Social theory and embodied knowledge: An auto/biographical approach

Mary E. Bastable

Edith Cowan University

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is posted at Research Online.
https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/1297
You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study.

The University does not authorize you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following:

- Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.

- A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. Where the reproduction of such material is done without attribution of authorship, with false attribution of authorship or the authorship is treated in a derogatory manner, this may be a breach of the author’s moral rights contained in Part IX of the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth).

- Courts have the power to impose a wide range of civil and criminal sanctions for infringement of copyright, infringement of moral rights and other offences under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth). Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
Social Theory and Embodied Knowledge:  
An Auto/biographical approach

Mary E. Bastable  
B.A. (U.N.E.), M.Ed. (Hons.) (U.N.E.)

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Regional Studies, in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy for the Faculty of Regional and Professional Studies of Edith Cowan University

EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY  
January 2003
Abstract

This work presents my attempt to constitute and articulate a praxis of embodied knowledge production; embodied both in the sense of the knowledge produced, and the manner of its production.

My recipe for this presentation has incorporated auto/biographical writings as a hermeneutic tool, and draws on connections I have made between a wide range of feminist, poststructuralist and postmodern insights. These have included work on subjectivity, on the praxis of graphing embodied autos, on embodied writing practices and technes, on emotion, and on the 'reality' of knowledge, exploring the relationships between ontology, epistemology, politics and ethics.

I have indulged my 'self', through the introduction of eccentric texts, from letters, novels, emails, poetry, artworks and performances, in ways which are intended to illuminate the manner and value of their contributions to a given knowledge/meaning making process.

Part 1, it has come to this ... problematizes the ontological status of embodied knowledge-production; it describes 'clippings made flesh', and demonstrates strategies aimed at the deflection or inversion of traditional specular analyses. It traces the process of youthful evangelizing, and of a desire to theorize sexed, embodied experience as of socio-political validity. Stanley’s writing on feminist auto/biography instills a ‘rejection of the ‘spotlight’ approach to a single individual’, and the ‘difficult pleasure’ implicit in finding textual lenses to deflect the spotlight, and using representation to convey a ‘productive, always partial and temporally indexed ... composite of temporary constellations’ is recognized.

Part 2, exploring visual impairment, has been a feminist performance of making meaning of the embodied experience of visual loss, and interrogates phenomenology’s ‘unsexed’ body in this context.

Part 3, toxic politicking: a Hestian dilemma, uses the experience of chronic fatigue syndrome (C.F.S., or M.E.) to explore the ‘translations’ of embodiment between sexed bodies, and encounters knowledge grounded in the experience of ‘other than human’ bodies, rethinking boundaried notions of ethics, truth and morality.

Part 4, perverse production, examines a range of perverse productions, ‘shot through’ with images of a woman academic dean who chooses to produce her body otherwise in a Western Australian country town. These considerations lead to theorizing the productions of contemporary biotechnology.

Part 5, a climacteric, recognizes the emotional honesty required for embodied knowledge-production when early experiences of sexual abuse and religious fundamentalism are re-activated in the manner of a ‘virus’, in a global socio-political context of the stark prominence of both child sexual abuse and religious fundamentalism as forms and progenitors of violence. An unresolved concern to understand the different embodiment of an autism spectrum condition remains.
Part 6 considers *connections and redirections* in orientation to ontological territories and their constituent realities, and incorporates recipes for therapy and for theory, as they relate to auto/biographical praxis.

The ‘truth-claims’ implicit in this work, and the ‘analysis’ it generates, inhere in its representational practices: ‘text’ is in context, and it tells the realities of ‘chance, randomness, openendedness and becoming’. No specular analysis of these collections is undertaken; there is an attitude of respect for the reader and their process of meaning-making, an attitude which ‘expects the unexpected’. This text is *bricolage*, combining ‘glancing’ perceptions and scraps of reality to produce embodied knowledge as ‘strings of tinglings’: it relishes the infinite possibilities of new ways of ‘knowing’ embodiment.
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 degree

(ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

(iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signature
19th September, 2003
Acknowledgements

Thank you to my children, Abi, Rose and Leo for the inspiration, balance and encouragement they have always provided. And to the good women of Armidale, New South Wales; Lewisham, south-east London; and Bunbury Western Australia; for their friendship, support and practical assistance.
USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
# Table of Contents

Abstract 2

Acknowledgements 5

Table of Contents 6

Part 1  it has come to this … 9
  - first degree nausea 16
  - Clippings made flesh 17
  - Connections 19
  - *Graphing* embodied *autos* 28
  - Representation 33
  - Emotional honesty 35

Part 2  exploring visual impairment 41
  - Affective relationships and embodied experience 44
  - Living the embodied experience of visual impairment 58
  - Unsexed embodied experience 61
    - Leder’s ‘corporeal hermeneutics’ 61
    - Merleau-Ponty and vision’s pre-eminence 66
  - Theory moves 71
  - “World”-travelling 73
  - Seer/seen 79
  - Accord: notes for a method 81

Part 3  toxic politicicking: a Hestian dilemma 86
  - Cameron’s translation 88
  - Correspondence 97
  - ‘Ethical’ awareness 104
- Political awareness 112
- Playfulness 113
- Aesthetic awareness 115
- To open conversation 120

**Part 4**

perverse production 121

- production note: discontinuities 123
- living spaces 124
- knowledge places 133
- Performance space 139
- Stretched to breaking point 144
- Contra/dictions 148
- Miscarriage 153
- Nostalgia perverted 156
- Perverse reproductions 160
- New beginnings 163

**Part 5**

a climacteric 166

- Introducing a virus 168
- Fury and despair 171
- virus ii 180
- Outbursts 182
- virus iii 187
- Articulations 189
- virus iv 191
- Naming abuse 195
Part 6

connections and redirections

- Personal equations
- Speaking to the father
- Therapies and recipes for theorizing
- Thinking new ontological territories

 References

Appendices:

Appendix 1.

Transcript of conversations between Cameron Way and Mary Bastable at the ‘Fireman’s Cottage’ office, University of New England on 15th December, 1994 and 16th March, 1995.

Appendix 2.

Transcript of conversation between Elizabeth Hatton and Mary Bastable at ‘Benessé’ café, Bunbury, W.Australia, on 18th March, 2001.
part 1

it has come to this …
'What seemed animate in the first part of the performance was not the human figure on stage, but its shadow (its umber) as it danced two dimensionally with its umbrella across the screen at the rear. What held one's attention, in other words, was not the performer herself but her projections - the tape of her voice, the image of her shadow, the slides of her own drawings - those traces of herself which somehow exceeded her.'

'At the very least, the complexity of reality, of the stories that compose our lives, our desires, our histories and communities, call for complexity in our practices, our responses, our analyses and recommendations for the future.'

'Solanka soon learned the value of working, like the great matadors, closer to the bull; that is, using the material of his own life and immediate surroundings and, by the alchemy of art, making it strange. His insight...eventually led to a series of “Great Minds” dolls, often arranged in little tableaux - Bertrand Russell being clubbed by policemen at a wartime pacifist rally, Kierkegaard going to the opera for the interval so that his friends didn’t think he was working too hard, Machiavelli being subjected to the excruciating torture known as the strappado, Socrates drinking his inevitable hemlock, and Solanka’s favourite, a two-faced four-armed Galileo: one face muttered the truth under its breath, while one pair of arms, hidden in the folds of his garments, secreted a little model of the earth spinning around the sun; the other face, downcast and penitent, under the stern gaze of the men in the red frocks publicly recanted its knowledge, while a copy of the bible was tightly, devoutly clutched by the second pair of arms. Years later, when Solanka quit the academy, these dolls would go to work for him...'

it has come to this … 

‘And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’. John 8:32

Inculcated upon my childhood was a quest. Born of my mother’s experience of Faith, it was a quest for the ‘Truth’ of the Word, God’s Word. We, as ‘Witnesses’ of Jehovah, were door-knocking evangelists in south-east London’s mid-1960’s summers. White-gloved and hatted, ‘kitten-heel’ shoe-ed, we embodied that Truth door-to-door, street-to-street: it was inscribed upon our hearts [2 Corinthians 3:3], marked on our foreheads [Ezekiel 9:4]. The Truth we had been urged to discover, and now urged others to share, illuminated His pre-determined intention for humanity’s becoming, and little had been left to ‘chance’. The hermeneutics were deciphered in the U.S.A.: what the next millenium held, known to Him in detail from the beginning of time, was interpreted and represented for us in published outline by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania.

The telos of my approaches to knowledges of the social and political, and some likely scenarios for their births, deaths and reincarnations may already suggest themselves to you from these informations. But there is (always) more; and John Stuart Mill perhaps prefigured the necessity of textual excess to understanding alterity when he wrote:

We may safely assert that the knowledge men acquire of women, even as they have been and are, without reference to what

---

4 My use of footnotes is intense throughout this thesis. Technically possible where palimpsest generally is not, my use of footnotes is intended to uncover and remark the layered, multiple, sometimes cacophonous range of text, voices and images, experience and affect which are always evident in theorising. A crowded process.
they might be, is wretchedly imperfect and superficial and will always be so until women themselves have told all they have to tell.5

I read his words now as deconstructive of the Enlightenment attitude to the range of subordinate others (woman, child, native, other), positioned as closer to nature than to reason, objectified outside of reason’s definitive parameters for ‘rational’ knowers or knowledge-production …

By the age of 19, my initial apprenticeship to the evangelical pursuit and transmission of ‘the Truth’ was long since relinquished: my faithlessness and a hunger for knowledge led me to seek ‘worldly’ truth. I tried ‘literature’: my only college-educated friend was male, and when I asked him what I should read, he first suggested Saul Bellow, then J.D. Salinger. Salinger came closer … both were still from another experiential world.

And then, in my third year of clerical work, still teen-aged, I encountered the discipline of Sociology as a way of thinking the social. I was charged with sorting out the collection of social work texts to start a ‘library’ in the London Borough of Southwark’s Social Services Department. This task was combined with part-time reception duties at the Elephant and Castle head office, above the ‘Elephant’ traffic underpass, which provided eerie and stench-ridden shelter for some of our lumpenproletariat clientele.

From reception, I forwarded to the social work ‘duty officer’ requests for money/accommodation transmitted by troglodyte alcoholic clients through the ‘hatch’, and observed the offers of casework support from social workers who occasionally slipped them a quid6.

The books I skimmed and categorized for the social work library unpacked some of the shorthand terms I heard used for individual malaise, and for the location of causal

6 One pound note
factors in social institutions or socio-economic relationships. Faithless and irreligious, I was now irredeemably ‘of this world’ and wanted to understand it.

My study of sociology was undertaken on day-release from work. Perhaps the acquisition of this knowledge of the world would suggest liberatory alternatives to the force of destiny as determined by my social class (further education was no part of the culture of my working-class family), my gendered anatomy (further education was irrelevant) and my religious heritage (both freedom [John 8:32] and the exclusive ‘prize’ of everlasting life [John 17:3] simply demanded faith and Truth-seeking bible study).

Elsewhere, I have traced in detail my dis-embodied experiences of sociological/political/philosophical theories as I attempted to place myself in the worlds they described. I look again at my ‘Sociology’ notes and diagrams from 1972. I failed to place myself in those diagrammatic explications of ‘Affluence and the Labour Vote’, where the only box ‘women’ were suggested to fit was with ‘retired manual workers’. Perhaps at 19 I simply was not yet a ‘real’ woman?

I reproduce overleaf the notes I took then on Affluence and the Labour Vote:

7 Bold lettering within the text often signals a footnoted clarification of my use of terms: in this case, my use of understand throughout my work connotes a reference to the ‘under-standers’ of the Elizabethan theatre who stood down in the pit, with optimal proximity to the text of the performance.
8 Bastable, M., The Textual Representation of Life-Story-Telling as Social Theory, M.Ed. (Hons) University of New England, Armidale, N.S.W., 1993.
'Lockwood and Goldthorpe found from Luton study that although affluence as such made little difference to voting behaviour, certain political consequences followed from:

(i) Conjugal patterns
(ii) Social patterns
(iii) Workplace affiliations ('Gaffer to man' – Nordlinger).

White collar parents, friends, spouses, workmates. A WORKER’S PROPENSITY TO VOTE TORY VARIES IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO HIS (sic.) WHITE COLLAR AFFILIATIONS.

Parkin – Two structural barriers to Tory System:

(a) Value-system generated by working class community;
(b) Value-system of industrial workers at work.

Miner, docker
Retired manual worker
Woman
Domestic servant;
Farm worker

So we can apply Lockwood and Goldthorpe’s findings to a Parkin diagram, in which the shaded area is the number and importance of white collar affiliations:

This method seeks to explain the working-class Tory by study of structural factors rather than simply socio-psychological factors.
My mother’s prior allegiance was to the déclassé almighty: affiliations across class lines were initiated daily in her ‘ministry’ with any willing hearer of the Bible’s message. Her chosen brand of fundamentalism aligned us (along with our tremulous, guilt-stricken White Anglo-Saxon Protestant psychic baggage) with an exclusive congregation of ‘brothers and sisters’ largely made up of first- and second- generation Afro-Caribbean migrants. Where would she fit in the diagrams?

My father belonged to an elite group of highly paid and unionized Fleet Street printers assistants: he had no white-collar affiliations, but considered himself middle-class by virtue of owning his home, car and spouse. The diagram’s most apt box for his averred self-perception was the one reserved for ‘domestic servants’ and ‘farm workers’.

Even notions of ‘subjective class membership’ and ‘objective class position’ would not account for these complexities and contradictions. And so I concentrated on theories of meritocracy and the ethnocentricity of IQ tests, where I could stand more easily outside of the subject matter. I passed the university entrance exam.

I had learned effectively to disappear my self, along with the range of difficult-to-categorize ‘others’ around me, for the sake of producing what was seen to constitute valid knowledge of the social world. Here were more sets of Truths in respect of which I must know myself to be the ‘faithless man’ (Jas 1:5-8), full of doubt and unable to align my thinking with the ‘liberatory’ texts offered to me. University study was suggested and avoided: my serial approaches to academic study were not resumed for another 10 years …

Artemis March would by then have produced a paper on ‘Female invisibility in androcentric sociological theory’9, which described the forms of women’s ‘invisibility’ in social theory. She named them as:-

**exclusion by default**, where the object of study (based on the assumption of its unsubstantiated importance) rendered women invisible;

---

pseudo-inclusion, where women are defined as a special case and marginalized (Durkheim’s study of Suicide explains women [whose data contradicted his theory] out of the study on the basis of their ‘nature’), and, alienation, where what she presented as an androcentric skewing of observations allowed Mill (her example) to posit education as the route to liberty and equality for women without recognizing the constraints on child-rearing or on education’s application once attained.

first degree nausea

my work in this thesis is to explore and demonstrate a critical writing praxis of embodied social theory. this task’s practical necessity was first signalled for me by a bodily development which clearly required response ‘at the scene of writing’.

i began, late in my 1980’s undergraduate degree, to recognize feelings of nausea as a physical refusal to practice learned strategies and techniques of study and representational practices which i had acquired over years (and through serial approaches to social theory). those acquisitions had enabled me to represent theories of ‘politics’, ‘sociology’, ‘history’ and ‘philosophy’ as if from outside of and unrelated to my body, any body, and so to attain an undergraduate prize-winning level of academic success. i loved to learn with a view to understanding, but must always erase any erotic pleasure, despair, joy, anger, elation, uncertainty, poetics, from the representation of my acquired ‘knowledge’. the best marks were for academic product of veracity and precision, in which intuition and poetics, colour and capaciousness were only hinted at, kept to a minimum, peripheral. but i experienced the process of its production as dry, whittled down, meagre, unsatisfying, dishonest.

i felt the need to lie to myself and my kindly professors about my reasons for not undertaking an ‘honours’ year, and again walked away from disciplinary social theory. later that year, Bev Thiele referred to the work of Artemis March (above) in a paper

10 Please note that my occasional need to avoid capital letters to begin sentences signals some uncertainty of or discomfort about my writing work-space, the space between myself and your reading.
delivered to the Australian Political Studies Association conference entitled: 'Vanishing Acts in Social and Political Thought: Tricks of the Trade'. Such positions, if unearthed, were dismissed by my kindly professors as the hysterical productions of angry feminists, or as irrelevant to the 'real' issues of sociology, politics and philosophy.

in truth, my nausea spoke the repetition of my (minded) failure appropriately to control my body. The disembodied knowledge on offer, and my polished practices for reproducing it had begun to make me feel physically sick. Emerging post-modern perspectives on language, power and subjectivity were seen as 'faddish', 'politically disempowering' – they allowed no faith in, or appeal to, the 'truth' of values of liberty, equality or justice outside of human historico-cultural contexts.

years later, I would understand connections between the experience of disembodied academic production and viral metaphors of cosmic child and sexual abuse, which gave further light to my epistemological, relational, methodological and global meanderings.

**Clippings made flesh**

Stepping back briefly from the stuff in the middle of lived theorizing, I attempt to show you the tracks, how it has come to this ... that my thesis, as Rose, quizzically critical, offers, is 'like a pile of magazine clippings'. I pick over her simile with some pleasure and a cup of peppermint tea ... there are folded sheets of dry crisp newsprint; a few yellowed snippets, well-thumbed, kept and re-read for pleasure; a photograph enveloped with a letter from a friend; thick and glossy palimpsests of colourful words

11 Serially subordinate in terms of dualist dichotomizations of reason and nature, mind and body, my persistent embodiment as other than unmarked rational knower of disembodied knowledge effectively excluded it/my/self.
12 Metaphor productively 'fleshes out' thought. Examining the value and fertility of metaphorical thinking in connection with the work of Hélène Cixous, Françoise Defroment, in 'Metaphorical thinking and poetic writing', in Wilcox. H., et al *The Body and the Text*, 1990, pp. 114-125, asks 'is metaphorical thinking mostly poetic, philosophical or political? It appears as multidisciplinary with none of the usual categories between theory and practice or even between theory and fiction.'[p. 117] It is with this recognition of its value for discovery that I attempt to uncover and develop metaphorical thought in my work.
13 'I can never get enough of that, of people talking from the middle of their lives. Spilling. Speaking. The point where the surface breaks.' Janine Burke, *Speaking*, Richmond, Greenhouse, 1984, p. 319
and images; a misplaced handwritten recipe; poetries; photocopied academic journal articles, identified and annotated; precious notes from a radio interview.

The 'clippings' simile names my work with an attitude that usefully problematizes its ontological status. The fragmentary form of its intertextual conversations signals an absence, a refusal, of any immanent textual Authority; likewise an absence of unitary, coherent Authorship.

Its epistemology is interrogated: what measure of veracity can be applied to a collection of fragments, dis-located, dis-membered or re-membered, with juxtapositions and connections effected through an oppositional imaginary, and imposed with perverse intent? The intention is to represent embodied knowledge-production honestly, counter to the hegemonic power of formal, unitary, phallogocentric scientific discourse.

And its questionable methodology adopts a de-centreing writing praxis which purposefully constructs and represents serial, fragmentary collections-in-process, necessarily unstable and volatile. Both tangentially and essentially auto/biographical, its writings attempt a distinctly representational graphing of embodied autos using strategies aimed at deflections or inversions of traditional specular analyses.

14 other than a negotiable, organic authority as characterised within classical anarchist thought by voluntary, temporary and mutual authority-relationships, where authority never inheres in structures or positions, but would seem to be unequivocally linked-in-process to embodiment.

15 Following Hélène Cixous' development of Derrida's use of 'phallocentrism' and 'logocentrism', I use the term phallogocentric to refer to the assumption of a combined authority which, in patriarchal terms, inheres in the fixed meanings guaranteed by the hierarchical dualisms of linguistic structures, and their underpinning by the primacy of the phallus/no phallus distinction which serves to reproduce the patriarchal order.

16 Mary Evans suggests (from what appears to be a distinctly Eurocentric perspective) in her book Missing Persons: the impossibility of Auto/biography (London and New York, Routledge, 1999, p. 24) that the value of auto/biography is that it 'offer(s) us a chance to stabilise the uncertainties of existence'. Conversely, I would suggest that the value of honestly auto/biographical work inheres in its articulation of selfhoods and knowledge-production of beings (human or non-human) traditionally located outside of existential (and so, theoretical) certainties.

17 For example, in her short paper on 'Self-representation and fictionalysis', Tessera, Vol. 8, Spring 1990, pp. 13-17, Daphne Marlatt's work extends a poststructuralist recognition of the functions of language and the unconscious which invert the notion of a stable, unitary, informing 'self' of autobiography. The paper uses metaphor and figurative language to question the 'f(Stop)acts', 'frozen somethings of evidence' apparent in life/history writings, introducing a 'fictionalysis' which plays with fictive images, metaphors and alternate selfhoods embedded in the text, which do not deny 'the truth of the ground, of that which bears us in all our harrowing complexity: context' (p. 17). I struggle to practice the 'writing for life' which she describes: 'When text becomes context...when it drops out of narrative as climax and opts for
Connections

What Donner\(^8\) clearly did was write an infuriatingly ambiguous book, which may or may not be "true", is and is not ethnography, is and is not autobiography, does and does not claim professional and academic authority, is and is not based on fieldwork, and so on. An ungrateful apprentice can do no worse than this.\(^9\)

I adopted the endearing position of Ungrateful Apprentice in explication of my 1993 Master's thesis, "The Textual Representation of Life-Story-Telling as Social Theory". That thesis was the outcome of yet another return to academic theorizing of the social and political, this time via a tenuous and hard-won Women's Studies program in a regional university.

Then, I brought to my studies my years of living as a woman, mother, daughter, disaffected wife, as a friend and social worker; of reading women writers, of hearing and being with(in) the life-story-tellings of a wide range of women. I knew that we 'made up' and remade our lives through our lateral tellings and their overlappings, through our performances and dissemblings. And that we carried the inscriptions of unchosen discourses; and that there was always more, dehors du texte (outside of the text). I encountered a feminist poststructuralist approach to theorizing the social: it drew on postmodern texts and insights which excited me aesthetically\(^{20}\) and erotically\(^{21}\), locating these responses, along with creativity, pleasure and emotion as constitutive of social practice, and so as the valid stuff of social theorizing.

narrative as interaction with what surrounds us, then we are in the presence of a writing for life... - it's all there in the so-called 'nothing' '(p. 17)
\(^{20}\) The dense and often difficult writings of Derrida and Foucault in translation were reminiscent of the didactic poesis of Mikhail Bakunin and other classical anarchist theorists whose a/political theories, whilst bearing historic-cultural and theoretical traces of phallogocentric 'disappearing' of women as 'other', did exemplify a liberatory writing praxis, transgressing the borders of traditional socio-political theory.
\(^{21}\) bell hooks' paper on 'Eros, eroticism and the pedagogical process' in *Cultural Studies* Vol. 7(1): January 1993, pp. 58-63, refuses the axiomatic link between the erotic and the romantic-genital. Such a conceptual limit to libidinal energies is repressive and denies the productive power of passion. She
Saussure’s structuralist linguistics had recognized language to be constructive of social reality rather than simply reflecting it, but attributed a fixed meaning to the combination of signifier and signified, a meaning effectively guaranteed by the conventions of its use by a ‘speech community’\(^{22}\). The ‘real’ meaning of ‘woman’ remained fixed: by language. There was still no theoretical space here for the thinking of women’s complex ‘storying’ practices of self-meaning-making, with their implicit inconsistencies, their performative\(^{23}\)aspects and repeated reconstitutions.

Now feminist theorists were interrogating and developing Derrida’s work, which remarked the endless deferral of meaning and the play of signification within the text, as well as the cultural and historical contexts of the discourses which produced conflicting and competing meanings. Here was a way of thinking plurality and change. I was excited, too, by the language of Derrida’s critique of Western philosophy as ‘centred upon a Reason which does nothing but recall itself to itself’ and whose ‘ontlogy is tautology and egology’\(^{24}\). I remembered my undergraduate introduction to philosophy, watching yet another kindly professor proffering from the podium his definitions of philosophy’s central concerns. Ontology, he said, was the quest to establish that which is permanent beneath all change. Epistemology was the quest to establish what we can know, and how and why we can know it.

I had great hopes of philosophy, but the arrogance and impossibility of its supposed ventures were exclusive and overwhelming. The department’s eccentric ‘others’ drank hard, but perverse observations made around that time were and remain sensible to me: one is most apt to this writing:

concludes that ‘to restore passion to the classroom, professors must... allow the mind to feel and know and desire’(p. 63).


\(^{23}\)In *Acting Women: Images of Women in Theatre*, Lesley Ferris notes that in Allardyce Nicoll’s *The World of Harlequin*(Cambridge University Press, 1963), ‘women performers are characterised as fickle, mutable, lacking consistency...’(Ferris, op. cit., p. 45) She restates her prior observation (Ferris, op. cit., Chapter 2, passim.) that: ‘Woman’, the ideological concept, is ... eternal and unchanging, but characteristic of her abstract consistency is her personal lack of it ... It seems that actresses, by their very nature as women, can achieve no critical uniformity or steadfastness of character.’ (Ferris, loc. cit.)


20
A part of Derrida's interest in Hegel lies in the latter's own consideration of the preface (introduction) of a philosophical work as both unnecessary and fictitious; a well-written work of philosophy should need no preface and the term preface is itself unreliable because it is rarely written before (pre) the work itself. (A.R. Roughley, 'Poststructuralism, Deconstruction and All That' Kangaroo No. 13, 1996, University of New England, N.S.W.)

And Derrida's description of the 'Reason' around which Western philosophies were based fitted with my understanding of phallogocentrism; so, still tipping my hat to patriarchal interests, encouraged by a flock of women fliers\textsuperscript{25}, I began to write.

The development within feminist theory of Foucault's writings on the knowledge/power nexus, and on care of the self were useful for my purpose; my methodology was becoming a writing praxis which adopted/adapted formal theoretical positions when and where they seemed liberatory, where they opened up new thinking spaces, where they inverted or perverted repressive knowledge-practices or positions.

My approach to writing of lived experience in embodied ways made connections between:

- my desire to theorize sexed, embodied experience as of socio-political validity; and,
- my desire to make the specificity of this/that experience evident as excessive of textuality: I knew there were some troubling residues, somethings (essences? meta/physics?) outside of, beyond the text: there is always more.

And it expressed my belief that poesis, the evocation of emotion and imagination through vivid, figurative language, was a necessary language of the political, and my perception of the political power of self-writing for women.


It's no accident: women take after birds and robbers just as robbers take after women and birds... They go by, fly the coop, take pleasure in jumbling the order of space... What woman hasn't flown/stolen? Who hasn't felt, dreamt, performed the gesture that jams sociality?... Who hasn't inscribed with her body the differential, punctured the system of couples and opposition...
So, my first thesis explored ways of responding to my questions then, which were:

How to know us with understanding, these women implicated in each other’s stories of bodies-in-relationship and surrogacy?

How to articulate our actual/possible selves, as embodied, sexed females from within the context of a symbolic order whose socio-political knowledges and whose theories of structure and agency have failed us, and infinite ‘others’, at their intersection?

Did new ways of knowing the stuff of politics and the social world, and of presenting ourselves as subjects-in-process offer more valuable ways of locating ourselves as actors in the world?

I scribed for and wrote with the women I knew, with women I met: in doing so, I knew and recorded myself-in-relationship with many others. We reflected on and re-produced our stories interactively over some years, sometimes in letters, sometimes as the product of friendships, with and without intentionality. Our relationships were shot through with the ‘otherness’ of relationships of power (social worker/client, sighted/unsighted, mother/daughter, surrogate mother/surrogate daughter, speaker/scribe; writer/teller; knowing participant/ ‘collected’ text). Telling stories, we ‘made up’ and remade lives; our struggles for coherence and integrity drew on the stories we were with and part of.

Through it I made connections between the creative, aesthetic and therapeutic pleasure of playing with language to ‘story’ embodied experience, and the shared recognition of the profound ‘truthfulness’ of our fictive productions. Each person I listened to, spoke with, scribed for, whose stories I wrote with and into and introduced other voices to, understood well that we were ‘liars’, that we ‘made up’ our lives. Our memories and imaginations were complicit in our dissembling, but that what we produced in our storying ‘theorized’ our lives with profoundly honest understanding. It engendered recognitions of who we were and could be which opened up, rather than closing off, worlds of knowledge.
A fictional\textit{}t\textsubscript{ical}\textsuperscript{26} articulation of the imaginary and language-play with political analysis contributes to a re-embodiment of social theory. I developed the liberatory implications of this use of ‘fictions’ in reconceiving my epistemological parameters, just as I was learning to reconstruct the ontologies of my instilled quest for ‘the truth’.

The following thesis extends that development. It is intended to uncover and clarify the implications of those revisions, in terms of how we approach not only knowledge-production of and by the multiplicity of human ‘others’ to traditional knowledges, but by extension, the productions (and so, the ‘being’-status) of non-human bodies, with its ethical and ecological corollaries. If any metaphysical ‘truth’ is to be had, it must be accessible through embodiment using embodied processes, not through covert conjuring tricks …

New lived experiences and other perspectives presented themselves and so new theorizing happened. These are what I bring to this thesis. They centre around how I/we write, make language, articulate and represent lived experience as knowledge-production, with what intent and to what effect for theorizing the social and political.

I reproduce here my letter in response to engaged encouragement from Professor Laurel Richardson, one of the examiners of my first thesis. It helps to contextualize my current work, and foreshadows some of the concerns, interests and questions it attempts to address:

\textit{Dear Laurel Richardson,}

\textit{If your life proceeds at anything like the usual pace for a woman attempting a life and academia, you may have to dredge the depths of your memory to recall my Masters}

\textsuperscript{26}For example, in her short paper on ‘Self-representation and Fictionalysis’, Tessera, Vol 8, Spring 1990, pp. 13-17, Daphne Marlatt’s work extends a poststructuralist recognition of the functions of language and the unconscious which invert the notion of a stable, unitary, informing ‘self of autobiography. The paper uses metaphor and figurative language to question the ‘f(\text{stop})acts’, ‘frozen somethings of evidence’ apparent in life/history writings, introducing a ‘fictionalysis’ which plays with fictive images, metaphors and alternate selfhoods embedded in the text, which do not deny ‘the truth of the ground, of that which bears us in all our harrowing complexity: context’(p. 17). I struggle to practice the ‘writing for life’ which she describes: ‘When text becomes context…when it drops out of narrative as climax and opts for narrative as interaction with what surrounds us, then we are in the presence of a writing for life…- it’s all there in the so-called ‘nothing’’ (p. 17)
thesis which you examined last year– almost a year ago. Then, in the perceptual fog of chemically-induced chronic fatigue syndrome, I remember how important it was for me that you be asked to examine my thesis (The Textual Representation of Life-Story-Telling as Social Theory): a woman who was comfortable on the (intellectual, sociological) margins, who quoted from bell hooks and Maria Lugones in the same brief article, and who chose to perform sociology as poetry was my kind of writer! And in the last months of 1993 after receiving your evaluation, I managed some days of uncharacteristic exhaustion and depression (which was eventually diagnosed as C.F.S.) by perking myself up with a read through your engaged, encouraging and affective comments and questions. Although it then seemed impossible that those comments related to anything I might have written, given my inability at that time to produce and maintain a shopping list, there were occasional rushes of remembering and excitement. On good days, I ventured to think that I might one day have the wherewithal to respond....

For a few months now, life's been back to meditation- and extremely-healthy-diet-assisted trot, with two children and a PhD to run. Time now to thank you for your comments. Many of your questions seem, on reflection, to relate to my need to refer to, now simply to take issue with and subvert the seductive tyranny of the patriarchal interests implicit in our inherited language and knowledge. Not only do I want to 'talk to patriarchal interests' as you suggest, but I'm still aware of my attempts to translate myself back into the 'home' of a lifetime's knowledge-practice. And in the translation my knowledge is alienated, silenced: because my place, of course, is not inside the protecting walls of the secure home, but out in the big backyard compost heap, where we make our own living warmth with the other organic epistemological refuse. Perhaps the cycle of resentment, anger, creativity which this process impels within academia is necessary. But exhausting, because every time one attempts to write differently, there's a process of reversal and denial to be gone through in which 'everything shuts off - the analytic way of thinking, thinking inculcated by college, studies, reading, experience... Nothing is concerted.' (Marguerite Duras, from an interview with Susan Husserl-Kapit in Signs, Winter 1975)

Your questioning of my use of a 'standard narrative frame' for the thesis is partly to do with problems of format. But again I think it points up this desire to keep a foot in the
world of legitimate philosophical discourse. What brought me back to university years after the abortion of my pre-feminist-theory under-graduate studies was the memory of the inspiration of alternative stories still evident within those exclusive knowledge-traditions: the devalued pre-Socratic philosophers, the anarchist theorists of the apolitical, etcetera. Reviewing those alternatives was an important element of a post-structuralist theoretical approach which, as Michael Hardt remarks (in Gilles Deleuze, Uni of Minnesota, 1993 p.ix) 'is involved not simply in the rejection of the tradition of political and philosophical discourse, but more importantly in the articulation and affirmation of alternative lineages that arise from within the tradition itself.'

Now, the work I want to do in making theoretical space for embodied, sexed subjectivities, and further to recognize embodiment and the consciousness which it engenders as the basis both of knowledge-production, and of a playful, productive ethics, seems perhaps to fall outside of post-structuralist discourse. Probably because I have felt discomfort with the discarnate nature of psychologized bodies, unsexed by Lacan and unvoiced by Foucault, I hear with some concern Somer Brodribb’s words:

A frantic search in the masculine classics for their relevance to women portends subservience and alienation. Women can only smash a contingent relationship to knowledge and philosophy by a clear and unequivocal break with The Master....What is necessary now is more feminist thinking that does not take on the masculine construction of a question, but begins a more complex way of conceptualizing ... ('Discarnate desires', in Women’s Studies International Forum, Vol.14(3), 1991, pp135-141)

And her suggestion that ‘without reference to sexual politics, theories of sexuality are ideological and metaphysical’. She says that ‘we need women’s work that rejects integration into the world view, sees the incongruity of seeking in masculine paradigms a process that is without our context, or a context that is without our process, refuses the silencing of women by the masculinization of the feminist project, and the feminization of patriarchy by Dionysian discourse’ (cf. her Nothing Mat(t)ers: A feminist critique of Postmodernism, Melbourne, Spinifex Press, 1992)
Next day...

Your comments leave me with questions about 'writing lives so that readers will want to read them'; 'bringing equity into a final layered, multivocal text'; and about how we can 'both represent how lives are lived and stories told and tell stories that readers will want to read'. This is where there seems to be some connection with an ethical position that I'm trying to work out, am getting clues about.

Firstly, it's something to do with the predisposition we have, and the approach we (and I recognize the complexity of who is speaking for whom as 'we' here, but stay with me, because these ideas may elucidate that problem too ...) take to relationality. Lisa M. Heldke (Food politics, political food, in Cooking, Eating Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food, Indiana Uni. Press, 1992) speaks about the necessity of 'rethinking the nature of ourselves as persons' if we are to undermine the dichotomous egoism/altruism (charity) account of ethical motivation. She suggests that 'the separation which is presumed (by both altruism [charity] and egoism) renders as optional all relations between persons.'

Her position of a Coresponsible Option (p.310) which 'recognizes the constitutive role of relations in human personhood' locates 'acting in the world (as) a communal, relational activity'...It connects with Deane Curtin's development (in Recipes for values, in the same book) of the Buddhist ethic of compassion, with its implicit recognition of co-dependence and interrelatedness, and its multiple definition of self and others (as, for example, understanding and ignorant, oppressor and oppressed, neither exclusively). Such self- and other-recognition facilitates participatory living, with a participatory understanding which 'recommends compassionate entrance into the worlds of others, 'world-travelling'; (p. 139). So, to the extent that our read/writing of our/other lives is a participatory, reflexive practice of movement through, across, with 'others', and we take an ethical, rather than a literary-critical approach to these stories, the pleasure of the text takes on a different meaning for interactive read/writer. And perhaps the reader's pleasure becomes located in their play/interplay with difference?
With Lucie, in the thesis you examined, that's how the knowledge-making happened too — not in the attempt to account and record f-acts, but in; the imaginary play — hers and mine:

Lucie: ‘I was just a liar, wasn’t I?’

Lucie has always loved to read, and used to ‘scribble’ stories when time and other constraints allowed. She wanted to leave something of herself for her sons; and she took real pleasure too, in the work of remembering and representing...things which she felt might soon be lost to her memory. This was the ‘rehearsal’ process which she and I had discussed, through which we had both habitually used language and/or writing to ‘play out’ situations, events and practices — to practice and re-examine them, and to place them in self-stories which formed our respective repertoires of ‘performance’... (pp. 48-9)

Mary: ‘As I live, I know’;

and that knowledge will be a social product, formed through interaction and relationship with embodied subjects-in-process, and through positioning vis a vis social structures. Fiction is a fact of consciousness, itself in turn the product of that lived experience. Memory and imagination are intimates, indivisible in the production of self- and hence social knowledge... Lucie does not adopt the conventional posture of autobigrapher (as writer of a unified, coherent, fixed ‘self’), nor does she produce conventional narrative definitions of linear structure and causation to describe her lived experience. (p. 50)

Whatever the complications and ambivalences, writing embodied bios is so important; and I’m read/writing Susan Sontag’s Illness as Metaphor and Arthur Kleinman’s The Illness Narratives, into eco-feminism, eco-anarchism and social ecology, understanding stories of environmental illnesses which are classic mind/body dis-eases.

And a final thank you for being so outrageous as to encourage me to be more disruptive in this boy’s club, where there is no funded position in Women’s Studies and no identity for them, or us. The encouragement (implicit in your comments) to dump the standard narrative framework and explore alternatives — the shocks and complexities of
knowledge-making, attempting its honest representation as, for example, erotic and aesthetic knowing – is inspirational and well-taken.

I'd love to hear from you with anything which you feel may inspire pleasure, excitement, delight, or movement in thought on anything here...

With best wishes.

Graphing embodied autos

Initially, the writings of Liz Stanley on the epistemic and political implications of self-life-writing for women, illuminated and impelled my work. The embodied episteme upon which Liz Stanley insisted for a feminist biographical method included:

- insistence that works of biography should be seen as composed by textually-located ideological practices… - and analytically engaged with as such;
- a textual recognition of the importance of the labour process of the biographer as researcher in reaching interpretations and conclusions:..."intellectual autobiography" as an analytic (not just descriptive) concern with the specifics of how we come to understand what we do, by locating acts of understanding in an explication of the grounded contexts these are located in and arise from, and
- rejection of the ‘spotlight’ approach to a single individual.

In theorizing auto/biography, Liz Stanley noted that ‘authorized facts are actually authorized fictions, the picking out of specifics related by the interpretive understanding of the author and presented as generic unfolding truths about the subject." My critical practice of self-life-writing selects precisely those un-authorized fictions, ‘picked out’ and so, implicitly ‘interpreted’, to hold a mirror to my epistemological concerns.

Developing approaches to biographies\textsuperscript{29}, auto/biographies\textsuperscript{30}, ethnographies\textsuperscript{31}, and life story writing\textsuperscript{32}, combined with the range of French feminist writings, invigorated my attempt to write social theory 'otherwise'. I was excited by Cixous' explication of \textit{l'écriture féminine} as it traversed the borders of signification and the imaginary with a 'body-writing' which recognized lived embodiment to constitute the locus of language. It pushed language through its limits, and suggested ways of metaphorising self/other writing within the socio-political. My production is concrescent with that of autoethnographic\textsuperscript{33} writers, notably Carolyn Ellis, who records her intention to:

... develop an ethnography that includes researcher's vulnerable selves, emotions, bodies, and spirits; produce evocative stories that create the effect of reality; celebrates concrete experience and intimate detail; examines how human experience is endowed with meaning; is concerned with moral, ethical and political consequences; encourages compassion and empathy; helps us know how to live and cope; features multiple voices and repositions readers and 'subjects' as coparticipants in dialogue.\textsuperscript{34}

I applaud and take pleasure in her work, which effectively 'connects the practices of social science with the living of life.'

The autoethnographic concern to 'seek a fusion between social science and literature'\textsuperscript{35}, however, sits less comfortably with me. My work, too, is intended to combine and connect theorizing with creative production, aesthetic evaluation and pleasure. It values embodied knowledge and eschews foundationalist scientism for social theoretical use.

But the term 'fusion' seems to undermine the great value I perceive in looser assemblages: aligning, re-aligning, unraveling and reconnecting texts (with intent and as

\textsuperscript{29} cf Modjeska, D., \textit{Poppy}, Ringwood, McPhee Gribble, 1990 and \textit{The Orchard}, Sydney, Macmillan, 1994


\textsuperscript{34} Ellis, 'Heartfelt autoethnography'., p. 669

\textsuperscript{35} ibid, p. 669
a process), allowing the 'academic production' itself to function as a conduit. That is to say, I want the production as praxis to function as a site for the bringing-together of texts in productive combination; for their boundaries, distinctions or contrarieties to be remarked; or simply for their mutual or combined transportation onward. My interest is in the politics of representation, the meanings and effects of graphing bios, and its implicit self-life-writing. The intended autoethnographic ‘fusion’ of ‘social science’ and literature’ carries, it seems, an accession to some exclusive and canonical values which seem to be of limited use for my approach to social theory.

A tension remained for me between the liberatory power of poststructuralist selflessness and the recognition my writings with others had produced of an important 'always more', outside of the text.

Those residual embodied specificities, often complex and contradictory, amounted to other than the particularities of identity politics. They were part of what was shared, overlapped, compared and exchanged in our knowledge-production, and to understand these seemed to require some reworking and interrogation of notions of community. To what extent, for example, were those residues of specificity imbricated, connected with other than human ‘beings’? Ethical, ecological and biological questions were implicated, arising concurrently with, and re-presenting themselves in the course of Parts One to Four, the auto/biographical texts which follow.

In critiquing approaches to analyses of women’s auto/biographical texts which she suggests have often amounted to analyses of powerlessness, of ‘the system in which the self is caught’, Elspeth Probyn describes (drawing on the work of Michelle le Doeuff) an understanding of the self as ‘a point of view’:

The ‘point of view’ is not concerned with creating that which it is trained on; of course, it allows for the construction of questions and modes for analyzing the scrap of reality that is under its consideration, it

36 Conduit: 1. A channel or pipe for conveying liquids; 2a. A tube or trough for protecting insulated electric wires; 2b length or stretch of this.[O.E.D.]
37 Phelan, S., Specificity: Beyond equality and difference, Differences, 3 (1), 1991, pp. 128-143
does so in such a way as to allow these questions to meet up with the facts: one can only say, therefore, that it produces things. As Probyn emphasizes,

'... the 'point of view' doesn't create that which it describes; it has to construct questions from the level of the reality that it is trained upon. It produces or provokes connections; this is to realize the self's doubled locations.

Jeanne Perrault's edition of 'Writing selves: contemporary feminist autography' aims to foreground the suggestive and flexible processes of autos and graphia evident in a range of transformative feminist 'self'-writings. Her study of a range of these autographs addresses 'who and what is meant by that written 'I' as an element in the 'we' of feminist communities'. Her query is categorical and like all directed knowledge-production, non-innocent, and I am comfortable that she achieves tentative descriptions rather than definitive answers. She finds in what she terms autography 'a writing whose effect is to bring into being a 'self' that the writer names 'I', but whose parameters and boundaries resist the monadic'. My preference remains for the term auto/biography, which recognizes 'bios', life as process, to be implicated in the movement of self/other-writing. Perrault remarks the 'multidimensional...will toward self-making in feminist textual practice', whilst noting the 'highly indeterminate feminism, and an equally indeterminate notion of selfhood' implicit in this unstable process. She is informed by a range of theorists whose work has substantiated mine, and remembers to me Donna Haraway's evocative observation that:

The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another. Here is the promise of objectivity: a

38 le Doeuff, M., L'etude et le rouet, Paris, Seuil, 1989, pp. 105-106
scientific knower seeks the subject position not of identity, but of
objectivity; that is, partial connection\textsuperscript{41}.

I was attracted by Perreault’s reading of feminist autographical texts as ‘not a site or a
space, but as an energy’ and, whilst maintaining an embodied writing practice, retained
this image of dynamic text in my work.

\begin{quote}
P was not satisfied with a particular truth. She liked bits and pieces,
fragments. She had no faith in wholes, completions, endings, harmony.
Unlike L, who sought to find the cracks and stop them up, P took pleasure
from minutely examining the pieces.\textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

Working eccentrically is a difficult pleasure, and assists in de-centreing my self-as­
writer. My practice is one of interrupting flows, writing ‘other-wise’, telling stories,
collecting/making poetry, showing letters, using my writing self as a periscopic
‘point of view’ to angle approaches to scraps of reality, introducing interlocutory voices
as theorists and/or in poesis, with writings occasionally presented as performance text\textsuperscript{43}.
These writings have become a feature of an ethical praxis of self-care, for myself and
for others involved. Its social theoretical substance implicates interactive, self-reflexive
and reflective methodological technes for representation and analysis.

\textsuperscript{43} As in the case of the ‘Visual Impairment’ performance text: see Part 2 herein.


Representation

I have needed to think about written representation in ways which can first allow its validity as a theoretical practice, and then facilitate useful ways of introducing a range of voices, texts, performances, imaginations into a theoretical conversation. I have attempted to theorize the social as I have encountered it in open-ended ways which introduce multiple tellings and points of view, presenting a range of glancing perceptions, and producing a range of context- and praxis-implicated knowledges. I have experimented with ways to theorize the interstices of embodied knowing: the spaces between corporeality and incorporeality, the locus of the ‘always more’ of embodiment.

My desire is not to analyse, or even to apply only a fictionalysis to, the discursive contexts or productions of the voices/images/ideas I introduce into conversation. Nor (in owning the politics of a feminist poststructuralism) is it to ensure in addition that attention is paid to the ‘social and institutional context of textuality in order to address the power relations of everyday life’. Although I believe the texts I offer serve to facilitate those practices, my intention, given my implacable concern with truthfulness vs. the truth, is to craft an impression of these introduced productions based on my own conception of how thought and affect combine in knowledge-production. That conception expresses my heartfelt knowledge that to understand is to take (and describe) a position (motile - and that is my movement - one which offers sometimes connection, sometimes confrontation, sometimes a periscopic view, sometimes peripheral, performative glances) which invites the risk (to any truth) of other knowledges/imaginations playing/working on its ideas and impressions.

For Linda Martin Alcoff,

Representation is not an association between a linguistic item and a bit of the world, but a kind of momentary constellation in which active
human practice is involved though not unilaterally determinant over the outcome

The description, above, follows her observation that ‘representation is at the heart of any debate over the ontology of truth’ in a paper whose interest is in ‘rethinking an ontology of truth within an immanent rather than a transcendental metaphysics’. The utility of this endeavour would be to present a conception of truth as ‘becoming’ rather than ‘being’, as in process rather than fixed. This would have the effect of situating truth-claims in a reflexive relationship with lived experience. Her interest here is important for me, because my work is expressive of and embedded in lived experience, attempting to articulate, uncover or signal its complexities and spillage, its ‘always more’, in embodied ways. My representational practices function in effect as truth-claims for embodied knowledge-production.

Alcoff’s work in describing an ‘epistemology of becoming’ is helpful in explicating my attitude to representation and knowledge-production. She traces her development of Hilary Putnam’s account of ‘internal realism’: in his view, ‘representation and reference ... do not convey an appropriation of being; they convey a productive, always partial and temporally indexed, description of a virtual reality, that is, a composite of temporary constellations’. Alcoff remarks her preference for the term ‘immanent’ to describe Putnam’s realism, valuing its clear counterposition to any transcendent reality existing beyond ‘human practice or intervention’. The difference between true and false claims to knowledge would then be not their representation (or not) of an external reality, but would be located in the ‘nature, quality, and comprehensiveness of representation’. On Alcoff’s extension of Putnam’s account, ‘truth is an emergent quality of all the elements involved in the context, including but not limited to theory’. Putnam’s concept holds that ‘truth is (partially) dependent on theory, which is created by scientists’. Nonetheless, as Alcoff points out, he concurs with Nelson Goodman that:

45 ibid., p. 72
The differences between fitting a version to a world, a world to a version, and a version together or to other versions fade when the role of versions in making the worlds they fit is recognized.

Again with the hindsight of preface and lately-gathered understanding, my concern with representation and truthfulness has links to what Elizabeth Grosz has referred to as the ‘labyrinthine enchantments offered for contemporary thought by Deleuzianism’. Deleuze’s method of transcendental empiricism, as explicated by Claire Colebrook, ‘insists on … ‘the experienced’ or ‘given’ … as the starting point of enquiry’: it is transcendental because, whilst refusing the ‘given’ transcendent notions of ‘matter, reality, man, consciousness or ‘the world’’ as knowledge-bases, he transcends the limitation of human experience to include ‘the perceptions of plants, animals, microbes and all sorts of machines’. As well as having considerable implications for language and/as representation, Deleuzian thought is concrescent with the ethical and ecological concerns and insights developed in this thesis. These ideas will be reconsidered in the place of hindsight, on reflection.

Emotional honesty

... emotional honesty pays epistemic dividends. In knowing how she feels about something, a subject knows what she thinks of it. Self-awareness then affords epistemic access to the cognitive commitments emotions embody. These may be commitments the subject never expressly entertained, even ones she would be loath to acknowledge as her own. So her emotions may disclose convictions she has no other way to discover.

I have attempted to approach my work with emotional honesty: the ‘dividends’ paid, beyond the critical epistemic value indicated above, are ethical and aesthetic, political and therapeutic.

46 ibid., p. 71
Victor Seidler has engaged with issues of emotion in addressing masculinities, violence, and the expression of emotion in and as social theory. I observed between his and Liz Stanley's writings and my own interests connections of social class and culture, shared eras, known persons and known landscapes. I was drawn to his writing for its value as a lingua franca: I wanted to communicate my concern with writing 'otherwise' to a friend who was now a male professor, and had been a political activist with Victor in 1970’s London.

As I make reference to the work of a male social theorist, I note here a need to 'talk to' patriarchal interests which I bring to my work. Although it is generated by feminist knowledges and energy, I have always retained a concern to find or construct a lingua franca, not simply for communication, but perhaps to validate or recommend our knowledge production in the place of power. With the hindsight of 'preface', its likely psychosocial basis seems to become evident in the course of this thesis. But there is also an attitude of respect for historico-culturally situated knowledges whose discursive practices may have been oppressively patriarchal. The respect is again for that elusive 'something more' of lived, embodied experience as itformulates episteme and is made evident in theoretical practice. Extraneous to postmodern textuality, these somethings more: of desire, poesis and performance, pleasure, ethics, creativity, aesthetics, which are sometimes implicit in what is unarguably masculinist theorizing for example, are what remind me that I want to understand other than an exclusively feminist practice. I want to make connections between locations.

Ironically though, it is poststructuralist and postmodern developments which have illuminated these elusive residues of 'selfhood'. So, for example, in the works of classical anarchist theorists for whom women’s presence in general was subsumed under notions of support, context, reflection, there remain factors which render their elitist and exclusive revolutionary ideologies readable as inspirational poetic invocations of oppositional imagination. Clearly, my early religious experiences endeared to me the anarchist writings of Mikhail Bakunin:
Until the days of Copernicus and Galileo everybody believed that the sun revolved around the earth. Was not everybody mistaken? From the origin of historic society down to the present day there has been always and everywhere exploitation of the masses by some dominant minority; oppression of the people by the Church and by the State. Must it be concluded that this exploitation and this oppression are necessities absolutely inherent in the very existence of human society?48

Victor Seidler wrote about the need he perceived for a ‘different conception of the political which can sustain a different vision of masculinity’49, and

...remember(s) working in the Ford group ... encouraging workers to come to meetings we had arranged. Sometimes they would feel guilty at not coming ... they wanted the time with their families ... Proving ourselves as ‘militant’ ... closed to our own backgrounds ... it was hard to be open to others50

He observes that

When men seek to theorize the relationship between emotions and power as part of exploring the tension diverse men often feel in relation to dominant masculinities, this is too readily impugned in Protestant terms as a form of ‘self-indulgence’51.

Indeed, to indulge (L. indulgēre – to give free rein to) selves, inviting them to articulate knowledges from myriad discursive locations, and from the loci of residues of selfhood evinced through memory, imagination, and in libidinous creative production, has ominous implications for exclusive, repressive knowledges. The complexity of self

48 Mikhail Bakunin, God and the State, New York, Dover, 1970, p. 20
50 ibid., p182

37
indulged will adopt heterological\textsuperscript{52} approaches which undermine the bases and structures of traditional knowledges.

And Victor Seidler recognizes that in order productively to theorize different masculinities and spaces for change:

\ldots we want an analysis that is able to illuminate the importance of the emotional lives of men, as part of a more general theoretical shift able to validate emotions and feelings as sources of knowledge.\textsuperscript{53}

Thoughtful practice\textsuperscript{54}, de-alienated through the use of language and structures which have the capacity to express mutable connections and connectedness if not fixed community, and to articulate \textit{linguas franca} if not the marriage of the holy couple, seeks emotional honesty. The production of emotionally honest embodied knowledge using auto/biographical accounts, or self stories, will often implicate narrative practices which themselves effect therapeutic ends: this may be extended, as Yvonne Anderson suggests, to \textquote{constructing an auto/biographical account which in its inception and creation is therapeutic}\textsuperscript{55}. This is in keeping with an ethical praxis of self-care, as Elspeth Probyn notes:

As an activity of theory and of being, the self is not an esoteric question; it is not to be held at a distance\ldots The self is not an end in itself, it is the opening of a perspective, one which allows us to conceive of transforming our selves with the aid of others. Far from being a self-

\textsuperscript{52} Michel de Certeau, in \textit{Heterologies} (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1986), describes heterological approaches which recognize subjects as both organizers and knowers of lived experience, and so traverse disciplinary boundaries and disrupt the traditional organization of knowledge on which those boundaries depend.


\textsuperscript{54} Cuomo, C.J., ( in \textit{Feminism and Ecological Communities}, London and New York, Routledge, 1998, p. 143) notes Lisa M. Heldke's characterization of theoretical work as a form of \textquote{thoughtful practice}'. Heldke's (Curtin, D.W. and Heldke, L.M., \textit{Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food}, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1992) extrapolation of John Dewey's assertion that philosophy should start with practices or \textquote{common experiences'}, is in one sense its inversion. Her position is not that philosophy should encompass practice within its theory, but that daily practices such as cooking, and our relations to food, are praxes which are ontologically prior to philosophy's historically \textquote{privilege(d) questions about the rational, the unchanging and eternal, and the abstract and mental} (pp. xiii, xiv).

\textsuperscript{55} Anderson Y., \textquote{Therapeutic narrative: the final say} in \textit{Auto/biography} Journal of the British Sociological Association's Auto/biography study group Vol. VII (1&2), (pp. 63-68) p. 64
centred or a self-centring action, this is to radically de-centre our selves, to work at the extremity where myself can be made to touch hers\textsuperscript{56}.

Transformation ‘with the aid of others’ is implicit in the relationships of alterity which characterise auto/biographical texts: as Anderson notes, ‘there is always an other in an auto/biographical text...the greater the number of others present in a narrative, the more perspectives will be possible in the reading or telling’\textsuperscript{57}

I invite you to encounter and understand the gatherings here, through the register of representational orders, as snatches of affective conversation. With luck, they will serve to engender the effect, and the affect, of useful, engaged theorizing.

Part 1, \textit{it has come to this} \ldots, problematizes the ontological status of embodied knowledge-production; it describes ‘clippings made flesh’, and demonstrates strategies aimed at the deflection or inversion of traditional specular analyses. It traces the process of youthful evangelizing, and of a desire to theorize sexed, embodied experience as of socio-political validity. Liz Stanley’s writing on feminist auto/biography instills a ‘rejection of the ‘spotlight’ approach to a single individual’; and the ‘difficult pleasure’ implicit in finding textual lenses to deflect the spotlight, along with the use of representational practices to convey a ‘productive, always partial and temporally indexed \ldots composite of temporary constellations’ is recognized.

Part 2, \textit{exploring visual impairment}, has been a feminist performance presentation of making meaning of the embodied experience of visual loss, and interrogates phenomenology’s ‘usexed’ body in this context.

Part 3, \textit{toxic politicking: a Hestian dilemma}, uses the experience of chronic fatigue syndrome (C.F.S., or M.E.) to explore the ‘translations’ of embodiment between sexed bodies, and encounters knowledge grounded in the experience of ‘other than human’ bodies, rethinking boundaried notions of ethics, truth and morality.

\textsuperscript{56} Probyn, E, \textit{Sexing the Self}, London and New York, Routledge, 1993, p. 169
\textsuperscript{57} Anderson Y., op. cit., p64
Part 4, *perverse production*, examines a range of perverse productions, 'shot through' with images of a woman academic dean who chooses to produce her body otherwise in a Western Australian country town. These considerations lead to theorizing the productions of contemporary biotechnology.

Part 5, *a climacteric*, recognizes the emotional honesty required for embodied knowledge-production when early experiences of sexual abuse and religious fundamentalism are re-activated in the manner of a 'virus', in a global socio-political context of the stark prominence both child sexual abuse and religious fundamentalism as forms and progenitors of violence. An unresolved concern to understand the different embodimindment of an autism spectrum condition remains.

Part 6 considers some *connections and redirections* in orientation to ontological territories and their constituent realities, and incorporates recipes for therapy and for theory, as they relate to auto/biographical praxis.
part 2

exploring visual impairment
Two women as social theorists construct a multitextual conversation which represents their exploration of a shared interest: the embodied experience of visual impairment. One, an academic and researcher in the sociology of education, has been visually impaired by cortisone-induced cataracts. The other, a post-graduate student, was once a rehabilitation counselor for the blind and visually impaired in northern New South Wales and has recently suffered from chemically-triggered chronic fatigue syndrome.

This work represents their exploration of these embodied experiences and of the ways in which the privileging of the visual may affect both lived experience and the construction of knowledge and knowers. They take pleasure in, and reflect on the process and effects of theoretical production and performance.

For our performances [at the regional University of New England, N.S.W. (1994), the Australian Sociological Association’s annual conference at Deakin University, Melbourne (1994) and the Cultural Studies Association of Australia’s annual conference at Charles Sturt University, Bathurst (1995)], we dressed in stagehand black, and placed blindfolds on conference participants before ‘sighted guide-ing’ them, one by one, into the performance space, where we were to speak our words, interspersed with projections of related images. Inside, the only illumination in the blacked-out rooms was from two reading lights at the small table where we sat. Bespectacled, we led our unsighted audience into the sound of the room: music played, and we invited them to remove their blindfolds if they wished.

From the rear of a small reading light, Elizabeth began to story her perception of the experience of visual loss

* Permission to reproduce granted by MacMillan Jan. 03.
Elizabeth:

'... there was blind terror, the terror of blindness. ... a world of darkness: a world that is present to others, but you open your eyes and it's not there; nothing is there only blackness'. (Drusilla Modjeska describes her experience of temporary sight loss in her novel, *The Orchard*1)

Before diagnosis
I felt obliged to
Explain away my clumsiness
My inability to cope
Without my glasses
My inability to cope
With them.

After diagnosis
I feared how people would see me
I feared that my relationships
Would change
With the label
 Severely visually disabled.

I'd had an experience
Recently
Where I found a lump in my breast
And went for a mammogram.
That day I was recalled
To have an ultrasound
No explanation.
On arrival

“Oh yes, you’re the mammogram lady who had to come back”.

I tried to speak to the doctor
To understand
The images
On the ultrasound screen
He made it clear
He wanted me to shut up.
Then I felt
I was no more than
The two breasts having a metal object
Slid over them.

So I feared the vulnerability
Associated with
An obvious defect
Which I knew
Could reduce
Me
To
No more than
Two
Sick eyes.

Mary:

Affective relationships and embodied experience

When you are threatened and afraid, unable to live by the capacities and capabilities that have gone without question all your life, a great deal about how you live changes.²

We attend here to loves and friendships.

² ibid., p. 117
Mary:

When did I become aware of our common ground? In ‘93, I was dragging myself into work at the university. Feeling the isolation of being constantly, inexplicably, unwell and depleted. Undiagnosed, chronically fatigued. One day we spoke about your mammogram, adding to the stress of the diminishing sight which you still did not understand. I told you about the multiple malfunctions of my body: they came and went - blurred vision and lack of depth perception among them. I didn’t understand my body’s productions. We connected through our experiences. In owning our bodies in their disturbing refusals to perform for us, we both observed the inappropriateness of their insistent, palpable presence in this place where we wrote, taught and thought.

Rebecca told me about the philosophy of ubuntu common across the nine language groupings of sub-Saharan Africa. In those languages ubuntu means ‘I am human only because you are human’, ‘your humanity affirms my humanity’, ‘a person is a person by means of other people’. Translated, it is a philosophy of “brotherliness”.

I spoke to you and we talked, about the thesis I was finishing, on the embodied knowledge of life-story texts as social theory, and the part poetic language played in expressing social truths. Your good throwouts came to me before St. Vinnie’s.

The year got longer. Our disabilities worsened.

We made a space here for our knowledge. It opened doors, made our bodies evident, invited the evidence of other bodies. The hysterical women. Nicole Ward Jouve\(^3\) writing on the work of Hélène Cixous, refers to the psychoanalytical recognition of hysterical symptoms as ‘both a search for a socially acceptable breathing space and a highly-condensed auto-biography’. And the connection between hysteria, knowledge and the power of creative writing is indicated when she suggests that:

---

art is precisely the domain in which symptoms can be translated into symbols ... . Writing can act as the psychoanalyst holding up a mirror to the self so that it can perceive its own bodily symptoms ... that need the self-reflectiveness to become transformed into symbols⁴.

Later, we came to understand the chemical instigation of each other’s illness, and both felt angry. We came to understand the meanings for women of seeing and being seen. We knew that figurative, poetic language, language put together and taken apart differently, might bring the experience of our bodies into words for theorizing, for making knowledge of the embodied social:

Closely knitting together the body with the book - that is, nature with culture - means abolishing the old antagonistic dualism between nature and culture.... . The body is then given a full cultural dimension; the writing self no longer appears as just the intellectual self ... the writing gesture is revealed at last as a physical act⁵.

This year, between your lens replacements, I drove you to the case study school in the bush. We used the ‘shu roo’⁶ to move the birds. Later we drank gin and tonic as we talked to overcome the year. We swapped recipes for bouillabaisse and spinach soup, and discovered our birthdates were the same.

And the word was made flesh.

Elizabeth:

Friends for years
We shared a room in Fawlty Towers
At a conference last November
Judyth noticed things
But did not ask.

⁴ Ward Jouve, N., loc. cit.
⁵ Françoise Defroment, 'Metaphorical thinking and poetic writing in Virginia Woolf and Hélène Cixous', in Wilcox, H. et al, op.cit., p. 120
⁶ An electronic signalling device fitted to cars to deter wildlife from road areas.
Judyth:
I was amazed at ... the problems you were having seeing, and that light was really important and in various lights you couldn’t see at all. ... So putting on your makeup was actually a deliberate act, and it required a set of physical conditions that you had to create ...

Elizabeth:

    My make-up
    Is worn as a mask
    To distance me
    From the world.
    I take off
    The mask
    Only
    For
    Intimates.
Would I totally lose the ability
    To put on
    The mask
    Of
    My choice?
Would I end up
    As the woman
    With Lipstick
    All over Her face?

    Judyth saw fragility
    And did not pry
    Judyth saw loss of confidence
    And did not intrude
    Judyth saw
    That my life had become a performance
In which
Things became exaggerated
Finding my glasses
Became
A joke
A performance
That she now knows
hid
"Where the fuck are these glasses?
I can’t find a thing”.
And she laughed with me.

Judyth:
I think your friends saw you as being vulnerable. We could see how it ... affected your sense of your own personal competence.

Elizabeth:
I remember two nights before the first operation
Miriam was away
I was in the house
Alone.
I put down my glasses
And could not find them.
Although they did
Little
I was afraid
To move far
Without them.
I thought
I was going to have
To ring a friend
To help
Judyth:
I was so ashamed
Of not being able
To look after myself
That
I felt my way around
All the likely surfaces
For hours
Before
I found them
Hidden
In the patterning of the chintz couch.
I sobbed with relief.
How vulnerable
I felt.

Judyth saw me
After the operation
Disability
palpable
And grieved for her friend

Judyth:
Oh it was awful. You were obviously visually impaired. I just felt totally helpless
and wondered, you know, how I could help you ... 

Elizabeth:

Robert and Elizabeth
When Robert told me what it was like for him
I could not believe what I was hearing
As if he spent the time I was going blind
In another room.
All he could remark
Was how annoyed he got
When I asked him to do
Things for me
“She could do it if only she would put on her glasses”.
“Why doesn’t she put on her glasses?”
But my glasses were on
I went to sleep in them
Attempting to avoid the more ambiguous world
I saw without them
He lay beside me
Didn’t he see?
But why should he
See things differently
From me?
I had no clearer
Idea than he
That I was
Going
Blind.

For Robert
Being defective
Is wearing glasses.
What would he think
Of a woman
Who needed
Implants
Stitched into her eyes
To see?

“They are fine”, he said.
“They are not visible
Like glasses”.
And what of a woman
Who needs
Surgery?
“It’s minor”, he said
“I’ve talked to my mother.
She had it done
With a local.
It’s easy
You’ll be reading in a week”.

Another specialist to see
The next day
To confirm
The diagnosis
And measure my defective lenses
For the
Prostheses.
The news
Shocking
Numbing.
Four months sick leave
For the first eye.
What of my week-old sabbatical?
Little chance of reading
For a long time.
The surgery more complex
Than anticipated
General anesthesia
And a stay in hospital
Unless I can promise
Someone to take me home and care for me.

I know Robert has planned to be at ANU
The day of the operation
Giving a paper
Postponed earlier
By the death of his father
I phone him
Tell him that
I need someone to help me
And cannot find anyone
"I cannot postpone this paper again", he says.

Annoyed that
Blindness like death
Does not respect
Prior plans.
I promise to keep trying my friends,
Conscious of the change
In our relationship
Brought about by
My move from
Willful independence
To
Crushing, confining
Dependence.
Who is this woman?
I do not know her
Lonely and afraid.

Finally I confess
That it's not as we thought
That
My life will be
Much changed
For months to come.
Lonely and afraid.

He hears my fear and desperation
It touches him.
And he offers to come
Ashamed
That he did not
Offer
Straight away

Judyth saw Robert and me
The day after the first operation
She watched us
She saw how disabled I was.
She saw Robert's fear.

**Judyth:**

Robert wasn't going to let go of you and he was constantly patting you and stroking you, I think as much to reassure himself as to reassure you that you were all right. You seemed to be in really good spirits. That might have been a forced *bonhomie* to help Robert's sense of anxiety and his fear, and I think that's a very woman-like thing to do ... that - "All right, I'm not going to let him know that I'm feeling frightened, but I'm going to try and help him deal with his fear".

With one eye patched
And the other out in sympathy
Duped into believing that it
Too
Had been
Operated on
I was not able
To get around
Without help.
I had bruises on my arm
Where Robert gripped me
To steer me around
I tried to persuade him
To let me
Just hold onto his arm
But
He did not feel safe
Without
An iron grip.
In the supermarket
He parked me
Like a shopping trolley
While he foraged
An elderly woman came up to me
And commiserated
She too
Had recently had
Eye surgery.

Mary and Elizabeth:

We have learned, as Modjeska\(^7\) points out, that:

One of the harsh truths about fear is that no one can accompany you through it. ... Our fears trigger the fears of others; for the robust we are the spectre of what happens when activity is stripped down and silence revealed. Some turn away. Others flock around with too eager sympathy. Few can last the distance. Friendships, once solid and unquestionable, became fragile and chancy\(^8\).

Mary:

My involvement in Elizabeth’s experience of pain and visual loss irrevocably changes

\(^7\) Modjeska, op. cit., p124
\(^8\) ibid., p. 124.
our affective and working relationships. Seeing a colleague lose and then regain visual functioning causes me to reflect on my own experiences of loss and disability, and adds a dimension to my knowledge of sight loss. At the same time, it impels a re-view of the visual metaphors for knowledge and the way it is conceived of in the university, the place of seers - prophets and visualizers, persons of vision. And it demands an examination of the status of embodied knowledge. How are we to understand embodiment in relation to the structure of existing knowledges, of which embodiment is 'the repressed or disavowed condition'? It seems important, for example, to uncover, rather than obliterate, the connections between our emotional, creative and intellectual work, and to examine the implications of those connections for the language and format of sociological knowledge.

Such a theoretical practice potentially 'breaks down dualisms ... inscribes emotional labor and emotional response as valid ... and makes a space for partiality, self-reflexivity, tension, and difference'. In this way, we will also be representing the experience of our intellectual, affective, and creative lives in a truthful way, evincing the type of 'practical ... meaningful, human truth' which exists in the 'common ground' that 'develops between us as we speak; [and which] is to be located in the very possibility of communication, and the actualization of that possibility in the event of understanding'.

A language of social enquiry based on rationalist dualisms was always inadequate for understanding or describing what Grosz terms 'embodied subjectivity'; or 'psychical corporeality'. Recognizing sexual difference to be central to the socio-political status of the subject, and corporeality to belong to every body, with each variously sexed and gendered, necessitates a rethinking and a re-vision of embodied knowledge as other than a contradiction in terms.

12 Grosz, op. cit., p. 22
13 ibid., p. 22
Our work is contextualized by postmodern insights on the construction of truth and validity and, more broadly, on language, power and subjectivity itself. It is informed, too, by a range of theoretical moves toward a corporeal feminism in the work of such writers as Grosz and Judith Butler. Implicitly, it shares their concern with the centrality of sexual difference to any social theory which seeks to illuminate the ways in which we all understand and act in the world; clearly, sociology cannot begin to take account of the body (bodies) without engaging with the problematic of sexual difference.

Approaches to language which suggest a move beyond the 'overall context and horizon governed by dualism' work well for social knowledge-making. They enable social theory to speak of the embodiment and lived experience of its implicated subjects - researcher and researched. This is consonant with a feminist ethical position described by Liz Stanley in which 'research and life are not separate and divisible but one and the same and must be shown to be so'.

Elizabeth:
I speak as a novice to the practice of producing what Mary calls embodiment as social theory. I have been well versed in, and comfortable with, what Richardson calls 'sociology's unwritten emotional rules' which produce social science writing which is supposedly emotionless, and which leaves the reader unmoved.

My initial, tentative commitment to this practice arose from the journey I took into the world of the severely visually disabled on which I could ignore neither the emotional dimension of lived experience nor the connection between social relations and bodily matters. I resolved, somewhat tentatively, to explore the possibilities of a bodily

16 Grosz, E., Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1994, p. 22
18 Stanley and Wise, loc. cit.
informed sociology which more effectively demonstrated lived experience. Tentative commitment soon disappeared. Early in the writing phase of this paper Mary read me a poeticized account, synthesized from transcripts of our conversational interviews, of my experience of the world diminishing as my sight diminished, my pain, my daily loss of competence, much of it taking place in a hostile work environment. The text so completely captured my lived experience it took me straight back into it. I was there again. I cried.

My initial reaction was to plead with Mary to inure me to whatever became the substance of the paper since I did not want to be humiliated by crying when presenting. However, I soon saw how important that incident was. Mary’s synthesis was powerful and affected me so deeply, surprisingly and spontaneously precisely because it did not suppress or eliminate the pain, the anguish of the embodied experience of visual impairment. Richardson20 asks ‘How valid can knowledge of a floating head be?’ I surprise and please myself by responding; not very. The novice has learnt an important lesson.

Mary:
Now, in this place, when we begin to feel ourselves abstracted from the language of lived experience, our desire is to revert to genres of language or performance that will engage your bodies, with their creative, erotic, and aesthetic energies and judgements. The intention here is not to persuade, but to retrieve; to articulate and affirm alternative ways of knowing, and to present embodied experience in a way that reconstitutes it practically and powerfully.

20 ibid., p. 706
Living the embodied experience of visual impairment

Mary:
Last year, I watched your competence. I was thesis-finishing, sick, exhausted, not knowing I’d been poisoned by organochlorins. You passed along the corridor of a disintegrating department in an ailing universe, gradually blinded by cortisone. At that time, I didn’t understand us both to be victims of environmental crimes.

The material of our conversations was wrapped around our writing and teaching, and our exhaustion. I took slimming pills for staying power, until the chemist withdrew them from sale: you drank good coffee and were, apparently, competent.

Your Thursday was a work overload, a weekly fourteen-hour student contact stretch. Thursday was how I explained your bloodshot eyes; that and editing the book, and the stress of departmental politicking. But you were competent.

bell hooks\textsuperscript{21} wrote that:

\begin{quote}
The public world of institutional learning was a site where the body had to be erased, go unnoticed. When I first became a teacher and needed to use the restroom in the middle of class, I had no clue as to what my elders did in such situations. No one talked about the body in relation to teaching. ... Trying to remember the bodies of my professors, I find myself unable to recall them. I hear voices, remember fragmented details but very few whole bodies\textsuperscript{22}.
\end{quote}

Much later, you told me the stories of learning to replace your seeing with touch: working the CD player counting the controls along, making mistakes with the shampoo and conditioner, and with the stick-on sanitary pads. You told me the stories of incompetence with laughter, but they were about another you. Incompetent.
Those were stories about the woman who watched videos rather than read or write at

\textsuperscript{21} hooks, bell, 1993, 'Eros, eroticism and the pedagogical process', \textit{Cultural Studies}, 7 (1), [pp. 58-63], p. 58
home.

Elizabeth:

By the weekends I found myself unable to read anything but part of the Weekend Australian. I relaxed, not with novels as had been my custom, but with videos. ... I also noticed some things about me that had me puzzled. It was as though I was having some sort of processing difficulties. Things which I should have been noting, taking in and responding to, I either didn’t register or I registered too slowly. I attributed this to aging, or dumbness, stupidity... Pain in my eyes became a constant feature of my life. Each evening I dreaded having to read. I thought I lacked the will to work: I am too lazy/tired/slowed down to work productively.

Mary:

She doubted her mind, and she doubted her desire. Her desire to read and write, to focus, to produce.

I empathised: my exhausted, dysfunctional self seemed to have no motive force. Erotic desire, passionate energy were strange and distant memories, threatening to recapture:

bell hooks\textsuperscript{23} refers to Sam Keen\textsuperscript{24} who, in The \textit{Passionate Life}, urges readers to remember that in its earliest conception ‘erotic potency was not confined to sexual power but included the moving force that propelled every life-form from a state of mere potentiality to actuality\textsuperscript{25}.

She doubted her desire rather than doubt sense-organs. Perhaps doubting the painful, dysfunctional eyes themselves would admit that volatile, unruly body as a presence in opposition to that thinking-self.

\textsuperscript{22} ibid., p.58
\textsuperscript{23} ibid., p.61
\textsuperscript{24} Keen, S., \textit{The Passionate Life}. San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1983
\textsuperscript{25} Keen, S., cited in bell hooks, op. cit., p.61
The body surfaces. The deceptive body.

Modjeska\textsuperscript{26}:

Even when my eyes filled with black swirls and orange flashes, I
didn’t foresee the guardian of visual certainty was about to desert me.
Like falling in love, it was a sudden shock ...

**Elizabeth:**

After the first operation I was told, by friends and my shocked GP, "You hid it well..."

But I didn’t hide it.
I didn’t know I was going blind.
I thought my sight was bad
And I coped with it -
Sometimes by laughing
("I’m as blind as a bat", I’d say with a laugh
To explain away my incompetence)
Sometimes by snarling
(Poor Robert; I remember the way I snarled when you laughed as I walked into a plate
glass door
"Don’t laugh at me. Don’t you realize how frustrating it is!")
And
Sometimes by accepting as normal a restricted world.
Like Modjeska\textsuperscript{27} I found ‘the question that was put to me was how to live with any
bigness of spirit when the soil from which it must flourish had shrunk to a handful of
loam’\textsuperscript{28}.

\textsuperscript{26} Modjeska, op. cit., p109
\textsuperscript{27} ibid., p118-119
\textsuperscript{28} ibid., p118-119
Unsexed embodied experience

Elizabeth:

So last year, I watched my competence recede
Life was bitter - an unending struggle.
Confusion, fear, incompetence and pain
Nagging pain
Toothache in the eyes pain
Evening pain
Daily pain
Waking pain
Unceasing pain
Accelerating pain
Closing down pain
"Why", said Ilana, "did you wait so long?"
"Why did you tolerate the pain?"
"Why didn’t you see a specialist sooner?"

Leder’s ‘corporeal hermeneutics’:

Leder provides analyses of pain and disability which, he argues, demonstrate the way in which both cause us to turn our attention to the body. According to Leder’s analysis, the new world we enter in pain has a restricted aspect. While our old world is not disrupted to the point of collapse, Leder suggests that in pain ‘we are no longer dispersed out there in the world but suddenly congeal right here. Our attention is drawn back not only to our own bodies but often to a particular body part’. Similarly

30 ibid., p. 73
31 ibid., p. 75
pain constricts the temporal sphere by summoning attention to the ‘now’\textsuperscript{32}. Thus Leder argues ‘pain exerts a phenomenologically “centripetal” force, gathering space and time inward to the centre’\textsuperscript{33}. Pain reminds us ‘of the here-and-now of the body. ... The body is no longer a nullpoint but an active presence whose call we must resist’\textsuperscript{34}

The painful body then brings a number of projects into play; that is, it exerts a telic demand on us. Leder says:

> While calling us to the now, its distasteful quality also establishes a futural goal: to be free of pain. ... The sensory aversiveness and world disruptions effected by pain cry out for its removal ... \textsuperscript{35}

Pain’s telic demand, Leder suggests, includes a \textit{hermeneutical} and a \textit{pragmatic} moment\textsuperscript{36}. He claims that pain induces ‘corporeal hermeneutics’\textsuperscript{37} such that the painful body becomes the ‘object of an ongoing interpretive quest’ to enable understanding:

> ‘We obsessively probe and palpate even when this increases discomfort. We read books on the body, seeking self diagnosis, or ask friends for answers. We go back through the past, reflecting on our bodily history and possible origins of the current problem. We pose tests to see what diminishes or increases the pain\textsuperscript{38}.

Since the aversiveness of pain calls for change, Leder argues:

> the hermeneutical moment is ultimately involved with a pragmatic goal: getting rid of, or mastering, suffering. My own body becomes the object not just of perception and interpretation but of action. ... Instead of just

\begin{footnotesize}
\bibitem{32} ibid., p. 75
\bibitem{33} Ibid., p. 76
\bibitem{34} ibid., p. 76
\bibitem{35} ibid., p. 77-78
\bibitem{36} ibid., p. 78
\bibitem{37} ibid., p. 78
\bibitem{38} ibid., p. 78
\end{footnotesize}
acting from the body, I act toward it\textsuperscript{39}.

While Leder's analysis is elegant and compelling, it makes little sense of my experience with pain. I can, at best, only partially find myself in his analysis. I experienced pain, my world contracted and changed. My hermeneutics, however, were not corporeal. For a long time I tolerated the pain and attributed the difficulties I was experiencing elsewhere:

\textbf{Elizabeth:}

If I had to describe what those months were like, it was a state of just being bewildered by what was happening. Absolutely bewildered. I was attributing it to things other than my sight. Like what's wrong with my mind that I'm not processing things properly? Why am I resisting work? Why am I not able to work as well as I used to work? ... I'd think, "My mind is not functioning as well as it used to", or "I lack the will or the talent to do it".

Perhaps it is the case that the unsexed body in Leder's analysis is often male and the 'we' from which he generalizes is not always inclusive of women's experiences. Significantly, the cover of \textit{The Absent Body} shows a disembodied male body with no sign of a female body. To be fair, Leder does show some sensitivity to differences between men's and women's experiences of their bodies where these differences have been addressed in feminist literature\textsuperscript{40}. However, at no point in his analysis of pain or disability \textit{per se} is there a recognition that bodies are sexed and that this fact may have crucial significance for the analysis of embodied experience of these phenomena. After all, many of western women's experiences with bodily matters in a patriarchal world are ones in which they learn to tolerate ill health and discomfort. Their illnesses, they are told, are not real; they are the result of hysteria.

\textbf{Mary:}

My immune system dis-ease was triggered by exposure to toxic chemicals;

\textsuperscript{39} ibid., pp78-79
\textsuperscript{40} ibid., p99
conventional doctors attempted to treat the symptoms with chemicals.

"Sometimes I’m breathless, doctor. My arms and legs ache, I’m hot when it’s cold, cold when it’s hot. Sometimes my vision is blurred. I forget words, what I’m shopping for, where I’m driving to. Sometimes I have muscle spasms, palpitations, dizziness, swollen glands, pins and needles. I’m hypersensitive to noise. I find the smell of cigarette smoke, perfume, overwhelming ... Look at my file, doctor - this has gone on for months. You know that I am a healthy person: this just is not me."

Roslyn Woodward41 has presented extensive research based on her observations of this dis-ease: it does not support suggestions that its origins are psychosomatic, grounded in depressive illness, malingering, or loneliness.42

"Sometimes doctor, in the nights awake, I believe I am losing my mind; but then my hands tingle, my legs jerk, my throat aches and I know that this disease is not an absenting mind; it’s a presence affecting my whole body...; then I can get myself together."

**Elizabeth:**

In a male dominated CAE

I was attacked by a plague of book mites

Severely allergic

Covered in irritating and disfiguring pustules

Treated with cortisone ointment

I told my colleagues of the infestation.

Reminiscent of the claim that women’s wombs would atrophy should they attempt to work


42 ibid, p. 6
Or
Be educated
I was told the problem was psychosomatic
A result of working
Doing a PhD
And publishing too.
No action was taken for a long time
So my exposure

To cortisone treatment was prolonged.
It entered my bloodstream
Through my skin
And attacked
The centre
Of
My lens

Mary:

elizabeth, I want to take a break from making this script ...
this is painful for both of us; it takes us back to confront not just the embodied experience of fleshly pain and discomfort, but into a troubling politics of interactive embodiment. you’ve just spoken your experience of invalidation, being silenced over valid environmental concerns in your working/thinking space. and what a fertile symbol: the book mites taking their fill of the academic traditions lining the walls of your postgraduate space, and emerging to irritate your epidermis and limit your embodied functioning in that place.

accused of causing your own symptoms of allergic response, disrupting your own immune system, by the willful excess of overwork, asking more of your woman-ness than it, as body, was capable of. then prescribed long-term symptomatic attention to the rash and itching of the book mite allergy, a treatment which itself caused a decomposition: what your eye specialist termed ‘eating away’ of your lenses by the
cortisone in the ointment, resulting in your sight loss. we've encountered a range of
disavowals: of different, 'perverse' experiences of embodimindment; and of what
ecologists term the 'moral considerability' of other-than-human bodies.

Merleau-Ponty and vision's pre-eminence

Perhaps it is the case that the unsexed body in Leder's analysis is male and the 'we'
from which he generalizes is not inclusive of women's experiences. Grosz43 makes a
similar criticism of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to which Leder44 appears to have
a significant intellectual debt. I don't think her observations on this fit into our
performance script, but I'd like to remember her critique (following Irigaray45) of
Merleau-Ponty here, where we're digesting these ideas on vision and embodiment.
That is because through her critique of Merleau-Ponty she addresses precisely some of
our broader concerns with epistemology, as well as the symbolic centrality of 'vision'
with regard to knowledge.

She observes that in *The Phenomenology of Perception*46, Merleau-Ponty noted the
privileged role of vision as the superior sense in terms of informing knowledge-
production. From the times of the early Greek philosophers, 'knowledge itself was
generally described in metaphors derived from vision and optics'47, and vision's 'role
is generally regarded as that of unifying and hierarchically ordering the other senses,
taming or honing them'.

It is 'the clarity and precision of the images of which [sight] ... is
composed'[emphasis mine]48, Grosz notes, which form the basis of the
epistemological value ascribed to vision, and she presents the three traditional
characteristics of the image:

44 Leder, op. cit.
Kegan Paul, 1962
47 Grosz, op. cit., p. 97
48 ibid., p. 97
it presents a manifold field or set of events in terms of simultaneity (it is the only non-temporal or synchronous sense);

it functions at a distance, setting up a space or field between the seer and the seen, the physical and the psychical; and

it does not imply or presume causality (because the other senses are momentary and occasioned by events, vision is ongoing and need not be focused on or caused by any object).49

Here are signs of the germination of some ideas developed in Grosz’s later edition50 of writings on time and duration, which seem effectively to posit multiple ‘open-ended’ epistemologies of becoming as alternatives to the traditional centrality of an ontological concern with being. Clearly, such a conceptual shift would have profound implications for the ordering, and indeed the use-value, of a hierarchy of the senses in terms of their epistemological value.

Grosz acknowledges Merleau-Ponty’s recognition that the senses are not simply separable, but are interactive, ‘communicate with each other…[and] are transposable … onto each other’s domains, although … irreducible in their differences’51. She cites The Phenomenology of Perception:

The senses communicate with each other …. When I say that I see a sound, I mean that I echo the vibration of the sound with my whole sensory being, and particularly with that sector of myself which is susceptible to colours.52

It is the unifying fleshly body which, as Grosz shows, makes possible in Merleau-

49 ibid., p. 97
52 Merlau-Ponty, op.cit., pp. 232-4
Ponty's view the translation, even the transposition and integration of the senses\textsuperscript{53}. But Grosz, following Irigaray, observes in Merleau-Ponty's work a 'sexualization of ontology...the utilization of a whole series of metaphors embedded in and derived from relations between the sexes'\textsuperscript{54}; further, his representation of the body and of subjectivity 'in fact tend to take men's experiences for human ones'\textsuperscript{55}. Merleau-Ponty's lack of an account of sexual difference; and his position on vision (as the pre-eminent active sense, conditioned by the visibility of the seer, but defined by a field which sets the seer in a position apart, 'unimplicated in what is seen')\textsuperscript{56}, are of limited use for feminist theorizing of embodiment.

Grosz presents Irigaray's counterposition on the sense of touch:

'the tangible provides the preconditions and the grounds of the visible...the visible requires the tangible, but the tangible is perfectly capable of an existence autonomous from the visible.'\textsuperscript{57}

Blindness may exist alongside other functioning senses, and may be compensated for by them: but as Grosz points out, 'if the tangible does not function, the subject is in a state of unconsciousness'.

And Iris Marion Young, in *Throwing like a girl*\textsuperscript{58}, her phenomenological consideration of 'feminine body comportment, motility and spatiality', presents a range of female embodiment's contradictions of Merleau-Ponty's (unmarked, unsexed and so implicitly male) positions in *The Phenomenology of Perception*. He conceives of the lived body as the active expression of its intentionality in the world: indicating, as Young puts it, that 'there is a world for a subject just insofar as the body has capacities by which it can approach, grasp, and appropriate its surroundings in the direction of its intentions'. Merleau-Ponty writes:

\textsuperscript{53} Grosz, op.cit., p. 100
\textsuperscript{54}ibid., p.103
\textsuperscript{55}Grosz, op.cit., p. 103
\textsuperscript{56}ibid., p. 101
\textsuperscript{57}ibid., p. 106
\textsuperscript{58}Young, I. M., *Throwing Like a Girl and other essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990
Our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space. It applies itself to space like a hand to an instrument, and when we wish to move about we do not move the body as we do an object. We transport it without instruments...since it is ours and because, through it, we have access to space\textsuperscript{59}.

Young, however, observes and illustrates through her collection of essays that 'feminine existence lives space as \textit{enclosed} or confining...and the woman experiences herself as \textit{positioned} in space\textsuperscript{60}. She refers to Seymour Fisher's\textsuperscript{61} findings that 'women experience themselves as having more clearly articulated body \textit{boundaries} than men do', and observes that 'the space...that is \textit{physically} available to the feminine body is frequently of greater radius than the space that she uses and inhabits'\textsuperscript{62}.

As Elizabeth has noted, Leder's \textit{The Absent Body} graphically presents a decapitated 'male' image with floating 'top hat', and no feminine signs or imagery. Unsexed, but 'womb-mad', women's bodies in illness are, not surprisingly, limited in their 'being in the world' in terms of their 'intentionality'.

* * *

Elizabeth, what are we doing here? Why are we demanding to perform, to demand attention to the difficult process of theorizing our embodiment in these academic places of disembodied knowing? Because we are politically, emotionally, committed to a process of rendering these disavowed knowledges sensible, giving them meaning in our contexts as social actors, which contexts are here in these universities' disciplines.

* * *

\textsuperscript{60} Young, I. M., op. cit., p. 151
\textsuperscript{61} ibid, p. 158, note 7
\textsuperscript{62} ibid., p. 151
Our shared learning/teaching spaces happen to overlap and connect through ‘sociology’. We are concerned with what Morgan and Scott term ‘embodiment of social actors and the relationship between this embodiment and the problems of both everyday life and sociological theorizing’. An upsurge of interest in bodily matters in sociology follows a history in which there has been a lack of explicit sociological concern with (sexed) embodiment. One reason for this evident lack, as Morgan and Scott point out, is a fear of being closely linked to sociobiology and its attendant essentialism and reductionism. Hence, clear distinctions were made between what was taken to be biological or natural (for example, one’s sex) and therefore beyond the scope of sociology and what were believed to be socially and culturally constructed differences (for example, one’s gender) which were the proper subject matter for sociology. Since the body falls on the biology side of the biology/culture divide, then to include the body was to run the risk of being labeled reductionist or essentialist.

Another reason is ‘the particular rational and modern project that has characterized sociology since its earliest days’. As Morgan and Scott observe:

Rationalities have tended to open up distinctions between the ordered, the controlled and the abstract on the one hand, and the disordered, the uncontrolled and the concrete on the other, with the relegation of the body and bodily matters to the latter, implicitly discredited, set of categories.

Moreover, they add that:

The project of modernity, closely associated with these rationalities, also seeks to emphasize the triumph of culture over nature. Bodily matters either become subservient to, or objects for, rational

64 ibid., p. viii
65 ibid., p. 2
66 ibid., p. 2
67 ibid., p. 2
modernity, or linger as a source of embarrassment or awkwardness in the wings of a modern social order.\textsuperscript{68}

\textbf{Theory moves}

A particular understanding of theory, together with the place theory is accorded within institutionalized sociology has historically contributed to a disembodied sociology. Here we refer to the discernable tendencies within sociology to give theorizing a 'privileged status' and to understand and value it 'in terms of its levels of abstraction and its distance from everyday experience, even where such experience may be the object of the theorizing process'\textsuperscript{69}. To the extent that this tradition takes account of bodies, it does so in a way which maintains ' a distance from embodied experience'\textsuperscript{70}. When these tendencies conjoin with an emphasis on rationality as a significant element in the theorizing process, 'the body with its apparent close association with nature and the emotions, can only be admitted into such processes of theorizing through a kind of disembodying process'\textsuperscript{71}.

What we are doing here is 'being here'. We are theorizing embodimentment using embodied processes and practices in these places of knowledge production where for all the above reasons, it's feeling uncomfortable and confronting. These are the places where we have learned, and learned well, to leave our embodied experience, in which our lifelong daily theorizing (our reflections on the meanings of all we know and the practices which those meanings engender and underpin) is implicit, outside the door.

Our intention is to destabilize the hierarchical dualism of mind/body which is implicated in male/female, culture/nature dualisms. We recognize that positions of essentialism, naturalism, and biologism have underpinned conceptions of women as 'somehow more biological, more corporeal and more natural than men'\textsuperscript{72}. We reject

\textsuperscript{68} ibid., p. 2  
\textsuperscript{69} Morgan, D and Scott, S., op. cit., p. 12  
\textsuperscript{70} ibid., p. 12  
\textsuperscript{71} ibid., p. 12  
\textsuperscript{72} Grosz, op.cit., p. 14
those positions. We are practising a way of theorizing the social which describes and
details the complexity of the layered, reflexive interconnections between mind (mind)
and body, between body (bodies) and culture. This projects commits us to
problematicizing ‘sociology’s concepts and methods by grounding sociology in lived
experiences; to write sociology as ‘windows on lived experience’\(^73\). We have joined
Richardson in her struggle to ‘unite people’s subjective experiences with our
sociological utterings’\(^74\) in the most direct ways available to us: by engaging with our
own embodied processes in order to explore this connection.

This project, of necessity, involves us in writing sociology which moves people
affectively as well as intellectually. We desire to move beyond ‘the numbing and
deading, disaffective, disembodied, schizoid sensibilities characteristic of
phallocentric social science’\(^75\). Clearly the Enlightenment metanarrative which
privileges rational philosophical and scientific knowledges is called into question
when we as women speak the emotional and sensate (the irrational) as valid social
knowledge: female embodiment provides context, other-definition, the disavowed
condition of all knowledge – never knowledge itself\(^76\).

From sociology’s inception, paradigmatic ‘vanishing acts’\(^77\) excluding women’s
embodied experience from social inquiry, were performed: we remember that when the
data on women for Durkheim’s (1897)\(^78\) study of suicide contradicted his theoretical

\(^{73}\) Richardson, L., ‘The consequences of poetic representation: writing the other, rewriting the self’, in

\(^{74}\) ibid., p. 136

\(^{75}\) Richardson, L. Poetics, dramatics and transgressive validity: the case of the skipped line, The
Sociological Quarterly, 34, (4) 1993 (pp. 695-710) p. 705

\(^{76}\) Grosz, op. cit., p. 14

\(^{77}\) March, A., ‘Female invisibility and androcentric sociological theory’, Insurgent Sociologist XI(2),
1982 pp. 99-107

\(^{78}\) Although Terry R. Kandall, [The Woman Question in Classical Sociological Theory; Miami, Florida
International University Press, 1988, p. 85] remarks Durkheim’s ‘conflating biological stereotypes about
women with his inconsistent recognition of the social subordination of women’ in the analysis of suicide,
he counterposes to this Durkheim’s ‘recurrent theme that women benefit less than men from marriage and
experience more stress from it’. Kandall suggests that critics of Durkheim’s biologically deterministic
position on women oversimplify his analysis, claiming that ‘Durkheim saw clearly [sexism’s] curious and
multiple effects in nineteenth century suicide rates’[p. 89]. Nonetheless, Durkheim’s prior position, based
on a social Darwinist approach to differential access to the public sphere for men and women, was that
‘One might say that the two great functions of the psychic life are thus dissociated, that one of the sexes
takes care of the affective functions and the other of intellectual functions’[Division of Labour in Society,
position, they were explained out of the study in terms of their ‘nature’. It is of value to us as women theorists to practise the critical use of our sexed embodiment to interrogate the socio-logical: to interrogate it in these places with that which has been defined as contra-logos.

“World”-travelling...

Elizabeth:

In the Library ... [someone] asked me to write something ... - [on] a very small space on a form ... and I said, “Look I’m sorry I can’t. Would you mind if I dictate and you write ... for me?” And [the librarian] ... got quite angry. And in the end I said, “Look I’ll take it away and get it done”. ... it was quite humiliating ...

Modjeska\(^79\):

Where once I had stood aside and made order of the life that swirled around me - a spy ... in the lives of others - I was down in the ruck of it myself. Pushing through the gloom it was all I could do to keep my balance against the snags and snares that pushed at me.

Elizabeth:

I learned if you cannot read or write
    Some believe
    There is no place for you
    at UNE\(^80\)
    You are

Trs. George Simpson, New York Free Press 1964, p. 60]. And so a ‘purely’ sociological explanation from Durheim of women’s suicide statistics seems impossible. Again quoting Artemis March, women were, in Durkheim’s terms ‘too primitive to absorb the niceties of male civilization, too dense to be deeply affected by the unweavings and reweavings of the social fabric, too self-contained to be socially vulnerable’.

\(^79\) Modjeska, D., *The Orchard*, Sydney, MacMillan, 1994, p. 15
\(^80\) The University of New England, Armidale, N.S.W., Australia.
Unable
Unworthy
Brought down by the experience
Small.

And yet, ... at the bank ... without even asking me they would just read me each transaction, ... count money into the various piles I wanted ... they weren't treating me like a ninny. They were just saying, “Okay you can’t do this but you can process”, you know. Whereas in the Library ... I felt like I was being treated as though I were mentally defective.

Mary:

Modjeska\textsuperscript{81}notes that:

... in many cultures ... blindness has been crudely associated with a condition of unrelatedness: of being cast out, alone, ignorant and confused. Because blindness disrupts the distinction between the known and not-known that is regulated for the rest of us by sight, it represents ... dissolution, the borderline between being and not being. An alternative to death; as good as death.

Elizabeth:

I found
That some people
Could not
Make eye contact
With me
Or even
Say hello
When I appeared
In the

\textsuperscript{81}ibid., p. 122
Department
With an eyepatch
After the second operation.
I felt like the
"Other"
Who should have stayed
Closeted at home
Out of sight.

As Modjeska indicates, the place of disabled or ill people is a marginal one given that the dominant culture is one in which illness or disability tend to be understood as 'a form of moral infirmity'; thus for the 'robust we are the spectre of what happens when activity is stripped down and silence revealed'\(^8^2\). So we have from Modjeska one possible explanation of why 'some turn away'\(^8^3\). Iris Marion Young\(^8^4\) suggests that the 'liberal imperative that differences should make no difference' has put a 'sanction of silence on those things which at the level of practical consciousness people “know” about the significance of group differences'.\(^8^5\) Accordingly, rather than expressions of overt handicappism, members of this (and other) oppressed groups more frequently experience behaviours such as 'avoidance, aversion, expressions of nervousness, condescension, and stereotyping'\(^8^6\) as new forms of discrimination.

Mary:
It is interesting to consider why some people do not behave discriminatorily. Perhaps a partial answer may be that have some skill in the practice of “world”- travelling\(^8^7\), a practice which Lugones suggests 'outsiders' to the mainstream necessarily develop as a feature of their existence as they move between the worlds in which they are ‘at

\(^8^2\) ibid., p. 124
\(^8^3\) ibid., p. 124
\(^8^5\) ibid., p. 133
\(^8^6\) ibid., p. 133
home’ and other, sometimes more hostile worlds. Perhaps only those who have been outsiders or who can empathetically project themselves into an ‘outsiders’ world can act with ease as world-travellers. Lugones is a woman of colour and an ‘outsider’ to mainstream White/Anglo culture in the U.S. As a practice, she believes, “world”-travelling, although sometimes undertaken ‘unwillingly’ into hostile worlds, is ‘skillful, creative, rich (and) enriching.’ And as a practice, it is constitutive, she suggests, of ‘cross-cultural and cross-racial loving’.

It seems to us that this learned ability to identify with the other in a loving way may be the practical counterpart of embodied knowledge-production. It may be understood as a correlate and adaptation of Carol Gilligan’s notion of a feminist ethic of care, with its central attention to the lived experience which contextualizes any moral issue or problem. Reflection on the development of and debate around Gilligan’s ethical position is of interest for the embodied theorizing of embodiment, again calling up the gendered nature of the epistemological issues implicit in such a theoretical approach. These issues will arise in other contexts later in this thesis.

Such a pre-disposition to loving-perception may be consonant to and combine well with an ethic of flourishing to encompass ecological concerns, and it will usefully underpin an ethical approach to social inquiry which avoids what Heldke refers to as the ‘epistemological “attitudes” that are foundationalism and relativism (which)

88 Ibid., p. 85
89 Ibid., p. 85
90 Ibid., p. 85
92 In her paper ‘The ethic of care vis-à-vis the ethic of rights: a problem for contemporary moral theory’ (Hypatia, Vol.9(3), 1994) Joy Kroeger-Mappes addresses Gilligan’s adumbration of the ethic of care and the ethic of rights [or justice], which are counterposed by Gilligan as expressive of ‘female’ and ‘male’ conceptions of morality, respectively. Kroeger-Mappes presents Gilligan’s work as functioning to ‘highlight the ethic of rights and some of the difficulties with it, reveal a part of the ethic of care...largely invisible before, and suggest predictable ways of reforming this ethical system’[pp. 108,109]. For Kroeger-Mappes, Gilligan ‘slightly chang[es] the official story’, producing what is in effect a ‘woman’s ethic that is consistent with the subordination of women.’[p. 109]. For a useful presentation of Gilligan’s formulation, a digest of the ‘lively exchange’ over its potential uses and application, and further critical reflections on understanding morality, see Maihofer, A., ‘Care’, in A Feminist Companion to Philosophy, Malden, MA, and Oxford, 1998, pp. 383-392
hobble efforts to inquire into, and theorize about, our experiences. In turn, such ethical positions are likely to engender epistemologies which seek to avoid the dichotomies of traditional knowledge, in particular the ‘subject/object’ divide implicit in the powerful visual metaphors for knowledge. Rather than seek to reiterate traditional philosophies’ claims to illuminate ‘Reality’, or struggle with a presumed dichotomy ‘between the absolute and the arbitrary’, Heldke values an epistemological approach which she terms the ‘Co-responsible Option’. This term denotes the interactive, reflexive, co-operative relationships we necessarily enter into with the traditionally-defined distanced ‘objects’ of our social inquiry; and that it as an ‘Option’ signals Heldke’s position on theories in general as

‘ ... tools we may choose to use, outlooks we may elect to assume. Some are more useful than others; none is universally reliable’

Much of my early experience in working with visually impaired persons was overlaid by my own feeling that I failed adequately to understand, to come close to, the experience of being without sight. I listened to and carefully watched hundreds of stories of the experience of sight loss, read books and journal articles on the perceived experience and on psychic symptomatology. The language used both to describe the experience and to offer, discuss and plan rehabilitation to the visual world, was necessarily the language of translation from perceptual impairment into the dominant discourse of sightedness.

My role, after being with visually impaired persons in coming to terms with their loss, was to negotiate with them preferred ways of reconstituting effective ‘sight’. In loss and grief, because we have all suffered losses and have grieved, I was able to identify in a loving way with those persons. My job though, was specifically concerned with

94 Heldke, Lisa M., ‘Recipes for Theory Making’ in Curtin, Deane W. and Heldke, Lisa M., op. cit., p. 252
95 cf. Elgin, Catherine Z., Between the Absolute and the Arbitrary, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1997, p. 1: Introducing this collection of papers, Elgin writes: ‘The alternatives are stark. Unless answers to philosophical questions are absolute, they are arbitrary. Unless a position is grounded in agent-neutral, determinate facts, it is right only relative to a perspective that cannot in the end be justified. Philosophers differ over where the line is to be drawn.’
96 Heldke, Lisa M., op. cit., p. 253
facilitating their world-travelling, not mine. Only in the instances where we came to make relationships based on commonalities and shared concerns other than sight loss, did I come to be at ease in travelling to and from their worlds.

In the case of my closest long-term friendship with Lucie\textsuperscript{97}, it was her stories of being a willful young woman, a worker and a sole parent through which she identified herself and with which I could identify, rather than her sightlessness.

As Probyn\textsuperscript{98} writes:

Because of the material conditions of ourselves we can not indulge in the fantasy of dialogism wherein “you” can be me” and “I” can be “you”. “I’ am not “she” but articulating a working image of the self may allow for a movement of empathy between us.

Elizabeth:

Late this year
Finally
Allowed to exercise
I went at 6 am
With Ann and Sue
To the gym.
I wore sunglasses
To protect my eyes.
My friends were quickly absorbed into casual conversations
But no one but Ann and Sue
Spoke to me
Until one day
Wheelchair bound Pete said, “How are your eyes?”
We talked of my disaster and his disaster
Our bodies touched.

\textsuperscript{97}Lucie Mackenzie became a worker and a single parent in the 1920’s, and lost her sight in the 1980’s. In the early ‘90’s, we worked together on an auto/biographical text which generated my Masters thesis, ‘The Textual Representation of Life-Story-telling as Social Theory’(University of New England, 1993).

Seer/seen

Mary:

Grosz\textsuperscript{99} notes that:

from the time of the Greeks ... thought [was] regarded as speculative, imagistic: the visible coincides with the intelligible. Knowledge is “depicted” as revelation, manifestation ... the proposition is pictorial. ... These metaphors provide a series of usually unexamined presumptions governing the ways in which knowledge is construed; they are deeply implicated in the history of epistemology.\textsuperscript{100}

Vision provides a \textit{simultaneous} representation of a set of events across the visual field, bearing the metaphorical relation to knowledge which Daphne Marlatt\textsuperscript{101} interrogates:

what is fact? (f)act. the f stop of act. a still photo in the ongoing cinerama.\textsuperscript{102}

Vision is construed as an active rather than a passive sense, a sense which is not activated by or focused on any \textit{causal} event. The triangulation of vision, knowledge and power which this notion of active seer/passive seen generates has been remarked in various contexts from film\textsuperscript{103} to biological and medical discourse\textsuperscript{104} and discussions.

\textsuperscript{99} Grosz, E., \textit{Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism}, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1994, p. 97
\textsuperscript{100} ibid., p. 220
\textsuperscript{101} Marlatt, D., \textit{Ana Historic}, Toronto, The Coach House Press, 1988, p. 31
\textsuperscript{102} ibid., p. 31
\textsuperscript{104} Jordanova, L., \textit{Sexual Visions: Images Of Gender In Science And Medicine Between The Eighteenth And Twentieth Century}, Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989
Traditionally, in the space between the seer and the seen, the viewer and the viewed, a distancing is implicated, and the setting up of subject/object status for the seer/seen. This space between seeing and being seen formed the terrain across which we have tried to make connections; to imagine, write and perform the movements of our conversation and the embodimentment of our experience. We have tried to articulate the duration of the processes of our experiences: from Elizabeth-sighted, through sight loss and recovery of sight, as her process connected with my work with visually impaired persons, and with my own movements between a functional, 'invisible' body and the insistent sensory demands of the chronically fatigued body. We are persistently reminded that the raw elements of social knowledge-making are not simply those which speak to the precision and scientific observation that constitute vision as the optimal 'knowing' sense.

Our experiences have made it clear for us that all the senses function in complementary combination with each other and with other drives, emotions and desires. My encounter with what has been termed the classic mind-body illness of Chronic Fatigue syndrome has tattooed me inside out with the knowledge of these complex interactions. For Elizabeth, memory, touch and imagination were evidently involved with other bodily knowledges and drives brought to the processes of perception and consciousness. In my experience with visually impaired persons, sound and touch, empathy and imagination were necessary for us to make interactive, knowing spaces.

To acknowledge the interconnections between bodily senses and unconscious drives and their effect on social practice has implications for social theory, as Anthony Elliott suggests:

To recognize ... that unconscious desire is deeply buried, sedimented in social practices and systems of domination offers an alternative kind of strategy for social analysis. It is one that recognizes that the maintenance and transformation of our systems of power are closely related to the possibilities for the expressive and affective articulation of the self.

**Accord: notes for a method**

**Elizabeth:**

Accord: a group of notes sounded together, as a *chord*, later confused with *accord* (O.E.D.)

**Mary:**

- The first note we have is a tactile, kitchen metaphor from Lisa Heldke:

  Kneading bread dough is not a "subservient" physical activity which "supports" bread-making "theory", even while violating the separation between "bread theorizer" and bread dough. Rather, kneading is an essential part of the theoretical-and-practical process of making bread - a part in which subjects' and objects' boundaries necessarily meet, touch and overlap.

- Analogous to Helene Cixous' 'rising insurrectionary dough, kneading itself', and employing what Modjeska (1990: 308) terms 'patterns of thought that brood rather than argue', our talking, and our writing *otherwise* a social theoretical

107 Heldke, L.M., 'Foodmaking as a Thoughtful Practice' in Curtin, D.W. and Heldke, L.M., op. cit., p. 206


account of bodies' stories is not an activity which supports or illuminates an
abstracted theory of a 'sociology of perceptual impairment'. Rather, this kneading,
these broodings, introductions of other metaphors, have been an essential part of
the process of understanding a visual impairment as the embodied experience of a
woman, and its knowing by and with her colleagues, friends and lover, cultural
others to her sightlessness.

• The politics of our social theorizing may be usefully understood as Mara Négron
Marreo\textsuperscript{110} puts it, as 'politics in the poetic sense ... . It involves a certain way of
looking at texts, of listening to the other. Texts are not just things, dead leaves.
They bear witness to life. Reading a text represents a desire to rediscover the
human.'\textsuperscript{111} And as Liz Stanley\textsuperscript{112} points out:

\begin{quote}
Knowledge ... is political knowledge through and through,
because it necessarily derives from the world-views, assumptions and
frameworks concerning knowledge ... of its producers ...\textsuperscript{113}
\end{quote}

• We have worked in accord with Liz Stanley’s\textsuperscript{114} suggestion that 'one of the
preconditions for 'good research' is that it should account for the conditions of its
own production; that is, it has to be 'unalienated knowledge'. Such 'unalienated
knowledge', she writes, is characterized by:

* the researcher/theorist [being] grounded as an actual person in a concrete
setting;

* understanding and theorizing [being] treated as material activities; and

* the 'act of knowing' [being] examined as the crucial determiner of what is
known\textsuperscript{115}.

These prerequisites were so clear, so unarguable, so liberatory for social theory
and researchers when I first came upon them in such unambiguous terms.

\textsuperscript{110} Mara Négron Marreo, conversation translated in Sellars, S. (Ed) \textit{Writing Differences: Readings from
the Seminar of Hélène Cixous}, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1988, p. 143
\textsuperscript{111} ibid., p. 143
\textsuperscript{113} ibid., p. 39
\textsuperscript{114} ibid., p. 13
\textsuperscript{115} ibid., p. 13.
Simple and palpably honest and correct as Stanley's position was, it is sobering if unsurprising to observe the substance of her publication *Knowing Feminisms*, a decade later. Stanley's "Introduction: on Academic Tribes, Borders and Knowledges" evinces traditional academies' effective rejection of such epistemological positions as they have been taken up by feminists and others/Others within academe. Her note for our collection here includes her insistent invocation of ' 'knowing' as a methodological matter, as an analytical problematic, and as an ethical requirement. This trinity – methodic, analytic, ethic – is actually one and indivisible.

- We are attempting to represent embodied experiences, which involve the processes of imaginations, emotions, and political positions on knowledge. Our wish to present poetic elements of our work indicates our recognition of their value in representing 'moments of our genuine bedazzlement, the truths which are the most difficult to think and bring to life ... so fundamental to our human condition and yet so consistently repressed'. Hélène Cixous says:

  I believe thinking is most powerful when it is poetic ... . Strictly speaking, thought has philosophy as its synonym. But philosophy proceeds in a manner which I find restrictive. I prefer thinking in a poetic overflowing.

- We have attempted to write differently, aligning ourselves with Richardson's quest

---

116 The introduction (along with the series of papers in this edited collection) explores the dimensions and effects of interrogating the distancing academic 'gaze' in terms of its 'knowledge-production and claims-making... and the related bartering and exchanging that occurs in the academic/intellectual marketplace'. Stanley reiterates such processes to be 'political ... through and through', as is the position which has led to this interrogation. It is the position which Stanley understandably claims to be 'the most revolutionary idea associated with feminism': that 'all knowledge is located and thus specific, that it is grounded and consequently has its limits'. Stanley, L., 'Introduction: On academic Tribes, Borders and Knowledges' in *Knowing Feminisms: On academic borders, territories and tribes*, London, Sage, 1977, p. 15

117 ibid., p. 15


119 Hélène Cixous, conversation translated in Sellars, S., op. cit., p. 142

120 ibid., p. 142

83
to ‘find and deploy methods which allow us to uncover the hidden assumptions and life-denying repressions of sociology; resee/refeel sociology’ If we have been successful, our text should have violated ‘sociology’s unwritten emotional rules’

- As researcher and researched both, our boundaries have, both explicitly and implicitly, perceptibly and imperceptibly, met, touched and overlapped with others:

Elizabeth:

Most of
This year
I felt like
A rat on a wheel
There were many accidents

Recovery
Was not seamless

Liz Stanley:

The university is a minor transit camp
for many displaced people...
...although I’m supposed to be ‘at home’,
I feel little of this...

...the gendered nature of knowledge/power is witnessed
by the apparatus of science, objectivity,
detachment, rationality...
creating hierarchies
in which one form of knowing –
scientistic, apparently detached

122 ibid., p. 706
and presumed to be objective – stands over and against others\textsuperscript{125}.

Should I pull myself together?\textsuperscript{126}

Connections made at such borderlands of understood pain, concomitant desire, empathy, and even of perceived failures adequately to understand, generate valid and valuable knowledge of modes of being in the world.

\textsuperscript{124} Stanley, L., op. cit., p. 13
\textsuperscript{125} ibid., p. 5
\textsuperscript{126} ibid., p. 14
part 3

toxic politicking: a Hestian dilemma
toxic politicking: a Hestian\textsuperscript{1} dilemma

I have worked with Cameron Way, who is an advocate for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome survivors, and we share the experience of exposure to toxic ‘termite-control’ chemicals (organochlorins) having triggered our experience of this dis-ease, the classic mind/body illness.

This writing explores a collection of approaches to knowledge grounded in the experiences of whole bodies, including other-than-human bodies. The questions it asks relate to how embodied knowing, and knowledge of bodies, connects with philosophical positions on environmental ‘ethics’, to scientific and to spiritual discourses.

Bodily experience \textbf{understood} invokes metaphor and figurative representations in this text, and promotes rethinkings of boundaried notions of ‘ethics’, ‘truth’ and ‘morality’ through trajectories of playfulness and aesthetics. In turn, this experimental collection offers important mediations: altered \textbf{awareness} may describe fertile connections between our domestic space and its implicit concerns with nurture, growth and care of the self/other, and our felt positions as actors and knowers in the \textit{polis}.

\textsuperscript{1}Hestia, virgin goddess of the hearthfire, home and family.
Hestia, virgin goddess of the hearthfire, was the guardian of households, and by extension, of families. The name of the hearthfire and the name of the goddess were the same: *hestia* = Hestia ... Over time, "private life", with its varied sites of experience, was discounted as irrelevant to philosophy ... As a consequence of patriarchy, visible public life, occurring in the space of the political domain, became the subject of most philosophy and theory, even though the root word for theory, *theorein*, is defined by some as contemplation of the household fire, or *hestia*.

‘There is only one question:

how to love this world.

**Cameron’s translation**

I was able to speak with Cameron when I needed support, or to exchange ideas and feelings which stemmed from our respective experiences of chemical exposure. We believe this exposure triggered our C.F.S., and we had both felt our bodily experience invalidated in our dealings with doctors and institutions. Cameron had experienced his own, and helped with others’, long-term problems in validating, for Social Security purposes, a mutable inability to work for extended periods.

Cameron is a self-professed scientist who recognizes the importance of scientific discourse to his advocacy work on C.F.S. He values highly the power he observes in scientific method to produce the respected language of rational knowledge:

*(The discourse of science, for some purposes is) excellent ... what made it so powerful was that there was a simple process by which the individual with all their emotions and*

---

2Patricia J. Thompson, Dismantling the Master's House: A Hestian/Hermean Deconstruction of Classical Texts, in *Hypatia*, Vol.9 No.4 (Fall 1994), pp 38-56
attachments to their ideas, while spending some time really exploring them and being in that reality, can then spend time independently testing them and exposing their ego and their expectations to a way (of knowing) that was external to themselves, some kind of refinement test ...

... Often when I'm trying to find an avenue of advocacy for myself with a legal group or whatever, you get five minutes into the conversation and you're expected to somehow relate the significance of the entire tapestry. So you talk rapidly, and they see you as overly intense ... and you can't think strategically in your head and it all comes out as this interactive sort of thing ... and they just see you as ... a bit of an emotional nutter, one of those people to avoid, a drain on resources.

(Cameron: Transcript 15.12.94 p4)

Cameron was telling me of separate 'realities': one encompasses the space of emotions and individual 'attachments to ... ideas'; another is described as the 'refin(ing)' reality of 'independent'scientific 'testing' and ego-exposure, processes locatable 'external to selves'. Cameron's position here is appropriate in a context of Western knowledges which have counterposed the emotional, one component of embodied experience, as a defining 'other' to the rational, and as its alternative, lesser term in a series of hierarchized binaries. Complicit with the mind/body split, these oppositions are constitutive of the ontologies which underpin patriarchal conceptions of illness, of disease. There is a loss of minded control implicit in such bodily dysfunction. As A.W. Frank writes:

In society's view of disease, when the body goes out of control, the patient is treated as if he (sic.) has lost control. Being sick thus carries more than a hint of moral failure; I felt that in being ill I was being vaguely irresponsible4. (emphasis mine)

But in Drew Leder's5 terms, when the body (presumably under the auspices of just such a minded control) functions properly and according to expectation, it effectively

3Mary Oliver, 'Spring', New and Selected Poems, Boston, Beacon Press, 1992, p. 70
4Frank, A.W., 'The body as territory and as wonder', in At The Will of the Body, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991, p. 58
‘disappears’. It becomes evident only when its malfunction demands its recognition. Such dichotomized conceptual schemas and the knowledges they generate are fundamental to the corseting of medical science in a ‘disease’ paradigm:

The danger of avoiding doctors is immediate and physical, but if we allow them to dominate the drama, they will script it to include only disease. By saying ‘This will have to be investigated’, my physician claimed center stage and scripted the drama to follow; the person within my body was sent out into the audience to watch passively.6(my emphasis)

I reflected on the similarities which Cameron and I perceived in our experiences of toxic environments around and within our bodies, and on the evident differences in our respective attempts to describe those experiences, and to act upon their meanings for us...

Journal, Wednesday, March 22nd. I’m working on the chapter with Cameron. Now, because he’s only in town once a fortnight, or is it because he’s male, or is it because he’s a ‘scientist’, I don’t feel the usual sense of working with him, except in mutual support for each other’s project. Elizabeth, in her visual impairment you see, was interested in exploring the same practices of representation: our subject matter was our object matter too, and we approached our work together with that knowledge. Perhaps I don’t want to write together with Cameron - I feel some pain in seeing how he’s had to hold on to a disembodied scientific discourse, in an attempt to achieve the goals of advocacy for his and others’ demands to be recognized as ill. I’m finding it very hard to work on this chapter-as-chapter anyway, because of all the fear and loathing I have to keep working through over the toxicity stuff, in my work. And my work is my working out, isn’t it? Interactive, imaginative, reconstructive: it’s auto/biography7.

Translating Cameron, I remember Elizabeth Grosz’s words:

6ibid., p. 53
7Liz Stanley, in ‘Moments of writing: Is there a feminist auto/biography?’, Gender and History, vol. 2(1):58-67, suggests that innovations of form and the traversing of genre boundaries in women’s autobiographical writings have facilitated illuminating treatments of women’s experience of multiple selfhood and interactive knowing, and uncover the importance of fiction and fantasy in life-stories. She also points out the influential nature, in biographical writings, of the autobiography of the writer: hence auto/biography.
‘... sexually different bodies produce sexually different minds and sexually different minds produce sexually different knowledges. I know that’s a dangerous argument, but I have to make it’

But we did make a limited lingua franca, a space for translations. In that place, Cameron offered me perceptual and linguistic bridges to patriarchal understandings of illness, embodiment, and environmental bodies; I offered him different perceptions of our similar symptoms.

I expressed my fears and guilt about the effect of chemical exposure on my children in the space that had been our secure home on an acre out of town, roughly built by a woman geologist around a huge fireplace of her cobbled stones.

Rough-house

Accomodation for rough beast.
A rough-house for the unrefined,
where clothes may be rough-dried. Unironed.
Coarse cloth; bumps and obstacles
to be confronted, negotiated. Coaxed or worn smooth.
Creases allowed to drop out with wear.
Where beauty is occasionally free
to steam-iron to fabulon perfection.
Room for the rough-and-tumble
of the litter: an irregular, scrambling,
Disorderly brood.
With spaces for unrestrained boisterousness.
And precious corners of peaceful, perfect light.
Space for rough attempts to be made, rough coats applied,
rough welcomes offered. Fluctuation,
the process of chaos, dramatic performance,
to be lived through, applauded.

8 Grosz, E., Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray in the Flesh, unpublished lecture delivered at U.N.E. Armidale,
And exhaustion bedded in serenity.

Cameron made the information-seeking phone calls to an oncologist when I read of heptachlor’s toxicity to bone marrow, especially in children. I needed some sensitive ‘cushioning’.

I felt guilt because I had reacted in panic to the termite invasion with death-inducing chemicals in an attempt to govern, to control the realm of our home, to protect our investment in security…

The Flickman

All that makes the woods, the rivers or the air
Has its place between these walls which believe they close a room.⁹

“I hope you haven’t poisoned my children.” Spoken to Schnieder the Flickman, but effectively self-addressed as I waded again through the morass of meanings and emotions this termite-infestation/visitation and my eventual flick-response had engendered.

The pest-control industry in this country had its birth in the struggle to find an effective termite control method. Until this discovery was made by William Flick the plight of the owner of an infested property was generally considered hopeless ... the only solution being to patch up the damage as best as possible and sell out.”

(Flick Pest Information Bulletin No. 3 – Termites)

My sense of this house was of a home offering both a haven for children and self, and a welcome for others “so genuine that even what may be seen from the windows

Sept. 3, 1992, transcript p. 17
belongs to it ... inviting the universe to come back into the house ...”.¹⁰ But the termites had taken their fill of its substance, the structure of the home, the wood of its bearers, joists, noggins and doorframes. They had done so uninvited and invisible, intangible. I felt a physical violation of my house and of my body; uncontrollable transgression, a negation of hospitality.

This is the stage of real threat to buildings, fences and other property. In their quest for food, the termites will build covered ‘runways’ from the ground over foundations and ant-capping and along pipes ... These runways are enclosed to preserve the atmosphere of the nest, shield the termites from light and protect them from natural predators ... . Once new wood is located the colony virtually excavates the whole of the inside leaving only a honeycomb of tunnel walls and the outer layer which preserves the controlled atmosphere. The destruction is devastating and can be remarkably quick.

PRODUCT NAME: Gold Crest Heptachlor 400EC
ACTIVE CONSTITUENT: 400g/L Heptachlor
CHEMICAL FAMILY: Organochlorine Insecticide

As a guide to relative safety, THIS PRODUCT, WHEN APPLIED AT NORMAL USAGE RATES, IS 9.6 TIMES LESS TOXIC THAN COMMON TABLE SALT.

(Flick Pest Information Bulletin and Product Guide)

I handed the operative a coffee when we’d completed the paperwork. My signature agreed to re-inspection, and after handing me the Treatment Specification, Health and Safety Information, and the Pest Information Bulletin, the Flickman spoke: “Now I’ll give you the really important stuff”. From beneath his Flick clipboard he slid a handful of printed tracts, ensconced in a glossy reproduction of tanks and soldiers

¹⁰ ibid., p. 66
doing battle, overlaid by bold red lettering: ‘THE 20TH CENTURY AND THE FUTURE’.

With a modicum of attention to gauging my initial response, Rick the Flickman weighed in for a forty-minute exposition on the retributions to come, on speaking in tongues and being born again in water and spirit along the Pentecostal lines of Jeanette Winterson’s mother’s horrific and gaudy ministry, described in *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*. I registered no surprise at the evangelical technique. My Jehovah’s Witness childhood had inured me to such pronouncements; the language of holy vengeance and gory retribution was mother’s milk to me ... Perhaps he had drawn encouragement from the ready availability of eye contact from me: I was pondering his slightly goggle-eyed appearance. Was it a result of exposure to heptachlor? Or an expression of the power of the holy spirit, which even as he spoke settled upon the shoulder of his royal blue flick outfit in the form of a pardalote, grave and attentive?

I was quiet, too. I heard the Heptachlorist’s words as I watched him speak of miraculous healings of unnamed disorders. I fixed my eyes on a fold that fell from the bottom left of his nose to become the signification of a jowl. The suds of a hot wash cycle inside my head became a confabulation of images of life and death, salvation and threat, sickness and health, condemnation and deliverance, silence and the gift of speaking in an unknown foreign language. All up for mediation by the Flickman. Evangelical street-call: “Contradictions overcome with faith: sixpence-a-bag. Four hundred dollars: seal-your-house-against-His-universe”.

It was a long speech, touching on the scientific demonstration of the inspiration of the scriptures; I wondered about the washing of his uniform as I observed a necessary faecal by-product of the holy spirit in pardalote form. “How does your wife feel about your faith?” fell past the cooling coffee mug onto my lap. “She hasn’t got the spirit yet, but she comes to the Revival Centre with me, and she’s interested. But that’s her affair, between her and the Lord.” So that must save on the washing.

Later, digesting his pamphlets, I was urged to note:

---

11 Winterson, J., *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*, London, Vintage, 1985
the curses to come upon the human race (because of disobedience to God): ‘madness’ [mental diseases], blindness and ‘astonishment of heart’ ... [and to] ... Thank God that the sin and sickness question was dealt with at the Cross, and that the ministry of healing was not only manifested by our Lord when He came but passed on to the believing church of the Bible.

Ungenerously, I later suspected bug-eyed Rick the Flickman, certain of his own immersion in salvation, of being actively intent on hastening the ‘pestilences ... in divers place’ which would mark ‘the time of the end’, using the direct means to hand in his secular employment.

For they shall say PEACE AND SAFETY, then sudden destruction comes upon them”.
(1 Thessalonians 5:3, cited in The 20th Century and the Future)

The Flickman’s dialectic of deliverance.

* * * *

Dear Mary,

I know our letters will probably cross in the post but I must just say this. When I spoke about “Go to the ant ...” I was really referring to their industriousness and certainly not to you being lazy, in case that is what you thought.

If there is one thing I would say you are not it is lazy. You do deserve to be commended for all the things you have achieved in your life along with looking after and caring for your two lovely daughters. Dad saw the doctor in the week and they are going to put a camera down his throat to see why he is getting such a lot of pain in his stomach. He has been treated for a hiatus hernia but the medicine doesn’t seem to have any effect on the pain. Anyway they will now have a look and see. I hope they can give
him some help because it is making him feel quite down and as
everything he does seems to pull on his stomach, he can't seem
to get any better ...

Love from Mum and Dad

* * *

We had fled our violated home with no careful leave-taking: for many months I was
nauseated each time I thought of approaching Flick to remonstrate. I hesitated to give
my new address in case the Flickman decided to visit his wrath upon our new
accommodation: paranoia\(^{12}\) is perhaps a sensible condition for those whose bodies,
ideas and languages are consistently violated by the nature-domination and the
environmental degradation which characterize late capitalist patriarchy.

I think of the translation that Cameron offered as mediating between, on the one hand,
the experiences of ill-health and chemical toxicity which affected our domestic spaces,
spaces for growth and nurturing of selves and children, and on the other hand, our
engagements with, and felt positions as actors in, the public spaces of work and
education of the \textit{polis}.

Patricia J. Thompson has described the Hestian and Hermean paradigms drawn from
classical Greek thought which focus, respectively, on the private, domestic sphere of the
household (\textit{oikos}), with Hestia the 'goddess of the domestic hearth'\(^{13}\), and the public
sphere of government and the State (\textit{polis}), with Hermes, the nephew of Hestia, the
'guardian of the marketplace, bridges and commerce'\(^{14}\). She suggests the value of
attempting a \textit{bifocal} standpoint which 'includes both the oikos and the polis'\(^{15}\), the
domestic and political economies. This approach would serve to counter what she

---

\(^{12}\)Sandra Bartky ('Toward a phenomenology of feminist consciousness', in Vetterling-Braggin, M.,
22-37) has used the term 'paranoia' in explicating the complex view of social reality which must
accompany developing feminist consciousness, with the increasing awareness that things are not as they
seem in other states of consciousness.

\(^{13}\)Patricia J. Thompson, op. cit., p. 42

\(^{14}\)loc. cit.

\(^{15}\)ibid., p. 38
describes as the polis-centric orienting assumptions of patriarchy, based upon which a ‘dominant group’ has come to frame ‘all competing definitions within its own perspectival framework’\textsuperscript{16}. This bifocal approach, this different way of seeing, offers the scope to ‘extend beyond excluded or marginalized individuals or groups to excluded standpoints, ideas, and language’\textsuperscript{17}. All women, men and children have private lives, live in households, and practise meaning-making there in ways which influence, are essential to, their social being and their action in the polis.

If the \textit{oikos} has been regarded as irrelevant to philosophy, and the language of its resources and practices devalued and marginalized, then perhaps a practice of reclaiming and reiterating its language and meanings will help to constitute a valuable ‘translation’. Where such a bifocal philosophical perspective is available to approach ‘moral’ questions of embodied experience, then perhaps as Thompson suggests:

\begin{quote}
   discourse can instead focus on a Hestian morality that argues on behalf of that which is deemed ‘essential’ to sustain and nurture ‘being’, as opposed to focusing on a Hermean morality that argues on behalf of that which is deemed ‘essential’ for ‘governing’\textsuperscript{18}.
\end{quote}

\textbf{Correspondence}

After almost a year of inarticulate inaction, I began a correspondence with W.A. Flick and Co, enclosing scientific evidence of high levels of airborne heptachlor in our Flick-treated home, which Cameron followed with an attitude of interest and support ...

27th January, 1995

Dear Ms. Bastable,

\textsuperscript{16}ibid., p. 39
\textsuperscript{17}loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{18}ibid., p.50
Thank you for your letter of 23rd January 1995 regarding the treatment of your property by W.A. Flick and Co.

We have considered the matter and are of the opinion that the treatment was carried out in accordance with the Flick specifications and the current Australian Standard, AS 2178 - Protection of Buildings from Subterranean Termites - Detection and Treatment of Infestation in Existing Buildings.

The Australian Standard AS 2178 details the method of application of Heptachlor for the control of Termites. The procedures in this Standard will result in airborne Heptachlor levels acceptable to National Health and Medical Research Council.

Should you have any further inquiries please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully, John Smith, Client Services Manager

20th March, 95

Dear John Smith,

Thank you for your letter dated 27th January 95...

In the Blue Mountains of New South Wales where termite treatment of new constructions is regulatory, more than fifty doctors signed a petition calling for a ban on the use of organochlorine pesticides claiming they cause cancer... Council aldermen are concerned by the fact that the Environmental Protection Agency in the USA has had the pesticides withdrawn because they are neurotoxic, bio-accumulative, cause infertility and are toxic to bone marrow, especially in children. (Whitmore, T., Toxic Chemical -Free Living and Recovering from ME/CFS, Birchgrove, Sydney, Sally Milner Publishing, 1990, p43)

I have two beautiful daughters, aged twelve and six - they were ten and four when the house was treated with heptachlor- certainly not according to Flick specifications as you claim, but I will return to that later.

Do you have daughters, Mr. Smith? I wonder what the effect of this poison, which evidently attacked my daughters' immune systems, has been on the eggs of their own
possible offspring? Or on their bone marrow? Something to think about at night for the 
woman who was always so careful to feed them fresh vegetables, and not to scratch 
them with nappy pins. It meant a year of inexplicable headaches and nausea every day 
for Abi, then aged ten, whom I took to doctors repeatedly, but had to keep sending to 
school sick and fatigued. Every time she came into the home we loved I was 
unknowingly dosing her with more of this toxin. Can you imagine how sick I feel every 
time I think of the home we loved, in the clean air out of town?

On the night in October, 93 when I realized that both my daughters and myself were 
having major limb-spasms in our sleep, and was finally able to connect this 
neurophysiological response to the termite treatment, we started a journey from sleeping 
on floors at friends houses, to one bedroom flats, to supported women’s housing - have 
you moved house with two children on a low fixed income, chronically fatigued, whilst 
trying to keep up mortgage repayments on your only ‘security’ which has been rendered 
uninhabitable, Mr. Smith?

I understand that the level of airborne heptachlor recorded (many months after 
application) in my home, the evidence of which I sent to you, was approximately seven 
times that at which American service personnel are removed from contaminated 
environments. The fact that it’s thirty-five times less (and this is for adults, of course) 
than the ‘acceptable daily exposure standard’, in an Australia which has somehow been 
persuaded for many years to be less concerned about its toxic effects than countries such 
as Turkey, really doesn’t make me feel at all relieved. And if you have a partner who is 
mother to your children, I doubt that it would comfort her, either.

The house most certainly was not treated according to Flick specifications: I was 
present whilst the treatment was done, and watched the white fluid spurting up the walls 
from behind the wainscoting. I could clearly hear the fluid being sprayed on the earth 
floor and brick piers/walls under the house, and indeed phoned your information number 
the next evening to enquire whether it was safe to be in the house with the very strong 
smell which persisted. I was advised that that was the smell of the solvent used in 
application and not a danger. I was not advised by the Flick operative of the very poor 
ventilation under my house. Before I felt morally able put my house up for sale, I had to 
leave it empty for months and have major ventilation work done to attempt to remove 
the poisoned air.
Prior to treatment of my house by Flick, both myself and my daughters were exceptionally healthy and active persons: your treatment certainly changed our lives. I have learned much about how unprotected we are from the irresponsible and greedy unconcern of individuals and companies who continue to poison this country and its inhabitants with toxins (often quite ineffectual on termite infestation, by the way) which have a half-life of several decades. On nights when I have cried over what I have (and may have) done to my children’s health (not to mention my own, and the toxic soil) by trying to ‘protect’ our only security, I have wished, as you may imagine, that I had known then what I know now.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Mary Bastable

29th March, 1995

Dear Ms. Bastable,

Thank you for your letter of 20th March, 1995. We fully appreciate how concerned you are about health issues. However, we are at a loss to know what else we can do to allay your fears.

The use of pesticides is regulated by stringent State and Federal Regulations. W A Flick and Co abides by these regulations throughout the course of our business.

The issues that you have raised in your letter are covered by these regulations and your concerns should be addressed to either the manufacturer of the product, Velsicol Australian Pty Ltd or the N S W State regulatory authority, NSW Agriculture, Registrar of Pesticides.

Yours faithfully

John Smith, Client Services Manager
The correspondence continued ...

Friday, 7th April 1995

With regard to your letter dated 29th March, I reiterate the request of my letter of 19th March: please would you comment on the report from Systems Pest Management which I enclosed with that letter.

It seems quite clear that you cannot possibly ‘allay’ my sensible fears; if the role of client services manager is seen to include the role of alleviating such fears on the part of Flick customers, I imagine that as a daily task it must constitute a severe ethical challenge.

Perhaps you will also answer these simple questions:

If the Flick application was ‘subterranean’, why was the fluid being sprayed up the walls of my living room and my daughter’s bedroom from underneath the house as I watched the process? Why could I hear the liquid being sprayed over the substructural walls? Why, when I pulled the wall linings and struts from my daughter’s room walls a few days later, were they wet, with the distinctive smell of the Heptachlor application, although taken from a very dry house?

I believe this issue is properly addressed to Flick for response, and not to Velsicol, nor the Registrar of Pesticides.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Mary Bastable.

2nd May, 1995

Dear Ms. Bastable,

We are writing regarding your further correspondence of 7th April 1995, regarding the treatment of your property by W.A. Flick and Co.
We do not feel that it would be constructive to enter into any discussions of the Systems Pest Management Pty Ltd report carried out some 9 months following our treatment of your property.

We maintain that we have completed a treatment of your property in accordance with the relevant Australian Standards and State Government regulations. Should you claim that this is not the case you should address this claim to the NSW Registrar of Pesticides.

Yours faithfully, John Smith, Client Services Manager.

That conversation ended, but I was now living in awareness ...

2nd May, 95

Dear Editor,

Q. If it takes one man with three litres of Roundup one hour to control chthonic nature along a two inch strip of grass, how long does it take one feminist with a pair of shears to trim it, or three to contemplate its growth?

I recently encountered a university groundsman spraying herbicide on a perimeter of lawn, the few straggly inches of dry grass which had not been reached by a ride-on mower. This grass is immediately outside my office. This violation was necessary, the groundsman told me, because there was insufficient staff to keep the straggly tufts down in any other way. I own a pair of shears: it occurs to me that if anyone has a problem with these few tufts (and the life forms surrounding them) continuing to brazen out an existence (the occupants of this office do not), it would be as simple and surely cheaper to chop them down.

The herbicide in use was Glyphosate (Roundup), Monsanto’s ‘safe’ herbicide. Apart from the isopropylamine salt of glyphosate,
'the other constituents of Roundup are a surfactant and water. The surfactant is a type of detergent which enhances the contact between glyphosate and plant. The surfactant is not named on the Monsanto Material Safety Data Sheet. The surfactant is more easily absorbed through skin, and is more toxic to fish, than glyphosate itself. It has also been shown to be contaminated with traces of 1-4 dioxane, which causes cancer at high doses in animals. ('Toxic Chemicals: Your Exposure and Your Rights, Total Environment Centre, Sydney)

Such informations on, and evidence of the environmental and health effects of the cocktail of toxic chemicals to which we life forms are all increasingly exposed is now widely available: I don’t wish to add to my toxic burden.

The rest of the university grounds’ awkward edges and ‘difficult corners’ (e.g. the margins closest to office accommodation) will continue to receive this treatment. I believe it’s appropriate

(i) at least to be informed of the intention to spray herbicides or pesticides in or around work areas, and shown clear notice of its having been done;

(ii) that we all give careful thought to:

why we mount a costly chemical attack on non-threatening life forms?

why we maintain manicured lawns anyway? Native trees and shrubs offer shade and ground cover and require neither costly mowing nor thousands of costly gallons of precious water for maintenance.

Mary Bastable,

Postgrad., Department of Social, Cultural and Curriculum Studies

26th May, 95

Dear Editor,
Re Mary Bastable's overworded and laborious description of her surroundings, it might interest people to know that the Oxford Dictionary definition of chthonic is 'dwelling in the underworld'. So that's what she was talking about!

Liza Marlin,

Distance Education Centre

'Ethical' awareness

In Buddhism, the most important precept of all is to live in awareness, to know what is going on. To know what is going on, not only here, but there. For instance, when you eat a piece of bread, you may choose to be aware that our farmers, in growing the wheat, use chemical poisons a little too much. Eating the bread, we are somehow co-responsible for the destruction of our ecology.19(my emphasis)

My environmental (bodily) concerns return me to an engagement with traditional rationalist thought. Ethicists, including environmental ethicists, engage in a science of morality. In common with those who have an economic interest in environmental degradation (e.g. pest-control companies) and with state bodies (e.g. the NSW Registrar of Pesticides), they subscribe in general to disembodied truth-regimes. The dualisms which underpin the abstraction of universal knowings from lived, embodied experience, and which posit nature as 'other' to humans, is perhaps in no discipline more stark, nor more potentially threatening in its application to the wellbeing of non-human and human bodies.

Feminist theorists have used postmodern insights to reapproach areas of knowledge riven by the hierarchical binarisms of Western thought. Like them, I

... insist on viewing science as a *social practice* whose products are the effects of complex social relations sustained over time and shaped by a continually changing culture.20

Feminist writers on ethics and ecofeminism21 have usefully sought to de-scientize and de-universalize notions of morality in their work, whilst others have offered insights on alternative universalities and spatialities which both encompass22 and decentre23 issues of gender. But for now I wish to avoid the epistemological and the regulatory implications of the term ‘ethics’ here, as a philosophy of morals, and to exploring the use of *‘know(ing) what is going on, not only here, but there’* as a practical guide.

It is a term which makes sense of the physical and psychic processes through which I can come to what is effectively a *political* position, in its intention of balancing diverse concerns. Such a knowledge-practice, ‘knowing what is going on, not only here, but there’, counters the binary hierarchisation which has defined humanity in contradistinction to both nature and the feminine24. Shane Phelan25 has suggested that a prior attention to embodied *specificity* allows for a ‘combination of structural analyses and stubborn individuality; not transcendence of our context, but forever living with the remainder, the unique, the inassimilable’26. It allows us to locate our points of intersection with others, and as Phelan notes, ‘those intersections help us talk about the places that are less congruent’27. It requires a practice of movement across boundaries in the approach to knowledge of other bodies.

To ‘know what is going on’ implies multiplicity: it requires engaged bodily presence and a minded sensual openness to knowledge of* other bodies. Grosz28 describes Deleuze’s


23 cf. Thompson, P.J., op. cit.


26 ibid, p. 134

27 ibid, p. 135

28 Grosz, E., *Volatile Bodies*, Bloomington, St Leonards, N.S.W., Allen and Unwin, 1994, p. 168
notion of the Body without Organs as the ‘attempt to denaturalize human bodies and to place them in direct relations with the flows or particles of other bodies or things’. Deleuze and Guattari assume a Spinozist notion of the ontological equivalence of all things, and so the Body without Organs, as Grosz remarks, ‘refers indistinguishably to human, animal, textual, sociocultural and physical bodies’. Bodies may then be understood in terms not simply of their specific embodiment, but in terms of the ‘capacities and unknown potential of the body to do things, to engage in practices’. To extend a practice of embodied knowing in this sense is to attend to the processes of bodies-becoming.

Colebrook understands the Deleuzian body without organs in terms of the ‘life we imagine as underlying our forms of organization’. In conceiving our world as ‘composed of organized bodies’, we assume a substrate, an underlying ‘life’ or ‘ground’ from which different bodies emerge. The equivalent of capital [as Body without Organs] for capitalism was, in previous societies, the earth, which formed the equivalent ‘substrate of life, such that primitive tribes imagined their distinct orders as distinctions of the whole or totality of the earth’.

Radical ecological feminist conceptions of ‘ethics’ have required and justified the ascription of ‘moral considerability’ to all living things. In the current climate of re-thinkings and computer-simulated interrogations of just this categorical boundary between the living and the non-living, it is useful to consider the ways in which a ‘here … and … there’ knowledge-practice of specific embodiment may sensibly require

---

30 Grosz, E., op. cit., p168
31 ibid., p. 169
33 ibid., p. xxi
34 ibid., p. xxi
36 Christopher Langton, known for his work on artificial life, or ‘a-life’ has remarked: ‘...the world of Man is beginning to crowd out the world of Nature. But you have to remember that one developed out of the other...we are natural ourselves, and we can consider our products as well to be natural in some sense...And for me, artificial life simply means that evolution has now discovered other materials in which to evolve’. C. Langton interviewed by Dana Lewis, retrieved from:www2.dgsys.com/~dlewis/nlcoolto.html
an inquiring approach to other-than-human bodies, or to inorganic matter. Consider the following story:

**Going underground**

The volcanic rock and coral formation of Mururoa atoll is a French colony in Polynesia's Taumotu archipelago: in 1966 (following Algeria's 1962 independence from France and its resultant loss as a nuclear testing site) France began atmospheric nuclear tests in the colony. From 1975, in line with the Nuclear Arms Non-Proliferation treaty to which it was a signatory, the testing there was conducted underground. Testing had been moved underground as a result of the articulation of growing international awareness and concern over health and environmental effects.

Throughout the period of atmospheric testing, levels of radioactive fallout had been monitored by New Zealand: although the level was low, it was uneven. In 1966 there was a 'blow back' from Mururoa toward Samoa when wind direction, combined with heavy rain, 'resulted in quite a lot of local contamination'. Other such 'rainouts' were observed, in Tahiti and the Gambier Islands (just southeast of Mururoa). Claims that birth defects and cancer rates have increased in the area since the atmospheric tests are not verifiable: there is not register of birth defects in French Polynesia.

In mid-1995, in a context of low security concerns following the end of the Cold War, President Jacques Chirac announced that France would lift a three-year moratorium on nuclear weapons testing and conducted a series of eight more underground tests at Mururoa between September 1995 and May 1996. The tests were intended to create computer simulations 'which would eradicate the need for further testing'.

[Occasionally, we do a rousing chorus at home of the song written by the Uralla, New South Wales. women, and performed at one of many peace protests in late 1995:

---

37 Dr. Murray Matthews, National Radiation Lab, New Zealand, interviewed on the ABC Quantum programme screened on August 23 1995, written and reported by Megan James, retrieved from www.abc.net.au/quantum/info/mururoa.htm, transcript p. 2

So drop it in Paris – c'est votre bomb

If it’s so damned ‘safe’, test it at home:

Drop it on the Eiffel Tower, stick it up your vest

Use the Champs Elysée for your nuclear test..."

Michael O’Sullivan notes the ‘very permeable’ nature of the atoll’s limestone and coral structure ‘from about 400 metres below sea level to the surface’. He outlines the French claim that the tests undertaken at least 1000 metres deep, in the basalt base, were effectively happening within a sealed chamber of glassified rock, formed within the basalt base, and that the radioactive waste of the nuclear explosions remains safely within the volcanic rock39.

Photographs40 of a three metre fissure in the coral of the atoll supported suggestions that previous nuclear testing had degraded and destroyed coral and altered land plates. Vulcanologist Pierre Vincent observed that ‘further tests could rupture the rock and release radionuclides from underground cavities’41. The French recognized the certainty that radioactive waste will eventually leak through the basalt rock into the biosphere; estimates of when this process may begin varied from 500 years to thousands.

There were uncertainties; there had been accidents. In ‘July 1979 a 120 kiloton bomb got stuck halfway down the shaft, at 400 metres. They exploded it anyway, and because tests were then on the rim of the atoll, part of the southern side collapsed in an underwater landslide’42. Tsunami, seismic tidal waves, are known to result from the future shocks of underground explosions; the number and magnitude of the tests at Mururoa may increase the likelihood of such an event.


41 cited in Falco, T., op. cit., p. 2.

42 from text of www.abc.net.au/quantum/info/mururoa.htm, p4
Days before the 1995 tests’ commencement, Jacques Chirac averred that a “country that wants to live in security should not lower its guard ... in a very uncertain world”. The story told was that the nuclear energy and radioactive waste of thousands of kilotons of nuclear explosions are made ‘safe’ by their containment in an other body, a land mass whose basalt rock, in its underground reaction to explosion, is supposedly impermeable, for long enough.

The ‘what’s going on here’ knowledge offered (and controlled) by the French government was inscribed with the discursive traces of distant colonial ownership; of nuclear capability as a political status symbol (despite lip-service to nuclear disarmament plans); of a boundaried Western European ‘security’ based on the power to attack distant difference; of a residual Cold War strategic ‘defence’ logic; of a disembodied scientism which paid no heed to alternative concepts of ‘security’, or to other concepts of bodies: bodies of land, or of water, or of colonized ‘other’.

‘What’s going on there’ knowledge was available in studies of biology, marine ecology, vulcanology and plate tectonics as they uncovered and presented evidence of fissures in the atoll, of contradictions in the image of the ‘sealed’ chamber, of risks to human and animal health, of possible future events and evident land degradation. Likelihoods and possibilities of traumatic events (such as tsunami), or of future harm to human and aquatic life were described, presenting profound images of material insecurity. But their distant locations in space and time from Western Europe’s nineteenth century championing of democracy and human rights were taken to remove them from the realms of necessary informations ‘here’.

* * *

In attending to embodied specificity, Phelan has suggested, we may locate those intersections which facilitate awareness of incongruities, of excess to context. In our

44 The ABC Quantum programme screened on August 23 1995, written and reported by Megan James, noted that ‘The French claim the chamber is sealed, yet cools quickly. The only way it could cool quickly is if the chamber is really so cracked it allows cooling water to get in and out.’ www.abc.net.au/quantum/info/mururoa.htm, op. cit.
45 Phelan, S., op.cit., p. 134
conversations around mind/body dis-ease, Cameron spoke cynically about how those points of intersection have been perceived and expressed with regard to his C.F.S. disease:

Maybe I'll have some revelation that on some fine, subtle, soul level I've chosen to create it all, and I've created chemical exposure as a cause. But ... the more people tried to preach to me about that whole new age philosophy about 'you've got to accept responsibility for yourself...I found that ... what it really did was enable them to say “I’m looking after myself - fuck you” ... And the last thing they’re really doing is taking responsibility for the whole of reality, not just themselves.

(Cameron Transcript: 15.12.94 p7)

In social-theoretical terms, corporeality is implicit in knowing what is going on both ... here and ... there: such a knowledge-practice assumes responsibility in the relationship of and movement between self and other. This knowledge is expressive of aesthetic truths and erotic drives, of emotions.

Learning to ‘know’, to recognize or become acquainted with ‘what is going on’ both ‘here’ and ‘there’ as the flows, intensities and products of other bodies suggests the aesthetic element of this process. This knowledge-practice promotes an understanding of life as what Elizabeth Dodson Gray terms ‘a system of interconnections where everything ultimately affects everything else’. Her suggested ethic of attunement requires that ‘we are to open ourselves, we are to listen and look, we are to pay attention’

She notes, citing Christopher Stone that bodies other than human bodies - trees, water, insect bodies - can and do quite clearly communicate their needs to us, and likens the process of attunement to the attention paid by a parent to a pre-verbal infant.

47Ibid., p. 28
Maria Lugones\textsuperscript{49} tells the story of learning to practice a communication of ‘loving perception’, understanding her mother (of whom she knew she ‘made far-reaching demands’, and whose ‘substance’ she ‘graft(ed) .. onto (her)self’\textsuperscript{50}):

To love my mother was not possible for me while I retained a sense that it was fine for me and others to see her arrogantly. Loving my mother also required that I see with her eyes, that I go into my mother’s world, that I see both of us as we are constructed in her world, that I witness her own sense of herself from within her world. Only through this travelling to her ‘world’ could I identify with her because only then could I cease to ignore her and to be excluded and separate from her. Only then could I see her as a subject even if one subjected, and only then could I see at all how meaning could arise fully between us. We are fully dependent on each other for the possibility of being understood and without this understanding we are not intelligible, we do not make sense, we are not solid, visible, integrated; we are lacking. So travelling to each other’s ‘worlds’ would enable us to be through loving each other.

Such a practice does not suggest an ideal of ‘the transparency of subjects to one another’\textsuperscript{51}. Rather, it suggests the use, with ‘attitude’, of multiple interactive techniques, many of which are peculiarly available to women for various socio-cultural and historical reasons.

For instance, Isobel Armstrong has suggested that women ‘have a greater understanding of difference and contradiction as a result of our culturally learned roles’\textsuperscript{52}, and that it may be appropriate for us to use this ‘heightened sense of contradiction’ to redefine both communality and sexual difference, incorporating the use of a politicized aesthetic to uncover differences, and hence specificities of gender, race and class.

\textsuperscript{50}ibid., p. 87
\textsuperscript{51}Young, Iris M., in \textit{Social Justice and the Politics of Difference}, Princeton University Press, p. 231, suggests this term to explicate the convergence of notions of ‘shared subjectivity’, ‘complementary reciprocity’, and a Derridean ‘copresence of subjects’ as based on an ‘ideal of community’ which ‘denies the ontological difference within and between subjects’.

111
The value of imagination in re-forging representations of selves is clear: it promotes a conceptual movement to the boundaries of our selves, where we come closest to the other’s different specificities, whilst maintaining the necessary bounded position from which we are able to ‘know’ the other. It allows us to use our peripheral vision, to see difference through modifying the act of looking. And it can locate knowing spaces between selves, areas in which distinction and alterity may be reworked, reconstituted53.

**Political awareness**

My politics impels a search for terms other than ‘moral’ and ‘ethical’ when examining issues of environmental risk. I need language which signifies a practical, material process of lived evaluation and action which does not have *a priori* regulatory overtones, which can encompass notions of negotiation, communication, play54, pleasure, care and affect. Perhaps a knowing awareness, an awareness of the other, of ‘here’ and of ‘there’, is usefully understood as closer to an articulate politics, a communicative organization of diversities. My intention here is to avoid the dichotomous connotations of ‘morals’ and ‘ethics’. Awareness would involve approaching the other politically rather than morally, as negotiator rather than judge. Grosz notes of Kristeva’s position:

> The speaking subject is not merely an individual producer of texts, an ‘author’, but is symptomatic of a social organisation: the ruptures and breaches in the ordered functioning of meaning and coherence mirror, even forecast, ruptures in social unities at the level of the State and ideological institutions.55


Moira Gatens\textsuperscript{56} has imaged 'an ethics that takes account of historical, social, ethnic and bodily differences'\textsuperscript{57} claiming that 'the political body, no less than the individualized body, with which it is complicit, must be acknowledged as polymorphous'. She continues:

If there is to be a genuinely polymorphous socio-political body, it is clear that it will need to be capable of discriminating and respecting differences among its members. This would involve institutionalizing the ability to contextualize actions and their meanings rather than taking a relativist stance toward issues of ethics. It also implies the ability to hear and respond to polyvocality and polyvalency. Part of what is involved in the viability of such a body is that its communication with itself would be polylogical\textsuperscript{58}

Many of us have lived out chronic dis-eases which suggest profound metaphors for such a politics:

M.E. (or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) patients will sometimes complain only of their more marked or important symptoms, because they feel that if they make a full confession of all their problems they will instantly be labeled neurotic or even downright insane. Unfortunately, if they take their symptoms out of context they often find those problems being specifically, and inappropriately, investigated\textsuperscript{59}.

**Playfulness**

William James' biographer described the illness (neurasthenia, the 18th and 19th centuries’ 'C.F.S') as a useful and popular excuse to allow pleasure and leisure in a basically puritanical society which had a strong belief in the value of suffering.'\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{56} Moira Gatens, Feminism and Philosophy, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991
\textsuperscript{57} ibid., p. 138
\textsuperscript{58} ibid., p. 139
\textsuperscript{59} Smith, David G., Understanding M.E. London, Robinson, 1991,p. 23
\textsuperscript{60} Roslyn Woodward, 'It's so strange when you stay sick': the challenge of chronic fatigue syndrome' - PhD thesis (Australian National University, 1994) p. 34
Cameron called in to the post-grad office holding a half-eaten spinach and cheese triangle: we talked about the relationship we each perceive between felt recovery from C.F.S. and being able to play, having an attitude of playfulness. First he remembered that no matter how much he wished to be playful, hoping to transcend the feelings of general debility and loss of self, it was impossible to act playful - it just didn’t work. And I knew that feeling when I was sick, of trying to be with the children in play and failing miserably, underlining rather than alleviating the loss of my ‘old self’. We both knew that there was a great feeling of liberation from the rule of our illness when we felt sufficient energy to be playful; we felt real connection at those times with our healthy selves.

Play sets up a constant dialectic between rules and freedom. It is thus a constantly questioning activity. But, more than this, it is only in play that it is possible to make an essential cognitive leap which radically changes one’s relation to reality...It is the experiment of play alone which ‘enables the child to act independently of what she sees’.

Patricia Yaeger’s stated interest in Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women’s Writing is to ‘explore the ‘poetics’ of play for women’s writing’, describing the ‘emergent or pre-emergent structure in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women’s writing’ of the multivocal, carnivalesque disruption of patriarchal language which has been celebrated inspirationally in the writings of French feminists.

Yaeger has suggested several reasons for an apparent resistance to the construction of a feminist theory of play. First, the notion that play is regressive, and has connotations of weakness and inferiority in a culture where labour is valorised over and against play, may connote uncivilised escapism. Secondly, the traditional stress on the normative function of play: she refers to the works of Geertz and Freud and their respective

---

61 Armstrong, Isobel, op. cit., p. 181, discusses L.S. Vygotsky’s writings on play, which emerged, as she notes, ‘at the beginnings of the post-war managed society, at the moment when capitalism begins to colonize the life-world of individuals ever more systematically’.


64 Ibid., Introduction
emphases on play as facilitating adjustment to social norms, and on ‘sanction(ing) the expression of hostilities in a context that reinstates repressions rather than questioning them’\(^{65}\). And thirdly, any construction of an aesthetic of play must ‘involve a complicity with’ the pre-existing ‘forms of the dominant culture’.

Maria Lugones values a sense of play which is quite different from the one she finds in ‘the literature’ (Huzinger’s *Homo Ludens*, and Gadamer’s chapter on play in *Truth and Method*) which suggests to her an agonistic definition of play, to do with ‘contest, with winning, losing, battling’\(^{66}\). Rather, the sense of play which she values positively consists in its ‘turn(ing) … activity into play; it is creative, involving an openness to being a fool; to self-construction or re-construction; and … find(s) ambiguity and double edges a source of delight’\(^{67}\)

Encounters with C.F.S. suggest other mind/body differences for which a practice of play and pleasure is an essential element of ‘recovery’. The reconstitution of knowing subjectivity from any position of excluded otherness is fraught with, and enhanced by, meaning-making which is other than rational. Playfulness constitutes a space for reviewing relationships to other bodies, and to the dominant cultures of the social world. As Jane Flax writes:

> The search for intelligibility and meaning is not necessarily the same as the imposition of reason … . Play, aesthetics, empathy with, or being used by other’s feeling states are also sources of meaning and intelligibility … . Meanings can be unconsciously and intersubjectively constructed without the constructor assuming they are “found” bits of the Real or True.

**Aesthetic awareness**

Praxes of ‘play’ with figurative language and metaphor, anarchic body-writing, interactive art and theatre all offer ‘awareness’ tools for pleasure and effect. They

---

\(^{65}\) Yaeger, op. cit., p. 212  
\(^{66}\) Lugones, M., op. cit., p. 96  
\(^{67}\) ibid., p. 97
reread existing systems of signification in illuminating spaces with/in/between interrupted flows of organized embodiment, spaces that crackle with unknown, mutable possibilities. For example, Kristeva uses the term *thetic* to refer to those intermediate moments of subjectivity-in-process where the symbolic (of language) is temporarily prefigured in the (pre-language)semiotic, or where the traces of the semiotic are evident in the symbolic. The aesthetic of this knowledge-space has been explored through a range of women’s writings, producing creative theoretical connections.

Catherine Z. Elgin’s recent work in the interstices of the academic discipline of philosophy has involved exciting developments conceived together with, and drawing on the work of Norman Goodman. She concurs with his invitation to aesthetics to ‘emigrate ...’ from the ‘realm of value theory ... to epistemology’: their work together has itself emphasized the value of treating not knowledge, but understanding as the focus of epistemology. In Elgin’s recent writing on *Relocating aesthetics*, she evinces her characteristic practice of ‘freeing up’ the fixity of concepts of truth and the ascription of truth-values. She applies a contextualization which locates both ontological debts and discursive connotations of figurative ‘bites’ of knowledge-production. For example, in her consideration (following Goodman) of metaphor, asserting that truth is ‘not confined to the domain of the literal’, she observes that:

If the student is metaphorically a panting puppy, “The student is a panting puppy” is metaphorically true. To be metaphorically true is to be true when interpreted metaphorically, just as to be literally true is to be true when interpreted literally. Nontautologous sentences are true only under an interpretation ... . Novel patterns and distinctions reveal themselves as the metaphorical scheme sorts people into categories no literal scheme recognizes ... . By calling one person a puppy, we make

---


70 ibid., p. 163


72 ibid., p. 66
other dog labels available for characterizing people, whether or not we actually employ those labels.\textsuperscript{73}

Later, Elgin compares the work and effects of aesthetic symbols with those of scientific symbols, and recounts Goodman’s example of a wavy line: it may function as an electrocardiogram, or as a Hokusai drawing\textsuperscript{74}. Only the shape of the electrocardiogram is significant; but in its function as a drawing, a wavy line’s
colour and breadth... position and dimensions of the line on the paper... the paper’s weight, composition and texture – all are potentially significant.... . Scientific symbols are comparatively attenuated, Goodman maintains. Aesthetic symbols are relatively replete\textsuperscript{75}.

The aesthetic of a process of knowing what is going on both here and there, and its implication of a politics of transgressive knowledge, were remarked for me at the University of New England's Theatre Studies Department. I had seen Peggy Phelan, Chair of the Department of Performance Studies at the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, present the work of contemporary New York theatre and performance artists\textsuperscript{76}. She had remarked the complex implications of making bodies visible, particularly in terms of sexual preference and race, and told the story of the political backlash generated by men of religion against the work of artists whose images confronted their notions of the sacred. There were photographic images of a plastic crucifix immersed in urine, of a ‘Black Mary’ madonna figure immersed in urine, and of semen in an ejaculate trajectory.

Peggy Phelan’s reading of these works was that they were in fact devout, earnestly sincere. They were the work of Afro-American men of colour, and the work of lesbian women, others to the mainstream, exploring their otherness through other’s responses in the communicative experience of art, and the actor-audience relationship. They showed the meanings and value, the risk, of making their embodied otherness visible.

\textsuperscript{73} ibid., pp. 66-67
\textsuperscript{74} Goodman, N.,\textit{ Languages of Art}, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1976, p229 cited in Elgin, C., op.cit., p. 72
\textsuperscript{75} Elgin, C.Z., loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{76} Professor Peggy Phelan, Guest Lecturer, University of New England Department of Theatre Studies, 8\textsuperscript{th} March, 1995
Those exhibits and performances showed the artists' understanding of their minded embodiment as both nature and culture, indivisible. Some placed their culturally inscribed and inscribing bodies caged, in art museums. From their cages, they playfully invited reaction, interaction and response. The players performed their difference and their sameness.

A slide of a photograph was presented: a rampant black penis, engorged, its orifice penetrated, probed by the same body's smallest finger. I read the slide of the photograph of the penetrated male part to 'stress the fundamental inter-implication of a subject and the object' and the 'necessary integration of the visual and the tactile' which Grosz sees in Merleau-Ponty's early writings. Merleau-Ponty's attempts to destabilise the mind/body culture/nature and other binary divisions involve the representation of flesh as an 'ultimate notion', the 'commonness in which both a subject and an object participate'. It 'is not reserved simply for human beings or for animate beings; flesh is what objects share in common with me that allows me to relate to those objects'.

Elspeth Probyn writes her reading of Foucault's 'care of the self':

Taking care of the self finds its social and critical meaning in the fact that 'being occupied with the self and political activities are linked'. Stretched to the breaking point where individuality ceases, the self designates that point of possible contact when it is neither a question 'who am I?', nor a separate one of 'who is she'? Pushed to the end of their distinct logics, these questions re-find themselves together at another point, at the point where we are both at the limits of our selves.

I consider how Cameron, in making his body visible both in its dysfunction and through 'recovery' to a different bodily knowing, has rendered his masculinity marginal, and placed himself in positions of embattlement.

77 Grosz, E., Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray in the Flesh. Unpublished lecture 3/9/92, p. 7 of transcript
78 loc. cit.
79 loc. cit.
80 Probyn, E., op. cit., p. 169
82 Probyn, E., op. cit., p. 169
And I remember the process of reworking our rough-house, after the termite treatment, before our flight:

**The Carpenters**

The first visitation of termites had eaten its fill and moved on. Rebuild.

M. The corners of the bedroom still need sanding as does a few touch up spots on ceiling and walls. See you next week.

The gentle builder had placed curls of Fastcut Cabinet Paper in the middle of the child’s bedroom floor; an electric sander was quiet in the corner.

Carpenter’s off-sider. Another job offer, nicely made, tools included. As last week, the crowbar was proffered: she used it to smash the mixture of plasterboard and fibro wall linings. Then, when the holes allowed hands to grip and tear, away came the linings in shards that flew from her hands, arc-ed out of the windows.

To uncover the termite workings, to make them visible and tactile, was to understand and fix their meaning for her. However transitory the meaning, it removed the unseen, mythical elements of their invasive threat.

Uncovered, the studs and noggins which supported the roofbeams and secured the weatherboards and linings were, in places, the delicate remains of a past colonisation. Grasped, they crumbled like the ‘crackles’ cakes you make from Kellogg’s cornflakes and honey. But the ants workings were partial, sustainable. The builder, who knew wood, remembered and felt a knowledge of termites’ not excavating in a context of tension, where tensile support was evident through the wood. The walls were taken apart in her termite retrospective. And the walls did not separate, but combined worlds.

The intricate lacework of their abandoned tunnels crumbled at her touch. As the gentle rebuilder replaced the studs they’d consumed, raising high the roof beams, he smiled the story of a house in his other country, ‘held up’, his parent told him, ‘by ivy, and the termites holding hands’.
To open conversation:

Recognising the implicit relationality of bodies in and of the environment, this writing forms a commitment to **awareness**, to **conversation**, and to the **reconceptions** of philosophies becoming.

Jane Flax wrote that:

> To pursue promising ways of understanding our experience is not necessarily to seek “truth” or power in an Enlightenment sense. Rather it entails commitment to responsibility and a hope that there are others “out there” with whom conversation is possible\(^{83}\)

Cameron and I have described, translated and reflected upon the meanings we have made around an illness. The ‘recoveries’ we have experienced have constituted pleasurable\(^{84}\) reclamations of wellbeing which incorporate those mutable meanings.

And Christopher Langton, researcher of artificial life, speaks\(^{85}\) different ‘possible biologies’:

> Our whole technological world is just the current state of nature, just in the way that at some points, termites took over part of this planet and built their little cities and had an enormous impact on the world. We humans want to think we’re different. But I just want to take the synoptic view that we just represent the current state of nature, and that all of this around us is biology. The TV set, the cars, the streets, the highways – this is the current state of biology.

\(^{83}\)Flax, J., *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 223

\(^{84}\) In Freudian terms, pleasure may be understood as a release of tension between something buried and troubling, and the conscious mind

part 4

perverse production
perverse production

these writings recognize and interrogate practices of perverse production – they are ‘shot through’ with images of a woman academic dean who chooses to produce her body otherwise.

we set glances in her direction within the ‘harrowing complexity’ of their context. alongside these, we ponder other productions perverted: through stories of transgressive homemakers’ claims to, and reclamations of, living space; through minded bodies stretched to their limits; through bearing, carriage and miscarriage; through beginnings and becomings.

these ponderings are made sensible within their contexts of place – as home, as landscape, as body, as workplace. usefully embodied notions of temporality are signaled in approaches to the perverse productions of contemporary biotechnology and exploratory geochemistry.

the process of knowledge–production in this text is purposefully illogical: it follows no chain of reasoning. it peers birdlike, askance at ontologies and rationales, whether traditional, feminist or scientific, which posit a script, either ‘natural’ or ‘cultural’, for the fleshly body. in contradistinction to these, it incorporates a series of glancing observations: the gathered outcome of perceptual acts which, in their ‘fickleness’ and ‘easy distractibility’ can both ‘take note of entire worlds’ and ‘insinuate (themselves)…into the very heart of the matter’.

Edward S. Casey invites a consideration of the ‘paradoxical power of the glance to find its way into the profound as well as the superficial … ’. He notes its birdlike propensity as a visual act to ‘perch precariously… alight(ing) here and there and there…mov(ing) mercurially over surfaces that are not themselves contiguous, leaping over intermediate points’, thus pairing ‘discontinuity in place’ with ‘discontinuity in time’.

Discontinuities, disjunctions, aberrations, transgressions and perversions are inevitably implicit in the practices of the embodied objects of those social theories which have traditionally obliterated difference and ‘otherness’. The multitude-in-process of complex, reflexive subjects which is the constituency of the social defies the episteme of the long fixed stare of analytical evaluation, just as it invalidates the recording practices, the ‘f-stop acts’ of petrified representation. The image of the ‘glancing’ perceptual act nicely points up the shifting intersubjectivity of knower and known:

The glance depends on a subject, literally “leaning away” (depending) from the subject; yet it exceeds any given subject and its internalized temporality by virtue of being directed … at an object of

---

3 ibid., p. 80
4 ibid., p. 82
5 Daphne Marlatt, in the short paper cited above, employs metaphor and figurative language to question the validity of what she refers to as ‘f(stop) acts’, ‘frozen somethings of evidence’, in the writing of life/histories. In a nice series of statements, metaphors and questionings of form, this paper offered me a distillation of insights gained from postmodern theories of language and subjectivity, from my work with other women on auto/biographical texts, and from the range of women’s novelistic, poetic and polemic auto/biographical writings.
interest ... (the glance) loops back onto the subject who emitted it; it
folds back on the subject, coils over onto this subject, falling back onto
it.\textsuperscript{6}

so, for a reading here, perhaps the metaphor of the \textit{glance} suggests a productive
theoretical and attitudinal counter to the unblinking solidity of traditional approaches to
theorizing. because lives and stories, and the contexts which bear them, like all
processes of knowledge production and meaning-making, are infinitely reconstituted
and so, rethinkable.

\textbf{living spaces}

in bunbury, western australia, beside an ocean. home, our house (for me, with abi [18],
rose [12] and leo [2]) is now in a gully across the dunes from the sea.
dunes, then two streets of houses shelter us from the sea. still and all, wind and
seaspray mist clatter along from the southwest through nearby tuart forest into our street,
kissing and slapping at the windows. the rhythmic explosions of waves crashing on
winter mornings reaches across the stillness, loud enough to touch me again and again
with the deep pleasure of its aural visitations. and rose sometimes imagines a tidal wave
which will carry us all away.

our tract of tuart forest is unique, very old, and still escapes development. some
persons here have cared to practise a politics of true self-indulgence, have touched this
forest of tall trees with their bodies, walked through and discovered it with children,
called out their concern and used words and bodies to save it in places of politicking.
their walking to lay claim to the earth stirs a memory for me from anna’s collection of
stories:

\textsuperscript{6} Casey, op. cit, p. 86
In Cape Town in the late seventies, the white government initiated a campaign of eviction of black people without passbooks from designated areas ... . Many of the people faced with eviction had grown up in Cape Town and considered it to be their homeland; some were women whose husbands were working in Cape Town and living in single sex hostels ...

The women of these communities initiated a strategy of nonviolent action that was eventually to annul the existing pass law system and grant them the right to remain in their place of preference.

They did this by walking. When the bulldozers came in the night and destroyed their houses, they gathered up what they could salvage... Carted to their designated homelands ... ordered off the transport ... they waited until the officials had disappeared over the horizon and then started the long journey back. Many women were pregnant, had small children to nurse and carry or were laden down with possessions. Step by step they made their way back to Cape Town; (for some a distance of over 2000 miles) and rebuilt their houses and their lives. The journey was perilous; main routes had to be avoided for fear of road blocks, food was scarce and women were dependent on the goodwill of people they met along their way. For some women, respite from the journey was short for no sooner had they settled than the bulldozers would return and the process of dislocation and relocation would be repeated. I met women who had been moved four or five times in a period of eighteen months. This campaign endured from 1977 until 1985 (when the pass law system was abolished) ... the government stat(ing) that when women were prepared to walk the length of the country there was very little the government could do to stop them.7

in turn, those women’s walking recalled my own migrant8 tracks in and around past homes of anna’s, with and without her, in these last few years :

7 Spence, R., Women Leading the Way, in Nonviolence Today No 41, December, 1994, pp. 7-8
8 Salman Rushdie, In his Introduction to G. Grass On Writing and Politics (San Diego, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1985) nicely explicates the sense of metaphor Implicit In all migration, In the crossing of frontiers. He writes: i "The very word metaphor, with Its roots In the Greek word for bearing across,
my journal, 1st May, 1996:

Ardara, in County Donegal, at the cottage… anna spent some of her childhood summers here, home from boarding school, and I am staying here now with abi and rose. soaking up the land through my limbs.

Before entering the village of Ardara … there is a height with an earthen enclosure on it from which Ardara derives its name - Ard an Rátha: the height of the earthen enclosure, or ring fort … Ring forts … usually have an inner bank and an outer ditch and an entrance on to a fairly level internal area which is usually higher than the surrounding field level … . They are, in fact, single-family defended farm settlements.

I must ask Conor, Anna’s cousin, what the construction of the cottage floor would have been. The lie of the land and its sparse contours hold us distant here in Ardara, even from the rest of the Ireland island. The hills and the bogs between make demands of me, they change the actions and habits of my body. There is no simple route for a long contemplative walk across land here: every step requires attention, concern. The only certainty is to walk across and along the sandhills beside the Atlantic. Even there, as I come to know it more, there are rapid tide movements and rockpools/inlets to be negotiated. The field at the back of the cottage, 30 yards from the kitchen table, is not a field but a tidal bog. No pattern to its flow; but now and again with a high spring tide, we watch the sea rise through and over the fences at the bottom of the paddock. Will we float? The lie of the land.

The bogland 'pull-ins' can suck a body down without trace. They may then preserve it, acidly, as they produce and preserve the aged beauty of the ancient bog oak. Those oak stumps, left behind after English ship-building requirements were thoroughly, devastatingly supplied, become blackened and hard as mahogany, and Conor makes from them the stools which sit with their three legs in their cottage kitchen, and whose describes a sort of migration, the migration of Ideas Into Images. Migrants - borne -across humans - are metaphorical beings In their very essence; and migration, seen as a metaphor, Is everywhere around us. We all cross frontiers; In that sense, we are all migrant peoples'

craft may soon take him away to college in Galway. One radical environmental trauma makes way for others, and the contexts change.

The winds and rains demand that I pay attention to the range for heat and make the trek (or send the children) several times each day, to the cow shed for baskets of peat. I feel my hands becoming rough, snagging my woolen clothes, and see the ingrained grime along the inside of my index finger: potato peeling, turf collecting, range and bedroom fire building/clearing/rebuilding. Rain and wind, chilling and skin-tingling, but rarely a 'drying wind' for the washing.

There is no light movement over the land as in Australia, where movement through the landscape can sometimes feel to be simply the negotiation of air, light and heat. Footsteps leave their mark here in the spring of turf, in the mud and bogland, and map a damp stagger over sandhills.

The earth's damp reaches into me, flesh and bone. "Please don't leave anything on the floor of the cottage: it is damp" (Kitchen handbook How to Survive in the Cottage, by Anna). To stand, to walk barefoot on the bedroom floor (not the polished tongue and groove body-temperature of Australian wood, but carpeted, the carpet worn hard and thin on packed earth, rock-solid) is to feel the dampness rise coldly, to be gradually desensitized to mid-calf.

And the vegetables: the people's relationship to their vegetables. What is it? Distant from Ireland's 'centres of population', we pay more for alcohol, for food, for everything. No washing detergent is made in Ireland, and its damage must be imported. As a sparse community, we seem to manage often to be 'well-oiled' with liquor and generally quite clean. But what about the vegetables and where are the fresh fish shops? The potato and the cabbage are the fresh vegetables; perhaps bodies remember and eschew a 'potato famine' history of lives dependant on unreliable vegetable crops. 'Heart attack on a plate' is a local term for a much-favoured vegetable-free breakfast meal of sausage, bacon, black pudding (pig's blood sausage), egg, bread and butter.

Conor explained about the relationship to fish: fishing was made illegal by the English for fear the Irish would learn navigation skills, and thus present a threat to their borders. So, seafaring did not become a part of this island's culture, and in coastal areas where there was plentiful fish within a few miles many starved to death in the great potato
famine of the mid-nineteenth century. The wooden rowing-boats which they were allowed to use, coracle-like, would sometimes be marked with notches by the exciseman to signify the maximum manpower allowed for that craft. The delicious mussels which Abi and Rose often gather on the beaches nearby still bear the stigma of 'famine food', as do rabbit and hare, and have not been popular with the local people.

I remember reading that nearby Dun na nGall, the County town of Donegal, was named after a 9th century Viking fort set up there, and its name meant 'the fort of the foreigner'. And Ardara has many foreign bodies; Northern Irish persons move here, and so do Londoners and French people, I've observed. The town G.P. is Mireille, a Frenchwoman who lives about fifty yards away, across Carn Lane - her seven year old daughter sits in front of our kitchen range right now, with Rose trying to pull a tooth for her.

* * *

When we spoke about those African women walkers above, Anna told me about Lungiswa, her friend in South Africa with four children who repeatedly walked back to the squatter's camp with them. They were sent back to the 'homeland' and walked back again, twice from the Transkei and twice from the outskirts of Capetown to the camp. When Anna asked her how she could do it again and again, she said "Do you know what drives me crazy, what I can't stand? The sand in my children's bed. I can put up with it all, but that's what I can't stand."

* * *

my journal, 5th June, 1996:

Today we walked through the coastal village south of Belfast where Anna’s parents now live. Biting wind and dishwater skies. Republican sympathies and I.R.A. membership here are well known. Our walk was in the direction of the river estuary, where two swans had been nesting and cygnets born a few days before: yesterday evening Rose went with the village children at 6.30p.m to see and feed the fledglings...

* * *
so. two winters ago, i arrived here in bunbury, western australia. sadly anxious and sleep-deprived depressed with a four month old son and two suitcases of life with cloth nappies wrapped around saucepans. no spare cash. risks had been taken, ache of shedding daughters, needing to be back there, in my own london birthing place. caught in an emotional mangle for years; but now away again from london’s greygrime, with time and space to gulp sea air and savour each breath. abi and rose visited for a month, to make love with new-life leo, to see us settle. to evaluate what they may later choose to come back to. mother’s insufficiency unspoken. tough loving times.

when the young women daughters left, it was solely mother and baby, in a depression close to the ocean. arms around leo to carry him, and later his body learning to lead me, rolling and crawling across cool pinewood and hard slate, colonizing our new living space. stretching our selves to move over months to take up more space in the body of the small house. moving through the home to use the lounge, the kitchen, the verandah, inside out …

i’m looking at elizabeth, now dean of this regional university campus, the small woman who invited me to come here to the end of the world to continue my studies. once in these years between, i lay phoning elizabeth from early morning in the bleak london flat. she described for me the architect-designed apartment: she lay in her bed (night-time dark) high on a rise at the top end of town overlooking both harbour and indian ocean. spoke of the lighthouse winding its light and shadow again and again around her big open crow’s nest bedroom.

later, visiting her, i stood in that high nest when the storm-wind blew: the crevices of doors and window frames produced whistles and sighs, carols and howls from the wind’s blast. then, on the balcony outside the walls and windows, the sound of waves crashed and dragged, and saltmist and buffeted insects spattered this tingling armflesh.

mary - elizabeth… our different tracks and choices have produced different life-patterns and living-spaces. our choices and incomes, if not our tastes for sensual pleasure as same-date taureans, have been different. i have lived with children in functional homes built for nuclear families with their double rooms for the holy couple flanked by rooms for smaller people; elizabeth’s architect-designed homes have offered adult delights: peaceful spaces, minimally furnished, with pleasing artworks and quiet
comfort. today elizabeth suggests that I invite distant anna to speak on peace studies at this campus, and i begin to look for anna's place in the world now...

elizabeth tells me she has often felt herself 'homebound', not by disability or family commitments, but by the knowledge that her position as a regional figurehead of a university is one which has constrained her sense of acceptable public 'play'.

in our friendship she has practiced what she calls a 'rawlesian' distributive justice when she pays for our shared good meals and coffees away from home, and passes on her used furniture to be expertly worn out by my children. and more than once she has offered me sanctuary, relief from angst:

*my journal 26 July 1995:*

*Then I went to Elizabeth's (she'd agreed to my inviting myself when I phoned before the rally - I couldn't face coming home to the empty house for the weekend) and pretty well stayed with her until Sunday lunchtime - Abi was due home at 2p.m. She cooked boiled eggs and small bowls of rice noodles laced with sesame oil and cups of orange tea and made up a bed for me on the lounge floor.*

and today i made an offer to anna, across the distance of a lost contact:

*Email 2.10.01  please find/make the space to care for yourself well. what you've been through is traumatic, and you know that physical resolution doesn't mean emotional resolution. my hope is that you're feeling safe and supported, and comfortable in taking any space that you may need to grieve. i really do care for you anna, and you're welcome in this home at any time ever for whatever reason - much more than welcome. abi and rose both send their love, all are fine.*

*love mary*

anna was born mid 1960's into financial security and northern ireland's 'troubles'. her quaker education, and concomitant personal quests for peace and love/emotional honesty/clear communication, have led her through a range of formal peacemaking tasks and a variety of homes and living spaces. i have lived and visited in some of those
homes and places and have learned from her stories about others. I hold shards of remembered images and representations from living spaces changed, borrowed, shared and sampled:

**Fined for Verbal Altercation** - (Donegal Democrat, 25th April '96)

Noel R., Saimer Drive, Ballyshannon, was fined 50 pounds for engaging in threatening, insulting and abusive behaviour in a public place Carrickboy, Ballyshannon, on 18th March last when his case came before the local court.

Celine R., with an address of Ernedale Heights, Ballyshannon, was also fined 50 pounds for the same offence resulting from the same incident. The court was told that they had been married, but were now separated.

The court was told that a verbal altercation had developed between the two defendants at about 2.30 a.m. Both had drink taken and were with different partners. Neither defendant had a previous conviction.

Judge Liam McMenamin warned that they should in future keep their domestic differences between themselves.

and Anna had written:

*In the coloured township of Manenberg where gang fighting and intimidation was an increasing problem, people felt trapped in their houses, too scared to go out because of the violence of the gang rivalry ...*

*A group of concerned mothers and sisters, worried about the safety of their children and siblings who were involved in gang activities, wanted to find a way in which to face up to the gangs but were too scared to do it individually. After a series of meetings which were held away from the township, the group arranged for electric alarms to be put on all the street corners where the gangs used to congregate and each woman was given a whistle.*
When these women saw gangs approaching they would blow their whistles or set off the alarms. This was a signal for all the women on the housing estate to rush out onto the streets and stand together in defiance of the scare tactics that the gangs employed. ... Gang fighting in the Manenberg area decreased dramatically.

(Nonviolence Today No.41 Nov/Dec1994)

close to anna’s old cottage in Ardara, Co.Donegal, I met a neighbour and acquaintance of her family, paul the frenchman: from my notebook, May 1996: An album track from one of Paul’s favourite french singers, Brassens, is ‘Il n’y a pas d’amour hereux’ (‘there is no happy love’) - he seems to assent to this as self-evident truth. But Paul has wanted to make for himself a happy love - it is based on a love of place, evident around his thatched cottage on the side of the Ardvally hill. "I have done a lot of work here", he told me. Paul works hard to make his cottage and land beautiful: he has landscaped the lawns and planted fuschia, escalonia and roses around the perimeter of the cottage garden, along beside the small river, and has replanted many trees along the public laneway which services 'the Green Gates'. When it rains, that is good, for his "trees are 'appy". He has a horse belonging to a friend from A.A. on adjustment in the small riverside paddock, and hails Seaboy when he enters and leaves by the road which runs beside the stream. The newest addition to his lands, where the cottage houses the manuscript of his book 'Le regarde du ventiloque', is a beehive: his father kept bees in Morocco, and he knows he wants to make a history, get back to his father and somehow weave in his son, Edouard.

The hive is placed close to the green gate, a signifier at the entry to his produced landscape. When I bought Seamus Heagney's most recent book of poetry, The Spirit Level, wanting to see something of the relationship to place which has been poeticised in the tradition of Irish writing, I was and wasn’t surprised to see that its cover picture was of beehives: a 'detail of bees, from MS Ashmole 1511, fol. 75V.', 'courtesy of the Bodleian Library, Oxford'. The several beekeepers I have known have all been fascinated by the bees world, where the Queen is ejected from the living space by the mass on recognition of the end of her functional life, where the males do no productive work.
knowledge places

i am back at the university on the hill (a new-to-me university on a different hill), and in answer to the polite enquiry of friendly introductions, i use ‘interdisciplinary’ rather than ‘adisciplinary’, or ‘un-disciplined’. feeling that my words must place my work in relationship with some pre-existing, defining, free-standing knowledges, if i am to describe it here at all.

my first words with new ‘colleagues’ on the hill do-not-speak my struggle, my senses of freedom and resentment, or my excitation at this writing perversely, against-the-grain. they do-not-speak the centrality of my desire to represent embodied knowledge, and the embodied processes of knowledge-production ethically and effectively, as kaleidoscopic and without resolution, by practising a process. my work is a process of question and conversation, of glancing views, reflection and digestion, of not-knowing.

for this pleasure, i use words and images which are already ‘mine’, collected, and add to them as a ‘string of tinglings’. sometimes, swimming in the ocean and walking with Leo in the stroller will balance this worded, sedentary living and knowing – work it through my body. for now, this small crowded house offers my hearth for Hestian contemplation...of different bodies and new names. of the unpredictable.

‘It would be good to dynamize thinking, to think of a text...as a thief in the night. Furtive, clandestine, and always complex, it steals ideas from all around, from its own milieu and history, and, better still, from its outside, and disseminates them elsewhere...A conduit not only for the circulation of ideas, as knowledges or truths, but also passage or point of transition from one (social) stratum or space to another. A text is not the repository of knowledges or truths...A text is not simply a tool or

10 for Casey, Edward S., in ‘The time of the glance’ in Grosz, E., Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1999, pp. 95-6, ‘the glance is a disquieting force... in its inward return, where it must attempt to incorporate what may be as unincorporateable as it is unforseeable’

an instrument...Rather, it is explosive, dangerous, labile, with unpredictable consequences\(^{(12)}\) (emphasis mine)

The textual combinations which I re-present form *choral*\(^{(13)}\) webs of 'tinglings', multisensual pleasures. I wish to slip like the lightfooted 'thief in the night' across and between the monoliths of those powerful fixed knowledges—grazing\(^{(14)}\), improvising, playing, reconstituting. sometimes raucous, always unbounded. home but not home, always 'borne across', migratory, transitional: and compelled, as Maria Lugones' 'world-traveller'\(^{(15)}\) to adapt the palate and/or the recipe, and identify the nourishing and the pleasurable.

When I feel closest to the solidity, when I again 'understand' those knowledges, begin to enjoy their shade or shelter, perhaps I risk succumbing again to the seductive tyranny of the conversation itself. Time to move outside again, feel the weather away from the shelter, listen for other voices.

Elizabeth Grosz has also described the embodied nature of the will to know as I understand it:

> Knowledges are not ... governed by a love of truth or a will to comprehension ... Knowledges are a product of a bodily drive to live and conquer. They misrecognise themselves as interior, merely ideas, thoughts, and concepts, forgetting or repressing their own corporeal

---


\(^{(13)}\) Elizabeth Grosz (in *Sexual Subversions*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1989, pp. 44-49) has examined Julia Kristeva's (in *Desire in Language*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez, Basil Blackwell's 1980) reworking of the Platonic notion of *chora* as descriptive of a locus of transition: that 'space' of pre-language, pre-symbolic order *thetic* subjectivity, where the symbolic order is provisionally anticipated in temporary 'organizations' of unstable pre-linguistic sensation and drives. Kristeva (in *Desire in Language*, trans. L. S., Roudiez, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1980) describes this space as 'receptacle, unnameable, improbable, hybrid, anterior to naming, to the one, to the father, and consequently maternally connoted' (emphasis mine).

\(^{(14)}\) Grazing ... a practice of eating which is responsive to my body's needs. It will disperse the excess corporeality of natality, re-place/remake my body to a comfortable weight for arthritic knees. To graze is to enjoy small intakes, more often, of a considered choice of foods which both nourish and pleasure the eater. Attention to the process of time, and to bodily signals, is required for this 'care of the self'. It invites an aesthetic/erotic pleasure in the act of eating.

\(^{(15)}\) In its contribution to *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food*, by Curtin, Deane W. and Heldke, Lisa M, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992, Maria Lugones' paper, 'Playfulness, World- Travelling, and Loving Perception' (pp. 85-99) describes and commends a practice of 'world'-travelling—the movement involved in inhabiting other or multiple cultural 'worlds', a form of 'travel' which involves a 'shift from being one person to being a different person', a process in which she suggests, 'one does not experience an underlying 'I' '. (pp. 92-93).
genealogies and processes of production. They are products of bodily impulses and forces that have mistaken themselves for products of mind.\(^{16}\)

My understanding of this 'bodily drive to live and conquer' which is knowledge-production with its generation and its effects, implicates the processes of embodimindment. My body contacts with and senses others – bodies of brick and wood, of writing and performance, of earth and flesh and water – as home, as landscape, as linguistic/artistic text, as workplace, as friend. Embodied, 'intuitive'\(^{17}\) social theorizing will explore the mapping and sensing of these spatial and temporal productions, the practical connections and interactions of those bodies and their possibilities in ways which 'analysis' cannot.

Grosz delineates the features of contemporary knowledges, those based on '...the presumption of a singular reality, preexistent representational categories, and an unambiguous terminology able to be produced and utilized by a singular, rational, and unified knowing subject who is unhampered by 'personal concerns' which have placed those knowledges in crisis'\(^{18}\).

My response to this ontological crisis is to trace the contours of the bodily impulses, forces and connections that position us and impel our 'perverse' embodied productions and their re-presentation in these academic knowledge places.

The staff/student population of this campus has articulated confused concerns about 'the feminists', 'political correctness', and Elizabeth's 'naivété' in response to her allowing a press photo in the deanery. Her production has caused confusion and disturbance in the designated place of knowledge-production. Having won the state fitness figure championship, she agreed to a series of publicity photos for the regional newspaper. The published image of 'our lean dean' showed her in 'fitness figure' bikini


\(^{17}\) This is not to suggest an appropriative solipsism; rather, it seems to offer an effective practice for decentreing the self. 'Intuition' may be understood, Bergson suggests, as 'the kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible. Analysis, on the contrary, is the operation which reduces the object to elements already known, that is, to elements common both to it and other objects' – Bergson, H., *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Trans. T.E. Hulme, New York, Macmillan, 1903, 1955, p. 24 (cited in Weiss, G., 'The durée of the techno-body', in Grosz, E., (Ed.) *Becomings: explorations in Time, Memory and Futures*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1999, (pp. 161-175), p. 164

\(^{18}\) Grosz, op.cit., p 38
and mortarboard, with the champion's trophy in one hand and a pile of weighty academic tomes in the other.

Elizabeth recognizes the corporeal genealogy of her range of knowledges. Her formal academic writings on social justice issues in education articulate her own embodied experience\(^\text{19}\); they have come to insist on representing the complexity of lived experience and the views and perspectives of 'others' using poetry and dramatic monologue\(^\text{20}\).

By mutual implication, her work and life as an educator have come to evince an epistemological position based in a perception of knowledge as 'embodied, engendered and embedded in the material context of place and space'\(^\text{21}\). They also evince conceptions of the 'public' and the 'private' which subvert the 'exclusionary and heterogeneous ideal of the public'\(^\text{22}\), with its reduction of the 'private' to that which the public excludes, rather than the space from which the right to exclude may be exercised. The university's public criticism of Elizabeth's willingness to situate her body work in the knowledge-place defined her action as 'an unfortunate mixing of the personal and professional'\(^\text{23}\). In this process, the gendered dichotomizing of the public/private division of space and of spatial practices has effectively been acceded to by what is widely perceived as a 'feminist' university hierarchy.

Elizabeth and I have worked together and are in relationship through our bodily productions, the spaces we have found for them, and their perverse performances. My empathy is with the bodily impulses and drives, forces and desires of the perverse academic. I observe how she has been affected by, and I reflect on, her condemnation by the women seen by most of the furore's audience as 'the feminists'. These were 'the feminists' of the university's hierarchy: their responses troubled me, and their published

\(^{19}\) Bastable, M., and Hatton, E., 'Social theory and embodied knowledge: an exploration through visual impairment', *Auto/Biography* Vol 7 nos 1&2 pp. 51-62; and her own experience of abuse as a child (see Appendix 2)


\(^{22}\) Young, I.M., *Throwing Like a Girl and other essays In Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990 pp. 107-108

\(^{23}\) Professor Millicent Poole, Vice Chancellor, Edith Cowan University on TVW7 *Today Tonight*, 30/10/00
and televised attitudes confounded my attempt to find a commonality with their punitive views which would calm and justify my own complex discomfort about Elizabeth’s chosen fitness-figure practice.

I am pondering the conundrum presented to me by Elizabeth’s perverse body performance, and the reactions it has engendered both inside and outside the university, from presumed and avowed ‘feminists’, and others.

Elizabeth Grosz’s work has addressed both the complexity and the questionable necessity of identifying any text as ‘feminist’, suggesting such a practice as evidence of a ‘Foucauldian anxiety’ as to ‘what power is invested in providing definitive categories’\(^\text{24}\). Her questioning of the links between textual production and sexually specific signatures/bodies displays four broad types of answers evident in feminist literature: the sex of the author, the content of the text, the sex of the reader and the style of the text. Her responses to these categorical approaches suggest that, whilst it is clear that none is sufficient to define the ‘feminism’ of a text:

there is nonetheless a way of proposing a femininity for texts that takes some elements from each position but also deals with what each leaves out, with what I would call ‘discursive positioning’, a complex relation between the corporeality of the author, that is, the author’s residues or traces, the text’s materiality, and its effects in marking the bodies of the author and the readers, and the corporeality and productivity of readers\(^\text{25}\).

Elizabeth’s corporeal perversity touches mine: she has chosen to place her produced, reproducing body outside of its allotted image-space as dean of the faculty. Her knowledge-production has insistently, repeatedly, pushed at the limits granted it by

\(^{24}\) Grosz, E., *Space, Time and Perversion*, London and New York, Routledge, p. 18. Here Grosz notes that she has drawn on both the work of ‘Benveniste on subjectivity in language and Derrida’s work on the signature’. She notes Beneviste’s remarking of what appears to be a distinction, ‘even in the case of autobiography’, between the ‘I’ who speaks and the ‘I’ spoken about: they can be neither definitively identical, nor separable: always the processes of production of the ‘utterance’ are inscribed in the utterance itself. And compares her reading of Derrida’s position of the three modalities of the signature as authorial/framework/definition; as interior/style/; and as the mutually implicated alterity of these two, where ‘it is the other, the thing as other, that signs.’(Derrida, J., *Signponge/Signsponge*, Trans. Richard Rand, New York, Columbia University Press, 1984, p. 54)

\(^{25}\) Grosz, loc. cit.
academic tradition. Her body’s production, along with its effects, represents a perverse
textual excess, impostor in the place of knowing definitive precision. Minded
physicality has been deemed inappropriate in the place of knowing: witness the
institution’s response to the ‘lean dean’.

For now, I choose to record and make language here in our house in what feels to be a
neutral space: to consider and sweep the tiled floor, cook and read, speak and hear,
digest and feel, walk and talk it through, think and write, down here in the hearth’s
ashes in this sandy gully where the small house sits. Flying, bussing, driving, cycling,
walking – I’ve traced a looped, erratic circle round the globe, jettisoning, recovering and
birthing children who will and will not forgive the disruption/production of their lives,
en route.

Away from, but still within reach of the university’s hill, playing on its languages with intent to
transmogrify their content. The computer in the corner of Leo’s bedroom, its floor strewn with
toys, will do.

Email to Laura last week:

i’m finally reading ‘space, time and perversion’ by
elizabeth grosz and it’s taking me back to an excitement that
makes me want to growl and get down on my haunches and
want to laugh (carefully) and pant instead of breathing, and
gives me such a pleasure tinged (only tinged) with sadness..

* * *

26 Cf. one such evidence in her recent paper: Hatton, E., ‘Writing and teaching about the oppressive
textual representations of the views and perspectives of working class parents which appear in this paper
are not poetry in a strict sense. I prefer to describe them more modestly as poetics or dramatic monologue
... concerning aspects of the lived experience of working class parents. These, I suggest, illustrate the
potential of poetics and dramatic monologue as a pedagogical tool.’ (p. 223)
27 The West Australian, Saturday 28th October 2000, p. 5
Performance space

In order to advance with moving reality,
you must replace yourself within it. 28

... our glances deliver to us a diversely populated
world of variegated beings in space as well as informing
our own continually changing becomings in time...The
glance does all this thanks to its peculiarly indirect
insertion into the social and perceptual world, its
laterality, its location on the agitated edge of the restless
subject. 29

There is, between our body and other bodies, an
arrangement like that of the pieces of glass that compose a
kaleidoscopic picture. Our activity goes from an
arrangement to a re-arrangement, each time no doubt
giving the kaleidoscope a new shake, but not interesting
itself in the shake, and seeing only the new picture... 30

elizabeth
pose:

29 Casey, E.S., 'The time of the glance' in Grosz, E. (Ed.), Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory
p306,] cited in Edward S. Casey, The time of the glance, In Grosz, E., (Ed) Becomings: Explorations In
Time Memory and Futures, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1999, p. 96

139
elizabeth places her flesh visible, culturally inscribed to present her ‘fit, toned, feminine physique that displays definition and proper conditioning’\textsuperscript{31} onstage at the Mount Lawley Theatre.

\textbf{voices over (1):}

\textit{Elizabeth:} ‘...the sorts of issues over which my father and I fought were about the stuff I was reading - that it’s not only homosexuals who might sexually interfere with his son, that ‘straight men’ might too ... god knows where I accessed those ideas at 12... Or that a conscientious objector who was locked up in the war was braver than someone who went to war without believing in what he was doing, but didn’t have the courage to say ‘no’. And my father found me ... like an alien creature ... That led to the ‘lockouts’ ... These conversations would typically happen when my father had been drinking and he would just get out of control and lock me out of the house and not let me back for weeks ... ’\textsuperscript{32}

\textit{Mary: So where did you go?}

\textit{Elizabeth:} ‘I was too ashamed to tell anyone what was going on ... I slept under the pine trees around the town, and slipped back into the yard before it got light, and then I’d wait til he went to work and go in, get changed for school, and then I’d have to make sure I was well away again at night before he got home. But my mother’s role was to go round at night and make sure that the windows were locked against me. So you see ... it’s a bit hard for me to ... help her, because she ... well, she needed help and I’ve helped her financially ... but I can’t honestly say I love her ... ’\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{31} Fitness pageant guidelines cited in Power Pageant by Mary Billard, \textit{Women’s Sport and Fitness, May 1999} Vol.2(4), p. 46

\textsuperscript{32} Transcript of taped conversation Mary and Elizabeth 18.3.01 See Appendix 2, p. 267.

\textsuperscript{33} Transcript of taped conversation Mary and Elizabeth 18.3.01 p. 267
transpose:

publicity shot. elizabeth places her flesh visible, culturally inscribed to present a ‘fit, toned, feminine physique that displays definition and proper conditioning’ in her deanery, quasi-religious heartland of academic symbolism. add mortarboard, and several heavy academic texts raised to flex left bicep.

voices over (2):

"Young children, or primary and secondary children, are often quite conservative in their expectations of adults and to see a university leader in what many thought were her underclothes rather than her sporting clothes has caused unfavourable comment. We feel that it’s an unfortunate mixing of the personal and the professional ... She knows what’s appropriate behaviour – we’ve talked to her about it." - Professor Millicent Poole, Vice Chancellor, Edith Cowan University on TVW7 Today Tonight, 30/10/00

"There is then perhaps in our resentment of them a dim sense that the cult of the body builders desecrates the ritual structure with which we maintain dignity in and conjure ridicule from our physical nature ... The resentment senses in them a virility insulated from death ... The body builder does not only stand in phallic hardness; he or she also moves rhythmically with the tensed violence of labor pains."34

34 Lingis A., Foreign Bodies, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, pp. 36-7
mary

pose:

mary, lover of knowledge, mother of denial has been up to London to visit the holy couple. (his)hand-to-(mary's)breast, (her)face-to-(their)faces, her voice to their silence - she confronts the sensation of her father's way of loving her.

voices over:

'A Manjimup man convicted of sexually assaulting his 10 year old niece will not go to jail unless he reoffends within the next two years ... Between 1996 and 1998 the man, a father and regular churchgoer, asked his niece to sit on his knee while watching t.v. before sliding his hand into her underwear and touching her vagina.'

...mary continues her pattern of seeking out a partner in the image of the father

'You are a person of impeccable record except on this one occasion where you succumbed to a temptation that you were powerless to resist", said Justice Michael Muller.'

...mary conceives a link between that pattern and her knowledge-practice:

'...my need to refer to, not simply to take issue with and subvert the seductive tyranny of the patriarchal interests implicit in our inherited language and knowledge. Not only do I want to 'talk to patriarchal interests' as you suggest, but I'm still aware of my attempts to translate myself back into the 'home' of a lifetime's knowledge-practice. And in the translation my knowledge is alienated...'

transpose:

mary sings a song.

---

35 South Western Times, September 13 2001, p. 10
36 South Western Times, loc. cit.
37 Letter to Prof. Laurel Richardson, August 1994
The words and melody have traveled from her mother ('I prayed to Jesus to help me love your dad'; 'but when could this have happened?'; 'I always kept my eye on him'), through her, over 20 years, to each of these children cradled in her arms to her breast: 'Go to sleep my baby, close your pretty eyes ... angels are above you, watching at you dearly from the skies ... great big moon a-shining, stars begin to peep; time for little Abi/Rose/Leo to go to sleep.'

anna

pose:

1995: anna sits on her husband mark’s wheelchair lap in the st. patrick’s night party crowd in their shared southern land home. then she stands up in the firelight, and from the big book of celtic stories reads us the tale of finn mccool, the boy-child grown so big in his cot that he is there mistaken by impostors for his warrior father. anna’s face glows with good irish whiskey and the fire’s colours, and her accent coats our senses like a honey glaze. we are enthralled.

voices over:

anna visits ireland during our time there: we meet at her parents’ home. as we walk through their coastal village in the early evening, anna asks me to try to find out why her mother sent her to boarding school at the age of 8...

Journal, 30th May '96, Thursday: Anna has just left; when I do the 'clothes' stories with her mother, she wants me to ask her mum why she sent Anna to boarding school: "I don't understand it and I can't find out".

As we walked we talked more about an important thing she and I had in common: a memory of recognizing at the same age, 8-9 years, that we had not pleased our mothers, could not please them, and would be deprived of a secure place in their love and approval, precisely because we were who we knew we were. Unavoidably.

letter from anna, 18.4.96: We have just returned from a wedding in Bundaberg – one of Mark’s old Uni mates – I walked out of the church because I was so insulted by the
whole wedding performance... why the hell did I buy into this marriage business?! it is so limiting and so conforming and so bloody disempowering! Having said that, I do enjoy Mark's company so much and we had a lovely time away. What is to become of me?!

transpose:

anna makes her home with a beekeeper. he is neither father nor husband to her. she wishes to bear their child. twice she has conceived, and twice miscarried. we have lost each other in our transgressions, and in our migrations from and across this great southern land. i long to hold her hands.

* * *

Stretched to breaking point

Carriage

As I swelled with middle-aged pregnancy, Elizabeth had told me in phone calls across the world about the regular weight-bearing exercise she’d begun to undertake and enjoy. It promoted both her health and her independence – as an academic her work was sedentary, and as a career academic in Australia, she was nomadic and moved house often. She intended to be able to move her own furniture around when necessary. As a small-boned ex-smoker, she was at risk of osteoporosis: a risk reducible by regular weight-bearing exercise. And later her body-building was implicated in her energetic response to attack and injury in a daylight mugging – the tiny, solitary grey-haired woman packed a shocking punch, but the vulnerability of that situation stayed with her as inspiration.

I hold the shrapnel of an image of Elizabeth en point with her crafted body-work, musculature outlined with fake tan and feminized by sleek swinging hair and high
heels. It's an image which she's performed in practise to show me in her galley kitchen, and one which has since appeared in local, state, national and international media.

We are working together again, and in scribing our traces now I'm reminded of Elspeth Probyn's image of selves in extremis:

As an activity of theory and of being, the self is not an esoteric question; it is not to be held at a distance .... Stretched to the breaking point where individuality ceases, the self designates that point of possible contact when it is neither a question 'who am I?', nor a separate one of 'who is she'? Pushed to the end of their distinct logics, these questions re-find themselves together at another point, at the point where we are both at the limits of our selves.38

In Bodymakers39, Leslie Heywood

argue(s) that (male) bodybuilding, in its deliberate, self-conscious construction of a particular bodily form, marks the limit point of the subject, the point where the fact that "being has been sacrificed to meaning" becomes visible.40

In the context of the western binary logic which marks body as lack or void, counterposed to mind as 'being', she suggests that male bodybuilding functions as a 'mode of compensation for a void', a '... fleshly curtain that covers a void of essential self or identity.' Conversely, she describes women's body-building per se as 'unequivocal self-expression, an indication of women's right to be, for themselves ... not for anyone else'41, and suggests that such a muscular, powerful, competitive image provokes anxieties about the nature of 'the feminine' in both males and females, which both contestants and image-makers have sought to defuse. No doubt such anxieties are concrescent with the ambiguous 'masculinity' evinced through such practices as those adopted in male bodybuilding, described by Chris Shilling.42

38 Probyn, op. cit., p. 169
41 ibid., p. 33
... taking drugs that shrink the testes, shaving body hair and applying tan creams. Skin care products hide the acne produced by steroids, tins of baby food are eaten because of their nutritional mix, and oversized nappies are worn to cope with the hazards of involuntary defecation during strenuous lifts.

Heywood’s work presents women’s ‘fitness figure’ competitions as symptomatic of a return to more traditional gender roles for women. Mansfield and McGinn have offered an examination of ‘the socialization of women into the world of bodybuilding, seeing, in common with other sociologists, socialization as a process of ‘making safe’.’ Following their interesting observation that competition is seen as central to the activity of bodybuilding by a ‘much higher proportion of women bodybuilders than men’, they trace the bodybuilding career of Bev Francis:

Over the years her waist and hips have become more slender, and the proportions of her body have changed to become more symmetrical, the development of her leg muscles has been toned down, she has brought out the ‘detail’ of her musculature rather than concentrating on pure size or mass, she uses make-up and nail polish and has grown, lightened and curled her hair.

44 ibid., p. 51. Mansfield and McGinn suggest that this requires further research; in connection with this observation on competition, though, they reproduce a report from Pearl, R., ‘Women and men judges’, Bodybuilding Monthly Vol.2(8), Yorkshire, Bodyshop, 1989 (pp. 72-75) who writes: ‘...many a judge has told me that they hate judging women and find it most difficult. One in fact openly admitted that he did not like women bodybuilders and could never get used to women having so much muscle, much preferring his women to be ‘soft and cuddly’.’ p. 72
45 ibid., p. 63
Despite the efforts of women body-builders 'proper', the cultural backlash evinced in the differential rewards now offered to competitors through sporting bodies and the media has resulted in bodybuilders now taking what Heywood sees as a backward step. They are de-bulking and taking up 'fitness figure' competition, which features smaller women, less striation and muscle bulk, more breast implants and more closely defined 'feminine' shaping and toning. Re-embracing the feminine-as-void implicates relinquishing the physical, cultural, conceptual space taken up by the 'delimited stretch'.

Heywood’s notion of the 'unequivocal self-expression' implicit in the delimited stretch of bodybuilding proper suggests the fiction of a unitary, coherent 'self' about whom the 'truth' of self-expression, equivocal or otherwise, may be known. But the expression of self among female bodybuilders is often, as Susan Bordo indicates, not only distinctly equivocal, but precisely counter to the unimpeded 'right to be' suggested by Heywood. Bordo notes that as with anorexia nervosa, there is an:

... emphasis on control, on feeling one’s life to be fundamentally out of control, and on the feeling of accomplishment derived from total mastery of the body...First, the reassurance that one can ... push oneself to any extremes ... Second. (it is spoken of time and again by female bodybuilders), is the thrill of being in total charge of the shape of one's body ...

Bordo also suggests that:

46 The workout and diet to increase muscle invariably reduces body fat, and therefore breast size, detracting from 'femininity'.
47 Heywood, L., op. cit., p. 14
49 Bordo in Curtin and Heldke, loc. cit.
In a culture ... in which our continued survival is often at the mercy of 'specialists', machines, and sophisticated technology, the body takes on a special sort of vulnerability and dependency...our contemporary body fetishism...expresses more than a fantasy of self-mastery in an increasingly unmanageable culture. It also reflects our alliance with culture against all reminders of the inevitable decay and death of the body ... .

Contra/dictions

Elizabeth-as-dean was already positioned as a knower, a minded representative of academic tradition in the wider community, prior in time and significance to her visibility as a 'feminized' fitness figure. She made choices, perhaps practising a Foucauldian care of the self as explicated by Probyn:

Taking care of the self finds its social and critical meaning in the fact that 'being occupied with oneself and political activities are linked' (Foucault 1988b: 26). The care of the self thus can only be conceived of and performed within the exigency of caring for others and for and within our distinct communities. The self is not an end in itself, it is the opening of a perspective ..

*Dear Elizabeth, I'm not a body-builder or university educated. I'm a nursing sister who's a bit pudgy after my two little kids...*

*I just want to say I think you are a fantastic role model – dispelling two myths in one photo:*

50 ibid., p. 39
51 Probyn, op. cit., p. 169
1. Body-builders are ‘boofheads – all beef and no brain’.

2. Deans are ‘twin-set and pearl types who look bookish and stuffy’

Well done!...You will probably inspire so many people and I am really sorry about all the flak you’ve copped through the uni and the media...if it helps there are many, many people out there who support you...

Kathy Ffoulkes

‘This of course is not such a serious offence that there’s any talk of termination...’ Professor Millicent Poole, Vice Chancellor, Edith Cowan University, TVW7, Today Tonight 30/10/00

Dear Professor Hatton,

Congratulations on achieving the excellent media coverage during the last few days. Your University should be delighted with the very positive image you have created for the institution. I was surprised and disappointed to read that a few senior staff were offended.

Curtin University has been conducting a Healthy Lifestyle Program for staff for over a decade. The program has received very good support...However, there are still a few critics who remain ignorant of the value of personal health and fitness.

Appropriate publicity for personal health and wellbeing such as you have generated, I believe, helps normalize health-enhancing behaviours including physical activity. This is particularly important for the 50+ age group (of which I am also a member!).

Once again, thank you for your valued contribution to health promotion.

From: Peter Howat, Head, Department of Health Promotion, Curtin University
I choose to read the text of Elizabeth's particular bodywork performance as an ambiguous auto/biographical signature whose materiality has among its varied effects the useful complication of humdrum notions of feminism and femininity, of selfhood, power and subjectivity. As Grosz notes:

'Any text, however patriarchal it may have been at its outset and in its author's intentions, can be read from a feminist point of view ... that is, from the point of view that brings out a text's alignment with, participation in, and subversion of patriarchal norms.'

In my chosen reading, Elizabeth's performance perverts the symbolic disembodiment of academic knowledge, and fleshes it out with a simulacrum: the feminized bodybuilder, smiling the 'tensed violence of its labour pains', casts the return loop of its glance around its audience. This reading offers a fertile ground for uncovering 'the corporeality of the author/s (encompassing my own re-presentation), 'that is, the author/s' residues or traces, the text's materiality, and its effects in marking the bodies of the author and the readers, and the corporeality and productivity of readers'. And it signifies a refusal to disembode analysis, like to Gail Weiss' observation that in the case of the body-image distortions and contradictions of anorexia, which neither 'medical, cognitive, nor cultural explanations can do justice to', what is required is a commitment to the construction of 'multiple aesthetic body ideals' which are not in tension, but are part of a conversation.

I wrote to the Bunbury newspaper which first published the image of the Dean-in-her-office:

---

52 Grosz, E. Space time perversion, p. 16
53 loc. cit. Here Grosz notes that she has drawn on both the work of 'Benveniste on subjectivity in language and Derrida's work on the signature'. She notes Benevistes remarking of what appears to be a distinction, 'even in the case of autobiography', between the 'I' who speaks and the 'I' spoken about: they can be neither definitively identical, nor separable: always the processes of production of the 'utterance' are inscribed in the utterance itself. And compares her reading of Derrida's position of the three modalities of the signature as authorial/framework/definition; as interior/style/; and as the mutually implicated alterity of these two, where 'it is the other, the thing as other, that signs.'(Derrida, J., Signeponge/Signsponge, Trans. Richard Rand, New York, Columbia University Press 1984, p 54)
55 ibid., p. 57
Bodies at work

Last week, Professor Elizabeth Hatton took her body to work. She donned both her body building uniform (a bikini), and her academic 'hat', the mortar board, and agreed to yet another publicity shot as Dean of Edith Cowan University's Bunbury campus.

What was unusual and challenging about this photograph (front page SW Times last week) was the magnificent clash of stereotypes it represented. The bikini, with its 'cheesecake' connotations, and the quasi-religious garb of the academic 'dean', are brought together in an image both thought-provoking and complicated (as people, life-situations, and our variously fit bodies so often are).

Our assumptions are rattled, and a range of questions is raised.....

For regional employees of state or national concerns (and their bodies):

Are my interests, abilities and life-choices necessarily evident and part of the way I am understood and valued in my local community? Is this recognised and respected by metropolitan, state and interstate management/officials?

For women and men with bodies: How do I view this image of a woman's chosen self-definition and her 'excellent' body? Why is that? There's no pornography here: clearly, this image does not deny or violate Elizabeth's identity as a thinking, acting agent. She makes the choice here, and her choice has had the effect of making us think, question and evaluate our ideas. What should a dean's/woman's body look like and enjoy or excel at?

For educators with bodies, and for colleagues of unusual university officials:

Was allowing the publication of this photograph a sign of 'naivete', an 'error of judgment'? or was it the decision of a true 'educator', valuing the promotion of thinking beyond stereotypes and dated imagery?

For those of us with bodies, and particularly for those concerned with the process and practice of education, more than a knee-jerk response to such questions is required.
To the extent that any form of aesthetic, intellectual, embodied production ‘departs from what is reasonable or required’ and engenders a ‘turning aside’ from ‘right opinion’, its practice is perverse (O.E.D.).

My auto/biographical reading sets lived experience in reflexive relationship with Elizabeth’s performance, and with other stories spliced together. It stems from and re-emphasizes the ethical and ontological necessities of actively understanding (i.e.closely approaching the texts of) perversities. And of learning to articulate perversely the processes of knowledge-production, with a view to ‘turning aside [phallogocentric language] from its proper use or nature’ (O.E.D.).

As Joan Cocks notes:

‘ ... if any particular language is always a system of specific constraints which limit what can be thought and so done, it also opens the way out of those constraints ... A critical theory that combines the evocative and the analytical...can pull out of language the words to mark figures and episodes that escape or transgress ... (and) will have their own anarchic force’

Creative, disruptive responses to the complexity and pathology of phallogocentric knowledges as they interface with patriarchal structures may often seem ambivalent or equivocal. They may be disturbing, and they may be pathologized. But descriptions of their carriage and bearing, their materiality and corporeality, their corporeal and productive effects on authors and readers are epistemologically valuable. Such approaches offer valid and useful antidotes to limited languages, whose representation of embodied knowledge is necessarily mediated by phallocentric articulations.

**Bearing**

As my pregnancy progressed in Inner London, my cycling became increasingly ungainly. I visited Elizabeth here in Bunbury’s heat in my seventh month: she was trim and muscular. On my return to London, I cycled no more.

**Labour Notes: 26.2.99  Lewisham, S.E. London**

21.30 Called to Mary’s home: regular painful contractions since 20.30hrs. Has had a show

22.20 Mary back in bath, contracting 1:3 lasting 40 sec. Prefers no pain relief at present

22.35 Mary is relaxing in the bath between contractions

22.45 LW called and asked to contact 2nd midwife, Student Midwife Imohu.

22.50 Student Midwife Imohu on her way. EPV cx. 9cm dilated. Membranes intact. FHR 140.

22.55 Strong urge to push

23.0 SVD of live male infant. Airways cleared on perineum

23.15 Placenta and membranes delivered by maternal effort. Uterus well contracted. Small 1 degree tear not sutured.

Baby boy. Born in good condition. Apgar score 9/10 1/60; 10/10 5/60

00.05 Mary relaxing in bed. T 36 degrees P 80  B/P 110/30
Miscarriage

At work. Reading Elizabeth Grosz on bodily flows and sexual difference. This page\textsuperscript{57} is telling the story of Julia Kristeva’s classification of menstrual blood with excrement as defiling. Like excrement, she believes, it elicits the reaction of abjection. It is despicable and degrading.

Walking my buttocks back to sit more straight against the trunk of this ornamental plum, and feeling the belly and thighs of six weeks pregnant slowing the movement, dragging furrows in the dust-dry grass. The breeze pushes a twig of early spring blossom down to blur the text of page 207.

\ldots women’s genitals and breasts are the loci of (potential) flows, red and white, blood and milk... These flows signal sites of potential social danger insofar as they insist on the irreducible specificity of women’s bodies, the bodies of all women, independent of class, race and history.\textsuperscript{58}

a need to bleed. Visit the gym each day and concentrate on crunchies and back extensions. Play squash at lunchtimes and do penetrative sex at night. Sometimes remembering the taste and touch of baby flesh to these lips, and the pleasure of the urgent suck. When that feeling comes, taste again the sadness, roll it well around the mouth, swallow, and speak again the refusal to reproduce.

Needing a ‘show’ of blood. A blood show. This show is part melodrama, part cabaret lucida; I need the gory spectacle of a Jacobean tragedy...

Finger-pad touching the petals of the small tree’s blossom, and its knobbly twig scribbles across the page. touch again inside the lips, knowing there will be no blood, and these fingers find it: mud-red rust-water. Lips apart, looking back to the book:-

\textsuperscript{57} Grosz, E., \textit{Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism}, St. Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1994, p. 206
\textsuperscript{58} ibid., p. 207
Lactation and menstruation, as is well documented, are immensely sensitive to emotional upsets and psychical belief systems. So I am not advocating a naturalist or even a universalist attribute. Nonetheless, it is also true that all women, whatever the details of their physiology and fertility, are culturally understood in terms of these bodily flows.  

It’s not much of a game of squash at lunchtime; heavy and slow. Home. And the bleeding stops. Square glass filled with whisky. Bath drawn deep and hot, body lowered into the bubbles. Wind up the mechanical dolphin, floating in the fluid. Let it go and bear down, pushing and wishing. She no longer feels pregnant, and the bleeding comes again. The doctor will see her tomorrow.

Tissue for pathology appears, timely for the doctor’s plucking. “There’s something called a mole, he says; the placenta just grows and grows and the fetus - or what was a fetus - gets lost; we want to make sure it’s nothing like that. . .” They do another pregnancy test. Of course, the hormones haven’t got the bleeding’s message yet. Her hormones again tell her pregnant; she knows she already isn’t. Why another pregnancy test? A techne, a performance in which she and her friend the doctor can have a valid interaction.

Necessarily, they have speaking parts. Her friend the doctor will ask, always, “how do you feel about that?” About being pregnant, about being un-pregnant ... as a question it had no priority over “what was the date of your last period?” or “do you need another pad?”

There will always remain a kind of outsideness or alienness of the experiences and lived reality of each sex for the other.  

So, over days and nights, she felt and watched and touched the flow of life-tissue, blood and body, the inside out.

---

59 ibid., p. 228, Note 17
60 ibid., p. 207
For Aristotle, semen provides form not only for the growing fetus and eventually the child but also to the very formlessness of menstrual fluid itself. As he describes it, semen is a kind of “setting gel” for congealing menstrual fluids into a form.\textsuperscript{61}

The action of the semen in the male in “setting” the female’s secretions in the uterus is similar to that of rennet upon milk. Rennet is milk which contains vital heat, as semen does, and this integrates the homogenous substance and makes it “set”...Once the fetation has “set”, it behaves like seeds sown in the ground. (From On the Generation of Animals, Book ii part 4)\textsuperscript{62}

\textit{Email from Anna, September 2001:

Hi, I am glad I am in your mind – I think I need to be right now. Have just had my second failed pregnancy – nine weeks this time and I am awaiting the miscarriage – just found out yesterday with a scan – I am not looking forward to the next few days – they might bring me into hospital, I am not sure – I do think of you all the time but seem to be quite incapable of doing anything but work emails due to the fact I am doing the jobs of two people

Attention to a flow from inside out. Bereaved awe. Dreams-becoming-tissue in migration. Reflections through grief and reweavings of flesh mediate a process: embodiment regroupung in kaleidoscopic shift.

\textsuperscript{61} ibid., p. 228
\textsuperscript{62} cited in Grosz, loc. cit.
Nostalgia perverted

I remark the appearance in this auto/biographical text of memories of abuses and unjust treatments of Anna, Elizabeth and myself as children. It is most likely that these experiences have affected the lived processes of our knowledge-practices and their embodied expressions. Given the silence and fears surrounding the articulation of abuse, the suggestion that 40% of women and 10% of men are similarly influenced may be a rough guide.

I am engaged in the process of recognizing the effects of abuse on my lived experience, and am heartened by Elspeth Probyn’s words on reconceptualized beginnings:

... if the primary sense of beginning is the time and place at which anything begins, nothing says that those times and places are fixed, no one orders us to start again from where we began the time before, and no one can say where or when the next beginning will occur, or where it may lead. 63

Probyn’s wish in ‘Suspended Beginnings’ 64 is to ‘couple the writing of childhood with a reconceptualization of beginnings’, as a part of unhitching such writings from the discursive practices and the moral meanings attributed to childhood. Her specific intention is to uncouple the queer childhoods of gay and lesbian writings from their ‘scientific quantification ... as pathology’ 65.

She draws on Deleuze’s reworkings of a notion of nostalgia which ‘merely reproduces the present as an effect of the past, of past causes’ 66, with its tendency ‘to practice a posteriori a small justifying reconstruction’ 67. Rethought, this logical trajectory ‘from the present to the past in order to justify the present’ may be usefully understood otherwise. Again following the work of Bergson, Deleuze recognizes memory’s simultaneous function of producing recollection memory, ‘oriented toward the past’ 68.

64 Probyn, op. cit, pp. 95-123
65 ibid, p. 122
66 ibid, p. 117
68 Deleuze, 1989, p52, cited in Probyn, ibid., p. 118
and contracted memory, 'contracting toward the future', a conduit for 'millions of vibrations or elementary shocks into a felt quality; it is the 'tensing' of things into a line of becomings'.

The percept of a simultaneous combination of contraction and recollection brings to the surface the serial fictions and constructions of memory, not as explanations of a present and determinants of a future, but as a fertile 'string of tinglings': nostalgia functioning as a conduit for "pure becoming, always outside of itself".

'While beginnings form part of our belongings, like memory, they resist ownership,' writes Probyn. Lived experience then, may be thought as other than psychologically determined, or as determinant: rather, it swims, body-surfs, with/in/on the real and the possible, filamentary in reality's string of tinglings, eliciting new imaginings and other experiences. Lived experience incorporates, embodies knowledge-production; it challenges the lies secrets and silences of disembodied knowing.

Elizabeth, Anna and me. We live in a society which has the luxury of articulating and attempting to measure childhood abuses; such are also the cultures and societies whose traditions of knowledge-production have defined and maintained the structures of patriarchal power, defining the expression of embodiment as 'other' to minded logic. We understand, have proximity to the text of another's abuse. Anne Cossins, writing on 'Recovered memories of child sexual abuse: the science and the ideology', recounts the incredible story of Jennifer Freyd, a Professor of Psychology at the University of Oregon with an 'international reputation as a researcher in the field of memory'.

Professor Freyd's parents, Peter and Pamela Freyd (whom Cossins notes 'have no qualifications in the field of psychology or psychiatry') set up the False Memory Syndrome Foundation in America in 1992 after their daughter accused Peter Freyd of

69 Deleuze, 1989, p52, cited in Probyn, ibid., p. 118
70 Deleuze, 1989, p. 87, cited in Probyn, p. 118
71 Deleuze, 1989, p. 55, cited in Probyn, p. 118
72 ibid., p. 118
74 ibid., p. 130
75 ibid., p. 130.
sexually abusing her as a child following her recovered memories of the abuse. Cossins article sets out convincing empirical evidence for the existence and validity of the delayed recall of child sexual abuse, noting that no empirical evidence has been presented for the existence of False Memory Syndrome\textsuperscript{76}. Part of a paper presented by Jennifer Freyd at a psychology conference in 1993 is reproduced by Cossins:

\begin{quote}
At times I am flabbergasted that my memory is considered ‘false’ and my alcoholic father’s memory is considered rational and sane . . . . Is it because I remember impossible or crazy things? No, I remember incest in my father’s house. Is my father more credible than me because I have a history of lying or not having a firm grasp on reality? No, I am a scientist whose empirical work has been replicated around this country and Europe . . . Am I not believed because I am a woman? A ‘female in her thirties’ as some of the newspaper articles seem to emphasize? Am I therefore, a hopeless hysterical by definition?

Is it because the issue is father-daughter incest and as my father’s property, I should be silent?\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}

In a context of the growing recognition of the ubiquity of familial and institutional child abuse, it is sensible to reflect on the challenge implicit in the articulation of embodied knowledges, including its challenge to the power of academic traditions which continue to silence and discredit those knowledges. The masculinist tradition’s imperative to obliterate the carnal, symbolized and reinforced not least in its exclusive quasi-religious forms and imagery, underpins a perversion of becomings which is more and other than metaphorical.

Elizabeth, whose temporality holds in its moments, is a conduit for, the images and sensations of child, body-builder and now dancer, continues to make choices. They include the perverse pleasure of remaining embodied with/in the institution, and the refusal of conventional (biological) reproduction. Her engagement with machines in

\textsuperscript{76} ibid., pp. 129-130.
self-reproduction, and the biotechnological alternatives now available to her may at any moment reshape her desire and her becoming.

**Perverse reproductions**

Iris Marion Young\(^{78}\) has remarked the 'implicit male bias' in medicine's conception of health to underlie approaches to pregnancy as a “condition” with “symptoms”: this bias is based on the notion (cf. Leder\(^{79}\)) of health as a process of equilibrium, a stable, unchanging state. But clearly, as Young observes:

> Regular, noticeable and sometimes extreme change is ... an aspect of the normal bodily functioning of adult women ... of healthy children and of healthy old people.\(^{80}\)

Such feminist encounters with the construction of pregnant embodiment as ‘disease’\(^{81}\), and with its cultural construction as ‘monstrous’, a site/sight of ‘horror and fascination’\(^{82}\) contextualize Gail Weiss’s\(^{83}\) observations on developments in contemporary biotechnology. I wish to follow Weiss’s development of Bergson’s ideas here in some detail, because it offers optimistic and productive ways of theorizing both the implicit ‘perversions’ of biotechnology, and the consequent existence of new and different (inter)corporealities, embodiments to be understood. Her writing constitutes a recognition of the need adequately to conceive of, to theorize and interrogate what she terms the ‘interface between bodies and machines’ implicit in technologies of cloning, genetic engineering, and ectogenesis (foetal development and nativity outside of the

---

\(^{77}\) ibid., p. 131.

\(^{78}\) Young, I. M., ‘Pregnant embodiment’ in *Throwing Like a Girl and other essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990, p. 169


\(^{80}\) Young, loc. cit.

\(^{81}\) ibid., p. 170


160
female body). Given the pace of biotechnological developments even since her writing, it is clear that percepts and language other than:

the barrage of statements ... from scientists (all of whom seem to be male) ... who appeal to medically "neutral" language [which] ... den(ies) the economic, metaphysical, sexual, and racial implications these new body technologies involve ...

and the offering of descriptions which are:

"futuristic, hypothetical [and] can seduce us into believing that ... potential consequences affect merely an impossibly distant, imaginary future ..."

will be needed.

Weiss engages with Rosi Braidotti's disavowal of biotechnology's 'reduc[tion of] bodies to organisms, organisms to organs ... evacuat[ing] human (and especially female) agency by doing away with the very notion and experience of durée or becoming in time". She cites Braidotti's claim that:

Stuck between the ... mystical-hysterical body and the test-tube, we run the risk of losing our most precious ally: time. The time of process, of working through, of expressing transformations of the self and other and having them implimented socially. This is the time of women's own becoming. It can be taken away before it could ever be actualized; it could be short-circuited, aborted.

Weiss perceives Braidotti's position here to be particularized in her idea of 'freezing time'.

---

84 I am using this Deleuzian term, adumbrated by Claire Colebrook (in Understanding Deleuze, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2002, p. xix), for its connotation of an embodied (perceptual) understanding, rather than introduce here the abstract implications of concept. This is precisely because of the relevance of the power of language-use in understanding changed-embodiments-anew in space and in time, a central concern of Weiss's work here.

85 Weiss, op. cit., p. 164


87 ibid., p.164
'biopower(s) ... progressive freezing-out of time, that is to say ultimately of death. The living material that comes under the scrutiny of the medical gaze is beyond death and time – it's 'living' in the most abstract way.'

Weiss outlines notions of temporality, or 'lived time', and 'objective', or 'clock' time in considering what she terms the 'conundrum' of 'freezing time' in Braidotti's writing. Weiss suggests its use to be a metaphorical strategy with an effective power to 'disrupt our understanding and experience of ... a durée that extends, transforms, and transcends itself through these very technologies ... [which] actively retemporalize our lives.'

Application of Henri Bergson's accounts of durée, or becoming-in-time, and of intuition as counterpoint to analysis, substantiate Weiss's counter to what she terms 'Braidotti's overwhelmingly pessimistic analysis'. Weiss extrapolates Bergson's consideration of the intuitive sense we are often able to have of our own durée, our personality-becoming. Durée is a process, a continuous flux which 'is accessible to intuition, but eludes analysis', and cannot be captured in disembodied, objective time. Bergson describes intuition as:

... the kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique and therefore inexpressible.

Weiss cites his suggestion that in intuiting our own durée, we encounter

... contact with a whole continuity of durations which we must try to follow ... we transcend ourselves.

---

88 Braidotti, op. cit., p. 47
89 Weiss, op. cit., p. 171
90 ibid., p. 172
91 ibid., p. 169
92 ibid., p. 169
She presents Bergson as arguing for both ‘the imbrication of our individual durées’, and for an ‘interemporality that need not be restricted to human experiences’, citing his example of an *intuition* of the city of Paris which can grasp its unique temporality.\(^9\)

My work has previously explored and exploited the *intersubjectivity* of auto/biographical texts, and the *intertextuality* of representational practices, in order to illuminate their social theoretical content and process. Here, Weiss considers the ‘*intertemporalities*’ which may be achievable through a practice of ‘*intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it’. She recognizes that the perverse productions and ‘*strange carnalities*’\(^6\), the linkages and imbrications of the living and non-living in/as techno-bodies\(^7\), do offer ‘new ways of linking bodies up to one another, expanding their interconnections, and … increasing their intercorporeal potentialities’.

These perverse rethinkings of lived time have been interpreted and developed in the work of Deleuze and others. Such developments have generated and are concrescent with a range of feminist theoretical insights on intersubjectivity and the limits of selves\(^8\), and with ecological feminist concerns with and commitments to non-human bodies and communities\(^9\).

**New beginnings**

Michael Russell, Professor of Geochemistry at Glasgow University, outlines on the ‘Origin of Life’ website\(^100\) the function of the ‘*inorganic incubation*’ of organic molecules through a geo-chemical process at the site of warm submarine

\[^9\] Weiss, op. cit, p. 169-170
\[^6\] Grosz, E., *Volatile Bodies: the strange carnalities of feminism*, St. Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1994
\[^7\] Weiss, op. cit., p. 170
\[^100\] [http://www.gla.ac.uk/projects/originoflife/]
springs involving a precipitate of iron sulfides which ‘acted as a catalyst for electrochemical reactions’. Boundaries evolve.

And in responding to a question from Laura Perez on the distinction (and its problematizing) in her work between the categories of the living and non-living, Elizabeth Grosz observed that the question ‘if life has evolved, from what, out of what, has it evolved?’ has a simple answer: ‘life evolved from something non-living’. In considering the ‘definition of life which links it to growth, self-organization and reproduction’ adopted by Christopher Langton in his work on ‘artificial life’ or ‘a-life’, she remarks that: ‘Among some of the issues at stake is the status of mind or brain, and its links to the evolution of the body ...’.

If, through a Bergsonian practice of ‘intuition’, living beings may encompass the durations or temporalities of the non-living, or the inorganic, evincing ‘inter-temporalities’, what are the implications for the ‘being’-status and potentialities of non-living or non-organic bodies? Are there more productive ways of understanding these connections?

These questions are germane to concerns such as those previously storied over the ‘body’ of Mururoa atoll (Part 3); they excite me because the questions, and their asking, are implicated in the structure and development of my reasoning, my process of embracing embodied knowledge, becoming healthy. They relate to a question I was taught to ask of Darwin, the anti-christ. In the first year of high school, as Jehovah’s Witness, I was drilled in the logical arguments to accompany the Watchtower publication on ‘Evolution or Creation by God: Which?’. My arguments (if required) and the publication were to be delivered to every teacher in the school, including the

101 [http://www.gla.ac.uk/projects/originoflife/], p. 2
102 [http://www.gla.ac.uk/projects/originoflife/], p. 3: ‘At the warm spring we envisage the formation of a special precipitate that provided a template for the assembly of chains of organic molecules, and acted as a catalyst for electrochemical reactions. The initial membranous precipitate consisted mainly of small groups of iron and sulfur atoms. Iron-sulfur groups still play an essential electrochemical catalytic role in all living cells. Our research has focused to a large extent on the origin, nature and role of iron sulfides. As a boundary, the precipitate concentrated organic molecules such as amino acids. These formed at depth below the spring where water and its dissolved chemicals reacted with rocks containing iron and iron-rich minerals. The boundary also concentrated other chemicals that could participate in chemical reactions. But eventually the boundary evolved by a process of organic take-over into a cell membrane consisting of organic molecules.’
103 http://web.gc.cuny.edu/cscw/found_object/text/grosz.htm
104 Grosz, E., in interview on website as cited immediately above, p 9 of 11
105 Ibid., p. 9.
terrifying Mrs. Reid, roaring science teacher. My logical and unanswerable question to her, the *denouement*, was in effect: ‘How did life begin?’ (It was: “Who created life”)?

Sidestepping a learned anxiety to detail, fix and control origins, and so rehearsing of embodied\(^{106}\) cycles of abuse, I choose to rethink those questions otherwise:

What are the connections and powers at play between the living and the non-living, the organic and the inorganic?

How may we understand their distinctions?

How do their perverse combinations, connections and alignments: bodybuilder with weights; body with machine\(^{107}\); fissured rock and coral with flesh\(^{108}\); virus with organism\(^{109}\) chemical compound with water and heat\(^{110}\); produce new, different potentialities?

\(^{106}\) epistemological, psychological, emotional and sexual

\(^{107}\) Weiss, G., op. cit., p170

\(^{108}\) See Part 1 above.


\(^{110}\) See footnote 101 above.
part 5

a climacteric
a climacteric

‘Truth is a pathless land.’

( Jiddu Krishnamurti, 1929)

What is the ontological status ... of those strings of RNA which lie halfway between the organic and the inorganic, which we call viruses? ... Viral infections of both biological and silicon form can be considered programs (genetic or computing) that are injected into the body of a larger “cell” or application. The cell is thereby infected and converted into a system for the production of many replicas or clones, and possibly mutations ... How can any clear line be drawn in any case, such that material objects are characterised by inertia and by temporal self-containment (i.e. by being) that the organic world enlivens (through becoming)?

1 E. Grosz, Thinking the new, in E. Grosz (Ed.) Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1999, p. 23
2 a supposed critical period of life, esp. occurring at intervals of seven years; constituting a crisis; critical (O.E.D.)
4 Grosz, E., Becomings: an introduction’, ibid., p. 6

Here is the embodiment of a climacteric: seven times seven years have reincorporated for me early experiences of sexual abuse and religious fundamentalism in a global socio-political context of the stark prominence of both of these as forms and progenitors of violence. Intimate encounters with autisms have been coterminous with experiences of domestic violence and sexual/epistemological abuse.

Viruses form a reprise in my work, both as tropes for abuse and as fleshly vectors. I explore the contexts in which my embodiment’s sustaining and generative systems (e.g. its immune system, its theoretical perspicacity/production, its sexualization), and the embodiment of some-to-many others’, may be enhanced ‘so as to flourish’, or may be rendered dysfunctional.

Insights and questions occur which coalesce with (re)new(ed) materialist ontologies of ‘becoming’. Productive epistemological practices are implicated. Treating of ‘a world whose truths are constantly in the process of unfolding and being made’, an ethics exclusive of calculations of reciprocity, open to the ‘promise of the new’, is thinkable.
Introducing a virus

‘Second Degree Tampering’ is the criminal offence under USA law which renders illegal the introduction of a virus into a computer system. Such viruses become active weeks, months, even years later – when the programmer is absent – often with unpredictable effect.

(from dustjacket of 'second degree tampering', an anthology published by Sybylla feminist press, Melbourne, 1992)

The second degree tampering anthology:

explores the (dis)connections between writing, female experiences and life in contemporary Australia. Key western narratives of ‘women’s identity’ are questioned, as are the literary methods used to construct those narratives….In the telling of different and surprising realities, second degree tampering also explores the possibilities of reworking and re-inventing our selves.

My contribution to the anthology was the following story:

Sister Jessie

A glued-on deer drank from a bright blue-painted river in a tiny rural scene above our mantelpiece. Then it was overlaid by the Kingdom calendar, by its vivid colours. They showed us the smooth tanned legs and thick Brylcreem-ed hair of a shepherd. Like one of the Hollywood actors in Photoplay magazine. Angled to a crook, he smiled down on sheep and lambs with an eye to the camera. The landscape may have been a Bible land, or the west coast of Scotland. Sinuous red letters traced the text: “And I will give you shepherds in agreement with my heart, and they will certainly feed you with knowledge and insight” (Jeremiah 3:15).

The Kingdom calendar dominated our living room. It was incidental here on Jessie’s picture-rail. This was a big house. Used rooms. Open doors. Jessie’s front room was a lounge. A large, comfortable space with sunshine walls. Minimally, exquisitely furnished; always fresh flowers. And a sparkling baby grand.
My shoes were spit-and-polished. At each step toward the sofa, they sank into the carpet’s dark roses. Snakeskin stilettos tiptoed to a matching grey velvet armchair. Jessie sailed away to make tea. An undertone urged: “Tidy your skirt up, love – and get that fringe back out of your eyes, do ...”

Jessie stood in for Sister Doris in providing musical accompaniment for the songs at our Kingdom Hall meetings. We met three times each week. On Tuesdays, there was the bible book study group at someone’s home. But on Thursday nights and Sunday afternoons we met at the Kingdom Hall, and there was a piano. We rented the dance hall behind ‘The Fellowship Inn’ pub at Bellingham. It was Henry Cooper’s pub – boxer, mate of the Kray twins. He lived there. He was the landlord, and would lean out of the upstairs window and wave to us after the meeting on Sunday ... So it was on Thursdays and Sundays that Jessie sometimes had to stand in for Doris.

The Fellowship Inn’s piano wasn’t up to much. Doris played with flamboyant insistence and made some powerful music. It was different for Jessie. Her touch was gentle, and her dancing baby fingers wanted to caress the keys. She would do her duty at the Congregation Servant’s request, but her suede kitten heels carried her to the piano reluctantly. Jehovah loved Jessie, my mother knew, because she was like the brother in the bible who said he wouldn’t help with the harvest, but did; Doris, on the other hand, was seen as having to wrestle with a tendency to arrogance. Her dramatic presentation of Song 73, for example, incorporated her own twirly bits.

So in a way, Big Mary was the bearer of a gift of recognition from the Lord, bringing me to Jessie for Counselling. In this way, Jessie might know that the Lord saw fit to use her as his vessel, and count herself a fellow-Counsellor with Sister Mary Senior, who was stumped by this one ...

Jessie brought delicate tea things whose use was clearly nothing out of the ordinary. I had extra milk and sugar. Big Mary had it strong, milk-no-sugar, and stuck out her little
finger to raise her spirits. She fidgeted uncomfortably on the edge of her chair. Jessie placed herself against the piano, resting one elbow on its curve. A high-quality Crimplene dress stretched across her well-corseted breasts made an impressive ‘monobosom’. You could tell high-quality Crimplene – its colours were muted, like ‘art’ – its patterns were of rich embossed flowers, in tonal variations of the basic colours. These flowers were roses, in tones of beige and grey.

I could tell that Sister Jessie didn’t find this easy, was uncomfortable. She shifted from one beige leather court shoe to the other. We established that the problem was my lack of faith. I did not want to live forever; but everlasting life on a paradise earth was God’s promised reward for obedience and faithful evangelizing. The global battle which was to herald the New System disturbed me: every carnage must involve some error. And I liked sinners.

According to scripture, I’d be safe through the Battle; I was an obedient 9-year-old. There was every prophetic indication that it would all be over before I reached an age to be held responsible. Big Mary’s salvation would cover me. But I knew that I was already responsible:– “So, if any one of you is lacking in wisdom, let him keep on asking God, for he gives generously to all and without reproaching; and it will be given him. But let him keep on asking in faith, not doubting at all, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven by the wind and blown about” (James 1:5,6). I knew myself to be that faithless man; I didn’t know what I could do about it. I prayed and prayed, but couldn’t work the magic. I didn’t want what was promised. “You don’t want to die, do you?” asked the mother. “No ... but ...” ... “Then you want to live for ever”.

It was a problem of desire. I desired Big Mary’s love and approval; both depended upon my expression of appropriate desires. I needed to get my ‘thinking straight with the Lord’; to direct my desire correctly. I wanted Sister Jessie’s counseling to work; when the mother left the room to wash up the tea things, Jessie sat beside me on the sofa and folded me into her huge bosom. Her baby fingers, with buffed nails of translucent pink, cradled my forearm. She smelled of fresh roses. Her string of fine pearls trickled into my mouth as she hugged me. I wanted to relax into the cuddle, or for both of us to cry ... “If you can carry on being obedient to Jehovah and being a good girl, I’m sure the faith will come, and
it will make your mother so happy,” she whispered. I inhaled her worried smile. “Can I tell your Mum that you’ll try to do that? And you can come and talk to me whenever you want to.”

When my mother returned, Jessie stood by the piano again and presented my undertaking and her offer. Mother was both humble and vindicated; I knew the look. She suggested that we “say thank-you to Jehovah”, and led a brief communiqué before we started the long walk home.

Later, Jessie would often ask how things went with me. My answers were hopeful, optimistic; the gaze was distant. I’d taken my part in a story where problems of belief and desire had no place. Their absence, the silence, served the purpose of faith for a while.

* * *

Casting another glance over the experiences of the child and women in this story, I am led to consider the repeated appearances of ‘viral infections’ of religious fundamentalism and child abuse as they may have generated and perverted my own, and some—to—many others’, orientations to ontological positions and epistemological concerns.

I seek interlocutors, and soon discover a stark connection made by theologian Rita Nakashima Brock, who refers to the “cosmic child abuse” implicit in ‘substitutionary and surrogacy constructions of atonement: the imputation to God the Father of the need for the physical torture, humiliation and sacrifice of the child.’

Fury and despair

‘Life is fury. Fury – sexual, Oedipal, political, magical, brutal – drives us to our finest heights and coarsest depths. This is what we are, what we civilize ourselves to disguise – the terrifying human animal in us, the exalted, transcendent, self-destructive, untrammeled lord of creation. We raise each other to the heights of joy. We tear each other limb from bloody limb.’
- from *Fury*, by Salman Rushdie (p 31)

The ‘flu virus had begun to change my body’s balance, sensations and functions on that Tuesday morning, but I still drove into town at 9 a.m. to pick up the copy of Salman Rushdie’s new novel, ‘Fury’, which the bookshop had ordered for me some weeks before.

The combination of title and author were compelling to me. Since childhood, I had been very distressed by the expression of anger. In young womanhood I learned that nothing I had then read had served to ‘give me a clue as to what it was really like to be a woman’; but Salman Rushdie’s metaphor of migration, and the ubiquity of the ‘migrant’ experience, was one which I had realized in my landscapes and embraced in my work:

The very word **metaphor**, with its roots in the Greek words for **bearing across**, describes a sort of migration, the migration of ideas into images. Migrants - borne-across humans – are metaphorical beings in their very essence; and migration, seen as a metaphor, is everywhere around us. We all cross frontiers; in that sense, we are all migrant peoples.

---

7 I had moved across the world in my mid-twenties from London to Sydney, and ‘my eyes became australian’: ‘This place! It’s unimaginable...Everything is very far apart...Early in the morning the sky was streaked with tender colours, not the pastels of England, a different spectrum of colour altogether: mauve, purple,orange. I suddenly understood why Lal could be entranced by a place like this...she said it was as if her eyes became Australian...’ Drusilla Modjeska, *Poppy*, Ringwood, 1990, p253
In the context of her inspiring and influential substantiation of this metaphor, the Chicana writer and activist Gloria Anzaldua tells in *Borderlands/La Frontera* of the U.S.-Mexican border as:

‘... *una herida abierta* (an open wound) where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it haemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture ... A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition ... *Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the “normal”. Gringos in the U.S. Southwest consider the inhabitants of the borderlands transgressors, aliens ... The only “legitimate” inhabitants are those in power, the whites and those who align themselves with whites ... . Ambivalence and unrest reside there and death is no stranger.’

I travelled in those borderlands and through Mexico. I felt the ceaseless pulse of violent machismo in the air, and sat beside mothers with small children on long-distance bus trips to a constant, loudly-televised diet of extreme violence: continuous videos of Jean-Claude Van Damme and Arnold Shwarzenegger’s most enraged/outrageous productions. Gloria Anzaldua has recognised a cultural ‘machismo’ as intrinsic to Chicano and Mexican-Indian males’ ‘adaptation to oppression and poverty and low self-esteem’, and observes the pathology of this process to be ‘...the result of hierarchical male dominance.’ And for as long as masculinity consists in the definitive practice of violent abuse of cultural ‘subordinates’: women (las mujeres) and old women (viejas, objects of derision), or homosexuals, then, Anzaldua observes, ‘the Indian and the Black in all of us is put down’.

---

10 ibid., p106
Thus 'the struggle of the mestiza' (those of 'mixed race', with a complex range of cultural and epistemological tradition/acquisition/invention) is 'above all a feminist one', a struggle to change 'the sexist elements in Mexican-Indian culture'. The powerful love inscribed in the Mexican-Indian and Chicano cultures for 'the Mother, the good mother', may, she suggests, underpin a challenge to the cultural tyranny of the puta/virgen (whore/virgin) dichotomy, and promote further disruptions of gender roles, challenging received masculinities. Such a hope implies the need for that 'm/other'-love to be realized through practices of empathy, understanding and compassion; these in turn seems urgently to require new ways of thinking and experiencing embodied connections and intercorporeal possibilities; ways to perceive and experience differently understood embodimentments.

For now, viruses are in process…

* * * * *

The cover of Rushdie's new novel was a stark black and white photograph of New York City shrouded in a twilight mist, with a storm-cloud covering the sun, the cloud apparently pierced by the pinnacle of the Empire State building. What I took at the time to be a lightning flash, on re-inspection looks like the glare of an otherwise blacked-out sun from around the edge of the cloud. I read the dust sheet later that day, and took the book to bed with a honeyed hot lemon drink…

---

11 ibid., p. 106
12 Fertile evidences of such rethinkings are found in the writings of Alphonso Lingis: cf. Lingis, A., 'Innocence', in Grosz, E., *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures*, Ithaca and London, Cornell Uni Press, pp 201-216, which stories the lived temporalities of a woman, a man and a child and their connections through south american peasant farming, genes, politicization, erotics, revolution, escape, imprisonment, soccer, nativity and birthing, torture, transcendence, loss and awakening. Also, in Lingis, A., *Foreign Bodies*, New York and London, Routledge, 1994, *passim*; for example, in 'Elemental Bodies' (Ch. 11), Lingis takes part in serial interpretations of Daniel Defoe's classic Robinson Crusoe, including Michel Tournier's novel *Friday*, trs. Norman Denny, New York, Pantheon, 1985. Lingis writes: 'It was at the extreme point of recognizing the alien in one another that their hands clasped never to let go again. In their fraternal association Friday does not now begin to implant in Robinson his civilization. The fraternity of these strangers resists being made comprehensible in our language, whose norms rest corporeally on kinship, the community of individuals in the species; Robinson does not succeed of speaking of it in his logbook.'(p204)
After a minimal night’s sleep, the flu virus was established and I was feverish and aching when I awoke to televised replays of that September Tuesday’s 9 a.m.events at New York’s World Trade Centre...

One month after that event, Tariq Ali took a cab in New York to the City University and noted down his conversation with the cab driver soon after:

T.A.: Where were you on September 11th?
He: (looking at me closely in the rear-view mirror) Why do you ask?
T.A.: I just wondered ...
He: Where are you from?
He: No, I mean where are you really from?
T.A.: Pakistan
He: I’m Taliban. Look at me. No, no. I’m from Central America. Can’t you tell?
T.A.: I just wondered whether you were anywhere near the Twin Towers that day.
He: No, I wasn’t but I wouldn’t have cared if I was
T.A.: What do you mean?
He: It wouldn’t have mattered if I’d got killed. The important thing is that they were hit. I was happy. You know why?
T.A.: No.
He: You know how many people they’ve killed in Central America. You know?
T.A.: Tell me.
He: Hundreds of thousands. Yes, really. They’re still killing us. I’m really happy they were hit. We got our revenge. I feel sorry for the ones who died. That’s more than they feel for us.
T.A.: Why do you live here?
He: My son is at school here. I’m working to pay for his education. We had to come here because they left nothing back home. Nothing. No schools. No universities. You think I’d rather be here than in my own country?13

---
Now, contemporary with the American empire’s ‘global war on terror’, there is an increase in attempts to understand the furies whose articulations continue to engender such attacks. And as Israelis are daily confronted with the terminal fury of Palestine’s suicide bombers, we in Australia observe our government’s extreme attempts to define, redefine and contain our borderlands, to ward off or immobilise would-be immigrant refugees. Images are formed and stories told of and by the refugee dispossessed, displaced and imprisoned:

In the nether reaches of Australia’s Great Victoria Desert, within the area marked on the Times World Atlas as Woomera Prohibited Area (since its time as a U.S research base):

**Boys despair over return to Woomera**

By Larissa Dubecki, Andra Jackson

_The Age, July 20 2002_

Two boys at the centre of an international bid for asylum late yesterday spoke of their pain after they were returned to the Woomera detention centre by Australian immigration authorities.

The younger of the two boys, Muntazer Baktiyari, 12, said he feared he would be held in detention indefinitely.

"I may be (at Woomera for) five years, six years, maybe (for my) whole life. We don't have any more ways to get our visa."

Alamdar, 14, speaking by phone from the detention centre, said: "Today we have been sent back to Woomera hell after a short period of escape to resist persecution."

He earlier told ABC radio he had twice tried to kill himself before his escape from the detention centre on June 27.

"In camp, we didn't learn English; we learn too many bad things," he said. "We learn how to cut ourselves, how to drink shampoo, how to suicide. Two times I kill myself by razor, two times I suicide me."

The Baktiyari boys escaped from Woomera detention centre last month as part of a mass breakout, and were taken into custody in Melbourne on Thursday night after their bid for asylum was rejected by the British consulate.

and in the beleagured West Bank:-
An Israeli father told yesterday how three generations of his family were killed or maimed by the suicide bomb that exploded beside a bus stop during the Jerusalem rush hour on Thursday. After spending his working life in Jerusalem hospitals, Isaac Aizenman, 36, found himself frantically visiting emergency wards trying to find his family, who he knew were at the scene...After an hour of desperate phone calls and visits, he discovered the worst: his daughter, Gal, 5, was among the seven dead, along with his mother-in-law, Noa Alon...

Israel's Defence Minister...Binyamin Ben Eliezer..has revealed that he visited two failed suicide bombers in jail earlier this month to try to understand their motives: ‘... the code that connects them is the despair that people come to ..... As Defence Minister, I know how to deal with tanks and planes. I know how to deal with fighters. I want to know what the fuel is that drives the suicide attackers...I want to understand if the background is ethnic, religious – where they live, education, social conditions ...

In London on Tuesday, Cherie Blair (wife of the British Prime Minister) ... (had) said suicide bombers were a symptom of Palestinian despair.
Quick criticism followed...and the Israeli embassy in London said it regretted that “any public statements , which might be interpreted as expressing understanding for Palestinian terrorism, should be made.” She later apologised.

(The Weekend Australian, June 22-23, 2002 p16 – Stephen Farrell, Jerusalem/agencies/a correspondent)
Tariq Ali avers the necessity of 'understand(ing) the despair, but also the lethal exaltation that drives people to sacrifice their own lives'\textsuperscript{14}. In \textit{The Clash of Fundamentalisms} he offers a palpably authentic account of the background and historical context of the ongoing clash between puritanical Islam and the imperialist fundamentalism of the United states and its western allies.

His own encounter, as the child of a Muslim family in Lahore, with the process of Partition which constituted the Muslim state of Pakistan in 1947 is one thread in a richly textured series of local, global and historical glances which incorporate the stories and insights of interested persons from novelists and documentary film-makers to cab drivers. His final chapter 'Letter to a young Muslim' attempts to engage, with a compelling combination of didacticism, story-telling and emotional appeal, a member of the new generation of angry young Muslim fundamentalists in Europe and North America: a generation spawned in part, he suggests, by a fatal contemporaneity. Correlative with the 'decline in radical politics as such' in Europe and North America is an

\textit{official multiculturalism...} \textit{(which)...stresse(s) difference at the expense of all else...} ‘Culture’ and ‘religion’ are softer, euphemistic substitutes for socio-economic inequality – as if diversity, rather than hierarchy, were the central issue in North American or European society today.\textsuperscript{15}

The writer describes for his correspondent the work of a young Iranian documentary film maker under the clerically oppressive regime of the Ayatollahs. Reiterating his antipathy to all religion, Tariq Ali quotes from transcripts of the film maker Moslem Mansouri's work with two Tehran prostitutes over two years, remarking the sex workers' observation that the best pickups were at religious festivals:

\textit{... the government has taken away the right to speak with the opposite sex freely in public ... if you talk to a man, the 'Islamic guard'}

\textsuperscript{14} Ali, T., op. cit., p. 3
interrogates you endlessly ... . I went to a special family court and begged the judge, a clergymen, to give me my child's custody ... I'll be your kaniz (servant) (This is a Persian expression which basically means 'I beg you. I am very desperate') ... What do you think the guy said? He said 'I don't need a servant! I need a woman!' I asked him 'don't you have a wife'? He said 'I need many'!\textsuperscript{16}...

Tariq Ali observes a 'desperate need' for an 'Islamic Reformation that sweeps away the crazed conservatism of the fundamentalists', with Muslim intellectuals asserting the right to interpret 'texts that are the collective property of Islamic culture as a whole\textsuperscript{17}. Basharat Tayyab, who also locates her original experience of Islam in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, concurs:

Qur'anic legislations primarily address themselves to the society in existence at the time. However, ignoring the historical, legislative aspect of the Qur'an, Muslim ulema dogmatically took to applying the legal structures developed during early Islam to any society, no matter what its inherent dynamics. This has led to the stagnation of Islamic sociocultural structures ... . It is believed that as far as feminist issues are concerned, Muslim women will have to struggle against both the internal forces (religious orthodoxy) and external sources (feudal tribal social structures). This struggle will have to be carried out by interpreting the true Islam for themselves.\textsuperscript{18}

Such stories of fury and despair as those above are evidently stories of social worlds dehumanised and rendered alienating through a combination of:

\textsuperscript{15} ibid., p. 310
\textsuperscript{16} ibid., p. 308
\textsuperscript{17} ibid., p. 312
(i) more or less insidious internal processes (where concentrations of social, religious and political power prove antithetical to open communication, authentic embodiment, or to values of freedom, equality and self-determination), with
(ii) the debasing effects of the imposition and influence, direct and subtle, seductive and violent, of the gamut of dominant Western demands and values.

Razor wire fences around desert compounds, angry contestation of plans for newly opened space in downtown New York, and the contentious boundaries of nation-states outline and describe these displacements. And 'tension grips the inhabitants of the borderlands like a virus'19.

**virus ii**

'A virus uses the machinery within our own cell to replicate itself – it tricks the machinery to make copies of it...' (conversation with Cameron Way, Advocate for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, N.S.W., 15.12.1994, p3 of transcript)

'Because achieving control of the woman is such an imperative for men who abuse, throughout their relationships with women they go about relentlessly and systematically reinterpreting these women's histories and identities. So, when women take steps to break free, they ... are also embarking upon a migration of identity.' (Michael White, Naming abuse and breaking free of its effects in Re-authoring lives: Interviews and Essays, Adelaide, Dulwich Centre, 1995, p. 99)

'One of the immune chemicals, anti-viral chemicals - alpha-interferon - actually works on the MRNA in the cells so that those (virus replication) processes can't continue. But...(alpha-interferon) not only stops the virus being able to reproduce, it stops a lot of the

19Anzaldua, op cit., p. 25
housekeeping, rebuilding of lots of the proteins and enzymes of the body, its own cellular maintenance ... (Cameron Way, as above, p3)

‘In this ‘liminal’ or ‘betwixt and between’ space, confusion and disorientation reigns, and often nothing seems manageable any more . . . . It is in this space that women are vulnerable to a sense of total incompetence and personal failure, to feelings of desperation and acute despair’ (Michael White, op. cit., p100)

‘Our survival mechanisms make us very robust, but our vulnerabilities are very real...with C.F.S.; (without) the needless, needless disregard, abuse, I could have fully returned to health ... but it’s taken real active effort to block my self-initiated efforts to make a recovery ... And that makes me so furious – really, really, really angry.’(Cameron Way, p20)

‘However, other readings of this ‘trough’-like experience are available...If women have the opportunity to map their experience of the descent into this trough of confusion and disorientation as part of a process...rather than...as regress,...it becomes more possible for them to persevere with their journey...Such acts of mapping assist women to place their distress within the context of progress...to hold onto the idea that the future might hold something different for them ... ’(Michael White, op. cit., p100)

In Michael White’s work with women who are ‘Naming abuse and breaking from its effects’, he encourages them to produce a daily graph of their sense of emotional wellbeing/despair during the process of their ‘separation and re-incorporation’. ‘Women are invited to plot their own journey through reference (with permission) to others’ graphs’. (Michael White, op. cit., p101)
White has observed that this mapping process ‘provides them with some indication of their location on a trajectory called a “migration of identity”’...Interpretations of regress dissolve, and hope, an antidote to despair, resurfaces...²⁰

Outbursts

Over several years, the most intimate of intersubjective developments has modified my selfhood. I have been in close, perhaps intimate, connection with a person who has been diagnosed in mid-life with Asperger’s syndrome(A.S.), a condition on the autism spectrum. It is believed to have a genetic base, and is recognized as a life-long developmental disability. It affects the ways in which a person communicates with and relates to others. Although there is a wide variation in its effects, the inability to empathize, or to form

intimate two-way relationships is characteristic. It appears to affect males more than females, in a ratio of approximately 10:1, although it seems likely that female’s culturally facilitated acquisition of socially skilled behaviours protects them from its worst social implications and facilitates their management/concealment of its disabling effects, and of the anxieties and angers its experience generates.

For some years preceding his diagnosis I chose to draw on all my energies, inscribing and scoring flesh in the process of attempts at intimate communication with Samuele. His underlying fury was often evident; it masked and dulled my own in our classically codependent relationship. I recognized that his practices of intense physical activity and other physical control techniques generally served to modify or restrain the overt expression of his anger. But often there were outbursts. For several years, ignorant of any other explanation, I believed this anger to relate to experiences which were open to possible discovery, examination and resolution over time. Following a violent outburst from Samuele which resulted in physical injury to me, I wrote:

**Letter to Samuele, 6th February 1998:**

*Dear Samuele*

*First, please remember that I know that hurt, fear and anger can provoke personal responses and actions which cause pain and suffering to someone you love, and that those actions are such that you feel you can’t bear to think about or deal with them when you’ve done them. But they eventually demand to be dealt with in some way, I think.*

*The most shocking part for me of this morning was not the angry acts, but that even as I stood there bleeding with shards of glass in my arm and hip, and in shock, you didn’t touch me, hold me, or do the basic human things that any healthy person would do for a dog in the same situation: clean it up, a cuddle, hot sweet tea, calming words. I know you came back briefly, after leaving, when you wanted to run: but the affection, simple compassion in*
the face of pain, weren’t there – that’s what frightened me the night I cried beside you…. Something was frozen inside… Anger is a healthy human emotion and can be understood and resolved, the energy redirected. But this cutting off is sad and frightening.

It’s 2.30p.m., and I’m feeling drained and realize that I’ve started to bleed (menstrually). And my first thought is ‘so it is all my fault’. Classic ‘victim’ response to violence or abuse...

Samuele believes that several factors are involved in generating what he calls his ‘outbursts’. Following a trip to Australia, a few months after his AS diagnosis in December 1999, he had written from Dubai:

Letter to Mary, May 2000:

Dear Mary

I’m finding more and different anger. In the book ‘Pretending to be Normal’ it said that stress can be released by using a rubber ball which I used at Secondary school until the Brothers took it away. Some closed doors in my mind keep opening… I was angry but remember the woman in the book said she allowed herself to be angry and assert her annoyance in public places. Digging into one’s mind and soul hurts… It’s hard to say the right things they were never said to me. Thank you for finding the book in some places it is overwhelming. I found some pages very difficult… As the woman in the book explains, she continues to learn and improve her normalness: “I have AS, a neurobiological disorder that sometimes makes it difficult for me to speak and act calmly and rationally.”

I tried to use a stereo headset at work to calm me but they took it off me. Hair also seems to be a problem for AS sufferers; keep it short is the advice. Maybe with long hair I was advertising that I was odd, now with short hair people think I’m normal…

Some weeks ago, Samuele wrote to me regarding his most recent ‘outburst’ directed at me, which had occurred when we (Samuele, myself, Rose and Leo) met for a week in a ‘neutral

space' in Indonesia. The uneasy federation of diverse island cultures which forms Indonesia is coincidentally the current borderland/transition space for many refugee atravesados of Afghani, Iranian and Pakistani origin, en route by sea to an unwelcoming Australian nation state's desert prisons, or redirection to its Pacific neighbours.

Our meeting must be in this space between, because Samuele overstay[ed] his last Australian visitor's visa and was not allowed into the country. It was my preference too, that the safety of our home space was not again threatened by violence. The particularities of our respective safe places, his football matches/our vegetable garden, his London Transport travel/our walk to the ocean, were neither evident nor at risk. On the last evening of the mimetic ‘holiday’, Samuele had been verbally abusive over several hours. Later, he wrote:

Letter from Samuele, May 2002:

Dear Mary,

I am sad and heartbroken that we ended as we did. I ask myself was it a problem from my past that I have not yet resolved, anger at you for your persistence to my AS, or my AS. I feel it is a combination of all three. In all my married years I had two outbursts, that's 2 in 9 years. With you it's 1 every 9 days. We must accept we are not compatible.

Samuele seemed to use the terms ‘sad and heartbroken’ here in an odd way which seems to suggest the superfluity of one of the terms. In a study by Francesca G.E. Happe of the autobiographical writings of adults with AS, she notes that in the works studied ‘it is hard
to find anything formally wrong, rather the reader is left with an overall impression of oddness\textsuperscript{25}.

I recalled that on speaking to S. years ago about the break-up of his previous relationship with an Italian woman, an opera-loving soprano with whom he clearly had much in common, I had said: “you must have been heart-broken ... ”. Long before any knowledge of Samuele’s AS, this questioning comment was intended to elicit some sign of Samuele’s emotional investment in the relationship, to observe his response to the suggestion that the break-up might involve acute emotional pain for him. A blank stare of incomprehension met my question, quickly overlaid with the dismissal of a quiet “no, Mary...” in a tone which usually signaled an impending angry accusation that I was ‘ranting’: a silencing technique which effectively avoided the ‘dangerous’ area of emotional communication. I recognize from looking at this letter, and looking through others, that Samuele’s written communication was often my own language (sometimes from years previously) given back to me. It was the repetition of what he’d observed to be terms or phrases with significance for me, and would be returned to me oddly or slightly out of context. Now I find that Happe notes in her study, above:

There is always the possibility that with autistic children and adults, who often seem to have such excellent rote memory for overheard material, some expression they use which may seem to show startling social skill is simply an echoed phrase remembered from a previous and similar context.\textsuperscript{26}

The stories of those interactions with Samuele tell themselves back to me now, articulated sometimes in a mirrored sadness in my eyes, sometimes remembered from copies of my own written words, in other women’s stories, or sensed intermittently through blunted scar tissue. I know that my emotional responses to our interaction have affected my orientation

\textsuperscript{25} ibid., p. 229
\textsuperscript{26} ibid., p. 219
to understanding, and perhaps my capacity to usefully understand, the effects and experiences of Asperger syndrome.

Our stories are remembered daily to me in the eyes and embodiment, the developing selfhood of the child born of this relationship. Leo was 8 months old at the time of the discovery and naming of his father’s hereditary brain difference – a difference which had, unknown to me, rendered my self-imposed task of achieving shared intimacy with Samuele precisely impossible. Now Leo, aged 3, announces ‘I can’t let you do that’ apropos of nothing, whilst playing with the living room blind. I don’t try to contextualize the comment here in the room: I recognize a line ‘collected’ from Leo’s favourite story, Beauty and the Beast, where Belle attempts to protect the Beast from the intended violence of misinformed villagers. No response is required.

* * *

**v i r u s iii**

*Belle:* (Startled by the beast’s appearance at the castle’s dungeon, where she has discovered her father’s incarceration) “Please, you must release my father: he is sick and this dungeon is so cold and damp …”

*The Beast:* (Growls) He trespassed here . .

*Belle:* Take me instead.

*The Beast:* I’ll show you to your room …

…later…
The Beast: Do you like being here with me, Belle?

Belle: (bewildered..) It seems that I can learn to love ... anything ...

The Beast: Well, then: if my rage, directed at you, terrifies you into fleeing from the castle into the freezing night, and then the wolves attack you and then I rescue you with moments to spare, will you like that?

Belle: (bemused...) How can I tell?

The Beast: Let's find out ...

...after Belle's rescue...

Belle: (to the Beast inside the castle) The villagers believe you may attack their children: I must speak to them and try to avert their battering ram....(to the angry villagers): I cannot let you do this...

Villagers: The beast is dangerous: we must protect our children ...

Belle: He assures me that he was once a handsome prince, but that an enchantress punished his cruel and selfish behaviour by transforming him into a beast. If he can learn to love and have someone love him in return, he will once more become that handsome prince and the beast will be no more. I can change the beast...

Articulations
Practical ... meaningful ‘human’ truth exists in the ‘common ground’ that ‘develops between us as we speak’. It is ... to be located in the very possibility of communication, and the actualization of that possibility in the event of understanding.\textsuperscript{27}

Today I am reading around Jeff Mitscherling’s (spoken) words, (written) above. Mitscherling was speaking above of ‘the aesthetic experience’ and the ‘truth’ of ‘art’. His characterization of the aesthetic attitude emphasizes embodied engagement with an ontological event which both is and is not a work of art: it is constituted as a (literary) work of art ‘in the interaction between the work of art and the active understanding of its readers’. This leads me to looking back through written trackings of Heidegger, Bakhtin, Gadamer\textsuperscript{28} and others as their work contributed to what became the poststructuralist concern with issues of language and signification in the construction of subjectivity.

These developments in social theory were concrescent with my exploration of the usefulness and validity of auto/biographical texts and alternative representational practices in theorizing the social\textsuperscript{29}(see introduction). Always open to drawing on the productions of memory, imagination and emotion, the layered texts produced in ‘our’\textsuperscript{30} conversations often encompassed dissembling and denial, play and pretence, but also dredged up profound truths of complex intersubjectivities and intertemporalities. With occasional outbursts


\textsuperscript{28} Mae Gwendolen Henderson’s Speaking in Tongues: Dialogics, Dialectics and the Black Woman’s Literary Tradition in Butler, J. and Scott, J.W., Feminists Theorize the Political, Routledge, New York 1992, pp. 144-166 compares the conflict implicit in the Bakhtinian notion of ‘dialogic engagement with the Other’, with Gadamer’s recognition of the ‘Thou’(the intimate other in the ‘I-Thou’ relationship) which, she believes, ‘signifies the potential of agreement’. That such relational practices are presented by their theorists as the product of intellectual choice, rather than as habits of perception, is an issue which perhaps underlies the approach of many feminist scholars (cf. Probyn, E., Sexing the Self: Gendered positions in Cultural Studies, New York and London, 1993, p.169).

\textsuperscript{29} Bastable, M., The Textual Representation of Life-Story-Telling as Social Theory, M. Ed. Hons., University of New England, 1993.

\textsuperscript{30} I was the only recorder, but always of some form of ‘conversation’: of the gift of stories recounted, the interchange of words/images from writer to reader/performer/interlocutor/audience.
registering responses from surprise, recognition, and amusement to indignation or fury, they represented the constituency, the substantive basis of theorizing the social interactively, with emotional honesty.

On revisiting those stories it becomes clear that gender-based fear, or at least wariness/awareness of outbursts and the uncontrollable is a ubiquitous emotional factor in the women’s life-story tellings which I have recorded and borne witness to over many years. And that those gendered fears have often determined how and in what form knowledges/stories were either recovered and proffered for empowerment, or remained consigned to the realms of lies, secrets and silence. My observations are in keeping with Catherine Z. Elgin’s position that ‘the cognitive functions emotions perform are ones epistemology cannot responsibly ignore’, in that, as she demonstrates, ‘emotions orient their subjects, focus attention, and supply grounds for classifying objects as like or unlike’.

Further, any epistemology is always, as Grosz puts it, ‘a kind of theft from ontology, from the real’, with epistemological debate necessarily located in the ontological ground of reality. On these accounts, it seems likely that the cognitive functions emotions perform have contributed to the generation of the characteristically ‘disembodied’ traditions of masculinist academic knowledge production. The excision of emotion from the arena of valid social knowledge-production has been concomitant with pathologized emotion’s generation of the dissociative mind-body splitting that is known to characterize effective ‘survival’ responses to child abuse.

31 Cf. ‘both acquired vision and loss of sight result in misapplied make-up’; ‘the proper woman’; Joan’s story; Anna’s story; Paula’s story; in M. Bastable, The Textual Representation of Life-Story-Telling as Social Theory, M.Ed.Hons. thesis, University of New England, N.S.W., 1993
My return to live in the place of my childhood after 20 years absence prompted a remarkable series of earnest, yet cryptic 'takings aside' by aunts, other family members and friends. A practical meaningful human truth was being referred to, a truth which had been silenced: 'we didn't say anything, for your mum's sake'. I was unable at that time to ask what they hadn't said anything about. Clearly they assumed important shared knowledges which I had no access to memories of:

"We just wanted to tell you that we know it wasn't your fault – it was your dad's fault, but we didn't want to say anything because of your mum, we didn't want to make it worse for her ..." (maternal aunt)

"Don't you remember coming to stay with us for a week when you were 11? Your Mum and Dad went away to try and sort things out ... And I was worried because you put a chair behind your bedroom door, and I told you that you needn't worry, your Uncle Len would never try to come into your room ... I'd never trust your father..." (paternal great-aunt)

"Look I'm only telling you this because I think it might help you with what you're trying to sort out: your dad tried it on with my mum (a friend of my mother's), in the car when your mum got him to give her a lift home from the meeting. And she wasn't the only one ..." (a childhood friend)
Pobre Maria Concetta

Maria Concetta was in her late 30's when she gave birth in London's autumn, 1960, to her only child, Samuele. Carlo, her husband, had found post-war employment 'on the railways' in London, and following their marriage, which was arranged on his return visit to Italy, he and Maria Concetta led an isolated existence in south London. Maria Concetta spoke little English, and they had little social contact, even with the local Italian community. The remembered happy times of Samuele's childhood (and the times when he remembers his nuclear family of origin as happy) are of train travel back to Italy and family holidays there. Carlo also displays AS traits and characteristics, and now in his late 70's has experienced some years of clinical depression. Samuele tells of both parents' violence toward him and, by telephone from Laos, of the recovered memory of sexual assault by his father at the age of 9. He knows the age he was, and believes the memory was triggered in Laos, because he remembers watching televised news reports of the siege of Phnom Penh at the time.

Samuele expresses no positive feeling for Maria Concetta who died several years ago: he tells that he never remembers being cuddled by her, but does remember that she would lock him in the cellar as a child, telling him that the spiders would eat him up for his misdemeanours. He also recalls being taken to gambling venues to stand with her whilst she tried to win what he believes was the money to leave London and Carlo, to return to Italy and take Samuele with her. His vocal tone is one of personal irritation when he tells me that she 'smoked herself to death', dying of cancer and heart disease. Never did Samuele or his father, in any of our conversations over years, speak well of pobre Maria Concetta: invariably, I initiated any mention of her. And yet in Italy on our visit to her birthplace, close to Italy's border with Austria, past neighbours spoke of her as a remarkably cheerful and caring young woman.

I once visited Maria Concetta's bedraggled London gravesite with Samuele: he spoke, not about his mother, but to complain that the local authority had insisted on the use of this cemetery several miles distant from their home, because their local cemetery was
considered overcrowded. No a priori family connection to the local burial plot existed to justify a space for Maria Concetta close to their South London home: these people were atravesados, displaced and replaced post-war in the late 1940’s, there in London under sufferance: the “I-ties”.

For many years, Maria Concetta was an out patient of the Maudsley Hospital in South London: Samuele believes she was treated for depression and suggests that she had paranoid delusions that the Mafia was ‘after her’ in London in relation to a family property sale in Italy.

On reflection, my period of volunteer work at the Maudsley hospital’s weekly club for in- and out patients probably coincided with her connection with the hospital ... It’s unlikely that she attended that club, though. Because although her language difference would have constituted simply one more chord in the club’s cacophony of communication-practices, or one more of the silences from the edge, the club was held in the evening. And even then, in the mid-seventies, a trip on the 185 bus through Lewisham and East Dulwich, and the walk home from the Lewisham High Street bus stop through a darkened commercial/light industrial area would surely, rightly, have been seen by her as risky...

Before the discovery of Samuele’s AS years after her death, several elements of Maria Concetta’s story as I pieced it together from Samuele and Carlo’s brief stories and comments, and the observations from the few people I spoke with who knew her, did not seem to ‘hang together’. She and Carlo were practicing Catholics in the late 1940s and 50s, and were married for over a decade before Samuele’s birth. Samuele is likely to have been a precious, if unexpected arrival for this socially isolated woman in her late 30s. He reports her story to him of how she had insisted that his father secure for Samuele what she saw as a good high school education at the Marist Brothers Academy. And remembers that she would urge him ‘not to go out to play football, Sammy’ when it was cold and raining.

When Samuele’s inherited condition was identified, and it was clear that his father had evinced the symptoms and characteristics of the condition throughout his life, Maria’s story
as I imagined it at its limits became one through which I sensed our life/times, our
temporalities to coalesce. I understood the likely structures of the traps and the inescapable
nature of the social structure which led to her choosing to ‘smoke herself to death’ as
Samuele put it. I understood that this young woman, a migrant, in a marriage with someone
congenitally unable to empathize with her, a man who was egocentric and prone to
malicious and spiteful outbursts, might desire to ‘fly the coop’. Pregnant, perhaps she had
felt the deep sense, as I did, that her responsibility and protective love for the expected
child would be what inspired the strength and self-care in her to remove herself and her
child. Remove them from the chronically damaging situation of living with and being
needed by this incomprehensibly, uncomprehendingly cruel person.

I felt not only surprise, apprehension and sadness at my pregnancy and at my emotional
inability to terminate it, with or without Samuele’s support: there was also a sense of relief.
I felt freed from commitment to the relationship with Samuele by the valid necessity of a
return to the primary responsibility of care for my self and children, including the one to
come. I realized the likelihood of Leo’s being affected by AS when I discovered Samuele’s
hereditary condition during Leo’s first year. Maria Concetta perhaps only gradually and
partially learned of the nature and extent of her son’s ‘difference’, of the accumulation of
his internalized anger, and of the constraints upon his ability to share any understanding
and intimate, caring relationship, over many years. The young son with whom she hoped to
abscond perhaps neither understood nor appreciated her wish to escape with him. Did he
feel a need for protection from, did she try to protect him from, his father’s sexual abuse?
Naming abuse...

I sift the stones
to find the space between,
then sift the space
to separate the known.  

My experience of physical and psychological abuse in the relationship with Samuele was concurrently reinforced by sexual assault and verbal sexual abuse by my ageing father in visits to my parents' home during those recent years in the U.K. Today, I re-read Lucie's stories in my Master's thesis, and found her telling about 'Charley Jack':

There was an old Chinaman who had a shop here, a grocer's shop in Rusden Street, near where Vinnie's is now, and I went to get some lollies, and he made a grab at me over the counter, and I ran for my life. I didn't get my lollies and I found out that ... well, there was one of the girls at school, she always had lollies; anyway, it came out that that's where she was getting them ... she'd go down and let him feel her up - goodness knows what else she (sic.) did - and he was an awful-looking old creature, too. Horrible man - his name was Charley Jack. I'll never forget that - I was so terrified that he should do that to me ... He was probably doing it to all the schoolkids.

Lucie was several years since passed on and Charley Jack several decades, when my father, at 11 a.m. one morning in his late sixties, had grasped his visiting middle-aged daughter,

pressing and squeezing my left breast as his welcome to the parental home. During moments and minutes of that day when we were in the same room, or area of the house, and out of my mother’s presence he made vulgar and demeaning remarks which spoke me as his sexual property, his ‘tart’. And for that whole day, I unconsciously blocked out, ‘lost’ what had happened on my arrival. When he spoke profound misogyny to me, about me, in a matter of fact way, as ‘advice’ (“you’d better learn to keep your legs shut – no-one will be interested in you now, except for what they can get”), my perception became fuzzy. My thinking seized up; no appropriate response would come. Just a clear perception of loss: recognition that this man would never be the fantasy ‘dad’ with whom I could talk, laugh, share a bottle of good red wine, with any pleasure or emotional honesty. Only when I awoke at their house during that night, with my stomach in knots, my heart pounding, silence exploding in my ears, did that morning’s experience return to my consciousness. With my body in turmoil for hours, denied peace, sleep or any sense of my self/safety in their (my parents’) home, or in the world, I knew that I must confront my parents in the morning with the source of this pain and fury. And that I must try to do it ‘rationally’, as if I had a sensible self, although I now had at best a fleeting, intermittent idea of my selfhood, my boundaries: I understood then the expression of being ‘beside myself’ with fury; concurrently heartbroken, outraged and bereft...

And so I was impelled by profound new recollections and perceptions of my embodied experience to return to the layered process of uncovering and working through their effects. Of necessity, I learned how to examine and express my fury and my healing through stories, written, spoken, shared and performed with others. During this process, I have shared stories with many women. The single UK performance in 1997 by Maya Angelou was at the local Town Hall of my birthplace in one of Inner London’s poorest Boroughs. I witnessed the breathtaking force of this woman’s presentation, her pride and power as she struts her stories on stage and the intense physical and emotional effect of her poetry as it grasps and caresses, raises up and shakes its hearers and readers. Her language in and of performance portrays courage, compassion and an astonishing practice of love. In her autobiographical writing, she tells the story of her rape as a young child by her mother’s
lover, and of the years she spent without speech, inarticulate, an emotional outcome of its effects.

At her concert, I met a group of women who were the workers at a South London community and advice centre. Some months later, in that community centre, whose building was surrounded by the grime and stench of three lanes of constant heavy traffic, a group of local women wrote and read together. On the advice of, and with trans-global support from Mary Hutchison\textsuperscript{35} I passed on the stories and writings of the Hells Bells group in the Australian Capital Territory, and used Susan Sellers(Ed.) \textit{Taking Reality by Surprise}\textsuperscript{36}, to tutor the women's writing group in company with Rae Levy, a drama therapist, as our group's safety net. I was honored to facilitate the writing practice of this group of women who were almost exclusively survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual abuse, and we wrote 'our' stories together: we were able to 'be' and 'be with' those shared expressions of embodied experience.

Together we danced out our survival and hers to the words of Maya Angelou's \textit{Still I Rise}:

\begin{quote}
...Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room

Just like moons and like suns
With the certainty of tides
Just like hopes springing high
Still I'll rise
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{35} Mary Hutchison facilitated the Hell's Belles women's writing group in Canberra, A.C.T.

197
Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries....

...You may shoot me with your words
You may cut me with your eyes
You may kill me with your hatefulness
But still, like air, I’ll rise...

We performed our owned fury with our words and our bodies, and we wrote our
knowledges as sometimes comic tragedies of poetry and narrative.
And we reflected on the significance of our telling and writing together, as it’s told by
Margaret in Hell’s Belles’ Letters:

Something more is needed to unlock all this,
to stem the seepage of your misery
even down to this generation (being the last),
and so I, without permission, have brought
your ghost out into the sunlight,
as a final imposition, touching some warmth
into its grief, softening its iciness
with resolution. I have broken into
your unbearable silence. And because
I give you shape, I acquire shape;
Because I have sought for your voice,
I acquire speech.

The sunlight eases
open the cage you wrought about yourself
and you, like smoke, fade into the bright air.
This is the point of finishing. You take with you my own silence.

**Informing emotion: Asperger’s syndrome**

My life/work/research has come to adopt an insistence on a conception of selfhood coalescent with Elspeth Probyn’s requirements: it must ‘articulate the theoretical necessity of care, of love and of passion’. As she has outlined her exploration of a Foucauldian ‘care of the self’, with its implication of a care for others, it suggests an ethic for our ‘comport(ment) as theorists’. In words which will bear repetition, she proposes that

in practicing empathy as a *critical stance* we may radically de-familiarize experience...In articulating our selves at the very limits of our selves...(we) set in motion a critical process that destabilizes our *separate* enunciation’ [italics mine] 37

Now I am the mother of a person affected by a condition on the autism spectrum. My emotion of parental love engenders, as Catherine Z Elgin demonstrates emotions are wont to do, particular ‘patterns of attention’ and ‘frames of mind’. 38 Among other things, it reminds me of and reconstitutes the desire I have always harboured 39 to empathize and communicate across borders with other ‘selves’ whose positions and interests are founded on what might be termed habitual, and perhaps even systemic or neurophysiologically masculinist perceptions.

39 In her evaluation of my Masters Thesis (‘The Textual Representation of Life-Story -Telling as Social Theory’), Prof. Laurel Richardson wrote:
   ‘...concluding with the moving letter to the professor of her undergraduate course, in which we learn how little the ‘professor’ cares to learn about what is happening to Ms. Bastable and to sociological theory, but yet how much Ms. Bastable still ‘cares’ about trying to teach, convince, bring-along that professor. I think of that professor as a synecdoche for sociology – as theory, method and representational practices; he represents, I think, the hold of the sociologically hegemonic on the practices of even as gifted and reflexive a writer as Ms. Bastable.’
There is now a range of internet support and information available in the form of conversation between persons with AS and their significant others\(^{40}\). And there is a rapidly increasing body of research on High Functioning Autism\(^{41}\) and Asperger Syndrome\(^{42}\). The rate of diagnosis of these conditions in children has increased dramatically over the past decade, and the cultural awareness of this and similar conditions enhanced by several popular films which have variously represented their social contexts and effects (e.g. 'The Rainman', 'As Good As it Gets'). In 1997, Simon Baron-Cohen and Jessica Hammer explored Hans Asperger's own position\(^{43}\) that 'the autistic personality is an extreme variant of male intelligence', in a paper entitled 'Is Asperger syndrome an extreme form of the 'male brain'?'.\(^{44}\) Their study presents the evidence of experiments which include tests of spatial analysis skills as well as 'theory of mind' or 'mindreading' tests, examining the ability to ascribe mental states to others. They explain that:

> mindreading is held to be the normal way in which we make sense of and predict events in the social world. The normal person interprets actions in terms of what the agent's likely intentions are, and what the agent might be thinking, intending, wanting, etc. This is also the strategy normal people use for decoding communication. Children with autism are correspondingly described as suffering from 'mind blindness', in failing to recognize mental states as underlying people's behaviour and communication.\(^{45}\)

\(^{40}\) This includes ASPIRES (Asperger Syndrome Partners and Individuals Resources, Encouragement and Support – www.justgathertogether.com/aspires.html ), and OASIS (On-line Asperger's Syndrome Information and Support – www.aspergerssyndrome.org ), both of which offer a range of information on and links to other sites.

\(^{41}\) The diagnostic convention (as outlined by S. Baron-Cohen in his article 'Is Asperger Syndrome/High-functioning autism necessarily a disability?', Development and Psychopathology, No. 12, 2000, (pp. 489-500), is to define individuals with autism and 'an IQ in the normal range or above' as having "high-functioning autism" (p. 490).

\(^{42}\) 'If an individual meets all of the criteria for HFA except communicative abnormality or history of language delay, they are said to have Asperger syndrome.' (ibid., p. 490)


\(^{45}\) op. cit., p. 10 (pre-publication copy)
Their work has led them to:

... suggest that it may be no coincidence that (1) autism is considerably more common among males; (2) in autism, psychological strengths are ...(in) the domain (spatial analysis) in which normal males are superior; and (3) in autism, psychological weaknesses are in social judgement, and specifically theory of mind tests, a domain in which normal females are superior. Rather than being coincidental patterns, it may be that these outcomes reflect the existence of sex-linked neurodevelopmental processes in the population, and that autism is an extreme form of the male neurodevelopmental pattern.

Following the above position, Baron-Cohen published a paper\textsuperscript{46} which 'considers whether Asperger syndrome(AS) or high-functioning autism(HFA) ... necessarily lead to disability or whether AS/HFA simply lead to 'difference'\textsuperscript{47}. It concludes that the term 'difference' in relation to AS/HFA is a more neutral, value-free, and fairer description than terms such as 'impairment', 'deficiency', or 'disability'; that the term 'disability' only applies to the lower-functioning cases of autism; but that the term 'disability' may need to be retained for AS ... as long as the legal framework provides financial and other support only for individuals with a disability.\textsuperscript{48} Arguments are presented for viewing AS/HFA as a difference rather than a disability, including:-

1. \textit{behaviour in AS/HFA is not better or worse than that seen in typical development} – persons with an autism spectrum disorder are generally agreed to be object- rather than people-focussed, and Baron-Cohen suggests that this difference would only constitute a disability 'in an environment that expects everyone to be social'\textsuperscript{49}. He remarks the

\textsuperscript{47} ibid., p. 489
\textsuperscript{48} ibid., p. 489
\textsuperscript{49} ibid., p. 491
‘injustice of this expectation’\textsuperscript{50}, and offers examples of children who choose to study and attend to specific narrow interests, rather than socialize at school break times, or who attend to the unique numbers on lamppost, suggesting that such differences of interest and attention do not indicate deficit or impairment.

2. ‘the neurobiology of AS/HFA is not better or worse than in typical development’ – he mentions a range, and specifies some of the neural differences that have been seen to accompany AS/HFA: increased cell density in some areas of the brain; the reported reduction in size of the cerebellar vermis lobule 7 and the posterior section of the corpus callosum; and remarks that the differences signaled ‘cannot be taken as evidence that one type of brain is better or worse than the other.’\textsuperscript{51} And with regard to research on the genetic basis of AS/HFA which suggests a linkage on chromosome 7 of persons with AS/HFA, he again suggests that this ‘evidence of difference…in no way implies that the genotype of AS/HFA is deficient.’\textsuperscript{52}

3. ‘Difference’ avoids value-laden judgements’ – the different ‘cognitive style’, as described by Happe\textsuperscript{53} may be spoken as other than lack-defined. And by modifying terminology in a range of ways indicated by Baron-Cohen, the power of language in constructing a differently-abled subjectivity is acknowledged: ‘It is possible to describe AS/HFA in value-free ways’.

I observed in the Baron-Cohen and Hammer 1997 paper the description of a predominantly ‘male’ neurophysiological (‘mind’) condition, which was noted to result in a marked lack of communicative and social skills and propensities historically located as feminine, on the ‘negative’ range of gendered hierarchical dualisms. ‘Aspies’\textsuperscript{54} were also characterized as object-centred and egocentric with a tendency to have narrow special interests: the characteristic range of traits and tendencies were, in combination, seen to evince ‘an extreme form of the male brain’. This was in keeping with Asperger’s early observations;

\textsuperscript{50} ibid., p. 491
\textsuperscript{51} ibid., p. 491
\textsuperscript{52} ibid., p. 491
\textsuperscript{53} Happe, F. Austismx Cognitive defect or cognitive style? Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 3, 1999, pp216-222
\textsuperscript{54} Liane Holliday Willey’s \textit{Pretending to be Normal: Living with Asperger’s Syndrome}, London, Jessica Kingsley,1999, initiates an empowering identity politics in the use of this identifying term to celebrate, rather than pathologize, the implicit ‘difference’ of Asperger’s syndrome.
the condition was described by Asperger and others as childhood psychopathy\textsuperscript{55}, and childhood schizophrenia.

Soon came the recognition in Baron-Cohen's 2000 'difference' paper, that avoiding the determinism of hierarchized binarisms allows for individuals (with AS/HFA) to be 'understood (my emphasis) in terms of an underlying dimension (which) blends seamlessly with normality, so that we are all situated somewhere on the continuum'. As Baron-Cohen notes, this

\begin{quote}
    dimensional approach is useful in reminding us that AS/HFA may simply be part of quantitative variation and individual differences in cognitive profiles, or styles of information processing. This approach could be recast to avoid the implication that one style is better (stronger) or worse (weaker), or that one is intact and another deficient.
\end{quote}

I welcomed the jettisoning of a binary hierarchy of terms whose application may constrain my son's and many others' optimal emotional and functional development. I recognized the limits of my understanding of the effect of AS on developmental and cognitive processes. However, I was uncomfortable with the implication that a neurophysiologically-determined incapacity to feel and express empathy and compassion which may characterize AS was not a 'disability':

\begin{quote}
    In this paper, we focus on AS and HFA since we accept that an individual who is lower functioning necessarily has a disability in the form of retardation. What is not clear ... is whether individuals with AS/HFA necessarily have a disability\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{56} Baron-Cohen 'difference' paper (2000), op. cit., p. 490
It need not, in Baron-Cohen’s view, constitute ‘a lack of an asset, quality or attribute that prevents one from doing something’ (‘disability’ [O.E.D.] italics mine): did the ability to identify, value and express emotions not constitute an important ‘something’?

AS is a lifelong neurophysiological condition which may more or less severely limit the ability to understand and express emotions, or to ‘read’ emotional processes. It is ‘untreatable’: appropriate social or caring behaviours can be learned, but not the emotions or feelings which usually engender them as responses. The narratives of AS, precisely like to the chronic illness narratives studied by Arthur Kleinman, show it to be:

not simply a personal experience ... [it] influences relationships as profoundly as it does individuals ... it is transactional, communicative, profoundly social ... The study of illness meanings ... is about social networks, social situations, and different forms of social reality. Illness is deeply embedded in the social world, and consequently it is inseparable from the structures and processes that constitute that world ...58

Liz is the Director of a Support Centre for women dealing with domestic violence and its effects. She cares for two young sons. She understands my discomfort with what she terms a ‘normalizing of pathology’ implicit in Baron-Cohen’s ‘difference’ paper: by extension, such a process requires, she believes, that we acknowledge behaviours/lacks/propensities which may be dangerous in relationship as acceptable, valid.

a frog dream:

After Liz and I had spoken about our concerns with the description of AS and its implications, I found it emotionally difficult to write this piece. During a period of

57 I refer to my membership of A.S.P.I.R.E.S., and the range of stories shared with me, as well as to published work such as Willey, L.H., Pretending to be Normal, and Attwood, T., Asperger’s Syndrome (refs to come Elizabeth)

204
withdrawal from the work, I had a vivid dream in which I had been fishing. The bream I’d caught was of a good size (although its skin looked rather dry and brown): as I carried it through the day with me, whenever I had to use my hands for something, I needed to ask someone to hold it for a few moments. When it was time to cook it, the person who was about to clean the fish found that its apparent body bulk was formed by a large green frog which it had held inside. The frog was given to me, and it seemed appropriate to swallow it. It became lodged in my throat and I was unable either to swallow or disgorge it; I soon realized that my continued efforts to do so might have the effect of blocking my narrowed airway completely, and desisted. On what I recognized was the next morning, someone remarked the frog’s presence in the room – it was no longer in my throat.

Reflecting on the dream, I understood something of what it was I needed to articulate here, but found so difficult to write, to make evident. My feelings on the autism/sexual difference issue are ambivalent. My concern about the possible effects of AS on Leo’s perceptions and behaviour, my hopes for him not to be ostracized, or to be unable to ‘love’, are alongside my experience of emotional and physical pain and injury from interaction with his father and with my father, and with a lifelong underlying fear of male violence which I’ve only recently recognized. These issues are congealed with my own current process of naming abuse.

I perceive the inability to feel and express compassion or empathy, to recognize and appreciate acts of care and nurturance and differentiate them from self-interest (or disinterest, or habit), as profoundly important and deeply distressing. I distrust the basis of Baron-Cohen’s politics of ‘difference’. His response to discovering that a distressing ‘difference’ which so compromises social and emotional functioning, whilst enhancing limited, focussed objective ability, evincing an ‘extreme form of the male brain’, is to deny that the difference constitutes an incapacity. He offers examples of specifically childhood differences and tendencies, and does not address the likely social and relational complexities and concerns inherent in the lifelong diagnosis. I recognize that my difficulty in disgorging and examining this ambivalence lies in my complex and ambivalent emotional orientation to this material.
Discussion with Liz clarified my discomfort with the liberal individualist conception of selfhood which seems to underlie Baron-Cohen’s taking up of a politics of difference in his 2000 paper. He does not recognize the interactive social contexts of his interrogation of the naming and representation of AS as a disability. The ethical value of understanding and responding to others and their versions of, their emotional orientations to, the distinctly transactional nature of AS is not evident. Chris J. Cuomo recognizes that:

Describing moral agency in strictly individualist terms, or using atomistic individuals as an ethical starting point, neglects the extent to which our selfhood is social, and misrepresents individualism as a natural fact.\(^59\)

The characteristics of AS have implications and expressions which are profoundly interactive, communicative and social. In turn, these meanings have profound effects on the structures and processes, the connections and productive intensities that constitute and reconstitute social worlds. I feel pain and confusion.

**Emotion in formation**

The antithetical positioning of ‘reason’ vs. ‘emotion’ has historically been, as Catherine Z. Elgin notes, ‘an article of philosophical faith, less often argued than assumed.’ She outlines the nature of the stereotypes upon which this suggestion is founded and proceeds with panache to undo them, following with the observation that:

Emotions and beliefs can be enduring or ephemeral, calm or agitating, rational or irrational. Neither class of attitudes seems to

possess any qualification for epistemic standing that the other lacks. That activation of passion involves abdication of reason is thus far from obvious.\textsuperscript{60}

Processes and practices of knowledge-production are evidently shaped, directed, constrained by both conscious and unconscious factors, and as Elgin recognizes:

Emotions need not be acknowledged in order to function epistemically. Like self-avowed emotions, suppressed rage and unacknowledged anxiety structure experience and orient us toward objects. We do not have to know what our emotions are to have our world structured by them... Self-awareness affords epistemic access to the cognitive commitment emotions embody ... Self-deception is a cognitive handicap then because it cuts off avenues of epistemic access.\textsuperscript{61}

Elgin persuasively demonstrates that emotions ' function cognitively...by engendering patterns of attention or frames of mind'\textsuperscript{62}. It would seem to follow that, to the extent that emotions and feelings may be repressed, unrecognized or misconstrued (whether the misconstrual is neurophysiologically or otherwise determined), the resultant epistemological recipes would be at best unappetizing in the lack of some essential ingredients; at worst they would be mistakes, lacking in nutrition or a nauseating mismatch of ingredients.

In \textit{Rediscovering Masculinity}, Victor Seidler recognized some effects of this lack in terms of knowledge and knowers:

... the learning of our masculinity ... the historical identification of reason with masculinity ... help to estrange us from a deeper

\textsuperscript{61} ibid., pp. 160-1.
\textsuperscript{62} ibid., p. 153.
understanding of self, as we somehow take up a position beyond our own experience. We lose any sense of *grounding* ourselves in our own embodied experience as we identify our sense of masculinity with being objective and impartial ... It is no accident that issues of perception became central to modern philosophy. We became historically obsessed with the truthfulness of our perceptions of a world that is estranged and distant.\(^63\)

Samuele told me his memory of Baron-Cohen’s description to him of the neurological ‘difference’ in the area of emotion and feeling which characterized Samuele’s AS. He had pointed out on a CTC scan the neurophysiological difference which affected Samuele’s perception and understanding of his own and others’ emotional states, and perhaps rendered imperceptible the connections between those emotional states and the feelings which may contextualize them.

For me, the effective/affective experience of inculcation with epistemes which produced alienated ‘dead’ knowledges led to my harbouring a passionately perverse desire. It was a desire to find or to conceive lingua franca, communicative keys to bridge-building between sexed, gendered epistemological and experiential worlds, to ‘bring-along’ (cf. fn 32) my ‘others’. What I now understand to be my own necessary dissociation was mirrored and metaphorized in my encounters with academic knowledge, and shaped my ontological and ethical positions. I have no doubt that it has shaped many more influential others.

Leo was born of connections and combinations, and may yet have to understand the experiences of AS described by Uta Frith\(^64\):

> as a child ... socially inept ... by adolescence ... vaguely realizing that there is a whole sphere of personal relationships from


\(^64\) Frith, U., ‘Asperger and his syndrome’ in Frith, U.(Ed.) op. cit, p. 4
which they are excluded . . . (and) as (an) adult remain supremely egocentric and isolated. They do not seem to possess the knack of entering and maintaining intimate two-way personal relationships, whereas routine social interactions are well within their grasp.\textsuperscript{65}

Emotions of parental love, compassion, fear, fury, confusion, hope, along with libidinous energy and more both complicate and impel my approaches to (re)new(ed) materialist knowledges of ontology, epistemology, and of ethics\textsuperscript{66}.

\section*{Keeping it real}

Embodied experiences of behaviours and processes stemming from ‘cycles of abuse’, ‘furious’ response, practices of articulation and approaches to understanding, combine to produce questions:

Can those fecund, difficult spaces at the limits of our selves, where we can best understand other human and non-human ‘beings’, be epistemologically de-gendered, re-materialized for optimal communicative, non-violent effect, so as to flourish\textsuperscript{67}?

What might those different communications sound/look/feel like?

Are there productive ways of opening up notions of ‘difference’ which recognize immanent capacities for productive change and interactive process, avoiding the fixity of self-centred, mind-centred politics of ‘identity’ and ‘specificity’?

\textsuperscript{65} ibid., p. 4
\textsuperscript{66} Ethics, that is, as an approach to moral theory: I wish to understand a satisfactorily \textit{embodied}, descriptive ground for ‘morally sentient beings’. An ethics grounded in a politics which, as Cuomo, \textit{op. cit.}, suggests of ecofeminism, recognizes that ‘values, notions of reality and social practices are related’ (p. 1).
\textsuperscript{67} Cuomo, \textit{op. cit.}, reconstitutes Aristotle’s description of \textit{eudaimonia} (‘happiness’, ‘living well’, ‘flourishing’) as the basic concern of ethics (pp. 62-80, \textit{passim}).
Holding these questions, I continue to contemplate useful writings which make no claim to the truth:

Elizabeth Grosz's recent writing and editions⁶⁸ offer a range of exciting approaches to ideas of 'becoming', from the natural sciences, philosophy, literature, politics and cultural analyses. In ‘Becoming an Epistemologist’, Linda Martin Alcoff⁶⁹ interrogates approaches to truth, nicely identifying in the process, through a reading of Foucault, the 'violence' of hegemonic knowledge. She writes:

The problem with global theories lies not only in their political effects, but also in their dismissive approach toward concrete, particular events that cannot be reduced or adequately included in their terms. Hegemonic knowledge always works through distortions and omissions at the local level in order to enable the reductionist move of containment. Subjugated knowledges that do not seek hegemony do not require the amount of violence, distortion and omission that hegemonic knowledges require.⁷⁰

The implication of denying any ontological base, or even content, to truth-claims, is to effect the collapse of 'truth' into 'power'; and there is little meaning to political deliberations which cannot result in articulations of truth or value⁷¹.

My concern is that locating the constitution of 'truth' as in any objectivist sense 'beyond our ken', outside of embodied knowledge-production, establishes and underpins the foundationalisms which

- validate and justify notions of eternal torment and jihad,
- establish relations of subordinacy through institutionalized oppression, and

⁶⁸ Elizabeth Grosz (Ed.) Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1999
⁷⁰ ibid., p. 63
⁷¹ ibid., p. 67
• define infinite ‘differences’ as infinitely, eternally despicable and fear-inducing ‘otherness’.

Alcoff’s position suggests, though, that the issues of ‘morality’ and ‘politics’ which need be encountered in social theorizing and praxis will be the ‘ordinary kind of questions about truth and morality, where morality is simply the normative assessment of what follows from the truest account of a shared reality’. This allows me to tolerate undecidability and relieves my anxiety, inviting a constructive discourse.

Grosz presents difficult and illuminating ideas drawing variously on Deleuzian reworkings of Bergsonian metaphysics in relation to time and virtuality; on the development of Darwinian theory in relation to randomness and chance (remarking the relative, and related, randomness of natural selection and individual variation); and on a range of resources which suggest a conception of ‘time, duration…outside the constraints of mathematization and spatialization’. These underpin her description, after Bergson, of time as ‘intrication and elaboration … an elaboration that frees up, undetermines, interrupts, and deflects rather than causes.

Questions posed by her in the book’s introduction move productively on from my own (above). She asks:

What…would politics be like if it were not directed to the attainment of certain goals, the coming to fruition of ideals or plans, but rather required a certain abandonment of goals?…

\[72\] the Foucauldian suggestion central to postmodern theorizing, that objects are discursively constructed suggests ontological fluidity, ‘being’-in-process. Alcoff’s work articulates the implication of immanence rather than transcendence for the ‘truth-operation’ of such an ontology. This leads her to a position on representation which is of central importance in my work: that ‘representation is…a kind of momentary constellation in which active human practice is involved though not unilaterally determinant over the outcome’ (ibid., p. 72)


\[74\] ibid., p20

\[75\] ibid., p28
What would an ethics be like that, instead of seeking a mode of equivalence, a mode of reciprocity or calculation, sought to base itself on absolute generosity, absolute gift, expenditure without return, a pure propulsion into a future that does not rebound with echoes of an exchange dictated by the past?76

My attitude shifts … .

In adumbrating an ‘ethic of flourishing’, Chris J. Cuomo77 usefully draws on related notions of immanent ‘becomings’ in the description of beings or things as ‘morally considerable’ based on what is termed their ‘dynamic charm’. Described as its ‘diffuse internal ability to adapt to or resist change, and its unique causal and motivational patterns and character’78, dynamic charm avoids the Aristotelian notion of fixed, ‘core’ qualities, and denotes ‘clusters of real transmutable qualities’79. It also evokes, as Chris J. Cuomo remarks,

‘compelling medieval and contemporary associations’. Early meanings of ‘charm’ related to magic spells or incantations, or to things with magical powers…

In contemporary physics, ‘charm’ is one of the terms used to characterize quarks – the energetic ‘building blocks’ of protons and neutrons. Quarks exist in pairs, called flavors, and charm quarks are always coupled with strange quarks.

In common use, ‘charm’ refers to a quality that attracts and delights, or an amulet that inexplicably provides protection. Whatever it is that living things and systems have – what evokes our awe, respect, and what draws us into relationship, and what enables us to change and adapt – is magical, mysterious, and fundamental, regardless of our ability to explain things scientifically and poetically…Dynamic charm is a

76 ibid., p. 71
77 Cuomo, Chris J., Feminism and Ecological Communities, London, Routledge, 1998
78 ibid., p. 71
79 ibid., p. 71

212
capacity for response and change. It is most apparent in instances of alteration, adjustment, and resistance to environmental and internal fluctuations.  

**Becoming pilgrims**

Michael White (above) treated of recovery from the effects of abuse, and his mapping of ‘migrations of identity’ served several purposes for me:

- it reiterated the importance of linguistic connotations: the term ‘identity’ was problematic for me because of the ‘fixity’ of its link to unitary, mind-centred notions of a coherent subject, which in turn have connections to Freudian/Lacanian notions of, respectively, lack-defined female subjectivity and the denial of a speaking-position in the symbolic order for ‘woman’, who cannot possess the phallus. And that ‘truths’ are momentary products of socio-historical and linguistic contexts, in which ‘versions’ of the truth are in turn affected by subject-position, regimes of power/knowledge, discursive constructions, etc.;

- it evinced a discursive practice of healing, detailing the reconstitution of selfhoods from shards of being not deconstructed in analytical self-reflection, but shattered by emotionally significant others. I acknowledged the appropriateness of the language of ‘identity’ to this particular practice of knowledge-production;

- it confirmed my own process of recovery from the effects of abuse as a healthful journey whose tracks, although sensed as erratic and sometimes regressive, might be ‘mapped’ and overlapped with others to show the range of different trackings which might lead to reconstitution;

- it effectively metaphorised my process of recovery from epistemological abuses, and so contributes both ethically and aesthetically to my own process of ‘becoming an epistemologist’ and its intended practice;

---

80 ibid., p. 71
81 Linda Martin Alcoff’s Becoming an Epistemologist, in Grosz, E.,(Ed.) *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1999, pp55-75, offers a similarly useful explication of the ‘project of an epistemology of becoming’ whose aim would be ‘not to secure the truth, but to explore the dimensions of the multiple forms of knowing and practices by which truths are ascertained.’ (p. 75)
its ‘tone’, combined with Tariq Ali’s trenchant critique of organized religion, suggested to me a distinctly irreligious use of the term ‘pilgrim’ to overlay my adoption of ‘migrant’ as metaphoric of my process of becoming a knower...

The term ‘migrant’ denotes the leaving of one place (dispossession) to arrive at another (fixity).

But the ‘pilgrim’ may be simply a ‘traveller’, and their ‘pilgrimage’ their ‘life seen as a journey’(O.E.D.): a movement along the combinations and evolving boundaries of climacteric cycles, sudden disruptions, and connections with (living or non-living) difference.
part 6

connections and redirections
connections and redirections

personal equations

As I touch these letter-keys, a yellowing, tattered copy of Herbert Read’s *Poetry and Anarchism*¹ lies open on the computer desk at its publication details and prefatory note. First published in 1938, its writer’s note to this third impression is:

I have taken the opportunity offered by this third reprinting to make a few minor alterations demanded by the events of the past three years, and to introduce one or two verbal changes in the interest of clarity. Since writing these chapters I have published a pamphlet, *The Philosophy of Anarchism* (Freedom Press, 1940) and an auto/biographical essay, *Annals of Innocence and Experience* (Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1940), both of which give further expression and, I hope, force, to the arguments offered in the following pages.

*October, 1941*  
H.R.

Read exhibited the strikingly contradictory complexity of a decorated soldier² who became an anarchist pacifist philosopher, and later accepted a knighthood from Winston Churchill. The range of his published titles both entices me to read further, and suggests his lifelong attempts to balance his social-theoretical notions of reason and emotion, truth and beauty: ‘The Innocent Eye’, ‘In retreat’, ‘Beauty and the Beast’, ‘Education for Peace’, ‘The Parliament of Women’, ‘Art and Society’, and ‘Poetry and Anarchism’, are titles forming part of the extensive list.

² Read was awarded the Military Cross and Distinguished Service Order for his soldiering in France and Belgium during the 1914-1918 war.
His first 'tract' in the 'Poetry and Anarchism' collection is named 'No Programme'. In it he makes the following 'personal confession':

I have arrived at a personal equation: Yo sé quién soy – my ideas relate to myself. They are conditioned by my origin, my environment and my economic condition. My happiness consists in the fact that I have found the equation between the reality of my being and the direction of my thoughts.

The following year, his forty-seventh, saw the publication of his autobiographical text, *Annals of Innocence and Experience*. The title, in its allusion to Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, is a coincidental reminder for me of the power of language to create, and not simply to represent, worlds.

Claire Colebrook has noted Blake’s ‘The Sick Rose’ to demonstrate how ‘a world of corruption, fallenness and destruction is effected from quite specific ways of speaking’. Colebrook refers to the speech acts of ‘diagnosis’ (‘thou art sick’), of ‘judgement’ (‘does thy life destroy’), which combine with the ‘short, fast pronouncements’ of repressive morality, to produce a ‘style’ from which meanings emerge. Her ensuing explication of Deleuze’s poststructuralist positions on language leads to a recognition that

In order to think non-repressively or non-moralistically, we would have to imagine a far more complex style: not reducing thought to simple phrases, identities and judgements . . . . The minute we take any voice as exemplary we have elevated one particular mode of thinking and speaking as a general model. We have ceased to think.

Deleuze’s ideas are complex and difficult to follow, but his work demonstrates the need to rethink, to avoid fixity in ideas; speaking/writing alternatives into existence. It has

---

3 ibid., p. 15.
4 Ibid., p. 15.
7 ibid., p97.
8 ibid., p. 95.
also engendered/enhanced a range of valuable feminist approaches to embodied knowledge.\(^9\)

H.R. rethought knowledges: his was a germinal recognition of the value of psychoanalysis in approaches to art and literary criticism.\(^10\) And his implicit recognition of the centrality of the unconscious and emotion in both creative production and the 'discover(y of) truth'\(^11\) perhaps understands my use of his words here. They may function as part of a recipe: a device to facilitate coherent reflection on the 'becomings' of the collections which form this thesis.

But the rationalist realism that Read reckoned on\(^12\) was based on an alleged transcendent order of 'universal truth'\(^13\), the foundationalist framework for which, as Elgin observes, must 'determine necessity, possibility and impossibility'.\(^14\) When new informations and ways of being challenge the position of such an edifice, its credibility is terminally damaged: if it cannot account for objective becomings or processes, it is bound, as Elgin notes, to 'collapse'.\(^15\)

For H.R., purveyor of the implicit 'freedoms' of anarchist theory, 'there can only be one kind of truth because there is only the single reality of our experience'.\(^16\) We must, in H.R.'s terms:

\[
\text{surrender our minds to universal truth, but our imagination is free to dream, is as free as the dream; is the dream ... If we confuse these}
\]


\(^10\) See, for example, Read, H., *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism*, London, Faber and Faber, 1938


\(^12\) Read, op. cit., p. 96.

\(^13\) In presenting his notion of 'truth' as metaphysical, transcendent of lived experience or embodied, earthly 'becomings', Read observes that 'in the theory of anarchism, the organized Church is as much an anathema as the State'(p. 95). But whilst averring that 'natural freedom' is consistent with 'direct communion with universal truth'(p. 96) and that the rule of reason - to live according to natural laws - ... is also the release of the imagination'(p. 97), he describes it as 'very necessary that we should once again submit our lives to the rule of reason'(p. 95), given that both 'universalism', and the 'rule of reason ... which is the rule of God'(p. 97) are 'as Catholic philosophers insist, aspects of realism'(p. 95)


\(^15\) ibid., p. 58.

\(^16\) Read, op. cit., pp. 95-95.
two worlds of reality and imagination, then we breed not only national pride and religious fanaticism, but equally false philosophies and the dead art of the academies\textsuperscript{17}

Perhaps H.R.'s 'ideas (which) relate to (him)self' do not dispense with, but merely redefine a disembodied dualism, another disassociated self. Art, literature and the creation of beauty, with their implicit connection to emotions and to imagination's 'unreality', the stuff of embodiment, must be distanced from the 'realism' of the 'universal truth' which transcends the horrors of the fleshly and embodied.

**speaking to the father**

If only due to nostalgia for what I had thought to be his neat reversal (above) of Cartesian dualism, I am comfortable to converse imaginarily in the company of H.R. He can sit for me in mimesis of the father with whom I may have enjoyed a bottle of good local (formerly Coonawarra, New South Wales, now Margaret River, Western Australia) red, a father figure whose knowledges and intent I might hold mirrors to, might question, interpret and rework, without fear. Sir Herbert is a benevolent cypher, and offers another, much safer voice, although still with the 'name of the father' I continue to address. During this thesis, I retained a desire to constitute *linguas franca*, to make repeated attempts at translations into and from 'patriarchal interests'. As you saw in Part 1's 'Letter to Laurel Richardson', this practice often had the effect of alienating my knowledge-practice. Why did I continue to make these references?

Patriarchal interests inhere in received masculinist languages and knowledges, and this renders them ubiquitous, but my continued reference to them was clearly not an uncritical acceptance, nor a search for legitimacy in their terms. It did not evince a conscious desire to have a 'foot in both worlds', the critical feminist and the traditional academic. Neither was it simply concomitant with the post-structuralist theoretical approach I adopted, which was often 'involved not simply in the rejection of the tradition of philosophical and political discourse, but more importantly in the

\textsuperscript{17} Read., op. cit.,
articulation and affirmation of alternative lineages that arise from within the tradition itself. There was more to it.

I have during the process of this thesis acknowledged that 'more' to be a deeply held personal fear of 'the Father', who demanded unquestioning obedience, attention and devotion. It was learned through my own lived experience as a child, and was contemporaneously inculcated as a religious 'fear of god the Father'; it was a fear of the Judeo-Christian Yahweh (Jehovah), supposedly based on 'love and respect' for Him as the almighty perpetrator of the impending global destruction, in which only 'men of faith' would survive. The text is shot through with evidences of this referentiality:

In Part 1 (It has come to this ... ), with the introductory benefit of hindsight, I retraced my initial experience of social-theoretical abuse. It was an experience of betrayal by the unmarked, neutral knowledges which offered to open up my world, but which instead cast 'woman' as 'other' to valid knowledge in an exclusive fait accompli. Calling on dissociative traits I was then unaware of, I initially decided that I was 'not yet a woman', then I chose as an undergraduate to associate and attempt to theorize with men, averring that I had little in common with women, and was better able to communicate with men.

Part 2 (exploring visual impairment) went on to trace, in part, the inscriptions of more than one masculinist philosopher's practice of 'absenting' fleshly embodiment from lived experience and its theorizing. Here, it is Elizabeth who exhibits a similar referentiality, in attending at some length to a masculinist account of the 'corporeal hermeneutics' of pain which did not serve to theorize her lived experience. Only after bewilderment and self-questioning ('What's wrong with my mind that I'm not processing things properly?'; 'Why am I resisting work?') did she conclude that:

'Perhaps ... the unsexed body in Leder's analysis is often male and the 'we' from which he generalizes is not always inclusive of women's experiences. Significantly, the cover of The Absent Body shows a disembodied male body with no sign of a female body.'

18 in Hardt, M., Gille Deleuze, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. ix.
The format of poetry served best to re-present the distress of those inscriptions on her embodiminded experience of visual impairment; that is, on her own body’s experience, and on her ability to theorize it.

Part 3 (toxic politicking: a Hestian dilemma) attended to a theoretical conjunction with Cameron Way over Chronic Fatigue Syndrome or M.E.(Myalgic Encephalomyelitis), exploring the connections between a disembodied scientism and our respective experiences, in our constructed ‘home’ environments, of environmental abuse. These environmental abuses, in both our cases, were indicated to have acted as vectors, partial triggers of M.E., which I note Seidler\(^\text{19}\) to recognize as having been perceived as ‘just’ psychological by a medical profession which had no conceptual framework for its embodiminded ‘real(ity)\(^\text{20}\).

Concordant with Seidler’s ensuing note of the evident ‘need to question distinctions between the physical and the non-physical’\(^\text{21}\), Part 4 (perverse production) discovered engagements with and responses to traditionally masculinist academic and scientistic controls and punishments of both physical (Elizabeth as ‘fitness figure’) and non-physical (Mururoa atoll) bodies for responsive performances in excess of imposed definitive boundaries. Coincidentally, childhood instances of abuse and betrayal are observed to inscribe their effects on social-theoretical praxes. Descriptions and definitions of perverse body performances, both human and non-human, were explored in a move away from the patriarchal ontological legacies\(^\text{22}\) of Newtonian physics.

Part 5 (a climacteric) presents a revisiting of psychological, physical, and sexual abuses. It explores the ‘fury and despair’ implicit in the current global ‘clash of fundamentalisms’ alongside the tracing of violent abuse as a ‘virus’, and eventual confrontation of the Father and the mother instigated by an adult sexual assault. Anger


\(^{20}\) ibid., p. 25.

\(^{21}\) ibid., p. 25.

\(^{22}\) In ‘A short scheme of the true religion’, Newton counterposed atheism to godliness with a note on Vision: ‘Did blind chance know that there was light and what was its refraction and fit the eys(sic.) of all creatures after the most curious manner to make use of it? These and such like considerations always have and ever will prevail with man kind to believe that there/he is a being who made all things and has all power and who is therefore to be feared.’ Author: Isaac Newton; Source: King’s College Cambridge, Keynes MS ref. 7/SL251/R18; Hand: Holograph, partly in a different and fainter ink; Undated: 4 sides on 2 leaves. Transcribed by Stephen Snobelen, June 1998, checked against original by John Young, 14 January, 2002. Accessed on 4 November, 2002 from: http://www.newtonproject.ic.ac.uk/web/keynes/keynes007.xml
and pain are articulated. There is also a recognition of the need to understand a genetically-based condition on the autism spectrum posited to exhibit ‘an extreme form of the male brain’. Engagement with this manner of embodimindment both engendered my confrontational reference to the Father, and resulted in the birth of a loved male child who must be taken account of and referred to.

therapies and recipes for theorizing

The praxis of my work here behoves me to attend to the ubiquity of a symbolic ‘father’ presence alongside my writing: see him sitting in the chair, requiring some resolution. Parts 1 to 5 are styled as collections, through which multiple sets of connections are signalled. Substantively, they are life-story tellings, observations, clippings and micronarratives theorizing lived experience and embodied processes of meaning-making. As ‘strings of tinglings’, they uncover recurrent viral evidences of violent abuse of embodimindments, perpetrated from positions of relative power upon less powerful bodies.

There are also indications of a range of ways in which the representation of those abuses as embodied knowledge might effect reflection and healing (cf. Elizabeth’s process of encounter with and production of embodied knowledge of visual loss in Part 2, exploring visual impairment); attitudinal change (cf. ‘ethical’ change effected through ‘toxic politicking’, Part 3); and the articulation and resolution of responses to silencing and abuse of human and non-human embodiment (cf. the women’s writing groups in South London/Australian Capital Territory mentioned in Part 5, a climacteric; the Mururoa atoll texts in Part 3, toxic politicking).

These glancing psychotherapeutic observations do not demonstrate a ‘rampant self-reflexivity’\(^{23}\). Rather, this work’s collected presentation of approaches to social theory suggests the use of ‘selves’ as vehicles. The ‘selves’ are ‘third terms’ in a combination: human bodies curving surfboards across and through waves/surf, or electrical pulses

\(^{23}\) Probyn 93 p. 170-171 values the ‘radical defamiliariz(ing) of experience’ effected by ‘articulating our selves at the very limit of our selves’, counterposing that process to ‘some of the more rampant self-reflexivity in ethnography’.
moving marker-lights through 'strings of tinglings'. They signal the usefulness and validity of attending to:

- The recognized ubiquity of psychological, physical and sexual child abuse, and so, the likely evidence of the effects of dissociation and other adaptive responses on the constitution of a range of disembodied theories of the social; and

- The value for 'theorists of lived experience of the social', in a context of changing, 'becoming' modalities and understandings of physical bodies, environmental bodies, and virtual realities, of adopting an attitude of 'awareness' (cf. Part 3, toxic politicking), akin to Cuomo's 'ethic of flourishing' (cf. Part 5, a climacteric). Such an attitude requires a moral praxis grounded in a politics of embodiment which 'recognizes that values, notions of reality and social practices are related'.

Embodied knowledge and self-awareness is implicit in such a position, and requires, as Seidler remarks, '... the courage to listen to our bodies and to attend to the contradictions in our emotional lives, rather than feel that we can leave them behind because our emotions somehow do not fit with how they are rationally supposed to be.'

Such rethinkings of bases for praxis require emotional honesty in reworking ways of knowing which have inscribed our bodies with minded 'disembodiment', devaluing our embodimindment as a source of valid knowledge. We do not, on deciding to learn to work and think in ways which evince embodied knowing, and are productive of embodied knowledge, start with a tabula rasa of pure, embodied, knowing selfhood available. Our prior orientations, whatever their origins and formation, very often present blocks to direct access to either embodiminded knowledge, or the means for its evocative, engaging expression. Indeed, as Cuomo writes during a consideration of ethical foundations for valuing women's lives and experience:

'Perhaps the best we can do in communicating the justification for a premise of basic moral value is try to evoke a feeling- to draw

attention to narratives, poems, experiences and observations of what we take to be valuable.  

You will have recognized my complete sympathy with this position.

It is interesting to note Cuomo’s footnote to this statement: ‘Thank you to Sheila Jasanoff for reminding me of this point.’ The striking suggestion of a distinctly embodied representational praxis as ‘perhaps the best we can do’ in order (in this case) to position women’s lives as valid and valuable concerns for ethical theory, had apparently been forgotten by the writer.

In this connection, remember Jennifer Freyd’s story of her recovered memory of childhood abuse, first mentioned in Part 4 (perverse production). Her academic work on Betrayal Trauma: The Logic of Forgetting Childhood Abuse, suggests a range of ‘factors related to betrayal by a close caregiver (which are) predicted to increase the likelihood of forgetting childhood abuse’. They include:

‘explicit threats and demands for silence from the abuser’; ... ‘the availability of alternative realities (abuse in the middle of the night, with ‘normal’ family life during the day)’; ... ‘isolation during abuse (lack of social validation for the experience, which would allow for cognitively consistent internal denial)’; ... and ‘the absence of any shared, explicit discussion of the abusive events’.

If we choose to recognize the tradition of disembodied knowledge-practices to have constituted a form of abuse, the factors (above) which increase the likelihood of

27 Cuomo, op. cit., p. 47.
28 ibid., p. 47.
29 Jennifer Freyd is currently a Visiting Professor of Psychology at the the University of Oregon.
31 ibid., p. 137.
knowers ‘blocking information’ regarding embodied knowledge and its re-presentation are worth reflecting upon.

Practical constituents of that knowledge-production, including a range of embodied writing-practices\(^2\), are valuable modes for its expression. Hélène Cixous’ work has explored the use of expressive language, a language of ‘desire’ which moved in the genealogy of her own writing from works of the most intense personal and psychological languages of the body (in Angst and Illa) to writing for the Theatre du Soleil, for actors whose dramaturgy draws on Eastern theatre, mime dance and make-up techniques. Her plays are epic productions\(^3\) exploring the nature of moments of historical crisis and its articulation with change: their contemporary relevance in a time of ‘fury and despair’ (cf. Part 5, a climacteric) is noteworthy. Morag Shiach\(^4\) writes that Cixous’ exploration of the ‘bodily roots of meaning’ is now focussed on and facilitated by “theatre as a space where the poetic can still survive within the forms of a public and accessible ritual”\(^5\). The importance of the linkage of the political with poetry and performance has been re-emphasized by the range and intensity of response to performances of Part 2 (exploring visual impairment), and its ‘ripple’ effect of theoretical connections.

Embodied reconceptions of the process of theoretical production are valuable, too: Lisa M. Heldke, whose writings and editions contribute variously in Parts 1-4, avoids the dichotomy of foundationalism/relativism by conceiving of pieces of philosophical theory created on the recipe plan as ‘if/then’ statements:

If you find this project appealing, then you might find this approach useful. ‘Do you like asparagus? It’s really inexpensive right now. You might like to try the recipe I have for asparagus soup.’

---


\(^3\) L’Histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk, roi du Cambodge The terrible but unfinished Story of Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia), and L’Indiande ou L’Inde du leurs reves (The Indiad, or the India of their dreams), performed in Paris by Theatre du Soleil in 1985 and 1987 respectively.


\(^5\) ibid., p. 106
Her approach has the added benefit of expressing respect and concern in the process of imparting/sharing knowledge-practice, avoiding the agonistic tradition of philosophical discourse.

Such processes may not be in our repertoire for theorizing or for academic production: they are often conceived to be located in the realms of ‘self’-indulgence: as creative production, therapeutic narrative\(^{36}\), ‘fiction’ as opposed to ‘fact’, invalidated by their use of ‘unreliable’ memory, emotion, imagination, metaphor, and figurative or even pre-symbolic order languages. Yvonne Anderson\(^{37}\) notes the value for her of poeticising, ‘giving shape and form’\(^{38}\), to her relationship with an abusive father; she stressed the ‘powerful realization … that (she) was able to gain therapeutic benefit from the act of writing’, but offered the conference paper which presented the poem with ‘some trepidation, as (she) felt both exposed and at risk of self-indulgence’\(^{39}\).

Anderson is a university educator in a research and graduate school of education. The purpose effected by her paper’s presentation as a ‘self story’ in which she did not ‘feel compelled to provide an ‘academic’ argument as rationale’, was ‘to both acknowledge and be liberated from the past, to enable growth and vision’. Anderson ‘spoke to the father’ after his death; Freyd, perhaps, remains ‘flabbergasted’. You may remember Freyd’s observation from Part 4 (\textit{perverse production})\(^{40}\):

\begin{quote}
At times I am flabbergasted that my memory is considered ‘false’ and my alcoholic father’s memory is considered rational and sane . . . . Is it because I remember impossible or crazy things? No, I remember incest in my father’s house. Is my father more credible than me because I have a history of lying or not having a firm grasp on reality? No, I am a scientist whose empirical work has been replicated around this country and Europe . . . . Am I not believed because I am a woman? A ‘female in
\end{quote}

\(^{37}\) Anderson, op. cit.
\(^{38}\) ibid., p. 66.
\(^{39}\) ibid., p. 63.
her thirties’ as some of the newspaper articles seem to emphasize? Am I therefore, a hopeless hysteric by definition?

Is it because the issue is father-daughter incest and as my father’s property, I should be silent?41

I believe the connections made in this thesis evoke a firm recognition that the feminist projects of rethinking the inherent ontologies, and of dislodging the traditional power-relations of patriarchy, its genealogies and knowledges, remain central political concerns for any embodied social knowledge praxis.

**thinking new ontological territories**

Both animal and human groups form ‘territories’42, and patriarchal power-relations have generally come to underpin, and in turn be reinforced by these **territorialisations**. Such territorialisations practically **effect** not only tribal-through-national spatial differentiations globally43, but are also constitutive of, rather than being ‘naturally’ constituted by, sets of human mother-child-father relations44. The mother-child-father relationship has an exclusive centrality in patriarchal genealogies, which have functioned with an imperative of fixing and defining ontologies and valid knowledge-practices as transcendent of embodied intervention, modalities and becomings.

Biotechnological developments have been contemporary with a post-structuralist recognition that the ‘family’ is produced through territorialisation’s own reductive ‘codeing’ of infinite genetic differences, rather than existing as a ‘natural’, definitive given. One likely function of such developments will be to open up the ‘nuclear’ family relationship to the illumination and scrutiny of radical re-thinkings, approaches which may usefully address the connotations of genealogies’ self-perpetuating and self-protective practices.

43 ibid., p. 36.
44 ibid., p. 37.
Social theory, in a general context of challenge to the bases (if not the substantive notions) of Enlightenment values and to modernity’s register of certainties, is increasingly recognizable as a ‘politics’, engaging overtly as it now must with the ontologies which underpin all situated and specific knowledges.

A central concern of Parts 1 to 5 necessarily became an exploration of the processes of epistemologies becoming ontologies. Contemporary with Deleuzian re-thinkings which prefigured current developments in the biological sciences, was the recognition, remarked by Liz Stanley⁴⁵, that:

The feminist … vantage-point has been one which seals together epistemology and ontology by situating the feminist knower within, at the heart, at the hub of the things that happen and which, analytically because experientially, matter. …

Stanley suggests that insistence on the locatedness and specificity of knowledge, that it is grounded and so has limits⁴⁶, is ‘the most revolutionary idea associated with feminism’⁴⁷, and I find it so.

In her view, this recognition demands reflexive interrogations of the academic ‘gaze’, as well as critical attention to ‘the processes of knowledge-production and the claims-making attendant on this product, and the related bartering and exchanging that occurs in the academic/intellectual market-place’⁴⁸. Marking herself as ‘within the academy, but not entirely of it’⁴⁹, Stanley recognizes these processes to be ‘political through and through’. And she would no doubt concede that the complexity of traditional knowledge/power networks, as they function both between the modern state and the ‘human sciences’⁵⁰, and so within the academy, often renders the discursive formation

⁴⁵ Stanley, L., Knowing Feminisms, ……..p. 15
⁴⁶ ibid., p. 15.
⁴⁷ ibid., p. 15.
⁴⁸ ibid., p. 15.
⁴⁹ ibid., p. 17.
⁵₀ Flax, J., Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and Postmodernism within the Contemporary West

228
of their practices, as Jane Flax notes, difficult to locate, grasp or effectively represent. In this context,

power operates as innumerable instances of constraints; its effects can be seen whenever a population appears to be homogenous, orderly, unconflicted and unified. Such order always depends upon the subjection of localized, fragmented knowledges …52

Any theory of knowledge connotes a prior ontological, and by extension, political and ethical commitments. In keeping with the project of ‘situating the feminist knower,’ Stanley prefers to locate the trinity of ‘methodic, analytic and ethic’ as the indivisible constituents of knowledge54. And as Grosz acknowledges: ‘ … we must at some political level understand that knowledges, epistemologies are a kind of theft from ontology, from the real.’55

My ‘method’ is complicit with and informed by the synchronicity of a ‘cluster of concepts’ which Grosz identifies in the writings of Darwin, Nietzsche, Bergson, and Deleuze: those concepts are ‘chance, randomness, openendedness, and becoming’56. She recognizes that:

Among them they make clear that something links the life of planets and universes to the life of organisms and their histories, and to the ‘life’ of non-organic or chemical things, and this something is the endless unfolding of the new, restless transformation, upheaval, redirection and digression … .

I have attempted a praxis which mirrors this open-endedness, where answers and conclusions are not offered. Nicholson has noted the spectre of relativism to be,

51 Flax, op. cit.
52 ibid., p. 41.
54 ibid., p. 15.
56 Grosz, E., from transcript of Interview with the Found Object editorial collective, following a talk at the University of New York Graduate School and University Centre, Buffalo, accessed on 9th September, 2002, at website http://web.gc.cuny.edu/cscitw/found object/text/grosz.htm, p. 10 (of 11).
precisely, the ‘situation which results when communication breaks down’; the presentation of connections, suggestions, reflections, ideas, counter- and juxtapositions effectively counters this spectre, and rather, is constitutive of an infinite range of possible conversations. Each collection has necessarily been the product of a desire for meaning-making, and:

Desire does not take for itself a particular object whose attainment it requires; rather, it aims at nothing above its own proliferation or self-expansion. It assembles things out of singularities and breaks things, assemblages, down into their singularities.

Chance and the randomness of intuition have inflected my selection of certain texts and the manner of their juxtaposition, just as chance has effected the random connections of a durée which influenced those selections. I have attempted to make the combinations both evocative and compelling; writing carefully, attempting to make languages for audiences, and sometimes disclosing a self in extremis, at its limits, where connections may be made (cf. Part 3, toxic politicking), as per Probyn’s reading of the politics of Foucault’s ‘care of the self’:

Taking care of the self finds its social and critical meaning in the fact that ‘being occupied with the self and political activities are linked’. Stretched to the breaking point where individuality ceases, the self designates that point of possible contact when it is neither a question ‘who am I?’, nor a separate one of ‘who is she’? Pushed to the end of their distinct logics, these questions re-find themselves together at another point, at the point where we are both at the limits of our selves.

The collected ‘clippings’ which form the major part of this thesis do not present unquestioned origins or tidy endings – of persons, ideas, or even of the representative practices which effect the manner of its truth claims. If I stand back from the process of

this *bricolage*\(^{59}\), (these ‘combinations of miscellaneous trinkets’, often of themselves ‘of little worth’[O.E.D.]) , it is not to gaze. It is to *glance* (birdlike, askance), or to interpose a lens, or make a periscopic angle, but always to make the connections at speed, at the speed of the glance collecting an impression.

The series does not lend itself to a specular analysis of the placements or juxtapositions of its contents, although returns to the text have been proven to offer new and other connections between and outside them, at every chosen reenactment of the loop of the glance. The operation of the glance, in the moment of its duration, effects both a replacement of the glancer within the whole of reality, and a detotalizing of whatever it searches out in its scanning. As Casey observes, the glance ‘punctures the durational subject from within, just as it perforates the enduring world from without’\(^ {60}\)

I have attempted to constitute a praxis of graphing autos, one in which the embodied ‘self’ is a constituent part of a textual flow. In the process, I have recognized that, particularly in terms of the ‘ethical’ element of Stanley’s ‘trinity’ mentioned above, an environmental ‘ethic of flourishing’ may impel graphings of and for other than living embodied autos, stretching a ‘graphing’ praxis to encompass, to scribe for, both lived and non-lived embodiments. Bio-graphy of non-living ex-humans has long been widely practised, and the politics of written production are an essential element of rethinking embodied knowledge-making, as it relates to living and non-living environmental bodies.

In *The Uses of Autobiography*, Julia Swindells notes that

> however much autobiography is supposed to be about personal life, the ‘the personal’ nearly always stands for something additional to itself .... The


\(^{60}\) Casey, E., ‘The time of the glance’, in Grosz, E. (Ed.), *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1999, p. 95. Casey suggests the glance to instantiate the *ritournelle* movement ‘that despite its brevity or otherwise modest aspects is essential to the overall circuit of which it is a part’, making reference to Deleuze and Guattari’s example of a territory that is indispensable to the larger circuit of the Earth, and to Nietzsche’s small recurrence that proves decisive to eternal recurrence (p. 94).
personal account provides both the record of the life, and also the means by which that life can be held to account\textsuperscript{61}.

My auto/biographical praxis has called for the kneading and stretching of embodied-life-writing into a style of textual representation which suggests infinite combinations of those ‘additions’ with ‘personal’. That done, Swindells’ observation, at a glance, can signal my work as a ground upon which both context and ‘being’ may usefully, variously, and repeatedly, be thrown into relief.

References

Books


Young, I. M. *Throwing Like a Girl and other essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory,* Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990

Journal articles


Electronic media

www.abc.net.au/quantum/info/mururoa.htm

www.american.edu/TED/ice/muruoah.htm

http://csf.colorado.edu/dfax/npn/npn32.htm#T-0020

http://web.gc.cuny.edu/csctw/found_object/text/grosz.htm

www.justgathertogether.com/aspires.html

http://www.gla.ac.uk/projects/originoflife/

ww2.dgsys.com/~dlewis/nwlangto.html
Appendix 1:

Conversation between Cameron Way and Mary Bastable 15.12.1994, office in the ‘Fireman’s Cottage’, University of New England, Armidale, N.S.W.

M. B. Do you get any specific reactions now to chemicals in food, or...

C. W. Well I do to amines in alcohol - if I have one beer, I’m gone. And that’s not the alcohol, its the amines.

Generally people with C.F.S. become very sensitive to alcohol, don’t they?

Yeah; I never seemed to be sensitive to alcohol throughout C.F.S. Those people who are sensitive to alcohol are really sensitive to alcohol, and other people - like, there’s no consistency...

I just found that I didn’t want to drink; I didn’t want the effect that I knew alcohol had.

Because of already being changed involuntarily...

Yes, because you’re so sure that something’s gone crazy with your body, your chemical makeup, you don’t want to change it yourself at all

Yeah; I find having had a nice confident, competent state of functioning made so uncertain and sort of removed without your control, it becomes a real luxury to be able to function clearly for even an hour or two in a manner that is... with a sense of complete normality and competence. That’s such a luxury, I lose interest in drinking...What was the worst thing for you in that year, in terms of your experience of having trouble functioning - the actual physical effects?

I think it was the fear that I was going crazy - forgetting things, being angry and irritable with the children in a way that I knew wasn’t me: alright, I’m not perfect but, it was so much more difficult to control my irritability, anger - everything - volatile...

And that’s quite frightening in itself...

Mmm - I knew there was something odd with me - these were emotional, psychic things. The physical things scared me, because there were so many of them. But I didn’t connect the physical symptoms, so...I just thought I was falling apart. And going crazy. It wasn’t just physical, I knew it wasn’t just physical and I couldn’t make any
connection. The GP thought that it was obvious that I was depressed and that therefore these other physical things would happen; but I couldn’t make that connection. I didn’t make that connection.

When that was presented to you it just didn’t feel right?

No. Because then I would have wanted a reason why I was so depressed. And I couldn’t find one - there was not good reason. Not to be so depressed that I would make my body physically ill. So I suppose it was the fear of the psychological effects that I didn’t understand. That was the worst thing.

Did you have feelings of fear of the fact that no-one was recognizing, or would believe your perception of reality - that they’d say you were just crazy, and you’d just be left...?

Well, at the same time as I’d been going to the doctor’s time after time - thinking that if I kept going and going with all these symptoms they’d see there was something radically wrong - at the same time I was going through that, I was beginning to find out about chemical toxicity and connect it to C.F.S. Then I began to make the connection, when I was really scared and sick...Then I was terrified because I thought this isn’t just me that I’ve done this too, it explained why the children had been so sick. And then we had to get out of the house, and moved four times in six months, with the kids. And moving house is a very stressful thing anyway...and so the thing snowballed...

But at least there was a face to the monster...

MM...a horrible face.

And one that could be named.

Mmm...it was a self-diagnosis in the end...

With C.F.S. I find that - well, it’s changing now, but in the past - self-diagnosis has been really reliable in people with chronic fatigue syndrome. You know, previous to two years ago, say during the eighties, people who did get C.F.S. were labeled with depression or whatever; neurosis, wanting to avoid life...

Malingering...

Malingering, yes. And, just like me, even though you might take those explanations on because they come from people that... you have no comprehension that there’s any reason for them to disregard you, and you’re intelligent and aware enough to think you may be missing something that they can see and you can’t - you have that objectivity if
you like, that capacity to question yourself... I'm losing the thread here...but when they've read an article about chronic fatigue syndrome, or you speak to someone with C.F.S. and they've been frustrated sort of, trying to put some words to articulate the kind of dysfunction they experience, because half the time they're still not sure that it's really real, because it's not like a defined slab they can say. It might be something like, you know, 'I don't understand, I used to be really good at work, and now, well no-one notices that I don’t function, but I don’t feel I can do anything. Like, I'm still there and no-one seems to notice it, but I sometimes try and share the difficulties I'm having and they say they have the same thing. Yet somehow, I just feel that whatever’s happening to me is really (...) like sometimes I think I should just quit my job, because I can’t do it - you know?’ And when I've put language to that experience, like ‘do you find ..’ ...er, things like, oh I haven’t got the words now but, and I've sort of put it into a few succinct words - and find that that’s a really distinct C.F.S. experience. The look on their face is amazing. They have this ‘how did you know that? I've been trying to find the words to describe it and you’ve just put them to me’, and it’s so clear that you’ve just hit a really clear truth for them in terms of a very distinct experience. And often there’s tears, you know... and when you go on to your other experiences, you can see them saying ‘no , no that hasn’t happened to me’ - they're not indiscriminate at all - quite the opposite. 

Is it difficult to talk about what’s wrong because of the difference in talking ‘soul’ language and ‘body’ language? Talking about what’s wrong with your mind and what’s wrong with your body?

Well, if you try and describe it...well, there's a couple of reasons: one, the nature of the disease process which this C.F.S. presents is simply quite distinctly different to a normal bacterial, viral or parasitic disease. You're looking at a global kind of dysfunction - like, a multitude of dysfunctions in so many different areas, and they all fluctuate and all vary, and any one of those may not be such a significant problem - it's the integrated effect of all these uncertainties that really create havoc in a person’s life. But also the specific dysfunction - it's outside common experience. You know, usually when one person relays an experience to another, it's understood by another person not because the English language words themselves convey accurately the whole painting of the experience, but with a few words its like a key and the other person goes ‘right, and they draw out of their own common experience something similar. The communication occurs more as a kind of comparison, and the words are just a key for recognition. That adds a little bit sometimes or... and that’s how language works in my experience as description. So when you try and describe C.F.S., there is no identifiable kind of experience, because
you’re looking at a different quality of dysfunction. So that’s one of the things that I reckon makes it really difficult.

Two, when you try and describe, like if you say ‘I feel tired a lot’, like people relate that to their common experiences. I’ve tested that with people who are quite hostile about C.F.S. I’ve sometimes said, I’ve directly handled it by making the distinction in conversation, saying - ‘you know how this is called chronic fatigue syndrome?’ And they all say ‘yeah, yeah, we all feel tired sometimes.’- and I say ‘well, actually it’s not about just being tired. The quality of being tired is totally different to normal tiredness. It is fatigue; it’s like exhaustion. And I’ve used the example, you know of the long distance runner, and they go through their first and second wind and you come to the point where no matter how much you resolve yourself (...) you just don’t care any more. Your will just dissolves, because you’re right up against that wall, and you just...

*You’ve got nothing left...*

Nothing left... ‘and that’s the kind of fatigue these people are dealing with’. Then when you add for example, something like, ‘and do you realize there’s a whole lot of other physical symptoms, like swollen glands and memory loss and aching muscles and so forth’, they say ‘you’re kidding - you mean it’s not just a label for people who are always feeling tired?’ and you say ‘no - it’s a real disease process, there are lots of other things happening’. And they’re quite amazed. And you can see them, just with the opportunity of more accurate information, immediately reviewing the kind of prejudicial, antagonistic attitude they’ve had. So that’s where language...that highlights the fact that with C.F.S., people just weren’t paying any attention to what people were saying to them.

*And what you’re saying with your two points is that you have to be more general than normal in trying to describe it and more specific - you’ve got to be both...*

both, yeah. And when you’ve got the chronic dysfunction of C.F.S. you’re hopelessly incapable of doing that. That’s the trap, because when you’ve got it...

*You’ve lost your words anyway*

Yeah, and you can’t integrate and think and construct articulate kind of conversation and argument. And you’re not able to...(phone rang)...Hmm - I get quite fired up about it...And something else comes to mind which I find really frustrating, and this is not particularly to do with C.F.S., is that I can articulate quite well, but I can’t put it in writing - that’s why I’ve got this tape. Like often when I’m trying to find an avenue of advocacy for myself with a legal group or whatever, you get five minutes into
to the conversation and you’re expected to somehow relate the significance of the entire tapestry. So you talk rapidly, and they see you as overly intense, but you’re trying to squeeze it in because they’ve said, ‘oh, I’ve only got five minutes...’ and then, of course, you can’t think strategically in your head and it all comes out as this interactive kind of thing. And you get side-tracked into other issues, and react to things, and they get a really garbled kind of thing, and they just see you as...well maybe you’re distressed, but really you’re a bit of an emotional nutter, one of those people to avoid, a drain on resources..

*I think that’s a problem with knowledge construction; we assume that ‘the rational’ is the best way of imparting knowledge ... and ... necessarily do violence to the emotional ... but the rational and the emotional both are part of an experience and a knowledge. We try and force ourselves into the rational to the exclusion of the emotional as if the emotional isn’t essential to what we are trying to speak and part of our experience ...*

Yeah, that’s Mauss’ application of the (xx) process and scientific thinking ... Like, I’m looking at it in a much more narrow context than you are, I know that, but yeah, it’s one of the things that I find so frustrating...

*And the discourse of ‘science’ is such a powerful one...*

It’s become powerful though, too, because it was very successful in its original application -

*And for some purposes...*

And for some it’s excellent, and in that particular context, what made it so powerful was that there was a simple process by which the individual with all their emotions and attachments to their ideas, while spending some time really exploring them and being in that reality, can then spend time independently testing them and exposing their ego and their expectations to a way that was external to themselves, some kind of refinement test...

Just like, you know, I have a wonderful theory about organochlorins being the source of C.F.S., and all the evidence fitted together so well, yet with Tasmania [inquiry into the incidence of C.F.S. in residents of Tasmania indicated....] it’s clearly not the only cause, if it is a factor, you know. And so through the process of doing that questionnaire, I was able to, even though I felt so confident in what I felt, I was able to expose it and have some kind of review of it. But that only works with building a particular quality of knowledge, which gives us particular resources within our
collective community; that is, science and technology and so forth - it's our understanding of the physical world. But what's gone really wrong in my opinion, from a science point of view is that other - like psychology, for example - it's tried to sort of cheat and gain its own success, and they believe that if they reproduce the same kind of discipline, they'll have the same success as physics. And collective systems like human beings with spirituality and so forth just aren't the same.

And it becomes a very violent process...

I agree. Mind you, I find universities to be violating experiences, full stop. But I'd like to write a paper on the psychiatric status of the medical profession .. I've got some serious comment to make, but it's also a play on the original title of 'the psychiatric status of (patients with) chronic fatigue syndrome', a famous paper by Australian researchers\(^1\), that led a number of leading authorities to take a second look at chronic fatigue syndrome and begin to think that it wasn't just a (xx) craze, but a pathological process in people, a physiological process. But I said that because of what you described, 'hey, my bowels aren't working properly', or passing wind all the time, or when I go to the loo, I leak when I'm finished...and they're minor complaints. In isolation they're not much of a concern, but your mind is aware that there's something disturbingly wrong, even though it's not a life-threatening effect. It's like you said, you're 'falling apart' and there is that sense of 'there's something happening to me, I can tell' - you know. And like, 'I'm scared. What is going on?' you know.

You lose touch with your body; you know that your body is no longer the set of known responses that you've grown accustomed to. It isn't that any more.

Hmm. There might be a difference here, in our emotional response to the loss of functioning. I found myself too emotionally dulled to feel too much anxiety or fear of what was happening to me. I was just too stuffed to have those kind of emotions. There were a few times when I was really alarmed, and I found myself particularly alarmed because there I was in this strange kind of living nightmare where in some amazing way, which no-one I knew, no-one would believe, I was incapacitated but at the same time I could always look and act normal. You couldn't do it in a science-fiction movie, you know - it was bizarre. And one, it led me to question my own sanity to some extent. But after a while when I had managed to find at least some people who were experiencing the same kind of - being a science person, as soon as I found some independent confirmation - I was able to gain the confidence that even though what was

happening was really bizarre, that my experience was probably the valid thing, not that I was going crazy. Because I could independently confirm that other people were having the same kind of reaction to what they were going through, the same kind of questioning and doubt. But there were a few moments when I felt really scared, aware of my completely vulnerable position, and that my whole life could be just completely obliterated, that I could just end up being a permanent ‘dole’ person, or it could even mean living off the gutter, and I’m quite sure most of my friends and family would just have said ‘well, he was always that kind of vagrant, spiritual kind of person - it’s what his life calling is, what he has chosen, and that’s his responsibility, and it’s not for us to interfere’. I really felt that people would just like, close the net and no matter how much you articulated, they would not have realized that you were going down the tube because there was something really seriously wrong. That fear of falling through some kind of basic fabric of reality which all the other members of your community are living in, that you’ve always taken as the reality, and all of a sudden it’s some kind of sub-set of what can actually happen. You can have like a magical thing where you just slip between the cracks of reality, you know? Things that are just as real, but no-one else can see. And it was really happening.

And it’s very difficult when you’re in the worst of it to conceive of ever being ‘yourself’ again, or what you knew was yourself. Eventually it becomes a long enough experience to realize that wherever you come out, at the other end, you will be radically changed by this experience.

Well, yeah, I kept on relying on that. And after five years I wasn’t any better, people weren’t recognizing it any more, and I was isolated, being increasingly abandoned, partly because I had pulled away from people, but also because even if I stayed, they couldn’t (...). And so that convinced me that things weren’t somehow eventually getting better, I wasn’t eventually weathering, getting through it. And in the end, somehow, in the very weakened state I was in, I really decided that I was ill, and what was happening to me, what I was perceiving as happening to me was actually true, it was reality. Even if I didn’t understand what was happening to me, even if no-one else could understand, I wasn’t making it up. There was something very serious happening, and even though I had no idea what to do about it, I had to take the chance that maybe if I struggle hard enough, there was a faint chance that I might find something.

Do you connect that with the time you began to improve?

Well, it was preceding the time that I improved, but it was definitely because of it. Er.
I mean, I wonder if there's a little shift in consciousness that is actually related to the process of this illness. I mean, I can look back on a particular day when I felt that things turned...

I guess I’ve got a really clear experience on that level. I really experienced a kind of divine intervention; I mean, in a moment I knew what had happened...I had been driven to that point where. On some really intangible level that is not really physical, but still essential to the construction of a living person in a living body that functions on a plane.... And maybe there were other influences as well as the C.F.S. that led to that situation; there were some other experiences as well. But in terms of physically getting well, I definitely experienced divine intervention, I mean I actually (-xxx) when it happened.

*Why do you understand that as divine intervention as opposed to a traumatic physiological shift.?*

I don’t know; I just do...Also maybe because, well I do believe that people...Well I guess, like in the end it's a bit hard to (-) . I mean, New Age people say that 'we are all God within', and Christian theology would say ‘God is everywhere’, and for those who make the same kind of choice, God loves within the world. So in the end it's a bit hard to discern between the different options of interpretation. But I was involved with the personal growth movement for quite a while and I guess I was really clear that...well, the shift I made, I had made that shift before, I had made that effort before, and struggled. I had insisted on seeing people, I had decided to really hold my ground. It was just that without any independent confirmation, I didn’t have the same to really persevere with that as I had before...What changed in ‘85 was that a doctor independently said, without me giving any messages or anything, said ‘you’ve got the most fragmented energy system I’ve ever met’, and hauled me over the coals for habitual hard drug use for ten years or whatever. That’s how he interpreted it. It took me a long time before he realized that I hadn’t been using hard drugs at all, but that there was something else going on that wasn’t anything to do with drug use. And he said:

‘I don’t know how to help you, but I really feel that if you don’t make some kind of change - you are still fragmenting - and if you don’t change your circumstances you will pass the lip of that edge where there is no turning back’

And I really felt that intuitively. He also confirmed that he could see there was something profoundly wrong occurring for me, without me talking about any of my experiences. Again, it was that message of independent confirmation: before, there was
that endless sea of subjectivity. Like, everybody seems to have an answer, an opinion. Like they can see that you've just got an attitude problem, you just need to try harder, or you've got some kind of psychological problem...And when everybody's unanimous about it you think they see something that's absolutely bitingly obvious, and that you just can't see it because you're self-deceiving, protecting yourself psychologically or whatever, you know. And so I went along with that. In one sense I was being more objective than the other people, because I had the capacity to question my own reality, and I gave preference to what seemed the most sensible. I mean, there's this bizarre new disease that no-one's ever heard of that's doing something weird to me, which is extremely unlikely: or, everybody's responding in the same way because there's something that I'm just not admitting and can't see about myself. But in the end, I really feel that they were wrong - I really am clear about that. Maybe, I'll have some revelation that on some find, subtle soul level, I've chosen to create it all, and I've created chemical exposure...But I found that invalidating, eroding, and the more people tried to preach to me about that whole new age philosophy about you've got to except responsibility for yourself...I found that whole thinking, what it really did was enable them to say "I'm looking after myself - fuck you"...And the last thing they're really doing is taking responsibility for the whole of reality, not just themselves...

And certainly not taking any responsibility for the politics of what's happening - putting it straight back onto the personal, individual case. Similar to a lot of the stuff that's come out of that personal growth thing, the co-dependency stuff...

It's very interesting; I've noticed C.F.S. really brings out...I've seen new age people who...I've seen, for example, someone who gets glandular fever. I'm not questioning that some of the new age people have genuine revelations and insights that are life-transforming for them, and in terms of the soul dynamics of incarnate beings, they are experiencing real truth. So I'm not invalidating their growth path and their experiences, but it's like they see it as the new complete truth: if every one knew it the world would be fine, perfect. And I notice particularly with C.F.S. in that, for those who've had a powerful experience where they realize they were, for example creating their, maintaining an illness that was a psychological construct that they had done for themselves, and then go round applying that to everyone. When someone had like glandular fever, or Ross River fever, or cancer, they want the other person to be 'set free' by the truth that they have experienced for themselves. And there's a compassionate desire to teach or bring the insight of their experience to that person and hope that they'll get well. And when they do so, there is also, and remains, the personal compassion and care and attention. And if they don't, they'll still be there as a friend. But with C.F.S it was quite different; it was just like some intuitive picking up of the
fact that there was something environmental going on that effects everyone, and it's a
kind of societal problem - in that they kind of dump out this attitude and then abandon
them. There was no sort of compassionate support for the person and accepting that
they may not get the realization at this point. It was just 'you grab this, and if you don't
accept it, well, that's your problem, I don't want to know about it'. That was their
reaction - 'I've got to support you by letting you recognize that you've got to be
responsible for yourself - you make the breakthrough'...

*It's difficult for them to deal with the mind/body nature of this illness...*

They feel it is all mind/body, and you just 'get your shit together'. And in some
respects they do have a better understanding, I feel, of mind/body in terms of
psychosomatic feedbacks and so forth, like the self-created illness and so forth - the
links are part of the fabric of our constructed being, you know. But at the same time
they're intellectualizing and having some kind of fear response in there; they're not
connected with what they're really feeling. I depends; it tends to be more the formal
psychological profession, who have kind of intellectual knowledge and intellectual
belief in the links between a choice to be vulnerable to an illness when one really has
the capacity not to be - psychological processes and so forth. Whereas the New Age
and Personal Growth movements is often people who have direct living conscious
experience of those connections within themselves, and so their understanding is much
more cohesive mind/body/being knowledge. And in one sense the quality of
understanding that I perceive within some of the New Age movement leaves the
intellectual, academic and professional, psychiatric professions for peanuts...You know,
they're just orders of magnitude apart. At the same time, though, I still feel that there
are real inadequacies of the New Age spirituality, and its source and origin, what drives
it, and because I have experienced its limitations really, that it is definitely a fixed
paradigm - it's not a whole truth. It's interesting: when I was involved for a couple of
years with the Personal Growth workshops and stuff, for years I had people sort of
saying 'oh I can see that you're re involved in that as a mechanism...you're really
playing that'. And I grew up fairly self-aware, and really aware of the potential to self-
deceive, so I was really on my guard about allowing myself to fall into patterns and
excuses and so forth. But when people kept on saying it, I sort of doubted and thought
they must be right. When I went through the real desperation in the final stages of '85, I
started to get so desperate that I had the incentive to want to start playing some games.
And when I began performing some of those game behaviours, all of a sudden it became
really clear to me what they were saying I was trying to do before. The stuff they were
trying to say that I was doing, I had really clear insight into what it was - I was trying to
do it now, but I definitely wasn't doing it before. Not then. That began a kind of
journey out of that whole scene. I now experience other spiritual stuff which, rather
than being the unfolding of divinity from within, its more recognizing divinity from
without. A different path, I guess. But there is that knowing, a time when you have
experiences where there’s just knowing. Click. You can fool yourself, wanting to
believe, and later on realize that you were conning yourself.

This illness for me is the basis of several recognitions, things that you come to know,
unquestionably, about human experience: the nature of aloneness, this particular
illness is something that you’ve got to be in alone ...it’s quite liberating to know that
you can be there

in this illness it has to be part of your way of living to be repeatedly, often, in that quiet,
alone space...

I keep losing that recognition - on the surface I find myself getting sucked back into the
more societal way of looking at things and it just causes distress in the end. And when I
come back to that recognition - that I am alone - I find I have more capacity to relate to
people out of that. And I guess that ties into our culturally dominant, what I call
romantic relationships, but I think other people call co-dependent emotional
relationships.

And so strong that our culture is built around that couple, the couple...

Mmm...

I feel really tired...

I can see it. Do you want to lie down? Do you want to stop?

Conversation between Mary and Cameron Way, Thursday 16th March 1995.

A virus uses the machinery within our own cell to replicate itself - it tricks the
machinery to make copies of itself - O.K? One of the immune chemicals, anti-viral
chemicals, alpha-interferon, actually works on the mRNA in the cells so that those
processes can’t continue. But in terms of long-term bodily housekeeping, when alpha-
interferon’s close down the mRNA, it not only stops the virus being able to reproduce, it stops a lot of the housekeeping, rebuilding of lots of the proteins and enzymes of the body, its own cellular maintenance. Normally it’s only closing down for a week or two, while we’ve got the virus. So the ability of the cellular machinery to return to replenishing lots of these enzymes and so forth is reduced. And so the ability of the body to maintain itself in all sorts of subtle processes which, in the short term a bit of a stop may not be such a problem, but long term, you know, it could start to give you all sorts of problems. It suggests too that there might be effects on hormone production...And so for example, it might mean that producing some of the means by which we handle the toxic load that we carry, like the enzymes used to break down toxins, also becomes impaired. So you get a kind of snowball effect. It’s well known that people develop chemical sensitivities with C.F.S.; I’ve noticed that as I’ve improved, they’ve faded. And other people with C.F.S. have noticed the same...

*And like smells which disturb you - perfume, cigarette smoke*

Yes, a clear sign of chemical sensitivity..

*Did you speak to Anne (my work colleague who has had C.F.S. symptoms for some months and who had intended to contact Cameron)?*

Yes. And I meant to ring her this week, because she’d said to come to dinner when I came into town, and to confirm...

I’d like to raise the money to have a session in the Town Hall - I think it’s good if local C.F.S. people get a chance to know each other, and offer each other simple support: it’s like the women’s movement in a way. You know, confirming experiences so that other people know they’re not that crazy...

*It’s a very threatening disease in a way, because people who are incapacitated by it are still walking around and it’s not evident that they are sick: what do you do about people who insist on carrying on living...that’s the scary politics of it.*

Well, wait until I found out how big the problem is - they’re gonna be really scared! I mean, the amount of C.F.S. people in Australia is massive and it’s increasing - it’s not going away! It is an epidemic of a sort. It’s not epidemic in terms of person to person transmission, but...

*Now, just about everybody you speak to about it knows someone who has suffered or is suffering from it. I keep meeting people now who have personal knowledge of it - and I’m sure in stress-ridden places like the University...*
I wonder what’s happening in the Senate, in Parliament? I’m sure they’re not exempt from the statistics...

And they’ve got fairly stressed

Jobs...But also, if you’ve got one in a thousand people affected by C.F.S., some of them are going to be mild, so maybe they’ll just thing they need a holiday, or think ‘I’m feeling a bit depressed, something doesn’t seem to be right here, I guess it must be depression’ - you know, you hang it on the only hook you can find, even though you’re really aware that it doesn’t really sort of fit - I bet you some of those poor ministerial decisions are made by persons with mild C.F.S., and the judgement which normally they can rely on is impaired.

Conversation between Cameron Way and Mary, Friday 17th March, 1995

I was going to ask you if you saw any connections between your concern with environmental issues and your experience of C.F.S....We can’t place human bodies apart from environmental bodies and all your work, your concerns seem to recognize that...

Yes, I’ve thought about your question; and you asked about...

What sort of risks you have taken, as a man, in making your body, your bodily experience visible...

The first thing that came to mind was - I could begin to relate what you were trying to say to my situation and my experiences; it’s all happened in a rather unreflective way. It hasn’t come out of some conscious perspective... It’s funny, you know, I do - I don’t - I’m more conscious of my body now - walking in just now, having a shower, feeling my body fresh, walking with bare feet in the sun and thinking ‘oh, how pleasant this is’. And the thing that I actually think is ‘Is this what all my other friends were doing when they were teenagers and young adults?’ That sensual experience, the sense of freedom, the sense of warmth, the relaxed sense of contact with my environment, I didn’t feel that then. I probably did when I was a kid, younger than that, in fact I know I did, but with C.F.S. there’s so much numbness that in your mind’s eye if you like, that the presence of my body as an image within my own consciousness has sort of dissolved, because it’s
either numb or confused or painful or, you know, it's 'on suspension'...And numbness too is still a really big thing for me; I won't go into detail...So there is a loss of body sensation. But in terms of a more intangible 'sense of body' as self, which is just a mix (-) basically my self-affinity probably, em, Something fundamental is that somewhere at a very early age (-), I guess say eleven or twelve, I used to feel very isolated (-).

Did you have brothers or sisters?

Yeah, I had one sister..

Older or younger?

Younger, she's seven years younger.

That's a big gap...

Yeah, and we never really recognized each other as equal until she was thirteen or fourteen and was in the process of leaving home but had gone back for a short while and was watching her being traumatized by another teenage lad who was the son of a man my mother was going out with; and I noticed my sister was surviving it extremely well, the situation, but this guy was just absolutely horrid, and my mother was just saying that (xx) my sister was half the problem, and (xx). And it was the first time I had ever completely challenged one of my parents, saying 'you have to take some notice of this'. and I think it was the first time Fiona had experienced a sustained act of real care on her behalf, and the first time that there was a recognition that we weren't two people just co-existing in the same...

That you had some commitment to her...

Yeah, yeah. Both ways too, like I remember her saying to me "you know this might sound crazy to you, but I feel like for the first time, I've just got to know you. And I thought about, and I said "yeah, it is a bit crazy" - I didn't say it was silly, but you know, I confirmed that it didn't make sense to me...But then two days later I came back and said "I understand what you're saying, yeah, you're right". It was like in the adversity, we'd looked at each other for the first time in a way...Maybe that happens in all families; I don't know - I've only got one sibling..

And that is quite a big gap, seven years...

Yeah, it was. And we often, I was really sensitive about having girls around, she'd just follow me around endlessly and drive me absolutely crazy. And of course, mum was working, and I liked to do a lot to support her - probably to a level that was
inappropriate to my age. And so for someone to be there, someone I liked, it’s have to be organized weeks in advance. There was no casual ‘drop in after school’; I’d be picking up my sister or something. And for a young male..my mother was probably feeling out of her depth as a busy working person. It probably was awkward about what were valid things to affirm or say to me, you know. And I sensed her uncomfortableness, so that made me feel even more awkward. I don’t remember any kind of exchanges or offered recognitions about emotional states, feelings of sensitivity or awkwardness - the fact that suddenly you have feelings of a new magnitude, a new quality, you know. But you don’t realize they’re of a new quality at the time, you just suddenly feel adoration for a particular girl; you think she’s really wonderful, and for me, I wasn’t even able to articulate the kind of feelings that I had like ‘gee, I’d really like to put my arms round her or kiss her’ or something like that. I guess I’d never had those feelings affirmed, and I really wasn’t able to recognize them for what they were.

So would this have been after the chemical exposure?

Yeah, after the chemical exposure. So I can’t really tell; I guess I’d identified that I was a bit slow on some aspects of intellectual, emotional..development in those areas where the two mix - where you form self-identity and intellectual thoughts in relation to your emotional experiences. I wasn’t very aware of it actually. But then, my parents - it was a pretty horrible environment really - so I probably shut off a lot of emotions...I had frustration and I had tears, but it was sort of subconscious, it wasn’t having a conscious experience of my emotions as a kid. Some pleasurable feelings - the sun’s really nice, or I’m feeling really bored, but I didn’t experience as something that one has a kind of in tune relationship with.

One of the major struggles of adolescence, to take on a emotional life and manage to have some control over it...

A lot of the kids today seem to..they would be able to articulate what they were feeling. Looking at conflicting emotions and values, and having some kind of internal dialogue and some way of resolving what their personal and feeling response is, as a self, to those different issues..some kids seem to have that emotional maturity much more easily.

My sense of body and the environment...

It was interesting when you spoke about your desire to actually be in the landscape...

I never really felt comfortable, in a relaxed secure space where I could really know and feel what I think as myself and make my own choices unless - I needed to be isolated, to get away. I like solitude. And the bush was the place where I could feel the freedom to
think my own thoughts and do the things that (-) have a sense of my own motivation. I did feel a connectedness there, I was conscious of it as something. One thing that has really influenced my life actions is that around ten or twelve/thirteen I did experience strong experiences of connectedness to a whole - not in any kind of sartori, enlightened moment that a few people have. But for some reason its always been in me that within my sense of self I've related to the world being all, a whole about me. Like I was always conscious of other people and what was happening to them; not disregarding myself, but with constant awareness and consciousness of what's going on. And seeing that just with a bit of thought and action that wasn’t generated from one's own individual perspective towards our whole fabric that you could greatly improve the overall quality of what was going on, you know? And I didn’t have parents who were determined to bind me to any career, I had an education (-). So when I looked at it, I realized there were probably very few people who could begin with a sense of self-choice in that kind of (-). And I realized that everyone was sort of streamlined into channels that really held them, and didn’t have the freedom to step out of it. And it needed someone who could step out of those streams and just go where work was needed. And I became really well known in that social group: like I’d meet kids on trains and have a conversation with them and they’d say ‘hey - your name’s Cameron isn’t it?’...And I felt a real common passion for people, to encourage them to be what they wanted to be. Probably out of my own weakness, my own struggle. When you really en-courage somebody, you be with them in a way that they regain their own sense of courage. And that has a long-term benefit.

*Like the real meaning of education - to bring out potential, not to impose.*

Yeah. I’ve always felt violated by educational environments: and the thing about it was that I felt it was my fault, that I had the problem. But thanks to my mother, who perhaps had a ‘my son’s wonderful’ thing, like all mothers do, but could also see the better side, the positive potential in me. She did take care to validate an intellectual perspective that would give me the imperative to have faith in myself, and if my ideas were different that was alright. But it doesn’t alter the fact that whatever seemed to be meaningful to me seemed to always meet invalidating reactions from those around me, which seemed to be unanimous. So there seemed to be some kind of understanding out there that I had missed. I just didn’t understand, you know? I find the university environment pretty much the same. By the time a person meets all the ‘mass-production’ requirements they don’t have time to think and pursue things with a sense of personal being understanding. And the long-term consequences of that for the community - well, we really are filtering out the stuff that provides innovation, passion, endeavour, creativity.
Imagination...

Imagination, yeah...

Being like this though has really led to tremendous attrition and a sense of personal violation. And it’s something I have tried to come to terms with. At several times in my life I have really tried to change; I’ve tried to think and become learned and satisfying to the kind of attitude of people around me. Other people seem to have pleasant happy days and go to the pub and have girlfriends and get married - there’s a kind of at-homeness in the world in that. And when I’ve asked them they seem to experience this. I’ve tried to search out what I’ve been doing wrong, and weed it out or change my values. But I try that for a while and then I realize I’m really not happy (-). What I really want to do was find a way to do what seems right to me in terms of my own meanings and life-path, but learn also how to interface that with the lives of people around me in such a manner that I’m not so violated, that I’m able to function constructively...

It sounds very similar to working out your position as a woman, say as a woman and a thinker, a woman and a desiring person, as opposed to the object of desire, i.e. again that which is always in the wrong story or in the wrong role or in the wrong place - it sounds very similar to women finding an identity in which they can relate to a world which is constructed in ways that doesn’t

That gives them constant feedback that clashes with...

that they’re getting it wrong, yeah...

Our survival mechanisms make us very robust, but our vulnerabilities are very real...with C.F.S., the needless, needless disregard, abuse I could have been fully returned to health and normal now, but it’s taken real active effort to block my self-initiated efforts to make a recovery. It’s not a case of something just not done: it’s taken active opposition, active undermining. And that makes me so furious - really, really, really angry. Just like women in trying to address what are really clear oppressions for men, but not enough other women have been able to recognize them because they have no support and there’s not enough critical mass, and the people caught up in the dominant paradigm just can’t recognize the injustice. Like, I will have spent fifteen years being five years ahead of medical research, taking on the government, the medical profession and our society simply to gain my final right of innocence: that I am ill, I have been ill, I have disability, I need to do these simple things and if I can just do this I can manage a recovery and return to work. Which is what I’m required to do and meant to do and judged for not doing in the first place.

259
Eventually, I have to choose to be a silent victim OR take on this massive energy threshold - perhaps arrogantly I think I can do it, because I’m bloody-minded, and really confident of the truth. Sometimes I could have done better, made better decisions if my functional capacity had been better, if I could think, you know. If I could just process situations and decide ‘what do I think about that’. But sometimes that simple act you just can’t do...you just have this collection of thoughts around you and you try and guess the best...

_I felt exactly that feeling - that I knew I wasn’t in any condition to get my thoughts together and you just had to pick something..._

Devastating in relationships: if you want to review your position in relationships, or come to terms with something that you think is going wrong, and you can’t. And you keep thinking ‘I’ll think about it later, maybe this afternoon’, and weeks and months go by and you sit down and go ‘O.K.; this is happening. What am I going to do about it?’ But you can’t get active and respond; you’re just left drifting along.

_In fact, I remember that really I just let go of all my friendships: the only relationships that I could hold onto were the ones that were offered with absolutely no demand. I couldn’t meet any demands: I was hopeless with the kids, because I was angry and irritable. And I virtually had one relationship, and that was with Margaret, because she was suffering the same stuff - so we both knew what we were going through. And we were just surviving and being friends in that survival. I had no other energy at all for a relationship._

But how do you articulate that profound change in your competency and your capacity as a human being. That profound shift; I mean, if you’ve got an illness that does this to ten per cent of the population, what kind of significant compromise are you talking. People in the work situation can lose the capacity to come up with any new constructs; they can no longer be responsive in a dynamic way. But you can always make things look right, and you find yourself hanging in there presenting the right spiel, the right kind of words...

_But nothing’s happening!

...Other than that, nothing’s happening! You’re always trying to see if it’s transparent that you’re completely ripped, you know! And C.F.S. is really like that - I’m quite sure there are chemical processes with C.F.S. that are similar to the active ingredient of marijuana. The kind of cognitive transition with C.F.S. was very much like when I got stoned; there were so many parallels. When I was ‘on’ C.F.S. all the time and all my friends were on dope, they all thought I was stoned. They felt, from my state of being
that I was stoned. Talking with you (-) reminds me - and it's not a painful experience, it's a positive experience - how worn and violated and invalidated I am as a human being, and how I need to address that violation process to retain my integrity of being...

*And the capacity to feel anger about it, which can be incredibly tiring...*

Well actually most times I (-) over it - and that's worse - I'd much rather feel the passion of anger. But I can't retain the reality in my mind...it slips down like water through sand. Even when you've been through a really terrible time, two days later you can't remember it - do you remember that? Somehow the neural process is leached away. If something happens that's really stressful, I can't retain the emotional recognition of that experience. Like I'll talk to you and I'll realize the truth of my existence to some extent and how important it is to take hold of that, and build on that: but this afternoon it'll all be washed away as if it never happened...If you've been disabled by C.F.S. cognitively for ten or fifteen years, that means you've almost been suspended from being able to re-check you life-purpose, your life-direction - to work through in an active way what your choices are. To for example come to terms with something like your identity as a sexual person in the world, or what your morality and values are in terms of relationships; you can't actively process those things. You sort of let the thoughts come into your mind, then you adopt one thing or reject another. To be removed from and missing that aspect of functioning really costs in time, in a way that's hard to highlight.

*I wonder if our perception of it might also be affected by the experience, our perception of our disability. Because even though I felt what we talked about - that inability to make a sensible choice - to rationally sift through the options about a particular event or concern and get it together and make a decision - even though I felt that, I was actually finishing that Masters thesis and I was actually writing some of the best stuff I've ever written.*

And you were making decisions...that's interesting, I understand that clearly, cause I...Sorry, go on....

*Yeah, but I watch you and I read stuff that you've written and hear things that you say that are so well thought out and well articulated...I mean I just wonder if there' another layer or gap in our perception that we think that's what happening and that we're being irrational, whereas maybe we're being not rational, but maybe our thought processes, although altered, equally valuable or...*

Still occurring. Hmm..when I was really bad with C.F.S., I couldn't form any constructs at all...
You were just surviving...

Yeah; there was literally nothing happening, and after a while I did realize that, and it went on for years. As I started to improve since '85, particularly a couple of years down the track when I first moved to Armidale, I was taking up work in a new service...I was aware that in my work that on a sub-conscious level my brain had regained the capacity to take in information over a longer term and process it and come out. So I was able to think and form new constructs again, but it was on a deeper level. I still can't bring it into my conscious mind, but I was aware, and I remember I wrote it in my diary, that I was problem-solving again. But I had to do it in a kind of peripheral vision way...and I think I've learned to use a different, sub-conscious part of my brain to do the problem solving...maybe we're actually maximizing our creative aspects in compensation.
Appendix 2:

Conversation between Elizabeth Hatton and Mary Bastable
18.3.2001, Benesse Café, Bunbury, W. Australia.

E.H....Even the poses are done differently...

M.B...*The poses are meant to delineate the muscles...?*

Mmm...but whereas a body builder, doing the bicep pose, the fist would be clenched so that the muscle will really stand; but with fitness figure, the hand has to look as though it’s soft, but the muscle still has to stand up and do what it’s told...so you’ve got to make it look effortless, whereas the effort can show for the bodybuilder, female or male...in the ‘fitness figure’ you have to make it look, as unnatural as it is – you have to make it look effortless.

I mean if you have a look at that book of Kevin Dutton’s, you’ll see the characterization of female bodybuilders as men in a bikini top...and that’s how people often relate to female bodybuilders - that their breasts are no longer breasts, they’re pecs...it’s that kind of transformation. You don’t go quite that far..

But part of the way it’s characterized, your brief in what you’re doing with your body, is to develop it but looking feminine..

Yes, especially in the poses..

*Is there a male fitness figure category?*

Not that I know of., although when you see some of the doubles, some of the guys aren’t bodybuilders per se, they really fit, healthy people so...there’s probably a fitness category for males...I only remember seeing those guys doing doubles..
Yeah – doing a routine with male and female – usually a sort of themed routine – you know how I had to do my routine on ‘blue suede shoes’ – they did a sort of Tarzan and

*Jane...*

Yeah, that sort of thing...and it was really good...
They put a lot of butter on this...

*That's my token to trying to eat healthily ... a big fried breakfast but no butter on the bread...*
*And I was going to ask you again to tell me about going back, revisiting your family...the stuff that happened prior to your uncle's death I'm a bit foggy about that time – I remember when I came to stay that weekend, your uncle was very ill...*

Well, that was a very interesting time, because I was clearly in the poo with my family for spending time with my aunt

*That was August, I think*

I didn’t visit until after he died...it was after he died and I didn’t see other than my aunt and her children and their children – it was actually a really special time...because...
I decided before I went that I wasn’t going to see my mother – I wasn’t going for my mother...you see my uncle and aunt and I were really close, my mother and I never were. I tried to play the two really evenly – if I sent one something, I’d send the other the match of it...but this was one time I just felt I had to take a side, take a stand, I suppose..

*Was there any problem between your aunt and your mum...?*

Over me..? My aunt has always found my mum as difficult to get on with as I have, only on balance I’d say she’s been better to her than I have...but my mother is very jealous
Of your relationship?

With my aunt, yes...
So I had rung up my mother and said that (pause)...oh, you see another thing that had happened was that when my uncle died my aunt asked me to write a piece to be read at the funeral...and that alienated me from my family...because they were wildly jealous...the view that has come across is that ‘you’re allowed to have those feelings for your aunt but keep them private’ – in making public my feeling for my aunt and uncle, they believed I was showing my mother up...therefore causing her pain...so it wasn’t easy there - I quite frankly thought it was a whole crock of shit...

Like... there’s something about confronting death that makes you feel that honesty is somehow related to it..

Yeah – well I just felt I couldn’t let him die and not say what was in my heart..and really there was nothing in it that they should have worried about – I talked about my uncle’s kindness to my mother, and he was invariably kind when she was often a great pain in the neck – but no it was my mother who attacked me at the funeral

So why haven’t you got a good relationship with your mother?

I think it was a case of being a bit different where the others were fairly much the same, ..of being born too quickly after my elder sister...

So you weren’t the cherished child..

No...
Being not very good at sport and things, in a very sporty family, preferring to nestle up somewhere with a book, I’d say basically I was a bit of an oddball in the family– made it as hard for dad as it was for me...
Do you feel like there’s guilt in the way they’ve related to you?

Not guilt, no…I think they nowadays want to put me on a pedestal, from which I slip when I say things like I did about my uncle at the funeral…

And it’s an acceptable way of distancing you too, to put you on a pedestal

Hmmm..

...look, it’s amazing to me: I’ve got no relationship with my mum, I don’t think I’m a person who couldn’t have a relationship with her mum

But then your mum didn’t protect you…from what I’ve gathered..
I don’t think there’s guilt and stuff associated with what…I don’t think it would register with her. I think my mum would have explained her actions away as ‘being a wife’ – and the fact that she would have stood up to my father on just about anything..

Except protecting the children.?

Well, no: she would protect the others …

A child …

Hmm
But you know it was very much also a product of that … Bourdieu talks about ‘symbolic violence’ – in which education and access to ideas can separate you from the family … and the sorts of issues over which my father and I fought were about the stuff I was reading, that led to the lockouts…that it’s not only homosexuals who might sexually interfere with his son, that ‘straight men’ might too…god knows where I accessed those ideas at 12  Or that a conscientious objector who was locked up in the war was braver than someone who
went to war without believing in what he was doing, but didn’t have the courage to say ‘no’. And my father found me ... like an alien creature.

Yes I can remember that look — “how can you say that to me...?”

These conversations would typically happen when my father had been drinking and he would just get out of control and lock me out of the house and not let me back for weeks... I mean it would be the absolute horror of having me espouse those kind of ideas...

And that’s when you would go to your aunt...?

No, my aunt didn’t find out about that until later – had she known, she’d have removed me from the family. I was too ashamed to tell anyone what was going on.

So where did you go?

I slept under the pine trees around the town, and slipped back into the yard before it got light, and then I’d wait ‘til he went to work and go in, get changed for school, and then I’d have to make sure I was well away again at night before he got home. But my mother’s role was to go round at night and make sure that the windows were locked against me. So you see...it’s a bit hard for me to...help her, because she...well, she needed help and I’ve helped her financially..but I can’t honestly say I love her...I find her physically repulsive. My aunt and I had this funny conversation one day when we both confessed to this......and I remember when I was staying with my aunt after she’d been hospitalized – she was hospitalized after my uncle died – and her skin had got terribly dry – and I remember sitting and just rubbing the sorbolene and stuff into her skin – I could no more do that for my mother than fly to the moon; but with my aunt it wasn’t an issue. That’s probably why my contribution to my mother’s welfare has been money – because it’s easier to do...I just don’t believe I have it in me to be physical with her – yet my aunt- it wouldn’t be a problem..