

# **Chapter Six**

## **Playing the Body – letting go**

## Playing the Body – letting go

The strategy of this chapter is to turn the coin over and focus on what it is to live as opposed to attempting to ‘fix’ life in order to avoid death. The strategy of this chapter is that of resistance, including resistance to resistance. The art of the actor as the player of plays is used to examine the essence of life. Two concepts emerged as being important here: the lightness of being and present-ness. This chapter subverts the concepts of academic seriousness while attempting to bring the subject of striving for life back to the joy of life. I reinsert the body as the irreducible context and focus disrupting the singularity of the text and bringing it back to the messiness of life.



*Ask not for whom the bell tolls: It tolls for thee.*

John Donne 1624

*Mad? Me?! Yes, yes, a resounding yes! I am riding this three-horned bronco of a life with all my might, dust-caked and with tears in my eyes. But do you know what? I don't think I really want to tame my bronco after all. I'll be happy to plunge her into the water till she treads white foam. She/I must become dawntreaders. (Hilder, 2003:39)*

### Prologue

This is the unwriteable chapter. It is the chapter that I have always said I have known what it is about. The last major chapter – and into this chapter I have mentally consigned learning the body, the art of the actor, living. I have written a multitude of beginnings to this chapter. And I keep thinking of a dear friend who told me that when they moved house they found a book of her father's writing that was full of beginnings and ends of stories but no middles. At the time she thought it was sad, some sort of failure. But it begins to dawn on me, now, that maybe it was the greatest testament to a life lived. What living must have taken place in the time not spent writing. What a love of life.

I cannot write the middle of this chapter – because it is about what it is to live.

On the day I married I took my new husband to meet my grandmother. Granny was 98 years old, and lay lightly lightly in this life, curled in a foetal position in her bed, her skin parchment and her bones as fragile as can be. She nodded to Peter, and said to us both, “Ah yes, weddings are such nice beginnings...” I could write about the wedding, but the living in the twenty years since is unwriteable. Fragments can be captured, stories can be made – but the actual stuff of living, in the moment, the life force, the movement:

*To be is much more, finally, than to be narrated...and therefore do not disparage or deny the existence of the untold, the unnarrated, and the invisible; we are the Real. What the philosophers sought.* (Watson Graham, 2003: Pg 44 – 45)

I find Peter Brook’s words, and think *Ah here is the end of the chapter. With these words...* And then again on casually reading Brook’s methods of acting I find a way between, a river flowing through, and there is no heaviness in my head, but an excited welling in my chest, right in the middle where my heart beats, and a lightness of being and I know then that this is a way of exploring the ideas of this chapter.

[I]n conversation in 1986, Brook described the quality he most admired in one of his actors, Maurice Bénichou, in terms of ‘lightness’. This quality can be understood through Paul Valéry’s suggestion that ‘one should be light as a bird, not light as a feather’. In other words, one must recognise and bear the substantive weight of what it is one enacts, its gravity; one must remain present, engaged and embodied in the doing that takes us into the world – but with a lightness of touch that is boyant and playful, that enables one not to be encumbered or consumed, but to take off, to move on, to be ‘free’. (Marshal and Williams, 2000:190)

But of course today, I find that once I have arranged the whole chapter it doesn’t work. I cannot fill in this sense of the middle, the infinity of possibilities of the w/hole. Brook asserts that:

There is only one difference between the cinema and the theatre. The cinema flashes onto the screen images from the past. As this is what the mind does to itself all through life, the cinema seems intimately real. Of course, it is nothing of the sort – it is a satisfying and enjoyable extension of the unreality of everyday perception. The theatre, on the other hand, always asserts itself in the present. This is what can make it more real than the normal stream of consciousness. This also is what can make it so disturbing. (Brook, 1972(1968): 111)

Theatre combines embodiment, place and time – and is about the stuff of life. And embodiment is Aristotle’s three unities manifest – time, action and place. Additionally

theatre has been about education through both the western and eastern traditions. As E.A Dodds (in Vellacott, 1973:10) says “[a]n Athenian dramatist was expected to be the teacher of the citizens, to have a message”. A similar function can be found in the Eastern tradition, for example, the use of epic narrative in Indian theatre as a means of communicating religious texts (Horowitz 1967). The learning presented in theatre is about learning about the “stuff” of life. This stuff is simultaneously the substance and the eclectic bits and pieces that make up life. Theatre reflects this eclecticism, as evidenced by the use and ‘stealing’ of bits and pieces from all over the place/time. As Brecht once said when accused of ‘stealing’ from Shakespeare: “Shakespeare, he was a thief too.” (Bennie 2003) Theatre gathers in the stuff of life, of living and re presents it to us while simultaneously creating a shared lived experience.

Marshall and Williams (2000) condense Brook’s underpinning concerns to actor training. The last three articulate/reflect/mirror my concerns with this chapter – the aspects I wish to embed within this writing, content and arrangement of writing:

- The absolute necessity for structure, and the conviction that forms can engender freedom for actors. Structure and play are seen as counterbalancing elements, interwoven supports for each other.
- Research as ‘self-research’; a process of evolution and individual development in which theatre serves as potent site and means, but rarely as the exclusive end. In other word, theatre as a means to go beyond theatre – theatre-making as the site for what James Hillman has called “soul-making”.
- The act of theatre as affirmative ‘re-remembering’(Brook 1998:225), in which a mythical narrative or fable is actualised here and now: “reuniting the community, in all its diversity, within the same shared experience” (Brook 1978:7 in Marshal and Williams, 2000:176-177)

And theatre is also about the play, and playing. I play with the internet. The relationship between play and learning is an area of rich research in education, particularly in early childhood. A brief web search in the adult education literature reveals no links between ‘Play’ ‘learning’ and ‘adult education’. ‘Play’ tends to occur in a more serious guise, as role play etc. Here it is already taken out of the realm of play and fun and turned into an applied concept. Curious I look up the word on my

computer dictionary, and then on various web based dictionaries such as Merriam-Webster (online 2004) Each of these produces lists of definitions, pages and pages of definitions and applications of the word “play”. I go back to Middle English “playen”, from Old English “plegian”. And trace it then back to its Indo-European roots *plegh* – to engage oneself. (Merriam-Webster online retrieved: 24 April 2004)

We engage ourselves through play with others and with the world. We learn the body through play, we play sports, we play games, we play with each other and ourselves.

In this chapter then, I wish to try to make visible the presence of embodied knowledge as a vital part of our communication, learning and meaning making. I want to unravel and examine the shadow in the Combs’ statement:

*The medicalized strictures against play stem from a kind of pseudo scientific morality, but with a mythic base in the belief that the wages of sin are death. (2000:61)*

I want to explore the link between embodiment and what it is to live.

## Act 1

### Learning the ethical moment

Right from the beginning of this thesis I have wanted to write about the actor. To claim that I am an actor, a theatre director, a trainer of actors. Instead I kept putting it to one side. That was a secret passion of mine, an unallowable position. I had given up theatre, I was now operating out of the field of adult education, of diabetes, and education. I found myself, acting as an actor in someone else’s doctoral research.

*[I found myself. Ahh I think, I must think on that.]*

### Scene 1

Shildrick’s(1997) analysis of bio-ethics contributes to the feminist project by applying a feminist poststructural analysis to the medical site. In *Leaky Bodies* (1997) she deconstructs the predominant ethical view, arguing that it is based on the concept of moral autonomy which, when viewed through the feminist framework is not possible. A reconstructed reading is of mutual realisation.

The aim of mutual realisation is to overcome the implicit and explicit objectification of others, and to stress that morality lies in the process of realisation, not as the discovery of one's own fixed nature, but in the sense of development as a part of becoming. As it further becomes clear in the feminist reformulation, moral agency is not simply a matter of choosing and following a particular course of action, but a more complex idea in which the existential being of all the participants is of equivalent importance. (123)

She goes on to say:

What I have described as the ethical moment, the only moment indeed to which a postmodernist recuperation of ethics can address itself, must precede the operation of morality as such, where that concept – if it is to have meaning at all – is understood not as the systemisation of rules of behaviour, but as no more than discrete instances of better or worse choice. In declining to provide a fully rational and supposedly objective foundation for morality external to and independent of the moral subject, but rather in asserting the futility of such an aspiration, I do not mean to imply that all behaviours are of equal value. (212)

What counts is the degree of reflexivity, the extent to which the actor is self-critical in her response to others. The ethical moment is a matter not of closure but of radical openness to the multiple possibilities of becoming. (212)

## Scene 2

A colleague, knowing of my early training in theatre, employed me to be part of a scenario along with another two actors, that was being used as part of her research project *Mature Men Matter* (Foskey 2004). This project is linked to men's health and finding ways to develop networks of men in different communities. We took to the road. We performed in little tiny regional communities. I loved it.

The process involved an audience of men watching the scenario, then of questioning the actors in role, discussing the actions of the characters, and finally choosing one character which they then directed to play the scene differently. While the character was being directed the other two actors would wait outside, hovering in a space between the self, the actor and the character. Later we would de-role in front of the audience, tell them something about ourselves that was different from the character. And often then we would have dinner, lunch or cups of tea with the men. We drank a lot of tea.

*I worry about referring to this in my thesis. I create excuses to stay away from this place of theatre, of acting. My acting was, after all part of someone else's research, just a side thing that I did – a favour really. The knowledge of the actor, is after all hardly taken seriously in the academy.*

Hark, hark the dogs do bark  
The beggars are coming to town  
some in rags and some in jags  
and some in velvet gowns (Anon)

*(Children's nursery rhyme often reputed to be about travelling actors and troubadours)*

*And yet here I am writing a play for a chapter. I am talking about learning the body. I am fascinated by the liminal space of theatre in which the audience and actor meet – that space beyond the stage and in front of the audience in which the words hover, shimmer and meaning is shaped momentarily. I love the fun and the play and the liberation of acting. I love the joy of the body in theatre – the necessity of the body, the functionality and being of the body. Here the body is treated with reverence.*

Susan Broadhurst (1999:1) in *Liminal Acts* says:

A certain sense of excitement is generated by the liminal: for instance, in many of the works, feelings close to disquiet and discomfort are experienced, A certain 'shift-shape', a stylistic promiscuity favouring pastiche, is signalled, together with repetition (a repetitiveness which foregrounds not sameness but difference), parody, playfulness and a delegitimation of authorial authority. Moreover, liminal performance strives to play to the edge of the possible, continually challenging not only performance practice but also traditional aesthetic concepts.

I warm my voice up before going on stage, stretch my muscles, find the hum that is the tuning of my emotions and my voice. Shift between finding the emotional note and letting it affect my body, finding the movement and letting it generate the emotion. Shifts in finding how I can extend myself out to be what it is the audience wants me to be, and use myself, my life, to draw on. I am the ground, the context, the moment.

The character I play cries, because she can't do it any more, and I cry for the possibility that I can't do it anymore. She is angry for her daughter, I am angry for the

daughter that I don't have but could have in the space of theatre where everything is possible.

In the *Mature Men Matter* project (Foskey 2004) the individuals in the audience essentially are coaching themselves. Or they are coaching the other people in their lives in the way that they want them to act, thereby uncovering or re-making their story in a different way. The collective nature of this with the audience as a whole interacting with the actors as a whole, performs the complexity of the interaction between the individual and the world. It is, and simultaneously teaches – and enables learning about – the heteroglossic.

*I* the actor reflect what you the audience want to be or to have happen or want to change, *you* the audience reflect all that I can be in that moment.<sup>1</sup>

I pause for a moment and consider again Shildrick's statement:

If 'I' only exist by virtue of my difference from 'you', then 'you' are a necessary part of my constructed being, and 'I' can no longer claim the sovereign individuality at the heart of liberal humanism. What this appears to suggest is that self-responsibility must entail a necessary responsibility to the trace of the other in myself. (1997:112)

And then I hold up Oida's statement as a mirror:

What is interesting is the exchange. The 'acting' doesn't reside in the hand of each actor; it exists in the air between the two hands. This kind of acting is not narrative, not psychology, not emotion, but something else, something more basic. It is very difficult to describe exactly what it is. (Oida in Marshal and Williams, 2000:182)

When I act, am an actor, I use myself, all of myself, to communicate *with* the audience. I enter into a space of play and playing. I play at being myself and others. An audience can see themselves in me, can see fragments of their lives in my life on stage, and I can momentarily become them. Sense them 'out there' in the dark, feel their breath, their suspense, their sympathy and laughter. My energy and theirs

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<sup>1</sup> While this has long been an area of contemplation for me I am indebted to Sue Fell for a conversation which helped to bring the words onto the paper.



combines somewhere in the space in between, and we make meaning together, in an embodied sharing of that moment.

A space of play and playing. The words jump out at me. I read and re-read Combs' work *Playworld* in which he defines playfulness saying:

Playfulness can be contrasted with its antonym, earnestness, the attitude that life is so important that it must be taken seriously... The attitude of earnestness (recall the term "dead earnest") in both its Latin and Gothic origins connotes "heaviness"; play, by contrast, is associated with laughter and funning, fooling around, carefree. The weight of earnest care includes worry and woe and all of life's burdens; when weights are lifted, or attitude becomes carefree, free to play. (Combs 2000:1)

And I am jolted into a new awareness as I link this to the actor, to life and to living, to the ethical moment, as I come back to the start, once again re-reading the words of Brook (in Marshal and Williams 2000:190) who

described the quality he most admired in one of his actors, Maurice Bénichou, in terms of 'lightness' ... [O]ne must recognise and bear the substantive weight of what it is one enacts, its gravity; one must remain present, engaged and embodied in the doing that takes us into the world – but with a lightness of touch that is buoyant and playful, that enables one not to be encumbered or consumed, but to take off, to move on, to be 'free'.

**curtain**

## Act 2

### Playing with Embodied Knowledge

#### Scene 1 Learning the body

Embodied knowledge<sup>2</sup> is knowledge known and expressed through the body. This knowledge can also be knowledge about the body. Sauer (1998:2) defines embodied *sensory* knowledge as direct physical sensations felt or perceived in highly specific local environments. If the body is the local environment (Somerville 2002a) and then it can also be known through embodied knowledge

Taylor's (in Mackeracher 1996:189) theory of learning cycles proposes that one moves from a state of knowing to discomfort and disorientation through to a new state of knowing. Discomfort lack and desire are integral in what it is to learn.

I remember the days of exhaustion, as I fed constantly, of a baby with reflux, of swollen sore breast and nipples, cracked and bleeding, of learning how to avoid that pain by feeding on the other side, till it healed then finding new ways of getting the baby to latch. For some reason it didn't occur to me that the baby would die or fail to thrive if we didn't get it right. Maybe it had to do with me forgetting to go the baby health centre. Other stories of other women who were successful at breastfeeding echo mine. These are not stories of it being easy and getting it right. They are learning stories.

*Where, I ask, is the space and the permission to learn the body, to trust the body. In this time of perfectly controlled, technological, plastic and consumer bodies(Hancock et al,2000), the confusion that arises in the merging of the boundaries between baby and mother is subversive. Here at the point of separation, the two bodies become one again, joined through food, nipple and mouth flowing milk.*

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<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to long conversations with Margaret Somerville on embodied knowledge and the need to explore define and write about embodied knowledge. I cannot claim these ideas as entirely mine or hers but rather as ones that have emerged, from conversations with her and with the women of the fiery cottage, in which Margaret was and still is, the centre and the impulse

How do we learn the body here? I ask.

I break the process down, as if I am analysing a task before devising a lesson plan, then let my thoughts explore on from this.

The baby is distressed/experiences a lack/desires fullness. The crying distresses the mother. If there is nothing else to soothe the baby we give the baby the breast, and learn to do it without pain. Time and clocks cease to matter. Only place and body, self and other dance here.

Stimulation of the breast followed by production of milk then satisfaction of a settled baby. The baby learns through its body the behaviour, of lack/distress/desire followed by vocalising followed by satisfaction. So the mother learns to trust her body while the baby learns the power of language.

But the society we have constructed reflects a fear of need, of the crying and the searching. We need to fix the body. To silence the cries. To be in control. And so we want to erase/suppress the part that distress plays in the feeding process, the need to surrender to the bodily knowledge. In response, we abstract the information, codify it in tables of weight, in number of hours between feeds, in theories about the benefit of sleep on the development of the brain. We are told that the urge to suck to treat the breast like a dummy is different from the urge to feed. The body must be controlled, by our intellect, and so our knowing, our dance between language and body, is silenced and ignored. And breastfeeding fails. And a chance to relearn our body is internalised as a failure to breastfeed.

Sonia, on first starting insulin, noticed the sensations in her body as her blood glucose levels dropped. This was different. She didn't like it. In reassuring her, and telling her that she would get used to it, the educator was reinforcing the message to ignore her body. On the other hand...

### **Conversation with Helen**

*Helen is a graduate with honours in a BA majoring in Theatre Studies – in which she experienced various aspects of actors' training. Helen has had over 20 years*

*experience being insulin dependent for survival. On moving from injecting insulin to using an insulin pump she commented to me that 'it is like going right back to the start, to when you are first diagnosed'.*

*H There's a bit of fear because my hypo sequences are a bit different - and I sometimes don't recognize it until it's a bit lower.*

*It's slower to come on. It's almost like you can feel the insulin dripping in and I'll just be sitting on 3.9 thinking, 'OKaaaay!' And then I'll check my sugar in 20 minutes and it's 3.8 - and so - and then I might eat. One time I had the worst hypo I'd ever had - (background noise)*

*A And you use that physical sensation to measure the hypo?*

*H Yeah.*

*A To measure when to be vigilant?*

*H Yeah, yeah.*

*A And so that's been changed - knowing when to be vigilant?*

*H Yeah.*

*A And yet you would have lived with that - knowing when to be vigilant - for years.*

*H Er -*

*A When you were injecting and stuff.*

*H Yeah. I did. (loud drill noises)*

*A ... so it was about relearning. So you've learnt to be vigilant?*

*H Um -*

*A A different vigilance?*

*H Yeah. It's just - it's just as my physiology's changed. I have to, um - you can actually teach your body to recognize hypos at a higher level but it's all shifting. It's like everything is shifting around at the moment, so it's confusing.*

*H Yeah. It is trusting in myself and my body and in my own condition and really knowing that. It's sort of like, even when a lot of people are telling you things, but what you need to do - underlying that is what I really*

*know I need to do. And some of it matches and some of it doesn't. And that's what I'm struggling with now -*

Interview 2003

### **Conversation with Astrid**

*Astrid, an actor and director has worked in professional and community theatre for over 40 years.*

*Astrid*        *You know it's a really funny thing, it's a wild, wild journey. I was sitting here last night, hands on my belly, feeling this tight belly, this skin, thinking that just underneath my hands, under this skin here, are the things that are bubbling away making me feel so tired and possibly even causing my death. But my skin doesn't look or feel any different. I'm still the same - the same person*

*Alison*        *And when you go to the doctor is like they are talking about another body - it sort of takes over - and you talk about this other body - sort of held inside the computer*

*Astrid-*        *yes oh yes and on the films.*

*Alison:*        *It's like a different body isn't it - sort of a public one.*

*Astrid*        *Yes and then there's the warm body at night inside your pajamas.*

*Alison*        *The lived body?*

*Astrid*        *Yes! Yes! the lived body*

Here, in these conversations, what is at play is the dialogue between a construction of the body through embodied sensory knowledge (Sauer 1998) and the body as constructed through medical models, and the body as constructed as a social agent within which to fix subjectivity.

### **Scene 2**

Embodied knowledge – the knowing of the world that communicates through the body – is different from the use of senses to experience the world. A bodily interaction with the world. This embodied knowledge is a knowing. It is an embodied response – so when I am in a team meeting, and I am presented with a logic, my body

will sometimes react to that logic – an uncomfortable sensation in my belly, or in my chest. A sensation that I have over the years come to recognise as a valid knowledge that, in this example, means that there is a disjunction in the logic, there is a gap which the language of logic, the words, is making invisible. That there is a disjunction I know, the putting that into words requires time, analysis from various perspectives, a new language. This is embodied knowledge.

Not only do we come to know the world through our body, receiving of the world into the body, we also have a bodily knowing that reflects on the construction of meaning. A material account of the world that resides in our bodies and communicates through our bodies. I asked a colleague, a philosopher, to comment on a piece of my writing for this thesis. In particular I wanted to know if it made sense, if it was logical, if there were any gaps in the reasoning. Her initial response was “Yes there is a pattern. A sense of a pattern – that is always a clue that it *does* make sense” She then had to reread and think about the piece. Her first knowing though, was an embodied knowing.

When training actors, I used to refer to the actor hitting an emotional note. It was something felt in my body, that I knew was “true” – a clear communication from them, the actor, to me, the audience. It was a note that held meaning for me. That enabled the construction of a shared meaning of the world – for that instant.

*Why do I feel uncomfortable* I write in the margins of a male colleague’s manuscript. I am surprised when he brings this up as a comment that has no real meaning for him.

In her work on embodiment Somerville (2003) argues that:

The body is conceived here as “the interface of the individual and society, as a site of embodied or “enfleshed” subjectivity which also reflects the ideological sedimentations of the social structure inscribed into it. (McLaren, P, 1988, 58). In our memory work we disturb the sedimentation of social structures and set in motion a process through which “body/subject”, can be rearticulated. It is this disturbance in the sediment, of the way sedimented meanings interact with current processes of meaning making through our bodies that we can access how the body/subject is inscribed, constructed, and reconstituted. (136).

I wonder do I feel as an embodied sensory response to my colleague’s writing the shifting of sediment, the grinding of particles of discourses, a disjunction between the

layers? That this means that I cannot insert myself into the text, that there is no space for me?

I remember the feeling, in my body, the first time I read body/landscape journals. I read it through the night and felt for the first time that I was not mad, that there was a place in academic work in which I was at home. I felt it in my body; I felt the shift and the knowing, an ease and a freeing. I did not feel uncomfortable. Somerville (2003:137) points out that :

Telling the stories, dislodging the memories opens up a possibility for change. According to Foucault, “The human body is the only irreducible ... it is the site at which all forms of domination are ultimately inflected and registered” but even more importantly, it is also the site of resistance.

Embodied knowledge, embodied resistance.

And I shudder.

*For Yvette Pierpaoli*

*Who lived and died giving a damn*

(Le Carré 2001)

I shudder

shud·der vi

1. to shake or tremble uncontrollably from a reaction such as cold, fear, or disgust
2. to vibrate rapidly

n

1. an uncontrolled shaking or trembling movement
2. a rapid vibrating movement

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**Curtain**



### Act 3

#### Structure and Play

##### Fragility

*Yeah. I was really vulnerable. Yeah, yeah.*

*Um (medium pause) - oh, I was just neurotic for the first couple of days, in terms of what I ate and reading my manual, you know, 'Excuse me everybody I have to go and change my (tubing) and everything,' and Jo said, 'Do you want me to come with you?' and I said, 'No, no, I'm all right!' Like there was just taking that time out to really give it - in a way to honour what was happening, to give it that space (huge noises as plumber works in the background) ... so that was my way of dealing with it I guess.*

*Um, and in other ways I found it hard because I've got a very pragmatic sister-in-law who sort of says, 'Well, how's it going?' and I said, 'Well, it's very stressful and ... awful.' And she said, 'Yeah.' (laughs)*

*It was like (laughing) - 'Thank you' - there's no nurturing. Like that female nurturing - there's no 'You just sit down and I'll get you a cup of tea.' You know, or something. So - yeah. That would've been nice.*

(Tape stopped while Helen attends to small child)

Interview. 2003

##### Lighting change

I mark essays from overworked, exhausted women, nurses and nurse educators, lecturers in nursing, trainers in industry. They write their stories of their workplaces, accompanied by urgent pleas for extensions of time as they struggle to meet their commitments at work, at home, in the academy. Of course I will give them extra time I reply, then try to cope with marking the last minute rush in time to meet the deadlines. . .

. . . and find myself in casualty being investigated for possible cardiac complications. I remember how fragile my body is, how fragile life is.

## Lighting change

Immediately they swing into action – you can hear the protocol – chest pain, breathlessness.

“On a scale of one to ten how bad is the pain?”

I try to explain that I am here not because of the pain, but because my GP is being cautious and anyway the specialist would like a chest x-ray and ECG done, also just to be cautious. It is most probably most likely a reaction to a new medication.

The ECG pad is sticking into the soft flesh of my breast. The leads attached to me and the machine hold me to the bed. The casualty doctor comes in. A woman. *Good* I think as she introduces me by her first name, her hair messy.

Her voice cheery yet hard at the same time. She pulls out an ECG from another time – another surgery (*I don't remember ever having one in hospital before*).

“This abnormality in your ECG is normal” she says, “it has shown up before – just the same.”

Is there a hint of accusation? I start feeling defensive.

“You should keep a copy of it on you”.

I struggle between feeling overwhelmed – *not another thing I am meant to know about myself*; guilty – *maybe I shouldn't have mentioned the pain*; and amusement – *images of shrinking the ECG onto a ceramic pendant to hang around my neck, or maybe a parchment discreetly carried in my handbag to be whipped out at need*.

The doctor talks on, the tone patronising. No doubt in her stretched and busy day, I am someone who is just using up resources. There is nothing dramatic. In retrospect there was no emergency, no heroic moment.

The doctor continues to talk to me as if I have decided to come of my own accord, as if I were somewhat hysterical and needed calming down. Telling me that I do not look like I am having a heart attack.

I wonder if she knows how damned irritating it is that I have had to disrupt my work day, to jeopardise the deadline for my thesis, to inconvenience my partner who has to rearrange his time to pick up the five year old.

I wonder what the effect of her words would be on someone else.

I decide to rewrite this chapter.

Then I hesitate – to whip out the book *The Madwoman of the Academy*, in its shocking-red paperback cover? Or the more serious blue of Shildrick's, '*Bioethics*', with all the sticky notes coming out the side and its academic seriousness? I decide on the latter.

This playfulness is an act of resistance, my act of resistance. I contemplate this in the light of Brewster's question : How does a minority group maintain its values in the face of pressure and coercion both official and unofficial? (in *Power* 2002 :13); and her answer "In resistance". *Power* uses this to explore the double pressure of coercion of Indigenous people, which is levied officially by the government and unofficially by white people. I use this to explore the oppression that I experience in the above story. The oppression that Helen and I explored, that permeates the stories we collected, that I collected. Here the official coercion resides in and is exerted by, the public health messages. The unofficial coercion through the discourse of individual responsibility which is so readily taken up by non medical members of society.

*"Do you have sugar in your tea, oh of course you wouldn't." The question and answer hover as one continuous statement. In resistance I say: "Of course I have sugar" [I hate sugar in tea] "and I think I'll just have to have some of that delicious and wicked Jamaican lime cheesecake – with cream – lots of it." At this moment I*

*resent the weight I have gained with the last round of medication – and find myself in a double bind as I read disapproval in their eyes.*

As Hughes points out:

It costs a lot to join the postmodern health club but one is paying for more than firm thighs. One is paying for a ‘good’ body. In contemporary consumer culture, to look good is to feel good is to be good. The outer body, when healthy and beautiful, confirms the positive moral disposition of the inner self. (2000:21)

It is not so much that medical advice in the interests in public health have changed so much over the centuries, as Foucault points, the conceptual map of regime in Hippocrates’ *Epidemics* ‘exhorts people to take care in relation to exercise, food, drink, sleep and sexual behaviour’ (in Hughes 2000:21). The interlinking of the consumer body and the public health discourse has transformed care of the body, as part of the formation of the self from “an art of living ... a whole manner of forming oneself as a subject who [has] a proper, necessary and sufficient concern for one’s body” (Foucault in Hughes 2000:21), to a regulated practice for the economic good of society and the subsequent profit of global enterprises.

Hughes (2000) goes on to argue that:

The idea of power diversified and without a centre seems to fit contemporary medicine and is consistent with the idea that medical work has become displaced and diversified, a matter as much for lay vigilance as the application of expertise. As health work has become ‘decentred’, then ‘power relations are rendered invisible, and are dispersed, being voluntarily perpetuated by subjects upon themselves’. (2000:26)

Power (2002) investigates the effects of regulatory and ‘naturalised’ power in the intersections of indigenous and white early childhood. The subtleties of Power’s argument yield a sophisticated framework with which to re[view] and emphasise my account of the effect of decentred and regulatory power with regards to the body. In Power’s refiguring, the mechanism of self regulation is taken up by the white majority and turned, with their gaze, onto the indigenous population. This is then internalised by the indigenous population as a cultural split. The same mechanisms operate to produce a cultural split within the person with diabetes.

*Well, it was really - it's going quite well (laughing) except I haven't been writing it down very well and I kinda started to do the weekly reports at the end of the week and say, 'Bread, bread, rice -' And then last night I ate half a packet of Tim Tams and I'm damned if I'm going to write that down. It just didn't work at all (lots of laughing). And I kept pressing my button to get more insulin and thinking, 'God! Doesn't this thing work!' My sugar's going up and up and up - I'd just had enough.(still laughing)*

Interview 2003

For someone whose sense of autonomy is removed by the insistent intrusion of imposed regulatory practices into the body the need to [re]engage with oneself is strong. Play, as *to engage oneself*, and resistance intertwine. I play with the doctor. Helen and I laugh at her naughtiness. Farce and Satire wend themselves into our consciousness as plays that resist the oppression of their times.

However “*Play*” also exists as the binary opposite of “*Work*” and perhaps this is the problem. Combs (2000) traces the revision of play from engaging oneself, to play as the binary opposite to a puritan concept of work, its slippage into indulgence and its eventual harnessing to consumption and consumer activity, and also the reverse problem of the control of the masses in order to labour for the boss.

The restrictions and controls imposed on people with diabetes through direct medical intervention, self-regulation and public surveillance primarily take the form of dietary and exercise regimes, and consequently are inserted into the body. This insertion of the health text into the body itself means that to erase that text, the body must be erased -- so pleasure[s] of the body, play as opposed to regulation/work, can only then occur when the self is constructed in such a way that it relies on disembodiment. This means that in rebelling against this oppressive regime the only option is to become abandoned, to move into a space of complete resistance, through which the body itself is abandoned and violence is done to the self.

It is at this juncture that play re-emerges as excessive, indulgent consumption, and is harnessed by the economic interests of globalisation. Resistance itself becomes an

agent of globalisation. The clash between different global interests, pharmaceutical companies, government health budgets, food manufacturers, advertising agents, turns the body into a contested site. (Somerville 1999; 2001; 2002a; 2003; 2004)

### **Lighting change**

Combs (2000:61) theorises that “The medicalized strictures against play stem from a kind of pseudo scientific morality, but with a mythic base in the belief that the wages of sin are death.”

What does theatre have to say about the body? The cradle of western theatre is located in ancient Greece, and the texts of Aristotle and Sophocles, Plato, Plautus and Terence, are produced today with only minor adjustments in modern theatre as relevant commentaries on today’s world.

That we can make sense of these in today’s context is perhaps as much a comment of the traces of knowledge that exist then and now. What then does theatre of ancient Greece say of bodies? I write a play and think on it and on the similarities and differences in the subject matter. I trace the ideas back to *The Bacchae*. To an origin in ancient Greece, birthplace of patriarchy, of democracy of western thought, philosophy and theatre. I recognised the intertwining here of theatre and philosophy. Plato, for example, was both a dramatist and a philosopher, a citizen and a politician. *The Bacchae* was written by Euripides in approx 400 BC while he was in his seventies. The play sets up divisions between the world of the senses and the world of reason; the feminine and the masculine, the patriarchy and the world. I decide to cast my gaze for a while on this. To see if in this play the idea of body and embodied knowledge, of patriarchy and control rationality and thought play and work, if these binaries are explored or give me any insights as to the way forward. What can or has or may be able to shift?

Euripides’ *Bacchae* (circa 407 BC) is essentially a play about embodiment vs reason. Traditionally it is presented as an argument for the need to balance the rational structured control of patriarchy with the abandoned delights of unfettered nature as

represented by women. In a move away from satire and farce, and yet incorporating aspects of both, it is a political commentary by Euripides on the over regulation of a society at the expense of divine ecstasy. This play plays with the idea of abandonment and possession, resistance and destruction.

In the hope of finding another perspective on the embodied aspects of the play I search for a feminist revisioning of the play and read Caryl Churchill's *A Mouthful of Birds A Mouthful of Birds* (Churchill & Lan 1986) is a reworking of *The Bacchae* and is completely set in the present. It takes on possession as its central metaphor and is about people who become possessed in one sense or another, or who have extraordinary things happen to them.

We thought of possession as anything that would make you feel beside yourself, or outside yourself in the normal sense. (Churchill in Churchill & Lan 1986)

What interests me about *The Bacchae* and this feminist revisiting of it is the following two positions:

- That in order for the women to be abandoned they must be possessed. To enter madness requires here an embodiment that is only permissible if it is through the agency of male possession;
- That entry into the realm of embodiment, pleasure and abandonment, resistance to the patriarchal structures and controls, must spiral into violence.

I think about the space that theatre creates. The space that allows the *Bacchae* to exist. Except in my version the *Bacchae* are having fun. They are not possessed, but are rather embodied. In my version I wonder what would happen if they were not subjected to being brought back under the patriarchal gaze.

I play with titles for a diabetes workbook.

# Wickedly Diabetic

A workbook about fun and naughtiness



# Wickedly Diabetic

A workbook about fun and naughtiness

Living life to the full after diagnosis with diabetes

As soon as I introduce the word diagnosis, or the phrase, after diagnosis with, it feels like all the liveliness is just a con to get me to do the right thing. It brings Combs' (2000) work in *Playworld* into a new focus.

### **Lighting change**

I want to play. And so I find myself writing a play. And I consider what it is to play. Combs (2000) contrasts the modern manifestation of play as consumption and a mechanism of control with play as a “lightness of being” (2000:62) ... as “what happens after all the decisions are made – when ‘lets go’ is the last thing one remembers”. (9)

He argues that play has become commercialised. Simultaneously harnessed as a consumer item and a tool of compliance. The ever-increasing necessity to work to obtain the money by which to buy play has left us “lacking the time and energy for leisurely enjoyment or even for minimal pleasures such as exercise or cooking a meal. So the exercise machine becomes a coat rack and the cat sleeps undisturbed on the stove” (59)

He goes on to say:

[I]n a driven culture, it remains difficult for those committed to heavy tasks to find time for play as they live their productive lives. We are in an era of the “fall of fun”, in which many people, including the best and brightest in creative fields, find it hard to lighten up and enjoy themselves in the ludenic interstices of life. Play remains a shimmering potentiality, but one never quite gets around to it. (60)

He situates play within a framework of shifting power relations declaring that “ since Roman times, states have often utilized the policy of ‘bread and circuses’, providing the masses with food and spectacle. Play in this sense serves as a form of control, giving political authorities a therapeutic resource with which to manipulate popular opinion.

On the other hand, unauthorised play has often been viewed as dangerous and even “treasonous.” (49)

Interestingly though, it is his description of the shifting of play as intertwined with our daily lives, in the time just preceding the Industrial Revolution, that intrigues me.

Indeed in the peasant and artisan culture immediately preceding the factory system, at least there was some sense of the rhythms of the seasons, respite from labour during the lax winter months, a feeling of place and permanence, and the relaxed pace of village life. (31)

People in regions of Luddite strength had memories of relatively relaxed days working in fields or craft shops in the villages, and also memories of folk play. The rural rhythm of life included many periods of play such as “holy days”, weddings and feasts, and seasonal festivities... So what was lost was free time, relaxed time, and festive time. These were the first modern people to lose their habits of play to the imposed requirements of work. (32)

In many countries before the Industrial Revolution, the distinction between work and play was unclear, and although days might be long in the shop or field, they were interspersed with time off – many holidays, siestas, and time for games or goofing off. But the organisation of the workday into long hours did demarcate the work week from the weeknight and the weekend, what we now call ‘free time’. (45)

*H I went from the dieticians room that is like a little box, to the kitchen (laughs) for my consultation with the diabetes educator.*

*A In the kitchen?*

*H Yeah.*

*A Fantastic!*

*H So, she gave me a cup of tea. I felt really comfortable because there were Asian people coming through, getting coffee made for them, and I could hear the doctor saying to them, 'So, you know, do you know what you have now? You know you have to have (laughing covers up words). So these people were just being diagnosed with diabetes, quite funny. I guess they were individuals but they all had family, their family with them, so big groups of ethnic people being shocked, or telling their story about how they had diabetes with their baby and now it's come back. And so this was all going on while I was in the kitchen talking with Julie about the pumps. (Interview 2003)*

Act 5

A Little Play

Characters:

Emily teenage girl

Joyce Emily's mother

Nell elderly woman with Alzheimer's

Various other women 40s up

Scene 1

*A dark stage, light on a pedestal with an old fashioned ceramic mixing bowl and a wooden spoon in the bowl*

*Lights up Joyce and Emily's – minimalist set bench and pedestal*

EMILY: [*flying in through 'screen door' banging door, throwing school bag down*]

Hi Mum, you're home early

JOYCE: Yeah, early mark from work – Good day at school?

*[out to audience]*

Can you ever bring back the untamed land

The body known and yet unmapped

Memory traces

Footstep places

Here, girl,

Take my hand and follow me.

*[JOYCE turns and starts making scones]*

JOYCE: So good day? What were/

*[EMILY joins in and in unison they complete the obviously familiar response, enjoying the brief communication]*

JOYCE AND EMILY /the good things and what were the bad things?

EMILY Not much happened – good thing, Mr Scott gave back the assignments and I got 17 out of 20 for that speech, and only 15 more days to holidays. Bad thing – we had Miss Denham again – and she said we couldn't use the musical instrument – I mean how are you meant to compose something without making any noise – I just hate her

JOYCE mmm

EMILY [*grabs something to eat and drink, and flings herself down-in between mouthfuls*] I gotta make up my mind about subjects for next year

JOYCE: Any thoughts?

[*In the following sequence EMILY is out of time, out of space in a different place- a dream JOYCE remains pragmatic trying to turn this into a naturalistic, realistic scene.*]

EMILY: I ran today/ flew today

JOYCE: Flew? What do you mean ?

EMILY: I was following the ball... the net-ball catch-ball flow-through-the-net-ball.

JOYCE: Oh you were playing netball. Oh good, for a moment there I thought you were trying to tell me you could fly!

EMILY: Oh I did. I followed my hand the arc of the ball I felt my self lengthen and the air push up against my body. I laughed

JOYCE: You know its good to/

EMILY: /laughed and I laughed and laughed and could think of nothing but this bubbling joyful being.

I want to do it again, Come on, come and play with me

JOYCE: Well, I'm really pleased you are exercising

EMILY: Exercising?

JOYCE: Yeah its really good that you are doing this all you have to do is aim for 30 mins a day.

EMILY: Oh

JOYCE: To be healthy, you know. There was this interview I heard on the Health Report the other day [*pause*] on radio national

**/Long Silence/**

JOYCE: What's up?

**/Silence continues/**

JOYCE: Come on Emily what is it, tell me?

EMILY: Is that what it is? All it is? Exercise?

JOYCE: Yeah but you can still have fun too.

EMILY: But that word, it sneaks into the cracks, it tells me [*obviously distressed*] I just want to fly. I want to laugh. I don't want to be good [*almost crying,*] I just want to have fun, I want to play.

JOYCE: Oh Emily, we can do that. [JOYCE *soothes* EMILY *by patting her cheek and in the process inadvertently marks her cheek with the white flour*]

EMILY: [*to JOYCE*] Can we? Now – after this?

[JOYCE's *touching of* EMILY's *face becomes more formalised so that it is a deliberate painting of her face, a branding, an initiation and standing behind* EMILY *places hands on* EMILY's *shoulders- uses* EMILY *as a barrier between herself and the audience. Presents and holds* EMILY *there*]

EMILY: [*out to audience*] Or will it only ever be fragmented, now, shot through with other consciousness and words. A momentary flight, a delusion

A sense that in absenting myself only then can I fly.

Never knowing if the real me

Is thinking me,

Words

And the laughter an aberration

JOYCE: [*steps out from behind* EMILY *and speaks out to audience*] I want to have fun.

I want to play

I want to laugh, so hard I cry. Deep bubbling laughter from the very pit of my stomach. I want to giggle. Unreservedly. I want to run and play and live. And I can't do it anymore. It got lost somewhere in all the seriousness of nurturing. Nurturing, myself and others. Serving. Myself and others.

When I was a teenager I was told to look after myself – I was too thin, but had to be careful not to get fat – like my mother. When I was pregnant I got told what to eat – for the baby's sake. They gave me sheets of paper with words and I had to turn those words into the stuff I put into my mouth. Then I was told what to eat when I breastfed – make sure I got enough calcium or I'd up with osteoporosis – and then I had to make sure I fed my baby the right food, healthy food- look after my family well – balance the protein the carbohydrate the fats. "Growing children need" – and as for balancing the budget, the food shopping and teenagers. Oh it was ok to make food beautiful – to serve it up for family meals to balance the colour and the taste. Every day for years and years I had to think about the serving of food for others. Three times a day as well as afternoon and morning teas. Some days I felt like putting myself on a platter, stuffing an apple in my mouth. And now I am consumed.

### **Blackout**

**Nell with a clown wig, clown red nose and purple hat, runs onto stage – tells the following as if it is a hilarious and sinister piece of stand up comedy.**

NELL: Ellen's daughter Judy, fit young and full of life went off to a netball camp

The dietician came and spoke to them

Told them not to eat fat – even told them how to remove the skin off the chicken before cooking it – you place your hand in a plastic bag

And boom-boom she said:

No fat.

No fat said Judy. Won't eat breakfast now

Don't want to get fat.

Fat you're not fat replies Ellen

Just skin and bone

Says Judy

Gotta watch those bumps gotta watch that skin

Boom Boom says the dietician

Boom Boom.

### **Blackout**

*Two women on stage with teacup and saucer each, a couple of plates for biscuits on the bench.*

**Woman 1:** Come share a cup of time with me  
I'll pour the tea  
While you arrange the chatter on the plate  
And when I pass the milk  
I just might touch your eyes

*The women start to throw the cups across to one another starting a simple juggling act, throughout this piece they add the saucers and the plates so it becomes complex eventually they are jumping around the kitchen totally focused on the juggling*

W 1      come share  
W 2      a cup of time with me  
W 1      cup of tea with me  
W 2      cup of time with me  
W 1      cuppa tea?  
  
W 2      I'll pour the tea.  
W 1      spouts and spouts and spouts of tea  
W 2      time for tea?  
W 1      tea of time  
W 2      yes please tea for me  
  
W 2      chatter now  
W 1      chatter on a plate  
W 2      chatter time  
W 1      tea time  
W 2      time for tea  
W 1      time for me  
W 2      chatter  
  
W 1      hold me  
W 2      see me  
W 1      feel me  
W 2      be me  
W 1      chatter  
W 2      chatter  
W 1      chatter-chatter  
W 2      chatter on a plate

*The women are now working in perfect harmony with each other and complete the now complex and exhilarating juggling in silence – bringing it to a spectacular finale.*

**Blackout**

**The kitchen**

*Lights up on kitchen –which is both JOYCE'S kitchen and the kitchen or the other women and a communal kitchen space*

*There is a knock on the door,*

SARA [ *Off stage*] We're here, Joyce  
JOYCE Oh Emily, that'll be Aunt Nell –can you go and help her – I know SARA's in a rush, god it's nearly 11 –what am I going to do with her?  
EMILY Ok mum –

*[EMILY goes to back door, helps NELL in. NELL is an elderly woman, obviously used to being the matriarch, and now starting to show signs of advancing Alzheimer's]*

JOYCE Hello Nell. I'm glad you're here  
NELL: Dianne here yet?  
JOYCE: Not yet, she should be though  
NELL: Should be here for lunch soon – school Bell'll be going – that girl's always  
EMILY: Aunt Dianne's not at school anymore  
JOYCE: Its OK Emily – [*to NELL*] Cup of tea?  
NELL [*To JOYCE*] Good and strong, girl

*[The door flies open and KATE rushes in arms full of shopping bags groceries, long bread stick under one arm]*

KATE Sorry I'm late – (*she dumps it all on the table swoops over and kisses Joyce on the cheek*)  
JOYCE Now Aunt Nell I need some help with the scones. Emily, give aunty a hand with the chair  
*[EMILY helps NELL to sit down while JOYCE puts flour butter and bowl in front of NELL KATE goes over and kisses NELL who continues to look around her bemusedly]*

KATE [*to JOYCE*] You think she'll be right with this\  
JOYCE It doesn't matter we can make up another batch – So how's it going, god its good to see you. Tea?  
KATE No I've got some cold champagne – come on let's risk it

*Meanwhile NELL has found the bowl and starts to mix the butter in with her finger tips happy watching what is going on around her.*

*Lights 'flicker'*



## *Lights flicker*

*This scene is played both within JOYCE's kitchen, and simultaneously in the kitchens familiar to the other women A riotous preparation for a feast. Other women take their places all working together preparing a celebratory feast– Throughout the scene there is a air of industriousness chaos and play as the women are busy preparing food, chopping, stirring arranging. As the scene develops more and more food appears. pumpkins are prepared for soup, vegetables are peeled and prepared. Snippets of conversation are heard by the audience and the other women. The focus moves throughout the space.*

### KITCHEN 1

*SARAH is making a cake, and has obviously just finished preparing some slices. She is surrounded by fruit, abundant and lucious.*

### CENTRAL KITCHEN

*Joyce spends time making sauces, as well as baking scones and generally answering people's questions, showing them where things are in her kitchen and directing EMILY.*

*EMILY is present throughout, moving from kitchen to kitchen carrying, fetching, helping and watching. She keeps returning to the central kitchen*

*KATE: [ strawberry in each hand and dipping, one in champagne one in whipped cream to JOYCE who has hands covered in cooking mess–] Do you want the strawberry dipped in champagne or cream– better still open up.  
[JOYCE obliges]*

### KITCHEN 2

*VANESSA is obviously a serious cook, surrounded by heavy duty but beautiful casserole dishes and pans, she is drizzling oil over a dish ready for the oven.*

*VANESSA: Just love the way they never say pour the oil, you just drizzle it – drizzle.*

KITCHEN 1

CENTRAL KITCHEN

KITCHEN 2

KATE: Champagne first. *[Puts it into mouth]* Mmm. Lovely isn't it, and cream next...

*[JOYCE protests, her mouth is still full so KATE eats it, stuffing whole strawberry and cream into mouth, exploding out of mouth, giggling with delight as she wipes the excess cream from her face]*

*CAROL arrives immaculately 'groomed' with boxes of pre bought food. CAROL leaves a trail of boxes behind her, and spends most of the scene moving between arranging things artistically on platters and being distracted.*

SARA: Who wants to lick the bowl? *[looks across to Emily]*

CAROL: I do.

*Carol moves over to Sara and the two women start scraping out a bowl with spatula's thoroughly enjoying 'licking the bowl' and fighting over it*

CAROL: You know I don't cook– but I just love the delicatessen at Five Ways– beautifully presented. So I'll just arrange it on a platter.

JOYCE: Emily, can you show everyone where things are. Has anyone got some thyme?

VANESSA: I've got some lemon thyme over here.

*VANESSA working on a piece of raw eye*

KITCHEN 1

SARA: We took turns, and mum marked it up on the calendar– the kids think I should let them have all the turns, *[scrapes a big bit of batter]* hey, No you don't , that's my bit,

*[Laughing]*Ok then I'm having this bit.

No its on my side of the line– see here's the line *[drawing a line through the batter ]*

I don't know when I last cooked a cake– I just run in a and buy one these days.

CENTRAL KITCHEN

KITCHEN 2

*fillet of beef slab long side of muscle – so it is a long cylinder of meat. She is puncturing along the meat, inserting small slivers of garlic.*

*The garlic is being cut up by KATE, who when this is finished starts to pound herbs and garlic, and pours some oil into with it*

VANESSA: How are the boys?

KATE: Good, well they're good, I'm exhausted, I always thought teenage girls were difficult, but I reckon boys are really consuming. They're pretty good kids. Mind you Victor decided to get his eyebrow pierced.

VANESSA: Don't tell me about piercings.

*VANESSA and KATE both laugh– an in joke*

*Silence as they keep working it*

*VANESSA takes a handful of KATE's mixture and smothers the meat*

VANESSA: I read somewhere that in Japan

KITCHEN 1

*Sarah moves over into the central kitchen, moves up to Joyce who is beating up merigues*

SARA: Good on her, she might have lost her mind but she's still got her spirit!

CENTRAL KITCHEN

SARA: I'll lick the beaters, and this meringue mix is just wicked. [*dips finger through the meringue mixture.*]

KITCHEN 2

men have pearls inserted into the skin of their penis.

KATE: For their pleasure?

VANESSA: No for the women

KATE: Interesting...

KATE: [*Looking across to NELL who continues to mix the scones oblivious to everything else*] Nell, she's really losing it you know. I found her the other day, walking down Servius St, asking everyone if they could help her find her lounge room, she'd lost it she said. I took her home. Mary was frantic. She'd been looking everywhere –The really funny thing – the police had actually picked her up, took her back to the office and found some ID on her– but they left there alone at the desk when they went to ring Mary, when they came back – she'd gone!

KITCHEN 1

Good to know that when everything else  
is gone, we can still be/

EMILY: Mischievous?

CAROL: Wicked.

CAROL: I felt so wicked, straddling him  
out there in the middle of the bush – and  
then later, it was so hot, and I hate that  
stickiness of semen afterwards ...

*[Nods of agreement]*

And there was a little creek...

CENTRAL KITCHEN

*[Almost overlapping]*

JOYCE: Rebellious?

*ALL the women listen to Carols  
story but keep working in their own  
spaces*

JOYCE So you got in yeah?

KITCHEN 2

VANESSA: Naughty.

KATE: Alive?

KITCHEN 1

CAROL: Yeah! And there I was, sitting in the middle of the creek almost nine months pregnant, I was huge and he raced back to the car, and brought out a thermos of coffee, and the packed sandwiches, used a hubcap as a tray.

CAROL: [*tasting it and rolling it round in her mouth, obviously enjoying the tart taste*] Oooh yes, so sweet and so sour all at once.

ALL: [*in unison*] 1 handful of rice per person

CENTRAL KITCHEN

VANESSA: [*dipping a spoon into saucepan that JOYCE is stirring*] Mm that's superb—

[*to CAROL*]

Here have a taste of this sauce, it's the lemon in it, makes my mouth water.

VANESSA *crosses over to CAROL*

EMILY: How much rice to you reckon we need?

ALL: [*in unison*] 1 handful of rice per person

EMILY: Yes, but how many people should I be expecting?

KITCHEN 2

ALL: [*in unison*] 1 handful of rice per person

SARA: 3 portions of carbohydrates, 45 grms of carbohydrate

KITCHEN 1

CENTRAL KITCHEN

KITCHEN 2

SARA: Here give me your glass and I'll top it up.

CAROL: The first time I tried to whip cream – I turned it to butter. I was trying so hard to impress these friends of mine – and I hadn't a clue what I was doing. I felt so ashamed. I mean everyone just acted like its something everyone was meant to know. You know, if were born a girl you were born knowing how to whip cream.

VANESSA: And then there they both were, mother and sister in law, in my kitchen. and they each whipped out an electric carving knife – I think I just backed out at that point – I was quite happy keeping my Christmas contribution to fruit cheese and nuts. There was no way I was going to take them on!

CAROL: Anyone for a cuppa tea?

*CAROL crosses into Kitchen 1 to get milk out of fridge*

JOYCE: One glass of white wine for the pot, and one for me.

JOYCE: Empanadas: to cook the filling brown the onions in butter I love the bubbling of the butter, the salt on the top. Let the onions go soft and transparent, just a hint of caramelised butter  
JOYCE: /add the mince, the ground

KATE: No don't use that, that's the breast milk I was going to use for the mousse.

SARA:[*starts to write in a note book*] One teaspoon is 25grms of fat then the fat in

KITCHEN 1

*[VANESSA moves up behind CAROL, and leans into CAROL's neck, runs hand down CAROL's outer arm turning her then scooping CAROL's hand in her own leans down to the palm of CAROL's hand- KATE keeps talking throughout this]*

VANESSA:*[to CAROL -slightly aggrieved obviously settling an argument]*No Carol, it's definitely vanilla'd sugar.

CENTRAL KITCHEN

cardamom, a pinch of chilli

EMILY: Like this?

JOYCE: That's right just the tips of your fingers, a pinch.

Mood is broken as VANESSA stands up abruptly:

*[Freeze for a beat then all stay frozen while JOYCE takes bowl from NELL expecting it to not be done properly lifts a handful of the mixed butter and flour and lets it trickle down- it is perfectly mixed.]*

KITCHEN 2

the mince

KATE: It was just the other day, I was in the photocopy room, I couldn't tell you know, the way I could feel their body brushing past me, leaning in a little more than usual- a subtle pressure, a taste, like the tip of a tongue running round the edges of your lips, such danger



KITCHEN 1

CENTRAL KITCHEN

KITCHEN 2

JOYCE: [*to all*] See, her hands have remembered.

JOYCE: [*moves over to EMILY, picks up an old battered cook book and resumes cooking*] Then we add the hard boiled eggs,

JOYCE: Mix them in. Once that's done you let it sit, and roll out the dough.

[*NELL starts to do this*]

JOYCE: [*to EMILY*] – before we do that, should we make some special ones? [*flicks through the recipe book*] Look, in my mum's writing, here in the margin.

EMILY: [*takes the book and reads from it*] 'Marguerita's tip, a handful of sultanas – very good' [*to JOYCE*] Who

SARA: [*now with calculator, small booklet– the GI Index, and note book*] That's 1 protein portion per egg, 9 grams of fat, and no carbs. The flour will make it high on the GI index, but the fat will make it low, so it should be about 40, but the fat won't be good for the triglycerides. Maybe if we readjust the recipe...

KITCHEN 1

CENTRAL KITCHEN

KITCHEN 2

was Marguerita? [*the question hangs in the air and punctuates the scene*]

VANESSA: and then he dripped the ice down my back, ran right down my spine.

*KATE sneaks up behind, and drips ice down VANESSA's back who screams and turns around, starts chasing after KATE swiping a handful of the whipped cream on*

*the way the women leap over benches,*

*other women duck to get out of the way, EMILY's flour gets knocked over, releasing clouds of white, JOYCE grabs the champagne, and leaps up onto a chair to keep it safe they all join in, a game of tag, till they collapse in fits of laughter on the floor –*

*Leaving only NELL standing rolling out the scones.*

LIGHTS FADE TILL IN BLACKOUT

LEAVING THE SOUND OF LAUGHTER