

2012

Lilac tractors : a novel ; and, Critical essay: intersections among psychiatry, madness, sexuality and feminism in 'Lilac tractors'

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Lilac Tractors

A novel

&

Critical essay

Intersections among psychiatry, madness, sexuality and feminism in ‘Lilac Tractors’

A thesis submitted for PhD in writing, Faculty of Education and Arts

Edith Cowan University

23 November, 2012

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Abstract

This thesis comprises a novel, 'Lilac Tractors' and an essay, 'Intersections among psychiatry, madness, sexuality and feminism in 'Lilac Tractors''. The novel focuses on the relationship of a married couple, Gary, a fly-in, fly-out rig worker, and Sharon, a mature-age university student studying psychology. They live together in Perth's north at the turn of the twenty-first century, as the outer suburbs are beginning to sprawl. Gary has Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Sharon finds that her growing knowledge of the condition increases her annoyance with him, rather than her compassion. But mostly she is unhappy because Gary is too gentle and the relationship doesn't provide the power differentiation she requires to feel sexually fulfilled. The novel explores the intersection between his psychiatric condition and their domestic lives while also investigating intergenerational relationships of mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, and complicated forms of inheritance.

Various themes are explored in the novel, including the overarching idea that, in patriarchal societies, there is a common tendency towards control of that which is different or perceived as threatening: women, the mentally ill and the land. This is explored through the juxtaposition of masochistic sexual desire, psychosurgical treatment and the tractors that clear the land next door to Sharon and Gary's house. The tractors provide a visual reminder of one way that humankind controls the environment.

The critical essay discusses the inspiration for and genesis of 'Lilac Tractors', which was developed first as a film script and progressed through many versions to become a novel. I discuss my stylistic choices and why I chose to write a work of general fiction that draws on and also violates some key conventions of 'chick lit'. The essay also refers to relevant feminist theory and criticism to support a discussion on pornography and female sexuality, providing an explanation and rationale for the novel's depiction of a masochistic relationship. 'Lilac Tractors' depicts 'aberrant sexuality' within a conventional suburban milieu, which some readers may find challenging or even

troubling; however, fictional treatments of this kind are important and might potentially open space for frank and serious examination of power in relation to sexual desire.

A key concern of the novel is psychiatry. The essay also discusses two aspects of psychiatry, with a focus in particular on the history and practice of psychosurgery and diagnostic and literary depictions of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- i. incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education
- ii contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis; or
- iii contain defamatory materials.

Signed _____ Anna Bennetts

Date _____

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to my supervisor Dr Ffion Murphy for her sensitivity, infinite patience and detailed feedback. Thanks also to Associate Professor Richard Rossiter for providing comments on the first draft of the novel.

I am extremely grateful to Edith Cowan University for this opportunity and for providing me with a scholarship. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Drug and Alcohol Office, in particular, Sue Helfgott, for being a great friend and enabling a really supportive work environment.

For information that enabled me to write Darlene's stroke and hospital scenes I would like to thank Dr Jay Bruce.

Thanks also to Dr Zbigniew Kotowicz and Dr Jock McLaren who shared inspirational discussions and emails with me at the start of this process, and Dr Richard White, who recently helped clear up some information about psychosurgery in Australia.

Thanks to James Cron who provided one of the initial stories and other inspiration for 'Lilac Tractors'. Thank you to Dan Costello and Summer Williams for their support throughout my studies. Many thanks to Steve Havercroft. Heartfelt thanks to my sister, Lydia Bennetts, and champions/friends, Richard Hyde and Nikki Jecks for their generous reading of my work.

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Intersections among psychiatry,
madness, sexuality and feminism in
'Lilac Tractors'

Introduction

‘Lilac Tractors’ was inspired by two stories I was told a number of years ago. A friend who worked on oilrigs in the United States told me about a workmate who had Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). The dirty, muddy work on the rig was difficult for this man as he had to wash his hands constantly. Another friend spoke about his mother, who had suffered from OCD and had been treated with psychosurgery¹ in the UK in the 1960s. I was appalled; surely psychosurgery was restricted to horror and science fiction movies, surely it had not occurred in my lifetime. These stories coalesced in my imagination when several months later I saw a lilac-coloured tractor on the side of a road near my childhood home in the northern suburbs of Perth, Western Australia. How incongruous this metal machine seemed, built to crush nature and dominate the land yet painted in a colour that is considered feminine and even representative of feminism.

As a young woman, I read *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (Kesey, 1962) and *Will There Really be a Morning?* (Farmer, 1974), both of which feature psychosurgery, and saw films based on these works. But still, I could not fathom that lobotomies were performed during my lifetime, and that some who had endured them were still living. However, lobotomy was a standard treatment for OCD in the 1950s in England and America, and psychosurgery was still being performed in Australia and other Western countries well into the 1970s. Furthermore, psychosurgery, albeit a modernised tightly controlled version, is today on the increase (Kondziolka, 2007; Kotowicz, 2005). Controls include bodies which oversee psychosurgical decisions, such as the Psychosurgical Review Board in Victoria. It is understood that today these are procedures of ‘last resort’ chosen by a patient when their condition is unresponsive to less invasive treatment.

¹ For the purpose of this essay I will restrict my use of terminology to the most commonly used words in the psychiatric literature. *Psychosurgery* is the generic name for brain surgery that aims to modify the person’s behaviour or emotions and is conducted in the absence of any organic problem, such as a tumour. This term was coined by Egas Moniz (Kotowicz, 2005) a neurologist considered in the literature to be the forefather of psychosurgery. The terms *lobotomy* and *leucotomy* refer to different forms of psychosurgery.

Given that I completed an undergraduate psychology degree and had worked in a psychiatric drop-in centre my lack of knowledge about psychosurgery was surprising. Surely I should have known? Since then I have become aware that there is often a disjunction between public perception and psychiatric reality. For example, Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) or ‘shock treatment’ is still commonly used in psychiatric hospitals to treat depression (Andreasen, 2001; Kaplan & Sadock, 2007; Pressman, 1998), but ‘many regard it as an outdated, barbaric treatment no longer in use’ (Worth, 2012). Indeed, until I commenced research for this thesis I had no idea that psychosurgery was still being performed in the twenty-first century.

My interest in all things psychiatric deepened during the 1990s when I worked as a psychologist. I had a series of formative experiences; the most notable was working in the detoxification unit of an old psychiatric hospital in Sydney’s Western suburbs. I was shocked and saddened at the way patients were treated by staff. Doctors and nurses misused their power, and those patients they found confronting, because they were too angry or too clever, would be pulled back into line. In case review meetings these often vulnerable and damaged people, for whom we were supposed to be caring, were, at times, character assassinated because they did not fulfil the staff’s expectations. But expecting patients to be polite, respectful and submissive at all times seemed unreasonable given that they were often in physical as well as emotional pain. Pain relief medication and gifts from families were sometimes withheld from patients who did not conform. It seemed the only thing that had changed from the days of *Will There Really be a Morning* in the fifties and the fictional yet believable *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* in the sixties was that abuse of power by medical staff was more subtle. When I confronted colleagues with my concerns I, like the ‘difficult’ patients, became vilified.

These experiences fed my interest in psychiatry, helped generate ‘Lilac Tractors’ and motivate my fictional exploration for this thesis. In this essay, I explore some intersections among psychiatry, madness, sexuality and feminism. ‘Lilac Tractors’ required research in a number of areas including psychosurgery and the history of psychiatry, feminism, women’s sexuality and its representation, OCD, the treatment of

strokes and life and work on oilrigs, not all of which can be covered in this essay. To help inform scenes on the oilrig, I consulted friends who had worked on oilrigs, watched audio-visual material and read a number of books, which are listed in extended bibliography. In order to ensure Darlene's stroke and medical treatment were depicted accurately I conducted web research and also consulted with my brother-in-law's sister, Dr Jay Bruce, who works as an anaesthesiologist at Fremantle Hospital. These areas of research are not covered further in this essay.

The essay has three parts. The first explores the literary background of the novel 'Lilac Tractors.' I discuss some of my choices including why I set it in the year 2000 and why I chose to write from both a female and male point of view. My choice of place, the northern suburbs of Perth, will also be discussed. I will explain why the novel includes excerpts of the erotic Rock Ravel stories Sharon is reading. The final part of Chapter One discusses mise-en-abyme generally and Rock Ravel specifically, and also discusses use of a similar device by Margaret Atwood in her novel, *Lady Oracle* which was published in 1976. I discuss the way I have used Rock Ravel excerpts to suggest the perils of some types of pornographic literature. In addition I explain how the form of Rock Ravel, a detective pulp, harks back to the history of literary censorship in Australia.

The second part of the essay draws on feminist theory to provide rationale for why I explore aspects of female sexuality in 'Lilac Tractors'. I discuss classical feminism, second wave feminism and the current Third Wave (Selden, Widdowson, & Brooker, 2005). I focus on ideas that are most relevant to my work, including the so-called pornographic generations posited by Naomi Wolf (1990). The grounds for Sharon's masochistic behaviour are discussed by reference to some of the ideas of diverse feminist thinkers including Gail Dines, Sheila Jeffreys and Sandra Bartky. I discuss some of the difficulties and dangers of exploring aberrant female sexuality and some conflicting responses to two exemplary novels, *Looking for Mr Goodbar* by Judith Rossner (1975) and *In the Cut* by Susannah Moore (1995).

Finally, the history of psychiatry with an emphasis on psychosurgery is explored. When researching lobotomy for 'Lilac Tractors' I became intrigued by this grisly chapter in the history of psychiatry. I discuss some fictional depictions of psychiatry and specifically lobotomy, primarily Ken Kesey's (1962) *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and Marge Piercy's (1976) *Woman on the Edge of Time*. Finally I discuss OCD and suggest that drawing on my professional experience as a psychologist and counsellor assisted me to write an accurate portrayal of OCD for my protagonist, Gary.

The novel: Background and stylistic considerations

The first incarnation of ‘Lilac Tractors’ was a film script, which featured Gary, a rigger with OCD who must wash his hands frequently. A character whose internal conflict manifests outwardly and visually is useful and an oilrig provides a compelling setting. The screenplay used the oilrig as a metaphor for Australia conceived as a male-dominated, geographically and emotionally isolated island.

I have experience as a playwright and to a lesser extent, a screenwriter. ‘Shift’ a full-length play adapted for film and radio,² was inspired by my work as a psychologist, and it explores some similar territory to ‘Lilac Tractors.’ In ‘Shift’ the fragile balance of a dysfunctional relationship between a doctor and nurse who work together on night shift in a psychiatric hospital becomes unstuck when a mysterious and mute catatonic patient is admitted to their ward. ‘Shift’ explores the question of whether health care can ever be truly objective or scientific and whether personal relationships between staff can affect patient care. It addresses the medical model suggesting that when it comes to the mentally ill, this model often seems at odds with patient care.

Another theatrical study, a one-act play, ‘Delusion of Doubt’ explores OCD in some depth. OCD manifests as a character, a monster on the stage which shadows the main character, at times chasing him, at times copying him but always mocking him and making him doubt himself. This was inspired by my research around different treatments for OCD. One treatment for children is to talk about the illness as a monster. In 2009, ‘Delusion of Doubt’ was selected for performance as part of Lost Theatre’s One Act Festival at the New End Theatre in Hampstead, London. It is slated to be performed in the Blue Room Theatre in Perth as part of the Fringe World Festival in 2013.

After developing the draft screenplay ‘Lilac Tractors’ in 2002, I embarked on a script development process with a Perth producer who was intrigued by the story but felt it was

² Radio adaptation of ‘Shift’ won the Asia Pacific regional prize in the BBC World Service International Radio play competition in 2009.

too complex for film and should be simplified. The producer was most interested in the story of Gary's wife, Sharon, who undertakes a masochistic sexual journey, recommending that we cut the story of Gary's mother, Darlene, and her lobotomy. However, Gary's experience of OCD, Darlene's lobotomy and Sharon's sexual misadventures highlight parallels between the treatment of mentally ill women, the mentally ill and women generally. I needed to find a more appropriate medium for the story. Thus 'Lilac Tractors' the novel was born.

However writing a novel was very different to writing scripts. As mentioned I have written a number of scripts and also, holding degrees in psychology and public health, I have worked as a behavioural scientist and have written a number of research papers. One of the problems that I encountered when writing the novel was the use of punctuation. In my scripts I use punctuation very sparingly, feeling it is the role of the reader or actor to decide how characters speak. Apart from this problem with punctuation I also tended to over write, particularly description. This was perhaps due to having written a number of scientific papers in which every small detail needs to be explained. Or it could be as a consequence of writing scripts in which screen and/or stage direction serves a functional, as well as a creative process. This is probably compounded by the fact that I have been the director of most of my scripts and therefore much of this stage or screen direction is solely functional. I struggled with knowing how much description to include in 'Lilac Tractors' and much of the re-drafting process, particularly as the entire novel was complete, focussed on paring back the description. In the end I settled on a minimalist style, which has been described as 'filmic' and fits with some of my themes. Some characters, particularly Sharon, experience isolation and emptiness. Both Sharon and Gary have little self-awareness or language to theorise and explain themselves. In this way, my economical way of telling the story seemed best suited to characterisation and subject matter.

Form and genre

The novel form enabled me to explore the psychological complexity of my characters. Certain restrictions that exist when writing a script do not apply when writing a novel. Revealing a character's thoughts on screen is difficult unless a screenwriter wishes to use the voice-over technique, which is often discouraged by screenwriting teachers. For example, Robert McKee, who is played by the actor Brian Cox in the film "Adaptation", says, 'God help you if you use voice-over in your work, my friends. God help you. That's flaccid, sloppy writing. Any idiot can write a voice-over narration to explain the thoughts of a character' (Jonze, 2002). Although there is some irony in this statement and voice over is often used effectively in film, writers are encouraged to use other means to show or imply the thoughts of characters. Moreover, an emerging writer would find it difficult to get funding for a film that relies heavily on voice over.

In a stage-play, the equivalent of voice-over is an internal monologue. While in Shakespearean times these were expected, perhaps the ubiquitousness of film and television make modern theatre audiences less likely to accept internal monologues, particularly in realistic plays. While this style of writing may appeal to some playwrights, I am not usually drawn to plays with monologues and do not tend to write them.

In *Feminism is for Everybody*, bell hooks (2000) discusses the need for texts with feminist messages to be written in a range of styles and formats so that feminism can be understood and hopefully embraced by the masses. In her review of American feminist theory, Ann Cacoullos (2001) outlines various arguments suggesting that feminism, in its current forms, has become both too theoretical and too radical for the mainstream media. Science fiction writer Joanna Russ writes that, 'far too much recent academic feminist theory has totally left behind any concern with anyone's real experience and consists largely of people theorizing from other people's theories about yet more theory' (Russ, 1998, p. 435). It is felt that 'the academy can insulate feminist ideas from the wider popular culture and consciousness thus limiting the practical impact of feminism on institutions of power' (Cacoullos, 2001, p. 74). I therefore wanted to write general or

‘mainstream’ fiction that explores feminist questions and can be described broadly as ‘women’s fiction’.

Chick lit is a category of mainstream women’s fiction. Mainstream women’s fiction and chick lit novels are usually written by women for women. They often have similar themes—love, relationships, marriage, fidelity, work and friendship. ‘Lilac Tractors’ uses some of the conventions of the chick lit genre but differs in important ways. To clarify I will consider two chick lit novels, *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (Fielding, 1996) and *Jemima J.* (Green, 1999) in relation to ‘Lilac Tractors’.

Most chick lit novels depict the lives of white middle class female protagonists. Sharon in ‘Lilac Tractors’ is 29, white and middle class, though from a working class background, and much of the novel is told from her point of view. Bridget Jones is 33, Jemima J. is 28. Both *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and the majority of *Jemima J.* are told from the female protagonist’s point of view. Chick lit novels often depict friendships among women set in shops, cafes and bars: ‘Lilac Tractors’ shows Sharon with her friends Jeanie and Mandy shopping, in cafes and in bars. In *Bridget Jones’s Diary* key scenes between Bridget and her closest friends take place in the bar/café Café Rouge (Fielding, 1996, pp. 19-22, 68) or department store cafes (p. 32). Similarly Jemima and her friends spend time in restaurants (Green, 1999, pp. 254-264; 282-284), cafes (pp. 196-200) and bars (Green, 1999, pp. 93-101).

Sharon’s concerns in ‘Lilac Tractors’ are with her appearance, sexual experiences and consumption, mirroring those of chick lit protagonists (P. Butler & Desai, 2008). Bridget Jones’s concern with her appearance, particularly her body image, borders on the obsessive; at the start of every day (and chapter) she states her weight, how many cigarettes she has smoked and how much alcohol she has consumed. Often, after stating her current weight, Bridget will include some self-hating commentary such as, ‘repulsive’ (p. 30) or ‘unexpectedly repulsive notion: never before faced reality of lard splurging from bottom and thighs under skin’ (p. 57). After inflicting a particularly painful beauty regimen upon herself, Bridget explains:

Wise people will say Daniel should like me just as I am, but I am a child of Cosmopolitan culture, have been traumatized by supermodels and too many quizzes and know that neither my personality nor my body is up to scratch if left to its own devices. (p. 59)

Jemima J. depicts Jemima's transformation from an isolated, obese young woman addicted to food into JJ: svelte, attractive and confident. It has been argued that a leitmotif of chick lit is women's obsession with their imperfect bodies (Gill & Herdiekerhoff, 2006). This is also true of 'Lilac Tractors'. Sharon is preoccupied with her looks and Mandy is obsessed by her weight. However, I've endeavoured in 'Lilac Tractors' to present this differently so that the treatment is more serious and critical of this preoccupation as opposed to the way it is usually presented in chick lit, which is 'often distinguished by its humour—wisecracking characters or ridiculous situations' (Vnuk, 2005, p. 1). As Sharon becomes more involved with Dion she becomes more concerned with the way she looks, eventually feeling as though she is nothing more than her body: 'She can't decide if she's beautiful or disgusting. She tries to imagine how he sees her. She feels that's all there is now, nothing else matters' (LT, p. 140).

The novel's title, 'Lilac Tractors' could even conjure images of chick lit's 'clearly marked jacket designs (day-glo or pastel, with cartoon style illustrations)' (Gill & Herdiekerhoff, 2006, p. 488). Gill and Herdiekerhoff (2006) find that despite superficial differences, many themes found in traditional romance novels are mirrored by chick lit so that constructions of masculinity, femininity and heterosexual relationships are pervasive despite significant cultural changes, including an increase in same sex unions, single person households and divorce. In both romance and chick lit there seems to be an idealisation of heterosexual love which includes a happy ending, always monogamy, often marriage. In *Jemima J.* when Jemima decides to marry her love interest, Ben, not only do they live happily ever after but also she fulfils her desire to become a magazine journalist. Although there is a wedding in 'Lilac Tractors', Mandy's, it is not idyllic and, notably, takes place at Heathcote Point, the site of a former psychiatric hospital in which

Darlene recuperated after her lobotomy. Meanwhile Sharon, the novel's protagonist, separates from her husband and remains ambivalent about this. Like most chick lit novels, 'Lilac Tractors' focuses on love relationships. However, 'Lilac Tractors' breaches most romance conventions.

Women's sexuality is dealt with differently in 'Lilac Tractors' than in chick lit. Unlike the traditional romance genre with its innocent and passive protagonists, which has been dismissed by feminists according to Gill & Herdiekerhoff (2006), many liberal feminists applaud chick lit. Camille Paglia, for example, described the television series *Sex and the City* (Star, 1998), which is thought to present a chick lit sensibility, as a victory for 'the huge wing of us pro-sex feminists' (cited in Maddox, 2004). However, despite their apparent sexual agency, many chick lit protagonists are looking for true love and can only enjoy sex when it takes place with their hero. Jemima for example, 'has never really enjoyed sex, has never tasted the pleasures of making love' (Green, 1999, p. 18). However, later in the novel when she loses weight and has sex with Ben it is akin to a religious experience:

I know because I've never dreamt that love-making could be so passionate, and yet so tender. I know because no one has ever cupped my face and looked deep in my eyes, and whispered how wonderful I am while moving gently inside me. (Green, 1999, p. 358)

Gill and Herdiekerhoff (2006) refer to this as being 're-virginised', or returning to an emotionally virginal state, in which the protagonists enjoy sex fully. Thus, the codes of romance are reinstated within a milieu of greater sexual freedom for women or 'through the back door' (p. 494). In chick lit, contradictory discourses of sexual freedom, liberation and pleasure seeking coexist with the notion that 'married heterosexual monogamy more truly captures women's real desires' (p. 500). I did not seek to perpetuate either discourse in 'Lilac Tractors'. Marriage, for Sharon, is no longer satisfying and this, together with her desire for sexual liberation, leads her to Dion, who drives the tractor in the housing development

next to her home. Sharon's sexual encounters with Dion, although compelling and exciting initially, are often painful and unsatisfying. 'She closes her eyes; helpless. He lifts her legs around his neck but the angle isn't right; smarting pain each time he thrusts into her.' (LT, p. 100).

According to Gill and Herdiekerhoff chick lit expresses a post-feminist sensibility which:

entirely evacuates the space of social and cultural influence and avoids all the interesting and difficult questions about how socially constructed ideals of beauty are made our own. It completely eschews any discussion of power, and has no language, besides that of individual free choice, with which to discuss women's lives. (p. 500)

Throughout 'Lilac Tractors' I have tried to indicate that Sharon and the other female characters are not operating in a social vacuum that fails to account for the legacy of women's oppression and abuse and the continuation of this oppression into the twenty-first century, albeit in different and more confusing forms, including risk of self-destructive behaviours such as eating disorders and cosmetic surgery, matters I discuss further in Chapter 2. Portrayal and discussion of sexual experiences of the kind depicted in 'Lilac Tractors' would not normally be found in chick lit as 'frustrated desires of heterosexual relationships—including those that relate to sexual intercourse—are rendered invisible [through the chick lit discourse] that one day my prince will come' (Gill & Herdiekerhoff, 2006, p. 500).

My Generation

'Lilac Tractors' is set twelve years ago in 2000. At one time I considered using a present-day setting but historical veracity prevented me from doing so. Although I know that psychosurgery was conducted in Sydney at least until 1977 (Kiloh, 1977), it has been very difficult to get information on where and when psychosurgery was performed in Western Australia. Although one 1992 source cites a WA ban on psychosurgery for the

previous twenty years (Hay & Sachdev, 1992), I do know leucotomies were conducted at Royal Perth Hospital until 1974 at least (N.J. McLaren, personal communication, February 8, 2008). Despite the freedoms fiction allows I did not want to contribute to misunderstandings about psychiatric treatments.

The novel explores two generations, my own and my parents', thus spanning from about 1940 to 2000. From the late sixties to the early eighties the status of women in Australia lagged behind the rest of the Western world (Dixson, 1976; Schaffer, 1988; Summers, 1975). In the third edition of *The Real Matilda: Women and Identity in Australia 1788 to the Present*, Miriam Dixson discusses the 'hostility' towards women that has pervaded the Australian ethos (p. 22). She cites women's paucity of power and status, the lack of consideration of women in historical studies and a literary tradition dominated by men, which produces no stories or poems about love, but, rather, a sense of loneliness and an awkwardness about the flesh of women (pp. 32-33).

In the early 1970s, gender roles were still clearly demarcated in Australia. Many women were not welcomed in various professions and jobs and were thus financially dependent on men. Because men were out working many children grew up feeling their fathers were absent even though their parents were not divorced. In 'Lilac Tractors' the absence of Sharon's father, Geoff, during much of her adolescence is symbolic of the absent male of this generation. Moreover, as suggested by 'Lilac Tractors' it was a period in which marriage breakdown could be financially devastating:

[Sharon's] mum told her that when she and her dad married, the marriage bar was only just in the process of being lifted so Pam had to give up her job in the public service. Geoff resented her dependence and her mum felt humiliated having to beg him for every cent when they were together and then, after he left, not only did she have a mortgage to pay on her own but she was also unemployable, having been out of the work-force for so long. Sharon thinks that's probably why her mum stayed in her hated cleaner's

job for so long. A part of Pam is terrified she'll sink back into poverty.

(LT, p. 28)

The marriage bar meant women were forced to resign as permanent employees upon marriage. In 1951 Australia was one of only five countries, out of a total of 44 sampled, that retained the marriage bar (Dixson, 1976). In 1962, no industrialised nation subjected married women to as many bars against employment or job promotion as did Australia (Taft, 1962). The marriage bar remained in place until 1966 and its repercussions were felt long after this time (Australian Public Service Commission, 2006). During this time many women were 'forced to remain in domestic situations that they would prefer to leave simply because they [had] no ready cash and no financial resources to draw upon to enable them to find new accommodation' (Summers, 1975, p. 168). A woman like Pam would have suffered financially and socially, as single women were seen as pariahs, 'derisively [labelled] and assumed to lead a dreary sexless unfulfilled life' (p. 492).

In the introduction to her revised second edition of *Damned Whores and God's Police*, Anne Summers notes that, although Australian women's rights had improved during the intervening twenty years that, in the mid-nineties, 'many young women are confronting a different set of pressures from those their mothers experienced. They are growing up in a distressingly confusing world to which they are reacting in almost inexplicably self-destructive ways' (p. 28). She expresses confusion as to the source of women's low self-esteem. In *Feminism is for Everybody*, bell hooks refers to the 'enemy within' (2000, p. 14) or women's internalised sexism, arguing that many women are socialised as female through patriarchal thinking and, therefore, women can be just as sexist as men. Given the persistence of women's oppression in Australia, passionately outlined by Summers, I find her confusion about the source of young women's low self-esteem curious. Even if equality had become a reality, which it has not, how could women of the following generation, given the milieu she describes, not have internalised misogyny or sexism to some degree? 'Lilac Tractors' explores the legacy of women's oppression, which manifests in women's sexuality, self-esteem and body image.

Choice of Setting: Perth, Western Australia

Miriam Dixson (1976) posits several reasons for why the status of Australian women lagged behind the rest of the Western world until the 1970s; for example, at the turn of the twentieth century the women's movement, which was gaining ground in British middle and upper classes, was practically non-existent amongst its working class, from which the bulk of Australian immigrants were drawn. She suggests that feelings of disempowerment among working class men resulted in a desire to oppress women. Other factors at play include the imprinting of Victorian prudery onto Australian society, resulting in 'a sense of awkwardness or fear about the flesh of women' (p. 32), and the high ratio of men to women, resulting in women becoming objects of desire and hatred. In 1800, men made up 80 per cent of the Australian population over 12 years of age, and in 1861 there were still 38 per cent more males than females (Sullivan, 1997, p. 17).

In *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition*, Kay Schaffer (1988) proposes less visible reasons for Australia's pervasive misogyny that are particularly pertinent to 'Lilac Tractors'. Schaffer discusses the search for an Australian national identity and the emergence of an 'Australian tradition' (as coined by literary critic AA Phillips) which became inextricably bound to a 'fervent celebration of robust nationalism' (Phillips cited in Schaffer, 1988, p. 16) promoted by the literature of the 1890s. In this formative literature, epitomised by Henry Lawson and others published in the *Bulletin*, she finds a voice asserting its difference from Britain through an image of 'bushman-as-hero' (p. 22), a man with egalitarian values and an ethos of mateship. Man is pitted against the bush and the bush is typically imagined as a feminine landscape (Schaffer, 1988, p. 4):

The metaphor calls to our attention a common construction of the land as mother earth within a Western European discourse. But in Australia the fantasy of the land as mother is one which is particularly harsh, relentless and unforgiving. Although desired within a framework of imperial and colonial ideologies as an object to be possessed, conquered and tamed, the

Australian landscape in the nationalist tradition is also a loathed and feared plain of exile which threatens madness and defeat. And woman, metaphorically, resides here. (pp. 22-23)

'Lilac Tractors' attempts to draw a parallel between the land and woman by using the tractor as leitmotif:

The tractors and cranes have been sitting there for weeks it seems, idle creatures, prehistoric. Sharon looks out the window at the empty plots of land next door. She wonders when the work will resume, when the groaning of heavy machinery will again form the soundtrack of their days. (LT, p. 5)

In "Notes on Power Politics", Margaret Atwood (1973) states that 'man must conquer. He must conquer other men, women or nature itself' (p. 7). In 'Lilac Tractors' this flattening and homogenising of the land parallels Sharon's sexuality which has been formed, in part, by her exposure to pornography at a young age. In the next chapter I will discuss in detail how pornography can be viewed as limiting and even damaging in the way it may affect women's sexual preferences and identities. In a recent study, *Pornland: How Porn has Hijacked our Sexuality*, Gail Dines (2010) writes of her concern that porn is actually being encoded into the sexual identities of young boys such that 'an authentic sexuality—one that develops organically is replaced by a generic porn sexuality limited in creativity and lacking any sense of love, respect or connection to another human being' (p. xi). That porn is currently so prolific and easily accessed by younger boys is of particular concern. Dines suggests that women are not consumers of porn; however, some Australian researchers suggest that around 17 per cent of consumers of porn are women (McKee, Albury, & Lumby, 2008).

Pornographic magazines and videos are everywhere on the oilrig where Gary works. Gary, unlike other men on the rig, is not interested in porn. In the dogbox, Gary helps Tim drill a hole in the earth so that Tim can relax and look at a pornographic magazine

featuring Candy 'holding her surgically enhanced breasts with some difficulty in one hand' (p. 94). This coupling of earth drilling with pornography is true-to-life; during the time this novel was set, porn was prolific on male-dominated oilrigs (J. Cron, personal communication, August 31, 2011) but it also helps suggest a parallel between sexual domination of women and mastery of the land.

In contradistinction to traditional Australian literature discussed by Schaffer (1988) 'Lilac Tractors' depicts patriarchal power as loathsome, rather than women or the land. Patriarchal power is exerted over women's minds as well as their sexuality. In the 1970s patriarchal culture enables Darlene's husband, Frank, and her psychiatrist to decide she should have psychosurgery, which halts her tendency to defy conventional restrictions and essentially kills her spirit.

This desire to normalise Darlene parallels the work of tractors:

She looks at the way the bush, once intricately tangled and ruggedly beautiful is now crushed away to make room for all these nondescript plots of yellow sand. Small limestone walls order and demarcate each quarter acre block of land, identical plots as far as the eye can see. She thinks of him bearing down on her. That screaming girl chained to the wall and then, Darlene. (LT, p. 195)

In 'Lilac Tractors' I explore the widely held view that sexism is not good for women or men. The leucotomy has tragic consequences for Darlene, and also for Frank and Gary. According to Gary's uncle, Eddie, Frank's life consists of, 'Not much. Goes to the Guildford Arms. Backs the ponies. Not much' (p. 50). Later, in chapters 61 and 63, Gary witnesses the loneliness and regret of his estranged father. As Ronald Sampson asserts, 'To the extent that we develop our capacity for power we weaken our capacity for love' (1966, pp. 2-3). 'Lilac Tractors' explores gender roles and relations, sexuality and the treatment of people with mental illness to comment on love and compassion and how various forms of power can undermine it.

Northern suburbs

The northern suburbs of Perth make a fascinating case study. During the 1990s, WA was on the brink of a resources boom that the state continues to experience. It is estimated that Perth will grow at a rate of 43 per cent from 2005 to 2021, which is the fastest growth of any Australian city at any time (Maley, 2008). There are few places where evidence of this boom is more visible than the northern suburbs of Perth where in ‘Lilac Tractors’ ‘(t)he suburban sprawl northward seems endless’ (LT, p. 5). Sharon recognises this has changed dramatically in her lifetime:

As a young girl growing up in Wanneroo, then the northern most suburb of Perth, it had seemed like the end of the earth. Beyond, only bush, pine forests, and the occasional roadhouse...She was relieved when suburbs began to emerge beyond Wanneroo, including Clarkson, where she and Gary bought cheap land and built their new home. (LT, p. 5)

Australia has variously been described as ‘a commonwealth of suburban dwellers’ (Stevenson, 1999, p. 213) and the world’s ‘first suburban nation’ (Horne, 1964, p. 28), with 70 per cent of Australians living in city centres and the majority of these living in suburbs (Gerster, 1990; Newton, 1999; Stevenson, 1999). Perth’s north, with its fast-track suburbanisation is, therefore, a microcosm of modern Australia. Surprisingly, it has been suggested that little has been written about the places where most Australians live, which has been thought to indicate that ‘ordinary Australians’ are ignored and ridiculed by writers (Gerster, 1990; Glass, 1994). This has changed recently with a number of contemporary novels set in Australian suburbs, most notably *The Slap* (Tsiolkas, 2008). Nevertheless, Newton (1999) asserts that suburbia had, until the 1990s, negative connotations among Australian intellectuals. Traditional Australian literature exalted the bush over the city and more modern works exalt both bush and city over the suburbs (Gerster, 1990). When it is written about, suburbia has often been parodied (Gerster, 1990; Newton, 1999; Stevenson, 1999) or even seen as a place of death (Esson, 1973; Gerster, 1990). Some of the most famous parodies have appeared on screen, including the

satire of Dame Edna Everage, and more recently, Kath and Kim. The anti-suburban sentiment that has pervaded Australian drama and fiction may be partly due to Boyd's (1952) idea that improvement consisted of changing nature, destroying native foliage and cultivating disciplined hedges. Drawing a parallel between suburbanisation and Darlene's lobotomy is in line with other works that have viewed the suburb as a place of limitation and death (Esson, 1973; Gerster, 1990).

Meanwhile, the inner city is often celebrated in Australian fiction for its cultural energy and diversity. This is not the case in 'Lilac Tractors', at least not for Gary who sees the city unfavourably:

In Highgate the city looks fetid. A hooker stands on a street corner, shoeless, moving from foot to foot, trying to avoid the urban detritus and broken beer bottles strewn from a nearby pub. Rubbish spills out of a mini-skip and graffiti—*Open your eyes, we're all being screwed*—is scrawled on a wall in blood coloured paint. It's strange but when he and Sharon lived here he didn't see it like this. When you are a part of something, it's hard to see it clearly. (LT, p.155)

Sharon feels ambivalent; she is relieved that the suburbs are growing as she 'hadn't liked the nearness of the bush and the pine forests, where teens went to suicide and serial killers to bury their prey' (LT, p. 5). Nevertheless, she experiences an awareness of what Flew (2011) might refer to as 'pacification by cappuccino' in the shopping mall:

With its puce carpet, upholstered chairs and white laminate tables, the cafe could be replaced by any of those in suburban shopping centres. Crowds of lunch-breaking workers and shoppers include older women wearing pastel pinks and blues, their necks and hands adorned with precious stones in gold. The younger women have longer hair and wear bold colours paired with black. Sharon realises that her hoop earrings are worn by Mandy, along with three other women. This is what I have to look forward

to, she thinks, eternity ring, ham and cheese sandwiches and homogenised hair do. (LT, p. 102)

Sharon's fear of the bush is in part due to her isolation, as Gary works away and they live on the edge of a new housing development: '(t)he burgeoning suburb surrounds her like futuristic ruins' (p. 118). Where they live is not yet a fully-fledged suburb. Stevenson (1999) suggests that the suburb has always been ambiguous, as it is a 'liminal' or shadow space, neither bush nor city. The north of Perth is replete with these temporary shadow spaces and has been for some time as the suburbs have expanded. Communities are fragmented by mine and rig workers following on-again-off-again rosters. In 'Lilac Tractors' I wished to explore this shadowland between the bush and suburb.

Much has been written about the suburban dream in Australia and the desire for open spaces and blocks of land, which has been said to represent a desire for success and security. However, it is thought that this way of living is achieved at great cost to the environment and may no longer be sustainable (Jones, 2010). Furthermore, hikes in property prices as well as increasing population densities in the urban centres may mark the end of the suburban dream ("Suburban Dream", 2011). For Gary the emptiness of this dream becomes obvious as their marriage breaks down, while for Sharon this emptiness is explicit throughout the novel:

Instead there is the need for busyness and company. And now this new sense of feeling cheated. The house is perfect. Everything in the kitchen is bright and shiny. The fridge is enormous, pours out filtered water and makes ice. The furniture is chic, matched and modern. Everything is just so, everything she had wanted, but the feeling [of emptiness] is still there. (LT, p. 5)

Male and Female Voices

Before I started writing 'Lilac Tractors' I spent some time considering narrative perspective. I decided to use third person omniscient narration which is considered by Macris (2002) the best form for the psychological novel. I decided to focalise this third person narrative, which, in summary, allows the integration of a protagonist's thoughts, feelings and sensations, while avoiding the limitations of a first person narrative. These include a limiting of perceptions. The narrator is not the character, yet has access to their important thoughts and feelings. This perspective provided greater freedom to explore the thoughts and feelings of the characters while also reporting their actions.

As I wished to explore gender-related themes such as sexuality, I felt that writing from one character's perspective and one gender, would be limiting. So, while 'Lilac Tractors' is written in third person omniscient, it uses variable perspectives, switching from Sharon's to Gary's. Macris (2002) discusses the dangers of shifting from one character's point of view to another, for when this is done within chapters it can be confusing. He also writes of the need to set up rules for changing from one point of view to another and to stick to them. While I chose to alternate between Sharon's and Gary's points of view by chapters of varying lengths, I break this rule in Chapter 2, and shift point of view within the chapter. This was necessary as I wanted to use this scene of the barbecue, a pervasive cultural symbol of Australia (Philips & Smith, 2010), to depict some of the differences between the way men and women communicate (Tannen, 1990).

Tannen observed a number of conversations and concluded that men use conversation as a way to confirm independence and promote status, while females tend to use conversation to negotiate intimacy. This concurs with my own observations. While Gary stands outside cooking the meat, Uncle Eddie berates him for drinking a 'shiel's drink' (p. 17) and for being an 'offshore pussy' (p. 16). I wanted to juxtapose this one-upmanship with Sharon's interaction in the kitchen in which Gary's Aunt Marilyn tells Sharon how brave and clever she must be for going back to university as a mature-age student (p. 16). I believe I was able to avoid the confusion that Macris warns against

because the action takes place in different places within one event and setting: at this stereotypical Aussie barbecue, the men are outside cooking the meat, while the women are inside making the salads. Thus, the point of view changes as the scene changes, hopefully avoiding confusion.

Story within a story

In 'Lilac Tractors' I include brief excerpts from the Rock Ravel soft-porn novels Sharon is reading. This could be considered a form of *mise-en-abyme*. The story within a story, *mise-en-abyme* or frame device has been used for as long as literature has been produced. Some biblical stories use the frame device (Bosworth, 2010). Examples appear in ancient Indian literature including, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharat* and classics of Western literature, including Homer's *Odyssey* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It is unusual for these stories within stories to be told merely for entertainment's sake. More often they have a symbolic purpose, perhaps providing an example to the other characters, but usually having significance to the characters in the outer story. A parallel is likely to exist between the two stories; for example, the inner story may be used to expose the truth in the outer story. In 'Lilac Tractors' the pornography Sharon reads parallels and informs her sexual fantasies that eventually get acted out in real life. The inclusion of these excerpts was necessary to make their contents clear and to highlight the importance of them to Sharon's real life.

***Lady Oracle* by Margaret Atwood**

Margaret Atwood uses the story within a story device in *Lady Oracle* (1976). We first meet Atwood's protagonist, Joan, in Italy where she has fled after faking her own death in Canada. She describes childhood memories filled with pain and humiliation, primarily due to an unhappy relationship with her mother. She also describes her adolescence and young adulthood, during which she escapes to London, becomes the mistress of a Polish count, and begins a successful career writing romance novels of the Gothic or historical

kind. Eventually she meets Arthur, a political activist who becomes her husband. They build a fairly unsatisfying life together in Canada and it seems only the writing of romantic novels sustains her. Arthur does not know about her romance writing but, when she becomes famous for her book of poetry, 'Lady Oracle' which she writes using a spiritual technique called automatic writing, their marriage deteriorates. She begins an affair with a quirky artist named The Royal Porcupine and is blackmailed by an unscrupulous journalist, prompting her need to escape to Italy where the novel ends. Excerpts from the romance novels that Joan is writing at different times are included in the text. Joan's life intersects with the lives of the heroines she creates in these novels.

Atwood has said that she attempted to examine the perils of Gothic thinking in *Lady Oracle* (Ingersoll, 1990). In 'Lilac Tractors' Sharon's fantasies, precipitated by erotic readings, are eventually acted upon. This acting out of her fantasy life leads to various adverse consequences. I have thus attempted to examine the perils of certain types of pornography, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this essay. At first, the concepts of romance fiction and pornography may seem at odds. However, many writers have drawn analogies between romance and pornography; one that is most relevant to this discussion is that both romantic fiction and pornography 'eroticise the power relations between the sexes' (Gill & Herdiekerhoff, 2006, p. 490). In line with this, Masse (1992) argues that sado-masochism lies at the heart of popular romance and also of many classics, including *Jane Eyre*, *Gaslight* and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.

The appeal of popular romance fiction has been attributed to women's fears and dissatisfactions, which are temporarily assuaged by the happy endings of romance (Radway, 1984). It may be that women read these novels, and like Atwood's character, *write* them, out of dissatisfaction. This is suggested by Joan who explains, 'if I couldn't work at my current Costume Gothic, I would become mean and irritable, drink too much and start to cry' (Atwood, 1976, p. 238). Tania Modleski (1990) argues that romances offer a kind of unconditional and nurturing love that women may experience from their mothers, and later may give this kind of love to men but it is not reciprocated. This

inequality of emotional care is resolved by fantasies of a romantic protagonist who nurtures and satisfies the heroine's needs.

Sharon also reads Rock Ravel out of dissatisfaction; with Gary she has found the kind of love Modleski speaks of, but her dissatisfaction coupled with her fantasies lead her to give that up. In this way 'Lilac Tractors' may seem a depressing indictment of pornographic effects. Prior to the influx of pornography perhaps women were able to create their own fantasies rather than fantasies inscribed by male sexuality which may well be damaging to us. However it may also be that women's sexuality is organically more complex than this and infused with a large degree of ambivalence. As mentioned, romance novels can be compared with pornography in their eroticised power relationships. The romantic hero typically starts out as distant and cruel and evolves into a kind loving partner. Joan highlights this contradiction when she discusses her readers:

They wanted their men to be strong, lustful, passionate, and exciting, with hard rapacious mouths, but also tender and worshipful. They wanted men in mysterious cloaks who would rescue them from balconies, but they also wanted meaningful in-depth relationships with total openness. (Atwood, 1976, p. 216)

Masse found that within both romance and classic Gothic texts there is 'a cultural, psychoanalytic and fictional expectation that (characters) should be masochistic if they are "normal" women' (1992, p. 2). While Sharon's fantasies move her toward this 'unhealthy' reality, Joan's fantasies help to keep her mind off her own masochism and the experiences of heterosexual relationships. In Joan Foster's novels there is always a happy ending; she manages to feel better about her life by writing the romantic novels. Interestingly, though, when she embarks on automatic writing and writes her 'Lady Oracle' poems she is perplexed at how dark and disturbing they are and, by this means, Atwood indicates that, at least on an unconscious level, she is in touch with reality:

In fact, except for the diction, it seemed a lot like one of my standard Costume Gothics, but a Gothic gone wrong. It was upside down somehow. There were sufferings, the hero in the mask of a villain, the villain in the mask of a hero, the fights, the looming death, the sense of being imprisoned, but there was no happy ending, no true love. (Atwood, 1976, p. 259)

Madeleine Davies (2006) examines Atwood's protagonist writers from within the frame of Hélène Cixous's theory of *L'écriture féminine* in which she asserts 'Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies' (Cixous, 1991, p. 334). The Rock Ravel series has been written by a man: unlike Joan and other Atwood protagonists, such as visual artist Elaine in *Cat's Eye* (1990) and Iris in *The Blind Assassin* (2000), Sharon is not engaged in an act of self-representation (Davies, 2006). Rather, she has been driven away from her body and is trapped in patriarchal thinking. This is represented symbolically later in the novel when Dion, her lover, accidentally cuts her: the mark he leaves 'has a droplet of blood at the end and looks for a moment like an upside down flag or the letter *d*' (LT, p. 176).

Szalay (2001) suggests that Joan has inherited her fascination with all things Gothic from her mother and her paternal aunt. Therefore, Atwood's use of the Gothic, including the novels Joan writes in *Lady Oracle*, could be considered part of a maternal legacy, with '(t)he unfading popularity of the genre reflective of a common fascination with the Gothic among women who pass on these novels from one generation to the other with hardly any call for alterations of long established conventions' (p. 217). That Sharon receives the Rock Ravel books, inadvertently, from her mother Pam can be seen as passing on a legacy of female sexual submission. According to Szalay (2001), Atwood suggests that being hooked on Gothic novels is not aberrant behaviour for women; rather Joan is presented as a 'normal' woman. I have also tried to present Sharon as a woman like many others.

Rock Ravel

For my purposes, it is important that Sharon reads pornography; however, I did not think obvious pornography would work for a number of reasons. Although there is recent evidence that women do consume pornography (McKee, Albury, & Lumby, 2008) it seemed, at the time of writing, that these women may have been in the minority (Dines, 2010; Faust, 1980; Theobald, 2004). The recent popularity of S and M novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* (James, 2012c) suggests that women do indeed enjoy reading pornography. However, this phenomenon had not occurred at the time I conceived and wrote 'Lilac Tractors' and this, coupled with comments from readers of earlier drafts, raised concern that Sharon would alienate female readers if the books she read were straight porn. Indeed, one commentator has suggested that the nondescript cover of *Fifty Shades of Grey* is part of the reason women are comfortable reading it in public (Thomas, 2012). It seems many women have mixed feelings or a complicated and uneasy relationship with pornography (Ciclitira, 2004; Paasonen, 2011; Wilson-Kovaks, 2009). I therefore felt Sharon needed to be reading something that had pornographic content but was thinly disguised as general fiction that she might find in second hand bookshops or that her mother could feasibly have passed down to her in a box of discarded books. I also wanted to illustrate that pornography permeates all kinds of genres, including, in the case of Rock Ravel, the detective genre, not just those labelled as pornography or erotica.

Among the first books to be banned in Australia were mass-produced American comics that began to enter the country in high volumes in the 1930s (Coleman, 1974) and the so-called 'pulp' (Johnson-Woods, 2004, p. 12). It was the American comics that brought the issue of literature censorship in Australia into focus (Sullivan, 1997). The comics met widespread opposition from church and women's groups as they were seen as 'morally and educationally harmful, particularly as their representation of 'Negro and Italian influences' was seen to be undermining 'Australian racial characteristics' and an Australian identity (Coleman, 1974, p. 109). Further, they often contained advertisements for sex literature. Comics and mass-produced, soft-cover pulp fiction could be divided

into sub-categories which included the detective genre (Coleman, 1974; Johnson-Woods, 2004).

Pulp fiction stories were typically high-energy, fast-paced and relied on stereotypes. Sex and violence were typical of the genre. The books were usually easy to read and readily available. The covers had to be eye-catching and typically resembled comic books (Johnson-Woods, 2004). I emulated this for Rock Ravel:

A cartoon image of Rock Ravel with a woman either side of him. One of the women is dressed in a skimpy bikini and fishnet stockings. She has a lascivious mouth and an evil look in her eyes. The other woman wears a white neck-to-knee frock with lacy fronds, a pious look and saint's halo. (LT, p. 45)

In 1939, the Australian government banned American soft cover fiction (Johnson-Woods, 2004). The American books were extremely popular, so once they were banned an industry emerged in Australia. This created something of a literary assembly line with writers churning out thousands of words each week (Johnson-Woods, 2004). The proliferation lasted from 1939 to 1959 as local publishers attempted to fulfil the demand that increased rapidly after American pulps were banned. In pulp fiction's heyday new publishers sprang up everywhere and prospered—until the prohibition ended and cheaper imports flooded in again (Todd, 2005).

I imagine Rock Ravel books as a particularly salacious example of American detective pulp fiction. Through Rock Ravel 'Lilac Tractors' pays homage to this somewhat forgotten genre and the initiation of censorship in Australia, which will be explored further in the next chapter.

Women's Sexuality

History of feminism

While the present chapter cannot provide a detailed history of feminist theory, it is important, given that I explore feminist questions in 'Lilac Tractors', to provide some background to the theories upon which these questions are based. My exploration of feminist theory, prior to undertaking this thesis, consisted of texts which were popular in the 1990s such as *The Beauty Myth: How images of beauty are used against women* by Naomi Wolf (1990) and *Backlash: The undeclared war against women* by Susan Faludi (1991). *The Beauty Myth* in particular provided inspiration for some of the ideas in 'Lilac Tractors'. In this chapter my focus is on ideas and texts that provided inspiration for my exploration of sexuality and pornography in 'Lilac Tractors'.

Broadly speaking, Western feminist movements and their respective theories can be divided into three 'waves' (Humm, 1989; Selden, Widdowson, & Brooker, 2005) The 'first-wave' refers to the first feminist movement which occurred during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and is commonly associated with the suffragettes. It includes ideas about women's equality that emerged prior to the 1960s. The 'second-wave' refers to the ideas and actions which began in the 1960s and is commonly referred to as the women's liberation movement. 'Third World' or 'third-wave' feminism of the 1990s and onwards is considered both a continuation of and a reaction to the perceived failures of second-wave feminism.

First-wave activists focussed on suffrage and the promotion of marriage and property rights for women. First-wave theorists explored various themes including women's material disadvantage compared to men and the difficulties female writers and intellectuals face because men hold legal and economic power (Selden, Widdowson, & Brooker, 2005). According to Eagleton (1995) Virginia Woolf has been considered 'the founding mother of the contemporary debate'. Woolf recognised that gender identity is socially constructed and, in *A Room of One's Own* (1928), she proposes women need to adopt an androgynous mind as gender designation is limiting for both men and women.

‘It is fatal [for a woman] to be a man or a woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly’ (p. 102).

Simone De Beauvoir’s influential study, *The Second Sex* (1989), originally published in 1949, has been seen as a cross over between the first and second wave feminist movements. *The Second Sex* discusses material disadvantage, which preoccupied the first-wave, and it proposes some fundamental tenets of modern feminism, including that women are forced to define themselves through men: ‘Thus humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being’ (De Beauvoir, 1989, p. xxii). Not only are women positioned as the ‘Other’ but they also make decisions based on patriarchal ideology. Like Woolf, De Beauvoir saw gender as socially constructed; she was distrustful of ‘femininity’ and considered that change depended on women breaking out of their objectification. Her observations paved the way for some of the arguments that emerged during the second-wave, and these are relevant to my thesis.

Although second-wave feminists continued to fight for women’s rights and equality, the focus expanded to reproduction politics, women’s ‘experience’ and, perhaps primarily, to sexuality. Sexuality began to be seen as something to celebrate but also as a form of oppression (J. Butler, 1999; Cixous, 1991; Greer, 1970; Millett, 1971). Famous second-wave texts include *The Female Eunuch* (Greer, 1970), which explores how ‘female sexuality has been masked and deformed’ as the female is considered ‘a sexual object for the use and appreciation of other sexual beings, men’ (p. 15). In *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millet (1971) argues that ideological indoctrination is as responsible for women’s oppression as economic inequality. Gender is seen as culturally acquired and therefore a psychological rather than a biological concept. Women are as responsible as men for perpetuating these gender stereotypes. ‘Sexual politics’ is the playing out of these sex roles and resultant inequality, namely, domination and subordination.

Sexual Politics seemed to open up thinking around ideas of reproduction, sexuality and representation (especially verbal and visual images of women and particularly

pornography) and paved the way for other second-wave feminists to discuss these issues. Andrea Dworkin, perhaps the most famous of the 'radical feminists' was an active protester and prolific writer on the subject. Dworkin argued:

[p]ornography reveals that male pleasure is inextricably tied to victimizing, hurting, exploiting; that sexual fun and sexual passion in the privacy of male imagination are inseparable from the brutality of male history.
(Dworkin, 1981, p. 69).

Along with feminist theorist and lawyer Catherine MacKinnon, Dworkin was the first to attack pornography and its producers through civil rights litigation, arguing that pornography is implicated in actual violence against women both in its production and in the social consequences of its production.

Judith Butler's notion of performative gender (J. Butler, 1999) takes Millet's ideas further; she proposes that gender is not innate, but is both socially constructed and performed. Butler is critical of many contemporary feminist ideas, including the idea that men and women are fundamentally different. She proposes that while this separation exists, there can be no equality and further, that gender is not binary, nor are women a unified group. Butler's ideas owe much to the post-structuralist feminists, particularly Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, who elaborated on the ideas of Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida in their insistence that there is no essential truth in language, just a series of dichotomies that provide a conceptual order that favours the masculine and excludes the feminine. Irigaray believed that women remain unseen as they have only been observed through the lens of phallogocentrism (Irigaray, 1999). Phallogocentrism refers to 'ideas ordered around an absolute word (logos) that is "male" in style (hence the reference to the phallus)' (Putnam Tong, 1998, p. 193).

On the other hand, being excluded also provides women with a privileged position with their difference being one of the most powerful tools they possess. Cixous explored this idea in relation to women's writing and particularly the relationship between writing and

sexuality. In “Laugh of the Medusa” (1991), Cixous criticises phallogocentrism and proposes an alternative, *L’écriture féminine*, which women must learn. ‘Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies’ (Cixous, 1991, p. 334). Unlike Cixous and Irigaray, Kristeva and Butler resist identification of the ‘feminine’ with women and the ‘masculine’ with men.

It was perhaps the ideas of post-structural feminists such as Cixous that have been seen to lend support to the views of the ‘pro-sex’ feminists who became vocal in the nineties. They espoused positive ideas around women’s sexuality, representation and particularly pornography. They were critical of anti-porn feminists, including Dworkin and MacKinnon, two of the ‘radical feminists’ that have been derided for their views (Jeffries, 2006). This debate was raging in the nineties when I was a young woman and began reading about feminism. Although I was aware of the different views and some of the feminist theory upon which they were based, it was one popular third wave feminist text *The Beauty Myth: How images of beauty are used against women* (Wolf, 1990) which had the most impact on me and inspired some of the ideas in ‘Lilac Tractors.’

Pornographic generations

In *The Beauty Myth* Naomi Wolf discusses the threat that female sexuality poses to men, and how this has underpinned the oppression of women:

Very nearly released by the spread of contraception, legal abortion and the demise of the sexual double standard, women’s sexuality was quickly restrained once again by the new social forces of beauty pornography and beauty sadomasochism which arose to put guilt, shame and pain back into women’s experience of sex. (p. 132)

Violent pornography usually depicts women’s subjugation and is often sadomasochistic. It is found in magazines, videos and restricted Internet sites viewed mostly by men. Wolf discusses this and another more pervasive threat, ‘beauty pornography’ and ‘beauty sado-

masochism', which is found in women's magazines and on fashion catwalks. Wolf provides some examples of beauty sado-masochism:

In an ad for Hermes perfume, a blonde woman trussed in black leather is hanging upside down, screaming, her wrists looped in chains, mouth bound. In an ad for Fuji cassettes, a female robot with a playmate's body, but made of steel, floats with her genitals exposed, her ankles bolted and her face a steel mask with slits for eyes and mouth. In an ad for Erno Laszlo skin-care products, a woman sits up and begs, her wrists clasped together with a leather leash that is also tied to her dog, who is sitting up in the same position and begging. (p. 133)

Wolf contends that the generations of women born after 1960 have grown up in an atmosphere of increasingly violent sexual imagery, referring to this group as the 'pornographic generations' (p. 163). In support of this, Gail Dines (2010) credits Hugh Hefner with breaking down 'the cultural, economic and legal barriers to mass production of porn' (p. 1) through his clever marketing of *Playboy* in the sixties. Dines has extended this critique to examine how pornography itself has migrated from being considered a secret pastime of 'seedy men who couldn't get a real woman' (p. 25) into mainstream culture. She cites its discussion on popular television shows such as *Sex and the City* and *Oprah Winfrey* as well the widespread crossing over of porn actors into mainstream films. She discusses the cable television program and website *Girls Gone Wild* in which teenage girls, often drunk, are coerced to take off their clothes and perform sex acts in front of the camera. Rather than being classed as pornography it has been promoted cleverly as 'hot, sexy fun that pushes the envelope of mainstream pop culture' (p. 26). While some may argue that there is a difference between 'violent' pornography and much of the imagery in *Playboy* or *Girls Gone Wild*, I would argue that any imagery in which women are objectified and passive has an insidious violence that may be as damaging to women, if in some different ways, than what is identified as hard-core violent porn. This is because of its ubiquitousness and its appearance and acceptance in the 'mainstream'.

While some may view this increase in sexually violent imagery as part of an ever-increasing market for more violent imagery, whether sexual or otherwise, others view it as part of a backlash against the feminist movement (Faludi, 1991; Wolf, 1990). Wolf provides a cogent argument to suggest that ‘education of the young in sex as stylish objectification or sadomasochism’ (p. 163) may have helped to produce generations of young women who believe that ‘sex is violent’ (Wolf, 1990, p. 161) and violence towards women is the norm.

This is the view of so-called radical feminists, and the central tenet of Sheila Jeffreys’ sardonically entitled study *Anti-climax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution* (Jeffreys, 1990), in which she argues that, rather than liberating women, the sexual revolution trapped women in new and insidious forms of oppression, wherein their sexuality is controlled and defined by the needs of men. More recently Gail Dines (2010) argues that with the proliferation of gonzo pornography on the Internet, along with the saturation of beauty pornography, pornographers not only define women’s sexuality in a way that serves men, but also sell it back to women as empowering (p. 119).

Liberal or ‘pro-sex’ feminists argue that women have more agency now, and that pornography and even behaviours such as Bondage and Discipline and Sado-Masochism (BDSM) can be liberating to women (Ruth, 1977). Of course not all liberal feminists accept pornography and BDSM. Nevertheless, these different opinions about sexuality, pornography and BDSM continue to divide feminists.

In *Femininity and Domination*, Sandra Lee Bartky (1990) explores different theories for masochism, as part of the female psyche, including those inspired by Freud. The common element among these theories is the notion that masochism, or the condition in which sexual gratification depends on suffering or humiliation, is a natural state for women. Bartky concludes that every person’s sexuality is the result of their individual ‘sex-print’ or ‘microdot’ which is a ‘highly compressed and encoded system of information out of which can be read ... the history of a person’s life’ (p. 59). Cameron (1990) suggests ‘[o]ur sexualities are socially and discursively constructed out of complex possibilities

and experiences; among these, however are the representations of sex our culture provides—the texts we read, the movies we see’ (p. 787). Thus the concept that modern women believe sex equals violence because they may have been exposed to pornography and have been exposed throughout their lives to beauty pornography and beauty sadomasochism makes sense.

Although it would be impossible to prove or disprove the existence of ‘pornographic generations’, evidence for the negative effects of the beauty industry and of the proliferation of pornography seems compelling (Dworkin, 1981; Griffin, 1981; Paul, 2005). There is little doubt that access to pornography has expanded since the sixties, and exponentially in recent times (Dines, 2010; Jeffreys, 2005). This pornography consistently utilises gender stereotypes of male dominance and female submission (Cornell, 2000; Jensen, 2007) and makes frequent use of abusive references and language directed mainly against women (Jensen, 2007). That subjugation of women is the norm in mainstream pornography lends support to the idea that ‘heterosexual sex is the eroticised subordination of women’ (Jeffreys, 1990, p. 251) and that BDSM is a logical extension of heterosexuality (Bartky, 1990).

Erotica versus Pornography

At this point it is useful to draw a distinction between pornography and erotica. Trying to define these concepts is difficult (S. Cameron, 2005; Pope, Voges, Kuhn, & Bloxsome, 2007; Rea, 2001; Slade, 2001). Pornography is typically considered to be potentially damaging and dangerous while erotica is seen as artistic and harmless, but often it is just a matter of taste and what is deemed pornographic and offensive to one person may be considered harmless erotica to another. Distinctions between erotica and pornography and their definitions are most likely going to change with time. For example, an image in a *Playboy* magazine from the seventies or eighties considered pornography might now seem ‘almost quaint’ (Dines, 2010, p. xvii). A definition of what constitutes pornography and erotica may tell us more about the cultural values and norms of a particular time than it does about pornography or erotica (Pope, Voges, Kuhn, & Bloxsome, 2007).

Nevertheless, definitions do exist, with different disciplines tending to use different definitions for pornography. For example, most legal definitions relate to the intended purpose and use of the material, while social science definitions consider the content of the material (Fisher & Barak, 1991). Social science practitioners define pornography variously, as being violent, depicting and endorsing sexual violence and coercion, usually but not solely against women (Donnerstein & Berkowitz, 1981; Fisher & Barak, 1991); degrading (Longino, 1980), lacking in artistic value (Berger, 1977) or including sexual objectification (McElroy, 1995). Erotica may be defined as a type of pornography that presents non-violent, non-degrading consensual sex (Fisher & Barak, 1991) or as a completely different entity. Kovetz (2006), for example, argues ‘The line between erotica and porn isn’t thin or fragile... Erotica is to pornography as a portrait is to a cartoon’ (p. 74). Pope et al. (2007) agree that pornography and erotica are separate entities and base their definition of pornography on that posited by Rea (2001) who states that for an object to be considered pornography it must be a communication material wherein its user 1) desires to be sexually aroused, 2) does not use the material to foster intimacy, and 3) it must be reasonable (on the part of its creator) to believe that the material will be used for sexual arousal or gratification. The main focus of Pope et al. is on the absence of intimacy, a factor which distinguishes pornography from erotica. Kovetz (2006) concurs, emphasising the importance of intimacy in any distinction between erotica and pornography, so that erotica humanises sex and pornography dehumanises it.

‘Gonzo’ is a contemporary term used to distinguish between different types of pornography. Inheriting the name from ‘gonzo journalism’ which uses the first person perspective, gonzo porn is often shot from a first person point of view. However, the term is now used synonymously with ‘hardcore porn’ that is, porn focussed only on sex, with minimal storyline, a low budget and, typically, brutal sex in which women are abused and degraded. Gonzo porn is prolific on the Internet and is today one of the biggest money earners for the porn industry. It depicts ‘hard-core body-punishing sex in which women are demeaned and debased’ (Dines, 2010, p. xi). Various other kinds of porn have also emerged in recent years these include, amateur pornography, which is not always amateur but made to look so in order to appropriate authenticity. ‘Realcore’ (Messina, 2006 cited

in Hardy, 2009) refers to truly amateur porn which, along with sex-blogs, is often made by women themselves. Realcore is usually free, which makes it different to most other porn which is situated within a multi-billion dollar industry. In realcore a wider variety of people and sexualities are featured, protagonists are typically unmade up and no special lighting, shooting or editing is used. While some would argue this is democratisation of pornography (Hardy, 2009), using my definitions above, I would consider some realcore erotica, rather than pornography. Realcore is not the type of imagery that I refer to when I discuss 'pornography' which is prolific and typified by gonzo.

Pornography evidence

Studies have found that exposure to pornography decreases self-esteem among women (Mayerson & Taylor, 1987) and desensitises them to violence, while increasing men's and women's acceptance of interpersonal violence and myths that women enjoy being raped (Malamuth & Check, 1985; Mayerson & Taylor, 1987). Recent research on adolescents indicates that viewing pornography makes boys and girls more likely to view women as objects (Peter & Valkenburg, 2007) and that frequent exposure to porn diminishes trust in sexual partners and increases the belief that marriage is sexually confining. This kind of research can be criticised for a number of reasons including being morally biased, for example, is it necessarily wrong or bad for people to believe that marriage is sexually confining? Moreover, the earlier research particularly has been derided for failing to 'bridge the gap between the real and the representational that its own epistemology insisted upon' (Hardy, 2009, p. 4). However there is evidence that exposure to pornography directly affects young people's sexual behaviour, making them more likely to engage in oral and anal sex, despite most women describing anal sex as a negative experience (Rogala & Tyden, 2003). With the more recent emergence of such phenomena as gonzo, amateur pornography, 'realcore' and sex blogs, society has become the laboratory and we can see for ourselves that 'the increasingly mainstream cultural presence of pornographic texts and images has made a contribution to contemporary sexual practice and experience' (Hardy, 2009, p. 17). If this mainstreaming of sex is empowering to women, as is often argued (Stoller, 1999; Taylor, 2006) how can we explain the increase in female risk taking (Carr-Gregg, Enderby, & Grover, 2003) and

self-harming behaviour that has occurred over roughly the same time? This includes self-mutilation known as 'cutting' (Health Department of Western Australia, 2000), eating disorders (Currin, Schmidt, Treasure, & Jick, 2005), harmful drinking (Haw, Hawton, Casey, Bale, & Shepherd, 2005) and cosmetic surgery (American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 2009; Trad, 2008). While it would be impossible to prove causality, we know that viewing porn makes girls more likely to view women as objects and increases their risk of negative body image (Zillman, 2000) so it seems possible that the trends of increasing access to pornography and female risk-taking could be linked.

Wolf contends that if women today believe that sex is violent, 'it is not because they are psychopaths but because that representation in mainstream culture *is the norm*' (p. 163). According to Wolf, young women born after 1960 have been 'made ill [...] from having seen little representation of sexuality apart from beauty pornography. But they are not as ill as the generation who were children in the 1970s; those even younger women are [even sicker]' (p. 217). Inspired by Naomi Wolf's idea of the 'pornographic generations' I chose Sharon's birth year to be 1970. Sharon is exposed to pornography as a young girl (LT, p. 3) and this is her first sexual experience. Her early sexualisation leads to an adult fascination with porn. 'Lilac Tractors' depicts Sharon's subsequent obsession with Rock Ravel, detective/porn novels in which the hero, Rock Ravel, has sex with Bunny, a prostitute who enjoys rough sex and subjugation.

Like a lot of pornography, Rock Ravel is pure fantasy and quite absurd and there is a risk, then, that some readers may feel alienated from Sharon because she enjoys reading it. However, Jane Ussher (1991) suggests that in their 'quest for knowledge and excitement' women may turn to images that degrade them simply because these are 'the only images available' (Ussher, 1991, p. 36). Although there is currently some pornography made by (Hardy, 2009) and for women (Taormino, 2006), including the amateur self-made kind discussed above, this is a rather recent phenomenon and relatively insignificant when compared to the amount of mainstream pornography.

Sharon's obsession with Rock Ravel porn and later with an abusive lover, Dion, can thus be viewed as a result of her education in 'sex as stylish objectification or sadomasochism' (Wolf, 1990, p. 163). Sharon begins to find sex with Gary too gentle and boring. This is partly because her arousal in response to porn helps to confirm a sense that sex with Gary does not have the eroticised power difference or female subjugation necessary to constitute heterosexual desire (Jeffreys, 1990). The Rock Ravel novels are implicated in Sharon's involvement with Dion and her subsequent marriage breakdown, and Dion's language and behavior mirror Rock Ravel's.

Of course, to suggest that Sharon's exposure to pornography is the single cause of her magnetic attraction to Dion and subsequent decline would be simplistic, as human emotion and behaviours have complex causes and this needs to be considered when creating convincing characters. Sharon's exposure to pornography is just one part of a complex microdot (Bartky, 1990) comprising her identity of which sexual desire is a part. Growing up in sexist society in the seventies and eighties, Sharon has been socialised as female through what bell hooks (2000) calls 'patriarchal thinking'. In *Feminism is for Everybody*, hooks refers to the 'enemy within' (p. 14) or women's internalised sexism (2000). According to hooks many women are socialised from birth to accept sexist thought and action and this is 'patriarchal thinking'. Along with Sharon's internalised misogyny, her patriarchal thinking includes rigid ideas about how men and women should behave.

It has been posited that Western societies are currently 'post-feminist'. Those who support this view may argue that feminism has become obsolete as its goals have been achieved. Others argue that today's society is 'post-feminist' because feminism has failed, at least to some degree. One of the many reasons given for this purported failure is that women do not really want equality. In this post-feminist society pornography is often viewed by those who enjoy it as harmless and even potentially emancipatory (Taormino, 2006; Ussher, 1991). This has come into societal focus in an unprecedented way in 2012 due to the recent success of trilogy of erotic novels *Fifty Shades of Grey* (James, 2012c), *Fifty Shades Darker* (James, 2012a) and *Fifty Shades Freed* (James, 2012b). One of my

intentions in exploring the negative effects of pornography in 'Lilac Tractors' is to interrogate women's enjoyment and question the harmlessness of pornography and BDSM.

Concerns

Exploring the themes of pornography and female masochism in fiction is fraught with difficulty. Sharon's character might alienate readers who consider her perverse rather than an intelligent woman struggling with conflicting desires in a misogynistic society. A number of situations invite recognition; for example, when Sharon switches on the television the fashion channel showcases beauty sadomasochism (pp. 59-60). Sharon and her friend Jeanie have a lunchtime drink in a bar only to be confronted by strippers and sleazy clientele (pp. 74-75). Sharon's childhood involved exposure to her father's stash of sadomasochistic pornography (pp. 3-4) and her childhood memories include men in bars watching strippers (p. 34). When Sharon's father, Geoff, abandons her mother, Pam, one of the only things he leaves behind is 'a stubby holder with a picture of a nude woman on it' (p. 8). Sharon and her friend Mandy are concerned with their body image and Mandy's obsession becomes dangerous when she is jilted by her fiancé. Even certain character traits, such as Eddie's constant need to be reminded of Sharon's name, suggest the irrelevance of women in some social situations. In Sharon's milieu almost everything she sees, hears or feels is coloured by sexism and misogyny.

Readers may consider that the novel reinscribes a stereotype of female masochism, or worse, gives credence to the rape myth³. Gubar (1987) suggests that it is often very difficult to disentangle whether art dealing with sex is symptomatic or diagnostic of the status-quo or, in other words, whether a text is reinscribing the 'inexorability of male dominance or [satirising and thus decrying it]' (p. 730). Gubar indicates that the underlying ideology of the work will be central in any attempt to understand such a text. I hope that the indicative scenes together with the characters' journeys help to produce a novel that decries rather than reinscribes stereotypes of male dominance and female

³ The myth that women want to be raped.

masochism. Sharon's journey takes her masochistic fantasies to their logical conclusion so that 'Lilac Tractors' carries a message that pornography and BDSM, even in fantasy form, could be harmful. Throughout the novel, sex with Dion is often unsatisfying and painful for Sharon. By contrast the Rock Ravel novels suggest Bunny enjoys being subjugated. Sharon's response to rough sex is different from Bunny's to indicate the absurdity of the rape myth. The final sex scene in which Dion actually rapes Sharon is not intended to be erotic or exciting, just brutal and traumatic.

It has been argued that the difference between pornography and obscenity 'which redirects the individual through the shock of sexual stimulation' (Lawrence, 1956 cited in Gubar, 1987) is that porn encourages readers to regress into 'the masturbatory daydreams of adolescence [or a] pornotopia' (Marcus, 1969, p. 271). Despite my intentions, there is a risk that sex scenes between Sharon and Dion may be read as pornography rather than as commentary on it. Bartky (1990) suggests that masochistic fantasies may not be uncommon to women, while Guber (1987) states that our knowledge about 'the relationship between hostility and sexual desire is almost entirely limited to our knowledge of male-authored texts' (p. 740). Without exploring such phenomena, how do we understand ourselves and move forward as women? This is challenging territory and 'Lilac Tractors' may provoke conflicting emotion and debate. Indeed, my intention has been to produce a text that expresses the 'ideological tensions and contradictions of the culture from which (it) originated and to which (it) refer(s)' (Gubar, 1987, pp. 731-732).

Censorship in Australia

Censorship is a grey area for me. I believe strongly in freedom of speech but also recognise the power of the written word and film imagery to affect people's views and behaviour. If the state bans and regulates certain drugs and activities because they are potentially dangerous to people, why not ban potentially dangerous literature and art?

Sexually explicit publications were socially and politically problematised in Australia for the first time in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries (Sullivan, 1997). This was

likely driven by shifts in Western culture towards the idea that sexual behaviour was an indicator of moral health. In the early 1950s a range of popular publications such as comics and salacious magazines came to be identified as problematic, inspiring debate about censorship. Interestingly, this may have been more about the numbers being produced than the actual content, as these types of publications were available as early as 1939 but not in such large numbers. Nevertheless, it was also in the 1950s that dominant sexual discourses emerged about the need to protect children from salacious materials in order to encourage appropriate patterns of sexual behaviour. In the 1960s, popular opposition to censorship began to emerge as sexual libertarianism entered mainstream political discourse. In the 1970s, the number and range of pornographic materials expanded significantly in Australia. This is in line with Naomi Wolf's hypothesis about the 'pornographic generations'. Existing laws were beginning to become inadequate because literature was changing and novels with artistic merit were increasingly adopting the codes of pornography. Moreover, influential sections of the electorate were beginning to demand the right to consume pornography. However, in the early seventies there was little consistency across the country with the governmental response to *Portnoy's Complaint* (Roth, 1967) being an interesting case in point. *Portnoy's Complaint* was sold legally in Western Australia, South Australia and New South Wales, but was illegal in Tasmania, Victoria and Queensland. Meanwhile, an increasingly libertarian sexual culture had its maximum effect on law and public policy in this period, producing substantial reformulation of censorship procedures in all Australian states from 1973 to 1975 (Sullivan, 1997). These were essentially moves from banning to regulation. Underpinning most of these moves was the libertarian idea that adults should be entitled to read and view whatever they wish.

From the late 1970s feminist voices, which were beginning to be heard, criticised the consumption of pornography. For example, feminist theory emphasised the role of men's violence in the construction of women's oppression (Edwards, 1987). There was concern that women were being coerced into performing in pornography and also that 'the consumption of pornography undermined public and private attitudes towards women' (Sullivan, 1997, p. 169). Child pornography became an important political issue

throughout Australia in the 1970s, which helped to bring some of the more general debates about pornography into focus, resulting in a shift from the libertarian ideas that dominated law and public policies in the seventies (pp. 163-164). New laws were passed which, to some extent, limited the rights of people to consume pornography (particularly child pornography and material that combined sex and violence). In the 1980s, the market for video pornography extended, which inspired further debates. The introduction of the X-classification to pornographic video-tapes that were unclassifiable largely due to sexual violence has been attributed in part to consideration of feminist arguments. The X-classification became a new legal category for video-tapes in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory but it was rejected by all the states (Sullivan, 1997). Again, this lack of uniformity between the States and Commonwealth has resulted in discrepancies. For example, a thriving (and legal) mail order industry was established by pornographers in the ACT to service interstate customers.

In the 1990s unanimity emerged in the parliamentary debates around pornography. The sexual libertarianism of the seventies and eighties was quelled as parliamentarians generally agreed to prohibit the distribution of material that depicted non-consensual sexual violence. And, of course, the emergence of the Internet in the 1990s created a whole new spectrum. It is argued that Australia has the greatest censorship of the Internet in the Western world. The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is our regulating body, and it works on the basis of community input and consensus, with any person being able to report dangerous sites. Once submitted, a complaint is then investigated and websites which are dangerous (or in ACMA's judgment likely to be) are refused classification or classified X and may be banned. In contrast to many other countries, bans are enforced rather than optional. Critics of this approach argue that it is not just child pornography that has been banned, but also a number of seemingly innocuous sites, and they are also concerned that this process can result in political censorship. For example, Wikileaks, the controversial whistle-blowing website was initially banned here, making Australia one of only two Western countries to ban it.

The debates concerning censorship have never been simple. Various arguments for and against censorship of pornography continue unabated with those around sexual violence perhaps the most contested. 'Lilac Tractors' did not aim to propose an argument for or against pornography or to imply there should be censorship, but had hoped to provoke discussion on the matter.

Other texts

Looking for Mr Goodbar by Judith Rossner (1975) and *In the Cut* by Susanna Moore (1995) deal with similar sexual themes. Given their provocative treatment of female sexuality it is illuminating to consider the kinds of critical response they have inspired.

Looking for Mr Goodbar

Looking for Mr Goodbar depicts the life of Theresa Dunn, a primary school teacher who cruises New York bars at night to pick up men, a practice that culminates in her brutal murder. The novel has been seen as a product of the sexual revolution (Fishbein, 1978) during a time when 'a woman's movement seemed to be developing' (Rossner, 1975, p. 179). Theresa is not a feminist; in fact, she is suspicious of feminism, yet she embraces one aspect—sexual freedom—fully. Her casual encounters with men have a dangerous edge:

No way to explain in an orderly fashion how, without being drunk or stoned or out of her mind, she was having the most incredible sexual pleasure of her life with someone who at best amused her, and at worst scared her half to death. (p. 167)

Theresa's identity is split: 'Theresa Dunn. There was a Miss Dunn who taught a bunch of children who adored her...and there was someone called Terry who whored around in

bars when she couldn't sleep at night' (p. 142). The men Theresa picks up in bars seem to become more random and the behaviour more addictive as time goes on:

In that mood of anger with him she went to Luther's, picked up a large, fat man who said he was a newspaper reporter, came home with him at three o'clock in the morning—drunk, both of them out of their minds—and rolled into bed, where he couldn't get an erection and informed her that his wife had castrated him. (p. 246)

Like Sharon in 'Lilac Tractors' Theresa is depicted as a 'normal' woman. Despite a painful childhood coloured by sibling rivalry, grief and illness (polio and scoliosis resulting in a slight physical abnormality that Theresa experiences as her imperfection), she is a diligent and caring primary school teacher. The juxtaposition of this normalcy with her promiscuous sexual behaviour is highlighted by the shock expressed by men she meets in bars when they discuss what she does for a living. One lover, Tony, refuses to believe her when she explains she is a school teacher and 'stare(s) at her with a mixture of awe and suspicion' (p. 183). Even her brutal murderer remarks in his confession, 'Boy some of the people they got teaching kids, I'm keeping mine out of school' (p. 14).

As Sharon has Gary, Theresa has the love of a good man in James, her conservative Catholic suitor who works as a lawyer. Her frustrated masochism becomes explicit in her relationship with James when she thinks: '*As a matter of fact I'd probably like you better if you could walk out on me. Or at least smack my face*' (p. 201). And later, '*If you could give me a good beating when I acted like that, I would like you better for it. I might even be able to enjoy sex*' (p. 252). Theresa is extremely confused: she wants the love and security that James can offer her and also the freedom and sexual pleasure of picking up men in bars. In 'Lilac Tractors' Sharon is similarly confused and ambivalent:

Perhaps she needs to see someone, a psychologist or counsellor. Perhaps she needs to get Gary back. The world seems so bleak and frightening

without him to help her make sense of it. But then she thinks about Dion.
(LT, p. 128)

It has been suggested that Theresa's confusion is a product of women's changing roles in society following the sexual revolution. 'Lacking the moorings of traditional morality or new standards to guide her through the sexual revolution, Theresa is incapacitated for making an even simple decision' (Fishbein, 1978, p. 178). This is still an inherently sexist society in which men hold economic and physical power and Theresa, at different times throughout the novel, seems to have insight into the limits of her own sexual empowerment:

The phrase "controlling your own destiny," which Evelyn had used more than once had a delightful ring to it, but there were huge limits, after all. You couldn't control which men you met, or which ones liked you. You could make sure you didn't have a baby, if you worried about that sort of thing, but you couldn't make sure you did....If you drove a car you could make fairly sure that you wouldn't smash into something else, but you could never control whether someone smashed into you. (Rossner, 1975, pp. 260-261)

In some ways more interesting than the book itself, was the response, including that Theresa's behaviour was considered so aberrant, and yet her behaviour is comparable to accepted male behaviour. There is evidence that young people's sexual behaviour is changing, with greater numbers of young women participating in casual or 'hook-up sex' (Dines, 2010). Therefore, Theresa's behaviour could today be considered normative. Yet much of the literature about this work focuses on the apparent outrageousness of Theresa's behaviour. Even more recent reviewers of the film seem outraged by the story. One blog reads, 'It takes a strong stomach to see Annie Hall playing a wanton slut of a woman, left behind by the sexual revolution' (Null, 2000). This response may just indicate that despite the apparent sexual freedoms that today's women experience, things have not changed all that much except rather than being discouraged, women are now

encouraged to be sexually adventurous, but nevertheless continue to be judged harshly for it (Dines, 2010).

Rossner presents Theresa as a sane person who shows little insight and, in this way, she is similar to Sharon in 'Lilac Tractors'. Theresa's world is physically painful and male dominated. Her adult masochism seems almost logical when we consider the depiction of her childhood memories, peppered with painful recollections of polio and the humiliating medical procedures she was forced to endure:

There were innumerable examinations and tests before she could enter the hospital for surgery. The first so bad that after that it almost didn't matter—she felt little. Or she felt a great deal but dimly. As though it were happening to someone else (Rossner, 1975, p. 27).

Her adult sexual fantasies are powerfully reminiscent of these childhood experiences:

In her fantasies his wife had always just died in an automobile accident and he had sent for her. He made love to her passionately after explaining that all love had gone from his marriage for years. Sometimes they played a game called Threshold of Pain, in which he and many assistants tested her to see where pleasure ended and pain began. Or vice versa. Afterwards they would bring her to a warm healing bath. (p. 48)

In 'Lilac Tractors' I tried to indicate that Sharon's formative childhood experiences had helped form her adult masochism, especially her exposure to pornography at the age of five:

On every page are similar pictures. Women tied, being whipped, wearing dog collars, women with strange and far away looks in their eyes. In some of the photos there are men and women together. The women remind her of the butterflies on the cork board at school, spread flat, faceless and

stuck down on the page. The men look strong and cruel, stabbing their things in between the women's legs. (LT, p. 3)

Sharon was also exposed to strippers when she was around thirteen (p. 33). When Sharon's father, Geoff, abandons her mother, Pam, one of the only things he leaves behind is 'a stubby holder with a picture of a nude woman on it' (p. 8). Sharon was later assaulted by one of her mother's lovers (p. 79). In *Looking for Mr Goodbar*, the misogyny of Theresa's world is drawn subtly yet powerfully. One of Theresa's earliest sexual encounters is with her professor, who is married: 'When he spoke his voice was neutral but she was convinced that he was looking at her with hatred' (p. 71). Later he admits that he feels contempt for women after he has had sex with them.

Theresa's initial confusion at the concept of the women's movement is also quite telling, indicative of one of the questions the novel raises: do women really want equality? 'The equal pay demand seemed all right but she had that anyway, and she was upset by the stridency of much of it. The demands. It seems that men must surely dislike women who were so demanding' (p. 79). Later, Theresa's interest in a women's group is sparked when her friend Evelyn explains some of the topics discussed at the group, including the pressures that women feel: 'we're taught that we have to be perfect. Like objects in a museum, not people' (p. 243).

Feminist responses to *Looking for Mr Goodbar* have ranged from confused to angry. On the one hand, it has been called a feminist novel because it discusses female sexuality, and recognises that Theresa embraces this one facet of feminism in her search for sexual liberation. However, as Fishbein (1978) suggests, the penalty for Theresa's search for liberation is death. Thus, anti-feminists can rest assured that sexual liberation is harmful to women and misogynists can enjoy Theresa's brutal death.

There is a long history of novels in which women who fail to conform are punished, including *Jane Eyre*, *Gaslight* and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. But perhaps the best example is Gustave Flaubert's *Madam Bovary* (1928) first published in 1857. Emma

Bovary feels stifled and bored by her married life in nineteenth century provincial France. To escape this boredom she reads salacious romance novels and indulges in a world of fantasy. Her desire for stimulating experiences leads her into one and then another destructive extramarital affair. *Madame Bovary* has been read as a morality tale in which Emma's failure to conform to the rigid conventions by which women had to live in 19th century results in punishment; in Emma's case, a painful suicide.

In 'Lilac Tractors' Sharon does suffer on account of her sexual experiments but not as greatly as does Emma for her indiscretions. She loses her marriage, is humiliated and raped by Dion, but at the end of the novel is still alive and ready to create a new life for herself. If viewed as part of a history of novels about 'fallen' women 'Lilac Tractors' can be seen to carry a more positive message, with the consequences less severe for women who transgress.

A similar idea can be found in Jeffrey Eugenides latest novel *The Marriage Plot* (2011) in which he transposes elements of the common convention of the marriage plot to a modern setting. While Madeleine studies Victorian literature and the marriage plot in novels by Jane Austen as well as is in *Middlemarch* by George Eliot and *The Portrait of a Lady* by Henry James, she falls in love with and marries Leonard, a romantic and dashing man who happens to suffer from bipolar disorder. Madeleine suffers on account of this marriage plot; however, she does not go against any conventions. Her choice of marriage partner leaves her heart broken at the end of the novel, but because she is financially independent, young and beautiful and living in much different times, there is no sense that she will not recover:

What would it matter whom Emma married if she could file for separation later? How would Isabel Archer's marriage to Gilbert Osmond have been affected by the existence of a prenup? (2011)

Eugenides suggests that many things have changed for women, but some stay the same. While women will still be attracted to dashing and dangerous men, in an era when

marriage no longer means surrender of person and property, bad decisions do not have the dire consequences that they once had. This is also the case in 'Lilac Tractors.' Like Madeleine, Emma Bovary and Theresa in *Looking for Mr Goodbar*, Sharon is attracted to a dangerous man. Like Emma Bovary and Theresa she could be viewed as a fallen woman. But in modern day Australia, this fall does not result in her complete demise. She does experience humiliation, pain and rape and is not exactly happy. However, she is still alive. She has created some difficulties in her life but manages to reject Dion and, by the end of the novel, is embarking on an exciting journey hopefully of further discovery with best friend Jeanie. Whether she is stuck with her masochistic motivations in relationships or whether she will make different choices in her future is not clear.

I think that *Looking for Mr Goodbar* raises more questions than it does give answers and I believe they are no less relevant today than they were in the seventies. These questions include, but are not limited to, those raised by 'radical' feminists: Has the sexual revolution liberated women or issued in new forms of oppression? Can women achieve sexual equality? Is sexual equality really what women want? If not, why not? How can sexual equality be defined? I hope that 'Lilac Tractors' raises similar questions.

In the Cut

In the Cut by Susanna Moore (1995) deals with similar themes to *Looking for Mr Goodbar*; indeed, it has been referred to as 'almost identical' by Good (2003). The protagonist, Frannie, is a university teacher. Like Theresa, she is exploring the boundaries of her sexual freedom but a generation later and in an environment of even greater violence. At the beginning of the novel, Frannie witnesses a woman perform fellatio on a man with a tattooed wrist in a public toilet. The same woman is murdered later that night by a serial killer who has been terrorising women in her New York neighbourhood. Hence Frannie becomes a witness and, by this process, becomes involved with the sexually aggressive Detective Malloy who has the same wrist tattoo as the man Frannie saw receiving fellatio in the public toilet. She begins to suspect Malloy is the murderer. His dangerousness makes him no less attractive and Frannie's confusion and fear seem to

fuel her desire. The risks that Frannie takes, and also her confusion and ambivalence, result in her brutal torture and murder by her lover's partner, Detective Rodriguez.

Good (2003) considers *In the Cut* even more dystopian than *Looking for Mr Goodbar* and suggests that both texts carry the message that feminism and the pursuit of sexual equality can be deadly. Frannie's murder has a heightened sense of urgency when compared with Theresa's murder in *Looking for Mr Goodbar*: While Theresa was murdered by a no-good loser, the violence in *In the Cut* is perpetrated by a member of an organised gang of policemen who are identified by wrist tattoos: 'In this novel, with the threats of feminism nipping close at their heels, men have banded together to form a pack' (Good, 2003, p. 84).

In the Cut and *Looking for Mr Goodbar* both explore the idea that while women on some level think they want equality, neither men nor women want the kind of equality that threatens to eradicate a range of pleasurable gendered desires and pursuits. These pursuits may include ways of relating to each other sexually. Good describes this as 'a schizophrenic waffling between conscious, theoretically reasonable ideals and unconscious Darwinistic instincts that have lent themselves to the crippling of feminist goals' (Good, 2003, p. 83). This is an interesting idea that I also explore in 'Lilac Tractors', for example when I juxtapose the Rock Ravel pornography Sharon is reading with Gary's cleaning of the house near the beginning of the novel:

He goes to the cupboard in the hallway. She can hear him retrieving the bucket and mop and all the cleaning products.

Rock bit Bunny's nipple hard and she squealed in delight. He tied her other wrist to the bed head. There she lay, splayed on the bed, waiting, wanting him. He decided to make her wait. He looked at her, smiled. This time he wouldn't make her beg. He slowly loosened his pants to reveal his huge

steel-like rod which he thrust hard and fast into Bunny as she moaned in submissive ecstasy.

‘Sweetheart?’

Sharon looks up to see apron-clad Gary holding the mop and bucket in each of his rubber-gloved hands.

‘Can you get Mum a present tomorrow when you go shopping?’

(LT, pp. 9-10)

Frannie seems less confused and more empowered than Theresa or Sharon, yet she is still confused and ambivalent. This confusion is what leads her to her tragic demise at the hands of Detective Rodriguez. Like Theresa, Frannie wants sex on her own terms but sometimes she is conflicted:

I who did not want to wish to belong to one man. I who did not wish to belong to anyone. I did not want to be fixed, to be held down, the closed opened, the heart broken.

I wanted to be fixed, to be held down. Opened. The old longing to be chosen, pursued, fought for, called away. (p. 120)

‘Lilac Tractors’ explores similar territory and Sharon is also confused about her desire for abusive lover, Dion. Sharon shows little insight into her confusion, and in the following scene, taking place after sex with Dion, he seems to have a greater understanding of Sharon’s motivations.

‘It was a fuck, Sharon. It was a great fuck.’

‘It might have been great for you...’

‘You like it that way,’ he says, getting angry.

‘No I don’t,’ she says quietly.

‘You don’t, but you do. That’s why you like it. That’s the game.’

Is this a game? If it is, she’s surely losing. (LT, pp. 146-147)

My review of the literature about *In the Cut* suggests that reviewers often focus on the juxtaposition of sex and violence rather than the novel's less controversial aspects. Moore has been chastised for her representation of women and feminine desire but some critics consider this unfair because the book is clearly a literary novel that is self-reflective. Frannie is obsessed with language and the violence of language. The novel is replete with literary examples and allusions. In this way *In the Cut* is a highly intelligent literary text. Linden (2010) claims it possesses 'a double semiotic nature, both in its manipulations of language and genre' (p. 7). However, these literary aspects of the work have often been ignored, with critics focussing on what they consider to be Moore's irresponsible representations of female sexuality. Critics have asked, for example, 'how can presumed feminists justify producing an erotic story involving the matter-of-fact mutilation of women?' (p. 7). Interestingly, Moore seems to anticipate the critical response to her book. On the first page, the narrator says of her students:

I considered giving them Naipul to read, *A Bend in the River* or *Guerillas*, but I decided they would be so sensibly outraged by the beating, murdering and dismemberment of women that they might not be able to see the intelligence in the books. (Moore, 1995, p. 3)

Linden (2010) considers the critical response to *In the Cut* when exploring 'the tensions that arise for women as an awareness of feminist political thought interacts with their experience of creative texts' (p. 2), particularly creative texts that are written by women and explore transgressive femininities. She focuses on female masochism, as 'one of the most contentious areas of feminism's interaction with women's sexuality' (p. 2). Merri Lisa Johnson (2002) says, 'the familiar connection of sex and violence provokes in me two responses: there's the proper feminist critique (violence is bad, connecting sex and death devalues the erotic, condones and fetishises the brutalized female body) and then there's my real response' (2002, p. 42). Johnson implies here that some women enjoy reading such texts. This is also suggested through the recent commercial success of pornographic novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* (James, 2012c). Nevertheless, the fraught

responses to texts dealing with female sexuality considered to be aberrant raise the question of whether it is 'dangerous for a woman to write such an image of femininity into fiction' (Linden, 2010, p. 2). On the other hand, 'should literature always or ever be expected to perform a transformative, positive social function?' (Linden, 2010, p. 2) Should a feminist critique of literature seek a positive narrative in female-authored texts, particularly if such critique deters women writers from exploring darker subjects? If women are deterred from writing about transgressive sexuality (whatever that means), how do they come to explore and illuminate their own and other women's desires, which at times may be dark and confusing? Moreover, how realistic or interesting is literature that only shows women as positive role models?

Linden suggests that it is 'through an acknowledgement of ambivalences, such as those achieved in Moore's writing that we may come to understand more about women's fraught relationships with men, patriarchy and feminism (p. 7). Aisenberg (1994) claims that it is through such writing that female characters as well as female readers are 'forced to reflect on and negotiate the boundaries of what is appropriate in terms of their sexual behaviour'. However, these female characters also 'provide vicarious satisfaction' for female readers. This satisfaction is considered dangerous because 'they are hardly transformative messengers' (p. 150). I believe such characters inspire more confusion than satisfaction, and it is through this confusion that we may learn about ourselves and the complex nature of desire. New ways to view femininity and sexuality may also be inspired through such work. For example, Susanna Moore has argued that Frannie's behaviour is less motivated by masochism than by her refusal to be afraid (Linden, 2010). Frannie explains: 'I still hold the adolescent belief that one must surrender to the soul's transformation, however terrifying it may be. However difficult it may be. But I am not a masochist, I know that' (Moore, 1995, p. 125). Bravery or heroism is something that is also raised in a view posited by Fishbein (1978) in her discussion of *Looking for Mr Goodbar*: 'One literary device for showing contempt for women is to have them die grotesque deaths since so few of them are called upon to die heroic ones' (p. 174). Frannie dies a gruesome death yet she is brave. Theresa also shows a level of fearlessness. What sort of bravery can women show, when they also wish to be seen as feminine, attractive

and desirable to men? Perhaps sexual fearlessness, mistaken for masochism, is a way for women to express bravery and still maintain their desirability to the opposite sex? Fear of creating and discussing such work precludes such questions being raised and explored.

Women and Madness

Sado-masochistic sex and violent pornography appear to be the antithesis of love, and yet sex is often considered to be an expression of love. In 'Lilac Tractors' I wanted to explore whether misogyny might underpin the romantic ideal of heterosexual love. Sharon realises that images of sado-masochistic pornography are almost interchangeable with images of people being treated for mental illness in the past. Past treatments have included bleeding, restraint and chaining patients to walls (Davidson & Neal, 1986). If love and pain seem incompatible, so too are the concepts of healing and pain. The visual symmetry between the chaining and restraint of women in sado-masochistic porn and of the mentally ill in asylums strengthens the idea that the brutal treatment of the mentally ill and the oppression of women may be motivated by the same force—fear. 'Lilac Tractors' explores the possibility that some aspects of biomedical psychiatry and sadistic sex express a need fostered in male dominated societies to control that which is different and perceived as uncontrollable and threatening.

In *Women's Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness*, Ussher (1991) suggests that during the Victorian era the medicalisation of insanity emerged as a way for men to control women; insanity and femininity became interchangeable with both considered as "other" and inferior. By their use of science and the concept of rational truth, from which women were excluded, 'men could uncover and control nature and by extension uncover and control women' (Ussher, 1991, p. 69). Women have historically been viewed as weak, dependent and diseased and their bodies as saturated with sexuality (Foucault, 1988). By this view, female sexuality became synonymous with insanity. While women were more likely to be considered insane just by nature of their gender, women's insanity where aberrant behaviour did exist, could easily be viewed as a sane response in protest against oppression and control. Or a result of damaging psychiatric treatments such as

clitoridectomy which, while 'not widespread, was inflicted upon many women' (Ussher, 1991, p. 73) or the 'rest cure' as experienced by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and portrayed in her short story, 'The Yellow Wallpaper' (Perkins Gilman, 1892).

Ussher argues that throughout history women have been positioned as mad in the West. This is backed up by some research showing that women are diagnosed with and subsequently hospitalised and treated for mental illness more frequently than men. (Russo, 1990; Ussher, 1991) In the UK in 1986, 83,865 men were admitted for psychiatric care and 113,386 women (Ussher, 1991). This imbalance appears to have continued in the UK. Kendrick and Simon (2008) summarised national statistics and found that more women (11%) than men (7%) suffered from a mix of anxiety and depression. This was true also for those who received a diagnosis of anxiety (women 5%; men 4%) or depression (women 3%; men 2%). In fact, women outnumbered men in all psychiatric diagnoses apart from panic disorder, which was equally common in women and men. These trends also seem apparent in Australia where in 1997 women were more likely to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder (12% versus 7.1%) or an affective disorder (7.4% versus 4.2%) (Andrews, Hall, Teesson, & Henderson, 1999). Depressive disorders were almost twice as often diagnosed in women as men (503,000 versus 275,000).

Further, some of the most invasive psychiatric treatments, including psychosurgery (Berke, 1979; Ogren, Sjöström, & Bengtsson, 2000; Pressman, 1998) have been and continue to be administered to women more frequently than to men. Up until the 1970s, ECT was prescribed for women more often than to men at a ratio of two or even three to one (Clare, 1976; Showalter, 1985) and, although not as pronounced, that trend still remains in Australia, with a nation-wide survey of the practice finding that 63.4% of recipients were women (Chanpattana, 2007).

Summary

Women's sexuality continues to be a divisive issue for feminists, who hold diverse and at times strongly oppositional views. This division may be partly because sexuality is a site of both potential pleasure and danger for all people, but especially for women. I wished to write a novel that explored a woman's use of pornography, the potential violence of heterosexuality and female masochism. Novels that have explored similar subject matter, such as *Looking for Mr Goodbar* and *In the Cut*, have been sources of inspiration, and they have been instructive in terms of the critical responses they engendered.

Mental Illness and Psychiatry

One of the key inspirations for 'Lilac Tractors' was a story told by a friend about his mother who received a lobotomy in the 1960s as treatment for her Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). I began to research psychosurgery in order to write accurately about this treatment, and through that research, became fascinated by a rather grisly chapter in the history of psychiatry. In this chapter, I discuss the biomedical model of psychiatry, which is the dominant psychiatric model underpinning psychosurgery and most modern-day psychiatric treatments. I then consider two novels that depict madness, psychiatry and psychosurgery, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey (1962) and *Woman on the Edge of Time* by Marge Piercy (1976), concluding with a discussion of OCD.

Definition of terms

Medical terminology can be confusing at the best of times but never more so than when discussing psychiatry. Unlike most other medical disciplines, there is very little agreement within psychiatry as to what illnesses are being treated (Ash, 1949; Bentall, 2009), what the causes of those illnesses are, or how the illnesses should be treated (McLaren, 2007; Torrey, 1974). The introduction to the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM III) in 1980 did little to improve this situation, with diagnostic agreement between psychiatrists rarely reaching an acceptable level of statistical agreement ($\kappa=0.7$) (McGorry et al., 1995).

Psychosurgery is a good example of this confusion. One article by Andy (1966) in the *American Journal of Medical Science* lists seven different types of psychosurgery, with various names including cingulotomy, cingulectomy, temporal lobectomy and temporal lobotomy. As evidence began to mount that psychosurgery was not working in a consistent, predictable way, practitioners just modified it, rather than abandoning the procedure (Pressman, 1998), which resulted in these different names for different types of 'surgeries.' But it was all experimental and none of these types of surgery differed from

others in its indications or in its outcome. Jack Pressman (1998) refers to psychosurgery as ‘a stab in the dark’ both literally and figuratively.

In this essay I use the term *mental illness* interchangeably with the words *madness* and *insanity* because I am interested in the meanings with which such terms are laden and feel that none of them is sufficiently denotative, at least that the truth about these states of mind lies somewhere between the different terms. The treatment of people with mental illness in Western patriarchal society is governed and moderated by the professional medical discipline of psychiatry, so I will use the phrase *treatment of people with mental illness* interchangeably with the term *psychiatry* when referring to the modern age (roughly 1800s onwards). I restrict my use of terminology to the most commonly used words in the psychiatric literature. *Psychosurgery* is the generic name for any brain surgery that aims to modify a person’s behaviour or emotions, and which is conducted in the absence of any organic problem such as a tumour. This term was coined by Portuguese neurologist, Egas Moniz who is still considered the forefather of psychosurgery (Kotowicz, 2005). The *biomedical model of psychiatry*, used interchangeably with *biological model of psychiatry*, refers to the dominant theory that underpins psychiatry in modern times: by this view, mental illness is caused by some biological or physical problem with the brain. In the psychiatric literature, the terms *lobotomy* and *leucotomy* are often used interchangeably, and essentially each refers to a slightly different form of psychosurgical procedure. Prefrontal leucotomy⁴ was the term Egas Moniz used to describe the procedure he invented. American neuropathologist Walter Freeman modified Moniz’s procedure slightly and coined the term frontal lobotomy⁵. There is no medically important difference between any of the different types of psychosurgery (Kotowicz, 2005). The theories underpinning them were not proven and their results were mixed. In the absence of any proven theory about why a physically

⁴ In some operations Egas Moniz injected absolute alcohol into the frontal lobes. On other patients he used an instrument called a leucotome which was plunger activated. He would insert this through trepanned holes on the sides of the head, through the cortex into the white matter. When discussing these cases Moniz did not differentiate between them, i.e. they were all called pre-frontal leucotomies (Kotowicz, 2005).

⁵ Freeman's techniques varied but in the end he would conduct lobotomies by putting an ice pick above the eyeball and pushing it through the roof of the orbit with the aid of a hammer and swinging the instrument medially and laterally (Feldman and Goodrich 2001).

healthy brain should be operated on, these procedures could equally be described as different types of medically sanctioned brain damage.

Psychosurgery

Even before the birth of psychiatry at the end of the eighteenth century, the idea of cutting into the brains of human beings existed. The response to this idea has wavered from enthusiasm to revulsion across time and among individuals. Between 1888 and 1889, the psychiatrist Gottlieb Burkhardt, who was in charge of a small Swiss asylum, operated on the brains of six patients. In 1891, he took the results to the Berlin Medical Congress, where they were not well received, 'his presentation [causing] a chill in the room' according to Joannette, Stemmer, Assal, & Whittaker (cited in Kotowicz, 2005, p. 80). In 1935, Egas Moniz attempted brain surgery to treat mental illness. With the help of a surgeon he operated on the brains of twenty patients and the positive response to this contrasted greatly with that Burkhardt had received. However, there were some critics; for example, Sobral Cid, an eminent Portuguese psychiatrist, felt that Moniz's patients were diminished post-operatively, and he questioned whether results that were viewed as positive were 'anything but reaction to shock' (p. 93) much like head injury (Kotowicz, 2005). Cid dismissed as 'brain mythology' Moniz's theory that a fixation of synaptic connections was responsible for mental illness (cited in Kotowicz, 2005, p. 94). Nevertheless, the practice was generally accepted and embraced by the medical fraternity and Egas Moniz won the Nobel Prize for medicine in 1949 for inventing the lobotomy. Why the idea of leucotomy was rejected when posited by Burkhardt, yet accepted when it was suggested by Moniz thirty years later has been the topic of some debate and is of interest given that at neither time was there any compelling evidence that mental illness was the result of brain pathology.

Moniz's success may be due in part to timing, as the uptake of his discovery coincided with a greater need to manage larger numbers of people with mental illness presenting post-war. In the years immediately following the Second World War hospitals were brimming with large numbers of severely disturbed war veterans presenting with what

would now be called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and physicians were desperate to find ways to deal with this. This must have been a frightening time for hospital administrators. But there were also less visible forces at work. Moniz's findings occurred during the widespread professionalisation of psychiatry (Pressman, 1998). Before the First World War, there was no such thing as psychiatry, with the care of people's mental health scattered among asylum-based physicians (alienists), private practice neurologists and general practitioners. A large endowment from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1938 enabled the creation of departments of psychiatry and new research institutes which promised to legitimise and professionalise this new speciality. In line with this professionalisation there was great pressure on psychiatrists to prove their worth and be more scientific. Psychosurgery which, as a surgery, had all the earmarks of other more scientifically rigorous medicine, was very attractive to this movement.

Even so, the lobotomy might have disappeared into oblivion were it not for Walter Freeman, an American neuropathologist who enthusiastically promoted psychosurgery in the US. Moniz's success was partly because the man himself was impressive, then this would also be the case with Walter Freeman, who was loud-spoken, audacious and eccentric. In 1939 in a strange turn Egas Moniz became an invalid after being shot in the back by one of his patients. Around the same time, Walter Freeman began working tirelessly with his partner James Watts to 'rid the world of mental illness' according to his biographer, Jack El Hai (Pressman, 1998). Freeman and Watts were said to have conducted 702 lobotomies on 624 patients throughout America from around 1939 to 1947 (El Hai, 2005). But Freeman, who was dissatisfied with the low number of people receiving lobotomies, felt that a simpler and less invasive procedure was possible. He then invented the transorbital or 'icepick' lobotomy, a procedure wherein he used an icepick, hammering it into the patient's brain via their eye-socket with a rubber mallet and then wiggling it around. Such was Freeman's enthusiasm for psychosurgery that he travelled around the nation in his own vehicle, which he called his 'lobotomobile' performing flamboyant lobotomy demonstrations in medical centres and even hotel rooms. In 1947 Watts parted ways with Freeman feeling that his behaviour had become inappropriate and unethical.

Freeman acted as if lobotomy was a cure-all. Even well into the 1960s, when psychosurgery had fallen out of mainstream medical favour in the US, Freeman continued to be its zealous advocate and went on performing lobotomies all over the country, one of these being on Howard Dully, who was only twelve at the time. Much has been written about Walter Freeman, including by Dully in a stirring autobiography co-authored with Charles Fleming (2005), and certainly Freeman was a dangerous and eccentric maverick whose obsessive mind seemed uninterested in any evidence that went against his ideas. However, what some literature about Freeman fails to mention is that for most of his tenure he was working within the bounds of psychiatry, with Moniz's Nobel Prize not just legitimising but also celebrating the procedure.

Between 1949 and 1952, 5,000 transorbital lobotomies were performed in the US, with more than 60,000 between 1936 and 1956 (El Hai, 2005). Documents including case records from hospital archives suggest that the operation was performed largely for the hospital's, rather than the patient's benefit in order to bring calm and order to wards full of unruly patients. The majority of patients who underwent lobotomy were women (Berke, 1979; Ogren, Sjöström, & Bengtsson, 2000; Showalter, 1985), with American women being lobotomised at twice the rate of men (Pressman, 1998). One justification for lobotomy being more frequently practised on women than men was that it would not interfere with their ability to assume or resume the role of housewife (Berke, 1979). In many countries, including the US, children were also lobotomised; in Japan, this included disobedient children or those who had bad performance at the school (Berke, 1979; Sabbatini, 1997). In the US, inmates in prisons for the insane were widely operated on and other targets included lesbians (Falco, 1991) and the 'mentally retarded' (Ogren, Sjöström, & Bengtsson, 2000). In some countries political rebels were treated as mentally deranged and given lobotomies (Breggin, 1975; Sabbatini, 1997). At times, psychosurgery has been used as a method to control undesirable behaviour, rather than a last-resort for desperate cases of mental illness.

So, why did doctors like Freeman think they were doing the right thing? It is difficult to sum up the evidence for the efficacy of the lobotomy because the way it was judged, like lots of things to do with psychiatry, was subjective. In one short-term follow-up study of 10,000 patients post-lobotomy, 4% were described as 'recovered' or greatly improved; 28% as minimally improved; 25% showing no change, 2% made worse and 4% died (Tooth & Newton, 1961). Summaries of information from a number of sources tend to suggest that around one third of patients improved, one third were unchanged and one third got worse post-lobotomy (Sabbatini, 1997; Valenstein, 1986). However, even in those cases where the operation was considered successful, it was generally agreed that the lobotomised patients displayed lowered zest and spontaneity, lowered creative productivity (Anderson, 1972), reduced emotional intensity (Anderson, 1972; Scoville, 1972) and impaired attention and memory (Hitchcock, Laitinen, & Vaernet, 1972). Nevertheless, because some patients were unable to function prior to the operation, for a while lobotomy was deemed generally successful despite patient deficits post-operatively. But, as long term studies began to emerge showing relapses, epileptic seizures (Lindstrom, 1972) and high rates of early deaths (Tranoy & Blomberg, 2005), the folly of the surgeons' enthusiasm for what was essentially surgical brain damage was exposed.

Eventually lobotomy not only disappeared but was relegated to the realm of medical 'mistake' along with bloodletting and the rack. And, interestingly, it safely remains there in the popular imagination despite the fact that psychosurgery is again on the increase, albeit in a modernised form (Kondziolka, 2007; Kotowicz, 2005). Lobotomy fell out of popular usage not so much because it was shown to be ineffective and used indiscriminately, but due to the discovery in the 1950s of Chlorpromazine and other behaviour controlling drugs that decreased the perceived need for more invasive measures like psychosurgery and physical restraints. These 'chemical straightjackets' revolutionised psychiatry. But like psychosurgery and the measures that came before it, psychotropic drugs do not work for everyone and often have horrendous side-effects (Bentall, 2009). The side-effects of the modern atypical anti-psychotic medications may not be as obviously disturbing as some of the side effects of Chlorpromazine and the

earlier drugs, which included Parkinsonian stiffness and tremors and the irreversible Tardive Dyskinesia, which causes involuntary movements, usually of the jaw and tongue, but include weight gain, increased risk of diabetes, loss of sexual function and severe sensitivity to sunlight. Moreover, the reasons why anti-psychotics work, when they do, is theorised about but not understood. Approximately one in three patients will not respond to anti-psychotic drugs and, despite extensive research, there is no known way to predict who will respond. For all these reasons it is fair to say that drugs, like psychosurgery and other psychiatric treatments justified and fuelled by the biomedical model, are blunt instruments.

Before disappearing in the US, psychosurgery experienced a brief renaissance or second wave in the 1970s (Pressman, 1998). This happened in the aftermath of the 1967 Detroit riots, when a letter was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* suggesting that psychosurgery should be used on habitually violent prisoners. A small number of lobotomies were inspired along with a strong backlash (Pressman, 1998). In Australia, as far as I can ascertain, there was never a distinction between first and second waves, with psychosurgery being practised until the 1970s. It has been difficult to find information on psychosurgery in Australia, but when reviewing past issues of the *Medical Journal of Australia (MJA)*, I found that although it appears to have been practised in the 1950s (Pressman, 1998) enthusiasm for psychosurgery (as evidenced by articles published about it) did not really emerge in Australia until the 1970s with a number of articles published concerning psychosurgery in Australia. Furthermore, in 1971, lobotomy was performed at a higher rate per capita in Australia than in any other Western country (Health Education and Welfare Department, 1977). It is difficult to fully comprehend why this would be and such speculation is beyond the scope of this essay.

Enthusiasm for psychosurgery in Australia, even as the rest of the world abandoned it, may reflect the personal views of powerful individuals in the politically driven world of psychiatry. Many publications in the *MJA* during the seventies came from Callan Park, a centre dedicated to psychosurgery based at Rozelle Hospital in Sydney. It is likely that many of the lobotomies accounting for our high per capita rate were performed there. In

1977, there was an enquiry into this centre prompted by a damning exposé on television. A nurse working at the centre, appalled by psychosurgery and the way patients were treated, leaked the story to *60 Minutes*. An inquiry made various findings, including that doctors alone should not decide whether a patient should have psychosurgery; instead, a psychosurgery review board should be established to oversee psychosurgical decisions. Callan Park changed its name to the Neuropsychiatry Institute which moved to Prince Henry and then to Prince of Wales Hospital. In 2009, all psychosurgery was banned in New South Wales (R. White, personal communication, 24 April, 2012). Psychosurgery, albeit in modified form—usually electrode implantation which is considered less invasive—is still practised in Victoria, overseen by a state-based psychosurgery review board.

In ‘Lilac Tractors’, Darlene, Gary’s mother, has had a leucotomy in 1972 and through correspondence with Jock McLaren a doctor who assisted with leucotomies at Royal Perth until 1974, I know this timeframe to be accurate (N. J. McLaren, personal communication, February 8, 2008). In *Eloquent Testimony: The story of mental health services in Western Australia 1830 to 1975*, Ellis (1983) discusses fourteen patients of Heathcote Hospital, once a major psychiatric hospital in Western Australia, who were selected for leucotomy and underwent the procedure at Royal Perth Hospital. I therefore thought it most realistic for Darlene to have been operated on at Royal Perth Hospital and to rehabilitate post-operatively at Heathcote Hospital.

Two non-fiction texts have brought lobotomy into focus in the last decade. These are *The Lobotomist* by Jack El Hai, a biography of infamous neuropathologist/lobotomist Walter Freeman, and *My Lobotomy* by Dully and Fleming (2007), a co-written autobiography of Howard Dully, who was operated on by Walter Freeman. To my knowledge this, and a US National Public Radio (NPR) program on Dully (El Hai, 2005) that came before it, comprise the first ever personal accounts of lobotomy. The Internet site www.psychosurgery.org, which has testimonials and information from survivors of psychosurgery and their families, also highlights lobotomy. This group conducts a number of activities to increase awareness of psychosurgery, which have included

helping to market Howard Dully's book and lobbying, albeit unsuccessfully, for the Nobel Prize awarded to lobotomy inventor Egas Moniz to be revoked.

Howard Dully was only twelve years old when Walter Freeman performed a lobotomy on him. According to Dully this was for no other reason than that his stepmother, who had too much power in the family, could not manage him and failed to love him: 'She was probably what you'd call a control freak today. She insisted on having things her way' (Dully & Fleming, 2007). Howard's biological mother had died and when his father remarried he did not get along with his step-mother, Lou. Lou took Howard to a series of psychiatrists in order to find out what was wrong with him. All six psychiatrists said that his behaviour was normal, with four of them saying that the problem was with Lou. But then she took Howard to see Walter Freeman.

I have become aware that there are many disjunctions between public perceptions and the reality of psychiatry, one of these being that extreme physical treatments, such as ECT and psychosurgery, are sins of the past when actually they are current practices. One thing perhaps helping to maintain this disjunction is a tenacious misperception that lobotomy is something ghoulish, outlandish and fit only for horror movies. Could it be that the heightened literary and filmic representations loom so large in the public imagination that they prevent a perception more close to reality which would actually be more disturbing? El Hai (2005) suggests that we make jokes about or distance ourselves from things that are too horrible to contemplate, like lobotomy. Newspapers and the popular press do not seem to help. When *The West Australian* ran a story on Howard Dully's book in the Weekend Magazine (Day, 2008) it was titled "The Man Who Lost His Mind" and had a very harsh over-exposed black and white photo of Howard Dully on the cover of the magazine with the front line, 'This man had an ice pick shoved into his brain...by his doctor.' This kind of heightened representation perhaps helps those who see it to maintain psychological distance from it and Howard Dully, ensuring that psychosurgery remains something that happens to 'the other.' However, a message is clear in Dully's book:

I find it sad that lobotomy was welcomed by ‘traditional’ medicine...I know that we must always watch out for ‘quacks’ however most people do not realise that many of the most dangerous outrageous therapies are the ones approved by the ‘traditional’ medical establishment. (p. 259)

One thing that maintaining distance from medical mistakes of the past does is enable us to trust that what is going on today is sound. On this point, Dully and Fleming are also clear:

And has anything changed today? Where are the authorities now? How come any regular M.D. or paediatrician is allowed to diagnose depression or bipolar illness or ADD in children, and prescribe medications without a second opinion? How many children are taking powerful brain medications now simply because parents find them too difficult to handle? How many of those boys and girls are having their childhoods taken away from them, the way mine was taken away from me? (Dully & Fleming, 2007, p. 268)

In ‘Lilac Tractors’ I too wished to focus on lobotomy and look at the devastation Darlene’s lobotomy wreaks on her, her partner and her family. In my view, this dark chapter in the history of psychiatry is worthy of exploration. Further, while there are a number of novels which explore psychosurgery, some of which I will discuss in the following sections, there are none to my knowledge that explore its legacy.

Portrayals of madness and psychiatry

A commissioned history of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists suggests that ‘psychiatry has often been viewed in a dark light’ (Rubenstein & Rubenstein, 1996). In “Literature and psychiatry: The case for a close liaison”, Bokey and Walters (2002) discuss the long history of an ‘affinity between literature and medicine’ (p. 393). This affinity includes many literary (Posen, 1997) and film (Gabbard

& Gabbard, 1999) representations of people being treated for mental illness that depict psychiatry negatively. In some works of fiction such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Kesey, 1962), autobiographical fiction such as *The Bell Jar* (Plath, 1981) and *Faces in the Water* (Frame, 1961) as well as autobiographical works by Janet Frame, *An Angel at my Table: An autobiography volume 2* (Frame, 1984) and *Janet Frame: Autobiography* (Frame, 1991) we find depictions of lobotomy.

Not only can literature reflect and comment on society but it can also be a powerful force for change. Some link the success of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* with the decline of psychosurgery and ECT. This book certainly increased public awareness of psychiatric treatments, which may have affected policy and practice. Interestingly, some commentators are appalled that art may have the power to impact on medicine. After quoting a gruesome description of ECT in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Edward Shorter (1997) dismisses it: 'That this account had nothing to do with what actually happens in ECT was beside the point. It scared the wits out of a generation of reader: ECT must be stopped' (p. 282). However, Kesey's description mirrors descriptions of ECT found in works by Janet Frame including, *An Angel at My Table* (1997) and *Faces in the Water* (1961) as well as in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (Frame, 1984). Both Frame and Plath experienced ECT, so I am not convinced that Kesey's account had 'nothing to do' with what actually happens in ECT. Literature may, in fact, be able to present aspects of medicine more accurately than can scientific textbooks, particularly when it comes to depicting human emotion and pain (Bokey & Walters, 2002).

According to Feder (1980), no subject defeats an investigator's desire to be comprehensive as does madness in literature, due to the sheer volume of works. Although I read a number of works depicting madness, psychiatry and psychosurgery, which are listed in the bibliography, I have selected for discussion two key texts, Kesey's (1962) *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Woman on the Edge of Time* by Marge Piercy (1976), which include depictions of psychosurgery. I am interested in the relationship between medicine and literature for, as must be expected, different shifts in medicine and society inspire literature which comments on these shifts.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, protagonist Randall McMurphy spends time in a psychiatric hospital to avoid prison. McMurphy, a non-conformist, draws attention to the idiocy of the hospital's rigid rules and regulations and inspires several other patients, who are portrayed as weak and overly sensitive rather than mad, to be strong and true to themselves. Chief Bromden, who narrates the story, has been diagnosed as schizophrenic as he is paranoid and hallucinates. Adams and Marini (1995) suggest that, because of this, Chief is an unreliable witness whose point of view cannot be trusted. However, Chief's point of view is endowed with great wisdom, which suggests that Chief's insanity is a more complex type of mental illness than that afforded by the biomedical model. This is in line with the idea that madness can be a heightening rather than diminishing of consciousness (Sass, 1992), a concept that recurs in twenty to twenty-first century film and literature concerning the mentally ill and aligns with depictions of madness found in many texts from the Classical Age and art work during the Renaissance (Foucault, 1988, 2006): 'Compared to Wisdom, the reason of man is nothing but folly: compared to the shallow wisdom of men, the Reason of God is caught up in the essential movement of madness' (Foucault, 2006, p. 33).

Michel Foucault suggests that there is nothing innate or natural about madness being perceived as an illness. He proposes that there was a moment in history when madness started to be considered a disease and an object of scientific inquiry. Lillian Feder (1980) critiques many of Foucault's assertions, including what she sees as his idealisation of madness as freedom constrained. Having seen the pain and frustration that those who suffer from mental illness can experience in my capacity as a counsellor, I see Feder's point. Nevertheless, the contribution made by thinkers such as Foucault, and others who have been labelled 'anti-psychiatry', such as RD Laing and Thomas Szasz, is important. These clinicians have questioned the medicalisation of insanity, not only because in the past insanity was seen as many different things including akin to wisdom and insight

(Foucault, 1988) but also because they question the science and effectiveness of the treatment which is driven or justified by this model.

A recent publication, *Doctoring the Mind: Is Our Current Treatment for Mental Illness Really Any Good?* by Richard Bentall (2009), makes a case for a rational anti-psychiatry. Bentall sites a number of studies which suggest that, when compared to the advancements we have made in the treatment of physical illnesses, advancements in the treatment of madness, are strangely absent. He refers to work by Richard Warner (1985) in *Recovery from schizophrenia: psychiatry and political economy*, in which he identifies 68 US and European studies of schizophrenia and finds no evidence of improvement in the condition since the first decades of the twentieth century, when the medical model became dominant and since the advent of Chlorpromazine and other antipsychotic drugs. This finding is supported by other studies (Healy, Harris, Cattell, Michael, & Chalasanni, 2005; Hegarty, Baldessarini, Tohen, Waternaux, & Oepen, 1994), including a meta-analysis of recovery rates from schizophrenia between 1985 and 1992 by Hegarty et al. (1994). Evidence that medical psychiatry may be doing more harm than good can be found globally when comparing recovery rates in poorer countries that do not have access to psychiatric advances such as psychotropic medicines. In 1979 the World Health Organisation studied 1202 patients seen by psychiatric services in nine different countries, China, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, India, Nigeria, Russia, Britain and the United States, over five years. At the end of the five year follow-up period 27% of patients in developing countries compared to 7% in developed nations had only one episode of illness followed by recovery. This finding inspired a subsequent study (Jablensky et al., 1992) which found that after two years 37% of patients from developing countries suffered one episode followed by complete recovery, compared with only 16% of patients from the developed world. Nearly 16% of patients in developing countries showed impaired social functioning in the follow-up period compared to 42% for the developed countries. Further studies have supported this finding, that is, people in developing countries are much more likely to recover from severe mental illness than patients in developed countries that are well served by biomedical psychiatry. Nevertheless, the biomedical model—which became dominant in the 1920s and, despite

the absence of evidence, has gone from strength to strength—is incompatible with the idea that madness could be anything other than a sickness.

The idea of madness as a heightening, rather than a diminishing of consciousness is found in ‘Lilac Tractors’. Gary, who has OCD, also has premonitions, as did Darlene before her lobotomy: ‘Had this sixth sense too, sometimes she knew what was going to happen. That was scary, bloody scary’ (LT, p. 167). Like McMurphy in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, Darlene, prior to her lobotomy, is portrayed as eccentric and unable to fit in to her domestic situation. Frank’s description of Darlene as a young woman indicates that her mental illness was only one of the ways in which she was different, ‘She’d say things other girls never dared say, not girls from good families, not nice girls. She got that tattoo and smoked cigarettes’ (p. 161).

Foucault argued that psychiatry emerged not as a medical discipline but as a means of social control peculiar to the Western world. Many works of literature, including *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, align with the ideas of the ‘anti-psychiatrists’ in depicting psychiatric treatment as a form of social control. The ultimate power of psychiatrists or the idea that psychiatrists play God is a common theme, while psychiatry is often used as a vehicle to portray what is wrong with society. In most literature in which lobotomy is depicted we find medical staff, usually psychiatrists, having ultimate power over the lives of their patients. Some examples include Dr Sugar in *Suddenly Last Summer* (Williams, 1959) and Dr Ross in *Terminal Man* (Crichton, 1972). *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* differs in that the power resides with a female nurse, the formidable Nurse Ratched, rather than with the hospital psychiatrist, who is depicted as a ‘frightened, desperate, ineffectual little rabbit’ (p. 60). But the ultimate, almost God-like power of Nurse Ratched or the ‘angel of mercy’ (p. 58) is clear: ‘So she really lets herself go and her painted smile twists, stretches to an open snarl, and she blows up bigger and bigger, big as a tractor, so big I can smell the machinery inside the way you smell a motor pulling too big a load’ (p. 5).

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest presents the psychiatric hospital as a symbol of social control, in which a free, almost Christ-like individual fights against the Combine (the Chief's term for the conformist power that underpins society). McMurphy refuses to conform to the rules creating a tragic power struggle. The cogs of the Combine are often juxtaposed with images of nature, which is also a technique deployed in 'Lilac Tractors' where tractors and psychiatry are paralleled. 'Lilac Tractors' also uses the treatment of people with mental illness as a commentary on man's fear and need to control that which is different from him and, as such, Foucault's theories about psychiatry and the history of psychiatry inform my work.

In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, McMurphy pejoratively refers to women as 'twitches' and they are invariably wicked and implicated in the male patients' mental illnesses; the only women worthy of trust are prostitutes. And, of course, the inflictor of brutal psychiatric treatments is a detestable woman, Nurse Ratched, while the male psychiatrist is presented as weak and as afraid of Ratched as are the patients. So, while *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* can be read as a portrait of the brutal constraints society and psychiatry inflict on people, the message gets confused by the fact that society is symbolised by a woman. If this deters one from concluding that the novel is commenting on society rather than just on psychiatry, the idea of women pulling the strings in psychiatry or, for that matter, any form of patriarchal medicine is equally as absurd as women being the holders of power in society. It has been suggested that there is a patriarchal undercurrent to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Leach & Murray, 2008) in which emasculation is paired with disability.

'Lilac Tractors' is inspired by *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in that psychiatry is paired with control and set up against nature. But in 'Lilac Tractors' it is patriarchal society that clears the land and controls or subdues those who are different. This is in line with the way the female is often conceptualised as uncontrollable nature in literature and other discourses. There is a risk that this binary of man-power versus nature-as-woman, which has been damaging to women, is reinscribed in 'Lilac Tractors'. However, as 'Lilac Tractors' is critical of patriarchal society, it subverts the way this binary typically

functions, particularly in early Australian literature. Darlene's husband and her male psychiatrist decide to operate on her to subdue her spirit as much as to cure her mental illness. 'Lilac Tractors' reveals the fall-out from these power inequities a generation later. Gary suffers from OCD but does not understand it because his mother cannot explain his or her illness to him; his father sits alone and broken having destroyed the only person in his life he was able to love; and Sharon is complicit in her own pain and humiliation because of confusing messages she has received and incorporated about gender and sexuality. Unlike *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, 'Lilac Tractors' criticises patriarchal power structures and their debilitating effects on both men and women.

Psychosurgery is usually depicted negatively in the literature and often as the most severe in a variety of punishing treatments (Arnold, 1978; Frame, 1961; Piercy, 1976; Williams, 1959). In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, psychiatric treatment is punishment; McMurphy is subjected to various subduing treatments, including ECT, as Nurse Ratched tries to gain the upper-hand in their power struggle. Right until the end McMurphy refuses to let Nurse Ratched get the better of him, fast becoming a hero to the other patients who are ruled by their fears, particularly their fear of Nurse Ratched. Lobotomy is the last in a series of psychiatric treatments: McMurphy is dealt the ultimate blow, surgery making him 'just like one of those store dummies' (p. 308).

In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* Chief Bromden identifies two kinds of lobotomies: the failures and the successes. When done wrongly, he explains, the patient ends up 'like Ruckly sitting there fumbling and drooling over his picture'. If done right the patient is transformed into 'a sleepwalker wandering round in a simple happy dream' (p. 16). This concept of the successful versus the failed lobotomy is a feature in many other texts and is probably quite accurate upon consideration of the broad statistics on lobotomy outlined earlier: that 30% of patients improved post-lobotomy, 30% of patients got worse and 30% stayed the same. McMurphy's lobotomy would definitely be considered a failure, while in 'Lilac Tractors' Darlene's lobotomy may be considered a success by the criteria the Chief uses. However: 'A success they say, but I say he's just another robot for the Combine and

might be better off as a failure' (p. 16). In the literature I have reviewed it seems no lobotomy is ever really a success.

Often portrayals of psychosurgery suggest lobotomy as a metaphorical death. The loss of McMurphy is tragic on a number of levels as he was a symbol of freedom and self-expression. When McMurphy's spirit dies due to surgery, the other patients' hopes die with it. The idea of lobotomy as death can also be found in 'Lilac Tractors.' After Darlene's actual death Gary conducts a memorial service for her at Heathcote Hospital where she recuperated post-leucotomy. This suggests that Gary feels he lost his mother in many ways when she had her leucotomy, before her actual death years later. To Frank, the loss of Darlene post-surgery is also clear: 'All I know is that everything good about your mum, all the things that made her my special girl, those are the things that doctor ripped out of her that day' (p. 167).

In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, McMurphy's lobotomy signals his symbolic death, a spiritual death so horrible that the Chief feels compelled to kill him:

I was sure of one thing: he wouldn't have left something like that sit there in the day room with his name on it for twenty or thirty years so the Big Nurse could use it as an example of what can happen if you buck the system. I was sure of that. (p. 308)

Woman on the Edge of Time

In *Woman on the Edge of Time* (Piercy, 1976) Connie Ramos, a poor Chicana woman, is committed to an asylum by her niece's pimp and her own brother. Connie is sane and displays more honesty and integrity than many other characters. This work of speculative fiction has two major story strands, one concerning Connie's life in the brutal psychiatric hospital to which she is committed, and the other involving her visits from the enigmatic Luciente who is from a utopian future world in which a number of political and social goals of the radical movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s have been fulfilled.

These include environmental protection and gender and racial equality. Another story strand appears later in the novel and depicts an alternative dystopian future where the wealthy live on space platforms and subdue the majority through mood altering drugs and surgery. Organs are harvested for use by the rich and many women are only valued for their appearance and have radical plastic surgery to exaggerate their sexual features.

The stigmatising effect of diagnosis has been highlighted by many, including Rosen (1973), who argues that psychiatric diagnoses carry with them ‘personal, legal and social stigma’ (p. 252). Having been in the psychiatric hospital once before, Connie is marked as insane so it is easy for the powerful men in her life to put her there again. Once a label is given there is nothing that person can do to overcome the effects. The label profoundly colours others’ perceptions of them. To Rosen, this did not make sense as just as the sane are not sane all the time, nor are the insane always insane. Indeed, some may not be insane at all. Diagnoses and hospitalisation cast patients in a hopeless light ‘as the label sticks, a mask of inadequacy forever’ (p. 257).

The hospital in *Woman on the Edge of Time* is full of strong women with the dual problem of being poor and failing to conform. Connie’s physical ailments and insistence that she is not crazy are deemed delusions by medical staff. Once in the hospital she is declared insane and nobody thereafter believes a thing she says. This chilling scenario is explored in other portrayals of psychiatric institutions and patients and ‘anti-psychiatrist’ Thomas Szasz suggests it is accurate:

In vain does the alleged madman insist that he is not sick; his inability to “recognize” that he is, is regarded as a hallmark of his illness. In vain does he reject treatment and hospitalization as forms of torture and imprisonment; his refusal to submit to psychiatric authority is regarded as a further sign of his illness. (Szasz, 1977, p. xvi)

Woman on the Edge of Time, published in 1976, may have been inspired by lobotomy’s second wave in the US. As outlined earlier, psychosurgery’s second wave involved a

number of violent prisoners undergoing lobotomies following the Detroit riots of 1967. Another novel published in the 1970s was Michael Crichton's *Terminal Man* (1972) in which Benson, a patient who is perceived as violent, is subjected to psychosurgical brain control which goes horribly wrong. Unlike Benson's, Connie's violence is in self-defence and justified. Her resultant incarceration and impending electrode implantation operation is due more to her place in society as a disempowered and impoverished single woman than any danger she poses. Nevertheless, I have not read any fictional depictions of psychosurgery that condone the practice.

Connie time travels between three different worlds in the novel, the present world of the asylum and alternative future worlds. On one of Connie's trips to the future, the wise future beings sum up one of the main messages of the novel:

It's that race between technology, in the service of those who control, and insurgency — those who want to change the society in our direction. In your time the physical sciences had delivered weapons technology. But the crux, we think, is in the biological sciences. Control of genetics. Technology of brain control. Birth-to-death surveillance. Chemical control through psychiatric drugs and neurotransmitters. (p. 223)

Connie notices, as her impending electrode implantation gets closer, that the idyllic future world of Luciente is fading and in its place the ugly alternative future appears. Thus she realises that she is at a pivotal place in history and can determine which world, the utopian or dystopian, will eventuate. She declares war on the asylum doctors when in one of her visits to the future she appears to be fighting the war that Luciente and her people are embroiled in. Connie sees in this inexplicable vision that the army they are fighting is composed of the doctors and nurses who are spearheading the psychosurgical experiments in her ward:

She caught a clear glimpse of the enemy through the bubble glass: the thick glasses the aquiline nose, the satisfied twinkly blue gaze of Dr. Redding as briskly, efficiently he shot off the jizer. (Piercy, 1976, p. 336)

Connie takes extreme action and decides to poison all the medical staff, knowing that this will lead to her own death. In this way Connie is like McMurphy who, in the end, is sacrificed to enable the freedom of the other patients. However, unlike Connie, McMurphy does not choose this. And Connie does, in the end, sacrifice herself so that Luciente's utopian world can exist. There are also similarities between Connie and Chief Bromden in that both display heightened awareness, as Connie is the only one able to see the highly evolved beings who visit her from the future. And Connie may be considered an unreliable witness, particularly as the last pages of the novel contain her case notes in which she receives the diagnoses of 'Schizophrenia, undiff. type' (p. 378) and 'Paranoid Schizophrenia' (p. 379).

In *Woman on the Edge of Time* the objects controlled by psychosurgery are women, the poor and the disempowered. The notion that the poor or working class are more susceptible to the power of psychiatry is made explicit in *An Angel at My Table* (Frame, 1984) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (Williams, 1959), and implied in 'Lilac Tractors'. For example, Darlene and Frank are working class people and, when Frank tells Gary about his interaction with Doctor Smyth, the power imbalance that exists between them is apparent: 'He never talked down to us, he just spoke kindly like he really wanted to help' (p. 162).

In many texts the psychiatric institution is portrayed as a place of control and punishment rather than healing. The protagonist of *Faces in the Water* (Frame, 1961), Istina Mavet, relates her experience of the psychiatric hospital:

Every morning I woke in dread, waiting for the day nurse to go on rounds and announce from the list of names in her hand whether or not I was for shock treatment, the new and fashionable means of quieting people and of

making them realise that orders are to be obeyed and floors are to be polished without any protesting and faces are made to be fixed into smiles and weeping a crime. (p. 15)

Likewise, the psychiatric hospital in *Woman on the Edge of Time* is a place of punishment and brutality rather than healing:

The mental hospital had always seemed like a bad joke; nothing got healed here...She had remained sure that somewhere in what they called a hospital was someone who cared, someone with answers, someone who would tell her what was wrong with her and mold her a better life. But the pressure was to say please and put on lipstick and sit at a table playing cards, to obey and work for nothing, cleaning the houses of the staff. To look away from the graft and abuse. To keep quiet as you watched them beat the other patients. To pretend that the rape in the linen room was a patient's fantasy. (Piercy, 1976, p. 194)

Since the 1970s there has been a strong push to care for people with mental illness outside of institutions. This process has been aided by the increasing use of behaviour controlling medicines. Due to deinstitutionalisation, psychiatric hospitals are in many ways a thing of the past. For this reason, and also as I have explored the setting of a psychiatric hospital in my award winning play, *Shift*, I was not so interested in depicting such a place in 'Lilac Tractors'. My interest was in exploring the legacy of such dehumanising places and treatments a generation later. Darlene's surgery, like the psychiatric hospitals depicted in the novels I discuss above, is depicted as anything but healing.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is an anxiety disorder that affects approximately one to three percent of the population. It is characterised by obsessive irrational thoughts which then result in compulsive behaviour.

In 'Lilac Tractors' Gary suffers from OCD, as did his mother, Darlene. I largely used my first-hand experience of working as a psychologist and treating a number of people who had the illness to draw my characters with OCD. In order to ensure Gary's is an accurate portrayal and he would indeed be diagnosed with OCD, I examined the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). Below I outline the symptoms of obsessions and compulsions as documented in the DSM IV TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) and follow these with passages from 'Lilac Tractors' which reflect Gary's symptoms:

A. Obsessions

- 1. Recurrent and persistent thoughts, impulses, or images that are experienced at some time during a disturbance; and which are intrusive and cause marked anxiety or distress,*
- 2. The thoughts, impulses, or images are not simply excessive worries about real-life problems.*

He'd think horrible thoughts, such as 'mum will die' and then be certain that the only way to prevent this from happening was to switch the bedroom light off and on nine times. Sometimes he'd have to do it over and over again, maybe up to ninety times before the fear and anxiety stopped and he could get on with his work. (LT, p. 38)

- 3. The person attempts to ignore or suppress such thoughts, impulses, or images, or to neutralise them with some other thought or action.*

He's preoccupied, trying to unravel the puzzle of the nightmare last night. He looks down at his gloves, filthy again. He can feel the mud seeping through onto his fingers. He needs to wash them before his mind will clear.
(LT, p. 86)

4. *The person recognises that the obsessional thoughts, impulses, or images are a product of his or her own mind, and are not based in reality.*

He trusts his premonitions but the problem is he can't always tell the difference between a premonition and an obsession. Sometimes he thinks if he could, he would be cured of OCD. (LT, p. 30)

B. Compulsions

1. *Repetitive behaviours (e.g. hand washing, moving items into order) or mental acts (counting, repeating words, etc.) that the person feels driven to perform in response to an obsession, or according to rules that must be applied rigidly.*

Finally the kitchen, a check that all the appliances are off, all the plugs unplugged, that everything on the bench-tops is neatly ordered and straight. He switches the kitchen light on and off nine times. At the front door he takes a moment to compose himself. Is everything all right? Has he checked everything? Laundry, bathroom, kitchen—kitchen, bathroom, laundry. Eventually he is satisfied. With that he switches the entry hall light on and off nine times, locks the front door from the inside and leaves the house. (LT, p.11)

2. *The behaviours or mental acts are aimed at preventing or reducing distress or preventing some dreaded event or situation: however, these behaviours or mental acts are not actually connected to the issue, or they are excessive.*

But on the other hand he is terrified of crashing. He quickly touches his head, his heart and his testicles. This variation of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost is one of his compulsions. (LT, p. 105)

In *Obsessive Compulsive Disorder or OCD: Questions and Answers* (National Institute of Mental Health, National Institutes of Health, & US Department of Health and Human Services, 2008), a number of personal accounts are presented which epitomise the illness:

‘I couldn’t do anything without rituals. They invaded every aspect of my life. Counting really bogged me down. I would wash my hair three times as opposed to once because three was a good luck number and one wasn’t’. (p. 10)

In ‘Lilac Tractors’ Gary has a similar relationship to numbers:

But how can he explain that unless there are exactly nine items of dirty clothing on the floor he cannot pick them up? He knows how crazy it sounds but the number nine has been associated with safety since childhood. Nine is divisible by three and next to ten but why exactly it is comforting, he isn’t sure. (LT, p. 36)

Often the compulsive behaviour is driven by irrational fears:

‘Getting dressed was tough, because I had a routine, and if I didn’t follow the routine, I’d get anxious and would have to get dressed again. I always worried that if I didn’t do something my parents were going to die’. (p.11)

Irrational fears also fuel Gary’s compulsive behaviour:

At any time he can decide, or rather his illness will dictate that something is bad luck and touching it will result in catastrophe. He cannot take the rubbish out, for instance, or he will scrub his hands raw afterwards trying to disinfect them. (LT, p. 42)

Gary's symptoms change over time, which is quite common for people suffering with OCD. If one kind of symptom is managed, others will emerge. One patient whose care I was involved with while working as a psychologist at Cumberland Hospital described how he had hand washing symptoms but then managed them by buying bottle soap only to then find the magical thinking displaced onto other objects. He found it very difficult to clean his house because different objects would become imbued with danger and when he was very unwell he was unable even to flush the toilet.

As it is likely that OCD is determined by an interaction between genetics and the environment (Davidson & Neal, 1986; Griffiths, 2009; National Institute of Mental Health, National Institutes of Health, & US Department of Health and Human Services, 2008), it was important to me to include the memory/scene in which Darlene washes Gary's hands:

Little hands rubbed raw. He's in the bathroom holding his hands up over the sink. His arms are aching at the shoulders from straining upwards. He thinks he's doing the right thing but his mum's very angry and upset. She scrubs at his hands with soap and water and it's starting to hurt and he's crying and his mum is saying sorry but that she has to do this and then Frank comes in and yells at Darlene and picks Gary up and puts him to bed. (LT, p. 168)

Kessler et al. (cited in Holt & Lewis, 2009) estimate that around 40% of people who suffer from OCD do not seek help, so despite the seriousness of Gary's condition, it is quite accurate that he would not have sought treatment. Given the secrecy around Darlene's surgery and precipitating illness, it is also feasible that Gary, who finishes school at fifteen, would not have known what OCD was prior to Sharon's studying psychology at university.

Depictions of OCD

My literature searches suggest that there have been few literary depictions of OCD, Grace, the protagonist of a recent Australian novel, *Addition* by Toni Jordan (2008), has OCD and *Oxford Messed Up* by Andrea Kane Kaufman (2011) features Gloria who also has OCD. Both of these depictions are accurate and sensitive.

Grace is beautiful and has a wicked sense of humour. She was a teacher, until she became too debilitated by her illness to work, and is a fan of the inventor Nikola Tesler, for he shared her obsession with counting and numbers, an obsession which helps her make sense of things. But so much of Grace's time and effort goes into counting and measuring the parameters of her world that she finds it difficult to function. Her life is planned to the second until she meets Seamus with whom she starts a relationship. To please Seamus, Grace starts therapy and takes medication which slows her brain down; she gains weight, loses motivation and can do little but watch TV. She realises that she is slowly becoming like everyone else, something she has always abhorred: 'Ants. Average, huddling little ants, indistinguishable and unremarkable' (Jordan, 2008, p. 177). When she realises she is losing her identity, she breaks up with Seamus, stops taking her medicine and slowly puts her life back together, losing all the weight she gained, giving her TV away and finding a job. Seamus eventually returns to Grace, explaining that he never wanted to change her, just for her to be happy. In this way *Addition* is a redemptive story about staying true to oneself no matter what the costs and it suggests that being fully oneself is not incompatible with finding love. It has similar ideas to those explored in 'Lilac Tractors' that diversity is important, that mental illness is more than just an illness, and can be inextricably bound to one's uniqueness and identity.

In *Oxford Messed Up* (2011) Rhodes Scholar Gloria travels to Oxford to study the poetry of Sylvia Plath. Gloria has an aversion to germs and human contact and we learn about this in the opening pages. 'Gloria's hands were a mess. They were red, chapped, and peeling with the sore knuckles of a bare-knuckled boxer' (p. 7). At Oxford, Gloria is mortified to find she has to share a bathroom with Henry, a music student who is grieving

the loss of his supportive mother and desperate to win the approval of his aloof father. Gloria and Henry are both lost souls who, by finding each other, also manage to find themselves. Henry helps Gloria to conquer her OCD and enter the world of human intimacy. It is not until Gloria is well and truly in love with Henry that she finds out he is HIV-positive. Gloria helps Henry achieve the academic success he needs to earn the respect of his aloof father. In this way *Oxford Messed Up* is similar to *Addition* as it is a story about redemptive love.

While there are parallels between these two depictions of OCD and my depiction of Gary's illness, there are also differences. Both Grace and Gloria are highly intelligent. Although Grace has recently stopped functioning at a high level, when she was at school her illness helped her receive high grades. Gloria is a Rhodes Scholar. Gary's illness, on the other hand, has always prevented him from achieving his academic potential: 'When Sharon decided he had OCD she said it explained why he had struggled at school. She insists that he's smarter than he thinks' (LT, p. 36). Gary is typical of the people with OCD that I saw clinically, that is, he is intelligent but unable to fulfil that potential because of the illness.

I did not want the illness to define Gary entirely so I was careful to reveal it slowly so that readers would get to know him prior to learning about his illness. This is something that Kaufman also manages in *Oxford Messed Up*. In *Addition*, Grace's illness is also revealed slowly although it is clear from the start that she counts everything. Like Gary, these characters are more than just their illnesses. However, in both *Addition* and *Oxford Messed Up*, OCD is at the centre of the texts. I did not want that to be the case in 'Lilac Tractors.' While OCD affects a relatively small number of the population, mental illness is something that many people will experience at some point in their lives. Although Gary is a major character in 'Lilac Tractors' he shares that focus with Sharon and this, coupled with the fact that the story is essentially about their relationship, helps to ensure OCD is not a major theme.

Perhaps the most famous depictions of OCD are those on screen, including the character Melvin Udall played by Jack Nicholson in feature film “As Good As it Gets” (Brooks, 1997) and the detective Adrian Monk in the television series *Monk* (Hoberman, 2002) . These depictions have been criticised for a number of reasons. In “As Good As It Gets”, Melvin Udall is a successful author but also a recluse who is misogynistic, homophobic and anti-Semitic. Understandably, this depiction has been criticised because bigotry is not a symptom of OCD. When Udall starts taking his medication he seems to be almost immediately cured, and this has been criticised as an unrealistic reflection of the reality of treating OCD. The depiction of Melvin Udall’s OCD has also been criticised as Udall seems to suffer myriad problems. He cannot step on sidewalk cracks nor touch other people, wears gloves all the time, can only use a bar of soap once, wipes door handles clean and must eat in the same café every day, to name just a few. It seems that the list of symptoms is arbitrary and exaggerated and the accuracy of this portrayal has been questioned (Wolz, 2011).

Adrian Monk is a far more agreeable character than Melvin Udall but he is also extremely eccentric and difficult to work with. He suffers from numerous phobias as well as OCD, but it is also the symptoms of these disorders, such as obsessiveness and great attention to detail, that help him to solve cases. Like Udall’s, Monk’s symptoms are many and far-reaching. While some have criticised these screen portrayals of OCD as improbable and focussed on the lighter rather than darker aspects of the illness, overall these shows are applauded for raising awareness about OCD.

Like Gloria in *Oxford Messed Up*, Udall and Monk are successful and well-functioning people who happen to suffer from OCD. While Gary is not debilitated by his illness, he does not have great talents which help him transcend it. In contrast, the few portrayals I have found of OCD, which are discussed above, apart from that of Grace in *Addition*, suggest it results in an almost savant quality. As most people who have autism are not savants, the same could be said for OCD.

Summary

Two aspects of psychiatry are explored in 'Lilac Tractors': psychosurgery and OCD. OCD is a fascinating illness that inspired and continues to inspire radical treatment. In order to present this illness authentically I drew largely on my own clinical experience as a psychologist and a counsellor. In order to justify the accuracy of this portrayal, I consulted the DSM and various psychology text books. By examining the few other portrayals of OCD I could find, I discovered that Gary is more of an 'every man' than characters with OCD in comparable literature, given his average skills and intelligence.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, much modern literature depicts psychiatry and the psychiatric hospital as more concerned with control than healing. This is particularly so when those with mental illness are women or from the working class as are the protagonists in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Woman on the Edge of Time*. Put simplistically, the psychiatric hospital becomes a place where the rich control the poor and, in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, men control women. Lobotomy is often used to depict the worst kind of psychiatry, with these two novels being just two of a number of texts emerging after 1950 that depict lobotomy. Thus, mental institutions become a microcosm of broader society. Portrayals of psychosurgery are never positive and are often very negative: the medical fraternity is portrayed as driven by power as in the case of Nurse Ratched in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, or cruel and misguided as is the case in *Woman on the Edge of Time* or merely misguided as is the case in *Terminal Man* (Crichton, 1972).

In the works discussed, lobotomy seems to be depicted realistically. Various ideas emerge when we explore literary depictions of psychosurgery, with perhaps the most compelling and disturbing implying that psychosurgery is a kind of death, which recurs in 'Lilac Tractors.' Another theme is that of lobotomy as the last in a long line of treatments used as punishment and to control rather than heal. Lobotomy comes to represent the worst aspects of psychiatry and Western society more generally. Novelistic depictions tend to support works labelled anti-psychiatry, including various studies by Foucault,

Szasz and Laing that question the increasing power of psychiatry and also the science behind it. Richard Bentall (2009) renews a compelling case for many of their arguments.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest and *Woman on the Edge of Time* can be categorised as social commentary. 'Lilac Tractors' fits within this tradition but it is a contemporary work of general fiction focussing on the ramifications of a lobotomy many years later. There has been a long history of literature commenting on social issues. For 'Lilac Tractors' to fit within this tradition, I needed to research the history of psychiatry and psychosurgery in Australia and ensure as accurate depiction of Darlene's surgery as possible. Thankfully now, although psychosurgery is still performed, it seems to be used as a treatment of last resort for people unable to function and there are strong controls over who receives it. However, I felt that the episode should never be forgotten and, as such, Darlene's lobotomy was central to my story.

Conclusions

This essay describes some of my thoughts, research and other steps I have taken from the day I saw a purple tractor on the side of the road and conceived the idea for this story to submitting this thesis. 'Lilac Tractors' has many themes but the overarching one, which provided the inspiration, is with the patriarchy and systems of control. These can be seen through the intersections and parallels between the treatment of women in Western society, the treatment of the mentally ill and the treatment of the land. Put simply, 'Lilac Tractors' is a fictional exploration of these.

Prior to embarking on this degree I had no idea that women's sexuality was an area so difficult and dangerous to write about. While my depiction of Sharon's sexuality and interest in pornography may be viewed as an irresponsible reinscribing of female masochism, for me it was nothing more than a vehicle through which I could explore the potential violence of heterosexuality, and female compliance with this, something that fascinates me and I struggle to understand. I hope that as well as fulfilling these thematic purposes, Sharon is a believable character.

While I was interested in the violence of heterosexuality, it was psychosurgery that provided the main impetus for this work. I wished to explore psychosurgery in 'Lilac Tractors' partly because I believe it is a gruesome reflection of the way broader social and political mechanisms are designed to control that which is perceived as different and uncontrollable hence threatening. Cutting into the body is a pursuit peculiar to Western medicine, and lobotomy could be considered the most extreme type of medical practice, or medicine at its most intrusive and barbaric (Z. Kotowicz, personal communication, December 6, 2007). The absence of any convincing rationale for psychosurgery increased my fascination. That most psychiatrists hold tight to the biological view of mental illness, as is evidenced by the widespread use of psychotropic drugs and the continuation of physical interventions such as ECT, in the absence of conclusive evidence for their efficacy, can be seen as reflective of a great fear of that which we cannot fully comprehend and thus control. This is not to say psychotropic medication is not suitable

and a life-line for many people, but rather that the focus on these biological explanations and subsequent interventions over others is curious and more enquiry and debate is warranted.

I had many revelations along the way, some of which have ended up fictionalised as Sharon's moments of insight. I realised at one point how interchangeable pictures of BDSM porn and past treatment of the mentally ill were, and Sharon is arrested by asylum photos in Chapter 29. I spoke with an academic who confirmed what I thought, that we are 'Pre-Harvey' in terms of our understanding of the brain. That is that our understanding of the brain is very limited and could be seen as parallel to the knowledge we had of another body system, namely circulation, prior to the 1600s. This also has become a scene between Sharon and her tutor in Chapter 72. These moments of insight were shocking to me as I considered myself quite knowledgeable about mental illness and psychiatry. I now think these reflect that I was, until embarking on this thesis, as loath to accept how limited our knowledge of the brain is, as are psychiatrists and drug companies. I continue to be curious as to why many people think ECT and psychosurgery are things of the past. Perhaps keeping psychological distance from practices like psychosurgery helps us to maintain confidence that it is sound research and science driving medical decisions when the forces may be more insidious and less benign.

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