

THEATRE OF TESTIMONY:
A PRACTICE-LED INVESTIGATION INTO THE ROLE OF
STAGING TESTIMONY IN CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

Submitted by Helena Mary Enright,
to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Performance Practice,
3 January 2011

This thesis is available for library use on the understanding
that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis
may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work
has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved
for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Helena M. Enright

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| ABSTRACT | 5 |
| ILLUSTRATIONS AND IMAGES | 7 |
| ACCOMPANIMENTS..... | 8 |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | 9 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 12 |
| Testimony and Theatre | 12 |
| My Practice..... | 14 |
| The Research Project..... | 17 |
| Research Questions | 18 |
| Practice-as-Research..... | 20 |
| Research Methodology..... | 22 |
| Research Ethic: Becoming Ethical - An Ongoing Process..... | 23 |
| Thesis Structure | 25 |
| CHAPTER ONE..... | 28 |
| Documentary Theatre: A Broken Tradition | 29 |
| Developments in the Form | 30 |
| Contemporary Documentary Theatre | 32 |
| Terminology | 34 |
| Verbatim Theatre..... | 35 |
| Theatre of Testimony..... | 36 |
| Epistemology: Testimony as a Way of Knowing..... | 39 |
| Testimony and the Interview | 47 |
| Testimony and the Traumatic Memory | 49 |
| Testimony and Theatre: Ambitious Sisters | 51 |
| Staging an Authentic Testimony | 52 |
| The Minimal Aesthetic | 56 |
| Ethical Considerations..... | 58 |
| Conclusion..... | 61 |
| CHAPTER TWO..... | 63 |
| Introduction | 64 |
| PART I: GENESIS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT | 64 |
| Research Questions Specific to this Project..... | 66 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| PART II: SCRIPT | 69 |
| PART III: CRITICAL REFLECTION | 104 |
| Gathering the Material..... | 104 |
| Producing a Domestic Violence Testimony: The Significance of the Site of Production..... | 104 |
| The Interviews | 106 |
| Writing the Play: Domestic violence narratives meet the ‘rhythm and shape of art’ | 112 |
| Making an Argument with Personal Narratives | 119 |
| <i>Walking Away</i> in Rehearsal and Performance..... | 123 |
| Embodying Testimony in the Absence of the Other | 123 |
| Impact on the Original Testifier | 130 |
| Discoveries | 131 |
| <i>Walking Away</i> : Final Considerations..... | 133 |
| CHAPTER THREE..... | 135 |
| Introduction | 136 |
| PART I: GENESIS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT | 136 |
| TIE Model: Exstream and Interactive Theatre | 137 |
| Interactive Theatre..... | 137 |
| Research Questions Specific to this Project | 138 |
| PART II: SCRIPT | 140 |
| PART III: CRITICAL REFLECTION | 177 |
| Producing Road Safety Testimonies: Finding a Story | 177 |
| The Benefits of Practice: When Gadgets Go Wrong..... | 182 |
| Maintaining the aesthetic of ‘reportage’ and ‘memory’ | 185 |
| The Play: ‘Writing’ versus ‘Wrighting’ | 186 |
| <i>Under Pressure</i> in performance | 195 |
| CHAPTER FOUR | 198 |
| Introduction | 199 |
| PART I: GENESIS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT | 200 |
| The Catholic Church in Ireland | 201 |
| Lourdes | 202 |
| Research Questions Specific to this Project | 203 |
| PART II: SCRIPT | 205 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| PART III: CRITICAL REFLECTION | 243 |
| Gathering the Material..... | 243 |
| Writing the Play..... | 245 |
| The Influence of Testimony Work on my Dramaturgy..... | 246 |
| Writing the ‘Fingerprints’ of Individual Voices..... | 252 |
| <i>Aquéro</i> in Rehearsal and Performance | 257 |
| <i>Aquéro</i> : Final Considerations | 259 |
| CONCLUSION | 262 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 271 |
| APPENDICES | 282 |
| Appendix A: | 283 |
| Appendix B:..... | 284 |
| Appendix C:..... | 285 |
| Pledges from Under Pressure Pilot Tour – March 2008..... | 285 |
| Axe Valley..... | 285 |
| Honiton | 285 |
| Tavistock (pm)..... | 285 |
| Teign (am) | 286 |
| Teign (pm) | 286 |
| Chumleigh (am)..... | 286 |
| Chumleigh (pm)..... | 287 |
| Bideford (am) | 287 |
| Bideford (pm) | 287 |
| Ivybridge (Day 1 am) | 287 |
| Ivybridge (pm)..... | 288 |
| Ivybridge (Day 2 am) | 288 |
| Ivybridge (pm)..... | 288 |
| Appendix D: | 290 |

ABSTRACT

The use of personal testimony in theatre is a central component to the practice of Verbatim Theatre. Verbatim Theatre is a form of documentary theatre and is enjoying an increased popularity on world stages in recent years. The last decade, in particular, has seen both established and emerging playwrights incorporating the testimony of others into their scripts. This has led to various concerns and questions pertaining to the practical and moral implications of the work particularly surrounding issues of authorship, authenticity, truth, aesthetics, theatricality and ethics. This study is a practice-led enquiry. A central component to the study is the writing and performance of three plays in order to arrive at a better understanding of these challenges. Three original plays, *Walking Away*, *Under Pressure* and *Aquéro* are presented in a series of case studies accompanied by a critical and reflexive analysis on the practice of writing and staging each play. This examination investigates both the creation of these plays – from interview to writing – and their performance – from the perspective of the playwright and to a lesser extent the actor, in addition to contextualising the ethical and moral ramifications involved in this type of practice.

The Introduction explores a few of the general problems and challenges around the practice of staging testimony, outlines the nature of the research project and is followed by a discussion on practice-as-research and my particular research methodology and ethic. The dissertation is then divided into three parts. Chapter One begins with an overview of the documentary form and considers developments in the form that have facilitated the staging of testimony. The chapter then considers the terms Verbatim Theatre and Theatre of Testimony, arguing for a distinction to be made between the two terms and why Theatre of Testimony is the term most suited to my practice. It contends with an examination of the epistemology of testimony that new knowledge can be generated by attending to and nurturing the narrative essence of

testimony. This chapter also examines the significance of the site of production of the testimonies and the extent to which this impacts on the dramaturgical choices made by the playwright. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the main questions, problems and challenges that have been identified by theatre practitioners, scholars and critics regarding the use of testimony in theatre.

Part Two comprises of Chapters Two, Three and Four, which discuss the case studies. Each chapter provides a context for the research project, a script of the play, a DVD of a performance of the play and critical and reflexive commentary on the practice of writing and staging the play. The final section, Part Three, presents concluding thoughts on the research outcomes and considers the value and potential efficacy of employing 'reportage' as a legitimate dramaturgical choice when staging personal testimonies.

Accompanying this thesis are three DVDs which include recordings of each script in performance.

ILLUSTRATIONS AND IMAGES

| | |
|--|-----|
| Fig. 1.1 Developments in Documentary Theatre | 31 |
| Fig 2.1 Poem taken from the 'Irish Women Against Abuse' MySpace page | 123 |
| Fig 2.2 Excerpt from my notebook of early sketch of staging plan | 126 |
| Fig 3.1 Extract from the notes I handwrote during the interview with 'Nick'. | 184 |
| Fig 3.2 Extract from my handwritten transcription of the interview with 'Jack' | 189 |
| Fig. 4.1 The Grotto of Massabielle in 1858 | 203 |
| Fig. 4.2 Extract from my notebook with possible idea for 'Lourdes' play. | 248 |
| Fig. 4.3(a) Extract from notes I made while in Lourdes which became Scene 3 | 250 |
| Fig. 4.3(b) Continuation of notes that became Scene 3 | 251 |

ACCOMPANIMENTS

This dissertation is accompanied by three DVDs. Each DVD documents a performance of the play I wrote for each practical project.

DVD 1 – Performance of *Walking Away*, Saturday 28 June 2008, Belltable Arts Centre, O’Connell Street, Limerick, Ireland

DVD 2 – Performance of *Under Pressure*, March 2008, Ivybridge School, Devon, United Kingdom

DVD 3 – Performance of *Aquéro*, Saturday 6 December 2009, Roborough Studios, University of Exeter, Devon, United Kingdom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the generous help of a large number of people, all of whom gave of their time so enthusiastically and graciously. I would like to begin by thanking the people who generously shared their stories with me - I am both honoured and humbled that you let me into such personal areas of your lives. The writing of both *Walking Away* and *Under Pressure* in particular would not have been possible without your stories.

Throughout this study three members of faculty, Dr. Jessica Berson, Mr. William Stanton and Dr. David Roesner were each at separate times responsible for supervision. Each of them in their own way has helped guide and shape this project and I thank them for their input. I would also like to thank other faculty members and support staff who have provided advice, guidance and assistance when needed; Professor Mick Mangan, Professor Christopher McCullough, John Somers, Dr. Anna Harpin, Gayatri Simons, Jon Primrose, Chris Mearing, Andy Yarwood and Michelle Yates. I would like to extend a particular thank you to Professor Peter Thomson, not just for reading my scripts and sending relevant information my way but for his continued support and interest in my work.

I would also like to thank those who made each production possible and in particular the casts and crew for their enthusiasm, energy and commitment. For *Walking Away* - Laura- Jane Allis, Eleanor Bennett, Niamh Coghlan (R.I.P.), Karen Fitzgibbon, Sinéad Vaughan, Ciarda Tobin, Ella Daly, Naomi O'Kelly, Brendan Hickey, Judith Ryan, Annemarie Ryan, Stephanie O'Keefe, Gene Rooney, Monica Spencer, Margaret McBride, Frances Quinn, Emma Tec, Fiona Ryan, Mike Keane, Aideen Wylde, Liam O'Brien, Bríd Madden, Sue Enright, Stephanie Enright, Tom O'Donnell, Niamh Conroy, Karl Wallace, Joanne Beirne, Brendan O'Sullivan, the staff and management of the Belltable Theatre, Limerick, the staff and management of Adapt Services Ltd., Limerick. For *Under Pressure* – Rich Lea, Sam Morris, John Palmer, Sarah McCourt, Wil Scott, John Somers of Exstream Theatre Company, Keith Vaughan, Ginny and Jeremy at Devon County Council and the staff at Police HQ, Middlemoor, Exeter. For *Aquéro* – Aideen Wylde, Adam Brummitt, Noni Hobbs, Kelly Miller, Mark Reed, Katie Shewen, Karen Fitzgibbon, Myles Breen, Jim Moroney, Eleanor Bennett, Maeve McGrath and the staff and management of the Belltable Arts Centre, Limerick.

The journey towards a doctorate is not easy. It is at times an isolating journey, full of twists and turns, highs and lows, surprises and disappointments throughout which one has to somehow manage to retain a sense of sanity. On such a journey everyone needs an angel at their side, I was lucky to have more than a few throughout this journey and I extend a heartfelt and sincere thanks to my colleagues and friends who have rallied to keep the insanity and isolation at bay. To Dr. Sarah Goldingay, I thank you for the contacts you put my way, your helpful comments and advice on my research. To Effrosyini and Ioannis, I am grateful for the many coffees and chats - thank you for 'Greeking' me. To Jason Price and Richard Feltham - thank you for the many interesting discussions about theatre. To my fellow doctoral candidate and close friend Jessica Beck – thank you for forgiving but not indulging my many moments of insanity! To Steve, your love and support over the last number of months (and dinners) mean more than I can ever say. Finally, an impossible thank you must go to my family and in particular to my parents. It has not been an easy few years for our family and without their love, belief, encouragement and support I could not have done this. *Go raibh míle maith agaibh!*

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of

Marc Harris (26 April, 1983 – 1 April, 2007)

and

Niamh Coghlan (25 January, 1949 - 17 April, 2009)

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

*...we ought to attend to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions
of experienced and older people or of people of practical wisdom
not less than to demonstrations;
for because experience has given them an eye they see aright.*

Artistotle, Nichomachean Ethics

INTRODUCTION

Testimony and Theatre

The shaping of eye-witness accounts, personal memories and public history into art is no simple matter, theatrically or morally
– Christopher Bigsby, *Emily Mann* (2004: 134)

Writing about the documentary plays of American theatre practitioner Emily Mann, theatre scholar Christopher Bigsby, highlights one of the key challenges faced by documentary playwrights who choose to incorporate the testimonies of real people into their scripts: how to balance the creative with the ethical concerns of our practice? I include myself in this category because I am a theatre practitioner who, since 2004 has integrated the testimonies of others into my script writing and their performances. My attraction to this work is fuelled by a sincere belief that attending to the testimony of others can help us to better understand our lives: it has the reflexive potential to challenge our own behaviour and attitudes. I am not alone in my quest to use the testimony of others to help me to make sense of our world; examples of people testifying to their experiences are everywhere.

In the 1930s Walter Benjamin (1999) lamented the future decline of the storyteller. However, what he could not have possibly foreseen was the shift in storytelling that would take place in the latter half of the century, a shift which has seen the domain of the storyteller move from a place of officialdom and renown in the community to one much more situated among the public and concerned with the local and the personal. We live in a story-saturated society; we are surrounded by people telling stories about their lives and various experiences they have witnessed or endured. Evidence of this can be found in the unprecedented amount of autobiographies and memoirs currently filling the shelves and windows of bookshops, the popularity of magazines such as *Bella*, *Take A Break* and *Chat* which are dedicated to reporting the ‘real-life’ stories of ordinary people and the increasing number of television

programmes which purport to transmit, document and/or follow the lives of real people.¹

A key contributing factor is the focus on personal narratives and testimonies that have dominated the discourses of trauma relief and human rights campaigns in recent years, a phenomenon which has attracted the attention of scholars in the social science and psychology fields and more recently in performance fields. One of the catalysts for this has been the use of testimony in an attempt to bear witness to the atrocities of the Holocaust. The influence of Adorno's infamous contention that 'After Auschwitz, it is no longer possible to write poems' (1973: 362) can be keenly felt in the proliferation of the testimonial in contemporary society, particularly in relation to trauma. Moreover, as we approach the end of the first decade of this new millennium this interest in other people's stories of their lived experiences shows no signs of abating. Sociologists Maynes, Pierce and Laslett observe that in recent years there has been 'an outpouring of scholarly work based on personal narrative evidence' (2008: 1), while the general public simultaneously continues to consume these narratives.

This has led some commentators to define our era as an 'age of testimony' (Felman and Laub 1991: 5) while others even go so far as to suggest that we have invented a new 'literature of testimony' (Wiesel 1973: 9). This proliferation of testimony in society has attracted the attention of both scholars and critics. Felman and Laub in their 1991 study on testimony, express concern as to 'the significance of this growing predominance of testimony as a privileged contemporary mode of transmission and communication' (1991: 5). Furthermore, scholars and critics are questioning the reliability and the authenticity of testimony we are being presented with and whether or not it is even generating useful knowledge (Heddon 2008; Watt 2008; Gardner; 2008).

¹ BBC recently ran a competition *Mystory*. Members of the public were encouraged to send in autobiographical stories. Each month the winning story was published in book form.

Dee Heddon has written that one of the problems with this type of theatre is that rarely are we 'told or shown *how* or with what agenda the play is made, nor are the interviewing conditions ever made transparent' (2009: 119). In this thesis my intention is to share with the reader both the 'how' and the 'with what agenda' these plays were made through my reflection on the following key areas: my approach to gathering the testimonies; my dramaturgical choices for each play; observing the challenges the actors faced in rehearsals and performance; and any effects I observed in relation to those who gave their testimonies. As will become clear as the thesis progresses it is not always possible nor is it always necessary to include these aspects or make them transparent within the performance. These concerns dominate the literature concerning the use of testimony within theatre and will be discussed further in Chapter One.

My Practice

My attraction to sharing testimony through the medium of theatre is influenced by a number of experiences I have had in theatre over the last ten years. These experiences have also raised a number of questions which have ultimately led to this research project. The first experience came about during my involvement in V-day Ireland 2002². The project was set up to stage a number of benefit performances of Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* (1998) in order to raise awareness and money for Irish organisations dedicated to ending violence against women. The project produced a production of the play in each of the following Irish cities, Limerick, Galway, Cork and Dublin between the months of February and April in 2002. The plays were seen by approximately 2,000 people and the project rose over €40,000 for charity. In my capacity as both co-producer and performer, I began to consider theatre's capacity to raise awareness and bring about new understanding through the theatrical presentation

² V-Day Ireland was part of the global V-Day movement which aims to end violence against women and girls.

of testimony in the form of personal narratives. The play is based on material that Ensler gathered from over 200 interviews with women from all over the world on the subject of their vaginas and is presented as a series of monologues directly addressed to the audience³. I was intrigued by Ensler's admission, in her introduction to the published version of the play script, that 'some of the monologues are close to verbatim interviews, some are composite interviews and some [she] began with the seed of an interview and had a good time' (2000: 7). I was curious as to how much of the interviews had made it to the final script as despite Ensler's provision of a contextualising introduction for some of them it was not always clear which monologues were verbatim, which were composite interviews and which had started life as just a seed. In addition I was interested to know why Ensler felt the need to impose her own voice on the testimonies she gathered and I what as an audience we might be missing from the original testimonies the women had given her.

This concern again presented itself when studying the *The Permanent Way* (2003) by David Hare. The play includes, amongst others⁴, the 'testimonies' of survivors and relatives of victims of four different rail crashes that have occurred since the privatization of the British rail service. These testimonies are once again presented directly to the audience in monologues. However, Hare's process of gathering the material differed from Ensler's significantly. First of all, Hare was not the only person who conducted the interviews that provided the source material for the play. Hare was only one of a team of actors who interviewed people. Secondly, the actors following an interview with the real person came back to the rehearsal room and in 'character' (as the person they interviewed) recalled for Hare what the person had said. Again, I found myself questioning this notion of how much was being lost from the original testimony.

³ It was first performed as a one woman show by Ensler herself in 1996

⁴ Among those interviewed and whose testimonies were represented in the play were employees of the railway companies, engineers, members of the Treasury.

These testimonies were being presented in the play as being the words of the people who originally spoke them, yet in reality they were filtered back to the playwright through the medium of the actor.

The third experience occurred when conducting research for my Masters degree in Drama & Theatre Studies at the University of Cork. For my thesis I examined the role of documentary theatre and its ability to respond creatively to the subject of cancer. During the course of my research, I examined a number of models of documentary theatre which used personal testimony and was particularly struck by the ideology behind American theatre practitioner Emily Mann's 'Theatre of Testimony' which is concerned with putting the words of real people on stage in order to bear witness to our times. At the same time I came across a couple whose daughter had died of cancer and were interested in sharing their story with me; I subsequently met with them in their home and recorded their account of their experience of their daughter's battle with a rare form of cancer called Ewing's Sarcoma. As part of the thesis I wrote the play *Less Than A Year* (2006), where, rather than rewriting their narrative, I chose to incorporate material directly from the transcript of that interview. The play consists of two characters, 'Mother' and 'Father', testifying directly to an audience about their experience from the time of their daughter's diagnosis to her death ten months later.⁵

Writing *Less Than A Year* taught me that the relationship between theatre and testimony is a complex one that warrants further investigation. The process of transferring personal narratives into performance is fraught with a number of challenges that concern notions of authorship, authenticity, truth, aesthetics, theatricality and ethics. Included in these challenges are issues of legality, concerns for those represented or implicated in the narrative, privacy and anonymity by those who testify, as well as

⁵ *Less Than A Year* was produced by Island Theatre Company in November 2006 at The Georgian House in Limerick and embarked on a short Irish Tour in February 2007. A subsequent production in 2009 by The Shannonside Players reached the finals of the All-Ireland One Act Drama Festival.

issues pertaining to the practical and moral implications of the work. Following my experience of writing *Less Than A Year*, I decided that the focus of this research would be an investigation as to how the playwright negotiates the challenge of resituating testimonies in performance.

The Research Project

This research project examines the challenges that arise when writing and performing the testimonies of real people and considers the extent to which these differ when writing and performing a more conventional play. Testimony, for the purpose of this study, is defined as a person's retrospective account of something they have directly experienced in their life. The plays that will be written and performed as part of this study engage with various subject matters of social and political importance; domestic violence, road safety and religion. The overall aim of the study is to arrive at a better understanding of why playwrights choose to work with testimony and how they balance the creative with the ethical demands of the practice. This exploration is conducted using my own work as the primary object of study and will be examined from the reflective perspective of the playwright.

The study traces the questions that arise when these testimonies connect and collide with the demands and challenges of the theatre such as how they are rewritten into a script; how they are performed by actors; and how they are received by an audience. In the first two practice-based projects, I specifically explore the conditions under which the testimonies are produced, including where the interviews took place, the approach by the interviewer and the method of recording the testimony. In turn, I consider the impact that each of these has on the dramaturgy of the play. The final project represents a significant departure from the first two projects in that the play is written as a freely imagined work. As such it considers the implications of writing and

performing a play that does not seek to dramatize testimony. This enables the study to make comparisons between the practice of writing of a testimony play and a freely imagined work and also consider the epistemology of testimony plays.

As part of this study I have also produced and directed at least one performance of each of the plays. This has enabled me to observe the challenges faced by the actor in rehearsal and in performance particularly when they are faced with performing testimony in the absence of the original testifier. Although Bella Merlin writes on the challenges she faced when performing in *The Permanent Way*, there is little scholarship addressing the challenges actors actually face in practice when embodying and performing the testimony of the Other, particularly those who have not met with the original testifier nor had access to a recording of their testimony. The nature of the study also enables it to consider the impact on those who gave their testimonies. As such it is able to consider the impact which results from the actual experience of giving testimony alongside the effect of seeing testimony being performed by an actor, particularly on the original testifier.

The aim of this research project is to arrive at a better understanding of the use of personal testimonies in theatre and to examine from the perspective of the playwright the challenges that arise as a result. In a series of case studies I will write and direct three plays, two which are based on the testimony of real people and one which is a more conventional play; each play deals with a different subject of social and political importance.

Research Questions

The overall aim of this study is to further an understanding of the relationship between personal testimony and theatre through the practice of writing and performing three plays. The study asks the following questions that focus on the role of the writer,

the experience of the performer, and the testifier, the ethics of the approach, and the inter-relationship between testimony-based and imaginative dramaturgical processes:

- 1) What are the challenges faced by the playwright when rewriting the testimonies of real people for the stage? To what extent, if any, do the conditions under which the testimonies are produced impact upon the dramaturgical choices made by the playwright.
- 2) What are the ethical implications that arise when staging personal testimonies? How 'authentic' do the testimonies need to be?
- 3) How does the practice of writing a play that does not seek to dramatize testimony compare to the process of writing one that does? To what extent, if any, does having previously worked with testimony impact upon the dramaturgical choices made by the playwright?
- 4) How does the epistemology of a testimony play compare to that of a more conventional play? What is the value of resituating personal testimonies in performance?

The study because of its nature also asks a further set of secondary questions which relate to these plays in rehearsal and performance. It asks:

- 5) How do actors respond to the challenge of performing these testimonies, particularly in the absence of the original testifier? What are the difficulties that arise? Does it require a different style or approach to acting?
- 6) What impact does the experience of giving their testimony have upon the original testifier? How do the choices made by the playwright and subsequently the actors in performance impact upon the original person who gave their testimony?

Practice-as-Research

Researching through practice is becoming an increasingly popular methodological approach among arts based researchers. John Freeman observes, how we understand research has been challenged by '[t]he emergence of 'practice as research' as a catch-all term for many methodologies and outcomes that sit outside text-based research' (2010: ix). He writes:

Within the study of theatre, drama and performance we are seeing researchers paying focused attention to the knowledge of their own creative and cognitive processes, to the extent that metacognitive practitioner awareness is now widely accepted as providing invaluable links between 'knowing about' and 'knowing how', between inspirational acts of creativity and the conscious ability performance makers possess to talk rationally and well about their work (xiii).

I have chosen to conduct my research through practice to enable me to reflect more accurately on what is actually involved in the actual creative practice of resituating testimony in performance. In my dual role as playwright and researcher immersed in the act of researching the act of resituating testimony in performance, I am already interweaving concepts and theories with a practice that is already 'saturated with experiences, histories and beliefs' (7). By considering carefully my own 'creative and cognitive processes' when writing and directing three plays I will be attempting to make links between 'knowing about' the use of testimony in theatre and also 'knowing how' testimony is used in theatre. In addition, practice-led research belongs to what Henk Borgdorff refers to as research *in* the arts rather than research *on* or *for* the arts (2004: 6). According to Borgdorff a research *in* the arts approach 'is based on the understanding that no fundamental separation exists between theory and practice in the arts' (7). He argues that because the research

does not assume the separation of subject and object, [or] observe a distance between the researcher and the practice of art [...] the artistic practice itself is an essential component of both the research process and the research results. (7)

As such my artistic practice of writing and performing the three plays presented as part of this thesis are essential components of the research in terms of my process and my outcomes.

In her article ‘Inquiry Through Practice: Developing Appropriate Research Strategies’ (1996) scholar and visual artist Carole Gray’s original definition, of practice-led research highlights two important features of this kind of research. According to Gray, the research:

... is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners...and the research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioners. (in Haseman and Mafe 2009: 214)

In Chapter One, I identify the main questions, problems and challenges that have been discussed by theatre practitioners, scholars and critics regarding the use of testimony in theatre. My research approach is to explore these through methods familiar to me as a practitioner, which includes writing and staging plays. According to Haseman and Mafe, ‘Gray stands in the tradition of [...] practitioners and theorists who seek to build epistemologies of practice which serve to improve both the practice itself and our theoretical understandings of that practice’ (2010: 214). It is in this context, they suggest, that ‘practice can be understood primarily as the knowledge, tacit or otherwise, of how something is done within the context of a professional and cultural framework, a contingent activity that makes or establishes meaning or significance, although not through the application of thought alone’ (214). They argue that as a result ‘[p]ractice needs to be understood in its wider sense as all the activity an artist/creative practitioner undertakes’ (214). They identify the following six conditions of practice-led research which frame such a research environment –

resolving the ‘problem’ of the research problem; repurposing methods and languages of practice into the methods and language of research;

identifying and deploying emerging critical contexts which are networked out of his or her practice; identifying and engaging with the 'professional frames within which practice is pursued; anticipating and deciding on possible forms of reporting; deliberating on the emerging aspirations, benefits and consequences which may flow from the demands and contingencies of practice. (214-217)

In the chapters that follow I examine and reflect upon the process of resituating personal testimonies in performance.

Research Methodology

The principal aim of conducting this research through practice is that the process of writing and staging three plays - the first two of which dramatize the testimony of real people and the third which is a freely imagined play - will lead to discoveries which will further our understanding of how and why testimony is used in theatre. As such the following methodology was proposed.

Through a review of scholarly literature, an analysis of key plays in the genre and the practice of writing and staging three separate plays, I would specifically examine, from the perspective of the playwright, how and for what purpose personal testimonies are resituated in performance. The writing and performance of each play would be considered a 'case study'. Each case study consists of a practical experiment that begins with a set of questions in relation to how and why testimonies are produced and resituated in performance. Each play responds to a different subject matter that has social and political relevance. Furthermore, each case study stands alone as an individual experiment with the theories and their relation to the subject matter and specific aims of each play. All three then will be considered as a 'collective case study' in order to examine some of the conclusions that may result (Stake 2005: 437).

The benefit of using this methodology is that writing and staging these three plays enables me to directly experience the challenges that arise during the process and provides me with embodied knowledge of the practice. I can note challenges as they

occur throughout the practice and then critically reflect on them in relation to theory set out in the first chapter once the practice has been completed. In *Blood, Sweat & Theory: Research Through Practice in Performance*, John Freeman writes that '[w]riting about one's own practice is an act of critical reflection that is becoming increasingly established as a key aspect of experiential knowledge across a range of subject areas' (2010: xiii). It is my contention that my self-reflective work on these original plays will enable me to more fully articulate my concept of the use of testimony in relation to how it is employed in theatre. The difficulty with this methodology of course is trying to negotiate the role of critical researcher with creative practitioner. To combat this it was necessary to remain conscious of my dual positionality throughout the study. While I allowed the creative moments to flow when required I also found it necessary to step outside the creative process in order to objectively reflect on the practice.

As part of my research I have also viewed live performances of other plays which use personal testimony where possible. I have seen performances in London, Edinburgh, Exeter and Plymouth. These have included productions by professionals, amateurs and students. When it has not been possible to view plays in this genre I have examined scripts, reviews and critical scholarship. My observations have also been drawn from conversations with playwrights and actors who have created and performed in this type of theatre.

Research Ethic: Becoming Ethical - An Ongoing Process

Sheila Preston maintains that:

As cultural workers, whether we are researchers writing about individuals, theatre makers constructing narratives and stories, or facilitators enabling people to write or perform their own stories, we have a responsibility towards ensuring that the representations that are made are produced through a climate of sensitivity, dialogue, respect and willingness for reciprocity. (2009: 65)

This is a concern that I take seriously, both as a researcher and an artist who is involved in researching, through practice, the process of making documentary theatre. In *Doing Documentary Work*, Robert Coles reminds us that because of the nature of our work as documentarians we should always remain alert to the many ‘questions that confront us explicitly or by implication as we who take stock of others also try to live our own lives with some self-respect’ (1998: 49). Furthermore, he urges us to be mindful of ‘our responsibilities to those with whom we come to spend our time, to whom we pose questions’ (1998: 74). Coles raises a number of questions which, given the nature of this study, I believe are worth quoting at length:

...what, if anything, do we owe those who we have “studied,” whose lives we have gone to document? Should we, for instance, send back the writing, the photography, the film once it is completed? If so, at what stage of that work’s development: as it is being assembled, as it is being edited, before it is published or exhibited or shown on television or in a movie house, or well afterwards, or indeed never? Should we pay informants for all the time and effort put into making a film or working with a photographer or an interviewer? Should we share our royalties, our artistic fees, our monetary rewards or prizes with the subjects of our documentary project, or share them with a group or fund whose purpose it is to address the particular “problem” we have presented? (1998: 76)

Coles also refers to the possibility of exploitation that is contained within documentary work. He writes:

Is it “exploitative” to do documentary work, to arrive on a given scene, ask for people’s cooperation, time, energy, and knowledge, do one’s “study” or “project,” and soon enough, leave, *thank yous* presumably extended? How can we do such work honourably, so that those observed get more closely, explicitly connected with it? Should “informants” be publicly acknowledged if they so desire? Should we invite them to those exhibitions or film presentations that commemorate the completion of documentary work? How do we communicate to others, called “potential subjects”, our artistic or social or political purposes, let them know what we have in mind, what we hope to do, and why it might be necessary to go to such lengths? (1998: 76)

Coles’ questions have emerged at various points throughout the course of this research and will be discussed as and when they surfaced in the practice.

Thesis Structure

Chapter One constructs a theoretical framework through which the practice is subsequently analysed and reflected upon. It examines and explores the concept of documentary theatre. To do this it takes a social scientific approach to discuss the personal narrative in relation to testimony. It explores the sites of production under which testimonies occur, particularly in relation to the significance of the interview. It also examines the various approaches used by contemporary playwrights working in the field. This is contextualized with a reflexive analysis of my methodology and research ethic as a playwright. Chapters Two, Three and Four then present and examine the actual practice undertaken. Each of these chapters is divided into three sections. They begin with a description and contextualisation of the genesis of the research project. This is then followed by a script of the play, which is accompanied by a DVD of the script in performance. The final section of each chapter offers a critical and reflexive analysis of the practice.

Chapter Two presents the first case study – *Breaking the Silence: Staging the Testimonies of Domestic Violence* in which I use the personal testimonies of Irish women who experienced domestic violence to write the play *Walking Away* (2007). In this chapter I consider the significance of the interview in the production of the testimonies and the impact this had on the dramaturgical choices I made as the playwright. I also consider the challenges faced by the actor when embodying these testimonies in the absence of the original testifier.

The second case study *Making Choices: Staging the Testimonies of Road Fatalities* is then presented and discussed in Chapter Three. This play *Under Pressure* which I wrote using the first-hand testimonies of three men affected by road traffic related deaths sat within the wider parameters of a Theatre in Education initiative. In

this particular project the approach to and method of gathering the testimony is further explored and in particular the effect this had on those who testified. Given the questions raised by the actors in the first project, I further explore the challenges faced by the actors when faced with embodying these testimonies in performance. The chapter also considers the potential efficacy of this form.

In Chapter Four I present the final case study *Aquéro: Staging Pilgrimage*. Here the thesis takes a different direction and considers the role of the playwright in the creation of a more conventional play where the words come from the playwright's memory and imagination. The chapter presents the play *Aquéro* which I wrote in response to a trip I took, as part of a pilgrimage, to Lourdes in the South of France. My decision not to gather and include testimonies, which I expand upon in the chapter, allowed me to compare and contrast the role of the playwright when writing a play that does not incorporate directly the testimonies of others. This enables the study to examine the differences in the role of the playwright when not bound by the conditions of testimony. The chapter also considers the epistemology of such a play in comparison to the previous two plays which incorporated the testimonies of others.

The thesis concludes with a general discussion of the significance of what the practice of writing and directing these three plays has revealed about the use of testimony in theatre and considers the efficacy of this particular form. It is my hope this research will enhance our understanding of the practices involved in documenting real people's stories and representing them in performance through the medium of theatre. I believe this research will be of particular relevance to researchers who are who are interested in presenting their field notes through performance⁶. Furthermore this research should also be beneficial to those working in the fields of psychology,

⁶ An interesting discussion on the benefits of presenting research through theatre can be found in the article *Staging data: Theatre as a tool for analysis and knowledge transfer in health research* (Rossiter et al 2008)

sociology, anthropology, communication studies, oral history, human rights, applied theatre and education. In the field of theatre and performance I believe it will be useful to playwrights, directors and actors wishing to work with the testimony of others. While my findings offer some potentially useful considerations for others who wish to engage with personal testimonies it is important to remember what Freeman reminds us of in *Blood Sweat and Theory*, that ‘any solutions sought and found are more likely to relate to the specific set of circumstances created by the work in question than to any globally significant responses’ (2010: 59). My interest in investigating this use of personal testimony in theatre was sparked by a belief in the potential of this type of work. I believe it can help us to better understand issues affecting our lives while simultaneously challenging our own behaviour and attitudes. Having conducted this study I am even further convinced of the potential for testimony and theatre to work in combination and so I hope that the reader, by the end of this thesis, will recognise the contribution that attending to and staging the words of real people can offer to theatre and society in general.

CHAPTER ONE

*Nobody works in a vacuum; all creative work operates within
– or reacts against – established discourses.
(Nelson 2009: 128)*

This chapter examines the questions and issues that appear in the ‘established discourses’ and literature of documentary, verbatim and testimony theatre that are concerned with notions of authenticity, truth, aesthetics and ethics. My practice-led research is located in this contested area and this chapter will establish a theoretical framework and critical context which will provide the backdrop for an examination of my own practice. This examination will investigate both the creation of these plays – from interview to writing – and their performance, from the perspective of the playwright, and to a lesser extent the actor, in addition to contextualising the ethical and moral ramifications involved in this type of practice. This study centres on the analysis of three of my plays that are presented as case studies in the second half of this thesis. In order to create the analytical frame to investigate the practices and processes central to the creation of these three plays, this chapter takes a wide view of the work of both scholars and practitioners, coalesces them under four key headings and then reviews these in order to find the best descriptor for my working practice and processes.

First, I discuss ‘documentary theatre’ and the techniques associated with it that have facilitated the use of testimony in theatre. Second, I examine the various questions that the creation of this type of theatre raises. Third, the chapter turns its attention to the term ‘verbatim’ theatre. In so doing, it considers how labelling a piece of theatre as ‘verbatim’ is misleading and only serves to further complicate arguments about truth and authenticity which surround the form. Fourth, I consider the term Theatre of Testimony. I contend that such a term is perhaps less misleading. As will become clear this is the theoretical framework that best describes my work and practice because,

through an examination of the epistemology of testimony, I am able to establish a more concrete argument for how my practice nurtures the narrative essence of testimony.

Documentary Theatre: A Broken Tradition

Documentary theatre came to prominence in the early twentieth century largely through the work of theatre practitioner Erwin Piscator, who was concerned with creating a theatre that could ‘show the link between events on the stage and the great forces active in history’ (Watt 2009: 191). The term ‘documentary’ was originally coined by John Grierson in 1920 in relation to film and was then adopted by Piscator in the 1930s in relation to his idea of epic theatre.⁷ The history of documentary is both as complicated and diverse as the various forms and techniques it employs and has been described by Paget as being ‘fundamentally discontinuous’. He writes:

It is, in Stourac and McCreery’s resonant phrase, part of a ‘broken tradition’ of activism that tends to (re-)surface in difficult times...[t]he strength comes from documentary theatre’s repeated ability to reappear as new and excitingly different; weakness follows from the way practitioners – especially young ones – are cut off from their own history. (2010: 173)

For Paget, while this ‘discontinuity’ is ‘both a strength and a weakness’, a certainty is that the form always remains ‘event- and issue-centred in terms of its functions’ (2010:173). Acknowledging that there is no one consistent form of documentary theatre, he does, however, agree that various forms do tend to have functions in common. Moreover, he argues, that ‘they tend also to exhibit at least one function in any specific manifestation in whatever medium their makers choose’ (2008: 227). As such he identifies the following functions as being indicative of the documentary form:

⁷ In his article *The Theatre of The Future*, Piscator defined Epic Theatre as referring ‘...specifically to a kind of theatre which came into being in Germany after “Expressionism.” The most primitive explanation of it would be that it is like a novel in that it presents not only dramatic action, but also describes the surrounding social and political circumstances which compose the modern Fate. In order to do this onstage, however, certain technical means are needed, and have been evolved: techniques such as projections, movies, screens and treadmills, as well as choruses and speakers’

They *reassess* international/national/local histories; They *celebrate* repressed or marginal communities and groups, bringing light to their histories and aspirations; They *investigate* contentious events and issues in local, national and international contexts; They *disseminate* information, employing an operational concept of ‘pleasurable learning’ – the idea that didactic is not, in itself, necessarily inimical to entertainment; They can interrogate the very notion of *documentary*. (2008: 227-228 original emphasis)

These functions highlight the potential of the form to play an important role in a society that wants to learn from its endeavours. Proponents of the documentary form claim that, with its links to actuality and reality, the employment of the documentary can not only lead to a better or deeper understanding of the world, but can also mobilise members of society to implement change. The ability of the documentary form to respond quickly to and engage with ‘pressing matters of the present’ (Heddon 2008: 9), has led an increasing number of theatre makers who attempt to engage with social and political realities to turn towards its use.

Developments in the Form

Over the course of the twentieth century the form has seen a number of developments. I have reproduced the following table from my Master’s thesis and included the addition of the past decade so that the reader can see at a glance some of the major developments in the form (Enright 2005: 12).

| | |
|-------|--|
| 1920s | Piscator and the Weimar Theatre, Germany |
| 1930s | The Federal Theatre Project and productions of <i>The Living Newspaper</i> , USA influenced by German agit-prop theatre. |
| 1960s | Resurgence of the form in both USA and Germany. Peter Weiss <i>Fourteen Propositions for Documentary Theatre</i> |
| 1970s | Recording Tradition Stoke-method innovated by Peter Cheeseman, UK Workers Movement in Canada |
| 1980s | Theatre of Testimony by Barney Simon, South Africa and Emily Mann, USA |
| 1990s | Anna Deveare Smith – Direct Testimony |
| 2000s | Reportage, Embrace of Naturalism Robin Soans, David Hare, Political Theatre Alecky Blythe and Recorded Delivery - UK Awareness Raising and Political Tool - <i>The Exonerated & The Vagina Monologues</i> USA, Iceandfire, UK |

Fig. 1.1 Developments in Documentary Theatre

Canadian documentary theatre practitioner, Alan Filewood, maintains that during the course of the twentieth century what we have witnessed is a series of ‘interconnected experiments in form arising out of various cultures’ and he observes that often where documentary theatre has developed as an ongoing tradition it is due to a response to a crisis in the culture where it is created (1987: 13-14). However, since the beginning of the twenty-first century the documentary theatre has also been more concerned with what theatre scholar Carol Martin refers to as ‘embracing the contradictions of staging the real within the frame of the fictional’ while simultaneously ‘questioning the relationship between facts and the truth’ (2010, n.p.). According to Martin, ‘[t]heatre and performance that engages with the real participates in the larger cultural obsession with capturing the “real” for consumption even as what we understand as real is continually revised and reinvented’ (Martin, 2010: 1).

Contemporary Documentary Theatre

Contemporary documentary theatre appears to be enjoying a more mainstream popularity than it did in its earlier periods (Watt 2009: 190), and the form's emergence on mainstream stages in the last twenty years has been credited with revitalising and even "galvanising" political theatre in the United Kingdom (Gardner 2008). The contemporary documentary play is often referred to by a variety of terms. Among these are theatre-of-witness, theatre-of-fact, verbatim theatre, docudrama, testimonial theatre, theatre of testimony. Critics and scholars use these labels interchangeably and intermittently and this can be problematic, a point I will discuss in further detail later in the chapter. This confusion can be attributed to the fact that the term documentary itself is problematic; no single definition of the form exists in relation to either film or theatre.⁸

According to film theorist Bill Nichols, '[d]ocumentaries adopt no fixed inventory of techniques, address no one set of issues, display no single set of forms or styles and neither do they exhibit a single set of shared characteristics' (2000: 21). Although Nichols is referring in particular to documentary film, the same assertion can also be made in terms of documentary theatre. An examination of contemporary documentary plays reveals that they too 'adopt no fixed inventory techniques', 'address no one set of issues', nor do they 'display a single set of forms or styles'. Playwright Robin Soans does not consider this to be a negative aspect to the form and maintains that he would resist any notion to come up with a set of rules for this type of theatre, as he does not want to find himself 'hamstrung by notions of [his] own making' (2008: 43). However, not everyone is of the same opinion. Human rights practitioner Brian Phillips questions this lack of rules or governing practices surrounding the form

⁸ Gary Fisher Dawson includes a number of definitions of the form that have been put forward during the course of the twentieth century in his seminal survey and analysis of documentary theatre in the United States.

particularly when these plays encroach on the territory of human rights (Phillips 2010: 5), a point I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter in relation to the subject of ethics.

Contemporary documentary plays do, however, appear to share one common characteristic; the reliance on the words of real people as primary source material combined with a return to naturalism that the documentary theatre was initially designed to evade (Watt 2010: 192). According to Watt this is particularly evident in the emerging 'theatre of testimony' (2010: 192). Here in Britain the last decade in particular has seen a number of established and emerging playwrights employing this technique to create their plays. These plays include *The Permanent Way* (2003) by David Hare; *Talking to Terrorists* (2005), *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook* (2004) and *Life After Scandal* (2008) by Robin Soans; *Caravan* (2008) by Ben Freedman and Look Left Look Right Theatre Company; *Motherland* (2008) by Steve Gilroy; *Deep Cut* (2008) by Phillip Ralph; *Come Out Eli* (2004), *Cruising* (2006) and *The Girlfriend Experience* (2009) by Alecky Blythe and *The Asylum Monologues*⁹ (2006) by Sonja Linden and Iceandfire.

The United States, Canada and Australia have also seen an increase in this form of theatre. The plays of Emily Mann and Anna Deveare Smith¹⁰ in the 1980s and 1990s were performed to critical acclaim on and off Broadway and were instrumental in bringing a renewed interest to the form. Other plays such as *The Vagina Monologues* (1998) by Eve Ensler, *The Laramie Project* (2000) by Moises Kaufmann and *The Exonerated* (2005) by Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen have demonstrated the political

⁹ I performed in a production of this play on St. Luke's campus at the University of Exeter in April 2010.

¹⁰ Anna Deveare Smith's plays include *Crown Heights* (1991) and *Fires in the Mirror* (1992) and Emily Mann's include *Still Life* (1980), *Annulla: An Autobiography* (1985), and *Having Our Say: The Delaney Sisters' First 100 Years* (1995).

and social significance of this form of theatre¹¹. In Australia these plays include *Aftershocks* (1993) by Paul Brown and the Workers Cultural Action Committee, *Run Rabbit Run* (2004) by Alannah Valentine and *Through The Wire* (2004) by Ros Horin.

The ‘crisis’ many of these plays appear to have developed in response to, is what some argue is the failure of contemporary journalism and media to deliver the truth (Blythe, 2008; Hare 2008; Megson 2008; Soans, 2008); a distrust which, according to playwright David Hare, has made people more likely to speak with artists than journalists. It is how these plays have incorporated personal testimonies that most interests me as a researcher and as a playwright. As such they have been key texts, performances, and practice models for this thesis as they prompt a number of questions regarding content, form, and aims of this type of theatre.

Terminology

Before continuing I will discuss the terminology that surrounds this use of testimony in theatre. As noted in the previous section this type of theatre is known by a variety of terms. I will discuss two in particular – Verbatim Theatre and Theatre of Testimony. At first glance, one would be forgiven for thinking that both ‘Verbatim Theatre’ and ‘Theatre of Testimony’ have the same meaning. Both terms are associated with the wider genre of documentary theatre, are used interchangeably, and for the most part are concerned with staging real people’s stories or accounts of events. It might seem like an innocuous association but it is one I believe is worthy of closer investigation and I wish to make a case for a distinction between both terms.

¹¹ As noted earlier *The Vagina Monologues* inspired the grassroots political movement V-DAY which is dedicated to ending violence against women and children worldwide. Both *The Laramie Project* and *The Exonerated* continue to be performed across college and university campuses across the United States.

Verbatim Theatre

The term ‘verbatim theatre’, was originally coined by Derek Paget in relation to a number of community-based plays which took place in the 1970s in Britain. Paget described it as:

...a form of theatre firmly predicated upon the taping and subsequent transcription of interviews with “ordinary” people, done in the context of research into a particular region, subject area, issue, event, or combination of these things. This primary source is then transformed into a text which is acted, usually by the performers who collected the material in the first place. (1987: 317)

According to Paget the emphasis on the word verbatim was because ‘the firmest of commitments is...made by the company to *the use of vernacular speech*, recorded as the primary source material of their play’ (Paget 1987: 317 original emphasis). Today, as theatre scholar Mary Lurkhurst observes, the term ‘verbatim’ is being applied to all forms of contemporary documentary theatre. She writes:

From the 1990s, however, the term is applied by some informed practitioners, and more loosely and confusingly by others, to much documentary theatre, from Piscator’s model in the 1960s, to plays like *My Name is Rachel Corrie* (2005), based on diaries, notebooks and emails, as well as to plays which incorporate both testimony and invented material, such as Hare’s *Stuff Happens* and Gupta’s *Gladiator Games*. (2008: 203)

From this list it is clear that the verbatim form has moved away from this reliance on the interview as the primary source material.

Further evidence of this appears in the recently published *Verbatim Verbatim* (2008), an anthology of essays by six leading verbatim theatre practitioners; some of whom use recorded interview material as their primary source material, some who openly admit to inventing material and some who use existing public records such as court transcripts. Hammond and Steward’s description of the term in their introduction to the book also points to evidence of this. They write:

The term *verbatim* refers to the origins of the text spoken in the play. The words of real people are recorded or transcribed by a dramatist during an

interview or research process, or are appropriated from existing records such as the transcripts of an official enquiry. They are then edited, arranged or recontextualized to form a dramatic presentation, in which actors take on the characters of the real individuals whose words are being used. (2008: 9)

In a recent attempt to disentangle the genre, Derek Paget, has made a distinction between verbatim and tribunal theatre.

Theatre of Testimony

The term ‘theatre of testimony’ was first used by the late South African theatre director, Barney Simon in relation to the work¹² of Emily Mann after directing a production of her play *Still Life* in the early 1983. Athol Fugard, in the introduction to Mann’s anthology *Testimonies*, an anthology of Mann’s plays, relays the following conversation he had with Simon:

In talking about Mann’s work [Simon] used the word “testimony” several times – I made him check its dictionary definition: “To bear witness” according to the *OED* A perfect definition of the challenge [South Africa’s] theatre faces at this moment in our country’s history. . . . Barney became very worked-up: “We can’t be silent! We must give evidence! We are witnesses!” He said Mann’s work had been a great provocation to him and had revitalized his sense of theatre’s role in a time of crisis. (in Mann 1997: ix-x)

The term ‘theatre of testimony’ has also been used in reference to the documentary work of Nola Chilton in Israel. Here it is referred to as a type of theatre where ‘an interviewer records the words of actual people. This testimony is then shaped and theatricalized, but not altered, and presented in performance by actors’ (Ben Zvi 2006: 45). According to Ben Zvi, Chilton’s documentary work

has provided a space for these ignored “others”—Arabs, women, the poor, and the elderly—to be seen and heard, to tell their stories, and to emerge from the shadows to which they have been consigned by societal institutions that neglect or suppress them and by the media, which stereotypes or erases them. (2006: 44)

¹²Mann’s plays include *Still Life* (1980), *Annula: An Autobiography* (1985), *The Execution of Justice* (1982) *Having Our Say: The Delaney Sisters’ First 100 Years* (1995), and *Greensboro: A Requiem* (1996).

Furthermore, as Ben Zvi notes, Chilton has no illusions about what such theatre can achieve. He quotes Chilton who acknowledges that, ‘It can’t change very much, [...] but it can at least bring people together. That is something’ (2006: 44). This seems to be one of the main aims of those who associate the term testimony with their work or have the term associated. Furthermore, he writes:

According to Chilton the actor is central to this type of work. She says - I do not agree that the actor has to be nonpresent, like a camera in a movie. I think that the audience needs to know that there is an actor in front of them—someone with a personality and values who is struggling with the character she is playing, absorbing the person into herself, kneading them together. (2006: 45-46)

In her PhD dissertation, *Collaborative Theater of Testimony Performance as Critical Performance Pedagogy: Implications For Theater Artists, Community Members, Audiences And Performance Studies Scholars*, Claire Deal (2008: 5) defines Theatre of Testimony as ‘[a] form of theatrical performance created from the narratives of real people interwoven with excerpts from primary documents such as diaries, letters, participant observer’s field notes, court transcripts and other texts’. This definition is very similar to Hammond’s definition.

Watt more recently has referred to ‘theatre of testimony’ as a new form of ‘verbatim theatre’, and associates the term particularly with the plays of Emily Mann and Robin Soans. As noted above this emergent theatre of testimony is one which has seen a return to the naturalist habit that documentary theatre was initially designed to avoid. Watt describes this form of theatre as being one where:

...disparate “authentic” voices speak apparently directly (but actually through the medium of an actor) to an audience able to vicariously experience “another world,” on the assumption that such vicarious experience offers access to real knowledge. (2009: 192)

For Watt there are a number of issues in relation to this type of theatre that need to be considered. According to Watt, the first thing that needs questioning is the authenticity

of the material being presented. The concern here is that interviewees may succumb to the ‘seductive appeal of fame’ and as a result exaggerate or lie about their life stories and experiences.

The second concern is ethical and relates to those who tell their stories and whether this “telling and retelling might have the effect of re-enforcing rather than liberating their victim-hood” (O’Brien in Watt 2003: 8). The responsibility of speaking for the Other has attracted much attention from scholars and critics, most notably from D. Soyini Madison and Linda Alcoff. The responsibility of speaking for the Other and the problems associated with this have been well argued in Linda Alcoff’s *The Problem of Speaking for Others* (1991-92 – see especially 5-32). Alcoff’s primary concern is how, in the very act of speaking for the Other, the speaker may not only misrepresent that Other but also, in the very act of attempting to give them a voice, one may contribute further to their silence. As a result she maintains: ‘Speaking should always carry with it an accountability and responsibility for what one says’ (26).

The third issue that Watt wants us to consider is ‘the doubt that the “experience” we are being offered constitutes knowledge’ (193) particularly as Watt points out much of this ‘new’ type of verbatim theatre ‘remains in thrall to the naturalist habit’ (193). This is because in this emergent ‘theatre of testimony’, there has been a tendency to move away from the dramatization of interview transcripts into scenes towards more of a restaging of the interview. This aesthetic usually involves characters directly telling their stories to the audience who has taken the place of the interviewer.

I suggest that there is more to this emergent ‘theatre of testimony’ despite its inclination towards naturalism. I argue that there is something to be gained by attending to this testimony even if it is delivered to us through the medium of an actor. Even taking into consideration Watt’s issues with this new and emergent form, I prefer to use

the term ‘theatre of testimony’ rather than ‘verbatim theatre’ to describe my approach to creating these plays. I find attributing the label verbatim to my work problematic - particularly because of its associations with ideas of ‘truth’ and ‘authenticity’. When a play is labelled ‘verbatim’ commentators seem to assume that the purpose of the play is to reveal or expose the ‘real’ truth behind something or an event that has happened. As performance scholar and practitioner Dee Heddon notes, ‘[v]erbatim and indeed documentary,... operate as signifiers that propose a relationship of veracity to the supposed facts’ (2010:117). While the testimony that I include in my plays is ‘authentic’ in that it was genuine testimony that was produced by me in an interview with another person, I have no idea whether or not the person is telling me the actual truth of the situation. In fact, given the unreliability of memory it would be rather naive of me to assume that this was the case. However, what does interest me in working with testimony is not about whether the person is telling me the truth of a situation but more about what more universal truths their testimonies might reveal.

Epistemology: Testimony as a Way of Knowing

In his book *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*, Coady defines testimony as that which ‘puts us in touch with the perceptions, memories, and inferences of others’ (1994: 78). According to Derrida a testimony is always autobiographical: it tells, in the first person, the sharable and unsharable secret of what happened to me, to me, to me alone, the absolute secret of what I was in a position to live, see, hear, touch, sense, and feel’ (1998: 43). Paul Ricoeur asserts that testifiers are saying, in effect: ‘Listen to me, I was there, this happened to me, I am a part of this story.’ In the act of actually recounting their story (he terms this a ‘living presentation’) they are ‘deploy[ing] the capacity of the imagination to place the events before our eyes, *as if we were there*’ (Ricoeur 1999: 16, emphasis added). In *Towards a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* Mary Louise Pratt, drawing on the work of William Labov (an authority on the oral narrative

of personal experience), also maintains that when a speaker is testifying to their experience he/she is '[n]ot only reporting but also verbally displaying in a state of affairs, inviting his addressee(s) to join him in contemplating it, evaluating it, and responding to it' (Pratt 1977: viii). She further suggests that the speaker's aim is 'to produce in his hearers not only belief but also an imaginative and affective involvement in the state of affairs he is representing'. This in turn enables the hearer to make 'an evaluative stance towards it' (in Carlson 2006: 68).

Robert Audi in his book, *Epistemology*, notes that one can learn from testimony in the following two ways. Firstly, he maintains that the content attested to can be learnt and secondly that the testimony itself can reveal something that one can learn by (2002: 143). For example, I can say to you that yesterday I took my dog for a walk. By that you can learn that one of the things that I did yesterday was walk my dog; you learn this from the content of my testimony. However, my testimony has also revealed something else; the fact that I have a dog which is something that you have now also learnt by becoming acquainted with my testimony.

One of the most recent writers to contribute to the debate on the epistemology of testimony has been Jennifer Lackey who, in her book *Learning From Words: Testimony As A Source of Knowledge*, states that strictly speaking we do not learn from one another's beliefs – we learn from one another's words. She argues that 'a failure to appreciate this has resulted in the widespread acceptance of a picture of testimony that is fundamentally incorrect. If one is to make any real progress in the epistemology of testimony', she argues, 'we need to stop looking at what speakers believe and focus, instead, on what speakers say' (Lackey 2008: 15). While the views dominant in the literature on testimony focus on the epistemic status of internal states of speakers such as states of believing and knowing, Lackey advances an entirely new theory that instead focuses on the linguistic or communicative items in testimonial exchanges such as

statements and or other acts of communication. This view explains how knowledge can be acquired through the testimony of speakers despite the fact that such speakers fail to possess the knowledge in question. Consequently, according to Lackey, ‘strictly speaking, we do not learn from one another’s states of believing or knowing – we learn from one another’s words’ (Lackey: 2008). She argues that if to we are to make any advance in how testimony operates as a way of knowing then we need to focus on what people say instead of what they believe or know (Lackey: 2008).

Testimonies, however, when they pass through the structures of memory can become subject to all manner of distortions. According to Arnon Keren (2007), in his article *Epistemic Authority, Testimony and the Transmission of Knowledge*, while the usual manner in which one relies on someone’s testimony is by believing the testifier he reminds us that this is not the same as believing that the content of the testimony is actually true. Derrida also reminds us of this when he states, ‘testimony always goes hand in hand with at least the *possibility* of fiction, perjury and lie’ (1998: 27 original emphasis). When someone is testifying, their testimony is a narrative account of what happened rather than what actually happened. Passerini writes:

When people talk about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a little, exaggerate, become confused, get things wrong. Yet they are revealing truths ... the guiding principle for [life histories] could be that all autobiographical memory is true: it is up to the interpreter to discover in which sense, where, and for what purpose. (in Sangster 1994: 1)

The unreliability of memory has been the subject of much debate with regard to eyewitness testimony¹³ and has particular implications for the personal narrative as a valuable source of knowledge. Dori Laub describes how one survivor of Auschwitz ‘remembered’ how four chimneys blew up during the Auschwitz uprising, when later historical evidence proved that only one chimney in fact exploded (1992: 59). Quoting

¹³ See Bartlett (1932) and Elizabeth Loftus (1996, 1997)

his own response at a conference Laub argues that just because the facts later proved the woman to be wrong did not mean that her testimony was not credible. According to Laub,

The woman was testifying [...] not to the number of the chimneys blown up, but to something else, more radical, more crucial: the reality of an unimaginable occurrence. One chimney blown up in Auschwitz was as incredible as four. The number mattered less than the fact of the occurrence. The event itself was almost inconceivable. [...] She testified to the breaking of a framework. That was historical truth. (1992: 60)

He further argues that it was through his listening to her that he ‘came to understand not merely her subjective truth, but the very historicity of the event, in an entirely new dimension’ (1992: 62). ‘She was’, he writes, ‘testifying not simply to historical facts, but to the very secret of survival and of resistance to extermination. [...] The woman’s testimony, [...], is breaking the frame of the concentration camp by and through her very testimony: she is breaking out of Auschwitz even by her very talking (1992:62). For me this notion that testimonies not only reveal more than just what they say is the essence of testimony work and why I prefer to associate the term with my practice.

These contributions to the epistemology of testimony have particular relevance for the manner in which I ‘rewrite’ the testimonies I gathered for both of the plays *Walking Away* and *Under Pressure*, which will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three. In both plays I choose to ‘wright’ the words of those who testify into the play rather than re-‘writing’ them and altering what they say and reveal. This is because I want audiences to not only know the content of the testimonies but also the greater knowledge they can reveal. As we will become clear in Chapter Two the audience knew the women had experienced domestic violence, but there testimonies also revealed what it was like to live with it on a daily basis and how it affected their lives and others in their lives.

I believe that firstly, the term Theatre of Testimony provides more of a sense of where, how and why the words originated. Secondly, the term allows for more creative space with regard to interpretation. For example, rather than being bound by the semantics of ‘verbatim’, which literally means ‘word for word’, the use of the word testimony immediately conjures notions of someone testifying to their knowledge about a particular event. Taking a cue from religion and the legal arena the purpose of someone testifying is that they have information that they can share so that other people can benefit from it. As suggested by Audi earlier, when receiving testimony we learn not only the content but also what the content of the testimony reveals. The Theatre of Testimony does not just provide a platform where an audience can bear witness to testimonies, but a place where they can reveal their greater significance before a community of listeners.

For theatre scholar Chris Megson, when personal testimonies are performed they give ‘expression to the unthinkable realities of ‘everyday life’ by plac[ing] the human subject at the centre of the theatrical experience’ (2006: 526). This focus on the human subject testifying to their experience is, I argue, the essence of Theatre of Testimony. Someone is communicating the benefit of their experience so that it can in turn, through the medium of theatre, be shared with a wider group of people who, we hope, will learn from it.

Writing on testimony Derrida states that,

‘...the moment one attests...the instant one gives testimony, there must also be a temporal sequence – sentences, for example – and, above all, these sentences must promise their own repetition and thus their own quasi-technical reproducibility (1998: 33).

This implies that when the sentences one produces when giving testimony are repeated, even if not by the original person, the essence of the original testimony will be retained.

However, Derrida also maintains that ‘...to testify is always *on the one hand* to do it *at*

present – the witness must be present at the stand himself, without technical interposition’ (1998: 32). The concept of a Theatre of Testimony, however, suggests immediately an acknowledgement that there has been some form of ‘interposition’. In such a theatre audiences are aware that is an actor before them and not the real person¹⁴. Thus retaining the narrative essence of the instant of testimony by having the actor narrate the testimony directly to the audience is one of the key elements of a Theatre of Testimony. Testimonies by the very nature include elements of intertextuality. Kristeva’s concept of intertextuality which is usefully explained by scholar Graham Allen is helpful here:

The fundamental concept of intertextuality is that no text, much as it might like to appear so, is original and unique-in-itself; rather it is a tissue of inevitable, and to an extent unwitting, references to and quotations from other texts. These in turn condition its meaning; the text is an intervention in a cultural system. (Allen 2010: np)

In *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, Mikhail Bakhtin maintains that ‘the use of words in live speech communication is always individual and contextual in nature’ and claims that words exist in the following three aspects:

...as a neutral word of a language, belonging to nobody; as an other’s word, which belongs to another person and is filled with echoes of the other’s utterance; and finally as my word, for, since I am dealing with it in a particular situation, with a particular speech plan, it is already imbued with my expression. (1986: 88)

However, as Derrida claims that ‘...the classical concept of attestation, like that of autobiography, seems by law to exclude both fiction and art, as soon as the truth, all the truth and nothing but the truth, is owing’ (1998:43). He argues that ‘[b]y law a testimony must not be a work of art or fiction’ (1998: 43). I argue that attributing the word ‘theatre’ to ‘testimony’ allows the testimony to become a work of art because we know that theatre, although it happens in the real moment, is a fictional construct. It has

¹⁴ There are some plays where the people testifying are also the actors. Just for Us’ production of *Binlids* (1997)

been put together so that we can see it and experience it, as real life in the moment it occurs, but the moment it is showing is simultaneously removed from real life.

From my experience as a theatre practitioner, resituating testimony in performance is about the possibilities that are created as a result of sharing these testimonies with wider audiences. The Theatre of Testimony appears to have more in common with what Reinelt refers to as ‘personal documentary projects’ as they ‘evoke a public sphere where a gathered group might investigate and consider the memory of individual experience in the context of state or societal responsibilities or norms’ (2008: 12). American performance scholar Jill Dolan suggests that we ‘[t]hink[...] of performance as a public practice through which radical democracy might rehearse... (2005: 91). She writes:

People *do* performances, in both performative and material ways; publicly practicing performance makes it a tool of both expression and intervention, of communication and fantasy, of reality and hope. (2005: 91)

The production of a testimony is one of these performances that people ‘do’. As scholars suggest the epistemology of testimony reveals so more than just the content of the testimony. It has also been suggested that we need to focus on what people say in order to learn. This follows then that we can learn from each other’s words by creating spaces where the act of testimony can be publicly performed even if it is spoken through the medium of an actor. The Theatre of Testimony where the performance of testifying is publicly practiced, I argue, can be one that is ‘a tool of both expression and intervention, of communication and fantasy, of reality and hope’.

As such my practice is more concerned with creating a theatrical space that facilitates the telling of the story, or stories as the case may be, rather than trying to find out the facts and present the truth of the story that I am told. To illustrate what I believe

the difference to be between verbatim theatre and theatre of testimony I will use an example from my own experience of writing *Less Than A Year*. During my initial meeting with the parents, it emerged that they were very bitter towards the Irish Health Services. During the interview they spoke of how their daughter had been ‘murdered’ by the Irish medical authorities, as they felt she had not received the appropriate treatment¹⁵. Consequently, the manner in which they referred to some of the individuals who they encountered during their daughter’s illness was not always positive. Had I decided following the interview with the parents to go and interview those individuals and then include their testimonies in the play, *Less Than A Year* would not only have become a different play but also one which would be more likely to sit comfortably within the definition of a ‘verbatim play’. However, I chose not to interview those other people involved as I felt that an audience would benefit more from listening to the story that had been told to me during the interview. My aim when writing the play was to recreate in performance a similar experience for the audience to what I had undergone when listening to the parent’s story. I wanted to attend to and nurture the narrative essence of their testimony so that audiences could in turn experience listening to such a testimony.

Another example concerns the work of emerging playwright Sarah Beck. Beck wrote a play called *The Kratos Effect* in 2006 which was based on the testimonies of a number of people whose lives had been affected by the shooting of Jean Charles Menendez in Stockwell Tube station on Friday 28th October, 2005. Beck interviewed a number of people whose lives had been affected by the shooting. These included a Greek woman who maintains a shrine in the tube station; an activist; a former policeman and other characters that had been affected by the death of Jean. The play

¹⁵ After her daughter’s death, the mother had commissioned a doctor in the United Kingdom to compile a report assessing the treatment that she had received. The report, however, found that the daughter had received the necessary care. The parents decided not to pursue the case any further.

consists of their narratives which are intercut, juxtaposed and directly addressed to the audience. When Theatre 503 agreed to produce the play, they felt it needed more development and brought in playwright Paul Unwin to work on the script with Beck. Unwin decided they needed to conduct more interviews with some of the family members of Jean Charles and also other people who were involved in the shooting. The play as it developed became more of a ‘verbatim’ play than a Theatre of Testimony play. The play was renamed *This Much Is True* and for me, when I saw a production of the play at Theatre 503, it had much more the feel of a Verbatim play that was trying to live up to its title. It was a very different play from the initial script of *The Kratos Effect* that I had read. To me it had lost the narrative essence of the testimony that had been crafted and edited by Beck; testimony which showed us how ordinary people’s lives had been touched by the shooting. *The Kratos Effect* had placed the human at the centre of theatrical experience whereas *This Much Is True* placed the event at its heart.

Consequently, I find the attachment of the term ‘verbatim’ to my particular plays problematic as my practice is not about getting to the truth of the particular stories or events that have been told to me. And although I include other documents along with the transcripts of the interviews similar to the verbatim technique, the difference for me in creating a ‘theatre of testimony’ is inherent in my belief in what I feel listening to these testimonies can offer experientially.

Testimony and the Interview

The interview has become in our postmodern society one of the most popular ways of generating information. Holstein and Gubrium note in their chapter on ‘The Active Interview’ in *Qualitative Research Methods* that ‘the mass media, human service providers and researchers increasingly generate data by interviewing’ (in Silverman 2004: 140). They continue by saying that ‘interviewing is undoubtedly the most widely used technique for conducting systematic social enquiry, as sociologists, psychologists,

anthropologists, psychiatrists, clinicians, administrators, politicians, and pollsters treat interviews as their “windows on the world” (140 original emphasis). Given the increase in the use of words spoken by ordinary people in theatre it is fair to say that playwrights too are also using the interview to generate data for their plays. They do not appear however to be as strictly observed and formulated as they are when done in terms of more scientific research, so questions that are significant in this area are how are such interviews conducted and what does this contribute to meaning making in terms of the information we see on the stage?

Holstein and Gubrium also write that ‘treating interviewing as a social encounter in which knowledge is actively constructed suggests the possibility that the interview is not so much a neutral conduit or source of distortion; but rather a site of, and occasion for producing reportable knowledge’ (141). As they are inevitably implicated in the knowledge that is constructed in the interview, paying attention to the interview as a creative act can enable us to better understand the role the testimonial playwright plays in this early stage of the testimonial process. In a manner similar to the way in which a conventional playwright constructs or creates the story and dialogue in his/her imagination the playwright using testimony contributes to the construction of the text that is generated through the interview which is subsequently written on the page.

Silverman writes:

Interviewing is understood as an interactional event in which members draw on their cultural knowledge, including their knowledge about how members of categories usually speak; 2) questions are a central part of the data and cannot be viewed as neutral invitations to speak – rather they shape how and as a member of which categories the respondents should speak; 3) interview responses are treated as accounts more than reports – that is, they are understood as the work of accounting by a member of a category for activities attached to that category (2004).

Schaffer and Smith, in their book *Human Rights and Narrated Lives*, argue that ‘all stories emerge in the midst of complex and uneven relationships of power which

prompts certain questions about their production’ particularly ‘[t]o whom they are told and under what circumstances?’ (2004: 5). A testimony which occurs within the context of an interview is the product of an interaction between two people. According to anthropologist Marjorie Shostak, such an interview is an occasion where ‘one with unique personality traits and particular interests at a particular time of life, [...] answers a specific set of questions asked by another person with unique personality traits and interests at a particular time of life’ (2008: 100). In *The Oral History Reader*, Joan Sangster reminds us that ‘[s]ince the interview is not created as a literary product is created, alone and as a result of reflective action, it cannot be divorced from the circumstances of its creation, which of necessity is one of audience participation and face to face confrontation’ (1994: 44). Bearing in this mind along with Baz Kershaw’s extension of Schechner’s definition of performance which includes how ‘everything that is done in preparation for the performance’ (1992: 22) can affect its ‘socio-political significance’ and ‘potential efficacy’, I argue that the manner in which the interview is conducted when collecting testimonies has significance and should not be dismissed. This will be discussed in further detail in the relevant case studies.

Testimony and the Traumatic Memory

*Some stories are so disturbing that they must be told
in order for them to lose their destructive power.
(Agger, 1992: 5)*

In recent years scholars and practitioners in the field of trauma have alluded to the healing potential of narrating a trauma story (Agger 1990; Herman 1992; Jensen 1996; Luckhurst 2008). In *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of violence—from domestic abuse to political terror* (1992) Judith Herman speaks at length about the process of reconstructing the traumatic memory. According to Herman integration is one of the main reasons it is important for the survivor to reconstruct the trauma story.

She writes, ‘this work of reconstruction actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor’s life story’ (1992: 175). Herman writes: ‘Testimony has both a private dimension, which is confessional and spiritual, and a public aspect, which is both political and judicial’ (181). Herman references Agger and Jensen (1990) who believe that the use of the word *testimony* links both meanings, giving a new and larger dimension to the [person]’s individual experience (181 original emphasis).

Agger and Jensen argue not only for the importance of telling the trauma story but also of the potential for reframing the story. They argue that, once the story is told, it can not only be given a meaning, but can also be reframed. According to them it is through this reframing that “private pain is transformed into political dignity” (1990: 115). In addition, such conditions for transformation are more likely to occur when the survivor is given the opportunity to release any guilt or shame that is connected to the trauma. Placing the story within a theatrical framework is one such way of allowing a person to reframe their story.

Herman also states that, “the goal of recounting the trauma story is integration, not exorcism” (181). Once the person has told their story, it is transformed by becoming more present and real for the person. Herman uses the example of Richard Mollica’s work with refugees to illustrate her point. According to Herman, Mollica refers to the transformed trauma story as ‘a “new story”, which once told is no longer about “shame and humiliation” but rather “about dignity and virtue”’ (1992: 181). In addition she argues that when the story is told within the confines of a safe and protected relationship, the actual “action of telling a story” can produce a change in how the traumatic memory is processed (183). This has particular relevance for the Theatre of Testimony when the testimony is produced as a result of a trauma a person has

undergone. There were a number of occasions when giving their testimonies for the first and second case studies enabled people to integrate and reframe their trauma stories. These occurrences were not always possible to show or include in the first two plays but this notion of reframing the trauma story was incorporated into the third play *Aquéro*; providing a clear example of how my experience of testimony work influenced my dramaturgical choices when writing the ‘freely imagined’ play.

Testimony and Theatre: Ambitious Sisters

In the introduction to Yael Farber’s book *Theatre as Witness: Three Testimonial Plays from South Africa*, Archbishop Desmond Tutu refers to theatre as being the ambitious sister of testimony pointing out that ‘the structuring of random facts and details into a trajectory from which a powerful theatre experience can emerge, demands much from a playwright and those whom she is collaborating for a story to be powerfully and truthfully to be told’ (2008: 7). An examination of the field reveals that there are a variety of methods adopted by theatre practitioners when resituating testimonies in performance. These vary depending on their reasons for using testimony and range from how they gather, transcribe and rewrite the material into the script that is then for the most part performed by actors; in some cases the practitioners themselves perform and there have also been plays when those who gave their testimonies also performed them. In addition, the subject matters they address are as varied as the methods they employ to produce the testimonies and resituate them in performance.

A recurring theme in the literature and scholarship surrounding the use of testimony in theatre is the challenge it presents to the playwright. As performance scholar Janelle Reinelt reminds us ‘[t]he inability of the documents to tell their stories without narrative intervention becomes in film and theatre the inability of the documents to appear without the creative treatment of film and theatre makers’ (2009:

8). Theatre scholar Christopher Bigsby, writing about Emily Mann's testimony plays, argues that when working with real people's words, 'the theatrical challenge, [...] is in a sense no different from that confronting any other playwright' (1999: 134) as the documentary playwright still has 'to give shape and form to the material, to develop character through language and action, [and] find a way to bridge the gap between the subjectivity of the character and the subjectivities of the audience' (1999: 134). However, transferring oral testimonies to a form that is dramatic or theatrical can be problematic. The way people speak is not always clear and does not always come with a natural narrative arc. Memory is fragmented and people often go off at tangents, some of which are not even relevant to the actual story that they are telling, and while this may be clear in an interview to the person interviewing these tangents are not always necessary for an audience to hear.

'Creative treatment', Reinelt warns is 'a slippery slope' – and gives rise to a 'structuring fault-line' that dominates representations caused by 'the tension between objective shards or fragments of reality and subjective treatments of it' (2009: 8). This is a fundamental challenge for playwrights when working with the testimony of others as it gives rise to a number of questions in relation to authenticity, aesthetics and ethics of practice. These three areas are inextricably linked and in some cases the privileging of one tends to happen at the expense of the other. This challenge became particularly relevant when writing and staging *Under Pressure*, which will be discussed further as part of the case study presented in Chapter Three. In this next section, therefore, I investigate the problems and challenges that practitioners have encountered when resituating testimony in performance in combination with the questions that have been raised by both critics and scholars concerning this practice.

Staging an Authentic Testimony

The process is of course flawed: as soon as you remove testimony

*from its human source and substitute an actor's voice,
authenticity is compromised.*
– Jonathan Holmes (2007:141)

Authenticity, in terms of how testimony is resituated in performance, is a complex discussion and one worthy of a PhD in its own right. Numerous levels of representation occur from the original moment of testimony to the reading by the eventual audience. It is, however, one of the central criticisms of the form and therefore is worthy of discussion here. The first complication arises due to the fact that authenticity consists of several layers. These include the manner in which the testimony is represented in the script; the representations of the people who gave the testimony and also concern the conditions under which the testimonies are produced are represented. A testimony when resituated in theatre and spoken through the medium of an actor can never be fully authentic but it can as we have seen earlier contain echoes of the original testimony. Many playwrights who use testimony claim to try and say as faithful as possible to the primary source material. Emily Mann is always careful not to bend a testimony to her own needs (2000: 3), while Blank and Jensen feel it is their job to illuminate the stories they gather rather than rewrite them (2005: 93)

Despite their claims, intervention by the playwright remains a central criticism in relation the use of testimony in terms of 'authenticity'. For Heddon problems occur because the 'speech' we are presented with 'is lifted out of context and used within a different context' (2010: 117). She writes '[i]n addition to sourcing and selecting interviewees, verbatim practitioners also construct the questions that are then posed, thereby prompting certain answers' (2010: 117). This for Heddon is problematic in that '[these] plays do not typically provide [audiences] with the contextual information of the interviewing process itself' and as such we are unable to 'witness the extent to which the speech statements are jointly authored' (2010: 118). While Heddon's point is

valid I am more inclined to agree with Reinelt who has pointed out that ‘[a]rguments about the purity or contamination of the document/ary have ... needlessly obfuscated the recognition that an examination of reality and a dramatisation of its results is in touch with the real but not a copy of it’ (2009: 8). As Reinelt reminds us, documents are often selected because they ‘have something significant to offer’ rather than for their ability to provide unmediated access to the truth (2009: 11). This idea that the document, which in my case is the testimony that has resulted from the interview, has something significant to offer is not only why I choose to resituate such testimony in performance but also informs the manner in which I do so.

The accusation of manipulation is one of the principle concerns raised when working with testimony. This is another reason why I transcribe the speech from the interviews so meticulously. I am also mindful of this when transposing the transcript into the script. During the workshop phase of the writing of their play *The Exonerated*, playwrights Jessica Blank and Eric Jensen observed that the ‘actors started to “channel” the real people whose words they were reading’, stating:

As we watched the actors organically and unintentionally adopt whole personas just from reading someone’s sentences, we began to understand just how much our psychology is contained in our speech. The rhythms, the words we choose, the order we put them in, the places we pause, stammer, change the subject—they reveal everything about us. We saw that as we cut and pasted the transcripts, ripped them apart to make new structure, it was imperative that we preserve all the inconsistencies and details, patterns and regionalisms, of each person’s speech. (2006: 187-188)

One of the concerns often raised by critics in terms of authenticity relates to the editing process that playwrights undertake when rewriting the testimonies into their scripts. The editing and selection process is a fundamental part of the playwright’s task when working with testimony. In relation to her testimony plays Emily Mann has talked about how careful she is about not changing what people want to say. In response to the following question ‘How free do you feel working to reconfigure or shape or even

invent material?’ which was put to her by an audience member at a talk she was giving

Mann replied:

I feel it's my job to conduct an interview well enough that, through editing and boiling down, I will get all the poetry of that person's speech. I will get what they want to say. I'm very careful about not changing what they want to say. That is, I don't bend a person's testimony to my personal needs. I want people to be able to speak in their own voice. I actually love how real people talk, especially about what is essentially their experience and their story. (2000:

Playwright Robin Soans uses the analogy of a photograph in response to the accusation of manipulation regarding the editing procedures playwrights undertake. He writes:

Just because I write about real people and seek to portray them honestly, is there an embargo on editing creatively? Would you say to photographers that they have no right to interpret or to crop? That all their subjects should be filmed straight on, in nothing other than flat light? To declare that, because subjects are real, they have to be portrayed in a way that fictional characters are not, is to undermine the power of the verbatim playwright. It prevents the tailoring of the material to make it political, emotional or even theatrical. (Soans 2008: 35)

My own experience of writing *Less Than A Year* leads me to agree with both Soans and Mann. The conversation I recorded with the parents lasted for nearly five hours. There were times when I had to make certain edits that would make the narrative clearer for an audience as they would be hearing the story in the context of a performance. In performance an audience would not have the opportunity to comment or ask for clarification. Also at certain places I had interrupted the parents with some comments that did not always help the flow of the story. In addition, there were occasions when the parents went off on a tangent that wasn't relevant to particular points of the story. To present a direct transcription of that interview in performance would not have highlighted what I felt as the writer of the play was the significance of sharing these parents' story with a wider audience. This was also my experience during this study when writing *Walking Away* and *Under Pressure* and will be discussed further in the relevant case studies.

The Minimal Aesthetic

In a recent article in *The Guardian*, Edgar asks '[w]hy is the first question for an audience at a contemporary political play not "how have they shown the horrors of terrorism and war?" but "will it be stools or chairs?"' (2008: np). In addition, Robin Soans refers to verbatim theatre's 'quintessence' as 'a group of actors, sitting on chairs, or cardboard boxes, or a sofa talking to the audience, simply telling stories' (Hammond & Steward 2008: 21). Canadian theatre scholar Julie Salverson, attributes this to, '[an] idealization of 'authenticity' which as she points out 'often happens at the expense of aesthetics or theatrical form' (2001: 123). This tendency to privilege authenticity over aesthetics has resulted in the form heralding much criticism particularly in the area of aesthetics as many practitioners to veer towards presenting a dramatization of the act of narrating - playwright David Edgar refers to this as 'reportage' - rather than dramatizing scenes that are contained within the narrative which was typical of earlier forms of this type of theatre. Many of the plays that incorporate testimony tend to be polemical in nature and as a result are often presented with minimal attention to aesthetics.

For practitioner and scholar Stuart Young, this is particularly true of recent British plays and their productions. In his article 'Playing with Documentary Theatre: *Aalst* and *Taking Care of Baby*', (2009) he comments how these plays have a tendency to 'eschew all touches of theatricality, emphasizing above all the faithful representation of the words, vocal inflexions, and physical gestures of their interviewee characters' (2009: 73). Young refers, in particular, to Jonathan Holmes's production of *Fallujah* and notes that despite Holmes attempts to inject theatricality into the play his tendency to privilege the authenticity of the testimony still got in the way. Emily Mann has also been criticized for her documentary tendencies. In a review of *Annulla* in 1995, theatre critic Mel Gussow wrote 'Emily Mann tries to find common ground between oral

history and political drama. Sometimes her strict adherence to documentary evidence [...] can impede her sense of theatre (Gussow in Dawson 2005: 112)

I refer again to Salverson who notes that ‘many of the images and tropes in performance texts that display “true stories” of injury recycle scripts of melancholic loss’ (2001: 124). This is problematic for Salverson as this leads to an over reliance on narrative at the expense of a more ‘embodied and imaginative’ response to the testimony. This results in a lack of theatrical engagement with other dimensions of the story or event (124). In addition, Salverson questions why ‘the pain of injury [is] considered more accurately translatable, more faithful to grief, than the complex terrain of laughter, [...] These also are elements of living the stories of loss (124). Salverson’s concerns are valid and she acknowledges that part of the reason for this is to do with ‘an ethical fidelity to “true stories”’ combined with ‘assumptions about what is considered appropriate for theatre that testifies to accounts of violence’ (124). This has particular relevance for *Walking Away* and the case study will reveal how I tried, even though I did privilege the narrative, to theatrically engage other dimensions of the stories.

Consequently Salverson argues that ‘performances which engage and embody testimony must be approached deliberately’ (2001: 120). To do this she advises that practitioners ‘respect[...] and take[...] seriously the complexity of the relationship between pedagogical approach, theatrical form and participant/audience response’(2001: 120). As part of this study will involve ‘engaging and embodying’ testimony to make theatre Salverson’s call is one I take seriously. In addition as Richard Kearney has pointed out: ‘[i]f it is true that on an aesthetical level it matters little whether there is an accurate correspondence between narrative and reality, it matters hugely on an ethical level’ (2001: 37).

Ethical Considerations

How can we not feel anxious about making private words public, revealing confidential statements made in the context of a relationship based on a trust that can only be established between two individuals? True, everyone we talked to agreed to let us use their statements as we saw fit. But no contract carries as many unspoken conditions as one based on trust. In the first place, we had to protect the people who confided in us, in particular, by changing the names of places and individuals to prevent identification. Above all, we had to protect them from the dangers of misinterpretation. (Bourdieu 1999:1)

Bourdieu's question about the inevitable anxieties one feels when faced with the responsibility of 'making *private* words *public*' has particular relevance to theatre practitioners who stage the testimonies of real people, particularly in terms of ethics of practice. As applied theatre scholar Helen Nicholson points out, 'The process of editing and adapting [such] material into theatre form present[s] particular challenges', and Bourdieu's concerns can be felt in the following questions she raises about such work –

'How are conversations interpreted? Whose stories are chosen for development in drama? Who controls the texts? Do the actors have the authority to fictionalise the stories? How are the narratives shaped? How is the work presented and received?' (2005: 89).

Ethical considerations are paramount as scripts for the theatre are written to be performed and are inevitably made public in the process. This next section will consider some of the ethical challenges that arise in the production and circulation of such testimonies through the theatre.

'All storytellers are vulnerable' Nicholson writes, 'because stories, once told, have a life beyond the immediate context in which they were heard' (2005: 271). When words are spoken to a playwright during the course of an interview, it is important to remember that not only are the interviewees communicating with the playwright, they are also communicating with future audiences. Arnon Keren (2007), referred to earlier in the chapter, argues that trust is fundamental in the acceptance of another's testimony as when giving testimony one is essentially promising that their word can be relied on. Paul Ricouer in a conversation with Richard Kearney on *Imagination, Memory and*

Trust also refers to the issue of trust in accepting another's testimony stating that 'When I testify to something I am asking the other to trust that what I am saying is true. To share a testimony is an exchange of trust' (Kearney, 2004: 156). This issue of trust is paramount when dealing with testimony as when a testimony, produced in the context of a private conversation between two people, has been recorded its status changes but more significantly so do its possibilities. The testimony no longer retains its ephemeral quality and when fixed in a script risks being exploited by those who come into contact with it at a later stage.

Ian Hodder, in his article 'The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture,' warns '[o]nce words are transformed into a written text, the gap between "author" and the "reader" widens and the possibility of multiple interpretations increases' (2000: 705). In theatre, this gap is further widened when directors and actors become involved and these words are re-interpreted again in rehearsal and performance. Though playwrights such as Anna Deveare Smith and Alecky Blythe have sought to lessen this gap- in Smith's case through her rehearsal technique and in Blythe's through the extension of this technique into performance - ethical considerations are still paramount, as scripts for the theatre, no matter how they are performed, are inevitably made public in the process. As Leah Gilmore points out:

Because testimonial projects require subjects to confess, to bear witness, to make public and shareable a private and intolerable pain, they enter into a legalistic frame in which their efforts can move quickly beyond their interpretation and control, and become subjects to judgements about their veracity and worth. (2001: 7)

The concepts of veracity and worth can be found frequently in the testimony rhetoric, particularly in relation to questions about how the testimony has been edited and adapted. As plays that incorporate the testimony of real people, are often responding to 'pressing matters of the present' (Heddon 2008: 2), this often takes them

into the territory of human rights. This is causing concern in relation to ethics of practice in the area of human rights activism. In his essay ‘Testimony in Transmission: Victim and Witness Narratives in Contemporary Drama’, human rights scholar and activist Brian Phillips raises important questions in relation to the ‘rules governing [the] conduct and process’ of playwrights whose work takes them into the realm of human rights practice (2010). Phillips writes,

Human rights investigators working with victims and witnesses in this vein are now expected to follow strict protocols with regard to interviewing victims and witnesses and making use of their testimony in publications and campaigns. Playwrights may not be professionally bound by these same standards, but if their work is beginning to take them into a similar realm of human rights practice shouldn’t the same rules governing conduct and process apply? (2010: 5)

While he acknowledges that ‘the incorporation of victim and witness testimony into dramatic texts and theatrical productions can be a wholly legitimate undertaking’ as well as the important role these plays can have as a tool for raising awareness, he calls for a more thorough exploration of what ethical practice constitutes by those who create and consume contemporary human rights drama (2010). Comparing the approach undertaken by the writers of two plays; *Ruined* (2007) by Lynn Nottage and *The Aftermath* (2009) by Jessica Blank and Eric Jensen, Phillips argues that Nottage’s use of poetic language got in the way of the testimony commenting that ‘it is the very finished tone of much of the text which somehow makes us rather too conscious of the artist at work here’ (2010: 278). While according to Phillips, Blank and Jensen’s decision to ‘eschew almost any authorial presence’ resulted in a much more successful approach to staging testimony (2010: 278).

Phillips also questions Nottage’s statement that ‘...theater can activate change, heal a bit of the horror, restore hope and give voice to the silent and unseen’ (2010: 274). While such a position is laudable it gives rise to complex questions about the

ethical challenges faced by those involved in the production and circulation of such testimonies through the theatre. In *Digging Up Stories: Applied Theatre, Performance and War*, James Thompson warns that ‘theatre projects that dig up narratives, experiences and remembrances’ must be treated with extreme care as they can ‘blame, enact revenge, and foster animosity as much as they can develop dialogue, respect or comfort’ (2005: 25-26). Heddon also warns that even when stories of selves are told for their potential to ‘contribute towards constructing a hopeful future’, because they are bound up with the construction of identities, they are not separate from the material world and might actually serve to ‘exacerbate tensions between peoples’ (2008: 60).

Such warnings serve to reinforce the necessity of bearing in mind that the potential impact of the encounter between the aesthetic and the ethical may not always be positive. In the first two research projects I endeavoured to retain in performance the essence of the context for the telling of these particular stories and throughout the process I was constantly aware of the impact this might have on the individuals who told me their stories.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the various problems, questions and challenges posed by key theatre practitioners that arise when resituating personal testimonies in performance. I have also attempted to tease out the differences between the term Verbatim Theatre and the term Theatre of Testimony in an attempt to differentiate the purpose of what one hopes to gain by resituating these testimonies in performance. The plurality of approaches to incorporating testimonies into the script which have been examined in this chapter also reveal the power struggles that can occur between the creative and the ethical when creating this type of theatre. Greater or lesser authority is given to each concept depending on the objective of the playwright and their aim for the

piece. The next section of the thesis presents the plays that I have written in an attempt to address some of the challenges that I have identified in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

Breaking the Silence:

Staging Testimonies of Domestic Violence

Introduction

We must unite. Violence against women cannot be tolerated, in any form, in any context, in any circumstance, by any political leader or by any government. (UN, Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, 2010 original emphasis)

This chapter presents the first of my three case studies. Each project is conducted with the aim of increasing our understanding of what is involved in the process of staging the testimonies of others. This project engages with the subject of domestic violence. In order to address my research questions, I gathered the testimonies of women who have left violent relationships and resituate them in performance. This chapter is divided into three parts. Part one provides the reader with the genesis of the research project. Part two contains a written copy of the script for *Walking Away*. This version of the script is the third draft and was performed in the Belltable Theatre in Limerick in June 2007. A DVD recording of a performance of this script also accompanies this chapter. While the reader is encouraged to both read the script and watch the DVD, the order in which this occurs is left to the reader's discretion. Part three then discusses the practice of producing and gathering the testimonies, the practice of writing the script of *Walking Away* and the play in rehearsals and performance. It concludes with a discussion on my findings from the project and establishes the framework for the second project.

PART I: GENESIS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

As noted in the introduction, one of the important features of practice-led-research is that the research is 'initiated in practice' and 'questions, problems and challenges are identified and formed by the needs of the practice and practitioners' (Gray in Haseman and Mafe 2009: 214). When deciding on the first case study for the overall research project, I was already in the process of writing a play which involved staging the testimony of others. As various challenges in regard to staging testimony

were being identified in the practice, *Walking Away* became an appropriate case study in order to further an understanding of the relationship between testimony and theatre.

In January 2006 I was approached by a colleague, Ciarda Tobin,¹⁶ about the possibility of making some documentary theatre work with female survivors of domestic violence. The women were participants in a programme called *Breaking The Silence* which is run by ADAPT House, a women's refuge in Limerick, Ireland¹⁷. The programme's main focus is empowering women who have been in abusive relationships to address their needs and the needs of others who have been abused. By doing so the programme aims to develop an awareness of domestic abuse among community-based personnel and the public. In order to achieve this it draws on the participants' experiences by utilising a range of community arts and other media, in particular art, drama and creative writing.

Under the direction of Tobin, the women were studying *Othello* by William Shakespeare as part of a FETAC¹⁸ certified drama programme¹⁹. Tobin's rationale for using *Othello* was because she felt that the women's life experience might help them relate to the themes explored in the play even if the language of Shakespeare proved challenging.²⁰ As Tobin predicted, once the women started to become more comfortable with the text they started to identify with the character 'Desdemona' and started to relate experiences in the play to experiences they had in their own lives. As they started to recall some of their experiences Tobin spoke to them about the

¹⁶ Tobin and I co-founded Amalgamotion, a Limerick based theatre company in 2002. She also directed me in a production of *The Vagina Monologues* by Eve Ensler the same year. We have since collaborated on a number of projects.

¹⁷ ADAPT Services, established in 1974 is a Limerick based charity which is dedicated to raising awareness and ending violence against women.

¹⁸ Further Education and Training Awards Council, Ireland

¹⁹ Given the propensity of participants in drama education workshops to '[...] identify strongly with plays or films which reflect aspects of their lives' (Nicholson 2006: 66) it is quite common for practitioners to use fictional stories to 'illuminate lived experiences' (66).

²⁰ Many of the women had low levels of education and not only had little or no experience of Shakespeare but also considered his plays beyond their academic abilities.

possibility of creating a play which told their own stories. Tobin spoke to them about documentary theatre and suggested that a theatre practitioner could record their stories and then use this material to create a script that could then be performed. The women expressed an interest in this but only on the condition that they would not have to perform in such a play²¹ themselves. I was then contacted by Tobin and required to submit a proposal to the refuge outlining my intentions and a proposed schedule for when the work would take place (see appendix A). This was approved by the refuge and it was subsequently agreed that I would document these women's first-hand accounts of their experiences of domestic violence with the explicit aim of creating a piece of theatre that could be presented on a public platform by actors; the intention to raise awareness about the subject of domestic violence.

Research Questions Specific to this Project

As noted in the introduction, my preliminary questions surrounding the use of testimony in theatre were initiated when performing in *The Vagina Monologues*, studying *The Permanent Way*, and writing the play *Less Than A Year*. These questions were mainly concerned with the manner in which testimonies were incorporated into scripts. For example in relation to *The Vagina Monologues* I was wary of Ensler's admission that some of the monologues were as a result of the good time she had with the 'seeds' of the interview. In relation to the *The Permanent Way*, I was concerned as to what might be lost by not recording the actual interview and relying on actors to perform it for the writer in the rehearsal room. While writing *Less Than A Year*, questions arose in relation to the purpose of telling this particular story.

Although writing *Less Than A Year* was not an easy task and gave rise to many questions about capturing the essence of testimony, it centred on a single narrative and

²¹ The women were already working towards a performance of *The Midnight Court* under Tobin's direction.

this made it relatively easy to translate it into theatre. However, for this play, I was presented with the task of interviewing nine different women, all of whom had various experiences of domestic violence to which I had no prior knowledge of or ideas about how much they would be willing to share with me. Consequently, I was particularly interested to explore what sort of material I would generate and how would I translate these stories into theatre. I was particularly interested to examine to what extent, if any, the conditions under which the testimonies were produced would impact upon the dramaturgical choices I made as a playwright. The second question I was interested in exploring relates to the ethical practice of staging personal testimonies. How faithful would my writing be to the original testimonies? How much of the testimonies would I incorporate into the play? How would I decide whose stories to include and who to leave out?

It also transpired that the play was going to have a life beyond the initial rehearsed reading, which was scheduled to take place in December 2006 at a local theatre in Limerick. My theatre company Amalgamation was invited to perform the play at the Belltable Unfringed Festival in Limerick. Tobin was not available to direct the show so I was presented with the opportunity to direct. This put me in the position to observe first-hand the actor's responses to the play in rehearsal and performance. The study as a result also asks how actors respond to the challenge of performing these testimonies, particularly in the absence of the original testifier. What are the difficulties that arise? Does it require a different style or approach to acting? The final question is concerned with the original person who gave their testimony and asks what impact does the experience of giving their testimony have upon the original testifier? How do the choices made by the playwright and subsequently the actors in performance impact upon the original person who gave their testimony?

PART II: SCRIPT

WALKING AWAY

© Helena Enright

This version of the script was staged at the Belltable Theatre, Limerick from Monday 18th June to Sunday 24th June 2007. The performance which occurred on Saturday 23rd June 2007 was recorded and can be found on DVD 1 which accompanies this thesis.

Characters in order of Appearance:

Groom

Woman 1 - late forties

Woman 2 - twenties

Woman 3 - sixties

Woman 4 – early fifties

Woman 5 – mid thirtie

Woman 6 – late thirties

Bride – late teens/early twenties

The above is a rough guide to the ages of the characters.

The set consists of eight round tables. Six of these tables represent separate kitchens and are marked by a different tablecloth. Each of these tables is lit separately by an overhead ordinary light and shade, the kind one might find typically in a kitchen. Each shade is a different colour. These six tables accommodate one actress and five audience members. The other two tables are dressed with white table cloths similar to tables found in a standard hotel function room. One should represent a wedding table and should have flowers and two candles on it. No light is suspended over this table. A large kitchen knife is suspended over the second table which has a radio and a single candle on it. The statistics should sound like they are coming from the radio which should be lit each time a statistic is played. A seat at this table should be reserved for use by the ‘Bride’ in the performance. In this particular production a recent newspaper was also placed on the table. All tables should have cups/mugs, teabags, milk, sugar and spoons.

The Bride’s lines are in bold where they indicate a chapter heading. The statistics, which are pre-recorded with the author’s voice, are also in bold.

As the audience enters the space the groom is seated near the wedding table. He is strumming a guitar in a manner typical of a teenage boy in his bedroom. He does not respond or react to the audience as they enter. As the audience is seated they are served tea and coffee. During this time the actresses playing the various women enter in accordance to their character number. Each woman enters the space as if she is entering her own kitchen. She takes her seat and goes about her business ignorant of the audience.

Once all the audience have been seated and served tea and coffee, the lights dim and the groom begins to play and sing the first verse of SHE by Elvis Costello. At this point the bride enters the space. She walks through the space as if she were a teenager on her way to meet friends. At the end of the verse the bride and groom's eyes meet as if across a crowded room. He stands leaving his guitar to one side as she slowly begins to walk towards him. He places a gold band on her marriage finger. They embrace and begin to dance to the second verse of SHE, which is played through the sound system.

LX The lights fade on the couple as they continue to embrace.

Bride: **The Bees Knees**

LX Lights up on Woman 1. Throughout the performance each woman is lit only when she speaks

Woman 1: I was sixteen when I first saw him you know?
 an I thought he was the bees knees at the time
 an all the girls were mad about him
 an I thought he'd never go out with me
 coz I was so timid and quiet,
 but he did you know...so...

Woman 2: *(spoken quietly, nervous manner)*
 I was fifteen when me and my-ex partner met.
 I didn't fall in love with him straight away
 but we started dating and I'd say
 two weeks after I met him
 we were together 24 hours a day.
 We felt that there was no one in the world
 only me and him.
 I didn't want to do anything else
 I didn't care bout anything else
 and it seemed that way with him as well.
 He was two years older than me.

We didn't really go out on dates
we just dated you know
like you do when you're that age.
It was kind of...forget about all our friends
...it was just the two of us.

Woman 3: (*speaks in a matter of fact type manner*)

Ah...yes...I met him, we worked together...
ah I was in the job longer and he joined the job.
and am we went out dating, went to the pictures
and all that sort of thing
and ah he was the perfect gentleman.

Woman 4: (*comical touch to her manner*)

With my ex-husband?
I used to be able to remember it clearly
it's become vague, it *has* become somewhat vague...
I'll try and recapture it now...
Yeah I think I can, yeah I can...
Just looking back there now
it was probably more a physical thing...
Yeah I think we were involved physically so quickly...
He had such a fine body (*laughs*).
I remember admiring his body you know and
thinking he'd lovely shoulders an all, lovely shoulders.
I like a man with nice shoulders so...am...
hook line and sinker anyway physically.
I was 19 maybe, 20, 19 and a half.
We were engaged after ten months
and then married a year later.

Bride: **Falling In Love**

Woman 6: (*Straight up and matter of fact*)

The first time I fell in love was with my oldest son's -
he's 21 now - with his father.
But when my son was 8 months old,
his father got burnt to death in a flat fire, he did.
So he was my first love
because I was supposed to marry him, I was.
And himself and his brother got killed.
Two of them, two brothers got burnt to death
and my son was eight months old.
So I was really devastated about that.
I was only 18 years of age.
So I think that was the worst experience of my life.

Woman 5: Am, I remember when I first met him.

We were both working together and
I remember the first time I saw him I liked him.
And we went out together and we were happy.
I loved him but I wasn't ever in love with him...
Maybe I was, I don't know.
I think he was quiet and he was different and
he had a kind of security and
I was 30 and I wanted to get married.
So maybe I was head over heels, but I'm not now.

Woman 3: We dated for about a year and a half...
we were engaged after the first twelve months
and together another year, year and a half after that
and we got married and I suppose it was during that time
I fell in love with him.
He was a perfect gentleman that time.

Woman 6: I was going out with him four years.
I was only a teenager, the two of us were
and I was only 17 when I became pregnant.
He was only 18 and he went over to England
because all his older brothers and sisters went over there to work.
Back then like you couldn't really get jobs around here.
So that's why he went over with his brother.
And it was two days after Christmas.
They didn't come home for Christmas
as they were coming home for the New Year.
And two days after Christmas on the 27th December
the two of them died in a flat fire...over...
yeah...devastating.
My son was only 8 months old
and then when he was about two and a half
that's when I met my next partner.
And he was the abusive one.

Woman 5: We went out for about a year and a half then we got engaged.
Then about a year and a half later we got married.
So three years and we lived together about a year, year and a half.
Am everything was going well enough, I suppose at first.
I don't know it's just that I was
never completely connected to him I suppose
on an intellectual or spiritual level I was never deep...
You know he had his own house and everything and
I just wanted that security.
I should feel ashamed saying it,
but I don't (*laughs*) because of what happened.

Bride: **Warning Signs**

The Groom pushes the Bride away and resumes his original seating position. She stands alone looking confused & bewildered.

Woman 6: My friends stopped calling to me
because he didn't want me going around with anyone
and it was little things like that, that started it first.
Then am I'd get a slap and I'm very fiery so I used to slap back.
And it went on like that.
Oh and then I'd get a "Oh I'm sorry I'll never do it again".
He'd come along, he'd be bringing me
bunches of flowers,
boxes of chocolates and sure
I'd fall for it then like...believing everything.
Until the next time.
I'd get probably one or two extra slaps...
but I used to always lash back in.
But then it started getting heavier and heavier and
I just gave up then.

Woman 5: After we got married I suppose we were on a honeymoon period.
One thing that always stuck in my head...
After we got married we went on our honeymoon...
something silly it was ah it was...
We went out for a drink that night
when we got to Spain or the following night.
There was these two young lads and
they started fighting in the pub...pissed drunk...
And the other fellow grabbed a chair as if to fight and
I wasn't into that and that wasn't the man I knew.
It was another side of him I'd never seen before.

Woman 4: My story's a different kind of story
than the normal or the norm or
what you might have heard from the others.
Mine is a bit different, a lot different.
Am yeah I mean ok we were going out together and
he did give me a box ok?
Now he was the kind...you know...
I didn't think anything of it you know
but it was a nice little box mind you...
but I just didn't...I thought no more of it...
No on the night I thought I'm off, getting a taxi home.
I thought I deserved it as well you see...you know
the way we think we deserve it.
So I went off and he followed and
if I hadn't taken him back,
things would have been different.

The Bride moves towards the groom placing her hand on his shoulder.

Bride: No you're right, it's my fault I deserved it.

Woman 5: The honeymoon always stood out in my head
coz that's when I noticed something wasn't right.
I'd never seen this side of this person before.
Coz he was a gentleman and it was like as if
well I'm married to you and you have me now...
this is what I'm really like.
Looking back that's what I can see now.

LX *Lights up on radio on death table*

FX: *1 in 5 Irish women have experienced domestic abuse within intimate relationships.*

Bride: **Family**

Woman 1: We were goin out about two years and
then I got pregnant with my first...
it was sort of a big rush like you know.
I didn't even realise I was pregnant I was that naive.
I didn't know nothing about sex or...do you know...
or what happened.
It was his sister actually that brought me to the doctor
coz I was throwin up and everything and
he (the doctor) asked me was I havin intercourse
and (*whispers*) I was like "what's that?" you know.
And he said you know you're pregnant
and you're goin to have a baby...

Groom: (*Staring straight ahead and ignoring the Bride*) Prostitute.

Woman 1: I was havin a very bad time at home...
you know with my mother as well,
we didn't get on.
Things were very bad at home
on the domestic front with my father.
So I think it was an escape as well to get from her...
away you know...
That's the way it was.
We got married five months later.
I had a bump,
a shotgun weddin as they called it in those days.
I was disgraced... you know...my parents ...
My father didn't go to the weddin...
which broke my heart.

Woman 4: I'll call him John, no I won't bother.
I'll have to or I'll say a name.
I'll call him Pat.
He was always quiet
and he got on well with my father you know
and sure Jesus wasn't I after getting myself

a fine fellow you know
and my father was gonna get rid of me
and I was getting rid of my father
so you know...
and eh I think looking back on it
even on our wedding night - now
I'm straight up now -
I can remember thinking...
I actually started to cry really
because I was thinking of my father
I was fond of my father really
but my father was a hard man.
Not a hard man as such
but a kind of am a tough man you know...
the old school, the old school you know
and you know
"I want the best for you, the best arrrgh" you know.
I kind of missed my father.
I kind of knew straight away like, you know.
That was gone that...that time of my life was gone.

Woman 1: He never gave me away.
My brother had to give me away.
Even now when I think about that
I get a bit upset but I forgive him...
But at the time I was only eighteen years of age
and you would probably say that by today's standard
simple minded at the time d'you know...
we knew nothing...
but that was horrible that he wasn't there
but he was ashamed.
It wasn't just me that got pregnant,
it was my brother got his girlfriend pregnant
and my other sister was pregnant.
Three of us within the space of the three months...

Woman 4: Yeah I was crying and he was asleep...I was crying.
I loved him though, I loved Pat.

Woman 1: His father was a tough man now you know.
I remember when I was datin him and
we'd be goin down to his house you know and
if anyone riled his father they'd be all runnin,
he'd bellow like.
His mother she was a lovely woman like, you know.
She was real grandmotherly, motherly, you know, an all this.
No one ever said she was bein abused.
I never seen anything, you know what I mean, I don't know.
But he seems to be the only one from his family that was,
as far as I've heard, beating women.
You know I couldn't understand it

because his other brothers are nice like, you know.
My brothers...now of course they would say...
they'd kill him to this day.
They would now, like you know.
Coz up to last year he was goin out and roarin in pubs
that I was a whore and
my brothers 'd be there and
they'd have to go over and kill him and...like...
but you know anyone that would listen to his sad story
he was trying to tell it.

Groom: *(Still staring straight ahead, places his hand on the Bride's hand on his shoulder)* You whore, you slut.

Woman 2: With my family its...
I've two brothers, an older brother and a younger brother.
It's like as if my older brother doesn't want to see the truth.
It was only a few months ago he was talking about my ex and
em he really got on with him.
And I turned around and I say
"You know well what he was like,
are you just trying to cover it up, trying to hide it?"

Woman 1: They all knew then eventually.

Groom: *(He tightens his grip on her hand)* Bitch.

Woman 3: It was a few years afterwards
that my next-door neighbours said it to me.
She said I could hear him up in the bedroom
roaring and shouting,
kickin in the bedroom door an all.
And the funny thing is that
his sister lived next door and said my neighbour
"if I could hear it then his sister next door could".

Woman 2: But he doesn't know exactly,
he doesn't know the worst of it you know?
And my brother'd say
"I thought he only broke things in the house,
I thought that was all he done."

Woman 3: But he'd never ask me or my children
if we were alright.
He'd often meet them the next day,
they were only school children like
In all the years I lived there... a soft or a kind word ...never.
Never to say it to me like...
but the children...
yeah never.

Bride: **Children**

Woman 3: I was expecting my first baby
actually just the bare year...
Only two days in the difference from my first anniversary
and my child's first birthday.
And am when I was due to go in to have the baby...
I had complications with her because she was a breach you know.
I didn't know much about that or anything do you know.
I never had any connection with babies
or anything really coz there's only two in our family
and I was the youngest.
So I never had experience of babies or anything much.

Woman 2: I had...the first child, I had my first daughter,
I think it was 2 and a half three years after I met him.
He begged me from the age of fifteen
"Can we have a child, can we have a child"
and I didn't want to.
So then I kind of gave in to him when I was 17.

Woman 3: But am when I was in labour anyway,
I was in slow labour for a few days.
You know that means the pains are bearable.
Then things began to get heavier
and during the night I had to wake him up
coz I felt that I had to go into the maternity
and he roared at me "Lie down and be quiet...go sleep"
and all this sort of thing.
Because I woke him up
and I was worried in case
I'd have the baby in the bed like,
I didn't know what was going to happen.

And I said nothing for a while
and the pains were getting worse.

Woman 1: Eleven in my family and eleven in his,
which was spooky like.
It was in the breeding as they'd say then,
breeding like rabbits.
But that wasn't the case.
God forgive me for saying it
but none of my kids were planned.
I didn't take the pill or anything
and he didn't want to wear condoms
you know the male thing...
so it sort of was a game then with him.
Every time I got pregnant he was "oh I'm brilliant"
and you know big man.
It became a sort of joke in the family,
his father anytime he'd see me would say
you know "any news?"
The first one arrived in 1980,

then there was 1982, 83, 85, 87, 89, 90, and 94...top that!
It's amazing I still have a womb!

Woman 3: I really actually thought
I was going to have the child in the bed
and he roared at me "Lie down, lie down and be quiet"
and all the language that went with that.
So finally I had to get up and he got up
and he was arguing and fighting
coz he had to ring the ambulance and all of that...
that's a year after being married.

Woman 1: You know people would be slagging you've eight children,
you must be in bed all the time...
Yeah that could happen once a month or...
do you know what I mean.
I spent fifteen years of my marriage pregnant.
They were the only...all I can say about the marriage,
is that I got eight kids out of it.
And everyone of them, their births an all
and if you've any kids you'll know, painful, painful...
but I mean from the moment,
from the first one to the eighth one,
I seen them I cried "Give me my baby!"
I loved being a mother, no matter how...

Woman 5: I got pregnant, went over for the first scan,
was told the baby was dead and I had to go away and lose the baby.
Since then our marriage just went down.
Because he threw it in my face afterwards
that I was the one who lost the baby.
We started trying again.
We were trying nine, ten months before
I got pregnant with my son and
when I told him I was pregnant –
"is the baby mine?" I was told
and we trying, we trying as a married couple.
You try and "was the baby mine?"

Woman 4: I loved Pat...he could be a good man, but ah a very hard man.
Now looking back on it, we'll say what happened...
I kind of...ah, it was more like a kind of ah,
a more mental thing the abuse, more emotional
and it was on my children as well you know,
particularly on my daughter.
She's abroad now, a great girl and I'm very proud of her.
He said she wasn't worth tuppence.

You know he never gave time to her.
He put her down and you know, he put her down.
“Do you see what she’s after doing?
DID YOU SEE? what are you going to do about it, what are...?”
Oh Jesus (whispers).
Then she couldn’t eat a bit of food either
because he’d be there you know.
He’d say to her, you know, he’d put the food there and he’d say
“EAT THAT” and there was just no question.
She was very young and very thin.
He’d bring us into these cafes,
knowing full well...a big meal in front of her...
...she was only a child...
...constantly doing it to her over and over again.
And she wasn’t able to eat it like you know.
And then he’d be saying to me she’s anorexic
like you know she’s going to get sick you know.
Pat had a terrible problem himself you know...
He should never have had children,
never been a father and he never really was a father as such...
But am he has his own stories though...
No excuse though, no excuse!

Woman 2: Yeah, my ex had no patience for ‘em at all,
no patience whatsoever.
And my eldest had colic and I had to...
We were living in London...and
I had to go out at 11 o’clock at night and
take her for a walk in the pram.
Coz she had colic and we were living in his sister’s and
he just couldn’t handle it all.

Woman 3: I remember going in the doors of that maternity hospital.
I had my bag and everything ready you know for a while
and ah...he came to the hospital door
and the nurses came out to bring me in a wheelchair.
He went off home.
And am I remember going in the door crying.
I felt I didn’t care if I lived or died on the day...PAUSE

Woman 1: After the third one I was spitting them out like...
the nurses would say ring that bell if you need us,
I’d be practically delivering them myself.
You know straightaway I’d be up and walking around
and breast-feeding, the lot. I loved babies.
I got sterilised though two years before the marriage finished.
I had to get him to sign the form, he had to sign it or they wouldn’t do it.
When I think of it...my body...uuuugh...
And then when I got that done,
he didn’t want me anymore
because the thrill was gone out of it “she can’t get pregnant”.

Woman 5: I had the baby and everything was grand.
He was a doting father. But I got postnatal depression.
I didn't realise it at the time.
When I came out if then, I said
"God I didn't realise I was so sick" and he said
"yeah you were very sick, you changed".
I said why didn't you call the doctor?
"I thought they might take the baby from you."

Woman 2: He did try at first.
He'd take her off me and walk around with her,
but he just couldn't handle it at all.
And it kinda got worse as they got older.
He'd come in the door from work and my eldest...
She's crazy about him, she's a pure Daddy's girl...
even though he doesn't go out of his way for her,
it's like as if she doesn't notice any of that...
Daddy's everything, you know.
So he'd come in from work and
she'd come over and sit on his lap,
straight away the minute he come in the door and
she's be pullin out of him.
He'd just put her straight down and
"Why isn't she in bed, why have you got the kids up?"
I'd be sittin there and I'd be wishin in my head
why doesn't she see?
I can't wait for the day she can see what he's like.
I don't want it to hurt her or anything,
but I think the more she loves him the more it is gonna hurt her.
She's seven, nearly eight.

Woman 3: I was exactly a year married and it was my first child,
which I think should have been a great occasion,
a happy occasion, all this sort of thing.
I went in crying because
he was fighting at me and roaring at me.

Bride: Domestic Violence Related Injuries

The Groom stands as if to strike the Bride. As the women begin to speak the following list of injuries, the Bride tries to escape him and moves past the wedding table.

However he is too quick for her and cuts off her escape at the other side of the wedding table, where he grabs her, pulls her towards him and then discards her. He returns to his original seat, while she sits on the empty chair at the death table.

This list is divided among the six women who overlap each other as they speak.

physical abuse
abrasions
lacerations
broken bones
head injuries
facial injuries
(particularly to the lips, eyes and teeth)
fractures
sprains
penetrating puncture wounds
burst ear drums
abdominal or pelvic pain
internal bleeding
haemorrhages
loss of consciousness

anxiety
depression
sleep disturbances
malnutrition
substance abuse
suicide attempts

prolapsed wombs
ruptures of the uterus
miscarriage
early labour
placental separation
foetal fractures
foetal death (*beat*)

rape
sexual abuse

post traumatic stress disorder

Statistic: *An estimated 213,000 women in Ireland have been severely abused by a partner.*

Bride: **The First Strike**

Groom: Where the fuck do you think you're goin dressed like that?

Woman 1: Oh he was always sort of a drinker
but I wouldn't say an alcoholic...
I remember he used to work out in the county
on construction and some nights
he wouldn't come home at all.
And you hear about fellas bein...
men bein killt out on the construction site,

I remember there was two or three at the time.
And at the time there was no mobiles,
so I'd never know from one...where he was
and I always reckoned sort of that he was seein someone,
coz he'd been goin on about this one y'know.
But when you're young like that...
and I was sort of grateful for someone in my life I suppose
and you know havin three small kids as well...
but that's the way he was.

Woman 5: He started drinking at home...
heavily and this went on for a while.
We never drank at home, we'd go out.
And I loved my son so much coz I had tried so hard to have him,
that I didn't want to bring him up in that atmosphere whatsoever.
So I said to him one night you'd want to stop drinking
coz if you don't, I'm leaving here and I'm taking our son
and you'll never see him again.
So I walked up the stairs, I'll never forget it,
I walked up the stairs smiling,
he'll cop on now you know whatever.
So I got into bed, the baby was next to me in the cot.
I heard him comin up the stairs.
I thought he was goin to come up and say you know
we'll have a chat about it...I won't drink anymore.
I was inside in my bed reading my book, my hair was long.
He grabbed me down by the head of hair and am he said
"You'll never fucking take my son away from me".
He said, "I'm warning you".
And I remember lying in the bed my head shaking,
my heart thumping,
I thought I was going to have a heart attack.
I've never known fear of a man until that day.

Groom: You're goin fuckin nowhere!

Woman 6: I can't exactly remember
when the first time he actually hit me.
But I know it was about 2 years after...
It was soon after my first daughter
that's when it started.
I couldn't go anywhere.
I couldn't do anything.
I couldn't dress...you know...if it was the summer,
I couldn't dress in summer clothes
like shorts or tops or anything like that.
I wasn't allowed...ah
there was a local shop around the corner from us and
if I went up to the shop...you know!
It started off with the little things like
if I didn't come back from the shop for twenty minutes
I must be carrying on with the shopkeeper.

It was all that sort of thing but I couldn't see it at the time.

Woman 1: I should have seen it comin
but you don't...you don't...no.
When I look back I can see it now because I'm wiser...
but then d'ya know fuuuuck!
It still hurts terrible when you think...you know that...
I was mad about him,
he was supposed to be mad about me
and then the first strike.
And I can remember it like it happened yesterday.

Woman 5: Fear, you can't go right, you can't go left, you can't go backwards.
I woke up the next morning...
I'm not going to be one of those women that gets hit.
I grew up with five brothers.
I was the only girl and they loved me...
and my father...protected me.
This was not going to happen.
Those women, that happened to someone else.
IT DID NOT HAPPEN TO ME.

You go and talk to someone, you talk to your doctor.
And I was outside where my doctor lives,
I was just about to go in and I was saying
No, no...it'll change, it has to change, he was gentle before,
this is only something, I'll just shut up and I'll be quiet.
So I did shut up and I kept it in.
But unknown to myself,
shutting up meant hiding my personality and
hiding a part of me. That's what I did.
It's so weird coz you're weak but you have to be strong.
It's like your brain is split in two halves.
You have to rehearse what to say coz if you say the wrong thing
it started again.

Woman 1: Something stupid...his sister used babysit for us.
An I was livin at the time in a bungalow.
We had an open fire and
I was drying the clothes in front of it
and I used use towelling nappies.
I was such a mother nature you know.
And I came home anyway
and I took one out to change...
and everyone of them were scorched
and they were beautiful snow white towels.
So I gave out to her and if I did
I just got a whack in front of her
and that was the first...d'ya know...
stunned really after that!
So it went on from there...I suppose...

the odd slap here and there,
d'ya know what I mean, whatever...
Sex! you'd be taken against your wishes
you know what I mean,
that was his right,
all this kind of stuff
and it kind of escalated from there then...

Statistic: **Article 5: No one shall be subjected to torture, inhuman degrading treatment or punishment.**

Universal Declaration on Human Rights, 1948

Bride: **The Beatings Continue / It Gets Worse**

Woman 1: I had a perforated ear drum twice.

Woman 3: It takes exactly three weeks for a black eye to heal

Woman 2: He threw a stereo across the room at me and I had the child in my arms.

Woman 6: He threw an ashtray after me and it got the back of my head.

Woman 4: I was in and out of psychiatric wards.

Woman 1: There was one time that he gave me a bad beating
it was at his brother's wedding.
Jesus that's a while back,
but you...I was black and blue from...
didn't even feel the digs.
The fact that we'd been drinking...we were at a wedding like.
It was simple thing triggered him off.
He was so clever that when he was finished beating me I was in the back
seat he was in the front and he just...
I remember the dress and everything I'd on me.
A lovely white dress.
I just remember the fists you know
the blows but you don't feel the pain at the time
in my head in my ears in my eyes and black and blue and
then he drove me then down to my mother's and
dumped me outside and that was it.

They were shocked...
I woke my sister
I was roaring crying
I didn't even have a cigarette and oh "have you a fag?"
I don't think she'd any cigarettes.
She couldn't believe the state of me.
My mother was crying the next day then like you know...
but then you go back you do

you have kids you go back...
But there was no sympathy from him.
There was never any remorse
and that's the thing that killed me you know.
I was supposed to say sorry for irritating him.
Do you see my finger now?
He broke that, broken arm,
Never reported nothing then you see...

Woman 5: I've often said I felt like an actor out on a stage and
someone's giving you lines.
It's not really you, you're acting this part and you're just there.
It's like being in a Shakespearean play and you're there and
you're acting it, but you're only acting it.
You're not there 100 per cent being yourself.
Coz you're frightened to be yourself in case...
he doesn't think it's funny or you're stupid or
you might be fat or might be this or...

Woman 1: There was another time when he killed me.
We were down in his sister's house,
She was home from America - she lives there.
But she came and we were drinking.
The minute we went outside the door he started belting me.
For what?
"You were coming on to her husband all night".

From the bottom of Garryowen,
right up to Gerald Griffin Street...he murdered me.
I think it was a cab brought me
out to the hospital and
I felt terrible.
I remember I had on a mini, well it was to there like,
and tights and they were all ripped and
I was like a whore.
So I felt they thought I was a whore you know?
and I was in bits, my breasts were black and...
He had kicked me and I was only diagnosed
with the colitis in the bowel and
I had a child of eight months old.
So he kicked me up the fuckin backside.
They had to examine me internally but do you think huh...
I didn't do anything then I mean
But the nurse she was looking at me
with tears in her eyes an she said
"Will you report him? Will you leave him? Will you do *something*?"

Statistic: *On average a woman will be assaulted by her partner or ex-partner 35 times before reporting it to the police.*

But sure I was naive then you know?
You're still hopin that things will be ok.
He's his good points...he had...not...
and you think at the time it's all over an
oh it's some weird horrible thing you know.

Woman 5: On my second child, yeah I had second child...
well you go out one night and things seem fine
and then you're pregnant.
And I remember I had to go around smiling like the actress,
"Oh isn't it wonderful I'm pregnant on my second child
and inside I'm dying.
You just want someone to look at you in the eyes and see it.
That's what I wanted.
I wanted someone to look at me but no-one did.

Bride: Physical and Mental Abuse

This list should be divided up among the 6 women who take turns to say one injury at a time. During this list the Bride leaves the death table and moves towards the table with the flowers. By the end of the list she is seated on a small stool next to the tables of flowers.

Loneliness
Isolation
Cheating
Language
Roaring
Shouting
Silent treatment PAUSE

Threats
Intimidation
Cruel Remarks
Selfish
Domineering
Power
Control
Blame
Raped
Beaten
Hospitalised
No Respect
Your own fault

Young Girl: NO

Woman 4: You deserve it

Young Girl: NO

Woman 1: For some people it's physical abuse,

Woman 4: for some it's mental or emotional abuse,

Woman 3: for some it's both...

Woman 2: Yeah it would have been both with me.

It would have been physical and emotional.
There was one time when I threatened to leave him,
before I had my kids and
he put his hand in front of me and
held a knife like that (*wrist upturned*) and
"This is what I'll do if you leave me" and
he did it but I didn't see this bit...
He turned his hand around that way.
The blood squirted everywhere all over my mother's kitchen.
What did I do?
I threw him out of the house...
could have died just outside the front door...
I just threw him out...
get away from me kind of thing.
So that when I did threaten to leave him again,
he knew that wasn't goin to work you know.
But it did, it scared me a lot and
a lot of the times I thought...
People used to often say to me
if you ever leave him he's gonna fall apart,
he's not gonna...he's gonna be locked up,
which is actually what happened since I left him you know.

Woman 4: I had an illness, which meant I had to go into hospital a bit.
I don't want to go into that now though.
I was frightened of him coz he hadn't any patience.
Now I'm not saying I was perfect by any means,
but he frightened me, he intimidated me.
There was many a time when I was in hospital when I said
"I don't want to see him you know I don't want to see him, I'm afraid"
and I was afraid like.
But am it was all my fault of course, it was my illness.
But then as well as that, as well as that,
at the same time that that was happening
he was doggedly there as well.
You know he'd come in and his shoulders'd be down.
You know a fine tall man as I said,
a fine man and you'd know by him.
He looked like he was carrying the weight of the world...
and he couldn't carry anything,
he couldn't live, he couldn't enjoy his life.

He wasn't able not at that time.
I don't know if he's still able to
but you'd know and he'd let you know.
You know so am...treated me like a child,
I behaved like a child then.
He was the boss. Power, see what I mean about power...
Control that's it, control all the time.
He was regimental like, he was regimental you know.

Woman 5: Asking him for a lift somewhere, it was like asking him to climb Mount Everest and climb down on his fucking arse backwards.

Woman 3: He had me in such a way
that if a person was nice or polite to me
I couldn't take it.
One time when I was pregnant,
he had sent me into town to get tins of paint.
And I was walking up the hill home,
it was a hot summer's day like and
I was out to here (*indicates pregnant belly*).
Next thing a bus passed and the driver stopped.
Now I didn't know the driver from Adam,
well I kinda new his face from goin in and out on the bus.
And he stopped to give me a lift up the hill.
He must have seen a pregnant woman,
a woman out to here with two tins of paint.
Oh your man's above in the house (*referring to her husband*).
The driver stopped.
"Hop in there" says he "and I'll give you a lift up".
And I couldn't believe you know
That he was so kind and that he spoke to me kindly.
I was so unused to it.
If somebody said something nice to me I'd start crying...
A shopkeeper, a bus driver, strangers like. Just to be kind.
I was so used to him domineering, roaring,
shouting, name calling that when somebody spoke kindly to me
I wasn't able to take it. (*very emotional during last few lines*)

Woman 4: Initially I left and came up here (to Adapt)...coz I was frightened.
I was frightened for a lot of things you know I didn't really understand.
I knew something wasn't right...
Again I had the kids and it was peaceful here...
and then he said something.
It was very clever anyway what he said to the kids,
something that immediately caught the kids
and they wanted to go home.
So they, if my kids are going, I'll go.
I love my kids you know...so he knew that.

Woman 1: Sometimes I think I imagined it all.

Because I went from the physical
to the mental,
to the emotional.
The last couple of years it was the sexual...horrible do you know.
He wanted me to go with his friends and he'd watch,
which I didn't thank God...stuff like that, he would really
...groping my sisters everything...pervert.
He did rape me once, but you can never...
in front of two of the kids...but you could never prove that.
Yeah, they were in the bed longside us,
I'm sure they were awake...
...and when he finished he said
"Well how much do I owe you?"

Bride: **For Richer or Poorer**

Woman 3: Money is control.

Woman 4: Money is power.

Woman 1: You need to stay equal,

Woman 2: hold your money,

Woman 5: hold your bank account,

Woman 3: get your car,

Woman 6: have your job.

Woman 2: Before the children it was kind of,
because he was older it was, the money was his issue.
I'd give him the rent money.
I'd give him this and that and
I found out afterwards that he wasn't payin any of it.
But when I had the children I had my own money,
the children's book and he wouldn't get any of that.
There would be rows for it but
there was no way I was givin that up you know.
I'd just go through the war before I'd let him have
the children's food money and things.
There was one time I was in the hospital
with the second child and
he said he'd collect my book for me so off he went.
I didn't see him that day.
I had to go to a loan shark to get them...
the food for the two kids
when I came out of hospital...off gambling.
He was an awful gambler.

Woman 6: He was a gambler and he had a drink problem.
He robbed everything out of my home he did and sold it.
Every time I had a child you know the way
you get presents off other people and
you'd have them hanging...
He even robbed his own children's presents,
clothes...everything...sold em.
Often left us in the middle of winter
with not even a fire,
not even whoever was the baby at the time,
baby food nothin.
But then he'd have his good streak then and
he'd give you everything, do you know.
But then when he'd go like this,
when he'd go you know,
when he'd go on the drink and the gambling
you'd expect to have nothin.
And if he lost his money
you were expecting him
to come home and murder you.
Do you know that kind of way?

Woman 3: When he used to get paid,
I can't remember what it was at the time...
but when he'd come home on a Thursday night,
my lads'd be there and he'd say "Come in here now"
and he'd sit them around the table .
And he'd say to my son "Count that there" and
my son'd be counting out 1, 2, 3...
I think it was £30 I was getting.
"Now you count that there".
The children had to count out all the money and
that was big money to children.
"Now you see what I'm giving your mother".
This was like a ceremony every week.
"Now do that again" and he effin and blindin and
the kids had to count it out.
"You see what I'm givin your mother"
and I had to count it.
We were all put around the table.

Bride: **The Final Straw**

Woman 5: You don't really want to believe I suppose that...

Woman 2: ...the person you're in love with really is an evil person you know,

Woman 4: so you look for excuses for it.

Woman 1: And you just keep thinking the good time is going to come out and stay for good you know.

Woman 1: The night...that night I was out with my current partner.
It wasn't that we were having an affair we weren't.
I met him in work actually.
Afterwards when I got talking to him
he said he'd see me
and how sad I was and
my sad eyes and
you used be smoking your brains out and
very thin and
the weight of the world on my shoulders and
he used feel sorry for me and
want to get to know me.
So he passed me one day and he said "how ya Jane"
and I says how does he know my name?
Not coppin on that my work badge was there
(*indicates badge hanging from her chest*),
with my name on it!

Woman 6: I was with him for nearly eight years.
Then he moved to England to get a job
and me and the kids used to go over and back all the time,
every couple of months to see him.

Woman 3: I always remember I reached a point in my life
where you could see him falling up the road like,
staggering, banging off the walls in the broad daylight,
children and everybody out playin, you know, in the green.
And then I reached a point in my life where ...
Saying... what am I tryin to hide this for
coz even when he'd come in they could hear him
roaring and shouting.

Woman 1: So we sort of got chattin ya know and I did...
go for a drink with him even though I was married.
I didn't care at that stage,
I needed to be wanted...do you know what I mean?
Someone to help me...
So it went from there.
We were together four or five months
before anything sort of happened you know ...physically.

Woman 2: He was after coming home one night
and I wasn't letting him in.
He was on drugs and everything,

I wasn't letting him at all.
I was frightened of him being in the house with the kids.
But he got in anyway and he smashed the house up
and his father's, you could say wife, common-law wife,
was there at the time with me.
And he got...and he started the house up...
He broke into the house
and he started smashing the house up
and his father's girlfriend
had to shelter my two kids in the corner.

Woman 6: So the last time I was with him then was in...
I think it was 1995 and I went over to England to see him.
I was only over there two days and
we got up one morning before nine o'clock
and at 9 o'clock he started,
around 9 o'clock he started
and I got crucified.

Statistic: *There have been 125 women murdered in Ireland since 1996.*

Woman 6: It's 131 one now.

Woman 1: Anyway that night I went home
and I knew things were going to be...
my ex went out and he was drinkin.
He came home and he was goin on,
he met this girl an blah blah blah...
she's not good looking or anything
but she understands me...
So that was it, that night I took the knife...
the knife that I used sleep with...
for a long time...a big blue one, I
still have it in my mind,
I haven't got it but...
I wanted to kill him.
Then he took the knife off me
and I got afraid then.

Woman 6: I think it was the worst beating I ever took from him

Woman 2: It's one night I'll never forget.

Statistic: *80 of these women were murdered in their own home.*

Woman 2: She couldn't believe it...she hadn't seen this before...
she was terrified and ah things hit off me...
picked up the TV...picked up my stereo,
the stereo hit me.
The TV very nearly hit the kids and his father's girlfriend
and he went back out again.

Actually I actually picked something up
and hit him into the head...
and he was bleeding in his head
and I didn't care,
I just grabbed him and threw him out the door
and locked the door again.
and the ne...I... I went out to the kitchen
and I smashed the place up.

Woman 1: My current partner he had said he'd text me or ring me
to see if I was ok and I wasn't answering then
and I couldn't get to the phone
and it all sort of went very quick...you know
I was trying to get away from him and
I ran out the door oh I answered the phone and goin
Help me Help me and no I'm ok and
Help me Help me and
he's was probably like what's wrong with her,
coz I didn't want to drag him into it coz I knew...
But he came eventually, Robert, and I ran down the road,
say where I live there's a shop and his car was there and
trying to get...like it's in slow motion
that you're running from here to get to there (*indicates distance*)
that space like and
it was an eternity
it was like slow motion
and I dropped my phone...
I got into the car anyway, I'd nowhere to go.

Woman 2: The next morning I woke up
and I thought I'm goin crazy.
I'm goin as bad as him and my kids saw me hit him.
It was bad enough they seen him doin it
but to see me acting the same way.
I just left him that day and came up to the refuge.
I just thought I have to get out.

Woman 1: I was with my current partner but he lived...
he was gone from his wife about two months...
so he was stayin in his sister's, so I'd nowhere to go.
So we spent two nights in his car in Curraghchase...nowhere...

Woman 6: I'll never forget the screams of my children.
My oldest son as you know wasn't his
so he was about 9 at the time and
I always remember him screaming to
Leave my mammy alone.
And the rest of the kids were downstairs,
they knew something was going on.
And ah then I knew I was busted up.
I knew it cause my eyes an all closed and
the blood was pouring from my mouth and

he was after dragging me by the bunches of the hair
do you know along the carpet in the bedroom and
I knew I had all burn marks on my knees and
my elbows an all.

And then he ran at me with a scissors
but that's when my eldest son ran in
and started roaring
"leave my mammy alone"
and that's when he stopped with the scissors.
So instead of stabbing me with the scissors
he took it to all my clothes
I was after coming to England with.

Woman 1: I couldn't go to my family
well I could have
but you know
all the kids had been left behind
an everything d'ya know.
I often say if I had my time over
would I have done it that way
but I think I would have,
I mean that was the only way

Woman 6: All I was left with is what I had on.
So a friend of his called for him a few minutes later and
he said that he was goin away with him for a while and
that I had better not go anywhere.

So I went into the bathroom and looked at my...
oh my eldest son says to me
"Oh Mammy look at your face"
and I went into the bathroom and
I looked at my face and
it was just unrecognisable.

So I just got the kids together.
I had one in my arms, the baby
I didn't even take him in the buggy and
four more longside me under the age of nine and
we made our way up around the corner and
I spotted a taxi base.

And I made my way in there and ah the girl,
I always remember she was at the desk
and she looked up and she nearly died.
I said "could I have a taxi please?"
I didn't even know where I was going
and she says oh my god what's after happening to you?
And I just broke down and I told em.

So they brought us into a back room,
very good to us now they were giving me tea
and the children bars an all.
So I thought I was waiting for a taxi
but they had phoned the guards.
The guards came along in the Paddy Wagon.
They wanted to take me to a hostel.
But I had a cousin who lived in another part of London.
So they took us to her instead.
And it was her husband then that paid for our tickets home.

We had flight tickets but he, my ex, would have had them.
So her husband wouldn't have had the money
to pay for us on flights but he paid for us
on the coach and the ferry.
So that was the last time then that I was with him from...
I came home then and my mother was...
My mother and my sisters
were waiting at the station for us
and they nearly died when they seen me.

And I never turned back since then.
I didn't but he ca...he followed on.
About a month later begging me,
begging me, begging me...never do it again...
He gave me, brought me home
oh yeah when I got the beatin off him
I had loads of jewellery he had bought throughout the years.
And he ripped every one of my chains,
my rings, my bracelets...
Broke up every single bit.
The rings...threw them all away.
When he came from England then, the month after,
he brought me back jewellery, perfume, this, that,
loads of stuff for the kids.

Begged me begged me,
I just never turned back no more.

Bride: **The System**

Statistic: *The Garda has a written policy on domestic violence intervention which is arrest oriented and recognises the vulnerable circumstances in which victims find themselves. This domestic violence policy is an integral part of Garda training and is reinforced continuously.*

Woman 1: The Guards were an issue for me.
When I used to ring them, oh they'd come you know
but the way you were treated...

I know they've been trained now...
"Come on Christmas is comin think of your children"
and I could be sittin there battered.
That as well prevents a lot of women.
They don't see anyone to help them or
the guards aren't helpful or stuff like that.
They feel like they have to stay.

Statistic *According to the 2005 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices
In 2004 the Irish Police Complaints Board recorded 1,232 complaints,
including abuse of authority, discourtesy, neglect, and discreditable
conduct of police officers.*

*Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
March 8, 2006*

Bride: **Friends**

Woman 2: I lost a lot of friends, people got angry with me.
I wasn't telling anybody what was happening
but people picked up on it and ah,
one of my closest friends I had since I was really young,
she just said to me one day.
She said "you know I don't know what's wrong with you",
you know, "you need to get away".
And that was it. I didn't speak to her since.
Lost contact completely.
I think she was the kind of person that she was,
she is... shouldn't have time for women...
you know the way some people think...
women that put up with that...

Woman 1: One friend in particular she knew about me,
but I knew that she was going through the same.
Not as bad but I knew she was bein abused,
she would never admit it, she still won't. She's still with him.
One time after we'd been out, he took her up to the woods
and he beat her with a dog lead.
When I saw the state of her when I called over two nights later...
She was very wild you know.
She still is very wild, she was great at the dancin
and we'd be having great crack, harmless you know,
but men don't see it that way you know...she was very funny.
She wasn't that funny that night though when I called over.
She was...she turned around and...
That was it then, we never went out again after that like you know.
For her that was the end of it, the fun you know?
I said to her does it go on like that and she said now and again,

but she didn't do anything about it.
She chose to...she just wanted to put up with it for the sake of the
children...save face...some people are like that.
You know there's people there in high powered jobs
and loads of money and they're putting up with that, they won't leave.

Bride: **Falling out of love**

Woman 2: I think I fell out of love with him
just before I had my second child
a couple of years later.
I kind of knew he was seeing other women.
It's crazy the way the things he'd done
I forgave him but that was the one thing I couldn't.
I felt like oh Jesus I'm putting up with all this
expecting you to change
giving you that at least and
you have the cheek to go and do that...you know?

Woman 4: He's married to someone else now sure,
he got married immediately (laughs)
Jesus he was engaged while we were still married.
Isn't that a good one?
He hasn't children though and he never will.
I think he's gotten exactly what he wanted.
What he should have always stuck with...me and him...
he wanted no-one else.
I don't think he'd room for anyone else,
he hadn't room for his children.
We all go through times when we can be a bit insecure,
we can be very insecure
when we mightn't act right
but I think he would have been as well off
to have stuck without any kids.
He's better off without them, he's happy, he seems to be.
She's a younger woman than him,
couple of years younger maybe six seven
but ah that doesn't matter.
I don't know why I said that...

...isn't that awful isn't it?
Part of me will always love...have some ...
He still has a kind of you know a power,
he still has a power.
But it's getting easier, it's getting a lot easier,
because my life has changed for the better.
So...I'm more occupied in my life
and I'm happier altogether you know...
so he's become lesser,
my life is more you know?

Woman 5: I remember he was always giving out about his sex life...I...useless...
I mean there's no other way I cou...he was.
But you go along with your moanin and groanin
because what else do you do like?
He was useless.

Woman 4: I still love him though, I'll always love him.
I wouldn't have married him if I didn't like...

LX – the lights slowly get brighter on all the women

Bride: Moving On

The Bride moves to the death table but doesn't sit. She stares straight at the groom.

Woman 2: Yeah I would like to be married someday
I would but if I really thought about it
it's frightening you know...it is quite frightening.
I always said I'd never trust another man again and
I've dated a couple of guys since I left my ex and
straight away I think, do you know,
don't trust him,
don't trust him when it comes to other women.
He's only playing a game you know...
Until I met the guy I'm with now.
He's made me see a completely different way you know.
I was going the opposite way turning into a man hater you know.
You're frightened of being taken for a fool again.

Woman 1: I'm in a new relationship nearly five years and a half years.
At the moment it's all goo goo gaga.
I don't know whether it's just me or him.
As I said to him there,
we were talking the other night like, you know!
When I met him, I was really aware
that I needed to be saved
and he saved me but now
I don't need to be saved any more.
I'm stronger,
even though I love him
an all that you know.
Maybe he sees me getting stronger,
I don't know I could be imagining it
but that's how I feel.
That he sees me getting strong and
he doesn't like it,
that he wants me to be dependent...as men do.
He said "I don't, I want to see you getting stronger",

but I mean, I said to him,
“You can be led by the way some needs you
but maybe I don’t need someone anymore...”
I don’t know.

Woman 6: It took me three or four years to get myself and the kids together.
It took an awful lot out of me. But I did thank God I did.

Woman 4: Now it wasn’t like he was ...
People would say what you on about?
From the outside it would look just like that...
I still don’t fully understand it you know.
I just know that I’m not that...
I’m a different person now than I was and
I was trapped you know like a child.
I know he was cruel...to my daughter and
that’s the way he was cruel to me.
You can’t do that. That’s the clearest point of it.
Why couldn’t he be proud of his children?

Bride: **A Better Way**

Woman 2: I’d like to help women understand
that there is a much better way,
because when you’re in it you don’t see that.
You don’t see there’s another side you know.
Women should...they need to know
they are worth better than they are...putting up with.
No one deserves that.
They need to know there’s a better life out there.

Woman 3: It’s like you’re blind to what’s outside.

Woman 1: I feel that I am a stronger person now, do you know what I mean?
I am. I can stand up now and be counted. I matter.
I’m not that little insigni..insig,
oh I can’t even think of the word, insi,

Woman 3: Insignificant/

Woman 1: insignificant person that he made me think I was.

Woman 5: This is the start of my life. I’m 40 next year.
I can’t wait. I can’t wait to start. This is the start of my life.
I have my beautiful children.
If I say I regret meeting him,
then I have to regret my children, which I don’t.
I wouldn’t do it all over again though.

Woman 4: I’ll tell you one thing, now I’m just saying it, but I haven’t been in

hospital since I left him.

Bride: Dreams

The Bride touches her wedding ring still on her wedding finger.

Woman 2: I already have a dream...
It's to have my own flower shop near the beach...
Me and my daughters and I'm getting there
Slowly but surely...yeah
I worked in a flower shop when I was 17 for over a year.

Woman 3: I would have been like to have been able to travel.
I would have liked to achieve something, to say I'm good at
something...further education or a qualification...
but now at my age it's into Alzheimer's I'm goin! (*laughs*)

Woman 1: I dream of getting married again.
I'd like to be married properly.
It'll be a first for me getting married for love not for...
because you're pregnant or feel you have to keep your name good.
I'm older now and wiser and I know what I want.
If this relationship goes wrong though,
I don't think I could go through it again...the pain...
trying to find someone.
There are decent men out there
but finding them is hard.

Woman 3: One achievement which is silly now
but to me it's a big deal...is that I'm driving five years.
It's only a banger but to me that's a great achievement.
Because never in my wildest dreams when I was with him
did I ever think that I would drive a car.

Woman 5: Never in my wildest dreams did I think my marriage would be like it
was.

Woman 1: You don't get into marriage to get out of it.

Epilogue

Groom: You whore, you slut!

Woman 1: Violence against women in the family – domestic violence -
is a fundamental violation of human rights.

Groom: Bitch!

Woman 2: It is a daily reality for women living in every
country across the globe.

Groom: I'm sorry I'll never do it again.

Woman 3: Its impact is devastating on women,

Groom: You're not comin into bed with me with some other fella's cum inside
your knickers.

Woman 4: their lives,

Groom: Who'll ever love you, if you leave me?

Woman 5: their health,

Groom: I'm sorry I didn't mean it.

Woman 6: their work

Groom: Where the fuck do you think you're goin dressed like that?

Woman 1: and the wellbeing of their families.

Groom: You're going fuckin nowhere.

Woman 2: It takes strength to endure abuses

Groom: I'm sorry it won't happen again.

Woman 3: It takes courage to stop them

*Bride places her wedding ring on the death table, turns and walks towards the door to
exit.*

Groom: You whore, you slut!

Bride keeps walking, ignoring him.

Woman 4: It takes strength to survive

Man: *Bitch*

Bride exits through door backstage right

LX Light in door

Woman 5: It takes courage to live

The End

PART III: CRITICAL REFLECTION

Gathering the Material

Producing a Domestic Violence Testimony: The Significance of the Site of Production

In this section, I reflect on how I conducted the interviews with the women and the circumstances under which they took place. I examine in particular how my approach and the context in which the interviews took place proved significant in my dramaturgical choices at a later stage in the writing process. I discuss how these choices impacted upon the ‘socio-political significance’ of the play and ‘efficacy’ for the spectator later in this chapter. First, however, I examine my approach to interviewing, reflecting upon how this impacted on the generation of these particular testimonies of domestic violence.

My first introduction to the women took place at the refuge itself. The project has its own dedicated space at the back of the refuge, which consisted of two workshop spaces, an office, and kitchen and toilet facilities. This initial meeting took place in one of the workshop spaces. During this meeting I introduced the women to the concept of documentary theatre and in particular to what I understood to be the concept of documentary theatre with particular emphasis on the idea of theatre of testimony. Most of them had never even heard of this form of theatre, let alone had any experience with it. I explained that the process would involve them telling me in their own words about their experience of having been in an abusive relationship. I would record this ‘telling’ and then use it to create a written script which actors would subsequently perform. It was envisaged that, as an awareness raising exercise, a public reading of the script would take place in December 2006 as part of the 16 Days of Action.²²

²² The *16 Days of Action against Violence against Women* is an international campaign which started in 1991. It runs from November 25th (UN International Day against Violence against Women) to December

During this initial meeting the responses from the women about the project were mixed. While there was a general enthusiasm for the project and a desire to use their own experiences in order to help other women, there were also a number of concerns raised. At this point, some of the women were nervous about getting involved in the project. They were interested in telling their stories in order to help other women but they expressed a number of fears and concerns. For example, some of the women expressed a concern at this point as to whether or not anyone would be interested in hearing their stories. Another concern the women had was in relation to privacy, particularly in relation to how their testimonies might implicate others and the impact this might have on those involved - particularly their children. One woman was concerned about the fact that the interview was being recorded. This concern was echoed by the other women, particularly regarding what I would do with the material once I had it on tape. It transpired that previous to me, another artist had come into the refuge and recorded interviews with them about their experiences. A few weeks later the women attended the artist's exhibition in a local gallery. What they did not realise prior to attending or when they were being interviewed was that the actual recording of their voices would be used. When this particular woman entered the space she was shocked to hear her voice coming through the sound system. Her anger and distress, however, was more related to the fact that they had not been informed that this was going to happen.

These concerns suggested that trust was going to be an issue. As identified in the previous chapter, trust is a fundamental concern when working with testimony. The main aim of this project was to get the women to speak about their experiences in such a way that it would be useful for other women to hear it. In order to allow these women

10th (International Human Rights Day). Ireland is one of 164 countries that takes part and various projects take place around the country during this time.

to open up about their experiences I needed to gain their trust. I needed to provide the conditions in which not only could the women feel safe speaking about their experiences but they could do so knowing that they had some involvement with the outcome. As a result I assured them that they would receive my initial draft of the script. This would give them the chance to see how both they and their stories were going to be represented. If the participants were unhappy with the direction I had taken or with any of the content then they would have the opportunity to raise their concerns.

The Interviews

One of the major concerns that I had prior to the interviews was how to conduct them as I knew that my approach would be a significant factor in the development of this project. Della Pollock argues that:

The interviewer is her/himself a symbolic presence, standing in for other, unseen audiences and invoking a social compact: a tacit agreement that what is heard will be integrated into public memory and social knowledge in such a way that, directly or indirectly, it will make a material difference. (2005: 3)

Everything from my demeanour to my appearance could have an impact on how the women responded to my questions and the information they chose to share. In addition Joan Sangster, who has conducted a lot of oral history work with women, writes:

It is important to acknowledge how our own culture, class position and political worldview shapes the oral histories we collect, for the interview is a historical document created by the agency of both the interviewer and the interviewee. (1994: 10)

While in this case I shared a similar cultural background with the women – we were all white, heterosexual and Irish – I was aware that my dual role as a playwright and academic researcher might prove intimidating. As such I chose not to place too much emphasis on this during the course of the interviews. I was also very conscious of my relationship status; at the time not only was I single but I also had never been married. This had a notable impact on how some of the women related to me. For example,

some of the older women appeared more cautious about relaying some of the more traumatic details of their relationships. They were conscious that such details might discourage me from entering into a relationship with a man in the future and often commented during the course of the interview how they did not want their stories to ‘turn me off’ men.

When considering the approach to take when interviewing the women I decided to adopt a format that was more feminist in nature, where the interview is more like a conversation and the interviewer shares some of their own personal experiences with the interviewee (Oakley 1981, Benmayor 1991, Glucksman 1994). The particular approach I chose could also be described as a blending of the oral history and the life-story interview. Oral history is concerned with recording and preserving historical information, based on the personal experiences and opinions of ordinary people. A life history is defined by Watson and Watson Franke as ‘any retrospective account by the individual of his life in whole or in part, in written or in oral form that has been elicited or prompted by another person’ (1985: 2). I was interested in recording these women personal experiences of and opinions about domestic violence and as such needed the women to provide me with a retrospective account of part of their life in oral form.

Although the feminist approach to interviewing advises that the interviewer does not ask a specific set of questions, I decided to draft a set of questions prior to the interviews. The questions were based on a conversation I had with Tobin (see appendix B). At the beginning of this chapter I referred to how, in applied theatre, fictional stories are often used for their ability to illuminate life experiences. As the women had been working on *Othello* for this very purpose, I decided to bring the same principle into the interview process. Furthermore, I decided to begin by asking questions not directly related to domestic violence to initiate conversation. The initial questions on my list were generic questions relating to relationships, about meeting someone and falling in

love. Once the woman and I developed a comfortable rapport I would then introduce other questions which referred specifically to their experiences of abuse. Often I preceded these questions with reference to specific sections of the text of *Othello*. In some cases this reference to *Othello* proved a useful tool, particularly if a woman was finding it difficult to speak about her experiences. This approach was to prove instrumental for encouraging the women to speak in depth about their experiences. It facilitated the disclosure of very private and intimate details regarding their experiences which revealed the extent to which the abuse had impacted upon their lives.

Before considering the relevance of the questions in more detail, I will first discuss the interviews and how my experience of listening changed during the course of the project. According to Emily Mann:

A good interview consists of setting up the situation and the environment for someone to finally let go and reveal to you who they really are and what they really need to say and what their story really is. That means you have to learn how to shut up. The impulse, as people reveal more and more, is to have that conversation, but the key is to be quiet and be able to deeply listen. (2000: 3)

The interviews took place over a two week period in August 2006. The allotted timeframe for each interview was one hour. Each interview took place in the refuge and an audio-recording was made using a standard Dictaphone. My previous experience of recording the interview with the parents when writing *Less Than A Year* had taught me that it was impossible to remember everything that might be said in the context of an interview. I was therefore reluctant to use hand-written notes, as I was concerned I would not document everything that the women had said. Also I did not want my ability to listen to the women to be comprised by the taking of notes. Recording the interview enabled me to focus my full attention on the woman without being distracted by concerns about whether or not I would remember what they said. Also recording

the interview seemed the most appropriate choice to facilitate the capturing of the rhythms and nuances of the way the women spoke.

The women were initially conscious of the presence of the Dictaphone, but as the interview continued most of the women did not seem overly concerned by its presence. Only one of the women remained visibly conscious of it throughout and this occurred particularly when she was referring to other people in her story. I found myself having to constantly reassure her that, even if she did reveal something that she did not want made public, she could withdraw what she had said afterwards. Although this did seem to put her at ease, there were still certain points throughout the interview when she requested that I stop recording, especially when referring to information about her husband and his past. Again here the issue of trust was paramount. If trust is fundamental in my accepting the testimony of another, then the testifier must have trust in me, as the playwright, that I am going to represent the telling of their story accurately within the right context. In other words, trust that I am not going to misrepresent what they say and trust that in turn I will direct the actor to also not misrepresent the testimony.

The first interview lasted for nearly two hours and I was surprised at the amount of intimate and personal details of her life that the woman shared with me. I had not expected her to go into so much detail but, as Julie Chaitin in *Narratives and Storytelling in conflicts and conflict resolution* writes, '[h]aving the opportunity to recount one's traumatic past to an empathic listener, especially when one can integrate the traumas into their present-day life, can often lead to the telling of deeply personal stories that may have been previously forgotten or denied' (Chaitin 2008: np). During the course of this particular interview the woman referred to many incidents in her childhood that she had not intended to share. According to Birren and Birren (1996),

‘[j]ust witnessing – really hearing, understanding, and accepting, without judgement – another’s life story can be transforming’ (in Atkinson: 126). Most of the women at the beginning of the interview stated that they were not looking forward to it. At the end of the interview, however, most of the women remarked on how it had actually not been as bad as they had thought it would be, that it actually felt good to be listened to which surprised them.

Once each interview had been conducted the next step involved transcribing the interviews. Schaffer and Smith write:

Stories enlisted within and attached to a human rights framework are particular kinds of stories – strong emotive stories often chronicling degradation, brutalization, exploitation, and physical violence; stories that testify to the denial of subjectivity and loss of group identities...Some stories, formerly locked in silence, open wounds and re-trigger traumatic feelings once they are told. (2004: 4)

Eliciting a life story especially one that has involved experiences of trauma is a highly sensitive undertaking, one that affects both the interviewer and the interviewee.

Psychoanalyst Dori Laub has written of his experiences of listening to the testimonies of Holocaust survivors and suggests that ‘the listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event [and] through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself’ (1992: 57). When I initially listened to the women’s stories in the interview I was there in a specific capacity as a playwright whose primary aim was to document what these women told me and then write a play using those documents. Sangster writes:

After all, we are using this material for the purpose of writing books which are often directed, at least in part, to academic or career ends. I gained access to women’s memories not as a friend, but as a professional historian. (1994: 11)

In a similar manner I gained access to these women’s stories not as a friend but as a playwright. These women knew from the very beginning what my role was, this was

made clear to them. My objective was to record what they told me, not help them rewrite their life narratives. However, during the course of the interviews I experienced first-hand just how difficult it was for these women to recall certain events in their lives, particularly events that they would rather forget.

Often at various times during an interview a woman would mention her concern that she was rambling. My response was always “ramble away”, explaining that it was my job to make sense of what she was saying. This result of this was that it seemed to put the women at ease and therefore allowed them to recall memories in a very raw and personal way. South African playwright Yael Farber has also observed this in relation to her testimonial theatre, pointing out that it has the effect of freeing the person ‘to access random, chaotic and raw memory’ (2008:20). She writes, ‘[w]hen gathering material, the person telling their story should not be consciously looking to contrive a compelling narrative. It is [Farber’s] responsibility to be holding the larger frame’ (2008:20).

During the transcription phase the following questions began to emerge – How could I represent these stories in performance? What sort of theatrical structure or framework would this involve creating and how would this impact upon their stories? Emily Mann, in the production notes that accompany *Still Life*, claims that ‘[t]he characters speak directly to the audience so that the audience can hear what [she] heard, experience what [she] experienced’ (1997: 34). If I was to have characters directly speaking to the audience about their experiences of domestic violence, would it be possible to recreate for the audience something akin to what I had experienced? How could I restage the telling of these stories and how could I do it in such a way that would lend itself to the act of breaking the silence? What would this mean theatrically?

Helen Nicholson writes, ‘[t]he idea that there are multiple interpretations of truth in autobiographical memory suggests that a dramatic style that relies heavily on

naturalistic forms of representation is politically, as well as artistically, constricting' (2006: 90). Observing some of her students who were creating a piece of theatre based on interviews with older people in their community she noted that their concern to tell the stories as 'authentically' and 'faithfully' as possible resulted in the work lacking the 'sense of these stories as memory' (2006: 90). Could I capture what Nicholson refers to as the 'aesthetic of memory' while retaining the essence and purpose of the testimonies? My desire therefore was to create a theatrical aesthetic that would signify the context that these stories were told in but that would also highlight their content.

Writing the Play: Domestic violence narratives meet the 'rhythm and shape of art'

When approaching the writing of *Walking Away* I was immediately presented with a number of challenges. The main challenge included finding a theatrical framework that would hold multiple testimonies; respect the privacy and anonymity of the women; avoid the 'stools and chairs' aesthetic; avoid the presentation of a number of monologues by individual woman and capture the aesthetic of memory. I wanted to include as much of the testimonies as possible with minimal interference from me. Inspired by my previous work on *Less Than A Year* and the words of Blank and Jensen, I was intent on finding a framework that would enable me to illuminate their stories without layering my own opinions on them.

I wanted to do this because the stories that were told to me by these women are stories that normally remain behind closed doors. These stories remain hidden largely because of shame. I knew from listening to these stories and from conversations with staff in the refuge that a majority of women who experience domestic violence feel that they are in some way to blame for the violence. They feel somehow it is their fault and that it their behaviour that has contributed to the actions of their partner. Silence and shame have both been recognised as key contributors to the continued prevalence of domestic violence, not just in Ireland, but worldwide. The consequences of shame are

clearly pointed out in the introduction to the book *The Irish Journey: Women's Stories of Abortion* by journalist Medbh Ruane. Ruane writes:

Shame keeps women in their place: out of sight, out of mind, or so it is hoped. Such shame leads directly to negative mental health effects, which can provoke additional physical damage. Alone among behavioural indicators, it stimulates depression and threats of suicide. (2000: 6)

This sense of shame is a serious issue that needs attention as it is largely shame that fuels silence. When people are ashamed of something then they are less likely to talk about it.

For years silence and shame have penetrated the darkest corners of Irish society and the effects on people's lives have been devastating. In that same introduction Ruane also points out that:

Irish society needs women's silence to keep its good opinion of itself. In all the talk and high rhetoric of the endless abortion debate, the story of Irish women is usually authored by someone else, with few women daring to speak for themselves, to become visible. But just as years of concealment about the abuse of children in state institutions were finally ruptured when its reality became untenable, years of denying the reality of abortion is starting to tell unbearably on other aspects of Irish life. (2000: 6)

Although Ruane is referring to abortion, she could just as easily be talking about domestic violence as they are both subjects that are surrounded by secrecy in Irish society. Secrecy has long been a feature of Irish society, especially in relation to abuse. While on the one hand the recent revelations of abuse experienced by young people at the hands of Catholic clergy members has shocked Irish society, it nevertheless has resulted in more and more people being encouraged to break their silences about their experiences of abuse. I wanted *Walking Away* to contribute to breaking these silences. I wanted the play to somehow negate the sense of shame that surrounds domestic violence and contributes to the silence.

With the idea of ‘breaking the silence’ in mind, my task was therefore to represent the speech of these women as accurately as possible so that it could be transformed into a written text that could be performed by actors. Given the women’s request for anonymity I wanted to transcribe the speech in such a manner that the actor would not need to listen to the aural recordings. Transcribing the interviews is an integral part of my creative process. In order to try to transcribe the interviews as meticulously as possible I listen carefully to the words the person speaks paying particular attention to their phrasing – their ‘punctuation’ of their words. I treat this punctuation like a form of musical notation in order to indicate on paper to the actors a sense of the rhythm of the person’s speech. This often requires my listening to the recordings several times in order to determine how best I can illustrate this rhythm on paper.

In her essay ‘Representing Discourse: The Rhetoric of Transcription’, Elliot G. Mishler argues that ‘transcription is not merely a technical procedure but an interpretative practice’ and adds that ‘the meaning of a representation is problematic and dependent on variations in craft and context’ (1991: 299). When I began the transcription process it was my intention to transcribe each interview in its entirety, before deciding on a way to structure the material. However, as I have previously mentioned, transcribing is a lengthy and arduous task. I was using a standard Dictaphone and during playback I found myself having to re-listen to sections numerous times. I also found it difficult to listen to the interviews. In Chapter One I referred to Dori Laub who has written extensively on testimony and in particular on the effects of the act of speaking and listening to testimony. Laub claims that the listener to an account of severe trauma shares in the ‘struggle of the victim with the memories and residues of his or her traumatic past. The listener has to feel the victim’s victories,

defeats or silences, know them from within, so they can assume the form of testimony' (1992: 58).

For the most part these were traumatic stories that I had already listened to once in the interview. When listening to them again I found the experience more traumatic. During the interview I endeavoured to keep my composure as much as possible. I could see how hard it was for the women to recall their experiences and it was not unusual for some of the women to suddenly start crying as they recalled a painful memory of a time in their lives. I at times found myself having to control my own emotions as I did not want to further upset the women.

However, when listening to the audio recording of the first interview that I conducted in order to transcribe it, I found myself becoming quite emotional, sometimes to the extent that I would have to stop transcribing in order to regain composure. I had not been prepared for this experience as having managed to maintain my composure during the interview, it did not occur to me that I would not be able to during the transcription phase. As a result I found the prospect of transcribing each interview in its entirety quite daunting. In addition I was anxious to find a suitable theatrical framework. So at this point in the process I made the decision to transcribe the first twenty minutes or so of each interview. This I felt would give me an indication of the sort of testimonies I had produced and also some sense of the themes and ideas that they contained.

Finding a Theatrical Framework

Lawrence Langer, author of *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*,²³ writes '[t]he raw material of oral Holocaust narratives, in content and manner of presentation, resists the organising impulse of moral theory and art' (1993: 204). The

²³ The book is based on 1,400 videotaped oral testimonies by Holocaust survivors, which are preserved at Yale University's Fortunoff Video Archives.

next step was to develop the theatrical framework in an attempt to organise the ‘raw material’ of these domestic violence narratives into a piece of theatre. During this phase of the research I read *The Laramie Project* and became interested in Kaufmann’s ‘moment work’. When organising the material that he and his team had gathered from the people of Laramie during their research phase, Kaufman decided to employ a technique which he calls ‘moment work’. The play is divided into a series of moments which Kaufmann refers to as ‘...unit[s] of theatrical time that [are] then juxtaposed with other units to convey meaning’ (Kaufmann 2001: xiv); they do not signify a change of location or place nor represent an entrance or exit of characters or actors.

I decided that this type of framework could be useful to turn the raw material of the women’s narratives into a performance text as it would allow me to create a narrative structure that could contain or ‘hold’ the narratives. However, I was conscious of Soans’ caveat that if a play which incorporates the testimonies of others is to hold the interest of an audience over the course of an evening it must not just be a presentation of monologues. I thought of significant moments that occur in relationships, such as meeting someone, falling in love, introducing partners to family and indeed starting your own family. I also thought of significant moments that might occur in an abusive relationship such as warning signs, the first instance of abuse and the point that finally made them leave. Through these moments I could look for reoccurring themes in the narratives that may lend themselves to creating a theatrical structure. This meant I could then distil the narratives into a form that would have an overall narrative flow. I wanted to take the audience on a journey from the experience of starting out in a relationship to exploring the complex situations that result in a woman staying in a violent relationship.

To create the ‘moments’ in *Walking Away* I also re-examined the set of questions that I had drafted prior to the interviews and extracted some of the key themes such as the women’s experiences of falling in love; how their family reacted to their partner or relationship; the first instance of abuse; the type of abuse they were subjected to; what made them leave and so on. I then examined the transcripts of the interviews to look for sections that were relevant to the main themes and used phrases that occurred in the women’s testimonies. I wanted the ‘moments’ to reflect the various stages that occur in the journey of an abusive relationship. I decided to name these moments and refer to them as chapter titles. The aim of these chapter titles was twofold. Firstly, they would signify the various stages a woman goes through in a relationship and secondly, they would provide an overall narrative which could contain the testimonies, thus giving the play a sense of temporal progression. This framework also facilitated my desire to have all the women on stage at the same time telling their stories to the audience; a dramaturgical choice based on the following episode that occurred during the writing phase.

I had recently relocated to the United Kingdom to begin this study and as such my contact with the refuge was largely conducted through email. It was agreed that I would send the first draft of the script to Tobin to distribute it to the women so that they could, as promised, see the shape the script was taking and ensure they were happy with how they were represented. As I mentioned earlier, the women were anxious to remain as anonymous as possible at the beginning of the process (for some of the women this changed as the project developed). Subsequently when transcribing the interviews I attributed a number to each woman in accordance with the order in which I had interviewed them. For example the words spoken by ‘Woman 1’ came from the transcription of the first interview that I conducted, the words spoken by ‘Woman 2’

from the second interview and so on. I decided to keep this in the play and the characters in the play were listed as 'Woman 1' - 'Woman 6'.

Once I had decided on the headings this proved useful when deciding what sections of the women's narratives to include under each heading. Using a number system also allowed me to see at a glance how many times each woman featured in each section of the play. My intention was to try and represent the women as equally as possible. However, this decision was to have unexpected repercussions that neither Tobin nor I were prepared for and reminded me of just how sensitively working with testimony needs to be approached.

Influenced by the women's desire for anonymity, I had not informed Tobin which number represented which woman's story. When Tobin gathered them to read the draft during one of their drama workshops, she just gave out the script and assigned each woman a number randomly. The women got very upset during this reading something neither they nor Tobin were prepared for. One woman in particular said she had kept a note of the order the women had been interviewed in and as such could tell whose story belonged to whom and that she was not happy about this. I did not specify that the women should read a copy of the script on their own when emailing Tobin the draft to distribute; I had just assumed this was what she would do. Through a simple lack of communication between me and Tobin, the trust that I had so carefully built up was suddenly in jeopardy; one woman was threatening to pull her story from the play.

When I visited the refuge the next time to speak with the women, I was nervous as to how the women would respond to me. I decided that honesty was the best policy. I explained what had happened, admitting that I was new to this process and, therefore, like them was learning as I went along. I told them how it had genuinely never occurred to me that some of them did not know each other's stories; that in my naivety I had

assumed that they knew each other's stories because they were all part of the same group. I expressed my sincere apologies for any hurt or upset that had been caused and that I would make every effort to ensure that an occurrence like this would not happen again. This seemed to appease the women but it made me even more sensitive to the fact that I was making a piece of theatre with these people's lives.

Making an Argument with Personal Narratives

Jack Zipes in *Creative Storytelling* writes, '[s]torytelling always takes place in a sociohistorical context, and this context shapes the reception of a tale as much as the tale or teller does' (1995:204). Lisa Kron in reference to her autobiographical performance work writes, '[t]he goal of autobiographical work should not be to tell stories about yourself, but instead, to use the details of your own life to illuminate or explore something more universal (2001: xi). Furthermore, as Maynes, Pierce & Laslett argue, if personal narratives are to be of potential use to social science or history 'they must go beyond the individual and [...] grapple with issues of generalization' (2008:128). They continue:

However individual the evidence base, most personal narrative analysts who are social scientists or historians aim to generalize in some sense by claiming that an individual story either speaks to a broader social experience or positionality or illuminates a symbolic framework or a historical event or process. (128)

One of the techniques available to the documentary playwright who aims to make individual stories speak to a broader social experience is to borrow from film the technique of montage. Evidence of this technique at work in the *Walking Away* is the juxtaposition of statistics and other official texts found in the public record with the selections of the personal testimony. My decision to interrupt the testimonies with statistics and other texts relating to domestic violence was motivated by the desire to provide audiences with the chance to make further meaning in relation to the culture

that produces these texts. I wanted the text of *Walking Away* to be an additional historical document and one that could place these stories within a wider cultural frame.

I also wanted audiences to consider the bigger picture in relation to domestic violence rather than just focusing on the individual women's stories. In addition, I wanted to remind audiences of the extent to which domestic violence is still a major problem in Irish society. The statistics are ones I gathered from official agencies and government reports that deal with domestic violence and are included to remind audiences of the 'official' situation regarding domestic violence in Ireland. Here, they were placed side by side in an attempt to heighten the relevance of the individual stories in an attempt to encourage the audience ask questions of the society they are living in. Their inclusion also represented an attempt to remind audiences that these stories were only a sample of the stories that existed. Rather than the statistics lending weight to the stories, I wanted the stories to lend weight to the statistics. I wanted to place these stories within the appropriate 'sociohistorical' context.

As such the statistics and reports I chose were ones relating to the 'documented' situation regarding domestic violence in Ireland. They were taken from sources such as Women's Aid and government reports and by using them I was also trying to find a way to make the play more universal. One of the criticisms with this type of work is that often these type of plays are only relevant to the local community they are drawn from. If the play were to have a life beyond this research project then these statistics and texts could be replaced by ones that were relevant to the specific community the play was being put on for.

My intention was that they would also provide the actor - who in performance would be faced with the task of switching from the subjective 'I' to the more objective fact - with a tool to remind them of the significance of the story they were telling. This

was inspired by the Brechtian concept of *verfremdungseffekt* (or ‘alienation effect’). In performance, the transition between ‘character’ and the ‘real self’ happened at three points during the play. This was when the actors were required to deliver ‘facts’ to the audience.

The first time this occurred was in the chapter entitled *Domestic Violence Related Injuries*, which consists of a list of various injuries that women are subjected to as a result of domestic violence. The list of injuries was taken from a report on domestic violence I accessed through the Irish Women’s Aid website. The stage directions state that the actors with the exception of the ‘Bride’ and ‘Groom’ should take it in turns to speak the lines and overlap each other. The rhythm of this section was intended in performance to suggest the manner in which physical blows are often delivered. As the actors spoke their lines the increase in rhythm created an intensity that grew as each word or phrase was spoken. The purpose was to create an aural assault on the audience.

The second list detailed the mental and emotional consequences of domestic violence. The testimonies of the women suggested that the mental and emotional abuse that the women were subjected to was almost worse than the physical abuse they received. The second list was delivered in a much more controlled and deliberate manner. Again this was to serve as a theatrical metaphor for the way in which women are affected by these forms of mental and emotional abuse. After this list ‘Woman 6’ says ‘[s]ometimes I would just sit there and wish he would give me a slap and get it over with coz the mental torture would just go on and on’. It is at this point in the play that the ‘Bride’ begins to assert some control over the situation.

The final piece that the actors delivered as themselves was at the end of the play and was punctuated by speech from the ‘Groom’. The lines delivered by the women at the end of the play are taken from a paragraph at the beginning of the *14-Point*

Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence on the Amnesty International website and from a poem I found on a MySpace page dedicated to ending violence against women. The decision to divide the lines between the women and intersperse them with the 'Groom' repeating lines that he had spoken previously was an attempt to demonstrate the fact that while for many of the women the man still continued to affect their lives, his presence was no longer as strong.

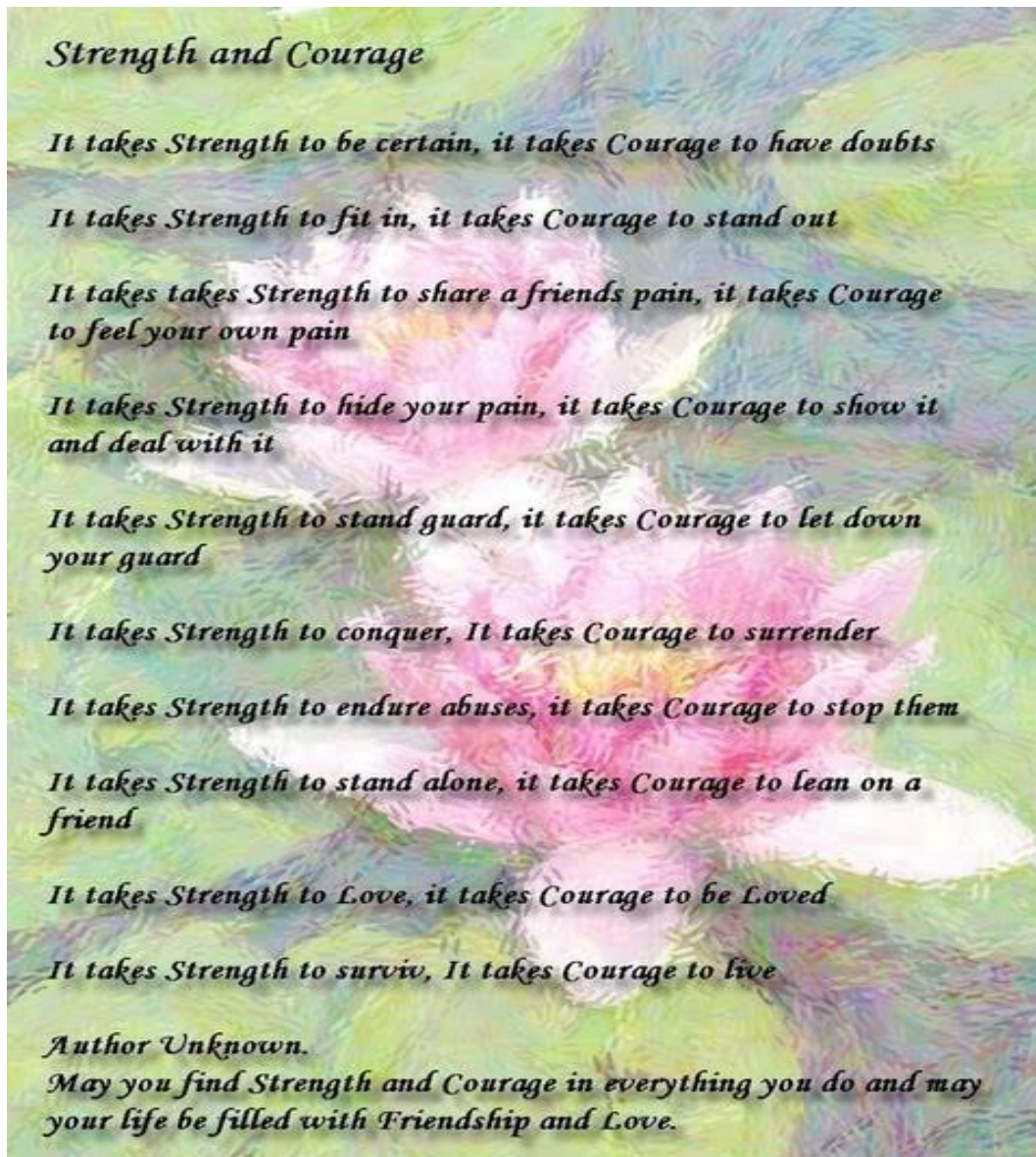


Fig 2.1 Poem taken from the Irish Women Against Abuse MySpace page

Walking Away in Rehearsal and Performance

Embodying Testimony in the Absence of the Other

This next section discusses and examines some of the issues that were raised by the actors during the rehearsals for the performance. The rehearsal period was one week in duration, due in part to the availability of the actors. During rehearsals it became apparent that working with this kind of text was placing different demands on the actors than those they had previously faced when working with more conventional texts. Among the concerns raised were mastering another's speech patterns, the fear of

misrepresenting the real person who had told the story in the first place, and directly addressing the audience. In order to remind the audience of the greater significance of these stories it was important that the actor trusted the language and avoided emotionally embellishing the ‘character’s’ delivery of the story. Rather than focusing on being the ‘psychologically whole’ character which most of the actors were used to, their primary task was to consider the importance of telling this story, paying particular attention to the words on the page.

The characters that the actors embodied are not imitations of the actual women who shared their stories. Instead, their characters were meant to be representations of women who are speaking about their first hand experiences of domestic violence but using the language that real women have spoken. One of the concerns that arose during the initial rehearsals for the actors was the question of how to approach the telling of the stories without having met the women or hearing the audio recording of the interview. I informed them that I had already used this approach with success in my previous play *Less Than A Year*. Both Moran and Sheehy had never met the real mother and father yet seemed to capture their spirit. I also explained that when transcribing the interviews I had been very careful to include the punctuation that would portray the woman’s speech patterns. This had required listening to the recordings several times in order to determine how best I can illustrate this rhythm on paper.

Karen Fitzgibbon, who took part in the initial rehearsed reading of *Walking Away* (telling Woman 6’s story) also told Woman 1’s story in this production. She notes how the different ways in which the two women spoke affected her physicality during performance:

First I told Woman 6’s story. She was very to the point, no extra detail unless it related to story, you could tell she was still very much in recovery and a little bit down. Your physicality changed automatically becoming quite defensive. Woman 1 however was a little bit of a dreamer at times, getting carried away with details of her story. You

could tell she was cautious of making the interviewer upset, physically you became open and not as guarded as Woman 6. Does this make sense? (Fitzgibbon 2007: np)

Following her experience of performing in the production of *Walking Away*, at the Belltable Unfringed Festival in February 2007, Judith Ryan (who played Woman 6) referred to the importance of the words:

I also found the vernacular of the woman whose story I told very difficult at first but as rehearsals went on it was this in fact that allowed me to understand her essence and hopefully helped me tell her story as she told it. In the end though I had to treat it as just words in order to learn it (Ryan 2007: np)

Each piece of punctuation is as a result of a choice that I have made and one that is informed by a very careful listening to what I hear. I try to notate as I hear the speech without actually interpreting what the person says. The punctuation, I believed, would therefore assist them in telling the story as accurately as possible. I also explained that I did not expect them to portray the actual women who had told the story. In chapter one I referred to the performance notes that accompany the published script of *The Exonerated* where actors are advised to avoid ‘overemotionalizing’ and to trust the stories (2004: 8). This advice was particularly applicable to the actors during rehearsals for *Walking Away*. This, however, was not an easy task as the actor was faced with the challenge of embodying the testimony of a woman, who for various reasons did not wish to speak herself, before an audience. Furthermore, given the form of the play the actors were required to portray women who were testifying to their experiences of domestic violence directly to the audience. Although the actors had not embodied the actual experiences that were being testified to, they were nevertheless implicated in the act of testifying in the first person before a very present audience.

Staging a Theatrical Meeting

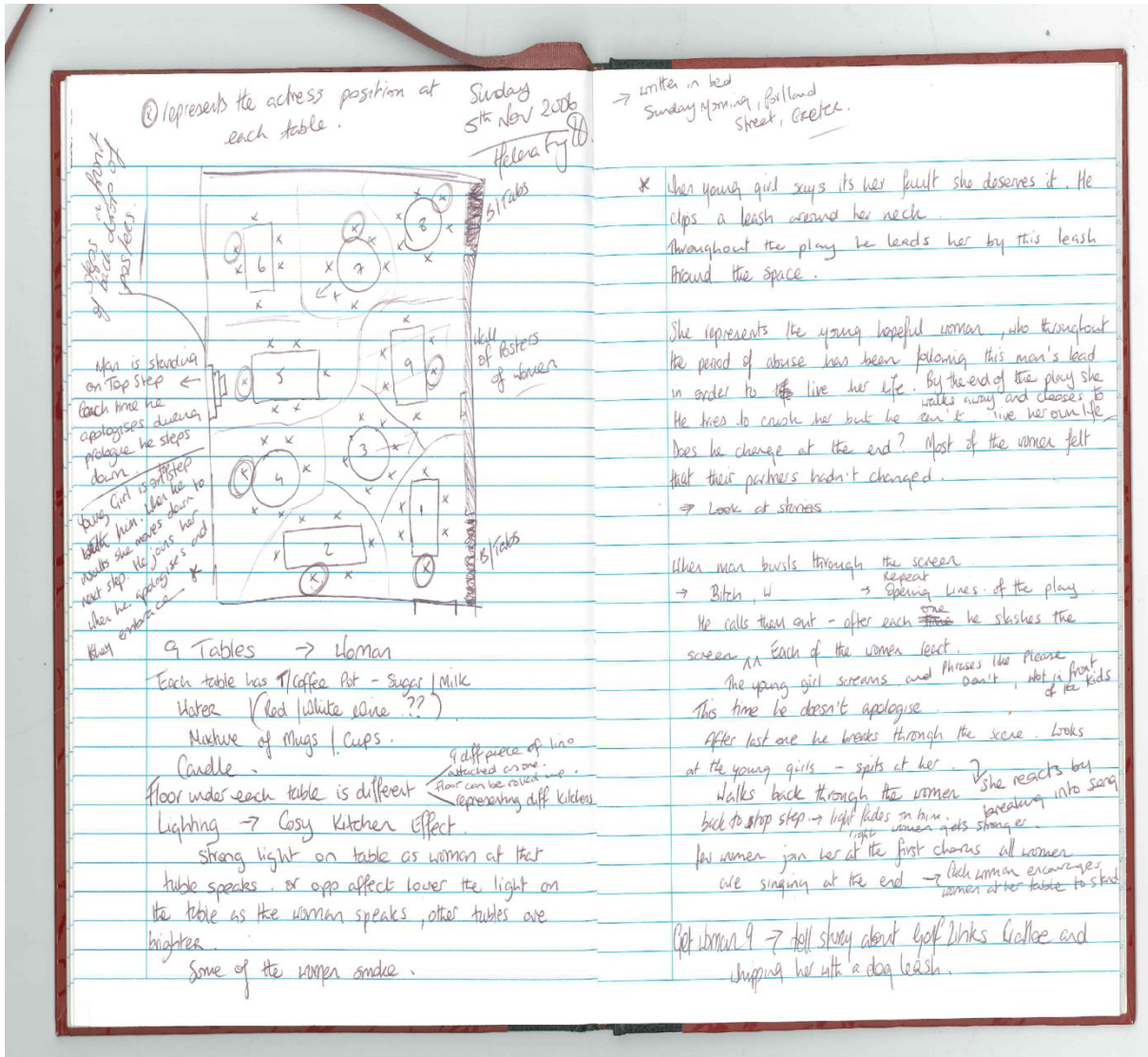


Fig 2.2 Excerpt from my notebook of early sketch of staging plan

The decision to have the actors seated at tables was initially inspired by the fact that I wanted to avoid the 'stools or chairs' aesthetic. In performance this had the effect of unsettling the audience at the beginning of the play. Julia Bardsley in *Taking Stage: Women Directors on Directing*, states:

It's also about wanting the audience not to know quite whether something is meant to happen. If you're unsettled you're more receptive to what is going on than if you're sitting back and enjoying something in a comfortable received way. (in Manfull 1999: 41)

Following a performance the actresses often commented how audience members were unsure as to what to do or how to engage with the actress at their table. This was something I observed first-hand during most of the performances. On one occasion when we were performing in the Belltable Theatre, I witnessed a man at my table turn to another person sitting at the table and enquire as to whether or not they had ever been on the stage of the Belltable before. It transpired that neither of them had been on the stage before and he commented on how different it felt from being just seated in the auditorium. On another occasion, one of the actresses relayed the experience a friend of hers had when he came to see the show. He had come with a group of people but due the limited seating arrangements (only five people could sit at a table) he found himself seated at a table on his own. When a young woman sat down beside him at the table he decided to start up a conversation. However, when he turned to talk to her he was surprised to find her reading a book. It was not until she started to speak a few minutes later that he realised she was an actress.

My decision to have the audience sit at the same tables as the actresses was motivated by my desire to create the conditions for a 'theatrical meeting' to take place. Roger Grainger describes the 'theatrical meeting' thus:

The audience is at one and the same time protected and exposed – protected by the fictional or metaphoric structure of the event, exposed by the hypnotic fascination of the theatrical image, which is focused and identified by the very things that seem to set it apart from life and render it harmless. The artistic nature of the happening distinguishes two separate but mutually inclusive worlds brought into relationship by a line of demarcation which unites what it divides (1990: 9).

I wanted to provide a space where these stories could live and breathe among a community of listeners. Again Emily Mann proved to be an inspiration. In an

interview I had read Mann had been quoted as saying, '[w]omen sit around and talk to each other about their memories of traumatic, devastating events in their lives' (in Betsko and Koenig, 1987: 281). For the most part when conducting the interviews I had sat across a table from these women and we had drunk a cup of tea or coffee. Being seated at the table with an actress facilitated this simultaneous protection and exposure to the stories. The audience were exposed on the one hand to these difficult stories but protected in that these stories were being told by an actor and not the real person.

Grainger also writes that '[t]heatrical catharsis depends on the achievement of a special symmetry between fact and fiction, expressed in an experience of balanced safety and nature (2006: 22). The fact was that these stories had been told to me by actual women who had firsthand experience of domestic abuse; the fiction in this case was the creation of a space which allowed this telling to take place at the same time in the same space by actors.

As Grainger also points out '[b]oth theatre and ritual use distance to promote encounter, [...] and it is this [...] that makes them safe ways of dealing with the kind of awareness of 'the other' that is experienced as frightening, aversive, something we try to defend ourselves against' (2006: 22). The combination of the staging and the narration by the actor I hoped would achieve a mixture of intimacy and distance to allow a safe encounter with these narratives. In this particular case the decision to have actors speak the women's testimonies was fuelled by the women's own request that they would not have to perform themselves.

The decision to not base the actors' mimetic representations of female survivors of domestic violence on the actual women, who had been interviewed, was again governed by this desire to create distance. I wanted the focus to be on the words that these women had spoken rather than on who they were. My intent here was not in any

way to deny the existence of these women and although my decision risks being interpreted as one that contributes to actually reinforcing the women's silence, from my experience I would argue to the contrary.

When Statistics Get in the Way

The inclusion of statistics and facts, influenced by the documentary form, did not always have the intended effect. After a production of *Walking Away* that took place in The Granary Theatre in Cork, a theatre director I spoke to afterwards felt that they not only interrupted the flow of the stories but also the emotional engagement an audience might have with the stories. He suggested that I should consider letting the stories speak for themselves as they contained powerful messages on their own that I did not need to reinforce with statistics. I responded that my aim when using the statistics and factual material was not to reinforce the messages within the stories but rather to set these stories in a wider context and also to question some of the conditions that contribute to the production of these narratives. Having them come from the radio on the table where there was no woman testifying was meant to indicate to audiences the purposelessness of the statistics. We need to encourage woman to speak out while they are alive otherwise we will only have statistics to listen to. I was disappointed that the director had not picked up on this and that his comments suggested that this approach was not working in the way I intended. This was the only occasion when I had this response and I suspect there were other contributing factors. Due to the layout of the venue, we could not place a speaker under the table with the radio on it. The sound came from overhead and had the effect as if the statistics were being boomed out through the venue.

Impact on the Original Testifier

The potential impact on the original person who told the story became very clear after the initial performance of *Walking Away* (a staged reading that took place at the Friar's Gate Theatre, Killmallock, Co. Limerick on 6 December 2006) when I spoke to one of the women whose testimony I had included in the play. Most of the women whose stories were featured in the play came to that reading, and when I met with the women following the performance (some a few days after the performance, some the next time I visited the refuge a number of months later) it became clear that each woman was affected differently by seeing and hearing how we had interpreted, and in turn represented, her life on the stage. For example, I had read Woman 4's story and the director had encouraged me to engage with the humorous manner in which she recalled elements of her story. This directorial decision had unexpected repercussions.

The director of the reading, Ciarda Tobin, had worked with the women for nearly three years as a drama tutor on the Breaking the Silence project and was conscious that these women would be looked on not just as victims of domestic violence but as women in their own right with individual and unique personalities. I knew from having interviewed this woman and observed her relationship with the other women that she had a particularly humorous side to her and so allowed this to inform my approach to telling her story. Her response, though, to the performance when I met her a few months (she was not present on the first occasion that I met the women following the reading) later reminded me of the implications of what we were doing. In our interview she explained:

The part that you played of me, we'll say, erm, was almost humorous. It was humorous really. It would appear to be humorous. I must have covered up a lot with humour. No, I did [. . .] yes, I did and it kind of came back to me on the night that I covered up a lot of my life and the pain in my life with humour [. . .] Coz it really was there [. . .] Maybe in a way [. . .] now I'll be honest with you, Helena, I mean that night it was/ I did feel in a way that maybe there was in a way/that the humour was coming too much to the fore because it was far more serious and, you

know, I felt like in a way that, you know, and I sometimes feel it that maybe because I put humour, I cover up with humour then I'm not taken seriously. I want to be taken seriously. I DO NOT want to be the clown all my life covering up things with humour and even sometimes here (referring to the refuge), on an ordinary day someone might say to me [...] Mary, we missed you, you've a great sense of humour. I can't sometimes live up to that, I can't do it. And I won't anymore, not now.
(Woman 4, 2007)

Here I am reminded of what Paget refers to as 'an awareness of theatricality that is ultimately informing the whole operation' (Paget 1987: 324). When working with the testimony of real people it is important to remain aware that the issue of interpretation has implications beyond the realm of the performance.

Discoveries

Many of the discoveries that occurred as a result of this research project have been documented throughout the chapter. My approach to the interviewing process proved to be significant in the production of testimonies for this project. My approach facilitated the disclosure of many private and intimate details about not only these women's lives but also their experiences of domestic abuse. My decision to audio record each interview was also a success in that it enabled me to capture the particular rhythms of each woman's speech. It also meant that I could have more time with the material. This was particularly helpful when incorporating the testimonies into the script. However, I did question how this would have changed if I did not have access to audio recordings. How would this impact upon what material I could include in the script. This will be discussed in more detail in the second research project.

There were many different directions I could have taken when incorporating these testimonies into the script. Kaufman's moment technique proved particularly useful as a framework to hold the testimonies. Such as structure meant that I could avoid presenting what Soans described as a random collection of monologues (2008: 26) as the headings gave the piece a sense of temporal progression. The decision to

intercut the testimonies, place them under the relevant headings and juxtapose them with statistics and facts from official domestic violence literature allowed the individual stories to be told while simultaneously painting a wider and more universal picture of domestic violence.

The actors encountered several challenges when faced with the task of embodying the testimonies. These included trying to master the speech patterns of another person, a fear of misrepresenting the women's stories and directly addressing the audience. However, this was only touched upon briefly in this case study and will be explored in further detail in the next case study.

The ethics of working with testimony presented a series of challenges and I questioned constantly whether or not I was in fact making the right decisions in relation to how I was using the material. One of the most significant challenges that emerged was in relation to the responsibility of speaking for the original person who has testified. This responsibility of speaking for the other has attracted much attention from scholars and critics, most notably from D. Soyini Madison and Linda Alcoff. The responsibility of speaking for the Other and the problems associated with this have been well argued in Linda Alcoff's *The Problem of Speaking for Others* (1991-92 – see especially 5-32). Alcoff's primary concern is how, in the very act of speaking for the Other, the speaker may not only misrepresent that Other but also, in the very act of attempting to give them a voice, one may contribute further to their silence. She maintains: 'Speaking should always carry with it an accountability and responsibility for what one says' (26). This was something that was foremost in my mind throughout the course of the research project.

Walking Away: Final Considerations

Hannah Arendt reminds us, '[w]herever the relevance of speech is at stake, matters become political by definition, for speech is what makes a man a political being' (1958: 3). *Walking Away* takes the political position that violence against women should not be happening in our society and as members of that society we have a responsibility to play a part in ending it. The stories that are contained in the play *Walking Away* chronicle the experiences of a number of Irish women who have survived experiences of domestic violence. Domestic violence is not easy to live with and, as I discovered during the course of this study through speaking to these women and witnessing theirs and others' responses to the play, its stories are not easy to hear. However, I believe that the stories need to be heard and as such *Walking Away* represents an attempt to break the silence both literally and metaphorically that surrounds this form of abuse in Irish society. In addition, the play seeks to educate women that it is possible to leave a violent relationship. As 'Woman 2' states towards the end of the play:

I'd like to help women understand that there is a much better way, because when you're in it you don't see that. You don't see there's another side you know. Women should...they need to know they are worth better than they are...putting up with. No one deserves that. They need to know there's a better life out there. (Woman 2, 2007)

These lines indicate why she gave her testimony and what she hopes it will achieve. She also indicates here the potential value of someone listening to her testimony. She implies that it contains advice that might be helpful to other women who find themselves in a similar situation and supports my argument that making plays based on the testimony of others' first-hand experiences of events can provide an audience with a different knowledge. I have chosen to end this chapter by reminding the reader of these words as they set the context for the next research project where I investigate the

attempts to stage the personal testimony of real people within the boundaries of a Theatre in Education programme.

CHAPTER THREE

Making Choices:

Staging the testimonies of road fatalities

Introduction

*To have any hope of changing its audience
a performance must somehow connect
with that audience's ideology or ideologies.*
(Kershaw 1992)

This chapter presents the second of my three case studies, which involved the practice of writing and staging a play about the subject of road safety. The purpose of this research project is to further explore the problems, questions and challenges that arise when staging testimony and investigate the efficacy of performed testimony as a way of knowing. The chapter is divided into three parts. Part one provides the reader with a context for the research project. Part two contains a written copy of the script for *Under Pressure*. This version of the included script is the one used for the tour to secondary schools in the Devon region. A DVD recording of a performance which took place at Ivybridge Community School on Thursday 12th March, 2008 also accompanies this chapter. While the reader is encouraged to both read the script and watch the DVD, the order in which this occurs is again left to the reader's discretion. The final part of the chapter is divided into three sections which explores the process of producing and gathering the testimonies; the process of incorporating them into the script of *Under Pressure*, and the play in rehearsal and performance. The chapter ends with some concluding thoughts on the on how the audience responded to the play and considers staging testimony as a way of knowing.

PART I: GENESIS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

In February 2008, I was commissioned by Exstream Theatre Company to research the issue of road safety and produce a draft treatment for an interactive theatre project. The project was a joint initiative by Exstream Theatre Company and Devon County Council's Road Safety Unit. The main aim of the project was the generation of a greater awareness amongst young people, specifically Year 11s, of the possible

dangers involved with driving, especially risk-taking behaviour. Given what I had learnt from the previous research project, I was interested in creating a play that would incorporate the testimony of real people about their experiences of road traffic collisions. In addition I was interested to see how it would work within the framework of an existing TIE model as the play would only be one component of the overall project.

TIE Model: Exstream and Interactive Theatre

Exstream Theatre Company was founded by John Somers when he was a lecturer at the University of Exeter. The company specialises in working with professions that need ways to raise sensitive issues through approaches which engage audiences emotionally and intellectually. Exstream has won several major awards for its work, including a National Institute for Mental Health England Award for its programme 'On the Edge' which dealt with the effect of psychosis in a 17 year-old-boy. Somers' Interactive Theatre programme has three phases - Compound Stimulus; The Performance; and Interactivity.

Interactive Theatre

A week prior to the performance each school or college receives the 'Compound Stimulus'. The compound stimulus is usually made up of various items which feature in the performance. The purpose of the compound stimulus is to orientate the audience to the performance in advance by enabling them to create a possible scenario or hypothesis about the performance that they are going to see (Somers 2008). The prospective audience does this by examining the item and its various contents and attempting to make sense of what they mean and to whom they belong. The compound stimulus then features in the play. For example, in a previous Exstream play that I had seen about teenage runaways the compound stimulus was a rucksack containing various items. I attended a performance (usually the second phase) of the play which took place

in the University drama department before it went out to schools. Prior to the performance of the play a facilitator told us that the bag belonged to a young teenage girl. The bag contained, among other items, a school report and a letter addressed to her parents about problems she was having in school. We were then asked to speculate as to who owned this rucksack and what the contents might indicate. This would normally take place a week or so prior to the performance coming to the school. The interactive phase then occurs at a certain point in the performance. This is normally when the play reaches a climax and a resolve is needed. The facilitator stops the action and asks the audience for the advice on how the play should end. Audience members are encouraged to 'hot seat' the characters to glean any further information and also to advise them on possible solutions to the problem.

In the case of *Under Pressure*, the compound stimulus was a shoebox in which the character 'Jack' kept various items that reminded him of his son. This was sent to schools a week prior to each performance. However, unlike other interactive theatre projects, the interactive phase took place after the performance. Students were divided into groups and asked to discuss various issues that arose in the play. The students were then encouraged to make a pledge about their own attitudes to driving. The card they wrote their pledge on was attached to a flower which the students then placed on a tree stump. This act was symbolic of the floral tributes that can be seen on roadsides where fatal crashes have occurred throughout the country.

Research Questions Specific to this Project

In the first project, I considered the significance of the site of production of the testimonies and how the production of the 'testimonies' impacted not only on the stories the women shared with me, but also upon my dramaturgical choices when writing and staging the script. For this project, I again consider the significance of how the

testimony is produced and the impact this has on how it is presented in the script. Also, as the play forms part of a wider TIE project I explore to what extent the aims of the project have upon the dramaturgy of the play. Secondly, it emerged that during the writing phase of the first play, having access to audio recordings of the interview, enabled me to capture the language, particularly the phrasing and the rhythms of the way the person spoke very accurately. In this project I specifically examine the method of recording the testimony and its subsequent incorporation into the script in order to establish how this might impact on the transmission of the testimony. Following this, I discuss the challenges the actors encountered when rehearsing the script. Establishing whether or not concerns raised by the actors in first project were similar to those raised by the actors in this project will, I hope, shed further light on how an actor relates to the task of performing the testimony of another, particularly, in the absence of the original testifier. I then reflect on the performance itself in terms of audience reaction in order to explore whether the decision to nurture the narrative essence of testimony contributed to the generation of new knowledge for the audience. While *Under Pressure* could stand alone as a play, in this instance it only forms part of a wider drama and education programme in which the audience becomes involved.

PART II: SCRIPT

UNDER PRESSURE

© Helena Enright

PROLOGUE

From darkness lights up SL to reveal man in late 40s embracing younger man in 20s.

LX fades on two characters.

A video is projected onto the back wall which includes a montage of scenes related to driving, partying, drinking.

Pause 1 - At a certain point the video pauses and focus returns firstly to the two characters SL.

Nick: I'm so sorry, It's all my fault, I'm so sorry.

Pause 2 – lights flash up on Paramedic who has entered SR.

Paramedic: *addresses the audience*

There was nothing I could do.

As the video continues the characters exit. Video ends with sound of knocking on door.

Blackout

SCENE 1

The time is 4.30pm. New Year's Day 2008.

SR - Jack enters with a shoebox and cup of tea. As the DJ speaks he opens the shoebox and begins to lay the contents out in the manner of a ritual that he performs every year.

He is whistling along to the tune of song by Queen that is playing on the radio.

And love dares you to change our way of caring about ourselves

This is our last dance, This is our last dance

This is ourselves

Under pressure, Under pressure, Pressure

Fade last few bars of song as DJ starts to speak

DJ ...Queen with *Under Pressure*,

I was reading in the paper today that approximately 3,000 people were killed on British roads in 2007. And it is young people that are far more likely to be killed on the road than older people. Why? Well experts say that this is due mainly to young and inexperienced drivers taking horrendous risks on the road when behind the wheel, often killing their young passengers at the same time.

Jack reacts to this. At the same time Nick enters the space at the other side of the stage with a newspaper and a bottle of beer. It is obvious that he is in a bar having a drink.

But is it just our young people that are the problem? Are we allowing them to get behind a wheel too early? Perhaps we should increase the minimum age for driving? I don't know, how can we make sure that this figure is less in 2008? What can be done? Call us now on 444546 or email us on reallife@gemini.co.uk or text on your views 0785 55505560 *Commercial Break*

Lights up on Jack. As he picks up the photo of Simon he starts recalling the afternoon of his son's death. He begins to directly address the audience.

Jack: We had decided that we were going to have a New Year's House party, invite some friends around. My son who's an auto electrician technician for the city council,

works in the bus depot, am,
has decided that he was going to go down to Newquay
for the New Year celebrations am,
and stay with a friend he had met
on his apprenticeship training –
they all go up to Bridgewater and
they go up there on block release.
He's got to meet some new set of chums up there.

Nick appears upset by something he is reading in the newspaper. He starts remembering. He directly addresses the audience.

Nick I'd known Simon about two years.
I was actually asked by my boss at the time
to go on this engineering course up North,
it would be like one week out of every four.
She said that there was another guy going on it from Plymouth
and that she would introduce me
to him on Monday morning at the train station.
So on the Monday morning I get to the train station,
I'm introduced to this guy and
we're basically put on the train and told go to college (*laughs*).

Jack One of them happened to live in Newquay.
He got an invite down to Newquay for the New Year celebrations
And he thought he would go down
with one of his friends from Plymouth.

Nick We had good conversation on the train on the way up.
He seemed a bit more of a boy than I did, bit of a lad,
but yeah we got on okay.

When we got there, there were three others on the course
Jimmy, Tom and John, it was sort of the five of us straight away.
We got on really well, we were inseparable really,
yeah kicking up stink if we didn't get housed together,
you know that sort of thing.
Yeah...just the five of us.
There were others on the course but the five of us
just spent all our time together.
Even outside college, we'd go and visit each other,
hang out at weekends. We were all really close.

Jack

Am at four o'clock in the afternoon, am,
we were all off, am, we were goin, when I say we,
I mean my wife and I,
we were going to go out and get some supplies for the party
and we went out about four o'clock.
Simon was still in the house so we sort of said our cheerios!

And, am, so we did the usual,
we said look Simon if you're in Newquay tonight
there's no way, there's no point you trying to get us on a mobile,
the networks will be completely jammed so,
have a Happy New Year.

He kissed his little sisters, gave them a cuddle,
am we did the father and son hug thing, said goodbye,
he gave my wife a New Year's kiss and we went on our way.
And at the time little were we to know that
that would be the last time we saw him alive.
He'd arranged to go to Newquay with a friend

from Plymouth called Nick.

Nick was picking him up about half past four

Lights fade on Jack

Nick:

John had invited us down to Newquay for New Year's Eve.

We were going to go out, fancy dress, have a bit of a laugh.

Simon was a lot more into it than I was.

I was like yeah whatever, not sure if I fancied
going all the way down there just for a few drinks,
but Simon well he sort of got me geed up for it.

We got two Scream outfits, masks, black capes,
white shoes everything and had lunch together.

Then later I am picked him up.

We were going to go down to John's house first,
get changed into our outfits, have a few drinks and then hit the
club.

He lived about seven or eight miles outside Newquay.

Nick resumes reading the paper

SCENE 2

David enters his space with a mug of tea and a newspaper. There is a chair and a table with a radio. The radio is playing something with a strong techno type beat, typical of the type of song popular with today's young people. He goes to switch stations when he hears the DJ speak.

DJ And we're back...lots of emails coming in with different view points. Michael from Topsham says Teenagers are always getting the blame, we're not the only ones who cause accidents you know? Vicky in St Thomas says "The government should spend more money on educating young drivers of the consequences of dangerous driving. How often do you see cars driven at high speed around town centres by immature teenagers trying to impress their mates? Each one is an accident waiting to happen." We've got Andy from Crediton wants to know what is being done about all the old people on the road, half of them can't even see, they're much more of a danger. Today we're talking about teenagers and driving? What can be done to stop all these unnecessary deaths on our roads? Call us now on 444546 or email us on reallife@gemini.co.uk or text on your views 0785 55505560

Song – something upbeat in the current charts

David listens to the above speech and as the song fades he begins to recall the first incident he went to. David directly addresses the audience.

David I remember the first incident that I went to.
I was with these two guys, they were older than me,
wouldn't have had much qualifications in those days,
but they had plenty of common sense and
that's definitely something you need in this job.
I was a sprog, knew nothing really.
That first job was actually a road traffic/
accident we used to call them in those days.
They call them road traffic collisions these days.
It was an elderly lady knocked down by a truck.
I just remember following them around and we did the job.
Sadly the lady lost her life,
but yeah that was my introduction to it.
And I did not sleep,
I did not sleep for a couple of nights after that.

Nick John's family were there when we arrived.
Then they went out and left us.
We put some music on, got changed into our bits and pieces.
We were dancing around having a laugh.
Sarah didn't drink, as she was going to be driving us into town later.
Her car was parked in this little side section off the house,
it was a big farmhouse with a big drive and
her car was actually blocked in by mine.
We tried to get a taxi but they were all booked up.
John's car was parked just outside the front door.
The weather was really atrocious.
It was absolutely chucking it down...really strong winds.
It was about am, about 9.15 when we left.

David I stumbled into it really.
I went to teacher training college,
found that was alright
but I didn't get on with the kids, (*laughing*) bit of a downside really.
I wanted something that was going to challenge me.
Then my father was taken very ill and
an ambulance turned up.
I don't...it just pressed a button in the head and
I thought I can do that and
that's how I sort of stumbled into it really.

Nick You know at college/
well to be honest John always drove a bit erratic.
Tom who was on the course with us,
he hated getting in a car with him.

When he got his own car,
he would drive from Newquay up to college
on his own coz he wouldn't/
he did drive like a bit of an idiot.
If Tom had been there with us,
he was going to come out with us but
he had a family bash to attend and couldn't get out of it,
he wouldn't have got in the car with him.

David Well when you get a call to go to an accident,
you usually experience two emotions.
First you get a surge of adrenalin,
then once you know where you are going,
well then you got to sort out in your head
what you are likely to face.
Initial information will be real sketchy.
Normally you only get a location.
Road Traffic Collision at a certain location.
Usually on route then you get further updates
and that helps you sort out in your mind
what you are going to face.

Nick ...anyway John opened the car and I was first in,
got in immediately right behind the driver.
I was about to shimmy over into the passenger seat
and Simon went no you're alright mate and
went around to the other side.

David It's usually very difficult at that stage to determine
whether it's serious or not.

Initial information is always sketchy.
The tendency is always to overreact...
Number of cars, one car, two cars,
approximate number of cars involved.
Priorities are sorted out in your head.
What sort of kit will you need and
the sort of decisions you'll have to make.
At that stage I used to find that
I would become very calm.
It was like buttons were pressed and
you went into a completely different mode.
That uncertainty of not knowing
what you were going to face
would cause me to go into
a void, detached, calm mode.

Nick

Anyway we were in the car, we had quite a bit to drink,
about four or five cans, few shots.
Sarah was sober, but the music was really loud,
you know real hard dance music, John was really into it.
He had these big subs in the back of the car and everything.
We let off some party poppers as we left and
me and Si had these plastic knives we got with our costumes
and we were stabbing each other and stuff,
just having a right good laugh.

David

You usually then start to discuss it
with your crew mate en route,
what you know about it
obviously without distracting them as they are the driver.

But you do talk about it and I guess
at that stage there can be a lot of black humour
That's just a diffuser or tension reliever.
Am normally some distance from the scene
you've got some idea of how serious it is.
What's happened to the traffic,
the reactions of people even a mile away,
what the traffic is doing will often
give you some idea of what you are going to face.

Lx fade on David.

Blackout. David Exits.

SCENE 3

Voiceover of Weather Report/Warning for New Year's Eve 2005.

Nick: We drove down into the village,
and then we were on these really bendy roads,
there was loads of flooding, yeah the weather was really bad.
John was driving really fast along those roads
but me and Si weren't taking much notice,
we were messing about in the back.
He overtook this minibus,
I didn't actually even realise he overtook the minibus until later,
we were too busy messing about with those plastic knives.
Then suddenly he goes around this corner and he sort of loses
control.

Jack Am...the party started about eight o'clock,
friends came round
and we had a relatively pleasant evening.

Nick All you could feel was the car just sort of lift.
I remember grabbing hold of the seat in front of me really hard,
for some reason I don't know why I did it
but I looked at the speed dial,
well I was always a bit of a back seat driver I suppose,
but as the car was off the ground the speed dial was showing
80mph.
The car just went completely out of control.
We were like Oh Shit John, the car went over to the left/

Fade in SFX of people at party singing Auld Lang's Syne which continues in the background

until "ain't gonna be good news"

Jack Am and then at 2 o'clock in the morning, am,
one of our guests noted that there was a police car
pulled up outside our front door.

Nick I just remember the noise in the car was horrendous.
It was ear piercingly loud, everything was smashing all around us
and the car was spinning really violently.
I just grabbed the seat in front of me for all I was worth and
closed my eyes...there was bits of glass flying everywhere.
When the car stopped I opened them
and I just remember, I just remember
this white powder falling around me
and the smell...the airbags had exploded,
and I fix and test a lot of cars right
and when an airbag goes off there's this smell of gunpowder,
it's from the pretensioners,
but what I really remember when I opened my eyes
is all this white powder settling around us.

Jack I've always lived in dread of a police knock on the door
at that time of the morning, am, I've always been aware that,
you know if, I never knew how I would cope
if one of my kid's died before me and
I've always had that at the back of my mind,
policemen in the middle of the night
ain't gonna be good news.

End SFX

Image of ambulance, police car driving fast with sirens flashing.

SFX various emergency services sirens

Nick I looked over at Simon and he was just slumped forward,
the roof had completely come in at the back of the car.
I couldn't really feel anything. I had so much like
adrenalin going through me.
I managed to get myself out of the car,
I don't know how I did,
but I went straight around to Si's side,
I couldn't get the door open, and then I did
and I just remember saying "Simon, come on mate, Si can you
hear me?"
He didn't answer.
I pushed his head back,
the front of his nose was completely smashed,
there was so much blood, blood coming off his head.
I felt absolutely helpless.
I just couldn't understand why he wouldn't wake up.

End SFX

Jack We didn't know that they were particularly there for us.
At first we didn't take a lot of notice,
other than that the police had turned up on the street.
We thought that there was another house party goin on,
somebody was making too much noise and somebody's
complained.
Am, and then the guests noticed,
hold on, they're walkin up our path.

Nick Just as I had got the door opened I saw this minibus pull up
and people got out. John and Sarah were over there talking
and John was getting very agitated.
All I could hear was “just say you were driving,
I going home, I’m just gonna leave”.
She didn’t seem to be having any of it.
And I don’t know but like it suddenly like dawned on me
that I may be blamed for this.
It would be just like John,
he was always bullshitting his way out of everything
and you know who’s to say I wasn’t driving,
Shit, Si can’t move, he’s not breathing
and John just wanted to run away, wouldn’t own up to anything.

Jack Now at that point, the radar started tweaking,
Am, fair to say that I had copious amounts of alcohol
and was in a fairly merry state, am,
but found it a very sobering statement
that the police were coming up my path.

Nick The driver of the minibus came over and he was really/
he got this scarf, no it was a tie and he helped me with the blood.
I never thought Si was actually/
at no point did I think/
I thought he was just knocked out.
It was a saloon car, the back of the car was completely/
the roof was pushed right down behind our heads, it was horrific.

Didn't seem very long until some off duty policeman
or someone from the services came along.
Then the ambulances came, the first one was aiding to Simon.
I just remember him on the stretcher
going into the back of the ambulance and
hearing those doors getting deadlocked.
I just remember that sound, hearing them lock. (pause).

Jack I had two of the children with me that night
and they were still awake, still up.
Three of them, the big ones were all out
and when I realised they (the police) were coming up the path,
my instant reaction is one of them's copped it
and I'm about to be told some pretty horrific news.

Multimedia film of ambulances and police cars on their way to the scene of an accident, sirens blaring played under the following SFX Gemini FM - Reports are just coming in of a serious road accident on the A3047. The car left the road and hit a tree just before 10pm. There were four occupants in the car and the extent of their injuries is not yet known. No other vehicle appears to be involved in the accident. Police at this stage are not clear how the car came to leave the road, although weather conditions in the area at the time were described as 'atrocious' with strong winds and heavy rain.

Jack: Now, I'd now, I'd already anticipated that
I was about to receive some pretty bad news.
The knock came on the door.
We live in a three storey building/house.
My wife went downstairs to answer the door
and I'm stood there at the top and

I can hear my wife becoming a little agitated,
am in so much that, they didn't really,
they didn't really want to speak with her,
they wanted to speak to Mr. Baker.

She was saying why can't you speak to me,
"No we want to speak to Mr Baker" and

I picked up on the end of this and am
sort of came into the hallway.

The police were there and they said –

Now they were pretty assertive, am

"I'm sorry I can't tell you what it's about

I need to speak with Mr Baker"

am the two officers were at the door

in their full dayglo fluorescent jackets with the full monty on

and it was actually a highway patrol car that was outside,

it wasn't a Panda yeah? It had come off the highway.

Nick

I wanted to go in there with him but they wouldn't let me.

There was a policeman holding me back.

I got taken in another ambulance.

Sarah was on a stretcher, a spine board,

she had some problems with her back,

and I was on the seat beside her in the other ambulance.

This was the first opportunity I had to talk to her.

A police officer came into the back of the ambulance

and said to me "were you driving?"

And I said no it was John,

but she wouldn't tell the policeman anything,

she was like I can't remember.

I'm sat there listening to this and

you know the policeman doesn't know who to believe.

On the way to the hospital the paramedic
was asking us questions you know like
"How do you think the accident happened?"

and I said John was driving like an idiot.
Sarah kept saying she couldn't remember
and I was like you've got to tell the truth.
But she wasn't putting John in that position,
she wasn't telling them anything.
It seemed like we were in that ambulance for hours.

Jack

Then they came up the stairs and

I was just riveted at the top,
nah I was (*pauses overcome with emotion then regains
composure*)
They come up and they said "Mr Baker"
and I identified "yeah I'm Mr Baker".
"I'm sorry but we need to speak with you,
Could we speak to you in private please?"
coz by now everybody was going on
"wah the police are here, what's going on here?"
Am we went into the kitchen,
my wife was sat by my side,
and am one of the policemen said
"I'm sorry to tell you Mr Baker
that your son Simon was killed
in a road traffic accident tonight. (*pause*)
am (*v quietly*) I thought it was pretty cold
the way it came over at the time,
it was delivered short and sharp..."

am I was later to find out that
that is a recognised method of telling somebody news like that.
But at this time I thought Christ you know.
I obviously got very emotional, very upset, was full of denial.
Am when, when you lose somebody like that
you do go through a whole set of emotions
am and the first one is denial, the second one is anger,
the third one is you want revenge from somebody and
then you want answers, am,
but the most overriding one is one of grief and and of loss.
This doesn't happen to us this is what happens to other people
and am...

Nick

When we got to the hospital
I just walked out of the ambulance and
into the A&E reception area,
I just remember sitting there.
There was all these people coming in and out
and I just sat there...there was no one...I felt so helpless.
I didn't know what had happened to Simon
and I sort of just felt a bit lost, I guess.
It was a busy night and I didn't know if I needed treatment or
what.
I think about a half an hour passed and then
two policemen came up and breathalysed me and
all I could think of was why?
I wasn't driving,
was I getting framed?
I didn't know what was going on.

Jack

Then there was the issue of telling Simon's mother.

We were separated and am the police asked
if I'd tell her and because of well we weren't on particularly good
terms...no...I wouldn't do it, but I said/
I didn't even know her proper address.
I knew the location where she lived, but I didn't know her proper
address.
My other son Ben was out on the town and
when we separated he had decided to stay with his mother.
So I thought that's what I'll do, I'll try and blag it with Ben.
Ring him and try and get an
address and anyway...so I phoned Ben,
I said "Ben I need your mum's address,
I don't want to tell you why but I need your mum's address".
I said "thanks very much" and I ended the phonecall.
Gave it to the police am then within two minutes
he's back on the phone and his mother's hysterical in the
background.
"Why did your father want the phone number?"
I couldn't get out of it.
I had to tell him on the phone
Am I had to tell him that his brother had been killed.

Nick

Anyway then I went up to one of the nurses and
I said I've just been in an accident; do I need to be treated?
They took me in, put me in one of these wards
you know where there's all these cubicles.
They put me on this trolley outside one of the cubicles,
the curtains were drawn,
I still didn't know what was happening with Simon
or where the other two were.

Then I heard this conversation in the cubicle I was outside
“I can’t say I was driving” It was John and Sarah.
I don’t know something in me just snapped and
I immediately got off the bed, ripped open the curtains
and I was saying “how could you? You have to tell the truth.”
They just kept saying “I don’t know, I can’t remember”
One of the nurses saw me and came over and
put me back on the trolley.
I just sat there, I was getting more and more frustrated,
I couldn’t really take in what was happening.
I just sat there for what seemed like hours.
Next thing it’s New Year and I remember,
there was this old rickety clock on the wall over the nurse’s desk
and at twelve everyone started wishing each other a Happy New
Year and I’m sitting there and I just felt like I was on,
I don’t know, a different planet.
Everything around me seemed so surreal.
I had to pinch myself – am I really here,
is this really happening?
I kept asking the nurses about Simon
but I just couldn’t get any answers.
How is he? What’s wrong with him?

Jack:

We then decided that the father-in-law
would take us down to identify the body.
The police officers left.
The whole night then just disappears into a complete blur.
The thoughts that were going through my head were
I’ve gotta tell people,
when do I tell people,

when do I tell them?

When do I tell my mother, my father,
my brothers, my sister.

Do I wait until the morning, or do I phone em/because
it's an hour and a half drive
from where we live to the morgue,
so now I'm thinking is it right for me
to keep this news to myself or do I phone people
in the middle of the night and
tell them that they have lost a valued member of the family.
I chose to tell them then and there.

It wasn't an easy decision to make but am/

So I phoned my parents first,

then my older brother,

then my sister and then my younger brother

and broke the news...

completely devastated them through the night.

Nick

I then tried to contact my Dad.

I went out for a cigarette and I kept ringing and ringing him
and I couldn't get an answer.

He's notorious for not answering his phone.

Anyway I got through to him, he and my step mum
had just had a quiet evening in,

it was about one in the morning at this stage.

I told him what happened and

they just got straight in the car and came down.

After I got off the phone a police officer came over to me
and said were you involved in the traffic accident.

He took me down into this very long narrow room,

there were two other police officers there,
there was one doctor sitting on a chair, there was another nurse.
They said sit down and they shut the door, something wasn't
right.

The doctor told then told me

Simon had been killed in the accident.

“No way he's fine, you've the got wrong person”. (*pause*)

I just felt really, really, really, really guilty.

You know I'd driven him down all the way down here
to go out for a few drinks and now suddenly he's died.

The other two are lying, no one could see the truth...I/

As soon as I left the room I saw John,

he asked me how Simon was and I said he's dead.

He just burst into tears, Sarah heard and she started crying.

John's parents were there and they couldn't believe it.

They kept saying it's a terrible accident,

don't worry it's not your fault,

the roads were really wet, the car just came off the road.

Sarah's parents were there as well,

I looked at Sarah's dad,

I kind of knew him a bit and

I was like I have to speak to someone you know.

So I said asked him if I could have a chat with him.

He said yeah so I went off with him and

I told him the truth of everything that happened.

He became very angry about what happened,

but I didn't know if he was angry about John or at me

and he kept saying look “it's okay, it's okay,

it was an accident” and I'm like “no the lies have got to stop”.

He just kept reassuring me and I'm thinking
my best friend has just been killed and now everybody's lying,
I just couldn't get it into my head.

Weather Report/Warning for New Year's Eve 2005

Jack We eventually got to the hospital about four in the morning
and that particular New Year
was one absolutely foul New Year with the weather,
it was almost hurricane.
It rained and rained and was blowin a/ there was debris/
we drove down and there was nothing on the road.

Nick My parents then wanted to get me away.
I had some glass in head and forehead and
the doctor took a few bits and pieces of that out.
Then I said to my Dad,
"I can't see Simon, I just can't see him".
I had to make that really hard decision of leaving.
I just remember sitting in the car outside the hospital,
the rain was lashing down and I looked up and
I saw a light on in one of the windows and
I thought Simon could be in there you know.
I said to my Dad,
"I can't leave, Simon's dead, he's in the hospital".
My Dad said "what can you do?
There's nothing more you can do".

Jack Am we got there at four o'clock.

We went in and we went up to reception,
introduced ourselves, am,
she took us out to this room out the back
where there's this police officer waiting.
He told us that he was a police liaison officer,
that was assigned to our family,
that he only had the basic information to tell us,
that he had no part of the investigation,
that he was there purely to support us
through the process of identifying the body.

Nick

My parents drove me to John's house to get my car.
Some of John's parents' friends were there,
they wouldn't say anything to me.
I went straight upstairs to the back room/
that's where we were going to stay/
and the whole night started flashing before me.
I just saw Simon's stuff and I completely broke down.
I felt sick to the absolute teeth.
I thought I'm just gonna take everything
coz they were all lying and everything, I just didn't know/
He had this big, really big bulky watch and a ring and
they were on the windowsill, I picked them up and
got the rest of his stuff and his bag.
Then I got to the top of the stairs and
I just stood there and everything just seemed so strange.
I mean I had been standing there only a few hours ago with
Simon,
and I had one of Sarah's bras on and shoving socks into it.
It just didn't make sense...None of it.

Jack

I wanted more and he was very apologetic,
“I’m sorry, I’ve just got to do this for you, this is my job”.
He said “What I’m going to do is, am,
we’re going to take you into the mortuary to
identify the body, am,
and at that point he made his one mistake
because what he said next suddenly gave you a bit of hope.
Because he said it may not be your son
but we need you to identify the body.
So then, sort of, well,
hang on a minute what you mean it might not be our son?
and here you got those two coppers down the other end saying
your son’s been killed in a car crash and
now you’re saying to me it might not be my son?
“He was dressed in fancy dress costume and
we’ve only got the bare minimum of personal effects,
in fact all we’ve got it is his driver’s licence
found in the wallet that was on the body.
It may not be your son.”
So now your hope is lifted.

(takes a sip of water) silence

The mortician came in and
I got this incredible sense of calmness from this guy.
Guy in his thirties, he had a white t-shirt on
with a big motorcycle skull crash helmet on it,
yeah pair of leather motorcycle trousers on,
big pair of biker boots, am, long hair in a pony tail

and he was incredibly down to earth and his am, (*struggles for a word*),

his, his humanity, his humanity

as a mortuary guy washed over me, am,

and I almost felt he could read what I was feeling or how I was feeling.

He introduced himself and said look we're going to go into the room, Simon's am, I've done the best I can with him.

There was quite a bit of facial disfigurement but

I've done what I could for him, am, cleaned him up,

washed his hair, coz there was lots of blood and, am,

we've covered him in a blanket and he's on a bed in there.

So if you go in there and when you know it's him

just nod your head and make some sort of acknowledgement

that it's your son,

then stay in there for as long as you feel like.

So I took Tina in, my wife, the minute I saw his hair I,

it was Simon, and of course all that

hope just went flooding back out of me again.

But I did have the strangest feeling...

although that was Simon's body on the bed, he wasn't there.

I don't know if you've ever had experience of /

but I looked at Tina and she looked at me and

whilst you could recognise what would have been the carcass,

the spirit had completely gone.

Am the body was cold to touch and

I didn't feel the need to stay for very long.

Yeah I did break down, gave him a hug all the rest of it,

feeling to see if all his limbs/

coz at that point we hadn't even been told how he died.

All we'd been told is that he had been killed

but we'd seen no doctors, had no idea how it happened and
all he had on him was a cut on the bridge of his nose
and they had put a plaster over it.

Apart from that, I checked to see if he had a seatbelt on.

There was a big bruise across his chest,
which to me confirmed that he had...so, am,
yeah I didn't need to stay there at all.

Nick

I left the house, my Dad drove me home in my car.

On the way home I just felt sick.

I kept pinching myself,

I must have cried all the way home.

I also had Simon's phone on me,

it was still turned on,

there were some text messages from his Mum.

"Happy New Year. Sweet Dreams son, I love you always, Mum."

I just had to read them, I don't know why I did/ I felt guilty.

There were so many things going round in my head.

I started thinking what's Simon's dad going to think,

he's going to kill me, Jack's going to kill me.

Jack

Dawn was breaking just as we got home

probably about quarter to seven in the morning.

I remember going upstairs to lie down for a bit...

so many questions running through my head.

Bear in mind we still had no details of what happened

other than...

we had a great night,

had a party,

two police turn up,

tell you your son's dead,
down to the mortuary,
yeah that's my son,
back again...
how the hell do you cope with something like that?
How do you deal with it?

Nick

That night I just stayed awake all night,
thinking about Simon and everything that had gone on.
A few hours later I got up went into my wardrobe,
got out a shirt and trousers and went down to the kitchen to iron
it.
My Dad came in and he was like What are you doing?
I said I've got to go over and see Jack.
He said I'll come with you.
I said No this is something I've got to do on my own.
I got Simon's bag and got all his stuff together,
put it in the back of my car and drove over there.
When I got out of the car, I left his stuff in the boot.
It's funny but I didn't want to give it back in a way.
It was like this was all I had left of him.
Their driveway's quite steep,
the house is quite imposing and
I just remember walking, walking up and up,
seemed like a lifetime.
I knocked on the door.

SFX - Gemini FM – Lunchtime News – New Year's Day 2006

POLICE confirmed this morning that a 19-year-old Plymouth man had been killed in a car accident in Cornwall. He was a rear seat passenger in a car which left the A3047 road and hit a tree. The driver and two other passengers were injured and taken to hospital. Two of them were kept in overnight, although their injuries are not believed to be life-threatening. The road was closed for five hours. No other vehicle was involved in the accident and police said that it was not clear how the car came to leave the road, although weather conditions in the area at the time were described as 'atrocious' with strong winds and heavy rain.

Jack About lunchtime there was a knock on the front door.
I went to answer it.
I opened the front door and there was a lad
about the same age as Simon, baldy headed guy,
who I vaguely recollected
but couldn't remember his name or who the hell he was.
He was dressed very smartly and he looked upset.

Nick I just stood there and he stared at me/

Jack I'm thinking word has got out and it's one of Simon's friends
he collapses in my arms saying/

Nick I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry, it's all my fault/

Jack He's completely overwrought with grief/

Nick I'm so sorry. It shouldn't have been Simon. I'm so sorry/

Jack He kept apologising/

Nick I'm Nick, I was in the car with Simon last night

Jack Bloody hell, you better come in/

Nick He brought me inside.

Jack's mum and dad and his wife were there...

He made me a cup of coffee, which I couldn't hold.

Jack

I'm thinking like ok what's going on here?

Was this chap driving?

We didn't know any of the details at this stage.

"You better start from the beginning".

Blackout

SCENE 4

Lights up to reveal Jack sitting at the table again.

David is on the phone.

DJ

Let's bring in David. Good evening David.

You're a paramedic is that right?

David

Yes Scott. I'm actually retired now,

but I was a paramedic for 30 years.

I've also trained paramedics and blue-light drivers.

DJ

Ok so you know the horrors of attending these crashes.

It is obvious that Jack is listening to this.

David

I do indeed Scott and you wouldn't believe

some of the things I've seen over the years.

I've seen people die both young and old in the most horrific ways.

Some of those images stay with you for life.

I found it fascinating to listen to that young guy Kevin

you had on earlier, you know,

when he was talking about speeding and

driving so fast along those country roads
just for the sheer thrill of it.
I got so annoyed.
Do people ever stop and think about
the effect all this speeding has on other people?
So many of these deaths could really be avoided.
I run this course in the Devon drivers centre now
for people who have been caught speeding.
We take them through this kind of ripple effect,
so they see for themselves the wider effect their speeding has...

Lights fade on David as he resumes doing the crossword.

Throughout the next speech Jack is putting the rest of the items back in the box.

Jack: Simon's sister was six at the time and

she and Simon were inseparable, she totally idolised him.
He was a typical big brother who absolutely
doted on his little sister.
I used even sometimes get jealous
that she'd prefer to spend more time
with him on his playstation...(laughs)...
She at the age of six...
it's surprising how grown up you become at the age of six
when something like that happens,
she was inconsolable.
She understood the concept of death,
Simon was gone, yeah she knew what death meant.
It's probably affected her more than anybody.
You know it's three years down the line
and she still won't sleep on her own,

she won't go up the stairs on her own.
She constantly needs to be supported...
she has all sorts of bad dreams, nightmares.
It really has affected her,
every night she still gets into our bed
coz she won't sleep alone.
We're trying to get her counselling
and trying to get her through this.
Simon's other little sister was only two at the time
and didn't really understand what was going on.
Now that she's five and a half, she's started asking questions.
The effect it's had on all our lives has just been incredible.

***He places the remaining item, a small teddy bear, in the shoe box and puts the lid on.
He stands and puts his jacket on then picks up the box.***

So I got on and organised the funeral.
I realised as head of the family that I'd be carrying/
and I was stiff upper lip and you know,
if anybody's going to get the family through it,
it's going to be me.
So a certain part of me shut down
in my own personal grief, and emotions
and yeah you know
man in cave and all that...
yeah yeah men don't cry yeah.

Jack exits.

didn't really know who I was,
but talking at the funeral really
lifted a weight off my shoulders.
I felt that I got the chance to put
Simon to sort of, rest in my mind.
I hadn't really had much of a chance
to talk about what had happened.

*Jack enters the bar. He is looking for someone. He sees Nick and goes over to him.
Nick stands, they shake hands and embrace. They stay frozen in the embrace and the
light comes up on David. He glances at Nick and Jack as if a memory of a scene many
times before.*

David The most difficult thing I found to deal with
was where you were at the scene and
you had perhaps family members and
you know in your head that one of them has died.
You could never say that,
you could never pronounce them dead,
only a practitioner can do that.
But the most difficult thing is,
if you have one over there and one over there
and one is saying "how is so and so?" and
you know that person has died.
I used to find that so stressful.
I did not know what to say and I never found a form of words/
I guess I stumbled through it and
they probably saw through me if the truth be known,
because I never found a satisfactory way of dealing with that...
saying the right thing.

Lights fade on David

Jack: What are you having?

Nick: I'll have another one of those.

Jack exits.

Nick You know, the morning after the accident
 When I called around to Simon's house... (he pauses)
 They thought I was driving.
 They didn't know any of the details.
 That was the hardest thing I've ever done,
 trying to tell them...
 that I was the last person with him...
 tell them how he died...
 it was awful.

Jack re-enters with two bottles and joins Nick at the table. They clink bottles and drink.

Jack It's hard to believe it's been two years.

They freeze and the opening bars of Under Pressure by Queen are heard.

Light Fades

Light back up on David and Nick and Jack.

Fade to Blackout

PART III: CRITICAL REFLECTION

In this next section, I offer the reader a reflexive and critical analysis on the practice of writing *Under Pressure* and the experience of the play in rehearsal and performance.

Producing Road Safety Testimonies: Finding a Story

Unlike the previous project, I had not been invited to document a particular group of people talking about their experiences of road fatalities. Therefore I decided to adopt a similar approach to the one I undertook when researching the subject of cancer in Ireland. I began the process of finding testimonies with initial research into the area of road safety and young drivers. I conducted preliminary informal interviews with police personnel, paramedics and council staff to get a sense of the extent of the problem and the education initiatives that were currently in circulation. I also visited some schools in the Devon area and spoke to young people to get a sense of what they felt might be the best approach. Applied theatre scholar Anthony Jackson, in his book *Theatre in Education*, observed the following in a series of interviews he conducted with the fourteen- to sixteen-year olds who had seen his play *Love Trouble*:

When young people experience a piece of theatre, they will generally experience it holistically and process it as an immediate, unfolding entity – not content followed by form, but a dramatic narrative peopled by ‘real’ characters who will be more or less convincing as they progress through that narrative. Believability, empathy, clarity of story-line, relevance to their own lives and concerns, enjoyment of the vitality of the performance and indeed of the moments of recognition – these are the factors that weigh in their minds, rather than ‘learning outcome’ or behaviour modification. Any evaluation of this kind of programme has to take account of the way young people experience theatre. (2007: 207)

I wanted to get a sense of the type of story that young people would be interested in listening to and whether they felt there would be anything to be gained from watching a piece of theatre that was based on real people’s experiences.

It was also during this time that an internet search revealed a number of websites dedicated to raising awareness about road safety. From these websites it was also apparent that using real people's stories was one of the ways awareness was being raised. One of the websites that I looked at in particular was that of the charity *Brake*.²⁴ I contacted them through email to see if they knew anyone who might be interested in speaking to me. They put me in touch with a man whose 19-year-old son had been killed in a road traffic collision on New Year's Eve a few years previously. Our first contact was through email. The following are the initial emails we sent to each other prior to my interviewing him. I have chosen to include them here as they give a sense of the rapport that was beginning to develop between us before we met in person. As the first research project demonstrated this rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee is significant in terms of the depth of details a person reveals.

Subject: Your plays
Sent: 18 April 2007
To: he217@exeter.ac.uk

Helena hi,

My names[sic] XXXXXX and the guys at "Brake" have asked me to get in touch with you about helping with your "uni" stuff.

Not sure how much I can help you but I am willing to give it a go, my own experience is that my son XXXXX was killed in a car crash three years ago at the age of nineteen.

I have done some work for Brake before, talks and the suchlike so if you want to get in touch please do.

I live in XXXXX but work in Exeter and am pretty flexible with my time, either ring me on XXXXXXXXX or email me if you think I can help.

Kind regards,

XXXXX

²⁴The charity particularly focuses on people whose lives have been devastated by a death or serious injury on the road as they believe they are often the forgotten victims. <http://www.brake.org.uk/>

Date: Wed, 18 Apr 2007 19:26:29 +0100
Subject: Re: Your plays
From: he217@exeter.ac.uk
To: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear XXXX

I'm very sorry to hear about your son, XXXXX. First of all thank you so much for getting in contact with me, I really appreciate it.

Before I ring you I'll just give you some background as to the nature of the project. Exstream Theatre Company are an interactive and educational theatre company affiliated to the University of Exeter. They have been commissioned by Devon County Council to research and develop a play on Road Safety aimed initially at year 11 to increase awareness and change attitudes to road safety.

I am a playwright currently in the first year of my PhD in the Drama department of Exeter University and I have been hired to write the play. I have previously written two plays which have been produced in Ireland (I am Irish), one on the subject of Cancer and the other on Domestic Violence.

Both plays have been written using real words spoken by real people. "Less Than A Year" tells the story of a young teenage girl who died from Ewing's Sarcoma from the parent's perspective. I met with the parents, recorded their story and used it to create a play. "Walking Away" is based on the testimonies of women who have survived domestic abuse. It won Best Production at the Belltable Unfringed Festival in Limerick in February of this year.

Basically I am interested in using theatre to share the real stories behind issues affecting society. For this play I want to explore and share with these young teenagers what it is like for the real people who are affected by crashes. Whether that be people who have been left injured, family members who have been left bereaved, the emergency services who are called to the scenes etc. Hopefully by listening to these stories young people will rethink their attitudes to getting behind the wheel of a car. What are the stories behind the statistics?

I'm living in Exeter so if you are interested perhaps we could arrange to meet next week at some point and I could record your story?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks

Helena

Subject: Your plays
Sent: 18 April 2007
To: he217@exeter.ac.uk

Hi Helena,

Thanks for your reply, sounds like a very interesting and worthwhile project, count me in.

I work on XXXXXXXXXXXX so not too far from the uni, I have my own office as I run the business and therefore would suggest you visit me.

Should be free all next week apart from Friday so ring and we will arrange a time and just so that you understand my interest, I find talking about XXXXXX and what happened to him helps me cope with the loss and helps me feel that if others learn from my experience then some good will have come from XXXXXX's loss.

I look forward to hearing from you.

XXXXXX

P.S. I like the Irish so no probs there either!! just had a great weekend in Dublin!!!

As the emails indicate I met with the man in his workplace one afternoon and the interview took place in his office. At the beginning of this interview I enquired if it was okay to record the interview, explaining that if I was going to use his story in the play I wanted to capture the particular words he used to describe the experience. He said that he was fine with that and did not seem too perturbed by the presence of the recorder. I also told him that at this point in the process I had no idea what shape or form the play would take and even if I would eventually use his story in the play; I was interested in hearing his story so that I could get a better understanding of how a person is affected by losing someone in a road traffic collision.

In the previous chapter I wrote about how a testimony which occurs within the context of an interview is the product of a unique interaction between two people and how my particular approach to interviewing is to see it as more of a conversation. I also observed that disclosing personal details about my own life during the conversation

helped to create an atmosphere of mutual trust which facilitated disclosure of a more intimate testimony. When gathering the testimonies for *Walking Away*, this approach facilitated the disclosure of very private and personal details about the women's lives. I followed a similar approach when interviewing for this play and found the same to be true. On one particular occasion, when Jack was referring to going into the morgue to identify his son's body, he asked me if I had ever seen a dead body. I revealed that, unfortunately, I had seen one just three weeks previously. I explained how my cousin Marc had died suddenly at the age of twenty-three (this was the age Simon would have been at the time of the interview had he lived), and I recalled for Jack my experience of going into the funeral home to see his body. I believe that Jack's knowledge that I had experience of a similar situation and so could identify with some of the feelings associated with that experience, encouraged him to open up more to me during the interview.

Further evidence of how the interview as a site of production can impact on the dramaturgy of the play occurred when during the interview Jack spoke about his son's friend who was a passenger in the back seat of the car on the night of the collision. He related to me the story of how the friend had arrived at his front door the following morning and told him his version of what had happened the previous night. I was immediately struck by how his experience of the collision contrasted to what Jack had told me about his experience of the evening. Jack offered to put me in touch with him as he thought he might also be interested in talking to me. A week later I received the following email:

Subject: Re: Your plays
XXXX@hotmail.com
Sent: 26 April 2007 16:43
To: he217@exeter.ac.uk

Hi Helena,

Just spoke with XXXX and XXXX and as expected they would be only too happy to talk to you, thanks for today hope to see you again soon!

XXXX

The Benefits of Practice: When Gadgets Go Wrong

During the course of my research for project one I had the opportunity to interview the playwright Robin Soans. Prior to the interview I knew that his approach included taking written notes during the interview rather than making audio recordings of the interviews. In an accompanying essay to the published play text of *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook* Soans writes, '[g]adgets go wrong, need constant adjustment, interrupt concentration and put people off' (2004: 8). He then creates a script by reconstructing his notes, claiming, in most cases, to use the words spoken by the people he has interviewed 'verbatim'. During the interview he disclosed that I had avoided using this approach in the previous project as I was concerned what might be lost when having to write down everything the person said in the interview. I was also concerned as to how this would affect my relationship with the interviewee if my attention was more focused on note-taking and how would this impact upon what they told me. My approach when gathering testimony had prior to this project had always involved making audio recordings of the interviews that I conducted. I did this for a number of reasons – so that I would capture everything that was said; so that I could be more present as a listener; and so the situation would feel more like a conversation than an interview. However, I was to find out for myself that gadgets do go wrong when conducting one of the interviews for this project, the implications of which I will discuss later in my reflection. I was interested in trying out this approach, but I was concerned that choosing to rely on notes and memory rather than creating an aural recording of the interview might not capture the testimony in its entirety. This could then result in my

not capturing something that may have been of significance in the actual interview. This theory of mine was particularly influenced by my previous experience when gathering the testimony for *Less Than A Year*. When I went to interview the parents the mother did most of the talking and it was only when I was transcribing the audio recording of the interview that I realised the significance of the father's testimony. This had a significant impact on the dramaturgy of the play as instead of creating a play which featured just the mother's testimony, which was my initial intention following the interview, I decided to include the testimony of the father. Consequently, the play features the characters of both 'Mother' and 'Father', both of who testify to their experience of the time their daughter was diagnosed with cancer to the time of her death.

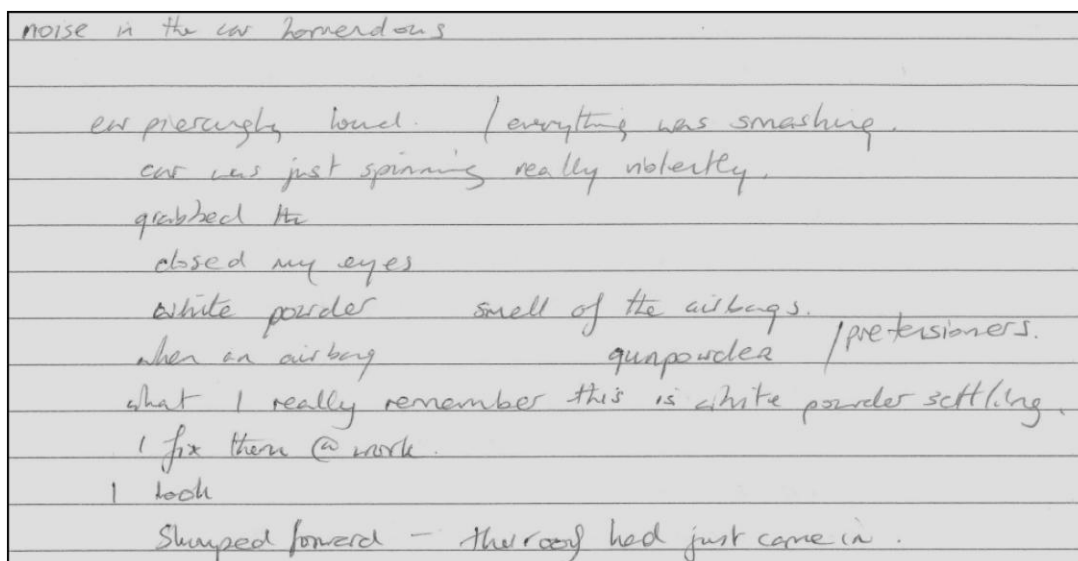
One of the benefits of conducting research through practice is that while sometimes in theory you might decide against carrying out a certain task the practice of actually carrying out the task can result in questioning one's assumptions and consequently rethinking one's beliefs. When I went to interview Simon's friend my voice-recorder would not work and I ended up having to write notes throughout the interview, and, consequently, rely on both these and memory when incorporating his testimony into the script. As a result of this malfunction, two important occurrences that affected the dramaturgy of the play came to light.

While I was trying to figure out what was wrong with the 'gadget', and in an attempt to shift the focus from me and my incompetence, I gave Nick an excerpt of the script I had drafted so far which included some of Jack's testimony. I explained that reading this would give him an indication of how I intended to use his testimony in the play. When Nick finished reading this excerpt, he said to me that he had never really thought about what it was like for Simon's parents that night. This influenced my

decision on how to include the two narratives in the script. I decided to create a theatrical framework which would allow the narratives to reveal themselves independently of each other. This I felt would give the audience a chance to see how people can experience and be affected by the same event differently. The decision to juxtapose them at particular points in relation to how they were both experiencing the event created an alternative dialogue between the two narratives and also served to heighten the dramatic tension of the piece.

My inability to get the recorder working left me with no option but to take notes while he was speaking. The note taking created an entirely different atmosphere in this interview than what I had experienced in others previously. Having read Jack's testimony, Nick began to tell me his story. I was intent on capturing as much of Nick's language as possible so I just let him talk while I wrote down as much as I could of what he was saying. The result was that Nick recounted his experience with very little interruption from me.

It soon became apparent that it was impossible to write down every single word he said; this is evident in the extract from my notes below in Figure 3.2.



noise in the car horrendous
car presurghly loud. (everything was smashing,
car was just spinning really violently,
grabbed the
closed my eyes
white powder smell of the airbags.
when an airbag gunpowder / pretensioners.
what I really remember this is white powder settling.
I fix them @ work.
I look
Slumped forward - the roof had just come in.

Fig 3.1 – extract from the notes I handwrote during the interview with Nick.

I was immediately concerned that I would not be able to remember everything he said and the effect this might have on the accuracy of his testimony when I later went to incorporate into the text. To counteract this it was necessary to immediately write up his testimony from the notes that I had taken when I returned home. Here I was forced to do this from my memory of the conversation and I was conscious of how this might result in my imposing my own voice on his testimony. The following is how the above notes appeared written in the script:

Nick: I just remember the noise in the car was horrendous.
It was ear piercingly loud, everything was smashing all around us
and the car was spinning really violently.
I just grabbed the seat in front of me for all I was worth and
closed my eyes...there was bits of glass flying everywhere.
When the car stopped I opened them
and I just remember, I just remember
this white powder falling around me
and the smell...the airbags had exploded,
and I fix and test a lot of cars right
and when an airbag goes off there's this smell of gunpowder,
it's from the pretensioners,
but what I really remember when I opened my eyes
is all this white powder settling around us.

Maintaining the aesthetic of 'reportage' and 'memory'

When beginning the process of writing the script, I paid particular attention to what I felt was the significance of the testimonies that I had gathered. I considered very carefully my reasons for using these testimonies and on the particular manner in which I wanted to resituate them in performance. From the beginning my instinct was to favour the aesthetic of 'reportage' rather than dramatising the material into scenes. In *Walking Away*, the message contained within the play was that it was possible to walk away from violent relationships. The experience of listening to these testimonies of domestic violence proved important and effective. The message I wanted to communicate through this play was about choices. I wanted in particular to highlight the effect that

our choices can have, not only on our own lives but on the lives of others. Rather than preaching to young people the 'do's and don'ts' of driving, my aim was to try to reach them on another level by highlighting the fact that it is their behaviour and attitudes toward driving that can have fatal and life changing consequences not only for themselves but also for others. I felt that the details surrounding the death of a teenager, particularly as told from a parent's and his friend's point of view was particularly demonstrative of this point. Moreover by placing these narratives alongside the testimony of a paramedic my intention was to show the impact these types of deaths can have on other people. I also felt that it would shift this story from the local to the more universal.

One of the criticisms of this type of theatre is that it is often too locally based and that these types of plays do not tend to travel very well. One of the Council's aims when commissioning the project was that it could tour to schools across the country. I wanted to find a way that this play could connect with local ideologies regardless of where it might travel. I wanted the play to have relevance for young people wherever they were. In the same way that the statistics could change in *Walking Away*, I wanted to find something that could also be altered accordingly in this piece. In this case it was the radio element. For this production of the play Gemini FM, the local radio station at the time in Exeter (the station has now changed to Heart FM), recorded the sections of the script that required the voice of the radio presenter. I envisaged that these sections could be recorded without too much difficulty by other radio stations around the country.

The Play: 'Writing' versus 'Wrighting'

The three characters in the play are 'Jack' whose son was killed in the collision, 'Nick', his son's friend who was in the car with him and 'David' a retired paramedic.

As I listened to the language that both ‘Jack’ and ‘Nick’ used to recall the events that led to the death of ‘Simon’ I realised that it offered a tremendous insight into the incredible effect this tragedy had on their lives. This was the message that I wanted the audience to take from the piece. I wanted to extend the boundaries of effect that result from irresponsible attitudes to driving. My aim when using the language that ‘David’ the paramedic spoke was not only to give an insight into the practicalities of dealing with road traffic collisions on a daily basis but also to give the play a wider frame of reference. The title of the play *Under Pressure* is meant to symbolise the pressure that many teenagers find themselves under in today’s society.

In Chapter One I referred to David Hare, and how he did not always incorporate speech verbatim into the playscript for *The Permanent Way*. In an interview with Richard Boon, where Hare admits to interfering with what people said, he does give an example of where he did lift the following speech ‘word-for-word’ from a transcript because he felt it was ‘just the most extraordinary evocation of a moment’ (2004: np). It is the speech of the ‘First Bereaved Mother’ describing what it felt like as a parent to wait for the news of her son’s death:

On the night we were waiting to hear, we were standing in the dark, September – so the nights were getting dark already – making pots of tea and not drinking them – and we just stood in the kitchen. And I kept just saying 'Well if he's gone, it's written', and I felt as if this was coming from somewhere – and my husband said to me and it was in the dark - and he'd just made another cup of tea which he'd thrown away and he said 'Maureen' – (to Bereaved Father) You don't mind me saying this do you ? He said 'Maureen', and he was crying, and he said 'If Pete has gone you've got to forgive me'. And I said 'What do you mean?' And he said 'I'm not going to stay here, I'm going to go.' He was going to kill himself. (in Boon)

When transcribing the interview with the father I became aware of how the language he used produced very vivid descriptions of what he went through. One particular moment I found particularly revealing was when he describes how he reacted when the police came to his door. During our conversation he used the word ‘riveted’ to describe the

moment when he heard the police at the door asking to speak to him. In Chapter One I discussed that according to Audi, we not only learn the content of the testimony but we also learn *from* the content of the testimony. From his use of the word ‘riveted’ we learn that he was ‘firmly established’ (definition from OED) to the spot where he was standing on the top of the stairs. This suggests that at this point he did not want to or could not move forward. His testimony also suggests that he knew the moment that he moved forward his life would never be the same and that he would have no control over the events that were about to take place. I also referred in Chapter One to how, when a person is testifying, they are ‘deploying the capacity of the imagination to place the events before our eyes, as if we were there’ (in Dooley & Kearny 1998:16) and that the testifier’s aim is to ‘produce in his hearers not only belief but also an imaginative and affective involvement in the state of affairs he is representing’ (Pratt in Carlson 2008: 68). I found the father’s use of the word ‘riveted’ strongly captured the truth of that moment for him. His description of this moment evokes so much in terms of what it must be like for someone who knows what they are about to hear will change their life forever. This is further evidence of when it makes sense to attend to testimony rather than rewriting it. In this instance I felt that his testimony would have lost its significance had I chose to rewrite it rather than incorporate it directly into the script.

Below is an example of how Jack’s description appears in my transcription of our conversation, followed by an example of how it appeared in the script.

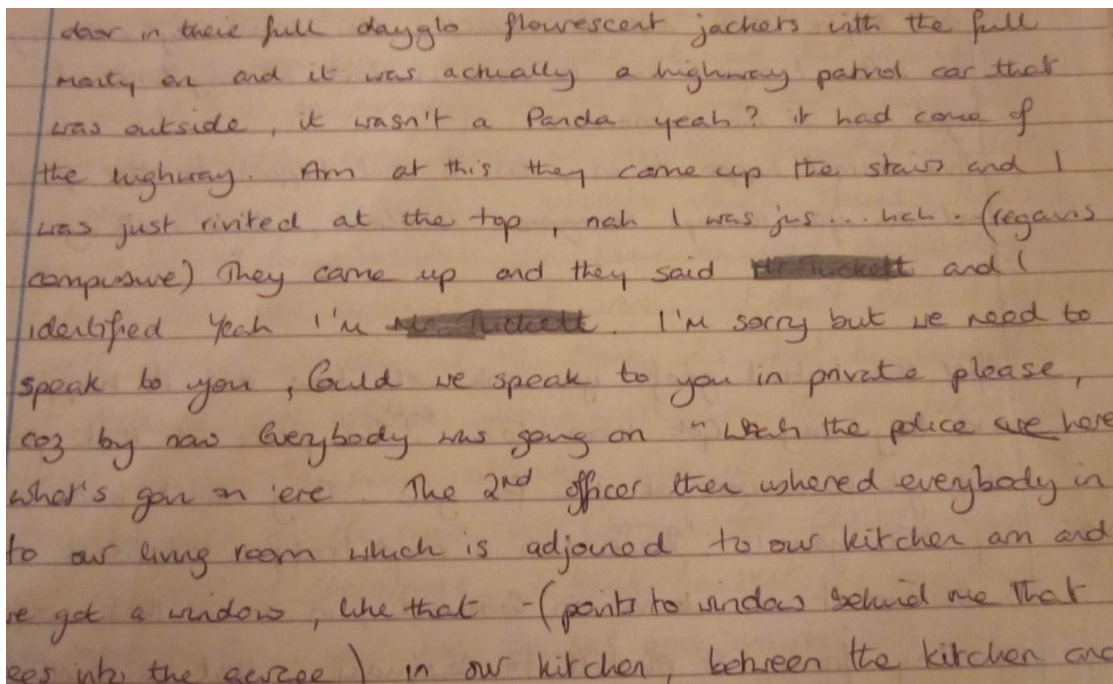


Fig 3.2 – extract from my handwritten transcription of the interview with ‘Jack’

The Demands of ‘Reportage’: Performing Testimony and Storytelling

But the principal skill required of the actor remains that of a storyteller, and his or her key relationship with the audience.
(Soans 2008: 21)

Much of the acting was direct address to the audience which means, as you're not acting opposite someone, / you don't have their energy to use in a dramatic exchange. You have to keep to your little map. Also, the general acting note was less, less, less, to make it as super-real as possible.
(Chung: 2005 57)

In his introduction to *Acting (Re)Considered*, Phillip Zarrilli maintains that ‘the psychologically whole “character” is no longer central to many types of contemporary theatre’ (2002: 22). He insists, however, that regardless of whatever actions and tasks the actor must perform, ‘the “material” conditions of his or her work’ still ‘include capturing the audience’s attention and engaging their awareness as well as emotional and aesthetic sensibilities’. Similarly, Robert Gordon in *The Purpose of Playing: Modern Acting Theories in Perspective* maintains that the actor’s body must be capable of expressing itself in varied and subtle forms regardless of whatever tasks he is faced

with (2006: 2). However, as Gordon argues, how this is negotiated is dependent on what is being represented and why such a representation is being made (2006: 2). I touched briefly on some of the challenges that the actors encountered when performing in *Walking Away*, however, in this project I reflect on this in more detail. As there are a number of similarities between this type of performance and storytelling I will draw from the discourse of storytelling in order to contextualise my reflection.

In the quotation at the beginning of this section, actor Chipu Chung²⁵ points out that one of the challenges of direct address is the loss of the energy that you normally get from a dramatic exchange with another character. From observations during the rehearsals for *Under Pressure*, it was apparent that the actors were nervous about the idea of directly addressing the audience, and particularly for such a length of time. Normally direct address occurs in the form of asides and represents a significantly smaller portion of the script. A fear about direct address is not unusual among actors. As Irish storyteller Jack Lynch suggests that ‘...some actors are fearful of a style where you address the audience directly [...] in naturalism there is the fourth wall and a lot of actors are afraid to go beyond that’ (in Wilson 2005: 163). Lynch stresses the importance of making eye contact with your listeners. According to Lynch ‘[i]t’s important in telling stories to see people’s eyes [...] you know they’re following the thread of the story [when you can] see people’s faces’ (2006: 163). He finds that storytellers who have ‘come through acting’ often prefer to be lit and to look out into the darkness. He also points out that ‘many actors make lousy storytellers’ because they don’t recognise ‘the direct, immediate, and interactive nature of storytelling where in contrast to most theatre the emphasis is on *telling* rather than *showing*’ (2006: 163).

In rehearsals I asked the actors to consider the fact that they would be looking directly at the audience and asked them in particular to not be afraid to make eye

²⁵ Chung is referring to when she performed in Robin Soan’s *Talking to Terrorists*.

contact. One of the actors, said that when he had to directly address an audience in the past, he normally picked a point somewhere in the audience, just above the audiences' eyes. He did this, he said, because he did not want to make the audience feel uncomfortable by eyeballing them. My response was to remind him of the greater aim of the play. I reminded the actors that they were telling this story directly to the audience because it was of some relevance to them and that they had something to gain by listening to it. I spoke to them of how in *Walking Away*, because of the proximity of the audience, there was no way an actor could 'cheat' eye contact with audience members. To help set them at ease I shared with them my own experience of performing in *Walking Away* and how I could empathise with how unsettling this could be but at the same time I also knew how important it was.

It also became apparent through conversations with the actors that part of the actors' fear was also because of the fact that they were going to be talking to young people and they were worried about whether or not they would hold their attention. Robin Soans writes about this fear of not holding the audience's attention in reference to his role in *The Waiting Room* (1995). However, this fear was soon abated in the actual performance. He writes, '[a] few lines into my first long monologue, I became aware that the audience was listening. And not just listening, but really listening' (2008: 22). He continues, '[t]he audience were paying a different kind of attention to this play, an unsophisticated attention which was new to me' (2008: 22). The 'unsophisticated attention' that Soans is referring to here is an interesting concept and one I can relate to from my experience of performing in *Walking Away* and observing audiences watching *Under Pressure*. Drawing on my own observations this seemed to stem from the use of ordinary language in combination with direct address to the audience.

In a review of *Less Than A Year* Irish theatre scholar and critic Patrick Lonergan

wrote:

[t]heir (the parents') story is told in a form of speech that is subjective, self-contradictory and full of slips and non-sequiturs. In a work of fiction, this might seem like bad writing, but here it provides invaluable insight into the couple's struggles to come to terms with their daughter's illness, and the apparent indifference of the Irish health service to their situation. (Lonergan 2006: np)

From my observations when working with actors with this model of Theatre of Testimony, the actor's starting point must always be on why they are speaking this testimony, as this will influence how they speak the testimony. This is not dissimilar to Piscator's demands for a new kind of actor for his Epic Theatre which, as we have already seen, was the foundation of contemporary documentary theatre. Piscator wrote:

The Epic Theatre, of course, required a new actor. I could no longer use the classic declamatory actor—in love with his voice and uninterested in what he said, but only in how he said it. Neither could I accept the Chekovian actor, hypnotizing himself behind the “fourth wall.” (1970: 304)

My play *Less Than A Year* was produced by Island Theatre Company in Limerick in November 2006, and Seamus Moran (who played Father) spoke of the challenge of working with this type of text in an interview with Sean Rocks for the RTE Radio One arts programme *The Eleventh Hour*. The following is his response to Rocks' question about how his role on Ireland's soap *Fair City* was useful to him when approaching this role:

It probably helps having done some television acting because as you say it, the characters are very, very real but, having said that I still found it extraordinarily different and it's been a fascinating process because people don't, their speech patterns are totally erratic. That's been very difficult to master and to learn and no writer could write the way these people speak and everybody, everybody's speech patterns are unique to themselves...em...so that's been challenging but then once, once you've grasped that and you've got that in you as it were, it's amazing how the words, the way they are phrased makes you do things physically and feel

things physically without having to go through any sort of an intellectual process if you like. So I suppose it becomes very intuitive and you really do get the feeling of kind of allowing these people, coz you're very conscious that they are real people and you have a huge responsibility to them and to their story and you kind of get the feeling that they...you've just got to let them live through you if that doesn't sound, it's probably going to sound pretentious, but that's what it feels like when you are up there. (RTE: 2006)

Moreover, Joan Sheehy, who played the part of Mother, while describing it as 'one of the toughest...if not the toughest challenge [she has] faced as an actor in over twenty years' also acknowledged the importance of trusting the language:

I found a huge difference working on this text....in terms of language, interpretation and performance. The language gives you everything you need to tell the story and find the character...the rhythms of speech, the repetition, the oddness of expression is so rich and particular that you have to immerse yourself in that and run with it and not impose a character or style of performance. More than anything I've ever done I had to trust the language and kill my instincts to embellish or act or strive for significant or emotional moments. (Sheehy: 2007 personal email)

Both Seamus' and Joan's responses to working with this type of material reflect testimonial theatre-maker Anna Deavere Smith's interest in how an 'interview text works as a *physical, audible, performable* vehicle' (Smith 1994: xxiii, original emphasis). Smith further argues: 'Words are not an end in themselves' but rather 'are a means to evolving the character of the person who spoke them' (1994: xxiii). The actor's main task is recognise the essence of the testimony and allow it to do its work; which, as we have already seen in Chapter One and earlier in this chapter, is to produce in those who hear it 'not only belief but also an imaginative and affective involvement in the state of affairs it represents' (Pratt in Carlson, 2008: 68). Observing her fellow actors in *The Permanent Way*,²⁶ Bella Merlin noted 'that the more simple the acting style and the less cluttered the physical vocabulary or the vocal colouring, the more deeply moving the performances could be' (2007: 48). The actor must respect and

²⁶ Merlin is referring in particular to Kika Markham when playing a children's writer who survived the fourth, Potter's Bar crash and Miles Anderson when playing the Squadron Leader who rescued her from the carnage.

attend to the essence of the testimony if the audience is to benefit from listening to it.

To achieve a close reading, study of the testimony is needed, as well as the discipline to be exact when learning the text.

Brecht did not use the testimony of ordinary people in his theatre but I found his concept of alienation, or distancing, useful in terms of a starting point in working with the actors, particularly when they were faced with speaking another person's testimony in the absence of the person who spoke the testimony in the first place. Brecht writes:

At no moment must [the actor] go so far as to be wholly transformed into the character he played. The verdict: 'he didn't act Lear, he was Lear' would be annihilating blow to him. He just has to show the character, or rather he has to do more than just get into it (1964: 193-194).

One of the things that I did not want to happen was for the actor to try and imitate or replicate the person whose testimony that they were speaking. It was more important that they understood the words they were speaking and that the syntax of the words had a particular and unique relevance. One of the exercises that I used in rehearsal was getting the actors to read their lines in the third person. I wanted the actors to treat the words as a physical entity. Also they needed to consider the action that they were doing – that of telling a story. I wanted to create a gap between them and the story they were telling so that they could appreciate the essence of the story. In performance, however, it is narration in the first person and not the third that is required, but from my experience this proved a useful exercise for the actors in helping them to achieve this gap.

The form's propensity to have the characters directly address the audience means the task of the actor in a theatre of testimony play is similar to that of a storyteller.²⁷ Many storytellers, especially those with actor's training, talk of their need

²⁷ The term 'Platform storytelling' is used more commonly in the United States. Here in Britain it is usually referred to as 'performance storytelling' or 'theatrical storytelling'. For a more detailed discussion on this form of storytelling, see Chapter 3 in *Storytelling and Theatre*, Wilson, 2006.

to learn a different kind of physicality for storytelling, to resist the actorly impulse to mime, or play out, the actions of the story, but rather to develop the language of gesture (Wilson: 2006: 80). For storyteller Michael Parent, '[t]he storyteller remains a vehicle for the story and the audience remains a repository for it, and the storyteller must not allow his/her artistry or ego to get in the way of it' (in Wilson 2006: 84), while storyteller Daniel Morden insists that 'the storyteller's main task is to become invisible in order to allow the story to work its magic' (in Wilson, 2006: 84). As a director this was how I tried to encourage the actors to see themselves; as storytellers. During the rehearsal period we discussed different ways of telling stories and tried various approaches. John Palmer who played the role of 'David' the paramedic in *Under Pressure* reflecting after the performance saw his task as being:

to represent, as accurately as I could, the character which emerged to me from the words I was given rather than to try to make the part compelling or amusing for the audience which can often, quite justifiably, be the motivation when interpreting more conventional scripts (Palmer 2010: np).

John's comments reflect the different approach he adopted when working with testimony.

Under Pressure in performance

I am sitting at the back of the hall. The young people coming into the hall are talkative and chatting amongst themselves. They are typical of their age groups. I wonder what they will make of the play. I find that I am more nervous than I thought. I am not up there performing so therefore have no control. Questions that keep coming into my mind include – have I done enough with this material? Will they find the story interesting? Will it hold their attention and will they listen to it? What will they take from it? I start to question my decision to have the actors narrate the story directly to the audience rather than recreating scenes that are contained in the story. I wonder will the actors be able to hold the audience's attention. The pre-show music ends and the play starts...well, here we go I think... (Enright 2008: np)

If playwrights insist on dramatising the contents of the testimony - as opposed to staging the act of testifying - I argue that they are denying an audience the potential to actively listen to what is being said, learn from the content of the testimony. My decision to have audience members seated at the same tables as the actors during *Walking Away* proved to be a novel experience for many audience members. As I have discussed previously this decision was meant to unsettle the audience in the hope they would be more receptive to the stories they were hearing. With *Under Pressure*, the staging, although on the same level as the audience, was essentially proscenium arch. To compensate for the lack of onstage dialogue between characters I included various forms of multi-media throughout the play. Also using images, projections, and statistics is a feature of the documentary form, which endeavours to make the audience engage more critically with the subject matter being presented.

Robin Soans claims that '[t]ransferring a deeply personal conversation onto the stage in this way confers a responsibility on the audience – a responsibility which I think they enjoy – and this partially accounts for the increased intensity in their listening' (Soans 2008: 24). I had experienced this with *Walking Away* in the previous chapter and from my observations the young people who attended performances of *Under Pressure* seemed to enjoy this responsibility also. These observations are supported by the qualitative remarks from the sociological survey that Exstream carried out as part of the overall programme (see Appendix C for the pledges the students made following the performance). I have chosen to end this chapter by including a sample of these remarks which I believe are testimony to the effectiveness of staging testimony:

The Student's remarks:

It open my eyes on how dangerous drink is and how it can effect[sic] our lives.

It caught my attention and made the situation much more believable.

I really enjoyed it and it made me think a lot more about driving safely when and if my friends are in the car.

I thought that the theatre programme was particularly influential to my view on driving, as I now know that full concentration is very important when on the road.

Very sad and moving. It grabbed my attention and made me see a side of driving that has frightened me, losing ones I love!

I think the production was really good. The fact that there was no comical bits like others I've seen made me think about the seriousness more.

The teacher's remarks:

It touched them on an emotional level especially as it was a true story.

Raising awareness of the long term effects of one unwise decision.

They might think more carefully before getting in a car to drive. Their 'gung ho' attitude might be tempered a bit.

CHAPTER FOUR

Imagining the Journey:

Staging Pilgrimage

Introduction

*What more is achieved when the words don't come
from the playwright's memory and imagination,
but instead from the mouths of real and ordinary people?
(Clancy 2006: np)*

This chapter presents the third and final case study of this research project which aims to shed light on the process of staging the testimonies of others. Clancy's question above is one that is frequently asked of practitioners who choose to stage the testimonies of others. In an attempt to answer his question the methodology for this project represents a significant departure from the previous two projects. The previous two plays involved writing and staging a play which was based on the testimonies of real people. However, the play presented in this case study, *Aquéro*, was written as a freely imagined work rather than an attempt to dramatize the testimony of others. The chapter is divided into three parts. Part one provides the reader with the genesis of the research project and discusses my reasons for not using testimony to write this play. Part two contains a written copy of the script for *Aquéro*. This version of the script is the first draft and was performed in Roborough Studies at the University of Exeter in December 2009. A DVD recording of a performance of this script also accompanies this chapter. While the reader is encouraged to both read the script and watch the DVD, the order in which this occurs is left to the reader's discretion. Part three then offers the reader my critical reflection on the practice of gathering the material for the play, writing the script of *Aquéro* and the play in performance. The chapter ends with some concluding thoughts on the questions that emerged from this project and considers the epistemology of this play in comparison to those written for the first two research projects.

PART I: GENESIS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Staging the testimonies of real people for the first two research projects has led to various questions about why we choose to stage testimonies, how the performance of testimonies responds to certain subjects and what sort of knowledge the performance of such testimonies offers. The subject matter of the previous two projects was typical of the subjects that testimony is suited to as domestic violence²⁸ and road safety²⁹ are matters of both social and political importance. For both of the previous research projects I had been commissioned to create a theatre piece that would simultaneously raise awareness and educate people about the relevant subject matter. When designing this case study I wanted to ensure that the subject matter would be of social and political significance. As this play was not part of a wider project, or aligned to any institution, I had complete freedom when choosing the subject on which to write about.

I was having difficulty deciding on what to write about when an opportunity to join a pilgrimage of Irish people travelling to Lourdes in the South of France presented itself in September 2008. The group consisted of approximately eighty Catholics from my local neighbourhood in Ireland. This group was made up of both men and women who varied in age from seven to eighty years. The decision to go on this pilgrimage was made prior to the conceiving of this third research project and was primarily a personal decision to accompany my mother who was going on the pilgrimage. My place on the pilgrimage would put me in an ideal position to gather testimonies of the people I was travelling with, or so I initially thought. My hope was that these testimonies would not only shed light on why people go to Lourdes and what their expectations of pilgrimage are but also reveal something more general on attitudes to religion in Ireland.

²⁸ At least 1 in 4 women experience domestic violence in their lifetime and between 1 in 8 and 1 in 10 women experience it annually. Less than half of all incidents are reported to the police, but they still receive one domestic violence call every minute in the UK – [Online] www.womensaid.org.uk

²⁹ In 2010, the police recorded 1,850 deaths, 22,660 people seriously injured and 184,138 who received light injuries. [Online] www.bbc.co.uk

The recent emergence of the abuse scandals regarding members of the Catholic clergy in Ireland has been very damaging and I was interested in what people's testimonies might reveal about the position of the Catholic Church in Irish society. As such I decided that the subject matter for this play would be religion and in particular its place in Irish society.

The Catholic Church in Ireland

The position of the Catholic Church in Ireland has weakened considerably in the latter half of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century. Ireland, traditionally a Catholic stronghold where it was not unusual for church leaders to sit on government advisory boards, has undergone substantial changes. In his essay 'Catholic Identity in the Irish Context', John Littleton notes how many critics suggest 'that we now live in a post-Catholic Ireland (2006: 29). As a society its position has shifted from that of a relatively sheltered one to one much more cosmopolitan, globalized and pluralistic in nature. The nineties, known as the era of the Celtic Tiger, brought with it an increased prosperity which resulted in a substantial increase in the population's disposable income. As a result people became less religious and more materialistic; money was the new God³⁰.

In addition to this, revelations of incidents of both physical and sexual abuse have caused serious damage to the Catholic Church, especially in the Western World. This has been especially true in Ireland. Not only have the incidents themselves been damaging but also the manner in which the Church authorities have handled them.

³⁰ These changes have not been specific to Catholics in Ireland; materialism has affected Catholics worldwide. English sociologist Michael Hornsby-Smith writes:

Like everyone else, they [Catholics] have experienced the forces of reaction against the excessively mechanistic, rigid, rational world of modernity which had dominated thinking since the Enlightenment. In the so-called 'post-modern' world of recent years, the dominant values have been individualism, self-determination, expression and fulfilment, personal autonomy, and instant gratification. (2002: 257)

People as a result have lost faith in the Church and reacted by turning their back on what was once an essential part of their identity. The identity of Irish people was once synonymous with being a Catholic. Catholicism had a major influence on how people went about their lives, the choices they made. To be a 'true' Irish person was to be Catholic; one need look no further than Northern Ireland to see the extent to which the relationship between identity and religion mattered.

Recently, however, an increase in secularism and a 'pick and choose' mentality adopted by many Irish Catholics means many people have become disaffected from the Church (Littleton 2006: 28). While surveys reveal that the prevailing attitude among younger generations is that the Church is 'out of touch' with the real world (Littleton 2006:28), there is still a strong sense of spirituality among Irish people. An estimated 50,000 Irish people travel to Lourdes on pilgrimage every year (Raj & Morpeth 2007: 28).

Lourdes

The town of Lourdes is situated in the South of France at the foothill of the Pyrenees. The Marian shrine at Lourdes is one of the most famous and most visited Catholic shrines in the world and in 2008 celebrated its 150th anniversary. The origins of Lourdes as a site of Marian pilgrimage can be traced back to that of a young teenage girl called Bernadette Soubirous. Between February and July in 1858 Bernadette claimed to see eighteen apparitions of a lady at the Grotto of Massabielle on the banks of the river Gave de Pau.

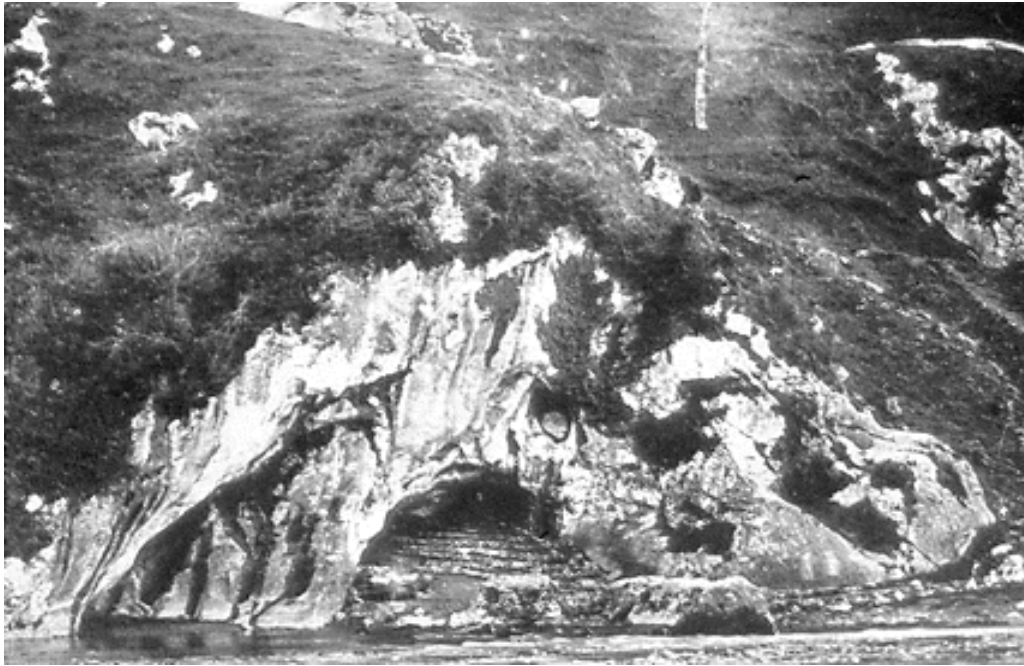


Fig. 4.1 – The Grotto of Massabielle in 1858 (CatholicPilgrims 2010: np)

During one of the apparitions this lady proclaimed herself to be the Immaculate Conception³¹. The apparitions were initially met with scepticism by the Catholic Church but were officially sanctioned in 1862. Since then it is estimated that more than 200 million pilgrims have visited Lourdes. A typical pilgrimage to Lourdes last five days and there are certain activities that the pilgrim is encouraged to undertake, among which include visiting the baths, making confession and doing the ‘stations of the cross’. Typically pilgrimages are run by dioceses or groups.

Research Questions Specific to this Project

This research study is intended to arrive at a better understanding of the challenges involved in staging the testimonies of real people. The plays written for the

³¹ The Immaculate Conception is a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church which states "that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin (EWTN 2011: np).

previous two projects incorporated testimony that I had gathered from primary sources; interviews that I conducted with real people who had firsthand experience of the subjects I was writing about. However, one of the questions that emerged as a result of writing and staging these two plays was how much different would it be to write a play when not bound by the conditions of testimony. What sort of knowledge would such a play generate and how would it differ from that of a testimony play? The main aim of this project was to explore the extent to which writing a ‘freely imagined’ play differed from writing a play based on people’s testimonies. How would this impact on the dramaturgy of the play? What sort of material would I find? What sort of play would result? In addition, I was interested to discover how much of an impact my previous experience of writing testimony based plays would have on the dramaturgical choices I made for this play. If stories were told to me during the course of the pilgrimage, but I had not set up the usual conditions for testimony work, how comfortable would I feel including this material in the play? To what extent would this affect my ethics as a playwright?

My aim was to capture in performance the essence of what people experience on a pilgrimage to Lourdes in the hope of shedding some light on why people still go there. From the perspective of knowledge generation, given what I felt was the significance of staging the testimonies in the previous plays, I had serious reservations about writing a piece which did not include testimonies. From a ‘practice’ point of view writing a fictional play would entail a significant departure from the way I wrote the previous two plays and I was interested to critique the experience given what I had learnt when writing the previous two plays. *Aquéro* is my attempt to explore these issues.

AQUÉRO

© **Helena Enright**

A performance of this script took place at the University of Exeter on December 6th, 2009. A reading also took place at the Belltable Unfringed Festival in Limerick, Ireland on January 28th, 2010. The same script was used for both.

Synopsis

It's 2008 and the Catholic world's most famous shrine is celebrating its 150th anniversary. Mary and Jim, an Irish couple in their fifties leave their small estate in the suburbs of an Irish city to go on pilgrimage to Lourdes. Mary has been to Lourdes on several occasions but this year Jim decides to accompany her. Louise, a young American Catholic is carrying out some research for a documentary book she intends to write. She is curious as to why this little village at the foothills of the Pyrenees attracts so many "ordinary" people to come on pilgrimage. Why do they come here and what do they hope to gain?

Characters

Jim Ryan

Mary Ryan

Bernie

Fr. Pat

Louise

Scene List

Prologue

- 1 Ireland, Wednesday 17th September 2008, 4.15am
- 2 Lourdes, Coach from Airport, Wednesday Morning
- 3 The Sanctuary, Wednesday Afternoon
- 4 Torchlight Procession, Wednesday Night
- 5 Louise and Fr. Pat - Coffee, Hotel, Thursday Afternoon
- 6 Hotel Bar, Thursday Night
- 7 Hotel Terrace, Friday Evening Before Dinner
- 8 Jim and Louise, Sunday Afternoon

Epilogue

PROLOGUE

Video Footage of Lourdes projected onto back wall/screen as the following voiceover is heard:

BISHOP V/O Today my brothers and sisters on this the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes and the World Day of the Sick, I welcome you here to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first appearance of the Blessed Virgin to the young Bernadette Soubirous. For the Church, as well as for the believer, a pilgrimage to Mary is more than a journey to a miracle. It is a journey of love, of prayer and of the suffering community.

Sound of churchbells

BLACKOUT

SCENE 1 Ireland 2008

Projection: Wednesday 17th September 2008, Ireland, 4.45am

Mary enters at the back of the audience struggling with two suitcases, a large one and a smaller one, a handbag, a plastic bag and a pair of shoes. Jim's voice only is heard at this point.

MARY: Come on Jim, will you? What's keeping you? It's quarter to five.

JIM: I'm coming woman!

MARY: Jim the bus is leaving at five.

JIM: Mary it's only two minutes around the corner and besides Bernie won't leave without us.

MARY: I don't want to be the last one on the bus! We're always late!

JIM: Tis a bit early to be looking for miracles. (*sound of toilet flushing*)

MARY: What?

JIM: Nothing love, I'm coming! Have you got the passports and tickets?

MARY: Yes, don't I always?

JIM: Of course love! Where would I be without you?

MARY: Well I know where I'd be without you, on the bloody bus! Come on!
Getting more agitated. She checks the handbag to make sure she has the passport and tickets. JIM!

Jim enters and joins Mary. He has just one medium suitcase and a camcorder case. He glances at Mary's assortment of luggage and shakes his head. Mary ignores him.

MARY: Have you room in there? I need you to put in these shoes.

JIM: Jesus, Mary, we're only going for five days. *He notices the plastic bag in her hand.* What's in the plastic bag?

MARY: Sandwiches!

JIM: Sandwiches, they have food in France you know?

MARY: For the plane! I don't trust that plane food, anyway most of the crowd are bringing sandwiches for the plane, they said it at the meeting the other night.

JIM: Well if most of the crowd are bringing sandwiches then heaven forbid the Ryans would do anything different!

She makes a face at him.

Let's make a move then, come on Mary, what are you waiting for?

MARY: What am I wai...

Jim gives her a smile and winks at her and proceeds to take her larger suitcase.

Do you see you, some day...

JIM: Now now love what sort of attitude is that?

She throws her eyes up to heaven and taking the rest of the luggage follows him through the audience and towards the stage.

A woman, Bernie, close to Mary's age has appeared near the stage.

BERNIE: Ah Mary, Jim there ye are, last but not least, I was just about to ring you Mary.

Mary throws Jim an "I told you so" look.

JIM: 'Twas the traffic Bernie, awful at this hour of the morning!

BERNIE: Traffic...*tuts*...G'way or that Jim Ryan, put your luggage in there and get on that bus, traffic and you only living around the corner!

MARY: Don't mind him! Jesus Bernie, I don't know what I'm like, I've been up for hours.

BERNIE: If I'd a pound for every time I've heard you say that Mary Ryan...

JIM You wouldn't get very far Bernie, tis been a while since the pound was of any value.

BERNIE Go on in let ye, the first bus is already gone. We're just waiting for two more; Breda Murphy's cousin and her sister.

JIM: Now and all your panicking, we weren't even last!

MARY: Just get on the bus. *Gives him a gentle shove*

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO Lourdes, Coach from Airport, Wednesday Morning

Jim, Mary and Fr. Pat are on the coach on the way in from the airport. Bernie is speaking into a microphone at the top of the coach. The sound of traffic underscores the dialogue.

JIM Well, that was a grand flight! 'Twas fierce handy getting those seats by the emergency window, plenty of leg room. Did you see who that other group on the plane were? They seemed to have an awful lot of sick people with them.

BERNIE Good morning everyone, well we survived the first part of the trip. We're just on the outskirts of Lourdes now and it will take us about twenty minutes to get into Lourdes itself!

MARY They're from Clare, some Cancer Charity I think. Ssh,

JIM We don't have that many sick people with us, do we, except for the few in wheelchairs?

BERNIE Now just a few things about the trip that I want to go through with you while I have you all together. Right we'll get the bad stuff out of the way first and that is the pick pocketing! Now I have been told to tell you that it is really and truly bad here in Lourdes at the moment. You

know yourself when you have big crowds, you don't know who is watching you. So be very careful ladies with the handbags, keep an eye especially if you're buying something, you know yourself, you take out your purse and the next minute it's away! Gentlemen, when you've got your cameras out, don't be leaving them down and forgetting, they'll be gone! So please, you *have* been warned, be very very careful!

So that's the worst part of it over anyway! At the moment you're just looking at the Pyrenees and it's absolutely beautiful outside at the moment, the sun is shining. Now if you have mobile phones...

MARY You don't have to be in a wheelchair to be sick, Jim.

JIM Sure I know that.

MARY I'm just saying that's all, sickness isn't something that can always be seen. Now what did she just say about phones and credit?

JIM Sure how would I know, I was talking to you.

MARY Well be quiet then and let me listen to Bernie. She'll tell us now what to expect for the week.

JIM But sure you've been here before...

MARY Ssh!

BERNIE Now your meal times for the week are 7-9am for breakfast, 12 noon for lunch and 7pm for dinner, and they'll be in the hotel dining room, now did you all get that? Am regarding the Baths, we're very lucky we're here this week coz last week they were closed for the Pope's visit, coz of security and everything. People were fierce disappointed. Anyway now they are open again from 9-11 in the morning and 2-4 in the afternoon. Having said that, there's that many trying to get into the baths you're being advised to get there well before they open.

Now, at 5pm every day, there is the Blessed Sacrament procession for the sick; I'll be showing you where that takes place tomorrow when we

go down to the Sanctuary. You'd want to leave the hotel at about half four if you are to get down in time to join it. And at 9pm every evening there is the Torchlight Rosary procession, again if you want to join this you'd want to be leaving the hotel at half eight in the morning/...Sorry...in the evening

JIM Jaysus I was wondering!

MARY Ssh!

BERNIE Sorry about that! Anyway you can get your candle in the hotel shop or in shops on the way down, they're quite reasonable...Now this evening we will have Mass...Ann O'Neill has kindly printed out some hymn sheets for everyone, she'll be giving them out to you shortly. Oh yeah and before I forget there is also a bar in the hotel and this is where odd song-song has been known to take place.

(Her voice trails off during the following and the light fades) Now we are also running a number of day trips during the five days, I'll be putting details on the hotel notice board. Do check this every morning in case there are any changes. There are a number of other groups staying...

BLACKOUT

SCENE THREE **Lourdes 2008, The Sanctuary, Wednesday afternoon.**

Jim and Mary are exploring the Sanctuary. Jim is looking through the camcorder and the footage is projected onto the wall. They stop across the river from the Grotto and Jim is

looking at a number of circular stone tablets on the side of the Basilica. He focuses in on the one in Irish. There is a middle aged couple sitting on a low wall/bench next to them.

JIM (to Mary) What do those circles say?

MARY Which circles?

JIM The ones over there on the side of the church?

MARY I don't know love, sure I can't see across that far!

JIM Hey look! There's one in Irish. One sec...*(reading it out as he zooms in on the circle)*

Téigh agus ól...ag an...tobar... Agus...nigh *(he pronounces it as 'nig')*
... tú féin ann... What?

Go and drink... from the... tobar...tobar...the spring, the well ah,
tobar the well, And nigh ... to... you... there.

What does *nigh* mean, love?

MARY Nigh *(she repeats Jim's pronunciation)*...how do you spell it?

JIM N...I...G...H

MARY And what does it say?

JIM Téigh agus ól ag an tobar

Agus nigh tú féin ann.

MARY That's Nigh *(pronounced as 'knee')* not *nig*. *(Pronouncing it correctly)*...Nigh, Nigh...I'm not sure love.

The woman sitting on the wall/bench interrupts them

WOMAN Is it the circles you are looking at? They're all in different languages. They say "Go and drink at the well and wash yourself there."

MARY Wash, Nigh, of course Jim, it's wash.

WOMAN It's the message Our Lady gave to Bernadette.

MARY Oh yeah I know it's just/

JIM We were just trying to work out the Irish translation.

WOMAN Oh you're Irish? We had an Irish priest once, lovely man. Do you remember him? (*She nudges her husband sitting next to her*) I'll tell you, he came on pilgrimage once with us, (*to her husband who gives a shy nod*) didn't he? And I remember he asked me one day 'Why do you go into the baths?' And I said 'sure isn't that what you are supposed to do?' 'Well' he said, 'Our Lady only said to go and wash yourself, she never said bathe or immerse yourself.' 'Right', says I! Well, after that I never bothered.

MARY Had you done them before?

The man and woman get up to leave.

WOMAN Oh ay, I did do them before but not since.

MAN I did them once and it was enough. They were right cold.

Jim shudders at the thought.

MARY Well I still be doing them.

MAN Good luck to you!

Man and woman exit.

Jim puts the camcorder down and sits on the wall.

JIM There's fierce heat in that sun!

Mary joins him.

MARY Jim

JIM Mmh

MARY We need to talk about Paul.

JIM Ah Mary, can you not let me enjoy the sunshine?

MARY No, Jim, this has gone on long enough...how many months has it been?

Silence from Jim

MARY It's been nine months Jim, nine months and in that time you haven't said one word to your son. Not one single word. How can you not...Jim...he's your son...your only son...I just...

JIM Mary

MARY No Jim, this can't go on...Look I know it's not what we had planned for him, but at the end of the day he is our son, our flesh and blood, and although you might find it hard to accept that he is attracted to men rather than women, he is still our son. All we've ever said is that we want our children to be happy. Isn't that what we wanted Jim, for our children to be happy? *(at this her voice begins to break)* I thought that mattered to you Jim.

JIM It does Mary, it does but/

MARY But you can't even bring yourself to speak to him, Jim. I don't understand it. Why? Talk to me Jim. Tell me why.

JIM It's just that...

MARY It's just what Jim? Talk to me.

JIM It's just that well he didn't give us much opportunity to talk about it, did he?

MARY What do you mean?

JIM Well one he day he tells us and the next he's off to Palestine and well I've never been good on the phone Mary.

MARY Is that it? Is that your excuse for not talking to your son for nine months...you've never been good on the phone...you don't seriously expect me to believe that do you? *(Getting angry)* And what if he hadn't announced the day before he left that he was gay, huh? What then? You honestly expect me to believe that you still wouldn't have

said one word to him in nine months, nine months, because you've never been good on the phone. Seriously Jim, sometimes I wonder what goes on in your head at all. (*More serious*) Jim, our son is out there in Palestine, in the middle of a warzone, with bombs going off all 'round him, innocent people being killed, and we don't know from one day to the next when it could be his turn. And God forbid if it was his turn, huh, what would you say then Jim? How would you live with that?

JIM Mary!

MARY No Jim. Look whatever is going on in your head, and I don't know what that is, really I don't, you know I never realised you were such a...such a...You know Jim I actually feel sorry for you. I wasn't exactly thrilled when he told us and you know I have my own struggles with it but Paul is my son, yours too, he's our son and there is no way I am going to cut him out of my life just because you can't accept it.

JIM I'm not asking you to do that Mary.

MARY Well I hope you're not! You know sometimes Jim, I just don't understand you, I just don't understand you at all.

JIM Mmh (*nods in agreement, he gets up to leave*)

MARY Where are you going?

JIM I'm going for a walk.

MARY A walk? But you can't just/

JIM Sorry Mary, I just need to...look what time is it now?

MARY A quarter to five.

JIM Right, I'll see you back at the hotel in time for dinner

MARY Jim

JIM I'll see you at dinner. *He exits, Mary looks around slightly nervous. We see her carefully take a mobile phone out of her handbag and begin to type a text message. As she is typing, she wipes a tear from her eye. Fr Pat approaches her.*

FR PAT Mary Ryan, fancy meeting you here?
Mary looks up a bit startled and upon seeing it is Fr Pat attempts to compose herself.

MARY Oh Father, tis yourself!

FR PAT On your own, Mary?

MARY I am Father, Jim wanted to do a bit of exploring with the camcorder. I said I'd let him off, this sun is killing me, so thought I'd take a bit of a breather. I said I'll see him back at the hotel for dinner. Actually Father, are you in a hurry anywhere?

FR PAT No, just having a bit of a wander around, I like to just have a walk around the grounds of the sanctuary on the first day, just to kind of take it all in. Remind myself of the place and the story of Bernadette and why we all come here...a bit of inspiration for the ole sermons you know!

MARY Would you mind if I joined you Father?

FR PAT Not all Mary, not at all.

They exit together.

BLACKOUT

SCENE FOUR **Torchlight Procession, Wednesday evening 9.30pm.**

The screen shows images of people processing around the sanctuary. The sound of hymns and prayers is heard over a loudspeaker. Enter Jim looking through his camcorder, Mary is with him, she is holding two candles one which is unlit.

JIM Jaysus! I didn't realise there would be so many people.

MARY I'd say we've missed most of it.

JIM Wow! Would you look at all the candles? (*He scans the area with the camcorder*) Where's Bernie gone?

MARY She's lighting her candle from that woman over there. (*Indicates offstage, she lights the other candle from the lit one and hands it to Jim*)

JIM Sure I have a lighter here.

MARY It's the tradition, you never light your own candle.

JIM Why's that then?

MARY I'm not sure really!

Voiceover is heard reciting the Rosary, the language changes to Gaelic.

*Sé do bheatha, a Mhuire, atá lán de ghrásta,
Tá an Tiarna leat. Is beannaithe thú idir mná,
Agus is beannaithe toradh do bhroinne, Íosa.*

JIM Jaysus, they're saying it in Irish! (*joins in quite proudly*)

A Naomh-Mhuire, a Mháthair Dé,
guigh orainn na peacaigh, anois, agus ar uair ár mbáis. Amen.

After two Hail Mary's in Irish the language changes.

JIM What language is that? How do I answer it now?

MARY What, in whatever language you want? Ssh!

They walk slowly towards the screen and stand as more footage is seen...crowd can be heard singing the Salve Regina as the light fades.

BLACKOUT

SCENE FIVE Hotel Lounge Thursday Afternoon

Video Footage of the Blessed Sacrament Procession & Ceremony

Lights up on Fr. Pat and Louise having coffee.

LOUISE Thanks so much for agreeing to meet with me Fr.

Fr. PAT Not at all. Fr. James and I go back a long way so I'm only glad to do him a favour.

LOUISE Yes, he mentioned you were in the seminary together.

Fr. PAT That's right, many moons ago although 'twas only like yesterday.

LOUISE Well, I'm sure you must be really busy, so I really do appreciate you taking the time to talk to me.

Fr. PAT Ah, not too busy that I can't take a break every now and then. Sure even Himself took a break on the seventh day eh?

LOUISE Yes that is true (*laughs politely at his joke*). You don't mind me switching this on do you? (*indicating a small voice recorder*)

Fr. PAT That thing won't pick up our voices will it?

LOUISE Yeah it will, it's quite discreet isn't it?

Fr. PAT Tis indeed, what is it? One of those iPod thingy's!

LOUISE Yeah sort of, only it's a cheaper version, but it's got a real handy voice recorder on it. See this little hole here (*indicates a little hole on the side*), that's the microphone.

Fr. PAT (*He picks it up and looks at it*) Well now, I think I've seen it all now, isn't that marvellous? (*Looks at it a bit nervously*) Is it on now?

LOUISE No you're fine, I haven't switched it on yet! Actually it's really handy as I can upload the interview straight onto the computer...

*Fr. Pat looks at the recorder again and shakes his head in amazement.
Louise picks it up and turns it on.*

LOUISE (*Speaking into the recorder*) Interview with Fr. Pat O'Malley, Thursday 18th September 2008, 2.30pm, Lourdes, France. (*She places the device on the table*)

So em, Fr. James told me that you've been leading pilgrimages to Lourdes for over twenty years...

Fr. PAT (*Fr. Pat clears his throat, looking once again at the device. Louise smiles at him*) Well, em... *clears his throat again.*

LOUISE It's okay Fr. just ignore it. I use it mainly coz I really want to capture the actual way that people speak. When I document people's experiences I try as much as I can to use their actual words and I'm useless at making notes.

Fr. PAT Right then, Well em, I first came here in 1963 as a boy scout. A few of us came over as volunteers to help the sick on the annual diocesan pilgrimage from Limerick. I had heard about Lourdes but I didn't really know what to expect from the place but I wasn't here long before I realised that there was something really special about the place... it was here actually that I made the decision to become a priest.

LOUISE Really, wow! Was it something in particular like an experience of some sort that made you decide or was it...of course you don't have to tell me if you don't want?

Fr. PAT Not at all, I remember the evening well. It was the third day of the pilgrimage. I was assigned to assist this elderly gentleman, well I'd say he was about 60, sure I was only 16 at the time, a young fella! Anyone over 30 was elderly to me back then. I don't think 60 is all that elderly now, I can tell you.

LOUISE It's not elderly at all Fr. (*looking embarrassed*)

Fr. PAT Tis alright girl, I know I'm not as young as I used to be. Anyway as I was saying I was assigned to assist this particular man, Tom O' Brien, he died not long after the pilgrimage, God rest him...lung cancer...ah he hadn't been given long to live at the time. I think it was his family that

got the money together to send him on the pilgrimage, kind of a last hope I suppose. He himself didn't hold out much chance for a cure but...anyway my job was just to bring him round on the chariot, you know the blue chariots that are used to transport the sick around the sanctuary.

LOUISE It's kind of hard to miss them. I was actually sixteen the first time I came here too and I also came as a helper.

Fr. PAT Ah with your mother no doubt. Fr. James mentioned that she's been involved in organising pilgrims from the New York area for a number of years.

LOUISE This year is actually the twentieth annual pilgrimage that she has overseen.

Fr. PAT I'd say she'd give me a run for my money.

LOUISE She would indeed Fr.

Fr. PAT So is that what inspired you to write this book?

LOUISE Yeah, that and I guess since that first time I came here, I've been fascinated by what brings people here. I've read quite a few books on Lourdes and they all seem to concentrate more on the stories of people that have been cured. But you only have to look around to see that there are so many, I don't know is "ordinary" the right word Fr., but people who don't look like they are sick and I wonder what brings them here. I studied journalism at University and I was always drawn more to biography and I suppose documentary type books, true stories if you like! It's hard to describe this place isn't it...quote from the film... I'm hoping to talk to as many people as possible. I know I won't be able to include every story that I find, that's if of course people are willing to talk to me.

Fr. PAT I think it's a great idea Louise and I think you'll be surprised at the amount of people who would be willing to talk to you...and you know

given the amount of negative press the Church has been getting in recent years.

LOUISE Well exactly, yet Lourdes attracts approximately five million pilgrims every year. Why? Are they all in search of a cure, a miracle?

Fr. PAT I don't think it's as simple as that really Louise.

LOUISE No, I know that Fr.

Fr. PAT You know, a lot of people often tell me that they don't know what's brought them to Lourdes, why they've come here, they say it was something internal, something somewhere inside that they couldn't quite put their finger on. People have many reasons for coming here, Lourdes. You'd be surprised at the stories that I have heard down through the years.

LOUISE I suppose you would hear a lot in confession.

Fr. PAT Oh not just in confession, Louise. Sometimes people just need someone to talk to and this place has a strange effect on people. When people come here and witness the care and the tenderness that is given to the sick by countless volunteers/

LOUISE It's quite overwhelming/

Fr. PAT It is and it touches people in a very deep and personal way often makes them realise just how fragile human nature is.

LOUISE Right, yes/

Fr. PAT You know we shouldn't forget Louise, that illness is not always physical or even visible. There are many people in this world who are mentally and emotionally wounded from not just past but often present situations. Lourdes has a strange way of bringing things to the fore people thought they had long buried. Healing takes many forms Louise and often it begins with acceptance or a sort of peace of mind if you like. A lot of people come here searching for inner peace and many of them do find it.

LOUISE

I think I know you what you mean. I was in the Basilica yesterday afternoon after the Blessed Sacrament Procession and I was fascinated by this gentleman kneeling next to me. At one point during the Eucharistic Adoration I noticed him out of the corner of my eye and he appeared to be shaking, just slightly, just enough to disturb my vision. I thought maybe he had Parkinson's or something like that. But then as I suppose the intensity of the ceremony increased, I realised that he was actually crying, really crying. He must have been in his early sixties, he was dressed in a navy sweater and pants. He was kneeling on one knee, with his right hand outstretched towards the altar and his left clenched in a fist by his heart. And he was crying, I mean really crying. I don't think I've ever seen a grown man cry like that before. He really touched something in me. He didn't look sick or anything and I couldn't tell obviously why he was crying, but I wanted to reach out and just touch him and tell him that whatever it was it would be ok. I didn't, I mean it wasn't my place.

Fr. PAT

And did you approach him afterwards to see if he would talk to you for the book?

LOUISE

No, I didn't. I couldn't. He had just been crying his heart out, for something that he was seriously struggling with and although he seemed a lot calmer at the end of the ceremony I just didn't feel it was my place to question him about what I had just witnessed. It's that thing about pilgrimage I guess, about how although most things take place in a very public way, like the processions and the ceremonies and even the baths, well the queuing for them in particular, yet there is also this very private element to a pilgrimage. Probably because one's relationship with God and oneself is very private...very internal. I don't know it just didn't feel right to question him about what I had just witnessed.

Fr. PAT

Mmmh!

LOUISE

I think if I hadn't witnessed that and I met him under more normal circumstances, and during an interview he told me that he broke down

etc, perhaps then I would ask him why? But no I just didn't feel it was appropriate to intrude on what was obviously something very emotional for him.

They both pause for a moment to reflect on this.

LOUISE Fr. Do you think that any of your group might be interested in talking to me?

Fr. PAT I say they'd be delighted to.

LOUISE Really, well then if you could just let the group know about my project and then if anyone wants to talk with me they can.

Fr. PAT Well, what I'll do is I'll mention it at Mass this evening and...Actually a few of us from the group meet every night after the Torchlight Procession to pray the rosary. We meet on the opposite side of the river to the Grotto, it's quite special. Why don't you join us there? Do that and I'll tell them that you'll be there and that you'll come back up to the hotel afterwards for a drink. Sure they can chat to you then and perhaps you can arrange a few interviews.

LOUISE Awesome, I'd love to, thank you Fr, only though if you're sure people won't mind.

Fr. PAT Mind, they'll be delighted, but I will warn you they will probably insist that you give them a song.

LOUISE A song? Oh I don't sing Fr.

Fr. PAT You'll fit right in then! (*checks his watch*) Well I'd better be off, I'm hearing confessions for the rest of the afternoon.

LOUISE Ok, well thank you so much Fr. for meeting with me, it's been really helpful.

Fr. PAT You're more than welcome. Are you/ (*he points towards the door*)

LOUISE No, I'm going to stay here, make a few notes

Fr. PAT Right you are! I'll see you later then.

LOUISE Ok Fr, and thanks again.

Fr. Pat Exits and lights fade to Blackout on Louise at the table.

SCENE SIX **Thursday Night, Hotel Bar**

Mary, Bernie and Louise are sitting at a table. Bernie is singing Molly Malone. Jim enters and joins in the song. Louise is looking slightly bemused.

JIM Go on Bernie! Jaysus, you can take the crowd out of Limerick, but you can't beat an owl sing song can you Bernie?

BERNIE Sure it wouldn't be Lourdes without the odd sing song, isn't that right Mary?

MARY Enjoy your smoke, did you?

JIM Mary, I keep telling you if Herself wants me to stop, She'll give me a sign. And sure amn't I in the right place for a miracle?

MARY Tis more than a miracle you need Jim Ryan to give those things up!

JIM Louise I hope you're taking note of this for your book, man's search for peace in Lourdes hindered by presence of his beloved wife!

MARY Take no notice of him, Jim Ryan you're an awful man.

JIM See?

Louise appears a little uncomfortable and looks from one to the other, unsure of how serious they are being. Bernie notices this.

BERNIE Don't mind them Louise, they're always like this. Mary, he could be doin worse! At least he's here with you, more than my fella! So come on Jim, what's the latest scandal from the smoking area?

JIM Well, I was just talking to this fella from Clare, he's over helping with the Cancer crowd. Nice man, we were just saying how us smokers are a far jollier breed (*he throws Mary a look*)! Seriously though, we'd a good old chat. He's come over a few times before and we were just saying you know how could you explain Lourdes to someone? You can't really explain it, can you? I suppose Louise that's what you're writing your book about really isn't it? Actually he'd be an interesting chap to talk to. He's been over here as a volunteer with the group a few times. He was saying that for him it's about a joy that he gets in his heart from helping those less fortunate than him.

MARY Very profound. (*clearly still annoyed with him over the smoking dig*)

JIM Ah Mary, don't be like that! Seriously though, I can understand what he means.

MARY Sure who have you helped that's less fortunate than you.

JIM Didn't I push Peggy Clancy's mother around the City of the Poor this morning?

BERNIE Ah now fair is fair Mary, he did do that alright! She was delighted! I think it's been a while since she had that much attention from a man! I'd say he's in there what do you reckon Mary!

MARY She's welcome to him!

JIM I love you too Mary Ryan!

BERNIE Interesting place though isn't it, the City of the Poor? Have you been there Louise?

LOUISE Yes I went yesterday morning.

JIM How does it work again?

Mary takes a sip of her vodka.

BERNIE You have to get a letter from your Bishop saying that you can't otherwise afford to go to Lourdes, it's something along those lines isn't Mary?

MARY 'Tis Bernie. They cater for something like 90,000 pilgrims a year and it's completely run by volunteers.

BERNIE Amazing isn't it? I'd say you'd find some interesting stories there Louise.

LOUISE I was really interested in the Russian Cross that was hanging on the wall. I want to find out more about the story behind it.

BERNIE Oh yes I saw that, some group brought it across Europe from Russia/

MARY Well I'd love to stay, but I'm exhausted. Jim Ryan, are you nearly finished that pint?

JIM I was just going to/

Mary throws him an 'if you know what's good for you?' look.

JIM Right Bernie, Louise, I think its bedtime for the Ryans!

He drains the pint glass.

LOUISE Are you sure Mary it's ok to meet here at three tomorrow?

MARY Of course and I'll work on persuading himself to talk with you.

JIM We'll see although I'm not sure I would have anything of interest to say.

LOUISE Don't worry about it Jim, it's fine.

MARY Bernie. We'll see you at breakfast in the morning, Night!

BERNIE Night Mary, Night Jim!

LOUISE Night!

BERNIE

So Louise tell me more about this book you're writing.

Lights fade on Bernie and Louise

BLACKOUT

SCENE SEVEN Hotel Terrace, Friday Evening Before Dinner

Jim and Mary are sitting on the terrace at the hotel about 5pm on the Friday afternoon. The sun is shining. Mary's reading a text on her mobile phone. Jim is reading some leaflets on Lourdes.

MARY Paul says Hi!

Jim continues reading, pretending he hasn't heard her.

MARY Jim! I said Paul says Hi!

Jim still doesn't look up although his body has slightly tensed. Mary notices the tension.

MARY Jim!

JIM I heard you!

MARY Jim, I'm awful worried about him out there.

Jim glances up from the leaflet.

JIM He'll be grand, he's a tough lad! Knows how to take care of himself.

MARY I know that, but what about that young fella from England that was killed a few months ago? I'm sure his parents thought he was grand. I can't help it Jim.

JIM Mary, look I know you're worried but really there's nothing we can do or say to make him come home is there? It's his life and he has to lead it as he sees fit. We just have to accept it and hope that he's alright.

MARY And the other thing, have you accepted that?

JIM What thing?

MARY Jim Ryan you know full well what I'm talking about.

JIM Do you want another one of those?

MARY It's nearly time for dinner!

JIM One more won't do any harm.

MARY Jim!

JIM Mary! I'm on my holidays.

MARY All right, go on, I'll have another.

As Jim gets up, she places her hand on his arm.

Jim, we do need to talk about Paul, you can't just block it out.

JIM Do you need another tonic or is just a vodka?

MARY Jim!

JIM Well do you?

MARY Yes but/

Bernie enters.

JIM Ah how'ya Bernie.

BERNIE Shattered Jim, absolutely feckin shattered!

JIM I told you to pace yourself with the ole praying Bernie, it can take an awful lot out of ya especially at your age!

BERNIE Cheeky!/
/

MARY Don't mind him Bernie! Jim, get Bernie a vodka and tonic as well, will you love?

JIM At your serveece, Madame! Anything else Madame? (*Mimics a French waiter. Both women exchange glances, throwing their eyes up to heaven.*)

BERNIE How do you put with him?

MARY Patience Bernie, and plenty of it!

They laugh knowingly.

BERNIE I shouldn't really have a vodka, I still have to organise that Mass for tomorrow evening, and there's a few said they're going to Spain for the day trip on Sunday, so I just need to make sure that their tickets are sorted and the bus is/

MARY Relax Bernie, they'll be grand, you're entitled to have a bit of a break yourself you know.

BERNIE Next time you hear me saying I'm running a bus anywhere, hit me or something will you, Jesus I'm worn out.

MARY Any luck with Margaret's hand luggage?

BERNIE No, no sign of it. It's like it's disappeared off the face of the earth.

MARY It's a bit strange isn't it, I mean it was there next to her one minute and then it was gone.

BERNIE Who told you that? That's not what happened at all! She left it behind her.

MARY You're having me on?

BERNIE She went to look for a wheelchair for her sister, got it, went back to organise her sister and then forgot all about her hand luggage.

MARY Oh I thought it was stolen from right next to her, the way she was going on about it.

BERNIE No she left it behind her in the airport and didn't realise it 'till she got to the hotel.

MARY Jesus they probably thought it was a bomb at the airport. Can you imagine? Poor Margaret, she could be needing a miracle yet!

BERNIE Me legs could do with a miracle at the moment, I feel as if I've done nothing but walk since I got here. How's Jim coping with his first trip to Lourdes, he seems to be enjoying himself?

MARY You know Jim, Bernie, as long as no one's putting to nor from him and I don't complain if he wants a beer before dinner, he's all right. Although if I'm to be honest, I think this place is affecting him more than he thought it would.

BERNIE What do you mean, Mary?

MARY I don't know, it's just that, I don't know really, I can't put my finger on it.

BERNIE Well they do say that Lourdes affects people in different ways. Come here have you gotten in touch with Paul? Is he ok? I just saw some of the images of the hotel on the telly, it looks terrible.

MARY Jesus Bernie, he's in Palestine, not Pakistan. What sort of a mother am I?

BERNIE Mary what are you like? *They laugh.*

MARY Well they both begin with P and they're both out that side! Sure how am I supposed to know? I gave poor Jim an awful fright!

They both start laughing again.

BERNIE How is Jim now about the whole Paul situation?

MARY Oh Bernie, I can't get him to talk about it at all. Every time I bring it up he changes the subject. I can't figure him out at all.

BERNIE Ah you know what men are like Mary, he probably just needs a bit more time.

MARY I don't know Bernie. For me it's quite simple, he's my son and that's that. Oh I know people think I'm really religious and I suppose in a way I am, but at the end of the day Paul is my son and if I have to fight with Himself at the Pearly Gates, I'll fight with Him. I have been praying a lot to Our Lady about it though, you know especially that she'll keep an eye on him out there in Pak/

BERNIE Palestine!

MARY *Tuts at herself in disgust.* But then, now don't laugh at me Bernie/

BERNIE I won't/

MARY sometimes I think, what if she won't because he's gay?

BERNIE Oh Mary!

MARY I know it's silly, but I'm like he's out there risking his life, trying to do some good in the world, trying to help these people, how can he be a bad person?

BERNIE He's not a bad person.

MARY In the eyes of the Church he is, well he's a sinner.

BERNIE Sure aren't we all sinners in the eyes of the Church, Mary?

MARY I know but...well you know what I mean. Feckin Pakistan eh? What am I like?

They both start laughing. Jim enters with the drinks on a tray.

JIM Une Vodka pour la Madame et pour la Madame aussi. Et une 'grande' beer pour moi!

BERNIE Jesus, Mary I could do with a loan of him.

JIM Not a bother Bernie, my rates are quite reasonable!

MARY I'll pay you to take him Bernie.

JIM So! What where you two lovely ladies laughing at?

BERNIE Ah now, Jim we couldn't be telling. You'd have to kill us first.

JIM Again not a bother Bernie, I won't even charge.

MARY Don't be encouraging him Bernie.

BERNIE So how are you getting on Jim?

JIM Grand Bernie, grand. I'll tell you though all those sick people take a bit of getting used to don't they? I don't think I've ever seen so many sick people in one place.

MARY I told you before we came here to expect that, Lourdes is especially for the sick.

JIM Yeah I know, but you also said that you don't have to be in a wheelchair to be sick but everywhere I turn there's wheelchairs and stretchers and I guess it's just a bit, well, it's a bit overwhelming like, I suppose I wasn't really sure what to expect you know? It kind of makes you think, you know, about life and well...all sorts of things really and you know I suppose when you think about it, it makes you grateful for what you do have.

Mary nods towards Bernie in an 'I told you so' manner.

MARY You like the Torchlight procession, don't you, Jim?

JIM I do actually, Jesus I've never seen the likes. All those people holding up those candles, all at the same time, and the singing, I don't know, there's such a sense of hope there and it's strange. You look around at all the sick people, all the wheelchairs, the thousands of people and you think, you know, you'd feel a sort of, how would you put it, a sort of sense of despair, you know? But actually what you get is this overriding sense of hope and of peace especially when everyone lifts those candles.

Mary and Bernie exchange glances.

MARY I'm just going to powder me nose!

JIM Right love! (*He continues talking to Bernie.*) I only caught the tail end of it on Wednesday and I was blown away by it.

BERNIE I go every night when I come here and it never fails to move me.

JIM And would there always be so many people at it? I mean there must have been thousands there last night.

BERNIE

Yes, every night from when the pilgrimage season starts at Easter they'll come in their droves and that'll continue right up until the end of October. They say on average about five million come here every year and they were saying for this year they're expecting it to be six what with it being the 150th anniversary and all that.

JIM

You'd wonder where all the people come from. You wouldn't think there's a Catholic left in the world according to the media. All they seem to go on about is what the Church does wrong. I'm telling you, Bernie, beam that torchlight procession into every city in the world and it would soon bring a bit of peace, put a stop to all those suicide bombers and the likes.

BERNIE

You must've got a fright with the one in Pakistan, what with Paul being out that side.

Jim stiffens at the mention of Paul's name. It's not very obvious but still noticeable.

JIM

I think Mary got the bigger fright coz she thought he was actually in Pakistan.

BERNIE

I know so she was saying!

JIM

We'd only gone up to the room, I went into the loo, she turned on the telly and all I heard was "Jim, Jim, Jesus, Jim"... I ran straight back out, I didn't know what was after happening. She's hysterical and she says "there's been a bomb in Pakistan!" I said "ok, ok, love, so?" She says "what about Paul?"

Mary enters at this point and obviously overhears the conversation.

I said "love, he's in Palestine". "Oh sweet Jesus! Are you sure?" she said, "I'd nearly swear he's in Pakistan". "I'm sure, love".

MARY

Oh that's it have a good old laugh at Mary. Take no notice of him Bernie! Anyway at least it shows I was concerned for my son's welfare.

Jim shifts slightly uncomfortably at this and Bernie notices the tension. She drains the last of her vodka and makes to exit.

BERNIE Well cheers for the drink Jim, I'd better be off, I've a few things to sort before dinner.

JIM No rest for the wicked eh Bernie?

MARY Jim!

BERNIE He's grand Mary, are we still on for the Grotto tonight?

MARY Oh definitely, I wouldn't miss it Bernie, I've been looking forward to it all week.

BERNIE Well sure I'll see you after dinner and we'll sort the details then.
Bernie exits

MARY Jim Ryan, you can be really rude sometimes!

JIM Will you go 'way woman, she knows I'm only having her on. What's this about the Grotto tonight anyway?

MARY I told you, me and Bernie always go down there about two in the morning at least once on the trip. It's just so peaceful there at night time Jim. It's very different than during the day. You wouldn't believe it Jim, you'd have to see it for yourself, I can't explain it.

JIM I might join ye, if ye don't mind...or is it a women only thing?

Mary throws her eyes up to heaven.

MARY No, sure Fr Pat is coming too. Remember we're also doing the baths tomorrow.

JIM Oh I'm not sure about those baths Mary. What's it that woman said the other day? Mary didn't say anything about immersing yourself in freezing cold water...I don't know, Mary.

MARY Ah Jim! You were all up for it earlier.

JIM I know! It's just that, the thoughts of being plunged naked into freezing water...

MARY Don't be such a drama queen Jim! You won't be naked, you'll be given a sheet!

JIM I think I'd prefer a kettle of hot water. Anyway I'm sure I'll brave it!

MARY My hero!

JIM Now come on Mrs Ryan, finish up that (*nodding towards her glass*), we don't want to be late for dinner now do we... mmmh I think I can smell the watery cabbage soup from here!

MARY Jim Ryan, you're on a pilgrimage not a five star holiday and anyway (*patting his belly*) a few bowls of watery soup won't do you any harm!

He pats her backside affectionately and all traces of the earlier tension have disappeared. She responds playfully, linking his arm as they exit.

BLACKOUT

SCENE EIGHT Jim and Louise, Sunday Afternoon & Night

Video Footage of people praying at the Grotto at night. This is replaced by a still image of the Grotto by night. Lights up on Jim who is kneeling centre stage.

JIM Bless me Fr. for I have sinned, it's been a few months since my last confession, actually (*he coughs*) that's a lie it's actually been several years. The wife thinks it's only been since Christmas; sometimes it's easier to keep the peace. You know yourself, well I mean, you would if, you know what I mean (*he is obviously uncomfortable*). To be honest I find all this a bit strange you know, the wooden box, telling my sins to a stranger, I know it's supposed to be talking to God, but you know I can't just block you out. Right so am, well there's a couple of things that you know, (*coughs*) ehm, well you know that I struggle with, you know, with the Church and that, some of the teachings. You know the wife's a great believer and I admire that you know, even envy it but I find it hard to believe, you know, sometimes? Bit of a

doubting Thomas you might say, eh? I don't really know what I'm supposed to be saying here Fr. To be honest I don't know what even brought me here, like to confession today...I don't know it's just well this place has affected me more than I thought it would. I only came along to please Mary, as in Mary the wife, not Herself, Mary, that's the wife's name. That's probably a bit of a sin right there isn't it? *(He takes out his handkerchief and wipes his forehead, he is clearly uncomfortable)* Jesus, I'm not really making a good job of this, I mean Christ like... *(He pauses)*

Alright Fr. I will, thanks...it's just that I'm a bit nervous that's all, but like I said, I only came to please the wife and well this place has stirred up all sorts of memories, some I thought I had dealt with...

Lights down on Jim, Lights up on Louise who is listening to Jim's testimony and making some notes, the following is heard as a voice over

I'd known Bobby, well you could almost say since birth. Our mothers met in the maternity and it turned out that they had recently moved into the same street. We were born on the same day, we might as well have been twins we were that inseparable, joint birthday parties every year. I only had the two older sisters; Bobby became the brother I never had. We looked out for each other, it was as if we really were brothers you know? I was always the more sensitive one you know, Bobby was more of the man, more, I dunno, macho, I suppose you would call it. I'm sorry I'm rambling, I haven't spoken about this in a long time...I haven't ever really spoken about it if truth be told apart from yesterday...in confession.

In darkness Jim walks towards the image of the Grotto with his back to the audience.

As I said before like, you know, ehm, Bobby was the good looking one you know, real macho, all the girls were mad about him. And Jaysus, did he take advantage. He was a right charmer, I never got a look in, ah I was shy enough in them days. Well in actual fact women terrified me; seriously you haven't met my sisters!

Anyway, me and Bobby had these plans, we were going to become mechanics, serve our apprenticeships, work for a few years, get some savings together then open our own garage. That was the plan. While that was happening we'd both meet the girl of our dreams, get married and live near each other. Our wives and our kids would all be friends, Christ we had it all worked out huh?

Anyway one night about two weeks after our 18th birthday, we'd had a few pints, as you do, and then on the way home we got into a bit of an argument about, uh something stupid, God I can't even remember what it was about now. Anyway it got a bit physical, and we started kind of wrestling each other and before I knew it Bobby was kissing me on the mouth, like a full feckin kiss you know. I pushed him off me ...and I don't know it all happened so quickly but I just remember I punched him and told him that he was a fuckin pansie and to stay the fuck away from me, sorry about the language, and that I never wanted to see him again and then I ran home.

Pause Jim turns and lights a candle. Lights down on Louise.

They found him hanging from a tree the following morning. No note, no nothing. Everyone was shocked, no-one could believe it, handsome young Bobby who had everything going for him. Why would he do such a thing? I knew why.

Jim blows out the candle and exits slowly. Lights back up softly on Louise.

People were so kind to me, I couldn't stand it. I was numb, hardly spoke to anyone. They all thought I was just in shock, I mean people used to say we were like twins, we were always together. I didn't want to go to the funeral but I had to. I left Dublin the following day and went to London. Then after about a year I met Mary. She was a nurse. She had a sort of no nonsense approach which I sort of liked, she was different...anyway after about two years I proposed and we moved back to her homeplace, Limerick. Been there ever since.

BLACKOUT

EPILOGUE 2009, Ireland,

Jim & Mary are in their kitchen at home in Ireland

MARY Tea or Coffee?

JIM Tea please love! (*He is unwrapping a parcel at the table*)

MARY What's that love?

JIM I don't believe it!

MARY What? What is it?

JIM Tis only the copy of the book about Lourdes, you know the one the young American girl was writing. The one we did those interviews for. And today of all days...

Jim opens the book and a note falls out on the table. As Jim begins to read it the voice of Louise is heard.

Dear Jim

As you are probably aware by now the book has made it to print. Putting the book together has been an amazing journey and I can't thank you enough for sharing your story with me. As you requested I have changed names and places, so that Bobby can rest in peace. I hope you find the book interesting and even enlightening; there are some pretty awesome stories in there. Please say a big hello to Mary for me and I hope she doesn't mind too much that her interview didn't make it into the book, sorry again Mary! You might be wondering where the title of the book came from. *Aquéro* simply means the thing and it's the name Bernadette gave to the woman in her visions. Well I do hope you enjoy the book and if you ever make it to the Big Apple, then please do look me up. My email is...(her voice fades).

Mary hands him a present

MARY Happy Birthday dear!

JIM What's this?

He unwraps it to reveal a framed picture of him and Bobby taken as teenagers.

I don't believe it, where did you dig that out of? That was taken the summer before he died.

He is overcome. He recovers after a moment and gives Mary a hug.

JIM Thanks love,

MARY Would you go again, Jim?

JIM Where?

MARY Lourdes, was it worth it like, you don't regret...

JIM No, I definitely don't regret it! T was definitely an interesting experience, one for the books, eh? But no, I don't regret going. To tell you the truth Mary, it's no harm to take a step back from life once in a while, look at things from another perspective, I mean just looking at all those sick people, it would make you wonder, huh?

MARY Wonder what, Jim?

JIM About life...about life and what it's really all about? *He appears deep in thought. He is brought back to reality by the sound of a phone. He picks up the phone from the table.*

JIM Hello! Ah! Paul...Ah thanks son... You got back alright then?

Mary looks at him and smiles

As the lights fade video footage is played of the Torchlight Procession with the crowd singing Salve Regina.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACKOUT

THE END

PART III: CRITICAL REFLECTION

*...when you're writing fiction, you want to see the pages
getting higher and higher in a stack on your desk.
When you're doing documentary work,
you want the stack to get smaller and smaller.*
- Emily Mann (2000)

Throughout my stay in Lourdes, I had heard various stories, experienced many of the aspects of the pilgrimage and witnessed several incidents. My decision not to collect testimonies meant that I had to rely on repackaging these experiences and observations in order to present them within a dramatic fiction. In the previous two case studies when writing the play my desire was to see the pages of transcripts get smaller and smaller, however now I was faced with the task of building a stack of pages.

Gathering the Material

The process for gathering material for this play was very different than that in the previous two case studies. Playwrights are inspired by real life all the time and as Robin Soans reminds us '[a]ll the best writers, Shakespeare, Chekhov, Miller and Pinter for example, constantly use real life as a basis for their material and they clearly derive their idiosyncrasies from real conversations' (Soans, 2007: np). Initially my intention was to gather the testimonies of those I was travelling with, specifically inquiring about why they had chosen to go to Lourdes. Because I was not relying on testimony, I kept a journal of my time there noting possible incidents, experiences that may be significant. I also recorded video footage and took several photographs, as well as reading a number of books on Lourdes which served as useful points of reference and also provided some of the answers to questions I wanted the play to address.

My work as a theatre artist is primarily guided by achieving theatricality. However, with these plays I must also include a sense of responsibility towards the people whose stories I seek to stage, particularly in their absence. While the previous two plays contained characters that were not ‘actual’ representations of the people that I interviewed, the actors were still telling stories which belonged to real people. These were stories of a very private and personal nature that had in some cases been traumatic and had a considerable effect on their lives.

Given that I knew I was going to be writing a play following my experience in Lourdes, I felt uncomfortable talking to people and asking them questions as to why they were there in order to obtain information for my play. The first challenge that presented itself was an ethical one. The stories that had been shared with me had not occurred under the usual conditions that I established when producing testimony. As the week progressed and I became more familiar with the members in the group, some people began to share intimate personal details of their lives, some of which I knew would make interesting material for a play. Although a number of people on the pilgrimage knew I was writing a play about the trip and Lourdes, I had not explicitly asked them if I could use their stories and conversations as material for the play.

In the previous two projects I was always upfront about my intentions with the people I was interviewing and very clear about how I intended to use their words. This has been one of the constants in terms of my research ethic when gathering material for the testimony plays that I write. My experience of producing testimonies with people is that if you are honest and straight-forward with people about your intentions, they are more than willing to share information, and in some cases, it can lead them to disclose information that they did not initially intend to share. In this instance, the more that people opened up to me and shared details of their lives with me, the more uncomfortable I felt about using this as material for

the play. The combination of this responsibility and the sensitive nature of the material had considerable influence on the dramaturgical choices that I made when writing both *Walking Away* and *Under Pressure* and also for writing *Aquéro*.

Writing the Play

The first challenge I faced when writing *Aquéro* was finding a way to create a piece of theatre that would shed light on why people go to Lourdes without relying on testimony. Previously, the study had been concerned with focusing on how the playwright negotiated resituating the personal narratives of others in performance. However, for this project I decided not to record any of the conversations that I had with people, an element which had been a fundamental part of my methodology and practice for the previous two projects. My decision not to gather testimony meant that I did not have transcripts of interviews to work with and I was concerned that I would not be able to capture the essence of Lourdes which I felt would have been revealed in people's testimonies. On this occasion I was faced with trying to absorb the experience of Lourdes and the various stories I heard -- and I was concerned about whether what I would write from my imagination would be enough to fulfil the aims of the play.

Elizabeth Ficocelli notes in her book *Lourdes: Font of Faith, Hope and Charity*, that while 'a great deal has been written on Lourdes, not that much has been written in English, and what is currently available is often tainted with inaccurate details to downright skepticism' (2007: xvii). I did not want *Aquéro* to be a sceptical portrayal of Lourdes. From my perspective the purpose of writing this play was to give audience members a sense of what Lourdes is and what it represents. I wanted to give the audience an experience similar to what I had while there. My decision to use the framing device of the couple 'Mary' and 'Jim' was inspired by the number of married couples in the group that I was travelling with. Some of the husbands I spoke to had never been to Lourdes before and most of them seemed to be

impressed and touched by the place as the week progressed. They had not known what to expect when they got there and most of them had not been prepared for all the sick people. Ficocelli recalls how Fr. Griffin told her that at Lourdes people realize how fragile human nature is (111). She writes:

The number of sick pilgrims at the Sanctuary can be quite overwhelming for some people. Witnessing how they are tended to by so many caring volunteers touches [people] in a deep and personal way (111).

In light of Ficocelli's observation and indeed my own, I thought it would be interesting to see Lourdes through the eyes of one of these men who had never been to Lourdes before. The atmosphere of Lourdes is difficult to describe if you have not been there. I found Lourdes to be quite an extraordinary place. I had grown up listening to the story of Bernadette and knew of many people, including members of my own family who had gone to Lourdes. Although I had seen pictures and heard various stories I still did not know what to expect when I arrived.

The Influence of Testimony Work on my Dramaturgy

The practice of creating a play from testimonies has affected the manner in which I make theatre and has also impacted on the role of theatricality and aesthetics in my work. The form of the two plays that I created for the previous two research projects was based on the notion of 'reportage' where the characters directly address the audience. The purpose behind this was twofold. First, I wanted to retain what I felt was significant in the testimonies that I had gathered from those I interviewed. Second, I wanted the audience to have the experience of listening to the testimony.

In the first project the impetus to contribute to 'breaking the silence' surrounding domestic violence was guiding the project. I felt that creating a theatrical space where 'characters' were speaking about their experiences of domestic violence would be more

valuable than reconstructing scenes from the content of their narratives. In the second project my decision to have the men speak about their experiences directly to the audience was also inspired by the fact that I felt that their experiences had something significant to offer and I wanted the audience to experience what it was like to listen to a person actually talking about the effect of road fatalities on their lives.

Initially, I considered creating a number of characters who would tell their stories directly to the audience as they sat or knelt before the grotto. I envisaged projecting an image of the grotto on a large screen which would portray a twenty-four hour period, and that various characters would come and sit or kneel (as is typically the case in Lourdes) and share with the audience their reasons for being there. Fig 4.2 below presents an extract from my notes while on pilgrimage concerning this idea. My decision to do otherwise was motivated by the fact that I did not have any actual testimony. From my perspective such a play would be far more interesting if it consisted of actual testimony from people who were there; to make up stories would be insincere. In addition, various people had told me stories but not under the conditions that I had set up in my previous two projects and this caused me constantly to question whether or not to include them in the play. I felt uneasy about doing a

piece that looked as if it could be a testimonial piece of theatre.

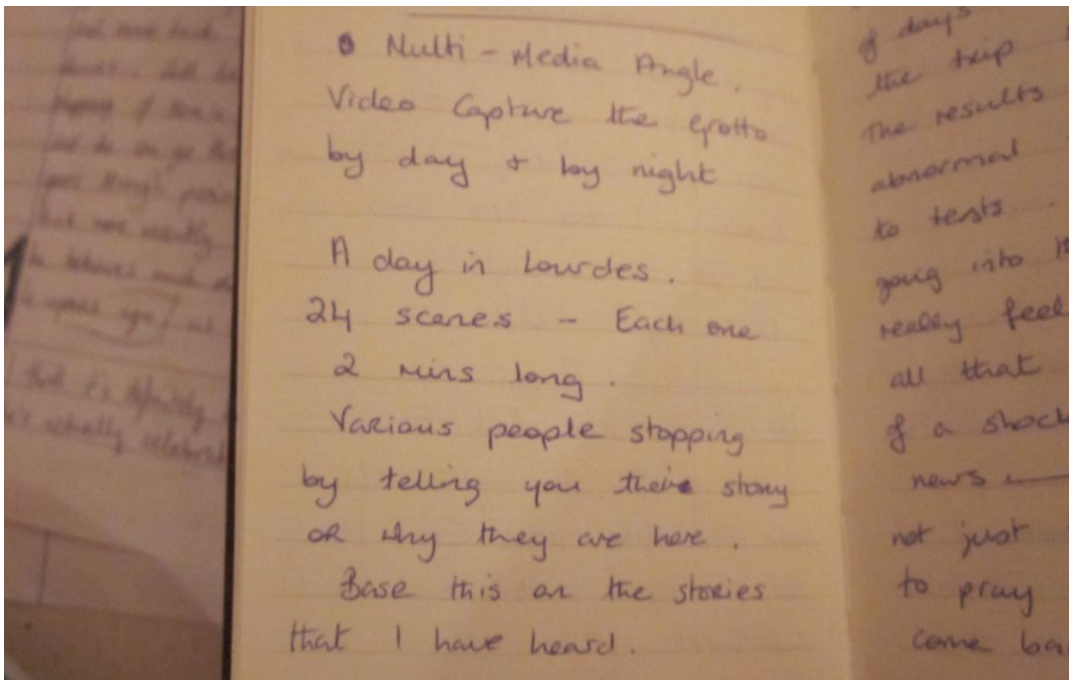


Fig. 4.2 Extract from my notebook with possible idea for 'Lourdes' play.

The other significant influence on my decisions over what to include in the play was the effect the testimony work had on those who gave their testimonies for *Walking Away* and *Under Pressure*. For some of the people involved, having the opportunity to share their story as part of the process altered their opinions of their experience and for some it even helped them move on. The reader will recall how Woman 5 in *Walking Away* referred to how watching her story being told by someone else in public meant that she could no longer deny the abuse. Similarly, following his telling of the story to me, for *Under Pressure*, the character of Nick met with Simon's father on New Year's Eve for a drink and also celebrated New Year's Eve for the first time since the night of the crash.

Despite not using testimony in the creation of this play, I still wanted to demonstrate the effect such testimony work can have on someone's life. Lourdes is perhaps most famous

for its 'miraculous' cures and is particularly known for its devotion to the sick³². It is impossible to avoid physical illness when in Lourdes. Upon disembarking the coach, the first sight I was met with was a load of empty wheelchairs outside the front door of the hotel. Wheelchairs were a prominent image throughout the week. It was impossible to walk anywhere without seeing a person in a wheelchair. In the grounds of the sanctuary, wheelchairs were joined by blue-hooded chariots and stretchers to transport the sick from the hospitals to various places of worship and procession. Throughout the week I was continually impressed by the amount of volunteers who were giving up their time to tend to the sick. I was also struck by the care and compassion with which the sick were treated. Some members of our group also went to Lourdes annually on the main diocesan pilgrimage especially to volunteer and tend to the sick. I ended up pushing the wheelchairs of one or two of the members of my group during the week.

The decision to have the character 'Jim' reveal his story during confession was inspired by the words of an Irish born priest, Father Liam Griffin which I read in Ficocelli's book on Lourdes which I referred to earlier. In the book Ficocelli recounts a conversation with Fr. Griffin where upon when asked if he has seen any miracles, he replied 'yes, of course. Hundreds. We see people having life-changing experiences at Lourdes all the time, especially in the reconciliation chapel' (2007: 110). According to Fr. Griffin, people often do not really know what brought them to Lourdes and often they find themselves in the Confession chapel, but again do not know why (110).

Fr. Griffin's response to the question 'What does being cured mean?' also proved an inspiration for the play. According to Fr. Griffin, '...it means being healed, being able to accept the situation, to accept the imperfect, and to accept our own mortality' (110-111). Ficocelli also writes about how 'Chaplains at Lourdes continually meet with people who are

³² As of 2005 sixty seven cases have been officially recorded of people being physically cured in Lourdes.

mentally and emotionally wounded from past and present situations. Again she quotes Fr. Griffin who states that '[people] are trying to do something about their lives and find some sort of inner peace,' and '[m]any of them find it here' (111). The decision to have Jim reveal the story about his friend's suicide in confession was inspired by Fr. Griffin's observations in terms of what a person might experience when they go to Lourdes. I wanted to show how by talking about and testifying to his experience he could find some healing from the mental and emotional wounds of his past that were in turn affecting his dealing with the present situation regarding his son Paul's homosexuality.

My decision to retain some of the verbatim and documentary techniques that I incorporated in the previous plays was motivated by the decision to enhance the 'authenticity' of the play. I wanted to bring some of what I had experienced in Lourdes into the performance. The following are a number of scenes which I experienced in Lourdes and are included in *Aquéro*.

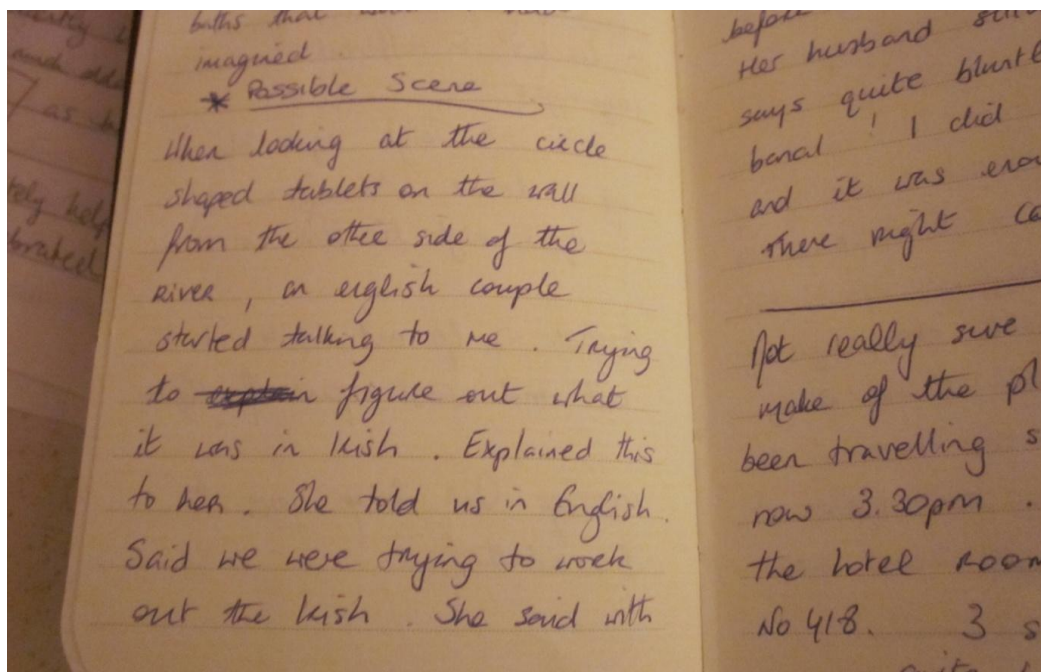


Fig. 4.3 – (a) extract from notes I made while in Lourdes which became the beginning of Scene 3 in the play.

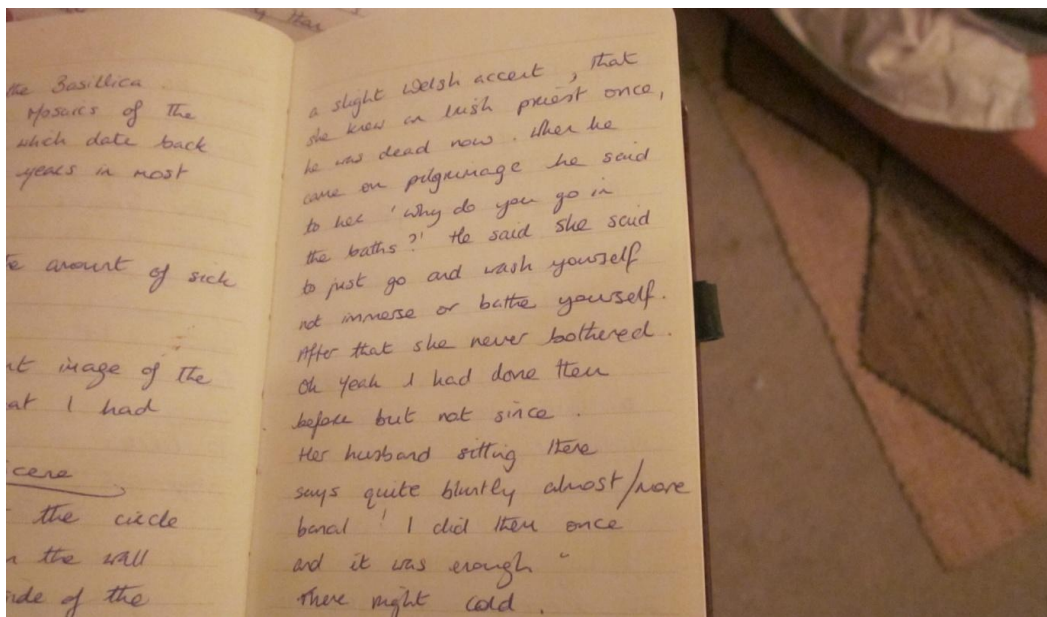


Fig. 4.3 – (b) continuation of my notes that became Scene 3

By referring to the tablets on the side of the wall that were written in different languages, I could relate the universal appeal of Lourdes. People travel there from all over the world and this is reflected in the fact that the sanctuary has six official languages; English, French, Spanish, German, Dutch, Italian. The speech made by the character ‘Bernie’ in the coach on the way in from the airport is taken from a recording of the speech given by our tour guide. I did not have an ethical problem with using this speech in the play as it served a different function than testimony.

Another example of where I based a scene on a real life experience occurs in the scene between ‘Fr. Pat’ and ‘Louise’. Louise’s recollection of the man she saw in the Basilica is actually my own recollection of a similar scene. For me, this scene represented one of many that I witnessed during my stay there. I saw many other people moved to tears during the week and I wanted to show this side to the place. Louise’s struggles reflected my own. I felt uncomfortable kneeling next to this man and witnessing his outpouring of sadness. I was torn between wanting to reach out and help him while at the same time wanting to

respect his privacy. In Lourdes, however, there seems to be this unwritten rule that people should be given the space to release their emotions.

Writing the ‘Fingerprints’ of Individual Voices

Throughout the dissertation I have argued that my primary reason for incorporating the testimonies of others directly into the script is motivated by a belief that such testimonies have something significant to offer. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter One, we can learn not only the content of these testimonies but also what the content reveals. Elyse Dodgson, Associate Director of the Royal Court, argues that while ‘[p]laywrights may be inspired by their own experience and imagination...in between there are things they need to research and discover’ (2005: 108). She suggests that ‘[g]etting out the tape recorder and listening to the fingerprints of individual voices can be a breakthrough for writers learning about character dialogue’ (2005: 108-9).

By using the actual words spoken by the people I interviewed for the previous two plays, my attempt was to capture the manner in which real people talk. For *Aquéro*, I was faced with the task of writing the words that the characters would speak. When writing the previous two plays, I had attempted to transfer the testimonies onto the page in a way that would enable the actor to embody the words previously spoken by the testifiers: so that they could in turn speak them to an audience without losing their original significance and intent. In order to achieve this, I listen carefully to the words the person speaks paying particular attention to their phrasing – their ‘punctuation’ of their words. I treat this punctuation like a form of musical notation in order to indicate on paper to the actors a sense of the rhythm of the person’s speech. This often requires my listening to the recordings several times in order to determine how best I can illustrate this rhythm on paper.

Given that my previous experiences with the first two projects had involved working so closely with the actual speech of real people, I was immediately conscious of overwriting

this material. A number of audience members commented on the language in *Walking Away*, with one woman in particular was impressed by the fact that there was no -- what she referred to as 'perfume' -- on it. For this play I wanted the text to resonate with people who go on pilgrimage in the same way the language of the other plays seemed to resonate with people who had similar experiences. Therefore the text, when spoken in performance, had to sound like words that would actually be spoken in real life. However, natural speech is very difficult to write; even with testimony there is the temptation to tidy it up and present 'clearly' written speech without all the 'ums' and 'ahs'. However, as I have previously alluded to in Chapter Two, it is precisely these 'ums' and 'ahs' where the truth of a character or an emotion can be revealed.

When writing the previous two plays my role was more like that of an editor. The words the characters spoke were taken for the most part from the transcripts of the audio recordings of the interviews (with the exception of the words spoken by the character 'Nick' in *Under Pressure* – the reader will recall these were reconstructed from my notes and memory) and as such my role was to 'wright' their stories into the play rather than 'write' them. For this play, however, I was faced with the task of writing these characters' stories and I found the prospect quite daunting. The fear I felt in this project was very different than the fear I experienced when writing the previous two plays. For those plays the fear I experienced was mainly caused by my desire not to misrepresent the people who had trusted me with their stories. The fear I experienced in this project was more in terms of my own ability as a writer. I had complete creative responsibility for the piece and it was up to me to decide what happened to the characters, what their stories were and how they chose to reveal them. I have often heard writers refer to the fact that when they are writing a novel or a play they try not to pre-empt the stories that their characters reveal to them. This notion has always fascinated me with regard to fictional writing. Is it actually possible to let a character

Speak to you? Are the stories the characters tell not the stories the writer wants them to tell? How much of the characters' thoughts are influenced by the writer? Can the character ever be a separate entity from the writer?

When approaching the actual writing of *Aquéro*, I decided to start from a similar premise to that of the previous two plays. I decided on a number of characters and attempted to let them tell their stories to myself in a similar way to the people I interviewed for the previous projects. Of course, these 'characters' were not real people and the conversations were taking place in my head but I tried to stay out of the way as much as possible. For example, I had initially thought the secret Jim was hiding was that he had been abused by a priest. When I listened to him 'talk', the story he told was very different. I have decided to include the following two samples of 'testimonies' that I wrote during the early stages of *Aquéro*. They are the stories of Jim's and Mary's two children, 'Ann' and 'Paul', who I had initially intended to include as two other characters in the play. I begin with Ann's:

I work in the computer side of the industry but I have a number of friends who are really feeling it. In actual fact there's real fear in the air, everybody is walking around on eggshells. They're comparing it to the Great Depression, people are losing their jobs left right and centre...New York's not a nice place to be right now, although we came through 9/11, still...I've been in New York now just over ten years; I don't think I'll ever go back to Ireland. I mean I still obviously think of myself as Irish, well you can't really deny your Irishness over here, it's a badge of honour to have an Irish ancestor not to mind a fully fledged Irish accent, although Dad keeps goin on about my New York twang, he's not too impressed. It's hard though, I've got a musical ear! I kind of feel now though that New York is my home much to my Mum's disappointment, but my life is pretty much here now. I can't imagine living in Limerick again. I'm still in touch with one or two school friends back in Limerick but most of my friends are ones I made over here.

I did a degree in Business Studies at the University of Limerick, it was all the rage in the early nineties, that and European Studies, what with the whole expansion of the EEC or the EU as it is now known. As part of the degree we had this thing called Co-op, which is essentially a work placement, we had to do two six month placements, I think they only do one nine month one now and I came here on my first

placement in second year and fell in love with the city and one or two New Yorkers!! I'd never been out of Ireland before, I'd been to Dublin a couple of times, but Dublin had nothing on New York. I'd never seen so many different people, different colours, cultures, religions, shapes, sizes, well maybe shapes and sizes, but there was an excitement in the air, a smell, a feeling that just didn't exist in Ireland. I don't think there's anywhere like New York in the world. I knew pretty much straight away that New York was where I saw my future. I spent an amazing nine months there working for an Investment Bank, and when I went back to Ireland to finish my degree made immediate plans to come back once I graduated. Anyway, where was I..oh yeah I remember now...one of the girls in work had got a promotion and a few of us went out to celebrate with her. We went out straight after work and hit the cocktails, not a good idea on a Friday evening. Friday evenings are funny like that, you seem to get drunk after barely one drink, get real giddy, I don't know, other nights you could go out and drink a shed load and it would have no effect, well that's probably not entirely true, but you know what I mean. Anyway we were all in great form, giggling, laughing, just being silly really and there was this group of lads sat next to us. They all seemed to be in flying form, anyway one of them took a bit of a shine to me, you know one of those absolutely gorgeous guys, really typically good looking and the sort that knows it...normally I'd run a mile from someone like him, but well I'd just been dumped the night before. I'd been going out with Geoff about six months, it really wasn't going anywhere and I knew that. To be honest I didn't really fancy him, but he was good fun to be around and well then out of the blue we're out one night, we'd been to the cinema, some arthouse foreigny type film, subtitles, not really my thing, but he was into it. If I'm going to see a film, then I like to see the film. If I want to read I pick up a book! Anyway we watched and read the film, went for a drink afterwards and he dumps me, *he* dumps me...seriously! Needless to say I was feeling a bit sorry for myself...oh god...How could I have been so bloody stupid? I'm thirty years of age for godsake, it's not like I'm some teenager who doesn't know any better. God I don't even know his last name, we didn't even exchange numbers...

Below is the story 'Paul' *told* me. The actual scene that I developed from this and Ann's story did not make it into the play but is included in the appendices.

I've been in Palestine nearly a year now...it seems like only yesterday I arrived here, although in some ways it feels like a lifetime. I got involved in the Palestine cause at university. I studied International Relations and Politics at Trinity in 1995, the same year that the Oslo II agreement was signed in Washington. The point of the agreement was to set out a framework for Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza, pending final status negotiations, which were scheduled to begin in 1996 and finish by 1999. That was nearly ten years ago now, wow and here I am in Palestine. Anyway I won't bore you with the details.

I met Gráinne in Trinity, she was studying Philosophy and English. We met through the debating society, God she could get fiercely passionate about certain topics. That passion didn't transfer to the bedroom though so it suited me perfectly. We had gone for a drink a few times, nothing had really happened apart from a brief kiss at the door to her digs. I think it was about the third time we went for a drink when she said she had something to tell me. She was a virgin and wanted to stay that way until marriage. She was worried that I might think she was some sort of freak and that she understood if I wanted to stop seeing her. I told her that it was fine and that I totally respected her decision and that if she wanted to wait, we would wait. I knew in that instant, I could see it in her eyes that she had fallen in love with me. I felt like the biggest bastard but I couldn't help it, I just wasn't ready.

We were going out for about a year and a half, I mean yeah initially I did try the obligatory attempts at first base but she would always stop me saying, Paul we've got to be strong, we've got to resist. I know, I know it's just that I love you so much and want you so much... bastard huh? The lies were eating me up...

It was a Thursday evening and Grainne was away visiting her parents, so I headed into the city centre for a couple of pints. I was sitting at the bar watching some soccer match on the TV, and I made some comment to this guy sitting next to me about the match. He said, it's not really my scene, mate! You sound like my girlfriend, I said. You've a girlfriend? he said. Yeah I said slightly confused as to why he sounded so surprised. I mean I know I'm no Brad Pitt, but... Going out almost a year and a half now. Right says your man. He drained his pint and got up and went towards the loo. I remember thinking that was a bit odd but couldn't stop the sense of excitement that I was feeling. I tried to ignore it and just concentrate on the match. Anyway a couple of minutes later, I feel this tap on my shoulder. I turn around. Conor he says and hands me this card. What's this? I say. My number. Your nu/ In case things don't work out with you and the girlfriend.

I broke up with Grainne the following Sunday when she got back from her parents. It was awful, she even agreed to have sex with me, if that was the issue, if only. I couldn't tell her the truth, I didn't even know the truth myself at that stage. I never did call Conor, never laid eyes on him again since that night in the pub, but there's a pint with his name on it in a bar in Dublin.

This is my second trip abroad as a volunteer. When I graduated I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do with my life so I headed off to Romania and worked in an orphanage for about six months. Dad wasn't too happy when I told him. I sat them down and told them the Christmas before I came out to Palestine, I was leaving at the beginning of January and I couldn't leave without them knowing. I was afraid like you know, what with the situation out here. Well there's a serious possibility of death out here you know, it doesn't

matter that you're here as volunteer or a peacekeeper. I guess I didn't want them to bury their son without knowing who he really was. Coming out here makes you think about death you know and in a strange way that makes you think about life too. You can't think about it everyday you'd go nuts, but you do think about it. One of the guys got shot two months ago. I tell you that put the frighteners on, sent shockwaves through the group. You know it could be me next and you know as I said, I ah well, I didn't want them to bury their son without knowing who he was. So I sat them down and told them. St Stephen's Day, we're sitting there watching Willy Wonka, the old version. I made a comment about how Johnny Depp made Willy look gay in the new version. Dad just stiffened...looked all uncomfortable. I said there's nothing wrong with being gay you know? Mam was like no one said there was. I said well that's just as well then, it means there's nothing wrong with me. There was dead silence. I said, I said well there's nothing wrong with me then. My father couldn't look at me. I said I'm gay. My mother started crying, Are you sure she said? How do you know? Maybe it's just a phase. No Mam, it's not a phase, I've known for ages. I just wanted to let you know before I went to Palestine in case anything...she put her arms around me and said You're my son, I've loved you forever and will always love you forever. We both shed a few tears ya know?.. I love you too Mam I said and thanks. Mam and I continued hugging and crying for what seemed like forever, we didn't even notice that *he* had left the room. When we did notice, she just said don't worry son, he'll be fine, just give him some time to get used to it. I said its ok Mam it's taken me a while...I just wanted you to know in case...

In the previous two projects I did not stage the conditions of the interview itself in an attempt to recreate that particular moment realistically on stage. Rather, I wanted to capture the essence of the interviews that I conducted. To do this I tried to use the language that the person spoke during the interview as faithfully as possible. Producing these 'testimonies' also contributed to my practice of writing.

***Aquéro* in Rehearsal and Performance**

When directing the play, I decided to adopt a similar approach to that I had undertaken in the previous research projects. The actors only had a week to rehearse the performance, in part due to availability. Prior to the first rehearsal I informed the actors that I would like them to be off book as much as possible and not to worry about trying to 'create' a

character. I was more interested in the actors being as familiar with the text as possible. Due to the fictional nature of the piece I wanted to steer the actors away from the usual ‘psychological’ approach to creating characters which has become a feature of the modern theatre due to the legacy of Stanislavsky; a legacy which has permeated all levels of character work in the theatre. I was particularly wary of this work because the script appeared to have more in common with naturalistic theatre than documentary theatre.

When writing the dialogue for *Aquéro* I tried to capture the ‘fingerprints’ of the individual characters and I wanted to see how much of the ‘psychology’ of the characters was contained in the words that I had written. I wanted them to focus more on what the character was *saying* rather than what the character was *feeling*. I chose to apply the same type of rehearsal strategy that I had used in the previous two projects. I asked the actors to trust the language and surrender to the story they were telling. I wanted to observe how they approached creating their character and to see how this differed from the previous two projects. I asked that their focus be on the words they were speaking and communicating them clearly.

Aquéro begins with a series of images of Lourdes being played on a large screen as audience members enter the space. Some of these images appear again throughout the play at appropriate moments. These images were recorded by me and provide documentary evidence of Lourdes. My decision to include the images was motivated by my desire to give the audience a sense of the physical landscape of Lourdes while simultaneously bringing Lourdes into the performance space. From my observations, this decision worked well in performance. Also having different playing spaces worked well as it gave the sense of the different places that things are happening in Lourdes. Placing the audience within the action was an attempt to symbolise the fact that in Lourdes you are surrounded by everything and constantly witnessing partial glimpses of people’s lives.

***Aquéro*: Final Considerations**

Following my experience of writing *Aquéro*, I have begun to question the role of the playwright as witness. As a witness to people's testimonies in previous projects, I had been instrumental in setting up the situation where I was a witness to what they were saying. Furthermore, I was also a co-creator of the interview text. For the creation of *Aquéro*, the events were taking place around me whether I was there or not to witness them. What had become apparent through my practice for the last two projects was that I had been the first witness to the story that was subsequently told on the stage as part of the final performed element of each project. However, I was not an accidental witness. I had purposefully put myself in a position that would enable me to witness the manner in which they told their story, the narrative of their lived experience. I had constructed the witnessing with a number of specific intentions. The first was to document these people's recollection of their experiences. This then provided me with material to create the play. The play would in turn facilitate the sharing of that experience with a wider audience in the hope that they would learn something from it. The material for *Aquéro* came from the scenes that I witnessed in Lourdes and although *Aquéro* is not intended as a testimony play, it is, I would argue, a testimony to Lourdes and the kind of experience one may have there.

My intention when writing *Aquéro* was that the play would shed light on why people go to Lourdes. More specifically for me, I wanted the play to shed some light on why, in an age that has become increasingly more secular, people continue to go on pilgrimage. While I attempted to portray this in *Aquéro*, particularly through the characters of 'Louise' and 'Fr. Pat', from my experience of working on the previous two case studies, I feel gathering testimonies would have been a stronger way to achieve this objective. Consequently, if I was to write this play again, I would gather testimonies and I would do so in a similar manner to the way I did when writing the previous two plays. However, I am not sure if I would gather

the testimonies while in Lourdes. From my observations throughout the week, it was apparent that for some people a pilgrimage to Lourdes can be a very emotional experience. In the previous two case studies the testimonies that I collected were about experiences that people had already been through. They were recollections of their experiences. I think it would be more interesting to gather testimonies from people who have been to Lourdes as they would probably reveal more. People would have more time to reflect on why they went there and whether it lived up to their expectations.

Aquéro is not a theatre of testimony play because it does not fulfil the conditions necessary for such a piece; it does not include testimonies that were produced specifically for the play, nor is the main emphasis on staging the act of testifying. While it does - to some extent- incorporate the words of real people in the script the intention behind their use is different. In *Aquéro* these words are used in to further the authenticity of the play, so that audiences could relate to the language being used. In addition, the play does not use direct address or rely on characters testifying directly before an audience. However, I would argue that the play is a testimony to Lourdes and what can happen to people there. The play also promotes the benefits of testimony. It is a semi-documentary play. It is also a testimony to how speaking about a traumatic event rather than keeping it inside can have a positive effect. We learn this through the character of Jim, not just by what his testimony reveals but also by how it affects his subsequent behaviour towards his son.

People's reactions to the play have surprised me. Various people who read the play commented on the character Jim's inner struggles and how they found the dialogue really natural to listen to and easy to follow. Because I was concerned that the piece did not include testimonies, I wanted to the play to demonstrate some of what I had learnt through working with testimony. One of the comments from practitioners who work with testimony is that working on other projects can feel insincere. From my perspective as the writer, I felt that

while the play worked well in performance, I felt it was lacking compared to the previous two plays. It did not put us in touch with the perceptions and inferences of real people. In that sense the epistemology of the play differs from the previous two plays in the study.

Two months after the performance took place at the University of Exeter, I was invited to stage the play at the 2010 Belltable Unfringed Festival. Due to time constraints and teaching commitments in the university it was not possible to stage a full production of the play so I instead staged a rehearsed reading of the play. This reading took place on the 28th January at the Belltable Arts Centre in Limerick. It was a Sunday afternoon and the audience consisted of a mixture of people, some of whom had seen my previous work and others who had not. The audience also included some of the people who had been on the pilgrimage and some who had been to Lourdes on other occasions. Those I spoke to following the performance that had been to Lourdes commented on how much I had captured the spirit and essence of Lourdes. After the reading I was speaking to a couple who had been on the pilgrimage with me and during the conversation the wife said ‘that could have been us’. This comment sums up what I feel is the main difference between working on a testimony play and a freely imagined work. Behind both of the previous plays were real people’s lives. Even if the people were not identified explicitly in the play, their private thoughts and feelings were being shared on a very public platform. This was not the case in *Aquéro*. As the couple said, ‘Jim’ and ‘Mary’ could have been them...the difference was that they were not.

CONCLUSION

And there is one fundamental point that historians and performance scholars agree on: that stories matter deeply in the present, indeed they only exist in the present.
- Della Pollock, *Remembering Oral History Performance* (2005 xii)

In the introduction to this thesis, I pointed out how David Hare and Max Stafford – Clark argued that there was no difference when writing a verbatim play than a wholly imagined play while Derek Paget argued that there is as ‘[s]eeking the testimony of a witness in order to dramatize it involves a different level of commitment from all parts of the theatrical communication circuit to that required in a freely imagined work’ (2009: 236). Seeking the testimony of others in order to dramatize has been a central component to this study. My experience of writing two plays which dramatized the testimony of witnesses, followed by writing a ‘wholly imagined’ play, finds me more in agreement with Paget. While I cannot make any universal claims about the relationship between testimony and theatre, what I can do is offer the findings of my research in relation to what I have experienced when writing and directing these plays.

Before I present these findings I would like to remind the reader of the research questions that were guiding this study.

- 1) What are the challenges faced by the playwright when rewriting the testimonies of real people for the stage? To what extent, if any, do the conditions under which the testimonies are produced impact upon the dramaturgical choices made by the playwright.
- 2) What are the ethical implications that arise when staging personal testimonies? How ‘authentic’ do the testimonies need to be?

- 3) How does the practice of writing a play that does not seek to dramatize testimony compare to the process of writing one that does? To what extent, if any, does having previously worked with testimony impact upon the dramaturgical choices made by the playwright?
- 4) How does the epistemology of a testimony play compare to that of a more conventional play? What is the value of resituating personal testimonies in performance?
- 5) How do actors respond to the challenge of performing these testimonies, particularly in the absence of the original testifier? What are the difficulties that arise? Does it require a different style or approach to acting?
- 6) What impact does the experience of giving their testimony have upon the original testifier? How do the choices made by the playwright and subsequently the actors in performance impact upon the original person who gave their testimony?

I faced numerous challenges when writing the first two plays. The main challenge was finding an appropriate theatrical framework that could capture the complexity and contradictory elements that testimony contains while simultaneously respecting the integrity of the original testifier. When writing *Walking Away* and *Under Pressure* I tried to achieve this by creating a space where I could juxtapose the narratives while retaining their essence by using as much of their language as possible. Stevan M. Weine in his book *Testimony After Catastrophe: narrating the trauma of political violence* maintains that:

efforts to use testimony to address the consequences of political violence would be strengthened, though by no means guaranteed, if based on a fuller acknowledgement of the personal, truthful and ethical elements that are embodied in the narrative essence of the testimony. (2006: xiv)

My initial attraction to testimony worked was fuelled by what I believed was testimonies potential to allow us as a society to learn from the experiences of others. From

my experience of writing both *Walking Away* and *Under Pressure* for this study, I am even further convinced of its potential and echo Weine's call for those of us who choose to work with testimony to more readily acknowledge the 'personal, truthful and ethical elements' that can be found by attending to the 'narrative essence of testimony'. Rather than attempting to rewrite the testimonies to suit our own needs, I argue for a much more nuanced listening to and nurturing of the narratives that people share with us. However, as Cathy Caruth in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* argues, '[t]he difficulty of listening and responding to traumatic stories in a way that does not lose their impact, that does not reduce them to clichés or turn them all into versions of the same story, is a problem that remains central to the task of therapists, literary critics, neurobiologists and filmmakers alike' (1995: vii). Given the amount of theatre makers who are now seeking to stage the traumatic memories of others, we can also add playwrights to this list.

My experience of working on the first two case studies leads me to conclude that the conditions under which the testimonies were produced had a very definite impact on the choices I made when writing the first two plays for this study. The way I chose to conduct the interviews and how I related to the interviewees definitely facilitated the disclosure of more in-depth and intimate material. Disclosing information about myself was also helpful and resulted in people sharing information they may not have shared with another interviewer. Developing an atmosphere of trust was also a fundamental part of my approach. It was very important to me that the people I was interviewing knew exactly where they stood in relation to what I was going to do with the material. This was not as much of a consideration in the third project as I was not specifically interviewing anyone. However, it did affect the sort of stories that I included in *Aquéro*.

Throughout this study I have tried to remain aware of and consider the ethics of my practice. 'Becoming ethical', according to Helen Nicholson, 'is an on-going process – a

continual journey of action, reflection and evaluation – in which values and beliefs may be challenged and tested over time and in response to new situations and different people’ (2005: 166). Various ethical concerns presented themselves throughout the course of this study. These ranged from the responsibility of speaking for the other and how this may in fact further contribute to reinforcing a person’s victimhood when making the private public; the manner in which third parties were implicated in the stories that were told to me; and the effect on the individual upon seeing themselves represented in performance.

The testimony work that I undertook as part of this research was very different from those working in the field of psychiatry. My role was different than that of a therapist doing testimony work. When someone was testifying to me they were doing so with the knowledge that I was a playwright and not a therapist. A common practice for clinical psychiatrists is to give the interviewee a copy of the entire transcript of the interview. For both *Walking Away* and *Under Pressure* I decided against this. I chose instead to give them a completed draft of the script to read before it was made public. My decision to give the participants a completed draft of the script was motivated by three reasons.

The first was practical; I handwrite the transcript and do not always transcribe the interview in entirety. Transcription is not only a lengthy and arduous task but also a very technical one especially when the aim is to capture on paper the rhythms and cadences of ordinary speech. In addition, when people talk about their experiences they often deviate and go off at a tangent. Often this would result in the generation of material that was not always relevant to what I wanted to include in the script. I found that listening to the interview and noting particular sections for inclusion in the script - which I then transcribed very carefully – was often more suitable.

The second reason concerns the experience of someone reading their life story on paper. When someone reads the transcript of their life story it can be a particularly upsetting or traumatic experience. With the knowledge that this information is about to be made public there is possibility that the person might ask for some of the transcript not to be used - this is often because they may not often see the significance of their story unless it is placed in a context. My hope was that by seeing how it is used in the context of the play they would understand the potential of using their words.

Finally the third reason was in part inspired by how plays that incorporate the testimonies of real people had worked in the past. In the Verbatim Theatre of the 1970s often the interviewees were brought into the rehearsal process to act as collaborators. I was not entirely comfortable with having sole responsibility for how these stories would be represented. Giving them the script prior to rehearsals and the performance of the play I felt would go some way towards compensating for the fact that they were not included in this part of the process. I also wanted to ensure that they were comfortable with how the material they had shared with me was represented in the play. As documentary filmmaker Gavin Pryluck warns '[w]ith the best intentions in the world, filmmakers can only guess how the scenes they use will affect the lives of the people they have photographed: even a seemingly innocuous image may have meaning for the people involved that is obscure to the filmmaker' (2005: 97).

While I was not working with a camera, I certainly experienced moments during the creation of both *Walking Away* and *Under Pressure* where meanings from my dramaturgical choices were made that I could not have anticipated from the outset. For these two plays both my practice and my research were concerned with making private stories of real people public. During the interviewing phase people shared very personal and intimate details of their lives with me. When their stories were retold by the actors in performance meanings

emerged for the testifiers that they did not expect. In case study two I referred to how Woman 4 reacted to seeing her testimony performed on stage.

Another one of the women also had a strong reaction to the play. I spoke to her about ten days after the original reading when I visited the refuge. She told me how much she hated the play and there were times when she wanted to stand up and shout at the actress telling her story to stop. I was quite taken aback as when relaying her testimony to me in the initial interview she was one of the women who was quite easy to talk and very forthcoming. When I asked her why she hated the play so much, her response was:

It was like as if somebody was holding a full-length mirror in front of me and forcing me to look into it to see the person that I have become. Was I really that person? I found telling the story to you quite tough, but when listening to the story being repeated back to me, it was like someone pushing a button and fast-forwarding my healing by about two years. I could no longer deny the abuse. (Woman 5 2007)

According to Amanda Stuart Fisher there are three central challenges that confront practitioners who engage with accounts of personal and political trauma. They are:

How do we negotiate the telling of trauma whilst recognising its incommunicability? What is the appropriate language with which to speak of trauma? And what are the ethical implications of being a listener and performer of testimony? (2009: 110)

This thesis has shown that, despite the precariousness of memory and that a person's narrative account of an experience is not necessarily the truth of what actually occurred, favouring an aesthetic of reportage which recognises the narrative essence of testimony is something to be considered. Its potential as a tool for education and healing tool should not be overlooked in favour of the dramatic. Testimonies by their very nature contain complex and contradictory elements that can be revealed in performance providing the theatrical team do not attempt to 'bend them to their own needs'. When the aim is to highlight or showcase these complexities and contradictions that occur in the language of the testimony the

challenge for the playwright is to find a theatrical structure or form to represent the testimonies in a manner which will be theatrically effective while still respecting the integrity of the original testifier.

The Theatre of Testimony, although heavily text reliant, has much more in common with Brecht's Epic Theatre and Lehman's notion of 'postdramatic' theatre than traditional Aristotelian drama. Lehman describes the principle of narration as an essential trait of postdramatic theatre; the theatre becomes the site of a narrative act (2006: 109). The foregrounding of the theatre as the site of narrative acts in both *Walking Away* and *Under Pressure* aligns theatre of testimony to the postdramatic. For Lehman, narration is 'lost in the world of media', but 'finds a new site in theatre'. He writes:

Yet while epic theatre changes the representation of the fictive events represented, distancing the spectators in order to turn them into assessors, experts and political judges, the post-epic forms of narration are about the foregrounding of the personal, not the demonstrating presence of the narrator, about the self-referential intensity of this contact: about the closeness within distance, not the distancing of that which is close (2006: 110)

This concept of narration leads us once more to Park-Fuller's argument in reference to autobiographical performance that the 'conflict or drama in this type of theatre is not only the struggle disclosed (the narrated event), but also the struggle *to tell* (the narrative act)' (2000: 24).

My experiences during this study lead me to conclude that not only as theatre artists but as active citizens we can learn by attending to and nurturing the narrative essence of testimony. Resituating testimony in performance even when it is spoken by actors puts us in touch with the 'perceptions, memories, and inferences of others' (Coady: 1994:78) by inviting listeners to share in a recollection of that which has been experienced. I remind the reader once more of Jennifer Lackey's observation that 'almost everything we know depends in some way on testimony [and] [w]ithout the ability to learn from others, it would be

virtually impossible for any individual person to know much beyond what has come within the scope of her immediate perceptual environment' (2007:1). In addition, the recent philosophical debates on the epistemology of testimony point to the fact that we can learn from the words of others. This thereby implies that, by forgoing the use of our own voice in an attempt to surrender to the words of others, we can, as Lackey points out, not only transmit knowledge but also generate new knowledge. However, the conclusions from this study so far have raised important questions in terms of what this means when we attempt to create plays or performance pieces using testimony. It is my sincere hope that theatre makers will continue to engage with testimony and explore new ways of addressing the fundamental challenge of balancing creativity with theatricality.

Finally, it is impossible for me to share with you all that I have learned and experienced within the scope of this study, particularly the many moments where these plays extended beyond the boundaries of their performance. Many significant moments occurred for the people who shared their stories for *Walking Away* and *Under Pressure*. To support my argument that staging the narrative is beneficial and that the effects extend beyond the performance I leave you with a selection of the women's testimonies regarding the experience of participating in *Walking Away* which took place outside the boundaries of performance. I offer these vignettes in response to Clancy's question '[w]hat more is achieved when the words don't come from the playwright's memory and imagination, but instead from the mouths of real and ordinary people?'

To see someone else repeating your words brought back memories that really hit me in the face. I always found it difficult to talk about domestic abuse. I covered up for years and was in denial and always lived in fear of being recognised. I am glad and found it positive that I was able to talk about it. Being part of this made me feel not so alone. Hearing my own story and other women's stories I felt very indignant like "How dare he do this to me? What gave him the right to do this?" This makes me feel very angry. I hope this will help women to get the courage to get help.

It was hard telling my story, very difficult. Personally I felt it helped me come to terms with my past and hopefully [it will] make some good use of my story. I hope my story will contribute to women seeing there is a way out.

It was a shock to hear and see my own life story acted out on stage. I never realised I was so quiet, dignified and such a lady until I saw myself for the first time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adorno, T. (1973) *Negative Dialectics*, New York: Continuum.
- Agger, I. (1994) *The Blue Room: Trauma and Testimony Among Refugee Women – A Psychosocial Exploration*. London: Zed Books.
- Alcoff, L. (1991-92) 'The Problem of Speaking for Others', *Cultural Critique*, vol. 4, no. 5, p. 32.
- Anderson, M. (2007) 'A Resurgence of Verbatim Theatre: Authenticity, Empathy and Transformation', *Australasian Drama Studies*, 50, pp. 153-169.
- Arendt, H. (1958) *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 3
- Atkinson, R. (2001) 'The Life Story Interview', in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*, Gubrium, J.F. (ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Audi, R. (1998) *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*, London: Routledge.
- Baglia, J. and Foster, E. (2005) 'Performing the "Really" Real: Cultural Criticism, Representation, and Commodification in 'The Laramie Project'', *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, vol. 19, no.2, pp. 127-145.
- Bakhtin, M. (1986) *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bartlett, F. C. (1932) *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University press.
- BBC News UK 'Every death on every road in Great Britain 1999-2010' [online] Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-15975720> [Accessed 26 Oct 2011]
- Benjamin, W. (1999) *Illuminations*, Harry Zorn (trans.), Hannah Arendt (ed.), London: Pimlico.
- Ben-Zvi, L. (2006) 'Staging the Other Israel: The Documentary Theatre of Nola Chilton', *The Drama Review*, vol. 50, no. 3, pp. 42-55.
- Betsko, K. and Koenig, R. (eds) (1987) *Interviews with Contemporary Women Playwrights*, New York: Beech Tree Books.
- Biggsby, C. (1999) *Contemporary American Playwrights*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Billington, M. (2005) 'Talking to Terrorists by Robert Soans', Review, *The Guardian* [online] Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/critic/review/0,1169,1472063,00.html> [Accessed 17 September 2005]

- Blank, J. and Jensen, E. (2005) *Living Justice: Love, Freedom, and the Making of The Exonerated*, New York: Atria.
- Blank, J. and Jensen, E. (2003) *The Exonerated: A Play*, New York: Faber.
- Blythe, A. (2008) 'Alecky Blythe', in Hammond, W. & Steward, D. (eds.) *Verbatim, Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre*, London: Oberon, pp. 77-102.
- Bossier, G. (2003) 'Bearing Witness: Emily Mann', *The Dramatist*, (Sept/Oct).
- Bottoms, S. (2006) 'Putting the Document into Documentary: An Unwelcome Corrective?', *The Drama Review*, vol. 50, no. 3, pp. 56-68.
- Bourdieu, P. (2002) *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Brecht, B. (1964) 'The Street Scene', in: Cousell, C. and Wolf, L. (eds.) *Performance Analysis*, London: Routledge.
- Brown, R. (2005) 'Collaboration: Moisés Kaufman: The Copulation of Form and Content', *Theatre Topics*, 15 (1), pp. 51-67.
- Bryman, A. (2001) 'Introduction', in A. Bryman (ed.) *Ethnography*, London: Sage.
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, London: Routledge.
- Caruth, C. (1995) *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Chaitin, J. (2008) 'Narratives and Storytelling in conflicts and conflict resolution'[online] *Intractable Conflict Knowledge Base Project* Available at: http://abrahamsvision.org/documents/readings/2008vision/israeli-palestinian-conflict/optional/Narratives_and_Storytelling.pdf [Accessed 26 November 2009]
- Chase, S. (2003) 'Taking Narrative Seriously: Consequences for Method and Theory in Interview Studies' in Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds.) *Turning Points in Qualitative Research: Tying Knots in a Handkerchief*, Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, pp. 273-296.
- Cheeseman, P. (2005) '...on documentary theatre' in Soans, R. *Talking to terrorists*, London: Oberon, pp. 104-107.
- Clancy, L. (2006) 'Talking to Terrorist [sic]' *Review* [online] Available at: <http://www.theloy.com/2007/04/review-talking-to-terrorist-samuel.html> [Accessed 25 September 2007]
- Coady, C. A. J. (1992) *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

- Coles, R. (1998) *Doing Documentary Work*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Conquergood, D. (1985) 'Performing as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of the Ethnography of Performance' *Literature in Performance*, 9 (April).
- Couser, G. T. (2003) *Vulnerable Subjects: Ethics and Life Writing*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Dawson, G.F. (1999) *Documentary theatre in the United States: an historical survey and analysis of its content, form, and stagecraft*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Deal, C. (2008) *Collaborative Theater of Testimony Performance as Critical Performance Pedagogy: Implications for Theater Artists, Community Members, Audiences, and Performance Studies Scholars*. Thesis [PhD]. Fairfax, VA: George Mason University.
- Denzin, N. (2003) *Performance Ethnography*, London: SAGE Publications.
- Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds.) (2003) *Turning Points in Qualitative Research: Tying Knots in a Handkerchief*, Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, pp. 437-440.
- Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds.) (2005) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, pp.1 -32.
- Derrida, J and Rottenberg, E. (trans.) (2000) *The Instant of My Death*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Diamond, E. (ed.) (1996) 'Introduction', *Performance and Cultural Politics*. New York: Routledge, pp. 1-12.
- Disch, L. (2003) 'Impartiality, Storytelling, and the Seductions of Narrative: An Essay at an Impasse', *Alternatives*, 282, pp. 253-66.
- Dolan, J. (2005) *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Enslar, E. (2001) *The Vagina Monologues*, New York: Villard Books.
- Etchells, T. (1999) *Certain Fragments: Contemporary Performance and Forced Entertainment*, London: Routledge.
- EWTN.com (2011) *INEFFABILIS DEUS (The Immaculate Conception) by Pope Pius IX* [online] Available at: <http://www.ewtn.com/LIBRARY/PAPALDOC/P9INEFF.htm> [Accessed 26 October 2010]
- Farber, Y. (2008) *Theatre as Witness: Three Testimonial Plays from South Africa*, London: Oberon.
- Favorini, A. (1995) *Voicings: Ten Plays From the Documentary Theatre*, New Jersey: The Ecco Press.

- Felman, S. and Laub, D. (1992) *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, London: Routledge.
- Filewood, A. (1987) *Collective Encounters: Documentary Theatre in English Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Fisher, P. (2007) 'Robin Soans and Verbatim Theatre' *British Theatre Guide* [online] Available at: <http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/otherresources/interviews/RobinSoans.htm> [Accessed 26 August 2010]
- Fitzgibbon, K. (2010) *Walking Away Research*, email to Helena Enright (henright@gmail.com) 15 February 2010 [Accessed 25 May 2010]
- Forsythe, A. and Megson, C. (eds.) (2009) *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Freeman, J. (2010) *Blood, Sweat & Theory: Research Through Practice in Performance*, UK: Libri Publishing.
- Freeman, R. (2007) 'Solving the Laramie Problem, or, Projecting onto Laramie', *Theatre Symposium: A Journal of the Southeastern Theatre Conference*, 15, pp. 107-122, 138.
- Gardner, L. (2007) 'Does verbatim theatre still talk the talk?' *Guardian Theatre Blog*, [online] Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2007/may/07/foreditorsdoesverbatimthea> [Accessed 25 May 2010]
- Gilmore, L. (2001) *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Gordon, R. (2006) *The Purpose of Playing: Modern Acting Theories in Perspective*, 4th ed. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Gray, P. H. and Vanoosting, J. (1996) *Performance in Life and Literature*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Grainger, R. (2006) *Healing Theatre: How Plays Change Lives*, Oxford: Trafford Publishing.
- Greene, A. (2000) 'Interview with Emily Mann', *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, vol. 2, pp. 77-98.
- Hammond, W. & Steward, D. (eds.) (2008) *Verbatim, Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre*, London: Oberon.
- Hare, D. (2004) 'David Hare talking to Richard Boon', *National Theatre* [online] Available at: <http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/?lid=8304> [Accessed 15 May 2010]
- Hare, D. (2010) 'Mere fact, mere fiction', *The Guardian*, [online] Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2010/apr/17/david-hare-theatre-fact-fiction> [Accessed 15 May 2010]

- Hare, D. & Stafford-Clark, M. (2008) 'David Hare & Max Stafford-Clark', in Hammond, W. & Steward, D. (eds.) *Verbatim, Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre*, London: Oberon, pp. 45-76.
- Haseman, B. and Mafe, D. (2010) 'Acquiring Know-How: Research Training for Practice-led Researchers', in SMITH, H. and DEAN, R. (eds.) *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Heddon, D. (2008) *Autobiography and Performance*, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Heddon, D. (2009) 'To Absent Friends', in Haedicke, S. C. et al, (ed.) *Political Performances: Theory and Practice*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp. 111-136.
- Hodder, I. (2000) 'The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture', in Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 703-715.
- Holmes, J. (2007) *Fallujah*. London: Constable.
- Holstein, J. A. Gubrium J. F. (2004) 'The Active Interview' in Silverman, D. (ed.) *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*. London: Sage Publications
- Hornsby-Smith, M.P. (2002) 'Catholic Identity and Evangelisation', *Priests and People*, vol. 16, no. 7, p. 257.
- Jackson, A. (2007) *Theatre, Education and the Making of Meanings: Art or Instrument?*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Jeffers, A. (2006) 'Refugee Perspectives: The Practice and Ethics of Verbatim Theatre and Refugee Stories', *Platform*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1-17.
- Kalb, J. (2001) 'Documentary Solo Performance: The Politics of the Mirrored Self', *Theatre*, vol. 31, no. 3, pp. 13-29.
- Kaufman, M. (2000) 'Into the West: An Exploration in Form', *American Theatre*, 17.5, p. 17-18.
- Kaufman, M. (2001) *The Laramie Project*, New York: Vintage.
- Kearney, R. (2001) *On Stories: Thinking in Action* London: Routledge
- Kearney, R. and Dooley, M. (1999) *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, London: Routledge.
- Kent, N. (2008) 'Nicholas Kent', in Hammond, W. & Steward, D. (eds.) *Verbatim, Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre*, London: Oberon, pp. 133 – 168.
- Keren, A. (2007) 'Epistemic Authority, Testimony and the Transmission of Knowledge', in *Episteme: A Journal of Social Epistemology*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 368-381.

- Kershaw, B. (1992) *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention*, London: Routledge.
- Kershaw, B. (1999) *The Radical in Performance: between Brecht and Baudrillard*, London, Routledge.
- Ki-moon, B. (2010) 'Resources for Speakers on Global Issues' *United Nations* [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/endviol/quotes.shtml> [Accessed 19 June 2010]
- Kron, L. (2001) *2.5 Minute Ride and 101 Humiliating Stories*, New York: Theatre Communications Group.
- Lackey, J. (2007) 'Introduction: Perspectives on Testimony', *Episteme: A Journal of Social Epistemology*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 233-237.
- Lackey, J. (2008) *Learning from Words: Testimony as a Source of Knowledge*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Langellier, K. M. (1999) 'Personal Narrative, Performance, Performativity: Two or Three Things I Know for Sure', *Text and Performance Quarterly*, vol. 19, pp. 125-144.
- Langellier, K. (1989). 'Personal narratives: Perspectives on theory and research', *Text and Performance Quarterly*, vol. 9, pp. 243-276.
- Langellier, K. (1998). 'Voiceless bodies, bodiless voices: The future of personal narrative performance', in S. J. Dailey (ed.), *The Future of Performance Studies: Visions and Revisions*, Annandale, VA: National Communication Association, pp. 207-213
- Langer, L.L. (1992) *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*, London: Routledge.
- Laub, D. (1992) 'Bearing Witness and the Vicissitudes of Listening', in Felman, S. and Laub, D. *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. London: Routledge, pp. 57-74.
- Lehmann, H.T. and Jurs-Munby, K. (trans.) (2006) *Postdramatic Theatre*, London: Routledge.
- Littleton, J. (2006) 'Catholic Identity in the Irish Context' in *Irish and Catholic?: Towards an understanding of identity*. Dublin: The Columba Press
- Loftus, E. F. (1996) *Eyewitness Testimony*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Loftus, E. F. (1997) 'Creating False Memories', *Scientific American*, 277, pp. 70-75.
- Lonergan, P. (2006) 'Less Than a Year' Review, *Irish Times*, 28 November.

- Luckhurst, M. (2008) 'Verbatim Theatre, Media Relations, and Ethics' in N. Holdsworth and M. Luckhurst. (eds.). *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British and Irish Drama*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Luckhurst, R. (2008) *The Trauma Question*, New York: Routledge.
- Madison, D. S. (1998) 'Performance, Personal Narratives, and the Politics of Possibility', in Dailey, S. J. (ed.) *The Future of Performance Studies: Visions and Revisions*, Annandale VA: National Communication Association, pp. 276-86.
- Manfull, H. (1999) *Taking Stage: Women Directors on Directing*, London: Methuen.
- Mann, E. (1997) *Testimonies: Four Plays*, New York: Theatre Communications Group.
- Mann, E. (2000). 'In Conversation' in *Theatre Topics*, vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 1-16.
- Martin, C. (ed.) (2010) *Dramaturgy of the Real on the World Stage*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Martin, C. (2006) 'Bodies of Evidence'. *The Drama Review*, vol. 50, no.3, pp. 8-15.
- Maynes, M.J., Pierce, J.L., and Laslett, B. (2008) *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History*, London: Cornell University Press.
- Megson, C. (2006) 'Backpages', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 16(4), pp. 522-532.
- Merlin, B. (2007a) 'Acting Hare' in Boon, R. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to David Hare*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 123 – 137.
- Merlin, B. (2007b) 'The Permanent Way and the Impermanent Muse', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 41-49.
- Merlin, B. (2007c) *Personal Interview*, with Helena Enright, April 2007.
- Miller, J. and Glassner, B. (1997) 'The 'inside' and the 'outside': finding realities in interviews', in Silverman, D. (ed.) *Qualitative Research Theory and Practice*, London: Sage Publications.
- Mishler, E.G. (1991) 'Representing Discourse: The Rhetoric of Transcription'. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 255-280.
- Moran, S. (2006) 'Interview with Sean Rocks', *The Eleventh Hour*, RTE Radio One. 21 November 2006. No longer available online.
- Nagel, E. (2007) 'An Aesthetic of Neighbourliness: Possibilities for Integrating Community-Based Practices into Documentary Theatre'. *Theatre Topics*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 153-168.
- Nelson, R. (2009) 'Modes of Practice-as-Research Knowledge and their place in the

- Academy', in *Practice-as-Research in Performance and Screen*. Allegue, L., Jones, S., Kershaw, B., and Piccini, A. (eds.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 112 - 130.
- Nichols, B. (2001) *Introduction to Documentary*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Nicholson, H. (2005) *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Paget, D. (1987) 'Verbatim Theatre': Oral History and Documentary Techniques, *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 12, p. 317-336.
- Paget, D. (2009) 'The Broken Tradition of Documentary Theatre', in *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present*. Forsyth, A. and Megson, C. (eds.) Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 224-238.
- Paget, D. (2010) 'Acts of Commitment: Activist Arts, the Rehearsed Reading, and Documentary Theatre', *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 173-193.
- Palmer, J. (2007). *Under Pressure Research*, email to Helena Enright (henright@gmail.com) 20 February 2010 [Accessed 25 May 2010]
- Park-Fuller, L.M. (2000) 'Performing Absence: The staged personal narrative as testimony'. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 20-42.
- Phelan, P. (1999) *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London: Routledge.
- Phelan, P. (1999) Performing Questions, Producing Witnesses, in: Etchells, T (ed.) *Certain Fragments: Contemporary Performance and Forced Entertainment*. London: Routledge, pp. 9-14.
- Phillips, B. (2010) 'Testimony in Transmission: Victim and Witness Narratives in Contemporary Drama', *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 271-286.
- Piscator, E. (1970) 'Objective Acting', in *Actors on Acting*. Cole, T. and Chinoy, H.K. (eds.). New York: Crown Publishers, pp. 301-307.
- Pollock, D. (2005) *Remembering: Oral History Performance*, New York: Palgrave.
- Prentki, T. and Preston, S. (eds.) (2009) *The Applied Theatre Reader*, London: Routledge.
- Pryluck, G. (2005) 'Ultimately We Are All Outsiders: The Ethics of Documentary Filmmaking', in Rosenthal, A. and Corner, J (eds.) *New Challenges for Documentary*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Raj, R. & Morputh, N. D. (2007) *Religious tourism and pilgrimage festivals management: an international perspective*, CABI Pub.
- Read, A. (1993) *Theatre and Everyday Life*. London: Routledge.

- Reinelt, J. (2009) 'The Promise of Documentary', in Forsythe, A. and Megson, C. (eds.) (2009) *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Ricoeur, P. (1999) 'Memory and Forgetting', in: Kearney, R. and Dooley, M. (eds.) *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, London: Routledge, pp. 5-11.
- Ruane, M. (2000) 'Introduction', in *The Irish Journey: Women's Stories of Abortion*. Dublin: Irish Family Planning Association.
- Salverson, J. (1996) 'Performing Emergency: Witnessing, Popular Theatre, and the Lie of the Literal'. *Theatre Topics*, vol. 6 no. 2, pp.181-91.
- Salverson, J. (2001) 'Change on Whose Terms? Testimony and an Erotics of Injury', *Theater and Social Change*, vol. 31, no. 3 pp. 118-125.
- Salz, M. (1996) *Theatre of testimony: The works of Emily Mann, Anna Deavere Smith and Spalding Gray*. Thesis [PhD]. Boulder: University of Colorado.
- Sangster, J. (1994) Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History. *Women's History Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 5-28.
- Schaefer, K. (2003) 'The Spectator as Witness? *Binlids* as Case Study', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, vol. 23, no.1, pp. 5-20.
- Schaffer, K. and Smith, S. (2004) *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schechner, R. (ed.) (1988) *Essays on Performance Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Sheehy, J. (2007) *Role of the Actor*, email to Helena Enright (henright@gmail.com) 26 February 2007 [Accessed 25 May 2010]
- Silverman, D. (ed.) (2004) *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*. London: Sage Publications
- Smith, A. D. (1993) *Fires in the Mirror*. New York: Anchor.
- Soans, R. (2004) *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook*. London: Oberon.
- Soans, R. (2005) *Talking To Terrorists*. London: Oberon.
- Soans, R. (2008) 'Robin Soans', in Hammond, W. & Steward, D. (eds.) *Verbatim, Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre*. London: Oberon, pp. 15-44.
- Stoller, T. (2004) 'Performing Laramie: The Tectonic Theater's Project', *New England Theatre Journal*, 15, pp. 21-34.
- Stuart Fischer, A. (2009) 'Bearing Witness: The position of theatre makers in the

- telling of trauma', in Prentki, T. and Preston, S. (eds.) *The Applied Theatre Reader*, London: Routledge.
- Taylor, P. (2010) 'The rise of democratic theatre'. *The Independent*. 13 April 2010.
- Tigner, A. L. (2002) 'The Laramie Project: Western Pastoral'. *Modern Drama*, vol. 45, no. 1 pp. 138-186.
- Thompson, J. (2005) *Digging Up Stories: Applied Theatre, Performance and War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 25-26.
- Thompson, J. (2009) *Performance Affects: Applied Theatre and the End of Effect*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Thompson, J. & Schechner, R. (2004) 'Why "Social Theatre"?'', *The Drama Review*, vol. 48, no. 3, pp. 11-16.
- Watson, L. and Watson-Franke, M.B. (1985) *Interpreting Life Histories: An Anthropological Inquiry*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Watt, D. (2009) 'Local Knowledges, Memories, and Community: From Oral History to Performance', in Haedicke, S. C. et al, (eds.) *Political Performances: Theory and Practice*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp. 189-212.
- Weine, S.M. (2006) *Testimony after Catastrophe: Narrating the Traumas of Political Violence*. United States of America: Northwestern University Press.
- Wiesel, E. (1977) 'The Holocaust as a Literary Inspiration', in Wiesel, E. et al. (eds.) 1990. *Dimensions of the Holocaust*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, pp. 5-19.
- Willet, J. (ed.) (1994) *Brecht on Theatre*, London: Methuen.
- Wilson, M. (2006) *Storytelling and Theatre: Contemporary Professional Storytellers and Their Art*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Women's Aid (2010) 'How common is domestic violence?' [online] Available at: http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic_violence_topic.asp?section=0001000100220041§ionTitle=Domestic+violence+%28general%29 [Accessed 26 Oct 2010]
- Woman 2. (2008) Personal interview with Helena Enright. May 2007.
- Woman 4. (2008) Personal interview with Helena Enright. May 2007.
- Young, S. (2009) Playing with Documentary Theatre: *Aalst* and *Taking Care of Baby* New Theatre Quarterly, 25: pp. 72 – 87.
- Zarrili, P. (2002) *Acting (Re)Considered: A theoretical and practical guide*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

Zipes, J.D. (1995) *Creative Storytelling: Building community, changing lives*. London: Routledge.

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Breaking the Silence, ADAPT HOUSE

*The closer we can get to touching on community concerns,
to making plays that people can use, that help them understand...that help us understand, this
community, the better off I think we are.*

Gerard Stropnicki of the Bloomberg Theatre Ensemble, USA

Documentary theatre may not be new, but in the last decade, several high-profile productions in both America and Britain such as *Fires in the Mirror* by Anna Deavere Smith, *The Permanent Way* by David Hare, *The Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufman, *Bloody Sunday: Scenes From the Saville Inquiry* by Nicholas Kent and more recently Robin Soans' *Talking to Terrorists* and *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook* have brought new focus to this loosely defined theatrical form. Documentary theatre, verbatim theatre, theatre of fact and docu-drama are just some of the terms that are attributed to this particular genre of theatre.

For the purpose of this project it is proposed that the form would follow that of verbatim theatre. This form of documentary theatre concerns the taping and subsequent transcription of interviews with ordinary people, done in the context of research into a region, subject area, issue, event or combination of these things. The primary source is then transformed into a text, which is acted. Essentially, verbatim theatre involves the use of actual words spoken by real people to create a piece of drama.

In this case I will begin with initial research into the area of breaking the silence and the work that Ciarda has already done with the group. I will then interview each of the women involved. Once this has taken place the collected material will then be edited and shaped into a play. As part of this process I will then attempt to bring some sort of theatrical form to the largely unstructured material. Characters in the play will be based on people that were interviewed during the research phase and will be represented by actors. The stage setting for the play may be representative of the world from which the language of the play has evolved. A narrative may then be applied to bring together the various voices, events, images and facts so that the play can be presented as a focused and dramatic telling of a story, event or social issue.

Helena Enright

Appendix B:

Questions for the BTS project

- Can you remember when you first fell in love?
- How did you meet your partner and was it love at first sight?
- When did you fall out of love or do you ever?

At the beginning of the piece, Desdemona is formidable in her quiet but resolute defence of her marriage to Othello. She is able to stand on her own offering no excuse for what she has done, indeed seeing no need for any.

*She puts her father firmly in his place reminding him that she now owes the same loyalty and duty to Othello as her mother owed to Brabantio when she married him. **Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see: She has deceived her father, and may thee.***

- Did your family put up any resistance to your husband/partner when you met them?
- Did you listen or even care?
- What do you think of the statement love is blind?

Again her strength is evident after Othello has reduced her to a state of shocked, bewildered anguish and exposed her to public humiliation. The trumpets sound for supper, and she must perform her ceremonial functions with dignified calm in the presence of those who have witnessed her being struck by Othello.

- Have you ever had to put on a brave face in front of others?

Iago will cause Othello to think that Desdemona has ulterior motives for wishing to help Cassio. What role do you think friends play within a relationship between a man and a woman?

- What does honesty mean to you?
- Have you ever been betrayed?
- Have you ever been accused of something you didn't do?
- What's the nastiest thing anybody has ever said about you?
- What's the nicest thing anybody has ever said about you?

- If you could write an ending for Desdemona what would it be?
- You are Desdemona – what happens next?
- What question would you most like to ask Desdemona?
- If you could be anything in the world what would you be?

Appendix C:

Pledges from Under Pressure Pilot Tour – March 2008

Axe Valley

- We pledge to never to drive erratically in a car.
 - We promise to never get in a car as a passenger with anyone who is under the influence of alcohol or who we think is a dangerous driver.
 - We pledge to drive with respect and care to myself and others and ensuring others do the same.
 - I pledge to take responsibility when driving. I will think of others on the road and the consequences of my actions when on the road.
 - I pledge to never put anyone else in danger as a result of me being under the influence of alcohol.
 - Take responsibility for yourself and others around you.
 - I pledge to take responsibility for my own actions.
-

Honiton

- Obey the law and always wear a seatbelt.
 - Always be careful when driving, concentrate and take care at all times.
 - I promise to drive safely and stay within the law.
 - I promise never to get in a car with a drunk person. I promise not to get in a car with a person I don't know.
 - Don't drink and drive and always wear a seatbelt.
 - Don't drink / Wear a seatbelt / Drive to the road conditions
 - No Drink Driving
 - We will never drive unless seatbelt is secure.
-

Tavistock (pm)

- I will take responsibility for my actions when driving.
 - I shall not drink and drive at any time and will not drive carelessly.
 - I promise not to drink and drive.
 - I will be responsible with my driving and make sensible decisions.
 - I promise to drive sensibly, safely and obey speed limits and traffic rules at all times.
 - I will always be a sensible driver.
 - I will drive with responsibility always.
 - Not to Drink and Drive.
-

Teign (am)

- We promise never to drink and drive and to make sure no one else does.
- Drive with due care and attention. Never get in the car with a driver who is under the influence.
- We promise to try to drive responsibly and be aware of everything around us.
- We will at all times think of road safety and don't drink and drive.
- I pledge not to stand back and let anybody drive while over the legal limit.
- Never drive under the influence of alcohol. Drive safely with full concentration.
- I promise to go slow in built up areas and always wear a seatbelt.
- I promise to think of others when driving and consider the consequences my actions may cause.
- We will never drive under the influence or let a friend willingly drive under the influence.

Teign (pm)

- To drive safely and responsibly.
- We promise to always drive responsibly and to NEVER drink and drive!
- Make sure my passengers are safe and don't drink and drive or let anyone drive who has been drinking.
- I promise to take care of myself and others.
- We pledge not to drive under the influence or get in a car with someone who is. Take responsibility for our driving and the safety of others.
- Take responsibility not just for me but everyone else in the car.
- We promise to keep within the speed limit and to not drive under the influence of alcohol.
- If we're out with our friends and are drunk, we won't let anyone including ourselves drive.

Chumleigh (am)

- We will not drink drive.
- Not drink drive because you could kill someone.
- I promise to drive with respect and never drink drive.
- We promise to never drink and drive.
- Everybody in this group promises to never speed whilst driving.
- I will always put my seatbelt on.
- We pledge to drive safely and carefully.
- We pledge to be responsible drivers and think of the consequences our actions may have on other people.
- I promise to drive safely and to think about others when driving and not to drink and drive.
- I promise to not drink drive and drive safely.

Chumleigh (pm)

- We promise that we will never drink and drive and will never pressure anyone into doing the same.
 - We pledge not to get into a car with a drunk driver.
 - I will not drink and drive especially if others are at risk with me. I will not be responsible for death.
 - I promise to drive slowly and not drink and drive.
 - I vow never to put somebody else's life in danger by driving irresponsibly.
 - I promise to drive safely and sensibly.
 - I promise not to drink drive and always plan ahead.
-

Bideford (am)

- We promise to always drive safely so that we will never be missing from each others lives.
- We promise to make cautious, mature decisions about the choices we make to ensure the safety of ourselves and others.
- Never to drink and drive and to always take into consideration other road users and any passengers.
- We pledge to each other never to drink like an idiot and then drive like an idiot.
- I pledge to drink responsibly and to drive responsibly.
- Too not drink and drive. Be responsible for yourself and others.
- I pledge to stick to speed limits and abide by the Highway Code and driving laws including drink driving.
- Not to put others in danger whilst driving.

Bideford (pm)

- I will not drive under the influence.
 - We promise to never drink and drive or get in a car with drunk people driving. I will concentrate on the road and I will follow the Highway Code.
 - We pledge to act safely whilst on the road.
 - We promise to stand up for what is right.
 - We promise to drive as safely as we possibly can and not distract each other when in a car together.
 - To Think.
 - We promise not to drink drive.
-

Ivybridge (Day 1 am)

- To take responsibility for my actions.
- We promise to always drive safely and think about what we are doing.
- We promise not to drink and drive and drive carefully, never having music too loud.
- Not to drive under the influence and to, where possible, take the initiative to prevent potential disasters/accidents.

- That we shall never jeopardise our own or others lives with carelessness and inconsideration when on the road.
- We will never drink and drive. We will not think it won't happen to us. We won't get in a car when the driver has been drinking. We will adjust our driving according to whether conditions. We won't show off whilst driving.
- I will always drive safely and never in a situation where my judgment may be impaired.
- I pledge never to drive carelessly and show off.

Ivybridge (pm)

- We promise to drive safely within the speed limits, to never drink drive and take responsibility for others and ourselves.
- I promise I will drive responsibly and safely.
- We promise to drive responsibly and never willingly endanger the lives of ourselves or anyone else.
- I will not drive under the influence of alcohol or under pressure or without MOT.
- I promise never to drive under the influence and I will also do all that I can to prevent others from doing the same.
- We promise to take responsibility for our actions to make sure we do not endanger the lives of others and ourselves.
- I promise never to drive the under the influence and to make sure my passengers and I are always safe.
- We will drive sensibly, drive aware. Don't be a statistic.

Ivybridge (Day 2 am)

- We promise to drive carefully and with due care and attention.
- We promise to be responsible for all passengers and think carefully about how it can physically and emotionally effect others whilst in control.
- We promise to say no to drink driving and to look after anyone in our cars.
- We pledge to drive safely and to never drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs. We will always take responsibility for the people in the vehicle that we are driving.
- Take full responsibility for yourself and your passengers when driving.
- I shall always drive in accordance to conditions.
- We promise not to drive under the influence the influence of drugs or alcohol or get in a car of anyone who is!
- Our lives are our responsibility but we are also responsible for others.

Ivybridge (pm)

- We promise never to drink and drive and to put others in danger!
- I promise to drive carefully and safely also to be considerate of my passengers and other drivers.
- I promise to be a responsible driver for myself and others around me.
- We pledge to always drive responsibility whether we have others lives to consider or just our own. Speed limits will be stuck too!

- I will never drive under the influence of any amount of alcohol or for that matter be a passenger in a car in the same circumstances.
 - We promise to never drink and drive and never get in the car with a drunk person behind the wheel.
 - We promise not to drink and drive or get into a car with someone under the influence or with an irrational driver.
 - I will never drink and drive and I will be a considerate parker.
-

Appendix D:

Lourdes Pilgrimage *Why are you here? What is your story?*

I am writing a play about why people go on pilgrimage and in particular to Lourdes. I am currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Exeter where the focus of my research is theatre where the script is created using words spoken by real people. These words are usually gathered through an informal interview. To date I have created three plays using this approach.

My first play *Less Than A Year* tells the story of a mother and father coming to terms with the death of their teenage daughter. *Walking Away*, my second play is based on the testimony of women who are survivors of domestic violence and my third play, *Under Pressure* involves the father and the friend of a teenage boy recalling their version of New Year's Eve 2003, the night Simon was killed in a car crash.

I believe that using testimony from real people recounting genuine events as they saw and understood them is a powerful way to help us to better understand issues affecting our lives while simultaneously challenging our own behaviour and attitudes. As such I am interested in hearing from you the pilgrim.

If you are interested in talking to me about why you have come on pilgrimage please approach me as soon as possible and we can arrange to talk. Please note that I will be recording these interviews and that what you share with me may be used in the creation of a piece of theatre. At the beginning of the interview I will require you to sign the release form on the back of this page. This is standard procedure when working with testimony.

I have also enclosed a questionnaire from the Faculty of Theology at Oxford University which I would be really grateful if you would fill in and return to me at the end of the pilgrimage.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I look forward to talking with you in more detail during the week.

Warmest Regards

Helena Enright

Testimonial Release Form

I _____ authorize Helena Enright, 45 Woodlawn Park, Ballysimon Road, Limerick (herein referred to as “the author”) to edit the audio recordings, transcriptions, emails, medical records and contents of my story for the purpose of creating a play about why people go on pilgrimage.

I also give permission to the author to use my story for whatever informational or educational purposes may be determined. I understand the author, and her successors and assigns, shall own all right, title and interest, including the copyright, in and to the Recording and associated materials, to be used and disposed of, without limitation, as she shall in her sole discretion.

I do however understand that the material I disclose is for research purposes and may not end up in the play that is actually created.

Signature: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____ Date: _____

Note: If you do not wish to be identified in the play please tick this box and I will endeavour to protect your identity through the changing of names, places etc.