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Decentring the self - a Journey or The ‘I’ Becoming Universal

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Abstract

This thesis follows a journey through a changing relationship to self over the four years of study. I consider this journey from an individual, social, political, and theoretical perspective. I consider the interrelationships between these perspectives. I have chosen an eclectic ontology of becoming and epistemology of the encounter, a challenge the Cartesian structure of more classical ontologies and epistemologies. By choosing an ontology of becoming I consider the possibility my ontological position can be overthrown or challenged in a face-to-face encounter. Associated with the ontological position is an epistemology of body, I challenge the societal centring of cognitive and representational knowledge. This ontology and epistemology are unpredictable and unintentional. Unlike representational structure and knowledge, they allow for spontaneity, transgressing norms and forming new meanings.

I adopt a 'method' called thinking without method which supports the spontaneity and the possibility of new knowledge and the decentring of ontologies to be produced in the relational encounter. This method doesn’t follow any specific procedures, instead it aims to engage in the writing process without form or idea of where the work will end. The reason for choosing this method is to allow whatever arises from the process of writing as I register my thoughts, feelings, and actions. The decentring of self aims to listen to the otherness of the other more profoundly. This is the thesis’s relevance to the field of psychotherapy. The first step was to come to terms with my own energetic knots in order to prevent my practice from becoming ‘translating my own old translations’. I explore how I can listen, construct a container that can provide a Copernican openness, that supports a container that can hold the client’s material to make possible a working through. I must ‘abandon understanding, preoccupations, memory’, the abandonment is only possible after coming to terms with my own energetic knots.

Part I considers the themes produced above in relation to my personal history and present reality. I consider times I have been silenced, times I have had to disavow femininity at school to be accepted and the attempts to escape or destroy my emotional suffering rather than work through it. This is part of the journey to reclaim my ‘I’ and take ownership of the traumatic elements of my history. Part II considers my work as a therapist. I explore how the structures can silence the voice of the those they seek to help. I explore my gender in relation to my psychotherapeutic work with the aim of producing a therapeutic container that holds the conditions for change. Part III registers the movement on from my past traumas in the decentring of the self, a return from an inward protective world back to society. In the reduction of a separation of self and word binaries are deconstructed. This clears a path for the ‘I’ that was reclaimed in Part I becoming universal, this makes possible the plural expression of ‘heterogeneity in itself’. I explore the idea of the ‘feminine sublime’ and in reconnecting with femininity a movement beyond my-self into a different kind of knowing and sensing.
In the Narrator’s Conclusion I summarise the thesis, registering the journey that has taken me from one place to the other. Just as important to where I end up, the ‘I’ becoming universal and the connection to the feminine sublime is the journey through the writing. This journey made possible a changing relationship to my suffering, moving from self-hatred towards self-acceptance.

**Lay Summary**

This thesis follows a journey through a changing relationship to self over the four years of study. I consider this journey from an individual, social, political, and theoretical perspective. I consider the interrelationships between these perspectives. I seek to challenge dominant modes of thought that represent knowledge and I explore this in relation to gender relationships throughout history and in the present. Instead of representing knowledge I seek to explore knowledge that is found through the face-to-face encounter, I call this an epistemology of body. Unlike representational knowledge this knowledge is unpredictable and allows for spontaneity, transgressing norms and forming new meanings.

I adopt a ‘method’ called *thinking without method* which supports the spontaneity and the possibility of new knowledge produced in the relational encounter. This method doesn’t follow any specific procedures, instead it aims to engage in the writing process without form or idea of where the work will end. The reason for choosing this method is to allow whatever arises from the process of writing as I register my thoughts, feelings, and actions. I aim to listen to my clients more deeply by working through the challenges in my own life that prevent this listening. This is the thesis’s relevance to the field of psychotherapy. The first step was to come to terms with my own challenges that prevented me from able to listen to my clients more deeply, this aims to prevent my practice from becoming ‘translating my own old translations’. I explore how I can listen, construct a container that can provide an openness to their expression which is beyond my own. I find I must ‘abandon understanding, preoccupations, memory’, the abandonment is only possible after coming to terms with the challenges in my own personal history and present.

Part I considers the themes produced above in relation to my personal history and present reality. I consider times I have been silenced, times I have had to disavow femininity at school to be accepted and the attempts to escape or destroy my emotional suffering rather than work through it. This is part of the journey to reclaim my ‘I’ and take ownership of the traumatic elements of my history. Part II considers my work as a therapist. I explore how the structures can silence the voice of the those they seek to help. I explore my gender in relation to my psychotherapeutic work with the aim of producing a therapeutic container that holds the conditions for change. Part III registers the movement on from my past traumas in the decentring
of self, a return from an inward protective world back to society. In the reduction of a separation of self and word binaries are deconstructed. This clears a path for the ‘I’ that was reclaimed in Part I becoming universal, this makes possible the plural expression and a deeper listening to my clients. I explore the idea of the ‘feminine sublime’ and in reconnecting with femininity a movement beyond my-self into a different kind of knowing and sensing.
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Introduction

What? What? Say it!
‘Another mask! A second mask!’ (Nietzsche et al., 1990, p. 278)

This irreducible ‘I’ which is the irreducible basis of my suffering-I have to make this ‘I’ universal. (Weil et al., 2002)

These two quotes sum up the thesis, Nietzsche’s quote suggests behind each and every mask, there is another mask. This quote brings a horizontality to the project, breaks the illusion that I merely need to find the right answer, find the essence or ‘true’ self¹. The second quote by Weil is where the journey ends, a working through my trauma, my suffering, my hang-ups and a movement to unseat the centrality of my-self. It is important to note here that the universal isn’t used to mean a sameness, it suggests the surrender of self into an unformed realm of becoming, this realm is a place of heterogeneity and difference. In Part III – Letting Go I explore this realm as the feminine sublime, which is a diversion from Weil’s Christian tradition, that holds onto a paternal God. The feminine sublime was originally coined by Lyotard under a different name, the contemporary sublime (Lyotard, 1991). Lyotard coined this term in an attempt to subvert Kant’s sublime, which he considered to be entrenched in categorisation and modern principles (see Learning to Love this Heart Ache for a further exploration of this). Lyotard uses the term contemporary sublime to present intangible experience beyond representation and left out of modern representational models. The term feminine sublime was coined by Freeman (1995) based on Lyotard’s term contemporary sublime and used by Zylinska (1998, p. 102). The use of feminine sublime throughout this thesis is in conversation with Zylinska and her use of the term. The journey to decentre the self draws me into many themes: masculinity², capitalism³, the family⁴, whiteness⁵. Throughout the journey I return to concepts that put down roots, settle into singular understandings, binarism’s that form a defensive cleavage between self and other, self and world⁶. I explore my journey to decentre my-self with the intention of listening to the other more profoundly, the thesis’s applicability to psychotherapy.

The sense of the ‘I’ becoming universal emerged out of a struggle with personal suffering: feeling unworthy of existence related to self-esteem explored in Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence and in a profound loss explored in the A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning. My experiences of suffering change in form as they are witnessed by myself in the writing process and being witnessed by others. In Part III – Letting Go I explore how this witnessing forms an entry point into the feminine sublime, into the beyond. In Part I – Holding On there is

¹ Here I am critiquing Winnicott’s (1960) true self, which is said to lie behind the false self. This is further explored in the chapter Atlas Fallen.
² See Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms.
³ See Learning to Love this Heart Ache
⁴ See Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence.
⁵ See Trying to Decentre the Whiteness of my Being.
⁶ See The Schizoid Returns.
sense of violence directed towards my-self and in the earlier section of the thesis my suffering appears as fixation, limiting plural expression. It is the expression of this pain that begins the process of transformation. My qigong teacher recently said the body that one doesn’t have to imagine the energy or qi moving through the body because if the movements are correct the energy will emerge of its own accord. This is a good analogy for the movement away from representation or images of thought to the raw, vulnerable encounter. The relationship between the encounter and more classic ontology is explored in An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body.

There is a relationship between Decentring the self and my practice as a psychotherapist, this is explored in different ways in the three chapters on my psychotherapy work in Part II – Working Through. In this section I explore the therapeutic container and the conditions that support therapeutic change as a crucial part in this process to decentre my-self and how this journey supports therapeutic containership. The first step of this process is to come to terms with my own energetic knots in order to prevent my practice from “translating [my own] old translations” (Stack, 2005, p. 69). Stack (2005). In an attempt to avoid normalisation or narcissistic re-centring, ‘curing’ I explore Copernican openness (Stack, 2005), that doesn’t normalise or reduce the power of the enigmatic, yet also doesn’t leave it untranslated. To achieve this one requires a container where enigmatic unconscious forces can be held. This is the work of the thesis which straddles my personal journey and my journey as a psychotherapist. In Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container I explore how I can listen, construct a container that can provide a Copernican openness, that hears the other without translating my own translations and supports a container that can hold the client’s material to make possible a working through. I write the therapist “must abandon understanding, preoccupations, memory”, the abandonment is only possible after coming to terms with my own energetic knots in Part I – Holding On. An interhuman connection that is beyond both therapist and client. Containing is a very different operation to normalising or regulating (it is regulatory but not intentionally), it seeks to “unbind and rebind, dissolve and resolve, aiming, in the end, to leave an unresolved, or untranslated, excess” (Stack, 2005, p. 75). This excess holds within it the possibility of divergent expressions of self, the enigmatic, the unknown.

This thesis draws from French psychoanalytic feminism and post structural theory combining my journey growing up in Northern England, an Anglocentric psychotherapy training followed by clinical practice in London. Bringing together these elements and attempting to go beyond the ontologies I’m imbued with contributes to British psychotherapy theory and practice. New understandings emerge such as heterogeneity in itself explored in Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace, the feminine sublime and the ‘I’ becoming universal explored in What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond, the container that is beyond both client and therapist explored in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container and the unreal explored in The Unreal and the Moment of Speech. The thesis follows

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7 For a further explanation of Laplanche’s work and the relationship to Copernicus see Decentring the self.
my journey through the abyss that emerges when ‘the phallic function fails’ (see The Failure of the Phallus) and the self is decentred (see Decentring Masculinity). These concepts emerged out of the abyss, bringing together personal, clinical practice and spirituality. The concepts that emerged and the journey itself will be of interest to psychotherapist and social theorists working in mental health settings.
Method

I have adopted Jackson’s (2017) thinking without method, as an alternative to more classical qualitative modes of research to explore encounters while refusing images of thought. To explore the tactile sensation that lies beyond the image, thereby thinking with theory rather than using it as a tool of analysis. Using a combination of personal and social commentary, I embrace the transformative quality of repetition, which holds the possibility of forming something new as I reminisce, work through. The historic events mould my-self into a certain shape and this shape changes as the events are worked through. This mode of explorative analysis is not considered scientific in the Cartesian sense. Throughout, I attempt to go beyond the empirical “I”, being thought of as separate and capable of objectivity. Where being does arise as a separate entity, I attempt to decentre this mode of thinking. The writing aims to be more akin to a living network of organisms, theory and practice are brought together on a plane of immanence (Grosz, 2017, p. 136), to such an extent that separation is no longer possible. This is important for research in psychotherapy involving “affective change events” (Greenberg & Safran, 1990, p. 6). In many forms of psychotherapy affective change directly related to the body is considered more fundamental than cognitive or behavioural change in isolation.

Jackson (2016) in Thinking Without Method, reformulates the “I” from an empirical “I”, that aims to recognize and represent, to a “subject in crisis”, a “fractured I” or “an encounter”. Jackson explains that in the encounter, her thinking becomes a stranger to itself, as the “I” slips away from its centre.

Richardson’s (1993, p. 695) summaries her post-qualitative research:

> The science practice I model is a feminist-postmodernist one. It blurs genres, probes lived experience, enacts science, creates a female imaginary, breaks down dualisms, inscribes emotional labour and emotional response as valid, deconstructs the myth of an emotion-free social science, and makes a space for partiality, self-reflexivity, tension, and difference.

Much like Richardson my research inscribes an emotional labour, bringing tensions and differences that problematise the binary of a singular whole ‘true’ self. The self-reflective process of writing I draws me beyond into the unknown, into something else, senses or affects that lie outside the normalised category of male. This involves reconnecting with the feminine that was excluded during my socialisation. I have been influenced by Richardson’s post-qualitative work in my attempt to inscribe emotional labour in academic work where it has been previously erased. Richardson (2017, p. 820) writes that it is in language that social organization and power are defined and contested and the place where one’s sense of self, one’s subjectivity, is constructed. I use the process of writing to draw me beyond, a re-writing of self. This is a movement towards what is excluded from language, at times I observe and explore this limit and at times draw forces into language that have been excluded. At

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8 Here I am critiquing Winnicott’s (1960) true self, which is said to lie behind the false self. This is further explored in the chapter Atlas Fallen.
times I use poetry to attempt to draw language into realms beyond language, this can be seen in Frustrated Surrender, Juul2 and What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond.

**Rewriting Modernity**

Lyotard (1991, p. 24) introduces the term rewriting modernity, to express the “pointlessness of any periodization of cultural history in terms of ‘pre-’ and ‘post-’, for the single reason that it leaves unquestioned the position of the ‘now’, of the present from which one is supposed to be able to achieve a legitimate perspective on a chronological succession.”

Lyotard contrasts this with forms of writing that have a path of travel inscribed within the form, referencing Freud’s ‘working through’, the working through is hidden not just by material from the past but also the ‘pro-ject’ of the future. Starting with a project sets a direction and form to the work, boundaries that regulate and converge towards the aim that structures the project. The project unreflectively ends with a proof of the rules of the project that were already inscribed at the outset. An attempt to master reality, to make the unconscious conscious. Lyotard considers this an attempt to rid oneself of desire, which is intolerable, by finding a first cause and it is this very search which perpetuates the pro-ject.

Lyotard, in a generous return to Freud⁹, considers that Freud finally gave up the trap of the search for a first cause when he gave up on the primal scene, to then consider working through without end and without will. Lyotard’s rewriting is a double gesture: forwards and backwards, akin to Freud’s ‘freely floating attention’. A surrender of the project to give free reign to whatever material manifests. Lyotard highlights that this form of working through requires a passibility, giving passage to the events that come to it from a ‘something’ that it does not know. It is an attitude or stance rather than a method. This is relevant to the work of psychotherapy, in putting aside representational models and to come into relationship with the other from a position of neutrality in order to witness the client more profoundly, this is considered in depth when considering the therapeutic container in the chapter Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container.

Lyotard likens Freud’s free association to his own project of rewriting modernity:

I recall that in working through, the only guiding thread at one’s disposal consists in sentiment or, better, in listening to a sentiment. A fragment of a sentence, a scrap of information, a word, come along. They are immediately linked with another ‘unit’. No reasoning, no argument, no mediation. By proceeding in this way, one slowly approaches a scene, the scene of something. One describes it. One does not know what it is. One is sure only that it refers to some past, both furthest and nearest past, both one’s own past and others’ past. This lost time is not represented like in a picture, it is not

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⁹ For a further exploration including a critique of the direction of Freud’s work see Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari.
even presented. It is what presents the elements of a picture, an impossible picture. Rewriting means registering these elements (Lyotard, 1991, p. 31).

Lyotard describes that when ‘free floating attention’ become possible, the material that manifests in the present is not an object, it is an aura or a gentle breeze. The end isn’t knowledge, but the “approach to a ‘truth’ or a ‘real’ which is ungraspable” (Lyotard, 1991, p. 33). “The Thing that haunts the ‘language’, the tradition and the material with, against and in which one writes” (Lyotard, 1991, p. 33).

Throughout this thesis I aim to bring material as it presents itself, without forcing a form or direction of a project. As I explore my own journey, I attempt to remove barriers, work through fixations that would prevent me feeling the gentle breeze as it softly (and often very roughly such as in Frustrated Surrender) engulfs the surface of my skin. The success of this thesis depends on the level I can surrender intentionality and go beyond the norms that have produced my ontological structure. This alternative path is to allow this softness to be perceived and registered in all its contours and allow the fragments of material to arrive from beyond the self. I am fortunate to have Lyotard as a guide in this process, his words inspire me, give me strength to resist turning away from the breeze making it imperceptible and turning towards a mastery, a project.

Another element of Lyotard’s thought which enters the thesis is the ‘heterogeneous in itself’ (Lyotard, 1990, p. 8). The heterogeneous in itself is ‘no thing,’ which representational logic or the cognitive forgets (Sullivan, 2007, p. 55), a call that cannot come from an identifiable subject, that cannot be ‘heard’ as proposition or project, but yet to which we are obliged to respond (McCance, 1996, p. 140). The heterogeneous in itself appears at various points throughout the thesis and is relevant to the field of psychotherapy. It situates ethics outside representational models and the concept of self. A sense or a call that rather than being recognised is responded to. The thesis is a journey to bear witness to alterity (Lyotard, 1990, p. 8). In Part I – Holding On I clear the way for this to become possible, de-centring the hegemonic elements of my-self that rely on recognition and mastery. In Part II – Working Through I move towards the call of the heterogeneous in itself by considering my client work and work towards hearing the voice of my clients more profoundly.

In Part III – Letting Go I return to the journey of feeling into the senses beyond my-self and introduce another a concept Lyotard calls the contemporary sublime (Lyotard, 1991) and renamed the feminine sublime, by (Freeman, 1995) and Zylinska (1998, p. 102):

It seems to me that the feminine sublime, in turn, not only redefines space and time but also delineates the boundaries of the meeting parties, which, nevertheless, may soon blur. The point is that the encounter itself defines those facing each other, giving them a chance to know themselves, and see their own difference, before they actually approach the other. The disproportionate ‘masculine’ (that is apparently neutral) sublime is personalized here: mutual wonder of both sides excludes the position of mastery the subject might adopt towards the threatening object. Thus in the
feminine sublime we have two subjects not only exposed to each other but also needing each other for the assertion of their own (temporary) subjectivity.

In **Part III – Letting Go** I move towards the re-introduction of the feminine into my experience, in surrendering mastery and experiencing the fragility of the encounter with the other and the enigmatic. This involves pleasure, pain and disintegration of self in the moment of the encounter. This part of the journey is explored in *Learning to Love this Heart Ache* and *What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond*. Poetry is used as a technique to present the redefinition of space, time and blurred boundaries. This concept has the potential to bring about a deeper meaning to the psychotherapeutic encounter and a redefinition of ethics outside of the concept of self, something beyond both client and therapist. This is explored in *Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container*.

**Decentring the self**

Laplanche introduces the work of Copernicus who placed the sun at the centre of the astronomical system rather than the earth, a radical shift in focus revealed a narcissistic wound in human thought. The totality of knowledge was undermined by a shift in perspective. Laplanche compares this to Freud’s realisation that the ego is not the origin of thought (Laplanche, 1999).

In every case, however, the news that reaches your consciousness is incomplete and often not to be relied on...But these two discoveries - that the life of our sexual instincts cannot be wholly tamed, and that mental processes are in themselves unconscious and only reach the ego and come under its control through incomplete and untrustworthy perceptions – these two discoveries amount to a statement that the ego is not master in its own house (Freud, 1955).

Laplanche explores how Freud moves between this more radical view and back towards a centring of the ego, Ptolemaic, akin to the earth being at the centre of the astronomical system. Laplanche describes Freud’s hesitation to put the origin of thought outside of the ego as ‘the unfinished Copernican revolution’. Like the movement from Ptolemaic to the Copernican system, Freud declares the ego isn’t the point of origin for thought, if thought isn’t the centre, there isn’t a centre. “Man, even as subject of knowledge, is not the central reference point of what he knows” (Laplanche, 1999, p. 56).

Laplanche highlights the elements of Freud which are Copernican, the unconscious as ‘excentric’, this idea situates thought forever an alien, only partially accessible and can never be mastered. Freud’s unconscious is not a hermeneutic copy of conscious life, it has its own laws and in his earlier writings gives rise to drives. Importantly for Laplanche and for this thesis trauma acts as an agent provocateur in releasing the symptom, which thereafter leads an independent existence. Fundamentally, from this perspective, trauma has a historical and a-temporal existence, the cause is only effective because it is present as a foreign body, acting upon the individual from the
outside. This foreign body Laplanche regards as an *agens* (Laplanche, 1999, p. 65) that is at work in the present.

Here Laplanche diverges from Freuds work in a similar way to my practice diverging from my ‘integrative’ training, in that Freud moves towards re-integrating the alien in a movement to ‘self-centredness’, denying a more fundamental alien-ness of the unconscious. For Laplanche, this self-centredness pathologizes the unconscious in attempt to do away with it in favour of ego functioning. When it comes to the conception of the other, Laplanche critiques Freud for absorbing the alien-ness of the other into the subjectivity of the individual. This closes down an ethic of otherness that “the immanence of egoistic life is always already disrupted by the transcendence of the relation to the other” (Chanter, 2010, p. 46), the basis of a new form of ethics popularised by Emmanuel Levinas. This is further explored in *An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body* and *Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container*.

For Laplanche the unconscious always maintains its radical alterity. This begins with a verbal or non-verbal message from parent to infant. Laplanche critiques Lacan’s language centred trans-individual alterity as this model diminishes the role of the actual other in the genesis of the symptom. For Laplanche the missing link in Freud’s seduction theory is the sexual life of the adult, this alien life is communicated consciously or unconsciously from the adult to the child. The adult messages are “indissociably enigmatic and sexual” (Laplanche, 1999, p. 79), the adult shares a message “without presupposing any shared code or interpretive rule”.

Laplanche’s model of decentring is therefore:

Internal alien-ness maintained, held in place by external alien-ness; external alien-ness, in turn, held in place by the enigmatic relation to the other to his own internal alien – such would be my conclusion concerning the decentering revolution I have proposed here in continuation of the Freudian discovery (Laplanche, 1999, p. 80).

As well as drawing from Lyotard’s *Rewriting Modernity*, the thesis draws from Laplanche’s project in moving towards the position of de-centred self, a movement in support of the Copernican revolution in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. In the thesis this appears as an acceptance that there is an internal alien-ness that refers to an external-alienness. I accept that my own sense of self can never be totalised, that there is always an enigmatic source that can’t be mastered, meaning that the self or the other can never be mastered or explained by knowledge of theory. This opens new realms of listening to the other and connecting to the beyond become possible, a surrender of mastery. There cannot be a simple closure, each time I speak of self it refers to the other and is mediated by something enigmatic, something that cannot be directly or simply named. The thesis doesn’t aim to decipher or master what is enigmatic, it aims to communicate with the unknown, to be haunted by what lies beyond conscious knowing¹⁰. I aim to allow the process of

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¹⁰ Here I turn to the language of Derrida (2012), who using different language, moves towards a decentring of self, this is introduced in *A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning*. 
writing to expose elements of myself that seek to master, seek to control, seek to know and through a repetitive re-working I will work through the continuous pull of narcissistic closure.

As part of the concluding remarks of the thesis in *Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace* I consider the relevance of the journey and Laplanche’s work to the field of psychotherapy. A radical divergence from mainstream psychotherapy practices including the integrative approach of my training. The purpose of decentring the self is to avoid “translating [my own] old translations” (Stack, 2005, p. 69). To work through the elements of my personal and social upbringing that have centred me into a certain perspective, in thought, emotion and in action. The work to de-centre in embedding my-self into Copernican openness supports a container that supports the client to decentre the elements of their self that lead to mental illness. Stack (2005) warns that Copernican openness without some form of translation can collapse into formless horrors. The role of the container is to translate the intensity of Copernican openness without the need of a representational anchor, the divergent self arises out of the Copernican excess, to “unbind and rebind, dissolve and resolve, aiming, in the end, to leave an unresolved, or untranslated, excess” (Stack, 2005, p. 75). This challenges hegemonic perceptions of the ‘cure’, such as the resolution of the Oedipus complex (Freud, 1916) or the depressive position (Klein, 1946) where the individual finds themself in a position of lack.

**Post-Colonial Theory and Decentring the self**

There are assumptions in the decentring process throughout the thesis that relate to post-colonial theory.

At the endpoint of my journey in the *Conclusion*, I separate myself from hegemonic masculinity, connect to the excluded feminine sublime, or heterogeneity in itself. This narrative is in danger of “animating an effectively heliocentric discourse, fills the empty place of the agent with the historical sun of theory, the Subject of Europe” (Spivak, 1988, p. 69). The aim is to present rather than represent, which finds it’s resting point in the intangible excess of excluded femininity. This resting point is in danger of becoming a new representation, a subject of knowledge re-inscribing the European Subject. It was originally intended to be an eternal struggle, rather than a resting point and in part the need to conclude that triggered this resting point. Spivak (1988, p. 66) warns “pluralized ‘subject-effects’ gives an illusion of undermining subjective sovereignty while often providing a cover for this subject of knowledge”.

The ‘I’ becoming universal was intended to be a subversion of the European Subject in the surrender of hegemonic narratives, ending in a position that makes space to listen to the voice of the Other more profoundly. I now question whether the assumed separation from hegemonic narratives, re-inscribes the European Subject.

Spivak (1988, p. 70) writes, “these two senses of representation – within state formation and the law, on the one hand, and in subject-predication, on the other - are related but irreducibly discontinuous”. It is the privilege or the European Subject that allowed me to unproblematically de-centre myself, merging these two discontinuous senses of representation. I assume the ‘I’ can become unproblematically embedded into the feminine sublime, indirectly creating a basis for a universal suffering that
erases the discontinuity Spivak names, this has the effect of erasing the context and history, the social and political. This heliocentric movement undermines my attempt to situate the journey in the discontinuous rather than the continuous. To assume the journey allows me to unproblematically listen to the other more profoundly, assumes that there is a universal experience of suffering and pain and assumes that there is not a discontinuity between my own countertransferral experience of the other’s suffering and their own experience of suffering. This amounts to the construction of an a-historical sovereign subject and an erasure of the other’s historical position.

Spivak’s (1988, p. 68) critiques Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari:

> These-philosophers seem obliged to reject all arguments naming the concept of ideology as only schematic rather than textual, they are equally obliged to produce a mechanically schematic opposition between interest and desire. Thus they align themselves with bourgeois sociologists who fill the place of ideology with a continuistic ‘unconscious’ or a parasubjective ‘culture’.

In the thesis I align myself with Foucault’s later understanding of power in *Irigaray’s Mimetic Reproduction*:

> The discursive subject as a social and historical construct, fragmented, decentered, but, crucially, enabled by the very circularity of power at large in the social web. The body remains the primary point of subjectification by regimes of power, but it is now understood by Foucault to be marked and created as a subject (and thus categorized as an individual) by these very same dynamics (Whitehead, 2002, p. 101).

I allow myself to virtually separate myself from subjectification by considering a parasubjective existence and in doing so reinscribe the Subject of Europe, in considering Spivak’s work more fully, I see that the schematic separation erases the textual. In my exploration of Weil et al. (2002, p. 10) in *What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond* I quote “an unspeakable wrench in the soul at the separation of a desire from its object”. This quote is based in Christian, and arguably imperialist scriptures. It is a hegemonic privilege to consider myself separable from the object.

Despite these dangers, I feel there is a value in a Western White male European psychotherapist momentarily separating himself from hegemonic norms that reproduce the conditions of oppression in order to see and feel beyond these structures. In the psychotherapy room this exploration arose directly from multiple attempts to hear the voice of the other more profoundly, invite their experience. (Spivak, 1988, p. 84) writes:

> On the other side of the international division of labor, the subject of exploitation cannot know and speak the text of female exploitation even if the absurdity of the nonrepresenting intellectual making space for her to speak is achieved. The woman is doubly in shadow.

I support this statement, and this highlights a weakness of this thesis in virtually claiming to have become separate from subjectification and in my ‘I’ becoming
universal and nonrepresenting. As a hegemonic male subject, I cannot hear the voice of the subaltern other. In the therapy room I must first take ownership of this and then temporarily suspend the imperial othering process that forms the subaltern as subaltern in order to set the conditions where it is possible for the other to speak. In missing the first step, I risk reinscribing the conditions of oppression. It is important that the ontological privilege of the white masculine therapist is not invisible. Therapeutic neutrality, or decentring must begin with an ownership and working through. In working to go beyond the norms of my hegemonic construction I still cannot know and speak the text of the female or subaltern exploitation because this is not my history. However, when applied specifically to psychotherapy, in an encounter with the other, I believe there is a role for the nonrepresenting psychotherapist. Psychotherapy is a praxis and it is within this praxis that, providing I can first take ownership, work through and finally temporarily suspend the ontological norms of my socialisation, the “translations of [my own] old translations” (Stack, 2005, p. 69) I believe it is possible to make space for the other to speak what remains unspoken and has been structurally impossible to speak when relating to a European Subject. The feminine sublime is an excess that exists in the shadow of the construction of self, including the shadow of imperialism and colonialism embedded in hegemonic masculinity. The encounter of psychotherapy can be a unique opportunity for both therapist and client to momentarily surrender into ‘another sense’ where speech becomes possible beyond usual ontological schemas, not a negating of the norm but transcending the norm in the vulnerability of the naked face (Lévinas, 1969, pp. 85-86) of both therapist and client-the plane of immanence, the “movement of ideas relative to each other and outside history (even as concepts are only ever created in and with a history)” (Grosz, 2017, p. 136). I suggest this is only possible in the moment of the encounter after the European Subject has been owned and worked through by the therapist.

In my experience of my psychotherapy practice I feel that in the, I feel my clients can speak, and overtime reclaim the ‘I’ of first-person discourse, however this is not necessarily their experience or the way they would describe the encounter. It is necessary for me to explore further post-colonial theory to find a way to write about these encounters effectively. In the chapter Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container I write “Bion (2013, p. 46) writes that the analyst must abandon understanding, preoccupations, memory and desire” in order to make possible a neutral space where expression can happen. The neutral space I hope can present the temporary surrender after a taking ownership and working through of imperial or colonial ontological constructions that silence. A limitation of the thesis is that I didn’t include Fanon, Spivak and queer theory throughout the doctorate, which would have made the thesis more ‘textual’ which would have protected against the construction of a parasubjective ‘culture’, risking re-inscription of the European Subject. Spivak (1988, p. 84) writes “Deleuze and Foucault ignore both the epistemic violence of imperialism and the international division of labour”. In bringing to the centre the late Foucauldian construction of power and excluding a post-colonial understanding of power I risk repeating conditions of oppression by considering the de-centring process as schematic and equally applied to all, rather than textual and particular to the individual, a “sanctioned ignorance” (Spivak, 1988, p. 86) of the role
of imperialism on the social reality and history of the othering/subjectification process. This forms a corporeal privilege where the white person can speak, represent and the subaltern other is structurally silenced.

The work of Sarah Ahmed can offer an understanding of formations of power, otherness and contact in and through the encounter. This offers a way forward for my work that includes post-colonial theory alongside de-centring the self, bringing together the structural and the textual in the encounter.

The organization of social and bodily space creates a border that is transformed into an object, as an effect of this intensification of feeling. So the white woman’s refusal to touch the Black child does not simply stand for the expulsion of Blackness from white social space, but actually re-forms that social space through the re-forming of the apartness of the white body. That is, the alignment between individual and collective bodies involves metonymy (contact and proximity between bodies and signs), rather than simply metaphor (to stand for or stand in for others) (Ahmed, 2005, p. 106).

The momentary deconstruction of the European Subject in the encounter of a therapeutic relationship is affective and relational. A movement to feel the imperial subject as it manifests in my being and to go beyond this construction in the vulnerability of the naked face. In taking ownership of the imperial subject, cognitively and affectively, a space can be formed where the white male therapist can surrender into the vulnerability of the naked face (Lévinas, 1969, pp. 85-86), momentary transcending his subjectivity into the plane of immanence (Grosz, 2017, p. 136).

If likeness is an affect and effect of identification, the unlikeness, or difference as a lack (of likeness), becomes an affect of forms of dis-identification that work to read the bodies of others (Ahmed, 2005, p. 108).

In the moment of the encounter the identification of the white male psychotherapists self that is upheld by likeness formed in the mirror stage of childhood (Lacan, 1977). To go beyond this is to listen to the other more profoundly and make possible an intimacy that can form a self that forms its identity through unlikeness and as the therapy progresses become an inter-human divergent ontology that can reform affective and cognitive relations between self and other, “recognizing that old skins will have affects and effects—and the itchiness of the emergence of new skins” (Ahmed, 2005, p. 109). I should note that the encounter in vulnerability could be discontinuous, for example the encounter could be an acknowledgement by the client that I, as a white male European Subject can never hear or understand certain feelings or narratives. Sometimes an affective change moment can be reaching an acceptance of an impossibility.

In Phenomenology of Whiteness Ahmed (2007, p. 151) describes whiteness as an orientation and describes orientations to be about “intimacy of bodies and their dwelling places.” Ahmed describes how Fanon considers the racial and historical dimensions beneath the surface of the body described by phenomenology, race ‘interrupts’ the corporeal schema, or ‘the corporeal schema’ is always racialised, it

This chapter brings a relational perspective to the chapter Trying to Decentre the Whiteness of my Being where I consider the work of Fanon and when combined with the work of de-centring in relation in the chapter Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container can bring the beginnings of a post-colonial perspective to the thesis. It is important to note that the journey presented in this thesis is applicable to psychotherapists who are already centred, i.e. they have adopted the European Subject through their socialisation. In the therapeutic relationship for a psychotherapist who is a white European male (like myself) working with a female person of colour there are at least two levels of structural othering and this will influence the corporeal schema: the othering of gender and of race. It is the responsibility of the white male psychotherapist to be aware of these dynamics as they arise in the transference dynamic and take ownership of them to avoid a structural silencing in the invisibility or disavowal of these corporeal schemas. Secondly it important for the white male psychotherapist can create a container that can work through these dynamics so that the client can explore these dynamics and the therapy can offer a place to speak rather a continuation of silencing. Affectively this is to experience in the inter-human connection the corporeal schema of maleness and whiteness and to interrupt this corporeal schema through words, actions, or energetics. So, the working through may be named and worked through verbally or may remain on the level of affect. Importantly the white male therapist must take responsibility for this emotional labour, by taking responsibility and working through the history of whiteness and its invisibility that has been “received upon arrival” (Ahmed, 2007, p. 154), a de-centring of self, breaking the chain of reproduction of the self-same system I describe in Irigaray’s Mimetic Reproduction. The unfamiliar or unknown becomes an object to become interested in and listen to rather than an object to fear, control, or abject.

My aim in bringing the ‘I’ to a position of universality, as a subversion of the universality of modernity was to return to the ‘uncarved block’ (Tzu et al., 2007, p. 60) a reference to Lao Tzu in What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond. Ahmed (2007, p. 161) considers a critique of Hegel by Lewis R. Gordon “White people are universal, it is said and Black people are not.” Ahmed considers that “to be not white is to inhabit the negative: it is to be ‘not’.” The I becoming universal was an attempt to inhabit the position of heterogeneity itself, a negative position which is productive of difference and a divergent of hegemonic norms of the European Subject. What felt real in my journey is that this position can go beyond the European Subject in the moment of the encounter. I am not sure the I becoming universal every fully subverted its imperial origins and in future works I will part ways with this phraseology as I feel Ahmed’s work on whiteness offers a more nuanced framework to explore the encounter from a post-colonial perspective. This acknowledges the ‘trying’ of Trying to Decentre the Whiteness of my Being is still a work in progress.
On Writing

In choosing a ‘method’ called thinking without method, I refuse a pro-ject and work through the material that enters my writing in a way that is similar to Freud’s free association. Lyotard describes this as an aura or a gentle breeze, to wait and allow whatever arises to be written. This process gives the writing movement to become something other than itself, to move from one place to another. This is an intentional challenge to contemporary norms of what is true, rigorous, or real. In this thesis I take an “approach to a ‘truth’ or a ‘real’ which is ungraspable” (Lyotard, 1991, p. 33). “The Thing that haunts the ‘language’, the tradition and the material with, against and in which one writes” (Lyotard, 1991, p. 33). A movement to come into relationship with what haunts me and engage with the forces that inform the writing in content and form. The writing refuses a linear path that can be found in a Socratic or Hegelian synthesis and sits with the discomfort of the unknown, the messy. To go beyond the norms aims to challenge hegemonic gender norms and academic norms and get in touch with what is excluded from classical ontologies and epistemologies.

In the world of mental health in England 2023, representational models are valorised, and then qualitative or quantitative data used to confirm the value and reality of the representation so it can be abstracted into a model and exchanged. From a Hegelian perspective to contribute to the movement towards universal truth, the ultimate centring of self. Or in a market driven society to harness the profit potential of exchanging a representational model of mind so it can be used in a new therapy or app. This thesis seeks to challenge this system by seeking value elsewhere, in the intangible, the expression of the unknown, the ungraspable, “another sense” a “co-poïetic” (Ettinger, 2004, p. 82), the “interhuman” (O’Connor, 2002, p. 223).

In earlier drafts of the thesis I believed this could be achieved through ‘writing as a method of inquiry’. Richardson and St Pierre critique analogies of building: structure, foundation, construction, framework, ground which can lead to totalization. Richardson and St Pierre bring the metaphor of a tapestry, problematising truth and validity of totalizing representations (Richardson, 2003, p. 380). I have found during the process of writing that even the analogy of a tapestry feels too much like a synthesis. My journey is to de-centre and through this process of decentring connect to something beyond what can exist as a structure that can be thought.

In taking a free associative path and in attempting to approach the ungraspable, certain chapters have emerged in a raw personal style. Others in a performative style that seeks to express the visceral reality of the intangible feelings. Other chapters are theoretical and keep more of a distance from raw expression. I provide introductions and conclusions after each section to orientate myself and the reader to the various styles, making links and connections between chapters and fragments of self.

I open the thesis by introducing Nietzsche’s quote suggesting behind the mask there is another mask. The thesis speaks in many voices, from many selves: the performative self, the theoretical self, the hegemonic self, the feminine self, the self-
destructive self, the self that hates the self, the spiritual self, the addict, the lover, the schizoid, to name a few fragments of self. All the selves that emerge in the thesis live and breathe on a horizontal surface, there is no hierarchy of truth.

In Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari I write:

Nirta (2014, p. 249) writes of the uncertain, the unclear, unsorted, unstable body' The ‘unsanitised’ refusal of Oedipal purity “can incite ways of being together, loving, desiring, and identifying that are at odds with the normative regime (Ettinger, 2004, p. 81).

Much of research I read comes across sanitised and made clean, I fear this denies social and psychic reality, erases certain voices or parts of self. In The Unreal and the Moment of Speech I write how a representational model can project an ideal of a “good citizen” into the client and this is in danger of transforming the therapist into an agent of the state.

In resisting what I consider to be a rising level of regulation and sanitisation in psychotherapeutic theory and practice I allow myself to write in a way that feels truer to the messiness of psychic reality. In Part I – Holding On the writing is often fragmented, manic, raw, viscerally painful, and self-deprecating. Much of this section was written a time of great psychic suffering which led to disjunction and fragmentation. Part I – Holding On seeks to express the reality of this pain and other past traumas without holding back or attempting to prematurely finding a resolution. In Part I - Summary I describe this as “acting out”, “a ciphered message which the subject addresses to an Other when the Other has refused or failed to listen” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973). The intensity of disgust and hatred in Frustrated Surrender and the fragmentation and mania of Attempting to Destroy can be seen as communicating more than the words themselves. This is an intentional movement towards what lies beyond the regulatory function of language.

Part II – Working Through and Part III – Letting Go are more coherent. In the self-reflective process of writing and the feedback from people who have read this work the ciphered message of Part I – Holding On has been witnessed and in this witnessing can now express itself more directly. This allows for complex meanings to be expressed more intricately. It also has a cathartic effect, the writing of Part I – Holding On is the most visceral, the most affective. I value all expressions for their different qualities as they are all important parts of the journey and have different functions in the text as a whole.

In the Rewriting Modernity section I quote Lyotard (1991, p. 31) who describes the emergence of units with “no reasoning, no argument, no mediation”. The performative sections and the theory sections of Part I – Holding On express these units in a raw and unmediated form. As the thesis becomes more developed and nuanced in Part II – Working Through and Part III – Letting Go these fragments or

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I use Other with a capital ‘O’ to denote the category of the Other which makes self-awareness possible, I use other with a uncapitalised ‘o’ to denote an actual person. Like in this quote, at times there is a blurring of the category and actual other. It was my mother who failed to listen, but it was also the school who represent the wider society who failed to listen.
units develop into scenes or chapters. To “register”, but not represent these scenes, brings interconnections to the many fragments while resisting a Hegelian unity. Importantly the focus remains on the tactic sense, a poïesis.

Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace is an afterwards, looking back on the movement of the thesis and surveying the landscape. The value is held in the journey and registering of the many expressions, it is this registering or witnessing that brings movement to the thesis, a movement from one place to another. This movement happens in many ways throughout the thesis always approaching plurality, the invitation of something bigger than the perspective of self, a decentring of self. The process of writing and witnessing myself in this process supports the move from one place to another. The primal witnessing, the first decentring of my trauma was when a friend listened to my pain profoundly, a story told in Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence. In Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace the units find their form in a scene. These units differ from themes that emerge from a qualitative method in that they lack intentionality, they arose as I waited and watched. They were not found, they emerged from a boundaryless unknown, they are not explanatory or representational, they are pearls that were scraped out of the dirt at the bottom of the sea. At times the doctoral process has felt like I’m entering a labyrinth with no hope of emergence, in giving up intentionality, in writing into darkness, the unknown. But I did emerge, lifted up by angels, and in this emergence new perspectives became possible.

The journey moves from “acting out” to registering the fragments in a nuanced and coherent form is explored in The Schizoid Returns chapter. In the fear of being unlovable I withheld parts of myself from the world. Many people have described me as mysterious or aloof. In decentring the self-hated parts, I have made myself more relatable, more comprehensible. The inner world had become somewhat of a protective and secretive place. In working through, I have returned to the everyday, bringing with me pomegranate seeds of unknowable mystery from Hades, I’ve emerged much more generous, much more able to translate the unknowable. An acceptance of the many scraps, the many voices. In Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container I quote Stone (2004, p. 26) “intrinsic to true speech - or a writing without power - is the reclamation of the `I`: if the psychical fragmentation of acute distress is to be transformed then a willed occupation of the ground of first-person discourse is essential.” This reclaiming of the I is an acceptance and trust in the unknown, the plural, the many parts, a making peace with the self-hatred. Learning to love my wounding, accepting the traumas and valuing each fragment as agent provocateurs, aliens or ghosts that haunt me and can carry me to new meanings and feelings about my-self.

The reclaiming of the ‘I’ is made possible a decentring of self in Part III – Letting Go, another sense that guides heterogenous expression, like a bubbling spring, deep within. In Learning to Love this Heart Ache I quote Lyotard et al. (1988, p. 83), “you teach it to receive...a little clearing where the penumbra of an almost given will be able to enter and modify its contour.” The clearing of the ground opens previously inaccessible possibilities, changing perspectives on the level of reality formation. The source of the bubbling spring, the basis of thought itself is not within me, it is Other to
my conscious experience, beyond me. In *Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container* I quote, “thoughts exist before there is a thinker to think them; the thinking self begins with emotional experience first contained and thought by the other” (Larner, 2018, p. 316). This is an example of writing about my clinical work in *Part II – Working Through* drawing me out of my-self and beyond my-self to consider the therapeutic container. This ultimately unknowable place is where needs and desires can emerge from beyond the self. *Part III – Letting Go* traces a movement from personal writing to writing into the beyond, thought becomes less and less a function of self and surrenders itself into something bigger. Thought approaches and enters into a Spinozean like material beyond, God as Nature (Spinoza et al., 2020), the wellspring of thought and ethics.

**On Working Through, Messiness and Discontinuity**

In this section I make an argument for aims or a research question not being set at the beginning of thesis as is the norm in quantitative or more traditional qualitative research. In the *Method* section I write:

Lyotard describes that when ‘free floating attention’ become possible, the material that manifests in the present is not an object, it is an *aura* or a gentle breeze. The end isn’t knowledge, but the “approach to a ‘truth’ or a ‘real’ which is ungraspable” (Lyotard, 1991, p. 33). “The Thing that haunts the ‘language’, the tradition and the material with, against and in which one writes” (Lyotard, 1991, p. 33).

Throughout this thesis I aim to bring material as it presents itself, without forcing a form or direction of a project. As I explore my own journey, I attempt to remove barriers, work through fixations that would prevent me feeling the gentle breeze as it softly (and often very roughly such as in *Frustrated Surrender*) engulfs the surface of my skin. The success of this thesis depends on the level I can surrender intentionality and go beyond the norms that have produced my ontological structure. This alternative path is to allow this softness to be perceived and registered in all its contours and allow the fragments of material to arrive from beyond the self. I am fortunate to have Lyotard as a guide in this process, his words inspire me, give me strength to resist turning away from the breeze making it imperceptible and turning towards a mastery, a pro-ject.

This way of approaching the work was inspired by Jackson’s (2017) *thinking without method* which explores encounters while refusing images of thought. Refusing the pro-ject also requires me to refuse a research question, to avoid converging towards a particular aim or image of thought, which from the perspective of this thesis would be a form of mastery. To set a question in advance would delineate a totality and direction, to the form and direction of thought, a pro-ject. This method diverges from all quantitative and qualitative research that contains the project within a homogenous sample or linear method and situates the work in the field of post-qualitative research (St Pierre, 2021). The method I have chosen, to listen to the
gentle breeze means that my aims are intangible or indiscreet, to be haunted by “The Thing” (Lyotard, 1991, p. 33) that haunts language and allow aims to haphazardly emerge through this haunting. I was not aware of a question or aim of the thesis as I began writing, or even part way through. All I knew was I was working through the material as it arose in haphazard ‘units’, trusting the process of writing beyond what is cognizable, resisting cognition of a whole or refusing a pro-ject. Lyotard writes:

I recall that in working through, the only guiding thread at one’s disposal consists in sentiment or, better, in listening to a sentiment. A fragment of a sentence, a scrap of information, a word, come along. They are immediately linked with another ‘unit’. No reasoning, no argument, no mediation. By proceeding in this way, one slowly approaches a scene, the scene of something. One describes it. One does not know what it is. One is sure only that it refers to some past, both furthest and nearest past, both one’s own past and others’ past. This lost time is not represented like in a picture, it is not even presented. It is what presents the elements of a picture, an impossible picture. Rewriting means registering these elements (Lyotard, 1991, p. 31).

In On Writing I write:

In Part I – Holding On the writing is often fragmented, manic, raw, viscerally painful, and self-deprecating. Much of this section was written a time of great psychic suffering which led to disjunction and fragmentation. Part I – Holding On seeks to express the reality of this pain and other past traumas without holding back or attempting to prematurely finding a resolution. In Part I - Summary I describe this as “acting out”, “a ciphered message which the subject addresses to an Other when the Other has refused or failed to listen” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973).

I see the acting out as units or fragments emerging and slowly linking to other units as the thesis progresses. I am not in control of this process; it operates unconsciously and beyond the self. It is an act of trust in the feminine sublime (a de-centring) to believe these fragments would haphazardly start to present as a picture, an impossible picture. It was not my role to lead, as one would in a pro-ject but to register the journey.

I found that as I moved towards the Conclusion which I could have called ‘Registration’, a picture formed and at this point the writing process became a form of testimony, I write:

For Felman and Laub (1992, pp. 57-58) the witnessing requires a listener in order to inscribe something unto a “blank screen”, something new. The “knowing of the event is given birth to”, in listening the listener partially experiences the trauma themselves, “to feel the victim’s victories, defeats and silences, know them from within so that they can assume the form of testimony.” Writing this thesis, the main witness is myself, or the process of writing itself playing the role of the Other who witnesses, the “blank screen” is the empty page. Once a month my supervisors have become witness.
The working through has arisen through a witnessing. The testimony deconstructs the need of a ciphered message, allowing the message to decipher itself overtime through the process of writing. This has been a rocky road. In the **Method** section I write:

The writing aims to be more akin to a living network of organisms, theory and practice are brought together on a plane of immanence (Grosz, 2017, p. 136), to such an extent that separation is no longer possible. This is important for research in psychotherapy involving "affective change events" (Greenberg & Safran, 1990, p. 6). In many forms of psychotherapy affective change directly related to the body is considered more fundamental than cognitive or behavioural change in isolation.

I will now go into more detail in what I feel has brought about these affective change events. Benjamin (2002, p. 51) writes:

Much of our therapeutic endeavour is taken up with trying to grasp what is happening when we are caught up in such negating patterns. The opposition to establishing rhythm seems to proceed from a difficulty in the evolution of thirdness. Persons for whom this evolution has failed as I suggested earlier, have not had the opportunity to negotiate difference. They experience what ought to be seen as a kind of necessity, as a wilful imposition of the other; by the same token, they can see miseries they themselves have created as objective necessities. Bringing ourselves and the other, through our interaction, into a form of togetherness that produces an experience of the third is thus often the therapeutically challenging task.

And elsewhere (Benjamin, 2010, p. 115):

Emerging from the confluence of infancy studies and self psychology, the idea of rupture and repair has since the 90s (see Tronick's, 1989, crucial formulation) profoundly changed our view of what is therapeutic or transformational-it has allowed us to understand that the inevitable moments of dysregulation and dissociation in our processing of what is going on, the possible enactments that result, and the ensuing repair of therapeutic "mistakes" (misattunements, failures in regulation) are what actually allow development and change to occur. Insofar as we recognize that the analyst is a subjective participant and thus she as well as the patient becomes involved in dissociative processes, the notion of rupture and repair becomes more essential.

The concepts of ‘thirdness’ and ‘rupture and repair’ can offer an understanding of the process of working through in this thesis. In **Frustrated Surrender** I highlight:

The purpose of writing this chapter was to turn towards the trauma in its full force. The frozen affective forces were causing a hidden resentment in my writing, a me vs the world feeling. It needed to come out, in **Part I - Introduction** I call it a purge, reading this text I feel a sickness, a disgust. The purpose is to externalise this disgust, so it no longer exist as scaffolding in the background, burdening my perspectives of life and burdening my writing. The
frozen suffering is too much to contain within the barrier of the skin. There are undertones of suicidality, fortunately this is not yearning for organic death, the death is transmuted into a forceful push against the totality the frozen suffering formed.

The self-reflective process of writing, at times shifts the ground that underlies my experience of self, I have described this shifting of the ground in Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace. In the Conclusion I describe the importance of the writing process:

the process of writing itself playing the role of the Other who witnesses, the “blank screen” is the empty page. Once a month my supervisors have become witness.

Both the writing itself and the writing as a blank screen offer an experience of thirdness. This thirdness, combined with a process of surrender offers a shift from the me vs world perspective and makes space for the possibility of difference. This process often led to ruptures in the supervisory relationship. I often resisted the perspective of the other receiving it as a “wilful imposition of the other” (Benjamin, 2002, p. 51). It is through many cycles of rupture and repair: perceived misattunements leading to disagreements and even arguments in supervision followed by reflection, writing and return allowed the rhythm to change from a self-negating rhythm towards a rhythm that could include difference. The rhythm that can include difference could be likened to Ettinger’s concept of “another sense” (Ettinger, 2004, p. 82) a term used throughout the thesis. The writing process made space for the inclusion of thirdness and the continued problematisation of my sense of self or ontological ground.

The aims haphazardly emerge throughout the thesis in parallel to the shifting of the ontological ground:

- I attempt to sketch a theory that can support male psychotherapists to hold a space without appropriating femininity. In the introduction to Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari.

- The journey of the thesis is working towards offering a container where the process of witnessing can support a changing perspective to my-self, this is the thesis’ applicability to the field of psychotherapy. In Part III - Introduction.

- To form into what in retrospect feels like the true aim of the thesis, to listen to the otherness of the other more profoundly, with less noise in the background. This is the thesis’s relevance to the field of psychotherapy. In Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace.

I explore earlier in this chapter that fragmented units come to present a picture, an impossible picture. This is how the aims emerged, rather than being preordained, emerging haphazardly through the process of writing. In Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari I write:
Nirta (2014, p. 249) writes of the uncertain, the unclear, unsorted, unstable body' The ‘unsanitised’ refusal of Oedipal purity “can incite ways of being together, loving, desiring, and identifying that are at odds with the normative regime (Ettinger, 2004, p. 81).

The journey of this thesis is an unsanitised, messy refusal of Oedipal purity. The fragments emerge as affective forces without form and find their form in the writing process. The lack of specificity and generalisability of aims may reduce the applicability of the work to future audiences. I hope the thesis can express elements of psychotherapy that may be left out of traditional research but lies at the heart of therapeutic change. The applicability to the field of psychotherapy is not in a universal, representational or generalisable end point but in the particular expression of the messy dilemmas and questions that arise through the work. I hope in future works I can begin to find ways of making this messy expression more widely accessible and accessibility I see as a weakness of the thesis when thinking of cope of readership. Psychotherapy is increasingly commissioned based on quantitative measures of benefit which presents a tension between my work and recognition in the wider field. It is possible that this presents a limit to the form of psychotherapy I describe in this practice, in that the messiness of affective change events and the conditions that make this possible cannot be quantified.

I consider this in An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body:

In transgressing the representational world of readymade law and order theory returns to its original place in the encounter with the Other, where the other who has lost their voice can reclaim their voice, a feminine voice. In this form an assemblage of qualities and intensities become possibilities, using the language of Levinas, this is the pathway to infinity. In my writing I cannot be value free, but I notice when the ontologies I have been socialised get in the way and can strive for an ethic that invites the otherness of the other into the writing and into the therapy room.

When read alongside the post-colonial work in Post-colonial theory and decentring the self this sets a path for psychotherapy theory and practice to problematise representational and method driven psychotherapy practices while still maintaining its accessibility and relevance.
Theory

What follows is an introduction to 4 years of discovery. My journey into theory has not been systematic, it has been personal. Searching for theory that intimately resonates with the unspoken textures of reality on the borderline of thought and unthought. This journey begins with an exploration of my masculinity, honoured in the Decentring Masculinity section below. This led to an exploration of the feminine and the exclusion of femininity in Western culture in the The Exclusion of the Feminine from Western Culture and Irigaray's Mimetic Reproduction. This part of my journey, the main body of the thesis, led me into theory that could be broadly categorised as French psychoanalytic post-structural feminism. There are important differences within the field such as Irigaray’s focus on strengthening a female subjectivity and an attempt to inject it into the hegemonic in contrast to Ettinger and Lyotard who put more focus on turning towards a sense that has been excluded from the hegemonic and the witnessing of this sense bringing about a deconstruction of the hegemonic from without. I then combine my studies of masculinity and femininity in The Failure of the Phallus. The deconstruction of male hegemonic mastery and the narcissistic wound that is revealed and felt through this process. This journey continues throughout the thesis, introducing other theorists along the way. Notably in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container I introduce Bion and Levinas when considering the interhuman encounter and a therapeutic container.

The reader may notice the relative absence of the British object relation school taught in the UK on most psychodynamic and integrative psychotherapy courses. The British object relation school includes Winnicott, Bowlby and Klein. The reason for this is that the thesis has taken me in a direction that considers the social in relation to the individual and seeks to problematise notions of subjectivity and objectivity. Post-structuralism and the focus of the French theory I use on the social and political offers more scope to theorise about the social in relation to the individual as this is also the direction many of these authors have taken. It is particularly important when problematising notions of gender and race. When considering the social production of an individual, “individuals are always-already subjects” (Althusser, 1972, p. 176), it felt necessary to theorise beyond the British object relation school which on the whole considers the subject as separate from the social. Less attention is paid to the subjectification process which is rooted in social space, and this is the focus and direction of this thesis.

Deepening my understanding of the work of Lyotard and Laplanche has guided me through the process of decentring the self and into ‘something else’. In Part III – Letting Go I call this ‘something else’ the feminine sublime. I have chosen to put Lyotard and Laplanche in the method section because my journey and the psychotherapeutic movement I consider a praxis (Bazzano, 2023), the theory should only ever be an afterwards and there is an argument for putting all of the theory in the method section. If the theory leads, it is in danger of becoming a representation, an overpower that distances me from praxis. The theory aims to be a tactic guide, a helping hand in the process of decentring my-self in order to connect to access the senses that lie beyond.
Towards the end of Part III – Letting Go in What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond I deeply resonate with the work of Simone Weil. At first glance this seems to be a divergence from the main body of theory, however knowing some of Weil’s history it is less so. Simone Weil studied alongside Simone de Beauvoir, Weil’s work has influenced the existential movement and the post structural psychoanalytic movement that came after. The second part of the title of the doctorate The ‘I’ Becoming Universal draws on my exploration of Weil’s work. In exploring ‘the feminine sublime’, Zylinska (1998, p. 98) writes the concept is “born out of this excess expelled from male aesthetics and not protected by its defensive principles of decorum.” Similarly, in diverging from Weil’s Christian understanding, I take the excess of the ‘I’ becoming universal and extract it from the underpinning patriarchal male God. The danger of the ‘I’ becoming universal being so central to the conclusion of thesis is that it could be seen to form a new hegemonic, a masculine sublime that erases difference in mastering the sublime energies. I intend and hope to have achieved a subversion of these modern forces as part of the journey to rewrite modernity, a reappropriation of the universal to denote the unformed generative potential of heterogeneity in itself. This is further explored in a comparison of Kant’s masculine sublime and the feminine sublime in Learning to Love this Heart Ache.

Decentring Masculinity

Althusser famously wrote (1972, p. 176) “individuals are always-already subjects12”. An example being when male or female is marked on an infant’s birth certificate. The individual, in this example the infant, is “hailed” and from this moment are always-already a subject, meaning they are always-already embedded into the norms of society as mediated through language. When the infant develops self-knowledge, they recognise themselves as a ‘self’, gender is an overdetermined category, containing structural possibilities and impossibilities maintained and perpetuated by cultural rituals, practices and beliefs.

Whitehead (2002, p. 35) writes that 90% of violence is perpetrated by men, he describes this as the “dark side of masculine role performance13”. In the I thesis I attempt to de-naturalise and challenge violence and invisibility of phallic privilege as it exists within me and socially. The darker side of masculine role performance with myself is explored in Attempting to Destroy, later in the thesis I move to make peace with masculinity Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms. This is a work of mourning, a work of witnessing and a work of remembrance. Cutting off the feminine can cause a “trauma in male socialisation” (Pleck, 1995, p. 20). I explore the disavowal of my femininity in order to fit in with male norms in Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence. I explore reconnecting to the disavowed femininity in Attempting to Destroy and Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace. In psychoanalysis the phallic separation is considered severe, often described as a

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12 Althusser’s statement and its applicability to psychotherapy is explored further in Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari.

13 A process driven exploration of the darker side of my own masculine role performance can be found in the chapter Attempting to Destroy.
castration and for the phallic male subject comes at the cost of a bound aggression and narcissism (Julien, 1995, p. 34). Without a self-reflective process, in my case through the process of researching and writing, the inability to witness his trauma can lead to “a gap that carries the force of the event” (Caruth, 1997, p. 7). The gap doesn’t go away in the process of witnessing, it becomes enigmatic rather than traumatic, a gateway to the beyond: beyond language, beyond subjectivity.

I will give a very brief critical analysis of masculinity studies from its conception in the 1970s to the present day. I include some of the debates and contradictions in the movement. But first I will define and give a brief history of the term hegemonic, a term used throughout the thesis.

Connell describes the hegemonic as “the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). He writes that even though only a minority of men enact hegemonic masculinity; it is nevertheless normative and reflects the “currently most honoured way of being a man” and legitimises the global subordination of women to men. In the thesis I use the term hegemonic masculinity with caution, as Whitehead (1999, p. 58) points out that it can only explain so much, “once we stress the fluidity, contingency and multiplicity of masculinities — and identities.” This is important for the relationship between me and the norms of masculinity, throughout the thesis I aim to challenge binarism’s and move towards plurality. For example, in Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari I attempt to move beyond the Apollo-Dionysus dyad of Nietzsche’s work to include Athena and Artemis.

In the 1970s there was an explosion of publications about men coming mainly from the UK, the USA, Scandinavia, and Australia (McCary, 2007). The publications debated gender roles, hegemonic and counter-hegemonic masculinities. Two strands emerged: Men’s Studies and Critical Studies of Men. While both groups claimed to share a political commitment to feminism Men’s Studies was more reactive. Traister (2000, pp. 278, 290) in considering both branches of masculinity studies states that while they claim to be pro-feminist are really a “regressive politics of ‘menz ideology’” aiming to “re-establish hegemonic, stable and unchanging masculine norms and practices for men under assault by such forces”. Wright (2005) who has more hope for the movement argues Men’s Studies challenges reactive men’s movements that use a “crisis of masculinity” to fall back on patriarchal definitions of manhood and masculinity that are “archetypalised as universal”, a psychological essentialism. In Postscript: Developing a Public Face to the Work I attempt to offer a progressive expression of men’s mental health by considering the violence enacted by many men while acknowledging the negative impact this has on men as well as woman.

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14 I return to this quote, the gap that carries the force of the event in Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace and Postscript: Developing a Public Face to the Work.
15 In Learning to Love this Heart Ache I explore this further, trying to cover the gap or the abyss is considered the foundations of a system of terror.
The less reactive *Critical Studies of Men* was renamed *Masculinities* in 1993, aiming to differentiate itself from the more reactive branch. McCary (2007, p. 407) writes that the two branches are now less defined. McCary considers masculinity studies to make only a token reference to feminism and inadequately consider the radical feminist theories of sexual difference. She writes that many works selectively appropriate feminist literature in support of their arguments. McCary believes one of the limitations is the lack of engagement with the issue of men’s violence and its interrelatedness to masculinity. Throughout this thesis I attempt to explore many men’s disavowal of femininity and the negative effects this has on woman and men. This exploration begins in the theory of Irigaray and Ettinger in the chapters, *The Foreclosure of the Feminine in Western Culture*, *Irigaray’s Mimetic Reproduction* and *The Failure of the Phallus*.

Some authors have attempted to engage with the material violence of men and its interrelationship with hegemonic masculinity. For example, Whitehead, a prominent writer in the field comments “while masculinities may be illusory, the material consequences of many men's practices are quite real enough” (Whitehead, 2002, p. 43). Whitehead explains male violence as the “dark side of masculine role performance”. In agreement with McCary, Whitehead writes that without a serious engagement with feminist writings masculinity studies cannot hope to “vividly [interrogate] the interrelationships of power, difference, identity, femininities and masculinities, embedded in the complex and often contradictory elements of language.”

Whitehead (2002, p. 10) writes there to be little obvious motivation for men to critique their privileged position because the exclusion of women enables the perpetuation of privilege. I disagree with this in that it is apparent the detrimental effect hegemonic masculinity has on men as well as women. For example, I explore some effects of men’s mental health struggles in *Postscript: Developing a Public Face to the Work*. Whitehead describes how unconvincing Darwinian-inspired research attempts to naturalise gender and perpetuate the myth a traditional gender dichotomy produces a healthy society. He notes biological reductionist explanations are an ideological stance that tend to reflect conservative values (Whitehead, 2002, p. 12). In Whitehead’s view there “are no set patterns of predictable, biologically given human behaviours from which we can assume certainty” (Whitehead, 2002, p. 13).

In the 1980s, informed by second wave feminism the biological basis of the male role was critiqued. Feminist psychoanalytic critiques challenged the “cultural arrangements” (Whitehead, 2002, p. 31) that sustain gender injustice, they critiqued the “timeless truths” (Whitehead, 2002, p. 33) that were sometimes expressed in Freud’s work, likely in part due to his need to make psychoanalysis scientific in order to be hegemonically recognised. Pleck (1995, p. 20) writes that “masculinity ideology directly creates trauma in male socialisation”. These critiques open sites of exploration rather than static essentialisms. Masculinity began to be seen as “plural and multiple” (Whitehead, 2002, p. 34), differing in time, space and context and influenced by sexuality, class, age and ethnicity. This is necessary for this thesis in that for disavowed femininity to be reincluded into my self-structure the relationship with my-self needs to hold the capacity for transformation.
In Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence and throughout Part I – Holding On I explore how a traumatic socialisation had the effect of excluding or deadening affective possibilities in my own life, in particular modes of being associated with the feminine. In post-structuralism there is a focus on moving out of the singular and into the plural as quoted by Whitehead above. Hegemonic masculinity has an affinity with the reproduction of sameness, reflection in a flat plane mirror. This flat plane mirror is entwined with a feeling and privilege as a hegemonic male recognises and affirms another hegemonic male through the same base of privilege.\(^{16}\)

In Part I – Holding On I explore my own history and how I was imbued with this privilege and also how I suffered from this privilege as elements of myself were divergent and as a result escaped recognition and suffered violence. In exploring these traumas in my writing I consider how femininity and the plural can be rediscovered or resurrected through reminiscence and working through.

Wright (2005, p. 245) describes the emergence of queer theory in the 1980s, arising with its grass roots in political activism, first articulated by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick:

> Queerly decentered subjects are dispersing in radical, new, hitherto unheard of directions; marginalized others are creating their own public voices in which to communicate sex and gender queernesses.

Queer theory is more focused on the non-hegemonic plural and therefore more accessible for the LGBTQ+ community, as well as non-Western cultures. Previously masculinity studies had been dominated by heterosexual white men (Wright, 2005, p. 243). Wright considers “queer masculinities” to offer a third way that challenges binary oppositions as constituted by Western culture:

> Transforming the invisible ‘zero degree’ of the ‘straight, white, middle-class, and gender and social-conformist male’—the unmarked ‘ideal norm’ from which all otherness has been judged inferior deviations (Wright, 2005, p. 243).

I make very few references to queer theory, except in the chapter Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari. However, the efforts to reinclude disavowed femininity and deconstruct structural binaries that shut down potentialities for both men and woman is a similar journey to that taken in queer theory. I have considered identifying as non-binary myself in that I feel estranged from hegemonic masculinity. The thesis and my own journey ultimately went in a different direction, in the chapter Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms I aim to make peace with my masculinity and feel a belonging with men. But a kind of masculinity that can be expressive of both maleness and femaleness, a plural masculinity.

**The Exclusion of the Feminine from Western Culture**

In this section I explore the male subject position in Western society excludes the feminine from a post-structural psychoanalytic feminist perspective. This chapter compliments the journey to reinclude disavowed feminine parts of myself and problematise the hegemonic masculine position. In Part I – Holding On there is a

\(^{16}\) See Irigaray’s Mimetic Reproduction for a fuller exploration of the flat plane mirror.
movement to decentring and deconstructing the hegemonic elements of my-self, but also a sense of holding on, of resisting. In Part III – Letting Go I let go of this resistance and explore how accepting my male gender can coincide with an inclusion of disavowed femininity.

Disavowal refers to the exclusion of femininity from the hegemonically male subject position, forming a totality, a semi-stable identity. This foreclosure forms a narcissistic ground to the male's subject position that has become invisible or neutral in Western society. The supposed autonomy of the hegemonic male relies on him disposing of his connection to certain affective experiences signified as feminine in his effort to achieve transcendental freedom. The disembodiment relies on an interdependence of women posited as the corporeal other, in “essential and enslaving identities” (Butler, 1986, pp. 43-44). In maintaining connection to the woman as other, he remains in connection with his alienated affective experience.

With roots in the myth of Narcissus, Lacan (1977) considered the mirror image as central to the formation of the self. Lacan’s account of the mirror stage and the Oedipus complex changed throughout his career. In what Lacan termed the imaginary register which occurs in early life, between 6-8 months and remains throughout life, the infant becomes capable of seeing themselves as a separate self, a moi or ego. An early example is the recognition of their reflected image in a mirror. The infant comes to know that their ego is not them, the I, not purely their own desire, rather, it is a repository of the fantasies of others, for example the parents and through the parents, societal norms, “this other who is myself is other than myself” (Julien, 1995, p. 34). In an attempt to overcome conflicting demands both bodily, social and everything in between, the infant identifies with the moi or the ego, the whole body image, binding narcissism and aggressivity. This is a narcissistic binding in that one’s whole body image is sustained by the other. Aggression is imbued into the whole structure in an attempt to overcome the tension that the other both attracts and rejects me, “I am indeed nothing but the other, yet at the same time, he remains alienus” (Julien, 1995, p. 34). If the individual remains bound within the socially inscribed hegemonic structures there is no resolution to this structural tension, life is a constant search for harmony and mastery in a futile but enduring attempt to resolve this conflict. It is a disavowal of the abyss that sits between self and other and a narcissistic wound in rejecting the reality that the ego or the whole-body self is not the origin of thought. This is explored further in Laplanche’s work in Decentring the self and Lyotard’s in Learning to Love this Heart Ache.

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17 I explore this totality and the ramifications for my identity further in Learning to Love this Heart Ache.

18 I explore this neutral, invisible ontology further in Trying to Decentre the Whiteness of my Being.

19 This follows from the previous chapter Decentring Masculinity engaging with French post structural psychoanalytic feminism more directly.

20 The disavowed other is very different from a witnessing of the other in a therapeutic container explored in the chapter Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container. It is different in that the former relies on a disavowal, the latter on a face-to-face encounter, an encounter with difference.

21 This topic is introduced in the Method chapter. It is relevant to both the theory and method of the thesis.
The next stage of development is the positive Oedipus complex. In this stage the male infant identifies their ego with the symbolic order through the father. The symbolic order for Silverman and throughout this thesis I refer to as hegemonic masculinity, suggesting more overtly than Lacan that it is a historic patriarchal order rather than a universal neutral order (Silverman, 1992, p. 40). The boy believes himself to have the power of creation as he identifies his penis with the central signifier in a hegemonic masculine system-the phallus. Identifying with hegemonic masculinity through the father requires the boy to relinquish the original object, the mother, but maintain libidinal connection to her in constituting her as other. The boy maintains libidinal connection to the other by enslaving actual others within the phallic order, objectified as mirror reflections of his ego in his continuous strive for harmony and mastery. In the chapters The Schizoid Returns and What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond I explore alternative possibilities that go beyond the Oedipal construction. To reinclude the feminine in a masculine identity and connecting to the feminine sublime, that lies beyond the Oedipal self-structure.

Ettinger traces the phallic construction to Roman times seen in the hero myth, in the many variations of this myth the hero begets himself. Excluded from the narrative is the hero’s separation from his mother, in this exclusion the hero forecloses the feminine. The birth giving mother melts into “obscurity and senselessness as a Thing of no human significance” (Ettinger, 2004, p. 70). From this point forward, throughout history the connective relationship with the birth giving mother is cut off and repressed and henceforth only accessible through the mediator of woman as Other. This exclusion disavows “archaic trauma and jouissance” in denying the maternal the self-creating male considers he holds the power of creation and identifies himself with the symbolic through the ideal image of the father.

Irigaray’s Mimetic Reproduction

In the translators introduction to Irigaray’s Veiled Lips Speidel (Irigaray & Speidel, 1983, p. 96) describes Irigaray’s method of re-reading texts and mimetically reproducing them with the intention of subverting the patriarchal construction.

The imaginary register, which is ‘marked by relation to the image of a similar being’, involves the notion that during the period Lacan calls the ‘mirror stage’ the child’s ego is constituted through identification with his reflection in a mirror. The unified body image which the child sees in the mirror represents the ego and constitutes the child as ego through his identification with it. ‘This Gestalt symbolizes the mental permanence of the I, at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destination (Lacan, 1977, p. 2)’. In Speculum, Irigaray envisions the possibility of a concave mirror which (unlike Lacan’s flat mirror) would not produce a faithful and unified image, but would distort and

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22 The silencing effect of the phallus, especially for women is explored alongside the work of Cixous in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container and returned to throughout the thesis.
23 The negative impacts the hero myth has had on my own clinical practice can be found in An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body Revisited.
24 An alternative historic ontogenetic account of the othering of woman focussing on aversion to menstruation can be found in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container, this account compliments the Ettinger’s phylogenetic account found in this chapter.
transform: ‘But perhaps, beyond this specular surface which supports discourse, what presents itself is not the void of nothingness but...a scintillating and incandescent concavity’ (Irigaray, 1985, p. 143).

Irigaray explores Lacan’s imaginary register and its domination by what she calls phallocentricity, she aims to subvert this domination through a process she calls mimetic reproduction. For Lacan, the imaginary register is where the eye and gaze are split.

In which the drive is manifested at the level of the scopic field...in our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in this figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it—that is what we call the gaze...nothing less than the phenomenon known as mimicry (Lacan 1981, 73).

At the point where the scopic and the gaze are split, the gaze is always-already imbued with the patriarchal norms of the society, the self-knowing self which Lacan considered to have a narcissistic ground. Lacan uses a metaphor of a flat mirror the subject creates representations of reality that unconsciously reflect one’s own needs and desires, this he calls the gaze. Irigaray challenges the inevitability of this mimicry that in some of Lacan’s writing appears to be universal. Irigaray considers the gaze to be a masculine gaze, with the feminine subject excluded from Lacan’s representational system of sexual difference. Irigaray mocks Lacan’s mimicry, a system of masculine reproduction of sameness which, like Ettinger, she sees in various authors and philosophers throughout history. She offers an alternative which she calls mimetic reproduction that rather than re-creating a system of phallic sameness subverts this system and gives rise to the possibility of a feminine imaginary, bringing plurality and difference.

Robinson (1989, p. 209) a commentator on Irigaray, describes the efforts of feminist theory, “demonstrating that the subject, in hegemonic discourses, is always produced as male-that is, ‘universal’-this work has also made it possible to theorize a different subject, a subject gendered female.” This can be seen in the above Lacan quote, Lacan posits a gaze, which is really the masculine gaze of a masculine subject. Butler (1990, p. 326) highlights that in making the paternal law central to his psychic structure Lacan universalises and essentialises the exclusion of femininity and bases his system around this exclusion. “The paternal law which Lacanian psychoanalysis takes to be the ground of all kinship and all cultural relations not only sanctions male subjects but institutes their very possibility through the denial of the feminine.” Butler challenges Lacan’s universalisation of gender and instead considering it to be a social and historical performance, this makes possible fluidity and subversion.

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25 This is relevant to the ontogenetic exploration in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container where olfactory desire is repressed and, in its place, the visual field dominates. This process is seen to require the binding of aggression and the othing of woman in the repression of olfactory desire.
In the following quote Irigaray (1985, p. 142) comments on her project poetically, with the aim of avoiding re-representation as part of her project of subversion, “overthrow syntax by suspending its eternally teleological order, by snipping the wires, cutting the current, breaking the circuits, switching the connections, by modifying continuity, alternation, frequency, intensity.” A performativity that problematizes the supposed universal system of masculine subjectivity. This problematization, making possible the overcoming of the narcissistic origins of self. Irigaray reimagines these narratives, making room for a feminine subjectivity to emerge.

The work of this thesis is a male parallel to Irigaray’s work, I attempt to overcome the narcissistic origins of the male subject position by reconnecting to disavowed femininity and connecting to the feminine sublime. This is explored in detail in the chapters The Schizoid Returns and What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond.

Irigaray in re-reading Freud, Lacan, Plato, Hegel, Derrida, Kant and others writes there is no female subject only a male subject with the female as the other, “an imprint of forms” (Irigaray, 1985, p. 141). Irigaray highlights how the over-cathexis of the scopic field, imbued with social norms in the masculine gaze becomes a system of domination “the contract, the collusion, between one sex/organ and the victory won by visual dominance herefore leaves woman with her sexual void, with an ‘actual castration’ carried out in fact” (Irigaray, 1985, p. 48). Irigaray aims to subvert this process which describes “if subversion is possible, it will be a subversion from within the terms of the law, through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawns unexpected permutations of itself. The culturally constructed body will then be liberated, not to its ‘natural’ past nor to its original pleasures, but to an open future of cultural possibilities” comments Butler (1989, p. 117). Like Irigaray’s concave mirror the subversion happens from within the masculine gaze (or in Butler’s language law) itself. Speidel (1983, p. 94) in the introduction to Veiled Lips describes Irigaray’s writing as an enactment that used the ‘tools’ of masculine discourse, this mimesis aims to make possible relationships between the sexes where “woman is no longer reduced to an echo or mirror-image of man but speaks to/with him in a dialogue that recognises her difference, which allows her to coexist.” My own exploration of a changing gender relationship in the therapeutic container is explored in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container.

Lacan argues that in the imaginary register the psychic self is dominated by the verbs “being” and “having”, a person desires to be or have the phallus, the symbolic is always at a distance from the thing itself and when in language the child accepts a lack in “being something like” (usually for a man in identification with the phallus) or “having something like” (usually for a woman in yearning for the phallus) (Hook, 2006, p. 75). Both men and women are always in a state of privation in that the imaginary is always at a distance from the real. Irigaray’s mimetic reproduction problematizes this binary and heteronormative system as the dispersed rays of the concave lens cannot be totalized in a self-same system. Irigaray comments on this binary system, “the inadequacy of language that reduces to active or passive when
what lie beneath really more complex” (Irigaray, 1985, p. 16). This complexity brings non-linear contours, a system that is multiplicious and fluid26.

Irigaray’s theory challenges the fixity of the phallocentric system categorised and ordered as a totality. Schutte (1991, p. 69) describes Irigaray’s method: “her counterproposal to the male speculative drive is the projection of a ‘concave speculum, a uniquely feminine mirror, one that is found pirouetting ceaselessly upon itself’ (Irigaray, 1985, p. 134). This mirror will absorb the light of the transcendent subject until it disintegrates him”.

It could be argued that this subversion is not possible for me, socialised into the classically oppressive group, Katz (1996, p. 487) highlights Lorde’s warning “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master's house”. Schutte (1991, p. 67) describes how this was the trap Lacan and Freud fell into, “the analyst, caught in his own discursive role, is blocked from the possibility of understanding or appropriately interpreting the heterogeneous experiences of women. He is also kept from engaging in a feminist questioning of current psychoanalytic theory”. The analyst sees what they want to see, this challenges Lacan’s universalisation of the preconscious narcissistic gaze. Irigaray describes how a biological essentialism in Freud and a psychological essentialism in Lacan’s work that in both cases universalises the masculine subject and recreates the conditions of oppression. One of the questions to answer in this thesis is how can I step beyond this gaze analysing appropriating? How can I “provoke ‘a line of escape’ a rupture—a tension out of which something else might happen…relentlessly transformative and inextricably relational” (Katz, 1996, p. 489). This question is somewhat answered in the work on the feminine sublime in Learning to Love this Heart Ache.

Whitehead (2002, p. 105) in considering Foucault’s later work speaks of the power being inscribed in the language that dichotomizes two groups, “the power of discursive regimes of (gender) truth lies in the very language that dichotomizes, and thus brings into existence, the gendered and sexualized status of the body - woman and man, straight and gay.” In problematizing masculinity, I attempt to decentre phallocentricity and create new possible moments of self-creation, Whitehead in discussing Foucault’s later work says:

In dismissing the idea of power as centralized, ‘appropriated as a commodity’ or functional to the benefit of a given structural order (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). Foucault stresses the symbiotic relationship between power and resistance. In so doing, Foucault develops further his concept of the discursive subject as a social and historical construct, fragmented, decentered, but, crucially, enabled by the very circularity of power at large in the social web. The body remains the primary point of subjectification by regimes of power, but it is now understood by Foucault to be marked and created as a subject (and thus categorized as an individual) by these very same dynamics. Thus the symbiotic relationship between power and the subject is revealed both in the

26 Lyotard’s exploration of this, considering the possibility of men to overcome this binary system and occupy a different position can be found in Learning to Love this Heart Ache. This process driven exploration is an important part of my journey to occupy a different position.
individual's subjection to those laws of truth; that constitute various discursive regimes and in the simultaneous marking and identifying of the subject as an individual - an enabling, positive moment of (self) creation….he comes to see the self as created as 'work of art', not in a prior sense of there being a prediscursive subject (Whitehead, 2002, p. 101).

Foucault’s later work considers power more as a web rather than a hierarchy, this invites localised struggles in multiple directions rather than dichotomized Marxist dialectics. In a system that behaves more like a web there are multiple opportunities for resistance with multiple possibilities for creation of divergent selves. It is in rewriting my-self and decentring my own subject position I problematise the power dynamics that form my subject position and the societal power dynamics and norms that are formed around this. In being a decentred philosophy, Foucault’s later work works well alongside Laplanche’s work introduced in Decentring the self and explored throughout the thesis, summarised in Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace.

I am heterosexual, white, middle-class male, all the categories that constitute the stereotypical phallocentric oppressor. Alongside the re-writing that aims to go beyond my subject position I will use the “tools of masculine discourse” (Irigaray & Speidel, 1983, p. 94) already embedded within my subjectivity to problematize the phallic domination within and around myself, I will do this “on the same symbolic level in which the phallus is hegemonic“ (Butler, 2000, p. 271), but also attempt to reach beyond the self-position, this reaches its mature expression in What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond.

I attempt to renegotiate hegemonic masculinity, “I do want to suggest that the increase in feminist discourses has to provoke a crisis in the hegemony of the masculine perspective. The reaction to this crisis, I would argue, takes the form Wiegman calls a ‘renegotiation of the masculinity’” (Robinson, 1989, p. 205). This is what the thesis aims to provoke, to problematize subjects that have alternative paths of recognition to phallocentric hegemonic productions. Whitehead (2002, p. 3) points out the ‘crisis’ of masculinity has already led to reactionary movements “‘there can be no prevailing, singular masculinity in crisis’ and proponents of this group have used the thesis to inform a backlash against feminism, the ‘white heterosexual, Anglo-Saxon men’ become the victim, the ‘wounded under threat’” (Whitehead, 2002, p. 3).

Using the idea of a crisis in a reactionary form can be used to further cement phallocentrism. Whitehead points out the crisis that results in “men ceasing to behave violently and abusively towards women, children, other men, animals, the earth itself, would be very welcome. However, unfortunately, that particular crisis of masculinity is less visible and barely talked of.” In this thesis I aim to go beyond representation and problematise or de-centre the singular self-structure that projects a mastery into the world and claims privilege, this movement I believe, based on personal experience and countless stories I am told in my clinical role, has a negative effect on men, woman and the environment.
The Failure of the Phallus

For the phallic male to move beyond a unified sense of mastery, Silverman argues there must be an acceptance of lack or vulnerability. Accepting lack can cause disintegration as it brings into awareness the narcissistic ground of the self that reality is built upon.

They are at least for the moment unable to sustain an imaginary relation with the phallus, and so withdraw their belief from the dominant fiction...When the male subject is brought into a traumatic encounter with lack...he often experiences it as the impairment of his anatomical masculinity. What is really at issue, though, is a psychic disintegration-the disintegration, that is, of a bound and armoured ego, predicated upon the illusion of coherence and control (Silverman, 1992, pp. 62, 63).

According to Silverman, the crisis of faith and reconstitution of reality can cause considerable disturbance, a reconstitution of reality when the phallic male’s imagined sense mastery and control fails. Ettinger (2004, p. 85) writes “the phallus fails, or this feminine-other-thinking fails but only in the phallic order.” This suggests that when there is a failure of a phallic structure a potential to unlock senses that lie beyond this system. “The artist, male or female, who encounters the gaze as a phallic ghost that has escaped unconscious repression27 – turns into a hero and becomes a man-artist figure. The archaic jouissance that is saturated with pain or pleasure and is the traumatic wound beyond the border is indeed inaccessible to the subject, inasmuch as it is phallic.” Here Ettinger suggests that if a subject is able to take on a non-phallic position, they can experience the trauma and jouissance that when excluded holds together the phallic position. Orbach (2009, p. 124) highlights

the need to represent [the penis] as ever hard, ever available and ever in pursuit have created a mythological magical phallus which allows us to forget how devastating the effect of the labile nature of the penis can be on men’s self-experience...we might designate the flaccid penis as some kind of bodily truth about the man’s emotions and vulnerability.

The failure of the phallus and the reality of the vulnerability is central to the process of decentring, it is this vulnerability of flaccidity that this thesis explores. To accept the reality of one’s body and self-experience requires a loss of the phallus, the failure of the magic phallus which is a journey through vulnerability and into material reality.

In this chapter I have traced a path of masculinity studies and its relationship with feminist movements. I have explored psychoanalytic constructions of power dynamics and feminist critiques of these constructions. I have then set out a path to make use of these theories in order to re-write myself, taking me beyond the norms of the hegemonic structure into what has been excluded and in doing this problematise the power dynamics embedded in myself and in phallocentric structures of masculinity. This did provoke a crisis and a restructuring of reality, the

27 Importantly this relates to the haunting of unconscious forces introduced in A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning. In rewriting modernity, rewriting my-self, I come into relation to the ghosts that haunt me, provoking a crisis.
crisis can be seen in Part I – Holding On, especially the chapters Attempting to Destroy and Frustrated Surrender. In Part III – Letting Go this reaches more of a point of peace that doesn’t mean an absence of pain, especially in The Schizoid Returns, Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms and What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond.
An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body

In this chapter, I problematise classical definitions of epistemology and ontology. I then offer an alternative ontology, explored through Levinas, Deleuze, and Jackson’s writings. A re-writing of the qualitative. In the post-structural movement, ontology is shifted from a representative image which moderates and recognises, to an ontology of becoming through encounter with the other. This system is open-ended meaning each encounter is impermanent and can never be totalised. In encountering my past traumas in reminiscence, I encounter the unknown, a repetition of difference and redefinition, taking me beyond the identification with the objects of trauma and into the realm of trauma as an agent to move from one place to another, beyond a body socialised as male. Trauma as agent uses the language of Laplanche, introduced in Decentering the self.

Ettinger (2004, p. 74), describes how Western society produces knowledge related to the male body:

The phallic subjective structure (disguised as neutral), and with it (also disguised as neutral) the sexual phallic difference that has become the measure of any sexual difference, refer both directly and indirectly to the male body, to its pleasures and pains and to the phantasms attached to it. This structure, from Freud to Lacan, to different degrees of concreteness and abstractness, was assimilated into Western culture to such an extent that the difference produced in its frame has come to be considered equally relevant (though in different ways) to individuals of both sexes, and furthermore to be the only difference.

Reading Ettinger and Irigaray, introduced in the chapter The Foreclosure of the Feminine in Western Culture and Irigaray’s Mimetic Reproduction it becomes clear that to challenge the hegemonic male structure in an academic environment, I must also challenge the normalised understandings of the objective. In the above quote Ettinger describes Western knowledge to be dominated by the male body. To challenge this requires a problematisation of the usual categories of ontology and epistemology as they are entangled with the privilege of the hegemonic male. I have been socialised as male so these ontologies are inscribed upon my being and I must also look into my own automatic patterns of being, this is the work of the thesis, an example is the disavowal of the feminine in my socialisation in Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence. French psychoanalytic feminism and queer theory have done a lot of work in this direction. For example, St Pierre (2003, p. 380) comments that the entire structure of empirical social science research methodology sets up a binary between the rational (mind/theory) and the empirical (body/practice). This split is a result of the male’s grasp towards transcendental freedom obtained through the disavowal of femininity, erasing affective potentialities.

Levinas was one of the first to recover the encounter from representational metaphysical philosophy inviting the vulnerability that lies behind the image of thought:
The skin of the face is that which stays most naked, most destitute…there is an essential poverty in the face…The face is exposed, menaced, as if inviting us to an act of violence. At the same time, the face is what forbids us to kill (Lévinas, 1969, pp. 85-86).

In transgressing the representational world of readymade law and order, theory is decentred and returns to its original place in the encounter. This radical way of thinking about epistemology and ontology holds the possibility of changing the perception of reality itself, I explore this in The Failure of the Phallus. This reality lies beyond any form of ideology, knowledge becomes excentric. For many men socialised as male, this reveals a narcissistic wound as when the ground of the ego is based upon a mastery and as the phallus fails this ground falls from beneath their feet. This vulnerability can be unsettling in its uncertainty as well as an exciting prospect and new potentiality. Beyond the realm of the self as the totalising structure an assemblage of qualities and intensities become possible (but never certain). By choosing an epistemology and ontology of encounter, I open this research up to the uncertain and the unknown, seeking meaning through the process of writing, in exploring the traumatic experiences of my past in Part I – Holding On and Part III – Letting Go and in the work of psychotherapy in Part II – Working Through.

Jackson (2016, p. 190) argues that in Deleuze’s ontology of becoming nothing is predictable or harmonious, rather everything is contingent or elastic. The ontology is open-ended, each repetition has different results as this movement dislocates itself from a hegemonic sameness. In classical constructions inherited from modernity, a territory denotes a fixed boundary or limit. Introduced in Rewriting Modernity, this thesis seeks to rewrite modernity, deconstructing representational models. Jackson reformulates Deleuze’s idea of dislocation and considers limits to be fluid and open to ‘transcoding’. When ‘territory is an act’, it subverts its own consistency in each new repetition, it is a becoming and renders Cartesian analysis impossible as “taking a bite of one concept doesn’t satiate the appetite for more”.

To exemplify the encounter, Jackson (2016) uses the example of a schoolgirl, who, uneasy about the sexualisation of girls in cheerleading, spontaneously performed a backflip in the middle of a routine. The backflip transgressed the rules and codifications of the routine and the qualities associated with it, including sexualisation. It was spontaneous, affirmative, dangerous, and unusual.

There is also an emphasis on the ‘in between’, this in between decentres the centrality of the “I”, “in a becoming, two entities or events come together, and each is transformed to produce something new in between.” Similarly, Ettinger (2004, p. 220) puts a special emphasis on “witnessing while resonating with an-Other in a trans-subjective encounter-event.” Elsewhere Ettinger describes this as the co-poïetic, emphasising the role of trauma and jouissance in the process of coming into a co-poïetic relation with another. This is explored further in On Writing, it is central to the decentring process used throughout the thesis.

The theories of Levinas, Deleuze, Jackson and Ettinger set a path for me to explore encounters, traumatic and joyful in my own life. The lines of flight that have unsettled the stability of my self-system and enriched my affective potentialities through a
dislocation witnessed, the line of flight as a work of mourning. This theme arises throughout the thesis and is summarised when considering the whole journey in Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace. This is my ontological position, an ontology of becoming.

Jackson (2016, p. 190) comments that the line of flight does not symbolise anything, it is a disloyal movement that makes possible an ontology of becoming, a shared deterritorialization which produces “something new in between”. This problematises cognitive epistemological positions as the knowledge produced does not symbolise anything, any knowledge produced is unstable and only exists in the temporality of the encounter itself. An epistemology of body remains outside of representational discourse, impermanent and transient. I do not seek to represent, I only seek to resonate, through the process of writing and hopefully a resonance with those who read it. Is this still knowledge? Knowledge of the encounter, or knowledge of the body that rises and falls, in escaping symbolisation it escapes replication. It is perhaps more accurately described as a force, process or movement of transformation, and therefore can never be captured or form a representation. The thesis is a journey that ultimately has no beginning and no end.

Parviainen (2002, p. 14) describes how movement is a fundamental cognition: “[movement] forms the I that moves before the I that moves forms movement.” Parviainen describes the role or tactility in moving from the symbolic into a tactile knowledge lying outside of the symbolic system, “our tactile-kinaesthetic bodies are epistemological gateways...[that] open a way to understand ourselves and the world through the movement.” Parviainen calls this a body knowledge in a feminist critique of traditional epistemological knowledge. Like Jackson’s critique of traditional ontologies, it shifts the role of epistemology from a ready-made universalised representation to “sensations and images of movement, its meaning, quality, shapes and textures, struggling to capture some half-grasped or intuitive complexity.” Parviainen’s work on dance helped me establish the epistemology of this project. I could even go as far as considering the encounter a dance, or dance-like. As I explore the pain of traumatic encounters in my own life and those in my psychotherapy work, I explore how the self is constituted and how this self relates to an “I” and a “self”, an epistemology of body. As I live the theory and explore the socialisation of the male subject position, I explore how the feminine has been excluded from this position. In the encounters that follow, such as the details of my historic trauma, I again reach an epistemology of body and consider how the process of reminiscing and writing reconstitutes the self-structure. This is a “tacit knowing” (Parviainen, 2002, p. 18) that to a certain extent cannot be symbolised as it exists somewhat outside of language. It is important to note this concept of body does not form a binary of body opposing social and linguistic knowledge. It is more accurate to consider body and the physical body an assemblage of movements or forces that are always-already approaching and transcoding limits. Body as experienced outside

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28 The epistemology of body becomes particularly relevant when exploring the body-image and ‘actual-body’, a problematic term, in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container.
29 The conclusion of this journey is for the “I” to become universal, detaching itself somewhat from the self, see What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond.
of the empirical ‘I’ is both physical and abstract producing a becoming subject rather than a universal category.

There is a paradoxical element present, however, in that I am attempting to reach what lies beyond the hegemonic subject position and what lies somewhat beyond language in a piece of writing. There is a constant danger of the two becoming in opposition and in the opposition losing the transformational potential of the plural assemblage. Keenan (1997, p. 196), in discussing Foucault’s work on power notes:

> The same discourse that transports the relation can undermine, block, distort, disable it. If the vehicle of the coincidence is discourse, the transference between the two cannot be totalized, unified, integrated, or otherwise stabilized. It is unpredictable. When discourse must be thought of as a ‘series of discontinuous segments,’ interference always already remains a possibility and a threat. The play of difference, not bound to itself by exteriority or ultimate continuity, opens the relation to the chance or alea of disarticulation. ‘Discourse transports [véhicule] and produces power; it reinforces it, but it also undermines it, exposes it, renders it fragile or breakable and makes it possible to thwart it’ (Foucault & Gros, 1976, p. 101).

I quote at length to show how the paradox I name above, is a living paradox of discourse itself and the individual’s relationship to societal norms in language. Discourse, in this case, hegemonic masculinity gives the appearance of totalisation, unification, stability. In forming an illusion of stability that hegemonic male recognises himself, producing and reinforcing the power and dominance which Ettinger (2004, p. 70) traces back to Roman times, with the introduction of the hero myth, see The Foreclosure of the Feminine in Western Culture. This very discourse, however stable it may appear, contains the seed of discontinuity, vulnerability, and disarticulation. It is the enigmatic inherent in the imagined unity of self that makes transformation possible. It is the paradox itself that drives the process of transformation, an emotional labour. Presence assumes absence, absence assumes presence.

I write into hegemonic power a play of discontinuous elements, an internal difference that opens up into the encounter, an encounter in the world alongside an encounter with the enigmatic unmasterable unknown. This encounter interferes with the sense of stability and reaches into what Ettinger (2004, p. 82) calls “another sense”, “co-poïetic” knowledge that “registers affected, shared-in-difference trauma and jouissance as ontogenetic memory”. This is an ontology of becoming in that it cannot be universalised or directly symbolised, an epistemology of body that holds the possibility of transformation, disarticulation and problematises the limits of the subject position. Foucault’s disarticulation (1976, p. 101), Jackson’s (2016) backflip, Irigaray’s (1985, p. 143) concave mirror, Levinas’ (1969, pp. 85-86) encounter with the naked face in vulnerability, Silverman’s (1992, pp. 62, 63) failure of the phallus, Nirta’s (2014) uncertain, the unclear, unsorted and unstable body and my encounter with the trauma of my past all challenge the normalised category of male. Unstable and discontinuous does not mean unhinged, there is an internal quality to an epistemology of body that has a peaceful quality outside of the boundaries of hegemonic regulation (Ettinger, 2007).
Dillet (2017, pp. 517-518) comments that in classical constructions there is an assumed “value-free actor (a subject) can know something by adopting a position of exteriority and therefore objectifying ‘bits’…of reality”. In following Lyotard’s path to re-write modernity, I am also re-writing my-self as I come up against tensions, assumptions as they arise in my writing. Lévinas (1969, p. 138) engages with this debate in a critique of an existentialist subject whose freedom is possible because of the privilege embedded within the concept of the subject position.

A philosophy of power, ontology, as first philosophy, which does not question the Same (the binary term opposed to Other which I interpret as the collective abstract, the rule system of conformity in ethics-politics) is a philosophy of injustice.

Levinas explores the invisibility of the phallic/hegemonic subject who produces knowledge and in doing so imperialises the other. The self is subjugated by the hegemonic repetition of sameness. This system negates the other’s reality while relying on their corporeal existence and creates an illusion of self-sufficiency. What Levinas describes as the collective abstract can be considered the representational world, the invisible ontological norms of modernity. Taking a feminist perspective on Levinas work Chanter (2010, p. 46) writes:

The solitude of the subject and the totality of being are thus refuted by the very words that would proclaim them. Being is always-already plural; the immanence of egoistic life is always already disrupted by the transcendence of the relation to the other.

In transgressing the representational world of readymade law and order theory returns to its original place in the encounter with the Other, where the other who has lost their voice can reclaim their voice, a feminine voice. In this form an assemblage of qualities and intensities become possibilities, using the language of Levinas, this is the pathway to infinity. In my writing I cannot be value free, but I notice when the ontologies I have been socialised get in the way and can strive for an ethic that invites the otherness of the other into the writing and into the therapy room. This chapter is revisited after the event towards the end of the thesis in An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body Revisited.
Ethics

Having chosen the method ‘thinking without method’, I begin with my own experience, weaving theory, the data, and my writings. This has caused some short-term psychological distress in thinking and feeling the past challenges I faced, but in the long term the work of the thesis is likely to have a healing effect on myself. I hope the journey will be useful to the field of psychotherapy in that it will improve my practice and may provide a particular example to other psychotherapists who draw parallels between my journey and their own.

In thinking about the ethical scaffolding of the thesis I reflected on the work Ellis (2007, p. 4), a leading scholar in the field of ethics of personal narrative. Ellis writes about informed consent of people implicated in a personal narrative. She notes, “central to relational ethics is the question ‘what should I do now?’ rather than the statement ‘this is what you should do now’”. Ellis writes about the ethical complexity of writing about intimate others who are alive and notes sometimes it can be a balance between saying every word and protecting the relationship with that person if they were to read the account. She suggests that there is moral ambiguity in gaining informed consent from those implicated in the writing: on the one hand it could strengthen and deepen a relationship but on the other hand it could put them in harm’s way or damage the people or relationships. Underlying the ethical complexity is the intention to adopt an “ethic of care” that aims to “not negatively affect their lives and relationships, hurt themselves, or others in their world” (Ellis, 2007, p. 25).

In thinking about writing about elements of my personal history which involves my family and the way my family held (or didn’t hold) the challenges I faced that I write about in Writing Into Silence. Writing Through Silence I held close Ellis’ ethics of care. If they read the thesis, it is likely they would recognize themselves which could cause some psychological distress. The reason I have chosen not to gain informed consent from my family members is because there is a culture in the family of silence and I am not confident conversations about how I have written about my past in the thesis would be welcome. I came to this based on my experience of the culture of silence. It is likely that they would rather not know. Ellis (2007, p. 26) writes one should “write to understand how they put their worlds together, how you can be a survivor of the world they thrust upon you.” With this in mind, I write without informed consent or offering it for them to read. However, I am aware they may find it when it becomes public. I have made this decision while holding an ethic of care in mind, writing to understand the systems that I was embedded in, including some information about my family without attributing blame. Ultimately it is difficult to say how my family would react if they recognized themselves in the narrative. In ‘thinking without method’ a genuine continued struggle over issues of informed consent and identity brings forth an ethic of care. There is no clear cut answer. Adams (2008, p. 185) writes, “the silencing demands of informed consent may jeopardize a desire and necessity to narrate our lives and help others.” It feels there is a wider ethical reason to write about these conversations that were closed to me as a child. Adams
writes “self-censorship is the most dangerous of all possible types of censorship”.

In the chapters The Unreal and the Moment of Speech, Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container and Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace I include details of client experience. In keeping with Ellis (2007, p. 25) I consider the “ethic of care”. I have chosen not to ask permission from the clients involved but I have not included any details of them that would be recognisable to anyone but themselves. The details they may recognise about themselves I have obscured by symbolically substituting key details with a view to conveying a similar sense and intention while maintaining confidentiality. I am influenced by Liz Bondi’s writing (Bondi & Fewell, 2017, p. 13):

Although clinical case studies focus on particular people, they too often objectify clients. This objectification arises when practitioner-researchers exclude themselves from their accounts and write as if they were utterly neutral within, or even absent from, their therapeutic relationships.

Throughout the thesis I write about the relationship I have with the client’s therapeutic work rather than the client or case material itself. This is an attempt to maintain confidentiality and humanise the work. In including my own journey and subjectivity I aim to avoid objectification. I take into account the ethic of care with its ambiguities including Wyatt’s (2012, p. 167) interpretation of the ethic of care. Wyatt’s paper includes client material. In this instance, Wyatt considers what he feels to be the most ethical route in this instance was to not consult the client and gain informed consent. Wyatt considers that it is ethical even though the client may recognise themselves (a pseudonym and identifying details are changed), Wyatt hopes that if the client did come across the work and recognise themselves they would consider it a tribute to them.

Working with ethics involves realizing that we do not know how others will respond to and/or interpret our work. It’s acknowledging that we can never definitively know who we harm or help with our communicative practices (Adams, 2008, p. 179).

Adam’s statement, in keeping with (Ellis, 2007, p. 5) relational ethics, doesn’t prescribe a universal ethical law but asks the research to consider each situation and “act from our hearts and minds” and approach the situation in a humane, nonexploitative way. I ultimately do not know how a client would respond if they recognised themselves in the text, but I have considered each use of client work and aimed to write in a humane, nonexploitative way, symbolically substituting details and using pseudonyms and composites to obscure identifiable details.

I will now go into more detail about each instance I used client material and describe what steps I took to hold an ethic of care. In The Unreal and the Moment of Speech I amalgamate a number of clients as case material and use a quote with substituted details with a view to conveying the same sense and while protecting confidentiality. It is possible the client could recognise herself. In the unlikely event she comes across my thesis and reads this chapter, I hope that she would support my depiction,
in that it is about the power dynamic within psychiatric systems and my support of her empowerment within an environment where it is difficult to get one's voice heard. In the chapter *Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace* I use a quote from a client. Again, I have symbolically substituted details to disguise the actual interaction. Despite this, it is possible if the client read this chapter, she may recognise herself. I hope that in reading it she would support the depiction of the inter-human interaction where she saw my vulnerability in me seeing her vulnerability. No details of either clients' life outside of the interaction are disclosed. In *Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container* I use a composite of many clients and situations as a case study. I have also symbolically substituted details to further protect confidentiality. I don’t think it is possible for any of the clients to recognise themselves even if they read this chapter. In the chapter *A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning* and at various points throughout the thesis I talk about a difficult situation that ultimately ended with a client's suicide. I have protected the deceased client's confidentiality by focussing on the details of the encounter and not given specific details of her. Details of the interaction I had with her have been symbolically substituted to maintain confidentiality.

In *Attempting to Destroy* I write about a person I fell in love with while writing the thesis. I don't give any details of them to protect confidentiality and use a pseudonym. In *The Unreal and the Moment of Speech* I use an email to a psychiatrist as case material. I use a pseudonym to protect confidentiality and do not name the organisation to protect confidentiality. No details of the psychiatrist or their work are shared. In *Frustrated Surrender* and *Part III - Introduction* I write about the breakup of a relationship, I don't give any details of the relationship or my partner to protect confidentiality. In *Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence* I write about details of abuse but do not give any details about the abusers. In *An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body Revisited* I write about my feelings towards my abusers but don't give any details of the abusers to protect confidentiality. I don’t think any of these cases bring ethical complexities because I stay with my own experience, pseudonyms are always used, and no specific details about any of the people involved are given. There may be a chance the people involved may recognise themselves but because the narratives focus on my own feelings and doesn’t give any details about them, and it feels as though adherence to ethical principles has been maintained.

In sharing details of my personal life it could potentially have an impact on clients I see currently, or future clients who read the thesis. Helps (2023, p. 152) writes that writing about our clinical practice strips away a professional veneer of protection and makes the writer-psychotherapist vulnerable. She writes we should write assuming our patients will read the work:

> We need to remain open to how the effect might be different to what we intend, how the effect might be immediate or much delayed, and we need to be prepared to discuss this with our patients.

This is a choice I have made and am aware it may have implications for the therapeutic relationship I have with clients who read the work. It is possible it could
have a negative effect. On balance, it feels as though the benefits of writing the thesis will have and is already having on my practice and possible contribution it will have to the psychotherapy movement in the future outweigh the potential challenges faced if a client reads the work. If a client has read the thesis and brings it to therapy, it will change the usual frame of psychotherapy as they will know details of my life and my practice they wouldn’t usually know. I will invite feelings about this and allow it to become part of the process. In many situations I hold a transference dynamic which involves sharing very few or no details about myself, however my practice is integrative and relational so there is space to include details of my life. In my practice I do explore contextual material if there is a reason for it to arise. Some authors have noted the potential benefit of ‘deliberate’ self-disclosures in supporting ‘reality testing’ which can support development of self-structure (Barglow, 2005, p. 98) and as well as potential negative effect on the therapeutic relationship there is also the possibility of a positive outcome.
Trying to Decentre the Whiteness of my Being

What emerges then is a need for combined action on the individual and the group. As a psychoanalyst I must help my patient to ‘concioussnessize’ his unconscious, to no longer be tempted by a hallucinatory lactification, but also to act along the lines of a change in social structure (Fanon & Philcox, 2021, p. 80).

Race was invisible to me as a child, the metaphysics of youth, paths that were taken were unknowingly white channels. Christianity imposed in school. Racism not considered a hate crime. Misguided career advice. A training in how to be a good oppressor.

Rarely thinking about race was a given, not considered a privilege of the oppressor. It was only when my own sense of privilege collapsed into crisis, I began to consider marginalised voices, voices that weren’t my own, voices that suffered in ways unfamiliar to my own suffering. It is wrong to ignore the “lines of change in social structure” (Fanon & Philcox, 2021, p. 80).

Ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the black man, since it ignores the lived experience. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man...Blacks have had to deal with two systems of reference. Their metaphysics, or less pretentiously their customs and the agencies to which they refer, were abolished because they were in contradiction with a new civilization that imposed its own (Fanon & Philcox, 2021, p. 80).

I look back at many situations with guilt. But this is not a confessional with the intention of making myself feel better. This is an attempt to consider the invisibility of my whiteness and the privilege of this system both in my own life and in the therapy room. An attempt to move towards decentring whiteness from its central position where it sits invisibly. Whiteness structures the ontological makeup of my being, named by Fanon above, so the decentering is not going to happen overnight, I consider it a daily practice of surrender. Every slip up an opportunity to further unravel, decentre, until the ontology is dismantled. My journey takes me into guilt and shame but I must not collapse into these feelings, but to use it to go to war with the previously presumed universality of ontological structures that inhabit and construct my character, to shake the automation of the ontological in its daily rituals.

Jacobs (2014, p. 300) describes the privilege of invisible whiteness to be “a pre-reflective expectation that our surround will provide stabilizing and affirming responsiveness.” In this sense, it is necessary to cognize what is incognito, to feel what is unfelt. To invite what is constructed as Other from the position of invisibility and shift it into a hospitality rather than exclusion (Jacobs, 2014, p. 301). This topic is returned to later in the thesis, in the chapter Learning to Love this Heart Ache, I write, “preceding the constitution of self, an ethic, a regard or hospitality for the other that one is obliged to respond to. Cognition, representation are forms of violence against this ethic.”
Cushman (2000) highlights how the centrality of whiteness is held up by an illusion of belonging. Invisible and white centric norms of behaving, dressing, gender identity that provide hegemonic recognition. An echo chamber of recognition that limits itself to the boundaries of a singular viewpoint. Racialised thinking, in its exclusion of potentialities, impoverishes the white man. It perhaps makes sense that my life improved by 1000% after a psychic collapse when I fell of the train of whiteness. I had to rebuild my sense of belonging outside of hegemonic recognition, and perhaps this holds a little more opportunity to invite elements of otherness into the reconstituted self. This movement can be seen as a “failure of the phallus”, introduced in the chapter The Failure of the Phallus. I began to develop a painful awareness of the Othering process inherent in hegemonic masculinity and in my own being, prompting a transformation.

Lefebvre (1992) sees the error in psychic structure becoming seen as internal, derived from representational metaphysics, which I explore in more detail in Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari. Metaphysics as universality as power over. To abstract from the community, to abstract from the everyday is always-already an invisible violence. There can be no abstraction without severance, without historical violence being committed in the act of forgetting.

African feminist practitioners have contributed to the process of deconstructing the hegemony of orthodox Western psychology and its largely depoliticised framework. The way its tools are unreflectively applied in the context of development and misguided humanitarian interventions. Horn (2020, pp. 95-96) describes her work as opening new understandings of distress and trauma, recognising that paths to cultivating tools for emotional resilience are necessarily creative. This brings political work to the forefront of the psychotherapeutic project, acting on structural power relations as a way to sustain well-being in the longer term.

Horn, cohering with the writing of Fanon writes that abstracted expert Western knowledge is lacking community knowledge and hence lacks the power to change, from the grassroots. Healing happens in the community, the ‘inter’, not the ‘intra’. Horn considers mental health models to be white saviours in disguise. In An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body Revisited I explore my own inner savoir, or hero and the regret I hold for not noticing this position. What we (the white saviours) are really trying to save is our own shame, disguised in their privilege. And in this disguise, another historical vail covers the flesh, it has a different shape but a similar structure of power.

If there is a flaw, it lies not in the ‘soul’ of the individual, but in his environment (Fanon & Philcox, 2021, p. 188).

In Europe the black man has a function: to represent shameful feelings, base instincts, and the dark side of the soul. In the collective unconscious of Homo occidentalis the black man-or, if you prefer, the colour black-symbolises evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, and famine (Fanon & Philcox, 2021, p. 167).

Jung locates the collective unconscious in the inherited cerebral matter. But there is no need to resort to the genes; the collective unconscious is
quite simply the repository of prejudices, myths, and collective attitudes of a particular group (Fanon & Philcox, 2021, p. 265).

Projecting his desires onto the black man, the white man behaves as if the black man actually had them (Fanon & Philcox, 2021, p. 143).

On the basis of Lacan’s concept of the *mirror stage* it would be certainly worthwhile investigating to what extent the imago that the young white boy constructs of his fellow man undergoes an imaginary aggression with the appearance of the black man (Fanon & Philcox, 2021, p. 139).

It was my environment that infused my white man’s soul with prejudice. The erasure of black history in my education, the Anglo-centrism of the history classes, the racism in school left unchallenged. How can I begin to exorcise some of these rituals that have become inscribed upon my perception of reality, stop them creeping silently into my psychotherapy practice? Over the years I have said many horrible things only realising how horrible they were in the act of speech, like an automatic racism acting from within me. My stomach turns in remembering, but I must not forget, there is already too much forgetfulness, my stomach churns, a potential for change in the churning.

Fanon, in the quotes above forges a path to begin this exorcism, exorcism is the wrong term, as much as I’d like to cut myself off, cleanse myself, no longer be a white man, this is not possible. A steady transformation is more realistic. Understanding that the values of modernity that have been carried over into present time are a rejection and projection of the darker side of my own soul is a beginning. This is the aim of the project introduced in *Rewriting Modernity*, to be haunted by the elements of individual and collective past that form a stasis, an ability to move from one place to another.

To read Bataille and Neugroschel (2013), Sade and Havoc (2008), Ellis (2015) who wrote about the horrors of human potential that exist as remnants in the psyche is a beginning, aiming to get in touch with the layers of horror that are foundational to the exclusion of psychic material that are necessary for an enlightenment-projection of base material. To feel my stomach churn, my skin crawl, my lungs contract at what is a possibility for my being on some level, is a reality check.

To speak to my black and ethnically diverse colleagues about what the unified eye of the Western white male psychotherapist excludes from view and how this perpetuates power dynamics that are uncomfortable to embody, is something.

To read Baldwin (2001) and touch an eroticism that is other to my own, to intimately engage in eroticism that is not my own through his work, is something.

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30 For an introduction to the mirror stage, that comes from Lacan’s work see the Method chapter. And for Irigaray’s method of overcoming the ontology that is built upon the mirror stage in relation to the Othering of woman see Irigaray’s Mimetic Reproduction.

31 For an exploration of the limitations of needing to cut off or cleanse a part of myself see Attempting to Destroy for a process driven account and Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container for an exploration in therapy.
All efforts to deconstruct, to decentre the *imagos* the centrality of ego structure that infused my being upon entry into the social world at the mirror stage.

Sometimes in seeing and feeling the prejudices that surround me, in Westminster, in the news, the police force, geopolitics, everyday I feel hopeless, but then I read James Baldwin (2015)\(^{32}\) and feel hope:

> It never went anywhere, attitudes don’t change because the law changes. I know that. And the homosexual question it’s like what you call the racial question. No body, no man and no woman, is precisely what they think they are. Love is where you find it. And you don’t know where it will carry you. And it is a terrifying thing, love. It is the only human possibility, but it is terrifying. And a man can fall in love with a man and a woman can fall in love with a woman, there’s nothing anybody can do about it. It’s not, and the problems with the law, there’s nothing you can do with the church. And if you lie about that, you lie about everything. And no one has a right to tell another human being who he or she can or should love. [Giovanni’s Room] it’s about what happens when you can’t love anybody, it doesn’t make any difference if you can’t love a woman, you can’t love a man, if you can’t love anybody, you’re dangerous because you have no way of learning humility, no way of learning that other people suffer and no way of learning to use your suffering and theirs, to get from one place to another.

I cannot give up hope, surrendering into humility can help me move my being from one place to another. In hope that the collective consciousness will eventually lay down the arms of the culture war that has flared up in recent times and go from one place to another. When I read Baldwin I feel the power of transformation written into every word written or spoken, driven by an ethic, a passion for change, I feel a river of power and love.

In *An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body* I quote Keenan, “the play of difference, not bound to itself by exteriority or ultimate continuity, opens the relation to the chance or *alea* of disarticulation” (Keenan, 1997, p. 196). In the chapter *Learning to Love this Heart Ache* I write about clearing the ground, the path needs to be cleared to allow the *alea* to invite difference more freely and deconstruct hegemonic ontologies so I can witness. The automatic paths are strong, repetition compulsions. In all decentring comes disarticulation.

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\(^{32}\) The quote that follows is taken from a short video clip that I recommend the reader views to feel into the mood of this chapter: [https://youtu.be/XZPmT3lk6cU](https://youtu.be/XZPmT3lk6cU)
Part I – Holding On

Part I - Introduction

Part I – Holding On is a collection of writings written in the first two years of the thesis. They trace my thinking, often disturbed thinking as I began to explore the decentring of self. The chapters return to the past and recover memory fragments, fragments of patterns, rituals, fixations, ontological centre points. The haunting of the past is in the presence of the writing, it is in the presence of the suffering that makes possible the movement from one place to another. In Part I – Holding On the suffering is mostly repeating itself, the focus is on discovering and exploring fixations. In Part II – Working Through and Part III – Letting Go the focus shifts and these parts are more fully worked through as exiled femininity is embraced. In Part I – Holding On there is a sense of frustration and anger, an inability to surrender the rigidity of structures including self-hatred and this leads to self-destruction. I have chosen to leave this raw expression in the thesis as it is an important part of the journey towards surrender, a frustrated movement outward and inward that in the reflective process of writing begins to unravel itself. This expression is the beginning of the process of letting go. It has become clear to me that associated with these parts was a secret sense of superiority, transmuted in form and displaced to such an extent that it wasn’t felt as a superiority, rather a self-disgust. To destroy because the world had let me down is a refusal to let go of a victim position forming an oppositional position with the Other or world, a refusal to go from one place to another.

The overall theme of these sections is death and renewal. Death of representation, of modernity, of the fixations of my past to clear the path for something else. This meaning is expressed partly in the performative expression. This can be summed up by Hillman’s (1973, p. 88) quote, taken from Attempting to Destroy.

Like the Shaman, he [the analyst] has already been to death himself for the dead can best communicate with the dead...by confirming the psychic death, it can be released from its organic fixation.

As I re-write my-self I find myself spiralling into the darkness and some readers may find themselves disturbed, especially in Attempting to Destroy, Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence and Frustrated Surrender. I summarise the process of witnessing in the Conclusion of the thesis:

Felman and Laub (1992, pp. 57-58) consider that the witnessing of event includes its hearer, inscribing something unto a “blank screen”, something new, the “knowing of the event is given birth to”, in listening the participant partially experiences the trauma themselves, “to feel the victim’s victories,

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33 For the theory and method relating to decentring of self, see Decentring the self
34 ‘From one place to another’, is a reference to the closing statement of Trying to Decentre the Whiteness of my Being, this phrase is used throughout the thesis.
35 This quote is also used as a central part of the conclusion, see Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace.
defeats and silences, know them from within so that they can assume the form of testimony.”

It is the act of being witnessed in the writing process and by others which has helped to dislodge the fixation, or energetic knot. The performative aspect of Part I – Holding On where the raw pain is expressed in an unmediated form is an “acting out” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973), an expression of a ciphered message that in my past was unheard. The acting out changes my relationship with the energetic knot in being witnessed by myself and others. The primal scene of witnessing is found in Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence where I speak about my childhood trauma for the first time and am witnessed by a close friend, an archetypal untying of knots, a never ending journey that continues to this day36.

The first chapter, A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning is my original PhD proposal. In this proposal I propose an exploration of the suicide of a client diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder who died a few weeks after I saw her for 2 sessions of study skills I provided in a mental health mentoring role. Tragically, the company or university didn’t have stringent assessment, safeguarding or crisis management procedures, contributing to a wider system of bad practice. When she was seen by the NHS home treatment team they failed to check up on her when she didn’t respond to their calls. If things were different her death may have been avoided, the thought of this hurts. Even thinking about this chapter, I feel a heavy sadness, remorse, loss. Even though my thesis changed direction shortly after beginning the writing, this chapter contributed to a psychic unravelling in the first two years of study. This tragic event haunted me and continues to haunt me. My undoing brought themes such as death, destruction, disjunction that were carried throughout the thesis, despite the content changing. A changing relationship to my suffering, allowing myself to be haunted by the ghosts of my life rather than attempting to resist or block out - both forms of mastery and centring of self. Reading this work brings a sense of a search for painful embodiment by entering into, rather than reading theory, “we lift to remove this matter, it already has taken certain shape or meaning. Lived experience is the name for that which presents itself directly unmediated by thought or language” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 142). This is not fully visible in the text itself but lingers in between the words. I’m collapsing into my suffering, the theory brings a sense of wanting to hold on, trying to hold on to something concrete, something that will guide me through my pain. This a shift from an unthought taken for granted self-hatred containing the pain that existed before the writing. The chapter ends with wanting to do method differently, do theory differently, something that will express and touch the pain in my heart, setting the direction for the further chapters.

The second chapter, Attempting to Destroy, is an exploration of the elements of myself that feel non-egoic, meaning phenomenologically they appear to my-self as coming from outside of my-self and putting pressure on my-self. Freud (1916) categorised these elements of the self as the id. In bringing them into the writing

36 Untying knots or a changing relationship with the knots that remain is covered in Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace.
process I form a relationship with my-self, even the parts that lie outside of what I consider self. This is the beginning of a transformation of not just what I consider my-self but also the forces that contribute to the production of a self, this is an important part of the Decentring the self introduced in the theory section. I link this particular expression of non-egoic id material, the sexual drive to hegemonic masculinity, a side of masculinity I know in myself and am uncomfortable with. Later, in Part III—Letting Go there is a shift or transformation towards non-egoic femininity, the feminine sublime.

This chapter is a performative expression of the affective horror that lies beyond my socialisation, in violent patriarchal structures. This chapter works through, by expressing myself in a raw unmediated form, leaving myself naked and vulnerable, open to change. I am re-writing Freud’s id, out of the biological and into the social, the elements of desire that lie outside the norms of acceptable expressions of desire. This raises the question on both an individual and societal level, what do I do with these parts that are unacceptable and which I hate? Charles Bukowski’s37 (2013) Tales of Ordinary Madness comes to mind, the blurring of reality and fantasy in the expression of what is unacceptable within the self. Trying to come to terms with my-self and express my-self erotically and playfully by exploring my relationship with man and my personal history. This is expressed in the first section of the chapter as a “slug sleaze masculinity”.

In the second section, in a reactionary movement I identify myself with Valerie Solanas (2004) who wanted to destroy all men who weren’t passive and ‘not-men’ and in this reactionary movement the binary of socialised gender split is reaffirmed. This dystopia is explored alongside Baudrillard’s (1994) dystopia of the virtual world, the loss of desire in the ‘real’, leaving only arbitrary transactions behind. I turn to Derrida’s (1969) ‘end of man’ or the representational structure of Being no longer fruitful, burning out. The chapter ends in hope that I can become something other than my-self, to re-write myself, forgive myself while shedding my slug desire like a skin and become something that both is and isn’t itself. To soothe myself, forgive myself, connect to my suffering more profoundly and become something else, become Madame Bovary, meaning to embrace the feminine parts of myself.

The third part named ‘I’m Speaking from my Tomb’ is a mishmash of theory and a clearly disturbed state of mind, written at the end of the first year of the thesis. I reflect on two people close to me who took their own life, the haunting of these experiences embedded into the style of the writing. There is an unnamed parallel between the trauma of the suicides of the two individuals and my own inner struggles, trying to become someone or something I’m not, bringing a destructive force. The chapter expresses the tragedy of suicide and the pain of mourning after loss to suicide, unprocessed guilt lingers and alongside this unprocessed guilt there is a failure to grieve. I aim to highlight the regenerative aspect of working through, my fate and the fate of masculinity no longer feels like self-destruction, despite the destructive path taken, it is a frustrated and unfinished attempt to renew, Part III—

37 A poem by Charles Bukowski appears in Frustrated Surrender, his gritty realism combined with emotional vulnerability has influenced my thinking in Part I—Holding On.
Letting Go continues this journey. In the unnamed parallel between the rejected male parts of myself, Derrida’s end of man and the grief after the suicides there is a sense of hoped-for transformation. A sense that the pain being escaped because it is too unbearable finally contained and this containment making transformation possible. This is influenced by Bukowski, when I read his spirals into hopelessness, I feel a strange sense of hope.

Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence was written at the beginning of the second year and at this point my childhood trauma was going to be the main theme of the thesis. The intention at this point was to explore the trauma of my past an attempt to work it through while making links to masculinity and my practice of psychotherapy. These themes still exist throughout, but the thesis expanded beyond. As it expanded beyond my perspective on my past traumas changed, rather than a victim narrative being protected, I felt as though something that needed to be relinquished, the grief felt in its full intensity and then moved on. This movement on is explored in Learning to Love this Heart Ache. This chapter, Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence, is an important stepping stone to what comes later, the focus is on the emergent memory fragments of trauma. There is an underlying theme of flight from conformity and at times this comes across as a reactive force, the trauma still appearing as a fixation that produces a turning of the wheel, repetition compulsion. Another theme is how my schooling excluded the feminine and this chapter is a rough attempt to write into something beyond the subject position that was developed as a protective force, an early attempt to recover the feminine in the act of writing, one of the central themes of Part III – Letting Go. The childhood trauma that was once going to occupy the whole thesis is contained within one paragraph. What wasn't spoken for many years, the unspeakable, the material that created a cage around expression itself explodes outwards in a single paragraph. Even after many years of psychotherapy it felt important for it to have a place, but not to be dwelled upon. The chapter recounts the time I told my friend about everything that happened, I name this above as my primal experience of being witnessed. I believe this experience profoundly changed the direction of my life and planted the seed for this thesis. The chapter ends with a sense of moving towards a working through, in preparation for Part III – Letting Go.

Atlas Fallen reflects on the thesis after the first two years, it traces an ever-present temptation to universalise, to master which I associate with hegemonic masculinity, of modernity. The chapter also traces a yearning to surrender, to clear the path, to let go and knowing that in this thesis this is found by entering my pain. I symbolise this using the dot between Dr and the name which I consider a separation of intellectual and physical. The fixations and narcissistic wounds that lie behind the urge to control, fixate, concrete, separate. I come to a realisation that surrender can only be

38 There is a reference to a similar movement in Trying to Decentre the Whiteness of my Being, reading Bataille and Neugroschel (2013), Sade and Havoc (2008), Ellis (2015) reading the darker sides of humanity in attempt to discover and uproot these parts of myself.

39 Relevant here is “a gap that carries the force of the event” Caruth (1997, p. 7) explored in Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace. Also relevant is later exploration of trying to cover the gap or the abys when pain is disavowed and, the foundations of a system of terror. This is explored in Learning to Love this Heart Ache.
found in the poverty of my flesh which has an unknown quality, a mysterious quality. I reflect on the aloneness of going to this place, the mourning involved in remembrance, in untying energetic knots. I set an intention to embody the fears and allow myself to be haunted by ghosts of my past, blur the lines between private and public and break down separations.

**Frustrated Surrender** is a kind of purge, purging the self-hatred I hold for myself. The purge expresses itself in the image of a beetle, that detaches itself from myself and crawls into the cupboard. This chapter is performative, it engages directly in re-writing without attempting to reach towards any meaning. The meaning emerges from the performance. Wanting to let go, wanting to live actively, wanting to live with self-contentment but being gripped by darkness. Past darkness, societal darkness haunting the present, making peace impossible. There is an underlying anger present in this text and in between the lines an attempt to harness this anger, to direct it towards totalities of oppression including the energetic knots that fixate and constrain my writing. Memories pass by, enter into the present and then fall away. There is a sense of sickness, inertia, violence and afterwards a strange movement towards acceptance. A frustrated surrender that ends without resolution, it is a necessary purge in order to open the possibility of transformation.

These chapters, as a collection, represent the spiralling movement that prepares the ground to work through in later sections. Returning to the knots of the past, returning to the present, returning to the familial, returning to the societal. Eventually the knots loosen, with each return the potential for a shift of perspective, a change in my perception of reality. Resisting attempts to bind this pain, numb out the pain and turning towards what hurts. Themes of witnessing the unspoken, turning towards the pain and decentring, exclusion/inclusion of the feminine, preparing the ground for a more comprehensive working through in **Part III – Letting Go**.
A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning

In this chapter case material is used from my psychotherapy practice, details have been changed to protect confidentiality, for more information see the Ethics section.

Introduction

The thesis has transformed dramatically since writing this chapter, taking new meanings and new directions. The journey into my own pain and suffering began with a client’s death and the proposal that follows. The journey into my own pain, the disjunction this journeying brought about is a theme that haunts the whole thesis. I write “this self that only truly knows itself through its own dismemberment”, this an expression of the fragmentation I experienced. Out of the intensity of pain I express “I am here, I am in this body but I can’t truly say I am separate. Is it true to separate myself from the suffering of the nine million inhabitants. They are me and I am then.” This expression predicts the endpoint of the thesis, explored in What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond, when connected to feminine sublime energies the ‘I’ shifts from being a function of self, to become a function of universal suffering. In Part III – Letting Go the connection to the feminine sublime is achieved through a decentring, a conscious process of moving beyond self-structure. In this chapter the access to the sublime is not a grounded movement, it is a traumatic disjunctive shock that led to psychic collapse and fragmentation. All chapters that follow are a working through of this disruptive shock and other traumas that led to a questioning of my relationship to my-selv. The haunting of this experience gestures “towards a still unformulated future” (Davis, 2005, p. 379). This future emerges throughout the thesis, in this chapter it is unfinished. Unlike the chapters that follow in Part I – Holding On, there is a sense of mourning and the pain is intact, intense, all consuming. It is likely the sense of wanting to escape or destroy in the rest of Part I – Holding On are a recoil to the intensity of the mourning process. The chapter begins with a first writing upon arriving in Edinburgh to begin the thesis, following this is the original proposal written a few months prior.

Intolerable Pain

When I heard of her death new air entered my lungs. New salt entered my tears. I go to my therapist and weep. He supports me, even in coming towards the end of my training it’s new for me to be supported like this, to let go and weep. Every second of my existence my thoughts occupied by the memory, the sacredness of those two sessions, it was study support. Why could this not have turned out differently. He doesn’t charge me and suggests I buy flowers, make a shrine - I do. I hold the yellow rose closely to my heart, helps the aching matter of my body make meaning, symbolise once again. I buy a red rose and a yellow rose amongst other flowers. They represent her heart and vibrancy, which she had so much of. I take the withered yellow rose to the conference where I am due to speak about suicide, the withered yellow rose symbolises her beauty, her suffering and the tragedy of the whole thing. Can I
let the rose speak rather than I, the withered rose, her words so much more sacred than my own. Can I both feel this deep aching pain in my cells and empty myself of matter to give her a voice she lost when she stopped playing the viola\textsuperscript{40}. As I write I am acutely aware she may lie in the morgue right now, cold and lonely, how I wish I could breathe life into her tender body and animate it once again.

When I heard the news of her death and I was sent into the burial chamber where the body lies, animated in its stillness. I have not recovered, I am mourning and wonder if this pain is eternal, etched onto every cell of my living body. In each passing second my thoughts are dedicated to her being, her memory. In her sweetness, her playfulness, her suffering, her pain, her beauty, her humanity. She said the world was crazy and she was the only sane one. Can we continue to say this is madness as we listen to the steady rhythm of our feet on this scorched earth tramping forward, our boots scraping the earth’s burning crust as we go on… and on. I dedicate my words to her in reverie and respect. I am sorry and in despair. I write out of necessity, I cannot not write anymore, no longer for my-self, this self that only truly knows itself through its own dismemberment.

I was once walking down the street, it was a sunny day, it was joyful, I felt content. I thought about all the suffering in the world and then it hit me. I am here, I am in this body but I can’t truly say I am separate. Is it true to separate myself from the suffering of the nine million inhabitants. They are me and I am then. This burden of suffering so much suffering, will it crush me? Will it free me? It’s still unworked through but it’s there on every doorstep, on every street corner.\textsuperscript{41}

She had stopped playing the viola. I mourn her loss. I cry and I weep, and I write with a sinking sadness contorting my stomach - it churns. I cannot eat. Her sufferings, her feelings of insecurity barred her from loving her natural brilliance that shone with such vibrancy. I wish I could have seen this for longer and helped her to see too, maybe it was too late, I don’t know. She was given medicine to numb the pain. Medicine only offsets the pain. Pain is forever in existence, invisible and all the more potent in its invisibility, inscribed invisibly on the body. She had schizotypal personality disorder and all the symptoms made sense. What does this perspective miss, what does the category miss\textsuperscript{42}. It misses sufferings secret inscription, inscribed on the heart which if not seen and seen to be seen can never be mourned, until death, cause death. The grey/blue of our humanity stays quilted, stays undercover, it can open up to joy - with careful time, with caring time. She saw

\textsuperscript{40} Alongside a deep sense of care, there is a grandiose hero narrative embedded in this passage, this is explored further in \textit{An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body Revisited}.

\textsuperscript{41} This is an early, raw, traumatic and partially disembodied movement towards the feminine sublime. To make the I universal is the end point of the thesis, explored in \textit{What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond}. It has taken 4 years and is still a process to connect to the feminine sublime without a partially dissociative self-hatred and self-blame.

\textsuperscript{42} What the diagnosis misses, in terms of the clients individuality and journey is explored in \textit{The Schizoid Returns}. 
more psychiatrists and then suffered intolerably and then she died. I only saw her twice, yet I hold her in my heart in the eternity of my finitude. My heavy heart, my lowered head, my depression empties me of words and the only thing left is to let the spectres speak. Was she, in her schizoid softness and vulnerability mourning the pain others cannot mourn, the nine million, perhaps. My heart forever reaches out, I collapse, some realities are so unjust they are difficult to feel as realities.

My thesis began with the death of a client I saw for 2 sessions of study skills while working at a university, she was being seen by the NHS home treatment team, they couldn’t save her. The referral for study skills was inappropriate from the get-go. The grandiosity of the beginning of career meant I didn’t turn it down, study skills not defined enough, safeguarding procedures not defined enough as company set up for study skills, which remains improperly defined. Four years later I feel guilty and still blame myself even though she had a full mental health team around her. I attended coroners court out of my own volition, putting myself through more pain while seeking closure. I saw her twice for study skills support, an inappropriate referral for someone with such complex suffering. She was open to the home treatment team when she died. She stopped engaging with them and they dropped her. At coroner’s court they admitted error. My heart, 5 years later still aches, did those two sessions open too much up? Was she looking for someone to witness her death? I’m sure there was a cry for help I heard and didn’t act upon because I felt it was overstepping professional boundaries. I will forever live with the pain, there is no escape, I don’t want to escape, like a past lover, holding onto the pain keeps her memory alive. I only met her for two hours.

My thesis began as an attempt to work this though, maybe to cleanse myself of guilt, to find answers where I know there is none. I share my proposal as this was the beginning of what started the journey to where I am now. A tragic beginning, a collapse into my own pain through her pain.

**PhD Proposal**

As part of my professional training, I wrote a master’s dissertation on the lived experience of trainee therapists working with suicidal clients I was left with many questions unanswered. Despite ending with de Beauvoir’s (2018) ethics of ambiguity which opens up multiple perspectives, I realised I had half consciously moulded a singular tunnel visioned Hegelian dialectic (Derrida, 2012). I posited myself and society as an oppositional dyad43 and enjoyed an ungrounded fulfilment in resisting the Master - which I set up to be society. In the ungroundedness of this fulfilment lay a sense of hidden a mastery within my-self. In holding onto this mastery I “quilted” (Žižek, 2019), or paved over disjunction, the disjunction reveals a wound where embodiment sits. Thesis, antithesis, not synthesis - instead disjunction. With the collapse of the dyad comes, the fall of the inner sense of mastery, I’m now living the painful wound.

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43 This exploration reappears in Atlas Fallen, Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari and The Schizoid Returns.
Shakespeare’s King Richard II (Turner, 2010, p. 73) in pondering the imminent collapse of his own mastery says:

- I had forgot myself; am I not king?
- Awake, thou coward majesty! thou sleepest.
- Is not the king’s name twenty thousand names?
- Arm, arm, my name! a puny subject strikes
- At thy great glory. Look not to the ground.

I heard the news a student I worked with who was in deep despair who was subsequently seen by an NHS mental health team has died. In hearing this news I collapsed into impossible, raw despair. I am unkinged, unseated and profoundly touched. Life was unjust to her, she suffered and died. I shared at the ECQI conference “the research and my experiences have undone me”. This shows the presence of a spectre, through the tapestry of personal-social-political-ecological becoming, my research and experiences have undone me, what spectre acts upon me and how can I give it a voice?

(Davis, 2005, p. 379), describes Derrida’s hauntology:

- Part of an endeavour to keep raising the stakes of literary study, to make it a place where we can interrogate our relation to the dead, examine the elusive identities of the living, and explore the boundaries between the thought and the unthought...the spectre’s ethical injunction...[is] in not reducing it prematurely to an object of knowledge...Phantoms lie about the past whilst spectres gesture towards a still unformulated future.

In opening myself up to becoming unkinged, in mourning, I opened myself up to a new quality of pain. A pain that pointed towards a new formulation of knowledge in unquilting, revealing the disjunctures, opening up to a new kind of becoming in the world. This mourning forms a performative gesture towards the future. And holds the potential to add voices to the way I live as an individual and potentially how we live as a society.

Davis (2005, p. 379), continues contrasting to Abraham and Torok (1987) analytic understanding of a hauntology:

- Conversing with spectres is not undertaken in the expectation that they will reveal some secret, shameful or otherwise. Rather, it may open us up to the experience of secrecy as such: an essential unknowing which underlies and may undermine what we think we know. For Abraham and Torok, the phantom's secret can and should be revealed in order to achieve “une petite victoire de l'Amour sur la Mort” (Abraham & Torok, 1987); for Derrida, on the contrary, the spectre's secret is a productive opening of meaning rather than a determinate content to be uncovered.

These experiences gestured towards my future, chosen for me by the spectre’s, a post-qualitative inquiry which (Le Grange, 2018, p. 7) defines:

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44 This experience triggered the beginning of the journey of this thesis, to decentre the self.
The subject of [post qualitative research] is not an atomised individual but is ecological; embedded in the material flows of the earth/cosmos, constitutive of these flows, making the subject imperceptible. [Research is] not performed on the earth but bent by the earth45.

When I mourn the loss of clinging or worshipping an outer icon either scientific, religious, capitalist or other I un-yoke my-self from ‘being’ or ‘representation’. I approach the dread and angst of “finding law within oneself” de Beauvoir (2018, p. 162) In a post-structuralist becoming world, which includes the Nietzschean (2006) multiple personas of affect, this law slips through our fingers, Van Manen (2014, p. 142):

the ‘matter’ that constantly keeps covering the ground of our being is also the ground itself. As we lift to remove this matter, it already has taken certain shape or meaning. Lived experience is the name for that which presents itself directly-unmediated by thought or language46. Yet in a fundamental sense lived experience is already mediated by thought and language in a broad sense, and accessed only through thought and language.

Deleuze and Guattari (2004) write of a movement to subvert or go beyond a triangulation of individual desire through the oedipal structure of the family, they call this the an-Oedipal. A more individual and expressive form of delivering oneself into the world in each moment that extracts one’s desire from the grips of Oedipal structures and allows for other voices, other affects to take centre stage in a fluid movement.

Derrida (2012) speaks of disjunction in linear time opening up a mourning process47. Using Hamlet’s Father’s ghost, a body without a face who cannot speak but has a voice. I will give spectre’s a voice through my embodied process and experience. I will adopt a stance of hospitality and allow myself to be possessed without hope of exorcism. In trusting the writing process and exploring the tapestry of my experience will emerge a hauntology.

Using my experiences and the current body of thought on hauntology as a starting block I will explore my own mourning process that gestures towards the future reconstructive of my existence in the world. I will interview others, people who have experienced loss. Continuing my experience and research into suicide, I will call for participants who are bereaved by suicide and hear their voice48. In thinking of ethics,

45 I later return to a similar expression in Learning to Love this Heart Ache, “you don’t give it the rules. You teach it to receive...a little clearing where the penumbra of an almost given will be able to enter and modify its contour (Lytard et al., 1988, p. 83)”.
46 Part I – Holding On aims to reach unmediated expression. Frustrated Surrender is the chapter where this is most pronounced.
47 The whole thesis is a work of mourning, I regularly return to the line of flight as a work of mourning, for example in Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence I name this directly to describe the return to my past, in turning towards the pain, offers something different.
48 Even though I dropped the overall project, I maintained the movement to listen to the other’s voice more profoundly, examples of this can be found in The Unreal and the Moment of Speech and Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container. The role of witnessing my own pain and the pain of others is summarised in the Conclusion.
I will put in place structures for support so participants can access further counselling if they like. I will also put self-care structures in place to support myself in what is likely to be a difficult personal project. I am also considering broadening the meaning of mourning to include losses such as: environmental, political, body function, homeland, identity. In doing this I could focus on a wider pool of participants or move the project beyond an exclusive focus on psychotherapy. I am also considering not ‘calling’ for participants in the usual way, which is the best way to exorcise a spectre rather than allow it to seep into the flesh and speak through me. An alternative would be to explore these mourning processes where the spectre’s act upon us in my lived experience of being in the world in all my exploits.

This will contribute to counselling and psychotherapy in bringing new ways of looking at processes of transformation in letting the spectre’s speak without an a priori hope for “une petite victoire de l’Amour sur la Mort” (Abraham & Torok, 1987, p. 452). I will protect the identities of those involved by gaining permission or by anonymising or not including certain data. At all times holding the participants choice, autonomy and best interest to heart. I will conform to counselling and psychotherapy and University of Edinburgh codes of research ethics.

The coherence of the project lies, not in my method as linear procedure, but in my method as stance, in following the threads of destiny, in trusting the intuitive voices of the spectres. Without creating a totality or limiting myself to singular threads I will pay particular attention to Derrida (2012), Deleuze and Guattari (2004), de Beauvoir (2018), Nietzsche and Common (2006), Bataille and Kendall (2014), Merleau-Ponty (2013), Freud (1957), Butler (2004), (Žižek, 2019). It will be in conversation with the metaphysicians, the psychoanalysts, the humanists. This continues Nietzsche’s (1990) project of active nihilism - the undoing of classical epistemology and creating of new, opening up disjunctions and giving birth to new bodies of knowledge.

My research will continue the growing movement in post-qualitative inquiry at University of Edinburgh which makes use of Deleuze & Guattari and Merleau-Ponty’s work. I will aim to contribute to the growing performative, immanent and action orientated body of knowledge. In keeping with Levinas’ (1969) ethic, I will aim to continually subvert the dichotomy of self and other, unseat the self. In doing this I will aim to see each person in respect of their otherness.

I end with Le Grange’s perspective on (2018, p. 9) the ethic of post-qualitative research:

(Post)qualitative research informed by an immanent ethics opens up pathways for all those involved in research to increase their powers of acting, to express their generosity, and to love the world (all of life) – it is an invitation

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49 These thoughts developed into the current method, thinking without method, details of this can be found in the Method section.
50 Attempts to resist the Hegelian structure that is led by a pro-ject aiming towards a happy ending can be found in The Unreal and the Moment of Speech, this chapter ends in a position of stasis, without change. It is also explored in Learning to Love this Heart Ache. In this chapter I explore Lyotard’s thoughts about terror that can imbue the writing when the happy ending forces disavowal of the abyss.
to dance (just do) (Braidotti, 2006, p. 259). It is when the power within us is suppressed/colonised by what is external to life's creative power that we see the erosion of Guattari's (2001) three ecologies, mental, social and environment.

**Summary**

This chapter sets out the direction for the thesis. An intention set to ‘unquilt’ myself and turn towards the pain of the client death. Throughout the thesis I maintain the effort to resist une petite victoire de l'Amour sur la Mort” (Abraham & Torok, 1987) and express psychic reality rather than more comfortable but less true expression. To achieve this, the chapters that follow in Part I – Holding On turn towards my pain. The pain of the client death remained an experience that haunted me throughout the writing and likely influenced a preoccupation with death. In addition, I turn towards other trauma from my past. This is in keeping with the call in this chapter to “in following the threads of destiny, in trusting the intuitive voices of the spectres”, the chapters that follow show the disjunction or fragmentation I predicted in this chapter. The writing is raw and painful, at times disturbing. I write in this chapter “this mourning forms a performative gesture towards the future”, it is not until Part III – Letting Go that this mourning, or line of flight begins to take upon a clear meaning, for now it is fragments, or scraps of knowledge presented as they slowly take on a form and build into a scene. Reading this proposal back it was prophetic, I could not have known what would come over the next 4 years yet many of the themes in this proposal play a central role in the Conclusion of the thesis.
Attempting to Destroy

Introduction

This chapter is problematic, written in the first and second year when my-self was fragmenting, disjuncting. Theory and personal history explode onto the page for the first time bringing many of the themes that are later worked through in Part III – Letting Go. The themes centre around writing into an affective realisation that “man doesn’t beget himself”. On a personal and societal level, I write into the disgust of mastery or control while still not able to surrender into an identity that lies beyond. The self-disgust I feel for myself and wish to become “neuter” or cut out the masculinity in my-self doesn’t solve anything but does express a strong desire for something else, at the time of writing, over 2 years ago, I did not know what this something else was. Concepts that achieve this goal are haphazardly formed in this chapter. For example, the alchemical attempt to become “neuter” after “the end of man”, is a journey that reaches its maturity in Learning to Love this Heart Ache with the concept of heterogeneity in itself, a sexualised difference beyond hegemonic masculinity. To become Madame Bovary is the journey to forming an identity that is based upon plural expression outside of the hegemonic - ‘heterogeneity in itself’ and finds its most full expression in Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace. This journey coincides with a reconnection to the ‘real’, but not Lacan’s real, a real that is named by Ettinger (2004, p. 82) as “another sense” a “co-poietic” knowledge.

I have kept this chapter in the thesis in its original and fragmented expression of concepts that were matured throughout the rest of the thesis. It felt as though the only way to work through was to first write into the epicentre of suffering and take ownership of this suffering in the act of writing. I write into my own disjunction and quote “dionysus cut to pieces is a promise of life: it will be eternally reborn and return again from destruction” (Nietzsche et al., 2017, p. 718). In entering into the epicentre of trauma my-self disjuncted, leaving fragments, these fragments search for theory, as if in search for something solid to hold onto. In Part III – Letting Go and introduced in Decentring the self the path of “disjunction” changes to “decentring”. The decentring becomes possible as the fragments find a more coherent form. The fragmentation I consider to be a form of death, one of the four deaths encountered in the thesis that are summarised in Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace, an underlying sense of death and grief haunt this chapter, and this is an important part of the process of renewal.

Driven

This drive that feels within me but beyond me. Freud called it the id, it does feel iddy. Phenomenologically it feels mysterious and seemingly outside but at the same time more me than me, my-self. A feeling of being driven from the pit of my stomach that feels kind of angsty, excited, anxious, overwhelming, that drives a voice in my head that says “smoke a cigarette, everything will be ok if you smoke a cigarette, one cigarette will not do any harm.” I can observe this id so it is not fully me, it can be in the driving seat, it can fall away, it can disappear, it can be controlled, mastered or occasionally falls into harmony. The id drives non-egoic processes and urges.
The shame of this id. The guilt of this id. Looking into the eyes of beautiful women on the tube, feeling my eyes penetrate her being, occasionally seeing a pleasure in her eyes at being seen. But mainly seeing an annoyance or disgust in her eyes at being objectified, being used as a container for a stranger’s desire. Yet I can’t resist, another beautiful woman, a split-second glimpse of her beautiful body as she travels to work in her red flowery dress, she must be cold, today is a cold day.

Memories of the club last Friday. I don’t go to clubs for good reason. I need a certain amount of alcohol to cope with the horror of being in a sweaty room of people accompanied by music I don’t like. The boss’s daughter was there and I have been paranoid she caught a glimpse of my desire overflowing into the dark corners of the room. A thick slime behind me as I slither through the dance floor looking for containers for my desire who are willing to be objectified who might even get a superficial kick when objectified by a slug sliming around the club. The yearning for my naked body to be in the arms of a stranger’s body is too strong.

My shirt buttons were unbuttoned. A woman told me it looked sleezy, it was sleezy. My hairless chest showing. My work colleagues seeing my hairless chest in the club. The thick slime, so thick I could drown in my own slime. I’m a therapist, I’m meant to be godly, priestly, together, whole, why am I so disgusting, such a slippery slimy slug.

I hate my-self; I hate my body, I hate all elements of this masculine self. I wish there was a knife that could cut off these masculine parts of myself. I wish I could drink acid to neutralise the acidity of this masculinity and balance things out. I wish I could burn out this masculinity and wait for the foliage to regrow, replenish, refresh. This masculinity is disgusting, if I was to write about all the times I have been disgusted by my own masculinity I would have to write five volumes and they would never be published.

I see another woman murdered by a man, I read one in three women murdered by men are son’s murdering their mothers. Policemen murdering women, sons murdering their mother men murdering woman. Disgusts me to be a man, toxic to be a man, horrific to be a man, shameful to be a man.

Is it possible to destroy this masculinity, is it something that can be purified? Or is it a stain on my body or is my body a tiny bit of clarity in the sludge of my masculine self. I need to eradicate this masculinity from my-self. The process of becoming woman, becoming hermaphrodite must accelerate. I wish I could apply to a demi-god to remove all my sins or speed up the purification process, but I can’t I’m a non-believer.

I tried to find solace in accepting the horror of my own gender by applying to Bataille, Sade, even Nietzsche. This worked for a little while, but ultimately became hollow and empty. There is nothing glamorous about being a man….and now I must take more extreme measures…To become an alchemist, Jung had it right after all. Sublimation was most alive in the times of alchemy, rocks turning into gold, man becomes hermaphrodite, darkness becomes light...
It would be nice, but fool’s gold after all. I don’t believe in symmetry\textsuperscript{51}, just another oppressive version of self, universal law, and order.

No the only way through is disjunction dismemberment, “dionysus cut to pieces is a promise of life: it will be eternally reborn and return again from destruction” (Nietzsche et al., 2017, p. 718).

I have suffered, I am in a society of suffering. To find balance to find peace is merely fool’s gold, a happy trick. This is not a yoga retreat. This is not an enlightenment project.

Grace rises out of dismemberment, grace rises from the haunting of the ghost, orgone is the silence speaking, even at the risk of death, unthought emerges into thought.

**On Nihilism and The End of Man**

The universe, and all of us, have entered live into simulation, into the malefic, not even malefic, indifferent, sphere of deterrence: in a bizarre fashion, nihilism has been entirely realized no longer through destruction, but through simulation and deterrence (Baudrillard et al., 1994, p. 159).

\textsuperscript{51} In the chapter Learning to Love this Heart Ache I explore the difference between Kant’s sublime and Lyotard’s feminine sublime. The final stage of the alchemical journey seems to forget sexual difference by adopting a symmetry. This can be compared with Kant’s sublime that Lyotard warns can breed terror, in forgetting the abyss, forgetting the asymmetry of heterogeneity in itself, which makes possible plurality. The Nietzschean quote that follows is more grounded in sexual difference in that it refuses an imagined symmetrical unity. It is the denial of death, the abyss and an assumed symmetry that risks terror. When this chapter was written I had not yet discovered Lyotard’s work on the feminine sublime, however the themes expressed show a movement in this direction of thought.
For Baudrillard the acceleration of the media (even more so now with social media and AI algorithms) there is no longer a critical distance between what is known and what is unknowable. In Lacan's (1977) construction of self there is a separation between the real, the imaginary and the symbolic forming a knot like formation. The critical distance between the three allows for meaning to be inscribed and for an 'id' or a desire to be experienced as a non-egoic reality. For Baudrillard the three exist on a horizontal plane. Without a critical distance the real (unknowable desire-jouissance) is accessible but neutral and indifferent, it is no longer yearned for. Instead, it is craved and accessed and craved again like a drug, like a vape, like a product, like a pay rise, like a present, like a promotion, like a line, like a beer, like a tinder swipe, BFF. There is no longer an I-thou there is only I-I, and the I-I is a mirror of we-we, this chapter is a simulation.

Hyper acceleration, hyper growth, whips up the real and embeds its energies into the systems as we know them. Sartre (1958) famously changes the metaphysical proposition essence-before-existence to existence-before-essence. Either way, essence is still inscribed, the soul of man makes space, a proximity for a semiotic system separate from a socio-linguistic system. Taking Baudrillard’s work into the internet age, it is more correct to describe existence as data-before-data, which becomes pure data, or pure productivity. The acceleration is so severe that the physical body has no privilege, the physicality of the earth has no privilege, both become tools that can be used by the machine. Violence (even when there is real death), is increasingly becoming simulacra, enacted by drones, by machines that blindly reap the earth. There is no longer a distance between the physical and the non-physical, both exist on the same plane.

Derrida (1969) announces the end of man, the concept of man being left unchallenged in metaphysical philosophy, being left to hold up the system of Being. The end of man can open a space that can invite pluralism and denouncement of possession. For Derrida this has the possibility of ceasing the eternal recreation of the self-same system bound by metaphysical logic and instead open into something else. A system of difference beyond the compulsive repetition that searches for an ideal of man and society in denial of the abyss.

Solanas (2004) is angry; let down by the institution of man she wrote the SCUM manifesto, a year before shooting Andy Warhol over disputes about how he valued her plays. Solanas, unlike Derrida, doesn’t see the critical distance between the concept of Man and the actual end of men themselves. In the SCUM manifesto she calls for the end of men, apart from certain men who support her journey and then after a period of peace where women continue through artificial insemination, like some Buddhist thought, peace will be found in the end of humanity:

Most men, utterly cowardly, project their inherent weaknesses onto women, label them female weaknesses and believe themselves to have female strengths; most philosophers, not quite so cowardly, face the fact that male lacks exist in men, but still can’t face the fact that they only exist in men only. So they label the male condition the Human Condition, posit their nothingness problem, which horrifies them, as a philosophical dilemma, thereby giving
stature to their animalism, grandiloquently label their nothingness their ‘Identity Problem,’ and proceed to prattle on pompously about the ‘Crisis of the Individual,’ the ‘Essence of being,’ ‘Existence preceding Essence,’ ‘Existential Modes of Being,’ etc., etc…A woman not only takes her identity and individuality for granted, but knows instinctively that the only wrong is to hurt others, and that the meaning of life is love (Solanas, 2004, p. 54).

Solanas points out the only reason men, or woman profiting from the system of privilege is by force. Solanas’ answer is to “kill all men” apart from men who make themselves inoffensive.

Do I have to die or can the concept of Man as I have known and lived, the element that cannot surrender to the unknown has to die, but me as man can survive…?

**After the apocalypse**

It is agreed by Derrida, Lyotard, Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Derrida, 1969; Lyotard, 1991), that there is a problem with a system, attributed to Man, in that it produces a system of repetition that commodifies, possesses, and produces sameness. Whether read literally or as science fiction, Baudrillard offers a stark warning, the patriarchal system accelerates and produces a system that that is apathic, death by banality. Solana’s corroborates the category of man and man himself. Looking at the overwhelming evidence, there is good reason to do this, despite the extremity of her path.

Unlike Baudrillard, Lyotard (2004) sees hope in a future that doesn’t lose touch with a sense of eroticism and difference:

Sex difference is not only biological difference, nor social studies difference; it’s something else, quite mysterious, which is incorporated in each of us, women or men, a difference which is internal, a capacity…the ability to be weak, a good weakness, so-called passivity. I don’t mind this term, though I have tried to propose the term passibility. In this certain representation we can have the way of thinking in Zen Buddhism or certain Eastern philosophies or religions: the ability to wait for, not to look at, but to wait for for what, precisely, we don’t know. That’s my ideological representation of the necessary attitude for writing. When somebody like Flaubert said, ‘I am Madame Bovary,’ it was not a joke; it was recognizing that he had not only to be the character, but to be a woman in order to write (Lyotard & Olson, 1995, p. 403).

Where does this leave me. Can I become Madame Bovary? Where does this leave psychotherapy. The movement towards femininity as a sense, could be more, be other than a project to master the self, could this shift the my-self into a place other than mastery? To work on my writing, to wait without hope of result. It leaves hope for the transformation of self to happen in the writing, something new to form through writing…passibility…re-writing what came before. Lyotard points towards something I feel at the very base of my reality, the original form of sexual difference to be the relationship between myself and that which is not myself, that enigmatic unknown that I desire. The unknown that can never be grasped, it can only arise.
I'm Speaking from my Tomb

Clarice Lispector. Speaking from her tomb. Speaking from my tomb. What does it mean to begin, what does it mean to end? Do I begin with intention; can I claim this intention as my own? What path or what energetic does the word research hold and what path does this push me towards. Is it possible to step outside of the master signifier or is this master signifier the master. Either way what is left over, what excess?

The diagram above is taken from Lacan’s fourth seminar (2018, p. 7). At this stage of Lacan’s writing in 1956 he places death at the edge of language, at the boundary or the separation from the body’s sense. Words can rarely (or never) reach the profundity of what needs to be said, what must be said. As I speak through these computer keys I destroy, Kristeva (1984, p. 28) speaks of the semiotic on a “path of destruction, aggressivity, and death”, I ritualistically turn away from the upsurging reality of existence I enslave my body in representation, I master, I signify because unmediated desire is too hot, too painful in its pleasure. Yet there is always something left over, driving the train, perpetuating, the id, even though non-egoic does not escape gendering, the social norms spliced onto my non-egoic being through some mysterious alchemy.
Lacan’s real, my first relationship, my first other before the Other exists is mother. Lacan speaks of this connection as a utopia, a unity without tension. But is it true that the before, the beginning is man before the fall. Irigaray (1981) says, “with your milk, Mother, I swallowed ice. And here I am now, my insides frozen. And I walk with even more difficulty than you do, and I move even less.” And these fragments, this blood coagulated, was never whole, was never pure, is never pure presence. The unified yogic body, the enlightened mind is not mine, was never and will be never mine, I have given up hope.

My beginning in my mother’s womb. My mother’s beginning. My grandma’s father’s violence, her mother’s psychosis. My own frozen body, difficult to be touched with ease, yearning to be touched, to be held. The repression of the family, the inability to express which led to lack of support when bullied for 12 years. My mother’s mystery, her authority. Father. The past in the present recursively and dialectically informs my actuality in the present, my body’s becoming which is the analytical tool I research with. The traumas especially, they knot, they complicate, but also hold disjunctive potential to see in a way that is somewhat outside a masculine or academic gaze, a gaze imbued with texture or maybe not a gaze at all.

The norms, at school. The oppressive system, the state’s violence acted out through these unformed vessels, these children, acted out unto me. I was different, I wonder if I was sensitive because I absorbed my mum’s suffering. I was persecuted for being outside the norms which pushed me further outside and into a painful solitude, I was bullied, told I was gay which aside from being horrible homophobia was confusing because I am not. I became an outsider, a stranger. As well as loss there was gain, an understanding of violence and oppression over time, an unlearning of the norms, a victim of the norms I gained an awareness, an empathy…led me to put these words on this page I suppose.

So where do I begin, with these fragments. These ashes, I hope, will be the basis of a greater alchemical work. Giving up hope is a return to the present, desire that is bound to the real through an unrealistic hope returns to the body, the return of the flesh. Can I allow myself to rot, can I be reborn, the fourth stage of the alchemical journey (Jung, 1980), is this what Kohut (1971) spoke of as transmuting internalisation, what S. Freud (2018) spoke of as sublimation, what Butler (1990) spoke of as subversion, what Nietzsche (1990) as active nihilism or Klein (2002) as reparation? Or has all of this just become a new age sedimentation of the oppressed self, a “reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation” (Althusser, 1972, p. 252). Foucault warns that attempts to neutralise power as it can indirectly concretes the oppressive power dynamics (Flyvbjerg & Sampson, 2001). If this is so, how can psychotherapy be an agent that creates a difference that unseats the mimetic mirror self? In this sense could Lacan’s grounding in lack be a more realistic possibility? But no, lack is not enough, eternal

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52 For a full exploration of this bullying, the traumatic knot and the changing relationship to this knot see Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence and Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms.
53 For a full exploration of the mirrored masculine self and Irigaray’s mimetic reproduction, see Irigaray’s Mimetic Reproduction.
slavery to a commodified world is not enough. Or was there a double energy, is the acceptance of lack to give up the ideal of unity, or returning to the wound and end the perpetual search, a changing relationship to one’s suffering?

I turn to Derrida (2004, p. 114) in search of an answer, a form or writing, or being that “holds the tension of dialectics” it can cross the “almost non-existent thickness of that leaf between the signifier and the signified”. Kristeva’s revolution in the poetic. To see the vulnerability of the face of the other and bring forth the force of the lost object, the Other. (Green, 2018, p. 117) brings the affective, the body back to Lacan’s work, “the body is the Other, resurrected in spite of attempts to wipe out its traces. The body is a limitation, a servitude, a termination.” The paradox of our limitation, my body opens up into the jouissance of the Other, the lost object. These words once again decay into lack, I have lost my tomb once again.

So I begin with the fragments, I have already begun. My master’s dissertation was on suicide, and I was left broken, traumatised. My dear friend commit suicide. A client commit suicide a few weeks after I referred her to the home treatment team. My ego collapsed, the knowledge of my master’s fell to ground and only an acute awareness of the assumptions remained. I fell into a poverty of spirit, a deep depression and sadness. With organic death the master signifier becomes 0, end but not worked through, everything becomes 0 and for those left behind, in my case fragments, increasing fragments, tatters of existence and a process of dreadful rediscovery.

I left London and entered Edinburgh in these tatters. Couldn’t find a home, couldn’t find a job, couldn’t settle in my studies, couldn’t start a practice, papers I hoped to publish rejected. I felt abandoned, alone, the world felt hostile, and I felt scattered. Continuing was the only option. Looking back this formed the perfect conditions for regression. I fell in love with Elena [name changed for confidentiality]. She was beautiful, she didn’t love me from the start, and I knew but didn’t allow myself to know. The fragments of self further fragmented, I lay in bed yearning for connection, for love with an increasing perpetual anxiety, each night got harder. I stopped exercising. I stopped eating properly, I started smoking and still hoping, seeking unity, projecting the lost object into a material form and she is too clever, she knew.

Lacan’s imaginary yearning for the Other because of the inaccessibility of the real, the maternal affective relationship. She said to me it wasn’t real love which hurt even more, I believed it was. The pain of separation, the struggle is real, at least from the perspective of the phenomenon itself. Bromberg (1994, p. 521) describes this:

> There is now abundant evidence that the psyche does not start as an integrated whole, but is nonunitary in origin—a mental structure that begins and continues as a multiplicity of self-states that maturationally attain a feeling of coherence which overrides the awareness of discontinuity. This leads to the

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54 I return to Derrida’s enigmatic expression in *Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container*, exploring how this quote could relate to therapeutic change.

55 For a thorough exploration of this pain see *A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning* and *Learning to Love this Heart Ache*. 
experience of a cohesive sense of personal identity and the necessary illusion of being ‘one self.’

I couldn’t stay with my suffering long enough for it to transform, in my traumatic reaction to life I was seeking unity, perfect balance and connection. With the loss of coherence, I was in more pain than ever and through this pain closer to the real than ever, holding the potential for opening new affective channels within myself, if the tensions could be held, but they couldn’t. Yearning for unity, for an ideal of connection to another to take away the pain, like yearning for a connection with a parent that will never be able to fulfil my needs hurts, yearning for a return to the womb (Rank, 2014). But it is not really a yearning for unity, yearning for the womb, it is the grief of the realisation that man doesn’t beget himself, he was begotten by his mother and the power of creation is outside of himself, this is my real loss, the loss of decentring, the line of flight as a work of mourning, he is alone, now separated, without the power of creation, everyman knows this is on a guttural level. I feel more identified what Lacan considers a feminine position a feeling of lack, forever seeking meaning and recognition outside myself. Feeling the heartache of separation between myself and the Other, which internally at the most profound level is the hurt of consciousness itself, the inability to find unity in myself, forever de-centred. Forever searching for completeness and forever feeling disappointment and loss. This humanness aches, the continuous search for a lost unity, a peace that can only be found by feeling these yearnings in their full force and feeling the most profound suffering, this time I couldn’t, I wasn’t ready, I wasn’t strong enough. I needed her…

I read Butler (1990, p. 117) desperately wanting to subvert my struggles, but it wasn’t a subversion it was an attempted escape. “If subversion is possible, it will be a subversion from within the terms of the law, through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawns unexpected permutations of itself. The culturally constructed body will then be liberated, not to its ‘natural’ past nor to its original pleasures, but to an open future of cultural possibilities”. My body remained a cipher seeking the real in the Other, the woman. Moi (2004) suggests if the body is reduced to purely a societal construct “[the body becomes] an abstract cipher, purely idealist construct”. I accessed the realm of the sublime only at a distance, only wanting to possess to own, like I am in the club again, an inner club, profoundly driving me into the limbo of my own lack, my own frustration rejected, this is the id, a rejection of suffering played out in the world, a demand that the Other makes me whole, takes away my pain, choosing the master signifier, the convergent point of societal norms over the actual physical feelings of pain, becoming cipher, perpetual cipher.

When Deleuze (2019, p. 4) says “writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come” all the methods that claim to create a static and separate representation of body of epistemological

56 For an exploration of a changing relationship to this suffering that holds the tension in a way it can transform the relationship to self, see The Schizoid Returns and Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace.

57 For an exploration of how the inner world can become a painful refuge of hoped for self-sufficiency see Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container and The Schizoid Returns.
knowledge are put into question. I am attempting to move from the symmetrical construction of signifier and signification to the horizontal body in all its parts, that more spontaneously bind and unbinds themselves in a dynamic becoming, but not in virtuality, in materiality. I am desperate, not waiting, not sitting in my yearning, seeking solace, seeking escape, the transformation is not complete, the unity was never a unity but this is what is strived for, I am frozen, my insides frozen, I am ice.

My thesis has left me feeling constrained, how can I develop rigor but maintain the intuitive necessity to spiral outwards, to write through fragment and disjunction. St. Pierre (2019, p. 10) in many ways confirms my resistance to the constraints, “the typical markers of goodness, adequacy, validity, objectivity, and replicability used to judge conventional social science research are not appropriate because those judgments impede the experimentation and creativity required for the new.” This experimentation, creativity required a step I couldn’t take, still hung up, still bound to my trauma in a static form, its repetition compulsion, the need to master.

I now return to death, my beginning and end. Looking back, I had a morbid disposition even in childhood, I remember feeling suicidal at 12. I think for me, both then and now it is wanting to escape, to escape uncomfortable affect and uncomfortable dynamics, I was angry and tormented. I think of my friend, never hurt a fly and then chose a violent death. I still want to know why, but maybe this is the wrong question to be asking. (Fairbairn, 2013, p. 214) says “the child seeks to circumvent the dangers of expressing both libidinal and aggressive affect towards his object by using a maximum of his aggression to subdue a maximum of his libidinal need.” Was my friend violently holding in an aggression he could never express which ultimately could not reach the world, it’s impossible to say, in the moment of action his signifying path was turned to 0, I seek answers and this act of seeking binds me to a path of escape, to not fully mourn, to not surrender, I must surrender into my pain, more fully, without hope of escape, end the perpetual cycle, symbolic death of the image of unity, the mastery of man, the demand put on the other, the objectification of the other through the image.

There must be another path? There is another path, Hillman (1973, p. 88) says “like the Shaman, he [the analyst] has already been to death himself for the dead can best communicate with the dead…but by confirming the psychic death, it can be released from its organic fixation.” In delving into Hillman’s shamanic death, I hope to lower myself down into Hades and lower myself into death myself, not physical death, but to learn something of the kernel of unknowable traumatic material in myself, the gateway to the sublime.

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58 For a fuller exploration of horizontality, using Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the rhizome see *The Schizoid Returns*.

59 The theme of aggression being directed towards the self to subdue libidinal need is followed up in *The Unreal and the Moment of Speech* and in the *Conclusion*.

60 The other path, offering an entry point to the sublime is explored further in *Juul2, The Schizoid Returns, Learning to Love this Heart Ache, What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond* and in the *Conclusion* it is the main theme of *Part III – Letting Go*. 
I end with Deleuze (Deleuze & Boyman, 2005, p. 92): “nothing less than the unfolding of a space in which it is finally once again possible to think”. This unfolding scares me, it is my journey, in writing, in psychotherapy, not in death but life…
Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence

Introduction

In this chapter I have included details of my past which includes details of my family background including details of family members and details of an abuser, for more information see the Ethics section.

This chapter is a breakthrough moment for the thesis. Writing into the pain of my traumatic past and considering the effect it had on the structure of my personality. I start by considering the role of my family, particularly my mother. The family dynamic ensured the suffering I was experiencing as a result of being bullied was unspeakable. The title of the second section “I cannot blame my mother”, is almost a message to myself, I shouldn’t blame my mother. When I was studying psychotherapy I had conversations with family members about their past. I learned my great grandmother, my mother’s grandmother was sworn to secrecy about her bi-polar disorder (previously called manic depression) by her GP and probably the wider community. She was in and out of institutions for much of her life. The silencing of her illness, the domestic violence, why my grandma wasn’t held physically or emotionally as a baby and then fostered was spoken. In hearing this story and hearing of my mum’s guilt and my mum’s inability to talk about my difficult pre-teen and teenage years my perspective changed. I should not and cannot blame my mother. My pain was not contained because her pain was not contained and her mother’s pain not contained. All embedded in a wider societal lack of containment.

It was my suffering and the silencing of my suffering that led me to share my pain with a friend at a festival, what had been unspeakable and silenced. It was this act of being profoundly witnessed that began my journey of meditation and psychotherapy. Knowing on some mysterious unthought level that the feminine and the repressed trauma caused a collapse inward and a turning against myself. This chapter is a movement to take ownership and work through these past traumas and the beginning of a grieving process.

In the first section, ‘Missing Links’, I write “the womb that protects the phallus” pointing towards the lack of containership of vulnerability, grief and suffering, in contrast to a protective shield ensuring suffering is not spoken. I refer to this as “the womb that protected the phallus”, highlighting a conflictual relationship to containment, authority, maternal holding and expression. I needed my mother to protect me from those violent boys as I couldn’t protect myself, but I couldn’t talk about my pain and suffering in the family home. The pain burst out in moments of anger but otherwise there was a missing link between my internal world and family life, leaving me lonely and lost, without a voice and without a way of working through my pain. This chapter is an important unfreezing, reclaiming and attempt to understand my past and the path it led me down. This journey clears the grounds for further working through and letting go expressed in Part II – Working Through and Part III – Letting Go. For example, my experience of containership or lack of containership intensified my reflections of the importance and conditions that are necessary provide containership in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The
Ethical Container. The understanding of the repression of the feminine clears the ground for a reconnection to the feminine sublime in Learning to Love this Heart Ache.

Missing Links

When I was small, in my formative years the family household was the site of binding, the womb that protected the phallus. Emboldened by legal training, it was my mother who held the phallic function, the phallus is the tool that binds, that frustrates or makes divergent flow impossible. My childhood was a training in obedience that formed the ground of a foreclosure of certain parts of my-self: the vulnerable, soft, in need parts were severed to form the individual self. This was unknown to me at the time and probably, at least partially, unknown to my mother.

I Cannot Blame My Mother

The structure of the family system mirrors the structure of the wider society. The family units microunits of a macrosystem. Marriage, success, exchange, productivity, control, balance. I cannot blame my mother.

The line of flight, a term used by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) is to step outside of the status quo, what I regularly refer to in this thesis as the hegemonic. In my experience it was the exclusion of the softer parts and more vulnerable parts of myself that formed an inner conflict between what I showed the world and experienced inwardly. It was only in returning to the inward suffering and pain that healing began to happen, I experience this return and working through as a form of mourning. A mourning of past traumas and a mourning of the unfulfilled and unwanted expectations of others. A refusal to replicate the hegemonic system of linkages, a break and disjunction.

As a child I felt I could not fulfil the demands of genital (heterosexual) desire. A recursive upward cycle towards the image of the genitality: climbing up the work ladder, buying a house, starting a family, procreation, productivity, recognition.

I remember (at the very least retroactive remembrance) an effort to squish myself into conformity, in attempting to adopt the ideal hegemonic image of man. Under the stresses and strains of late teenage years, suppressing my trauma ensured my emotional expression was effectively categorised and boxed away. I became absorbed in computer programming. The law and order no longer an oppression, a godlike power in setting the rules, a manic creativity in solving problems, creating more order. This displaced and stabilised the frustrated bodily desire, finding a defensive form in rules and order, my body becoming cipher. The creative spirit regulated by phallic form, a containment, desire channelled into my own oppression finally recognised hegemonically. Behind the rules that brought temporary

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61 At various points throughout the thesis trauma is seen to originate from society, not the individual mind. A thorough investigation of this can be found in Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari.

62 A further theoretical exploration of overcoming hegemonic narratives can be found in Decentring Masculinity and a more process driven exploration in Learning to Love this Heart Ache.
containment was the secret that I could never admit my desperate need to be held, to feel real in the arms of the Other.

The illusion of heteronormative balance, ‘the good citizen’ collapsed at university while I was studying physics, riding the wave of something not right for me. I fell into depression, anxiety, despair. I felt isolated and estranged from others and the world. My needs felt unknown and when they did arise felt irrelevant. I was lost and searching, searching for something that I could not define. I developed terrible acne and felt like an alien to others, unwanted intellectually, physically, I was more alone than ever before. One night I stole three jackets from a club and sank them in the canal, I have no idea why. One night I stole three books on farming from the library and ripped them up, I have no idea why. My-self becoming mixed up and desperate. Maybe I was trying to steal back a lost part of myself, or desperately trying to show the Other, a part of me was missing and needed to be seen.

The line of flight is to take the untrodden path, like the electron escaping the atom it takes a sustained force that has a lot to do with mourning or grief. It is an ectasis, the past-in-present, the future-in-present, the imaginary-in-real, the symbolic-in-real, on this horizontal writing surface these categories begin to fall apart, opening an a-temporal portal into something else, another sense.

Writing into silence, for Lyotard (1991) and for myself is political. The hegemonic demands answers, certainties, grounds, universalisms, individuation. The sense, silence, the feminine sense, the trauma of my past, my madness is where the force for change are where divergence and difference emerge. A violence that breaks through, breaks out, a violence that has an ethical political force for healing. Those other boys at school, they hurt me emotionally and physically, they traumatised me, they filled me with hate for myself. I coped with their violence by turning it on myself. I need to win back this violence as a force for good, a force for change.

Back to the past

I grew up under the subjection of a regime or training of truth. I felt violated. I must have identified or grown into this violation to choose friends who violated me and this became my miserable existence for over 10 years. This was a training gone wrong, a training in masculinity, in genitality, which ultimately had the opposite effect. The aim of this chapter is to write myself out of the rational image and into the unmediated sense, the silence.

As a child I had limited freedom to choose a different path, combined with the freezing effect of trauma I was left with few choices other than to allow the subjugating forces of the hegemonic to occupy me. I guess the only survival mechanism I had in such a system was to identify with the oppressive force.

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63 I return to exploring the line of flight in Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms. In this chapter I consider the line of flight as an opening, a gateway to receiving rather than mastering, the line of flight as the work of mourning, as potentiality, the line of flight as a gateway to the beyond.

64 In Learning to Love this Heart Ache I take this theme further: “this ethic is a violence against the hegemonic, the feminine sublime holds a violence in its capacity to unravel, deconstruct and crucially as Lyotard highlights, construct an alternative system that is obliged to respond to the other, a witnessing of alterity, heterogeneity in itself.”
Freud, 2018), internalise a self-hating voice which at least gave me some sense of control. Locked in a structure of control and violence nourishing forces felt inaccessible, a cruel dark cave. It felt as though the only option was to exclude the feminine, transform generative forces and reverse them to meet the demands of repression and moderation. And it was at this point, I became a man, a binary gendered man who could be of use to society, recognised by the external value systems.

**Can silence be written?**

Is it possible to write into unthought that produces thought, through the paradox\textsuperscript{65}? Would this appropriate or enslave the unthought into the representational systems? My answer is tentative, a continual risk if I fall into the temptation to universalise, to recreate the conditions of oppression. But on the other hand, leaving the silence unspoken and unrecognised is to shy away from the possibility for transformation.

**Silencing**

I lived in a system of silencing, and this affected how the silence\textsuperscript{66} was held within myself. The generative unknown became a locker room of unspoken fear and loneliness. The family unit couldn’t talk about sex, couldn’t talk about desire, couldn’t talk about the bullying or the abuse at school, they couldn’t talk. Living in this silence I lost hope that the world, the Other could contain or hold me. The affective quality of aloneness has stayed with me ever since, the cruel inner self-hating voice has remained with me intimately for too many years. It exists as a melancholic pit in my stomach, a shadow that decapitates affective peaks of joy, a second guessing of myself that kills spontaneity. Its vocal expression is the fear of being unwanted, a burden to others, my body disgusting and untouchable.

I was one of the lucky ones, my silence was spoken, and I share it here as a love story, an uncoiling. The unspeakable is unspeakable because the representational world we live in has created linkages that converge to a point, the phallic focal point. The phallic focal point is the ground of rationality, evidence and recognition\textsuperscript{67}. The unspeakable is the elusive, unknown, unrepresentable, in this place imagination can detach itself from the hegemonic and knows no boundaries. Self-hatred falls away like a feather softly floating towards the ground. Silence has a double energy: a place of generation and a lonely hell, for too many years I lived in lonely hell.

**The Repressed – The Unspeakable**

The words that could never be spoken: they pushed me to do things I didn’t want to do, my first sexual experience. But I don’t want to call it sexual because it had nothing to do with desire, objectively it is sexual abuse but somehow feels

\textsuperscript{65} The paradox of writing what is beyond words is also explored in *Attempting to Destroy* and *What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond* where poetry is used to move closer to wheat cannot be written. It is also explored when considering *The Wild Woman* who cannot be named in *The Schizoid Returns*.

\textsuperscript{66} As well as the related concepts of absence and the unknown, which highlight the relational component of holding silence inwardly.

\textsuperscript{67} This is explored theoretically in *The Foreclosure of the Feminine in Western Culture* and *The Failure of the Phallus*. 
disempowering to admit this. I felt disgusting, I washed my mouth out with soap in the shower. I didn’t tell anyone for 10 years. These people were my contact with the social world as it existed at school and I can now see how vulnerable this made me. I almost don’t want to write this down in electronic ink, they don’t deserve a second thought, but not giving this any thought excludes and sometimes the unbearable needs to be spoken or written. They had power over me. When I made a sandwich in cookery class that I was proud of they threw it on the floor, they punched me in the face for no reason. They chased me and I believed at the time, they were going to kill me. I still feel the fear while writing this. I pretended to phone the police in a desperate attempt to escape. On a daily basis I was psychologically manipulated, I directed the anger towards myself to try and regain some control, I directed the anger towards my family, a fury that what hurt most couldn’t be communicated. My sister didn’t talk to me for 3 years, I don’t blame her and on a drunken night at a festival this year she told me her side of things, what had gone wrong and for her it was horrible, even worse than my experience. I understand now, I had no idea. The worst thing was not being able to tell anyone and then over time forgetting but it was not forgotten, it gained power in repression, altering my sense of self, my sense of being in the world and the possibilities to connect with others. The possibilities of giving or receiving care and intimacy. I’m angry and I’m sad.

I don’t hate them anymore I feel an emptiness towards them. This didn’t have to happen. They gave me the impression I was unworthy of existence, unworthy of friendship, unworthy of life and these feelings that sit at the base of my gut when I am rejected, these are the feelings that made me into a psychotherapist hypervigilant and aware of the feelings of others, originally a protective mechanism. I chose a meek and passive existence, I retreated into myself – a form of death. I wrote a diary, a diary of my pain, maybe it helped a little and then I went to the woods, went to the swamp, buried the diary in the swamp, never to be seen again. My mind was a thick mud like the swamp, clouded, heavy, squelching thick, I buried speech. There was one time these friends came to my neighbour’s house, approaching 18, drinking had begun, she pulled me aside, she said why do you hang around with these people they are not your friends, not real friends. That one sentence was what I had needed for the last 8 years, my pain finally acknowledged, painfully real...

**A Love Story About Unsilencing – In Ecstasy**

This is a love story about breaking the silence, finally choosing a different path. It was a life changing act which took place a festival in the North of England. On my clunky steel touring bike, I cycled from my small hometown into the Yorkshire countryside to attend the festival. My friends and I were happily drinking and eating tomato soup when a man approached with a menu of drugs to buy at very reasonable prices. We started with some speed and MDMA. The night rolled on, 22 years old, the freedom to travel from place to place with whoever we wanted whenever we wanted, camping, drugs, music it felt like such a freedom at the time.

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68 To get into the mood of this section it is recommended to watch a video a youtube user created of the DJ set [https://youtu.be/sDEKGxniv90](https://youtu.be/sDEKGxniv90) (Nosurak, 2011) I found this video after writing this paper, it is a strange uncanny experience to watch, like peering into a memory vault, intensifying the sensations already embedded in my mind. A moment that I believed remained only in my imagination, in memory solidified, documented.
Me and three friends had our arms around each other, telling equally intoxicated humans that we were three parts of a whole. I was the spirit; one friend was the body and the other the mind. We enlisted an aging hippy to join us as the heart. Connection, linkage, in a theatrical way, life suddenly felt joyful and free.

Then my sensations became more sporadic, the room spinning more, another bump of speed, no anxiety, no fear, no shame, no guilt...at last. The burdens I live from day to day, crippling my sense of expression fell to zero, a sense of freedom had exited my body in a way that felt amazing. I remember lying in my tent after a nighttime spliff, feeling for one of the first times a dissolution of self. My body lying flat on the ground spilling energetically into the earth beneath, the earth beneath spilling into my body. Every cell of myself felt like it became part of the vibrations of the environment. I became no-self, the flowing currents of laughter flowed through me in the same way my breath flowed through me.

And the next day it was 1am, I was suddenly in a tent. Craig Charles is/was/will be doing a DJ set. There was love, light, connection. Irish music with an electronic twist. Many violas in the room. Faster and faster, our feet were moving, joy, intoxication, losing cognitions and falling into the wave of sensation. Kebab at a whole food kebab store.

4am, my lower jaw gurning. I walk with my friend, and this is where the love story begins. I was still heavily intoxicated state and this acted as a truth serum I tell him everything and expected the worst. Even with the serotonin ride I was on; the body began to enter its well-known state. Closed up, bound by shame, blood infused with an hourly shot of guilt, disgust and self-hatred. My living mantra, a way of life. With a huge effort I tell him everything, the first person in the world to know my suffering in its raw essence.

My fear is that he would feel the same disgust that I feel writhing through my veins. My fear is that my shame would destroy me, that I would combust or crumble. My fear is that I would be too much again, and he would push me away.

He didn’t. He looked sad, concerned, I felt a sense of awe. A sense of love and connection like never before. We hugged. He pulled me closer. As the sun rose, we walked around the campsite while a sense of richness poured over us. A sense of transition into something else. The closeness I felt beyond anything I had known, an untouched wound now touched. We eventually retired to our tents, I promised him I would name these things in the morning, to forge the pathway, to touch the wound while sober. And I did...

**A Feeling in the Chest**

I search inside myself and attempt to write through feeling, an imprecise science. The feeling I encounter in this moment is an emptiness of heart. A yearning to reach out into the world and touch, a frustrated expression. A need to escape this cage of isolation that I experienced as the barrier of my skin, this ‘inside’ of my body where my heart beats in solitude, irregularly. This need to reach out has many tones, at first glance a spherical whole, once explored shatters into a complex web of subtle movements. There is hopelessness, there is certainly loss, aloneness of the very
worst kind which is almost death. The scream of a child left alone to suffer in horror, in rage and in sadness. In sadness of the realisation this individual being, a separate self who is dependent on others to survive. Acknowledging my needs, my vulnerability, knowing myself to be alone, a separation collapses into the impossibility of separation.

Deleuze (2014, p. 73) writes “a scar is the sign not of a past wound but of the present fact of having been wounded”. It is only in bringing the past into the present I can change the systems that wound, oppress, alienate. It is only through a process of witnessing that I can seek to heal wounds both individually and collectively. I refer to the trauma but also the historical trauma of masculine socialisation. This chapter witnesses the abuses I suffered, the traumas of masculinity I suffered for many years at school. Ettinger (2004, p. 85) highlights the role of witnessing trauma and jouissance as a way of a man transgressing the phallic limits of male subjectivity and accessing the repressed femininity, “the phallus fails, or this feminine-other-thinking fails but only in the phallic order”.

Silverman’s (1992, pp. 62, 63) writes that when a man encounters The Failure of the Phallus:

> All that stands between him and the abyss is the paternal imago, within which he can no longer recognize himself...a living proof of the incommensurability of penis and phallus. Because of the resulting crisis of faith, 'reality' itself is at least temporarily jeopardized.

Silverman and Ettinger trace the path of the failure of the phallic male’s illusion of coherence and control, causing disintegration and then a reconstitution of reality that transgresses. As the phallic function collapses and I fall into painful loneliness, as I fall, I realise I enter a containership, the womb of the unthought is still there in my separation, materially this is found through those I love.

The phallic order rests upon the “inability to witness the event as it occurs” (Caruth, 1997, p. 7), it falls out of awareness but operates from the outside. It makes up part of the scaffolding of the ego through the identification of the penis with the phallus (Silverman, 1992, p. 40). The phallic male rather than having direct access to his body, requires the women to be in the position of the Other (Silverman, 1992, p. 40). Pleck (1995, p. 20) describes this “masculinity ideology directly creates trauma in male socialisation”. To write this trauma is to remember. To feel sadness, to feel regret for the pain I have caused others as well as been subjected to. At this point, on the individual level, the word hegemonic collapses, my pain, the energetic knot that the traumatic encounters have formed into begins to know that self-hatred doesn’t have to be the norm. The line of flight as a work of mourning.

**Returning home**

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69 This quote is introduced theoretically in the chapter The Failure of the Phallus, exploring the psychic change when the imagined unity and privilege of hegemonic masculinity falters.

70 This quote was first introduced in the chapter Decentring Masculinity, exploring the construction of hegemonic masculinity and its deconstruction.
I sit on a mossy rock in my hometown by a stream that suddenly drops off a cliff edge, a place I don’t remember coming before, I’m not sure why. I know why, it’s because the pastures of my hometown are infused with a lurking sense of unbelonging, of being unsafe, of not fitting in. The brook is surrounded by trees and an inviting path that looks as if it leads deep into a wood, it actually leads to nowhere, a dead end. Brings to mind the psychological cul-de-sac I lived for so long, in silence. The brook has an ancient feel surrounded by the decaying walls of an old dye factory, there is some scattered rubbish from teenagers who go there to smoke weed and eat takeaways. There is no noise from the nearby road, just the tranquil sound of water running down the stream and the soft leaves blowing in the background.

For a minute or so awareness of self-eases and I am immersed into the enormity of the flowing water. I stare deeply into the refracted light, how the water shimmer and slows, the softness of the eroded rocks. The immersion has an inherent tranquillity, a melancholic peace. Without intention the water continues to flow. There is so much emphasis on the present moment being peace, but I find it is blindness or absence that brings most peace. When time takes on proportions that are anything but linear, I’m transported into a forest which becomes the truest foundation of myself. I have been there once or twice...

I am called back to myself by a discomfort, the urge to forget and the impossibility of forgetting. The green, a little field where people used to fight after the school is just up the steps. The feelings of discomfort, of wanting to run, of the impossibility of feeling safe re-emerge when I’m in my hometown. I know they are always there wherever I am. Secretly preventing me from putting down roots. It suddenly feels like the cool air is mocking my need for comfort. The trees are judging me with that little dance back and forth. I cannot stay here, in my hometown, not for too long.

I don’t want to control or master; I don’t want to fix. But I do need to express, to redefine. I cannot claim the trauma as my own, neither can I blame the trees. The trauma I feel is an enmeshment of societal rituals, cruel rituals and rites of passages. As a result of these rituals, elements of myself were cut. I know now that enmeshed within this trauma is potentiality, to re-write, to re-define and to form communities that offer greater vitalities, less shame, to de-centre.
Atlas Fallen

Introduction

Having chosen the ‘method’, thinking without method I am left in the dark about what direction the thesis is heading or what the thesis seeks to achieve. In On Writing I write that when representation or structure is put aside I can listen to my-self, the gentle breeze beyond my-self and my writing. It is this process of listening, of allowing oneself to be haunted by unknown forces that sets the direction. This has led to feeling fragmented, often lost. The following chapter and later in What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond, I take stock, attempt to understand what the writing is doing and where the writing is taking me, the purpose crystallises. In this chapter, written part way through the thesis I see a movement towards this crystallisation, a steppingstone. This chapter draws out remnants of the hegemonic in my writing and self-structure. The urge to represent and universalise. A way to feel in control and cover the narcissistic wound and an effort to go beyond representation and surrender to the sensations that exist beyond. This sets the direction for a ‘war on totality’ explored in Learning to Love this Heart Ache and accessing what lies beyond the self in What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond. In this chapter these themes appear more fragmented than in Part III – Letting Go, this is in keeping with the method which in On Writing the presentation of ‘units’ and ‘fragments’ that slowly approach a scene. At this point in the thesis, I did not know what scene would later emerge, retrospectively when reading this chapter, I can see the units linking together and tending towards the presentation of the scene as my relationship to the fixations or energetic knots begins to change.

The Doctor

First half of the PhD, two years gone. Dr. defines the structure, the limits. Or at the very least my perception of the structure and limits, where collective meets individual, my body unfolds into a body of work, and back again. My fingers tap the keys. Organic meets mechanic as my fingers tap the keys, mechanic meets organic as the fingers tap the keys. This digital discreet process, these words on the page are created by me, or I am created by them, or are both things created by another, hidden mechanism behind the scenes, hidden organics behind the scenes. To type is to categorise. And to categorise is to order affective reality or become aware of affectivity through the categorisation and this is both the creation and synthesis of the individual and the social. Always-already a subject71 in a body beyond my body, in a society, in a system, in an organic system, in a mechanic ordering, back and forth I go, the breathing body forever centring and decentring, the river flows.

Master signifiers delineate the boundaries of any particular totality72. The label Dr. is an authority figure, he regulates and leads the formation of interpersonal dynamics, prestige, and recognition. It is him, He who sets the limits, he defines the space. It is

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71 ‘Always-already a subject, is taken from Althusser’s famous statement, (1972, p. 176)”Individuals are always-already subjects”, the maxim is used many times throughout the thesis, first introduced in Decentring Masculinity to introduce the self as always-already in relation to the social environment.

72 Master signifiers are also explored in the I’m Speaking from my Tomb section of Attempting to Destroy.
the dot after doctor that creates the cleavage between the observer and the observed. The gold plaque on the door is no longer required, relationality is internalised, automatic. The dot creates a wall between action and thought, a dissociation, a marker that differentiates the normal and the abnormal, the distance of the observing eye and the tenderness of touch. It is the Father, the Priest, the Doctor, the commodity, success, the happiness…converges towards the zero point of normality.

In mental health models when experience is seen as inner. When recovery orientates itself towards an Apollonian star, a gap between the observer and the night star is filled by ideologies, commodification of experience73. This holds a similar weight to Christ’s cross, a society that turns away from violence nails Jesus to a cross so he can endure the violence internally. When night falls trauma, suffering, violence knows no internal or external, they exist on what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) called the plain of immanence. The force that imagines suffering to be internal is a technology of control, a function of state apparatus, with doctors and clinicians cast in the roll or agents performing the act.

It is the cleavage that the dot creates, filled with ideology that forms a ground for a representational psychic structure. Plato was the first with his internal cave, everything is mostly the same now. Norms are the focal point of the state apparatus, the overseeing eye. And the individual digs a trench, turns towards a star, and turns away from what is most feared.

A Painful Return, Eternally

Heraclitus’ river is never the same on the second, third, or fourth approach. I return, after another year of approaching the cleavage of the dot, to an empty page. The tonal frequency of fear and insecurity ripple through my body. I know this beginning isn’t the same beginning as the last beginning, the way the empty page flourishes into plural expression. “No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man” (Heraclitus of Ephesus, c. 535 BC---475 BC). In monotheistic religion and Western society, stability, safety, a firm and stable ground is searched for, images of heaven haunt psychic structure74. The endless totems rise up into the sky in cities everywhere, offering a course oil heated womb.

I started out the thesis on a path of immanence and quickly fell into structure building, a mistake so many have made before me. But now, I return to the uncertainty and rawness that flutters through my heart. This moving away and returning is not dialectical, there is no linear path of travel. I am carried beyond myself by lines of flight, an uprooting that turns towards what flutters, sometimes an almost incomprehensible murmur, sometimes overwhelmingly painful flows subsume my whole body, penetrating my cells whether wanted or unwanted.

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73 The Apollonian star that fills the gap is further explored in the chapter Learning to Love this Heart Ache. This chapter was written before I was fully aware of Lyotard’s work on this topic.

74 The relationship between monotheistic religion, capitalist production and the sinful body is explored further in the chapter Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container.
Starting with the concept of trauma in male socialisation, I found myself searching for something, something that no one else had and making this something into a structure. The attempt to make the unbearable understandable a form of fleeing the pain\textsuperscript{75}. My own pain extrapolated into a unified system converts the I into a We, and forms a system of exclusion, based in narcissism. Like Narcissus who fixated upon his own image I held up a mirror to my own pain. I internalised my pain and attempted to freeze into theory, hoping it would be seen by the world, my pain finally witnessed – indirectly. Cleanse me of this dirt, this impermanent mess of bodily existence.

This being, in its stability, like all narcissistic formed beings, has hidden within itself the seeds of its own destruction, the seed is catalysed by humble surrender. I am humbled by listening to my clients speak their pain, in raw and unregulated frequencies. Humbled by moments of beauty that sometimes make unbearable angst and uncertainty a little more bearable.

I find myself playing the hero\textsuperscript{76}, listening to the trauma of others, giving myself a feeling of importance, of being needed. A voyeurism that turns away from the gaping wound. I am unwanted, a spare part, part of a cruel machine that plays me like the system of chess that plays both players. A transmutation of wound into healer.

**The Gaping Wound**

It is a gaping wound I turn towards in my thesis. To honour my existence more fully and the existence of others, to be useful to my patients, I have to address my own wounds, I have to explore the depths of the individual and social labyrinth and then return to this cool (now hot), polluted London air. I am haunted by ghosts, traumas in male socialisation, in my own socialisation\textsuperscript{77}. It is not unique or unusual to turn away from pain when one doesn’t have the strength of a community that can hold individual pain and in this virtual world, it can feel there is none. When inner life is commodified pain transforms into a burden, a responsibility. Atlas’ punishment from Zeus, the Father. The difference is that I am no titan, I feel the poverty of my flesh. It’s yearning. It could be destroyed. Guilt and shame bind the responsibility into an imagined whole, the self. The concept of self has its foundations in the poverty of private property and makes possible inequality and violence on a grand scale. I ask myself do I own this self that is my-self? How can that be? It cannot.

It would be nice to think there is a way through or a way out. A freedom at the other side that just needs to be revealed or reached. Hegel imagined mutual recognition\textsuperscript{78}

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\textsuperscript{75} Going beyond the relief of thought or symbolisation is explored further in the chapter *Learning to Love this Heart Ache*.

\textsuperscript{76} An exploration of the hero narrative and how it forecloses the feminine can be found in the chapter *The Foreclosure of the Feminine in Western Culture*. The hero narrative in representational models that become therapies is explored in *Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari*. A reflection of hero narratives held in my own self can be found in *An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body Revisited*.

\textsuperscript{77} My journey to turn towards my pain and allow myself to be haunted, in relating to my pain is explored further in *Learning to Love this Heart Ache* and throughout Part III – Letting Go.

\textsuperscript{78} Hegelian philosophies attempt to totalise and turn away from the intensity of fragmentation or pain without a happy ending can be found in *Learning to Love this Heart Ache*.
for all (a fairy tale where all lives matter), the Buddhists offered a path to enlightenment for the chosen few. I walk through the streets, I sit with my frustration, my continuous need to flee or to escape this psychic inner life, and I have lost touch with answers, I am alone. When the structures of outer reality crumble inwards, the world can feel hostile, reality becomes threat. Connection tinged with dissatisfaction. The human heart beats with delicacy, with sensitivity, a delicacy that I sometimes feel as an empty void, a heavy depression. Aloneness that goes beyond language, sits at the pit of the gut and expands through the body as a visceral cold painful yearning, not for an object, just for something Other than my-self.

Emotional connection can mitigate what can feel like a world of hostility and violence, but for those who have a tendency towards the void, the gap between inner experience and the soft hands of the other can fall away.

The self becomes a trench, individuation digs a hole that provides a dark and dreary protection from the outside world. The dense, moist clay soaked in addiction, obsession, control, compulsion, and there is no clear way out.

Writing and difference

The temptation to extrapolate my experience into a universal system is ever present, a narcissistic wound that has never left me. It never left Freud, Lacan or most of Western philosophy. Something changed with post-structuralism. A surrender (but not a submission), an enduring effort to challenge and deconstruct one’s own systems of privilege, profoundly and beyond identity. This is a journey without an end point, the overlapping forces in the field of immanence are forever overlapping, interrelating.

To work through narcissism hurts, there is a narcissistic wound that draws me back, draws me back into affective bindings once forgotten, they re-emerge. Hauntings individual and collective can possess, take hold and create an uncomfortable authority in writing. A sameness that can grip the possessive tendencies of the man of property, bolstered by a society that celebrates this narcissistic binding.

To write can be extend one’s narcissism into the world. In contrast, to write can be to write beyond the self, into a field outside of the self. Working on the self an invitation, inviting forgotten realities, an emotional labour. To open a dialogue with the ghosts of forgotten times, closed down potentialities. To approach the fearful and the unknown and blur the lines between private and public.

To approach, again and again, a process of becoming. A mourning of the broken parts of myself without them necessarily being fixed. A forgetting and a remembrance, an untying of knots. Approaching the empty page brings anguish and fear. A fear that if embodied can transform open into difference, the body-without-organs. Behind the mask I don’t find authenticity just another and another mask.

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79 Derrida’s hauntology is introduced in A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning.
80 This is a critique of Winnicott’s true and false self, the idea behind the mask is a true authenticity (Winnicott, 1960). A Nietzschean concept is adopted instead, that behind the mask is only another mask. This concept is explored in On writing and Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace.
the fearful acknowledgement that there isn’t any foundation, my mortality rests on a passing breath. Terrifying and yet freeing…I continue.
Frustrated Surrender

Introduction

This chapter comes with a trigger warning, it expresses a deep level of pain. An aggression routed in my past pain directed to myself and the world. Reading it back is painful, my supervisors left disturbed by the writing. I invite the reader to skip this chapter as it is a visceral expression of my past trauma. The purpose of writing this chapter was to turn towards the trauma in its full trauma. The purpose of writing this chapter was to turn towards the trauma in its full force. The frozen affective forces were causing a hidden resentment in my writing, a me vs the world feeling. It needed to come out, in Part I - Introduction I call it a purge, reading this text I feel a sickness, a disgust. The purpose is to externalise this disgust, so it no longer exist as scaffolding in the background, burdening my perspectives of life and burdening my writing. The frozen suffering is too much to contain within the barrier of the skin. There are undertones of suicidality, fortunately this is not yearning for organic death, the death is transmuted into a forceful push against the totality the frozen suffering formed. This is not a working through, this comes later, notably in The Schizoid Returns and Learning to Love this Heart Ache. This is an externalisation of trauma, a taking ownership of the pain and violence. Throughout the thesis I quote Stone (2004, p. 26), “intrinsic to true speech - or a writing without power - is the reclamation of the ‘I’: if the psychical fragmentation of acute distress is to be transformed then a willed occupation of the ground of first-person discourse is essential.” The work of Part I – Holding On is this reclaiming and this reclaiming shifts the entrenched position of victim. Partly the reason I need to reclaim the ‘I’ is that as a child my pain was never witnessed, there was no container for the pain, elements of this text appear as “a ciphered message which the subject addresses to the Other when the Other has refused or failed to listen”, an “acting out” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973). Remnants of an unmet needs that need to be witnessed linger in the background of the text. In the Conclusion I write:

The “knowing of the event is given birth to”, in listening the listener partially experiences the trauma themselves, “to feel the victim’s victories, defeats and silences, know them from within so that they can assume the form of testimony.”

The reader plays the part of witness to the trauma forming a container for the pain that didn’t exist in childhood. The writing is disturbing and for this reason, I want this to be a choice the reader makes rather than a shock. This shares a relevance to the work of psychotherapy where the therapist provides a container and witnesses client histories, this is explored further in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container. I now open into the chapter, written during a psychic collapse in the second year of my thesis writing and part of The Failure of the Phallus, necessary for the working through explored in Part III – Letting Go.

Murmurings Get Louder
Beneath the general demand for relaxation and appeasement, we hear murmurings of the desire to reinstitute terror and fulfil the fantasy of taking possession of reality. Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honour of the name (Lyotard, 2010, p. 9).

The murmurings are getting louder. The answer to the injustices of my past is not to create further injustices, I must not take the path of mastery. Of control. Yet sometimes I do follow this path, unintentionally and occasionally intentionally and it is this that hurts me most.

Falling into a protective inner cage, a victim of my own anxiety and guilt. Shame and self-hatred can risk indirect forms of mastery, traumatic centring on a grandiose negative self-image.

Revenge, sweet revenge. Has never been my thing.

Witnessing, witnessing the trauma that lives inside me, formed me, so many years ago. And the murmuring becomes a shout, a scream, the forgotten child is tortured and torturing. Is transforming, rotating, rendering.

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My job, my success, the societal wave that demands success, pushes me beyond myself. It creates an anxiety to move, to fulfil, to project and create a project.

I look at the sunset of this beautiful bay, the soft sound of the bay lapping against the harbour wall. The light glimmers as it bounces off the rugged cliffs, almost as if it is answering a call from the moon. The fishermen’s boats populate the bay, waving slightly, like corn in a corn field swaying softly on a Sardinian summer’s day. Stillness has a soft swaying movement. The crimson sun softly sets, like a tired lion settling down after a hunt, satisfied, docile. The sky, it melts into the sea and the sea melts into the sky. There is a road, flanking the scene as humans pass by quietly on their mopeds, sleepily returning home. The stars, beckon, invite my mind into the unknown. The stars, their constellations seduce.

And yet, I feel nothing. I am thinking about the next project, the next deadline. I am itching to return to my books, to knowledge acquisition. I need to survive in this world. Survival has turned away from the sensuous, from beauty and turned towards mastery, achievement. I feel nothing outside of this angst.

There’s a bluebird in my heart
That wants to get out but I’m too tough
I say: “Stay down
Do you wanna mess me up?
Do you wanna screw up all of my works?”

81 This quote also appears in Learning to Love this Heart Ache which also straddles the individual and the personal, moving towards acceptance of unacceptable parts of myself.

82 This theme is picked up in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container where I explore a psychoanalytic of the repression of desire turning away from the olfactory and towards the visual.
(Bukowski, 1992)

There was a time, I was in a field, outside of society on a month retreat, in silence. Outside of the codifications that drive, respite from the wave that drives me. I would walk in the forest, I would appreciate my suffering, my separation in a way that would bring a togetherness. A night settled over my need to touch the light, to possess the light. I remember that time. A PhD, just a tool to earn more money, be respected, be recognised for who I am. Because I am is not enough. A rising anger could be directed towards myself, my parents, society, but better directed to totality itself, that's where I can begin.

but I'm too clever, I only let him out
at night sometimes
when everybody's asleep.
I say, I know that you're there,
so don't be sad.
then I put him back,
but he's singing a little
in there, I haven't quite let him
die
and we sleep together like
that
with our secret pact
and it's nice enough to
make a man weep, but I don't weep, do you?
(Bukowski, 1992)

I weep. The weeping never reaches the surface, it turns in on itself. The inertia drives the movement forward. Anxiety, this inability to surrender into suffering, the tension in my muscles turns them into eternally coiled springs, my splintered bones don't give permission to release. I am a slave. I can only squeeze pleasure out of the terror of my own anxiety. I push and I push. Orgasm makes me sick. My cock purges its ungodly substance from the core of my body. Reproduction was a mistake, God's fundamental error. Her kisses smother me. Trapped in my separation. If there is a beyond it is unreachable, inaccessible. The stars, they mock me in their peacefulness. This vessel of anxiety must be escaped, this affect, this emotion is unholy, Jesus save me from this sinful flesh, it must be blotted out, it must be cut, it must be destroyed.83

83 A quote included in Attempting to Destroy is relevant to this passage brings the affective “the body is the Other, resurrected in spite of attempts to wipe out its traces. The body is a limitation, a servitude, a termination” (Green, 2018, p. 127). The body/Other is too intense, too uncomfortable to hold in my heart and must be expelled.
Her kisses they smother me, I would love her but have long lost the capacity for love. I crave the waitresses, their busty bodies. I crave the moment I can escape my own disgust of myself with the next cigarette.

This hotel mocks me. One hundred pounds a night for these insipid objects, slowly rotting away. These sheets that don’t properly fit on the bed. This throw that has a thousand men’s cum embedded into the threads to such a degree that it has just become a throw of cum. I lie beneath it, just a thin layer of cotton separating me from the *120 Days of Sodom*, Marquis de Sade (Sade & Havoc, 2008), a castle. My ribcage, my hipbones a castle that necessitate this emotional masochism. Asleep, awake, asleep, awake, asleep, the road goes on endlessly, the road returns to where I left off, asleep, awake, asleep, awake.

My mind returns to the field, meditating. Feeling my suffering surrender itself into itself until it becomes something else. Forgetting the need to be someone, to become someone else. Short lived. I wake up and drink my espresso, feeling the cool breeze enliven the still adolescent hairs on my cheek counterposed against my greying and receding hair.

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84 Accepting my suffering is a theme of the decentring of self journey throughout the thesis, in *Trying to Decentre the Whiteness of my Being* I introduce a quote from James Baldwin, “to use your suffering and theirs, to get from one place to another” (Baldwin, 2015).
My body. Screaming to escape from this wider body. This body that is restraining me. The flow of the waterfall, in its beautiful excess is stunted, turned against itself. Stunted the day I realised the cruelty of others. Hanging from my underwear on the school railings. My femininity, objectified, brutalised by those brutes. The flutes of peace become an urgency to escape, to become something other than myself. The tenderness of the surface of me skin was polluted by the gob of yellow/clear smelly spit slowly creeping down my cheek bones.

I weep.
I unravel.
I surrender through these words,
I do not write; these words write me and undo me.
A bitter pill to swallow.

The tears that rolled down my cheek, the soggy sandwich I had lovingly created in cookery class lying on the gritty tarmac. The metallic taste of blood.

The scream, a scream.

(Munch, 1893)

I scream. The colours melt into a monochrome pasture…and the world is grey. There is dung, there is shit, I swim in my own shit, an infinite swamp of shit.

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85 There is a movement of turning aggression inwards throughout this chapter, relevant to this is a quote introduced in Attempting to Destroy, “the child seeks to circumvent the dangers of expressing both libidinal and aggressive affect towards his object by using a maximum of his aggression to subdue a maximum of his libidinal need” (Fairbairn, 2013, p. 114). Later in the thesis an opposite movement returns to the societal The Schizoid Returns, this makes possible the following chapter Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms and at this point the violence against myself can be relinquished, somewhat.

86 The intensity of this writing, despite being disturbing begins to point to something beyond, a freedom from the self-sufficient protective cage of self-hatred, this is fully realised later in the thesis, also engaging in the poetic imagination in the chapter What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond.
Sometimes the structure of outer events, if not the will of the other, seems like an inexorable force; reality is not created and discovered, it is suffered. This view of reality results because the patient is hindered from using mutual interaction with the object to achieve better regulation. The ‘outside world’ appears to be obstacle, not vehicle. Not surprisingly, this experience of the world goes hand in hand with difficulties in internal regulation, so that one’s own internal affective states also appear to be frightening (Benjamin, 2002, p. 47).87

I want to be with others, I want to be alone, I want to be in between others and myself. I dissolve myself into this dissolution. A birth, a second birth, final birth, death.

I paint a pretty picture, a picture by the sea:

We walk down the little path by the sea,
The soft evening waves ripple and crack,
Her hand on my hand, soft and delightful.
I look into her eyes, they reflect the moonlight
Her skin shimmering with life.
The fruit from the fig tree,
These golden sands are the passing of time.
Time, when I'm with you,
my love.
Dissolves.

I gargle my own shit like mouthwash. Tastes like Listerine mouthwash. Minty. Damn I’ve ran out, I must buy some more. I reach for the next cigarette, the putrid stench of shit filling my lungs. I retch. A black substance exits my body through my mouth, guttural, unearthly, alien, it grows legs and creeps away, beetle like in its existence. Searching for a dark corner, to crawl, to hide, the shame of its existence.

I sigh a sigh of yearning.

Time reaches a standstill when I stop weeping. I am 12 years old, I find the warm little corner of my parents house, by the radiator and hide. I escape reality.

Love is to die
Love is to not die
Love is to dance
Love is to dance
Love is to die
Love is to not die
Love is to dance
Love is to dance
Love is to dance and dance
(Warpaint, 2013)

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87 This quote returns in the chapter The Unreal and the Moment of Speech, when exploring the extreme ambivalence of people with a diagnosis of an eating disorder and EUPD. In exploring the same quote related to myself I am working through my own suffering in order to use it to empathise with others. This was not intentional at the time of writing but is an important afterward. Exploring the darker shades of my existence has a purpose beyond my-self.
The first time a smoked a cigarette was not actually a cigarette; it was burning dry grass in a bamboo stick. It was disgusting, a way of playing adult, being a man. I did it not because I wanted to but because I want to be like the others, the only way to ‘fit in’, the small town in Northern England. Stuck in a regime of sameness. Then there was the weed that was not weed, I was no expert but weed is not some kind of orange powder, probably turmeric or worse. I didn’t want it, but I did want to burn through the feeling of shame, difference, exclusion. Having a home but never feeling at home. Hating myself, hating my existence.

...also partly because it struck me, on my walk yesterday, that these moments of being of mine were scaffolding in the background: were the invisible and silent parts of my life as a child (Woolf & Schulkind, 1976, p. 73).

It is the presence of my past that I want to destroy, a totality of pain, no soothing, no respite.88

And then, there was the PhD, another brick in the wall, another medal to put on my chest, to prove those brats I am better than them. Look at me I am a psychotherapist. Pycho-terror-pest. I am a pest. I am the beetle that has scurried into the cupboard in the hotel room. I watch on as my previous body, my previous self makes love, his soul synthesised with Her. Complete. I am a beetle that watches on the side-lines, at a distance.

Eight legs are better than one, these tentacles increase my capacity to feel, to touch. A hyperawareness, an ability to step outside of myself that haunts me. There is a ghost inside me, not one, there are many. The plurality of ghosts, collected like the playground Pokémon cards, occupy me, possess me. I am no body-without-organs (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), I am no cyborg (Haraway, 2006), I am a hypervigilant man with a few second rate qualifications voyeuristically looking upon others and feeling their pain alongside them.

The wave that drives my need to be something that is not putrid flesh89 is not graceful like the waves in this bay. The wave in the bay is enigmatic, where does it come from?90 Wherever it comes from it drives me like a Freudian id91, drives me to further dissociate my pain from my body, to become more beetle like in my

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88 In the chapter On writing I write “Learning to love the parts my wounding, accepting the traumas, the fragmentations as an agent provocateur, an alien or a ghost that haunts me and can teach me. Paradoxically this reclaiming is a decentring of self, another sense that knows, like a bubbling spring, deep within.” In this chapter, this movement is not achieved, in the place of the working through is a need to escape or destroy. The symptom turning against the self. Although it is not achieved it is an important steppingstone, a cathartic movement that holds a secret, sacred sense of hope.

89 The traumatic adoption of Christian ideas about flesh being putrid or sinful is explored further in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container.

90 This is another example of a traumatic encounter with the beyond, the feminine sublime. A more grounded encounter after the working through can be found in the chapter What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond. The journey from traumatic encounter to an encounter with the feminine sublime is summarised in Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace.

91 The rejection of the id is also explored in Attempting to Destroy. The id is related to the generative force of heterogeneity, explored in Learning to Love this Heart Ache, a force that is outside of the self, the feminine sublime. At this stage, before the surrender, this force is feared, destroyed and in this rejection at risk of reigning terror.

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existence. The hard shell protects me, nurtures me. The Otherness of the shell protects the flesh, the beetle flesh.

The tree, it is a tree, it rises from the earth, stands their strong and stable. It doesn't need a reason to exist, it exists unselfconsciously. My existence is futile, unworthy, the unworthiness a feeling that infects my heart, wraps me in a film of creepy crawly wurly furry hatred. Yet I love life, I feel the pleasure of existence. I am here, there is life, there is love. I continue my search.
Part I - Summary

Part I – Holding On presents the themes of the thesis as raw fragments. This begins with the pain felt after a client’s death, expressed in A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning. Turning towards and entering into this pain brings themes of mourning. As a result of the pain the self disjuncts and the fragments become an entry point into sublime. The disjunctive psychic collapse will later become the decentring and connection to the feminine sublime explored in Learning to Love this Heart Ache where the client death is revisited in What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond. The theme of being haunted by my past traumas is the beginning of the journey of decentring the self, the haunting challenges the origin of conscious life being situated in the self. In A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning it has not reached this point, it is an acknowledgement of a pain too vast to hold within my individual self. Turning towards this pain and allowing my-self to disjunct. This pain carried through into all other sections of Part I – Holding On and intensified feelings of self-hatred towards myself, not in content but in affect.

Attempting to Destroy is an expression of self-hatred and shame of my masculinity, a going to war with elements of my-self. Waging war and trying to destroy hegemonic masculinity in revenge of the pain caused over the years. In the attempt to destroy there is a sense of holding on with moments of seeing beyond, such as the question of Can I become Madame Bovary? This becomes important for the rest of the thesis. The idea of becoming Madame Bovary, including lost feminine parts and to listen to myself deeply. The violence and the aggression felt towards my-self and towards hegemonic masculinity a strange steppingstone to taking ownership of pain and opening the possibility and acceptance explored in Part III – Letting Go. In Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms I reflect on recent experiences of feeling belonging with other men and in feeling a sense of belonging no longer wanting to destroy masculinity.

Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence is a testimony of my past trauma. An attempt to work out why I have held so much self-hatred towards myself for so long. I start by telling myself not to blame my mother. I have blamed her in the past but it doesn’t feel fair or appropriate. I feel damaged by the system of silencing embedded in the family unit, not my family members as individuals. I love my mother and she did what she could for me, it feels fairer to take the focus off her and turn the focus towards the cruelty of the hegemonic system and the silencing embedded within this system. I write “the family units are microunits of a macrosystem. Marriage, success, exchange, productivity, control, balance. I cannot blame my mother.” Exploring these societal and transgenerational forces helps me make peace with myself and my family and channel the violence towards constructive change, in Frustrated Surrender I first name this constructive change, as a “war on totality” (Lyotard, 2010, p. 9). In Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence I share an account of the first time I told a friend about my trauma and how this aligned my path to a career in psychotherapy. I discover a double energy to silence: a traumatic silence lonely and leading to self-hatred and silence making possible the generative unknown. This chapter presents both silences but leans towards the former.
Atlas Fallen pushes against the sterility of research based upon Cartesian thought, which I consider to often be disembodied and a negation of much of psychic life. I critique representation and separation, while acknowledging the almost automatic temptation to fall into representational models as I write this thesis. The alternative path I propose is a messy path, a tactile path that includes what is excluded from sterilised research. I write towards the void, the empty page and the repetition involved in rewriting and decentring myself, bringing the past into the present and surrendering the fixations. I write towards fear, yearning, vulnerability and surrender.

Frustrated Surrender is an entering into the void or labyrinth. It is messy, offensive, raw, and visceral. This is an attempt to enter the epicentre of my traumas, of the shame, violence, and pain. The fragmentation of earlier chapters returns. The darker side of my own masculinity rises to the surface in an attempt to allow it to reach its full intensity and dislodge itself from its fixation. There is growing sense of annihilation of both self and world, a kind of Nietzschean active nihilism (Nietzsche et al., 1990). Key to this is that the annihilation isn’t aiming at complete destruction it is directed towards the fixations and symptoms that have secured the self-hatred and resentment, to move from one place to another. The freedom in writing into the disturbance brings something new and paves the way for the working through of Part III – Letting Go. Of surrendering, letting go and making peace.

Attempting to Destroy and Frustrated Surrender I consider to be an “acting out” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973). Laplanche describes Lacan’s acting out as a ciphered message which the subject addresses to an Other when the Other has refused or failed to listen. The intensity of disgust and hatred in Frustrated Surrender and the fragmentation and mania of Attempting to Destroy are communicating more than the words. The trauma that was silenced, that was never heard bursts haphazardly onto the page, cutting through shameful collapses inwards. This has an unconscious function in the act itself that indirectly aims to reclaim the ‘I’ of first person discourse. Bringing the “act” into self-reflection has supported me to reclaim the ‘I’ and harness the energy of the “act” directing it towards a more coherent working though. Part II – Working Through and Part III – Letting Go would not have been possible if the trauma had not actively entered the writing. Becoming a beetle in Frustrated Surrender supports this transformation. The trauma takes on a form and an externality that can be worked through. The latter sections appear more measured and coherent but are infused with the intensity of Part I – Holding On.

The patient does not remember anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but acts it out. He reproduces it not as a memory, but as an action; he repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it (Freud, 1914, p. 150).

Extracting the fixations bound in shame, guilt and silence required this forceful, manic and often disturbing movement of Part I – Holding On. To take responsibility and shift from the victim us vs the world strategy. This paved the way for the return to the world explored in The Schizoid Returns, looking back at Part I – Holding On a few years later, I still feel the pain and intensity of the expression but no longer fully
identify with the self who wrote the texts. I look back towards him fondly, with empathy, knowing he suffered and knowing the ‘I’ am no longer ‘he’.
Part II – Working Through

Part II - Introduction

Part II – Working Through explores the themes introduced in Part I – Holding On in relation to clinical practice. Throughout, themes of gender and patriarchal constructions that have carried over into individual models of mind and mainstream mental health practices are problematised. The chapters in Part II – Working Through are less raw and performative than Part I – Holding On. The focus on my material shifts to how my material relates to me as a therapist and the clients I work with. I explore how to create a container for my clients that can invite expression and working through. There is a search for flexibilities within the mental health system that seeks plurality of approach to meet the individual expression of the clients. I explore my inner struggle as a man while working with female victims of trauma and what is possible within a psychotherapeutic relationship to provide a reparative experience of masculinity. I take the path of psychoanalytic thought that considers there is no self in isolation, famously Winnicott (1986, p. 586) said there is no baby without a mother. This brings about a purpose beyond myself to explore my own material, not as a saviour of others but as a servant of others. I work though my own material to be in a place where I can provide a better container to support others to work through their material. The themes developed in these chapters link directly to the themes developed in Part I – Holding On, for example the theme of decentring myself to hear the voice of the other more profoundly with less noise is explored in all three chapters. This theme reaches its most full expression in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container with the consideration of the therapeutic container and the conditions that support an interhuman connection beyond both therapist and client. I consider Bion’s (2013, p. 46) conditions to form a container: the abandonment of understanding, preoccupations, memory. Reaching this point is an important part of the journey of deconstructing hegemonic ontologies and decentring my-self.

The first chapter, Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari, is an article published in the European Journal of Psychotherapy & Counselling. It is a strange experience reading my writing two years later, I feel a sense of shame in reading certain parts that I would no longer write, I feel a sense of proudness in that the article laid the ground for a lot of themes that have expanded and enriched myself both personally and professionally. The past writing is a snapshot in time, part of an infinite conversation with my shifting perspectives.

The first half of the article feels very different to the second. While reading the first half I perceive a sense of anger, an anger at not being seen, remnants of “a ciphered message which the subject addresses to an Other when the Other has refused or failed to listen” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973) explored in detail in On Writing. In the first half the semiotic and the hegemonic are split, I would no longer form this binarism. I would shift the focus to the immanent horizontal plane where the hegemonic is part of my-self rather than othered. Accompanying the split of semiotic and hegemonic is the use of ‘State’ with a capital S. The anger is directed to the
State as Other\textsuperscript{92}, the othering of the split of State maintains an anger I have long held for myself and prevents working through of more vulnerable feelings and precludes the inclusion of the feminine. In the second half the binarism falls away, it is worked through in the writing. This has some likeness to Deleuze and Guattari’s (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, 2004) text \textit{Anti-Oedipus}, even though they were attempting overcome binaries, they remain throughout this work. It wasn’t until they wrote \textit{A Thousand Plateaus} binaries could be more fully deconstructed and allow a fuller expression of plurality and non-linearity.

The article problematizes Freud’s (1916) resolution of the Oedipus complex exploring how, as Laplanche (1999) highlights, there is both an energetic of liberation and an energetic of oppression depending on which path is taken through Freud’s work. Both these forces have been carried forward into contemporary psychotherapeutic practices\textsuperscript{93}. The chapter calls for a line of flight from the Oedipal system and a movement to supporting clients to subvert the societal conditions that I consider to be the original site of trauma, not the body or individual mind. This ends by calling for the feminine forces of Athena and Artemis to be included in practices to break the binarism of Apollo and Dionysus, both male forces. A focus on “something”, “another sense” rather than conscious mastery as the end point treatment with Freud’s Oedipal resolution. To achieve this theoretically, I explore Ettinger’s (2004, p. 74) use of a “another sense” a feminine sense which brings a decentring, an alternative to practices that seek to master. As well as being a theoretical turning point, the movement from the Apollo-Dionysus dyad towards a plurality that includes Athena and Artemis was a turning point in how I relate to my personal history. This movement represents a bridging of the movement that resists or attempts to destroy in Part I – Holding On towards a movement towards acceptance and the surrendering of arms, a recovery of trust in the world around me. This journey reaches fruition in Part III – Letting Go, the same material is returned to with a different result, a gateway into the feminine sublime.

In the second chapter \textit{The Unreal and the Moment of Speech} I explore my work with people diagnosed with EUPD when I was working in a private inpatient hospital. I explore Butler’s (2004, p. 218) term the “unreal”, meaning that when someone’s voice becomes so unheard and devalued it reaches a point where they longer value or feel a connection to their own voice. This opens the door to self-harm, suicide, dissociation, and unbearable inner states of affect. Sometimes the destructive acts are described as attempts to feel real, a desperate attempt to scream, have their voice heard in a system that de-values their voice. I explore the parallels between the environment the patients grew up in and the oppressions of the psychiatric system. The systems I found to be silently dominating, projecting the ideal of a “good citizen”, and in doing so denying the possibility of the individual to define their own reality, a self-definition that will most likely diverge from the norm of the “good

\textsuperscript{92} I use Other with a capital ‘O’ to denote the category of the Other which makes self-awareness possible, I use other with a uncapsilised ‘o’ to denote an actual person. Like in this quote, at times there is a blurring of the category and actual other. It was my mother who failed to listen, but it was also the school who represent the wider society who failed to listen.

\textsuperscript{93} The more conservative, regulatory path is expressed in the extreme in ‘snake oil’ therapies such as EMDR, explored in \textit{Learning to Love this Heart Ache}. 

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citizen”. I explore the effects of removing therapy from its social context. The silencing effect when working through the reality of the individual’s trauma is excluded and replaced with abstract regulation methods. I compare the hospital to Sartre’s (1958) play No Exit. In theory all the patients must do is get better and be happy to escape, but the system perpetuates illness in a way that recovery or exit is almost impossible. I consider how most of the staff really did care and hold the best intentions of the patients at heart however they are equally stuck in the system. I then explore my own moment of speech in the form of an email to speak the truths of how I felt before I left. I reflect on the discomfort on the chapter having no resolution, the email remaining unheard. Change or subversion is hard to reach in a system where silent and violent norms dominate.

This chapter again offers a bridging between Part I – Holding On and Part III – Letting Go. Part I – Holding On considers themes in my personal life of not being seen and heard, including the trauma, leaving me feeling a sense of being silenced, anger directed inwards. In this chapter these themes are taken and explored in relation to clinical practice. In retrospect, there is a lack of plurality. The State with a capital ‘S’ of Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari now becomes company with a capital C. I feel this weakens the attempts the subvert the injustices of the system which could be a reason there was a lack of resolution or response after the email is sent. Part I – Holding On and Part III – Letting Go are characterised above as akin to Deleuze and Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus and A Thousand Plateaus respectively. This movement shows an important part of my journey, the first is a political Marxist struggle, to reject oppressive forces to make space for my own practice and avoid becoming a commodity, the second is a movement to plurality and re-inclusion of the feminine in my sense of self. Learning to Love this Heart Ache and the Conclusion aim to bring these movements together most maturely.

In the third and final chapter of this section, Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container I explore gender-based challenges faced by many women who struggle with an eating disorder. I explore how these challenges that may initially appear as individual struggles are also manifestations of challenges and inequalities in today’s society. I explore some dynamics related to gender difference I have come across in working with mainly female clients with a diagnosis of an eating disorder. I explore how a therapeutic container can contain ambivalences and fears about the Other. I consider Bion’s (2013, p. 46) conditions that make this possible: the abandonment of understanding, preoccupations, memory. When these conditions are met and the pain behind he ambivalences can be witnessed, there is possibility of a reclamation of the ‘I’ and a loosening of the need of the eating disorder with a newfound trust in the Other allowing the regulatory function of the eating disorder to transfer to the interhuman connection. I explore the working through of my own challenge to value myself and how working through this behind the scenes supported the client’s journey to recognise a disavowed dependency on the Other. O’Connor (2002, p. 223) writes “one can be a psychotherapist only through the interhuman emergence of one's own suffering.” The therapeutic container that is Other to both therapist and client allows for an emergence of the ‘I’ outside the eating disordered self that aims to master through self-sufficiency and kill
The therapeutic container makes possible vulnerability and witnessing of suffering and a slow deconstruction of the need to master or control affect.

The chapter links most closely to the overall journey of the thesis in the theory section *The Foreclosure of the Feminine in Western Culture* I write:

> This foreclosure forms a narcissistic ground to the male’s subject position that has become invisible or neutral in Western society. The supposed autonomy of the hegemonic male relies on him disposing of his connection to certain affective experiences signified as feminine in his effort to achieve transcendental freedom. The disembodiment relies on an interdependence of women posited as the corporeal Other, in “essential and enslaving identities” (Butler, 1986, pp. 43-44). In maintaining connection to the woman as Other, he remains in connection with his alienated affective experience.

In the transferential dynamic there is often anger felt towards males, a justified anger related to a historical and still current oppression and violence. This can be amplified with specific gender-based traumas that are very common in the service I work.

In order to provide a container to construct a neutral and safe therapeutic container it is necessary for me to become aware of the construction of my identity as male including the hegemonic parts. As I quote in *The Failure of the Phallus* “the phallus fails, or this feminine-other-thinking fails but only in the phallic order” (Ettinger, 2004, p. 85). The failure of the phallic order comes alongside the client in recognition of historical oppression, moving towards an energetic reparatory space for expression. It is my role to both hold the phallic function and the anger directed towards it while also subverting it and including the plurality of the feminine, this begins with my own journey and suffering as an active part of the interhuman encounter. This is explored in *Irigaray’s Mimetic Reproduction*, “woman is no longer reduced to an echo or mirror-image of man but speaks to/with him in a dialogue that recognises her difference, which allows her to coexist” (Irigaray & Speidel, 1983, p. 94). The journey towards inclusion of the feminine without destroying masculinity or adopting a hegemonic masculinity is explored most fully in *Part III – Letting Go*. *Part I – Holding On* is an important clearing of the path to make this part of the journey possible. As I write in the *Conclusion* the main purpose of the thesis is to serve my clients more fully, provide a better container is based in my psychotherapy practice and this brings a wider purpose to the exploration of my own material, this is most fully explored in the final chapter of *Part III – Letting Go, What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond*. 
Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari

The following chapter is a published journal manuscript (Seed, 2021). I have added footnotes to maintain the flow of the text while linking to other chapters in the thesis.

This article explores Deleuze and Guattari’s radical political philosophy’s applicability to contemporary psychotherapy in England. Drawing on my experience as a male psychotherapist working with survivors and victims of trauma, I initially critique psychotherapeutic approaches that disavow the social production of emotional distress. To do so, I draw on Deleuze and Guattari’s line of flight from the patriarchal Oedipal regulatory system that Freud identified\(^\text{94}\). I then consider how Deleuze and Guattari are in danger of positing another absolute, a binary between productive desire and patriarchal power\(^\text{95}\). Next, by drawing on Ettinger’s work concerning natality, I attempt to sketch a theory that can support male psychotherapists to hold a space without appropriating femininity\(^\text{96}\). Ettinger considers the past-site accessible to male and female subjects and a future-site accessible to female subjects exclusively through differing relations concerning the natal. I suggest that this path can open up many possibilities when entering into social signifying networks, and is compatible with queer theory while maintaining feminine difference. Finally, I consider how the male psychotherapist can overcome his own phallic limits, and I explore my journey through this\(^\text{97}\). This new perspective considers the therapeutic space as a socially produced site of support that accesses the subversive potential of mental health difficulties, which are in this perspective considered as unfinished micropolitical revolutions.

**Introduction**

When Freud introduced his theory of the unconscious, he paved the way for a radical philosophy that challenges the linear movement of Western history, a human-centred movement towards mastery and control over the body and environment. In the same movement, Freud opened up the possibility of a psychosocial analysis of subjugation by systems of power\(^\text{98}\) (Schouls, 2018). Althusser (1972, p. 176) asserts that we are always-already subjects, meaning that our sense of self always relates to the society.

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\(^{94}\) The theme of overcoming the binary and opening plurality is explored throughout the thesis, it is first introduced in the chapter Decentring Masculinity. In *Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence* there is a process driven exploration of the social conditions that led to the disavowal of femininity within my-self. The journey to the decentring of binary productions of sameness is summarised in *Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace*.

\(^{95}\) In *Part II - Introduction* I explore how the first half of this article separates State and semiotic in a way that distances me or disavows the social structure. There is a feeling of underlying anger associated with this disavowal. In *Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms*, I seek to make peace with this anger, the social structures and my-self, changing the relationship to my suffering.

\(^{96}\) I explore this using different language in *The Failure of the Phallus*. Throughout the thesis Ettinger alongside Irigaray have provided a crucial role in thinking beyond hegemonic masculinity.

\(^{97}\) Subverting the phallic order is introduced in *Irigaray’s Mimetic Reproduction*. In *Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms*, I explore the relationship between the need to subvert and the need to surrender or make peace.

\(^{98}\) At the time of writing, I hadn’t discovered Laplanche’s work on the unfinished Copernican revolution which adds important depth to the thoughts introduced in this article. Laplanche’s work underlies the decentring movement throughout the thesis, it is introduced in *Decentring the self*. 
we are born in; a society that seeks mastery through structures of oppression and the marginalisation of women, BAME and anyone with a divergent identity. Deleuze and Guattari (2004), in Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, challenge Freud’s resolution of the Oedipus complex as a psychological cure, as this sets up a society organised through mastery over others. Deleuze and Guattari seek “something else” outside of hegemonic signification by freeing semiotic flows that hegemony excludes. In an adapted form that does not appropriate femininity, schizoanalysis has radical individual and political implications. It holds the potential to hold a space of support that can meet traumatic affectual forces, where the survivor’s voice is valued and heard. This article explores the misogyny of the hegemonic system through a critique of the Freudian Oedipal.

In England, psychotherapy is in danger of losing its political force as a movement that addresses trauma and inequality, both individually and politically. The emphasis on scripted methods and measurable outcomes shifts the focus towards State recognition and goals infused with the same economic and political ideology. There is a danger of recreating the conditions of disempowerment and loss of choice in the therapy room. Therapists could render an increasing amount of semiotic flow “illegal and off limits” through the regulation and ordering of affect (Davies, 2009, p. 200). This displaced manifestation of Freud’s Oedipal resolution situates neurosis/anxiety in the mind and brain of the individual, disavowing the subversive struggles against the abuses that lead to neurosis.

The psychotherapeutic movement faces an existential crisis; the field risks becoming absorbed by State ideologies whose demands could transmute psychotherapy into a system of emotional mastery and recognition regulated by the State. Davies (2009, p. 192) comments that modern psychotherapies could lead to “regulation proposed by the state”. Under the guise of the client’s needs, the community polices behaviours in such a way as to meet the needs of the State by promoting behavioural moderation and control, over creating a space of support for survivors to have a voice. A state-regulated psychotherapy risks maintaining the commonly held feeling of guilt towards a society that creates the conditions for individual suffering, often via the family as mediators of this regulation. Internal models of mind are at risk of recreating the conditions of oppression by situating the emotional labour in the individual’s mind. As such, radical transformation is lost. This article explores how Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas could support the psychotherapeutic movement’s radical and political potential via an attentiveness to non-hegemonic semiotic flows.

I write this paper from a position of entanglement. Entangled in the semiotic inhibitions caused by my traumatic history, entangled with the society I produce and

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99 This theme is explored in Learning to Love this Heart Ache. I consider EDMR the latest snake oil, in promising a magic fix disavowing social change and the social construction of mental health disorders. In the same movement disavowing the role of the therapeutic relationship in creating a container for healing to take place.

100 The Unreal and the Moment of Speech explores the challenge for patients in certain systems to find a voice alongside my struggle to find a voice.

101 An alternative, where guilt can be held and worked through in a therapeutic container can be found in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container.
which produces me. The immediate concern and the driving force of these words is a need to explore the violence of masculinity, its disavowal, its celebration and ways through and out of these constructions. I draw from my experience of being a male psychotherapist delivering psychotherapy to female, non-binary and trans adults who have suffered abuse. In my training and practice so far, I have not come across a queer practice of psychotherapy, despite the rise of queer theory and practice in other fields. In addition to addressing male violence, this paper attempts to introduce a queer practice of psychotherapy, as that is how I increasingly identify myself personally both in and outside of my practice as psychotherapist.

In writing this paper, I have reached either a dead end, an almost Cartesian, gendered dichotomy, or a productive yet non-synthesisable difference from a post-structural perspective. How can queer theory, where gender or sex is often understood as uncategorised multiplicity, meet feminine difference, which from Ettinger’s (2004) point of view, has both a physical and social force. This is a dilemma within my own being. As well as feeling divergently male, I increasingly feel, and have always felt, feminine. Can it be said this is actual femininity, or is this the signification of femininity? And does asking this question transgress the phallic limit moving into a queer production of space, or does this naturalise or appropriate femininity. I explored these questions in this paper, attempting to find a way through using Ettinger’s past-site that is accessible to a male and female subjects and future-site is accessible to female subjects only. When entering into social signifying networks, the combination of these two sites opens up many possibilities and intersectional combinations of gender and sexual expression – the theatre of difference.

**Deleuze and Guattari’s influence on psychotherapy**

Deleuze and Guattari critique Freud’s focus on the Oedipus complex and its resolution as a suitable societal structure of regulation and organisation of desire. Freud’s movement towards an Oedipal resolution from spontaneous expression, in his earlier dreamwork, transforms psychoanalysis from an exploration of the unconscious to a project of regulation sympathetic with patriarchal state ideologies. Deleuze and Guattari offer psychoanalysis a way out of oppressive State systems, with lines of flight forming paths that escape the regulating function of the hegemonic system by turning towards the generative function of multiplicity and desire (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004).

For a hegemonic structure to maintain its moderating ground, it calls on its subjects to police behaviour in such a way as to exclude divergent semiotic flows in themselves and others, gaining recognition and accomplishment through this exclusion. The hegemonic exiles identities for many reasons, including immigrant status, race, gender, sexuality, and religious or political views. Hegemonic exclusion varies depending on the current State requirements; in England, a hostile environment forms unity based on exclusion. This manifests in the normalisation of

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102 I take the concept of the line of flight further in Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms, in this chapter I consider the line of flight as a gateway to the beyond. In re-reading this article I am surprised to see I had already thought this a few years earlier.
far-right values in mainstream politics, alongside associated technologies of surveillance. In the worst-case scenario, these lead to mental health treatment becoming a technology of control, a potent weapon of oppression, exclusion and surveillance. This system reactively treats victims and survivors for their maladaptive cognitions rather than seeking to proactively support victims and survivors to subvert the system of oppression.

While Deleuze and Guattari are not the first scholars to attempt to subvert psychiatric signifying networks, they are amongst the most influential in recent times. Deleuze and Guattari shift the focus towards semiotic flows, multiplicity in its non-Oedipal, non-signifying form. Rather than seeing non-Oedipal flow as pathological and something to be excluded through mastery of self, Deleuze and Guattari approach schizophrenic processes by considering schizo-flows. These exist partially or fully outside of the Oedipal signifying network in unregulated affect. Desire is expressed in schizo-flows before it Oedipalises or focusses into zones of erotisation that then become almost exclusively genital in the Oedipal construction. Deleuze and Guattari's subversive method suggests that by turning towards and engaging with these flows, they can be directed towards transformation rather than regulated or constrained. Deleuze and Guattari’s theory offers a framework for the psychotherapeutic movement to fight for a more liberated and hospitable society, and this has profound effects for psychotherapeutic theory and practice:

There is consequently little resistance towards carrying them out, since the mental dams against sexual excesses—shame, disgust and morality—have either not yet been constructed at all or are only in course of construction, according to the age of the child. In this respect children behave in the same kind of way as an average uncultivated woman in whom the same polymorphously perverse disposition persists (Freud, 2017, p. 191).

Freud perceives the highly generative nature of the non-Oedipal flow. Nevertheless, Freud, operating from his male position in a still misogynist society, then goes on to regulate these flows by attaching a judgement to them, exiling women, children and anyone who diverges from the hegemonic normalising function. His solution is the resolution of the Oedipus complex. The Ego gains in strength at the cost of living, especially for victims and survivors of sexual abuse, a life of shame and guilt. Such shame is convenient for the State apparatus as it leaves the individual, à la Plotinus103, hating their sinful flesh and striving for something more, something outside of themselves. Thus, by enslaving semiotic flow within the signifying network ruled by the image, desire is trapped within the Oedipal organisation:

The segmentarity becomes rigid, to the extent that all centres resonate in, and all black holes fall on, a single point of accumulation that is like a point of intersection somewhere behind the eyes. The face of the father, teacher, colonel, boss, enter into redundancy, refer back to a centre of significance.

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103 This theme, the sinful body, is taken further in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container.
that moves across the various circles and passes back over all of the segments (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 247).

This point, the hegemonic focal point, provides regulation and recognition; it is a point of invisibility and neutrality, the reason the white man rarely has to consider his gender or the colour of his skin\textsuperscript{104}, the reason patriarchal violence is still largely ignored or even celebrated — the fabric of society as we know it — the reason why misogyny is still not considered a hate crime. Recognition always comes alongside exile, and the Oedipal construction forms the psychosocial conditions of exclusion. Deleuze and Guattari comment that in modern-day society, with increased success and sublimation of desire, structures of violence become increasingly hidden to the extent that there is less and less need for overt displays of physical dominance. The inner and outer policing comes from surveillance cameras, mental health models and practices, psychiatric interventions and positive reinforcement for success in capitalist systems. The methods of authority are increasingly coercive, compromising the inner security of the individual from an early age.

**Psychotherapies in England today**

Any psychotherapy that claims to fix and aims towards an outcome value — whether happiness, function, behaviour change or anything else — is regulated by logocentrism; Whitford (1990, p. 98) explores how post-structuralism seeks to frustrate such master discourses. Deleuze and Guattari subvert master discourses by turning a corner in philosophy, away from representational thought, towards immanence, action, and free-flowing desire that exceeds rather than limits.

The strengthening and training of cognitive skills, or behavioural modification, can offer respite and reduce risk in some cases. This particularly applies to clients who suffer from severe dysregulation, most often due to trauma that distorts the development of healthy inner boundaries. As a result, their self-esteem is damaged to the extent that they cannot cope with the frustrations of everyday life. However, when regulation, outcome, or behavioural change become an end in and of itself, the treatment is in danger of becoming a mirror reflection of the regulating function of the Oedipal order. Thus the individual’s spontaneous expression is diminished. At this point, psychotherapy turns away from the client and functions as a technology of control. Deleuze and Guattari write: “the number has always served to gain mastery over matter, to control its variations and movements, in other words, to submit them to the spatiotemporal framework of the State” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 389). In this way, an obsession with therapeutic outcomes through tracking and monitoring colludes with and ultimately becomes indistinguishable from the State apparatus’s technology.

As a psychotherapist, I have a choice; to master or coerce my client into functioning in a system that has invalidated and traumatised them, or to offer lines of flight that promote affectual connectivity outside this system. As Deleuze and Guattari attempted, to allow for minor gestures that subvert systems of oppression and

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\textsuperscript{104} A process driven exploration of race can be found in *Trying to Decentre the Whiteness of my Being*. 

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abuse. The root cause of suffering is not in the individual’s mind. Any attempt to
essentialise blame reaffirms the Oedipal limits; regulation may be gained, but the
potential of expression diminishes while exiled semiotic flows are lost. The Oedipal
system is a hegemonic abstract machine, de-territorialised and unified, the driving
force behind the State apparatus. Underlying this system is a machine of annihilation
that in normalised hegemonic systems operates positively, as a continuous drive
towards progression, self-improvement and happiness. In this representational
system, which drives mainstream social perspectives, the feminine is appropriated
and assimilated into the hero image, a visual ideal image, which has been
transmuted into the professional family man of either gender. Repressed shame and
guilt or violence and possession often accompany such projects, thinly disguised as
somatisations. For a person who has suffered trauma or exile, this machine often
operates more directly nihilistically, expressing itself in dysregulation, self-harm, or
suicide. A subversive method drawing on Deleuze and Guattari’s line of flight
exceeds the absolute spatiotemporal individual model of mind and overflows into
another space. This space invites speeds and currents that overflow the Oedipal
system, freeing the individual, to some extent, from its grip. The aim is to access a
generative force that is substantial in its existence outside of signification. When this
force is acknowledged, any number of divergent and less harmful abstract machines
can de-centre the State apparatus and its associated harms. As Massumi (2017, p.
viii) writes in the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari’s work
aimed to bring forth the most radical and basic alienations of madness or neurosis
and channel them into revolutionary practice. Mental health difficulties are unfinished
micropolitical revolutions.

In a movement towards what Deleuze and Guattari called *schizoanalysis*, the
individual and society are no longer separate, and cognition is not objective. Therapy
ceases to posit itself as a master curing the sick and instead is a space of support
that disentangles the energetics of affective bindings that cause harm and moves
towards unbinding or freeing flows that have radical potential.

Not every client wants to address trauma, but for those who do, to avoid silencing
their voice, a psychotherapy with enough flexibility to allow for a multiplicity of
expression can support empowerment and healing through subversion. Working, as I
do, at a hospital that treats people who put their lives at risk as a result of trauma
requires reflection\(^\text{105}\). How much is the psychiatric system that puts severe
restrictions and controls on the patients in the name of safety and risk management,
creating an environment that leaves the patients disempowered and unable to
actively change their environment? As a psychotherapist working within this system,
if I do not consider the space to offer any form of sanctuary that addresses the
societal violence which emboldens perpetrators, then I am acting in bad faith. On the
other hand, to exit the system completely because it is too disturbing to accept the
reality of institutional violence would diminish my power of lobbying and fight for
change. An active subversion entails playing within while not playing along with the
system.

\(^{105}\) More reflection on this hospital can be found in *The Unreal and the Moment of Speech*. 
However, there is a dilemma wherein the Oedipal power of patriarchy falls into direct conflict with the expression of productive desire, and subversive potential becomes squashed. Withdrawal from this dilemma requires a movement beyond Deleuze and Guattari’s work. A line of flight that draws on a force outside of this binary and disrupts. Arendt (2019, p. 247) considers that the role of a miracle in the bible is to disrupt circular time: “the miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, ‘natural’ ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted”.106

The natal, as understood by Deleuze and Guattari, is a force that can be acquired, abstracted from the innate and once acquired, “the natal is a new figure assumed by the innate and the acquired in the territorial assemblage” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 386). Such an attempt to take a function or practice away from its locality and immerse it into a universal understanding is in danger of forming another absolute. Ettinger (2004, p. 76) draws on Deleuze and Guattari’s work while also challenging it by introducing “another sense.” This brings another dimension of sense that maintains feminine difference while still raising the natal out of the unsignified and into the cultural where it has an unrealised subversive power. “Female subjects also experience the womb as an in-side and future-site as well, as an actual, potential or virtual space and as a future and possible” (Ettinger, 2004, p. 77). For men and woman, “another sense” is an “archaic out-side and past-site”. So, for a male writer and therapist to work effectively with a female victim or survivor, he must access this past-site and acknowledge his own limitation in that the future-site is outside of himself, that the generative force is not a function of the phallus. In doing so, he opens the possibility to invite femininity into the therapeutic space rather than appropriate femininity, as Deleuze and Guattari ultimately did107. This creates the conditions for a more profound transformation that does not fall into the trap of a division between patriarchal power and productive desire whilst acknowledging actual difference. I cannot speak for female psychotherapists, but I get the feeling that for many of my female colleagues, an empathic connection through “another sense” is accessed more directly.

Drawing on the work of Lefebvre (1992), the physicality of this past-site is produced and produces social space with physical, historical, social, cultural and individual factors considered on a horizontal plane. This article particularly considers male violence towards women as produced and perpetuated by and within social spaces. The State apparatus is inherently violent. When this violence is approached through the antagonisms of difference (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014), trauma and jouissance of the past-site for male and female subjects and future-site of female subjects invite

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106 This is related to a ‘tactic knowing’, explored in An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body, moving towards ontology and epistemology that decentres Cartesian systems of knowledge. This journey culminates in connection to the feminine sublime and becoming Madame Bovary, this is introduced in Attempting to Destroy and reaches maturity in Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace.

107 Retrospectively I think this statement is unfair and over absolute, for example (Bray & Colebrook, 1998) consider Deleuze and Guattari’s work to support a non-reactive feminism. This statement is likely so absolute because I had not made peace with my own masculinity, see Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms.
generative action. This movement holds the possibility to unbind entangled affects the State apparatus captured. It is the texture, not the form of this space, which is of most interest to the psychotherapist.

**From language centred to desire centred**

Deleuze and Guattari raise the status of the unconscious process of spontaneous expression by moving away from the patriarchal system of representation and considering history as a linear hierarchical inheritance. Instead, they turn towards history as a circle of desire. This challenges Darwinian or capitalist humanistic notions of success and stability through privilege and mastery:

"The sole subject of reproduction is the unconscious itself, which holds to the circular form of production. Sexuality is not a means in the service of generation; rather, the generation of bodies is in the service of sexuality as an auto-production of the unconscious...The unconscious has always been an orphan — that is, it has engendered itself in the identity of nature and man, of the world and man. The question of the father, the question of God, is what has become impossible, a matter of indifference (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 128)."

Deleuze and Guattari proclaim that the unconscious engenders itself, shifting the focus from human inheritance to non-human generative production, a desire-centred philosophy of immanence. Such a practice does not have an overruling metapsychology that defines the formation of meaning in a top-down organisation. Crucially for psychotherapy, in Deleuze and Guattari's practice, a regulation through identification with the hegemonic system is no longer sought. Instead, the individual is freed from the system of invalidation perpetuated by the Father; hell-bent on possession, control, and violence. People who come to psychotherapy usually seek some form of validation or regulation.

"Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of fundamental encounter...its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed (Deleuze 2014, 183)."

To put faith in a “something” puts the affirmation and generative force outside of individual identification with a ‘self’. By remaining uncategorised, this something continues to be generative and is thus difficult to write about without destroying it or enslaving it to the signifying networks of language or models of mind. A therapeutic encounter that seeks to align the client with an emergent sense takes the emphasis away from the psychotherapist as guru, magician or hero, away from genital recognition of the Oedipal signifying network and towards affirming the sense of a “something”. This something can support the person to affect and be affected in their own way, to speak in their own voice and embody a generative force. This encounter may look very different for each person and cannot be reduced to any category or number. This de-emphasises the family, society, language or the therapist as the

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108 The consideration of the unconscious as orphan is similar to the unconscious as alien in Laplanche, *Decentering the self*. I now favour Laplanche’s language as it feels closer to my phenomenological reality and what clients express.
recognising agent, and towards an encounter with the generative force, the affirmation is found within the socio-bodily expression itself, felt as a reduction of tension that has nothing to do with the death drive. If the individual has suffered trauma, or exile, from the hegemonic Oedipal network, the movement towards a generative sense can be healing in that it offers a non-violent escape or line of flight away from the Oedipal system. This movement is inherently political; it connects to a sense of the erotic, which differs from eroticism as it is recognised from within the hegemonic.

My practice differs from Deleuze and Guattari’s in the relational encounter with feminine difference. For a male therapist working with a female client, this is an empathic encounter with the past-site felt affectively from within and with the feminine future-site of potentiality that forms a “shareability and a co-poïesis” (Ettinger, 2004, p. 76), outside of the male psychotherapists’ psychic structure. The future-site “out-of-time is a potentiality for repetition which might be actualized in the Real” (Ettinger, 2004, p. 75). This is a line of flight from circular time, an action that is also outside of linear time, it remains a force or a gesture of difference. When this generative force enters into the hegemonic system unregulated, it expresses a revolutionary energy, uncategorisable by the hegemonic. This is queer, in that the interrelation of past-site and future-site when entering into existing hegemonic significations can take on any form. Libidinal forces combine in a multitude of combinations, transmuting existing significations to form new and unusual forms; difference and repetition exist in a divergent reality outside of the focalising image.

Deleuze and Guattari’s non-Oedipal construction of sex and gender identity

Grosz (1993) highlights that Deleuze and Guattari, with their abstract and sometimes idealised deconstruction — becoming-woman, becoming-animal, reaching into the actuality of non-hegemonic flows — are in danger of limiting themselves by another absolute, totalised by a masculine force and losing political power, a phallic seizure. This is one reason why Deleuze and Guattari have largely been excluded by feminist scholarship. Braidotti (2011, p. 252) highlights that “the Deleuzian notion of ‘the body without organs’ is for Irigaray reminiscent of a condition of dispossession of the bodily self, a structurally splintered position that is historically associated with femininity.” It is possible that without the development of an organised group that challenged the binary of sex at that time, such as the work now being done by queer theory, Deleuze and Guattari felt their theory had to remain on the level of abstraction. However, Deleuze and Guattari themselves did prefigure the movement of queer theorist as the “shadow of people to come” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 218).

The two sexes imply a multiplicity of molecular combinations, bringing into play not only the man in the woman and the woman in the man, but the relation of each to the animal, the plant etc… a thousand tiny sexes (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 235).

In attempting to produce a system that lies outside of Oedipal violence and the hegemonic binary of sex division, Deleuze and Guattari move towards a system that affirms non-binary sexuality and sexualities in many forms. They offer lines of flight
from the overcoding of man and woman or human and animal: the molecular self that most people identify is really an afterthought, while most consider it primary. An assemblage of forces is generated in each moment before it is identified as any particular object. Deleuze and Guattari’s body-without-organs is not an organ-less body. Deleuze and Guattari moved towards the productive capacity of the unmedicalised body before it is over-coded by molecular binaries. However, this is still at risk of appropriating the feminine as it considers the body experienced in immanence as auto-produced, disavowing the birth-giving mother and the womb as a generative space. As discussed above, Ettinger’s (2004, p. 76) “another sense” takes this in another direction in considering a feminine space that is generative, returning a feminine space to the natal.

With the manifestation of non-binary, trans and queer practice and theory, if psychotherapy is to maintain relevance in the modern-day, it cannot afford to identify with Oedipal regulation, nor can it afford to appropriate femininity in another absolute. Queer theory overflows the phallic limits of Deleuze and Guattari’s project. Contributing to trans theory in describing the non-medicalised body, which is already a living reality for many trans and non-binary people, Nirta (2014, p. 249) writes of “the uncertain, the unclear, unsorted, unstable body” The “unsanitised” refusal of Oedipal purity “can incite ways of being together, loving, desiring, and identifying that are at odds with the normative regime” (Ettinger, 2004, p. 81). Ettinger indicates that turning towards generative production outside of hegemonic constructions that maintains feminine difference and space, challenging the binary opposition of gender and, going further than Deleuze and Guattari, the appropriation of the female body. When this generative space is accessed, it can offer a space of becoming that includes a multiplicity of forces outside of molar binaries – non-binary and genderqueer expression, a theatre of difference.

Social space is the site of trauma

In Freud’s early work, he revealed how widespread childhood sexual abuse was. He received disbelief from critics and, abandoning his evidence, instead turned to convictions about the Oedipus complex that remained until the end of his life (Roazen, 2001, p. 3). His attention turned from the societal reality of the effects of trauma towards the psychic structure of the individual. The displaced blame puts the weight of emotional labour on the victim or survivor and their neurotic internal dynamics. Rush (1996, p. 263) writes how Freud’s Oedipal construction is “more at ease with the fantasy rather than reality of sexual abuse”. The disavowal of the social proliferates today and is a problem for psychologies that exclude the social and political from their models.

Warner (2001) discusses how the focus on cognition or repetition compulsion, where the individual is considered separately from the social, can situate the responsibility for the abuse within the survivor. As a result, attention moves away from the social production of abusive relationships. Warner argues that survivors in therapy should have the choice on whether to talk about abuse or not, and that psychotherapy is not always the answer. To talk about abuse or emotions associated with abuse is a choice that the victim or survivor makes. When trauma is approached in therapy, this
can disrupt the narrative and commonly held belief that they are responsible for their abuse. A. Freud (2018) writes that this feeling of responsibility results from an identification with the male aggressor. If her father had not intensively mentored Anna Freud, perhaps it would have been easier for her to talk more directly about the violence of patriarchy in social practices. Yet, she did her part and planted a seed. Warner warns against a reduction to simply changing one’s thought patterns. This warning is more important than ever in a cultural context where men actively prey on women. A recent survey found that 86% of women aged 18-24 have been sexually harassed, with a further 96% not reporting those situations because they believed it would not change anything (Topping, 2021). Knowing this, it is important to acknowledge and work with the reality of the trauma as constant practice in our social space. Warner suggests working to disrupt an identity that holds on to the responsibility for one’s own abuse and helping the survivor to develop ways of defending against future abuses. The therapist makes sure they do not recreate a system of disempowerment, e.g. by making claims of benevolence and constructing fantasies that claim there is a quick fix to the effects of abuse. Warner warns that this could secure a situation where women continue to be disempowered and not prepared for the realities of social life.

For a male therapist to ethically work with a female client using a post-structural frame, I believe it requires accessing the force of femininity outside the limits of their own physical and psychic structure. An empathic connection can be found in the “past-site” (Ettinger, 2004, p. 77) of trauma and by holding a space external to themselves, inviting the generative power of femininity by getting themselves out of the way as a healer, authority or analyst. This requires male therapists to acknowledge another force outside of themselves. If the male psychotherapist has not successfully deconstructed phallic significations, he may feel an impotence and reactively take the lead. If he knows that the “future-site” is outside of himself and that it is not his role to define the space; the space is produced by the upsurge of a feminine generative force. The male avoids capturing or directing the force but instead offers the conditions where the texture can be explored, a hospitality. The difference between the past-site and the future-site at this point can be unbound, triggering a repetition of divergent difference, untangling sadomasochistic bindings. Having suffered childhood trauma at the hands of men myself, though with a different context being abuse against a male, I know first-hand that there is no quick fix in most cases. Even after five years of psychotherapy and long-term meditation practice, I still self-medicate using alcohol and nicotine. I still feel depression, and I still feel worthless sometimes. But I am lucky enough to be able to use my experiences in a role that supports others. The practice of supporting others, using one’s own wounds to help form an empathic connection can be subversive and be one way of accessing the political potential of trauma and jouissance. My personal revolution is still incomplete and has required a long and, at times, exhausting

109 I would now consider this generative force the feminine sublime, I trace my journey in connecting to this generative force in The Schizoid Returns and What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond.

110 More details of the darker shades of my struggles and my changing relationship to my suffering can be found in Part I – Holding On and Part III – Letting Go respectively.
exploration of how I relate to others and how the potential for trust and relationality has been limited by the phallic signification of passion and the trauma as a result of male violence. The feeling of exile from the hegemonic community at school became a knot that expressed itself in future relationships leading to secondary coping mechanisms to flee from intolerable feelings of vulnerability and loss. I was robbed of the opportunity of being with others in trust, especially when in a group, I am suspicious; I reject others and then feel rejected by them. This pain, which in reality is a collection of assemblages, can never be reduced or explained away in categories such as insecure or anxious attachment. In a subverted form, the traumas I have suffered can be used to empathise with the past-site and hold a space of empathy, a place where difficult relational dynamics and the risk of loss can be held.

In what feels like a never-ending search for community, practices of meditation and psychotherapy are a battle against the wound, the inability to be with others, an intolerable poverty of existence. And the cause, if there ever can be a cause, for me, is socially structured violence of masculinity. Whether of property or another person, the upward drive towards possession has unbearable consequences for the victim or survivor. As well as having this victimhood within me, elements of the violent oppression exist by their side. In order to serve my clients, the deconstruction must occur at the level of victim and perpetrator.

The practise of psychotherapy is a life choice and commitment, and it is a practice for a reason, an ongoing journey. If the reality of societal violence is disavowed or turned away from the illness can never be fully addressed. To acknowledge this and begin to deconstruct, for me, has demanded a long period of mourning that is still ongoing, to mourn my loss, to spend times with my wounds. But also, to find and overcome the phallus within me, and by this I mean to look at areas of my practice that perpetuated the system of oppression. This journey has taken me to what exists outside myself, in society, in gender difference and within myself – the victim and the perpetrator. My writing is driven by this commitment to turn towards what is uncomfortable, what hurts. The subversion is a way through; to no longer escape but to address the wounds in the spaces between my body and my mind, and to socially inhabit a flourishing, generative force.

Even though anecdotal, it seems too much of a coincidence that all of the patients on the so-called personality disorder ward intend to work in caring roles in the future. It is overly reductive to consider this exclusively to be a caring for their ‘inner child’ or past self. For me, it is a yearning and potential to reconnect with the generative future-site, and complete an unfinished revolution. When presented with a space conducive to healing and transformation, many of them will prevent others from suffering as much as they have themselves.

I do not have the formula to produce this subversion, but drawing from my experience of psychotherapy practice, it involves a changing relationship between the site of the body and the site of the abusive social space. There is a long process of coming into a different relationship with one’s physical body and social space in a way that unbinds the affective knots that freeze trauma. In psychotherapy, this
happens in a container that ultimately seeks to uncontain\textsuperscript{111}. The words of the psychotherapist are merely conduits that help the victim or survivor form their own pathways through which the sadomasochistic abstract machine can be deconstructed. When this is achieved, a force is unlocked that has been affectively bound in shame and guilt. Such a long process begins with sensitivity, care and trust; by inviting healthy boundaries over time and phasing into the expression of what is often intolerable and inexpressible.

**Conclusion**

Deleuze and Guattari’s work enlivens Nietzsche’s legacy. Nietzsche did not dismiss the Apollonian, which here is represented by the risk/symptom reduction tendency of more formulaic therapies, and it would be unwise for me to reject them unreflectively. He also warned against the subjugation of the Dionysian under the Apollonian. Here, subjugation is the dismissal of the generative force of the unconscious, expressed only through the victim or survivor’s voice: “Dionysus cut to pieces is a promise of life: it will be eternally reborn and return again from destruction” (Nietzsche et al., 2017). Warner (2001) notes it is helpful to see self-harm as a coping mechanism. For some victims or survivors whom a system of abuse has severely disempowered, the body is one of the few things left they have control over. If subverted, the harmful patterns can change into more hopeful means. Deleuze and Guattari, Nietzsche and I see the potential in the fragmentation of the Oedipal unified self that in a subverted form can open up to a generative force that can bring life to someone who has passed through intolerable suffering. Moreover, it is here that the psychotherapeutic movement has a choice to identify with State regulation and subjugate the generative force or hold a space where the generative force can be unbound and used for subversion. We can hold a space where a client can be supported to subvert and reconstitute the schizo-flows that they have been traumatised by in a still unequal society where institutional and individual violence remains a major problem.

Deleuze and Guattari’s method is limited by what I consider an inability to deconstruct a masculine weighting, and male gods still dominate their theory. They appropriate femininity in the formation of another absolute. Ettinger takes Deleuze and Guattari’s theory to a different place by accessing “another sense”. In overflowing Deleuze and Guattari’s masculine limits, this subversion disrupts the binary between Apollonian and Dionysian forces, breaking down the opposition between productive desire and patriarchal power. Drawing on Ettinger’s work, completing the micropolitical revolution demands the inclusion of the future-site of femininity with its forces of Athena and Artemis. For a male psychotherapist, this requires overcoming his own phallic limits and holding a space outside of his own body and experience. Once outside of the binary division, there is space to admit the generative force of the seed of destruction inherent in the State apparatus, making space for the generative force of multiplicity. This multiplicity coalesces in any combination of gender and sexual configurations, including non-binary, queer and trans expressions outside of molar gender categories. The expression of this

\textsuperscript{111} The theme of the container that makes therapeutic change possible is explored further in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container.
generative force of feminine difference has the potential to transmute and produce a multitude of affective paths, new divergent spaces that can contribute to intersectional societal transformation.
The Unreal and the Moment of Speech

In this chapter case material is used from my psychotherapy practice, details have been changed to protect confidentiality and the case material is an amalgamation of a number of cases with details symbolically substituted to protect confidentiality, for more information see the Ethics section.

Introduction

When I think about writing, my mind almost automatically wants to see through, see to the other side. To hope there is always a light at the end of a tunnel. Yet sometimes there are unsurmountable barriers. Sometimes the conditions are such that healing impossible or at the very least extremely unlikely. This article is about the frustrations for both patients and me in working within these conditions.

In this chapter I explore my experience working in a private hospital where it felt like the hospital walls were impenetrably thick, meaning opportunities for the clients to heal felt inaccessible. I explore how psychiatry and, in this case, psychotherapy existing within a psychiatric institution holds a double energy, one of freedom from oppression and one of oppression.

I explore how a diagnosis of EUPD combined with a de-contextualised approach centred around behavioural modification, can render the phenomenological experience of the sufferers unreal and unrecognised. I explore self-harm and suicidal crisis as a voice screaming out to be heard. In many of the client’s lives before the hospital and in the hospital this voice is largely unrecognised and is pushed into the realm of the unreal, risky acts an expression of a desperate yearning for the unreal unheard voice to become real. I explore a client’s struggles and their moment of speech, an attempt to have their voice heard. I then explore my struggles and my moment of speech while working within a private hospital.

This story doesn’t end in resolution but highlights a spirited attempt to move from the unreal to the real. It feels difficult but necessary to write in a way that reflects the reality of my work, it feels as though there is an automatic force driving my writing into a Socratic form: thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis (happy ending). This form feels like an almost automatic form inscribed upon my being and feels as though it can quickly change the focus of the thesis, earlier drafts of this chapter had a forced happy ending. In this draft I challenge this form and attempt to bring plurality of narrative. An “ethic of ambiguity” (de Beauvoir, 2018) protects plurality and gives the unexpected space to breath. This gives a voice to the unspoken ambiguity of human suffering, in its many forms. The syntheses or forced happy ending can erase the social political realities of human suffering.

In Frustrated Surrender and Learning to Love this Heart Ache I explore Lyotard’s (2010, p. 9) statement, “let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honour of the name.” This chapter explores how the individual and societal oppression meet in the norms that exclude some people’s expression, pushing them into a position of unreal and unrecognised. The straddling of the personal and political renders this chapter both
deeply personal and political on the same plane. In Part III – Letting Go the focus is on surrender and letting go, but first, for this surrendering to be made possible, Stone (2004, p. 26) writes “intrinsic to true speech - or a writing without power - is the reclamation of the `I': if the psychical fragmentation of acute distress is to be transformed then a willed occupation of the ground of first-person discourse is essential.” This chapter focusses on a more forceful and in the case of self-harm desperate movements to reclaim the I. To reclaim the I it is necessary to achieve some form of recognition. Self-harm and suicide attempts are understood in this chapter as attempts to be heard and seen, gain recognition from others when all healthy routes to gaining recognition have failed. If the service adopts a hegemonic voice that considers these acts incomprehensible, it is difficult or impossible for the patient to reclaim their I, a necessary condition of healing.

This chapter follows the movement to rewrite modernity and de-centre the self, introduced in the theory chapters Rewriting Modernity and Decentring the self. In this chapter the movement of the individual in finding a voice is a movement to de-centre their identity as unreal, claiming a subject position. This movement is relevant to Irigaray’s Mimetic Reproduction, her journey to strengthen the female subject position by decentring hegemonic male narratives that erase female subjectivity. In this chapter the onus is on the service to decentre itself, a service has a shape, a kind of identity. For the erasure of female subjectivity to collapse, the service would have to decentre itself. Unfortunately, in this chapter, I suggest the service is not able to decentre itself, representational models that erase female experience endure.

The unreal and the real

To be oppressed means that you already exist as a subject of some kind, you are there as visible and oppressed other for the master subject as a possible or potential subject. But to be unreal is something else again. For to be oppressed one must first become intelligible. To find that one is fundamentally unintelligible (indeed, that the laws of culture and of language find one to be an impossibility) is to find that one has not yet achieved access to the human. It is to find oneself speaking only and always as if one were human, but with the sense that one is not. It is to find that one’s language is hollow, and that no recognition is forthcoming because the norms by which recognition takes place are not in one’s favour (Butler, 2004, p. 218).

Butler’s definition of the unreal is poignant when exploring my experience of working in a private hospital. A private hospital that is commissioned when the NHS don’t have the resources to support the client in their own community. There is already an abstraction or de-contextualisation here, in that the patient is removed from their community and expected to recover in a place that is not their own, I situate trauma in social space, and I believe it is working through within the social space where healing is most likely to become possible. I explore this in Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari, declaring “mental health difficulties are unfinished micropolitical revolutions.” The client’s trauma and suffering has become unnameable, intolerable to speak or feel. Many of the clients suffered from unthinkable tragedies, losses or abuses in childhood that could not be effectively
worked though or spoken about in the family or community. If there is an inability to grieve (Freud, 1957) the clients suffering retreats inward and often aggressively directed towards their own body, one of the few remaining things the client has control over when environmental agency is lost.

In the concluding chapter *Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin's Palace* I explore Stack’s (2005) reading of Laplanche’s work. Stack explores Copernican openness, that doesn’t normalise or reduce the power of the enigmatic, yet also doesn’t remain untranslated, or collapse into a haunting of formless horrors. In *Decentring the self* I introduce the enigmatic as “trauma as ‘agens’ a foreign body that acts on the individual”, therapy is the work of changing the relationship to this foreign body, the enigmatic, without denying its existence or attempting to master something bigger than conscious life that can never be mastered. For the client’s I knew with EUPD, they hadn’t had a container, there hadn’t been opportunities to translate the enigmatic into conscious life and are left haunted by formless horrors. A patient (an amalgamation of client cases has been used throughout this chapter to protect confidentiality) once explored the affective experience of this formless horror as experiencing her emotional life as a ticking time bomb waiting to explode, something bigger than herself. In desperate attempts to be contained she would take an overdose and receive care at hospital, a desperate attempt to achieve physical and psychological containership, a temporary support and container for the enigmatic, more fearful than death itself. As treatment developed, she began to experience a different kind of container and name how unfulfilling the containership of hospital visits were for her. When one has been pushed into the unreal and words have become hollow, these desperate and destructive actions can feel as though the only way to be contained. It is only in reclaiming the ‘I’ that words can reclaim their power to receive containership from the Other.

In the psychiatric hospital, the psychiatric category EUPD maintains the unspeakable quality of their experience and forms an identity around it which like the hospital itself, forms an impenetrable wall. A treatment programme of de-contextualised skills maintains an illusion that emotions are merely a thermodynamic balance (Freud, 1954), and the social and actual context of dysregulation is too dangerous to consider. A paternal power that hides from its own paternity, power over is hidden in full view in the psychiatric diagnosis. The psychiatric diagnosis forms the legal ground for indefinite detention providing there are 6-monthly reviews.

It is no longer a matter of bringing death into play in the field of sovereignty, but of distributing the living in the domain of value and utility. Such a power has to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendour; it does not have to draw the line that separates the enemy of the sovereign from his loyal subjects. It effects distributions around the norm. I do not mean to say that the law fades into the background or that the institutions of justice tend to disappear, but rather that the law operates more and more as a norm, and that the judicial institution is increasingly incorporated into a continuum of apparatuses (medical, administrative, and so on) whose functions are for the most part regulatory (Foucault et al., 2013, p. 188).
The norm, in this case medical/psychological, has a ruling force, the sound of people’s voices do not have equal power in society, the sectioned patient has a legal right to appeal but they can only appeal from a position that is already unheard. In a hospital, when someone is under section, they are in a unique situation in that their voice has lost significance. Without a voice, their reality is unreal. Dissociation, a symptom of EUPD, from a social perspective could be considered the inability of a community to hear the individual’s voice. If the clinic has impeccable moral and ethical values and practices, then it makes sense for the individual to have a period to work through their difficulties in a place of safety. In the hospital locked doors and a de-contextualised therapy structure created a sense of stagnation, an intensity of energy rising towards the point of explosion in the foreclosure of its expression. Impenetrable hospital walls, no garden, no air to breath. It was rather like Sartre’s (1958) play No Exit, the way out of the hospital is straightforward, get better, be happy, it was just no one could become well in a place of unwellness. To lose one’s subject position one loses the possibility of using one’s voice to express and contain one’s suffering. It felt in this hospital that the possibility of transmutation was foreclosed by a regulatory biopower (Agamben & Sacer, 1998; Foucault, 1979) that disempowered and de-contextualised the reality of what was really going on. Risk scales and safeguarding reports replaced making meaning and working through. Looking back, it feels like a bad dream.

Butler (2004) speaks of a double aspect to the norm, a similar energy that is needed to construct the norm opens a potential to diverge from the norm, it contains the seed of its own destruction in its regulatory power. This means that whatever structural dimensions make up the hospital there is the potential to form community that holds the conditions for the unreal to become real, for recognition and a voice to be found where there was none. In between the gaps of so-called faulty cognition, one is flooded with affect of a different kind, in On Writing, I give this a number of names: “another sense” or a “co-poietic” (Ettinger, 2004, p. 82), the interhuman (O’Connor, 2002, p. 223). Norms, conformity, objectification are forever overflowing with seas of affect bursting out, this affect can be contained by the systems structured or channelled into expression and healing. The bursting of a dam risks death, and also the possibility for new channels of expression. These channels can transmute the drive to die into a drive to exceed the need to escape unbearable affect in the act of suicide. Harnessing this excess is to live outside of the norm that has negated the voice, becoming unreal. For individuals and communities to make possible the formation of their own boundaries in a way that nourishes rather than harms.  

In the hospital the client community formed in a largely destructive fashion, turning against each other, turning against the overpower and striving for destruction. This seemed to highlight the failure of the environment to provide recognition or autonomy leaving only division and violence as tool of expression. Many individual staff members cared deeply, went above and beyond but the underlying structure.
Despite this care, the underlying structure seemed to be unable to change, unable to reflect on the norms of power that mirrored the disempowerment of the patients outside world. There were many attempts made by the patients to escape, but sadly, outside of death, they had no place to go, the hospital was unable to provide a transformation that could sustain the clients to reclaim a subject position that was autonomous and in control.

A Client’s Moment of Speech as an Entry Point into the Real

Despite my cynicism in the possibility of transformation in this setting, I now explore a young woman’s attempt to reach a recognised subject position, which I believe to be the foundation of further healing, individual details have been removed for confidentiality.

A patient I saw for DBT, dialectical behavioural therapy (Linehan, 1993), announced in ward round she would like to get an tongue piecing. This patient is detained under the mental health act and is regularly subjected to the medical analytic gaze. After 5 minutes of questioning to the reasons behind this and the potential risks she announces, “my tongue, my choice” (details changed to protect confidentiality). I immediately think the feminist assertion “my body, my choice”. I name the importance of asserting an ownership over one’s body actively and being supported to do so in a way that doesn’t produce the usual harm.

The tongue is an organ of speech, an organ of knowing and expressing wants and needs, an organ of being heard and being seen. Her speech has been systematically silenced throughout her life, directly and structurally. After many years of silencing the speech lost power and only destructive actions could reach the intensity needed to express the underlying pain. With the help of psychiatric diagnoses this self-destruction became an identity, further alienating the context of the pain. The tongue lost its power as an organ of speech and the individual lost their power to transform their reality.

The hospital programme could be described as a system of moral system of behavioural modification, centred around norms of ‘good citizenship’. For those who have been pushed out of recognition from within the norm, the ‘good citizen’ may not be achievable, desirable, or even possible. The ‘good citizen’ is a projected idealised image or representation which is unachievable for most of the staff and clients alike, although this cannot be named, it would break the illusion. In the chapter Irigaray’s Mimetic Reproduction, I explore how representational models can erase meaning and the feminine sense. This applies directly to the ideal of the ‘good citizen’, it pushes self-harm and other risky behaviours into incomprehensibility, “faulty cognitions” and “distorted thoughts” (Teater, 2013) that have no history and no relationship to the social conditions that made these so called faulty thoughts necessary.

The tongue piercing, I see as an attempt to claim back the ownership of her body through its modification. A communication that takes ownership of her body on her own terms, a refusal of the ‘good citizen’ that has failed her so much and at the same time a willingness to engage in the world in a way that affirms her divergent identity.
A subversion of the norms of speech through modifying the organ itself and in doing so diverging from the violence against her body and the violence perpetuated against her in the past. The underlying structure of the hospital, erasing the meaning and context of self-harm perpetuates this past violence in the present, in carrying forward the ‘gap that carries the force of the event (Caruth, 1997, p. 7).\textsuperscript{112}

The patients were on a de-contextualised programme of behavioural modification because they were considered ‘not ready for therapy’ which is often what it is asserted for client’s with EUPD. It feels more humane to consider that the practitioner must first make the effort to support the client by creating the conditions in which recognition can be found outside of the norm that has oppressed them and together to harness a force that that can transmute the norm itself. In Linehan’s DBT (1993), the central representational model used in the hospital, it is intended that the social context of the struggles and support the individual in Stage 3 and 4 of her model. Unfortunately, the working through of stages 3 and 4 was considered too dangerous by the hospital authorities and dropped, leaving behind the de-contextualised system of behavioural modification centred around ideals of ‘good citizenship’ described.

In exploring the meaning of self-harm scars Chandler (2014, p. 115) writes:

> The scars left by self-injury can be understood themselves as communicative, and narratives provided by people who are scarred provide an opportunity to control, to some extent, the nature of this communication...of overcoming and transforming bodies and stories through painful experience; of feeling out-of-control and losing hope; of gaining control via interventions and ‘fixes’ which return the body—at least partially—to what it once was.

It is possible that the scarred body, or in this case the modified body can be seen as a traumatic reaction to suffering that is “partially embodied and in control”, an attempt to contain and make translatable the horror of the uncontained enigmatic force. A decontextualised programme that converges towards the ‘good citizen’ is in danger of excluding the individual’s last attempt at finding containership, in communicating the intolerable pain and hidden within this the possibility of repair. To have the pain witnessed or recognised could be the only foundation of transformation and the formation of narratives that can bring autonomy and choice outside the limits of the limitations of the EUPD identity.

**My moment of speech in an inpatient hospital environment**

Working in an environment where I had to surrender large parts of my psychotherapeutic training became increasingly disheartening. It is questionable whether what I was offering had anything to do with the psychotherapeutic movement I believed I had signed up to. A moral dilemma ensued, in that I had made a commitment to supporting the patient’s psychotherapeutically and at the same time was being increasingly pushed into becoming a state agent of ‘good citizenship’, regulation and control to police and uphold the norm. To minimise risk at

\textsuperscript{112} This quote is introduced in [Decentring Masculinity](#) and fully explored there.
the cost of psychic exploration and seeing the patients as persons. It felt as though a parallel process formed in that I felt I had lost my own voice; within this environment my psychotherapeutic understandings were slipping into the unreal.

In my final days shortly before leaving the hospital, like the patient in asserting the autonomy over her own body, I felt moved to assert autonomy over my practice partially disguised as a response to a recent journal club paper.

Hello Joyce [name of psychiatrist changed for confidentiality] and community,

Thank you for sharing the paper: *Who is killing what or whom* (Bell, 2008), as I will not be at the journal club I have shared some thoughts.

“All suicidal acts take place in the context of human relationships, real or imagined” (Bell, 2008, p. 46). This phrase leads me to think, how on the EUPD ward can we form a community that is a healthy resistance, a temporary retreat from the hostile dynamics they developed into and through. Not an easy task and could be one discussion point for the journal club which sadly I cannot attend as I will have left.

I was happy to see Freud’s *Mourning and Melancholia* (1957) invited into the conversation, one of my favourite Freudian papers. I often think that one strand of EUPD as a failure to mourn which perpetuates the pain and inability to hold and process emotions. Likely because there hasn’t been space or validation from others for the mourning to take place. This explains the fixation on dates and the prevalence of PTSD in EUPD, a kind of freezing of trauma both affectively and cognitively. Commonly a symptom of EUPD acknowledged in this paper is a feeling of guilt or worthlessness attached to self and certain emotions achieved through identification with the loss or traumatic event. In eating disorders, restriction, or purging acts like a gatekeeper to prevent these feelings from being felt, in EUPD it is dissociation, self-harm or suicide.

Relevant here and useful as it goes beyond the internal world is a quote from the feminist psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin:

Sometimes the structure of outer events, if not the will of the other, seems like an inexorable force; reality is not created and discovered, it is suffered. This view of reality results because the patient is hindered from using mutual interaction with the object to achieve better regulation. The ‘outside world’ appears to be obstacle, not vehicle. Not surprisingly, this experience of the world goes hand in hand with difficulties in internal regulation, so that one’s own internal affective states also appear to be frightening (Benjamin, 2002, p. 47).

Klein’s (1946) split of good and bad seems useful here, but this is seen not as psychic structure but as a reaction to an environment that has not been conducive to mourning because it is in this context where the possibility of change exists, not exclusively in the individual mind. Klein and Freud have both been accused of essentialism (Flax, 1990), incorporating all external
dynamics into the individual which can appear as an unhelpful foreclosure. A focus on community and context both within and outside of the hospital is helpful for treatment and to overcome the classic psychoanalytic errors. The context and community are also more difficult to achieve in an inpatient setting and possibly a reason to put more focus on how the individual can be liberated rather than fixed, part of this would be to consider how the role of super-ego, good and bad objects can embed themselves into hospital structures. We see these dynamics recreate themselves in a staff team, it feels like in reflective practice on the EUPD ward we have made some small steps into feeling into and working through some of these dynamics, the work is unfinished. The paper ends with the remarks that “staff morale is the vital therapeutic ingredient especially when mental health personal accept a level of responsibility that is quite unrealistic” (Bell, 2008, p. 58). This seems a very important point of reflection.

The body provides a particularly apt vehicle, in that it is the body that brings awareness of needs and desires (such as for food, sexual contact), namely awareness of reality. Hatred of this awareness, which is critically linked to intolerance of frustration, can result in attacks on the body, with the underlying phantasy that by getting rid of the body, or part of it, the patient can be rid of his desires and live on (Bell, 2008, p. 27).

This quote provides a useful and effective explanation of why in EUPD the body as the vehicle of desires becomes a hated object. “Shooting the messenger” (Bell, 2008, p. 50), the body-as-vehicle is destroyed rather than nurtured, in an environment where affect has been invalidated, gaslit or worse. Some patients present with a phantasy of meeting dead family members in heaven or living without these painful affects, an intra-uterine phantasy, or as Andre Green (2018) describes the death drive as entropy, an attempt to reduce tension to zero. From this perspective it can be seen why menstruation, sexual desire or hunger are particularly triggering. Therapeutic relationships and the ward as a therapeutic relationship seems an important vehicle in this respect in holding a space of reflection that can be seen as both good and bad this can be assimilated and become a vehicle that can deconstruct the system where the body or affective forces felt through the body must be destroyed. Thinking about me leaving, the process of mourning, not straightforward, especially with a resistance to feeling feelings is involved.

The guilt, hatred and torment projected outside seems particularly relevant here for the process of healing and brings to mind Winnicott’s *The Use of an Object* (1969). It brings the question, how as a ward can a community survive the projected attacks and not feel broken ourselves? This has the potential to provide possibly the first experience of consistency and security that if recovery is successful can be assimilated into a body security and a deconstruction of the necessity to destroy the body as the vehicle of desire. The intolerable slowly starts to become tolerable. This is also a loosening of an internal system of control or mastery of the body as the only way of
achieving body security that can be seen in both EUPD and eating disorders. Do our practices hold clear boundaries that can be used as the pivot point for understanding or transfer the system of control to another system? This is named in the paper as an actualisation of the inner situation and the paper warns this can lead to a destructive and spiralling projection of responsibility. Interestingly in the paper supporting people with these kinds of destructive inner worlds is described in the paper as a “mission” which points to the intense gravity of the situation. This is complicated and this is named in the paper as a system that itself holds a sense of guilt, shame, and fear. When the healthcare system projects these feelings onto individual staff members, something that has come up a number of times in reflective practice, we as staff are vulnerable too and the first thing, we need to do is talk about this and work through it as a community.

Thank you for sharing this paper, Joyce. I hope everyone enjoys discussing this and its application to our community in the journal club. It is a very powerful paper :) Reading it feels almost nostalgic written at a time when psychoanalysis and creative thought could bring the complexity of the intra and interpersonal, it seems now with the dominance and intrusion of the cognitive mastery of objects the unconscious has been exiled, unfortunately Freud (1916) opened the door for this in the focus on psychic structure seen in his later work, I fear the new order perpetuates a mind/body dualism that can close down plurality and reflection.

Best wishes
Andrew

The email sent to the hospital staff community in the final days reflecting on a journal club article. My voice comes across authoritative raising itself up to a hegemonic force it attempts to subvert, in hope, naively perhaps, that a paternal voice could play a part in deconstructing another paternal voice. In Irigaray’s Mimetic Reproduction, I write:

I will use the “tools of masculine discourse” (Irigaray & Speidel, 1983, p. 94) already embedded within my subjectivity to problematize the phallic domination within and around myself, I will do this “on the same symbolic level in which the phallus is hegemonic (Butler, 2000, p. 271)”.

When there is a fixed representational structure that is unwilling to perform a decentring through self-reflection, I feel it is sometimes necessary to use the tools of masculine discourse, in order to challenge the power on the same level that the power enjoys its privilege. The email was an attempt sow seeds of progressive descent that support the affect to overflow the norm and produce constructive change. Having run reflective practice for several months, I saw many staff members who wanted to act and had lost their voice, lost belief their actions could produce change in the system.
The majority of staff cared deeply, most of whom worked with humility, empathy and attention. Some of whom earn little more than minimum wage and would risk their job or sacrifice themselves if they believed it to be for the good of the patient. The norm situates guilt and shame in the individual, who in most cases is trying to act humanly. For psychiatric care to move forward in the UK money and proper investment is needed alongside a close inspection of how norms of psychiatric care are constructed historically and how they can be opened to critique and constructive change.\textsuperscript{113}

The email had little or no effect, some found it mildly interesting however it didn’t touch a system that is largely unresponsive to reflection, fixed in a representational model that relies on mastery over its subjects to survive. The email was a desperate last-ditch attempt to bring a sense of reflection and plurality, the little force it had lost its power as it fell into the inboxes of those who are constrained by the same systems. Maybe in cases like this it takes a more revolutionary force from the outside.

This email was my moment of speech, my tongue piercing, an attempt to value myself in a system that doesn’t value me. To value the unconscious in a system where the unconscious is in exile. In \textit{The Foreclosure of the Feminine in Western Culture} I quote Butler (1989, p. 117), “if subversion is possible, it will be a subversion from within the terms of the law, through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawns unexpected permutations of itself”. Even if the email had no effect on the hospital systems the moment of speech did have an impact on myself, to subvert the element of myself that doesn’t value myself, that has been crushed by limiting value systems that have stripped me of self-worth, a reclaiming of the I. I am no longer willing to dwell in the pain of not being able to speak, but to speak with a voice irrespective of whether that voice is heard, to value my words and expression. I demand recognition.

\textit{Conclusion}

I have explored some of the environmental conditions that lead to loss of control and how when there aren’t the environmental conditions to work this through, control and alleviation from suffering can be found in destructive ways. A psychiatric definition of EUPD can secure the failure to grieve the past into an identity. Butler’s (2004, p. 218) definition of the unreal, when an individual has not had the opportunity to be recognised, their voice loses signification and may find alternative outlets to communicate, in EUPD this can be self-harm and suicide attempts which can be seen as modes of both seeking care while simultaneously pushing away care. This is often because experience of being let down in the past can bring about an acute fear of being cared for.

I explore my experience in a private psychiatric system where regulatory norms have replaced contextual working through of past material. I explore a patient’s spirited attempt to work this through. I then explore elements of a parallel process and the

\textsuperscript{113} Relevant here is my exploration of NICE guidelines and EMDR in \textit{Learning to Love this Heart Ache}, a related exploration of how the norm can de-contextualised and shut down potentialities.
frustrated attempts to get have my own voice and the voice of psychotherapy heard within this system. Ultimately, I reach the opinion that within this system as it stands in this particular hospital it was not possible for the patients to reach a point of recognition, of their own truth. The norm of the 'good citizen' risks excluding embodiment and meaning of acts such as self-harm, that if understood rather could provide a foundation for transformation and further exploration of how past violence operates in the present.

This chapter, in its later drafts has been difficult to write. The first draft followed the Socratic form: thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis (or happy ending). However, this did not reflect the reality I experienced. The allure of forming a happy ending would have created an oppressive representation that ruled over the reality, much like the oppression of the 'good citizen' over listening to divergent narratives. I committed my heart to these efforts over a period of 18 months and hoped change would come from within, I conclude that maybe, sometimes radical change needs to come from without in political and social changes of perspective.

I end with a quote from Virginia Woolf's (2016, p. 190) Orlando. Virginia Woolf fought. She fought. She fought. Eventually she could not carry on and her life ended in tragedy.

She need neither fight her age, nor submit to it; she was of it, yet remained herself. Now, therefore, she could write, and write she did. She wrote. She wrote. She wrote. She wrote.

I hope the patients I worked with found their voice and I hope they found a place they could be heard.
Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container

In this chapter case material is used from my psychotherapy practice, details have been changed to protect confidentiality and the case material is an amalgamation of a number of cases with details symbolically substituted to protect confidentiality, for more information see the Ethics section.

I liked the comfort and the security of the eating disorder, with its strict, punishing rules: this was what I deserved, and I welcomed it. If I followed my rules perfectly, the sense of triumph and superiority I felt was worth the pain and difficulty and made me feel better about being me. Anorexia was a distraction. I created my own world, governed by my rules of starvation. Any bad feelings I was suffering became transformed into the need to eat less. I also liked the way that it numbed feelings. I was not so aware of my intense loneliness and longing for human relationships. I did not feel so left out of the normal things in the world around me, and sexual feelings towards other women disappeared altogether (Hertzmann & Newbigin, 2019, p. 261).

Introduction

This chapter explores some of the social strands that underly an eating disorder including a Freudian perspective on ontogenesis. Practices that objectify, degrade and idealise the female body lay the ground for a subjugation of the body as a solution to unmet needs. The subjugation offers a punishing and violent regulation and validation, I show the ways in which this punishment is socially structured. I explore a clinical example where a past material becomes ‘real’ for the first time, including the need for others and consider this part of a reclamation of the ‘I’. This reclaiming involves the listening to and expression of need, both within the self and relationally. I consider this a shift from using the eating disorder as a resolution to ambivalences inwardly. I explore being affected by the therapy and working through ambivalence around my own needs as part of making space for a container that is Other to both myself and the client. This unknown interhuman place of potentiality is where needs can emerge, a potentiality that makes possible the reclamation of the ‘I’ of first person discourse that contains and expresses rather than subjugates.

Gender, Socialisation and Eating Disorders

I consider an eating disorder to be an individual attempt to regulate and feel safe, the foundations for developing an eating disorder are socially constructed and contribute to its possibility and even necessity. Social forces operate on the individual through norms, societal rituals that can invisibly make possible or shut down potentialities of interhuman connection. Before a client suffering with an eating disorder subjugates
their own ‘actual body’\textsuperscript{114}, their body has already been objectified in the normalised practices and rituals of social life, a ground has been set to adopt a body-image and self-image that is Other to the ‘actual body’.

Society is in a continual process of transmutation and this holds the potential for progressive change as well as the potential for excruciating inner conflict and oppression. The patriarchal order in England was previously held in place by the structure of the church “one’s body as a source of impurity, and that this understanding lingers in religious traditions” (Reitsma, 2018). The Christian understanding of ethics and morality denounces flesh as putrid, dangerous and sinful, dating back as far as neo-Platonic thought (Plotinus et al., 1991). As the structure of society transmuted into a capitalist society these values take on different forms but maintain an underlying structure, the sinful body. The sinful body is often accompanied by an aspiration for the individual to go beyond the self, aspiring for something purer in the religious sense or more successful in the capitalist sense. In an individualised neoliberal society for many there is a strong desire to go beyond oneself by seeking perfectionist exam success at school, so much so that the body’s desires are restricted in an attempt to heighten focus, “as with schoolwork, the more I practised starving myself, the better I became at doing it” (Hertzmann & Newbigin, 2019, p. 261). The client’s self-value is signified by the ability to put aside one’s need and desire by subjugating their body and moulding themself into a normalised image of success, forming a cleavage between one’s body-image and ‘actual body’, the flesh and the spirit. The pressure to achieve and be recognised for academic success holds a transmuted relationship to what was considered holy in the Christian church (Deleuze & Boyman, 2005).

Freud (2013) in \textit{Totum and Taboo} sets a foundation for an ontogenetic understanding of the devaluation and idealisation of women’s bodies that predates monotheistic religion. Daly (1943) in offering a feminist analysis of \textit{Totum and Taboo} explores the menstruation taboo arising alongside the incest taboo when humans adopted an upright gait and developed a dread of blood. Daly considers the movement from the olfactory to the visual to be associated with the movement from menstruation being desirable to being feared by men and this leading to a traumatic frustration of the instinct. Daly writes that as a result of the prohibition of olfactory instincts in the instinct taboo men felt a horror and disgust towards female sexuality leading to aggression and attempts to control his desire as well as denial of his own femininity. The excess of desire remains in a repressed form and is expressed in spiritual ideals including the idealisation of femininity and the degradation of the woman’s ‘actual body’, a splitting of the flesh and spirit. To resolve the tension that

\textsuperscript{114} I use the term ‘actual body’, to denote something Other than imagined self-image/body-image, often dysmorphic. I consider the actual body to be less a function of thought and more an unreflective somatic materiality. I acknowledge this is a problematic term as I quote in the Introduction “individuals are always-already subjects” (Althusser, 1972). Despite being problematic I think it is useful, in this context, to consider that there can be an outside to the subjugated body, even if it is impossible to isolate an ‘actual body’ from perception, thought and societal structure. From my perspective the closest to an ‘actual body’ is an absence of reflection of one’s sense and actions, a state of being and acting on one’s desires and wants without a cognitive self-consciousness. From this perspective the ‘actual body’ is a function of the generative unconscious or what I later call the feminine sublime.
arises as a result of the prohibition, men attempt to control their repressed desires by controlling the other, the ontogenetic narcissistic wound of the self that drives patriarchal systems.

Daly’s analysis shows how psychoanalytic knowledge can provide an explanatory ontogenetic foundation for the rejection of anything impure in the movement from the olfactory to the visual and how this structure expresses itself in eating disorder psychopathology. I hold this theory lightly, considering it more mythological rather than objective fact in the way psychoanalysts may have. For modern woman the focus on the visual can result in dissatisfaction or in a more extreme form internalised disgust and shame towards their ‘actual body’, the vehicle of expression of desire and need. In the 20th century this has been hyper accelerated, and the norms of purity manifest in neoliberal aesthetics. Woman and men attempt to reach a spiritual purity by controlling their bodily desire including the hunger drive, an attempt to reach a normalised self-image and body-image that for many is incompatible with actual bodily expression. A hyper cathectic of the visual, capitalised by social media algorithms concretizes the need to change oneself and one’s body in order to be valued and recognised by others.

Hegemonic power over bodies exists in the rituals of everyday life. An eating disorder is an attempt to find agency in a system of patriarchal ownership, “transformation of the feminine body-object from its status as the environment on which the masculine subject acts” (MacSween, 2013, p. 252). Hegemonic masculine violence is often direct, but also manifests in a less perceptible structural violence. This can form inner conflicts for which an eating disorder is one affective path that attempts to hold onto agency and resolve conflict.

With the loss of a feeling of power and agency to affirm one’s own emotions and life path Lawrence and Pennycook (1984, p. 24) highlight that an eating disorder can be a way to survive socially inscribed inner conflicts by unconsciously fusing them which creates an inward facing self-sufficient system of control. With the loss of a feeling of social agency, an eating disorder can give a feeling of control or agency over one’s own body, a body that is actually a secondary body-image. When conflicts are fused they are exiled and shift out of awareness bringing a feeling of being ‘fine’. This fusion is an out of awareness attempt to regulate oneself outside of the conflicts and contradictions of the outer world. For many sufferers of an eating disorder there is not a specific point in time, or decision, rather it is something that arises over time, partially out of awareness. The attempt to annihilate one’s own needs is an “unmet developmental longing”, a fear that the needs of the Other will disappoint and an associated fear one’s own relational needs are ‘too much’ (Sands, 2003, p. 105).

The prevalence of eating disorders is increasingly less of a male female split, male prevalence of eating disorders remains “underdiagnosed, undertreated and misunderstood” (Sweeting et al., 2015, p. 1). Sands (2003, p. 107) describes how woman are more likely to experience their own bodies as having intolerable needs, leading to aggression directed towards their own bodies whereas men are likely to experience the other as embodying their disavowed, intolerable need leading to strategies where aggression is projected outwards. As gender becomes more fluid to
some extent the phallus is detaching itself from specific gender identifications, complicating the symmetry of the Oedipal structure, meaning the forces that lead to an eating disorder in its inward movement of aggression are increasingly effecting men as well as women.

Cixous (1976, pp. 880-881) in her seminal paper *The Laugh of Medusa* speaks of oppression of woman, challenging normalised regulation and oppression of the female body and desire. She calls for a resistance, though writing, which is also relevant to the field of psychotherapy in the act of speech.

By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display—the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time…It is by writing, from and toward women, and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than silence. Women should break out of the snare of silence. They shouldn't be conned into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem.

Cixous writes of exclusion from writing, governed by the phallus. The phallus refers to the structural elements of a patriarchal society. This structure can form an invisible exclusion of, in this case, female expression and desire. Cixous calls for woman to actively challenge the authority of exclusionary writing, to transgress the governing body: the phallus. If the body-image and self-image have become hated objects it feels difficult to imagine a wilful breakthrough, it is necessary to reclaim “’I’: if the psychical fragmentation of acute distress is to be transformed then a willed occupation of the ground of first-person discourse is essential” (Stone, 2004, p. 26). It is at this point I move into the therapy room itself and my work with eating disorder clients. I explore the container that provides the conditions for a reclamation of the “I”.

**Interpersonal expression of need and desire**

After seeing a client for about a year in a day patient I found myself called into a room as a jacket potato situation had arisen. I found myself sitting as calmly and attentively as I could for 45 minutes while listening a client I see for therapy express anger towards the jacket potato and me as the bearer of the jacket potato. I affirmed her right to say no, even if saying no to food is not recommended. In the 6 months that followed the client’s past trauma was explored in depth, the inability to say no in the world was understood in relation to the necessity to say no to food. The family’s inability to listen and respect the client’s needs combined with a number of occurrences of gender-based violence had fractured a feeling of trust with the world. As the client explored her trauma and the story as a whole ‘became real’ the self could no longer be blamed and the world took its rightful position as untrustworthy, a scary realisation and the basis of beginning to heal.
The process of the past trauma becoming real I named earlier as a reclaiming of the I, an inclusion of repressed sadness and anger that formed links between the past and the present. In the year that followed needs and desires could increasingly be expressed in the therapy room and in the world. Instead of avoiding going shopping and skipping meals, friends were recruited to support with the stress of being in the shop and having to make decisions that bring guilt. Increasingly joy was found in the world in a way that could affirm her-self, affirming the need to say no in the world gradually reduced the misplaced guilt felt towards the self and gradually reduced the need to say no to food.

Sands (2003, p. 108) highlights:

> The eating disordered individual’s vehement denial of need for the Other makes it much more difficult for her to form a developmental or selfobject transference—that is, a transference in which the therapist is experienced as the longed-for Other. Because the patient’s unmet, early needs are concretized in her body, where they are relentlessly attacked, and because they are detoured into and experienced primarily through the eating process, they are not as available to be mobilized in the analytic relationship.

As well as early needs, I find in many cases the accumulated effect of a long-term objectification in a still patriarchal society and the commonality of sexual assault mean that needs are turned towards the body when trust in the world has been lost. For the therapeutic relationship to develop beyond control over food and hatred towards one’s body, it is necessary to form a container where need and desire can be expressed as a steppingstone to these needs being expressed in the world. A transitional space to move from control and violence towards the body towards the therapeutic space becoming container. Sands considers that it is first necessary for the client to understand the selfobject transference felt towards food or eating processes before this shift can take place. The extreme ambivalence of appetite towards food mirrors an extreme ambivalence towards relational contact. Sands (2003, p. 109) gives examples of this ambivalence:

> ‘I need you/I don’t need you’; ‘Help me/Don’t help me’; ‘Admire me for my strength/See my fragility’; ‘Cure me/Stay away from my symptoms’; ‘My life is in your hands/You have no power over me.’

Sands highlights that the patient’s split-off need, concretized in the body and attacked, can be experienced as emanating from the therapist and resisted. The solution to unmet needs is resolved in the subjugation of the body. The therapy moves towards a position where overwhelming affect and need can be tolerated. Working through dynamics in the family and in wider society where the individual has not been seen (sexual assault being one of the most extreme versions of needs being violated) I have found it is necessary to form a therapeutic container where the distrust felt towards the world can be held. This distrust enters the counter transference relationship through ambivalence, lack of trust, anger.

**Gender difference and the therapeutic container**
In order for the ambivalences and commonly felt fear of being controlled by the therapist to be worked through, a therapeutic container is required to make possible the expression of need and desire. Bion (2013, p. 46) writes that the analyst must abandon understanding, preoccupations, memory in order to make possible a neutral space where expression can happen. Larner (2018, p. 309) writes:

The ethical relation is the container for receiving and thinking the emotional experience of the other. It concerns how to know in a way that resists knowing all as totalizing knowledge, being open to what is other, or beyond, knowing.

Larner writes that any attempt to represent the other by image, interpretation or theory can get in the way of holding a container where emotional pain can be expressed. As a male psychotherapist I inherit the present and ontogenetic degradation and idealisation of female bodies as well as the effects of a patriarchal system where sexual assault is common. I find that this inheritance, in a therapeutic space, can feel particularly amplified by my gender identification when working with female clients. It also feels it holds potential to heal the distrust towards through working through transferential ambivalences in the therapy room. This can gradually bring about a feeling of being seen and understood which can gradually be transferred into the world. This shows the potential for therapy to support a subversion of the internalised relationship with ‘man’ and to some extent this challenge internalised expectations of self that contribute to the eating disorder.

In the year that preceded the client example given above, I allowed myself to be affected by what was presented and what was disavowed. The exploration of my countertransference reaction, that sometimes was named, slowly helped disavowed need to be symbolised relationally and eventually expressed. Sands (2003, p. 107) writes that woman are more likely to use their own body for containment and men are more likely to, sometimes violently, discharge his intolerable affect into the other. A psychotherapeutic container can subvert the gender norms in forming a containing place for emotions to be contained and worked through:

Like the mother who acts as a receptacle, or container, to receive and modify through reverie the emotional experience of her infant, the analyst turns towards the face of the other in a gesture of unconditional hospitality empathy, and ethos. In therapy, it is the other who brings forth my thinking as an abode for unspoken experience to be thought and narrated (Larner, 2018, p. 316).

In Attempting to Destroy I ask myself “Can I become Madame Bovary?”, can I make peace with masculinity, accept my own existence on earth including the trauma of the past and even accept the energetic knots that have led to the exclusion of femininity. Levinas considers maternal receptivity as the ethical relation per exemplar (Larner, 2018, p. 316). With this in mind it feels necessary for me to overcome the social conditions and norms of hegemonic masculinity within my-self, even at the level of the ontogenetic instinctual prohibitions in order to provide a neutral container. The work of this thesis puts a focus on gender in an attempt to produce a container for expression both within myself and in therapeutic space. This is the movement of the thesis to de-centre the self which is also a de-centring of hegemonic masculinity, in The Schizoid Returns I explain this as follows:
The journey of decentring the self is a journey to bring forth this poetic into the world while working through the shame and grief, the grief of being different, being rejected, the grief of exile that in the past felt forced.

A challenge to providing containership has been the disgust I have felt for masculinity and my own masculinity, the de-valuing and disavowing of parts of myself resulting from traumatic experiences with men in childhood, this is explored in *Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence* and then later *Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms*. If the traumatic material remained at the level of narcissistic wound, the container would be leaky and preclude the possibility of need or desire to emerge in the unspoken degradation of my own being. O’Connor (2002, p. 223) writes “one can be a psychotherapist only through the interhuman emergence of one’s own suffering.” Working through my own wounds that resonated with the client’s wounds made possible an interhuman expression of need in the psychotherapeutic container, beyond both self and client we were both working on containership. “Thoughts exist before there is a thinker to think them; the thinking self begins with emotional experience first contained and thought by the other” (Larner, 2018, p. 316). The therapeutic container is Other to both my-self and the client, forever decentred, unknown, and enigmatic. In the interhuman connection the therapeutic container holds a primacy that produces both client and therapist. This unknown is a potentiality from which need emerges, the denial of need is to adopt a privacy, a degradation and in subjugating the body the potential of enigmatic thought is precluded.

When food has been used to regulate intolerable affective states and there is a fear of these states burdening the other, the movement to relational containment of these affective states is raw and vulnerable. To unsilence and express oneself risks annihilation and if this risk can be tolerated these needs can be expressed and contained. As the needs become acceptable the self-sufficient system of an eating disorder begins to lose its grip.

In order to unsilence oneself and overcome socially structured systems of oppression it is necessary for the ‘I’ to be reclaimed, and for this to happen, it is necessary for the subjugated self to be de-centred and for needs, desires and the ‘I’ to emerge from beyond the self. In *The Schizoid Returns* I describe this emergence as The Wild Woman, an energy that rejects norms and has an enigmatic power that cannot be named, a hidden potential, a surrender of the mastery of conscious life. This shifts the need for value and recognition from the hegemonic to the generative unconscious. The therapeutic container adopts a neutrality that refuses to totalise images of experience and thought allowing for thought to emerge from the container itself, harnessing potentialities that arise from the ‘actual-body’ of both therapist and client. The interhuman connection and potential of suffering to take oneself from one place to another.

**Conclusion**

We continually seek containers for our painful experiences of absence, and the thoughts they give rise to in us are continually experienced as persecutory or insufficiently gratifying (Eisold, 2005, p. 361).
In this chapter I consider an eating disorder to be a self-sufficient container for unmet desire and need, a solution to the risk of the expression of this need and desire in the world usually in reaction to a situation or trauma that has meant trust in the world has been lost. I explore what I consider to be the necessary conditions for psychotherapy to support a shift from a self-sufficient eating disordered container to a containing space in the therapeutic relationship, an acceptance of the Other in trusted dependency. I consider this to have everything to do with gender and intersubjective gender relations dating back to the ontogenetic dynamics arising with the incest taboo. In contemporary and hyper accelerated neoliberal society these instinctual prohibitions can lead to attempts to resolve ambivalence by identifying with the self-image and body-image that forms out of capitalist production, the body is a commodity for exchange, for others. This identification puts pressure on the individual to find value through idealised achievement rather than interhuman connection. The reclamation of the ‘I’ moves to an acceptance of the enigmatic and unknown as a place of potential rather than a persecutory force. This paves the way for an acceptance of the ‘actual-body’ and expression of need from this place loosens the grip of the hegemonically structured ideal of an unrealistic body-image or self-image.

Postscript I: A Note on the Authority of Psychoanalytic Writing

The supposed authority of this piece, in writing with confidence, writing with the authority of psychoanalysis as a privileged truth leaves me with an excess of angst. This angst is a tension between accepting the authority of what came before and embracing the individual in their unique, particular expression that can never be universalised or explained.

Kierkegaard’s (2006) writes of a similar tension in Fear and Trembling, Abraham’s tension between God’s will and a felt humanistic sense of what is ethical. Do I surrender to the authority of psychoanalytic knowledge, or do I refuse what came before, refuse the explanatory system. In this chapter I am confident in my words, I desire psychoanalytic knowledge, I am moved by the ontogenetic history expressed in Totum and Taboo (Freud, 2013). And yet, I am left full of angst. My journey is to register the presence of the client’s voice, not to represent.

The danger of authority without angst is the destruction of sexual difference. I write in Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms:

The desire for conformity and the reconciling of differences is, for Lyotard as for many other poststructuralist theorists, symptomatic of a “forgetting”: the forgetting of a radical heterogeneity that simultaneously exceeds representation and is at its very heart (Sullivan, 2007, p. 54).

To accept and express the authority of psychoanalytic texts as law would be to negate femininity and plurality, an opposite movement to what the thesis aims to achieve. This angst I feel has a purpose, to overflow the representational model of psychoanalysis. In Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms I quote Slade (2007, pp. 178-179) “the ecstatic experience at the margin of words and speech is the sublime affect born of a differend born of the sexual difference”.

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psychoanalytic style forgets that the authority of the words I write are not absolute, not universal, not truth. To become Madame Bovary forgets this knowledge and remembers sexual difference in the interhuman encounter, on the margin of words. Beyond truth, beyond hegemony, beyond authority. The therapeutic container can only exist in the overflow, haunted by what came before, haunted by authority and offering something Other. In the face-to-face encounter authority, knowledge falls away as the individual expression is witnessed.

As I reclaim the ‘I’ my words and gain the confidence to speak, my words are in danger of recreating the conditions of oppression in holding an authority. This speech becomes hegemonic when it universalises, takes a position of a god that represents an absolute truth, and this excludes and appropriates the feminine. The overflowing ‘I’ and formation of a therapeutic container that presents and overflows the psychoanalytic material, relinquishes this authority as the maternal function takes centre stage. The neutrality of Bion’s (2013) container I do not see as an abstract universalised neutrality of the neuter, rather a particular movement to the sexual ‘actual body’ arising from heterogeneity in itself, the generative unconscious. This is my journey to become Madame Bovary, my journey to reinclude disavowed femininity explored in Attempting to Destroy is an act of faith. This act isn’t a function of a paternal father, it is an act of surrender, to the enigmatic unknown, Spinoza’s (2020) God as nature where the particular gives birth to the ethical. Desire, passion, interhuman intimacy meet in the face-to-face encounter. Larner (2018, p. 308) writes “In Levinasian terms, the Said gives way to the Saying; the intellect gives way to the not-knowing.” My writing must be filled with this excess of angst and collapse into the wonder of not-knowing.

Postscript II: Interhuman Imaginal Thinking

While talking to a client recently, a metaphor emerged. The metaphor emerged from a place Other to both me and the client, the interhuman connection in the therapeutic container. The metaphor arose spontaneously from a place that is heterogeneous in itself, generative and unbound, beyond the self-system.

The metaphor was of the eating disorder as a poison ivy, an external force or collection of symptoms, that strangles and wraps itself around the self, inscribing guilt where guilt is not due. Logically the client knows that guilt is not due, but the poison ivy inscribes guilt regardless. The poison ivy extends to even the most fundamental elements of relationality, meaning even eating is guilty.

The client found this co-created metaphor useful to shift from ‘I am guilty’ to ‘there is guilt’, meaning the guilt shifted to an excentric position, a decentring of self. She named that its easier not to think about it but to not to think about it means that the poison ivy is identified with, it becomes her, there is no separation. To bring it into awareness brings both pain and relief. Cutting the poison ivy hurts, the journey to reach a sense of a relief is a painful one. There are many vines, and it can feel overwhelming to think about the vines all at once, a reason to give up.

In Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace I explore trauma leading to “a gap that carries the force of the event” (Caruth, 1997, p. 7). The erasure of the structure of
the relational reality in the past and present, means the force of the guilt is identified with and the phase ‘I am guilty’ is left unchallenged. The interhuman imaginal meaning making transformed the gap into a living scar or a ghost that haunts the client in the form of a poison ivy. In becoming a living reality, rather than a gap, the client could find relief in banishing the guilt, a decentring of the self-system, creating space. The gap is in between the self-system and the world, the decentring process is fulfilled in rebuilding a connection to the world. This space is a reclamation of the ‘I’, a passageway to the feminine sublime, where imagination becomes possible.

After exploring the metaphor, the client named being hopeful about the future of her work for the first time in many months, not a ‘fix’ or ‘cure’ but a possibility of taking a different position. Perhaps one of the vines was cut in this hour. In Attempting to Destroy I write “I turn to Derrida (2004, p. 114) in search of an answer, a form or writing, or being that ‘holds the tension of dialectics’ it can cross the ‘almost non-existent thickness of that leaf between the signifier and the signified’”. Perhaps it is an almost non-existent thickness of a leaf that separates the identification with guilt and the relief felt when a vine is cut, the strange affinity of pleasure and pain.

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115 A scar as a mode of communication is explored in The Unreal and the Moment of Speech. In this chapter it is a metaphorical scar, in The Unreal and the Moment of Speech an actual scar.
Part II - Summary


What changes in the encounter is how I see myself; in part, therapy is a gift I receive from the other...The therapist takes responsibility for changing his or her beliefs and prejudices rather than those of others.

The journey of Part II – Working Through is to consider the relational encounter and how my continued journey can support effective containership for others. This journey takes me into considerations of gender, therapeutic models, environments. Each chapter aims to go beyond representational models that can act as an over-coding of client expression. Larner (2018, pp. 302-303) writes:

To approach the Other in conversation is to welcome his expression, in which at each instant he overflows the idea a thought would carry away from it. It is therefore to receive from the Other beyond the capacity of the I.

Each chapter aims to go beyond representation and invite plurality and difference from beyond the capacity of the I, the interhuman encounter.

Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari considers my work as a male therapist working with female victims of gender-based violence. I critique the resolution of the Oedipus complex as a satisfactory end point of therapy as it leaves untouched a political challenge to the mastery of hegemonic masculinity. This risks therapy aligning with regulation proposed by the state and therapist becoming an agent of the state. I consider how a line of flight can disrupt this system and the associated expectation and guilt. Beyond this system and an alternative direction for the psychotherapy movement is a movement towards “another sense” (Ettinger, 2004, p. 77), a sense that lies beyond the Oedipal system and holds a non-Oedipal regulation and validation. This brings a political force to psychotherapy practice in moving away from representational models and towards the reality of social structures that perpetuate the subjugation of women. I proclaim, “mental health difficulties are unfinished micropolitical revolutions.”

The Unreal and the Moment of Speech applies Butler’s (2004, p. 218) concept of the unreal to my work in a private psychiatric hospital. A decontextualised skills-based practice is at risk of silencing the patients voice mirroring their experience of the outside world. Containing and speaking the their trauma or bringing meaning to their self-destructive actions was frowned upon. Instead, the programme projected an ideal of a “good citizen” onto the patients. I explore a patient’s “moment of speech”, an attempt to make meaning and assert her value despite the conditions that push her into the unreal. I then explore my moment of speech in attempting to speak the reality of the dynamics and structure of the hospital dynamics. I explore the difficulty in writing a chapter that ends with little change, ends with the impenetrable hospital
walls still silencing the patient’s voice. For this chapter and the thesis as a whole I seek to challenge the sterility of taking a form that ends with a forced happy ending that disavows and oppresses individual and societal realities.

**Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container** explores an ontogenetic history of gender and psychoanalytic and religious standpoint. This is an attempt to understand clients who express thoughts that their body or desire is guilty or sinful by bringing a historical context. I then take a sociological feminist perspective in an attempt to understand gender relations in the present, where often a man projects his unwanted affect into a “feminine body-object” (MacSween, 2013, p. 252). I explore my work as a male therapist working with predominantly female clients many of whom have suffered gender-based violence. I find it is necessary to work through my own wounds around masculinity in order to provide a container to contain gender related transference effectively. The degradation of my own masculinity risks a degradation of the container that can make possible the client to encounter and express their own needs. I explore the emergence of needs in a therapeutic container from a place that is Other to both my-self and the client, the generative unknown. I consider this to be particularly important for work with clients who have an eating disorder where often fear of the unknown or uncertain can bring about the need for a rigid control over themself, their interpersonal connections, and their emotions. The therapeutic container can provide a safe place where the client can feel safe to begin to let go the self-sufficient system.

**Part II – Working Through** brings to life the themes explored in **Part I – Holding On** by applying my journey to my therapeutic practice with the aim of providing safe and effective therapeutic containership. This has required reflections of my own self structure and the relationship with my-self in order to work effectively and humanely within the therapeutic encounter. The container that is both Other to client and therapist is an example of the thesis’ applicability to the field of psychotherapy.
Part III – Letting Go

Part III - Introduction

Part I – Holding On was a clearing of the path. A raw, contorted pushing against, wanting to be seen when I hadn’t been seen, hating masculinity, hating myself, hating the societal rules that restricted and oppressed me. Yearning, wanting more, wanting something else, to engage with myself and others more deeply, more profoundly. Part II – Working Through explores the themes introduced in Part I – Holding On in relation to clinical practice. This brings a wider purpose to working through my own material in considering the relationship to my-self in relation to that which lies outside my-self. The themes of gender are brought forward in considering the container of psychotherapeutic practice in relation to gender difference and gender-based violence. The journey of the thesis is working towards offering a container where the process of witnessing can support a changing perspective to my-self, this is the thesis’ applicability to the field of psychotherapy.

Part III – Letting Go builds on the themes introduced in Part I – Holding On and Part II – Working Through and offers a spiritual perspective. As energetic knots are untied, plurality can be embraced more fully, including the feminine that had been excluded. Returning to the past is no longer a traumatic and shameful experience, it has become an experience of reminiscence that unlocks pain and jouissance rather than binding. It is not that the energetic knots have disappeared but there is an emergent changing of relationship to the knots, a reconfiguration of self. Like in Part I – Holding On and Part II – Working Through, Part III – Letting Go takes aim at institutions that breed inequality and oppression, but the tone changes in Part III – Letting Go, the dyadic binary where State has a capital S and I am a separate Cartesian subject has collapsed somewhat. There is still fight, but the fight has become plural or less reactive as the feminine sense is invited. To use an analogy from Part II - Introduction an energetic found in Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987, 2004) Anti-Oedipus that resists oppressive structures or repetitions of sameness has combined with an energetic from A Thousand Plateaus, a male reaching into the beyond, plurality, the feminine. These two energies come together in the work of Lyotard and Laplanche. This is taken further in What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond, the work unravels into the poetic and the spiritual as it approaches the poetry of Rilke, Lao Tzu and the work of Simone Weil. This is the final movement of decentring as I approach “an unspeakable wrench in the soul at the separation of a desire from its object” (Weil et al., 2002, p. 10), approaching the full intensity of the energetic knot. It is in entering into this intensity that the ‘I’ becomes universal and the separation of the self from its object opens into the feminine sublime.

I am a string, stretched tightly over wide raging resonances.
(Rilke & Snow, 1994)

The whole journey of the thesis was unknowingly moving towards this point, this couldn’t be planned, I entered the labyrinth with no hope of return. To the point
where the separation of self and world dissolved, the final binarism and centrality of self. The string of the energetic knot is all that remains of the self, the self now a connection, a gateway to wide raging resonances. “Generations stirs in its sleep…I shall vibrate”. The ghosts that haunt are accepted on a horizontal plane and take up a permanent residency. To “become the valley of the world” (Tzu et al., 2007, p. 60). The unworthiness I express in Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence when the self dissolves becomes the pauper’s greatest tool, in becoming grace, the poverty of the gateway into the beyond. Schrödinger’s (Thirring & Urban, 2012) wavefunction discontinuously collapses. In Part II – Working Through I speak of the container of therapy, the beyond opens up a new kind of containership, a container that is infinite, boundaryless.

Juul2 is a short writing about struggles with addiction. An addiction feels like it can give access to the sublime through cycles of separation and a merging unity. Juul2 is a 18mg (very strong) nicotine vape I became highly addicted to, in part as a way of coping with stress at work. In Juul2, the addiction is personified as someone who I love and there is an element of parody in this, satirically mocking men’s enlightenment personifications of women/nature. This chapter writes into the challenge of re-writing my relationship to my own suffering, to tolerate the isolation of sadness and loneliness bringing a deep pain. Linking to the overall thesis giving up the vape represents turning towards the pain rather than trying to escape and this movement opening up a gateway to the feminine sublime. It was written in a difficult period of a relationship ending and becoming a friendship, in reading the article retrospectively it appears there are displaced feelings of grief/freedom about this relationship ending mapped onto the pain of relinquishing the mastery of a central self, meaning it was not such a parody after all and I am writing into and through hegemonic structures. It ends with a feeling of destiny in aloneness, without unity, the failure of the phallus. It ends in isolation, a kind of happy isolation. Notably as the addiction “became godlike…in the same breath my breath lost its divine source”. It is only in coming into relation with my suffering more profoundly that the breath could de-identify and return to its original and depersonalised divine source.

The Schizoid Returns is a wrestling match with individualised psychiatric descriptions that can objectify or even stigmatise a psychic state, which I believe can lead to condensation rather than working through of psychic suffering. I explore this alongside being described as ‘schizoid’ while on my psychotherapy training. I explore the meaning of this in my life a sense of avoiding social contact, especially when in social groups in fear of being unlovable. I explore the work of Estes (2008), a Jungian analyst and her alternative description of the schizoid position, an exile from the world which has a purpose of going somewhere else. I explore this through one of the characters in popular Netflix drama Stranger Things, as one of the characters undergoes a period of psychic exile, and eventually returns to everyday life as the relationship to self transforms. I explore my return to everyday life, a reclamation of the feminine that Este, drawing from folk tales names The Wild Woman. The Wild Woman ultimately cannot be named, but when named, in putting on a mask challenges the hegemonic structure that Reich (2013, pp. 401-402) names homos normalis. I explore this line of flight as more than a work of mourning, a work of
hidden potentiality, of jouissance. This is the opposite movement to the overall feeling of Part I – Holding On, in Part I – Holding On there is a movement inwards, forming binary separations that resist or bind emotions by tightening the energetic knot. In Part III – Letting Go, there is a change of tone, a retreat that is a refuge and then a return, a return that has harnessed the power of the Wild Woman, which I name the feminine sublime, using Zylinska’s term (1998, p. 102) see Method section for a definition.

Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms is a coming to terms with masculinity and me as a man. I explore attempts in earlier chapters, particularly Attempting to Destroy and Frustrated Surrender to rid myself of or destroy masculinity. Lyotard (Lyotard & Olson, 1995, p. 403) highlights that the phallus and phallocentricty as well as the feminine are somewhat detached from the individual’s gender assigned at birth. This feels important as a theoretical backing to the journey into the feminine sublime, a path that arose spontaneously and unplanned. Lyotard (2010, p. 9) wages a war on totality by witnessing the unrepresentable, no longer an attempt to destroy masculinity, which would be an entrenchment of the divide. A path to write into a sense, to open a gateway that can receive rather than master, the line of flight as mourning, as potentiality, the line of flight as a gateway to the beyond. I explore how this is a way to approach peace with masculinity and my own identity. I then explore how this was felt directly when I found myself in the unlikely position of a male role model in setting up a men’s group for people who identify as male at work. I experienced a sense of being welcome as a man, being welcome in my body and identity while in the company of other men and this contributed to a changing relationship to previously unacceptable parts of myself opening possibilities and potentialities.

In Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container in Part II– Working Through, I write:

A challenge to providing containership has been the disgust I have felt for masculinity and my own masculinity, the de-valuing and disavowing of parts of myself resulting from traumatic experiences with men in childhood, this is explored in Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence and then later Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms. If the traumatic material remained at the level of narcissistic wound, the container would be leaky and preclude the possibility of need or desire to emerge in the unspoken degradation of my own being. O’Connor (2002, p. 223) writes “one can be a psychotherapist only through the interhuman emergence of one’s own suffering.” It is in the working through of the wounds that resonated with the client’s wounds that allowed for an interhuman expression of need in the psychotherapeutic container, beyond both self and client we were both working on containership. “Thoughts exist before there is a thinker to think them; the thinking self begins with emotional experience first contained and thought by the other” (Larner, 2018, p. 316). The therapeutic container is Other to both my-self and the client, forever decentred, unknown, and enigmatic. This unknown is a potentiality from which need emerges, the denial
of need is to adopt a privacy, a degradation and in subjugating the body the potentiality of enigmatic thought is precluded.

To work through the wound and be comfortable in my own body is of central importance to the process of decentring the self and hold a stable ground, a container for my clients’ pain and vulnerability to be held. As well as a movement of decentring there is a movement in Part III – Letting Go, first explored in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container to strengthen the sense of I, “reclamation of the ‘I’: if the psychical fragmentation of acute distress is to be transformed then a willed occupation of the ground of first-person discourse” (Stone, 2004, p. 26). This movement, that is the central movement of Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms makes possible the decentring in working through the narcissistic wound fixates and centre, in a movement to focus on a willed active first-person discourse, a discourse that is confident to go beyond the mastery of self into the beyond.

In Learning to Love this Heart Ache I explore Lyotard’s concept of the feminine sublime as a way of understanding my journey in working through my past and the changing relationship with my identity. A changing relationship with my trauma, now less of a fixation, or an object and now an agent that can help me to feel into the suffering differently and listen to the intuitive voice of myself and the other more profoundly. Suffering takes on an impersonal quality and becomes an agent of change that forever remains excentric and in its excentricity makes peace with the energetic knot of self, an acceptance. An acceptance of the impossibility of mastery over one’s suffering and a realisation that any form of mastery or representation centres and blocks sublime feminine energies. This radically diverges from the mainstream trauma theories that promise integration or mind and body unity and radically diverges from my original training in psychotherapy. This chapter explores the line of flight as a work of mourning, the loss of recognition or validation in following a path that is recognised, that is valued in an ordered system. I end the chapter with a return to the material presented in A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning, the chapter that was the beginning of the PhD journey and continues to haunt each word written. The death of a client and the profound effect the grief has had on this work, a sublime pain, unmasterable and beyond symbolisation. This bars a happy ending of the thesis, bars synthesis as the pain will forever be inscribed upon my heart.

What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond is a performative journey into the beyond. A double movement of the ‘I’: feeling more secure in a sense of ‘I’ and at the same this ‘I’ becoming impersonal, my suffering no longer feeling like my own, tied to the world of objects but being experienced as a sublime suffering, beyond myself. I look back on elements of the thesis and use the words of Simone Weil, Rainer Maria Rilke and Lao Tzu to guide me to where I was already heading without knowing it, to the impersonal, the beyond. This is a parting of ways with the personal elements of my history, my trauma, to another place. A change of perspective as I experience empathy outside of the energetic knots that have somewhat limited my writing or caused a holding on through attempts to escape, bind or numb suffering. A process
of return, of repetition and with each repetition a further clearing of the ground to receive what lies beyond.

Rilke's poem ends:

into the old
abysses endlessly
falls...
(Rilke & Snow, 1994)

There is a sense of the abyss at the end, a death, the themes, the meaning was built with the aim of ultimately an undoing of self, I approach the abyss, ready to surrender consciousness of self, approaching the Container.
Juul2

My love,
You were always there for me, you were omnipresent
No one else was.
I can only rest when I am with you,
Silky warmth engulfs my presence,
You touched me in a way no one else could
An intimacy beyond intimacy,
The boundaries of my skin dissolve for you.

I loved you, I needed you, I wanted you, I demanded you.
The warmth of your soft breath dissolved my emptiness, I became whole,
When the world turned dark your light forced its way into me
A heavy outbreath,
My chest unfolds into cavity as this river runs through me.
You are next to me.

***

And then.
Hate grew between us like an abyss
Your body no longer new
My body no longer touched,
You became godlike and in the same breath my breath lost its divine source.

Even though I hate you I crave you even more,
You owned me, you possessed me and I felt so safe in your arms,
Even though I left you, you abandoned me when I needed you most,
There were others: Elfbar, VuseGo,
But nothing compares to that time, by the river,
We were together, we were one, the world felt less strange, less separate,
A joy lost, a sorrow returned.

Juul2 you are absent,
The blade of separation cuts through my heart
A knife penetrates my spleen, turning slowly,
The divine breath returns in moments of clarity.
Juul2 I will never stop loving you,
Forever branded unto my heart your love has become the deepest of sorrows,
The primitive gunk of my guts,
A place to return when the air is dark and cold
That time I lay by the river and…

***

My heart sinks in sadness,
A sadness I now must face alone,
This city I face alone.
The Schizoid Returns

I was responsible for the greatest but most unavoidable abbreviation of all, that of only being able to participate in Chloe’s life as an outsider, someone whose inner world I could imagine, but never directly experience. However close we might be, Chloe was in the end another human being, with all the mystery and distance this implied, the inevitable distance embodied in the thought that we must die alone (De Botton, 2006, p. 117).

Sometimes it can feel like the inner world is a hell. Haunted by a demonic voice, my actions, thoughts, feelings are judged by a part of my-self. Trapped, as if behind a glass wall from the world outside, separated from the intimacy and care of others. The melancholic pit rises up through my lungs and into my throat, a painful knowing I will die alone in a cold London flat. This thought distancing me from risking the intimacy of others, the fear my heart will unbearably break at some point, as it has done before. These are thoughts born of a detachment from the feminine sublime, the schizoid state. This chapter explores how I have lived in this state for many years and the possible return to connection to the feminine sublime.

This chapter is a turning point of the thesis. In Part I – Holding On my identity formed around the traumas of the past centred around a protective inner state, repetition compulsion secures this inner state. This chapter represents a movement back into the social world, risking intimacy, closeness, rejection. A vulnerable surrender of the protections the schizoid state necessitates brings the possibility of closeness, risking annihilation. This is a decentring, introduced in Decentring the self, in that the protection of the inner state relies on the ‘inner’ being a separate state from the ‘outer’ or the environment, a disavowal of the reliance on the social world, forming an antagonistic opposition. This opposition is expressed in Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari with a capital S when referring to state. In this chapter I can no longer separate myself from the social world in this way. The inner world brought about uncomfortable affectual states and self-hatred, in Attempting to Destroy I explore how this led to unbearable feelings that needed to be escaped. The surrender of the protected inner world clears the path and makes possible connection to the feminine sublime making possible the chapters that follow, Learning to Love this Heart Ache and What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond. The protected inner world has a sense of stasis, a singular or hegemonic ontology, whereas the decentring of this ontology makes possible plurality, crucial to constructing a therapeutic container that is Other to both client and therapist, explored in Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container. It also changes the role of the relationship to the enigmatic unknown, expressed in this chapter as the Wild Woman who cannot be named. In The Unreal and the Moment of Speech I explored how the symptom that is excentric to the individual, like an alien, forms a bridge to the enigmatic unknown when held in a therapeutic container and witnessed. In this movement the enigmatic unknown transforms from a force to be feared to a generative resource.

Fairbairn one of the early post-Freudian analysts describes the schizoid character:
Among the various characteristics common to the apparently conglomerate group of individuals who fall under the schizoid category as now envisaged three are of sufficient prominence to deserve special mention. These are (1) an attitude of omnipotence, (2) an attitude of isolation and detachment, and (3) a preoccupation with inner reality. It is important, however, to bear in mind that these characteristics are by no means necessarily overt. Thus the attitude of omnipotence may be conscious or unconscious in any degree (Fairbairn, 2013, p. 6).

Fairbairn's description feels accurate to my own experience of self and others, yet in the clinical way it has been written it doesn't touch the pain, the strife to connect but impossibility to connect common to those who have retreated into a protective inner state. Nor does it highlight the social conditions involved in a schizoid reality becoming necessary for some.

I first encountered the term 'schizoid' while studying psychotherapy when several tutors described me as having a schizoid personality. What began as a rather hurtful concept, over time, became a useful way of understanding what had been an unquestioned element of my perception of reality. A feeling that however close I got to other people, ultimately, I was unlikable and intimacy with others was a disaster waiting to happen, a looming abandonment. I was so used to these states of being they had become normalised and I had accepted them as my reality. This caused an ambivalence to human relationality: as I moved closer I would also hold back, often being described as mysterious or aloof. A willingness to engage through an image of what I believed would be likeable but excluding many parts of self I feared were unlovable. This extends beyond personality traits to a hatred for my body itself and in a subtle way a projection of this hatred in all directions. Often this produced a self-fulfilling prophecy that affirmed the hatred within, forming a viscous circle of affirming hate foreclosing the possibility of intimate relationality.

A poem I wrote recently brings me closer to this pain.

*Destiny speaks*

The strange currents of destiny
send me into the abyss once again
it is this abyss I fear the most,
and know all too well.

Strangely nurturing.
For my organs to collapse inwards
as my heart bleeds loving pain.

The disjunction of presence and absence,
haunts each cell
as I walk through this dreamy industrial wasteland
only my dreams of death speak the truth.

Beyond this truth is the truth,
beyond this abyss a warm silky softness I can almost touch.
I scream the name of retribution.
But the people don’t hear my cry
my cry is silent,
only realised through this lonely yearning.

As I enclosed myself in a lonely, isolated depressive realm of sadness the more impossible intimate relationality became and the more I yearned for it, but the less possibility I had of reaching it. The psychiatric definition of Fairbairn’s schizoid appears a-historical, meaning the individual’s suffering is taken out of the context of their individual and social life and reduced to the psychic or behavioural effects. Some practitioners who work in the realm of science forget or refuse to acknowledge there is always a historical reality and it can be damaging to enclose the disorder within the individual, for the sufferer may have identified themselves as the source of their suffering already, considering themselves the problem. This is the other side of psychoanalysis which centres the self around the ego and around reductive meta-psychological descriptions.

Reich, a controversial psychoanalytic writer who was eventually excluded from the association of psychoanalysis, working around the same time as Fairbairn saw the schizoid personality slightly differently:

The schizoid person sees through hypocrisy and does not hide the fact. He has an excellent grasp of emotional realities, in sharp contradistinction to homo normalis…Homo normalis blocks off entirely the perception of basic orgonotic functioning by means of rigid armouring (Reich, 2013, pp. 401-402).

For Reich, homo normalis, the general population, have thick character armour which blocks of sensations of a Daoist, Qi like energy, Reich called orgone energy. Reich problematizes the schizoid psychic construction perceived by Fairbairn as an individual pathology. What interests me about Reich’s definition is that he offers the possibility that the schizoid’s isolation is in part not a problem of the individual but a problem with the general societal response to a hyper attuned, less armoured, individual. Reich’s definition holds potential for transformation in a way that Fairbairn’s risks stigmatizing the individual. From a sociological perspective it is well documented that the diagnosis contributes to the production of mental illness (Foucault, 1979).

If you have attempted to fit whatever mould and failed to do so, you are probably lucky. You may be an exile of some sort, but you have sheltered your soul. There is an odd phenomenon that occurs when one keeps trying to fit and fails. Even though the outcast is driven away, she is at the same time driven right into the arms of her psychic and true kin, whether these be a course of study, an art form, or a group of people (Estes, 2008, p. 184).

Estes, taking an intersectional feminist Jungian perspective, considers the schizoid form (alongside Reich) to have value. Este’s descriptions have the advantage of having a sense of movement or transformation, the exile is an exile with the purpose of going from one place to another. In line with the Jungian tradition Este compares this to the alchemical journey, the process of being pounded and the torque and
tension eventually bringing a sense of clarity that has increased in richness through strife.

This brings me to a clip from *Stranger Things* Series 4 (Netflix, 2022), the clip rocketed Kate Bush’s *Running up the Hill* to number 1 almost 30 years after release. In the scene referenced Max, a teenager played by Sadie Sink, fits what Fairbairn categorises as schizoid. Max is struggling to come to terms with her brother’s death after he was possessed and then killed by a monster called a Mind Flayer. This, in combination with a violent stepfather and an alcoholic mother leads Max to become withdrawn and disconnected from friends. Living a seemingly disinterested life internally and withdrawn from others.

In the scene in question, Vecna, the villain of this series, preys on the characters vulnerabilities, sucking them into a parallel universe and violently murdering them to take their life force. Max is in the process of being taken my Vecna, when her friends play her favourite song to the version of her that remains on Earth who is in a trance with eyes rolled back. Flashbacks of happy memories with her friends bring her back and save her from her fate of being violently murdered by Vecna resisting his cries of “you belong here Max, with me”.

We dismantle the predator by maintaining our intuitions and instincts and by resisting the predator’s seductions. If we were to list all our losses up to this point in our lives, remembering times when we were disappointed, when we were powerless against torment, when we had a fantasy filled with frosting and frou-frou, we would understand that those are vulnerable sites in our psyches. It is to those desirous and underprivileged parts that the predator appeals in order to hide the fact that its sole intention is to drag you to the cellar and leech your energy as a blood transfusion for himself (Estes, 2008, p. 60).

Vecna bears a similarity to what Este calls the predator who leeches life force and distorts intuition, taking the energy for himself. Este makes a link between the inner critic, inner persecutor or predator and the shadow side of the animus, a male energy in society. In *Decentring Masculinity* and *The Foreclosure of the Feminine in Western Culture* I have named the shadow side of the animus hegemonic masculinity, a term taken from contemporary masculinity studies (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This chapter creates a bridge between mainstream understandings in popular media, Jungian psychoanalytic descriptions and contemporary sociology. I then explore my experience of schizoid reality as both a suffering and exile that has forged a path to a meaningful inner and outer life.

**In the present…shame and grief…yoga**

My yoga teacher asks me why I am rubbing my forehead as I take the walk of shame to take the assistive chair no one else requires. I paint a polite smile onto my face and reply that I am fine. But I am not fine, I am suffering an intense inner conflict.

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116 It is recommended the reader view the clip from *Stranger Things* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bV0RAcuG2Ao](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bV0RAcuG2Ao) (Netflix, 2022) in order to feel into the mood of the chapter.
Sitting in assembly in primary school, not being able to cross my legs, seeing the other children comfortably crossing their legs. A sense of difference and otherness has been kept underground and re-emerges in many yoga classes over the years. I attempt to go against my body's flow and elongate my body into shapes that don't fit, attempts to push down the shame and appear like the aesthetic of yogic health, living an ideal of myself that doesn't coincide with the reality of my body.

A psychological corollary was the pressure to perform a certain masculine role from an early age. It felt as though fitting in was the only way to survive at school, so I had a choice between denying the parts of myself labelled as feminine or suffering abuse from others. It wasn't a choice though; it is difficult to deny parts of self which feel profound to psychic structure and somewhat immovable. In an attempt to reduce the conflict experienced in the environment I found myself moving inwards, hiding parts of myself and developing a schizoid character, in exile from hostile forces.

I encountered this understanding of myself retrospectively, while studying psychotherapy the group facilitator highlighted my poetic and mysterious expressions that she considered left me at arm’s length from reaching empathic connection with others, highlighting my inability to look into people’s eyes when speaking in groups. To some extent this was true, but it felt like an attack on my choice of survival: to exile myself. A demand to return to *homo normalis*, the very site of the trauma. It is similar to the dynamic I share in the chapter *Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container*, Sands (2003, p. 109) highlights that the patient’s split-off need can be experienced as emanating from the therapist and resisted. Este’s work offers a different path, a path that honours the defensive retreat as a place of incubation, of transformation. A connection with the feminine, with intuition in a way the school and elements of contemporary society often rejects. The journey of decentring the self is a journey to bring forth this poetic into the world while working through the shame and grief, the grief of being different, being rejected, the grief of exile that in the past felt forced.

**A Reaction to Vecna**

When watching the video of Max save herself from Vecna, I cried several times, a rare phenomenon for me as my tear ducts are in exile, shut down to protect myself from the added vulnerability of a physical expression of pain reaching the world. I identify with Max’s strife: pain, depression, feelings of being misunderstood. Her desperate efforts to return to the intimacy of the relational world but the impossibility of the return and her friendships who save her from being engulfed. For Max it required a movement to the very edge of death for her exile to forge a path back to life.

A reaction to the scene from a YouTube user:

> This scene broke me man, I cannot believe it was right in front of me. This is literally what it’s like to struggle with mental illness, depression, anxiety, ptsd. This is IT, the feeling of being trapped, the feeling of being isolated away from everything and everyone, it’s like you’re stuck in a nightmare. Everything feels
empty. I’m a dude and I’ve struggled for so so long, this scene made me feel something again. This scene makes me want to take my life back!!!

Youtube user (1.1k likes on 07/06/2022)

Many people around the world identified with Max’s struggle. An increasingly individualised society offers many people from many walks of life to fall out of recognition and are pushed into exile or retreat. Psychological therapies often become over individualised and lose the sense of journeying, the sense of community, two things that Stranger Things hold central to Max’s escape from Vecna. Psychological therapies that become over clinical, abstractly cognitive lose touch with the narrative story and become derivations of homo normalis or become hegemonic and therapy no longer becomes a collective project of healing. From this perspective Stranger Things offers more healing power than any hegemonic therapy can offer.

In actuality, in the psychoid unconscious—an ineffable layer of psyche from which this phenomenon emanates—Wild Woman has no name, for she is so vast. But, since this force engenders every important facet of womanliness, here on earth she is named many names, not only in order to peer into the myriad aspects of her nature but also to hold on to her. Because in the beginning of retrieving our relationship with her she can turn to smoke in an instant, by naming her we create for her a territory of thought and feeling within us. Then she will come, and if valued, she will stay (Estes, 2008, p. 7).

For Reich orgone energy was a fundamental and profound life force (Reich, 2013), for Este this is gendered, the emanation of the Wild Woman who has no name. When Reich suggested that people could be healed by sitting in a Orgone Accumulator for an hour a week, a box whose walls were layered with organic and non-organic material, he gave up on words, possibly a traumatic reaction to his own exile when Freud and Klein rejected him from their psychoanalytic groups. Estes, holds on to the naming of the Wild Woman as part of forging a path back into society after a period of psychic exile. A territory that can be infused by something Other, something outside of the individual psyche.

**A Deleuzian perspective on naming the unnamed**

every philosophy is a foreground philosophy..., every philosophy also conceals philosophy: every opinion is also a hiding place, every word also a mask (Nietzsche et al., 1990, p. 216).

Ultimately the Wild Woman cannot be named, but in naming, in putting on a mask, as Nietzsche speaks, “every profound spirit needs a mask...” (Nietzsche et al., 1990, p. 216). A “territory of thought and feeling within us” must be named, a mask put on, worn for a while, an orientation, a perspective (Estes, 2008, p. 7).

Deleuze compares the philosophies of Plato through to Hegel that “postulate a transcendental hierarchical point from which everything real and rational is derived” (Weerasethakul & Suwichakornpong) to that of a tree which is a rooted like a
hierarchical representational system. And this rootedness underpins and limits the production of thought.

In contrast to this and in keeping with Nietzsche’s challenge to Western philosophy Deleuze brings the rhizome, the rhizome “presents” rather than “represents” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25). Like Nietzsche’s masks, there is no beginning and no end, it is always in the in between in a process of “constant metamorphosis and adaptation” (Weerasethakul & Suwichakornpong). The rhizome creates an “asignifying rupture” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 9), a rhizome can break but recompose itself in its old lines or in new lines, the totality upholding or dismantling and metamorphosing. This chapter and the thesis as a whole works to break out of old lines, *Rewriting Modernity*.

So how does this all relate to the schizoid, to the Wild Woman that cannot be named. The Wild Woman, to *homo normalis*, to hegemonic masculinity. Reich’s schizoid, Estes Wild Woman hold the potential to rewrite modernity (Lyotard, 1991). A challenge to the representational order that dominated philosophy throughout the modern age. The intuition of the unnameable Wild Woman, when she takes on a territory of thought, like the rhizome, can have unpredictable effects on the hegemonic order as the Wild Woman is not ruled by the same vertical structure. Reich’s schizoid or Estes Wild Woman are a line of flight from *homo normalis*, creating the potential for an organic explosion of metamorphic thought and feeling. When Max returns to the community she carries the power of the Wild Woman. In previous chapters the line of flight is described as a work of mourning, here the line of flight is not just a work of mourning but a work of potentiality, hidden potentiality, of jouissance as the spirit of the wild woman puts on a mask. The many masks, rather than hiding places to project an image become playful expressions of the Wild Woman, the generative force within. Rather than regulate they intensify and translate the enigmatic in the expression.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have presented schizoid exile within my own self, for Fairbairn, Reich, Estes, in *Stranger Things*. I trace a historical movement of thought from modernity when structural understandings still dominated to the present-day emergence of the rhizomatic thought in constant metamorphosis and adaptation. This re-writing is understood through the intuition of the unnameable Wild Woman, who when named, like the Deleuzian rhizome is not underpinned by the root of modernity. The Wild Woman’s intuition can unsettle dominant narratives bringing the line of flight as a work of hidden potentiality, of jouissance.

From an individualised perspective I related this to my movement out of traumas that in their inner exile alchemically were condensing and forming a hidden path of potentiality. A path that rejected *homo normalis* and included a Wild Woman power previously exiled by a hegemonic masculine socialisation. This movement was inspired by the tears shed when I read a comment made by a youtube user who also felt and affinity with the *Stranger Things* schizoid return.

**Appendix: the spirit of Kate Bush runs through this writing like a river**
This appendix celebrates Kate Bush and her feminine power, the embodied goddess power that I have tried to embed into this writing.

Kate Bush appears as a nostalgic return of 80s culture in Stranger Things. When Max is caught in the grip, locked in Vecna’s internal lair her friends play Kate Bush’s *Running Up The Hill*, Max’s favourite song. Kate Bushes’ voice punches a whole in the wall of Vecna’s schizoid lair allowing Max to sprint out into her friends’ arms. As this happens, *Running Up The Hill* reaches number one in the single’s charts 37 years after its original release. Kate Bush is a controversial feminist icon in the feminist circles.

Through divining her own flesh and presenting connective relational openness, Bush created a model of ontology congruent with ideas that shapes the female-focused ‘thea-ology’ (Christ, 2004, p. 7) of Goddess-based, neo-pagan spirituality. The revival of such a religion towards the end of the 1970s was, Carol Christ notes, ‘one of the most unexpected developments of the late twentieth century’ (Christ, 2004, p. xiii). Often seen as the height of essentialist embarrassment, the Goddess nevertheless provides a noteworthy ontological challenge to the dualisms of conventional humanist subjectivity because she is grounded within immanent models of divinity and like Bush has, of course, immanent flesh. Such an ontology is able to ‘reject the all-too familiar hierarchical dualisms that shape our understandings not only of God, but of ourselves and the world’ (Christ, 2004, p. 100).

*Cloudbusting*, for me, holds a sense of strife, of challenge, of beauty and sensuality. Kate Bush bursts into reality, overflowing with unobjectifiable power, bursts into Vecna’s lair, bursts into my teenage dreams through the exile, the pain, the longing, the loss.

Kate Bush in her song *Cloudbusting* follows the final years of Willhelm Reich’s life, in exile in America. In the video Kate Bush plays Reich himself, her voice plays his son, as they explore a machine that Reich hoped or imagined could change the weather by manipulating orgone energy. The song plays with the enigma of Reich, the power and strife in diverging from *homo normalis*, of going into exile, of possibly going mad but in this madness the beauty of a childhood dreams “just saying it could even make it happen (Bush, 1985)”. Kate Bushes’ goddess energy infuses the tragedy, the strife, the pain of exile. All with a redeeming quality that holds a sense of hope, when one is lost in a schizoid exile, being murdered by Vecna, there is power to be found in Kate Bush’s goddess spirit, if the sufferer can bear to put on the mask of the Wild Woman…releasing pain and jouissance.
Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms

In the chapter Attempting to Destroy, I directed a violence towards masculinity, to the pain masculine role performance has caused me and caused others. Returning to this again, another pass, I can see this was holding on, an inability to grieve or work through. I cannot simply escape my history, the gender I appear. The working through takes what is already there and sits with whatever arises until something else, something unknown emerges out of the pain.

It seems to me after having read Freud, and not only Freud but also feminist psychoanalytic writers, that sex difference is not only biological difference, nor social studies difference; it’s something else, quite mysterious, which is incorporated in each of us, women or men, a difference which is internal, a capacity. I will give you a simple example. Women are able to be managers in the system; they are capable of being turned into commodities in the system, as you say. Men are too: for example, great baseball player is turned into a commodity, obviously—or even a president. So, it is not the plight of women as such to be changed into consumable commodities. Returning to the idea of writing in a general sense and to resisting by writing. I think there is a strong relationship, an obscure relationship, between the ability to write in this sense and what I could call ‘femininity’ because there is a sort of openness to something unknown without any project to master it, but, rather, the opposite: to work on it. As a male, I represent this attitude as feminine (Lyotard & Olson, 1995, p. 403).

In my psychotherapy practice I’m regularly reminded of this when my gender is prejudged before the person knows me, assumes I will not be able to understand or that I do not feel safe because of my gender. It is logical, the instances of woman suffering violence from men is horribly high. I am initially branded unsafe based on a generalisation of the darker sides of male role performance. The reality is many men are dangerous. And yet, the cloak of ‘dangerous man’ that is sewn into my skin, doesn’t quite fit (although it doesn’t not fit), I can’t quite take it off.

Wearing the cloak of dangerous man, ironically, I suppose, connects me to the feelings of exclusion and abuse I suffered from dangerous boys. I wish I could just say, I’m not who you imagine, who you project, I’m like you, I’ve suffered. After some time, in most cases the transference takes on a different form, in some cases the concrete wall solidifies even further, becomes an impassable, impossible wall. The psychoanalytic process is about wearing the cloak to some extent, most of the time my heart can endure the arrows of projection, the arrows of fear, the arrows of inverted aggression turned into a protective layer. I must harden my heart whilst also softening my heart. Only paradoxical in a dialectic construction.

To wear a cloak that is not my own, but bears some resemblance in shape, in style, brings painful loss, painful mourning. The fullness of pleasure and of pain brings a raw overwhelm in its emergence. Fullness has a painful quality. A line of flight from one perspective to another, isn’t a line at all, it is an opening, a gateway opens. When this gateway opens the self crumbles and the fullness of affect is unrestrained,
a loss of consciousness in the momentarily immediacy of awe. This is pleasure-pain and beyond both pleasure and pain, the line of flight as mourning, as potentiality, the line of flight as a gateway to the beyond.

Lyotard (1995, p. 403) speaks of a “capacity” a “resistance” coming through the writing, an “obscure sense” that doesn’t “master” but attempts to “work through”. An internal capacity to receive is imbued in grief, in pain, in mourning. I will still be man, but not man as I knew man, in the future it may be that man is no longer named man, the collective re-writing hasn’t quite reached that point yet. To make peace with masculinity is to hold a transference, to hold a projection in my heart and feel the depth of its pain. To receive the depth of pain and allow my heart to become an alchemical vessel of transformation. At some level with no differentiation between my own pain and that of others.

To no longer destroy, to flee. The line of flight is a work of mourning not a fleeing, it is a subversive working through of the hegemonic, from modernity, from representation:

If subversion is possible, it will be a subversion from within the terms of the law, through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawns unexpected permutations of itself. The culturally constructed body will then be liberated, not to its ‘natural’ past nor to its original pleasures, but to an open future of cultural possibilities (Butler, 1989, p. 117).

A resting place is found, a resting place in the heart. This is a surrendering of arms, there is nothing to ‘do’ with masculinity. The resistance is an undoing, using Lyotard’s example of a baseball player, as he is commodified, his corporeality is removed from its original passion, original action and used for something else, something profitable and the baseball player is a willing participant. Resistance returns to the original action, the original passion, it is in this movement that masculinity becomes something other than what is ‘known’ in its commodified state. In this new form, it may not be ‘recognisable’ or ‘valuable’ in the same way, a surrender. To be content with an obscure sense can make the line of flight possible.

The desire for conformity and the reconciling of differences is, for Lyotard and for many other poststructuralist theorists, symptomatic of a “forgetting”: the forgetting of a radical heterogeneity that simultaneously exceeds representation and is at its very heart (Sullivan, 2007, p. 54).

The challenge of this sublime is to find, to refind (retrouver), in the fluidity of the remainders, a path for the thinking and writing of being which can attach itself to the material of the experience…Writing approaches what is not approachable, what is unqualifiable, what cannot be determined…The ecstatic experience at the margin of words and speech is the sublime affect born of a differend born of the sexual difference (Slade, 2007, pp. 178-179).

When the conversation becomes virtual, becomes categorisation, something is lost, something is forgotten. If gender becomes virtual gender as homogeneity, the repetition of sameness is held in place by the need to exchange commodities and heterogeneity, difference is lost. The estatic experience of gender is the collapse of
definitions, the collapse of reconciliation, the “estatic experience at the margin of words” drives forward an experience unknown, the materiality of the male becomes something other than itself. This fluidity feels like a resting place, a home. The sadness rising up through my chest as I write cannot be categorised but phrases can attach themselves to it and this gives it legs. The differend that lies beyond commodification, beyond identity is an openness to my suffering to “get from one place to another” (Baldwin, 2015). I do not know where that place will be, but I can trust that it is the place I must go.

Men’s group

At the service I work I was asked to start a men’s group for people who identify as male. It’s a strange thing running a men’s group while not feeling quite man, but this is only the case if ‘man’ is considered a concrete category. Last week we talked about how critique of masculinity on social media, accelerated by algorithms, and how it can converge into a sense of maleness being badness, violence and this can breed reactionary commentators who become representations of the badness and intensifying the belief in a universal badness.

In men’s group what lies beyond these conversations, sometimes political, sometimes social, sometimes personal is a call for the in between, a call for plurality. A meeting point in between each of our experiences, this meeting point for me feels as though it has a lot to do with love, although this is never named. A resistance to commodification, or in the case of social media an algorithmic definition of self. Lyotard’s (2010, p. 9) “war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honour of the name.” In reclaiming, in defining through speech, through the connection between and in doing so throwing off binarism’s, I feel a wound beginning to heal, I feel the self-rejection, the fear of intimacy begin to unravel itself. The feeling of being unwelcome in my own body beginning to disintegrate. Beyond the words spoken a feeling of belonging in difference emerges bringing about a changing relationship with what feels acceptable to show the world. In a container of belonging the enigmatic unknown begins to feel playful and erotic rather than an empty void that cannot be approached, that has to be destroyed.

Conclusion

These recent experiences represent a surrendering of arms rather than a resolution. The journey culminating in being accepted as a man despite diverging from ‘man’ in men’s group has contributed to a changing relationship with previously unacceptable parts of myself. No longer wanting to destroy masculinity, the ability to sit with my own pain alongside other men and be open to the pain of others, to accept myself as a man in a way different to what I understood to be ‘man’. An identity that can hold the possibility of the unknown, that can surrender mastery. This does not mean a life without fear, without pain it is just this fear and pain are related to in different ways, to connect rather than to protect.

I return to the place I once called home, town I grew up, that never felt quite home, I have always been foreign in my own land. It is Christmas time, a particularly wet and
soggy Christmas. I go on a run, I take the same running route each time I return and have done so for over 10 years. I know the paths like the lines on the palm of my hand. The repetition holds some mysterious importance, a strange nostalgia, a sense of continuity that touches a tender nerve somewhere deep inside. Past scaffolding unfolds into the present bringing about a sense of joy through dissolution. The return of past material fundamental to my being in the world. The return of what lies behind conscious life, what makes conscious life possible, both beautiful and painful. To be comfortable in a re-written masculinity is to occupy a radical heterogeneity, that must include femininity, the femininity that was stripped away all those years ago, a primal unfolding of who I was and who I become in each moment. Will I be judged? Will I be loved? Can I let go of these energetic knots and let the past unravel into the present more freely. It appears I have been here before, I am delivered from something outside of memory, outside of language, but somehow known, more known than what is known. There is a beauty in this, a potential that rises through me like an expansive breeze, as it reaches perception it becomes a silky, soft, calming flow. As it reaches language it becomes an inner voice that says, “you are alright Andrew, keep going, follow your passions, you can, you deserve”. And this is the re-writing, the working through, the acceptance of gender on a level way beyond egoic identity. Both material and transcendental, it is a becoming, a deliverance, but not of human origin. Something profoundly unsettling, yet something that reminds me of the home I have never had, a within my body, a body worthy of connecting to others, enjoying others.
Learning to Love this Heart Ache

For Levinas, this calling into question of the self that occurs in and through the face(ing) of the Other is what is meant by the term ‘ethics’: it is not an event situated in time and space, but rather ‘a structural possibility that precedes and makes possible all subsequent experience’ (Lévinas, 1969, p. 45). Integral to the constitution of the self, then, is the ‗call that cannot come from an identifiable subject, that cannot be ‘heard’ as proposition or project, but yet to which we are obliged to respond (McCance, 1996, p. 140).’…Rather than re-cognizing the Other, Lyotard’s Levinasian objective is to bear witness to alterity, to ‗the heterogeneous, which is not only heterogeneous to the self but heterogeneous in itself (Lyotard, 1990, p. 8)‘: that is, to the something that is ‗no thing,‘ which representational logic or the cognitive forgets (Sullivan, 2007, p. 55).

The other side of the constitution of self, an ethic, a regard or hospitality for the other that one is obliged to respond to. Cognition, representation are forms of violence against this ethic. This ethic is a violence against the hegemonic, the feminine sublime holds a violence in its capacity to unravel, deconstruct and crucially as Lyotard highlights construct an alternative system that is obliged to respond to the Other. A witnessing of alterity, heterogeneity in itself. The journey so far is a journey to develop this capacity, in Attempting to Destroy I name this capacity ‗to become Madame Bovary‘. It first requires a decentring of hegemonic ontologies that preclude the heterogeneous explored in Decentring Masculinity and Trying to Decentre the Whiteness of my Being. In On Writing I call the non-representational, non-cognitive “no thing”, “another sense” or a “co-poïetic” (Ettinger, 2004, p. 82), “the interhuman” (O’Connor, 2002, p. 223). In Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container I explore how this sense can support a therapeutic container that holds the conditions for change to happen, a container both Other to the therapist and client. The structural possibility, the feminine sense is accessed through a process of decentring the self.

Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honour of the name (Lyotard, 2010, p. 9).

The stakes are high for Lyotard. Totality, representation disconnects people from the vital resource that lies beyond the construction of self. To deny this beyond and live as if the self is a totality, breeds terror.

Kant, naming them the faculties, knew that they are separated by an abyss and that only a transcendentals illusion (Hegel’s) can hope to totalise them into a real unity. But he also knew that the price of this illusion is terror. The 19th and 20th centuries have given us our fill of terror (Lyotard, 2010, p. 9).

History has reached a point in time that risks the undefined or intangible being structurally written out of existence, a violence so normalised it is celebrated as ‘evidence’. “The objects and thoughts issuing from scientific knowledge and the
economy bring with them one of the rules underwriting their possibility: the rule that there is no reality unless it is confirmed by a consensus between partners on questions of knowledge and commitment” (Lyotard, 2010, p. 5). This isn’t an oppression that murders or jails, it makes certain realities impossible, irrelevant, unrecognised. Psychotherapy that is not pointing at a particular outcome is nothing, or sometimes seen as dangerous. What message does this communicate to a client? That they must become happy to be valid? They have to accept the status quo without being stirred to recover? An expression of these pressures is named as the ‘good citizen’ ideal in The Unreal and the Moment of Speech, an expectation on the client that is beyond their imminent expression.

A system that creates self-same banality I rediscover every time I have the same Pret hummus wrap each day, a disowning of my body’s polymorphous expression. “The system legislates for this freedom from within the system: Even then, ‘correct’ images, ‘correct’ narratives – the correct forms that the party solicits, selects and distributes – must procure a public which will desire them as the appropriate medicine for the depression and anxiety it feels” (Lyotard, 2010, p. 5). The people’s revolt becomes absorbed by the system and the fight rather than genuinely resisting the oppressive system at its roots, campaigns focus on little pieces of freedom in a wider system of oppression. This comes in the form of remedies for depression that further serve to affirm and concrete the outer borders of the system. How can I use a cognitive skill to further disown the upsurge of affect and have a congenial relationship with my boring or abusive partner, so I can return to work in my empty job that further highlights the void I fill with 10 barrels of sour beer every evening but maybe I can replace this with a wellness app by the end of my treatment so things will be ok. The cognitive always-already turns away from another sense, perpetuating terror in the abyss between the ‘actual-body’ and the body-image.

Returning again

You don’t give it the rules. You teach it to receive…a little clearing where the penumbra of an almost given will be able to enter and modify its contour (Lyotard et al., 1988, p. 83).

Able to survive the attack on its faculties resulting from attempting to see the invisible and yet seeing ‘something rather than nothing, (Lyotard, 1984)’ the self rejoices in its effort to transform a temporary arrest of its vital forces into ‘the invention of new rules of the game’ (Lyotard, 1984). And it is precisely in invention that it becomes ethical, open to what is not in it, allowing itself to be transported beyond what it knows/is…The ethical injunction for Lyotard only ever comes from the unmasterable alterity (Zylinska, 2007, p. 159).

In writing, in Rewriting Modernity, I make an effort to overcome the cognitive, the representative. I return, I return to the past-in-the-present. I seek the bubbling energetic within, but when the words reach the page, I find my writing going down the same old paths. Binarism’s are formed that appear as shades of victimhood, shades of ‘the world is out to get me’, shades of wanting purity, wanting to be cleansed. On a collective level this was expressed in a similar way to what Lyotard names Kant’s sublime (a masculine sublime), the hope for absolute freedom after
the revolution, but in this same movement creating an order even more oppressive or violent than the original, a redirecting of the potential of power directed towards a violent order. When one turns away from the abyss by imagining freedom, happiness, or unity, the abyss sits like standing water, its violent force reigns ever stronger, breeding reptiles of the mind.

I must return again, return until I can break out of this repetition compulsion and write into the feminine sublime, the unmasterable alterity beyond my-self. To enter into my suffering and joy without suppressing the abyss, not to reject, but not also to accept, to be absorbed by the penumbra, the moment of meeting where the contours can be redefined. The transformation is not a function of my-self, but another sense, I must wait, a certain kind of waiting, a passibility. To get lost in a never ending (hopeless) journey. To turn towards what hurts most, what is most excruciating without hope of solace, without freedom.

My heart aches. Learning to love this heart ache is a recontouring, an entry point into the feminine sublime, the thing doesn’t change but the relation to the thing becomes a bridge to something else, heterogeneity in itself. Even this rising sadness that visits me on an hourly basis I must learn to love. To accept I will never work it out, there is nothing to work out. There is suffering, I am suffering and this suffering can become a gateway to something else. Love is heartache, I suffer and love this heartache. The power behind this suffering transmutes in surrender, releasing painful jouissance. And strangely, a secret part of myself knows that this suffering is a gateway to the beyond. The power that lies beyond this need to seek success, and in adopting a project to suppress the abyss. A project that has largely been the project of my life, a lot of wasted time, or valuable time, to bring me here.

Returning from Bliss

Yesterday I returned from a retreat. I reached a place where goals falling away, a sense of community taking their place. I feel a floaty feeling of bliss, an almost permanent love and connection felt and expressed from my heart. A freedom from lack and chasing the next goal. A freedom from feeling that rejection is forever immanent, that I am forever alienated and lonely. My heart opens to the land (the Somerset countryside), the softness of the birdsong, the intensity of the night sky, the smell of the compost toilet, the aliveness of the waving trees, and to the others who occupy this land. My consciousness develops a soothing rocking motion, cognitions arise softly from the unknown, unyoked from any project, like a soft breeze.

I crash land in London with my heart open, vulnerable. I feel the ache of love when I met a woman who I rejected and then who rejected me after my feelings towards her reversed when my defences had fallen away. I fear I set up the conditions of my own isolation, patterns repeat. I feel an intense jealousy and an intense heartbreak. The yearning so strong that my heart feels broken into fragments. I lie alone in my bed, hugging Pollo my plush dog, wondering if I should express my feelings, my love. The rawness of my broken heart could destroy me, but I come to realise I would never take it away. This raw ache that sends me into the centre of my being, its physical electric presence is my connection to the world, however much strife, however much
pain, however many repeated patterns. May I accept this humanity, this pain, this love. Itself an awe, a gateway to the beyond of the everyday. It is absence as well as presence that brings me into intimacy with the world. The soft touch of her skin engulfs my being, the soft touch of painful absence penetrates my heart and engulfs my being. Simone Weil et al. (2002, p. 10) writes:

> Human existence is so fragile a thing and exposed to such dangers that I cannot love without trembling.

I am trembling.

Zylinska (1998, p. 109) describes the feminine sublime, “the feminine sublime does not intend to domesticate the object that might be a source of threat but accepts the amorous relationship of both pleasure and pain, or life and death, and the potential dispersal of the self.” It is this amorous relationship of pleasure and pain in absence and presence that I seek. This leaves me trembling in its full undomesticated force. Psychic reality in accepting the abyss, the pleasure and pain that lies beneath structures of Being, “a position of respect in response to incalculable otherness” (Freeman, 1995). It is this incalculable otherness I find in my-self, at the borderline between self and other, presence and absence. The incalculable otherness I find in the depths of my-self is this separation I feel, the gateway to hospitability to the otherness of the other.

**Letting go of Intentionality**

To receive is to refuse the almost automatic pattern of organising life around ego goals, there is an intentionality without project, a kind of free-floating intentionality. To let go of the need to be someone opens the potential of who I could really be. Who I can really be is not totalised by my identity, the ‘I’ that ‘knows’, but an ‘I’ that receives and registers. The ethic is already written, it is forever outside of my-self, a response to the Other, the unmasterable holds the possibility of invitation. To invite everything that is not-me into my being, to situate my-self in this place shifts the ‘I’ from a function of self to an undefined position of the received. An identity received and re-received in each moment of passion-pain. Receiving the earth, receiving the Other within myself as well as the actual other. To make myself receptive.

In everyday life I do not claim to have reached this place, at best there are momentary glimpses. Maybe I will never reach this place, it is a never-ending journey, an infinite conversation. I will always be identified with a socially constructed self and hegemonic narratives are always-already inscribed upon this self, a part of me. What I know so far is that a continued resistance of the rules of totality, which Lyotard named as waging a war, comes with sadness, loss of recognition. To give up the ready-made images brings resistance from those around me. Subtle or direct disappointment over the years. An indirect comment from a family member or friend, a passive aggressive silence. Turning away from physics, turning away from amassing large amounts of money, turning away from property, turning away from offering my grandparents their much-desired grandchildren.

In my psychotherapy practice this war appears as a sustained resistance to ready-made models, models that exclude the possibility of spontaneity, of connection on
another level than the sameness of ready-made images. This comes with challenge and is likely to be a continued rocky road, the allure of the next gimmick therapy that would most likely increase my earning potential is ever present, currently EMDR – a two week training that holds more hegemonic value than my 5 year integrative training. These distractions busy the ground, clearing the ground is the first step. Supporting this point Novella (2011) in critiquing the “magical elements” of EMDR that have been found to not add efficacy comments, “rather than getting distracted by alluring rituals and elaborate pseudoscientific explanations for how they work, we should focus on maximizing the non-specific elements of the therapeutic interaction”. This points towards an ethic beyond method, the psychotherapeutic equivalent of the re-writing of modernity of this thesis.

To re-enter my past, to return an infinite number of times to the empty page, the writing surface begins to clear the ground. The trauma I have described in Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence I see as an energetic knot. In the process of writing I have loosened this knot, or now relate differently to this knot and this has somewhat stripped away the content and charge from the trauma clearing the way for an entry point into the unknown, the unmasterable. No longer seeking to escape by imagining pain free utopias. In Attempting to Destroy I quote Derrida (2004, p. 114), the “almost non-existent thickness of that leaf between the signifier and the signified”, this penumbral, is the entry point into the abyss, into accepting the pain rather than forgetting there is a beyond. I allow myself to be engulfed by the abyss, be fragmented by its haunting. To allow affective intensities into my being without seeking refuge in representational structures that seek to bind these intensities.

In Decentring the self and The Unreal and the Moment of Speech I speak about trauma as agent provocateur. The unconscious operates in the present from the outside, an alien foreign body, an alien that is more me than my-self. In the writing in Part I – Holding On the symptom comes into full view in the writing, sometimes haphazard, often disjointed, at times falling into binarism, seeking to escape. The working through in Part III – Letting Go surrenders into plurality. As the emotions associated with the memory fragments are accepted in their raw form, the symptom becomes a guide, a guide that forges a connection with the feminine sublime. The main difference is that a neurotic reaction to a symptom produces sameness, a non-neurotic reaction to a symptom produces a bridge into plurality. The clearing of the ground is a physical and psychological space making operation. It is the social environment, the habit and rituals of everyday life that form or restrict fluidity of self, this is where the work begins and ends.

Underlying the mood of this thesis is the haunting effect of where I began, the material shared in A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning, I am haunted by many ghosts. The material operates from the outside and acts upon the individual, unsettling or disjuncting the imagined unity of self. This work is haunted by the client’s death. Working through the grief, allowing my-self to be haunted by her ghost is necessary to live with my-self, to reach the limit of meaning making when death brought an end to meaning. I carry her ghost in my heart, an eternal reminder. Soft, vulnerable, barred from the relief of symbolisation.
The unthought hurts. It's uncomfortable because we're comfortable in what's already thought. And thinking, which is accepting this discomfort, is also, to put it bluntly, an attempt to have done with it. That's the hope sustaining all writing (painting, etc.): that at the end, things will be better. As there is no end, this hope is illusory (Lyotard et al., 1988, p. 85).

Some things are more difficult to think thank others. My body wants to expel these feelings, these thoughts. Even thinking is an attempt to expel, the working through in this writing does not integrate, does not think. Rather it attempts to relate to the ghosts in their excentricity, a pain so profound it can never enter into language, only through a mask. The memory is still so crisp and infused with raw suffering, churning my stomach. I was standing outside a library in King’s Cross when the number of someone from my company flashed up on my phone, I knew what the man from the company was going to say before I answered, she is dead. Ever since, to this day, an intensity of feelings and thoughts, a fragmented self. Dread rises from beneath the earth, up through my feet, swallows me up. The line of flight is a work of mourning, a line of flight from the everyday, the ultimate excentric power is death itself, the beyond of symbolisation, an unmasterable force of sublime intensity. This experience haunts my words, bars the happy ending, the synthesis. I am forever decentred. Relating to the ghost, being close to the ghost without attempting to assimilate offers some solace, but the painful ache feels eternal. I will be forever haunted, and maybe that’s ok.

Freud (1958, p. 223) developed the idea of the reality principle which he said lies outside of pleasure-ego-functioning, in what he called the reality-ego. The raw reality of human suffering is difficult to bear, it is a heavy weight, an intolerable weight. This reality is one of intensity, an intensity so great it can never be contained by an ego. Working through the client death was never supposed to be the subject of the thesis, the experience in its sublimity is barred from language, its destiny was to haunt the thesis from the outside. The experience is bigger than itself, I only met her three times, the experience connects me to a profound suffering, a profound sense of loss. The loss puts into perspective the banality of my egoic interests, this suffering is my purpose if I turn can turn towards it. This opens a gateway to the beyond, yet if I could undo the whole thing I would in a heartbeat. These words can never touch the profundity of feeling, only silence, painful silence. Carol (name changed for confidentiality), I must honour her name. She stopped playing the viola because her mental health drugs numbed her feelings, she lost touch with the sublime, chemical totality. Her heartbroken, my heartbroken. The Heart is broken.

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117 This is introduced in Attempting to Destroy “I ritualistically turn away from the upsurging reality of existence I enslave my body in representation, I master, I signify because unmediated desire is too hot, too painful in its pleasure.”
What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond

There are points in my life that return throughout my writing. Fixations, or obsessions. One of the focusses of Part I – Holding On is my experience of being bullied at school and not being able to talk about it for many years. First it lived in shameful suppression, then repression until the festival at 19 years old when a cocktail of drugs forged an entry point into existence and expression, confessing (as if it was a sin, bound in shame) to my closest friend. I talked about it in therapy with various therapists, I wrote about it in my psychotherapy training and yet, it remained. And maybe this is the point, it remains, no longer attempting to assimilate or integrate which I now see as attempts to dissolve or escape, the movement has shifted, the perspective has shifted to live among the ghosts in their alienness, forever eccentric, to relate but not to master, to give up hope of resolution.

In The Schizoid Returns I identify with Fairbairn’s (2013) definition of the schizoid: to live an inner life of loneliness and isolation. I also identify with Kohut’s (1978) void that constantly needs to be filled. The traumas anchored me into limited perspectives that weighed me down like a heavy lead ball. Like a glue which pulled my words into a certain form, constantly returning to certain themes. Regardless of whether I am writing about myself or others my writing is haunted by these events, like a poison ivy, wrapping itself around by body, closing down the chakras and sucking out the breath from my lungs.

And yet…I am bored of talking about these experiences…so bored. I have already given it too much time, too much space in my mind, in my body. It doesn’t need or deserve anymore of my time. It’s time to let go. To extract the poison ivy from its roots. To live without roots, to open new channels. To allow new forms to create themselves and enter my mind. I realise now, it doesn’t have to be like that, I can live in peace with the ghosts and aliens, accept them as companions on this journey, this never-ending journey.

In the early days my thesis was going to be called Trauma in Male Socialisation, with the majority being based on personal experience, see Titles of PhD for the full metamorphosis. Now, I can’t think of anything worse than 88,000 words dwelling in self-same schizoid defences. The haunting still exists, the void still exists, but there is no longer anything to gain from dwelling. There was a secret satisfaction in dwelling, a validation, control or pleasure in binding the pain.

I was called to be a psychotherapist from my melancholic void, a psychological cul-de-sac. To transform my suffering and channel it into something meaningful. But now I’ve been lifted out of the abyss by angels and my suffering, when looking back, my schizoid defence appears like a lame rabid dog who aimlessly wanders around, infecting my mind with doubts and infecting those around him with ambivalences. I am not suggesting I want to escape, as I did in Attempting to Destroy. I have now achieved a change in perspective in relation to the suffering. From a de-centred position the suffering loses its fixation; the suffering has lost its object and in losing its object takes on new potentialities. I realise now, retrospectively, what previously felt like a godly pursuit was also a way of holding onto my suffering, refusing to work
it through. Freud (1914) names this repetition compulsion, the traumatic kernel and sameness is produced around this pivot point. This traumatic kernel wedded me to relentless ego pursuits for eternity. From this repetition arose an obsession with knowing/seeing, a hungry need to incorporate.

We have to go down to the root of our desires in order to tear the energy from its object. That is where the desires are true in so far as they are energy. It is the object which is unreal. But there is an unspeakable wrench in the soul at the separation of a desire from its object (Weil et al., 2002, p. 10).

The suffering becoming impersonal is an acceptance of suffering on a different register of existence, a withdrawal from continued attempts to seek an object of pleasure to take away the suffering. This is very different from dwelling in suffering, dwelling in suffering is seeking its release, seeking its destruction. The separation from the object, paradoxically brings a more intimate relationality:

The ethical therapist, open to an experience of other, is moved by the uniqueness of each therapy encounter. In receiving the other, I become aware she is separate from me; as other he overflows the “I”, who thinks only in terms of knowledge and understanding. This does not throw meaning to the wind; rather, it becomes grounded and thickened in relational experience (Larner, 2018, p. 305).

In both my therapy practice and my spiritual practice, the decentring of self is a wrenching of the self’s desire for the object bringing greater desire, infused with the power of the beyond, the feminine sublime. Archaic suffering and jouissance flow though my being in this separation, thickening my connection to others, inviting the suffering of the many into my being. Representations, images of self that delineate the boundary of self and Other fall to dust.

My connection to the beyond feels more powerful. I dislike the patriarchal phantasy of a male god, yet I can’t ignore my connection to the beyond intensifying, a mysterious area of psyche that is uncontained, unregulated, unpenned. The feminine sublime, in The Schizoid Returns is named the Wild Woman who cannot be named. An area of psyche that lies somewhat outside of social conditioning and hence somewhat outside of the wounds of my past. This area of psyche enters into experience at moments when I am able to decentre my-self, remove my intentionality from its position as central force of action and awareness. This may happen in moments of deep pain surrendered. A knowing that even in the experience of intensive affect, there is something more, something that has an impersonal quality. Unlike Weil I do not locate God in the supernatural, like Spinoza (Spinoza et al., 2020), in my experience god is the reality of the material realm, the unthought realm of the earth, that can only be captured in a glimpses at the penumbra of experience. Weil speaks of absence affirming god’s existence:

The absence of God is the most marvellous testimony of perfect love, and that is why pure necessity, necessity which is manifestly different from good, is so beautiful (Weil et al., 2002, p. 38).
It is this absence that brings a knowing of a different form to knowledge, this separation brings reality to what is inaccessible. The impenetrable barrier brings reverence, awe.

Therapy before the thesis was about my trauma, this thesis began being about my trauma. Now it is time, not to forget, but to make impersonal, detaching from trauma-as-object, to connect with suffering and joy of the beyond. The materiality of the social world outside of my-self engulfing my being in a forever changing becoming.

My method, ‘thinking without method’, aimed to relax form and structure to allow the unthought thought of everyday experiences to enter into the writing. This kind of thought is involuntary and does not originate with human consciousness, with the subjective and personal “I think” “Our thoughts do not originate from oneself but from universal thought flow” (St. Pierre, 2019, pp. 7-8). My writing now moves beyond the self and steps out of the orders of thought that forms binarism’s.

The journey is unfinished, there is always further to go, always ground to clear. I part ways with any form of pro-ject, part ways with the context of my trauma, my victimhood being affirmed a reality after being denied for so long. The suffering, the poverty, the cruelty, it has all has slipped away, become banal, become irrelevant. What is left over is impersonal sadness that sits heavily in my heart, Kohut’s void is no longer a personal void, it is a passageway into the beyond. The thought beyond thought in painful grace enlivens my bodily existence.

This realisation changes the nature of my psychotherapeutic work. My pain as the root of empathy was the driving force of my practice. This is no longer the case; I have rewritten my-self into a place that is beyond my-self. A relationship with my suffering that no longer tries to master but comes into relation with what is unmasterable, the enigmatic beyond, the feminine sublime. The feminine sublime is now the (unrooted) root of empathy.

And it is here where my connection with the unnameable beyond is affirmed, a potentiality that lies beyond my individual mind. Nietzsche et al. (1990, p. 216) speaks, "every profound spirit needs a mask". Stone (2004, p. 26) writes "intrinsic to true speech – or a writing without power – is the reclamation of the ‘I’: if the psychical fragmentation of acute distress is to be transformed then a willed occupation of the ground of first-person discourse is essential" I must name, knowing that naming is to put on a mask, I can only know what cannot be named in a movement back and forth towards the penumbra at the borderline of presence and absence. To create, destroy and then create again, without hope of putting down roots, this is the process of decentring. Never a single movement, forever in the process of beginning and ending.

This reclamation of I, I experience as a shedding the suit that no longer fits, this masculine suit no longer fits. It caught fire. It burns and leaves behind a clearing, a fertile pasture. The, I, of Lacan’s (1977) mirror phase is a necessary developmental phase, a mastery over objects in the world. An orientation, an existence, an intentionality in the world, filtered through socio-cultural forms. The ‘I’ of the impersonal, is not the ‘I’ of the mirror phase, it is the unrooting of the mirror ‘I’, the ‘I’
(eye) that sees. Becoming blind, becoming unintentional, is the removal of thought, of mirror thought, the rewilding of thought.

Behind this seeing is “another sense”, a sense “beyond the phallus” (Ettinger, 2004, p. 74). It is in approaching the beyond, the walls of melancholy begin to falter, the sublime force of the mountain spring begins to break through the barriers and cleanse the parched burnt ground. An alchemy of the spirit. The ‘I’ takes on new energies, amplifies itself beyond itself and becomes what it is not. A new pasture emerges after passing through the valley where the self is submitted to something beyond itself, an ‘I’ that is no longer a function of the self. The I of the forest taps into the infinite, the unpenned and unregulated.

THE END begins with a glimmering, a pulsating.

This thesis can only end with a return to nothing, a no-thing that is structured by heterogeneity in itself, the enigmatic unknown, a return to earth. Nothing worked out, no objective system grasped. This may feel disappointing for many readers, there is no enlightenment, the only afterwards unfolds into a fresh becoming. A fleeting glimmer of light passes through a stormy sky.

God is present in everything which exists as soon as it exists. The presence for which God needs the co-operation of the creature is the presence of God, not as Creator but as Spirit. The first presence is the presence of creation. The second is the presence of decreation (Weil et al., 2002, p. 38).

This ending is a ceremony, a closing, a return to the impersonal. Creation is only meaningful in its passing phase.

On the Edge of Night

My room and this vastness, awake over the darkening land,--- are one. I am a string, stretched tightly over wide raging resonances.

Things are violin-bodies full of murmuring darkness: in it dreams the weeping of women, in it the grudge of whole generations stirs in its sleep… I shall vibrate like silver; then everything beneath me will live, and whatever wanders lost in things will strive toward the light that from my dancing tone--- around which the heavens pulse--- through thin, pining firsts into the old abysses endlessly
falls…  
(Rilke & Snow, 1994)

It is the wide raging resonances that occupy me in these final words…something from the personal has resonated with murmurations from the beyond. The things, no longer objects, murmuring vibrations shiver through membranes of flesh as a well known sadness sinks as it rises up though my body. These words are here in a flash (a four year flash)...and now gone, falling, endlessly into the abyss.

Once we have understood we are nothing, the object of all our efforts is to become nothing. It is for this that we suffer with resignation, it is for this we act, it is for this that we pray.

May G od grant me to become nothing. In so far as I become nothing. God loves himself through me (Weil et al., 2002, p. 34).

This thesis is dedicated to all the clients I have served, I continue to serve and who will serve in the future. I come as I am. I dissolve my-self into the abyss to make way for the beautiful, tearing images down from the mirror, allowing in fresh energy from nothing to something and then again to nothing.

Know the male, maintain the female,  
Become the channel of the world.

Become the channel of the world,  
And TE will endure

Return to infancy.

Know the white, sustain the black,  
Become the pattern of the world.

Become the pattern of the world,  
And TE will not falter.

Return to the uncarved block.

Know honour, sustain disgrace,  
Become the valley of the world,  
And TE will prevail.

Return to simplicity.

Simplicity divided becomes utensils  
That are used by the Sage as high official.  
But great governing does not carve up.  
(Tzu et al., 2007, p. 60)

My writing is a journey of many returns, returning to infancy, returning to simplicity, returning to the uncarved block. Before the thesis many emotions were severed,
disavowed and in this severance the feminine sublime was severed, leaving mastery as the only option. Returning to the uncarved block is not an integration, it has been and continues to be a process of letting go, of dropping into the earth. Stripping thought of representation and returning to the bubbling spring.

The journey is a never-ending journey and will not stop when I stop writing. I am not worked out, not finished, not fixed. A rising sadness enters my heart. During the last four years I have observed a changing relationship with my suffering. Maybe I run away a little less, maybe I grieve a little more, maybe there is a little more surrender.

I can no longer write of my-self, the journey to become an uncarved block is a changing status of the 'I', “This irreducible 'I' which is the irreducible basis of my suffering-I have to make this 'I' universal” (Weil et al., 2002). To change the status of the I to include the otherness of others, the otherness of the natural world. At some level, the boundary my mind creates between outer and inner collapses, momentarily. In returning to the uncarved block I return to grace, the impossibility of separation and this is not identification, it is de-identification with my own self.

I have journeyed through a self-hatred for my-self and for my body. A feeling my existence was futile and a burden to the world. Existence itself guilty. My presence unwanted, unworthy of the company of others. These fears still rest in my heart. Yet, increasingly, my suffering detaches itself from these identifications, I feel the grace of suffering in the sublime. Enduring this suffering brings a force to continue my work, to sit in the pain of others, to support further de-identification, de-tachement, decentring.

Being at war with myself and my masculinity centred the I, made it a function of the selfsame logic of hegemonic masculinity, the very logic I was trying to detach myself from. At some point, I realised that holding onto this self-hatred didn’t solve anything, it just circulated my suffering into an energetic knot, an energetic knot that was secured by my own intentionality, my own pro-ject. In An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body I quote Chanter (2010, p. 46).

The solitude of the subject and the totality of being are thus refuted by the very words that would proclaim them. Being is always-already plural; the immanence of egoistic life is always already disrupted by the transcendence of the relation to the other.

The journey is never ending, “rose is a rose is a rose is a rose” (Stein, 2022). A sacredness in the never-ending return, forever de-centred by the Other. I am forever decentred, so long as I stay in touch with the vulnerability of the naked face, its poverty. My existence is poverty.
Conclusion

The decentring of self has been a journey, a journey that has taken me into my suffering and “from one place to another (Baldwin, 2015)\textsuperscript{118}”. James Baldwin’s (2015) words reverberate through my body and through the thesis as a whole. To use my suffering to get from one place to another.

I started out with an aim of listen to the parts of myself that have been unheard, or the parts that have been too uncomfortable to acknowledge in myself. In listening to these parts and giving them a voice, the fragments took on a form and have become the scenes that make up this thesis. Registering these scenes is a form of witnessing\textsuperscript{119}, witnessing through the process of writing. The act of witnessing has changed my relationship to my own suffering and hence the relationship with myself. There has been a voice in my head for as long as I remember that has told me I’m not good enough, that I shouldn’t, that I can’t, that everyone hates me, that I should stay silent. On an affective level this voice manifests as a physical shrinking or a withdrawing into sadness and recoiling shame, shame about existence itself. Kohut (1971)\textsuperscript{120}, describes this form of traumatic centring as a reaction to the pain of narcissistic injury.

The thesis has explored the process of this pain being witnessed by others and the writing itself providing a form of witnessing. If this voice is based in narcissistic wound or emptiness at the base of my being it has now become a scar\textsuperscript{121} that I can more freely relate to in allowing myself to be haunted by ghosts rather than attempt to exorcise the ghosts\textsuperscript{122}. The centredness of self, or hegemonic masculinity\textsuperscript{123} is a space that is taken, a power that is assumed to be one’s own, an outward aggression. The voice I speak of has a different nature, a collapsing inward. Even though this has an opposite movement it has a similar centring effect. In Attempting to Destroy I quote Fairbairn (2013, p. 114), “the child seeks to circumvent the dangers of expressing both libidinal and aggressive affect towards his object by using a maximum of his aggression to subdue a maximum of his libidinal need.” The witnessing of the writing process has supported these energies to be directed outwards into the world and take on a constructive and productive use, not dissimilar to the process Winnicott (1969) describes in his seminal paper, The Use of an Object\textsuperscript{124}.

\textsuperscript{118} This quote was first introduced in Trying to Decentre the Whiteness of my Being.
\textsuperscript{119} Witnessing is a theme throughout the thesis, it was first introduced in An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body.
\textsuperscript{120} Kohut’s evocative language to describe states of emptiness and the process of working through these states of emptiness appears throughout the thesis including in Attempting to Destroy and What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond.
\textsuperscript{121} For an exploration of a scar as a means of communication see The Unreal and the Moment of Speech.
\textsuperscript{122} The reference to ghosts that haunt is a reference to the chapter, A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning.
\textsuperscript{123} For the theory related to hegemonic masculinity see Decentring Masculinity.
\textsuperscript{124} This paper has been influential on my thinking and appears in The Unreal and the Moment of Speech.
For Felman and Laub (1992, pp. 57-58) the witnessing requires a listener in order to inscribe something unto a “blank screen”, something new. The “knowing of the event is given birth to”, in listening the listener partially experiences the trauma themselves, “to feel the victim’s victories, defeats and silences, know them from within so that they can assume the form of testimony.” Writing this thesis, the main witness is myself, or the process of writing itself playing the role of the Other who witnesses, the “blank screen” is the empty page. Once a month my supervisors have become witness. In the chapter Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence I tell the story of my primal experience of witnessing after many years of silence and it’s life changing effect. The primal event being when I told a friend about my childhood trauma at a festival. This was a major turning point of my life; hitherto vast realms of psychic experience were bound in shame and this experience allowed them to finally see the light of day for the first time. This experience ultimately led me to the practicing psychotherapy and writing this thesis, it is cathartic to return to this moment and bring new meaning to it.

The work of the thesis is to explore the energetic knot that locked in place a withdrawal from life and a distrust of life itself, forming a binary, a binary that has manifested itself in the structure of the writing. Exploring the contours of relational patterns and affective responses has helped to loosen binary thinking which I consider to be a function of my traumatic past, see The Schizoid Returns. Throughout the thesis I have expressed many parts of my-self, the process of writing has provided a witnessing of these many parts, it is the empty page who listens and inscribes the pain of the testimony. At times, in Part I – Holding On, this testimony is expressed as performative and raw, in keeping with Laub’s quote this has left myself and others disturbed by the writing. As the pain of witnessing is inscribed unto this empty page I have had the opportunity to breath new life and new perspectives into my past material. This began a process of transformation, a journey from one place to another, an “acting out”, “a ciphered message which the subject addresses to an Other when the Other has refused or failed to listen” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973). Expressing the ciphered message and reflecting upon it supported transformation. Larner (2018, p. 306) writes “I was disturbed by it, taking it in as emotional experience at the level of the body…to let oneself be affected or disturbed by the other, to take in their experience and think it, which, as we shall see, is what Bion calls containment.” And later in the text writes, “Where the therapist is disturbed by the experience and resists imposing preconceived meaning, the encounter is ethical” (Larner, 2018, p. 310). To disturb my-self in the writing process has been an important part of the witnessing process. In entering into, on the level of the body, previously unacceptable thoughts, affects and experiences, to make them known, to have them contained has brought about a transformation of my relationship to my-

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125 Further reflections on the arduous writing process and the empty page can be found in Atlas Fallen.
126 This is most directly explored in Part II - Introduction when introducing Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari.
127 For a further exploration of therapeutic containership and Larner’s work see Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container.
self. The cathartic release has helped dislodge self-hatred that was held in place by locked away feelings and memories.

The thesis has provided a container for suffering, a turning towards the most painful aspects of my being. Witnessing is only possible when what has been disavowed or silenced can be turned towards and held. The act of witnessing may lead to resolution or release of suffering, but I have found, in my experience, this can only be achieved through an abandonment of hope in the suffering going away, an acceptance of the suffering in its full intensity. This is not a dwelling in suffering or collapse, it is a form of listening, an active relationship to what hurts most.

In **Part II – Working Through** I shift the perspective to the witnessing of others in my psychotherapy practice. This practice draws me towards remaining wounds and at the same time draws me out of myself to hold a neutral container for others. The work requiring a deep reflection on my-self and relational patters in order to effectively form a container.

In **Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container** I write:

> A challenge to providing containership has been the disgust I have felt for masculinity and my own masculinity, the de-valuing and disavowing of parts of myself as a result of traumatic experiences with men in childhood. If this experience remained at the level of narcissistic wound, the container would be leaky and preclude the possibility of need or desire to emerge in the unspoken degradation of my own being. O’Connor (2002, p. 223) writes ‘one can be a psychotherapist only through the interhuman emergence of one’s own suffering.’ It is in the working through of the wounds that resonated with the client’s wounds that allowed for an interhuman expression of need in the psychotherapeutic container, beyond both self and client we were both working on containership.

My journey to decentre has been a form of unshrinking, and in doing so it was necessary to make peace with masculinity\(^2\) and come into relation with the parts of my-self I had been attempting to destroy. I have learned trauma and jouissance have a similar energetic form. In yoga I feel a tension that if I push will not release, but if I wait and listen, wait in the discomfort sometimes something let’s go and waves of bliss flow through my body like the water from a warm Icelandic spring.

In **Juul2** I explore this on an affective level in giving up an addiction to a vape:

> The blade of separation cuts through my heart
> A knife penetrates my spleen, turning slowly,
> The divine breath returns in moments of clarity.

The pain of separation brings about a return to the divine breath pain eventually release and jouissance enters into the self. An intensity that is itself almost too painful to bear in its beauty, its jouissance\(^3\).

\(^2\) See **Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms**.

\(^3\) The relationship between pain and pleasure is explored through client work in Postscript ii of **Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container**.
Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace

In this chapter case material is used from my psychotherapy practice, details have been symbolically substituted to protect confidentiality, for more information see the Ethics section.

In this penultimate chapter I summarise the thesis in four phases, these phases could never have been predicted at the beginning, afterwards and looking back on the scene the phases can be registered.

Phase one of the PhD began with the trauma of the past formed an energetic knot which rose to the surface in the written expression. Laplanche (1999, p. 65) considers the symptom a foreign body, an agent acting in the present. I found these knots fixed my writing into binarism’s, the plurality of expression in that my writing kept falling into a similar form. The self-hatred I felt towards myself was acted out and indirectly expressed as a resentment directed towards the Other. This can be seen in Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari the first half reads with a sense of resentment, binarism’s form even when I am attempting to deconstruct binarism’s. The second half softens, has a wider scope and a more plural feel, almost as if the energetic knot has been witnessed in the writing process and changed in form through in the process of expression. This chapter is one of the earliest chapters written because it is a published paper, the conclusion sets a direction of a “future-site of femininity with its forces of Athena and Artemis”, this set the course for the future of the thesis towards plurality and femininity.

Phase one explores the inability to witness my own trauma leading to “a gap that carries the force of the event (Caruth, 1997, p. 7)”, an erasure of femininity, of affective potentialities. The angry or manic performative outbursts of theory and emotion are a crucial part of a “true speech - or a writing without power - is the reclamation of the 'I': if the psychical fragmentation of acute distress is to be transformed then a willed occupation of the ground of first-person discourse is essential” (Stone, 2004, p. 26). This reclamation of first person discourse is the first stage, to undo elements of the traumatic erasure that situate myself in self-hatred as I seek to “circumvent the dangers of expressing both libidinal and aggressive affect” (Fairbairn, 2013, p. 114) and to begin engaging with the traumatic material in a different way, a working through. In the early stages of the thesis I could only write in a passive voice, I could only write as if I didn’t exist, not taking ownership of what I wrote, the ‘I’ got lost in the gap that carried the force of the trauma. This disowning of self also a disowning of the Other, forming binarism’s, for example in Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari, the State with a capital S disavowed uncomfortable feelings within myself and projected outside of my-self.

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130 This quote first appears in Decentring Masculinity.
131 This quote is first introduced in The Unreal and the Moment of Speech, it is returned to throughout the thesis, becoming a mantra for the reclaiming of the 'I'. The reclaiming of the 'I' is a crucial step in then decentring the self and the 'I' becoming universal explored in What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond.
In *Attempting to Destroy* I ask myself “Can I become Madame Bovary?”, can I make peace with masculinity, accept my own existence including the trauma of the past and even accept the energetic knots that have led to the exclusion of femininity and the reproduction of sameness. A movement to relating to rather than attempting to exorcise the ghosts that haunt, overcoming the need to negate or attempt to destroy my masculinity.

The line of flight as a work of mourning is a movement to a position of peace with the Other and alongside this a peace with my body. This is expressed in *Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms*, a movement to accept divergent masculinity a form of masculinity that includes femininity that is disavowed in hegemonic forms, to come out of commodification and surrender into heterogeneity in itself, “the ability to write in this sense and what I could call 'femininity' because there is a sort of openness to something unknown without any project to master it, but, rather, the opposite: to work on it” (Lytard & Olson, 1995, p. 403). The line of flight as a work of jouissance is a journey to be at ease with myself and form a container where the energetic knot, can be held and transform. Green (2018, p. 187) writes “the body is the Other, resurrected in spite of attempts to wipe out its traces. The body is a limitation, a servitude, a termination.”

The second phase is to wage war with totalisations in a way that doesn't produce new binarism’s, and instead opens into plurality, this is only possible after the reclamation of the ‘I’ of first person discourse in stage one. Lyotard (2010, p. 9) writes “wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honour of the name”. This is a war that is waged against hegemonic masculinity, against the silencing of the psychiatric system, against the invisibility of whiteness including my own whiteness. The chapter *Trying to Decentre the Whiteness of my Being* explores this decentring directly. The energetic knots, individual traumas that lead to the production of sameness go beyond my individual history, it feels necessary to continually struggle against the production of totality itself, the collective energetic knots. It has been challenging, when waging war, not fall into the very binarism’s I am attempting to destroy, me vs them thinking which forecloses a working through. To wage a political struggle the protagonist and the enemy generally come against each other, it is embedded in the form that the binary emerges, I have tried to construct and later deconstruct the binaries of political struggle, or bring about many binaries with different textures, until ultimately these binaries collapse. In *Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari* I consider mental health difficulties as unfinished micropolitical revolutions, holding knotted energy that if harnessed can express themselves in the world bringing a force for change. This is explored in *The Unreal and the Moment of Speech*, an attempt to resist systems of oppression in order to reclaim one's voice, to reclaim meaning outside of hegemonic recognition, a condition of plural expression.

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132 This quote is first introduced in *Attempting to Destroy*, the place where many theories were splurged onto the page in a manic expression before they had found a coherent form.

133 This quote first appears in *Frustrated Surrender* and appears throughout, becoming a mantra to represent a Marxist struggle that opens into plurality rather than another binary.
Phase one and phase two unravel into phase three and begin to form into what in retrospect feels like the true aim of the thesis, to listen to the otherness of the other more profoundly, with less noise in the background. This is the thesis’s relevance to the field of psychotherapy. The first step was to come to terms with my own energetic knots in order to prevent my practice from becoming “translating [my own] old translations” (Stack, 2005, p. 69). This is the reason Lyotard’s *Rewriting Modernity* and Laplanche’s *Decentring the self* are in the method section and central to the thesis. Stack (2005), in exploring Laplanche’s work asks the question of how to read a text and not “fill in the hollow of the text’s enigma”. In an attempt to avoid normalisation or narcissistic re-centring, ‘curing’. Stack (2005) explores Copernican openness, that doesn’t normalise or reduce the power of the enigmatic, yet also doesn’t leave it untranslated, which holds the risk of collapsing into being haunted by formless horrors. To achieve this one requires a container where the enigmatic force of the unconscious can be held. In this way Stack’s work on Laplanche expresses the journey of the first three stages of the thesis. I explore how I can listen, construct a container that can provide a Copernican openness, that hears the other without translating my own translations and supports a container that can hold the client’s material to make possible a working through. I write the therapist “must abandon understanding, preoccupations, memory”, the abandonment is only possible after coming to terms with my own energetic knots in phase one and two. To hold an in between that doesn’t foreclose Copernican openness and doesn’t fill the hollow of the enigma. An interhuman connection that is beyond both therapist and client. Containing is a very different operation to normalising or regulating (it is regulatory but not intentionally), it seeks to “unbind and rebind, dissolve and resolve, aiming, in the end, to leave an unresolved, or untranslated, excess” (Stack, 2005, p. 75). This excess holds within it the possibility of divergent expressions of self, the enigmatic, the unknown.

Phase four emerged unexpectedly and has become an important part of the thesis. A wandering into the beyond, the feminine sublime. Stack (2005) interprets Laplanche’s “centripetal vector” as a movement that allows the individual to remain open to “the other who comes to surprise me.” In *An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body* I highlight the potential for surprise in an ontology of becoming, nothing is predictable or harmonious.

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134 In *Learning to Love this Heart Ache* I explore how filling in the hollow can breed terror.
135 For a further explanation of Laplanche’s work and the relationship to Copernicus see *Decentring the self*. 

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Detail sketch of the third panel of the Larbro picture stone (ca. ninth century) showing a Viking Valknut or “knot of the slain.” The six-panel stone, which seems to
**depict an offering to Odin, is located on Gotland, an island in the Baltic sea off the southeast coast of Sweden (Wertheim, 2016).**

In the thesis, at certain points I talk about untying knots in order to form a gateway to the sublime, another sense. At other times I speak of loosening knots or coming to terms with the knots that are there within my-self. For Lacan (Wertheim, 2016) the knots will never be undone, it is more about coming into relation, even enjoying my symptoms and in retrospect this feels like a more grounded position that avoids striving for a purity or perfection. It is also coherent with Derrida’s (2012) hauntology introduced in *A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning*, to come into relation with the ghosts that haunt rather than attempt to exorcise the ghosts. The image above, the knot of the slain, provides the gateway to Odin’s palace, an ‘other place’ which I relate to Ettinger’s (2004, p. 82) “another sense”. A sense that is in excess of the totality of self. It is no longer an attempt to untie the knots that provides access to the feminine sublime, it is rather the change of relationship to my suffering and in doing so changing the relationship with the construction of self, the forever knotted self. Lacan’s depicts the self topologically as a Borromean knot, the self is forever knotted/knotting, but analysis or in this case writing can provide a changing relationship to the unconscious, embracing the enigmatic, forever unknowable generative force of heterogeneity in itself.

Accepting that the self is a knot that is forever knotted, is accepting on some level, with Lacan (1977), that the patriarchy, an appropriation of the mother’s creative force translated into an organised paternal society, will not easily go away and denying it wouldn’t help bring about something else. At its most fundamental level the glue that holds together the unity of self is a denial that the unconscious is more fundamental to my-self than conscious life, this knowledge forever decentres the self. It is here I diverge from Lacan in suggesting a surrender can bring about a decentring of self (Laplanche, 1999, p. 80), meaning the knot is decentred from its central position. The decentring, returns the mother’s creative force, Ettinger’s (2004, p. 82) “another sense”. Throughout the work of the thesis, I seek to recover this feminine sublime sense from phylogenetic affective memory traces. This often occurs in the face-to-face encounter and is related to Lévihas (1969, pp. 85-86) notion of infinity, but differs in that it is heterogeneous in itself, a sexual force. In this way it is closer to Spinoza’s (2020) notion of God as nature, materiality. This feminine materiality, in surrender, isn’t experienced through the self, the phylogenetic memory traces exist outside of taboo, monotheism or capitalism. The movement of the ‘I’ from being situated a function of self to being a function of the feminine sublime is the ultimate surrender, becoming Madame Bovary. This goes beyond the Cartesian construction, Descartes’ (2008, p. 29) “I am thinking therefore I exist”, after the shift of the ‘I’ to the universal comes a non-Cartesian first principle, “I am thought by the feminine sublime”. This first principle loses interest in the question of existence from within the totality of a Cartesian self, existence of the feminine sublime producing the ‘I’ is a felt sense beyond the need of cognition to provide validation or recognition.

The knot of the slain, that made possible the opening to Odin’s palace has required the passage into and through a number of deaths. Each death has loosened the unity and centredness of self, slowly moving towards accessing the feminine sublime through another sense. In *Attempting to Destroy*, before the journey was known, I intuit my destiny, or future path:
Hillman (1973, p. 88) writes “like the Shaman, he [the analyst] has already been to death himself for the dead can best communicate with the dead...by confirming the psychic death, it can be released from its organic fixation.” In delving into Hillman’s shamanic death, I hope to lower myself down into Hades and lower myself into death myself, not physical death, but to learn something of the kernel of unknowable traumatic material in myself, the gateway to the sublime.

I now present four deaths I have encountered in the thesis, each one a loosening the grip of imagined mastery, of the privilege of creation and the ontological system. Loosening the grip of the privilege of creation, relates to The Foreclosure of the Feminine in Western Culture, I write “in denying the maternal the self-creating male considers he holds the power of creation and identifies himself with the symbolic through the ideal image of the father.” To loosen the grip of the privilege of creation, my journey has prompted a return to the Spinozean notion of God as materiality, as nature, this idea is introduced at the end of On Writing.

In every case, however, the news that reaches your consciousness is incomplete and often not to be relied on...But these two discoveries - that the life of our sexual instincts cannot be wholly tamed, and that mental processes are in themselves unconscious and only reach the ego and come under its control through incomplete and untrustworthy perceptions – these two discoveries amount to a statement that the ego is not master in its own house (Freud, 1955).

The four deaths are a return to one branch of Freud’s work, the branch that inspired Laplanche’s (1999) decentring of self. The surrendering of conscious life as the centre of reality. The four deaths presented in the thesis are as follows:

1. The trauma I suffered when an actual client died, explored in A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning.
2. The trauma I suffered in the psychological and physical long-term bullying at school, leading to an erasure and silencing, a form of death as the feminine parts of my-self were disavowed, explored in Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence.
3. The deconstruction of my whiteness and elements of myself that were hegemonically masculine, losing the privilege of being the creator of reality explored in Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence, Frustrated Surrender and elsewhere.

These deaths are rooted in a fourth greater death, the death of the self as the centre of my existence. This is explored in all the chapters of Part III – Letting Go. This is to enter into “archaic jouissance that is saturated with pain or pleasure and is the traumatic wound beyond the border” (Ettinger, 2004, p. 85). This death makes possible the inclusion of femininity. In Attempting to Destroy I explore the end of man being a death of metaphysical philosophy’s concept of being, this death makes possible plural expressions of masculinity. In the theory chapter The Failure of the Phallus I explore the moment the imaginary relation with the phallus fails and the bound and armoured self falls, “the phallus fails, or this feminine-other-thinking fails but only in the phallic order” (Ettinger, 2004, p. 85). A necessary psychic
disintegration, being broken into fragments which alters my perception of reality and the writing process.

These two lips of the female sex make it once and for all a return to unity, because they are always at least two, and that one can never determine of these two, which is one, which is the other: they are continually interchanging. They are neither identifiable nor separable one from the other. Besides, instead of that being the visible or the form which constitutes the dominant criteria, it is the touch which for the female sex seems to me primordial: these 'two lips' are always joined in an embrace (Irigaray & Speidel, 1983, p. 123).

The material embrace of the two lips makes plurality possible, nourished by heterogeneous units, the feminine sublime. Ettinger (2004, p. 82) expands on this in naming “another sense”, a “co-poïetic” knowledge that “registers affected, shared-in-difference trauma and jouissance as ontogenetic memory” to become Madame Bovary. At the heart of my encounter with “another sense” is my encounter with James Baldwin (2015), “learning to use your suffering and theirs, to get from one place to another”, the ending statement of Trying to Decentre the Whiteness of my Being. This movement is the heart of the project, the ethic of heterogeneity in itself in its fundamental feminine generative force. It is the feminine generative function that brings materiality and substance to my sense of being a man, the force of generation is forever outside myself, forever decentred. This unity of becoming “nourishes…on the irremediable differend of gender…the alterity that is revealed in an encounter between two heterogeneous (discursive, but also sexual) regimes conditions and guarantees the survival of ethics” (Zylinska, 2007, p. 163). The unity, a disjunctive and forever decentred unity, opens Odin’s palace, my suffering, the deaths, make possible a gateway to the beyond, the feminine sublime. In this surrender I found the ‘I’ shifting to the position of the universal, “this irreducible ‘I’ which is the irreducible basis of my suffering-I have to make this ‘I’ universal” (Weil et al., 2002). This is the end point and final expression of the thesis, to hear the client more profoundly and the work done on myself makes this possible. Rewriting modernity, re-writing the self.

The skin of the face is that which stays most naked, most destitute…there is an essential poverty in the face…The face is exposed (Lévinas, 1969, pp. 85-86).

After the decentring, I am left exposed in raw and vulnerable expression. My cells, my heart are more alive, so alive the pleasure can feel like a pain or anxiety that is difficult to stay with. A client recently said to me ‘Andrew I don’t really see you as a man, I see you as more of a walrus’ (details changed to protect confidentiality). Last week she left the service, at this service the community has a ritual of coming together and saying goodbye, speaking the journey and the interpersonal meaning of their journey. She described how we began our journey in the service at a similar time, and at the beginning I was shy, vulnerable, clearly concerned about taking up space, even physical space. It is true, I am forever aware of my position as a man in the company of woman, many of whom have suffered gender-based violence. She went on to describe my journey over the last year, in becoming a confident figure
who could speak out against the violence of males which she has suffered, to contain a space where the trauma can be spoken, worked through, ‘commanding the space’, but not in a way that dominates or controls, but can hear the voice of the other. I felt profoundly seen, the re-acceptance of my masculinity to include femininity I have described throughout this thesis. I felt naked, vulnerable, the therapist seen beyond his words, beyond his masks. The vulnerability of the face, most naked, most destitute, in its essential poverty. In listening to the voice of the other I am seen. A beauty that words will never touch.

What? What? Say it!
‘Another mask! A second mask!’ (Nietzsche et al., 1990, p. 278)

The journey continues…
An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body Revisited

There are two experiences shared in the thesis that have disturbed my experience of self. The first is the trauma shared in Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence, long term bullying from people I considered friends at the time. The thesis was the final blow to the eccentric power this trauma had over me. I have learned that the process of working through is unique in each experience and follows no set path that can be represented. One of the bullies, the main coercive bully added me on Instagram a few weeks ago. It occurred to me he still may not register what he did to me as wrong. I felt a mild sense of disgust towards him and a mild dull sense of anger. I dedicated 5 minutes to observe polished pictures of his new baby, armchair spiritual affirmations of grandeur and other projections of idealised unity and happiness, the bread and butter of an online persona. I then, without too much thought, blocked him, expelling him from my existence as I should have done all those years ago. It is common for someone who has suffered traumatic experiences to feel responsible for their own trauma. I still struggle with self-hatred that boils up at times of stress and interpersonal tension and I am convinced one strand of this inner feeling is related to the bullying. But in relation to the bullies and events themselves, the working through has formed a clearing. Maybe the final separation of my self-esteem and the events themselves allowed for movement from one place to another with the disavowed affect being reabsorbed, given movement and becoming a scar in the present rather than a gap that carries the force of the event. It is a happy conclusion to that chapter of my life. Now, when I look back, I experience a dull disinterest, a frustration sits in my throat that I am bringing these retches to mind in writing this closing statement. So, it is done, it is over, they are over and can fall into insignificance. Live their lives which I hope are unhappy, I will never forgive them, let them rot in Instagram banality. The eccentric psychic power of self-hatred and violence direct towards myself, that in part is a result of their actions has dispersed. This working through is a reclaiming of the ‘I’, in On Writing I quote “intrinsic to true speech - or a writing without power - is the reclamation of the ‘I’: if the psychical fragmentation of acute distress is to be transformed then a willed occupation of the ground of first-person discourse is essential” (Stone, 2004, p. 26). Working through this experience formed a foundation of ownership over my own reality that laid the path for what was to come in Part III – Letting Go.

The other event, the death of the client explored in A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning and Learning to Love this Heart Ache has a different path of working through. Last night I stood by my window, vaping (the separation explored in Juul2 clearly not yet complete), gazing at the empty street. Carol Carol (name changed for confidentiality) came to mind, I remember looking at her online memorial after she died. Looking at pictures when she looked happy, when she played the viola before she became ill. She is a presence that remains within me, a presence I don’t want to go away. A looming sadness grips me when she appears. A connection

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136 For a psychotherapeutic exploration of working through see Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container.
to a reservoir of pain that is bigger and beyond my-self. I cannot contain this sadness, trying to contain this sadness would lead to self-hatred or self-destruction. I can feel this sadness, let it overpower me, momentarily. A deep humbling respect for her accompanies this sadness. Her struggles were excentric, she could not contain them, she did not have the resources. I feel something on the level of awe, something on the level of love that rises from an extremely painful source. A haunting experience of grace.

I barely even knew her, I only met her 2 or 3 times, I can’t even remember. So why does she have a grip over my mind. Maybe the intensity of the tragedy. Maybe because I felt and still feel responsible. Maybe because of the power of her personality. Maybe an identification with my own suffering or even universal suffering. I don’t know, but I do know the experience ripped a hole in the fabric of my-self in a way unparalleled to anything I have experienced. The terror of the enigmatic flowed in, the ghosts that haunt are functions of this terrible unknown, formless death that creeps warmly through my body.

Both experiences express very different examples of working through. The first clears the ground through disidentification with the trauma, unfreezing its fixation. The second is an example of a trauma that has profoundly disjuncted the unity of self-experience. Ripped a hole in the very fabric of self. The working through in this case is not an attempt to exorcise, it is to allow the enigmatic to enter into psychic experience in its full force. To allow grace to overflow and permeate every cell of my being.

Each experience problematises classic ontologies and epistemologies. The ontological structure is a structure of self, it exists as both a societal and individual structure. Both experiences, the second more profoundly, disjunct the ontological structure, changing my perception of reality. What remains is a clearing, where sublime affect can enter. In Part I – Holding On the enigmatic unknown appears as largely traumatic, a force that needs to be destroyed. In Part III – Letting Go the enigmatic force appears as a wellspring of potentiality, the feminine sublime. This transformation is made possible as a result of a changing relationship with my suffering. This shift changes the tone of the thesis and the definition of ontology. The former produces a self-same system, defined in advance by the limits of the totality, what has come before. The latter produces an epistemology, where thought is formed excentrically, outside of the totality of self. The former is centred around the visual field and the latter has no centre.

An ontology of becoming deconstructs fixed representational structures, as soon as thought emerges, it falls away or transmutes into something other than itself, each encounter or interhuman encounter draws from a place beyond representation. An epistemology of body focusses on the momentarily encounter, the sensuous experience and thought that arises from beyond the totality, often unexpectedly. The two traumas shared earlier are excentric, they bring unexpected results that cannot be simply identified or represented.
Hegemonic masculinity lies at the centre of the self-same system\textsuperscript{137}, it maintains privilege and silencing of woman and divergent men. In my experience at school this started when I was labelled as ‘gay’ used as a derogatory term. My femininity was attacked and at some point this femininity was disavowed in order to more closely represent the hegemonic norm, this was a survival technique, an attempt to be accepted by other men, who were dangerous\textsuperscript{138}. In the experience of the client death my sense of self was ruptured, after many years of guilt I am able to write about this without recoiling to the extent that the words cannot reach the page. Behind the guilt is an intense sadness in knowing I deeply cared for her but could not save her. Beyond the severe systemic failings was a hero narrative I had not worked through, leading to a grandiosity in thinking I could ‘cure’ Carol (name changed for confidentiality). I am haunted by both of these experiences and others. In turning towards what hurts the thesis has been an opportunity to do something different with my suffering. To explore the depth of my maleness and how it has influenced the centredness of hegemonic ontological forms in seeking to escape or master. Having passed through this process there is now more distance between my sense of identity and an identification with the phallus. The phallus is the social structural element of male domination, this is explored in \textit{The Foreclosure of the Feminine in Western Culture}. Outside of the hegemonic totalisation the ‘categories’ of male and female collapse. The totalisation that makes possible a fixed ontology collapses as the house of cards falls, approaching what lies beyond, the feminine sublime and heterogeneity in itself. In \textit{Making Peace with Masculinity – The Surrendering of Arms} I quote, “the ability to write in \textit{this} sense and what I could call ‘femininity’ because there is a sort of openness to something unknown without any project to master it, but, rather, the opposite: to work on it” (Lyotard & Olson, 1995, p. 403). It is at this point the ‘i’ can move from the individual to the universal as it is no longer yoked to the self as an object, profoundly changing the relationship between self and Other.

The relationship between self and Other, man and woman is explored using the concept of the therapeutic container in \textit{Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container}. The face-to-face encounter overthrows totalities opening an interhuman connection that is Other to both the therapist and the client, a relationship to the enigmatic. In \textit{The Unreal and the Moment of Speech} I write:

\begin{quote}
Trauma as ‘agens’ a foreign body that acts on the individual, therapy is the work of changing the relationship to this foreign body, the enigmatic, without denying its existence or attempting to master something bigger than conscious life that can never be mastered. For the clients with EUPD, they haven’t had a container, there hasn’t been opportunities to translate the enigmatic into conscious life and are left haunted by formless horrors.
\end{quote}

In my personal history working on the relationship with my own suffering has necessitated a turning towards the self-hatred I held for myself and associated states of depression. The therapeutic container, other to both the self and client, holds the

\textsuperscript{137} For a fuller exploration of hegemonic masculinity and the self-same system see \textit{Decentring Masculinity}.

\textsuperscript{138} For a fuller exploration of the trauma I suffered at school and how, in part, it formed my identity as a man see \textit{Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence}. 

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opportunity to go beyond the totality by forming an interhuman connection that witnesses disavowed affect. This points towards a non-Cartesian ontology, or an ontology that overthrows all ontologies in aiming towards the plural, heterogeneity in itself. The continuous decentring by the enigmatic means the ontology is forever undermining itself in the face-to-face encounter, an example of my journey to undermine socially inscribed ontologies can be found in *Trying to Decentre the Whiteness of my Being*. The movement from the totality of a disorder to a free formed expression of speech and affect, especially disavowed or silenced speech is made possible through the act of empathic listening. This is also a non-Cartesian epistemology as like the non-Cartesian ontology it doesn’t have any particular shape, the knowledge is generated in the interhuman connection of the therapeutic container, the enigmatic unknown which holds a primacy beyond self, Other, ontology and epistemology. It is genuine at the point of expression and can never be repeated. The symptom that acts as an excentric agent or alien upon the individual in their everyday actions. In the therapeutic container the symptom acts as an excentric agent of expression, from the outside of their self-structure. The symptom acts as a bridge between the individual and the enigmatic, its double energy makes possible a traumatic connection to the enigmatic as well as making possible a connection to the feminine sublime. In therapy the conditions of neutrality, empathy and witnessing make possible a movement from one place to another, a changing relationship to one’s suffering.

In *Still Anti-Oedipus? - Reflections on Deleuze and Guattari* I consider a mental health condition as an unfinished micropolitical revolution, this viewpoint straddles the individual and the social. Throughout the thesis I situate struggles in the everyday actions or rituals of society. This unsettles individual models of mind, the assumption of an individual mind that can be separated from society provides a foundation for traditional diagnosis or ontologies. Beginning with societal structures precludes any form of abstract solution that relies on linear progress or universal knowledge. The focus shifts from representing to registering historical patterns and movements, especially those which form into a symptom. For example in my experience of being bullied at school certain conditions that made the bullying possible: the normalised exclusion of femininity for males, the normalised outward expression of violence for boys to feel psychic unity through mastery and control, the homophobic trope of males who are feminine being labelled as gay which is likely an exclusion of the perpetrators own femininity, the inability for my nuclear family to contain and express difficult emotions within the family likely related to unprocessed transgenerational trauma and the inability of the school to contain and address uncomfortable realities.

In all chapters of *Part II – Working Through* I consider the social conditions that contribute to individual disorders. The re-writing registers these affects and in registering brings movement, loosening the fixation. In *Frustrated Surrender* I begin by quoting Lyotard’s movement to wage a war on totality. Throughout the thesis I have aimed to register rather than represent alongside a forceful movement to wage war on totalities, systems of oppression that silence. At times this has fallen into a binary me vs them stance. To go beyond these binaries, it is necessary to wage the
war from a place of plurality to register and activate differences rather than fall into the self-same structure of the hegemonic. To consider individual mental health conditions to have a social origin and a mental health condition as an unfinished micropolitical revolution I am always straddling the individual and societal. If a society is able to address the narcissistic wounds of the society itself it is possible to decentre hegemonic narratives. Challenging norms is a micropolitical movement that moves towards a society that can be a container for its symptoms allowing them to become agents of expression rather than structural representations. This makes possible the translation of the enigmatic into cultural jouissance rather than a society haunted by the enigmatic as an untranslated horror of hyper-regulated banality.

The final re-writing leads to the suspension of the self itself, the primordial object of consciousness. In Decentring Masculinity I quote Althusser (1972, p. 176), “individuals are always-already subjects”, meaning that a self makes possible consciousness and this could be taken in two ways: there is no beyond or there is a beyond. In Learning to Love this Heart Ache and What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond the momentary suspension of the self allows the feminine sublime to enter my being, there is a beyond to this subjectivity I am always-already. In The Schizoid Returns I name this energy The Wild Woman who cannot be named. The feminine sublime is difficult to write about because it is forever enigmatic and forever beyond words. Accessing the feminine sublime has been made possible by turning towards my suffering and accepting it, to some extent this has emptied it of historical content and cleared the path to what lies beyond my self. In What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond I quote Weil et al. (2002, p. 10) who speaks of something similar to the momentary suspension of self:

We have to go down to the root of our desires in order to tear the energy from its object. That is where the desires are rue in so far as they are energy. It is the object which is unreal. But there is an unspeakable wrench in the soul at the separation of a desire from its object.

Beyond the self as an object, my sense of ‘I’ repositions itself to the level of universal suffering, Levinas’ (1969) infinity:

This irreducible ‘I’ which is the irreducible basis of my suffering-I have to make this ‘I’ universal (Weil et al., 2002).

Suffering made universal makes possible the therapeutic container and the face-to-face encounter that can go beyond both therapist and client, a “return to the uncarved block” (Tzu et al., 2007, p. 60). These understandings go beyond classical ontology and epistemology that rely on a centred subject as a foundation. I explore in An Ontology of Becoming and an Epistemology of Body how the encounter, an ontology of becoming in the face-to-face encounter transgresses the representational world of readymade law and order, an epistemological “tacit knowing” (Parviainen, 2002, p. 18). In Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container I consider Bion and Levinas’ exploration of the face-to-face encounter and the conditions that make possible invitation of the feminine sublime. The feminine sublime transforms the structure of self and the relationship with the
enigmatic, this is a process of turning towards pain and using the symptom as a bridge to the beyond.

Only poetry can get close to the interplay of individual, societal and feminine sublime energies as they transgress classical definitions. In *What Am I Doing? Or Wanderings into the Beyond* I share extracts of Rilke’s (1994) poetry:

I am a string,  
stretched tightly over wide  
raging resonances.

The journey has taken me from fixation on trauma, to reclaiming the ‘I’ of first-person discourse, to overflowing the I into the beyond. In *Part I – Holding On* the enigmatic is experienced as something to master, in *Part III – Letting Go*, when the unknown is embraced I gain access to the feminine sublime. The identity of a repetition compulsion is static, whereas an identity fused with the feminine sublime, is forever becoming in its enigmatic origin and connection to heterogeneity in itself, a generative feminine force.
Titles of the PhD

The PhD has taken on many forms, this list of titles, that show the metamorphism over time:

- A Post-Structural Hauntology into the Work of Mourning
- Disjunction of thought as activism. Psychotherapy research into trainee therapists working with suicidal clients
- The phenomenological experience of trainee therapists working with suicidal clients
- Exploring traumatic encounters in male socialisation
- The Subject on Trial
- Rewriting phallocentricity
- Exclusion of Feminine - The production of a subordinate masculinity inclusive of the feminine
- The production of a subordinate masculinity inclusive of the feminine sphere
- The story of a male psychotherapist's gender stumbling and then possibly falling
- Transsubjective masculinity
- Decentring the self - a journey
- Decentring the self, a journey or Wanderings into the Beyond
- Decentring the self - A Journey or The ‘I’ becoming universal

Each new title is a return, each iteration has brought a different strand. Over time this has decentred my-self. A never-ending journey without hope of an end. As the grip of the self begins to lose its hold on my writing, the beyond, the feminine sublime has more space to infuse the words with another sense, in surrender.
Postscript: Developing a Public Face to the Work

In the thesis I have moved from a raw expression in Part I – Holding On to a more coherent and worked through narrative in Part III – Letting Go. I now move to communicate some of the thesis to a public audience as the thesis is brought to a close. This is the final stage of the schizoid returning\textsuperscript{139}. The unsaid and unspeakable left me cloaked in shame. My words were private, secret and internal, making it difficult to communicate straightforwardly. The re-writing has returned me to the everyday. The trauma no longer, “a gap that carries the force of the event” Caruth (1997, p. 7), now witnessed in the process of writing, a force that brings the power of the feminine sublime into language making non-enigmatic translations of the depth of my work for a public audience. This article (Seed, 2023) was written for my current services blog with the brief of exploring men’s eating disorder treatment. It picks up many of the themes of my thesis and offers a public facing summary of the work done. I have used footnotes to maintain the flow of the text while linking to other sections.

Men’s Eating Disorder Treatment

Historically gender has been split. Men have taken an active position as the creators of reality and the privileged position in society, while women have been pushed into a passive position, demonstrating “the inadequacy of language that reduces to active or passive when what lies beneath is really more complex” (Irigaray, 1985, p. 16). This system can be silencing\textsuperscript{140}. Silencing of needs, silencing of desire, silencing of taking up space. In a system of silencing it is often the case that self-esteem is slowly chipped away leaving a sense of unworthiness and seeking value externally.

In a review of the film Tár Suzie Orbach (2023) highlights the social elements of the inner conflicts girls and boys face:

\begin{quote}
The many internal conflicts of being raised a girl these days – and boy, too – are as costly, limiting and not simply expansive as we may hope…We all need to be heard, to manage the complex multiple inequalities that are structural and internal.
\end{quote}

Ideals and norms of masculinity can leave men feeling that it is not ok to express vulnerability or weakness\textsuperscript{141}. A sense they must be fit, strong, muscular, stoic, together, independent. Qualities of self such as weakness, vulnerability, needing others, emotional, empathic, qualities that are traditionally considered feminine can be stigmatised, perpetuating the norm, and leaving boys and men who diverge from the norm with an inner conflict. In transactional systems of schooling and work the inequality and oppression to some extent detaches itself from the gender binary.

\textsuperscript{139} See The Schizoid Returns.
\textsuperscript{140} Silencing is explored in Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence.
\textsuperscript{141} The inability to express vulnerability is explored in Decentring Masculinity and Writing Into Silence, Writing Through Silence.
meaning both woman and men feel increasingly silenced or oppressed, with seemingly unsolvable inner conflicts.

Growing up in Northern England I experienced oppression and bullying at school which led to difficult inner conflict. The softer, traditionally feminine qualities began to feel unacceptable, yet I always knew they were important parts of myself. It wasn’t until I saw a psychotherapist and then underwent psychotherapy training that I began to accept these qualities and value and express them in the world. Before this they lived silently within me and in the silence contributed to a sense of self hatred, loneliness, and longing.

Sometimes inner conflicts, which are often gendered, can lead to solutions involving internal protective mechanisms that promise resolution of these inner conflicts, when it has been impossible to resolve them in the world. An eating disorder is an expression of an attempt consciously or unconsciously to resolve these conflicts:

> Anorexia was a distraction. I created my own world, governed by my rules of starvation. Any bad feelings I was suffering became transformed into the need to eat less. I also liked the way that it numbed feelings. I was not so aware of my intense loneliness and longing for human relationships (Hertzmann & Newbiggin, 2019, p. 261).142

Although this quote applies to anorexia a similar related inner world that seeks to use food as a way to solve outer relational and affective conflicts can be seen in binge eating disorder and bulimia. Sweeting et al. (2015, p. 1) highlights that eating disorders for men remain: “underdiagnosed, undertreated and misunderstood”. There is an increase of men suffering from eating disorders and within the professional community less perception of men’s need for eating disorder treatment (Sonneville & Lipson, 2018). [The treatment centre] strive to embed diversity, equity, and inclusion at every level of treatment including the training of staff, recognising and attempting to deconstruct the elements of inner experience that could inhibit the understanding or ability to listen to a diverse range of clients.

Psychotherapy and group psychotherapy at [the treatment centre] involves witnessing and hearing the unheard, the silenced. This can help to release bottled up emotions that have not been allowed to reach the world. Men who have been socialised into feeling that it is not ok to reach out and express these feelings, perceived as weak, can benefit from being heard by professionals and other clients, male and female, to support changing perspectives of self.

Returning to efforts to deconstruct the active/passive binary and the associated internal conflicts, Lyotard introduces a term passibility143 (1995, p. 403), “the ability to be weak…to wait for”, Lyotard values passibility as necessary to express the depth of our inner selves. When working with one’s past wounds at [treatment centre] a man can include the qualities that have traditionally been considered feminine and may have been excluded from one’s identity. A passage to a different kind of

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142 This quote is taken from Gender Difference and Eating Disorders: The Ethical Container.
143 This term is introduced in Attempting to Destroy and used in Four Phases, Four Deaths, Odin’s Palace.
relationship with oneself and others. At [treatment centre] the witnessing of pain and vulnerability can be a transformative experience, and this is one of many ways [treatment centre] supports men to loosen the grip of an eating disorder, expanding and strengthening what it means to be a man.
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**Word Count:** 96,119