

LIVE BED SHOW: The Paradox of Traumatic Memory in Autobiographical Performance

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ABSTRACT

LIVE BED SHOW is an autoethnographic practice as research thesis exploring the apparent theoretical impossibility of reconciling the “unbridgeable gaps” of traumatic memory within autobiographical performance. Embracing an embodied poetics of failure, *LIVE BED SHOW* considers the possibility of employing the “ghosts” and “echoes” inherent to vinyl turntablism as a tool to represent traumatic memory in autobiographical performance. In doing so, it tests Karen Jürs-Munby’s hypothesis that post-traumatic experience might share an affinity with the fragmented, non-linear, and repetitive structure of postdramatic performance.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I: EPISTEMOLOGY	6
Traumatic Memory	6
Autobiography & Testimonial Performance	9
Postdramatic & Post-Traumatic Performance	11
CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY	17
Methodology Introduction	17
Practice as Research	19
Dramaturgy & Devised Performance	24
Remix Culture & Memory: Event Scores, Turntablism, and Hauntology	26
Embodied Inquiry	28
Somatic Movement & (In)visibility of Disability	34
Autoethnography	39
Documentation	40
CHAPTER III: RESULTS	44
Sound & Failure	44
Echo & Pan	46
Postdramatic Voice	49
Noise & Analogue Mediation	52
CONCLUSION	58
WORKS CITED	60

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1:</i> Epigraph	1
<i>Figure 2:</i> The performance space, with the performer at the second station.	5
<i>Figure 3:</i> The performer at the second station.	16
<i>Figure 4:</i> Turntables and mixing board.	43
<i>Figure 5:</i> Photograph of a photograph, taken during the same performance.	57
<i>Figure 6:</i> The performer at station three.	59

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“Every sound we make is a bit of autobiography.”
— Anne Carson, *Glass, Irony and God*

INTRODUCTION

Unlike the typical experience of narrative memory — wherein one recalls a linear sequence of events with a beginning, middle, and end — traumatic memory occurs when an experience is too extreme to be processed at the time of the event. It thus remains un-narrativized. It is accessible only through fragmented, non-linear, and repetitive images, thoughts, or feelings. The repetitive nature of traumatic memory is grounded in the very structure of trauma: repeated recall of the event (often resulting in further traumatization) is an unconscious attempt by the survivor to process *a posteriori* that which cannot be processed; thus creating an ouroboric loop.

Not surprisingly, the inherent structure of traumatic memory infers a theoretical

impossibility in deriving source material for autobiographical performance. Yet, perhaps paradoxically, post-traumatic autobiographies have received international acclaim, indicating it is in fact a possibility.¹ This thesis aims to reconcile the paradoxical nature of creating autobiographical performance with the “incommensurability, inaccessibility and ultimate resistance to narrative representation” characteristic of traumatic memory (Jürs-Munby, 2009: 201). Moreover, it aims to understand the process by which artists — including myself — create post-traumatic autobiographical performances. At the time of writing, I have lived with the aftermath of sexual trauma for close to half a decade. I can trace the impact of trauma on my personal relationships, my education, my body, and my self-perception. By pursuing this inquiry, I seek to understand the extent to which my post-traumatic experience shapes my artistic practice. The intention of this practice research project is to articulate a case study of possible use to other practitioners. Trauma is both porous and embodied. Ergo, it is necessary to ground this inquiry in the somatic knowledge of my performing body.

As a solo performance, *LIVE BED SHOW* combines movement, poetry, and vinyl turntablism to perform a post-traumatic soundscape.² Autoethnography serves as an embodied method of data generation, collection, analysis, and interpretation. The first iteration of *LIVE BED SHOW* took place in a studio laboratory at the University of Ottawa in November 2019. It was later reworked over the course of five days in December 2020 for a second iteration, and for a third

¹ For a known and oft celebrated Canadian example, see Kidd Pivot and Electric Company’s *Betroffenheit* (Convery).

² Both analogue and digital turntables exist, but for the purposes of this thesis, I focus my attention solely on analogue turntables. An analogue turntable plays an audio recording made on a polyvinyl chloride (colloquially known as *vinyl*) disc. The stylus (also known as the *needle*) makes contact with the grooves in the vinyl, creating minute vibrations in the stylus. The turntable converts these vibrations into electrical signals, which are then passed through an amplifier to convert the electrical signals to sound, which is output through the speakers. A *turntablist* is an artist who performs by manipulating one or more turntables, whereas *turntablism* refers to the discipline of the turntablist. See Tara Rodgers’ “On the process and aesthetics of sampling in electronic music production” (2003) for further elaboration on the respective features of digital and analogue turntablism.

time during a month-long period in May 2021. For the purposes of this study, I do not characterise myself as a sound designer, but as a “performance creator” who makes use of sound in my practice. This distinction is important when delineating the scope and purpose of this research project, and as a sign of professional respect to sound designers. Furthermore, I discourage any assumption that this research includes a medical application. Over the past two decades, the field of drama therapy has significantly advanced understanding of the therapeutic benefits of participation in amateur arts or applied theatre for trauma survivors. I have not trained in dramatherapy (or any therapeutic practice, for that matter) and thus limit the scope of my research to the dramaturgical and aesthetic qualities of traumatic memory.

A number of known scholars have applied trauma theory to performance. Deirdre Heddon examines autobiography’s complex and multifaceted relationship to self, memory, and truth (Heddon, 2007: 8). Patrick Duggan’s research examines the “unrepresentability” of trauma through the lens of “trauma-tragedy” (Duggan and Wallis 14). Likewise, Karen Jürs-Munby has hypothesised a connection between post-traumatic performance and the efficacy of its representation in postdramatic aesthetics (Jürs-Munby, 2009: 201). Jürs-Munby draws this conclusion from an examination of three case studies: Goat Island’s *When will the September roses bloom? Last night was only a comedy*, Neil Mackenzie and Mole Wetherell’s *After Dubrovka*, and Forced Entertainment’s *Void Story* (Jürs-Munby, 2009: 203-204). Building on Patrick Duggan and Deirdre Heddon’s research, Ariane de Waal applies Jürs-Munby’s hypothesis to Owen Sheers’ *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*, examining trauma in the context of verbatim theatre with amateur performers (de Waal 16). However, there has been little, if any, research on testing the validity of Jürs-Munby’s hypothesis through creative practice as research methods, and none based on

embodied memories of sexual trauma. Furthermore, to my knowledge, no research-practitioner has employed analogue sound design by way of vinyl turntablism in their performance practice to represent autobiographical traumatic memory. By articulating a cohesive case study, this dissertation will serve as a resource for fellow performance-creators who grapple with lived experiences of trauma in their artistic practice; for directors, dramaturgs, and designers with an interest in representing trauma authentically in performance; for performance researchers who employ embodied and autoethnographic methodologies; or for students and scholars in the fields of trauma theory, autobiography, postdramatic performance, or sound studies.

A single case study will not definitively prove or disprove Jürs-Munby's hypothesis. As Jürs-Munby argues, "there is no one way in which postdramatic theatre relates to trauma, ... partly because there is no one form of trauma" (Jürs-Munby, 2009: 217). A single case study will necessarily be informed by the subjective nature of practice, of memory, of embodied knowledge. However, this contribution may stimulate further case studies by others in the field, which will contribute to a body of research that can be greater than the sum of individual case studies.



Figure 2: The performance space, with the performer at the second station.

CHAPTER I: EPISTEMOLOGY

1. Traumatic Memory

Traumatology is the medical study of wounds and injuries caused by accident or violence. Similarly, neuroscience and psychology define trauma in medicalised terms — most recently in the DSM-5, a diagnostic tool developed by the American Psychiatric Association. In contrast, *trauma theory* is a subfield of literary theory developed in the late twentieth century, derived from a tradition of psychoanalytic criticism (Caruth 3). Etymologically, the English word “trauma” is derived from the Greek *trauma* meaning “wound” (Caruth 3). Noting this connection, trauma theorist Cathy Caruth describes trauma through sonic metaphor, as a “wound that cries out,” stating that is not:

[...] like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that ... is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor (Caruth 4).

While the emphasis of trauma theory is on querying the representation and reception of trauma in a literary context, its interdisciplinary nature includes contributions from scientific fields.

In Caruth’s *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, psychiatrist Bessel A. van der Kolk and psychologist Onno van der Hart draw on the writings of 19th century psychologist Pierre Janet to situate traumatic experience within the context of memory creation and recall. Delineating “*narrative memory*” from “*traumatic memory*”, van der Kolk and van der Hart assert that:

The [traumatic] experience cannot be organized on a linguistic level, and this failure to arrange the memory in words and symbols leaves it to be organized on a somatosensory or

iconic level: as somatic sensations, behavioral reenactments, nightmares, and flashbacks (van der Kolk and van der Hart 172).

In contrast to *narrative memory* (the ability to recall and retell a cohesive, chronological account of events), van der Kolk and van der Hart argue that *traumatic memory* occurs when an experience is too extreme to process at the time of the event. It remains un-narrativized (van der Kolk and van der Hart 176). Often, the inability to assimilate the events into a cohesive narrative results in experiencing memories as sudden, fragmented, non-linear, or repetitive images, thoughts, or feelings.

This inability for memory to cohere into a narrative form should indicate a theoretical impossibility in reconciling traumatic experience with performance, autobiographical or otherwise. Furthermore, Heddon notes that the dominant models of autobiographical storytelling are “patterned on the novel form, with its linear progression and its narrative drive to resolution” (Heddon, 2007: 36). Yet, in spite of this supposed theoretical impossibility, autobiographical performance of traumatic experience exists (Heddon, 2007: 55). This of course begs the question: how might an artist construct an autobiographical performance when they themselves are unable to recall, reconcile, or make sense of their own traumatic experience? It is paradoxical that traumatic memory — which cannot be clearly recalled or narrativized because it *is* trauma — may become material for an autobiographical performance. The following subchapters delineate the theoretical grounding for *LIVE BED SHOW* in order to elucidate this paradox.

Despite the theoretical impossibility of bridging traumatic memory with conventional linear narrative structures, accounts of trauma mark contemporary culture. In “Autobiographical Memory” memory scholar Robyn Fivush cites the ubiquity of Alcoholics Anonymous and The Oprah Winfrey Show as two examples. Fivush states:

Master narratives become increasingly important in the wake of trauma. How can something so incomprehensible become comprehensible? What cultural frames are available to create coherence out of chaos? McAdams (2006) has identified a dominant American master narrative that provides a resolution to difficult and traumatic life experiences — the redemption narrative. In this structure, the individual experiences adversity, but uses this experience as a springboard to growth and redemption. For example, many survivors of sexual violence end their stories emphasizing the value of learning how supportive friends and family are, or learning how strong they are as an individual.... The redemption narrative does not simply provide a framework for creating meaning out of difficult experiences; it creates the narrative that only those who suffer can truly grow as individuals (Fivush 16-17).

While the redemption narrative is ubiquitous, it is often difficult to reconcile one's own trauma within this framework when subjects are acutely aware of the randomness, the pointlessness, or the banality of one's own suffering. The redemption narrative certainly creates "coherence out of chaos" but not necessarily for the survivor of sexual trauma. It does so for the audience in a fashion similar to a morality tale or a children's fable. To a survivor of sexual trauma, the emotional arc of the redemption narrative can feel jarringly inauthentic, as there is no "greater meaning" to be created out of one's suffering. The overwhelming prevalence of this narrative in fact *limits* the vocabulary available to survivors in order to make sense of their autobiographical experience, both to themselves and to others.

Looking *beyond* narrative may provide a framework for "making sense" of autobiographical trauma. In his 2017 Nobel Lecture, author Kazuo Ishiguro states: "[I]n the end, stories are about one person saying to another: This is the way it feels to me. Can you understand what I'm saying? Does it also feel this way to you?" (Ishiguro 37). While it may be impossible to shape autobiographical traumatic memory into a coherent narrative, there is still a possibility that, through performance, one might be able to extend a hand that asks "Does it also feel this way to you?" *LIVE BED SHOW* attempts to create a performance grounded in this possibility, using affect

rather than logocentric construct. However, to evoke traumatic memory in autobiographical performance, performance creators must first account for the complexity of *authenticity* in autobiographical performance.

2. Autobiography & Testimonial Performance

Autobiographical forms like documentary *appear* to offer factual accounts of real events. However, as Deirdre Heddon outlines in her 2007 monograph *Autobiography and Performance: Performing Selves*, the foundational element of autobiography is not a truthful or factual account of events, but a performance that employs “I” throughout, dealing with what appears to be congruent content and portraying a character who could very easily be the performer” (Heddon, 2007: 9). On the surface, this congruency may indicate an alignment between the “performing” and “performed” self, and thus an implicit assumption that performed autobiography is factual and truthful (Heddon, 2007: 26). However, Heddon argues the opposite: that it is in the very nature of autobiography to destabilise notions of fiction/reality and actor/role. Autobiography is a “strategic” representation of the self (Heddon, 2007: 27). This complex relationship between truth and performing/performed self in autobiography is further complicated by the nature of traumatic memory — events which cannot cohere into narrative memory, and thus cannot be fully understood by their subjects.

In *Rape on the Contemporary Stage*, Lisa Fitzpatrick notes that there is a widely held but misguided cultural perception “confus[ing] rape with seduction posit[ing] the woman’s beauty as an irresistible lure, making her partially responsible for her rape” (Fitzpatrick 16). Indeed, sexual transgression is *not* caused by a perpetrator struggling with an overwhelming and irresistible

attraction to an individual. Rather, it is a tool used to reproduce hierarchies of power and status through control. For this reason, survivors of sexual trauma are often marginalised on multiple levels. It can be traced back to perpetrators seeking to affirm their status (objectification), and secondly, to society's aversion to accommodate the debilitating post-traumatic aftermath of a common yet stigmatised occurrence. Moreover, inequalities in discourse are magnified when the party with greater financial means and access to legal services can wield defamation laws as a tool to ensure survivors' silence. The result of this marginalization entails that survivors' accounts of sexual violence (both contemporary and historical) are met with intense scrutiny when brought into the public sphere, if not outright hostility. This hostility may be due to the perception that recounting one's experience of sexual trauma is a challenge to the status, authority, or entitlement of perpetrators. Not surprisingly, a majority of personal accounts of sexual trauma, regardless of their relevance to legal proceedings, are viewed as *testimonial*.³

In testimonial speech, the consistency and cohesion of the narrative is itself understood as an indicator of the validity and truthfulness of the survivor's experience. Not only is the consistency and cohesion of the account evaluated, but so is the survivor's willingness to employ tropes, stereotypes, and invocations familiar to the audience perceived as criteria for determining authenticity. The validity or truthfulness of a survivor's experience may be dismissed if their performance does not cohere to expectations (Fitzpatrick 7). A "detached" or "unemotional" recitation of events is read as less authentic as it is not appropriately mournful, regardless that emotional detachment of this nature is inherent to the structure of traumatic memory.

Some argue that retraumatization occurs when a survivor recounts their traumatic

³ Ironically, only a small fraction of incidents of sexual violence will ever face legal proceedings, and an even smaller fraction of those will result in consequences for the perpetrator (RAINN).

experience. However, this is a common misconception, as it is not the act of *recounting* which retraumatises survivors but rather the scrutinising of the testimonial. Narrative cohesion, familiar invocations, and appropriate tone in order to evaluate its truthfulness serve as a rubric. When a survivor is unable to convince an audience of the *truthfulness* of their traumatic experience, it can evoke feelings of powerlessness similar to those experienced during sexual transgression. Indeed, the popularity of the “redemption narrative” may be due to its effectiveness in satisfying the criteria for perceived authenticity. However, this heightened scrutiny fundamentally *limits* the vocabulary that survivors can draw on to represent their autobiographical experience. Not only does sexual transgression deny a right to bodily autonomy, scrutiny under the guise of a need for truthfulness denies survivors the agency and autonomy of self-representation in the discourse of their own trauma.

3. Postdramatic & Post-Traumatic Performance

In theorising verbatim and testimonial theatre — two genres that, similar to autobiography, seek to perform “the real” — Amanda Stuart Fisher states:

[...] [T]he testimony of traumatized subjects, which verbatim theatre exploits, places great pressure on such literalist construals of truth and authenticity. The ‘truth’ of the traumatic event is arguably not transparent, knowable or even communicable. Rather, trauma is, by definition, that which ‘resists simple comprehension’ (Caruth 1996: 6) and can perhaps best be understood as a radical break or rupture in our understanding of what it means to be in the world. To suggest then that the ‘authenticity’ of verbatim theatre that deals with trauma can be explained simply by its capacity to be truthful not only overlooks the problem trauma presents to this kind of representational, and dramaturgically literalist, form of theatre: it also places limitations on theatre’s capacity to respond *authentically* to real stories of trauma (Stuart Fisher 112).

Here, Stuart Fisher once again highlights questions of *authenticity*, questioning how

mimetic, realistic forms fail to represent trauma in performance. Postdramatic scholar Karen Jürs-Munby further explores this failure of mimetic representation, remarking on the function of traumatic memory in postdramatic performance:

[...] there is an affinity between trauma's incommensurability, inaccessibility and ultimate resistance to narrative representation and postdramatic theatre's anti-representational impetus, combined with its preference for fragmentation and its emphasis on the live copresence of audience members and performers (Jürs-Munby, 2009: 201).

This "unrepresentability" is, in fact, the reason why post-traumatic affect finds an affinity with the postdramatic: its repetitions, digressions, and a strict non-adherence to traditional dramatic mimesis.

Postdramatic theory, developed by Hans-Thies Lehmann, examines shifting aesthetic practices in performance during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Though postdramatic theory draws on a wide range of forms (including devised theatre, dance, new media art, performance art, and reinterpretations of classics) by geographically disparate range of practitioners, there are a handful of recognizable postdramatic aesthetics. Broadly, postdramatic theory eschews the hierarchical dominance of dialogue between fictional characters as the primary means of producing narrative meaning. Often, it rejects a type of performance that positions the audience safely behind an invisible "fourth wall", instead foregrounding a shared awareness of the event as a *performance*, thereby rejecting traditional dramatic mimesis. In many cases, the classical Aristotelian unities of time, space, and action are distorted or deconstructed as a source of meaning-making in the performance text.

In the introduction to her English translation of Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre*, Karen Jürs-Munby notes the "post-" of postdramatic is not a forgetting of drama, but an *anamnesis* of it, "a *rupture* and a beyond that continue to entertain relationships with drama" (Jürs-

Munby, 2006: 2).⁴ From the Greek ‘ana’ meaning *back* and ‘mnene’ meaning *memory*, an “anamnesis of drama” thus represents a remembering of past conventions of drama. The effectiveness of postdramatic aesthetics in performance requires audiences’ familiarity with dramatic mimesis in order to create meaning through the interruptions and ruptures of the dramatic. Without the pre-existing conventions of dramatic structure, postdramatic structure has no point of departure from which to create meaning. Furthermore, Jürs-Munby’s observes that:

Feminist theory, queer theory and postcolonial theatre scholarship, as well as the more recent analyses of disability and performance and age and performance, have all pointed out that performance has the power to question and destabilize the spectator’s construction of identity and the ‘other’ – more so than realist mimetic drama, which remains caught in representation and thus often reproduces prevailing ideologies (Jürs-Munby, 2006: 5).

Jürs-Munby’s observation is particularly relevant to *LIVE BED SHOW*. The act of representing my body — which, in this context, is explicitly, and politically, a survivor’s body — as a *performing* body is deeply entangled with “othering” through dominant constructions of gender and disability.

In Ariane de Waal’s analysis of *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*, a proto-verbatim performance featuring amputee combat veterans as performers, de Waal remarks that the work “stages the mutilated male body, quite literally, as a body of evidence, as a visual signifier of trauma” (de Waal 20). This move, de Waal notes, is akin to Caruth’s characterization of trauma as “the wound that cries out” (Caruth 4). However, unlike wounds sustained in combat, survivorship of sexual trauma often carries no visual signifier. While the post-traumatic wounds of sexual

⁴ Within sound studies, *anamnesis* is the effect of “reminiscence in which a past situation or atmosphere is brought back to the listener’s consciousness, provoked by a particular signal or sonic context” (Augoyard and Torgue 21). Ross Brown further elaborates on Augoyard and Torgue’s definition, stating that anamnesis is the physical recollection – the literal *re-membering* – of sound through the body, “produced either by sound or by memory; indeed, one might view it as a form of memory or imagination experienced in the aural body” (Brown 346).

transgression are embodied, the common lack of an accompanying visual signifier entails that the performing body is not perceived as a “body of evidence”. Just as the survivor’s lack of narrative coherence can hinder its perceived authenticity during performance, so does the lack of visible injury.

During the third exploratory studio period for *LIVE BED SHOW*, I sustained a sudden, significant, and immobilising injury to my neck and shoulder. It was not incurred inside the studio, but outside during the regular pursuits of my day-to-day life. Though the restrictions of the ongoing pandemic prevented ascertaining its exact cause, attending medical professionals indicated that *hypervigilance*, the constant hyper-active attention to the “fight or flight” response that accompanies trauma, inevitably strains the body. This often leads to injury or the exacerbation of previous injuries to the body. I could not turn my head or raise my arm for several days, and only gradually regained mobility through intensive athletic therapy. The injury was an intensely vulnerable experience, evoking a feeling of powerlessness and lack of control over my body and its regular functions. While sexual trauma may lack a visual signifier of injury, its echoes are felt throughout a survivor's life.⁵ Indeed, when offering that “in the postdramatic era the closed traditional approaches of textual dramaturgy are challenged by the conceptually open-ended and autogenic dramaturgy of the self, or of the dramaturg, as text”, Gay Kaynar may not have anticipated the literal nature of this affirmation (Kaynar 226). Nonetheless, the postdramatic function of “dramaturg-as-text” frames *LIVE BED SHOW*'s attempt to reconcile the paradox of traumatic memory with autobiography.

⁵ For more on the relationship between traumatic memory and embodiment, see Allan Young’s “Bodily Memory and Traumatic Memory” in *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, edited by Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (1996).

Regarding Goat Island's *When will the September roses bloom?*, Jürs-Munby remarks that this postdramatic performance encircles "the real" not only through "missing scenes and structural holes, however, but also through the articulation of a series of unbridgeable gaps" (Jürs-Munby, 2009: 207). The articulation of a series of "unbridgeable gaps" — of making meaning through the impossibility of making meaning — is likewise my own departure point as a dramaturg-practitioner-researcher.



Figure 3: The performer at second station.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

1. Methodology Introduction

This practice-based thesis seeks to examine the paradox that traumatic memory might be authentically represented in autobiographical performance. It aligns with Karen Jürs-Munby's hypothesis that realistic mimetic drama fails to authentically represent post-traumatic autobiography, which remains "caught in representation and thus often reproduces prevailing ideologies" (Jürs-Munby, 2006: 5). Postdramatic performance destabilises notions of identity and otherness through its "anti-representational impetus, combined with its preference for fragmentation and its emphasis on the live copresence of audience members and performers" (Jürs-Munby, 2009: 201). The political dimensions of postdramatic representational aesthetics share an affinity with the writings of sociologist and autoethnographer Laurel Richardson. Richardson argues, "[h]ow one writes one's theory is not simply a theoretical matter. The theoretical inscribes a social order, power relationships, and the subjective state of the theorist" (Richardson 49).

Autoethnography, Richardson argues, through its emphasis on the "*auto*", has the potential to destabilise prevailing ideologies of "otherness" in research. Similarly, art curator and critic Lauren Fournier argues that the "auto" of *autotheory* can destabilise prevailing ideologies of "otherness" in theoretical discourse. Fournier defines autotheory as:

[...] works of literature, writing, and criticism that integrate autobiography with theory and philosophy in ways that are direct and self-aware. Most simply, the term refers to the integration of theory and philosophy with autobiography, the body, and other so-called personal and explicitly subjective modes. It is a term that describes a self-conscious way of engaging with theory — as a discourse, frame, or mode of thinking and practice — alongside lived experience and subjective embodiment (Fournier 7).

This thesis engages with autobiography, embodiment, and trauma for the purpose of writing theory, and in so doing, (re)inscribes particular relationships of power and status. In contributing to the academic discourse on sexual trauma in performance, it is necessary to take certain ethical considerations into account.

As discussed in the previous chapter, high-levels of public scrutiny often seek to validate or dismiss the authenticity of personal sexual trauma narratives by paying particular attention to the consistency and cohesion of survivors' testimony. This remains problematic since both consistency and cohesion are fundamentally antithetical to the structure of traumatic memory. I am likewise aware that said argument is used to affirm that survivors cannot testify to their own memories and experiences of sexual trauma. This creates a possibility of contributing to societal discourse in a way that unintentionally undermines or harms survivors, and by extension, my own agency in my project and accompanying artistic discourse. Therefore, I have framed my theoretical and methodological approaches — encompassing data generation, analysis, and articulation — with a particular sensitivity towards these ethical considerations.

LIVE BED SHOW is a devised, solo, autobiographical performance, created during three self-directed studio residencies. The studio served as a testing ground for a series of devising exercises selected in order to generate performance material. Through the devising exercises supported by a somatic movement practice, I articulated an *embodied inquiry* process, which produced data in the form of embodied knowledge. I captured this data through reflexive autoethnographic methods, including writing field notes on the creation process. Afterwards, these field notes were revised into a field report, supplemented with photos and videos of the devising exercises. The third chapter of this thesis synthesises the field reports, highlighting questions and

connections between each studio period.

My rationale for selecting practice as research and autoethnography was threefold. First, my research question is meant to test the validity of Jürs-Munby's hypothesis, which has not yet been applied in a practice as research context. Second, I chose applied research in order to articulate a case study that will provide benefit to — and advance the knowledge of — practitioners, researchers, and to research-practitioners. Third, I selected a practice as research approach because it aligns with embodied inquiry, unto itself significant: Caruth defines *trauma* as the “wound that cries out” succinctly capturing both its sonic and embodied nature through the metaphor of *voicing* injury (Caruth 4). In order to comprehensively assess the validity of Jürs-Munby's hypothesis through this case study, the embodied experience of performing post-traumatic autobiography is essential.

A core component of my performance practice relies on the manipulation of analogue sound, and corresponding embodied affect which distinguishes it from digital sound. There is an inherent materiality to analogue sound, which is difficult to access in the purely theoretical sense. A vinyl record, as it is repeatedly played, will develop pops, clicks, and scratches and the fragile material degrades. Like the structure of memory, these “ghosts” of past listenings are such that every further repetition carries the imprint of the past. This element of practice proved useful when conversing with certain theories and accompanying literatures.

2. Practice as Research

There are numerous terms to describe artistic research, many of which are contextualised by the locality and academic culture within which they are produced. In “Wherefore PAR”, the

introduction to *Performance as Research: Knowledge, Methods, Impact*, Bruce Barton names twelve practice-related terms (Barton 4-5).⁶ For the purposes of this document, I have opted for “practice as research” to acknowledge that for the purposes of this thesis, knowledge is generated and embodied in artistic practice. Categorising my work as “practice as research” aligns my research aims (to produce a case study which can test the validity of Jürs-Munby’s hypothesis) with its intended audience (to be of use to researchers, practitioners, and, critically, to research-practitioners).

I have sought to answer my research question through a series of experiments during three periods of self-directed residency in Studio 1201 of LabO at the University of Ottawa. I generated my research data through the devised performance creation process, rather than engaging primarily with critiques of known performances or theories of audience response. I opted for this approach, as it would best facilitate an autoethnographic analysis of my artistic practice, aligning with my goals as a researcher. The initial self-directed studio residency took place in October and November 2019, during which the concept for *LIVE BED SHOW* was first conceived. Over the course of October, the performance monologue was written and recorded digitally, to be listened to on headphones by audience members as the embodied movement performance occurred live simultaneously. The Department of Theatre’s Assistant Technical Director, Trevor Teo assisted with engineering the recording and editing of this soundscape. A presentation of the performance took place on November 6, 2019 for Dr. Peter Kuling’s Theory of Performance course. The rewarding experience of combining academic theory and creative practice for this Theory of

⁶ They are: i. Performance as research (PAR), ii. Practice as research (PaR), iii. Practice-based research (PBR), iv. Practice-led research (PLR), v. Arts-based research (ABR), vi. Research-led practice (RLP), vii. Research-based practice (RBP), viii. Research practice (RP), ix. Research through practice (RtP), x. Research creation (RC), xi. Creative research (CR), xii. Studio research (SR).

Performance class led me to proposing a more in-depth exploration of further iterations of *LIVE BED SHOW* as my MA thesis project. I proposed to broaden my investigation beyond digital sound in order to explore the materiality of analogue sound as a potential metaphor for traumatic memory.

The second residency was slated to take place in August 2020, but was moved to a two-week period in December 2020 and January 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposed two-week period was reduced to a five-day workshop due to lockdowns caused by the second wave of the pandemic. During this residency, I began experimenting with manipulating live analogue sound with a turntable (a Technics Direct Drive SL-D2), vocal effects pedal (Boss VE-20), and microphone (Shure KSM9).⁷ Although COVID-19 restrictions prohibited members of the public from visiting the studio, my co-supervisor, Dr. Anne-Marie Ouellet, was present for two sessions to give dramaturgical feedback on the work-in-progress.

Initially, I designed space in a traditional end-stage configuration: the turntable and mixing board were set up on a table parallel with a row of audience seats, so that the performer and audience would face each other. Dr. Ouellet challenged this configuration, pointing out that a frontal relationship with the audience recalls the traditions of theatre, rather than performance. In a highly reconfigurable black box space, my ingrained logocentric and culturally anchored assumptions had led me to privilege the visual (spectatorship, from the Latin verb *spectare*, meaning ‘to watch’) over the audible (“audiencing”, from the Latin verb *audire*, meaning ‘to listen’, ‘to attend to’, or ‘to pay attention’).

⁷ For more on the technical minutiae of analogue sound equipment see Kirsten Hermes’ chapter on “DJing and turntablism” in *Performing Electronic Music Live* (2022).

Between my second and third studio residency period, during the winter semester of 2021, I enrolled in *Sound Design and Soundscaping (Non-real-time)*, a graduate course offered by the School of Music and taught by research-practitioner Caleb Abbott. This course culminated in my multidisciplinary practice as research project (*white noise*) *ghosts on late night radio*, which combines poetic writing with field recording and electronic composition to create a site-specific sound installation.⁸ Pursuing an additional creative project adjacent to my thesis significantly aided with the further development of *LIVE BED SHOW*. It allowed me to further explore the role of analogue sound technology. More specifically, I explored the Walkman Effect, a term coined by Shuhei Hosokawa to describe the sonic intimacy fostered by the “secret theatre” of analogue portable listening devices (Hosokawa 177). I juxtaposed the private listening sphere of the Walkman Effect with public transportation, site-specific ambulatory performance, and the urban psychogeography of Situationists *dérives*.⁹ This exploration in turn opened new lines of questioning regarding the use of analogue technology in *LIVE BED SHOW*: namely, thinking of analogue technology not just as a tool in my practice, but as a co-performer and/or extension of my own body. I would further investigate the idea of technology as a co-performer/extension of my body in *LIVE BED SHOW*'s next residency.

The third and final residency took place in May 2021 over the course of four weeks in LabO Studio 1201. During this period, I introduced a second turntable (a Pioneer PLX-1000) to the technical set-up, an additional vocal effects pedal (Boss VE-20) and microphones (Shure

⁸ In May 2021, “(white noise) ghosts on late night radio” was awarded third place in the Abby Sparling Poetry Contest, hosted by the Arts Council for Wyoming County. It is accompanied by a site-specific sound art experiment, available at kel-macdonald.bandcamp.com/

⁹ For more on *dérives*, psychogeography, and the Situationists, see Guy Debord’s 1955 essay “Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography” in the *Situationist International Anthology* translated and edited by Ken Knabb (2006).

SM57). In the first week of my residency, I participated simultaneously in a weeklong workshop in dance dramaturgy facilitated online by Guy Cools, hosted by the Ottawa Dance Directive.¹⁰ Dr. Ouellet was likewise present during the last week of the studio period to provide dramaturgical feedback. In this final residency, I expanded my technical set-up to introduce additional “stations”, moving the performance from a proscenium orientation to panoramic. I clustered seating in the centre of the studio and the choreography moved circularly around the seating, along the perimeter of the performance space. Seating faced several different directions so that no single sightline was privileged. This de-emphasised visual performance in favour of soundscape. Though no audience was in attendance, the seating functioned as a placeholder, helping me to determine the relative proxemics between audience and performer within the choreography.

Close readings in the disciplines of performance theory and history, cultural theory, sound studies and memory studies complemented these periods of studio performance practice. I also wrote critically, presented at research at conferences,¹¹ attended live performances, and discussed these efforts with my professors, peers, and collaborators in and outside of the University of Ottawa. This reciprocal exchange between studio practice and critical reading, writing, and reflection allowed for an iterative process that fundamentally enriched the research.

¹⁰ The follow-up to this workshop occurred on the evening of December 15, 2021 and the morning of December 16, 2021. The evening consisted of a double bill of lecture-performances from Guy Cools (on the *moirólóí*) and Laura Taler (on her video installation *THREE SONGS*), with a discussion moderated by Dr. Yana Meerzon. The following morning followed with an additional workshop taught by Cools in dance dramaturgy practice.

¹¹ On September 6, 2021 I presented a portion of my methodology chapter at the annual Theatre and Performance Research Association (TaPRA) conference, hosted by Liverpool Hope University. I was a curated panelist of the Sound, Voice, and Music working group, and greatly value the questions I received from the attendees, my co-panelists, and the working group convenors Dr. Adrian Curtin, Dr. Konstantinos Thomaidis, and Dr. Leah Broad.

3. Dramaturgy & Devised Performance

In *Dramaturgy and Performance*, Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrndt argue “[w]hen we are engaged in (doing) dramaturgy, we are looking at the composition or dramaturgy of the work” (Turner and Behrndt 4). On the surface, there appears to be a misalignment in Turner and Behrndt’s use of the word *composition* — calling to mind the work of a composer, a musical score — with the verb “to look” denoting the visual attention to “meaning-making”. However, it is exactly this mingling of the visual and the auditory which makes Turner and Behrndt’s definition an effective starting point when discussing the dramaturgical development of *LIVE BED SHOW*.

I am not a sound designer, but a dramaturg and performance creator who makes use of sound in my practice. For this reason, this thesis does not include signal flow diagrams, system patch sheets, or sound cue-tracking sheets. Rather, this thesis engages with the practical and theoretical dimensions of sound through the perspective of a creator, performer, and dramaturg. The distinction is important, not only to delineate the goals and purposes of this research project, but as a recognition of professional sound designers’ skill sets that have yet to garner the academic attention which they deserve (Roesner 63).

Primarily, I define my studio practice as a “devising process”. In *Devising Performance: A Critical History*, Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling describe devised performance broadly, as either a solo or collaborative creation process in which “no script — neither written play-text nor performance score — exists prior to the work’s creation by the company” (Heddon and Milling 3). When devising, I draw on a range of professional training experiences, including as a performer, director, dramaturg, and designer. In particular, I am drawn to the “sensual scenography” of each work, a term coined by performance scholar Josephine Machon to describe

the style of UK-based immersive theatre company Punchdrunk (Machon 43). Throughout this thesis, I cite mentors in non-text-based and interdisciplinary performance — including dance, clown, performance art/live art, and new media/sound art — whose teachings have heavily influenced my work.

The creative development of *LIVE BED SHOW* aligns with a process that dramaturg Claire MacDonald describes as working “between an expanded notion of performance writing and a parallel notion of dramaturgical practice” (MacDonald 91). This “dramaturgy as a material process” suggests a contemporary dramaturgy that “does not proceed from the text as a known set of procedures, but instead asks what those procedures might be” (MacDonald 94).¹² This questioning of *procedures* to create performance is particularly relevant to *LIVE BED SHOW*. In the subsequent subsection, I will further explore embodied inquiry as a research method, but I would particularly like to highlight the ways in which *artistic training* (the cultivation of artistic practice through mentorship and self-directed learning) exists as embodied knowledge. Artistic training, especially in the context of practice as research, is a practice of memory that functions as its own embodied citational practice. As my training hybridises performance, dance, music, visual arts, and media arts, the embodied knowledge of these forms exists in *LIVE BED SHOW*. Some procedures exist across disciplines, while other procedures remain discipline-specific. Thus, the selection — or rather, the *curation* — of these creative procedures is a core component of the dramaturgy of *LIVE BED SHOW*.

¹² Claire MacDonald cites David Williams and Lone Twin, Guy Cools, Hildegard de Vuyst and Alain Platel as practitioners of contemporary dramaturgy “engag[ing] the space between the elements of composition and the unfolding of a performance in the presence of viewers” (MacDonald 94).

4. Remix Culture & Memory: Event Scores, Turntablism, and Hauntology

MacDonald's directive to question "procedures" as a dramaturgical practice unto itself evokes (1) the development of research methodology through questioning procedure, and (2) the development of the process-based art movement in the latter half of the twentieth century, which foregrounds artistic procedure as a means of "making meaning" and producing a discourse in art. Likewise, Gad Kaynar's argument for autogenic dramaturgy (the "dramaturg-as-text") lends a frame for questioning the embodied nature of artist training and its contribution to the dramaturgical practice of *LIVE BED SHOW* as an act of performance creation (Kaynar 226). Furthermore, MacDonald notes that dramaturgy as a material process can include "creating a performance text from its instructive prompts, rather than directly performing words that have already been written. In the new dramaturgy, text moves closer to 'texture', and to the notion of fabrication as a material practice" (MacDonald 94). A significant influence on my practice as an artist (and by extent, on *LIVE BED SHOW*) is the conceptual art book *Grapefruit* by Yoko Ono, published in 1964. *Grapefruit* (a significant work in the Fluxus movement) collects Ono's "event scores", a series of instructions or recipes that prompt the reader to perform actions. Ono's work is a particularly salient influence on my own as an early connection between trauma, performance art, sound art, process art, and the dramaturgy of procedures.

Throughout my training and artistic practice (in addition to my practice as an arts educator), I have amassed an index of directives — which I will subsequently refer to as "prompts" — to facilitate the creation of new artistic work. Sources for these prompts include rehearsals, workshops, teachings, lectures, books, and other written and digital media. The curation of these prompts for the purposes of *LIVE BED SHOW* is a "dramaturgical act" aligned with MacDonald's

“dramaturgy as a material process” framework. I have also included excerpts of these prompts at several points throughout this thesis in order to highlight their relevance to the dramaturgical processes present within the development of *LIVE BED SHOW*. Amassing prompts is an ongoing project, and thus their curation is likewise ongoing. Each residency period included a mixture of familiar prompts — ones I have executed many times in my artistic practice — and new prompts — to be tried for the first time. When repeating the familiar prompts in the studio, I purposefully cultivated a conscious awareness of the embodied memory that existed in these repetitions. In turn, this highlighted the palimpsestic nature of memory in artistic practice.

These curated prompts, which arise from questioning procedures inherent to the practice of dramaturgy as a material process, help create a composition or an “event score”. MacDonald argues that the “event score” is “the perfect dramaturgical archival record — it preserves a performance moment and is open for reuse” (MacDonald 100).¹³ This openness to recycle is a key component of *LIVE BED SHOW*’s development process. During each residency, I approached the work generated in previous residencies as raw material to be collaged into new configurations, rather than with the intention of being additive. This artistic predisposition towards remixing and sampling was another reason why turntablism became a key focus of *LIVE BED SHOW*’s mise-en-scène. As Mark Fisher notes, “the turntable and the mixer ... converted pre-recorded material from an inert museum into an infinite archive, ripe for recombination” (Fisher 47). Memory is implicit within this notion of “infinite archive”. Fisher links turntablism to the concept of *sonic hauntology*, which he defines as “the problem of memory and its imperfect recovery; a familiar enough theme, but one given an extra piquancy in the context of electronic music, which was for

¹³ The subsequent subsection on embodied inquiry as a research method will define and further discuss dance and performance theorist André Lepecki’s concept of the-body-as-archive as a site of memory (Lepecki 28).

so long treated as a herald and signifier of the future” (Fisher 45). Sonic hauntology renders attempts to delineate the present from the past impossible, a phenomenon dubbed *dyschronia* (Fisher 47). Dyschronia shares an affinity with van der Kolk and van der Hart’s assertion that:

Many trauma-tized persons, however, experience long periods of time in which they live, as it were, in two different worlds: the realm of the trauma and the realm of their current, ordinary life.... This simultaneity is related to the fact that the traumatic experience/memory is, in a sense, timeless. It is not transformed into a story, placed in time, with a beginning, a middle and an end (which is characteristic for narrative memory). If it can be told at all, it is still a (re)experience (van der Kolk and van der Hart 176-177).

Like dyschronia, traumatic memory evokes a similar feeling of having come “unstuck” in time — to borrow Kurt Vonnegut’s description of the alien-abducted, time-travelling Second World War veteran Billy Pilgrim, from *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Involuntary flashbacks and nightmares are intrusions of the past into the present, without a coherent beginning, middle, or end. Therefore, in order to speak authentically to the structure of traumatic memory, I have framed my performance practice as a series of open-ended explorations emphasising theoretical and artistic inquiry as a *process* rather than the end-point of a fixed performance. I will continue to develop *LIVE BED SHOW* after the submission of this thesis: it is still a work-in-process.

5. Embodied Inquiry

Dramaturg Milan Zvada notes “even if there is no such person as a dramaturg, each theatre performance has one, usually embodied in the (artistic) director. Dramaturgy is inherent to every theatre production, and its steps can be traced within the structure, purpose, and other complexities of performance” (Zvada 203). Aligned with Zvada’s notions of embodied dramaturgy, one key

prompt was inspired by Pina Bausch's dance theatre creation process, as described by Royd Climenhaga for the *Routledge Performance Practitioners* series:

Exercise 8: History in Your Body

► How do you carry your history in your body? Show the group. You can begin by describing how something is contained in your body, but let the story affect your body so that your physical presence is implicated in the telling. / As questions become more prompts to action rather than descriptions of experience, they naturally lead into performed images and moments that work toward the underlying base of an idea through metaphor. The way in which a specific question is answered is often built out of the elements that have been in the rehearsal room up to this point. Asking for a developed response can be a means of coalescing some of the energy that has been in the room, and leads to more concrete performance images (Climenhaga 116-117).

In the previous chapter, I noted that Jürs-Munby refers to postdramatic performance as the *anamnesis* of drama (Jürs-Munby, 2006: 2). Augoyard and Torgue in turn define *anamnesis* as “reminiscence in which a past situation or atmosphere is brought back to the listener’s consciousness, provoked by a particular signal or sonic context” (Augoyard and Torgue 21). Sound theorist Ross Brown builds on Augoyard and Torgue’s work, defining *anamnesis* as the “re-membering” of sound throughout the body (Brown 346). There is a third definition of *anamnesis*, which Climenhaga’s exercise (perhaps unintentionally) evokes; that of a patient’s recollection of their medical history. These three definitions of *anamnesis*, although distinct from one another, all help ground performance theorist and curator André Lepecki’s concept of “the-body-as-archive” (Lepecki 28). Indeed, Claire MacDonald notes that archives are ongoing projects, constantly in flux, and that “dramaturgical practice is also archival, through identifying dramaturgs as conservators, as memory banks for past practices” (MacDonald 100). In other words, archives are,

by definition, sites of memory.¹⁴ Every *body* carries in it a history, marking the effects of the passage of time and of existence in relation to space. Bodies that locate traumatic memory are no less an archive, though the conventional “reading” of the archive may be impeded by an inability to cohere certain events into narrative memory, as is the consequence of trauma.

Faced with the immensity of my body’s archive, I turned to embodied inquiry in order to explore Climenhaga’s prompt. During my third studio period, again, I continued to work while having recently sustained a neck and shoulder injury that was likely related to the physical strain of post-traumatic hypervigilance — an unavoidable reminder of past traumas’ intrusion into the present. As a performance work, *LIVE BED SHOW* aims to highlight an artistic relationship between the embodiment of traumatic memory and sound in autobiographical performance. Both are invisible, intangible, yet *experienced*. As performance theorist Bruce McConachie notes:

The mind is embodied. Not only must the mind work within a living body, but the ways we think — our sense of self and the foundational concepts we use to perceive the world and other people in it — derive from the embeddedness of our bodies on planet earth (McConachie 1-2).

However, embodiment has often been sidelined in broader academic discourse (particularly among scientific and social science fields), in favour of a logocentric focus on Cartesian dualism.

Western epistemologies traditionally embrace Cartesian dualism as articulated in seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes’ work. Very generally, Descartes argued that the body does not exist independently of the mind, but that the mind exists independently of the body. Rooted within the tradition of Cartesian dualism is a bio-essentialist assumption which

¹⁴ For more on the relationship between archives, memory, and embodiment see Deirdre Heddon’s “Performing the Archive” in the special issue of *Performance Research: On Archives and Archiving* (2002). Heddon discusses walking as a palimpsestic *autotopographical* performance practice.

stereotypes cisgender men as logical and rational since they are mind-centred beings, while cisgender women are stereotyped as emotional and prone to instability, since they are corporally-centred beings.¹⁵ The intellectual tradition of codifying masculinity as logical and femininity as emotional has been deployed for the purposes of concentrating (and retaining) status and privilege within established hierarchies, justifying subjugation through the argument that the “other” is mindless and thus needs to be controlled (Leigh and Brown 32-33). In contrast to the logocentrism implicit to Cartesian dualism, embodied inquiry, as a reflexive method, offers the potential to augment voices that have been historically marginalised by these hierarchies (Leigh and Brown 33). Through embodied inquiry and self-reflexive practice, there is the potential to reorganise knowledge in academia and in the arts in general by bridging new and established methods of inquiry.

Educational researchers Jennifer Leigh and Nicole Brown define *embodied inquiry* as a research method that encompasses three basic principles. First, it is “part of an ongoing process of self” which is a reflexive practice of non-judgmental awareness attuned to the experiences of oneself and others (Leigh and Brown 2). This cultivated awareness, Leigh and Brown note, is likely to extend beyond the scope of the research project, shaping and reshaping awareness in all facets of a researcher’s life. While researchers are often encouraged to compartmentalise research from the ongoing day-to-day process of life and its effects, embodied inquiry embraces the potential for “the researcher to affect the research” and, vice versa, for “the research to affect the

¹⁵ While the enduring popularity of logocentrism (and its association with masculinity) is often attributed to Cartesian dualism and philosophers of the Enlightenment, similar speculations exist in Classical philosophy. Classicist Anne Carson notes (in “The Gender of Sound”) that Ancient Greek physicians believed in a “female affinity for all that is raw, formless and in need of the civilizing hand of men” while manhood was believed to be aligned with the “straight, light, honest good, stable, [and] self-contained” indicating that this preoccupation with gender and the mind predates the Enlightenment (Carson 21).

researcher” as a feature of the research method rather than a limitation. Second, embodied inquiry uses this attuned awareness to the relationship of mind and body to enrich research. Leigh and Brown posit, “accessing the data and stories that bodies store, hold and tell, it is possible to reach deeper, emotional and authentic truths about lived experience than are accessed by more conventional research techniques” (Leigh and Brown 2). Artistically, the *raison d’être* of *LIVE BED SHOW* is to venture beyond narrative frames of traumatic autobiography in performance, in order to speak authentically to the experiences of trauma and post-traumatic affects; that is to embrace fully the ambiguities implicit to a first person singular artistic enterprise that in no way seeks to be coherent or logocentric. Thus, embodied inquiry is invaluable both as a method of artistic creation and as a method of autoethnographic research practice. Third, embodied inquiry facilitates research by embracing flexibility and relativity, as no two research projects will execute embodied inquiry in the same way (Leigh and Brown 2). It embraces positionality, and awareness of the limitations this poses.

Throughout my process, I cultivated my attunement to embodied inquiry by turning to the writing of performance artist Marina Abramović. In the foreword to Colette Conroy’s *Theatre & the Body*, Abramović lists a series of “unanswered questions” which prompt the reader to think about the role of the artist’s (and the audiences’) body in performance:

- How should the performer prepare for the performance?
- What kind of diet should they have?
- What kind of liquids should they take?
- What kind of physical exercise should the performer have to do to prepare?
- What kind of mental exercise should the performer have to do to prepare?
- When should you be naked and when should you be dressed?
- What is performance?
- What is the performance body?
- What is the difference between performance and theatre?

How do you start and how do you end performance?
 What about documentation?
 Are the photographs taken of the performance a work of art themselves or just documentation?
 What is your responsibility to your audience?
 Why is performance still an alternative art form?
 If the performance is performed again, what are the rules?
 How do you sell the performance and what are the rules?
 Why is performance an art form that will never die and will always reappear in different moments of history?
 What is the role of the audience?
 Silent voyeur or active participant?
 What happens to a performance if something unpredictable takes place?
 Can performance elevate the spirit of the performer and the audience?
 Why is it so important to stage pain and damage in the performance?
 What about time?
 What about repetition?
 What about risking your own life? (Abramović ix-x).

These questions served as a starting point to my explorations. I copied them by hand and referred back to them both in and outside the studio. I responded to some individual questions as prompts for short autoethnographic writing exercises (such as considering the audience as “voyeur” or “active participant”). Other questions I used as prompts for exercises, such as questioning which physical exercises a performer might undertake in order to prepare for a performance. This led me to exploring the Alexander Technique semi-supine position and a breathing/vocal exercise inspired by Abramović’s own practice, recorded in Mary Richards’ biography of Abramović (Richards 143). By returning continuously to the same list of questions throughout the research, it allowed me to track when new ideas emerged throughout the development of the performance.

6. Somatic Movement & (In)visibility of Disability

Through my training, I have been introduced to a wide variety of somatic practices, including breathwork, experiential anatomy, Alexander Technique, Dalcroze Eurhythmics, and yoga nidra, the last of which Guy Cools also uses as an opening and closing practice in his dance dramaturgy workshops. Dance theorist Sondra Fraleigh defines somatic movement as approaches that:

[...] cultivate experiences of the lived body, sensory appreciation (aesthesia and aesthetics), and awareness through movement.... includ[ing] movement patterning, experiential anatomy, developmental movement, somatic yoga, and dance for personal and community development (Fraleigh 5).

In order to support the cultivation of awareness necessary for embodied inquiry research methods, I drew on the variety of somatic practices rather than relying on the teachings of a single method. These explorations eventually informed a core component of the choreographic language of *LIVE BED SHOW*. However, the primary purpose of these somatic practices was not to generate choreography but to cultivate an embodied awareness of how bodies *move* and are *moved by* analogue sound in performance. While others, such as Fraleigh, have explored the benefits of somatic movement in a therapeutic practice, again, this is not my intention. As my research focuses on trauma theory and postdramatic performance, I limited the scope of my study to somatic movement's applications in performance creation.

In "Somatic work and independent training as an invisibly disabled performer", dance research-practitioner Mo Pietroni-Spenst explores somatic movement's application in independent studio performance practice. Pietroni-Spenst's work highlights the predominant aesthetics of disability in performance that rely on visible differences of the disabled body in order to construct

disability as an identity marker (Pietroni-Spenst 2).¹⁶ This, Pietroni-Spenst argues, creates a binary between performers with visible and invisible disabilities, and furthermore, a binary which fails to account for the liminality of invisible disabilities that fluctuate over time (Pietroni-Spenst 2-3).

While “overt” ableism often excludes visibly disabled performers from training or professional practice, “covert” ableism likewise negatively impacts invisibly disabled performers in a variety of ways, such as through requirements to disclose private information in order to have accessibility needs accommodated or having their perspectives dismissed as not being “disabled enough”. Pietroni-Spenst notes that invisibly disabled performers face the challenges in the form of “neither represent[ing] the disabled aesthetic visually... nor can we be relied upon in our representation of the whole body to perform at the same level as able-bodied artists due to disabilities that manifest less predictably” (Pietroni-Spenst 2). I recognise an affinity with Pietroni-Spenst’s arguments and their applications to the subject of trauma in autobiographical performance. The embodied nature of trauma produces disabling effects both in mind and in body.

Like Pietroni-Spenst, I can be perceived to meet certain standards of able-bodiedness, however neither my body nor my mind can conform to the “predictable patterns and rhythms embedded in ableist society” (Pietroni-Spenst 2). In the previous chapter, I described the physical impacts of post-traumatic hypervigilance, which can exacerbate past injuries leading to re-injury. Re-injury can likewise trigger post-traumatic affects, as it can evoke feelings of intense vulnerability, powerlessness, and lack of control over the regular functions of one's body. In his

¹⁶ Regarding *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* — in which amputee combat veterans feature as performers — Ariane de Waal remarks that the work “stages the mutilated male body, quite literally, as a body of evidence, as a visual signifier of trauma” (de Waal 20). In contrast, sexual trauma often carries no visual signifier. Its wounding complicates a truth claim to authenticity when seeking to employ the performing body as a body of evidence. Just as the survivor’s lack of narrative coherence evades confirming its authenticity in performance, so does the survivor’s body.

foreword to *Somatic Voices in Performance Research and Beyond*, Konstantinos Thomaidis notes that such methodologies are themselves often *derived* from these “interruptions, subversions or ruptures” in the functioning of one’s body, such as Feldenkrais’ knee injury which led his research on the mechanics of movement, and thus to the development of the Feldenkrais Method (Thomaidis, 2021: xxiv).

Hypervigilance is only one of the many consequences of trauma, or its attendant comorbidities, which can lead to further impairment. My use of somatic movement practices is not due to a natural ease or affinity, but rather *because* I struggle with it, experiencing a great amount of difficulty. *Alexithymia* has been linked to post-traumatic experience, characterised by a difficulty in recognising and describing emotions. Many survivors have poor interoception skills — the ability to notice sensations in the body — particularly in connection with emotional states, such as a dry mouth when nervous, a tightening in the chest when anxious, or clenched fists when angry. There is also a link between post-traumatic affects and a significant struggle with proprioception — the awareness of one’s movements and body in relation to time and space — which strongly resonates with my embodied experience. Pietroni-Spenst highlights that she pursued somatic movement in her practice as research precisely because:

[I]t is the manifestation through time which makes chronic conditions difficult to account for in standard models of performer training. It would require a paradigmatic shift to re-think the ‘hidden rhythms of privilege’ embedded in expectations of normal functioning and activity levels.... [P]rivileged time is not compatible with the chronic time of invisible disability; working with energy-limiting conditions requires careful consideration of how best to spread available hours of productivity. Fewer productive hours means a long and lean working pattern in which to train, create or rehearse, which may result in different performance outputs (Pietroni-Spenst 7).

For Pietroni-Spenst, somatic movement “did not simply accommodate the needs and fluctuations of [her] illness, but drew upon these unique embodied experiences as a core component of [her] research” (Pietroni-Spenst 7-8). Similarly, the disability justice-centred performance collective Sins Invalid operates on a structure collectively formed around their “10 Principles of Disability Justice”.

The third principle includes the recognition that:

The nature of our disabled bodyminds means that we resist conforming to ‘normative’ levels of productivity in a capitalist culture, and our labor is often invisible to a system that defines labor by able-bodied, white supremacist, gender normative standards. Our worth is not dependent on what and how much we can produce (Patty Berne and Sins Invalid).

Thinking through these notions of *labour*, *LIVE BED SHOW* draws significant influence from the process art movement. By making the labour of the performance process visible, *LIVE BED SHOW* attempts make the labour a visible component of the autobiographical performance.

My application of embodied inquiry to autoethnography was not limited to the studio, however. As a research-practitioner, my methodology is fully hybridised, foregoing assumed binaries of practice (in studio; embodied) and research (out of studio; logocentric). Outside the studio, my research process likewise produced a number embodied affects entwined with lived trauma: sitting to read or write exacerbated previous injuries; long hours in front of digital screens disrupted sleep cycles; disrupted sleep cycles led to impaired cognition, including further impairments to memory); and disabling periods of fatigue increased stress over whether I was “keeping up” or “falling behind” in the program. The limited capacity for academic accommodations — and the attendant opacity of navigating bureaucratic structure — was further exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

At the onset of the global pandemic, I suspended my enrollment in my graduate program in order to ensure I would have enough time to conduct my studio research when restrictions were lifted. I re-enrolled four months later, in the autumn of 2020, because my scholarship funding would not allow me to defer a subsequent semester and I could not afford to complete my studies without the funding, even though access to campus facilities continued to be restricted. Drawing a connection to the ableist demand for physical “rigour” in performer training, Pietroni-Spenst remarks that ableist structures of academia are “deeply embedded in concepts of productivity, attainment and success” including:

The constant push for teaching and research excellence to cover new territory and reach ever higher academic standards reflects the notion of ablement itself, but as Kumari Campbell points out (in Brown and Leigh 2020), this is a false promise, suggesting that ablement is possible for everyone and perpetuating the notion of the superhuman academic. Griffiths voices her own struggles to reconcile her productivity with a chronic illness, with the pace of higher education institutions: ‘Past achievement seems to have no lasting currency. Achievement is no longer ‘bankable’; it is now (almost instantly) reframed as the new baseline for which more or different achievement is urgently required’ (2020, 137). With such an intensive pace as the marker of excellence in both academia and performance training, there is little room for the individual who requires different working patterns or support. But those with alternative bodyminds may act like ‘canaries in the coalmine’ drawing attention to working practices that risk the wellbeing of even the most die-hard workers, and require institutional change (Pietroni-Spenst 7).

While my research topic may have granted me the freedom to pursue somatic movement in order to support embodied inquiry as a disabled research-practitioner, timelines within the overall structure of higher education remain inflexible and thus present one of the greatest barriers with regards to completing research in this field.

7. Autoethnography

In “Autoethnography: An Overview” Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams and Arthur P. Bochner define autoethnography as:

[...] an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. . . . A researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 273).

Autobiography, Heddon posits, can be defined as a “cartography of self” (Heddon, 2007: 88). The “auto” in both autoethnography and autobiography represents a conscious positioning of the self within the work. Similarly, in Laurel Richardson’s *Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life*, Richardson makes explicit use of ‘I’ in her autoethnography, noting:

We are restrained and limited by the kind of cultural stories available to us. Academics are given the ‘story line’ that the ‘I’ should be suppressed in their writing, that they should accept homogenization and adopt the all-knowing, all-powerful voice of the academy. But contemporary philosophical thought raises problems that exceed and undermine that academic story line. We are always present in our texts, no matter how we try to suppress ourselves (Richardson 2).

All autoethnography is a construction of memory, and thus subjective and fallible. However, the artistic purpose of *LIVE BED SHOW* is in part to question narrative in the face of traumatic memory’s inability to conform to coherent structure, thus rendering autoethnography the most appropriate method to capture and analyse data as generated through the practice as research process. In an effort to frame how subjective, qualitative research methods might contribute equal value to a discipline as quantitative research, ethnographer Leon Anderson outlines five priorities for *analytic autoethnography* (Anderson 373):

- (1) Complete member researcher (CMR) status, which I have achieved in my autoethnography through my self-identification as a researcher, artistic practitioner and as a survivor of sexual trauma.
- (2) Analytic reflexivity, which I engage in through a constant evaluation of iterative effect in my practice as research process.
- (3) Narrative visibility of the researcher's self, which I achieve by foregrounding my positionality through the use of my body (in performance) and the use of first-person pronouns (in writing). Highlighting this positionality is a deliberate choice, in order to challenge an assumption of sexual trauma survivors as a monolith, instead of a varied and diverse group to which I contribute a single and limited perspective.
- (4) Dialogue with "informants" beyond the self, which I achieve formally through dialogue with the fellow scholars cited extensively in this thesis, [through the dissemination of my work at conferences] and informally through dialogue with my supervisors and artistic peers.
- (5) Commitment to theoretical analysis, which I achieve primarily through my subsequent chapter, applying theoretical analysis to my artistic practice.

In ensuring my research commits to upholding Anderson's five principles, I am satisfied that the positionality of my research will nevertheless constitute a contribution to research in the field.

8. Documentation

My primary documentation strategy included taking field notes of my time in the studio, a reflexive practice that also contributed to the artistic development of the piece. The field notes are

contained in a journal — a small, hardcover, dot grid A5 notebook — containing point form notes, creative writing, sketches and diagrams, written answers to dramaturgical exercises, quotes, meditations, playlists of music listened to in the studio, and other fragments. This notetaking occurred during and in-between creative explorations. Following each period of work in the studio, these entries were analysed, summarised, expanded upon, and elaborated in a typed document that eventually became the preliminary draft of the following chapter on practice.

In addition to this written record, I documented my studio practice through photography and videography. Short technical experiments — such as certain patterns of looping vocals with the looper pedals — were recorded in video format, which allowed me to evaluate the execution of the technique, similar to the use of a mirror in dance rehearsal. Additionally, I recorded one continuous 45-minute video of a performance during my third studio period. The weakness of videography, however, is its limited ability to capture the spatialized sound of *LIVE BED SHOW*. I filmed the performance with the equipment available to me: an adjustable tripod and an iPhone X with a built-in microphone. Filming from a single, fixed point on the periphery of the studio made it challenging to capture the dynamics of the multi-directional sound, whereas it is a far different soundscape when experienced live. When experienced live, an audience member's proximity to different stations would create a 360 degree effect to the audio, which a single video cannot capture. Additionally, some of the dynamics were flattened since it was impossible to capture the subtleties of the softer elements. Therefore, the archival video does not capture all elements of the soundscape accurately, and is not a precise depiction of the live performance.

The third type of archive is more challenging to categorise, falling in line with what Yvon Bonenfant defines as “plethora” (Bonenfant 224). Bonenfant’s “plethoric data” includes written

reflections and audio-visual recordings, but also encompasses memories embodied in both audiences and practitioners crucial for the construction of autoethnography: conversations, dialogues, and disputes; notes, sketches, lists, scores, and photos in progress; sound and voice recordings; sets, props, and costumes; programming and technical kits; observations; verbal and written feedback; consultations with experts; ineffable embodied knowledge; educational information packets; administrative and mechanical data; and reports for funders and arts assessors. The creation process of *LIVE BED SHOW* produced “plethora”-type archival material: the instant photographs generated by each performance; the annotation of the performance texts; technical riders that evolved with each stage of development; administrative paperwork related to the rental and insurance of technical equipment; conversations and notes produced through conversations in and outside the studio with my supervisors and peers that sparked new directions for exploration; and the “ineffable embodied knowledge” Bonenfant describes within myself. Anderson’s process of analytic autoethnography was an invaluable heuristic when curating this copious amount of data.



Figure 4: Turntables and mixing board.

CHAPTER III: RESULTS

1. Sound & Failure

Whatever you now find weird, ugly, uncomfortable and nasty about a new medium will surely become its signature. CD distortion, the jitteriness of digital video, the crap sound of 8-bit — all these will be cherished and emulated as soon as they can be avoided.

It's the sound of failure: so much of modern art is the sound of things going out of control, of a medium pushing to its limits and breaking apart. The distorted guitar is the sound of something too loud for the medium supposed to carry it. The blues singer with the cracked voice is the sound of an emotional cry too powerful for the throat that releases it. The excitement of grainy film, of bleached-out black and white, is the excitement of witnessing events too momentous for the medium assigned to record them.

Note to the artist: when the medium fails conspicuously, and especially if it fails in new ways, the listener believes something is happening beyond its limits (Eno 283).

Failure is inherent to Karen Jürs-Munby's description of traumatic memory in performance as an articulation of a series of "unbridgeable gaps" (Jürs-Munby, 2009: 207). For a gap to be "unbridgeable", it cannot create or communicate meaning, but it follows that this inability to make meaning — one could say this *lacuna* of meaning — thus becomes the objective and its own meaning. *LIVE BED SHOW*, in many ways, is a conscious exercise in what Christel Stalpaert deems "an embodied poetics of failure" (Stalpaert 57). To succeed in bridging an unbridgeable gap is paradoxical — any success annuls the gap: this is failure. In embracing "purposeful failure" — of performance, of memory — *LIVE BED SHOW* seeks to question when, where and how failure might be useful in the representation of traumatic memory in autobiographical performance.

This thesis aims to generate a case study in order to test Jürs-Munby's hypothesis on the affinity between post-traumatic memory and postdramatic performance. It is successful by the

measure that it has produced *LIVE BED SHOW* and this accompanying written document in order to articulate a case study. However, to argue that *LIVE BED SHOW* succeeds in bridging the “unbridgeable gaps” would necessarily undercut any embrace of the embodied poetics of failure and annul any meaning created by this embrace.

Over the course of this practice as research project, three works arose as consistent reference points for how failure can be embrace in performance to represent the traumatic: Kidd Pivot and the Electric Company’s *Betroffenheit*; 10 Gates Dancing’s *Autopsy of an Archive*; and Samuel Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape*. In 2016, I attended a striking performance of Kidd Pivot and the Electric Company’s *Betroffenheit* at the National Arts Centre. Choreographed by Crystal Pite and written and performed by Jonathan Young, *Betroffenheit* (a German word for a sudden sense of shock or trauma that dislocates body and mind) drew on Young’s traumatic experience of losing his daughter, nephew, and niece in a fire (and the ensuing grief that followed), as the starting point for the performance creation. In many ways, *Betroffenheit* is about the failure of linear, mimetic drama to represent traumatic memory. *Betroffenheit*’s mise-en-scène is a deluge of sinister circus imagery crossed with a derelict operating theatre, framing Young’s performance as the theatrical world’s central figure. Over the course of the performance, scenographic elements (including the distinctive sets, props, costumes, and makeup) are removed from the stage and replaced by a minimal and nondescript scenography. This highlights movement’s ability to express what is otherwise inexpressible through language. “Inherent in *Betroffenheit*’s aesthetic,” writes Guardian critic Stephanie Convery, “is the idea of working through trauma as labour, as a mechanical process involving rigid structure and repetition, systematic deconstruction and reconstruction” (Convery). Convery’s astute observation regarding working through trauma as a “mechanical

process” likewise resonates with 10 Gates Dancing’s *Autopsy of an Archive* and Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape*.

Presented by Ottawa Dance Directive in February 2020, *Autopsy of an Archive* functions as a retrospective on the corpus of work produced by seminal Canadian contemporary dance artist Tedd Robinson. Robinson’s work also courts an aesthetic of failure, representing memory in performance through projection of analogue VHS tapes of his past as a significant element of the work’s mise-en-scène. While *Krapp’s Last Tape* is not autobiographical, like Robinson, Krapp becomes co-performer to the analogue reel-to-reel recordings of his past, evoking a mediated haunting by his younger self, emerging from his personal archive. Jürs-Munby notes that much of Beckett’s work, “revolve[s] around unspeakable traumatic memories whose impact is communicated through new textual and dramaturgical forms of ellipsis, breakdown and repetition” reflecting the trauma of postwar Europe in the latter half of the twentieth-century (Jürs-Munby, 2009: 219). Both *Autopsy of an Archive* and *Krapp’s Last Tape* influenced the choice to experiment with foregrounding the materiality analogue sound (predominantly via vinyl turntablism) as a means of making meaning within the mise-en-scène of *LIVE BED SHOW* in order to represent traumatic memory in performance.

2. Echo & Pan

In the same volume that offers the “History in Your Body” prompt (referenced in the previous chapter) based on the dance theatre creation practises of Pina Bausch, Royd Climenhaga offers the following prompt:

Exercise 10: From a Myth

► Create a singular performative image from a myth. Work with the essential base of the myth rather than telling the story. Uncover the base feeling of the myth and find a way to evoke that on stage. Make it interesting. Think about context, raising the stakes, details of production, the role of the audience. How can you take your basic idea and make it more visceral, more felt, more engaging, more interesting? No language except in a poetic, rather than literal vein. The whole piece should be a singular image, 30 seconds may be fine, and no more than 2 minutes. Condense, structure, develop, engage, and present (Climenhaga 119).

In addition to my undergraduate studies in theatre at University of Ottawa, I obtained a minor in Greek and Roman Studies, focusing on Ancient Greek and Latin poetry and theatre in translation. Myths, and in particular aetiological myths, are often a recurring motif in my work. Through this prompt, I began exploring the sonic and mythological Echo.

By contemporary standards, the most widely-known depiction of Echo is in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where she is depicted alongside Narcissus. However, Longus' second century Ancient Greek romance *Daphnis and Chloe* offers a lesser-known depiction of Echo alongside Pan, the satyr-god of madness and the wild. Longus' aetiological myth explains the sonic existence of echoes by depicting Echo as a talented musical performer who refuses the sexual advances of Pan.¹⁷ As punishment for her refusal, Pan has Echo rent limb from limb by a group of shepherds, and her appendages are scattered across the earth. Taking pity on Echo, the Earth returns her musical ability to her buried limbs. She can thus continue to sound in response to the world.

My interest in Echo (sonically and mythologically) is connected with Patrick Duggan and Mick Wallis' suggestion that trauma can echo or "rehearse, repeat, and re-present itself in performed 'ghosts' that haunt the sufferer" (Duggan and Wallis 5). Furthermore, Historian Mark

¹⁷ Pan's most prominent symbol of association is that of the pan pipes, a reed instrument he is said to have created after the nymph Syrinx turned into reeds in order to avoid his transgressive sexual advances.

M. Smith notes sonic connection between echo and memory, stating that:

An echo is nothing if not historical. To varying degrees, it is a faded facsimile of an original sound, a reflection of time passed. It invites a habit of listening that not only allows us to locate origin (temporally and spatially) but, more important, test authenticity: how illustrative the sound was of the historical moment in which it was produced. The acoustic world in which echoes are generated after the original ring, bang, vocal moment — sound generally — is, inherently, a historical world (Smith 55).

I engage with echoes in *LIVE BED SHOW*'s soundscape through the use of vocal effects pedals, such as when I loop a simulated heartbeat that is produced by manually manipulating a handheld microphone, tapping it against my body rhythmically in the performance. I also loop fragments of my voice reciting the poetic text inspired by Pan & Echo. This looping process is one means of locating and augmenting the *autobiophony* within the autobiographical performance. Coined by voice scholar Konstantinos Thomaidis, *autobiophony* is defined as vocal autobiography in and through voice (Thomaidis, 2020: 81). Similarly, Anne Carson notes that “Every sound we make is a bit of autobiography. It has a totally private interior yet its trajectory is public. A piece of inside projected to the outside” (Carson 130). While *LIVE BED SHOW* may not impart the details of my autobiographical experience through speech, the autobiographical performance is located within the autobiophony of voicing my poetic adaptation of Echo's myth alongside the mediated augmentation, or mediated echoing, of my voice looped by the vocal effects pedals.¹⁸ While Walter Benjamin's “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” categorises authenticity as mechanically irreproducible, *LIVE BED SHOW* suggests that the looped voice — repetitive and disconnected from the body — may speak authentically to the post-traumatic in

¹⁸ As musical instruments are considered an extension of the performer's body, one could argue this renders the performer/turntablist as cyborg, a la Donna Harraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985).

autobiographical performance (Benjamin 1).

3. Postdramatic Voice

LIVE BED SHOW primarily foregrounds sound design as its means of “meaning making” within the performance. David Roesener states that sound design:

[...] includes sound effects, ambiences, music, and amplification and is used both for the process of crafting sonic events – and thus directing and manipulating an audience’s attention – and for the finished design. The design as a result consists of a mixture of material and immaterial settings (such as speaker positions, microphone choices, mixing board settings, sound files, MIDI cues or live music) and consequently in the unfolding of the designed sonic events over the course of a theatre performance (Roesner 63).

Dramatic sound design may serve a narrative function to establish time or locale through an environmental soundscape, or use music to differentiate a transition or dream sequence. However, Roesner argues that this type of design is “problematic, if not obsolete” when encountering postdramatic performance’s abandonment of “psychological characters, stringent plot lines and Aristotelian rules of dramaturgy” (Roesner 68). Postdramatic sound, Roesner suggests, can:

[...] emphasize the performativity of the given situation, heighten the sense of rhythm and/or musicality as a key aesthetic quality, contribute to a strong sense of intertextuality by creating a web of musical citations, organize or counterpoint a choreography of bodies, images, objects or words, or raise what Hans-Thies Lehmann called the ‘politics of perception’ (2006: 184): i.e. rendering problematic and thus pointing us to our habits and tacit hierarchies of hearing and seeing (Roesner 68).

LIVE BED SHOW emphasises the performativity of sound design through the display of process. Rather than being operated remotely, off-stage in a technical booth, the sonic landscape (or *soundscape*) is manipulated in real time by the performer. In *LIVE BED SHOW*, sound is the primary meaning-making element of the *mise-en-scène*. This performer-controlled technical

agency underscores the work's thematic meditation on the agency of the survivor in post-traumatic discourse, reinforced by the nature of sexual trauma as resulting from a negation of one's bodily agency. As *LIVE BED SHOW* wrestles with matters of self-representation in autobiography, the foregrounding of the performer's technological agency likewise becomes a site of meaning-making.

Patrice Pavis defines sound in theatre as a composition of four elements: noise, music, speech and silence (Pavis 232). While Pavis' typology provides a starting point, I propose that to substitute the category or *speech* with *voice* when considering postdramatic sound in the context of *LIVE BED SHOW*. This may seem to be a matter of terminology, but it is an important distinction as trauma disrupts the logocentric experience of communication, thereby disrupting the intelligibility of *speech* for the non-logocentric, embodied *voice*. Pavis defines *vocality* as "material, physical, instinctual and affective dimension" of voice, noting, "it is not the voice as the carrier of the meaning of articulate language, but the voice as a musical and physical material that artists can use for singing, diction and affective expressiveness" (Pavis 270). The postdramatic dramaturgy of *LIVE BED SHOW* opts to reject the traditional hierarchization of speech as "meaning-making" in favour of the embodied, non-logocentric *voice*, aligning with the findings of three scholars of voice and gendered bodies in classical and contemporary performance: Konstantinos Thomaidis, Guy Cools, and Anne Carson.

Thomaidis explains the difference between speech and voice through an example drawn from Sophocles' *Electra*. The condemnation of Electra's incessant, vocal, public mourning her dead father Agamemnon by her vengeful mother Clytemnestra "...could be experienced as a constant attempt to regulate this voice and direct it towards speech (as an effective linguistic

exchange) or silence (as unuttered speech)” (Thomaidis, 2017: 21). Thomaidis posits that “in the dramaturgy of *Electra*, Aristotle’s ‘ascension’ from voice to language not as a complete and finalised undertaking but as a struggle, as a project still in the making” (Thomaidis, 2017: 21). In particular, it is Electra’s circumstances that lead her to this excessive vocality: mourning for her sister (murdered by her father), and her father (murdered by his wife, Electra’s mother), and her brother (who, unknowingly to Electra, has faked his death in order to exact revenge, on behalf of his father, by killing their mother). Electra’s gender and social position within patriarchal society denies her any agency to act in a way that would create “coherence out of chaos” in the House of Atreus, thus situating her mourning in the liminal, unintelligible space found between speech and silence.

Furthermore, in “The Gender of Sound,” poet and classical translator Anne Carson notes that in classical mythology, women “make themselves objectionable by the way they use their voice” citing the monstrous howls of Gorgons and Furies or the seductive vocality of Aphrodite, Helen of Troy, and the Sirens for the purposes of manipulating men (Carson 120). The prophet Cassandra — similarly confined to the House of Atreus, where she is sexually trafficked by Agamemnon upon his return from the Trojan War — must also negotiate the liminal, unintelligible space between speech and silence. Cassandra’s prophecies are dismissed as lies, as a punishment for refusing the sexual advances of Apollo, god of prophecy. Cassandra screams, but has no listener.

In *Performing Mourning: Laments in Contemporary Art*, performance scholar Guy Cools links the vocality of these mythological lamentations with the contemporary practice of the *moirólóghia*, traditional Greek funerary performances by *moirólói*, singers who are hired to

vocally lament the deceased (Cools 37). There appears to be an enduring need, across cultures, for vocal expressions of loss and mourning that remains present to this day. *LIVE BED SHOW* seeks to extend this examination of voice into the technologically mediated realm in order to explore how the aesthetics of sound (through voice and noise) may serve to represent post-traumatic memory in autobiographical performance, creating both meaning and the absence thereof.

4. Noise & Analogue Mediation

Within contemporary dramaturgy and performance writing, Claire MacDonald highlights a potential to expand the horizons of performance (and thus what can be *represented* in performance) through a multidisciplinary approach to text and creation.¹⁹ MacDonald suggests that:

A counter pedagogy [to traditional creative writing and playwriting pedagogies] might begin instead with writing as a mode of enquiry, drawing on the history of artists' engagements with language as graphic, sonic, and visual material; with words as things; with writing as mark making and with scripts and scores as machines for making performance (MacDonald 92).

MacDonald further notes that modernist writers, such as e e cummings, were “interested in the typewriting machine as a generator of paratextual meaning” (MacDonald 92). Typewriters are, of course, no less an analogue technology than vinyl turntables, reel-to-reel recording, or VHS tapes, all of which, as described in this thesis, have been instrumentalised as means for “making meaning” in performance. *LIVE BED SHOW* further employs instant photography, a single-process analogue medium that does not produce a negative, and thus can never be re-developed,

¹⁹ For more on Performance Writing as an emergent discipline contextualised by its geographic and institutional connections to Dartington College of Arts (Devon, UK), see Caroline Bergvall's 1996 symposium keynote speech “What Do We Mean by Performance Writing?” (Bergvall 86-92).

reprinted, or faithfully recreated. The instant camera aligns with the nature of traumatic memory. The mechanical sounds of the instant camera were looped with a looper pedal, adding to the repetitive, mechanical sonic environment. The build-up of these disparate elements creates *noise-as-gestalt*, its resistance to interpretation as the intended meaning. Lynley Edmeades argues that both Performance Writing and sound art have the ability to “interrogate similar degrees of in-betweenness, where doubt is beneficial and can serve to disrupt our previously conceived frameworks of interpretation” (Edmeades 62). Indeed, Edmeades description of the disruptive potential of Performance Writing and sound art evokes Jürs-Munby’s assertion of traumatic memory’s “incommensurability, inaccessibility and ultimate resistance to narrative representation” (Jürs-Munby, 2009: 201). This indicates a potential application of Performance Writing and sound art to the representation of traumatic memory, which *LIVE BED SHOW* seeks to explore.

Pavis defines “noise” as both designed sounds and undesigned sounds that arise from the performance in a disorganised fashion (Pavis 235). Undesigned sounds, such as noises created by the audience or the environmental or architectural noise of the performance space, are critical in accounting for the totality of the live sonic experience, as they cannot be separated from the designed elements of the performance’s soundscape. Significantly, noise is derived from the Latin root word *nausea*, which itself is derived from the Greek root *naus* for “ship”. Musicologist David Novak notes “reference to seasickness captures the basic disorientation of the term: noise is a context of sensory experience, but also a moving subject of circulation, of sound and listening, that emerges in the process of navigating the world and its differences” (Novak 125). Like trauma’s resistance to cohere to narrative memory and postdramatic performance’s resistance to mimesis,

Novak also offers that “noise resists interpretation” (Novak 126). This perspective lends a starting point for thinking through the functionality of postdramatic sound in service of representing post-traumatic memory in autobiographical performance.

Similar to sexual violence, noise is a transgressor. Noise does not seek consent. One cannot redirect hearing or “shut one’s ears” to noise, the way that one might shut one’s eyes or look away. In contrast to the popular perception of the “five senses”, hearing is, in reality, not a distinct sense, but the sense of touch. Hearing occurs when vibrations in the air touch the eardrum, which the auditory nerve then converts into an electrical signal to be processed by the brain. Sound, therefore, states Anne Fernald, is “touch at a distance” (Radiolab). “To sound is to vibrate in itself or by itself,” writes philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, “it is not only, for the sonorous body, to emit a sound, but it is also to stretch out, to carry itself and be resolved into vibrations that both return it to itself and place it outside itself” (Nancy 8). To Nancy, sound is not atomized. Sound does not exist in one body, but exists as a collective experience of embodiment.

In *LIVE BED SHOW*, the buildup and gradual *minoration* (or lessening) of noise in the sonic environment is used as a metaphor for the perpetration of violence, with *echo* representing the return of the incident through traumatic memory. Furthermore, Novak characterises noise as:

[the] byproduct of technological reproduction that interfered with reception of a message (i.e., static in a radio transmission, distortion over a loudspeaker, or hiss on magnetic tape). The ‘signal-to-noise’ ratio identified the balance of interpretable to uninterpretable sound, in which noise should be reduced as much as possible to maximize the efficiency of communication. But even in its pure distinction from signal, the presence of noise in sound communication is far from meaningless. Attention to noise helped listeners to perceive authentic relationships with technologically mediated sound and resituate music and speech in new ‘discourse networks’ (Novak 128).

The distorted black and white faces of Andy Warhol’s *Marilyn Diptych* (1962) similarly

represent a kind of “noise” as a byproduct of technological reproduction. Warhol’s portrait is a commentary on Marilyn Monroe’s stardom and her presence in the memory of the public at the time of her passing, and is thus a useful starting point for thinking about the relationship between memory and technological reproduction.

Vinyl media not only evokes tactile nostalgia as a physical object in a predominantly digital music culture, but a sonic nostalgia as well. In “The Metaphysics of Crackle: Afrofuturism and Hauntology”, Mark Fisher notes the sonic nostalgia produced by the “crackle” of vinyl LPs as an appeal to authenticity (Fisher 45). A repeatedly played vinyl record will develop pops, clicks, and scratches and the fragile material degrades. These “ghosts” of repetition are part of the record’s inherent materiality: every further repetition will carry the imprint of the past. Similarly, performance scholars Patrick Duggan and Mick Wallis likewise conclude that “Trauma can be seen to rehearse, repeat, and re-present itself in performed ‘ghosts’ that haunt the sufferer, and to require ‘acting out’ in order to ‘work through’” (Duggan and Wallis 5).

Through proximity to and the manipulation of sound technology (both analogue and digital), the performer’s body likewise becomes a locus of meaning. Feminist muscologists and musician historians have been among the first to turn their attention to the role of the body in relationship to electronic sound. Music historian Tara Rodgers highlights several women who were influential in the development of sound art in *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (2010). Among these are several artists whose practises helped inspire *LIVE BED SHOW*. These include Delia Derbyshire (1937-2001) and Daphne Oram (1925-2003) of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, and composer Wendy Carlos (1939-), who aided in the development of the Moog synthesiser and composed scores for the Stanley Kubrick films *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) and

The Shining (1980).²⁰ However, the majority of written sound art criticism focuses on *acousmatic* work, such as Hildegard Westerkamp's *Kits Beach Soundwalk* (mediated by the personal listening device) or Janet Cardiff's *Forty-Part Motet* (mediated by an elaborate installation of speakers). This acousmatic focus often renders the artist's body invisible.

In a survey of professional theatre sound designers, Clare Hibberd remarks "As a theater sound engineer, a common greeting by visiting staff would be to ask where the 'sound guy' was" as the perception was that female sound designers were not as technologically proficient as their male counterparts (Hibberd 266). Likewise, in a 2017 interview with mononymic sound artist Rucyl, Magdalena Olszanowski remarks that for female sound artists, "Having gear sets up a legitimacy" and that the operation of sound technology proves a technological competence that was inherently called into question by the sound artist's marginalised gender presentation (Olszanowski). The notion that operating sound technology can confer legitimacy indicates the underlying exclusion of underrepresented artists from the still predominantly white, cisgender male electronic music field. This questioning of marginalised artists' legitimacy as creators and performers echoes the evaluation for truth and legitimacy that survivors of sexual trauma (who are often marginalized on multiple levels) face within public discourse. For this reason, the co-presence of my own body alongside professional analogue turntables is, in fact, an inescapable co-performance with the instruments themselves.

²⁰ Carlos is also significant as one of the most prominent transgender film composers of the twentieth century. Roshanak Kheshti examines Carlos' *Switched-On Bach* (1968) for Bloomsbury's popular music criticism series 33 ½.



Figure 5: An instant photograph of the performer's hand holding another instant photograph, taken during the same performance.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this case study, I have traced a paradox: if I cannot fully recall, reconcile, or make sense of my own traumatic experience, is constructing an autobiographical performance possible? Or does the possibility of an autobiography remain out of reach? *LIVE BED SHOW* forgoes linear narrative structure and traditional dramatic mimesis — two features of postdramatic performance, Jürs-Munby posits, that demonstrate an affinity with the structure of traumatic memory (Jürs-Munby, 2009: 201). I have attempted to create an autobiographical performance that exists beyond the confines of “redemption narrative”, in hopes of evading the demand for trauma to become scrutable so that it might be evaluated for its truthfulness, or for a “greater meaning” to be created out of suffering.

However, to succeed in bridging an unbridgeable gap is paradoxical as any success thereby annuls the gap. Through vinyl turntablism and technologically mediated autobiophony, *LIVE BED SHOW* embraces a poetics of failure: it gestures towards the inability of traumatic memory’s fragments and “unbridgeable gaps” to make meaning as a *source* of autobiographical meaning-making in and of itself.

As Jürs-Munby argues, “there is no one way in which postdramatic theatre relates to trauma, ... partly because there is no one form of trauma” (Jürs-Munby, 2009: 217). Therefore, a single case study will not definitively prove or disprove Jürs-Munby’s hypothesis. However, by contributing this case study, *LIVE BED SHOW* asks, in Ishiguro’s words “This is the way it feels to me. Can you understand what I’m saying? Does it also feel this way to you?” (Ishiguro 37).



Figure 6: The performer at station three.

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