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Embracing the abject: Explored through Kristeva's theory of the maternal and the abject in the creative work "Listening"

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**Embracing the abject: Explored through Kristeva's theory of the
maternal and the abject in the creative work "Listening"**

This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts Honours

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ESSAY - Opening the ears

Incommensurable, unlocalizable maternal body.

... A mother's identity survives only thanks to the well-known fact that consciousness is lulled by habit, wherein a woman protects herself along the frontier that divides her body and makes an expatriate of her child.

...What is the relation between him and me? No relation, except that abundant laughter into which some sonorous, subtle, fluid identity collapses, gently carried by the waves.

(Kristeva, 1976/1985, p145-146)

Introduction

French postmodernist and psychologist Julia Kristeva (born 1941) declares she is not a feminist (Caputi,1993; Höpfl, 2004); however, as my primary theorist, and an active scholar and commentator on gender issues, she offers great insight into both feminist history and its next best step forward. When pioneers of the women's movement began, their efforts were deeply rooted in the sociopolitical life, established by "dominant male power" (Kristeva,1976/1985, p150) or patriarchy, designed to exclude them (Kristeva,1977/1995). The universalist and spirited protest of the first wave suffragists at the turn of the twentieth century and the second wave existential feminists in the 1960s, achieved numerous benefits in the economic, political and professional arena (e.g. the vote, the right to education, work and equal pay, the right to borrow money, and professional recognition, as well as the right to control their fertility), benefits which twenty-first century women in the industrialised first world still enjoy (Kristeva,1977/1995; Nicholson,1990; Anderson,1996; Scholz, 2010). However, according to Kristeva, achievement of their fourth demand of full sexual equality, that is, permissiveness in sexual relationships equivalent to that enjoyed by men, alongside the right to abortion and contraception, have fallen short (Kristeva,1977/1995; Scholz, 2010). With their macro view, they perhaps failed to appreciate the micro workings of exclusion; they failed because they did not deal with the fundamental Symbolic nature of power, language and meaning (Kristeva,1977/1995). According to Kristeva, being locked into the grid of a patriarchal Symbolic world, these feminists could only value economic production not reproduction or motherhood (Kristeva,1977/1995). Consequently, not only did they miss a potential source of feminist power, the figure of the maternal, they also virulently denigrated 'her' reactionary role in the service of patriarchy (Kristeva,1976/1985; 1977/1995).

In a postmodern world that challenges unitary ideas (Hauke, 2000), there is opportunity to extend modernism's tragic questioning of the "eternal and immutable" (Hawthorn,1992, p109) values of nineteenth century realism. Post modernism emerged from 1950s onwards, and embraces fragmentation and ephemerality to see through beliefs to their social and cultural production (Hawthorn,1992). By extension, Kristeva represents the 1990s and 2000s third wave of psychoanalytic feminism with her prescription for feminism to go beyond a Woman belief (Kristeva,1977/1995), to see, hear and feel the irreducible singularity and complexities of each woman (Kristeva,1977/1995; Scholz, 2010). Kristeva claims that it is in 'her' many languages, that "strange 'fold' (pli) which turns nature into culture" (Kristeva,1976/1985, p149), her "jouissance" (Kristeva,1980/1982, p9) that the social position of women and men can be advanced (Kristeva, 1977/1995). Kristeva claims feminism needs to focus on the sexual, biological physiological and reproductive differences, and needs to clarify the different relationship that women and men have to the Symbolic (Kristeva,1977/1995). This involves exposing the socio Symbolic contract of language as a sacrificial/violent contract that forecloses the maternal, limiting women to social support roles (Kristeva,1977/1995).

When Kristeva first released her theory of the maternal she was criticised for essentialism by second wave feminists (Oliver,1997; McAfee, 2000, 2004). Kristeva wrote *The Stabat Mater* (1976/1985) when she was pregnant with her son. *The Stabat Mater* is a Latin hymn, which in English begins with the words, 'Stood the Mother, full of grief' (Oliver, 1997, p297). Kristeva's essay is split (cut) into two columns, with one poetically describing her own experience of motherhood and the birth of her son (1976), and the second calling for a new notion of the maternal (Kristeva, as cited in Guberman,1996). Pregnancy not only connected Kristeva to her mother, but it became a new notion of identity, and the most obvious example of Kristeva's subject-in-process model or her maternal theory (Kristeva, 1974/1984; 1980; 1980/1982). It also set the scene for her later exposition on the abject, an extension of her maternal theory (Kristeva,1980/1982). The abject represents the split between mother and child, the permanent, violent, uncertain craggy interspace, the mark of the border that simultaneously refuses the figure of the maternal, and enables its sublimated elaborations (Kristeva,1980/1982). The abject is the outcast feminine in the figure of the maternal that is rejected because it is unnameable, heterogenous, abominably real and cannot be integrated into the Symbolic (Kristeva,1980/1982).

When twentieth century Swiss analyst Carl Jung (1875-1961) articulated his ideas on subjectivity, he was drawing on his own mid life crisis in the wake of a split with mentor

and founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) (Schweizer, 2011). In the period between 1913-1916, prior to and during World War 1, Jung experienced his own “descent into hell” (Jung, 2009, p237). Jung’s “individuation” (Jung, 1959, p275) theory points to mid life crisis as “the process by which a person becomes a psychological ‘in-dividual’ that is, a separate, indivisible unity or ‘whole’ ”(Jung, 1959, p275). His individuation process is helped by spectral hauntings that irrupt when the time is right from deep within his psyche. These hauntings are referred to as the archetype, with the menacing Shadow typically the first disturbing force. Much has been written, by devotees and the more critical post Jungians, on how Jung’s creative and autonomous unconscious functions to initiate a process of individuation (Hollis,1993; 1996; 1998; 2006; 2010; Samuels,1999; Hauke, 2000; Rowland,1999; 2002; Vickers-Willis, 2008). However, less analysis has occurred of women’s individuation process, and their interface with the interior challenges of guilt and shame (Biddle,1997; Jacoby, 2002). Hauke (2000) and Rowland (2002) claim that the feminist potential of Jung’s creative unconscious has been missed because of perceived essentialism and sexism in its development. While both acknowledge Jung’s historically rendered failings, they claim a postmodern revision of his theory offers psychoanalytic feminists opportunity to work with a creative unconscious inclusive of a central feminine principle (the Anima), and multiplicities and pluralities that can be reinterpreted and, consequently, recuperated to provide a new potential for feminine subjectivity (Hauke, 2000; Rowland, 2002).

Proposition

Kristeva and Jung are both concerned with marginalization. For Jung, it is marginalization of the hidden unconscious (Hauke, 2000). For Kristeva, it is marginalization of the hidden physical realm of women and the “feminine” (Hauke, 2000, p127). Using Kristeva as my primary theorist, I will compare her subject-in-process theory of the maternal and abject to Jung’s static unitary theory of individuation and the Shadow. Because of the parameters of this project, I have not been able to focus on the nature of Jung’s central feminine principle. By comparing Kristeva to Jung, women’s shame, as represented by patriarchy’s rejection of the mother, has an opportunity to be reclaimed as a radical feminine authority. In this essay, I will explore the notion that, if women in a postmodern culture can recognize the unconscious function of how shame and guilt work on their subjectivity, in the context of the denied feminine principle of the maternal, they may come closer to experiencing what we colloquially call ‘who they really are’ (Jung,1953/1970; Kristeva,1980/1982). This essay will also discuss the role of practice led research and Elena Ferrante’s writing on my

Honour's project. I have chosen Ferrante rather than an Australia text because of the strength of my response to her work, its visceral and sometimes poetic language and her mother daughter subject theme. It also came to be incredibly relevant to creative exploration of Kristeva.

My thesis will explore this topic in three sections, and will necessarily rely on translated texts. The first section will review Kristeva's theory of the maternal and the abject focusing on the texts of *The Stabat Mater* (1976/1985), *Women's time* (1977/1995), *Powers of horror: An essay on abjection* (1980/1982), *The impudence of uttering: Mother tongue* (2010) and *Reliance, or maternal eroticism* (2014), as well as Guberman's *Julia Kristeva interviews* (1992). I will also refer to *Revolution in poetics* (1974/1984), *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art* (1980), and *Black sun: Depression and melancholia* (1989). Kristeva's theory will then be compared to Jung's theory of individuation and agent provocateur, the Shadow, focusing on his key texts of *Jung: Modern man in search of a soul* (1933), *The collected works: Volume seven, two essays on analytical psychology* (1953/1970), and *The archetypes and the collective unconscious* (1959). In this way, I hope the potential for a feminine subjectivity will be revealed. The second section will review the selected examples of Elsa Morante's *House of liars* (1951) and Elena Ferrante's *Troubling love* (2006/2015) and their exploration of how women's shame and guilt, in the context of the mother-daughter dyad, work on their protagonists' subjectivity. By focusing on the recent Italian literary phenomenon, author Ferrante, this second section predominantly relies on a small pool of Italian scholars who have translated their commentary into English (Giorgio, 2002; Benedetti, 2007; Sambuco, 2012; Milkova, 2013). Consequently, Australian and other international and translated media supplement this section. The third section will show how Kristeva's theories of the maternal and the abject have informed my novella and my protagonist's individuation/subject-in-process journey. This section will also refer to my creative writing practice and Practice-Led Research.

Section 1 – Comparing Jung's theory of individuation and its privileging of the unconscious with Kristeva's theory of the maternal and the abject

Jung's individuation comes not from the body but "grows" from the invisible instinctual unconscious or the "mother of consciousness" (Jung, 1959, p281). Individuation is the quest to become a "separate, indivisible unity" (Jung, 1959, p288) and a soulful and culture based Self (Jung, 1933, 1953/1970, 1959; Rowland, 1999, 2002). Using the metaphor of the sun, an individual's life is divided into the morning and the afternoon of their life and a pursuit of external achievement as directed by the socially-adapted

ego consciousness (Jung,1933,1953/1970). However, when an individual reaches the afternoon or middle of their life, “deep-seated and peculiar change(s) within the psyche” (Jung,1933, p109) occur and precipitate a re-evaluation and a quest for a meaningful and culture-based life (Jung,1933,1953/1970; Rowland, 2002). Jung likens this process to looking into the “mirror of the water” (Jung,1959, p20) and seeing an unflattering image floating above looming water creatures that would be harmless if they weren’t repressed (Jung,1959). The apparently secure and rational ego consciousness is then overthrown into the uncertain potential of the irrational unconsciousness (Jung,1933;1959).

While Freud’s concept of the unconscious focused on states of sexual neurosis, it was Jung who extended the unconscious to one of hidden potentialities (Jung,1953/1970; 1959; Rowland, 1999). When mid life individuation ensues, it is not just the personal unconscious that is disturbed, but also the deeper layer of the collective unconscious (Jung, 1953/1970;1959). Jung claims we are not born new, but contain a priori residues of continuously repeated stages of development, ancestral empirical preconditions that are historical and anticipatory (Jung,1959). They are “wordless occurrences” (Jung,1953/1970, p79) that regress to the pre-infantile, and they are patterns of joy and sorrow of the ancestors (Jung,1953/1970). This unconscious thinks in terms of millennia (Jung,1959). Freud acknowledged this archaic layer, but it was Jung who elaborated on it (Jung,1953/1970). For Jung the unconscious is superior, universal, inexhaustible, overwhelming, fascinating, convincing, sublime, paradoxical (an old man and youth), with a tendency to change into its opposite (negative to positive, male to female), (Jung,1953/1970,1959). It is only dangerous, unpredictable, and autonomous when it is being ignored (Jung,1953/1970). Individuation relies on the psychological laws of the regulative function of the opposites, in an “open conflict and open collaboration at once” (Jung,1959, p288), freeing the unpredictable repressed to become serviceable energy (Jung,1959). In the union of the two parts, there is a conservation of previous values together with a recognition of their opposites (Jung,1953/1970). The instinctual unconscious transmits its psychic disturbance through representations or archetypes, and typically the first presentation is the negative Shadow, a combination of repressed material from the personal and the collective unconscious (Jung,1953/1970; 1959; Rowland,1999, 2002).

In contrast, Kristeva’s maternal theory is a reconfiguring of the “incommensurable, unlocalizable maternal body” (Kristeva,1976/1985, p145) into a new notion of subjectivity that is a never-ending process of becoming (Kristeva,1976/1985; Caputi, 1993; McAfee, 2000, 2004; Höpfl, 2004; Balsam, 2014). By working with the body, and the metaphor of the maternal, Kristeva is able to point to a feminine specificity and

heterogenous plurality that has the potential to redefine terms of identity for men and women (Kristeva, 1974/ 1984; 1976/1985; 1980/1982; Balsam, 2014). Kristeva achieves this by reclaiming the maternal authority denied by patriarchy (Kristeva, 1980/1982; Balsam, 2014). Kristeva asserts that, despite Freud's acknowledgement of the archaic unconscious, his notion of subjectivity put forward by the castration complex and its evolution in post structural psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's (1901-1981) mirror stage assumes a "zero state" (Kristeva, 1980/1982, p33) which begins with the first uttered Symbolic configuration (Kristeva, 1980/1982; Guberman, 1996). She says Freud and Lacan miss the important role the mother plays at the pre-object, pre-linguistic stage of its Symbolic configuration. They miss communications in the uterine, birthing, mother-child symbiotic union: the effects, echolalia, tones, glances, gestures and mood that lack signification but have meaning (Kristeva, 1976/1985). They miss the maternal authority and civilizing in the initial sequence of separation, including the experience of "a real *deprivation* of the breast" (Kristeva, 1976/1985, p32;) as the mother too is preparing to be somewhere else (Kristeva, 1976/1985; Oliver, 1997). They miss this because of a secular and monotheistic history that denies the maternal figure, as per the emptied and silent Virgin Mary (Kristeva, 1976/1985; Bruzelius, 1999; Höpfl, 2004). They miss this potency because there is a patriarchal fear of the maternal mysteries of reproduction and, even more so, the associated immortality (Kristeva, 1980/1982). They miss it because of the ambiguous, dividing, heterogenous nature of the maternal: mother-woman is "a strange 'fold' which turns nature into culture and the 'speaking subject' into biology," (Kristeva, 1976/1985, p149) and cannot be subsumed by the Symbolic. But even more so, they miss this potential because of negative narcissism, projected onto the mother when the child, premature being, is separating from the mother and entering the Symbolic (Guberman, 1996). Kristeva's maternal theory reclaims the violently excluded and sacrificed realm of the maternal to create a new term of subjectivity that contests ideas of a theoretical unity for an "open system" (Guberman, 1996, p18) of subjectivity. And the maternal realm's *agent provocateur* in this process is the uncontainable psychic forces that, though refused at the time of the mother-child split, can never be denied; the abject marks their border and points to them through loathing (Kristeva, 1980/1982; McAfee, 2004).

Jung's correlative and disturbing archetypal forces are a function of his individuation theory (Jung, 1953/1970; Rowland, 1999). They exist in a personal and collective unconscious (synchronic and diachronic) as discharges of potentiality, or a structural residue that crystalize into the archetype or dominants of ruling powers, the gods, images of dominant law and principles that empirically repeat ancestral experience

(Jung,1953/1970; Rowland,1999). Archetypes transmit as solitary images or patterns and, as a vase holds flowers, they can only hold a “wink” (Rowland,1999, p126) or provide a “half glimpsed meaning” (Jung, 1959, p38) of the resonance, depth and numinosity – not a total representation (Jung,1953/1970;1959; Rowland, 1999). Archetypes also transmit in the form of dreams, visions, emotions and traces of personality, as well as grotesque ideas, myths, legends and fairytales symbolizing the transformation in question (Jung, 1953/1970;1959; Rowland, 1999). In hero myths, the monster of the unconscious is vanquished, and the transcendent function ensues, connecting the individual to meaning and purpose through connection to the forgotten and overlooked, as well as the wisdom and experience of uncounted centuries (Jung,1953/1970). There are numerous archetypes but several dominate, including the Shadow, the contrasexual Anima and Animus, and the old man, all progressing a transformation process to the realization of the whole Self (Jung,1933,1953/1970;1959). The archetypes will only emerge when the conscious mind has lost all hope and must descend into the watery realm of the unconscious (Jung,1953/1970). Jung’s Shadow is the first of the archetypal forces to transmit into the archetype images and is called the “apprentice-piece” (Jung,1959, p29), as it prepares the ground for all other unconscious encounters (Jung,1953/1970;1959). It is an encounter with the rejected and regretted personal material, as well as the collective potential for criminal, despotic, shameful, unconventional, inferior, forbidden and childish forces (Jung,1953/1970).

The Shadow is “the narrow door” (which sets the stage for the unconscious which is) “full of unprecedented uncertainty, with apparently no inside and no outside, no above and no below, no here and no there, no mine and no thine, no good and no bad. It is the world of water, where all life floats in suspension; where the realm of the sympathetic system, the soul of everything living begins; where I am indivisibly this and that; where I experience the other in myself and the other-than-myself experiences me.” (Jung,1959, p21)

Conversely, Kristeva’s disturbing abject is a function of the maternal theory (Kristeva,1980/1982; Caputi,1993; McAfee, 2004; Balsam, 2014). The abject is the site and timing (synchronic and diachronic) of the child’s dramatic split from its symbiotic union with the mother (Kristeva,1980/1982; Caputi,1993). Simultaneous to reclaiming the potential of the maternal, Kristeva also recognizes the psychological function of its negative alter ego (Kristeva, 1976/1985; 1980/1982). She claims the psychic and negative reinvention of the mother by a Symbolic instant (Kristeva as cited in Oliver, 1997), or as Freud termed it by an imaginary father (Kristeva,1989), is to ensure and safeguard the child’s entry and establishment in the Symbolic (Kristeva,1980/1982). This is because the child, as a premature being, still without the filter of language,

will resist separation from the maternal, and to stay there is to risk melancholia or depression, because without borders of subjectivity, the individual becomes lost in the pre-linguistic of the maternal (Kristeva, 1980/1982; 1989). So the maternal is reduced to a “nothing” which “contains my dejecta” and “waste,” and becomes the abject (Kristeva, 1989, p15). Never again are the life and death drives so activated (Kristeva, 1980/1982). And the child separates from the ambiguous, heterogenous maternal to enter the homogenous Symbolic (Kristeva, 1980/1982; 1989; McAfee, 2004). The abject interspace preserves the memory of this immemorial violence because that’s where the meaning is. With the advent of the ego, objects and signs, ‘I’ am a logic of imitation; “I am like someone else” (Kristeva, 1980/1982, p10). “But when I *seek* (myself), *lose* (myself), or *experience* jouissance – then ‘I’ is heterogenous” (Kristeva, 1980/1982, p10). The abject remembers in a double time what must be forgotten, the charged moment of desire for the mother, and the moment of remembering, a moment of “revelation” (Kristeva, 1980/1982, p9). The double time is the maternal turned into an oblivion, and the “thunder” (Kristeva, 1980/1982, p9) is a dim reference that we get to remember. The abject holds and releases, refuses but is never absent, excludes but draws you in; it is always there because it is a part of you. It disturbs because it is without borders, it is uncontainable, it disrupts identity, systems and order (Kristeva, 1980/1982; McAfee, 2004). It is the filth, the waste, the corpse, the fluids of the dead, birth, a child, feces, milk, it is anything related to the maternal, like the incest taboo, anything that holds ambiguity (Kristeva, 1980/1982; McAfee, 2004). It is uncannily familiar, it is a cunning murder, premeditated crime, the traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience. The abject sets up the ambiguous opposition between I and Other, or between Inside and Outside (Kristeva, 1980/1982). It is a “braided, woven, ambivalent, a heterogenous flux” (Kristeva, 1980/1982, p10) that marks the territory that was the child’s (Kristeva, 1980/1982). The abject, rather than being a swallowing of maternal love, is rather a swallowing of maternal hatred, and requires constant cleansing through rituals of purification, exile and sacrifice, through the abjection of self (Kristeva, 1980/1982). It is the abominable real, inaccessible except through *jouissance* (pleasure or sexual excitement) (Kristeva, 1980/1982). Yet, underneath is fear: fear of the absence, and fear of the devouring mother (Kristeva, 1980/1982). Ultimately, fear brackets the abject maternal from the Symbolic (Kristeva, 1980/1982). The abject then is just a repulsive gift from the maternal Other to ensure ‘I’ don’t disappear, and instead, and from a sublime distance, ‘I’ can find the forfeited existence or the meaningful archaic. This archaic is related to the separation process from the mother that has evolved over time (Kristeva, 1980/1982) and it is also related to the mother-child bond

(Kristeva as cited in Oliver, 1997). Consequently, the figure of the maternal is exiled and scapegoated so that 'I' might live (Symbolically) (Kristeva, 1980/1982).

Kristeva's theory of the maternal and abject is a quest to open up a feminine potential for subjectivity (1980/1982). However, it does not seek to achieve this by privileging the female body or emphasizing a notion of gender. Nor is it any attempt to return to values as they relate to a static and utopian archaic mother myth (Guberman, 1996), as Jung's individuation, and "mother of unconscious" (Jung, 1959 p281), seem to be. In fact, Kristeva is abhorrently against any archaic return, particularly in the form of a women's society based on these values, claiming that it is exclusive and inevitably paternalistic (Guberman, 1996). Instead, Kristeva's theory is about privileging the space that precedes the Symbolic, the maternal space, which is at the heart of everything, and in doing so privileges a notion of singularity that multiplies and recognizes difference (Kristeva, 1980/1982; Guberman, 1996; Caputi, 1993). The maternal place does not exclude or distort, empty to fit prohibitions and laws, but provides space for the unnameable and heterogeneous feminine, the denied reproduction of the maternal, to become a realm of plurality, singularity, difference and innovation that men and women can access and speak from (Kristeva, 1980/1982). It is this crisis of subjectivity that art and religion come from and that marks the everyday with sounds and gestures (Kristeva, 1980/1982). The subject-in-process is always in a condition of contesting the law, either with the force of violence and "aggressivity" (Guberman, 1996, p18) of the death, or with pleasure and *jouissance* of the life drive (Kristeva, 1980/1982; Caputi, 1993). By listening to the abject, we are listening and trusting the mother's corporeal, sensory pleasure, as well as her intellect that performed the "sort of miracle" (Guberman, 1996, p10) that enabled the separation from the child while loving and teaching them to speak (Guberman, 1996; Caputi, 1993). In this way, Kristeva's theory of the maternal opens up Jung's patriarchally confined unitary Self into a potential space of feminine subjectivity. This space is an opening up to the maternal potential that, from a sublime distance "expand(s) us, overstrain(s) us, and causes us to be both her, as the deject, [the one who the abject exist for], and there as others and sparkling" (Kristeva, 1980/1982, p12). Interestingly, post-Jungians' *rapprochement* on Jung's formulation of individuation includes the important role of the mothers in the expression of the greater personality of the Self (Samuels, 1999). Post-Jungians state that, as the Self can only be experienced, at the beginning of life, when projected onto a parent, the ego-Self identity is formed by the mother/infant relationship (Samuels, 1999). Hence, an individual incarnation depends on the initial mother/infant relationship (Samuel, 1999).

Section 2 – Review of contemporary examples in literature

The “discovery” (Giorgio, 2002, p121) by second wave feminists of the primary role that a mother plays in a daughter’s passage to individuation is echoed in fictional narratives about the quest to reclaim this maternal relationship. Kristeva explains that separation from the mother-child symbiotic union is much more problematic for the girl because her specular identification as well as her introjection of the maternal body make the mother’s body something much more personal (Kristeva, 1989; Höpfl, 2004). “Indeed, how can She be that bloodthirsty Fury, since I am She (sexually and narcissistically), She is I?” (Kristeva, 1989, p29). So instead there is an inversion of the matricidal drive into an image of her mother as a corpse (Kristeva, 1989). The daughter’s hatred of her mother is locked inside her, and becomes an implied mood, “a permanent bitterness,” “that kills me secretly” (Kristeva, 1989, p29). She is then stuck with the choice of the phallic or the denied other (mother), both of which will neuter development of her Self. Kristeva suggests that one method of escape is through the imaginary register, as a writer of fiction, and with an active engagement with the imaginary maternal a certain lifting of repression is achieved (Guberman, 1996; Höpfl, 2004).

Over the past 30 years, women authors have deployed a variety of fictional narratives according to personal and cultural particularities in England, France, Germany and Austria, Ireland, Italy and Spain (Giorgio, 2002). Initially they focused on ‘matrophobia’ – hatred of the mother and fear of becoming her/ like her leading to rejection (Rich, 1976, p235). More recently, narratives by women authors, who are not necessarily feminist, have evolved from matricide into a “mother quest” (Giorgio, 2002, p120), or the daughter’s search for her Self through a recuperation of her maternal heritage. Earlier Italian examples of this mother-daughter narrative represent the abandoned daughter’s bid to connect to her mother, and her ultimate failure (Giorgio, 2002). In Elsa Morante’s (1951) *House of liars* (*Menzogna e sortilegio*), the central character, 25-year-old misanthropic Elisa, is prompted at the death of her adopted mother to reconstruct her family history and work out who she is (Giorgio, 2002). In this story, the daughter is ultimately unable to engage with her mother, and the failure of her individuation ends with an isolated domestic life with her cat (Giorgio, 2002). This comment by Giorgio assumes that marriage or a partnership are critical for a fulfilling life and seems to be a blindspot. Morante is the inspiration for the Italian author writing under the pseudonym Elena Ferrante (Donadio, 2014). This section will focus on Ferrante in its exploration of mother-daughter narratives. However, because Ferrante is Italian and a recent phenomenon, scholarly resource material translated into English is limited to four sources (Giorgio, 2002; Benedetti, 2007; Sambuco, 2012; Milkova, 2013), with further

supplementation through other English commentary in Australian and international media articles.

Ferrante's fame exploded in the USA in 2013 for her raw and honest ability to liberate the female experience and transform it into a reinvigorated human experience (Wood, 2013; Donadio, 2014; Valby, 2014; Badami, 2015; Harvey, 2015; Miller, 2015; Tolentino, 2015;). Although her writing conforms to a traditional plot driven narrative, she has been hailed for breaking new ground, with her work likened to *feminine ecriture* (Wood, 2013; Harvey, 2015). *Feminine ecriture* posits that if women are to discover and express who they are, they need to bring to the surface that which patriarchy has repressed – their sexuality, their bodily drives and their libidinal difference (Jones, 1981). Or as French feminist Helene Cixous (born 1937) proposes: the “body must be heard” (1976). While key media is feting Ferrante for her *feminine ecriture*, it could be argued that she only appears to be doing this because of her popularity. Other lesser known writers have also successfully worked with the body in text, and include Australians Marion Campbell (2007), Nikki Gemmell (2012) and the French writer Violette Leduc (1966/2012), for example. Ferrante's authorship by pseudonym has also stirred debate on the arrest of literature by the circus of media and its focus on esteemed authors (Wood, 2013; Donadio, 2014; Tolentino, 2015; Badami, 2015; Harvey, 2015; Miller, 2015).

There are seven Ferrante novels available in English, each translated by the American editor Ann Goldstein: *Troubling love* (2006/2016), *The days of abandonment* (2002/2015), *The lost daughter* (2008/2015), and her Neapolitan novel series of *My brilliant friend* (2012/2015), *The story of a new name* (2013/2015), *Those who leave and those who stay* (2014/2015) and *The story of the lost child* (2015). An English translation *Frantumaglia: An author's journey told through letters, interviews and occasional writings* (2016) is due to be published this year. Ferrante's novels explore “bad or unnatural” (Milkova, 2013, p91) mother-daughter relationships with the daughters' disgust and “furious attachment” (Giorgio, 2002, p51) to their mothers leading them to celibacy, the abandonment of their own daughters, or to seeking compensation by nursing inanimate objects (Milkova, 2013). Ferrante's women seek to escape prescribed feminine roles, are strong and educated, but inevitably surrender to the patriarchal order (Milkova, 2013). Their only escape is through disgust as they recall motherhood, their pregnant body, and the Neapolitan dialect of their mothers (Milkova, 2013; Tolentino, 2015). This opens a space for transgression and liberation on the slippery borders of the (horrifying) body fluids of the female body that have been made abject, and provides insight into the construction of femininity (Kristeva, 1980/1982; Milkova, 2013). An example of this writing is in *Troubling love* when the protagonist

Delia is surprised by her menstrual blood at a funeral, and by deceased mother's lover:

He followed me with his voice, which changed from courteous to a threatening hiss of words that became more and more vulgar. I was hit by a stream of obscenities in dialect, a soft river of sound that involved me, my sisters, my mother in a concoction of semen, saliva, feces, urine, in every possible orifice. (Ferrante, 1999/2006, p19)

The usefulness of disgust as a framework is that it indicates the disintegration of boundaries and exposes what exists beneath (Milkova, 2013). This breaks down categories and jettisons Ferrante's heroines beyond social and gender expectations (Milkova, 2013)

In Ferrante's first novel, *Troubling love*, the search for the lost mother can be read as an exchange of identities (Giancarlo Lombardi as cited in Mullenneaux, 2007), and as a liberation from childhood lies (Giorgio, 2002; Benedetti, 2007). But it is most convincing as a suffocating portrait of two women in a hostile world, bound and gagged by a Neapolitan sexual code (Mullenneaux, 2007). On Delia's birthday, the "bruise(d)" (Ferrante, 2006/2015, p14) body of her mother, Amalia, is found washed up on a shore, wearing only an expensive bra (Giorgio, 2002; Mullenneaux, 2007; Sambuco, 2012). Delia's investigations into her death become a preoccupation in her relationship to her mother, forcing her to connect to her ambivalence and ultimate rejection of her mother (Giorgio, 2002, Benedetti, 2007). In *Troubling love*, a complex puzzle is presented to the reader: the mother's exuberance oppressed by her jealous husband, who the narrator seems to side with; her mother's ambiguous relationship of more than 40 years with Caserta, who has some involvement with her death; and elaborate imitation and transposition of her mother's assumed erotic encounters which unravel with Delia becoming a victim of child abuse (Giorgio, 2002; Benedetti, 2007). The descent into Delia's psyche coincides with her descent into the city of Naples, "its interiors, its subways and the old basement shop" (Benedetti, 2007, p105) in which Delia is sexually abused (Benedetti, 2007). The descent begins when, after taking the elevator to the top floor of her mother's apartment building as she did when she was a child, Delia decides to meet her mother and her past (Benedetti, 2007).

I had always known it. There was a line that I couldn't cross when I thought of Amalia. Perhaps I was there in order to cross it. That frightened me. I pressed the button with the number 4 and the elevator jolted noisily. Creaking, it began to descend toward my mother's apartment. (Ferrante, 2006/2015, p25)

And so Delia's discovery of her Self, through memories of her mother, begins.

Delia models her love for and rage against her mother, Amalia, upon the obsessive jealousy and abuse by which her father tries to control his wife and her body (Giorgio,

2002; Benedetti, 2007). Delia's reaction to maternal otherness is shaped by a culture and language that associate love with violence and death (Giorgio, 2002). Italian Catholicism, and its privileging of the maternal figure in the Virgin Mary, have helped to make the mother an ambivalent figure who simultaneously encompasses authority and subordination, chastity and sexuality, the sacred and the profane (Giorgio, 2002). Even as an adult, Delia uneasily admits her ambiguous feelings and, when defending her mother against her uncle's aspersions (Benedetti, 2007), she is compelled to wonder if her support of her father's jealousy is not a cover for own belief that her "mother bore, inscribed in her body, a natural guilt, independent of her will and of what she actually did, ready to manifest itself in the right situation in every gesture, in every sigh" (Ferrante, 2006/2015, p55-56).

Paradoxically, Delia also desires to identify with her, to become her, or more precisely the version of Amalia as constructed by her husband's jealous fantasies (Benedetti, 2007). This leads five-year-old Delia to reproduce erotic connections with little Antonia, as she imagines her mother plays them out with Caserta, Antonia's father (Benedetti, 2007). And while she is convinced she is Amalia, she is simultaneously aware that she is not: "I was surely Amalia ... I was identical to her and yet I suffered for the incompleteness of that identity" (Ferrante, 2006/2015, p131). Antonia's grandfather then abuses Delia, and when she runs home to tell her family, confusion takes over, and perhaps also an unconscious desire to punish her mother for the events, and imitation is transposed onto Amalia and Caserta (Benedetti, 2007). Her father's savage beating of Amalia and Caserta is her last recalled childhood scene (Benedetti, 2007). These two memories, her sexual abuse and her mother's beating, revealed in a revelatory and liberating sequence, then enable Delia to understand her early rejection of her mother (Giorgio, 2002; Mullenneaux, 2007, Benedetti, 2007). In a moment of adult clarity she realizes that her decision not to become a mother herself is linked to her incapacity to connect with her own mother, and a way of finding middle ground between identification and rejection (Benedetti, 2007).

Alert now to the lies of her former memories, Delia sets about reversing their effect on her (Giorgio, 2002; Mullenneaux, 2007). Delia reclaims the gift of clothes from her mother, her mother's old suit and new clothes bought as birthday gifts for her, that are more feminine than anything she would normally wear and which are retrieved from the crumbling shop where she was sexually abused (Giorgio, 2002; Mullenneaux, 2007). She then dresses herself in the clothes that were her birthday gift, and is pleased to wear them with a new feminine confidence (Giorgio, 2002; Mullenneaux, 2007). If sex is a commodity exchanged amongst men, clothes are the items exchanged between mother

and daughter as “tokens of love and shared strength” (Mullenneaux, 2007, p248). Delia draws her mother’s hairdo around her face on her identity card photograph. “I looked myself, I smiled at myself. That old-fashioned hair-style ... suited me. Amalia had been there. I was Amalia” (Ferrante, 1999/2015, p126). This completes Delia’s response to Amalia’s offer of reconciliation.

In the novel’s final scene, Delia returns to the beach at Minturno where she had once spent a summer vacation with her family. She recalls the fear-filled holidays, dominated by her father’s jealousy and Amalia’s furtive behavior (Benedetti, 2007; Mullenneaux, 2007). She speculates on Amalia’s last and likely drunken hours with Caserta, her playful escape of the possessive male gaze that had dominated her life when she entered the water, and possibly her suicide by drowning (Giorgio, 2002; Benedetti, 2007). No longer driven by fear, Delia realizes her search has ended, and yet the mystery remains (Giorgio, 2002, Benedetti, 2007). “I had asked myself why my mother had decided to die in that place. I would never know. I was the only possible source of the story: I couldn’t nor did I want to search outside myself ”(Ferrante, 2006/2015, p137). These final words are as mysterious as the novel’s plot, yet can be seen to evoke a freedom related to Delia’s acknowledgement of her mother’s legacy, as represented by wearing her old clothes, and imitating her hairstyle (Giorgio, 2002; Benedetti, 2007). While the ending suggests regression (Mullenneaux, 2007), it could also be viewed as a “perpetuation of a disastrous confusion” (Benedetti, 2007, p107). However, Ferrante claims that she did not intend Delia’s loss of identity but rather the recovery of her sense of humour (Mullenneaux, 2007), and that playfulness now serves to tell Delia that a huge part of her baby self has become adult, has been accepted, and can coexist with the other aspects of a mature woman.

The violence Delia associates with Naples and Amalia’s sexuality are one, and the source of all her anxiety (Benedetti, 2007; Mullenneaux, 2007; Sambuco, 2012). Naples is an extension of the mother – Amalia’s – body, a “woman-city, yanked, trapped, beaten, pursued, humiliated, desired and yet gifted with her own extraordinary capacity to resist” (Ferrante as cited in Mullenneaux, 2007, from *La Frantumaglia*, Edizioni e/o, 2003, p69, to be available in English in November, 2016). At the beginning of *Troubling love*, Delia has divorced herself from her past geographically, linguistically and sexually. In the course of this novel, Ferrante deconstructs the opposition of mother and daughter until they are one: “I was Amalia” (Ferrante, 2006/2015, p139). Like many female narrators, Delia is left to untie the complex mother knot with only her mother’s memory, chasing a ghost through Naples. If the primacy of mother love is affirmed, so is the courage necessary to run a gauntlet of secrets and lies to break through to

selfhood (Mullenneaux, 2007). Ferrante takes risks – not only in writing of taboos like pedophilia and domestic abuse – but by charting her protagonist’s progress with an unblinking candor and painstaking precision (Mullenneaux, 2007). Delia comes to bury her mother and stays to make her peace with this tortured “woman city” (Mullenneaux, 2007; Benedetti, 2007). Amalia finally gives Delia the key to her life by the means and timing of her death (Giorgio, 2002). According to Giorgio (2002), Amalia’s drowning (a possible suicide) on her daughter’s birthday communicates her wish to kill the Delia who had both betrayed her as a child and rejected her as an adult, and to give birth to a new Delia.

Section 3 – Practice-led research supporting long fiction/novella

The practice-led approach I have pursued is based on the ideas of Haseman & Mafe (2009) and Carole Gray (1996). In *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the creative arts*, Gray provides the first definition of practice-led research as:

...firstly, research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners; and secondly, that the research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioner. (Gray, 1996, p3)

Therefore, practice is at the heart of research (Haseman & Mafe, 2009). Key to this Practice Led Research (PLR) approach is the appreciation of the creative practice as legitimate research and knowledge, possibly implicit, alongside other activity that helps to establish meaning or significance, and that is not based on thought alone (Gray, 1996; Haseman & Mafe, 2009; Webb & Lee Brien, 2010). “Practitioners think, read and write, as well as look, listen and make” (Haseman & Mafe, 2009, p214). Knowledge innovation emerges not as a knowledge report, or a mode of self expression, but as a desire for meaning (Kristeva, 1980, 1980/1982, 2010; Webb & Lee Brien, 2010). Or “True art, when it happens to us, challenges the ‘I’ that we are “ (Winterson, 1996, p15). Creative writing is not about scientific advancement, but about offering new ways of seeing that have the potential to invite reflective engagement and recast social and global relationships (Webb & Lee Brien, 2010).

The artist is a translator; one who has learned how to pass into her own language the languages gathered from stones, from birds, from dreams, from the body, from the material world, from the invisible world, from sex, from death, from love. (Winterson, 1996, p146)

Therefore, PLR has the potential to build new epistemologies of practice as long as the work and its methodologies of development are translated (Gray, 1996; Haseman & Mafe, 2009; Webb & Lee Brien, 2010; Barrett, 2011).

Between Haseman & Mafe (2009) and Gray (1996), six key conditions have been identified to ensure practice-led success. I will present these keys as I elaborate on my practice-led research.

The first key practice-led condition acknowledges that the very nature of the creative act means that the research question, problems or challenges cannot always be identified in advance. As the research is the creative act, the problem/question becomes unstable because it is in a constant process of emerging until candidature is complete (Haseman & Mafe, 2009; Webb & Lee Brien, 2010; Barrett, 2011). This is because creative writing is about surrendering to the unknown, to the “night” (Duras, 1998/2011, p17). To enter into the unknown is to be as “unconscious as possible ... (so that) nothing may disturb or disquiet the mysterious nosing ... and sudden discoveries of that very shy and illusive spirit, the imagination” (Woolf as cited in Barret, 1931/1992, p61). “The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality” (Eliot, 1922/1982, p36). But it is to be unconscious in a way that “is a state of super-consciousness” (Winterson, 1996, p173) because we are entering dangerous territory. Writing from the unconscious is to attempt to unbury and re-discover that which has been excluded (Kristeva, 1980, 1980/1982, 2010), the ephemeral as well as the forbidden primal nightmares - otherwise it’s not worthwhile (Cixous, 1993). Therefore, writing from the unconscious is a combination of surrender and will; it’s writing from the heart, following the energy, but with intention (Vesselago-Turner, 2013). This is a spiritual exercise; the art instinct is the same as the God instinct (Winterson, 1996). When I think of writing, it is as if I were a flame, alert and in the dark, nosing my way forward tremulously. I am at once fired by and remote from my material.

Because the creative writing process is frequently a strong call to understand, the inquiry will be predominantly be a ‘feeling’ forward into the unknown. When I began my practice-led research, I found that I was in the perfect writing position. I was, as Duras suggests, in a “hole ... with something terrible to overcome ... empty” (1998/2011, p8). I felt I was depending on writing to save me (Duras, 1998/2011). So, like Elena Ferrante (Donadio, 2014), I found I write to myself first and then to my younger selves and my older selves, and then to my ideal reader, another woman who might be experiencing the same sense of being in that hole. And, for me, the writing is about joining the past, present and the future together to uncover that juicy sublime (Winterson, 1996). And, when I write, I do so with a voice that comes from my body,

that is autobiographical (Perry, 2007) but also fictionalized (Winterson, 1996), that is an intimate sharing but simultaneously, I hope, can also be a public declaration (Winterson, 1996). This is what Cixous (1993) calls the Indian Rope Trick, and T.S. Eliot (1922/1982) calls impersonal writing, freeing the writing from the weight of my personality so that it can express more than, other than, and be in full imaginative play (Winterson, 1996). It attempts to go beyond the personal and the political, to address, as Virginia Woolf declared in a 1931 to the National Society for Women's Services, the meaning of life itself (Woolf, as cited in Barret, 1992).

And so I write as if I were dying, and it somehow (sometimes) feels as if I am dying, and this is perfect, too (Cixous, 1993; Atwood, 2003/2013). As I write, I am searching for meaning by avowing the unavowable. And this means that I descend to "the scene of the crime" (Cixous, 1993, p45), the worst of the worst, crimes committed on loved ones, that can never be resolved, because it's related to the human tendency to paradoxically love, hate and exclude (Cixous, 1993; Winterson, 1996; Atwood, 2003/2013). And this is repulsive, and, according to Cixous, *immunde* (unclean), which recalls Kristeva's abject (Kristeva, 1980/1982; Cixous, 1993). Cixous discusses writing being a descent through dying, dreaming (Jacob's ladder) and abandoning ourselves to the outcast *immunde* (1993). For me, it's both an ascent and a descent, it's tuning into deeper selves in my body, to somewhere else outside; it's entirely physical, it plays itself inside me and outside me (Cixous, 1993), and it runs out of my fingers, and I write it and read it as if encountering it for the first time. In that moment, it feels as if I know as much as the reader does. It could go anywhere. There is a skeleton of an idea, but mostly it's just letting all these inside and outside parts of me find the way into words.

This can only happen in an unknown and deep silence. It favors low light. There is a deep listening, like my cat's ears are open and filled with sunshine or my every physical fear filled with the stillness of night. I am split in two, the writer dying and living, the individual in the world who simultaneously lives and dies. (Cixous, 1993; Winterson, 1996; Atwood, 2003/2013; Dillard, 1990; Duras; 1998/2011). And the other unknown is whether I can actually do this. But then I never feel that my 'true' writing is mine, anyway. This is why writing must be an act of complicity, because the writing feels as if it is not coming from me (Winterson, 1996; Duras, 1998/2011). So I cover my computer screen with a cloth, so that I don't see the words, and in that way the words, the images in my mind and I can be one, I can fall into that gap between prohibition and transgression, that interspace where exists a strength and wisdom beyond myself (Kristeva, 1980/1982; Winterson, 1996). This technique, called Freefall, I picked up when attending a one-week workshop in Denmark with Barbara Vesselago-Turner

(2013), in November, 2008.

And I write from the unknown in the body. This helps me to be there in every moment of the scene, to go “in the direction of truth” (Cixous, 1993, p36). I become the fiction (Winterson, 1996). From my body I hear the words as they land, feel out their shape with my fingertips, their colour, as if I’m painting and, importantly, I also imagine that the rhythm of my breath carries over and into the words because I want the reader to breathe that rhythm too, so that the story becomes a shared lived experience, and in that way becomes something we can both believe in and in some way be nourished by (Cixous, 1993; Winterson, 1996; Atwood, 2003/2013; Elena Ferrante as cited in Donadio, 2014). This, at least, is my aim.

In this PLR process, for the first time I wonder if this way of writing can only happen for a woman. Does my unconscious, in seeking out the forbidden, go immediately to my body? Is my need to write so urgent because it is about expressing what has been denied me all my life, so urgent in order that I might live? The advocates of *feminine ecriture* would agree with this (Cixous, 1976; Jones, 1981). In contrast, Kristeva rejects the notion of a woman’s way of writing as a One Woman, universalist approach, and instead advocates that writing be about the exploration of differences, and the discovery of singularities (Guberman, 1996). Kristeva’s body writing, or her discourse of the maternal “semiotic” (Kristeva, 1980, p133) honours a poetic space that men and women can use to re-experience the *jouissance* of the pre-linguistic maternal realm and, in this way, constantly and vigilantly challenge the Symbolic order (Kristeva, 1980). And yet, seemingly in contradiction, Kristeva also posits writing as a crucial form of cathexes for women in their complicated renegotiating of their lost realm of the maternal (Kristeva, 1980/1982; Guberman, 1996).

So, I wonder if my body writing is perhaps my personal approach to reclaiming this lost maternal and connecting to its sublime edges for meaning and direction. I have written so very deeply from my body that some scenes, painful coming out of me, have stayed with me - in the sensation of something stuck my throat, for example - for days afterwards. And the scene of the crime in my novella, the Iraqi man’s body, ‘arrived’ when I misinterpreted news events in such a way that it repeated on my body, with a “shock of memory,” (Winterson, 1996, p57) and in which the real writing for this Honours project began. So, as Cixous (1993) says, in my experience of writing ‘Listening’ it was about finding the scene of the crime.

As well as uncovering that scene of the crime, it’s also about re-discovery (Winterson, 1996), about connecting to the mystery of the sublime, and making the

world and our place in it clearer by trying to “set the liquid day” (Winterson,1996, p76) to “reveal a genuine coherence and not one manufactured for the moment” (Winterson,1996, p87). “Art shows us how to be more than we are. It is heightened, grand, an act of effrontery” (Winterson,1996, p93). This is also what I strive for.

So to write from the unconscious is to follow a line of words as if it is “a miner’s pick, a wood carver’s gouge, a surgeon’s probe. You wield it, and it digs a path you follow” (Dillard,1990, p3). Consequently, “Doubt equals writing” (Duras,1998/2011, p10). I must hold myself in the deepest of quiet, like that alert flame, finding my way through a darkness that goes in all directions, that has no ground except for the trusting forward movement, slow as an inch worm, like a ladybird swaying on a tip of grass, ready to fall, and then letting go. “Against daily insignificance art recalls to us possible sublimity” (Winterson, 1996, p59). As Virginia Woolf says, “The inexhaustible energy of art is transfusion for a worn-out world” (cited in Barret,1992). This is why the research question is subject to constant change and emerging (Cixous,1993; Haseman & Mafe, 2009; Dillard,1990; Vesselago-Turner, 2013).

The second practice-led research key element is the repurposing of the creative practice into research methods, such as use of a journal and/or media files. This repurposing has been multidisciplinary, and has taken a “scavenger methodology” (Haseman & Mafe, 2009, p223) or “bricoleur-bowerbird” (Webb & Lee Brien, 2010, p201) approach, drawing from a range of techniques and processes. In the process of writing ‘Listening’, I was constantly raiding and translating (Winterson, 1996) and documenting. I created an electronic studio through the software program Scrivener (see Attachment 1), filing the many scenes. Because I try to write from the unconscious and from my body, I initially capture scenes in fragments without knowing where they will be placed or how they will be developed. Some of these scenes are ruminations on autobiographical events, written in third person and fictionalized through acts of imagination. This process was borrowed from Nicole Krauss’ *The history of love* (2005) and inspired by her protagonist Leo Gursky, a budding writer, who used this technique. In the writing of ‘Listening’, I continued to read, drawn to books I happened upon and which were recommended to me. They tended to be explorations on dying (Didion, 2005; Garner, 2008), transformation (Wolkstein & Kramer, 1983; Krauss, 2005; Macdonald, 2014; Winterson, 1996; Oates, 1992; Lispector, 1977/2014; 1964/2012) and mid life crisis (Winton, 2013). It was Elizabeth Harrower’s *The watch tower* (1966/2012) and its harrowing depiction of two girls abandoned by their mother in 1940s Sydney that led me to Elena Ferrante’s work, which I first read without any appreciation of her popularity, and which provided me with an imaginative entry into

my Honour's project.

The third key condition of my practice was the critical context of my practice-led research. Specific theories of Jung and Kristeva helped to identify my story's mid life context and the mother-daughter narrative, and directed me to write from my body about an individual woman's experience from an unconscious representation that was both psychic and physical (see Attachment 2). Because women's marginalization today is still a serious issue (Kristeva, 2014; Elena Ferrante as cited in Donadio, 2014), I was encouraged to amplify the challenges to a woman of what we colloquially call becoming 'who they really are' (Jung, 1953/1970) by setting up the female protagonist in a romantic entanglement with a devout and traditional Muslim man who, because of his own values, would test her patriarchal notion of sacrifice for service of the other sex. The choice of a devout Muslim character also resonated beyond this essay's individuation narrative to make a comment about Australia's engagement with difference. I acknowledge that this opens up a whole new conversation, but this paper does not give me the space to further discuss this. Ultimately, the monitoring through the media of Islamic State (IS) terrorist atrocities and the backlash of prejudice in Australia and elsewhere accumulated such intense emotion within me that, it seems, it then translated to an imaginative error and created my scene of crime. This series of events is further elaborated later in this section.

The fourth key practice-led research element was to engage in "professional frames" (Haseman & Mafe, 2009, p216). While I had a general story arc, as previously outlined, a significant part of my creative writing practice is an intuitive one, involving writing in fragments, and putting these together like a jigsaw. I write in this way because I am interested in exploring innovative ways of communicating through writing, as opposed to reproducing plot-driven stories more in line with conventional cinema or television. However, in the course of this novella's creation, I oscillated between my intuitive writing practice and what I termed my 'safety net'. Martha Alderson's *The plot whisperer: Secrets of story structure any writer can master* (2011) gave me practical tools to examine my plot and character development. In the initial stages of writing I used Alderson's *Scene Tracker* to profile and then chart my protagonist's emotional development (see Attachment 3). Alderson's *Universal Plot* tool gave me a technical distance from my story, providing clear views of the gaps (see Attachment 4). In this way I was able to identify that my crisis event and my climax event needed to be extended in order to achieve the desired emotional intensity.

The fifth practice-led research key is the anticipation of the creative work into this

paper. This meant that the will that guided my unconscious writing maintained its clear inquiry about how the function of shame and guilt in the mother-daughter dyad affected a woman's individuation process. Kristeva's theories began with the potential revolution of writing that recalled the unnameable maternal through acts like poetry, progressed to her maternal theory including the abject, and then to issues of national identity, with the central thesis being that a disconnect with the irrecoverable foreigner or Other on the inside was being projected negatively on the outside (Kristeva, 1974/1984; Caputi, 1993; Höpfl, 2004). Interestingly, it is only when I completed my story, and was then reviewing Kristeva's work in minute detail that I realized that my creative work is a perfect mirror of her ideas. I find that the plot is an echo of Kristeva's belief that daughters carry the corpse of their mothers and that the best cathexes of this Symbolic phenomenon is through writing, as is my protagonist's desire. A further echo of Kristeva in the story is my protagonist's attempt to resolve international (and romantic) issues through engagement with the foreignness of a migrant man of Muslim faith (Guberman, 1996).

The sixth practice-led research key was creating space for reflexivity to respond to "shocks of memory" (Winterson, 1996, p57). On a weekend morning with friends, on my birthday in fact, I purchased a takeaway coffee from the Shipping Lane café by Leighton Beach and misread the front page of *The West Australian* (See Attachment 5). In simultaneously conflating two stories and then creatively extending them, I had the crime scene for my Honours project (Cixous, 1993). The stories in *The West Australian* were: A man washed up on the shores of Trigg beach with bound feet; and the Muslim leaders urging mosques to fly the Australian flag on Australia Day. My conflation and creative extension had an Iraqi man being the deceased on the beach, and the Muslim community opening their mosques on Australia Day.

Conclusion

We can connect to the potential feminine/maternal subjectivity by "opening the ears" (Kristeva, 2010, p685) to the hidden erotic, our inside and outside, that looms in language (Kristeva, 2010; Bedient, 1990; Caputi, 1993; Oliver, 1993; McAfee, 2000, 2004; Balsam, 2014). By listening "through language" (Kristeva, 2010, p680), we understand language beyond its linguistic principles to its practice of sublimating the pre-Symbolic, the realm of the maternal erotic or what Kristeva terms the semiotic, in her discourse: the revolution of poetics (Kristeva, 1974/1984, 2010; Bedient, 1990; Caputi, 1993; Oliver, 1993; McAfee, 2004; Höpfl, 2004; Balsam, 2014). The underwater movements (sublimations) of the semiotic, are not just devices of repression and

idealization, but infinitely expanding creative and, thereby, cultural signals (Kristeva, 2014; Caputi, 1993; Oliver, 1993). They are the “impudence [*Shamlosigkeit*] of uttering” (Kristeva, 2010, p681), they are carnivalesque, ludic and/or poetic, they are “partial disburdening, indefinite, infinite, [that are] never total” (Kristeva, 2010, p684), they are Eros and Thanatos; and in naming they prevent us from acting (Kristeva, 2014; Oliver, 1993). Kristeva claims that even the most modest everyday utterance can alchemically transform the original complications of enjoyment (*plaisir*) into the pleasure (*jouissance*) of searching for oneself by means of the semiotic maternal realm or the abject (Kristeva, 1980, 2010).

The power of language as a semiotic practice to connect a subject to a potential feminine/maternal subjectivity is most evident in the material of writers (Kristeva, 2010; Caputi, 1993). These writers, male (for example, Joyce, Proust) (Guberman, 1996; Kristeva, 2010) or female, will produce “sublimations of exception” (Kristeva, 2010, p685) that actualize the aesthetic experience with a “bang” (Kristeva, 2014, p685). Interestingly, and in contrast to her non-gendered maternal theory, Kristeva highlights that the creative potential of women writers is enhanced given their “mother-child bone” (Guberman, 1996, p2). Referring to the French author Collette, Kristeva highlights that banal signs with universal meaning can be transformed into words, which connect directly to sensations, the affects and the drives (Kristeva, 2010): “[...] For me, a certain word suffices to recreate the smell or the color of lived experiences; the word is as sonorous, full and mysterious as a shell where the sea sings” (Collette as cited in Kristeva, 2010, p685). The word then is “larger than the object of reference” (Kristeva, 2010, p686), just as the “word ‘sea’ [is] greater than water” (Kristeva, 2010, p686). Consequently, sublimation, rather than repressing the sexual impulse, converts it, and through the medium of communication, loads it with its multiple layers of affects and drives (Kristeva, 2010).

This experience of language is not necessarily a regression: while it respects repression, it renders it more subtle and porous, permeable to the pull of drives, which, thus filtered by words, becomes other than desire-pleasure [*plaisir*]. It is rather a displacement of the perversion inherent to the part-object of desire-pleasure into a foreign fetish-object, which is a third and universal medium: It is language transformed into an object of pleasure [*jouissance*]. (Kristeva, 2010, p686)

Kristeva asserts that the words of a writer are signs filled with the original pleasures of the drives and their conversions into meaning (Kristeva, 2010; McAfee, 2004). Heterogeneity is, therefore, “a cohabitation of drive and meaning, one never without the other” (Kristeva, 2010, p687). While writing can transpose affects and the drive

into culture by sublimation of the feminine potential of subjectivity (Kristeva, 2010), Kristeva claims the woman-subject will never truly be free until there is an ethics of the maternal that enables ideology to be rendered into practice (Kristeva, 2014). While psychoanalysts provide a frame for individual subjects to negotiate libidinal drives, Kristeva claims it does not support a civilization do so (Kristeva, 2010, 2014). In acknowledgement of the ‘crisis’ of civilisation, which Jung, referring to World War 1, calls barbarism, both Kristeva and Jung advocate that societies and nation states need to find a way to connect to their irrational unconscious (Jung, 1953/1970, 1959; Guberman, 1996). Kristeva claims that, with the psychoanalytic unburying of the wild and creative libidinal drives, there is potential for societies to thrive beyond repression and ideals (Kristeva, 2010). However, she is concerned that its potential benefit is today constrained by its meaningless and “mediatic” (Kristeva, 2010, p691) commodification, and by the return of prohibitive and fundamentalist religions that do not fit with our predominantly pluralistic and heterogenous societies (Kristeva, 2010). She asserts “(w) e are all fragile, premature beings, and we seek to cling not to a real mother perhaps, but to something we can depend on and use to satisfy our needs” (Guberman, 1996, p73). While Jung claims that we are “barbarians” (Jung, 1953/1970, p4) who need to connect to our Shadow, Kristeva’s solution is a new social ethic.

Herethics! Is this not another word for empathy? To engage in permeable borders. To engage in a world where borders of individual, sex, gender, reproduction, communication, nature, nation state are all exploding. To engage with listening “ears” and eyes, from the body, that’s always changing. That knows itself along lines certain as water. Like the borders of the maternal figure. The Virgin Mary was ‘reduced’ to milk and tears, but in fact isn’t this the jouissance the world needs. Which is why she’s cross-cultural. Milk, which is a source of creativity, and tears a source of listening. There’s a cyclical and monumental time in these essences that encompasses life and death, without a cyclical bloody vengeful violence.

Kristeva’s notion of a new ethic seems to advocate for the establishment of a new kingdom (Kristeva, 1976/1985, 1977/1995, 2010, 2014; McAfee, 2004), one that is not just a reworking of a new language which disturbs with the sounds and rhythms from the semiotic maternal, but an ethics called Herethics based on the all inclusive nature of maternal love, (Kristeva, 2010). The new kingdom would require a necessary departure from the moralistic, punitive and authoritarian discourses of patriarchy and religion (Kristeva, 1974/ 1984, 2014). It would require the revaluing of the maternal figure, including incestual values (Freud as cited in Kristeva, 2014), to recognise the mother’s crucial role in the foundation of

Sometimes when I cry the tears are hot. Under a microscope they are shapes of a barren landscape. My tears are the oceans, the in-between that joins the pieces of myself. Not into a single stable unit, but into something like a mosaic, or stained glass, lit by sun and things I cannot see. A connection to my interior on the outside. When I follow my tears of joy and pain, like rain down a window pane, I find myself, and I can connect on an edge of the sublime. When I follow the wobbly thread of laughter, it's the same. When I pursue uncertainty over security, I can move more, flow in grooves with seasons and cycles. That embrace dark clouds, welcome foreigners. And I can accept the mother in me. And when I write, this is milk to me.

culture through her “enigmatic signifiers” (Laplanche as cited in Kristeva, 2014, p78). Kristeva claims that the mother inhabits the fragile, forbidden place, the interspace, the abject border, and a “state of emergency in life” (Kristeva, 2014, p75) from which she uniquely “ ‘sprouts’ (her) libidinal forces as tenderness” (Kristeva, 2014, p75). It is this maternal abject foreign border that Kristeva says is at the heart of it all, that becomes the essential model for her new ethics (Kristeva, 2010, 2014).

Kristeva’s new kingdom, like the city of Colonus at which the blind and exiled Oedipus arrives (Kristeva, 1980), would be a democracy that understands and learns from transgressions (like murder and incest), because we are all abject, mortal and speaking (Kristeva, 1980, 2010, 2014). It is a place where the subject is desiring and responsible, is caring and tolerant, with laws that come from the “flesh, language and jouissance” (Kristeva, 1976/1984, p151) (Kristeva, 1974/1984; Guberman, 1996).

This new ethic is a democracy of the multiple, and in this perspective, is about seeing individual singularities, not based on sex or gender, but based on the inclusive love, like that felt by a mother for an other that is not quite her (Kristeva, 1976/1985, 1977/1995, 1980, 2010, 2014; Guberman, 1996; McAfee 2004). Kristeva’s new kingdom encompasses the desire to reproduce (and to maintain stability), and which is always interacting, procreating, rejecting and giving birth to new ideas (Kristeva as cited in Guberman, 1996). Kristeva’s new kingdom reclaims women’s excluded and defiled abject position into a vigilant, marginalized position that disturbs and breaks the laws of the Symbolic father’s tendency to homogenization and potential oppression (Guberman, 1996). Women/the feminine become the irreducible foreigner that ensures individuation and innovation (Guberman, 1996; Kristeva 1980, 2010, 2014; McAfee, 2004).

“The free woman is just being born,” wrote Simone de Beauvoir in the *Second Sex* (1949, p723). However, Kristeva claims, there will not be a free woman while we lack an ethics of the maternal, and it is this ethics that is just being born, and it will be a herethics (Kristeva, 2014; McAfee, 2004).

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ATTACHMENT 2 Honour’s theory integrated into plot and character goals for ‘Listening’

| STORY LEVELS (Kapur, 2009) | IN SUMMARY | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| | Overall story goal | Mid life transformation | | | | | |
| | What stands in his/her way | An unresolved mother-daughter relationship | | | | | |
| | What does she stand to lose | Connection to self | | | | | |
| | Integrating theory with plot and character goals | | | | | | |
| | Theory | Beginning - Crack in identity | End of Beginning - Forced to leave mother country | Halfway - At sea | Crisis | Climax | RESOLUTION |
| Psychological/ political/historical | Typical post Jungian midlife stages (Murray Stein as cited by Vicker-Willis, 2008) | Beginning: There is a crack in identity. Many of the ideals, hopes, beliefs, attitudes and structures that have been life foundations start to disappear.. | End of the beginning: A person will need to let go of old structures, including attitudes and family members that are no longer congruent with emerging ones. It will involve grieving, forgiving self and others. It will involve connecting to the feminine energy of joy in living, beliefs in just being and a trust in life, that parents could not pass on. | Halfway mark/ or the point of liminality: The socially adapted ego is surrendered. Negotiation of this transition will depend on past experiences, inner resources, outer support, individual personality, personality development, and attitude towards change. Any unresolved grief from the past may emerge and need to be dealt with as a person moves through this transition. This may be a period of confusion and bewilderment. | Crisis: Separated from solid ground and floating in unfamiliar seas, with an unknown future, a person at this stage will meet a range of antagonists that will force them to their knees and to reclaim strengths they were born with, and strengths they have discovered while on this journey. Antagonists/ archetypes include the shadow, anima/animus, wise old woman. | | In the end there is a sense of standing on solid ground. The answers are no longer pursued externally. A new sense of Self is born. A key task of reintegration is the reassessment of goals, increasing awareness of what was the ego and what is Self, continuing to integrate opposites, remaining open to ongoing change and development, developing increased congruence in all aspects of life, including going with the flow of life. Others will perceive a natural, open, centred, authentic, accepting and joyous. The person will be aware of an ease within themselves and an excitement about life that at times feels like magic. |
| | Jung Midlife (1933; 1953/1970; 1959; 1964) | Nothing has a stronger influence psychologically on their environment and especially on their children than the unlive d life of the parent. | Irruption of Shadow (guilt and shame), and Anima (the feminine principle). Through dreams, waking dreams, synchronicities. | | This is a fight to the death. | | Connection to Self with a transformation occurring. |
| | Kristeva maternal theory and mother-daughter narrative trends (Kristeva, 1989, Giorgio, 2002) | It is acknowledged that the negative valuing of the figure of the maternal to facilitate entry into the Symbolic is more challenging for the girl, who has a body like her mother. This is because she can't symbolically kill her mother like her brother, instead inverts her matricidal drive into an image of her mother as a corpse. | | | Recognition of the disconnect from figure of the maternal/mother or and therefore a positive sense of self. Connecting to and loving the mother corpse inside. | Renegotiating meaning in the mother-daughter relationship. | Connecting to her mother and a potential feminine subjectivity that embraces difference. Renegotiating split from mother-daughter bond through imaginary register of writing. |
| Plot | Plot stages (Alderson, 2011) | Beginning: Establish time and place. Set up dramatic action and underlying conflict that will run throughout. Introduce characters, who they are, their emotional make-up and their weight in the story. Allude to theme. Introduce protagonist short term goal, hint at long term goal. Set up promise and limitation. Opening of story introduces core conflict, and become basis of dramatic action - protagonist wants something she thinks she cannot have. | End of the beginning: Something happens to make old world contract. She doesn't fit in. She embarks on a journey to exotic world. At this point the here and now is grounded, but all elements of climax are foreshadowed. | Halfway: Represents major turning point. She is confronted with a new and strange world of opposites. Gradually this turn dark. The more unusual the mindset, beliefs and surroundings the better. | Crisis: Appears as failure, brokenness, fear, emptiness, alienation - loss and suffering. She has a crisis decision - to resist it she becomes a victim, to yield to it and will become a victor. | Climax: Character reconnects with ultimate destiny. There is a promise of transformation and release. | Resolution: Is the sum of the protagonist's action. Overview of whole story and how protagonist has been transformed. |
| Mythological | Below- The descent of Inanna (Harding, 1971; Wolkstein & Kramer, 1983; Gadon, 1989; Baring & Cashford, 1993) | Separation from family: Inanna is unhappy and in the middle of her life. And so decides to descend to the underworld/unconscious, and see her sister/mother/grandmother Ereshkigal. The descent myth of Inanna begins with: 'From the Great Above she opened her ear to the Great Below' (Wolkstein & Kramer, 1983, p52). | Before Inanna descends into the underworld where know one ever comes back, she lets the Wind God, Enil know so she can call on him should she need help. | Regression to a pre-natal state: Inanna descends, and the 7 veils of 'Me' that are representative of her culture must be discarded. She is named "Guilty" by the creatures of the underworld as she descends. | Death, dismemberment, suffering: When she meets Ereshkigal, her sister/mother/grandmother is so enraged at having been ignored in the underworld for so long and for the death of her husband, that she turns Inanna into a slab of meat and throws her on a stake. The God of Wind Enil understands this, turns dirt in his fingernails to galatur creatures that will be able to venture to the underworld and come back. He advises them to listen to Ereshkigal. And to repeat whatever she says. Ereshkigal cries "Oh! Oh! My inside ... Oh! Oh! My outside.' | Rebirth: And for their listening they are allowed to return Inanna to the world of the living, on the condition that she find a replacement. When she re-emerges, she is no longer nice Inanna, but she returns with underworld demons, and now she is looking to kill another. | Killing of another: Her ungrateful husband Dumuzi is chosen to replace her, and then as a compromise, her Dumuzi gets to shares this lot with his sister Geshitanna, in a cycle that reflects the seasons. |
| Story | Listening's key scenes | Attack of Iraqi man. | Rachel and Aamir go to Mosque Open Day on Australia Day. | Rachel discovery of News of attack. | Rachel shower breakdown. | Rachel sunset 'cut'. | Rachel writing. |
| | Listening dreams/archetypes | Rachel's childhood dream where she is running above the earth presents interior reality that mother earth is unsafe. | Rachel dreams that she is being floated away down a river naked presents her emotional vulnerability. | Rachel's physical and interior response is a series of condensations and displacements of her own fears and childhood experiences. | Rachel's waking dream brings her face to face with the challenge of her relationship to her mother, and simultaneously an understanding that she was like her - always feeling sorry, guilty and beaten. Later through an alter ego of the bronzen woman, she is able to connect to her own power. | Rachel reclaims her own power. She can no longer shape shift to another even if it means giving up love. She feels the change of this in the air, like a wheel turning over. | With new insight, Rachel connects to her mother and father, and starts to listen to herself and pursue her dream to write. |
| | Protagonist goals (Alderson, 2008) | To find herself through romantic love. | To resolve lack of love in world so she can have romantic love in her life. | To resolve lack of love in world so she can have romantic love in her life. | To resolve lack of love in world so she can have romantic love in her life. | Self love and self commitment involving pursuit of her dream to write. | Self love and self commitment involving pursuit of her dream to write. |
| | What obstacles interfere with her success (Alderson, 2008) | Her disconnection from her mother. | East/West conflict | The mysterious attack on the Iraqi man, likely a Muslim | Her emotions and increasing sense that this love is not right | Her relationship with Aamir | Her romantic relationship with Aamir |
| | What does she stand to lose if not successful (Alderson, 2008) | Opportunity to have a enduring loving companion. | Opportunity to have a enduring loving companion. | Connecting to her emotions, forcing her way through denial. | Connecting and recalibrating her relationship with her mother. | | Opportunity to transform the second half of her life and live from her own values. |

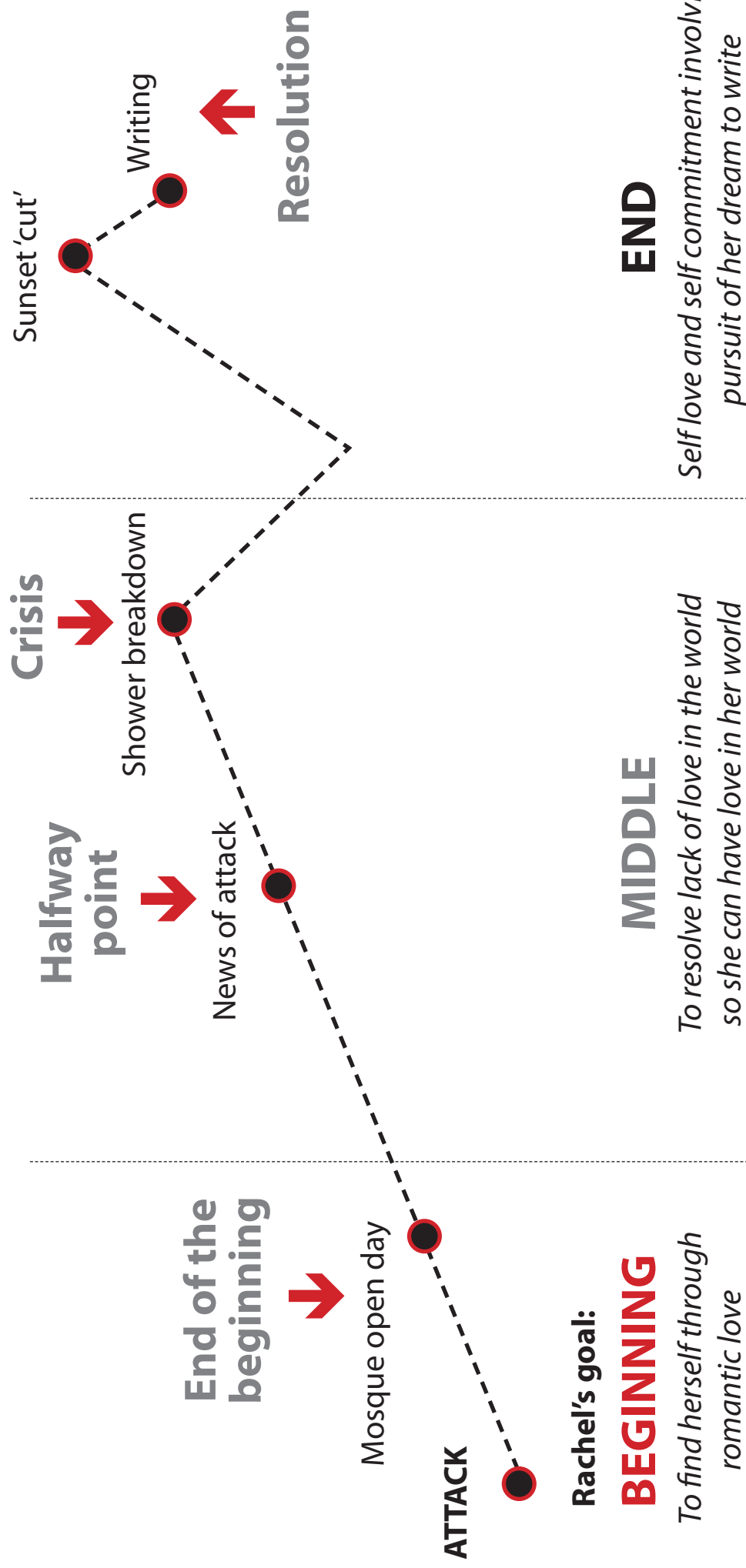
Plot planner for 'Listening'

THEME

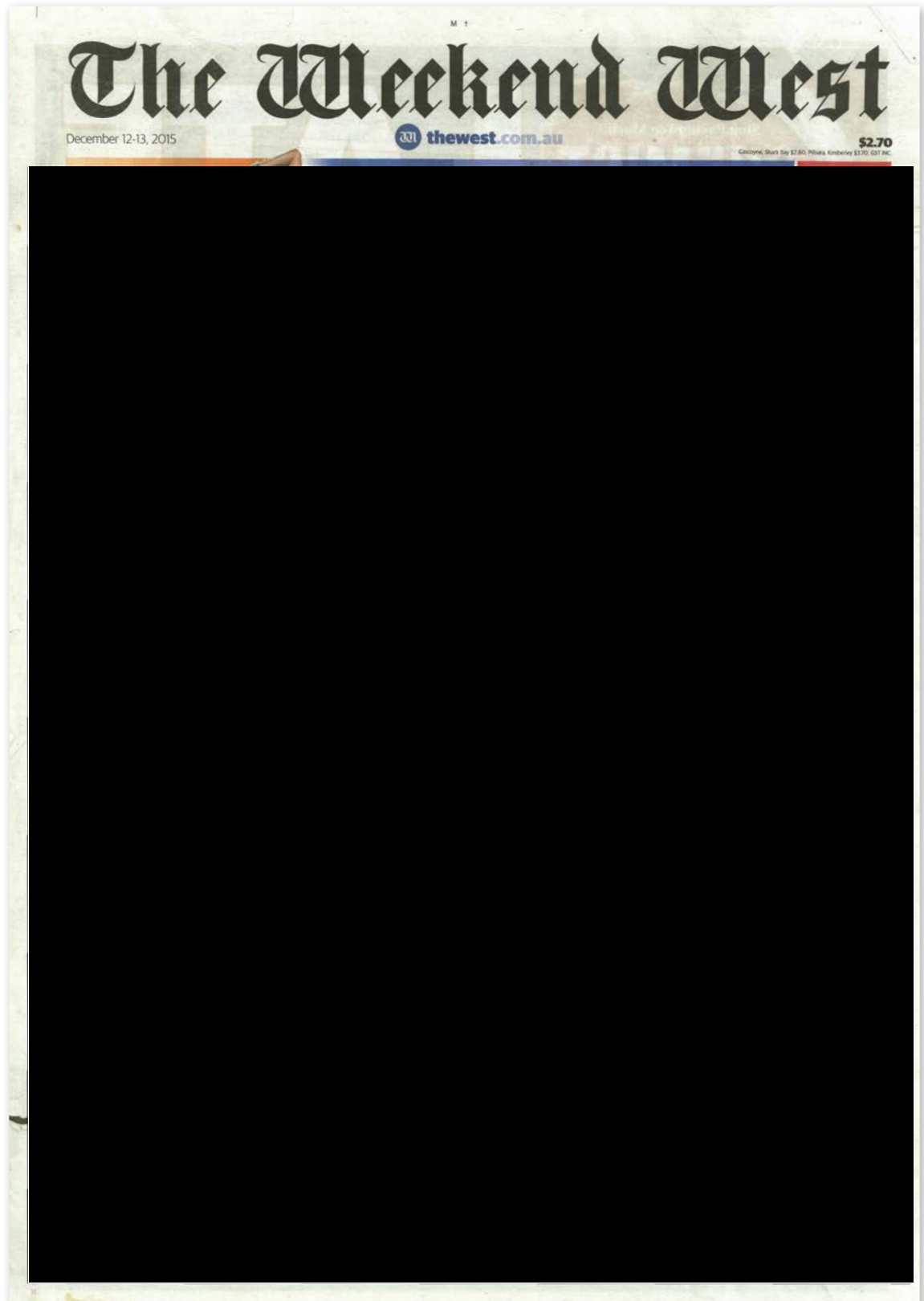
That, if women in a postmodern culture can recognize the unconscious function of how shame and guilt work on their subjectivity, in the context of the denied feminine principle of the maternal, they may come closer to experiencing what we colloquially call 'who they really are' (Jung, 1953/1970; Kristeva, 1980/1982).

OR

Giving up the 'beaten' mother.



Inspiration for the scene of the crime for 'Listening'
(Cixous, 1993)



ATTACHMENT 5

Inspiration for the scene of the crime for 'Listening' (Cixous, 1993)

