdale and it was a Saturday night and there was nothing on
1110 and I am sort of thinking, you know, the traffic can't be that bad. It's two
1111 hours since I've rung and it was like, you know. So anyway, their son
1112 died and I kind of left it another twenty minutes and I thought, I'm going
1113 to have to ring. So I rang the family and the father answered the phone
1114 and I said, ah, you're still at home?

1115

1116 **CHORUS:** Yes.

1117

1118 **DAVID:** Well, I said who I was and I said, I'm just ringing to tell you that your
1119 son has passed away.

1120

1121 **CHORUS:** Thanks very much for your call

1122

1123 **DAVID:** and he hung up. I kind of went, you know, your child has just died, and
1124 that's the way you respond.

1125

1126 **CHORUS:** Let us sit upon the ground

1127 And tell sad stories of the death of kings.^{xii}

1128

1129 **DAVID:** When I was working on the ward I knew a lot of my friends by their
1130 nicknames. So one guy called Cristal, I used to go out with him all the
1131 time and anyway, I was sitting in handover and this patient, one of my
1132 patients had been admitted by ambulance who had collapsed in the
1133 street coming home from work, which was often the story. People were
1134 collapsing. Some of them didn't even know that they were HIV positive
1135 and they would collapse in the street and be brought in. So, they'd
1136 come in in respiratory distress with a mask on their face or something
1137 like that. Anyway, I went in and pulled back the mask to clean his face,
1138 and it was Cristal.

1139

1140 Another guy who came in and he'd had cancer of the nose and so he
1141 was missing sort of almost half his nose. This really handsome man
1142 was suddenly disfigured by HIV and I walked in and said, my God, how
1143 are you? I can't believe what's happened to you:

1144

1145 **CHORUS:** you're the first person who's actually had the courage to even talk to
1146 me about the changes that have happened to me.

1147

1148 **DAVID:** These were my friends and I didn't know.

1149

1150 **NEIL:** Our parents and grandparents went through wars. There's a particular
1151 town in Victoria where, all the young men went off to war and it was the
1152 first world war and they um, this, there's people there like there's the
1153 mother, she and she has 4 sons and her husband killed in the war. You
1154 know we have a very similar sort of situation.

1155

1156 **DAVID:** That was also the dance party days. We were kind of taking lots of
1157 drugs, lots of speed, like I would go out with a couple of friends of
1158 mine, some of them nurses and some of them not. Dance parties,
1159 drugs, whatever, and get absolutely plastered, you know? And have the
1160 best nights. So there was this kind of like you've got this really intense
1161 kind of bedside war going on with HIV and people dying. And then the
1162 other side of it is, you're going out taking drugs, dance parties all night,
1163 dancing and drinking, you know, having an incredible time. You know,
1164 like the best time ever.

1165

1166 **NEIL:** People were out there and doing things and creating and loving life as
1167 well as dealing with death.

1168

1169 **DAVID:** And then you go back to work. I actually did my first shift in nursing in
1170 HIV. I learnt a lot, um an incredible amount, just being there, and really
1171 it was great because all my education and everything that I'd actually
1172 learned; all the altruistic kind of theory, the kind of caring.

1173

1174 Then poetry was something I kinda fell into and I wrote about HIV:

1175

1176 An Afternoon Shift

1177 The lift transcends to the seventeenth floor

1178 St Vincent's Hospital, Ward 17 South

1179 Through opaque plastic doors I push

1180 A resounding slap, flap to flap

1181 Then there is a buzz

1182

1183 **CHORUS:** We kept someone alive

1184

1185 **DAVID:** a voice said.

1186

1187 That one in there struggles for his last breath

1188 The gut wrenching sound with a foul stench

1189 Coming from a young man shitting himself to death

1190

1191 **CHORUS:** I think I hear them. Stand, ho! Who is there?^{xiii}
1192
1193 **DAVID:** Orates a wandering actor who's lost his fucking mind
1194 There's a nurse sitting by another bed
1195 She holds his hand, knuckles white
1196 An artery about to rupture in his lung
1197 In his own blood slowly he will drown
1198 Now he fights for his last breath
1199 Pump him full of morphine
1200
1201 A tube under water stuck between his ribs
1202 That's the monotonous bubbling sound
1203
1204 Another has a positive airways pressure mask
1205 It's the hissing beast that keeps his lungs inflated
1206 Still they will collapse and that's another dead
1207 That makes eleven this week or is it twelve?
1208 Brought in two days ago unconscious
1209 He won't wake up
1210 That sobbing, it's his mother, she didn't know
1211
1212 There is nothing I can do.
1213
1214 A young man cries out in pain
1215 I rush in our eyes connect, our souls collide
1216 Injecting the morphine, way too late I feel

1217 A second later he gasps
1218
1219 **CHORUS:** I'm going to die
1220
1221 **DAVID:** I need a drink I said to my mate
1222
1223 **CHORUS:** Yeah! Let's go out, let's get wasted.
1224 You want a bump?
1225
1226 **DAVID:** there's no need to ask again
1227 I snorted it in hard and fast
1228 Shit it burns but fuck its good
1229 These are the halcyon days
1230 Cocaine and Californian E's
1231 Boys in leather, lycra and drag
1232 We all dance like there is no tomorrow
1233 Donna Summer, Sylvester, Madonna
1234 Freddie Mercury, Kylie and Abba
1235 I become the Dancing Queen and do The Locomotion
1236 Sleaze Ball and Mardi Gras
1237 We have a ball we do them all
1238 Then too soon it's the slap of that door ^{xiv}
1239

1240 I can still visualise all of that. I can still see that man, that boy's face
1241 and his eyes. I looked into his eyes as he died. I basically stared in his
1242 eyes, watching someone disappear. He looked at me and said

1243

1244 **CHORUS:** I'm gonna die

1245

1246 **DAVID:** and he did.

1247

1248 **ROSS:** There would be a full page of obituaries every week, and we would
1249 know half of the people in the obituaries every week. So, you know, all
1250 you would do is that you'd get the paper on the Tuesday, you'd go
1251 down into the garage. Together you would open the pages and see
1252 who was going to be dead this week. You'd spend ten minutes reading
1253 and grieving, and then you'd go back to work. It was just mad. We
1254 weren't equipped for that sort of craziness.

1255

1256 **NEIL:** It went through like it was a plague.

1257

1258 **WILLIAM:** José was here and then he acquired it and then he, he, died in mid '87
1259 on his thirtieth birthday.

1260

1261 **ROSS:** There's no textbook that says how you deal with someone you know
1262 dying every week.

1263

1264 **WILLIAM:** When he died it was like -- Hiroshima. I was shocked that this general
1265 question of HIV then should affect me so personally and the great love
1266 of my life should then die. It brought home to me just the randomness
1267 of chance and existence, as I'm sure it must to people who are in a, in
1268 a real war. The people who are in the um, in the trenches in the First
1269 World War and the person next to them gets killed by a bullet and they
1270 survive. I just felt, um, shocked to determine, to to see the real nature
1271 of how the universe works, which surprisingly is neither fair nor just. It
1272 just is, and you do the best you can.

1273

1274 **MALCOLM:** I always remember this guy. I can't remember his name, which is
1275 shocking and it was when this guy, Glen, was in hospital, a friend of
1276 ours. We'd sort of go in and take turns, because the nurses, while they
1277 were sensational, they were sensational, but they were raced off their
1278 feet. They couldn't do everything, I mean food trays were being
1279 dumped outside the door because the catering staff wouldn't take them
1280 in, because they'd get "the AIDS". You know? It was just ridiculous. So
1281 you'd take that in.

1282

1283 And I just noticed this guy in the corner of the ward and he was always
1284 on his own. Every time. And we were there all the time. And one day I
1285 went over to him and started talking to him. He had that skeletal thing
1286 that they all get, this hideous, you know, that look how much longer
1287 have I got. And he said:

1288

1289 **CHORUS:** No, I haven't got anyone.

1290

1291 **MALCOLM:** I said, no friends, no family?

1292

1293 **CHORUS:** No.

1294

1295 **MALCOLM:** What about your dinner? I said, come on, just try it. So, I just gave him
1296 something to eat. I started chatting to him and I remember that I just
1297 put my hand on his arm, as I do because I'm a tactile person! And I
1298 didn't even realise he did it, but he put his hand on top of my hand and
1299 he started crying. I said, what's wrong?

1300

1301 **CHORUS:** I haven't been touched for so long.

1302

1303 **MALCOLM:** I said, sweetheart, let me give you a hug. So I gave him a hug. He had
1304 a cry.

1305

1306 I went to him the next day and he was gone.

1307

1308

~ End 6 ~

1309 **INTERLUDE 4**

1310

1311 *[CHORUS recites "Funeral Blues" by W. H. Auden. Deep bitter sadness.]*

1312

1313 **CHORUS:** Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,

1314 Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,

1315 Silence the pianos and with muffled drum

1316 Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

1317

1318 Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead

1319 Scribbling on the sky the message 'He is Dead'.

1320 Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,

1321 Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

1322

1323 He was my North, my South, my East and West,

1324 My working week and my Sunday rest,

1325 My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;

1326 I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.

1327

1328 The stars are not wanted now; put out every one,

1329 Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun,

1330 Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;

1331 For nothing now can ever come to any good.^{xv}

7. ~ FUNERALS

1332

1333

1334 **MATT:** When Dave died, his funeral was just the most leather clad funeral
1335 you've ever seen. Really packed, absolutely packed, and his casket
1336 was drawn in this kind of horse drawn black casket in a black and glass
1337 kind of horse and buggy with horses and feathers on their heads. It was
1338 just this complete performance, and he had just gone OTT. It was great.

1339

1340 He was a full on leather queen from way back. A motorcycle queen and
1341 he had a motorcycle accident and lost his leg just above the knee and
1342 was the first person who ever said to me that being an amputee was an
1343 advantage in his world because he could fist without a problem of a fist.
1344 Amputee sex *[laughs]*. He's the popular boy in his scene, because you
1345 could put him in a sling and he had no need of all this to get in the way
1346 and he could shove his stump up there.

1347

Stump sex.

1348

1349 **CHORUS:** Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs. ^{xvi}

1350

1351 **NEIL:** You know you did what you - you were as strong as you possibly could
1352 be, in the sense that someone passed away and you'd say "well look
1353 he had to have the whole adventure" and so there's hot and cold
1354 running altar boys with smoking handbags and, you know as many
1355 priests as they could and, you know the biggest chorus in the whole
1356 world. And that's probably what you kept reinforcing, because, if you

1357 constantly kept remembering the times visiting people in hospital, it's a
1358 different game entirely and that's quite debilitating and in a sense it
1359 was, I suppose my way of dealing with it was to try and affirm, um, the
1360 people I'd lost and, the lifestyle we'd all embraced.

1361

1362 **BILLY:** James was a very close friend about three or four years older than me.
1363 James was, he was a doll. You know, he was a babe. Women, men, all
1364 wanted to go to bed with him. So James's mother was very
1365 sympathetic to gays, because basically she'd had gay friends. But
1366 when she married James's father, James's father was like, no:

1367

1368 **CHORUS:** No poofers are allowed.

1369

1370 **BILLY:** And Jane told me, Jane was James's mother, that she had this really
1371 dear friend for many years who was gay. Right? And he was quite
1372 demonstrably gay. He dressed really well, he told great stories, he was
1373 bright, he was attractive, everyone knew he was gay, so James's father
1374 knew he was gay. And John said to Jane:

1375

1376 **CHORUS:** Well, if you're going to marry me, you can never see him again.

1377

1378 **BILLY:** Then suddenly here was this family now confronted with the idea of not
1379 only is your son gay, but he is gay and he's got this terrible disease that
1380 everybody is calling the plague. What are you going to do about that?

1381

1382 Later I spoke to James's father and he was a completely changed man.
1383 And he wasn't a changed man who was faking it either, because I can
1384 tell about those things, and we had long conversations.

1385
1386 James died in November and I do remember a lot about that. We'd had
1387 a falling out and I realised that he was getting sicker and sicker, so I
1388 opened a bottle of champagne one morning and made a tearful phone
1389 call to his place at about, mmm, August or something? And sort of
1390 basically said, look, this thing's bigger than us. Um, I apologise, can
1391 you forgive me, whatever?

1392

1393 **CHORUS:** Yeah, of course. It's stupid.

1394

1395 **BILLY:** The next thing that I heard was that he was really sick, he was at home
1396 with diarrhoea and we went over there to visit him. He was curled up
1397 like a baby Joey in his mother's pouch with just his head poking out of
1398 the doona, and we went and were sort of talking to him for about a
1399 quarter of an hour and then he sort of went:

1400

1401 **CHORUS:** You've got to go. I need to rest.

1402

1403 **BRENDAN:** It was a matter of smoothing the pillow, smoothing the pillow.

1404

1405 **BILLY:** And then someone rang me about three or four days later and they'd
1406 said he'd died and then there was this most horrendous funeral.

1407

1408 **NEIL:** There was another guy who was dying of AIDS and his family had
1409 disowned him years and years beforehand. He had a fantastic partner
1410 and bunch of friends, and when he was dying, the partner did the right
1411 thing and contacted the family and said, you know:

1412

1413 **CHORUS:** I just want you to know that he's really ill and he's dying.

1414

1415 **NEIL:** And lo and behold, the family land in the hospital from out of town and
1416 basically claimed their rights as the blood relatives, shunted the partner
1417 out of the picture altogether and sat around praying over this guy for
1418 the last days of his life.

1419

1420 And the partner was just pushed out of the situation and they refused,
1421 they took the body home to whatever hick country town it was and
1422 didn't allow the partner or friends to be involved in the funeral.

1423

1424 **BILLY:** Don't get me started on Catholicism, but I will tell you this. James'
1425 funeral was in a Catholic Church in North Sydney. I am always asked
1426 to play the organ because I'm the piano player, aren't I? And in a way,
1427 I'm kind of happy to do it because it gives me something to do and it
1428 means that I'm up in the organ loft so if I go to pieces I can go to
1429 pieces, and I know that I can go to pieces and still play a tune, so that's
1430 good too.

1431

1432 So, funeral -- North Sydney a couple of days later and you know, the
 1433 people at the funeral represented specific demographics. On the one
 1434 hand there was all of James's friends and all of the people from the
 1435 fundraising who were very, you know, pro-gay, pro-um, you know, he
 1436 had a fabulous life and this was a terrible disease. It's got nothing to do
 1437 with retribution. And then all of the Catholics who were like friends of
 1438 the parents, some of them painfully fundamentalist. Like this woman
 1439 who was a North Shore matron who was a family friend of theirs who
 1440 lead the singing in this really um, unpleasant high strident soprano
 1441 belting out all of those hideous Catholic hymns, like:
 1442

<p>BILLY:</p> <p>Anyway, the point I am leading up to is, um, evidently they hadn't arranged anybody appropriate to do a eulogy. So the Catholic priest did the eulogy, and the eulogy was</p>	<p>CHORUS & CAST:</p> <p>Praise, my soul, the King of heaven to his feet your tribute bring. Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven evermore his praises sing. Alleluia, alleluia!</p> <p>Praise the everlasting King!</p> <p>[Sotto</p> <p>Praise him for his grace and favor to his people in distress. Praise him, still the same as ever, slow to chide, and swift to bless.</p>
---	---

all about how through his life, you know, this man had been confused and lead astray and you know, down evil paths and you know, and had been punished for this. But in the last stretch of his life, because he'd done the fundraising, you know, and because virtually he was unable to have sex anymore, he'd sort of found, sort of the path to righteousness.

We were all just sort of scratching the pulpits and going, kill the priest and of course nobody did and I was up in the organ thing and it was awful. It was awful. We were so angry, I can't begin to tell you.

Alleluia, alleluia!

Glorious in his faithfulness!

Father like he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows.
In his hand he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.

Alleluia, alleluia!

Widely yet his mercy flows!]

Angels, help us to adore him;
you behold him face to face.
Sun and moon, bow down before
him,
dwellers all in time and space.

	Alleluia, alleluia!
	Praise with us the God of grace! ^{xvii}

1443

1444 **BILLY:** And then we went to the wake and the wake was wonderful. The wake
 1445 was at his parent's place and everybody was saying:

1446

1447 **CHORUS:** oh, wasn't that priest an absolute asshole

1448

1449 **BILLY:** and I was in total agreement. We had a really fabulous party, and so
 1450 his life was sort of celebrated and you know, luckily the majority of the
 1451 people there knew to disregard the unfortunate circumstances of the
 1452 eulogy.

1453

1454 **BRENDAN:** It affected you, when your friends were sick, it really encroached upon
 1455 you. But you went to the funerals, lots of funerals, and then you tried to
 1456 forget about it. Life went on.

1457

1458 **ROSS:** It just became completely numbing.

1459

1460 **NEIL:** It got to the stage though when people were first dying, you know you
 1461 would go to every funeral you know, how little or how much you knew
 1462 someone.

1463

1464 By the end, or towards the end of the 80s beginning of the 90s; I

1465 suppose there were less funerals then, but, it became a little bit like, "I

1466 went to see them in hospital, I don't need another funeral". Horrible,
1467 um, but sort of a protective thing that you did for yourself.

1468

1469 **MALCOLM:** I was sitting there once at a funeral thinking, I can't cry anymore. I just
1470 can't cry.

1471

1472

~ END 7 ~

1473 **8. ~ GHOSTS**

1474

1475 *[We are back in present day]*

1476

1477 **WILLIAM:** So what would I say now?

1478

1479 **CHORUS:** I count myself in nothing else so happy

1480 As in a soul remembering my good friends.^{xviii}

1481

1482 **WILLIAM:** Even if, even if I found somebody really, really, really nice now, I have
1483 to concede that they would not be as really, really nice as the person I
1484 found when I was twenty-seven.

1485

1486 **BILLY:** Consider compassion.

1487

1488 **MALCOLM:** By the time I turned forty, I realised that more than half my friends were
1489 dead.

1490

1491 **ROSS:** The thing that made gay men hang together was stigmatisation. HIV
1492 provided the glue and so community became more important. Then,
1493 you know, people with HIV said

1494

1495 **CHORUS:** We can't invest our lives inside the epidemic. We've got to work out
1496 how to have a life that is not defined by it.

1497

1498 **MALCOLM:** Life is a gift, and you must cherish and hold onto every moment as long
1499 as you can and never let go of it, just keep it there. And in order to do
1500 that, it's about protecting yourself. And make sure whatever you do in
1501 life is through an informed choice or an informed decision, so that you
1502 have the power, whatever path you go down, whatever road you take.
1503

1504 **NEIL:** There's a bloody great hole.
1505

1506 **MALCOLM:** It's not about making the wrong decision, it's about making the
1507 informed choice or the informed decision
1508

1509 **BILLY:** Consider being compassionate.
1510

1511 **DAVID:** I just think that every day is amazing. You know, there are, I've lasted
1512 another day. It's kind of like, WOW, I'm still here, twenty-seven years
1513 later. It's kind of like, how did I, and in some ways I feel guilty about
1514 that. How did I manage to make it this far?
1515

1516 **ROSS:** If you stood in Taylor Square, within half a mile there would be 60 "only
1517 gays" venues. Now there are three. *[laughs]*
1518

1519 **NEIL:** It was, a horrible time, I feel very lucky that things swung the way they
1520 did with me and my life trundles on. I fall over and get up and brush off
1521 and keep going and I think I'm incredible lucky for that.
1522

1523 **MALCOLM:** I've only started crying in the last three years again. And it's only on
1524 certain occasions, and it's at odd times when it's at certain people's
1525 funerals, and sometimes I think, I know some tears are about you, but
1526 some tears are actually catching up.

1527

1528 **BILLY:** Work hard to try and understand the difference between disease and
1529 moral failing. Disease is not moral failing and it deserves compassion
1530 and not judgement.

1531

1532 *[CHORUS starts to hum -Dance Me to the End of Love by Leonard Cohen]*

1533

1534 **MALCOLM:** It was blue, and it was crystal clear, and it was so much fun. And to be
1535 gay was wonderful.

1536

1537 **NEIL:** It's too easy to look back and sort of think, oh, all we were doing was
1538 going to funerals. No. There were bright sunny days as well. Some of
1539 those funerals happened on bright sunny days.

1540

1541 **MALCOLM:** We are talking about that period when the sky was sparkling and it was
1542 all blue.

1543

1544

~ END 8 ~

1545

9 ~ THE LAST DANCE

1546

1547 *[CHORUS sings Dance me to the end of love by Leonard Cohen.]*

1548

1549 **CHORUS:** Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin

1550 Dance me through the panic 'til I'm gathered safely in

1551 Lift me like an olive branch and be my homeward dove

1552 Dance me to the end of love

1553 Dance me to the end of love

1554

1555 Oh let me see your beauty when the witnesses are gone

1556 Let me feel you moving like they do in Babylon

1557 Show me slowly what I only know the limits of

1558 Dance me to the end of love

1559 Dance me to the end of love

1560

1561 Dance me to the wedding now, dance me on and on

1562 Dance me very tenderly and dance me very long

1563 We're both of us beneath our love, we're both of us above

1564 Dance me to the end of love

1565 Dance me to the end of love

1566

1567 Dance me to the children who are asking to be born

1568 Dance me through the curtains that our kisses have outworn

1569 Raise a tent of shelter now, though every thread is torn

1570 Dance me to the end of love

1571

1572 Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin

1573 Dance me through the panic till I'm gathered safely in

1574 Touch me with your naked hand or touch me with your glove

1575 Dance me to the end of love

1576 Dance me to the end of love

1577 Dance me to the end of love

1578

1579 ~ END ~

ⁱ Sourced from Lost Gay Sydney – Facebook.

ⁱⁱ William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, II. 1.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} www.backinthegays.com/history-of-the-hankycodex;

www.saleatherman.org.za/index.pp

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} www.nytimes.com/1981/07/03/us/rare-cancer-seen-in-141-homosexuals

^{ix} ACON and Positive Life *Slip It On* and *Safe Sex* Campaigns.

^x William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, II. 1.

^{xi} David says this as if the Dr had said “you’ve got to get over it”.

^{xii} William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, III. 2.

^{xiii} William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I. 1.

^{xiv} *An Afternoon Shift*. Copyright 2013 by David Crawford. Reprinted with permission.

^{xv} *Funeral Blues* by W. H. Auden. Reprinted with permission of Curtis Brown, Ltd.

^{xvi} William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, IV. 2.

^{xvii} Praise, my soul, the King of heaven by H. F. Lyte.

^{xviii} William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, II. 3.

Appendix 1

Monash University Human Research Ethics Approval Certificate



MONASH University

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Research Office

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

Date: 5 January 2012
Project Number: CF11/3627 - 2011001911
Project Title: Seeking Dorothy: in the land of Oz
Chief Investigator: Dr William Peterson
Approved: From: 5 January 2012 to 5 January 2017

Terms of approval

1. The Chief Investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to MUHREC before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation. **Failure to provide permission letters to MUHREC before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.**
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Requires the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

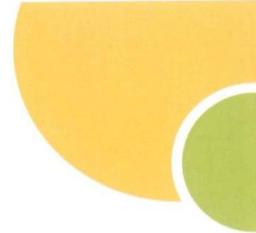
Professor Ben Canny
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Ms Colette Keen

Postal - Monash University, Vic 3800, Australia
Building 3E, Room 111, Clayton Campus, Wellington Road, Clayton
Telephone +61 3 9905 5490 Facsimile +61 3 9905 3831
Email muhrec@monash.edu www.monash.edu/research/ethics/human/index/html
ABN 12 377 614 012 CRICOS Provider #00008C

Appendix 2

AIDS COUNCIL OF NSW (ACON) Human Research Ethics Approval Certificate



30 October 2012

Colette F. Keen
Monash University
24 Cherrywood Cres
Llanarth NSW 2795

Reference Number: 2012/05

Dear Colette,

Thank you for the re-submission and addressed the issues raised by the ACON Research Ethics Review Committee. We appreciate the careful responses provided and are pleased to provide approval and support to this research project.

We wish you all the best with this important research.

Correspondence can be directed to me at ACON, PO Box 350 Darlinghurst NSW 1300.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Brotherton', written over a white background.

Alan Brotherton
Chair
ACON Research Ethics Review Committee



courage ● empathy ● diversity ● equality ● partnership ● community

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Hunter • Illawarra • Mid North Coast • Northern Rivers • Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP)

ABN 38 136 883 915 • Authority to Fundraise CFN/21473

ACON acknowledges the support of its primary funder, NSW Health

Appendix 3

Consent Form

Title: *The Death of Kings*
PhD (Drama & Creative Writing/ Communication & Performance Studies)
Flinders University

Consent Form for:
Members of professions associated with this research topic including, but not limited, to Theatre Practitioners and Professionals, Academics, Journalists, and members of the medical profession

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Flinders University researcher for their records

I agree to take part in the Flinders University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher Yes No

I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped Yes No

With respect to my level of anonymity in the published findings and reports generated from this project, **choose one** of the following three options. I elect:

Not to be identified in any way **Yes**

OR

To permit the researcher to use my name **Yes**

I grant to **Colette F. Keen** ("Company") and Company's assigns, licensees and successors the right to copy, reproduce, and use all or a portion of the statements (the "Interview") for incorporation in the thesis with the working title of ***The Death of Kings*** (the "Work"). I permit the use of all or a portion of the Interview in the Work in all forms and media including advertising and related promotion throughout the world and in perpetuity. I waive the right to inspect or approve use of my Interview as incorporated in the Work. I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the Work and research.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or the entire project.

I understand that data from the interview will be kept in a secure storage and accessible only to the researcher.

I release Company and Company's assigns, licensees and successors from any claims that may arise regarding the use of the Interview including any claims of defamation, invasion of privacy, or infringement of moral rights, rights of publicity or copyright. I acknowledge that I have no ownership rights in the Work.

Company is not obligated to utilize the rights granted in this Agreement.

I have read and understood this agreement and I am over the age of 18. This Agreement expresses the complete understanding of the parties.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Special Conditions: _____