NORA'S TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY:
FROM A DOLL'S HOUSE AND THE LITTLE MERMAID TO THE WAY HOME

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Rania Al-Harthi, candidate for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, has presented a thesis titled, *Nora's Transformative Journey: From A Doll's House and The Little Mermaid to The Way Home*, in an oral examination held on March 31, 2017. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Abstract

This critical engagement paper employs the practical work and research conducted for my MFA graduating installation performance *The Way Home*. For decades, domestic violence researchers analyzed abused women coping with abuse based on their psyche, which portrayed them as having certain needs that abuse fulfils. The assumption that there is something about abused women that makes them want to be abused overlooked major stress and obstacles that occur when choosing to leave an abusive relationship. While the pursuit of breaking the cycle of violence remains an important issue, I argue for giving more value to women's thoughts and feelings as they undergo the transition to living life on their own. Human pain and social suffering, past and present, can be rendered through art in such a way that its representation nurtures and illuminates life. Art can contribute to blocking the repetition compulsion of gendered violence; in particular, as I have found, it can make its mark through visual re-cognition, textual re-telling and physical re-enactment. As an artist, I found myself equipped with the will for self-preservation and the drive to find a sense of being in contextualizing home through the act of art. In Chapter One, I use women's intercultural performance, feminist nomadism, and postmodern fairy tales and myth portrayal to outline the aesthetic, critical and cultural context of this project. In Chapter Two, I discuss current theoretical constructions of the social and cultural discourse that informs gender violence, as well as the interdisciplinary nature of my work. In Chapter Three, I discuss the conceptual and practical methodology of the project, and conclude, in chapter four, with the possible outcomes.
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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this paper to women and children affected by domestic violence everywhere.
# Table of Contents

Abstract .............................................................................................................................. i

Acknowledgement ........................................................................................................... ii

Dedication ........................................................................................................................ iii

Table of Contents ............................................................................................................ iv

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ........................................................................ 1

1.1 Overview and Personal Statement ........................................................................... 1

1.2 *The Way Home*: Origins and Influences ............................................................. 2

1.2.1 *A Doll’s House*: Leaving Home to Find Home .............................................. 2

1.2.2 Transforming Nora: From Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* to *The Way Home* ........ 4

1.2.3 William Kentridge and Nalini Malani’s Shadow Play and Distortions .......... 11

1.3 Theoretical Premises and *The Way Home*: Intercultural Women’s Performance, Hall’s Identity, and Nomadism .......................................................... 13

1.4 In *The Way Home*: The Body as the Site of an Intercultural Encounter .......... 21

1.5 Production Parameters: The Ground Plan ............................................................. 31

## CHAPTER TWO: SOCIAL AND CRITICAL CONTEXT ....................................... 34

2.1 Domestic Violence ..................................................................................................... 34

2.2 Intersectionality in an Interdisciplinary Framework ............................................. 35

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY ................................................................. 39

3.1 Intertextuality (Dancing Text) ................................................................................ 39

3.2 Fictionalizing the Self .............................................................................................. 44

3.3 Doppelganger: Viewing from Behind ..................................................................... 45

3.4 Metamorphoses and Transformation ..................................................................... 46

3.5 Autoethnography .................................................................................................... 48

## CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION ................................................................. 52

2.1 Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 52

Works Cited .................................................................................................................. 53

Bibliography .................................................................................................................. 57

APPENDIX A: My Fairy Tale ......................................................................................... 65

APPENDIX B: Installation Performance Synopsis ...................................................... 67

APPENDIX C: *The Way Home*: A Work In Progress .............................................. 76
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview and Personal Statement

Having survived an abusive relationship that left me homeless with a child, I believe that I have the responsibility to live a life that matters to the world and try to contextualize my survival with the survival of others. I am a Jordanian performer, filmmaker, and storyteller who has Russian and Palestinian roots from both parents. I come from a family of Palestinian refugees who grew up in Jordan trying to navigate home as a personal challenge for survival and liberation. I am a female refugee, migrant, and a nomad in transit, who, through my art practice, strives to undergo a radical and profound change, making the repetition of the past impossible. Because we shape the world as each one of us behaves or chooses to behave, in relationship with others, we need to talk about women survivors yearning to conduct a responsible life that just might have been given to them by an accident of history.

As an interdisciplinary artist my art practice is located on the borderline of theatre performance, film, and performance art. The triangulation of these disciplines creates emotional, intellectual, and spiritual connection with the audience. The tension experienced in my personal narrative reflects the power of transformation. I have made a rational decision to address the spectatorship around my project intellectually as well as emotionally. Distancing myself using fairy tales, puppets and third-person narrative provides a certain degree of objectivity. In order to avoid perpetuating abuse, my attempt to re-enact violence is not intended to re-victimize the victim but to set her free. I have made a rational decision that I will use abuse as a catalyst, so this performance becomes a personal journey to freedom and emancipation from domestic violence.
1.2 The Way Home: Origins and Influences

1.2.1 A Doll's House: Leaving Home to Find Home

I began with Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* (1879) as a literary reference for the project. The play is about everyday life and unexceptional people in 1879 Scandinavia, manifesting concern for both women's rights and human rights in general. Ibsen's play treats the self-revelations of Nora, the main character, as an archetypal journey representing the quest for identity. The play raises serious questions regarding women's subservience to men, and women's domestic labour and power as undervalued and almost invisible in the market place. An awakening female power is represented by Nora's character in her final act of departure. Nora's action is voiced from the private sphere, which is the doll's house, into the public sphere, crossing political and social borders in creating cultural and gender tensions and landing in what was always known as the man's public space.

In the play's conclusion, Nora leaves her husband and her house, requesting that the audience undertake different possibilities for the finale of the play. In *Ibsen's Women* (1997), John Templeton explores *A Doll's House* through the eyes of Nora, identifying the play as “Ibsen's Woman.” He states that on December 21, 1879 in Scandinavia, Nora's declaration of independence left people “pale with excitement, arguing, quarrelling, challenging” (112). I was fascinated by Nora's character because at that time in Scandinavia she represented an act that the majority of women feared to take. The freedom the text is offering encouraged me to create my own narrative, asking, where does Nora go after she leaves her doll's house? Later, I wove this finale of *A Doll's*
*House* into my artistic methodology as an artist; functioning also as the writer and the narrator of the story depicted in *My Fairy Tale* (see Appendix A), I then embedded the latter text into the installation performance synopsis, titled *The Way Home* (see Appendix B).

While I was residing at Sofia House, a second stage women's shelter, I tried to cope with the effects of abuse and manage my personal process of healing. My personal experience with identity, loss, and separation found release in several friendships with other women in the shelter, who were reflecting the same feelings of being lost. In the shelter, I observed that women have a propensity to lose themselves while trying to survive violence. They die from the inside out and forget the person they once were. In attempting to understand and express the experiences of women transitioning from abusive relationships, I started preparing for my MFA proposal with a second review of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*.

I have to admit that time and place had a significant value on my later decisions regarding the viability of my project. When I read the play ten years ago I envisioned Nora as a spoiled brat, but during my second reading of the play at Sofia House my perspective on this character shifted from seeing her as a doll-wife not taken seriously to admiring her as a loving and noble heroine who decided to leave her doll's house to find home. During that time, I would do anything to be Nora. At that point, my time at the shelter was coming to an end as I was moving to my new place; simultaneously I was accepted to the MFA program at the University of Regina, where I was designated a
studio place to pursue my practice. For the next while I called this home. To start with a woman's face that can relate to all women I decided to create my Nora.

1.2.2 Transforming Nora: From Ibsen's *A Doll's House* to *The Way Home*

In Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, the lead character, Nora Helmer, who has years earlier committed forgery in order to save the life of her authoritarian husband, Torvald, is now being blackmailed, and lives in fear of her husband finding out about the forgery. But when the truth comes out, Nora is shocked to learn where she stands in her husband's esteem. Nora's husband, a morally judgmental man, labels Nora's attempt as childish and irresponsible. Further, he guides her as to how she should be behaving in this world:

**Torvald** Nora, I know you.

**Nora** I know you do.

**Torvald** You'll take all the money and you'll spend it all on the house or you'll waste it on things that are entirely unnecessary and not leave anything for yourself at all.

**Nora** I won't, I promise.

**Torvald** Do you know what the defining characteristic of the Swallow is?

**Nora** looks at him

**Torvald** It looks very, very sweet. It flies terribly high. But it really is extraordinarily expensive to keep the thing shining so very brightly. (Ibsen 2012, 8)

This scene from *A Doll's House* mirrors my life with my ex-husband. Torvald's reference to the swallow bird reflects very strong imagery regarding the utilization of birds and animals as symbols meaningfully represented in my personal narrative. In contrast to Ibsen's play, my solo performance depicts Nora's self-revelations instead of
her relationship with her husband. Ibsen's Nora spent a large portion of her life first
following her father, and then her husband. She did not know independence and learned
that she needed to leave in order to be her own person. What interests me in A Doll's
House is how Nora became a symbolic figure of resistance for the many women who
were held back from their full potential, including myself.

In his work Ibsen: A Doll's House (1995), Egil Tornqvist depicts this doll motif
in Nora's spirit as also present in the character of Selma, the fairy-tale princess in Ibsen's
The League of Youth (2011). Tornqvist argues that Selma's fairy-tale spirit and Nora's
doll-like life kept them as foreigners to any real-life contribution, which leads Selma to
cry out in anger, and Nora to leave the doll's house forever. Selma cries: “You dressed
me like a doll; you played with me, as one plays with a child. I would have rejoiced to
bear a burden; I longed with all my heart for everything that storms, that lifts up, exalts”
(Ibsen 2011, 87). Similar to Nora and Selma's longing for a true fairy tale to emancipate
them from their harsh realities, my cry found its way through creating my solo
performance The Way Home.

In A Doll's House, Nora's experience presented me with a variety of visual
metaphors that I found myself comparing to my story's preliminary outline and
performance ground plan. The doll's motif that was depicted in Nora's character and its
explicit reference in the play's title started realising itself through my decision to build a
human-sized doll's house that is my size, which will be my portable performance house,
into which I can weave my stories and experiences and where I can use different artistic
forms, such as puppetry and film projection. The human-sized doll's house not only
serves as a literal interpretation of the play, but also becomes my performance-sheltered space where I, as a performer, can play through puppetry and shadow theatre; where I, as a filmmaker, can project my film; and where I, as a performance artist, can reach out to my community with a serious social message. That human-sized doll's house has enabled me to combine all I can do as an artist.

The animal and insect metaphors encountered in My Fairy Tale (see Appendix A) were appropriately united in the installation performance synopsis, The Way Home, as personal dialogues, or stories. During my marriage, my ex-husband constantly blocked my freedom, and tried to prevent me from leaving the house, so I would secretly sneak out. I wrote: One day, I took my child for a long walk, and when I came back I made sure to put the stroller back in the same place that it was in before, wiped the pedals, and left the room. Next morning, my secret was out; my husband found a grasshopper in the stroller. He knew I had disobeyed him and became abusive, but this time it stiffened my resolve to leave and no longer bow to his control. This story is used in the performance to draw attention to the grasshopper as a metaphor that is a catalyst for change and advancement. In Continuum Encyclopaedia of Animal Symbolism in World Art (2006), Hope B. Werness explores how grasshoppers were always connected to fertility and good luck. Grasshoppers are usually associated with change for the best. The grasshopper only jumps forward, which is an interesting fact that can be looked at symbolically in terms of only moving forward, without looking behind at the defeat we encounter in life. In my performance I wanted to replace the swallow bird imagery in A Doll's House, associated with Ibsen's Nora's entrapment and loss of personal choice, with
the positive metaphor of the grasshopper. This exchange of metaphors between *A Doll's House* and *The Way Home* was one of many methodologies I used that involved metamorphosis and transformation. I explore the physical patterns of my Nora's transformation in *The Way Home* through a series of different embodiments of re-incorporated animal metaphors.

To create my Nora in *The Way Home* I had to establish the character's past and future. Where did Nora come from before entering her doll's house, and where did she go after she left it? Reflecting on my personal history as an artist navigating home expanded my Nora's frame and enabled me to situate my work within global themes involving migrants and refugee status. During my research I have noticed that my idea of home was an unusual one. During my relocation between Jordan, Russia, and, most recently, Canada, my perception of home was constantly changing. My feeling of personal displacement informed my aesthetic choice of using the barbed wire that the recent wave of Syrian refugees has faced during their relocation. I established my Nora's past as a refugee who went through the barbed wire, and who lost her physical home forever. When she finally finds her home, it is unsafe, a house of abuse. In her journey she regains control of her house through the metaphorical act of deconstructing it. This dismantling of the human-sized doll's house in *The Way Home* leads to Nora's future that only exists in the suitcase. In *The Way Home* I created a new Nora who shared my loss of home that was not safe, and had to navigate her way through and beyond entrapment. Pairing the new Nora's past with mine paved the way to deal with the critical complexity of family matters through the installation performance synopsis, and personally ensured
my ability to overcome personal challenges that I was handling at that time in order to
tell a story that could resonate with and beyond those challenges.

Despite having no previous knowledge of operating different film cameras, I was
driven to learn filmmaking as a contemporary method of storytelling. I found that
learning film production practices provided me with different forms and techniques,
starting with puppet films and super 8 and 16mm film shooting and hand-processing.
One of my film production classes with my supervisor, Gerald Saul, took a very
interesting turn working around mermaids as the theme for the class. I have passionately
researched the mythical creature's history and its representations in popular culture. I
found the first literary reference to a mermaid was in Udine (1811), by Friedrich de La
Motte-Fouque; it is a story of a water sprite who falls in love with a knight and is
betrayed. The Little Mermaid (1837) by Hans Christian Anderson is a story that
represents the power of Christian salvation. Disney's The Little Mermaid (1989) is a
story about access, mobility, and the cost of participating in the white patriarchal system.
Dealing with misconceptions of shame and victimization was washed away through
Ariel, The Little Mermaid's story of coming out of childhood into adolescence. The
mermaid's brittle and sad destiny inspired me to write My Fairy Tale, addressing
personal and family matters. Through mythologizing myself I was triangulating my
personal story and Ibsen's Nora with Disney's Ariel to imagine a magical story of
transformation. The performance trajectory started to take shape, through the journey of
refugee Nora, and her challenges with domestic violence, to Ariel's physical
metamorphosis. In my working synopsis, my new Nora was born a mermaid and lost her
tail and voice upon her decision to enter the doll's house. Inside the house Nora goes through a series of transformations including her encounter with Baba Yaga, the dark lady of magic and wisdom standing in for the person's fate. Inside the Baba Yaga's hut, which has a life of its own, *Vasilisa the Beautiful*, the heroine in the Slavic folk tale, finds her light, similarly to my Nora who finally decides that it is time to leave.

Reflecting on my artistic journey and talking about my practice was my way home; it was my way back to the self. I worked with my supervisor, Kathryn Bracht, through a dramaturgical process of a script breakdown, creating a rehearsal script that I intended to develop into a production script through studio explorations. In my dramaturgical process the questions of what, how, and why helped me in thinking about the meaning behind the actions and the themes I wanted to tackle through my performance. The process of identifying my intentions behind the performance was very interesting because it allowed me to get closer to my work and provided answers surrounding what I want to say to my audience. I wanted to talk about the story of my migration, home, and violence. I found out that a dramaturgical process brought more understanding and intimacy into my work. I openly brought the cultural aspect of home and where I come from to my project, and as soon as that happened surviving in transit became a major theme that added more meaning and transcultural scope to my work.

Devising a performance often starts with a social concern, and for me it was domestic violence and the act of leaving an abusive relationship. This approach turned my project into more of a case study that exemplifies events and relationships, not only between myself, my family, and my ex-husband's family, but also on a larger scale
regarding the social status of women in Jordan and Canada. The tensions and crossovers were about thought and practice between the East and the West, modes of writing, and focusing on my personal story, hoping that these tensions would bring new hybrid practices. Drawing from Hans-Thies Lehmann's postdramatic theatre, I paid more attention to constructing the performance space, creating modes to interact with the audience, and I worked on specific forms such as puppet theatre, movement, rhythm, architecture and the use of film and optical installations. My process of creation delivered its own characteristic aesthetic effects that were informed by myth, fairy-tales, anamorphic images, refugee imagery, and family archive. All these elements were intended to affect the audience and draw them in with a form of political engagement. I wanted a meaningful, effective, and affective performance.

In *Making Contemporary Theatre* (2010), Jen Harvie describes the emphasis of postdramatic theatre as focusing on “the visual and sacrificing a sense of coherent narrative synthesis in order to gain, in its place, the density of intensive moments, particularly moments of theatrical intensity” (Harvie 12). The moments of theatrical intensity are usually the moments where the performer and the audience engage in an exchange, or flow of energy. The visuals, the movement, and the rhythm of the action all sustain this flow between the two bodies. Lehmann argues that postdramatic theatre “becomes more about presence than representation, more shared than communicated experience, more process than product, more manifestation than signification, more energetic impulses than information” (Lehmann 85). My production relies on the process of creation. For my process the value in using postdramatic theatre relies on its focus on
the meaning-making system, which helped me to convey different personal themes and oriented me towards revealing personal concerns around social justice, women's rights, and gender equality. The audience is encouraged to gain the social value that is offered through the performance; to collect and discover gradually the meaning in the production and its implementation.

I have never collaborated with another visual artist, but I was lucky to explore what collaboration implies when working with Professor Leesa Streifler. The little mermaid painted on the yellow side of the doll's house needed some work on the material, context, and identification. Leesa suggested replacing the mermaid I designed with simple crafts, such as ribbon and a wig, with acrylic paint. We started mixing paint when the question of how this mermaid should look popped up. How did Disney's *The Little Mermaid* relate to my work, visually? We kept the Mediterranean colours on the mermaid's tail and fins, but decided to add some salt, symbolizing the installation's metaphoric relationship to Jordan and the Dead Sea. The skin was transformed from a pink tone of white to a lighter version of brown, and Ariel's red hair was painted in black with red highlights, mirroring my own. I looked at the final visual version of the new mermaid and it looked exactly like me, with a tail. Nora's visual transformation was complete.

1.2.3 William Kentridge and Nalini Malani's Shadow Play and Distortions

In this section I will share my artistic influences found in the work of two multidisciplinary artists, William Kentridge and Nalini Malani, in order to explore how the visual and literary sources of Kentridge's animation *Shadow Procession* (1999), and
Malani's video/shadow plays *In Search of Vanished Blood* (2012), were appropriated, adapted, and creatively transformed in my work. The installation performance synopsis, *The Way Home* (see Appendix B) contains a detailed description of the optical installations encountered by the audience. In the barbed wire space four embedded cardboard miniature houses are planted. Each of the houses contains a cylinder serving as a flexible mirror; two of the optical installations contain anamorphic images of staged photos: one of the photos is from my wedding and the other is a composite photo of a broken house. The other two optical installations contain short anamorphic films of losing my mermaid tail and becoming a mother, and the turmoil I lived with in the doll's house. These optical installations in the form of houses represent the challenges I have faced during the time staying at the doll's house.

In his discussion of his work in the ART 21 series “Art in the Twenty-First Century” (2009), William Kentridge explains the anamorphic film technique: “what is distorted in the projection gets corrected in the viewer's seeing of it in a mirror, so the distortion is the correction and the original is the distorted.” Standing on the threshold of the doll's house and closing that door is a moment that transformed me. Similarly, through the special effect of anamorphosis, the viewer finds herself or himself on the threshold between the correction of the image and the original, suspended in a moment of transformation. In *Hidden Images* (1976), Fred Leeman describes the effect of anamorphosis on the image, such that “the anamorphic representation rises from the background and finds its own separate existence in front of it” (Leeman 28). The threshold is the space between the correction and the original where the transformation
takes place. In crossing my personal threshold to safety, independence, and freedom I was rescued by my challenges.

William Kentridge's anamorphic cylinders were my first encounter with his work and drawings. As I started researching and reading about his art, I stumbled on his project *Shadow Procession*, which was about a procession of migrants out of South Africa. This resonated strongly because it was around the same time I was making the decision to join the global migration of Syrian refugees through my performance. What I take from Kentridge's *Shadow Procession* is the physical movement of the procession, and the endless marching in the migrant's search for home. Kentridge used the old medium of the shadow play to represent South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy. Like Kentridge's theme, Malani's central theme in *In Search of Vanished Blood* concerns the eruption of past violence against women in her community. In my performance the film and the shadow play function as supplements to the stage action, and it is important that the work of film and shadow place the spectator in the interplay of darkness and light. In *The Shadow Play as Medium of Memory* (2013), Andreas Huyssen states, “Shadows promote sensuous, that is aesthetic, reflection on the practices of seeing and the inescapable dialectic of light and darkness” (25). In my production I hope to achieve this reflection, so that the audience can witness not only my Nora's transformation in terms of my reality, but also the implications of her transformation in the greater community.

1.3 Theoretical Premises and *The Way Home*: Intercultural Women's Performance, Hall's Identity, and Nomadism
Performing Ibsen's *A Doll's House* outside the western world was characterized by the notion of localizing Ibsen's global work and at the same time transforming the local. In *Women's Intercultural Performance* (2000), Jullie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins explicate that in the intercultural Japanese production of *A Doll's House*, the character Nora was invested with extraordinary degrees of symbolic significance. Nora “offers women spectators' identity spaces to negotiate a meaningful life space” (20). This assumption articulates my desire to give spectators the possibility to connect during the performance and start testing the identity spaces created and motivated through the powerful role model of Nora's character. As Holledge and Tompkins write:

> By imaginatively inhabiting the role of Nora, women on the cusp of new social identities were able to explore possible futures and the consequences of possible actions. There is ample evidence that this interactive mechanism in the play worked for a large number of European women who were actively engaged in the first wave of the women's movement. (Holledge and Tompkins 23)

In Ibsen's play, as well as in my solo performance *The Way Home*, Nora functions as a conduit through which new subjectivity is being explored, telling a story of the emancipation of women and their path to find freedom within themselves.

Investigating women's subjectivity and freedom was further informed by my choice of *A Doll's House*, as it secured Nora's character trajectory to instigate a new space for women. In addition to the contextual subject of cross-cultural human experience, I created my own intercultural blend determined by social context and the divergent cultural framework that I possess as an artist. Talking about my work
politically, away from any appropriation of culture, encouraged me to test my work's ability to connect to different aspects of people's lives. It invited familiarity in the choice of Nora as a tangible representation in every woman's past and present. My investigation came down to this question: How can I turn a middle class domestic life from late nineteenth century Europe into a modern intercultural performance, where Nora's depiction of subservience provides a universal, contemporary framework for my own story and transcends my personal subjugation in my own cultural tradition? My goal was to create a new Nora whose space for identity is so fluid that it shifts and adapts into any cultural context, matching the local with the global. But can a text that emerges from one culture be consumed differently in another? Any cultural connection to the country where I live now stands as being problematic. It seems impossible to work and live in a culture that is not comparable to my birth culture, as I don't share race, language, or even a basic understanding of feminism. I find that my personal identity is constantly negotiated by the reality of my migration to Canada.

In cultures like Jordan, Islamic law is the traditional law, and it dominates the domestic sphere. These laws are usually enforced by men who have been projected into the modern world following the traditional belief system that puts man as the main interpreter of law. Holledge and Tompkins argue that man's role as the dominant identity is dependant on women's capacity to embody the traditional cultural values of their societies, and that these values can only be threatened by social change. They add that women will never achieve equality as long as they are excluded from the secular world of modernity. Choosing Nora to refute this gendered conflict, Holledge and Tompkins
find the central character functions as an interpretive mechanism for the audience “to explore the consequences of adopting new identity spaces made available to women through the social changes associated with modernity” (42). Holledge and Tompkins' suggestion for Nora's text to work as a social realist text through identification and empathy can be richly implied in my choice of creating a balance between traditional thinking and imported elements of social modernity that characterized Europe in the early twentieth century.

The question of cultural politics is important in Stuart Hall's discourse around identity, cultural appropriation, and positioning the subject globally and locally. In “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities” (1997), Hall argues that any stable articulation of identity is false and that modernity's troubled form of self-reflection and its clash with westernization defines identity through its continued ground of action (44-45). This argument of new subjectivity and the new politics of positioning suggested by Hall opened up a new space for new subjectivities to emerge. Hall asks the question: Can identity itself be re-thought and re-lived, in and through difference?

Being an artist in an ethnic group, as well as an immigrant to a new ethnic group, I wonder how I can voice my concerns and hopes regarding my creative process and final project performance. Hall, being an immigrant himself, helped me to understand what it implies to be different and how my differences will be inscribed and celebrated through my creative work. I am an artist who is given the benefit of moving my culture outside the borders of my country, which I am trying to connect and explore. Locating the personal in the universal, or global context, becomes a necessity, just as Hall explains
his position as an immigrant who was accepted when he started narrating the story of his personal migration: “I have discovered who I was” (Hall 54-55).

“As a process, as a narrative, as a discourse,” Hall writes, identity “is always told from the position of the other” (Hall 49), which implies accepting all contradictions and finding ways to recovery. The Way Home's intercultural collaboration brings with it different expectations regarding culturally determined processes and the additional problems of working in translation. As a result, my performance involves lots of exploring, intersecting, and clashing, in order to connect. This talk about interculturalism and the modern way of viewing identity spaces brings me closer to home, not my physical home, but closer to being united with oneself.

Gertrude Stein talks about home and roots, writing “It's great to have roots, as long as you can take them with you” (qtd.in Braidotti 1994, 1). Since I was far from my physical home as a result of migration, and far from the self as a result of violence, I wanted to evoke my personal vision of female feminist subjectivity in a nomadic mode. I found an answer to my quest in Nomadic Subjects (1994), by the Italian Australian migrant scholar Rosi Braidotti. Braidotti's framework invites intellectual feminists to have the courage to face up to the phallocentric vision of the subject. But what kind of paradigm is Braidotti suggesting? In the process of writing this critical engagement paper, as well as in writing a previous paper, “Reconstructing the Feminine in The Little Mermaid: From Anderson to Disney” for a class in Gendering Media with Dr. Christine Ramsay, I was exploring different representations of women's subjectivity. For example: I have worked through Judith Butler's parodic politics of masquerade trying to capture
the little mermaid's new female feminist subjectivity after her transformation, just as I have worked through *Intercultural Women's Performance* by Holledge and Tompkins to invoke a subjectivity that can be described as the process of becoming woman by analysing gender in relation to geopolitical concerns. In *The Way Home* my Nora's female feminist subjectivity entails a radical anti-essentialist position, which encourages her to “speak as a woman in order to empower women” (Braidotti 1994, 4).

It starts from where most feminists do, by energizing the notion of corporeality and materialism. Through focusing on embodied, sexually differentiated subjectivity, *The Way Home* explores the challenges that women face in their struggle with language in producing positive representations of women. “The body, or the embodiment, of the subject is to be understood as neither a biological nor a sociological category but rather as a point of overlapping between the physical, the symbolic, and the sociological” (Braidotti 1994, 4). In *The Way Home*, I re-examine the bodily roots of subjectivity, looking at women as having multiple, complex, and contradictory experiences. In her thinking, Braidotti locates the complex interaction of different levels of subjectivity in nomadism.

The nomad is my own figuration of a situated, postmodern, culturally differentiated understanding of the subject in general and of the feminist subject in particular. This subject can also be described as postmodern/industrial/colonial, depending on one's locations. In so far as axes of differentiation such as class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, and others intersect and interact with each other in the constitution of subjectivity, the notion of nomad refers to the
simultaneous occurrence of many of these at once. Speaking as a female feminist entails that priority is granted to issues of gender or, rather, of sexual difference in the recognition of differences among women. (1994, 4)

By choosing the nomadic subject I settle on political fiction; the mythical experience of the nomadic subject perpetuates unsettling images and thoughts across socially established codes. The practice of “as if,” Braidotti suggests, captures nomadic consciousness as a critical mode of resistance to any set of conventions (1994, 6). From a very physical connotation the nomadic state in The Way Home is a chance to slow down in order not to fall into any ritualized repetitions, and to instead come up with a united understanding for my art practice. A “nomad” is a metaphor that can displace and at the same time condense the images, sounds, allegory, and movement that I have identified and highlighted for the purpose of this performance.

But how do I find my “as if,” philosophy empowering me as an artist? To practice art through nomadic consciousness, the artist falls into a creative way of becoming. This performative metaphor opens up unplanned, uncontrolled interactions and connections. As a performer I could not ignore this invitation to impersonation, this practicing of the fluid boundaries of “as if.” To Braidotti the success is found in repetitive and mimetic strategies, which help to open up alternative modes of agency where parody is actually politically empowering (1994, 7). In my practice I found that by following an artistic nomadic consciousness, I am committed to hold myself accountable as an artist and I can do it creatively through the mode of experiencing ‘as if,’ by way of using my imagination. A great example is Laurie Anderson's parodic nomadic
performance art. Anderson's work has a great flow of experience; some of her spoken word prose was written while she was on the road during the 70s. The complexity of her experiences makes her art a strong tool for evoking paradoxes. Braidotti argues that “Anderson has perfected the art of reversibility; events, but also statements can collapse into each other and be turned inside out” (1994, 7). Therefore, the meaning that you come up with from Anderson's work can have multiple interpretations. Roselee Goldberg introduces “Laurie Anderson,” in the anthology of solo performance texts, *Extreme Exposure* (2000), as an artist who works verbally, thinking of herself being a speaker more than a writer. In her process of work Anderson writes a story to make sense of the song, or visa versa. I find Anderson's process as one of migrating through other disciplines and techniques with questions, like a true nomad.

In *The Way Home* the nomadic state presents metaphorical richness collected from diverse sourcing and referencing. Perhaps this suggests having a more coherent narrative and synthesised performance than what Lehmann suggested in postdramatic theatre. I include both representation, as well as presence. Although my performance has some narration in it, it is also organised around thematic concerns. I have closely observed in the process of writing *My Fairy Tale* (Appendix A) and later the installation performance synopsis (Appendix B) how I was moving from narrativity to thematicity. Keeping the audience engaged through gradual cognition, I am attempting to pull them across the work, opening the door for all types of creative transaction, allowing for more of an organic growth of the whole.
1.4 In *The Way Home*: The Body as the Site of an Intercultural Encounter

Recreating Nora as an icon of resistance in the collective struggle of women was one of my goals for my performance, but my most important goal was finding elements of resistance within myself in the process. As I was examining Nora's character in *The Way Home* and the identity spaces that her representation offered through my performance, I was getting closer to creating my own performing body, which will speak my story and depict the implications of my cultural exchange and the violence exerted over my body. Through my intercultural performance/encounter I am exploring the limits of the artificial performing body intersecting with the subjective body of myself as a performer, and hoping to find where the first begins and the latter ends. This connection of the two brings me to the third element: the body of the audience and its way of decoding this formed binary. Indeed, how does the audience perceive this duality and its attempt to read the foreign body?

Through Holledge and Tompkins I will explore how the performer can wear multiple performing bodies that represent different cultures and metaphors. To further explain the correlation between the body of the performer and the performing body, Holledge and Tompkins present the interrelatedness of the two through following Braidotti's form of “corporeal materialism,” as Braidotti defines it in *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy* (1991):

The body is seen as the inter-face, a threshold, a field of intersection of material and symbolic forces; it is a surface where multiple codes of power and knowledge are inscribed; it is a construction that transforms and capitalises on
energies of a heterogeneous and discontinuous nature. The body is not an essence and therefore not an anatomical destiny: it is one's primary location in the world, one's primary situation in reality. (1991, 219)

The material body of the performer is subjected to the performer's history, space, and beliefs, but is also unique through its cultural, political and social placing. Indeed, it carries its own socially conditioned, sexually exchanged, and legally inscribed particularity. At this point, I am aware that my subjective performer's body is organised around its own social structure of signification; in addition, when “the corporeal reality of the sexed body is always present,” a female performer can't escape her sexually differentiated body that realises itself under a privileged male identity within her society (Holledge and Tompkins 111).

I lived most of my puberty and adulthood years in Jordan. Leaving the house to go outside was considered brave on the part of working women and mothers. Every Jordanian woman must be aware of the religious and patriarchal surveillance rules that are enforced by the society and closed family members, such as parents and husbands. Although I was raised in a family who supported me in my personal and professional life, I could never escape the society and the way it treated and judged women. Honor killing became the most violent and brutal subjugation of women's bodies that I have witnessed growing up in Jordan. In this act of taking a woman's life by her family members to clean the family's honor, I continuously found my motive to survive. I decided that death must be faced with life and if I had the luck to become an artist, I would choose to tell stories of resistance that could make my heart pound with valour.
In her article “Honor Killings” the Jordanian human activist Rana Husseini defines honor killing as “the murders of girls or women by their husbands or relatives because they have behaved in a way that is said to have damaged the reputation of the family or the tribe.” In most cases honor-killing crimes are received with leniency by the juridical system. Honor-killing offenders are celebrated by their communities and families as being the protectors of their families' reputations. Adam Jones explains the problem of honor killing in “Honor Killings and Blood Feuds,” suggesting that it is not a question of “morality or of ensuring that women maintain their own personal virtue; rather, it is a problem of domination, power, and hatred of women who, in these instances, are viewed as nothing more than servants to the family, both physically and symbolically.” These sacrificed bodies of women victims of honor-killing shaped my cultural, social, and political understanding of women's status in Jordan. Living there I knew that challenging any gender discrimination laws often comes with a personal risk, which in the case of honor killing challenged the family belief system, the lenient legal system, the community that views women without ownership over their lives, and empowers the male kin to take women's lives.

To work through the complexity of my cultural heritage and to explore what could be excluded for female performers serving under a defined gender structure, as a site of an intercultural encounter, I created a human-sized house to wear. I chose to represent the performing body of the performer through a series of intervals and connections that I called “the different faces of my Nora.” This symbolic body of my Nora was intended to represent the body of artifice, which contains craft and trickery.
The human-sized doll's house was made out of plastic; each side of the house represents a different face of Nora: Ibsen's Nora wearing an apron representing the middle-class housewife who bakes macaroons to feed the audience through the barbed wire; My Nora as the little mermaid, Ariel, representing the journey of her transformation; similarly, my Nora in the grasshopper's shadow creating her catalyst for change; my Nora turning the doll's house to a Baba Yaga's hut to perform her magic; my Nora the nomad who folds the house into a suitcase; my Nora the refugee wearing a life jacket and saving herself; my Nora the puppet and the puppeteer, wearing herself as a hand puppet witnessing the interplay of her family's and her ex-husband's family dynamics in a puppet film; and my Nora the mother, who explores her relationship with her child in an experimental film that is projected on the rear screen of the human-sized doll's house. My performing body is thus wrapped in a very powerful signifier that is the doll's house.

In a solo performance the audience is treated as another body for the performer to interact and engage with. During the exchange, performers use feelings, sounds and sensations that originate from the collective body of the audience and react and interact with it. I am aware that each member of the audience will have different responses, but since they will all share the same time and place of the performance, I hope to get a collective feedback, along the lines of Holledge and Tompkins' observation:

Audience members watching an intercultural production tend to share an awareness of the unfamiliar: strange gestural and emotional expressions, alien performance energies, vocalizations, decorative codes, spatial relationships, or the slowing or speeding of perceptual time. When confronted with a foreign
body, they are likely to indulge their scopophilic drives, but they will draw on more complex mechanisms to decode this body if the narrative or emotional trajectory of the performance demands an empathetic relationship. (112)

Between three bodies—the performance, the performer, and the audience—comes a need to explore how these bodies interact and fuse, creating what Holledge and Tompkins suggest are the genres of women's intercultural performances. Therefore, I will attempt to apply my performance parameters to the taxonomic, hybrid, and nomadic types of women's intercultural performances as an attempt to analyse the different aspects of my solo performance piece. To achieve that, I will draw on rehearsal processes, performance analyses, training systems, and the subjective experiences of my intercultural artistry.

We find different elements related to the performing body in the performance space, which holds traditional or contemporary cultural significance. For example, in my performance there is the barbed wire and the salt. I will call it the salt of the sea, referring to the Dead Sea in Jordan. These images as well as the life jackets of refugees are all associated with the performer's body found in the first story—that of being a performer with Palestinian and Russian descendants who was born in Jordan and moved to Canada.

Here I come as the feminised other, representing a colored body, but without its national costume. Instead I wear a house that looks like a doll's house with its colors of green, yellow, red, and blue to remind the western audience of the Barbie doll's house of popular culture, and to signal also, on a deeper level, a European play by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, called *A Doll's House*. As a solo performer, I would like to
think that I am usually in control of how I want to be presented, but I am also aware that I could be misunderstood. I have solved this dichotomy by adding signifiers that are familiar to a western audience. Holledge and Tompkins explain that in an intercultural performance setting, despite the strong sense of the political and cultural identity that some performers have, shaping the performing body remains a challenge to many female performers. They noticed that ethnic women performers find “difficulties of rendering their subjective experience and cultural background into performance” (117). Holledge and Tompkins further explore Robert Young's assertion, in Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race (1995), that applying Young’s racial classification system within the western discourse can trigger a neo-imperialist gaze: “This gaze encourages the audience to indulge in the cataloguing and categorising of the other in order to re-affirm the superiority and centrality of the self” (Young 176). Characterized by the act of policing of the dominant group, taxonomic theatre presents its audience with the dilemma of a cultural and racial generalisation, so that the body of the performer and the performing body collapse into one single paradigm.

Dealing with these challenges as an ethnic performer, I established Nora as the main reference for my performing body and tried to use the symbolic characterization to which every woman can relate. Then I started looking for other representations like the mermaid, such that towards the end of my investigation I had developed the mermaid from being just a generic mermaid to The Little Mermaid of Hans Christian Anderson and Disney. I have borrowed a famous western pop cultural metaphor mirrored in the use of The Little Mermaid to ignite familiarity and curiosity in western audiences, witnessing
what I have hoped to be a stage of clashing cultures. I was looking for a single chance to clarify why am I using western metaphors to present my story. The mermaid, for example, has strong roots in Middle Eastern pre-historic existence and was the creative muse for Hans Christian Anderson. But choosing an aesthetic related to the culture I come from and at the same time strongly present in western popular culture helped me to keep my research united under a common theme.

As I was looking for subversive potential through my production decisions as a solo performer, all I could think of was whether my performance could fall under taxonomic performance. My strategy was to open up to the imperial gaze and work through my performance and maybe later look at the feedback from the audience body. I know that through my work I did not plan to create a single cultural entity simply because I was myself a mix of two cultures. I thought to myself, why not transform this dilemma to the audience and put them face to face with this hybrid fusion of the performer and the performing body?

As I include in the spoken word of my narrative, I understand my production of The Way Home to be a hybrid performance that opens up to the neo-imperialist gaze to break through the rigid boundaries of any racial differences. The intersection of the performing body with the gaze and the feminized and racialized performer's body could create an opening to understanding this complexity. Holledge and Tompkins suggest that the reproductive body of a female performer can inscribe a potential for a literal anarchic reproduction that can disrupt the parameters of a taxonomic theatre (119). And, as the spoken narrative in my performance suggests, hybridity is a cultural and racial exchange
that occurs when two cultures merge. In hybrid situations, more contradictions can occur between the performing body and the audience body, suggesting an overlap of cultural signifiers, which can produce contrasted performing bodies.

Without seeking to idealise my performance to be the perfect intercultural blend, or to assimilate any aspects of it to a specific cultural context, I started to account for hybridisation playing an integral role in bringing this performance together. Despite Jordan's projected image as a mono-cultural national identity compared to Canada's multiculturalism, I can define my personal contemporary cultural product as being highly hybrid, incorporating elements from East European and Russian cultural heritage. My performance falls into the category of solo intercultural women's performance containing mixed-media film production, object animation, soundscape, and a dramatic text to enact a fantastical fairy-tale narrative. In the opening of The Way Home, the refugee Nora is trapped in her doll's house, facing domestic violence and waiting on the borderline. My Nora leaves her past challenges behind her, stuck in visually distorted cardboard houses labeled as “shipped”, and metaphorically embedded in the barbed wire as a front line of gender struggles. My Nora decides to take on an infinite journey as a nomad, carrying her house in a suitcase, only to conclude in the final image of the performance that she was saved by bringing herself home.

Creating a hybrid performance delivers a more positive perspective about colonial and diasporic encounters. As Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo state in “Performing Hybridity in Postcolonial Monodrama” (1997), “[T]he concept of hybridity stresses the productive nature of cultural integration as positive contamination…. [I]t is
not a simple fusion of differences but rather a volatile interaction characterized by conflict between and within the constitutive cultures of a colonised society” (Gilbert and Lo 7). Indeed, creating a volatile interaction within the body of the performer and the performing body is where the crux of my performance lies. The point is to be at peace with what you are presenting and how you are presenting it in a performance.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of my performance I hoped that it would be possible to explore some differences between spectators' perceptions of projected images and audiences' perceptions of living performing bodies, since in my performance I am very often playing between the two. In a solo theatre performance, the performing body of the solo performer establishes a connection with the audience's body that is very much dependant on the body-to-body awareness. In my experience, whenever I talk to theatre audiences, they would always talk about what they sensed or felt during the performance. Some of my theatre friends explained their experiences watching a performance as being touched. Holledge and Tompkins suggest that this kinaesthetic connection between the performer and audience is established through a flow between two desiring bodies, like the flowing of the words between the mouth and the ears, or the milk from the breast to the mouth (135-136).

My performance presents the possibility of carrying this flow between the designated body of the audience and the performer, and it is captured in The Way Home through:

1. In Act One titled: Home in a Memory Stick, the audience is faced with a lost mermaid, who needs to cross the barbed wire to get to the doll's house on the other side of the
performing space. The memory stick represented in the portable iPad is packed with images from back home, and a map of Jordan. The mermaid's desire to cross transfers, or flows, to the audience and they feel her struggle to make it through the barbed wire. The audience is encouraged to participate, so the show can go on.

2. In Act two titled: In Transit, I get inside the doll's house and the mermaid transforms into Nora. I feed the audience macaroons that Ibsen's Nora uses as her muse in *A Doll's House*. Nora's macaroons were her energy fuel; she used to keep them in her pocket. I am passing them to the audience while wearing the human-sized doll's house, thus connecting with the body of the audience through the sense of taste, but also passing on the performing body's sense of entrapment and the performer's physical burden in carrying the house and passing the macaroons at the same time. Tension is created in the audience as they are challenged to reach across barbed wire, while they have been placed, or held as though at the border on unnamed country and reaching for food.

3. In Act three titled: *Home in a Suitcase*, the house has been collapsed and folded in the suitcase. Through the defined line of barbed wire, a raft of life jackets falls from above.

   From the beginning the body of the audience has an assigned role to play. It starts with their first step inside the theatre, moving through the salt covering the floor. They are then invited to take a look inside the cardboard houses that connect them to fragmented aspects of my personal narrative behind the performance. The audience is then cast as refugees standing behind the barbed wire. While that barbed wire suggests a territorial role, it is also challenged by the entrance of the lost mermaid, which changes the role of the audience from being passive refugees who can't change their fate to active
participants in helping the mermaid to cross the barbed wire. Also, upon the connection established between the audience and the mermaid, the personal story of the performance takes on a heightened significance through the live performance of the performing body. The audience is invited to play different roles through the performance, but they are not forced to do so if they don't feel like playing the role.

Holledge and Tompkins examine and conceptualise the composition of the flow that moves between the bodies through Deleuze and Guattari's concept of “desiring machines”: “If this flow is organised through lines of rigid stratification, the meaning that is created is homogeneous and will coalesce into fixed identities for all the body parts that make up the machine” (Holledge and Tompkins 136). This concept of the desiring machine opens possibilities to blur the fixed boundaries of identity and the boundaries of a fixed corporeality, moving away from any fixed racial and sexual identity to a multiplicity of positioning. Drawing on Braidotti's specificity of corporeal reality and Holledge and Tompkins's theorising the body as a site of intercultural performance, I am very much aware of my corporeal specificity that was derived from my culture and place of birth, but I also experienced the multicultural aspect of my family growing up with both Jordanian and Russian social backgrounds. As if from the beginning, I was born to never belong to one specific way, but to many.

1.5 Production Parameters: The Ground Plan

The performance will take place in the ShuBox theatre, Riddell Centre at the University of Regina. The ShuBox floor will be covered with salt. The floor plan shows
the performance space is divided by the barbed wire into two parts: The first part contains four optical installations with two anamorphic images, and two films. The mirrored anamorphosis contains a distorted type of projection viewed through the cylindrical or flexible mirror (I use a chromed cylinder). Each installation is contained inside a cardboard house with the word “shipped” printed on it, and the houses are embedded in the barbed wire. Each installation has a different story to reveal; all the images and films are staged. The stories include mythical creatures, for example, mermaids, and domestic elements, as well as personal wedding pictures. These parts of the story will reveal the mermaid's transformation into a two-legged human and her entrance into a doll's house. The audience is invited to observe the anamorphic distortion on the pattern and its correction on the chrome cylinders, which are also called flexible mirrors.

The second part of the performance is located in the main stage area. The artist embodies a scenographic object depicted in a human-sized doll's house. The house's performance includes a puppet theatre, shadow theatre, a hole in the face of the little mermaid, Ariel, and a film projection. In this part, the story reflects on the time period when the little mermaid, Ariel, transformed to Nora from *A Doll's House*, and while living in the house turned to a grasshopper, and turned the house into Baba Yaga's hut. In the final act, the artist dismantles the human-sized doll's house and starts folding it into a suitcase. Through the performance, a raft of life jackets is suspended down stage. In the final act the artist unties the rope and makes it rest among the audience. During the
performance the spectators will encounter different sound effects (for example, the
musical theme of the little mermaid, grasshoppers, and static puppet voices).
CHAPTER TWO: SOCIAL AND CRITICAL CONTEXT

2.1 Domestic Violence

In the west, any thorough critical discussion of battered women will be informed by the feminist perspective on domestic violence that is culturally produced at the intersection of gender, race, class, and sexuality. In “Domestic Violence: Examining the Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender-An Introduction,” (2005), Natalie J. Sokoloff and Ida Dupont define battering to include physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual violence and control against women, understood as “a purposeful course of action buttressed by familial, institutional, social, and cultural practices” (1). In different communities the cultural experiences of violence are facilitated through different systems of oppression, for example, gender inequality, patriarchy, racism, colonialism, and sometimes religion. It is a culture, or set of traditions, that restrict women's activity by subjecting them as owned objects and recognize women's independence as a danger that must be monitored first by the father as the head of the family, and later by the husband.

I am a woman immigrant, who carries a history of colonialism and patriarchy, and who as a result of national displacement and occupation lost any connection to the idea around conceptualizing home. In The Way Home I created a female-centred narrative that did not render me as a helpless abused woman but defined me as an independent female artist who can embrace a tragic experience and turn it into an advantageous one. This entailed me leaving an abusive relationship as my way of exercising agency within patriarchy. Leti Volpp discusses some immigrants' cultural
integration into the new culture through a study of “Feminism versus Multiculturalism” (2005). She states that all world cultures have clearly patriarchal pasts, but some cultures, such as western cultures, managed to depart further from it than others. But if the culture that the immigrant came from is not prone to alter itself to encourage the equality of women, immigrant women turn into victims of culture (40).

Speaking on behalf of emigrant battered women, I was always a feminist, but I did not practice feminism. When the western feminist discourse examined immigrant Third World women they assumed, as Volpp argues, that non-western cultures subordinate their women to such an extent that western feminists presume “Third World communities are sites of aberrant violence” (41). Assuming that Third World women suffer death by their culture, how can a Third World woman like me engage with feminism? Holledge and Tompkins explain that “…women in non-western countries refuse the word altogether because of a perception that feminism is based on western women's activism and its tendency to essentialise women's experiences forgetting the specific importance and place of history, culture, race, class, and politics” (5). Here I stand with the Palestinian/Jordanian activist Rana Hussein commenting on honor killing and feminism: “sometimes I get accused of being used by the West, of being a Western agent, but I'm sorry, I don't need anyone in the West to tell me that killing a woman is wrong.”

2.2 Intersectionality in an Interdisciplinary Framework
I always assumed that western women have more autonomy and agency than women in Third World countries until I lived in a women's shelter in Canada. As Volpp explains, “an individual can be subordinated in one social relation and dominant in another” (46). Therefore, every victim is also an agent of a subordinating practice of some kind. For example, a women's shelter is a non-oppressive environment for different groups of women who were oppressed and subordinated because they are women. For a woman of color who resides in the shelter she is doubly oppressed and subordinated, for being racially different and a woman. Through my research I had to navigate two major systems of oppression identified in gender inequality and racism. In order to respond to a discourse that politicizes the experiences of women of color, an intersectional identity, of both race and gender should be assembled as a source of social empowerment.

In her article “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color,” the African American critical race theorist Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) attempts to apply the theory of intersectionality in practice by exploring aspects of race and gender operating in the territory of violence against women of color. Crenshaw confirms the failure of both feminist and antiracist discourses in politicizing women's experiences; especially women of color enduring simultaneity of oppression. Crenshaw locates the reason for domination in the power of sociality to diminish those who are different by neglecting variations in and amid different groups of women, resulting in problematic identity politics.

Domestic violence is a form of oppression and social control that defines the social context and categorisation in which we exist. In “Strengthening Domestic
Violence Theories: Intersections of Race, Class, Sexual Orientation, and Gender” (2005), Michelle Bograd explains that violence is treated as a threat to the inner space of a family, which is usually reflected as a white middle-class heterosexual family, with an exception to gender inequality. In order to address the overlooked intersections and come up with a way to modify gender inequality we need to create intersections with other systems of power and oppressions. When defined by these intersections, the overlapping and interdependent systems of disadvantage can stop the cycle of violence from creating its invisible socially structured group of victims. Following the quest for multiple grounds of identity, intersectionality is asking us to envision women's experiences of race or gender separately.

Politically, the concept of intersectionality is groundwork for how different connections between race and gender can be articulated through an intercommunication of racism and patriarchy. I hope that this interdisciplinary project can shed some light on the disadvantages of silencing any discussions of intercommunity violence. By presenting a story of an immigrant woman of color affected by domestic violence, I hope to provide an opening to other marginalized groups, such as refugees, women affected by domestic violence, women of color, and all women. Through giving women a voice and visualizing them outside the domestic sphere, this interdisciplinary project touches upon strategies of empowerment in responding to gender and race in order to challenge the intersectional subordination of women of color.

The isolation that I have suffered just because I am an immigrant woman is a compound effect of the marginalization brought on by gender and race. The production
of images of immigrant women of color ignores the intersectional interests of this group of women and as a consequence does not fulfill their needs. Through my performance I hope to generate an objective representation of immigrant women affected by domestic violence, who have been subordinated due to the long histories of colonialism and patriarchy. Locating my performance at the intersection of multiple dimensions of identity, this project will allow women to advocate for themselves against internal exclusions and marginalization and to avoid the centrality of an intersectional identity of the few over the identity of the group. Recognizing the location of identity politics within multiple categories that intersect brings awareness of intersectionality and allows us to better acknowledge differences, as well as negotiate towards expressing those differences in constructed group politics.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Intertextuality (Dancing Text)

I began by writing my personal fairy tale, a story about my life, family matters, my childhood back in Jordan, and how I met my ex-husband and moved with him to Canada. While writing about my life I have noticed that using fairy-tales and myths as metaphors offered possibilities in moving away from the painful reality of the past. I felt free and confident; I also noticed that I have stated my opinion regarding certain issues about my life without embarrassment, or humiliation. In *My Fairy Tale* I refer to myself as the mermaid, a creature that I loved and admired during my childhood; I was fascinated by her strength and at the same time her vulnerability. Inspired by the fairy tale *The Little Mermaid*, which was originally written by Hans Christian Anderson and later produced by Disney with the central character Ariel in an animated movie under the same title, I referred to my mother as the queen, my father as the traveler, my mother-in-law as the witch, and my ex-husband as the prince. I was the mermaid that had lost her tail and her voice when she decided to follow the prince and live in a doll's house. The joy of writing *My Fairy Tale* empowered me to tell my story and helped me to understand that my story matters and it can create change.

In *The Postmodern Fairy Tale* (2007), Kevin Paul Smith defines fairy tales as “those little stories that function in the vernacular as a synonym for lies” (1). Indeed, fairy tales are considered stories of pop culture, which can escape what is agreed on to be factual by a large group of people. And since fairy tales are not being told to prove anything, they can be considered an opportunity for addressing unquestionable matters.
that affect people's lives and as vehicles for change. Smith is very clear on defining
where fairy tales originate. Either fantastic narratives, or folkloric stories, fairy tales are
mostly defined as a fantasy that is happening in an imaginary world where, for example,
animals can speak. For the influential fairy tale critic, Bruno Bettelheim, a story is not a
true fairy tale without a happy ending. To create a resolution for this binary division
between two genres of fairy tale, the “fantastic” and “folklore” and to contextualise the
critical process of my research project, I will be working with Maria Tatar's definition of
fairy tale, which states: “The term fairy tale is above all reserved for narratives set in a
fictional world where preternatural events and supernatural intervention are taken wholly
for granted. A fairy tale can thus belong to the category of folk tales, but it stands in
contrast to the folk tale which is sharply biased in favor of earthy realism” (33). Tatar's
dichotomy between those fairy tales that are clearly fantastic and those that are not is
highlighted in my methodological approach of intertextuality in exchanging reality for
magic and magic for reality.

I started working by analysing the intertextual text of My Fairy Tale before
looking at its oral transmission in performance through the installation performance
synopsis The Way Home. I then picked The Little Mermaid by Hans Christian Anderson
and Disney, and Vasilisa The Beautiful from the Slavic folktale, and I transposed them
onto Ibsen's play A Doll's House, then personalised it with my narrative about domestic
violence and the displaced home. Thus, I was using intertextuality to create a palimpsest
of well-known fairy tales, a famous play, and my personal story to build up my own
personal feminist monograph, which I have materialized through writing My Fairy Tale
hypertext, and carried it through to *The Way Home*. *My Fairy Tale* text contained references (intertext) to different genres of fairy tales. Smith presents Gerard Genette's work on intertextuality which is called hypertexuality and is concerned with the relationship between a late-coming text and its pre-text. Genette defines hypertext as “any text derived from a previous text either through simple transformation, which I shall simply call from now on *transformation*, or through indirect transformation, which I shall label *imitation*” (7).

One of Genette's categories of hypertextuality is writerly title reference, and is defined as a direct reference to a well-known fairy-tale in the title. *My Fairy Tale* does not grant the text any relevance to a pre-existing fairy-tale. My broader generic reference which deprives my life of any authorial voice, instead presenting a title full of possibilities and an invitation to explore, relying on the reader's knowledge of different genres of fairy tales, and igniting critical impulses and relationships with the text. Presenting the reader with some interpretation and lots of ambiguity forces the reader to go through a conscious process of identification, but denies the text any prominence and importance. “The less massive and explicit the hypertextuality of a given work, the more does its analysis depend on constitutive judgement: that is, on the reader's interpretative decision” (Genette 9). The title *My Fairy Tale* certainly implies ownership of the story and ties it to a designated individual who is the writer, and in this case also the narrator. The journey is another famous motif in fairy-tales, where it is known as the path heroes and heroines have to take in order for the magic to work. The journey motif is implied in my title “*The Way Home.*”
Incorporation is an explicit reference to a fairy tale within the text. One of the ways that incorporation works into *The Way Home* narrative is through providing insights into the narrator's psychological state and roles played by each character in shaping and influencing the narrator's expectations; for example in (Appendix B): *While the traveller explored life's challenges, the queen ensured her kingdom to be a place of complete conformity and loyalty under the dictum of maternal love/law.* This part of the text explores the relationship between the narrator and her mother, but also provides an insight into the narrator's internal conflict, casting the mother in the role of an evil queen that we often find in fairy tales.

Another of Genette's categories is revisions: In *My Fairy Tale* hypertextuality is mainly concerned with revising the hypotext of *The Little Mermaid* from Anderson to Disney, *A Doll's House* by Ibsen, and *Vasilisa the Beautiful*. So far, I have connected with *The Little Mermaid* from Anderson to Disney and the story of Nora in *A Doll's House*, explaining their involvement in *My Fairy Tale* and *The Way Home* as a hypertext. Next I will explore the Russian folk tale *Vasilisa the Beautiful*. Vasilisa lived with her evil step-mother and step-sisters. One day she was sent to the woods to the mother of all witches, Baba Yaga, where she was asked to fetch some fire for the house. Vasilisa lived with Baba Yaga in her hut and performed all her chores with the help of the doll that she inherited from her mother. Baba Yaga was surprised that Vasilisa finished all her chores, and when the witch asked Vasilisa how she managed to do that Vasilisa did not mention the doll but simply said, “the blessing of my mother helped me” (Franz 195). Baba Yaga gave Vasilisa the source of fire in a skull, which she thought of
throwing away, but an inner voice said, “Don't throw me away, take me to the stepmother” (Franz 196). When Vasilisa brought the Skull inside the house, the eyes of the skull followed the stepmother and her daughters until they were burned into ashes. In *The Way Home*, the character Baba Yaga is incorporated as an obstacle that Nora has to overcome to leave the doll's house. Baba Yaga's feathers thrown out of the doll's house are a precedent to Nora's decision to leave. In the hypertext of *The Way Home* Baba Yaga's magic is a result of a real action for a woman to leave an abusive relationship.

The revised versions of fairy tales gained momentum during the 1970's and were embedded in the second-wave feminist movement. Some feminist revisions were directed to highlight misogyny, and displace the patriarchal foundation in fairy tales, and folk tales, and others revised the fairy tales that were used against women and tried to cast them in more active roles. Jack Zipes defines this movement of re-vision as “a result of transformed values.” He further explains, the revised classical fairy tale seeks to alter the reader's views of traditional patterns, images, and codes” (9-10). For me, this revision helped me to empower my heroine, Nora, as a modern woman, clearing any implications of the original tale. In *The Way Home* Nora emancipates Vasilisa from being a follower of her stepmother and stepsister, and later Baba Yaga. Instead, Nora's down lock in the doll's house reveals how she was locked into a patriarchal way of seeing herself. While Nora is trying to explore internal domestic abuse, in my revision, I wanted to re-incorporate the recent global movement of migration in finding a home for Nora's nomadic pursuit of finding herself again.
3.2 Fictionalizing the Self

On the decision to see, meet, or perform oneself, I consider my practice as an expression of something very personal. I move between playing myself and fictionalizing my experiences entirely. Through the performance I am located between what is hoped to be an engaging performance, and playing with implied characterization. I start with confessional storytelling by minimizing any sense that I am playing a role, or presenting an act. Act one is characterized by minimizing any distance between the performer and the audience. In Solo Performance Drama: The Self as Other (2005), Stephen Bottoms revises the work of the solo performer Spalding Gray from the Wooster group, who defines the process of playing a self by oneself as “a narrative form in which embodied conflict of some kind is explored, and to some extent resolved, through dialogue and action” (Bottoms 522). The engaging approach in Act one of the performance is an invitation to the audience to share through direct address, and at the same time presents myself as an unresolved character. Establishing this relationship with the audience renders them as complicitous, and at the same time grants them the freedom to respond to the artwork on their own terms.

With Act two, inside the doll's house, the audience is critically distanced. The audience starts questioning whether any of these multi-faceted complex characters are really the performer, or just performative masks. To not play oneself is to fictionalize one's experiences and narrative. My narrative came out as a process of focusing on writing, creating multiple characters, figuration, and the use of metaphors. All these devices create this writer-performer self who is asking my audience to question and
intellectually engage. This multiple-character approach is preferable when talking about certain social tensions, such as domestic violence; as Bottoms recognizes, with multiple voices no one is prioritized, or privileged, as the only truth.

Bottoms argues that “the absence of the authorial central character evokes a powerful sense of self loss” (526). This is further complicated by the disembodied presence of the writer-performer in recorded voice-over, narrating different stories and life experiences, as if the process of writing happened outside the self. The story of my parents, meeting my ex-husband, and the final monologue with the doll's house—all these devices distance the audience aesthetically and bring a sense of estrangement to the experience between the performer and the audience. Act three is the finale, and as I address the audience directly using the first person, all my fictionalized multiple characters have transformed into me, into home, ready to move.

### 3.3 Doppelganger: Viewing from Behind

Act Two, Scene Five is silent. There is a projection on the rear screen on the doll's house. I am inside the doll's house holding a portable projector that is playing a film, from the inside out. The work of the projected image on the screen explains how I combine film projection and performance (see Appendix B), for the scale of the house in exact measurements. The audience is pursuing the projection of my film from behind the image. While projecting, the audience is invited to find a direction towards the image, to situate themselves in relation to what is behind the image. In “Viewed from Behind: The Projected Image and its Doppelganger,” Ignaz Cassar argues, “The topos of behind is ambivalent…we don't know what is behind, because of its behindness. Not being able to
see beyond the projected image, the ‘behind’ retreats behind the screen, evading us. It remains hidden behind the behind, confined to the rear” (Cassar 117).

On one hand, the image reveals itself to us and we find ourselves as an audience sheltered by it, and on the other hand, once the image is projected the secret is out. “And once we project, we confront the image we have put forth, thereby letting ourselves fall behind it. Being behind, then again, we find shelter in the shield of the image and the secret that lies behind it” (Cassar 117). The projected structure shields the image and keeps its secret. In this case it's the doll's house that plays the role of the projected surface and the shield for the image, the projectile. My body is experienced as vanished behind the projected shield. Although I am trapped physically, I am also inviting the audience to view my body in a different way, allowing myself to construct an image of myself, by myself. I am directing the image that will represent me.

3.4 Metamorphoses and Transformation

As a female performer, I have experienced a variety of approaches to the interiority and the exteriority of emotion, vocalisation, and gesture. Although trained in varied Stanislavski based systems, my work in The Way Home took more of a Brechtian process of alienation. I relied on the strength of my 15-year career in the performing arts and focused on creating a performance space where all the elements of my performance experience will interact. As hard as triggering past memories was, the effort to avoid any ambivalent feelings about an imposed hybrid identity was equally difficult. To work through the framework of hybridity within the positive realm of interculturalism that was suggested earlier, I followed Holledge and Tompkins's method in concentrating on the
body in space through “aesthetic hybridity of the interiors” which I explored by embodying the character(s) through the creation of my physical habitus.

I began by exploring the physical patterns of the characters. I was trying to make it clear that the performing body of the character is confined, fragile, and vulnerable without being victimized. This containment was expressed in a diversity of performance codes: Firstly, the performing body confined in a mermaid's tail and lost in the prairies attempts to find its way through the territorial confinement of the barbed wire. Secondly, the doll's house that has no door to enter, or exit, conveys the sign *Fragile* that is printed over its four sides. Fragility carries through the performance in the use of life jackets, the salt, and the styrofoam packing peanuts. Finally, the mermaid's voice is contained in my Nora's body, which is contained in the doll's house. All these examples acted as a wardrobe of an extended performing body, similar to a prosthetic connected to the performing body, animating and defining its parameters. Thus, the personalised interiors of the performer's struggles with domestic violence were reflected in the physical and vocal work of the characters.

Indeed, the performing body was provided with what Holledge and Tompkins refer to as “exterior uniformity” to embrace the different physical, and vocal, expressions of characters, themes, and metaphors with the personal technology devices complementing vocal and visual extension of my Nora. With a defined physical image, the hybrid version of my performance was ready where the exterior wardrobe was the physical extension of the character Nora in *The Way Home*. At this point of my performance development, I became aware of a concern voiced by Holledge and
Tompkins regarding embodiment of character through costume in that it creates fitted hybrid realities overlooking the corporeal realities of the performer's body, stating that this concern can be “solidified through memory” (Holledge and Tompkins 125). So I referred to the preliminary drafts of my rehearsal script that I had created with my supervisor, professor Kathryn Bracht. Performing my geographical home that I title as ‘Jordan’ was surprisingly reduced from the script due to fears of my inability to execute some of the technical aspects of my performance, or that this performance code of presenting my home country will not be understood by the western audience. Although Professor Bracht encouraged me to include this part about Jordan, I was still hesitant and scared. It wasn't until I arrived at the point where I started working on my production script, trying to perform the technical aspects of the performance, installing the barbed wire and the cardboard houses, that I started to realise that something was missing. As I was rehearsing in the ShuBox I found myself adding this scene into Act One: The solo character Nora loses her way in the prairies, arriving at the performance with her mermaid tail and a virtual map on her iPad leading her to the human-sized doll's house in the performance area. With a little help from the audience Nora crosses the barbed wire and gets into the doll's house. In this little extract Jordan was present in my Nora's memory stick (see Appendix B). At this point I have mounted the performing body with a new costuming physical code has granted the performer's body a way to release repression through memory.

3.5 Autoethnography
How does one know if their story is worth telling? I was aware that putting the “self” into my research helped me to demonstrate my experience to the audience, and make it resonate with the lives of others. I have a personal history that is steeped in trauma and forcible migration, a history that I wanted to read, reflect on, and examine with the eye of the researcher. “Being able to stand apart from what happened and look, then look back at it” (Ellis xix), this is how Carolyn Ellis describes the relational interaction between the other and the “I” of the researcher. Ellis's notion of the researcher being the subject of the research demands the “I” to be able to respond inwardly and outwardly. What happens in ethnographic research when the “I” is the focus of the research? In *The Ethnographic I* (2004), Ellis compiles a methodological novel about autoethnography by following the personal stories of her students where she transforms her experience in thinking like an ethnographer, but writes like a novelist.

To think like an ethnographer means the research that describes situations and cultural practices is the truth. Conducting fieldwork while I was residing in Sofia house, I developed a weekly journal, where I wrote my feelings and emotions, every day. At that time, I wanted to create work that would give value to women's thoughts and feelings as they undergo the transition to life on their own. Although during that time I was mostly going through clot of remembering and finding ways to fit the stories I have heard and my story into a coherent flow, writing about what I was observing created a playful feeling that carried me through three years of research. I never gave up the playfulness. Since I was a child I have listened to conversations of adults and made assumptions in examining their thoughts and actions. I was a very instinctive
ethnographer. I have noticed that while writing my ethnographic experiences I usually accessed my imagination.

To write as a novelist means to try to get to the truth, through fictional techniques, such as dialogue, characters, scene setting, and plot development. This creative composed work is usually accessed through fantasy. Developing plot: The main storyline is depicting the personal and relational life of a middle-class emigrant woman suffering from intimate partner abuse. For dramatic effect the character's story goes through three acts. Before entering the doll's house, the character's home is in a memory stick, inside the doll's house the character lives in transit, and after leaving the doll's house the character's home is located in her personal suitcase.

In developing characters; I based them on my family, and my ex-husband's family. Every character was geared to the development of the main character, my Nora. I have noticed that I had a very intentional thought for the male characters to remain silent, but their presence still affected the events. In setting the scene, the main focus is the human-sized doll's house. Anything outside the house remains a question. For example, the salt on the theatre floor could be interpreted as a re-creation of the Dead Sea. In developing the characters' dialogue, I used my conversation with my mother and my ex-mother-in-law. The spoken speech represented true events. The second conversation I staged between the main character Nora and the house was completely fictional.

Performing autoethnography has the feeling of a personal emancipatory methodology. It's an act of revealing what has been hidden, in order to reverse what has happened. In “Performing Autoethnography: An Embodied Methodological Praxis,”
Tami Spry defines the moment of the impulse of autoethnography as “movement and critical self-reflexive discourse in performance, articulating the intersections of peoples and culture through the inner sanctions of the always-migratory identity.” Spry delivers an explanation of autoethnography through the notion of ‘Being There’ and ‘Being Here’ where the body as a site of awareness and creation contests the meaning of self (Spry 183). The tension between the ‘here’ and ‘there’ represents the interaction of the body of the researcher/artist with the research/art. Performing autoethnography functions as an emancipatory method, liberating me from cultural and familial identity. Looking back at my story with my family and the relationship I have with my parents helped me to look back at myself as the other ‘being there’.
CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

2.1 Conclusion

Working through re-creating a new female feminist subjectivity with a history of displacement, migration, and violence was a response to the multiple, complex, and contradictory experiences I have gone through as an ethnic female artist. Through the notion of navigating the way home, I explored the physicality of displacing and condensing metaphors, which resulted in a re-creation of a new noble heroine, my Nora. A symbolic figure of resistance for those women who are held back from their full potential was given a chance to reappear in the hybrid form of a female trickster. Although tricksters are identified in reference to myth and fairy tales, their actions are set up to change the world around them.

In western culture we acknowledge the idiom ‘when one door closes, another one opens,’ but rarely the hallway, the in-between place where you are and where you are headed. In The Way Home this liminal space does not have to be a scary, dark, endless hallway of confusion- it can be a space of massive transformation, great memories, and peace. This transitive space in The Way Home was filled with visual memories carried in the house walls and windows. My story was packed in a doll's house and given a chance to journey through the performance space, placing hope and showing the way to go. This unceasing movement of me as the artist carrying the house created its impact through retelling the past, showing a way to the future, and being present in the now, to see.
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APPENDIX A: My Fairy Tale

My fairy tale begins in Amman-Jordan, the land of sand and wind that was built on seven mountains. I was born a mermaid, but the sea was so far away and my only source of water was salty and dead. From the beginning, my tail and fins caused the paradox of my life. I was born to a Palestinian father and a Russian mother. My father was a life-long traveller, whose adventures brought a sense of freedom into my life. Although his absence was hard to comprehend, as a mer-child, it created balance with my mother's sovereignty. When my dad exposed us to nature, my mother kept us inside her castle. While the traveller explored life's challenges, the queen ensured her kingdom to be a place of complete conformity and loyalty under the dictum of maternal love/law.

Soon I met the witch. With her apparent wisdom and manipulative character, she managed to lure me to accept her rules. The witch performed her tricks using the mermaid's naïve nature and her life-long acceptance of not being good enough. In a moment of black magic, the witch presented me with a suitor, asked me to sign the contract, and in exchange took my voice, forever. The suitor was her son, who became my husband. We moved into a doll's house. In that house, I became a mother. Being as hesitant, confused, and confined as I was, I still managed to steal some moments for my child and myself.

On nights of the full moon, the spirit of Innana, Goddess of wind and power, would visit me. I started dancing, tapping on the floor, and catching the reflection of my dancing body in the closet's mirror. After the dance was ended I would lean on the side of the mirror and listen to the sound of my breath. That's how I knew that I was still
alive. Looking at myself was impossible; looking in the mirror was difficult. I don't recall any of my reflections. I don't recall if they had a distinct feature about them. In that perfect household, the image of myself was the only distortion. But, inside the doll's house, I found a secret passage. Although my husband demanded me to ask his permission to leave the house, I didn't understand permission. My Goddess's spirit did not understand being imprisoned in her own house. Therefore, with the wisdom of Innana, I started sneaking outside, the doll's house. One day, I took my child for a long walk, and when I came back I made sure to put the stroller back in the same place that it was in before, wiped the pedals, and left the room. Next morning, my secret was out; my husband found a grasshopper in the stroller.

One day, I stood on the doorway of my doll's house and simply decided that it was time to leave. I looked at my body. I had lost my tail. And as I was crossing the threshold to the outside my body grew wings, and I started singing the most beautiful tune of all. I wrapped my chicken wings around my doll's house, I extended my chicken legs to firmly hit the ground and started moving forward. These days when I look into the mirror I don't see any distortion. Everything is very clear: Again, the traveller that I became managed to fold the house and place it into a suitcase, and I scattered into the horizon, to heal. Ultimately, I stepped into the light, which I could have never seen without going through the darkness first.
APPENDIX B: Installation Performance Synopsis

The Way Home

The physical performance parameters represent the nomadic journey of refugee/immigrant Nora and her challenges with domestic violence. The plot presents Nora's journey mirrored through The Little Mermaid, Ariel's transformation to human and the loss of her tail and voice. The performance begins with the mermaid losing her way in the prairies and arriving at the performance with her tail and a map. The mermaid finds her way through the salt and the barbed wire. With her end goal to inhabit the human-sized doll's house, she crosses the barbed wire with a little help from the audience. As the mermaid embodies the doll's house, she becomes Ariel, who transforms to Nora, the housewife, using the oval hole in the first side as the window for her face. Through a play of puppets Nora relives her family relationships and how she was introduced to her ex-husband. Nora's motherhood and relationship to her daughter play a role in her journey in the doll's house that she exposes through a film. Nora reveals her secret in the hidden grasshopper, which was the catalyst for her to leave her husband in the shadow theatre.

As Nora retells and witnesses what happened to her, she leaves that past behind, utilizing the metaphor of leaving and finding home on one's own terms. The narrative unfolds an experience with domestic violence through which the audience will realize that the story is about transformation and that the performance is an autobiographical experience. In questioning home and homing back to the self my final goal of the performance is about emancipation and having a voice.
The installation performance is divided into three acts: Home in a memory stick, in transit, and home in a suitcase. The audience will be standing through the duration of the performance, which is located in the ShuBox theatre.

Act One: Home in Memory Stick

The space is divided into two sections, using barbed wire installed diagonally in the middle of the ShuBox. The audience enters the theatre space filled with salt and styrofoam peanuts (used for packing fragile elements) that they manage their way through, only to be faced by the barbed wire. Forced to wait, the audience can't progress anymore, inducing a sense of entrapment. Inside the barbed wire are four anamorphic optical installations placed inside cardboard houses. The houses have different sizes, but they all have a source of light that beams out of them and an oval window that invites the audience to steal a look at what is inside. Each house contains a projection screen; a cylinder serving as a flexible mirror; filmed or staged, composite, or anamorphic images; and a light source. The cardboard houses have signs that read ‘shipped’ on them. The installation configuration represents the ‘challenges’ that Nora/Ariel faced before and after entering the doll's house.

The four cardboard houses with themed images and films in the form of experimental home movies are:

1. Wedding: Staged wedding image of me and my ex-husband fictionalized as the prince, with image of a heavy storm, and a knife popping out of a bouquet of white flowers.
2. Holding A Mermaid's Tail: A movie of me holding my tail, as it transforms into my baby, Sophia.
3. Broken House: The image of the house is imprinted on my body and the house is broken into two halves, signaling the trap of domesticity.

4. Remembering the Mermaid: A movie represents turmoil in the doll's house. I am secure on a house chair, while the rest of the furniture spins in a circle.

   On the other side of the barbed wire a human-sized doll's house is being installed.

Scene One:

_I enter from the south door of the ShuBox moving towards the centre._

As the audience starts filling out the space a sound of dragged barbed wire starts.

I enter the performance wearing a mermaid's tail and carrying a map, or an iPad that has Google Map shot of the travelled distance between Jordan and Canada and my final goal to get inside the doll's house. I start sharing the images with the audience.

Scene Two:

_located in the centre stage I cross the barbed wire moving towards the doll's house._

Act two: In Transit

This act occurs inside a human-sized doll's house across the barbed wire.

The doll's house scale is 5'5" x 2'9" and the puppet theatre window is 26"x20". The doll's house has four sides; each side tells a story and has a function:

1. Ariel the little mermaid: The first side is an oval window for a face with the little mermaid Ariel as a theme. This side represents the past and cleaning the past. It is Nora's flash back to her mermaid childhood and how she entered the doll's house (pulling the threads of the house together). This side explains who Nora was before she entered the
doll's house.

2. Puppets: The second side is a window that is used as a puppet theatre. This side represents: home, choice, options, tradition, expectations, conformity, and pressure.

3. Projection: The third part is the rear projection screen; the image is projected from inside the doll's house to the outside. This side represents hope, my child's growing up, and family.

4. Grasshopper: The fourth side is left for shadowy projections using a piece of white cloth. It represents the future in the grasshopper as the catalyst to leave, rebellion, discovery, and only jumping forward.

5. The house has a “fragile” sign sticker over the four sides.

Scene One:

I embody the human-sized doll's house. The mermaid's side of the house faces the audience. As the first story plays I place my face in the oval window.

The first story (recorded)

My fairy tale begins in Amman-Jordan, the land of sand and wind that was built on seven mountains. I was born a mermaid, but the sea was so far and my only source of water was salty and dead. From the beginning, my tail and fins caused the complexity of my life. I was a fish out of water, without the proper water to sustain me.

The Little Mermaid's theme song plays. I pull Nora's apron covering Ariel's tail.

Nora's apron has a sticker on its pocket that reads ‘Nora's Macaroons’.

Scene Two:
Inside a doll's house, I move to centre stage-offering macaroons to the audience.

_The audience reach through the barbed wire to get the macaroons._

Scene Three:

In a puppet film: The mermaid (me) plays the role of a witness, mother, father, mother-in-law, and husband. The puppet characters are made with distinct features for each one. The mother has a tiara. The father is wearing his backpack. The mother-in-law has a witch hat. The husband is a handsome prince, but the space around his heart is empty, and I have a fish tail.

Inside a doll's house, I turn the house so that the audience is facing the house's side with the puppet theatre. _The second story plays._

The Second Story (recorded)

I was born to a Palestinian father and a Russian mother. My father was a life-long traveller, whose adventures brought a sense of freedom into my life. Although his absence was hard to comprehend, as a mer-child, it created balance with my mother's sovereignty. While my dad exposed us to nature, my mother kept us inside her castle. While the traveller explored life's challenges, the queen ensured her kingdom to be a place of complete conformity and loyalty under the dictum of maternal love/law.

_Using the puppet theatre window, I carry an iPad in my left hand screening a puppet film. In my right hand I carry the mermaid puppet. The puppet is sitting on the window._

This dialogue is played in the short puppet film:

Mother: You need a man.
Mermaid: What do you mean?
Mother: You are going away…on your own?
Mermaid: Yes, why not?
Mother: You can't travel to Canada alone. You need a man.
Mermaid: I can if I want.
Mother: There is no man at work who likes you?
Mermaid: I don't know.
Mother: Not even one!
Father: (Smokes in the corner).
Mermaid: Dad, please say something.

_I pull the iPad and the puppet back to the house. The third story plays._

The Third Story (recorded)

Soon I met the witch, who with her apparent wisdom and manipulative character, managed to lure me to accept her rules. The witch performed her tricks using the mermaid's naïve nature and her life long acceptance of not being good enough. In a moment of black magic, the witch presented me with a suitor, asked me to sign the contract, and in exchange took my voice, forever. The suitor was her son, who became my husband.

_The puppet and the iPad are back on the window for the next dialogue._

This dialogue is played in the puppet film:

Mother-in-law: (places her hand on my forehead) You really need to relax and focus more on your personal life?
Mermaid: Yeah… I think I should take a vacation.

Mother-in-law: I say the same thing to my son.

Mermaid: You have a son?

Mother-in-law: Yes. He is about your age.

Mother-in-law: (thinking) Hmm… Does your computer need repairs? My son can fix it for you…(winks).


Mother-in-law: (looks like she doesn't know what to say next) You know…your computer… maybe?

Mermaid: (trying to get the hint). Maybe…

Husband: (Appears in the back)

_I move the iPad and the mermaid puppet inside the house._

Scene Four:

_Inside the doll's house, I turn the house so the audience is facing the house's side with the rear screen. I am holding a small projector playing a film. The film is projected on the house's walls and roof, and then it is fixed on the rear screen surface._

Featuring my child and me, the film represents hope.

Scene Five:

_In a dark theatre, a light source inside the doll's house._

_Inside the doll's house, I turn the house so that the audience is facing the house's side with the shadow theatre. I put the grasshopper headpiece on my head and its shadow will be cast on the outside. The fourth story plays._
The Fourth Story (recorded)

Inside the doll's house, I found a secret passage. Although my husband demanded that I ask his permission to leave the house, I didn't understand permission. I did not understand being imprisoned in my own house. Therefore, I started sneaking outside the doll's house. One day, I took my child for a long walk, and when I came back I made sure to put the stroller back in the same place that it was in before, wiped the pedals, and left the room. Next morning, my secret was out; my husband found a grasshopper in the stroller.

*The sound of the grasshopper getting louder as the story proceeds.*

Scene Six:

*Inside the doll's house, the audience is still facing the house's side with the shadow theatre. The fifth story plays.*

The Fifth Story (recorded on a loop)

Become the house.

*I add spoken lines between every other recorded line to create a dialogue.*

Recorder: Become the house.

My voice: I locked that door forever.

Recorder: Become the house.

My voice: I told you my story again and again.

Recorder: Become the house.

My voice: This sadness won't go away.

Recorder: Become the house.
Me: Fly, leap, jump and scatter.

Recorder: Become the house.

I play the sound effect of Baba Yaga's voice mixed with the sound of falling bombs. I throw her chicken feathers out of the house; it feels like a chicken coop. I move within the house up and down stage with transmissions of my voice trying to be heard. I undo the thread that keeps the house together until the house is dismantled on the floor.

Act Three: Home in a Suitcase

I am out of the doll's house. A raft of life jackets are suspended down stage.

Scene One:

The house is flat on the floor. I start folding the house by walking on it from side to side. The house falls into the shape of a trail. A walk follows every fold on the dismantled house sounds of wailing.

Scene Two:

I move up stage and grab the suitcase from behind the curtains and I start packing the doll's house in the suitcase. Back to centre I wear a life jacket I keep in the suitcase. I advise the audience to watch their heads and untie the rope that holds the hanging raft of life jackets and make the pile rest between the audience's bodies.

Scene Three: The Exit

While a sound track is playing, I move towards the west exit door at the ShuBox. The audience is left alone.

THE END
APPENDIX C: *The Way Home: A Work In Progress*

Leave the abuse behind and go for the art. Three years ago, with that goal in mind, I started my project reflecting on years of displacement, migration and the challenge of navigating home. Inside this transitive background lies a story of a captive woman in an abused marriage. That woman is me. For my project I decided to bring into focus famous figures with multiple, complex, and contradictory experiences.

“Resistance to conventions,” was the common point between Nora in *A Doll's House*, Ariel in *The Little Mermaid* and Vasilisa in *Vasilisa The Beautiful*. Based on these three tales I have created a symbolic figure of resistance for many women who were held back from their own potential. I called it “my Nora.”

In writing my personal fairy tale I was engaged as a researcher and an author deciding on which stories were worth telling. Locked into a patriarchal way of seeing myself, I wanted to share my experiences with a wider audience. Responding inwards and outwards presented me with a personal emancipatory methodology that I tested during my performance by playing myself and fictionalizing my experiences entirely. In *The Way Home* installation performance I started to weave my stories into the human-sized doll's house as my Nora's physical habitus, or a wardrobe of an existing performing body representing different faces of Nora. Expanding Nora's frame to be Nora the refugee, homeless, displaced, relocated, abused, lost in prairies, mermaid, Baba Yaga, Vasilisa, grasshopper, and nomad. All these condensed images of myth and fairy tale metaphors were evoked through my personal vision of a female feminist subjectivity in a nomadic mode.
The performer can wear multiple performing bodies while the material body of the performer is organized around its own social structure of signification. My research indicated that ethnic women performers find difficulties in rendering their subjective experiences and cultural background into performance. I tested this in In *The Way Home* where the audience awareness of the unfamiliar-cultural connection to the country where I come from was clearly explained. I believe that my attempt to approach the audience with a mermaid tail and a map of Jordan in an iPad at the beginning of the performance was effective. I noticed that while the audience lined up far away from the barbed wire, my engagement with them and direct interaction made me feel closer. The mermaid's decision of crossing the barbed wire brought the audience even closer. The crossing over was a hybrid moment of positive contamination, reminding me of the Canadians welcoming refugees running from the United States. Again the mermaid united both sides, she was there with all her magic “a mermaid between two cultures”. This investigation into interculturalism and the modern way of viewing identity spaces brought me closer to home. Today I stand on this North American land gazing back at home. I have never felt closer to home as I feel now.

*The Way Home*: enabled me to combine all I can do as an artist! I wonder how effective that was? In the puppet show, I wanted to present the hand puppet as a witness during the time of the performance and a witness on what happened with me in the past. Growing up, I did not have a chance to state my opinions, so I wanted the puppet to play that role. During the performance, the live puppet upstaged the puppet film. The puppet show created confusion for the audience, should they look at the puppet film or at the
live puppet? If I would do this scene again, I would use the puppets as part of the live performance and re-write the dialogues for three puppets into two, in each act. The use of life jackets was inspired by the Syrian refugees imagery crossing the borders, which was also enhanced by the use of barbed wire and the searchlights. In addition, the audience who were cast as refugees were supposed to be presented with life jackets for a chance to save their lives. During the performance the life jackets upstaged my final exit. If I would re-do this act, I would hand life jackets across the border (barbed wire) just like I did with the macaroons. That would have created more engagement, especially since I had only 13 life jackets to give, so I would have left members of the audience unsaved. I don't have an answer as to why I thought the audience survival was more important than my revolutionary exit.

The cardboard houses were supposed to be representing the challenges I have faced during this personal experience. After my entrance, the set up of cardboard houses were rendered as set or decoration, with no reference to the houses to evoke those challenges. I abandoned the houses. How would I go about this again? Approaching an anamorphic image requires the viewer to adjust, which I noticed the audience doing while listening and watching my stories inside the doll's house. If I were to do this again I would incorporate the anamorphic images as part of the stories played inside the doll's house to enhance audience engagement with the stories.

In The Way Home, Baba Yaga was supposed to be an obstacle for my Nora to overcome. In the original story, Vasilisa found the light in Baba Yaga's hut. My attempt to use the witches, either Baba Yaga or Ursula, was to highlight my Nora's quest for
wisdom. During the performance, Baba Yaga was confused with the Wicked Witch of the West in the Wizard of Oz. If I were to repeat the performance I would clarify Baba Yaga's relationship with Vasilisa, either through a sound track, or portraying Baba Yaga's magical power in controlling the day and the night as part of the performance.

Through this feedback revision of the performance *The Way Home* I can foresee it's future in coming back to the basics. I would work with one image in mind, for example; “entrapment,” with a single woman prisoner in her own house. Looking back at the doll's house I would rethink its design and replace some of the existing sides of the house with plain house walls. I would still design it to be without a door and with one window, which was the puppet show during the performance. I would take the house out into the community and try to interact with the public hoping to explore a real communal engagement. So far, the doll's house remained in the theatre behind the barbed wire that did not invite the audience to look inside and see how it operates. Taking the doll's house out into the public will explore more physical contact with the people and the environment. This tactile engagement process will move the audience from the role of viewer to the role of doers. I hope to create an opportunity to share the operational framework of the performance through a close physical engagement with the doll's house and the artist in it.