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SHOW TO TELL
A PSYCHOANALYTIC REFLECTION ON PHOTOGRAPHY
AS A TOOL FOR UNCONSCIOUS STORYTELLING IN
PERSONAL AND CLINICAL PRACTICE

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Abstract

In this thesis, I invite you to join me on a journey, told in photographs and shown through words, into the realms of my reflexivities in an attempt to explore new ways that reflexive practices can be used as a means for personal and professional development in counselling and psychotherapy. While there have been many discussions into the use and importance of reflectivity as a tool for personal and professional development within the field of counselling and psychotherapy (McLeod, 1999, 2006; Rose, 2011, 2018; Sanders et al., 2021), I present through this thesis that to simply reflect – that is, to bounce back – is not enough. Instead, I propose that trainee and qualified counsellors and psychotherapists should be encouraged to develop a diverse range of reflexivities (Serra Undurraga, 2020a) – ways of bending backwards and inwards – that not only question the source of a feeling or experience, but also examine the ways in which these questions are being asked.

This thesis is the product of an inquiry into the need to develop personal and unique understandings of, as well as methods of engagement with, reflexivity. Deriving from my own practice of using photography as a method of engagement with my reflexivities, this thesis seeks to explore, without presenting formal conclusions or universal claims, ways of answering the following questions: does a photograph itself hold the capacity to offer a reflexive space on its own, or does it require language to be able to hold itself as a formally reflexive practice? How might photography, as a reflexive practice, assist us as psychotherapy trainees and practitioners in exploring and understanding ourselves and our Unconscious better than we would otherwise? Is photographic theory and practice able to align itself to psychoanalytic theory and practice and how might it assist in developing an individual’s capacity for reflexivity?

At the core of my attempts to explore potential answers to the above questions is a unique post qualitative (St. Pierre, 2019) methodology that seeks to illuminate what happens when we think without method (Jackson, 2017): reflexivity-in-practice. Utilising an onto-epistemological (Barad, 2007) stance of immanence, performativity, and production, this thesis diffracts (Barad, 2007) the various intra-actions (Barad, 2003) between Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis and photography through the perspective of critical posthumanism (Braidotti, 2019)
in order to explore how they can be aligned to create a new form of reflexivity: latency. By combining latent reflexivity with four other aspects of reflexivity – diffraction (Barad, 2007), mastery, foreignness, and performative meta-reflexivity (Serra Undurraga, 2020a) – I present a new version of performative meta-reflexivity that has both been produced by and producing from my reflexivity-in-practice methodology.

The key product of the methodology shown in this thesis is my personal reflexive photography, taken throughout my time as a trainee as well as whilst writing this thesis. These photographs are presented, along with several pieces of reflexive writing, in order to show the ways that they have come to influence, and be influenced by, my reflexive practice. These photographs bring into focus potential answers to the questions presented at the outset through placing a focus on the latent aspects of my reflexivity. The insights and explorations of these diffractive, post qualitative inquiries lead me to present a conclusion that for myself, and potentially others who experience difficulties in using language to fully or sufficiently express or engage with their reflexivities, photography is an inherently psychoanalytic, reflexive tool. Photography, when engaged in reflexively, can be seen as equal to, if not above, the world of language. Photographs hold within themselves a world full of life and history that does not need to be verbally articulated, but instead recognised for the wealth of knowledge that they possess. As such, photography can be used as a reflexive tool to guide psychotherapy trainees and practitioners further into their journey of personal and professional development, and perhaps show something that their words would otherwise be unable to.

Key words: Psychotherapy, Reflexivity, Photography, Psychoanalysis, Diffraction, Post qualitative inquiry, Posthumanism, Freud, Lacan, Personal Development, Professional Development, Counselling and Psychotherapy Training, Reflexive Practice

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Lay Summary

In this thesis, I explore the ways that photography can be used to help trainee and qualified counsellors and psychotherapists learn to know themselves better. By creating a new definition of reflexivity, which asks us to question the ways that we question ourselves and our ideas, I present an opportunity for photography to be used as a tool for personal and professional development in psychotherapy.

This thesis begins by examining and questioning the ways that reflexivity is taught to psychotherapists during their training, which focuses on using tools such as written journals or personal therapy to help develop reflexivity. From this, I present the new definition for reflexivity that is used to create the research method for this thesis. This research method is then used to look at a selection of my own photographs and journal entries that I made while I was a trainee on my psychotherapy programme.

Following my photographs, I present a discussion that explores photography as a tool for reflexivity by looking at several theories created by the psychotherapists Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. These theories are then explored further by looking at what several philosophers and photographers, who use psychotherapy to inform their own work, have to say about the connection between photography and psychotherapy.

In the end, I offer several suggestions for the field of psychotherapy and training programmes for psychotherapists on how they can change their old definition of reflexivity for the new one shown in this thesis. The most important suggestion that I offer is for psychotherapists to recognise that photographs do not need words to describe what they show. Instead, photographs should be allowed to exist as they are, without a caption or description from someone telling us what we are supposed to see or feel.
Thesis Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself, and has not been submitted, in whole or in part, to any other degree or professional qualification. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Maorr Zadok

30th November, 2023
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I wish to acknowledge the many people who have provided me with the constant inspiration, guidance, support, and nurturance throughout my journey in becoming a psychotherapist and in producing this thesis.

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I also wish to acknowledge my tutors and supervisors who have challenged me as I presented headstrong the notions that have followed me throughout my life. To Seamus and Karen, I can never express fully the gratitude that I feel for your constant belief in me and my process. Your feedback and critiques have allowed me to shine brightly and have given me the opportunity to show something that I had long believed to be unseeable.

To the people who hold the love that I have known in this life, my friends and family, thank you for inspiring me to never settle for what I tell myself I am going to become and always pushing me to dream bigger. Your trust and belief in me has allowed me to persevere even when I felt that all way lost.

Finally, and with the greatest affection, I would like to thank my parents, Batel and Yoav, and my sister, Miya, for giving me a name to live up to and a home to always return to. Words, and even photographs, will never be enough to repay what you have given me in this life.
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FOR THOSE WHO TAUGHT ME HOW
TO LISTEN TO THE RIVERS
SING SWEET SONGS
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Chapter One

Introduction

I have always struggled to put pen to a paper. Or rather, in this instance, fingers to a keyboard. The acts of writing or speaking succinctly have often eluded me throughout my life. Sentences that could be shortened to simplify their meaning or make the message that I endeavour to share are often wrought with a desire to have myself heard and known by my other, giving them as full of a glimpse as they can perceive into the very essence of my existence. Perhaps this past sentence shows you exactly what I mean. If only there were a way that I could show what I was seeing, what I was feeling, to those who sought to listen to me.

Throughout this thesis, I invite you to follow along in my inquiry into the trepidatious relationship between photography and language. Language – the constantly evolving landscape through which we communicate – is often difficult in fulfilling the desire to be known that I hold within myself. Moreover, I have found through my experiences that language is wholly insufficient and inefficacious to its task. Whether it being through the aforementioned pen, keyboard, song or even its most reductive and ubiquitous form, talking, language has forever been deficient in my world. Afterall, how could it possibly seek to cover all the ground of experience that my (fewer-than) many years of life has had? No matter how painted my words, or exposed my reflection, or composed my thoughts were, there has always been a gap (or perhaps a lack, to welcome into the conversation the world of psychoanalysis that will be explored later in this thesis) between what was thought – or rather, felt – and what was shared.

Or perhaps it is not an act of hearing and listening that is necessary, but rather seeing. We have all heard the age-old adage of “a picture is worth one-thousand words,” have we not? If the meaning behind this saying were true, then I would merely need to show a certain number of photographs in a specific order and this thesis will have written itself. Of course, this would be impractical and not suitable for the task at hand. Perhaps, then, I might adjust this idiom to say that a picture can elicit one-thousand words. Afterall, pictures of various forms have always been utilized to communicate between people. Before formal language as we
know it today was created, there were pictures. Drawings in caves and on stone
dating back millennia have been found and countless meanings have been derived
from them. Yet in our present day, we struggle to allow a photograph to remain a
photograph.

Whether it be hieroglyphics or a still-frame portrait, humans have always felt
a need to voice an opinion or write a description of their understanding of what lies
before their eyes. I challenge that there has never been an occasion where someone
has entered a silent film, watched it, gone home and never written nor uttered a
word of opinion about it to another person. It would be outside of our nature to do
so. And yet, even with the countless interpretations or musings on a work of art, the
language used to do so would be lacking. I have experienced this lack countless times
for myself. I would argue that we all have, in one way or another. We have all had
moments where the pen we put to a paper is petrified at the thought of what it might
have to say or feeling that no matter how many different ways we can attempt to
articulate what is in our minds, it won’t do justice to the truth behind it. Where, then,
do the camera, the couch, and I come into this?

Though parts of this introduction may feel to be ramblings, and I am well
aware of my proclivity to ramble, I do believe that they all hold an important place
in this thesis. You will come to hear me describe countless things as having occurred
“for much of my life” in this thesis, and I would like to hold that statement as truth.
Throughout the reflexive process that I have engaged in to create this thesis, I find
that there are three points of origination for the thoughts and feelings that have
occurred in them. Whilst they may seem to have a sense of temporal hierarchy to
them, I wish to stress that they each hold equal importance. The first is the camera.
Though the bulk of its personal importance is described in the fifth chapter of this
thesis, the camera has been a constant in my life. I have been both the picture taker
and the picture taken – the wisher for something to be held, and the one that could
easily be forgotten. The second is the couch. Metonymous with the field of
psychoanalysis, the couch was where I first came to recognise the various aspects of
who I am. It allowed me a space to begin exploring and developing my reflexivity,
stepping onto a battleground that I would come to look upon as others began their
journey.
The third and final point of origination for this thesis is myself. Whilst it may be easy to place the two previous points into myself, I do wish for them to be held as separate. The self that I will be presenting throughout this thesis is one that has been found and cultivated throughout my time on this doctorate programme. It is a version of myself that seeks to embody the reflexivity discussed in the next chapter. It is one that found a way to bridge the gap between language and the image – between the lost and the latent. Most importantly, the self that I present is one that is continuing to grow, finding a space to explore the previous versions of it with the goal that, with time, it too will be seen.

The Camera

In the early days of my life, the sound of a camera’s shutter could be heard as often as the switching between languages. My parents are both immigrants from Israel, having meandered their way through the vastness of the world before establishing roots in San Francisco, my home. Moments in our lives were captured and held, saved for eternity: a baby perching in the grass; the preludes to a first haircut; grandparents clutching and doting on a new-born hours after he was brought home from the hospital. While these photographs were taken and saved to keep a memory of moments we wished not to forget, they were also sent around the world to share a message with those who could not witness their occurrence for themselves. Words of love and happiness were exchanged across multiple languages, each attempting to convey the sentiments brought up by seeing the scenes depicted in the photographs. Each person had their own reaction to them, sharing the feelings that arose from unknown places.

With each passing day, the sound of the shutter’s snap could be heard more and more. It mixed in with the rhythms and grooves of the Grateful Dead and Bob Dylan; an additional instrument found within their percussion. As life was lived, so too were its moments captured and its snapshots continuously shared. And yet some moments, some feelings, I have kept uncaptured and left standing against the test of time within my memory. At times I wish I allowed myself to take the picture while the moment was present. To capture an image is to immortalise it as photograph. To allow it to be held for only a moment is to savour it.
Throughout my life I have constantly battled with this enigmatic feeling of what to do with a given moment. In the fifth chapter of this thesis, I will come to describe how I first began to involve myself in the world of photography. It is a hobby and an aspect of my life that has at times seemed to come from nowhere whilst at the same time being ever-present. The camera was not my first instrument of choice, but it is one that I have come to know and hold dearly. Holding a camera has brought me countless moments of joy throughout the past decade of my life. It has also forced me to hold in my heart many harrowing memories that I wish I could forget.

It would have been quite easy for me to destroy all evidence of them ever having happened. I could delete the scanned pictures from my phone or email, though I would find it quite tempting to store a secret copy some place should I ever wish to change my mind. If I wished to grant further assurance that the picture were destroyed, I could take the processed film negatives and cast them into a fire or douse them in chemicals to prevent further scans being made. Yet still, there would remain opportunities in the future for more to be created. Perhaps, then, the only true way to prevent any further memory to be held immortal would be to destroy my camera altogether. With its lens shattered and chassis warped by force of stone and wood and the strength of my arm, it would come to be rendered useless. To do so, however, would mean to also destroy a part of myself that had yet to come alive, forcing it to remain in a state of limbo and latency.

*The Couch*

I first began my journey in psychotherapy at the age of seven. My elementary school had requested that my parents take me to see a therapist to explore issues regarding the management of my childhood anger, which had begun to make its way into the classroom and onto the play yard. I don’t recall how long it was after the school made its request that I found myself in the waiting room with Dr. C, a therapist and psychoanalyst who worked with children, adolescents, and adults. My time as a child with Dr. C was short, to my memory, perhaps only a couple of months. However, this would not be the last time that I would be seeing him as a client. Nearly a decade later, I found myself back in his waiting room, seeking to explore
and understand how the loss of several friends to suicide, as well as issues stemming from a broken-down relationship, were affecting my life.

For several weeks I sat across from Dr. C, discussing the issues that had brought me to his office. I would often avert my gaze from him, looking out the window of his office towards the shimmering waters of the San Francisco Bay, dreaming of the taste of its salty waters and the warm breeze of coastal winds caressing my cheeks. As my eyes and thoughts returned to the room that we were in, I noticed the couch next to his seat and inquired with him as to its purpose. He told me that he uses it with some of his clients as it can help them think more clearly, focus their words, or feel as though they are having a conversation with themselves, with him responding when it was appropriate. Thus began my relationship with the couch.

The following few years were filled with me further exploring the losses in my life as well as exploring dreams of my future. I shared the images of my mind – what I might look like, how I might sound, the places in the world that I would live in. If this younger version of myself were to see an image of who I am today, I dare say he would smile to know what life has been lived. “Not bad at all, then.” Over time I came to understand that the type of therapy Dr. C practiced was called psychoanalysis. I had heard of it briefly in a few of the psychology courses I had taken at a local community college. The knowledge that I had received a version of it throughout the years began to pique my interest – so much so that it became a dream of mine to offer it to others. This would not be the last couch in my life, however. In fact, it would come to serve as the catalyst for what is coming to be a life-long fascination with it.

In the autumn of 2015, I began my journey to complete my undergraduate education. I had decided to enrol at a small Liberal Arts college across the country named Hampshire College to take part in their Psychoanalytic Studies concentration. As I have mentioned, I had previously only been given a few short paragraphs and chapters on the works of Freud. Yet I now found myself staring at bookshelves full of his collective works as well as the thoughts and theories of those who continued them after him. The names Winnicott, Klein, and Erikson began to hold meaning and significance in my everyday conversations and thoughts. I began to consume their
writings, finding meaning and making sense of the life I had lived up to that point in them. To little surprise, however, I found myself craving for something – something that touched into the full aspect of my experience and an explanation for why it lies on tip of my tongue – unsayable.

In my second semester at Hampshire College, my supervisor and tutor, Annie G. Rogers, would hold her yearly course of the studies of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. I had briefly come across his works during her course on child and adolescent psychoanalytic psychotherapy where his theories of language and the way that it impacted the Unconscious struck a chord within me. All of us are shaped by language. For a reason described later on in this thesis, I began to see myself and my experiences in his work. In those moments, my obsession with the Freudian couch was replaced by its Lacanian re-upholstering.

The worlds of the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real would quickly come to fill my world. Through them, I began to fantasise about what my life would be like as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist. I would come to spend my final year of undergraduate study writing a novel imagining a young psychoanalyst-in-training and her work with a young male patient. Both of these characters represented versions of myself, past and present. As they went from session to session, I found these fantasies turn into dreams, and from dreams into a goal. I had decided at that time that my next steps would be to become like the character I imagined: a psychoanalytic psychotherapist.

A few short months after completing my undergraduate education, I was again found in the waiting room of a psychoanalyst, Dr. T. Twice a week I lay on my back staring at ceiling panels, running through the images of a life lived and a dream of what was to come. Though my words were able to offer Dr. T an opportunity to understand me better, it was through the lyrics in the songs that I shared with him that truly allowed us to walk together in an unconscious world. Yet I still felt that something was missing. Though the lyrics spoke words that my own lips could not bring forth, I began to feel that they were not truly of me. Instead, they spoke to something that would precede the words. They spoke to something that I wished they could show.
And Me

The self that I present to you throughout this thesis is one that struggles to find a space in time to call its own. It is a self that has previously existed, is currently existing, and has yet to come into existence. What I mean to say is, the self that is shown, not only through my narration, but in my reflexive musings, exists outside of a traditional temporal framework. In the reflexive productions that are to come, I have found myself grappling with understanding and reconstructing the ideas that I had previously held throughout my life, as well as attempting to explore a space of existence that I can only dream of – the future.

At times throughout this thesis, I have experienced myself returning to these younger versions of self, attempting to enter once more the world that it existed in. It is a strange feeling to do so, as if I am walking in a dream able to view myself as I once was. I can once again feel the air get stuck in my curls that had yet to know the wish to be hidden. I recognise the scents of my primary school play-yard and the taste of the honeysuckle that lined its walls. I recall the voices of friends and family who have left this world, the sounds of their laughter echoing through the cavernous space of time. There are moments where I question the knowledge that I held of myself then, and speak to myself as though I were giving a tutorial on the life that has yet to be lived. It is painful to do so, yet I find myself wishing to offer an apology to my younger self, as they had no idea of what the future would come to tell.

As my reflections go on, I let go of my childish hand to take grasp of a future version of myself. Unlike the past, which we might take for granted as an easy source for knowledge and learnt experience, the future is an unknown fantasy. Perhaps it is more apt to say, it is unknown which version of the future I am seeking to know. Is it a future dreamt up by myself when I was young and just coming to know the world around me? Or is it a future that is immediately awaiting to become present, to which the steps of achieving only require for me to put one foot ahead of the other to make come true? If I were to make a guess as to which future I have engaged with, I believe that there is only one reasonable answer: both. It is a future that has been shaped by both past and present versions of my self, seeking to fulfil the wishes that both have placed into it. The future I experience, however, is one that decides to
speak back, rather than be met with silence. When asked what form and shape it will take, the future that I experience only has one answer: I don’t know.

It was commonly said throughout my training as a psychotherapist that the future, as well as parts of the past, will remain unknown. As such, they will come to be experiences as uncomfortable. Throughout my training, as well as this thesis, I have come to recognise many of these unknown discomforts and have sought to find an answer to them. Not an answer that places them into formal knowing, however, but instead into a space of the known unknown. The form that this known unknown takes for me is to be found in a version of the Lacanian Unconscious, whereby it might, at times, come into existence and consciousness, but remain unknowable in its entirety. In this way, the versions of reflexivity – which you will come to know in the chapters following this introduction – that I have engaged with throughout this thesis seek to bring together the known, the unknown, and the known unknown. And now, to answer the first unknown that is presented: what does this thesis actually consist of?

Questions of What is to Come

What is to be presented in this thesis is a series of chapters that will each endeavour to illuminate my understanding of the following questions. Each chapter does not answer a single question, but comes together to offer an enlightened discussion into the topic of reflexivity in counselling and psychotherapy training, and its role and purpose in the personal and professional development of trainees. Throughout the rest of this thesis, I will only use psychotherapy and adjacent terms to describe the whole of counselling and psychotherapy, though brevity and concision play a part. In truth, I choose to make this distinction as a performative choice – I am a psychotherapist, not a counsellor. As we move forward, I wish that you keep the following questions in your mind, coming back to re-examine them at the end of each chapter to see if your initial answers to them have changed throughout this thesis.

The first question that I will seek to answer, which lies at the heart of this thesis, is: does a photograph itself hold the capacity to offer a reflexive space on its
own, or does it require language to be able to hold itself as a formally reflexive practice? Secondly, how might photography, as a reflexive practice, assist us as psychotherapy trainees and practitioners in exploring and understanding ourselves and our Unconscious better than we would otherwise? A third and final question: Is photographic theory and practice able to align itself to psychoanalytic theory and practice and how might it assist in developing an individual’s capacity for reflexivity to assist in their personal development?

The source for each of these questions will be explored throughout this thesis, though I wish to also give it space here to be addressed. These questions have borne their answers from the reflexive practices that fill this thesis. Much like the versions of reflexivity that I contemplate in the third and fourth chapters of this thesis, they exist to both call and respond. As you will come to see, these questions were created in response to a practice that I have been part of since before they were asked. Perhaps this places them in a space of being self-answering. I believe that acknowledging them as such would be correct to do, as the very nature of the subjective experience that this thesis will come to explore requires that they be created in the past: they serve the purpose to reflex on what has already been reflexed. Additionally, they have no formal answer – or at least one that is not able to be declared universal. The answers for these questions that are found within the research and discussion of this thesis may only hold true for me myself. For you, the reader, they might not. While there is a potential for us to come to differing conclusions, I do believe that the arguments made within these pages will come to show that the personal subjective nature of photography, reflexivity, and the Unconscious is just that: personally subjective.

A second consideration that I wish to convey regarding this thesis is that it does not have any formal literature review section. You will not find it listed within the table of contents that have come before this, nor will there be any annotations or footnotes describing the purpose of any resource that has been utilised to write this. Instead, the literature review takes place throughout the thesis as a whole, save for the fifth, photographic and “reflexive data” chapter. In this way, all of the chapters in this thesis serve as an opportunity to review and find space for the questions I have presented at the start of this section.
A further consideration, then, is the switching of voices that you might notice throughout this thesis. Though it has all been written by myself (and I assure you that it has), chapters four and six are notably more distanced from the voice that writes to you now. I believe they are felt this way, perhaps deliberately, because they work to touch on something that is greater than my personal experiences. Unlike the other chapters, these two grapple heavily with the world of academia which – as you will come to see in the next chapter – has the capability to stifle a voice just as much, if not more, than it has to join it in chorus. With that said, what does the rest of this thesis entail?

By seeking to answer the questions at the heart of this thesis, I aim to engage with the fields of psychotherapy training and psychoanalysis by presenting photography as a form of reflexivity that produces more than just pictures and images for reflective commentary. Instead, photography as a reflexive practice allows for significant opportunities to explore new avenues of personal and professional growth in psychotherapy trainees. By positioning the pictures as more than just an object for linguistic description, trainees may find that they are able to engage with aspects of themselves that language and words have long abandoned and, potentially, present photography as a tool to be used in therapeutic spaces as well.

In many ways, this thesis has already begun with this introduction. As I mentioned earlier on, it has a sense of rambling to it. To quote The Allman Brother’s Band (1973), “I hope you’ll understand / that I was born a ramblin’ man.” This first introduction chapter itself serves as part of the reflexive practices that will continue to be examined throughout this thesis. It has afforded me an opportunity to express linguistically, in the best way that I can, what occurs within me when I stop to think about who I am, where I came from, and the reasoning behind these various thoughts and feelings. Much like a play or film, this introduction is the preface, the prelude, the exposition of what is to come.

The first act, then, begins with chapter two, where I will be holding my initial discussions and explorations of reflexivity. It begins with an outline of the importance placed on reflexivity in psychotherapy training, citing several texts commonly used throughout my own training. Through discussion, it will be shown
that what most texts in psychotherapy training describe as reflexivity is actually, in my argument, its predecessor: reflectivity. I will then bring into focus the practice of reflective journaling in respect to its prominence as the primary form of reflexive practice undertaken by psychotherapy trainees, returning again to the texts found in my training as well as a few brief notes on my own troubled experiences with this practice. In transition from this scene, I offer a question of what, if any, other forms of reflexive practices might be suitable for psychotherapy trainees.

Following this question, in chapter three I will attempt to create a working definition of reflexivity that is to be used throughout this thesis. In doing so, I will come to present a version of reflexivity that stands in multiple positions. It is both actively present and hidden, making itself visible while also requiring that it be found. Starting with an exploration of my early conceptions of reflexivity, this will be the first interaction with both a Freudian and Lacanian Unconscious – further detailed in chapter six – which demands to be seen as it attempts to remain hidden.

As the chapter progresses, I start to grow and develop my understanding of reflexivity through an intimate reading of Karen Serra Undurraga’s (2020a, 2020b, 2022, 2023a) work on developing a reflexivity that intra-acts (Barad, 2003) with Karen Barad’s (2007) conception of diffraction. By involving the likes of Foucault, Butler, Deleuze and Guattari, Bourdieu, and others, I come to create a definition of reflexivity that is in constant evolution, as it belongs to me and I, too, am everchanging.

In chapter four, the final scene of this act, I will utilise this evolved definition of reflexivity to place myself and this research within the context of a critical posthuman (Braidotti, 2013, 2019) position, diffracted (Barad, 2007) through post qualitative inquiry (St. Pierre, 2018, 2019) that I wish to hold throughout this paper. Through this post qualitative posthuman perspective, I will place my work and research within an onto-epistemology of immanence, performativity, and production. This triumvirate of onto-epistemologies, when combined with my post qualitative posthumanism, will offer an understanding of how my definition of reflexivity has gone to create the methodology for my research: reflexivity-in-practice. Focusing heavily on the works of Elizabeth St. Pierre and Alecia Jackson, my methodology of reflexivity-in-practice shows how, when engaging in post qualitative inquiry and thinking without method, something new that extends
beyond the confines of traditional qualitative research is able to produce something that is equally as unique. The outlining of this methodology will serve as the end of this chapter, giving way to see how this methodology has been carried out to create the body of this thesis.

The fifth chapter of this thesis contains the largest bulk of reflexive material. Similarly to this first section, it is largely autobiographical in nature and content. It opens where the first act closes, positioning myself and my experiences as a young, novice photographer seeking a way to articulate the parts of myself that have been unspoken for many years. Following this walk through my journey into photography and the creation of my reflexive photographic practice, I offer to you a view of my photographic works. Accompanying some, but not all, of these photographs are the initial journal entries that I have written in association to them. These journal entries, you will come to read, were written, more often than not, after a fairly significant amount of time has passed since the photograph itself was taken. At times, this is due to me forgetting about the undeveloped roll of film as it laid dormant on the cool shelves of my refrigerator. At other times, however, it is because of something far more significant than my absent mindedness. Each photograph shown represents a different year along my journey towards completing this doctorate – creating a delineation between my past and present selves. In addition to the accompanying journal entries, I begin to engage in further reflexive practices by reflecting on these initial reflections, as well as producing reflexive commentary for the photographs that had not been commented on previously. You will come to see for yourself what time yields, as well as be given a challenge in engaging with each photograph and its reflection.

The third and final act of this thesis is the longest in length and in discourse. Fittingly so, I should add, as it is the discussion section of this thesis. A note on this chapter, before giving it an outline, is that much like the first act, it serves as a continuation of the literature review. Much of the resources utilised within it have been used in creating an understanding of what the fields of reflexivity, psychoanalysis, and photographic theory have to say about one another. As such, each turn of phrase within this discussion is an opportunity to elaborate and further recontextualise the pre-and proceeding points of discussion. To begin this dialogue, I will return to comment on and further extrapolate the closing idea of the first act
– a refrain of sorts – in order to once again ponder it following the revelations of the second act. In doing so, I will begin to present and define the concept of reflexive photography, which sits as the term I wish to coin for the reflexive practice that I have engaged in.

As this initial conversation on reflexivity settles, it will be used a diffractive (Barad, 2007) launching pad, beginning an exploration of how psychoanalytic theories can further inform the discussion of reflexivity. In this section, the concepts of nachträglichkeit and après-coup, created by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, respectively, will be given a podium to discuss the importance of latency, imagination, as well as compulsion and desire. With a movement from Freudian to Lacanian thought, I will present how psychoanalysis has been overly influenced by the power of language, using Lacan’s three registers as a primary example. Through this turn in the conversation, a clear understanding of how my interactions and struggles with the Lacanian Unconscious have come to shape the creation of my reflexive practices and this thesis as a whole, with a particular look into how psychoanalysis attempts, or fails, to consider posthuman and post qualitative perspectives. These psychoanalytic concepts will then serve as a point of reference for the next part of this diffractive discussion on reflexivity.

To adhere to the rule of thirds, the third and final discussion within this sixth chapter will revolve around theories and philosophies of photographic practice. To offer an initial exposure, the philosophies of Jacques Derrida will be offered as a bridge between the psychoanalytic philosophies presented in the previous discussion with regards to photography as a tool for memory. Utilising the writings of Ignas Cassar (2012), David Bate (2010, 2017), Dimitri Mellos (2013), photography will be presented as a tool for the retrospective and latent functions of memory, strengthening the bridge between the psychoanalysis and photography. From here, I will present how photography, as a constituent of the Lacanian register of the Imaginary, fights against the presumed supremacy of language in the Lacanian Unconscious. Supplemented by exploring my own experiences in chapter five further, I will call upon several modern photographers and psychoanalysts (Despenser, 2006; Eigen, 2016; Gerald, 2016; Hayes, 2002; Pally, 2001; Teitelbaum, 2016) to present what can be gained if the photographic image is allowed to thrive.
as equal to, if not at times above, the written word and language. And so, the curtain shutters upon this third and final act.

Following this denouement, I will present my conclusion to offer an answer to the questions given at the start of this section, as well as my final thoughts, and perhaps some further questions, on the topics discussed throughout this thesis. Similarly to this introduction, I hold a wish that my conclusion will serve as both a point of destination and departure. As many of its likeness do, it will endeavour to bring into cohesion the various threads and tangential thoughts and questions that have been offered throughout this thesis. These questions, naturally, will lead into other questions, and others beyond those. Those will, however, be outside of the framing of this particular thesis. Instead, they will serve the purpose of exploring how others might aim to replicate, if at all possible, the process that I have gone through in creating this thesis: reflexivity-in-practice.

As we now begin to move closer towards the heart of this thesis, I wish to present one final consideration by creating an initial working definition for the driving force that produced this thesis: the Unconscious. Though there are many definitions for the Unconscious, this thesis seeks to combine four different perspectives of the Unconscious into one. To do this, I borrow aspects of the Unconscious from both Freud and Lacan, utilising them as a point of departure to explore the Unconscious through the lenses of posthumanism and photography. In doing so, I present in this thesis an understanding of the Unconscious as a significant foreign force that influences not only how we feel, think, or interact with the world around us, but also with the worlds within us. Before giving a unified definition for the Unconscious, however, I find it prudent to discuss and define each of its constituent parts, beginning with its first “creator,” Freud.

Though Freud changed his definition of the Unconscious countless times throughout his career (Akhtar & O’Neil, 2011; Evans, 1996; Freud, 1900, 1915; Perelberg, 2005), this thesis concerns itself most with his understandings of it as described in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and subsequent essay *The Unconscious* (1915). For Freud, the Unconscious has been the driving force and home of the repressed (Akhtar & O’Neil, 2011; Perelberg, 2005). However, Freud wanted it known from the outset that “the repressed does not cover everything that
is unconscious” (1915, p. 166). To this end, the definition of the Freudian Unconscious that I wish to utilise throughout this thesis is one that is based on a mechanistic entity which both stores memories and the stimuli associated with them in a latent state and houses experiences that are forever to be lost through repression (Freud, 1915, p. 172). As such, the aspects of the Freudian Unconscious used in this thesis are those of repression and latency.

Building off of Freud, Jacques Lacan presents the Unconscious as something beyond simply “that which is repressed” (Lacan, 1977, p. 163). Instead, through his return to and subsequent departure from Freud, Lacan puts forth the Unconscious as being “structured like a language” (1993, p. 167). For Lacan, the Unconscious is created by the interactions between three registers: the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real (Evans, 1996). A deeper discussion of these registers can be found in chapter six. Furthermore, and perhaps of greatest influence to my definition of the Unconscious, Lacan describes the Unconscious as being an entity that is separate and “outside” (Lacan, 1977, p. 49) the individual. From Lacan, I wish to bring into my definition of the Unconscious both its extimate nature and its tripartite structure.

Moving beyond psychoanalytic understandings of the Unconscious, I wish now to create a definition of the Unconscious from a posthuman perspective. In this thesis, I seek to combine Karen Barad’s (2007) notion of posthumanism as creating boundaries with Rosi Braidotti’s (2013, 2019) critical posthumanism that blurs these boundaries, the posthuman Unconscious exists in a liminal space between the human and non-human. The human does not hold any control of mastery over the Unconscious and instead yields to it (see chapter three) as an external entity that produces something when encountering the non-human.

Given the exteriority of the Lacanian and posthuman Unconscious, it would follow then that that which is deemed non-human may also hold an Unconscious. For this thesis, this can be seen through the photographic Unconscious. Through an integration of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory with Walter Benjamin’s concept of the “optical unconscious” (Benjamin, 1999, 2002; Smith & Sliwinski, 2017), I present the photographic Unconscious as what is created by the intra-actions (Barad, 2003) of the other three versions of the Unconscious discussed here. The posthuman Unconscious works to diffract (Barad, 2007) Benjamin’s (1999,
2002) optical unconscious – which allows for the communication between what the human eye cannot see but the non-human camera still captures: “desires, fears, and structures of defense” (Smith & Sliwinski, 2017, p. 9) – through Freud’s (1900, 1915) latent and repressed Unconscious and Lacan’s (1977, 1993) three registers, in turn creating a cyclical process that leads to something being produced – the photographic Unconscious.

In the end, there is not one singular Unconscious proposed in this thesis. On the contrary, what is proposed is an Unconscious that is immanent and dynamic, constantly adapting and changing to produce something new with each interaction between the human and non-human, which, for the purposes of this thesis, are myself and apparatuses of photography. As this thesis progresses, I will begin to lessen the differentiation between these various forms of the Unconscious and, when referencing the Unconscious as part of my reflexive practice, present it as both an entity and process that facilitates the producing intra-action between myself and my photographs. The name for this Unconscious, then, must be the reflexive Unconscious. It is everchanging and adaptive to the person and moment it is encountered in, constantly producing something new when it is met. And now, we begin to delve into the contents of these productions.
To embark on a journey into the world of psychodynamic and psychoanalytic psychotherapy requires one to return to their past. For a client, there might be an expectation to share stories and events from their personal history, looking back at how those past events have come to shape their present worldview and impact their ideas of the future. Through this looking back, we endeavour to engage in a process that is in itself both cyclical and spiralling, attempting to both return to and depart from a moment in life at the same time. As a psychodynamic or psychoanalytic practitioner, we are called to a similar, but different, task. In the way that a client is asked to question their past and share upon it in order to gain further insight, so too is the practitioner tasked with looking into themselves in order to help another see. For the psychotherapist-in-training, however, the task of being reflexive requires one to embody both of these roles simultaneously.

Throughout this chapter, I will explore the ways in which reflectivity and reflexivity are both conceptualised, as well as portrayed, within the world of psychotherapy, with particular focus given to the world of psychotherapeutic training. I will begin by engaging with an exploration of the ways that reflexivity is taught to be interchangeable with reflectivity and expected within the training environments, giving a particular look into my own experiences as a trainee. Many trainees, myself included, begin the journey into reflexive practice – both clinically and personally – clinging to the idea that being reflective on one’s previous life experiences is often sufficient in developing the necessary skills of a qualified practitioner. However, I quickly came to find through my academic work and initial stages of training that to simply reflect – that is, to act as a mirror – myself and others would be far from enough. To gain an idea of the expectations and demands given to trainee psychotherapists, I will explore several of the key texts written by John McLeod, Chris Rose, and others, given to me during the earliest days of my training. To this end, this section will illuminate the ways in which trainee counsellors are required to be reflective as well as engage in one of the most common forms of reflective practice: reflective writing and journaling.
As you will know from my introduction to this thesis, I will be utilising the fifth chapter of this thesis to present the only way that I came to grow into a reflexive trainee, individual, and practitioner: photography. Before I show you my photography, however, I will spend the second part of this chapter reflecting on and discussing the purposes and importance placed on reflective writing as a – if not the – primary tool for ongoing personal development and the growth of self-awareness within psychotherapy, with particular emphasis on those in training. This section begins by exploring the significance of reflective journaling and reflectivity in psychotherapeutic training and practice. Through texts such as Jeannie Wright and Gillie Bolton’s 2012 book, *Reflective Writing in Counselling and Psychotherapy*, as well a return to several key texts from my training, I will show the supposed benefits and purposes of reflective writing, as well as begin to ask questions about its potential shortcomings and alienations. Though these questions will remain unanswered until the discussions chapter, they will be necessary in coming to understand the ways in which this thesis and research came to be. At this point in time, though, I wish to return to my first lessons, and struggles, with reflectivity: my training in psychotherapy.

*To Think is To Grow: Personal Development in Psychotherapy Training*

Throughout my life, I have felt that there is a constant need to grow. Growth, in my own conceptions of it, is not always stuck to a y-axis, however. Instead, growth is experienced in a variety of ways. At times, I have felt myself growing in my capacities to engage with certain troubling topics or in my ability to slow down and engage with the world around me. Other times, growth has meant to allow myself to simply continue as I am, experiencing a sensation of stasis not as a plateau to traverse before climbing a new mountain, but rather as a space of comfort and contentment. In these moments, I have found that the growth that occurs in me is highly personal, often only visible to myself and not those around me. Similarly, my experiences of professional growth have occurred when I continue to sit with a singular concept or struggle. Through regular use of supervision and other supportive spaces, I am able to grow into the challenge that is present, surmounting
it to find myself in another space of contentment and moving forward, awaiting the next opportunity for growth to occur.

In my present moment, I am once again faced with a challenge in writing this thesis. While this challenge holds different ramifications than the ones I experienced throughout my training, I find myself frequently returning to a question that preempted this thesis entirely: why is personal development important?

As I sit here pondering this question, I find myself continuously attempting to answer it by asking myself why I even bother asking this question. In writing this chapter, I recognise a battle occurring within myself – not only of ideals, but of politics as well. Part of me wishes to express that I hold no animosity to the role that personal development plays in the growth and training of psychotherapists. Nor do I wish to convey a hostility towards the fostering of reflective capacities or for self-reflection. In fact, the idea that this very thesis has grown from is due to the significance and importance that I, myself, find in the need for personal and, in turn, professional development for psychotherapists.

Another part of me feels as though I would be letting myself down if I did not express a dissatisfaction towards the rigidity that I have experienced by being told what personal and professional development is and is not. Whereas professional development can easily be placed upon a scale and proven through engagement with research and CPD activities, personal development is not graced with such an opportunity. Nonetheless, I have experienced, and will show throughout this chapter, several ways that personal development has been attempted to become a quantified commodity that can be tracked on a chart or checked off a list of criteria at various arbitrary moments along an individual’s training. As such, I ask from you, the reader, to keep this in mind as I offer an at times critical reflection of the ways personal and professional development is engaged with in the training of psychotherapists.

Within the world of practising and training psychotherapists, the concepts of personal and professional development are intrinsically tied together (Wright & Bolton, 2012, p.4). So much so that professional accreditation bodies have gone to lengths to formally make them a requirement for membership (BACP 2023; COSCA 2014). Recently, in beginning my applications for accreditation status with these
professional registers, I notice that once again there is a requirement to submit proof that personal development has occurred by describing a specific activity or practice that has been used in gaining it. As such, many counselling and psychotherapy training programmes have made these concepts an integral part of their criterion for academic work. Looking back at the handbooks for the Postgraduate Diploma and Interpersonal Dialogue courses here at the University of Edinburgh, every single course assignment has a requirement for students to show a “capacity to reflect” (University of Edinburgh, 2019a, 2019b) on themselves and their studies, practices, relationships, and personal histories. This course, like many other courses that seek to meet the standards outlined by various accrediting bodies, demands that its students show a clear, almost linear progression in their personal and professional developments. As such, I will be framing this current discussion around self-development and personal and professional growth as synonymous with the idea of reflective capacity. Where, then, does this demand for the growth of this capacity come from?

In one of the first texts that I encountered on this course, it was expressed that a good or competent psychotherapist is more than just someone with strong theoretical knowledge or technical ability, but also holds a strong capacity for self-reflection (Reeves, 2018, p. 207-208). Instead, a good trainee or qualified counsellor is someone who understands themselves, created through “an enduring, career-long, commitment to engag[ing] in cycles of collaborative reflection in both life experience and practice, leading to new ways of being with others, for the purpose of being as useful as possible to the clients, patients, or service users with whom one works.” (McLeod & McLeod, 2014, p.9)

In order to meet the varied needs of clients, a psychotherapist needs to be able to understand their own personal reactions to the various situations and topics that clients might bring into the therapeutic space. Moreover, the benefits of a therapist’s self-understandings and reflective capacities are experienced most by the client, who enters the therapeutic space sceptical of the therapist, seeking assurance that they are an individual whom they can trust (McLeod & McLeod, 2014, p. 12). Additionally, it has been found that the single most important aspect for a successful therapeutic experience is the relationship between client and therapist (Kraus et al., 2011; Okiishi et al., 2003; Saxon and Barkham, 2012). With such an importance
placed on the relationship in the therapeutic space, it is easy to see that for a client to place their trust and faith in their therapist, the therapist is required to have a strong understanding and relationship with themselves.

With such a strong focus placed on the therapist’s ability to explore and understand themselves, I find it unsurprising that the competence of a therapist is tied to these factors. Within this space of competence, the idea of “personal ‘soundness’” (McLeod, 2019, p. 414) can be seen as adjacent – if not interchangeable – with one’s capacity for reflectivity. To engage hour-after-hour, week-after-week, listening to the traumas and difficulties of another individual’s life requires a unique quality in any individual, argues McLeod (2019, p. 414). In order to foster the resilience necessary to weather such a storm, it is crucial that a psychotherapist be able to understand themselves, especially as it is highly likely that clients will go on to discuss aspects of life that touch back into the lived experiences of their therapist (McLeod, 2019, p. 414). How might the new trainee psychotherapist go about developing this capacity within themselves, then?

There are many ways to teach personal development within a psychotherapy training. These teachings span a variety of settings and methods, and I wish to distinguish two particular settings as I go forward: the communal, shared space and the personal, private space. Within the communal space, the predominant method of personal growth can be found within the personal development group. In the personal space, it is through the personal development journal, or reflective journal, as I have come to know it. As I will be giving more space and thought to the reflective journal in the following section of this chapter, I wish to spend some time now giving consideration to the former, group-based form of personal development.

Within my own training, I experienced several groups that were given the purpose of both growing in understanding of my peers as well as myself. From my memories, I recall experiencing these groups as difficult to navigate. There was an awkwardness to the group, with each member unsure of their role and place within it. At times, the group flowed well into a discussion, though more often than not it was the same chorus of voices carrying each conversation. Over time, I began to feel frustrated with the group. How would I be able to grow in my self-understanding through another if I was always met with silence or left to dwell in my own thoughts...
without any interactions for 90-minutes at a time? Eventually, the group that I was part of was forced to move online due to the COVID pandemic. If I had felt lonely and isolated previously, the experience staring at a screen full of 30-odd faceless, nameless boxes only further served to bring me to into isolation. What, then, was the purpose of this group?

As a student on a psychotherapy training course that placed particular emphasis on the relational aspects of therapy, the first aim of such a group is to be able to “recognise the need to know as much as [one] can about themselves and how they are in relationship with others” (Rose, 2018, p. 2). To further this, the group is meant to create a relational space between members in order to offer support to one another, where they may learn through observing the actions of others, as well as experience new ways of relating to others around them (McLeod, 2014, p. 27). In this way, the hope is that we grow in our self-understanding through the use of the group, turning it into an incubation chamber for personal growth and development. In turn, this self-understanding is expected to be brought into the working environment with clients, transposing the ability to come to recognise aspects of the self during encounters with an other. In order to ensure these developments, however, there are a few factors deemed necessary to ensure the group is a suitable space to foster this growth.

Within every group and space stepped into by a trainee, as well as post-qualification, there is an aim to create a safe environment. Through this safety, we come to grow in comfort with those around us and disclose ourselves without much reservation (Sanders et al., 2021, p. 37). To further this point, Sanders et al., in their book on beginning a training in psychotherapy, create a graph that depicts the optimum conditions for growth in self-awareness – read reflectivity – where the environment has to be both challenging and supportive (2021, p. 37). Once again, the group can be seen as a practice space for what might occur within clinical work. The clinical environment that is provided for clients is undoubtably supportive, focusing on the development of trust between client and therapist. Similarly, many therapists would agree that they seek to challenge their clients throughout their relationship. In perceiving the group as a stand-in for formal therapeutic work, it would follow then that trainees are expected, whether they are cognisant of it or not, to learn and implement the lessons of this tutorial into their personal practices,
which will later come to effect their professional development (Sanders et al., 2021; Rose, 2018). Who, then, might a trainee look towards for guidance when first stepping into the torrential waters of their personal growth and development?

Within training spaces, as within any space of learning, “effective leadership is essential for any group to perform well” (McLeod & McLeod, 2014, p. 29). In moments where participants of a group falter in meeting its demands or purposes, the facilitators of the group are required to push its constituents to challenge why they experienced the group as insufficient. Within the groups that I was a member of, I found myself recognising the challenge presented to me by my facilitators, leading me to take an initial step towards reflectivity within these communal spaces, with particular focus on who I am within them. When stepping back from the group as a whole, I began to within my reflections an initial answer to this query:

Who we are, the ‘I,’ comes from a constant negotiation between the rewards and responsibilities of these myriad group memberships. The separate, autonomous, freestanding individual exists only in our cultural mythology. We are inextricably linked to each other, and need that web of connection. (Rose, 2018, p.6)

As there “can be no ‘self’ without ‘other,’ and no ‘individual’ without ‘group’” (Rose, 2011, p. 49), where does the “personal” aspect of personal development come from? Looking back at the connections between personal development and clinical practice, I find Rose’s (2018) notion that true individuality is purely a myth to be inconsistent with therapeutic practice. While some therapists provide services to groups, the training that I have undergone focuses purely on individual, one-to-one psychotherapy. Perhaps I am being overly pedantic, however the therapeutic dyad, made up of practitioner and client, is difficult to formally call a group. Unlike groups, which often hold a premise “that some personal issues are not appropriate” (Rose, 2011, p. 49) for the space, the therapy office rarely has such limitations. As such, I began to question whether these communal spaces could truly provide the personal development that I was told to pursue, instead looking towards spaces and practices that truly focused on the individual.

In exploring the various texts provided to me during my training, I came to understand that many trainings in psychodynamic or psychoanalytic psychotherapy require their students to pursue personal development through mandated personal
therapy throughout their journey (McLeod, 2019, p. 429). However, unlike other forms of individual, personal development, such as reflective journaling, personal therapy still involves an interaction with another being. For those who are new to the helping profession, or perhaps experiencing anxiety surrounding meeting with clients for the first time, “being a client [in personal therapy] affords a unique perspective on the process of therapy” (McLeod & McLeod, 2014, p. 33). I have often found this true for myself.

As you know from my introduction, and will come to know further in the fifth chapter of this thesis, I myself have had substantial experiences of personal therapy, a privilege that I recognise many of my peers may not have had prior to beginning their training. At the start of my training and practice, I would often utilise my own memories and experiences of being in therapy as a foundation for exploring what kind of therapist I wished to be. In many ways, the soft and gentle tone of voice that I use with my clients is reminiscent of the voices I had heard while on the couch myself. The ways in which I might seek to relate to my clients were the ways that I was related to, finding safety and comfort within the relationship fostered between me and my therapists. However, the benefits of personal therapy may at times be taken for granted.

While the significance and ethics of compulsory therapy is a highly debated topic (Von Haenisch, 2010; Macran & Shapiro, 2011; Malikiosi-Loizos, 2013; Grimmer & Tribe, 2010), I myself have long held the belief that every therapist, at one point in their life, should attend personal therapy. While there is an opportunity for personal therapy to offer a truly unique and unrestrictive space for personal development, there are many roadblocks in place from trainees, especially international trainees such as myself, in accessing it (Rose, 2011, p. 49). Apart from the financial costs of accessing therapy, the prescribed nature of personal therapy requirements often work against one of the core tenets of therapeutic relationships: an autonomous desire to be in it. This can often lead to a tension in the relationship, where a trainee’s therapist may “believe that trainees who come to them [only do so] in order to accumulate [mandated] therapy hours” in an effort to meet a their prescribed quota while not truly investing or participating in the therapeutic process in an authentic manner (McLeod & McLeod, 2014, p. 33). As such, the forced – whether through mandate or being highly suggested, though still optional – nature
of personal therapy caused it to fall aside in my search for personal development spaces.

As I come to the end of this current reflection on my experiences of seeking personal development in my training, I find that there is a shared aspect that weaves together all the various methods of personal development that I have described thus far. Over time, the above notions of self-development began to feel methodical, almost as though they were a routine expected to be carried out by each individual trainee at some point along their journey. Perhaps, similarly to the personal development group, the notion of being prescribed a particular activity to support my journey into continuing personal development was the source of my resistance. In coming to explore this resistance further, I am able to recognise it, along with this thesis as a whole, to be of a political nature.

Something is lost when we give in to practices and conventions for the sake of meeting a criterion. To simply follow these conventions in order to meet the criteria set out by the governmental bodies or training providers would mean that I would have to forgo myself in favour of the greater group. Personal development, then, would be seen as anything but personal. Instead, it is the development of qualifications, of registered or accredited “members of the group” who lose the distinguishing feature of what would separate them from any other therapist. In looking back at my journey towards individuality and growth, I am able to see that I was yearning for something different – something that allowed me to feel as though I was acting upon the very essence of personal development: seeing, listening, and questioning myself. To this end, I began to search for something more personal, something that could place the accountability for personal development within myself. What I found, however, was once again a course for repetition.

Walls Within Myself: Reflections on Reflective Journaling

As I mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, I have experienced there to be two main spaces that are utilised for personal development. The first was the communal space, which utilised the personal development group and other group-based spaces to help foster the personal development of the individual
through their interactions with a singular or multiple others. The second space for personal development, as I began to describe above, can be found within an individualistic, highly personal space. In my experiences, the most common form of individualised personal development, where the trainee is given space and time to explore and foster their own sense of personal development, is to be found within the personal journal. Though there are many terms for this particular journal and the activity that it seeks to enable, I – for the sake of clarity and continuity – will call it the reflective journal, with its associated production being reflective journaling.

Whilst as trainee psychotherapists on this course, my peers and I were regularly told that these journals are important to help us track and reflect on our personal development as counsellors, offering an opportunity to look back at thoughts and issues that previously arose in both our personal and professional world. Within the course handbook, it goes on to say that “the personal learning [reflective] journal is such an important learning tool that it has become a professional requirement for the validation of the programme” (University of Edinburgh, 2019a, p. 18). These practices are so often accepted as a necessity for therapists in practice and in training (Wright & Bolton, 2012, p. xv), it begins to beg a question: are these personal journals truly being kept for a purpose, or are therapists mindlessly adhering to a longstanding tradition, as with the other forms of personal development discussed previously?

Perhaps it was this concept of simply doing as I was suggested that I found such struggles with. Afterall, “simply doing” is often considered good-enough, and far better than not doing it at all, right? And so, I persisted in my attempts to keep a journal, engaging to the best of my ability in the activities and exercises given to me by my tutors. Yet despite how fervently I tried, my hand couldn't budge the pen. It stood petrified in my grasp, unable to be used for its purpose of bringing thought onto paper. I began to fear that perhaps these difficulties in self-reflection and self-awareness would begin to influence my academic and professional work.

As I have shown in the above section, countless chapters and subsections regarding reflective practice and journaling fill books created to assist and guide the trainee psychotherapist. Afterall, for the practicing and training psychotherapist, the task of personal development is one that is constantly on-going (Sanders et al.,
2021, p.34), and to have these practices engrained within the trainee from the outset allows for them to be integrated into their practice and life once they leave training as well. When thinking about personal development and self-awareness, Richard Nelson-Jones (1996) recommends that those entering the world of psychotherapy or similar helping professions to consider topics such as one’s motivations for joining the profession, their senses of worth, personal fears, along with other topics such as their sexuality, values and ethics, culture and awareness of other cultures. It should be held as no surprise then, that many of the common prompts for beginning the practice of reflective writing follows similar themes (Wright & Bolton, 2012).

When presenting why an individual may wish to keep a journal, Wright & Bolton (2012, p.15) go on to discuss how writing “slows you down, offer[ing] a time to pause and reflect… [writing] allows you to express feelings and thoughts privately… [and] is a way to ensure ethical, reflective practice…”

Though the reflective journal may be created in a space of privacy, the contents within it do not always remain private. In fact, “participants in some training programmes are required to keep personal [reflective] journals, which may be submitted to the tutor in their entirety… [or] in some situations … hand[ed] in weekly [as] learning logs” (McLeod & McLeod, 2014, p. 35). Though I myself have never been asked to show my personal journaling, it has regularly been suggested that I include excerpts of my journals in my academic writing (University of Edinburgh, 2019a, 2019b). Moreover, I recall on a near weekly basis being asked to take time during the taught portion of my course, usually only five or ten minutes, to write a reflective account utilising a particular prompt from that day's lesson, and to then share what I had written with a peer or potentially the group as a whole. Practices such as this often give me pause, and similarly to the arguments against personal therapy detailed before, I wonder how truly free an individual might be in their reflective practices when they also hold in awareness that judgements will be placed upon them? With reflective journaling seeking to “externalise what would otherwise be [an] internal experience” (McLeod & McLeod, 2014, p. 36), it is likely to contain many of the same experiences that one would seek to later explore or work through in a personal therapy context.

This potential for a lack of privacy, especially in relation to the internal world of fears and difficulties that a trainee psychotherapist might be facing, once again
gives me pause when considering the use of easily accessible and objective forms of personal development. However, training is not the only time that therapists may feel the privacy of their development or practice under scrutiny. Whether it be through yearly audits or assessments of suitability to practice (BACP, 2023; COSCA, 2014), governing bodies hold immense power over an individual’s ability to begin or continue providing therapeutic services. In requiring trainee or practicing therapists to show objective evidence of activities to meet acceptable standards of growth and development, the true potential for engaging in such activities becomes limited and only activities that are seen as sufficiently evident, such as the reflective journal, find their way into being practiced.

As you will come to see from my own reflexive practice in the fifth chapter, much of my reflexive work has touched upon issues that have indeed been explored in my previous experiences of being an analysand. The topics of family, trauma, difference, shame, and depression, to name a few, have all found a home at one point or another on my analysts’ couches. Unlike those formal therapeutic spaces, however, my experiences of using a reflective journal were not brought to an end with a voice saying, “that is our time for today.” Instead, I have been able to return to these topics at will, continuing to offer myself a space to engage with them in a more expansive, unrestrained way (McLeod & McLeod, 2014, p. 37). At this point, I wish to turn focus onto a question that pre-empts the journal itself: why reflectivity through writing?

At this very moment, you have in your hands a special way of learning about yourself. You are reading words written by myself and others who all want to share our understanding of self knowledge and our ways of developing it. You also have at your fingertips a way of knowing yourself that is extraordinarily powerful. You have only to pick up a piece of paper and a pencil, or approach a keyboard, and write. With these two simple activities of reading and writing, you have access to a whole world of communication with other selves, including your own self. (Hall, 2011, p. 58)

While much discussion has taken place in the first section of this chapter around why one wishes to engage with personal development, the above passage by Caroline Hall offers an attempt at answering the question that I have just now posed. Why writing? Because words, particularly words which are written, place us into a
space of communication and connection not only with others, but with our self. When words are written, says Hall, they become more “tangible” (2011, p. 59), which in turn places them in a position of holding more power – a power of seeing, of feeling, of healing, and of learning. Additionally, Hall (2011, p. 62) goes on to present writing as a medium that “gives us the distance that allows us to see more clearly and ... to realise.” While having a space of distance may have its benefits, I wish to disagree with Hall’s premise that this distance allows for greater clarity or insight to be gained in our experiences.

Within the therapeutic space and whilst working with clients, distance can have many benefits. In fact, many of my clients have said to me that they chose to come to therapy because of the distanced, outsider perspective that I as a therapist might have on their issues, since others in their life would be too involved to offer any form of insight that wasn’t already influenced by their proximity. When it comes to ourselves, and our personal development through reflective writing, should we not then wish to come closer? If the goal of reflective writing it to come to know ourselves better, as I have described earlier in this section, would we not wish to come into as close of contact with the various aspects of our being that we wish to know and understand? In my own experiences of reflective writing, I have found that it is precisely this sense of closeness that has allowed me to grow and understand my self, or the various versions of myself that have existed throughout time, better.

When attempting to understand these multiple versions – or voices as Hall (2011) describes them – of self, it may prove to be helpful to allow each one to take a turn in being the one writing. At times, this may look like a conversation between them; or allowing each one to write independently of the other, using each moment of reflective writing to address the same topic but through a different voice (Hall, 2011, p. 66-70). Whereas it may be strange or perhaps even dangerous to follow this form of internal communication with verbal speech, the written word allows for a safe space to house these discussions between the multiple versions of ourselves. Perhaps, then, this is the way to allow for the distance that was discussed earlier. Similar to our clients, we seek distance from the influence and impact of being seen by others, but maintain a close and intimate conversation with ourselves to allow for a level of depth to be reached.
As I come to the end of this section, I wish to give a moment of attention to a line in the conclusion of Hall’s chapter in Chris Rose’s book. Hall (2011) writes:

In this chapter, I have presented ... ways of using written words to help us explore who we are. Much of what I have described is about the effectiveness of writing in helping us see ourselves, particularly by the mirror of reflective writing which places the self in a better place of focus, so to speak. (p. 71)

As you may have noticed, this chapter has spoken about reflective, rather than reflexive, practices. Hall does well to bring in the connection between reflection and the mirror, as there is a distinction that I wish to bring into the discussion at this point. My definitions and understandings of reflectivity, when taken outside of its definition used within the field of physics, places into focus the qualitative ability of an object – or in the case of this thesis, a person – in being able to lend itself as a mirror. By its very nature, a mirror is only capable of showing what it is already able to see. If I were to approach the mirror above the faucet in my bathroom, I would see my face reflected within it. Though I may have questions, thoughts, or feelings of significant strength upon seeing my reflection, they lie purely within a space of what is already known. Moreover, the questions that would be asked assume that the self that is being shown is fully formed and not liable to further change. Or perhaps, with some level of effort and minor, unintrusive investigation, what would be easy to know. If such simple actions were able to be taken in order to gain better understanding and insight into one’s self, I believe the task of engaging with personal development would be far easier and less significant than the arguments made earlier in this chapter make it out to be. To this end, then, I propose that being reflective is not enough for one to properly engage with the challenges required for personal growth. Instead, we require something deeper, something closer, something more. We require reflexivity.
Chapter Three
Defining Reflexivity

In the first section of the previous chapter, I described how reflectivity, which is often thought of and taught as synonymous to reflexivity, actually acts as a predecessor to reflexivity. At the end of the chapter, I began to describe how reflectivity does what is sets out to do: it mirrors (Hall, 2011). For the sake of personal development, mirroring is not enough. Personal development requires more from us than to just have what we might already know shown back to us, either directly or through a different angle. Instead, I wish to put forward that personal development requires us to engage performatively (Serra Undurraga, 2020a) with the aspects of our being that are hidden – aspects that require effort and struggle to come into contact with. Personal development requires us to engage in performances that cause us to bend over backwards and contort the long-held perceptions of our lived experiences in order to explore and create something new. I believe it is important to take some time, then, to look further at the distinctions that I wish to make between reflectivity and reflexivity.

From an etymological point, reflectivity and reflexivity both share the same root: reflect (Harper Douglas). According to the Oxford English Dictionary, reflect has several definitions, though most share one commonality: to reflect something is to have it turn and bend backwards upon and into itself (Oxford English Dictionary, 1.a, 1.b, 1.c., 2023). I find it curious that, over time, the conception of reflectivity has changed from a bending backwards to a simple mirroring, as shown by my readings – or re-readings – of texts from my psychotherapy training (McLeod & McLeod, 2014; Hall, 2011; Wright & Bolton, 2012, Sanders et al., 2011). Though many of these primary definitions come to us from the traditional sciences of physics or biology, I wish to bring them into the discussion now into the field of psychotherapy.

I begin this chapter by moving beyond reflectivity to present a broad overview of the various conceptions and aspects of reflexivity, paying key mind into the differentiations that I will make between it and, in my belief, its predecessor, reflectivity. Whereas some might hold that reflectivity and reflexivity hold equal weight and measure to each other, I will present an argument grounded in both my
personal experiences, as well as the teachings presented in the second chapter of this thesis, that states otherwise. I do so by returning to my foundations in psychoanalytic psychotherapy via a cursory exploration of the Freudian concept of nachträglichkeit. From here, I build upon this early notion of Freudian reflexivity by bringing in Jacque Lacan’s revision of nachträglichkeit, which he and his contemporaries in French psychoanalysis called après-coup.

As this chapter continues, reflexivity will gain a formal definition that will be utilised throughout this chapter, as well as this thesis at whole. Focusing on the work of Karen Serra Undurraga, I pull out four primary aspects of reflexivity: diffraction (Barad, 2007; Serra Undurraga 2020a, 2023a), anti-mastery (Serra Undurraga, 2020a), yielding to foreignness (Foucault, 1990; Butler, 2005; Bourdieu, 1977, 1993), and performative meta-reflexivity (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, 2020b, 2022). These four aspects of reflexivity come together with the addition of a fifth element, latency (which will be discussed in chapters four and six), to create a version of reflexivity that is not simply engaged with as an action, but made into a way of constantly questioning the past, present, and future whilst seeking the constant creation of new selves and new questions.

**A Bend in the Line: Reflexivity Encountered**

Throughout this section, I will endeavour to show that this act of bending backwards and turning inwards, which I will associate with the concept of reflexivity rather than reflectivity, hold a foundation in my past experiences of psychoanalysis. In my conceptions of reflexivity, I will come to create and show a definition of something that is much more than just an action. To be reflexive, then, is more than just to engage with one’s ability to bend and turn into themselves, i.e. their capacity for reflexivity. Instead, to be reflexive is to take part in a performance that is both an act of producing and the thing that is itself produced. As this is an overly simplistic definition of the form of reflexivity that I wish to utilise for this thesis, I believe it behoves us to take some time to understand and create a more full definition for reflexivity, paying mind to the various discussions and debates that go into its creation.
For myself, the definition of reflexivity that I have engaged with in exploring myself and in the subsequent creation of this thesis has been shaped and moulded by many definitions for it. As such, I wish to create my definition of reflexivity by speaking through the thoughts of others. In doing so, I hope that you will come to understand that my experience of reflexivity can only exist through coming into contact with an other, though not always a human other. Though at times these others may seek to engage with each other in a battlefield of differing thought and understanding, as I have done in the previous chapter, it is through these exchanges that I come to grow in myself and in my conceptualisation of reflexivity. To start, however, I wish to place my initial understandings of reflexivity into the frame, which I will come back to – and perhaps make amendments to – at the end of this section.

As I described earlier in this section, reflexivity involves a bending, or curving, back into oneself. In my understanding, this bend does not simply create an arc or simple curve, but instead creates a circle. We engage in a revolving cyclical pattern when we engage with our reflexivities, taking into consideration the ways the past has come back to influence and at times guide our present way of being. It requires that we come into a close, intimate contact with the past, rather than just observe it as an object or moment in the periphery. In this moment of engagement, we go on to create a new understanding of ourselves, whereby the past has been taken and once again brought into the present moment. At the same time, the moment that we departed from in the present is now moved into a space of passing, giving way to this new understanding to grow in the present moment, thus creating a new version of ourselves. Ultimately, however, this new version will once again be tasked with returning to the past, renewing the cycle of constant change and growth.

Much of this initial interpretation and understanding of reflexivity comes from psychoanalysis, particularly through Freud and Lacan, who both present a version of this reflexivity that is bound to a temporal nature. Though more time and space will be given to both in the sixth chapter of this thesis, I will briefly describe the concepts that each, respectively, have given to help shape my initial conceptualisations of reflexivity.
From Freud, the concept of *nachträglichkeit*, often translated as afterwardness or deferred action, begins to show an initial, rudimentary version of the reflexivity that I have just described. Freud first proposed the concept of *nachträglichkeit* in his correspondence with his friend and colleague, Joseph Breuer (1893/1975a; 1893-1895/1975b). In exploring his work with a young client, Emma, Freud explores the traumatic aspects of her childhood, coming to present the idea that “a memory is repressed which has only become a trauma by deferred action” (Freud, 1893/1975a, p. 356). This memory then lies dormant, awaiting a moment of stimulus at a later point in time to be made sense of and given meaning or context necessary to be experienced (Bistoen et al., 2014, p. 673). Bistoen et al. (2014, p. 674) go on to create the following process to describe the mechanistic nature of *nachträglichkeit*: “(a) two distinct etiological moments in time, (b) separated by a delay or time lag, (c) in which the first scene initially remains without consequence, (d) but is transformed by the subsequent one, and (e) becoming traumatic in a retroactive fashion.” From this procedure, we can see that *nachträglichkeit* is a process that works to change that way that we perceive and experience the past, albeit in a significantly passive manner. With Lacan, however, I find the difficulty of the passive nature of Freud’s *nachträglichkeit* begins to be addressed.

In his return to Freud, Lacan picks up Freud’s concept of *nachträglichkeit* and brings it forward as a formation of his concept of *après-coup*. Lacan first began to present his understandings of *après-coup* in 1953 through a re-examination of Freud’s *Wolf Man* case (Lacan, 1966, 1977). For Lacan, *après-coup* serves as an enactment of Freud’s process in which we are, at times, forced to continuously work through the traumatic aspects of the memories that had been deferred in order to make sense of them (Faimberg, 2005). Whereas Freud’s focus can be found in the latent qualities of experience and meaning, Lacan’s focus is placed into the retroactive nature of the action, whereby “later events revise the memory of an earlier event (or series of events), endowing it with new meaning” (House & Slotnick, 2015, p. 686). This new meaning is then placed into the present and, as I have stated previously, is then utilised as an opportunity for discovering further “intrapsychic historical truths” (Faimberg, 2005, p. 5).

Though both of the above readings can only be described as highly cursory, they go to show the initial conceptions that I held of reflexivity as requiring a bend
in the line of time. As my own line of time has continued to progress, I have regularly returned to this definition of reflexivity, utilising it as a way of asking myself questions such as “when have I felt like this before?” More often than not, it has served as a way of acknowledging that I require myself to return to my past to gain an understanding of my present, though that past may not always send me back to my earliest years or even into the worlds lived by others with whom I have come into contact in my life. Over time, however, my understanding of this version of reflexivity has become more blurred, just as the distinctions between past and present have been.

I wish to offer you an example of this blurring: I have tattoo on my left arm. To many, it simply depicts an hourglass filled with sand flowing through it. Adorning the top of the hourglass is a chrysanthemum. Though the flower is very much alive, it has reached a point in its life-cycle where it has begun to lose some of its petals and leaves, allowing them to fall and glide into a space of nothingness. There are many possible interpretations that people can make from this tattoo, many of which focus on the notions of time that the decay of the flower might portray. They may even begin to take into account the fact that time itself has frozen with the tattoo, depicting a very specific moment of existence. What most do not know, however, is that the tattoo itself is a coverup of another tattoo. If one were to look closely at my shoulder, they would notice a few gentle tones of red bleeding through the deeply shaded black of the chrysanthemum. Though I do not wish to detract for any possible meanings that you might take from this tattoo and its symbolism, I would like to present one that I have come to hold onto myself. Just as the colours of the original tattoo bleed through the new one, making the past known in the present, so too do the sands within the hourglass. How many times has it been inverted? How many times have the grains of sand that are meant to tell time switched roles? Which of them originate in the past and which of them are truly representative of the present? Is there a way for me to know, and if so, what purpose might it serve in doing creating such a distinction? Where would I find such knowledge? If I am to find an answer for any of these questions, a new definition of reflexivity that takes into account the blurred nature of time and its source of knowledge is required.

As I began to explore a world of reflexivity within this blur, I found myself to be overwhelmed. The following parts of this section have been, until now, quite
foreign to me. I do not mean to say that I have never heard of the names of the philosophers and thinkers that I will come to explore, nor the ideas associated with them. Instead, I mean that for so long, I held close to heart the psychoanalytic concepts of Freud and Lacan that I found it difficult to entertain or accept other possibilities for how to engage with or grow my capacity for reflexivity. After all, “the overvaluation of an idea can help deal with uncertainty [as well as] leading to a more rigid, dogmatic [way of] thinking” (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 163). However, as I have continued to grow and change overtime, “it is expected that an idea evolves from the frenzy of its discovery to see its limitations – to see it as one possibility – and in this way, it does not become dogma” (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 163). As I move forward from reflexivity being a creation of knowledge and insight through an enactment of Lacan’s après-coup interacting with Freud’s nachträglichkeit, there are aspects of it that I do wish to hold onto as I move forward. My reflexivity, as it stands, requires an intimate closeness to one’s self – a self made up of all versions of one’s self throughout time. Additionally, my reflexivity is made up of a constant conversation between the past and present selves that interrogates the assumptions and ideas they both hold to be true. What else, then, goes into the creation of my reflexivity?

**Stepping Into a Definition of Reflexivity**

As I stated earlier on in this chapter, I wish to present my understandings of reflexivity by allowing the thoughts and voices of others to flow through me. If I were to stop and lend my ear to this voice, I would come to recognise it as the voice of Karen Serra Undurraga (2020a, 2020b, 2022, 2023a). Furthermore, I hear within her voice the speech and thoughts of those whom she brings into her writing. In this way, the following part of this section will focus heavily on Serra Undurraga’s work, exploring the ways that she has come to create, and be created by, an understanding of reflexivity. For her, this version of reflexivity can be defined as such:

The conceptualisation of reflexivity that I produced is a diffracted [utilising Karen Barad’s (2007) concept of diffraction] reflexivity that is coherent with a subject that is continuously materially-discursively produced. A reflexivity that does not come from an individual masterful subject but from a subject that yields to foreignness
and to become otherwise in a way that cannot control nor anticipate. A reflexivity that is multiple and that produces its own contexts including the reflexive subject. My reconceptualisation produces the invitation to a meta-reflexivity – to explicitly think about how we are, unavoidably, relating to ourselves – that responds to the imperative need to see what our ways of relating to ourselves, to others, to texts, and to the world in general are producing. (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 221)

Whilst there is much to unpack and examine within this definition, I will endeavour to do so by examining the key aspects of reflexivity that Serra Undurraga presents in creating her definition of reflexivity, giving time and space to the voices of those that I have felt resonate through her and, in turn, through myself. “I am not the master in this game; through playing with these concepts they also play with me, they also reconceptualise and re-make me. I take a concept, I take an author, I take a theory, and I explore where they take me,” says Serra Undurraga (2020a, p.21). In this same way, I endeavour to open myself to be moved and reshaped along this exploration. It is worth noting, however, that not all the voices and concepts that she brings into her own thesis will be presented here, as I do not wish this part of my thesis to simply reduce and rewrite her own, but instead show that ways that I have come to understand and incorporate them into my own reconceptualisations of reflexivity.

As noted above, a key feature of Serra Undurraga’s version of reflexivity comes from a discourse between reflexivity and Karen Barad’s concepts of diffraction and intra-action (Barad, 2003, 2007). In their explorations of diffraction, Barad draws heavily on the work Donna Harraway, stating that while reflexivity – which they pair with reflectivity and the mirroring-based definition that I have given in the previous chapter – seeks to simply displace something from its original position elsewhere, diffraction serves to bring into focus a pattern of difference (2007, p. 71-72). To further this point, Barad’s diffraction places a heavy emphasis on representationalism, which “assumes that language can mirror reality and it is argued that reflexive methodologies just place the mirror in front of the researcher” (Serra Undurraga, 2023a, p. 1110). In contrast, diffraction works to remove the researcher from in front of the mirror, placing them into a space where we are constantly defining, and being defined by, the things that we wish to enquire about (Serra Undurraga, 2023a, p. 1110). Through this, diffraction (Barad, 2007) begins to
take on an exclusionary and delineating aspect to it, which begins to trouble both Serra Undurraga and myself.

Throughout her work, Serra Undurraga shows ways in which Barad (2007) has made attempts to differentiate reflexivity from diffraction, as well as positioning diffraction as being higher along a hierarchy of inquisition and exploration than reflexivity. Within her readings of Barad, Serra Undurraga (2023a, p. 1116-1117) points out that the hierarchical structure found within Barad’s (2007) work only serves to recreate the very thing that Barad is attempting to distance themselves from. Serra Undurraga (2020b, p. 923-924) goes on to present that, through this dichotomous position recreated by Barad (2007), they are working against their own conception of intra-action. As Barad states:

The notion of intra-action (in contrast to the usual “interaction,” which presumes prior existence of independent entities or relata) represents a profound conceptual shift. It is through specific agential intra-actions that boundaries and properties of the components of phenomena become determinate and that particular concepts (that is, particular material articulations of the world) become meaningful. (Barad, 2007, p. 139)

In response to the dilemma that Barad (2007) produces in their denouncing reflexivity, Serra Undurraga goes on to posit a “performative meta-reflexivity” that works to combine the self-interrogative and relational aspects of reflexivity whilst bringing into consideration a question of where this question itself comes from, thus seeking to bridge the gap between reflexivity and diffraction to present something that is not only performative, but also producing (Serra Undurraga, 2023a).

Within her space of performative meta-reflexivity, Serra Undurraga continues to develop a version of reflexivity that seeks to answer questions such as “what is going on now? How am I relating to myself/others/texts, etc?” (Serra Undurraga, 2022, p. 6). By developing a meta-reflexivity that involves diffractive (Barad, 2007) elements, Serra Undurraga presents the function of performative meta-reflexivity as:

...Continuously ask[ing]: how am ‘I’ relating to ‘this’ now? Understanding that the ‘I’ and the ‘this’ are delineated in the particular ways of relating that are enacted in that moment. Also understanding that the answer to this question is also part of the
situation – understanding that the answer is not an accurate response but a situated perspective that can enable other things to happen. (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 168)

As such, this version meta-reflexivity becomes performative, producing a solution to the gap that was previously presented between diffraction (Barad, 2007) and reflexivity, since it aims to not simply state or define a global generalisation from a particular moment of time. Instead, it forces us to look at how things intra-act to create a perspective that moves from an essentialist point into one that can be understood as a new way of relating (Serra Undurraga, 2022, p. 6).

As I bring myself to join in this discussion, I find myself returning to Lacan’s après-coup and the initial version of reflexivity that I held. With this primordial reflexivity, there is always a moment of origination. In my previous reflexive practices, I would be able to simply wait for moment B to stimulate the Unconscious memory held from moment A, return to it, and the come back to moment B with a new understanding of my present experience. Through the form of reflexivity that involves diffraction, however, I find myself beginning to question “but where did the me of moment A come from? What countless things occurred to create that individual? What went into the creation of those? And those before them?” and so on and so forth. In this way, each moment of existence is fractured into countless others, indefinitely, until a point comes that each individual line of question is almost imperceivable to the self, thus returning with a distanced glance into a singular line itself. Within the frame of this thesis, that singular line can be seen as the process of production, as well as the product itself, of the photographs and discussions held in the later chapters of this thesis. Additionally, when returning to Barad’s (2007) concept of intra-action, the producing-product of my photography is experienced as something that is not outside of myself, but rather as something that requires me to be within it. However, though I find myself to be directly involved and inseparable from this thesis and the idea of reflexivity I am coming to present, I do not wish to place myself as a master of it.

With this first step into a definition of reflexivity taken, I began to find myself deeply moved by the idea of, or rather the lack of, mastery that Serra Undurraga puts forward in the second step:
I am also pushing against masterfulness ... against the notion that we can intentionally and cognitively control and decide to make sense of ourselves in particular ways ... I put forward that in making sense of ourselves, we produce ourselves not from a mastery position but as part of something wider that we are becoming with and we cannot control or hold in our minds. (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 25)

For myself, this wider and greater thing that we come into contact and grow with is the psychoanalytic Unconscious of Freud and Lacan. Fittingly, Serra Undurraga (2020a, p.44) also gives spaces for psychoanalysis when referring to this something larger. Though I have already given some space to the reflexive mechanisms of the Freudian and Lacanian Unconscious in this chapter, I will continue to give it texture and context throughout this section, though I lend more time and thought into its role in my experiences and research in the sixth chapter of this thesis: Discussions on Reflexivity, Psychoanalysis, and Photography. Returning to the discussion of mastery, Serra Undurraga (2020) begins her examination of it in relation to “yielding,” which she again develops in relation to the psychoanalytic. Though the first aspects of yielding appear in Serra Undurraga’s (2020) chapter on methodologies, the concept is further developed through involvement of Foucault (2019) and Butler (2005), as well as Bourdieu (1977, 1993), whom I will pay particular focus to. I believe it is most important, however, to make clear that the sense of yielding that I wish to hold onto throughout exploring the concept – especially when relating to mastery – is that to yield is to surrender, to be vulnerable and to allow something foreign to shape, and be shaped by, us (Serra Undurraga, 2020a).

In her first invocations of Foucault, Serra Undurraga (2020a, p. 66) puts forth the use of “yielding to foreignness ... [as] what allows us to question our previous assumptions,” which in turn informs the initial uses of reflexivity that we have recently discussed.

To further this, Serra Undurraga (2020a, p. 70) presents an insight from her readings of Foucault, and subsequently Butler, which places this version of reflexivity within the space of social influence. From Butler (2005), I come to understand that in the reflexive “I,” – that is, an “I” or “self” that is being explored
through reflexive practices – has always been influenced and is itself yielding to social influence. Butler states this as follows:

When the "I" seeks to give an account of itself, it can start with itself, but it will find that this self is already implicated in a social temporality that exceeds its own capacities for narration; indeed, when the "I" seeks to give an account of itself, an account that must include the conditions of its own emergence, it must, as a matter of necessity, become a social theorist. (Butler, 2005, p. 8)

Once again, through Butler’s (2005) account we see the Freudian and Lacanian Unconscious expose aspects of itself in its quality of being beyond full visibility and comprehension. As such, we can come to understand that the psychoanalytic Unconscious – and by this very nature, ourselves – is influenced by the social world we are necessarily engaged in. Returning to Foucault (2000), Serra Undurraga explores how within the field of psychotherapy, which is one of the many spaces that both she and I are socialised within, it is socially accepted and, as I have shown in chapter two, expected that we engage in reflexive practices (2020a, p. 72). The experiences of being forced into certain definitions and types of reflexivity that I shared in the previous chapter give credence to the notion of reflexivity that Foucault (2000) and Butler (2005) put forth; no matter how much we might try, the ways that we express our reflexive capacities will always be influenced and situated within a social context (Serra Undurraga, 2020, p. 72). It is at this point then that Serra Undurraga, along with myself, begin to encounter a version of reflexivity that is influenced by Bourdieu.

While Bourdieu (Kenway & McLeod, 2004) himself presents a version of reflexivity that is automated, I find myself questioning, along with Serra Undurraga, if this is actually reflexivity. As I have described elsewhere in this chapter, this type of automatic response, though attempting to engage with the reflexive capacities that are being described in this section, falls short of acknowledging the full process of reflexivity. For Bourdieu, reflexivity is found within the habitus, which refers to the “embodied knowledge of how to perceive and act that is born from our positioning in a social field that, in turn, is structured according to the amount of different types of capital ... that people hold” (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). As such, the value that any product – with particular emphasis to the product of reflexivity, as it is intrinsically tied to the individual and as such is
influenced by all of the spaces that they traverse – is directly related to the space in which is it presented (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 73).

When thinking about my own work and this thesis, the value of my photography and reflexive practices can be seen and felt as more valued when presented within a space that values such thoughts, such as the field of psychotherapeutic research. More so, if I were to be presenting this thesis to an audience who are more keen to understand social anthropology, it may be deemed as having less value, as the self that I am presenting throughout this thesis does not necessarily align with this field. It is within this misalignment between field and habitus, then, that reflexivity occurs. Serra Undurraga gives a very apt idiom to express the experience that occurs within this misalignment: “like a fish out of water” (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 74). Curiously, when I hear this phrase, I find myself being drawn back to a moment in my adolescence when I frequently listened to a speech given by the late American author David Foster Wallace (2005). In it, he recounts a parable where two young fish are swimming along when they encounter an older fish who asks them “How’s the water?” After some time, the two fish stop and ask each other, “What the hell is water?” As Serra Undurraga (2020a, p. 74) states, “reflexivity emerges in the mismatch between habitus and field because this gives the opportunity to become aware of our habitus.” Just as the fish have been shaped by and assume nothing of the watery field that they are in, it is in this precise moment of consciously questioning our own fields that reflexivity occurs. Serra Undurraga (2020a, p. 75), referencing Bourdieu, presents this as the “awakening of consciousness.” Quoting Bourdieu, Serra Undurraga writes:

The critique which brings the undiscussed into discussion, the unformulated into formulation, has as the condition of its possibility objective crisis, which, in breaking the immediate fit between the subjective structures and the objective structures, destroys self-evidence practically. (Bourdieu, 1977 in Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 75)

From here, Serra Undurraga goes on to present that reflexivity occurs, actively, when we “yield to be affected by our dwelling in a different field and/or a different position within a known field. Even more, I think that reflexivity is spurred when we inhabit different fields and/or positionings and yield ourselves to be conflicted” (Serra Undurraga, 2020, p. 76). It is at this point that I begin to wonder: what is this foreignness that we are yielding to?
As noted earlier in this section, the foreignness that we – or perhaps it would be better to say, I – yield to is the psychoanalytic Unconscious. There are many debates as to what exactly constitutes the Unconscious in psychoanalysis, and to cite every different conception of it would mean to cite every individual who has come across the term. Instead, I will begin by creating my definition and understanding of the psychoanalytic Unconscious by presenting how Serra Undurraga presents hers: “Psychoanalytically, ‘our’ unconscious is the very intimate part of ourselves that at the same time is strange and ungraspable. The stranger [that] is within us” (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 84). However, I do not believe that the psychoanalytic Unconscious is fully ungraspable, but instead allows itself to be known by coming into contact with it – a contact that is made possible by yielding and reflexivity.

When we yield to the psychoanalytic Unconscious, we yield to its laws, which Dylan Evans (1996) describes as repetition and desire. In my conceptions of it, the psychoanalytic Unconscious desires to be known, and, as I will come to describe in chapter six, forces us into repetitive action until we yield to its foreignness, in turn allowing it to become (partially) known. For Lacan, we experience the desire to yield, to make known, due to the inherent lack that we all contain within us (Evans, 1996, p. 95-96). To further present my conceptions, this inherent lack is what creates the space and sensation that we know as foreignness. Harmonious to this, then, Serra Undurraga draws on Kristeva (1991) and Visker (2005) to present “that there is a foreignness that we cannot expel – because it is constituting us … [And thus] because we are foreigners to our own selves, foreigners can irritate us” (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 84). This leads Serra Undurraga, and myself, to ask why do we allow ourselves to come into contact, to yield, with this irritable and at times, painful, foreignness?

If I were to imagine a second question that the fish from Foster Wallace’s (2005) parable might ask, it would be “why have I never questioned what it is that surrounds me?” For Foucault, as Serra Undurraga presents, “curiosity and the possibility to think otherwise [is] in itself as a motivating factor” for creating such questions (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 86). However, Butler (2004) presents the motivations for such questions to be derived from a place of suffering an unknowable, oppressive force:
One does not drive to the limits for a thrill experience, or because limits are dangerous and sexy, or because it brings us into a titillating proximity with evil. One asks about the limits of ways of knowing because one has already run against a crisis within the epistemological field which one lives in. (Butler, 2004, p. 305-306)

For Serra Undurraga (2020a), Butler’s explanation of why we seek to engage with these painful discomforts as an enactment of reflexivity stems from the mismatches between habitus and various fields they are positioned within. Moreover, Serra Undurraga cites Butler (1997) stating that aspects of our socialised fields which we might take for granted are “never totally taken in by the subject, and they need to be ceaselessly reiterated by the subject – opening possibilities in each repetition to be resignified” (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 86). This once again returns my mind to aspects of the psychoanalytic Unconscious that I have described in this section. In attempting to decipher and come into contact with the lacks that we each possess, we are constantly seeking to gain greater insight in finding the answer to many of the “why” questions that we might ask of ourselves and our lives.

To further this connection to the psychoanalytic, I find there to be a strong connection between Butler’s (2004) presentation of suffering as a driving force and Lacan’s concept of jouissance. For Lacan (1966, 1977), jouissance is directly tied to principles of pleasure, many of which can be seen in the above quotation from Butler. The limitation and crisis found within the social field that Butler (2004) describes is presented by Lacan as the pleasure principle coming into action:

> the pleasure principle functions as a limit to enjoyment; it is a law which commands the subject to ‘enjoy as little as possible.’ At the same time, the subject constantly attempts to transgress the prohibitions imposed on his enjoyment, to go ‘beyond the pleasure principle.’ However, the result of transgressing the pleasure principle is not more pleasure, but pain, since there is only a certain amount of pleasure that the subject can bear. Beyond this limit, pleasure becomes pain, and this ‘painful pleasure’ is what Lacan calls jouissance (Evans, 1996, p. 91-92)

With every attempt that the subject makes in seeking to decipher and understand the norms within the field they are currently positioned within – which may be seen as attempt at seeking the pleasures of knowledge – they begin to experience a pain due to always being unable to gain a complete understanding of the field and, in turn, themselves. We are then, again, presented with the same question as before: why do
we engage in such painful pleasures? In many ways, seeking to answer this question is itself an enactment of jouissance, as in asking it I am seeking the pleasure of an answer that is prohibited to be given. Unfortunately, this question will have to remain unanswered, for now, for both you and I.

To close this section, I wish to reiterate where my definition of reflexivity sits. For myself, reflexivity involves a constant discourse of the intra-actions (Barad, 2003) that are occurring within me at any moment. Through a combination of “traditional” reflexivity and diffraction (Barad, 2007), a form of performative meta-reflexivity, presented by Karen Serra Undurraga (2020a), enables me to explore the sensations of difference that occurs within myself when engaging with my reflexivity, as I cannot remove myself from its definition or enactment. However, despite the inherent nature of my involvement in my reflexivity, I am required to acknowledge that I am not the master of it. While it would be simple to hand over the title of “master” to something else, that too would be incorrect. Instead, I find myself following Serra Undurraga’s footsteps and yielding to foreignness, bringing in the voices of Foucault, Butler, and Bourdieu. With the addition of Jacques Lacan and his influences to one of an infinite number of definitions for the Unconscious, I come to recognise that in yielding to foreignness, what I am yielding to is my reflexive Unconscious. Furthermore, in yielding to the foreignness of this Unconscious, I am working towards removing myself from a world of assumptions and taken-for-granted notions into a position that, as Serra Undurraga (2020) describes it, requires an ontological insecurity. However, to be present in a space of ontological insecurity requires me to have an ontology to be insecure about in the first place.
Chapter Four

Reflexivity-in-Practice as Research: Onto-Epistemology and Methodology

Bodies are not objects with inherent boundaries and properties; they are material-discursive phenomena. “Human” bodies are not inherently different from “nonhuman” ones. What constitutes the “human” (and the “nonhuman”) is not a fixed or pregiven notion, but nor is it a free-floating ideality. (Barad, 2003, p. 823)

In many ways, this final chapter before presenting my photography feels as though it should be presented more as a sub-section, or perhaps even conclusion, to the previous chapter rather than as a separate entity. The ideas and concepts that I bring into this chapter carry on where the last one ended, although my formal involvement in them becomes more clear. Whereas I have previously shown an attempt at naming the who and what in my working definition for reflexivity, this chapter goes on to describe both the why and how that follows it. Despite much of the end of the previous chapter focusing on such questions of “why,” this chapter seeks to elucidate the process of why I have come to ask them, as well as how I seek to answer them. As such, this chapter continues to be influenced by the works of Karen Serra Undurraga and Karen Barad, while inviting others to join them in a discourse regarding how one is inseparable from the world that surrounds them when creating and gaining – or perhaps it would be more apt to say, producing and being produced by – knowledge.

Whereas many researchers might present their ontological and epistemological stances as having existed prior to their research occurring, and thus shaping the research that they have gone on to create, I find myself – and my research – embodying a different approach and perspective. When I look back at the work that is presented throughout this thesis, I find myself having arrived at, rather than coming from, something. As such, the onto-epistemological stance that I hold whilst writing this thesis itself has shifted and changed countless times. Prior to conducting this research, I would have imagined that a humanistic position would be taken, as the knowledge of myself and the ways of growing it could only be found through me. However, as time and research has gone on, I have found myself taking
on a significantly more posthuman approach to this research. Furthermore, when exploring my methodologies, I have found that traditional qualitative research that psychotherapy often avails itself to be unfitting to the definition of reflexivity that I have come to form.

This chapter begins with an exploration of posthumanism as an ontological position of its own, and quickly turns focus into a critical posthumanism as presented by Rosi Braidotti. Through Braidotti’s questioning of arguments presented by humanists and traditional assumptions of the non-human given by classical posthumanism, I begin to position critical posthumanism in line with Elizabeth St. Pierre’s concept of post qualitative inquiry. With St. Pierre’s insight into the need to move beyond classical empirical structures that define ontological foundations, I present myself, and my research, in a new onto-epistemological context, with the assistance of Karen Barad, that I call post qualitative posthumanism.

With this new onto-epistemological position taken, I turn the focus of this chapter into elaborating that, from a post qualitative posthuman perspective, an onto-epistemology is created that is again influenced by the ideas of Karen Barad, with additional insight gained through Deleuze as well as Deleuze and Guattari. This then leads me to explore my positioning within my research, as both researcher and subject, and thus presenting the ethical considerations of my ethico-onto-epistemological position within my research. The final section of this chapter, then, brings together the two previous sections in order to present a post qualitative posthuman “methodology” that I have titled as “reflexivity-in-practice.” This methodology attempts to show a movement from how knowing from reflexive actions becomes being reflexive. While this methodology may borrow from other, established qualitative methodologies, my unique involvement in it requires a shift from the traditional qualitative school of thought to produce something new and post qualitative. I created it and in turn it created, and recreated, me.
Post Qualitative Posthumanism

Whereas a humanist perspective may present the need for boundaries as foundational to creating a separation between human and non-human, posthumanism seeks to move past and obscure these delineations (Braidotti, 2019; Barad, 2007). The research presented in this thesis is posthuman in the extent to which it involves things that exist beyond my physical being. It involves my Unconscious, rolls of film, a camera, and its lens. It also involves myself – a self that, coming into this research, has been shaped by and rejecting of the hegemonic discourses relating to the forms of reflectivity and reflexivity shown in chapter two of this thesis. These things combine to create something that is no longer purely me, but instead something greater that exists in a space of always creating.

Returning to my explorations of reflexivity in third chapter of this thesis, when recognising myself as a reflexive entity, I come to recognise that through various intra-actions (Barad, 2003), I experience myself too as always in a state of change, a state of becoming. Moreover, with the addition of the relational inter- and intra-actions with the non-human entities found in posthumanism, I find myself growing into something more than just human. The extent to which I experience myself as purely a conscious mind placed in a corporeal form is diminished, in turn replaced with a limitless being that is constantly in a state of growth and change with each intra-action.

These limitations of human boundaries (Braidotti, 2019, Barad, 2007) are fully obscured when considering the role that the camera plays in this thesis. Am I controlling it? Do I hold a masterful position over the camera, as though it were simply a technological tool to be used to enhance my capabilities of seeing and remembering? Perhaps the camera is a being with its own unique form of sentience, which controls my eye and makes me see what it wants me to see. Or is there is possibility that the camera and I are not entirely separate at all with neither controlling the other, and instead working together to find something that speaks to us both?

Quoting Katherine Hayles (1999), María Fernández describes posthumanism as “the deconstruction of the humanist subject and the attributes normally associated with it…” (Fernández, 2016, p. 275). This would in turn bring Hayles to
put forth a posthuman perspective that views posthuman subjectivity as always in a state of evolution, as it is constantly changing due to being part of a world that is itself constantly in a process of change (Fernández, 2016, p. 275). However, for Hayles (1999), posthuman subjectivity is viewed as chaotic and located within the consciousness. I struggle to align myself with the latter aspects of Hayles’s definition for posthumanism, as I believe the relationship between the human and non-human is not solely found in consciousness, as it would not allow an opportunity to yield to the foreignness of the non-human, or posthuman, Unconscious. When thinking about reflexivity through a posthuman lens, I begin to find myself focusing on the ways that reflexivity is something engaged with and brought into myself, not inherently found within myself.

Turning from traditional posthumanism, then, I find myself being drawn in to the world of critical posthumanism, as presented by Rosi Braidotti. For Braidotti, exploring a posthuman world requires us to be engaged within a “trans-disciplinary field of scholarship that is more than the sum of its parts” (Braidotti, 2019, p. 31). As such, Braidotti’s (2019) critical posthumanism engages with arguments that sceptics of the post-human – that is, people who worry about an extinction of the “human” qualities of life, such as the eventual reliance and over-taking of mechanical and technological beings – regularly utilise to create formal distinctions between the two. Instead, posthumanism offers itself as neutral, as “it does not define the new human condition, but offers a spectrum through which we can capture the complexity of ongoing processes of subject-formation” (Braidotti, 2019, p. 34).

Posthuman subjectivity, then, can be seen as an opportunity to explore and expand upon the ways that the human and non-human come into connection with each other (Braidotti, 2019, p. 39), each holding a relational capacity that enables a diffractive (Barad, 2007) position to one and the other, breaking boundaries that would otherwise have been previously exempt from one another. This breaking of boundaries leads Braidotti, and myself, to hold that

the critical posthumanities are emerging as post-disciplinary discursive fronts not only around the edge of the classical disciplines but also as offshoots of the established ‘studies.’ They provide the answer to what the humanities can become, in the posthuman era, after the decline of the primacy of the universalist ‘Man’ and of supremacist Anthropos … Critical posthumanities acknowledges the porous
nature not only of [other disciplines’] institutional boundaries but also of their epistemic core, which gets redefined in terms of relational capacity. The driving force for knowledge production is therefore not the quest for disciplinary purity, or the inspirational force of radical dissent, but rather the modes of relation these discourses are able and willing to open up. (Braidotti, 2019, p. 40-41)

Reading Braidotti, I find my mind being drawn into the ways that disciplines are traversed and required to intra-act in order to create new knowledge. Looking backwards, and forwards, at this thesis, I find myself having engaged in this expansion of posthuman thought in this transdisciplinary way. Already in these first few chapters, I have involved the fields of philosophy with social sciences and, to an extent, the hard sciences. When taking a closer look at what has been explored within those fields, I have begun to transverse between psychoanalysis, sociology, feminist studies, quantum physics, and will soon add in photography and photographic theory. In conversations with friends about these topics, I have been regularly questioned about how I could possibly combine all of these areas of thought and ways of thinking into one coherent narrative for this thesis. Often, I respond with a simple answer of “with a lot of stress and smashing my head into a wall.” After all, how can a variety of fields that traditionally stand opposite of one another in terms of ontological and epistemological beliefs come together?

Whereas Braidotti (2019) presents a shift from traditional qualitative subjective criteria for critical posthumanism, Elizabeth St. Pierre (2019) puts forth a need to reject qualitative inquiries as a whole and instead embrace a post qualitative form of inquiry. Stemming from an ontology of immanence (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), St. Pierre presents that post qualitative inquiry obsesses over “the not yet, the yet to come” (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 4). Whereas transcendence focuses on delineating between the internal and external of a subject, or the actual and the virtual, immanence presents an interest “in what might be and what is coming into being” (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 4). As such, St. Pierre puts forth that nothing is able to be viewed outside of a plane of immanence, as there is nothing that has already been materialised and thus made static, as everything is in a constant state of becoming (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 5). When returning to explore this immanent position in critical posthumanism, I start to find that even the limited distinctions placed between human and non-human are found to be oscillating.
While Braidotti (2019) expresses a desire to limit the distinctions that non-critical posthumanism makes between the human and non-human, it still requires there to be some distinction. Barad describes this as “thingification — the turning of relations into ‘things,’ ‘entities,’ ‘relata’ — [which] infects much of the way we understand the world and our relationship to it” (Barad, 2003, p. 812). In moving from a qualitative posthumanism, St. Pierre seeks to address this thingification by putting forth the following aspects of post qualitative inquiry:

*Post qualitative inquiry never is.* It has no substance, no essence, no existence, no presence, no stability, no structure … Its empiricism is transcendental empiricism whose task, unlike the empiricisms of logical empiricism and phenomenology … is not to recognize its epistemic object — what is already known — but to look for conditions of emergence for what comes to be, the actual that is unlike anything else … It does not assume that humans have access to the world, to the thing-in-itself, but rather that one world exists *for-itself,* and that its difference, its diversity is much more complex than the human mind can comprehend. (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 9)

Here, St. Pierre presents how engaging with the post qualitative inherently requires an engagement with the posthuman, as it comes into being in spaces that are outside of access by traditionalist conceptions of the human, or even posthuman. While there are still shades of distinction between the human and non-human in St. Pierre, when adding Barad’s notion of the posthuman apparatus, I find this distinction to begin to wither.

For Barad, “apparatuses have no inherent ‘outside’ boundary. This indeterminacy of the ‘outside’ boundary represents the impossibility of closure … [Thus,] apparatuses are open-ended practices” (Barad, 2003, p. 816). I believe that the open-ended nature of being and becoming that Barad discusses here holds a space where posthumanism can become fully post qualitative, discursively. Rather than focusing on what can be brought into the space between the two in discourse, Barad presents discourse as “that which constrains and enables what can be said. Discursive practices define what counts as meaningful statements” (Barad, 2003, p. 819). While traditional qualitative research might seek to present what can be considered meaningful by aligning to it, post qualitative inquiry seeks to move this static position (St. Pierre, 2019) to one that is discursive insomuch as it “is not static or singular but rather is a dynamic and contingent multiplicity” (Barad, 2003, p.
Thus, a post qualitative posthumanism can be seen as a discursive practice that produces both the human and non-human in a simultaneous intra-action, since “‘humans’ are neither pure cause nor pure effect but part of the world in its open-ended becoming” (Barad, 2003, p. 821). What, then, can be seen as the product that becomes from my post qualitative posthuman discursive practice?

**Onto-Epistemological Groundings**

Similarly to Serra Undurraga (2020a), I take inspiration from Barad (2007) by combining the terms ontology and epistemology into a singular word: onto-epistemology. For Barad, the separation between ontology and epistemology shows a clear “reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse” (Barad, 2007, p. 185). Building off the ideas presented through intra-action (Barad, 2003), which again asserts that “nothing exists by itself; there are no bounded units that then come into relation. Instead, the units are constantly formed through relations...” (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 34), I find that it would be impossible for myself, in my position as researcher, to separate myself as a being and as a source of knowledge. As such, to gain a better understanding of how the human and non-human intra-act, Barad proposes that instead of separating the ideas of “being” and knowledge, we should combine them into something else:

**Onto-epistem-ology** – the study of practices of knowing in being – is probably a better way to think about the kind of understanding that we need to come to terms with how specific intra-actions matter. Or, for that matter, what we need is something like *ethico-onto-epistem-ology* – an appreciation of the intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being – since each intra-action matters... (Barad, 2007, p. 185)

When I explore the intra-action of my methodology to this relational stance, I come to find that my onto-epistemology in turn becomes a triumvirate of immanent, performative, and producing. Each of these onto-epistemological stances shapes and have been shaped by the ways that I understand my reflexivity. The immanent part of my onto-epistemology is inherent, as shown earlier in this chapter, to my engagement with the post qualitative. Performativity, as defined by Barad (2003), ties in to my stance of critical posthumanism. The producing aspects of my
onto-epistemology, then, can be seen in a combination of the two, as being in the field of immanence (St Pierre, 2019) whilst being performative has caused me to produce, as well as be a product of, my reflexive work. To start, I will focus the discussion now into exploring the performative and producing aspects of my onto-epistemology.

In their discussions on posthumanism, Barad presents performativity as an opportunity to explore discursive practices in relation to how representationalism holds a belief in the power of language to place represent meaning in preexisting things (Barad, 2003, 2007). For Barad, the notion that things are able to be represented places them into a space of reflection “where, much like the infinite play of images between two facing mirrors, the epistemological gets bounced back and forth, but nothing more is seen” (Barad, 2003, p. 803). This leads Barad (2003) to put forward the notion that representationalism, inasmuch as it seeks to separate objects from each other, places them into interactions, rather than intra-actions. Thus, by moving towards performativity, we inherently move towards intra-activity, as “it is through specific intra-actions that phenomena come to matter—in both senses of the word” (Barad, 2003, p. 817).

To push back against Barad, I believe that representations matter to an extent. I believe that the intra-actions that occur within myself when I seek to find a way to represent that is occurring within me, reflexively, when taking and later looking at an image and its representative photograph holds great significance. It is precisely through this intra-action between my performative and representational self that something comes to matter. Along these lines, Serra Undurraga bridges the gap between performativity and representationalism, stating that “every time that we develop an argument we are attempting to represent something; Even the argument ... is a representation. Every time we assert something we need to use a representation in the sense that we say: ‘x is in y way’” (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 142). As such, I believe that it is through performativity’s focus on the importance of the intra-action and practice of representation that matters, as “in representing we are making sense of something in particular ways – that could be otherwise – and producing ourselves and the world in this operation. (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 141) It is in this aspect of performativity that I place it as part of my onto-
epistemological position. From this position, a performative onto-epistemology, as shown by Serra Undurraga, is one that also necessitates production.

When combining an onto-epistemology of immanence and performativity, I experience myself as having produced something new for myself. The combination of these onto-epistemological positions – with the use of this term itself being performative – has created a space for me to explore and understand my reflexivity, intra-actively, and then create a new philosophical and conceptual understanding of my reflexivity. For Deleuze and Guattari (1994), the task of philosophy is just that: to create new concepts to be understood. Rather than simply grasp onto something that has been previously known, the task of the philosopher – if I may don that title for a brief moment – is to produce something entirely new. “Concepts are not waiting for us ready-made, like heavenly bodies. There is no heaven for concepts. They must be invented, fabricated, or rather created and would be nothing without their creator’s signature” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p.5). From this space of creation, concepts go on to create an endless possibility for new and unique concepts. Building from Deleuze and Guattari, Serra Undurraga articulates this by stating that “the role of creating concepts is to bring about new possibilities and new worlds, to shift how things are currently articulated and produced” (Serra Undurraga, 2020a, p. 46).

As I have argued throughout this thesis, the reflexivity that I have articulated has been produced solely by myself. Aligning with St. Pierre (2019) and post qualitative inquiry, my onto-epistemological position has never been held before, because it comes from me and my process of becoming. It has involved conversations and insights from others, yes, but it is not holding a representational mirror of reflection and calling them my own. Instead, it holds my signature, though I would push against titling it Zadok-ian by any means. My signature is present insomuch as it was produced by me and in turn went to reproduce my understandings of who I am and my conceptions of my onto-epistemological position. What, then, might be the ethical considerations that I have placed into this thesis and my onto-epistemology? How have I gone to make it an ethico-onto-epistemology?
Ethico-onto-epistemology

As noted earlier in the previous section, Barad (2007) puts forward ethico-onto-epistemology as a coming together of ethics, knowledge, and being. While there is no question as to the importance of ethics in research that involves interactions with others, there is still a great importance of involving ethics into research that involves ourselves, as when “we think of ourselves as always entangled, produced, and productive, then what is ‘external’ is part of us and that makes us more responsible” (Serra Undurraga, 2023b, p. 39). As I am responsible for the thesis that has been created and all the implications that reading it may have on others, I find myself ethically bound to acknowledge my space within this research.

This research involves me and the world and life that I have lived. Though it may touch upon experiences involving others who I have shared my life with, as you will see in the next chapter, the writings and experiences that are presented are my own. In the early formations of my research, I regularly questioned whether or not I wished to involve the experiences of others in my work. What insight might they be able to offer me on the photographs that I have taken? Would the emotions and memories that these photographs bring up for them be significant in my understandings of what has been produced? While the value that the input and information that others could give me is no doubt significant, this research does not focus upon their reflexivities, but mine. The reflexivities that I have fostered and produced over time are what have gone on to produce this research. This leads me to wonder why exactly is reflexivity, of all kinds, valued in research?

While I have already shown the value of reflexivity within psychotherapy practice and training (see chapter two), the importance of having reflexivity within psychotherapy research follows a similar train of thought. For Smith & Luke, the use of reflexivity within both practice and research is “closely associated with differing methodological concepts ... such as bias, subjectivity, and objectivity” (2021, p. 165). There is bias in everything, whether it is desired or not. Within research, especially research that so heavily involves the researcher as a participant or as an interpreter, these biases can come to drastically change how and what knowledge and information is accepted and presented. As such, reflexivity can initially be seen as a
way for psychotherapy researchers to address ethical issues that may come to question the validity of research within this field from those outside of it. As psychotherapy research has evolved through time, venturing from classical case-studies to focusing more on the role of the practitioner-researcher themselves, the need to further develop and define one’s place within their research has grown to be even more significant (McLeod, 1999; Finlay, 2002a, 2002b; Finlay & Gough 2003). In fact, reflexivity can now be seen as a pre-requisite for any individual hoping to conduct (post) qualitative research to the point that “most qualitative researchers will attempt to be aware of their role in the (co)-construction of knowledge” (Finlay, 2002b, p. 211).

As reflexivity in research can often be used to levy heavy social critiques under a guise of subjectivity, Finlay warns that the use of reflexivity needs to be tempered as to avoid the “dangers of infinite regress, with researchers getting lost in endless narcissistic personal emoting or interminable deconstructions of deconstructions where all meaning gets lost” (Finlay, 2002b, p. 226). As such, Finlay recommends that reflexive researchers hold a consistent level of reflexivity that aligns to their epistemological and methodological positions, thus allowing reflexivity to be used in order to “problematicize the relational and social (cultural and discursive) context of the researcher” (Finlay, 2017, p.124). With reflexivity being required to be consistent throughout the conducting of research itself, it follows that reflexivity also needs to be engaged in from the beginning, or even before, the research has actually begun. There are many suggestions of how to begin engaging with this need, such as radical reflexivity (Smith & Luke, 2021) taught at the earliest stages of counselling training; reflexivity in phenomenological research (Finlay, 2011); collaborative reflexivity (Finlay & Gough, 2003; Wyatt, 2023); critical reflexivity and the use of personal experience in research (Etherington, 2017); or engagement with and being reflexive through unconscious communications (Bondi, 2014) to name a few. While all of these versions of reflexivity hold merit in and of themselves, I believe that incorporating them all into a combination of reflexivities, along with being performatively meta-reflexive (Serra Undurraga, 2020a), allows me to engage in the producing and being produced by my research in an ethically reflexive way.
Returning to myself and this research, then, I wish to elaborate on how I have engaged and acknowledge the potential ethical issues that arise from leaning so heavily into myself and my experiences. What have I done to recognise and limit the potential for personal bias or simply falling back onto my experience as infallible? A simple answer would be through performative meta-reflexivity (Serra Undurraga, 2020a), which has allowed me an opportunity to question not only how or why I have produced this research, but a combination of how and why it has been created. Additionally, I have engaged in the traditional performance of seeking ethical approval for this research, which has been granted by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Edinburgh. With this meta-reflexivity, I have performed the role of being as transparent a researcher as possible in my recollection of experiences and the way that they have come to effect me. From here, I have gone on to entangle my reflexivity throughout my onto-epistemological positions, thus involving radical reflexivity (Smith & Luke, 2021) in my research by returning to the questions of how I have been shaped by them and how they have been shaped by me. I have also involved my reflexivity in the formulation of my research itself, returning to question the phenomenological experiences (Finlay, 2002a, 2002b, 2011) that produced me as I was producing the foundations for this research, made evident by the writings in chapter five. Through the stages of actively producing this research, I engaged in collaborative reflexivity (Finlay & Gough, 2003; Wyatt, 2023) with the involvement of my supervisors, both academic and clinical, in order to explore and make use of my personal experiences of being a subject of this research (Etherington, 2017). In the end, the combination of these reflexivities have allowed me to better come into contact with and find space for the communications with my reflexive Unconscious (Bondi, 2013) that have searched for a voice in the reflexive data that this research has produced. What method, then have I utilised in producing this thesis?

**A Method Found**

I would like to take the time now to present the ways in which I have used the multiple reflexivities that I have presented throughout this thesis thus far: my methodology. My methodology – that is, my studying-of-methods – has led me to the
point of stating that I have no formal methodology. Rather, developed from my engagement with the post qualitative inquiry (St. Pierre, 2019) – which seeks to reject the limitations and formulations of traditional qualitative methodologies – my methodology has never existed before, or prior to this research, and never will exist again. Why? Because my methodology is my reflexivity-in-practice. Whereas other, classical qualitative methodologies are well accepted within the field of psychotherapy research, I recognise that simply stating that “I have created a methodology” is not enough to offer it a secure base to be accepted as a valid methodology. To respond to this critique, then, I will begin by offering a defence for the methodology that I have created.

The foundations for this methodology stems from St. Pierre’s (2018, 2019) formulations of post qualitative inquiry and come to involve a version of psychoanalytic inquiry. Despite my earlier proclamations against using established methodologies, I choose to engage with a version of psychoanalytic inquiry (Bachrach, 1989) as a way of formally integrating a part of this research that I believe to be beyond any boundaries found within qualitative research: my reflexive Unconscious. With much of the creation and exploration of the data that is presented in the next chapter having had occurred through a yielding to the foreignness of my reflexive Unconscious, I present a large focus on the language and voice that it has presented through me, though I wish to maintain a sceptical position in relation to it. As a result, this leads me to present my methodology as producing a reflexive analysis of an assemblage that I have produced in order to foster the personal and professional developments required of me during both my training and subsequent practice as a psychotherapist.

The methodology that I have engaged in with my research has been produced from a refusal of long held binaries. Throughout my psychotherapy training, I was presented with the binaries of reflexive or not-reflexive, acceptable or not-acceptable. In engaging with post qualitative inquiry, I have taken a step away from such binaries, since “refusing the logic of ... binaries means refusing the conventional social science research process itself, especially the presumed linearity and systematicity of its empirical work, because one is always empirical, always ‘in the field’ ... “ (St Pierre, 2019, p. 10). Traditional social science research, then, can be understood as a linear process (St. Pierre, 2018), whereby an individual
begins by stating an ontological and epistemological position, followed by a methodology that is dictated by the two. As you might be able to recognise from the structure of my thesis, my ethico-onto-epistemological position was far from the first thing that was found in creating this thesis. In fact, this methodology is the final piece of this highly convoluted puzzle that I have attempted to piece together. For St. Pierre (2019), post qualitative inquiry necessitates that methodology be involved later in the research process, since “one begins post qualitative inquiry without a methodology” (p. 10). Moreover, St. Pierre pushes against formal, repetitive methodology within post qualitative inquiry altogether:

Post qualitative inquiry is different each time it appears, produced by different contingent and unpredictable forces in experimentation with the real; that is, the conditions of its emergence cannot be repeated because they disappear immediately, and what one post qualitative inquirer “does” cannot serve as a model for others. (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 10)

What, then, does one do to engage in post qualitative inquiry? According to St. Pierre (2019), “one begins post qualitative inquiry with a concrete encounter with the real, not with a research question” (p. 12). For St. Pierre, this means to sit and play with one’s research, constantly questioning the ways in which we are coming to understand what in the encounter with the real is puzzling us—and then repeating the process until something that works is found (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 12-13). Whereas St. Pierre utilises “the real” in a Deleuzian sense, I wish to briefly invoke Lacan’s definition of the concept in psychoanalysis (I capitalise “the Real” as, in Lacanian psychoanalysis, it stands as one of three registers, the other two being the Symbolic and the Imaginary. Further discussions on Lacan’s definition of “the Real” can be found in chapter six). For Lacan, the Real is “the impossible ... because it is impossible to imagine, impossible to integrate into the symbolic order, and impossible to attain in any way” (Evans, 1996, p. 160). Through my encounters the Real, I find myself leaning into St. Pierre’s (2018) suggestion to engage with what Deleuze & Guattari call “the long preparation” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Whereas qualitative inquiry offers a preset path to follow, post qualitative inquiry involves “reading, thinking, writing, and living with theory in ‘experimentation in contact with the real’” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12 quoted in St. Pierre, 2018, p. 605). Through this experimentation and creation of novel concepts, post qualitative
inquiry rejects the limitations inherent to traditional methodologies, since “at some point, the [experimental] possibilities of the model are exhausted and its explanatory power greatly diminished” (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 11). With the power of the method relegated and diminished, how then are we to think about the research we are doing?

Alecia Jackson (2017) suggests that we begin to think about research by thinking *without* method. For Jackson (2017), “thinking without method relieves qualitative inquiry from the twin forms of epistemological imperatives of knowledge production and a conventional dependency on procedural method. Freedom from this reliance gives us a new starting place: the *outside* of method” (p. 666). Like St. Pierre, Jackson utilises thinking outside of method to question the preconceived notions of social science research which, when engaging with method, is “already at work when we start to think, most of the time without our even knowing it” (Jackson, 2017, p. 669). Jackson (2017) presents that when we involve method in our research, we are not actually thinking, but simply recognising something that already is. Invoking Deleuze (1994), Jackson puts forward that when we engage in thought, rather than recognition, we are engaging in a violence, and that “it is through this violence from the outside that new faculties can arise, *new faculties that are unanticipated and unregulated by method*” (Jackson, 2017, p. 670). Method, which places the researcher as a subject with knowledge *a priori*, thus exists as “a given; it has become natural and ready-made” (Jackson, 2017, p. 673). The novelty of thought that exists outside of method – or more specifically, qualitative method – is precisely what post qualitative inquiry demands. As a result, both Jackson (2017) and St. Pierre (2018, 2019) suggest that instead of thinking with method, we think with concepts and theory. The concepts and theories that I have chosen to engage with have been presented throughout this chapter and the one before it, most notable of which has been reflexivity. How, then, have I used my engagement with reflexivity, intra-actively, as means for performativity and production?

While the formal process of taking photographs and writing about their associated images is covered in some detail in the next chapter, I will use this space to describe my reflexive practice as a whole, thus introducing a methodology that not only can be seen in the production of the next chapter, but as encompassing this
thesis altogether. As mentioned earlier in this section, something violent occurs when an interaction with the Real occurs. It leaves a mark that is impossible to fully articulate and instead creates a need to question, reflexively, what has just occurred. There have been many moments throughout my journey in producing this thesis where I have felt myself coming into contact with the Real, producing within me a need to explore what is occurring, intra-actively, within myself. However, coming to recognise and understand the impact that these intra-actions have had on me hasn’t occurred in real time, or with a slight delay. Rather, like with the practice of film photography, a period of latency is required.

Something sits, festering within me. It gnaws at me, driving me to search for answers; not through methodology, but through an interest in myself that can only be fulfilled by studying philosophy, ontology, epistemology, etymology, and the history and politics of psychotherapy. The methodology of reflexive practice that I have utilised in producing this thesis requires that I produce and am produced anew. “If one wants to do the ‘new’ work, one has to understand the ‘old’ work,” says St. Pierre (2019, p. 13). From a psychoanalytic point of view, I understand the “old” work that St. Pierre is referring to is the previous versions of myself that have existed at various moments of time. As a result, I have returned to various moments of my life throughout this thesis, presenting the thoughts and notions that I held so dear to my understanding of the world I lived in, and have questioned them through my performative meta-reflexivity (Serra Undurraga, 2020a). While I have engaged with some of these thoughts previously in my academic work during my training, many of them stem from previous encounters with the Real. The remnants of these encounters have laid dormant, latent, waiting for a time where I would be able to explore them.

Borrowing from practices of psychoanalysis (Bachrach, 1989), I have allowed myself to explore, diffractively (Barad, 2007), a variety of associations that have come from these long-held assumptions of myself. I push against claiming this methodology fully being a psychoanalytic inquiry, as this would be at odds with the tenets of post qualitative inquiry that I have grasped tightly to throughout this chapter, however I accept that I have nonetheless engaged in thought (Jackson, 2017) utilising some of the concepts and theories of psychoanalytic technique. In the end I believe that by using psychoanalysis as a foundational ground for myself to depart
from, and return to, I have acted upon the final recommendation that St. Pierre (2019) offers for those wishing to engage with post qualitative inquiry:

My third recommendation, after avoiding methodology and reading and reading to find new concepts for thinking differently and then differently again, is for students to trust themselves and carve out a temporary space in which to think and write about an encounter [with the Real] that presses on them. (p. 13)

As you will come to see in the next chapter, I have written extensively about my encounters with the Real and the violent marks that it has left upon me. While they are unable to be seen by the human eye, I have been able to use my reflexivity as a method of recognising them through a non-human eye: the lens of a camera. Perhaps in seeing these photographs you will recognise for yourself something that I have been unable to, and I hold no reservations in having you wonder what these might be as you see the images of my photographic Unconscious. And now, having found the method in which I engage with my reflexivity-as-practice, I invite you, my reader, to explore what it – or better – what I, have produced.
Chapter Five
Photographic Journaling as Reflexive Practice

As mentioned at the start of this thesis, I have always struggled to put words on paper. As far back as I can remember, I have seen friends and family keep journals of their lives, marking down special events and memories of their days as practice to be kept everlasting. Despite my countless attempts at keeping a journal myself, whether that be for basic day-to-day activities or for my dreams whilst in psychoanalysis, I would end up forgetting the journal existed or actively neglect to write in it. Even if it were sat next to my bed, opened to a blank page with a pen uncapped and a prompt waiting to be answered, I would simply walk past it as I arose for the morning or laid back in bed to end the day. For some reason, I have always held a deep resistance to filling out the pages of my journals.

Time and life went on, and I began to feel more and more pressure from those around me to keep a journal. It felt like a constant onslaught from every possible angle: from my analysts who expressed that it may be helpful for me to keep track of thoughts or connections that appeared to me throughout the day in between our sessions; my tutors during my time as an undergraduate so that I could write ideas for the novel I was writing as my the thesis project; or even employers who expressed that journaling could be helpful in coping with the difficulties of working in child and adolescent crisis care. However, my resistance to reflective journaling would all come to a change towards the middle of 2020.

What follows in this chapter can, in many ways, be described as both the production of and producer for this thesis. In it, I will show how I finally began to find a way to engage with reflexive self-awareness and personal development through the use of a photographic “journal.” Though this section is primarily autobiographic, I will begin to create space for linking the psychoanalytic and photographic theories that will be discussed later in this thesis through the use of my personal photography taken over the course of my four years whilst on this doctoral programme.
The second section of this chapter shows you, finally, the photographs that I have alluded to throughout this thesis, though you will come to find something to be missing from them: their titles – though it would be a misrepresentation on my behalf to state that they do not have one. In truth, I often name the photographs in my mind and on the back of their print from the outset. Nonetheless, I would like to offer the challenge to view these photographs for the first time without them, and thus utilising the various reflexive writings attached to them to craft a title independent of my own. Though it may be tempting to flip through the pages in search of the title, (which may be found in the appendix of this thesis), I must insist that you refrain from doing so and instead let your imagination fill with the wish of what it might be.

Accompanying these photographs, or most of them, is the passage that is originally written on their backside. These passages have never been edited, and are instead given to show the raw, unfiltered version of my self at the time of writing. To follow these, however, is another product of my reflexivity, written at the same time as the rest of this thesis. In presenting these photographs and writings to you, I aim to show the ways that I and my reflexivities have developed since the first instance of rudimentary reflexion. You might go ahead and interpret the subsequent passages as a rewriting of the original journaling, and you would be right in doing so. However, I would also like to offer the challenge of reading them as their own, independent reflexive production. In doing so, I seek to convey to you the most significant aspect of my reflexivity: latency, which I will elaborate fully in chapter six. These secondary – or primary, depending on how you wish to experience them – reflexive productions given to these photographs feel, to me, as though they were written in a world where the first hadn’t occurred. They tell a story of who I am in this present moment.

A final consideration that I wish to offer as we venture into my reflexive photographic work is one that serves to further the distinction between the two “data sets” – the photographs and the writing accompanying them – presented in this chapter. To do so, I wish to give a moment in this thesis to consider W.J.T. Mitchell’s (1986, 1995) question of what constitutes an image and how is it different from a picture. As you may have noticed thus far throughout this thesis, I have at times used the terms “picture,” “photograph,” or “image” interchangeably. However,
it would be naïve to assume that these terms all mean the same thing when they all have a unique nuance to them.

Let us begin with what this thesis contends with as its central material block: pictures and photographs. While I have claimed these to be separate in the above paragraph, I do so purely out of a semantic necessity. Photographs, moments in time that have been frozen and captured, are a form of pictures belonging to the greater category of “graphic images” found in Mitchell’s genealogical tree of images (1986, p. 10). Like other graphic images, such as paintings or statues (Mitchell, 1986, p. 10), photographic pictures are a physical object that be seen, touched, edited, or altered to create something tangible that can be engaged with. The photographic pictures (as opposed to the motion-based pictures of the cinema) shown in this chapter are easily recognised and understood as moments from my life. They are the physical representations of scenes that I have witnessed with my own eyes, have built memories from, and returned to with the hope of understanding something more about myself. With this definition of picture – or photograph, as the two terms will continue to be used interchangeably throughout this thesis – in mind, I now turn to ask, what is an image?

As mentioned above, Mitchell (1986, p. 10) presents the image as a tree that houses many versions of itself including graphic and mental images. While Mitchell presents several other varieties of images that no doubt have a great deal to offer in the discourse of what is an image (Gori, 2017), they fall outside the scope of this thesis. As such, I wish to briefly explore the connection between mental and graphic images, though a more detailed examination of this connection can be found in chapter six of this thesis. For Mitchell (1986), the graphic image can be understood as having the most physical quality to it: it is external, can be touched and recognised fully as separate from the individual engaging with it. To this extent, pictures or photographs are not what is truly being examined when discussing “what is an image,” though they are inherently connected. This leads me to present that when trying to understand what an image is, we are truly asking, what is the mental image?

Mitchell presents mental images – such as dreams, phantasies, memories, or ideas (Mithcell, 1986; Gori, 2017) – to be alive and living “within” something, though not necessarily the person. Just as the posthuman and photographic aspects of the
reflexive Unconscious exist outside of the individual (see chapter one), I contend that so too does the mental image. In his reading of Mitchell’s *Iconology* (1986) and *Picture Theory* (1997), Francesco Gori describes the mental image as existing in a “no man’s land” (2017, p.41). While words are considered by Lacan (1977) as the signifier for the Symbolic register of the Unconscious, Gori presents the picture as the visual signifier for the image (2017, p. 41). Or, in other words, photographs serve as the signifier for the images – the memories, emotions, the “soul” (Mitchell, 1986) – that are found in the Imaginary register of the Unconscious. As such, I present the term “image,” as used from this point out, to refer to that which cannot be found in the Symbolic register of the Lacanian Unconscious, though is not necessarily lost in its entirety to the Real. Images are that which resist, to the best of their ability, symbolisation through language and instead seek to be represented through the signifier that developed from their very existence: the photograph.

With this in mind, I wish now to turn to the contents of this chapter: the photographs and their associated writings. As I have mentioned earlier in this introduction, they are two separate entities. Though my reflexive practice of writing on the back of the printed photographs has turned them into one physical unit, they still stand separate in that they are two different ways of experiencing something that is hidden, though not necessarily forever. For Mitchell (1986), images contain the “soul” or “likeness” of something invisible, something foreign. As we know from my discussion in chapter three, I present this foreign entity as the psychoanalytic and reflexive Unconscious. It is, as Gori presents, something that “comes and goes ... stop[ing] before our eyes” (2017, p. 57) in an attempt to have us understand something that has been lost and held in latency, replicating a process similar to the psychoanalytic Unconscious. Having now presented this discussion on the photograph and the image, I wish to invite the world of language to be recognised in this process.
A Dam Broken: The Reflexive Photographic Journal

As described earlier in this thesis, I have always been surrounded by cameras. However, for most of my early life I had little appreciation for them. A camera was just an object that allowed me to share a nice picture of myself or of some scenery for pleasantries and attention from friends both near and far. Before phone cameras became as ubiquitous as a wallet in the pocket of the everyday person, I used disposable cameras purely for the fact that they were cheap and readily available. They had little importance to me, as I could easily purchase a new one with the pocket change that I had or ask my parents for a few dollars in order to buy several to bring away with me to summer camp. Photography wasn’t necessarily a concept that I understood or recognised as having a “theory” associated with it, but rather an activity that I witnessed others doing and wanted to feel as though I were fitting in with the crowds around me. It wasn’t until my time as an undergraduate that a shift in my appreciation for photography and the camera began to take place.

Most of my closest friends at the time were art students and I was the only one within my immediate friend group that wasn’t formally taking either film or photography as a concentration of my studies. Nonetheless, these friendships and our academic interests influenced each other, as the world of the Image and psychoanalysis are so intrinsically intertwined. I began to go on outings with my friends where they brought their film cameras and in turn they began to teach me how to use them. I learned what terms like “aperture” and “focal point” meant. I was taught how to use a lux meter in order to assist them when setting up a portrait or landscape shot. “ISO” ratings for film began to make sense and have a context for when to use them, rather than just using the flash function on my phone to try and capture photographs in settings with various light quality. Over time, they began to trust me with their own devices, albeit the more easily replaceable ones in case the camera slipped from my hand or I were to somehow damage it. They would take the film and develop it for me, showing me the processes of using a red-room to keep the picture alive rather than risk it being damaged due to other light.

After finishing my undergraduate studies, I began taking film photographs of my own. I eventually saved up enough money to purchase a used Hasselblad C/M 500 medium format camera that utilises 120mm film and started playing around
with various film stocks, both in colour and black-and-white. With time, I began to discover that I had a particular eye for photography and eventually started to collect the printings. Though some were quite awful – my hands were still learning how to hold nearly 2 kilograms still and not jitter for the fraction of a second that the lens would shut – I found a pride in looking at them and sharing them with my friends.

When I found out that I would be moving to Edinburgh to take my place on this doctorate programme, I knew that the first thing that would be brought with me was my camera. For the first months of my being in this new part of the world, I brought my camera with me just about everywhere. There were more times that I forgot my phone in my flat than my camera, and I easily went through a half dozen rolls of film before the season changed from summer to autumn. As the seasons went on to change once more, I found myself going outside less. The coldness of the air and darkness of the light made mustering the energy to leave my flat beyond what was necessary more and more difficult. Whenever I did, though, I would have my camera hung from my neck, forcing me to stand with a firm posture and my neck craned to keep my eye ready for a moment to capture.

The pile of printed photographs ceaselessly grew on my desk. Eventually, I began to sort them into two piles, one that was tucked away into a drawer in my desk and one that stayed within constant view. For some reason, the photographs in the latter pile felt inspiring or thought provoking to me. Something in them spoke to me beyond just the memory of taking them or the events that they depicted.

The transition into the new year brought new challenges for me. By the middle of January, I would begin seeing my first client in my clinical placement as well as receive the first marks from my assignments on this course. These changes and developments brought with them equal measures of excitement as well as stress and frustration. For so long I had dreamt of beginning my practice – to move beyond the world of listening-practices and short 10-minute performances where I would play the role of sitting in the therapist seat. To sit in the actual seat, however, brought further demands on me to keep myself “reflexive” by both my tutors and my supervisor. In my assignments, I believed that I was sharing myself as honestly and openly as I could be. During my supervision, I was regularly asked to “pause and
think more” about myself in relation to my clients and try to find where it was that the feelings I had in relation to them were coming from.

Week after week passed and I began to feel as though I was failing everyone around me. I felt as though I wasn’t good enough, that somehow there was a mistake in allowing me to move to Scotland as a 23-year-old and begin this programme; that my placement readiness tutor was wrong to have allowed me to begin seeing clients and that the faith that others had held in me was entirely misplaced. I kept wishing that instead of writing, I could simply show the photographs that I had taken whilst in this country and thought to myself “if only these people could see what I feel” in the piles of photographs on my desk. These tensions continued to build in me over the following weeks, making time move both painfully slow and faster than I was able to keep up with. And then, the world stopped.

Barely six months after I arrived in Scotland, the world would be put into lockdown due to COVID-19. My practice was put on pause as the training agency explored ways to move clients online safely and in-line with requirements set out by regulatory bodies. The social circles that I had built for myself disappeared into little more than a few short messages asking if we had watched anything particularly interesting on Netflix that week or if anyone we knew had gotten ill. More importantly, my near daily practice of venturing outside with my camera stopped as I limited myself to venturing outside for the bare minimum of a walk in the garden of my accommodation or to the grocery store to buy supplies for the week. Film that I had planned to take to be developed stayed stacked in my refrigerator, questioning whether they would ever get the opportunity to be seen. The half-used roll of film in my camera itself felt empty, as though its purpose of being exposed to the outer world would never be realised. The stacks of photographs on my desk began being a dream of the outside world, taking on a layer of sentimentality that I hadn’t attributed to them previously. I looked through them daily, searching for something within them that was missing from my conscious experience. They stared back at me blankly, unable to speak. However, their aphasia would eventually make way for something greater than I had previously thought possible.

During the middle of April 2020, I decided to reach out to one of my friends from my time as an undergraduate to hear about his life and how the events around
the world were affecting him. After listening to the changes in his work and social life, we began talking about art and photography, when he asked to see some of the photographs that I had taken since moving to Scotland. We began discussing them together, exploring aspects of the photograph that spoke to each of us and he began offering me feedback for ways that I could continue to explore the concept of an image further.

At one point in our discussion, I shared that a few of the pictures allowed me to feel like I was transported back to a moment in the past where he and I would drive in his car, exploring the area around our university with his camera and taking pictures. He went on to ask me about how I was finding Scotland and my programme, to which I shared the feedback given by my tutors and supervisors surrounding my need to be more reflexive and how I struggled to understand what that meant. I explored with him the difficulties that I was having in writing and reflecting on myself in the ways that were being asked and said that I wish I could just use the pictures themselves. “Well, why don’t you just write on the pictures themselves,” he said back to me. In that moment, everything finally began to align. The way that he and I had just explored the photographs, reminiscing about the past and ruminating on the present and potential futures shown in them, could be done regularly. Each photograph on my desk had an internal story to show. Each one spoke to something within myself from various moments of my life; numerous versions of my self could be found within the confines of the photograph’s frame, fighting to break free from its bounds.

And so I finally began to write. It would be disingenuous to say that my first writings were immaculate and filled with insights that were revelations to my soul and changed my interactions with the world. No, the first writings were simple. They were simple statements of how I remembered feeling the day a picture was taken and how I felt looking at it again. Eventually, I began to write about what I enjoyed in the picture itself, as well as what I disliked. Over time, I began to explore my internal world through the external one shown in the photograph in front of me, looking to bridge the two experiences and speak into them both. With more time and practice, I began to develop and hone my skill in writing, moving past initial reflections towards something reflexive. I allowed myself to delve deeper and bend back into myself, returning to writings and photographs that had at one point felt
finished and closed. As the world began to open up again and lockdown restrictions eased, I began to venture outside with greater frequency, taking my camera with me to see what, if any, changes occurred in the world around me and how I would now interact with it.

It was at this time, perhaps, that I began to explore the concept and practice that I have recently called “reflexive photography,” which has become part of my reflexivity-in-practice methodology. Though lacking in formal name at the time, the photographs that I present to you throughout the coming section of this chapter aim to portray my – perhaps unconscious – foray throughout time into this concept. The following section of this chapter is made up of a selection of photographs that I have found to have held – and continue to hold – the strongest grasp over me these past few years. Additionally, I have made a conscious choice to present one from each year of my doctoral journey. Each one speaks into a version of me that needed to find a form of voice, and ultimately doing so through the photographs presented.
It's been a year since I left home in the search of a new one, a new life. Home has always been a strange concept to me. I've been lucky and privileged enough to have one all my life, never having to worry about it being there or not. I've had multiple homes throughout my life, but this one here has always been the one that's remained constant. Vermont Street, San Francisco. On every ID, passport, notebook or random thing that I am prone to misplacing, this was marked as my home.

In the past year, I've had multiple homes here in Scotland, but I've struggled to feel like I am more than just a drifter between them. A month ago, I moved into a new flat and for the first time since I was a kid, I have felt at home in a space. This room is mine; the walls that encompass it set a boundary for a world that I have a part in shaping, making my own and for all those with whom I cross paths.

The last 366 days have been a whirlwind, and in another month I start the second year of my PhD. The journey to become the person I dream of being is only just beginning and there are countless of lessons and experiences I have yet to know. Every corner offers an opportunity to learn and grow. Every day gives me a chance to make another step forward, another step backward or even to the side of where I hope to be. I move towards that life offers with open mind and heart and I welcome everything that comes along the way.

Date of photo: 14th August, 2019

Date of journal entry: 15th August, 2020
What makes a home? From the outset of this therapeutic training, it was suggested that my peers and I should always keep in our minds where it is that we come from; the places, the cultures, the families and histories that have gone to shape our past and inform our present. I struggled heavily with this task, much like I did with most of the challenges set forth for me by my tutors. For much of my life, I fought against the idea that I was limited by the influences of the places and people that I called “home,” and as I reflect upon this challenge now, I find an irony in my failed rebellion. Throughout my training and subsequent practice, one of the first questions that I would ask my clients would be to describe their homes and families in order to gain an insight into the background of their lives and how their earliest years shaped them. I recall one client who decided to share with me in great detail a description of the house they grew up in. The lengths to which they would go to describe the scents that filled the place, the creaks in the floorboards and the way voices would travel through the walls created an image in my mind of them as a young child immersed in a place that would never leave them. After my sessions with this client, I would travel back to a place that I initially called home here in Edinburgh and write notes for the session while looking upon a photo of my own childhood home – the first photograph that I present.

It feels strange to sit and look at the first photograph that I took at the beginning of this journey that is now coming to a close. It feels so incredibly distant in all senses – temporally, physically, and emotionally. If I had been asked at the time of taking this picture whether I believed I would come to miss my childhood home, I would have answered that it was a guarantee. For many years I would tell people that my home was San Francisco, quoting the old Tony Bennett lyrics as a way to affirm the belief that one day I would find my way back to the city and watch the remainder of my seasons pass there. Yet, as time has gone on, I find myself growing less certain of that answer. As I look back to this photograph, I am overwhelmed by the concept of “home” and brought to reflect on the many relationships with people in the places that I have called home throughout my life.

Throughout my life, I have been inundated with stories of “the wandering Jew.” Whether it be through biblical stories told to me during my time at Jewish primary and secondary schools, or at a summer camp for Jewish youth, or even in the stories of my parents and grandparents recounting familial histories of
emigration and displacement, there has always felt a strangeness in the concept of home. As noted in the above journaling, I felt as though I were a drifter travelling between residencies throughout my first year in Edinburgh, only to find a home in a new flat with new people who I would come to call friends. Yet, as the following year began to pass, even that new “home” began to feel only temporary. The idea that the space I inhabited was able to be claimed as my own now feels like nothing more than mere fantasy. Barely a year after moving in, I began to consider moving to someplace else, partially due to a sense of rising tension between myself and some of my fellow flatmates, but also due to the instability placed on us with the knowledge that the landlord would begin seeking to sell the flat, leaving us all unsure about how much time we would have left in the space together. Once again, I began to seek refuge and search for a true “home” like my ancestors before me.

This search for a home feels never-ending. It toils in the back of my mind, permeating itself into my interpersonal relationships and coming to effect the way I relate to any space I enter. Is Edinburgh my home? It has been, at times, throughout the past several years. I have found and let go of love within this city. I have uncovered aspects of my self, such as a desire for independence and the occasional need for dependency, within its boundaries. I have grown softer in voice while strengthening my spirit. I have found deep connections with those around me, yet I have also limited the extent to which I will let someone witness my vulnerabilities all due to the fact that I hold an unsureness as to whether the relationship, and myself, will remain in this place. The feeling that I will inevitably be forced to continue my wandering is exhausting. There have been moments where I wish that my knees would simply buckle and throw me to ground, forcing me to give in to the temptation to stay still and allow my roots to sow to the point that attempting to upend them would kill the tree of life that has grown from them.

At times, though, the urge to run away in the hope that a new home might allow me to find and feel better connected to the people and world around me feels like hot coals underneath my heels pushing me to move. The kerosene that drips from my hands and forces the fire to burn stronger soaks into the ground and burns away any traces of roots that may have started to form. It is almost as though an intergenerational curse has been placed on my family, one that can be traced back to the dawns of known time, condemning us to wander endlessly through desert and
rain in search of a haven to finally rest. A space that we, that I, might manage to call my own.

The home shown in this first picture belongs to my mother. She bought it well over 30 years ago, and it has been the only stable idea of home that I have known. It is curious, then, that I had chosen to photograph it in black-and-white, though that is not how it was meant to be at the moment of capturing it. In fact, the initial film-stock that I used for this photograph was meant to present soft colours and create an atmosphere of nostalgia. And yet, when it came time to get this particular roll of film developed, I chose to have it processed and printed in black-and-white. At the time, I simply thought it would be a fun experiment to see how the colours of the photograph would contribute to the depth and shades of grey. However, in this moment of reflection, I find the choice to speak more to a feeling that has been growing inside me for quite some time. The love and connection I previously held to this home has faded over these last few years.

In my fantasies of home, I struggle to decide whether I wish to return to the home as it was painted in my early years: white with forest green trim around the windows and the door with a burnt orange contrast on the front-facing balcony. Or do I imagine it as I left it, with its pale blue-grey face and deeper navy trimmings? Recently, my mother sent me a rather cryptic image of scaffolding outside the front of the house in a text message, meant to signal that the face of the house has changed yet again. Once more, I am left to wonder how the place that I called home as a child has changed. To some degree, I find myself coming to fear the extent to which these changes may be occurring. As such, I find myself choosing to remember the house as photographed – ambiguous in colour and left vacant for my imagination to paint it as I wish.

But what truly makes a home? According to my own words in my original journal entry, a home is a space with boundaries to delineate what is mine, and solely mine, from what is shared with others. In earnest, I find it hard to agree with that sentiment anymore. Presently, when I dream of home, I imagine an area that is open and vast. I imagine a realm that is shared with an other – or better yet, many others. Home is found in community. As I currently sit writing this and looking back at the picture of this house in San Francisco, my mind drifts to the many connections
and friendships that I had established while domiciled there. I think of the people I
would get to regularly encounter as I meandered the streets of the city; how I would
stop into a wine shop not to purchase a bottle, but to talk to the woman who owned
the store and hear about how her week has been. Of course, I would still leave with
a bottle to have with dinner that evening, but that meant that I would have to take a
trip to the delicatessen and ask its third-generation namesake what specialty pasta
he would recommend to go with it. Had I taken photographs of these spaces rather
than the building in the grey-scale picture shown above, I can’t help but believe that
I would have chosen to show them in the way that I remember them, full of colour
and vibrancy. To this end, then, a home might be conceived as a place that is
produced rather than found or given. Moreover, for myself, home can be seen as
being found in the people that come to share this produced space.

In the next few months, as the summer months wane to offer room for cooler
breezes and the brown shades of foliage to become more prominent, I will embark
once again to create a new home. As it stands, the dreams that I have of how this
home will look and feel are held in a similar grey-scale to the photograph I have
given you earlier. With each passing day, however, this new home is filled with
colour and life. It is given texture and depth as the haze of Lacan’s Imaginary is
removed from it and brought into the world of the Symbolic. Within this world, a
home stands to represent all that has transpired throughout the past and in the
desires for what the future might hold. Home is both the signifier and the signified.
Year Two
I’m doing okay and not okay.

It’s 4 a.m. and I’m reaching the third night in a row where there are good chances I’ll fall asleep watching the sun come up. I’m not sure why, but I’ve been holding on to this picture, and this post, for close to a year now.

I feel drained, fighting a daily battle to find energy to do most things – to do something with my day that has some semblance of productivity or beneficial action. Some days that’s going to the gym, other days it’s reading a few pages from some article that’s meant to be beneficial to my work. In the end, the only thing I feel that I am doing of any significance is sitting in a chair in my room on Friday mornings for four hours meeting with my clients. It’s both the brightest and the most draining part of my week.

In twelve days, it’ll be two years since I left San Francisco. Two years since I last cried. Regardless of how badly I want to, how much I try to, I can’t. Two years since I last hugged my mom, saw my friends, saw the fog roll down the hills from my living room window and break over the houses of Noe Valley and The Mission and Bernal Heights like waves hitting the shore. I miss it, so very much, and at times doubt that I’ll get the chance to see it again.

These past two years have been glorious and painful all at once. I’ve had the highs of working in an industry that’s made me happy, and the lows of losing that job. I’ve had the joys of exceeding what I thought I was capable of academically, and the sorrows of feeling that I could fail at any moment. I’ve made friends, fell in and out of love, mourned the death of family, and achieved more than I feel worthy of. I’ve felt inadequate, and then receive an internship at a therapy agency and an offer to be a teacher for two masters courses this coming spring all in the space of a week. A fucking whirlwind feels like an understatement.

I’m doing okay, but I am also struggling. I don’t think that the me of two years ago could have fathomed the level of resilience and strength and sheer wherewithal needed to push through this all, but I’m doing it.”

Date of photo: 24th September, 2020

Date of journal entry: 2nd August, 2021
Within my work as therapist, I regularly find myself telling my clients that the most difficult part of the therapeutic process is in the beginning. The beginning of therapy is a significant moment of transition within any individual’s life, and can often be the first opportunity in a person’s life where they might feel that they have a genuine autonomy in engaging with change, leading them on a detour from a path that had been laid before them during their earliest moments of life. As we know, however, the first instigation of this change doesn’t occur when a client arrives at the therapy office for the first time, but rather when they have acknowledged they are in some form of psychological and emotional pain and recognise that they wish for a change to occur.

It is curious, then, that it took a year of near daily emotional turmoil for me to write the journal entry attached to this photograph, and subsequently allow others to see it. For the better part of a year, this photo was pinned to the corkboard above my desk. It was taken in the early days of a relationship that, in hindsight, should never have occurred in the first place. I don’t say this to place blame into my former partner – or even myself – but rather as a point of recognition that, as mentioned previously, I have come to know myself as a person who seeks home in people.

Throughout the COVID-19 lockdown, I found myself separated and isolated from the people I hold most dear in my life. My parents and sister, to my great jealousy at the time, were able to find company and connection with each other, while I was left alone in an excessively small bedroom in a student accommodation. Finding a person who I could create a bubble with and return to exploring a country that was still quite new to me felt like an opportunity to experience a freedom that had been taken away from me.

And so on one late summer day after the lockdown restrictions had eased, I brought my camera with me on a date to North Berwick. Though nature photography has never been of particular interest to me, I remember myself being mesmerised by the rock formations and inlets that lie beneath Tantallon Castle along the coast. Despite the castle serving as a memory of how the human hand can impact the land and leave a mark, I continued to search for something more modern, more alive.
As I brought myself closer to the sounds of waves crashing into the cliffs, I noticed a space where the seafoam was fresh and continuing to grow. Much to my surprise, I found a small boat moored to a cleat protruding from the backside of the cliffs. Time flew by as I decided to sit and watch the boat bounce with the waves that found their way into the little inlet that it occupied. After some time, I took my camera out of its case and undid the lens protector and stared down into the viewfinder. As I gathered the various aspects of the photo into my mind, I paused for a moment and stared back at the boat with the small metal screen meant to protect from accidental exposures sat beside me. A tension grew within me as I questioned whether I should trust my instincts and simply take the photograph with the same lens settings as I had other photographs previously, or double-check? The light that struck the boat was similar enough to the light that hit everything else around the cliffside that I had shot, however there were far more shadows surrounding it and I feared that I would lose the contrast that they offered the solitary boat. Eventually, I came to decide to do a new light reading in an attempt to take into consideration how the shadows would present. I made slight adjustments to the shutter speed and refocused my lens while reframing the shot. At last, I felt my finger gain strength and released the shutter. Click Snap.

What followed for me was a process that occurred over two instances. The first was as fast as the shutter of the lens. In that fraction of a second, I felt every possible fantasy with regards to the photograph flow through me. I questioned how the shadows would come out, if the boat itself would be over-exposed, or would I lose the background of cliffs and have the boat floating in a space of nothingness. A fear crept through me that I had wasted a shot of perhaps the only sign of active human life outside of my own. I grew to feel confused by this fear, holding it within me. Why did I feel so afraid of this moment, when everything that surrounded it was full of happiness? After all, the same evening that this photo was taken was when I told my then partner that I loved them for the first time. Nonetheless, as I wound the lever that would prime the lens and auxiliary shutters, readying them for the next photograph, I felt this unease in me start to root.

The second process that occurred was one that was significantly more covert, and in fact unconscious. Despite having the particular roll of film that this photograph was on scanned and printed less than a week after it was taken, I spent
the better part of year staring at it daily looking for words that would match the uncomfortable feeling that was placed within me when I captured the shot in the first place. What followed the moments of happiness surrounding this photo being taken was several months of self-doubt and loss. Many of the friends who I made during my first year in Edinburgh had left the city and the relationships with my new flatmates moved past their initial stage of novel excitement. I felt alone and isolated once again. Like the boat tucked away, hidden amongst the cliffs, I was tied down and left in my loneliness.

As the year turned, the relationship that brought about the opportunity for the photo dissolved, and not long after that I lost my paternal grandfather. With the sun’s return in the spring and summer, I felt myself turning into a recluse, holding very little in importance aside from my client-work that occurred for only a few hours a week. I found myself stuck, needing to make some type of change but unable to find the strength or willpower within myself to do so. I felt my mooring line fray with each passing sunrise which signalled the end of another sleepless night. My dreams, filled with images and memories of self-harm and death, began to terrorise me. My sense of safety was nearly sentadrift, crashing me into the stoney walls surrounding me. Untethered, my boat began to sink. It was in these moments that I was faced with a choice, like all of the clients who I have come to know: stay motionless and lost or allow others to know of the cracks in my hull in the hope that they will be able to help keep me afloat.

As I have described earlier in this thesis, I am no stranger to being the one to lie on the couch staring at a ceiling and having someone sit behind me asking questions and passing interpretations of my thoughts and memories back to me. Regardless of the near decade’s worth of psychotherapy I have received, I – like many of my clients – still find struggle in engaging with the first instance of change necessary for the rapid waters of therapeutic healing to occur. I wish I could give a singular, concise answer as to why I struggle with this. It is, perhaps, the greatest point of self-development that I have had to overcome throughout my training and subsequently in my practice. Though I have never been one to shy away from asking for practical help when needed, be that in supervision with my client-work or from my tutors in academic study, asking for help – or better yet, care – mentally and
emotionally has posed a challenge for me for many years. However, this wasn’t always the case.

As a child and early in my adolescence, I would regularly reach out to friends and family for emotional support. In fact, my ability to do so without shame or fear was something that I and others often commended me for. Being able to articulate what was occurring inside my mind and heart came easily to me then. I held faith that I would be held and listened to, allowing me space to explore myself in the presence and comfort of those around me. Admittedly, many of the issues I brought into this space at the time – issues with other friends, academic stresses, juvenile crushes and romance – felt fairly simple and easy to bring into these held spaces. It comes as quite a disappointment, then, that when the time would come that I needed the support and care these relationships were meant to give the most, I felt as though my openness in thought and feeling would be used against me.

I have written several times whilst on this degree about the death of a close friend of mine to suicide when we were 15 years-old. It was my first true encounter with death and loss; a loss that could not be solved like the adoption of a new cat or through purchasing a replacement item. Quite regularly after the loss, my parents would check-in on me and see how I was doing. I rarely answered them as I fell in-and-out of grief and cannabis-induced sleep. In truth, I remember very few things from the first week following this loss apart from my parents attempting to hammer in the message that committing suicide or harming myself in response to my friend’s death would be the “most stupid fucking thing someone could do.” Though they may have wished for me to interpret this in a different way, the only thing 15-year-old me heard in their words was that I should never share with them the sadness that I was feeling. As I look back upon these moments once more, I am able to hold a level of appreciation for the intention behind my parents’ message, though at the time it felt like nothing but condemnation and invalidation of the pain that consumed my heart and mind.

The following months, and even years, were filled with regular confrontations between me and them. Every moody adolescent outburst was brought into the context of my friend’s suicide. Every period of silence or short answer to a question was able to be used as fuel for the notion that I myself was
suicidal. My decline to the offer of anti-depressants from my GP only further served as ammunition to their firmly held idea. The supportive and caring words that they would offer me over dinner felt hollow and poisoned. How could they possibly love me and yet treat me with such fear at the same time?

Questions such as this became prominent throughout the several years of therapy that ensued following this loss. At the time, I had come up with many possible answers, most of which elude me in the present moment. However, in writing this now, I come to understand that my silences and frustrations were simply an act of transference and projective-identification onto my parents. In truth, I was forcing myself to uphold a false notion of adolescent strength – not for my parents, but for my friends who also suffered through this loss.

A theme that I have noticed throughout my training and even now during my subsequent practice has been a force within me to remain “strong” for clients in their most difficult times. How exactly do I define this type of strength? I’m not entirely sure. At times it has meant to recognise that something has fazed me but not showing it, as doing so would weaken the therapeutic frame and relationship that I work hard to cultivate for my clients. At other times, this strength is shown by a calculated use-of-self in the therapeutic setting, allowing my clients to know how I feel in response to what they have brought into the session. Unlike these two versions of strength, or the strength I described earlier that brings a client into therapy in the first instance, the “strength” that I attempted to hold in my adolescent years was built on what I am now able to recognise as a lie. Perhaps calling it a lie is me being too harsh on my younger self, however the sentiment behind it remains. I felt a need to present as stoic and composed, giving space within me for others to seek support and care and in turn sacrificing countless opportunities for me to receive the same from those who fought with me to offer it. I could not allow them, or myself, to admit that I was in need of help and support.

When I first wrote a journal entry for this photograph, I was able to recognise that I once again was beginning to demote myself into taking on this aforementioned adolescent view of strength. I was in pain. The lonely isolation that I felt weakened the resilience of my hull and I had begun to take on water. In those bronzed moments of late-summer dawn I, like all the many clients who I have come to known
and hold these years past, found the courage to begin the most difficult task: acknowledge my pain and ask for help.
There is power in a name. While there are many names that we may be given and respond to throughout our lives, it is often the first name given to us that will hold the most power and meaning. Whilst the photographs that I have shown you thus far have all held a journal entry to them, this third photograph – as well as the one following it – do not. Instead, the only formal writing I have done for them before offering this current reflection is giving them a name. Though I may refer to this photograph to those who have seen it previously as “the one with the light in the living room” or “the really dark one with the light,” – or something along those lines – it does, in fact, have a real name.

As you may know, or perhaps forgotten after reading through these many pages, my name is Maorr. Whilst the spelling of my name might vary from person-to-person who share it, especially when translated from its original Hebrew מָאוֹר, it will always be pronounced the same and hold the same meaning. In truth, I have heard many different ways of pronouncing my name, some of which I have contributed to myself in hope that it offers an ease for the non-Hebrew speaker to say. Yet they have almost always been incorrect. My name is pronounced Maorr. Ma and Orr. It isn’t More, or Mower, or Moa-er, or Mayor, or May-or or... It is Maorr. Why, then, do I find myself insisting on giving one of these other variations an opportunity to be used when the true version is so simply explained and corrected?

Throughout my life I have been made to know that I am different and other. While many Jewish or Hebrew or Israeli names have become commonplace and are easily spoken by a foreign tongue, mine isn’t. Even within the spelling of my name, I am made to being different from all others who share it. My parents decided to give me two R’s in my name, whereas everyone else I have come across that shares my name only has one. As such, even within my own community, I am made to be known as different. Outside of the Jewish or Israeli community, however, my otherness is seen and experienced differently. Though I may have looked quite similar to most of my White peers growing up, my name was always the key denotation that I am different. Even outside of my Jewish day-school, or San Francisco, or the United States, I have characteristics that tend to blend me into a crowd. This changes once my given name is said. The clandestine nature of white skin and dark hair is no longer a camouflage. Instead, I stand out like this light, illuminated and bringing all attention and focus onto itself.
The photograph I have shown here was taken during the transitions between autumn and winter in my third year on this doctoral course. Though the sleeping issues that I described in the reflection before this one had subsided for the most part, I still allowed myself to glimpse upon an occasional sunrise. A difference though was that I welcomed the first lights of the rising sun, rather than dreaded them.

On one such night, I was sat in my living room with the lamplight offering a sole illumination into the space. The yellow light that radiated from it was gentle and warm, reminiscent of the late summer sun that had recently departed for the year. I sat across from the lamp, finding it curious that something that takes up such minimal space could offer such presence in a room devoid of all other light.

In that moment, I decided to grab my camera and wind a roll of low-light film into it. I began to look out towards the street, taking pictures of the occasional car that drove by as well as the storefronts that lined the street outside my flat. Eventually, I came to have only one frame left on the roll. Normally, I would take a light reading and adjust the settings on my lens accordingly. This time, however, I chose to listen to my instincts. I made some minor adjustments to the exposure and shutter speed and attempted to square the shot in my viewfinder, only to find a nearly pitch-black scene showing through it. A sigh of resignation left my lips before a deep breath of cold air filled my lungs. With the following exhale, I released the shutter.

Over the nearly two-years since this photograph was taken, I have returned to admire it daily and have attempted to write a reflection onto it countless times. Yet every time I uncapped my pen, my hand would begin to tremble. The light in this photo shone into me, as though it were exposing every fallacy in what I wished to write. So I left the back of the photograph blank, save for its name. As time has passed, this photo has grown in stature to transcend beyond a singular reflection and instead started to signify something greater: the light is me.

As I stated at the start of this reflexion, there is power in a name. However, I have hid from my name for much of my life; instead of feeling empowered by it, I regularly feel a pressure that is weighed down by the generations that came before me who came to shape my name. My name is Maorr. I was named after my father’s
grandfather, Meir. Translated from Hebrew, my great-grandfather’s name means “illuminator.” Similarly, the name given to me translates to “source of light.” The significance of my name became most apparent to me during the ceremony for my Bar Mitzvah. At the end of the ceremony, as the rabbi welcomed me into the community as a man for the first time, and I was given the task of living up to the name given to me by my parents. I was not to be a singular source of light, but the source of light for those whose path I cross in life.

At times in my life, the pressure to live up to the task given to me by my name has felt like a curse. As I described in my second reflection, the false adolescent strength that I forced myself to uphold was founded in my name. I had to be a source of light, of healing and strength, for those around me. These moments were the first time that I became fully aware of the weight of my name. It should come as no surprise, then, that this time was also when I first began to hide from my name. Though I may have viewed it as an innocent action, I would regularly give a false name when placing an order at a café. When friends would ask why I gave a different name, I simply stated that I wanted to make it easier for the person working behind the counter to take my order. In truth, I sought to save myself from the embarrassment of being asked “how do you spell that?” or being met with one of the many mispronunciations I listed earlier. In preventing myself as being known as distinctly other, I had convinced myself that I would be upholding a sense of pride, rather than shame, that is to be found in my name.

There is power in a name, and there is pride. Though I know they mean well for it, my parents have often imposed upon me the task of living up to my name and making them proud. While this may well be a familiar feeling for many children, there is an additional weight to it for me. My mother’s late father was a survivor of the Holocaust. All my life I have been given glimpses of the stories of his past – of the horrors that he saw and the miracles that allowed him to survive and bring my mother, and subsequently me, into the world. One of the earliest childhood memories that I can recall is being called “doctor” by my grandfather. Though I am aware that he only meant this to be humorous – as was his nature – it nonetheless sunk into the unconscious of my younger self as a duty to be fulfilled. It seems trivial to think, then, that gaining a degree and a title would be enough to honour him and the sacrifices he made. I have come to feel, however, that the task set out for me was
not to simply reach a point of stature or pride for my family. Rather, it was to feel pride in the history of the people who helped shape me and find meaning in my name, this time for myself.

Over the last two years, I have found this pride and connection to my name growing, particularly within my practice as a therapist. Since completing my training and receiving my qualifications, I have made a point to present my name clearly and correct clients during our first sessions should they ask for clarification. In contrast, during my time as a trainee, I would seldom offer this correction to clients or even tutors. In fact, I can recall very few occasions when clients would refer to me by my name at all. Perhaps this was due to me not placing much importance into my name or holding much value to it. Yet there is something that happened within myself when I shifted from trainee to qualified therapist. I had found a sense of achievement that enabled me to hold my head high and present myself, without shame or embarrassment, as different. If I am to be reflexive on it further, I find myself returning to this feeling of accomplishment, despite the fact that I often attempt to distance myself from it.

In my role as a therapist, I find myself holding firm to the belief that no matter how much effort or work I put in to assist the client in their process, the ability to accept it and take on that work is a task for them. Whilst I might assist a client in exploring and making sense of their unconscious as it presents itself inside and outside the therapeutic setting, any interpretation or connection between the unconscious and the client’s lived experience must already hold a place of truth for them. To this end, I merely share an insight that being on an outside position affords me to. The pain and struggles that this then entails is shared between the client and I, though still lies primarily within their realm. Looking back upon the various endings that I have come to with clients, there is a sense that in holding this boundary against their gratitude, I have once again played into distancing myself from the tasks given to me in my name. Instead, it was replaced by returning this gratitude – and genuinely so – back onto my clients in an attempt to hide this task from them as well as myself. However, what is hidden can still be found by those who seek to know it.
There have been very few times in my life when I have been asked what my name means. Even within Jewish settings, where one might assume that people are cognisant of the fact that it holds a meaning in Hebrew, I can only recall a handful of times where I have been asked. While it may sound as though I take offence to not being posed this question, I actually find it quite understandable on other people’s behalf. Perhaps this adds to the reasoning behind my previous attempts to hide from my name as in reality, very few people seem to care that it might hold a significance for me. I find this contrasting with how I experience other people and their names, as very often I am curious if someone’s given or chosen name holds and significance for them, especially my clients. Quite often in my work, when exploring the relationships that clients have with their parents, I will ask about the name they were given. Was it a name of a relative or family friend that was important to their parents? Does it have a particular meaning behind it in another language or culture? I have found that clients are often surprised to be asked about their names, as they rarely have given it much thought previously.

I recall a client who I recently finished working with who reported leaving our session and asking their parents about their name, coming back the next week with the findings. In doing so, they gained an insight into their family history as well as their own story that seemed to offer an opportunity to know themselves better. It came to much surprise to me that, in my final session with this client, they asked to read me a letter they had written for me. Though I am not unfamiliar with past clients reaching out to update me on their lives since ending our work, this was the first time that one had written something about me. In the letter, the client revealed that they had researched my name. In doing so, they found it curious that regularly throughout our relationship, I turned down the opportunity to accept their thanks for important changes that they had made in their life.

Over the past few months since the ending with this particular client, I have reread the letter written to me several times. In it, the client pointed out that they were aware of my not being White, despite the colour of my skin. They never brought it up during our session though expressed that my background and history was often a curiosity for them, leading them to research it. Ultimately, they found several meanings behind my name relating to light, leading them to thank me for being a guiding and supportive light in their journey to grow and discover within
themselves a person they dreamed of being. I hold this experience with my former client quite dearly. It is the first time that someone has taken the opportunity to explore my name and attempt to understand the reasonings behind my work as a therapist. For the first time, my differences and otherness were seen and experienced by someone else as something to aspire to, much in the same way that I have begun to view and experience it for myself.

There have been many years in my life that I have feared being seen and known by others as different. In doing so, I have limited the extent to which I have been able to see and know myself. I have pushed aside personal and family history in favour of being “normal” or similar to others. I have Whitewashed my name and appearance in the hope that I be accepted as myself. The self that I had presented, however, was as far from a true and real version of who I am and could be. It was filled with false histories and disavowals of the opportunities to engage in a world where I could be something more. It represented a fear of being known and ostracised for being other, just as my ancestors had been. In the end, all it took for me to accept and welcome my otherness was for someone to do so for me.

There is much contained in a name. It holds shame, and fear, and guilt. It is comprised of our histories and the stories of those who came before us, as well as prospects and dreams for the future. It offers an opportunity to be seen and known by those who we come into contact with throughout our life. But most importantly, there is power in a name, and there is power in me.
Year Four
There comes a time during every journey when the traveller is forced to stop and rest. In that moment of sedentary being, they are given the opportunity to engage with the world and life around them. During their rest, they might take a look, for the first time, back upon the path that has brought them to their current location, as well as look ahead to what is still to come.

Within my work as a therapist, I regularly offer my clients the opportunity to explore and reflect on the journeys that they have gone through. In fact, the very first task that I present my clients with is to share with me, to the best of their ability, a review of the various moments in life that they feel has brought them to seek therapy. For many, it is the first time that they are requested to do so. Often times, this task is felt as quite difficult and is met with not knowing where to begin. Though check-ins and re-contracting occurs throughout my therapeutic process, there is a reluctance to fully take a rest and utilise the available space to consider the impact that the current journey has had. Instead, this is often reserved solely for the end of the therapy. In this final moment of rest, I offer my clients and opportunity to look back at the time we have spent together and explore the hopes and dreams that they have for the approaching future. Similarly to my clients, then, as I sit writing my final reflection on the past four years of this degree, I find myself thinking back to the hopes, dreams, and fantasies of the younger me that decided to accept the challenge of becoming a psychotherapist.

As I myself now come to the end of my current journey, I find myself keenly aware that I still have many roads left to wander. Throughout the past four years, the fantasies of what fills these unexplored paths have constantly changed. When I first set out on my journey to become a therapist, these paths were filled with the wishes of a 15-year-old boy who felt as though he had finally found a purpose for his life. The only goal I held at that time was to become a therapist. I had a dream of holding a position similar to those who I held in such high esteem and helped guide me through the growing-pains of adolescence and early adulthood. As I have described before, I wished to pass on the kindness and opportunities afforded to me by my therapists, adding onto them the feeling of duty that my name encompasses. And so, at the young age of 23, I embarked on my journey.
During the early stages of my training, I took few opportunities to pause and look back to where I had started. Apart from the required moments of reflection for my academic papers, I found myself wanting to leave the places and people who I came from in the past. Moving to a new country – some 5000 miles away from my point of departure – was an opportunity to free myself and create a life that wasn’t bound by the shackles of familial expectations and obligations. Within two weeks of arriving in Edinburgh, I found myself immersed in a world that I had previously only known in my dreams and fantasies. I was working part-time in the fashion industry, turning a hobby and a passion into a source of income, as well as building it into my personality and allowing myself to be known as I had wished to be.

Up until the first lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, I was regularly seen wearing vintage three-piece suits. Behind the layers of woollen armour, however, was a body full of fear and doubt. As I have mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, I constantly questioned my ability to meet the expectations that I and others had placed upon me. I held tightly to the idea that if I dressed and presented myself a certain way, I would be able to move past these feelings of self-doubt and grow into who I was “meant” to be. I must admit that I wore my costume well, as many people would come to view me as a well put-together individual due to dressing in a way that stood apart from others. I was presumed to be full of confidence and maturity beyond my years and, for a time, I would endeavour tirelessly to prove that point. Despite these efforts, I was constantly afraid and worried of being found out to be a fraud.

Over the year-and-a-half following the first lockdown, I found myself forced to reckon with the lies I had sold myself. Being stuck inside and unable to return to work, moth holes and frayed seams began to be found across my armour. The realities of age crept into my body, leading me to change the way that I dressed and in turn, the way that I presented and viewed myself. The foundation that I had built much of my confidence on was fragile, being easily chipped away and crumbling under the weight of the pressures I felt. It should come as no surprise, then, that the events and feelings described in the journal entry and subsequent reflections for the second photograph I presented took place at this time. A few weeks later, however, after asking for and accepting help from the loved ones in my life, I began the process
of rebuilding and strengthening my foundations. With firmer ground beneath my feet, I decided to take the first moment of rest and reflexion on my journey.

In the journal entry of the second photograph I have presented, I stated that I had not returned to my former home of San Francisco in nearly two years. It would be another six months before I would get on a plane and travel back to where my journey began. I often wonder why I waited so long before returning home. At times, I tell myself it was due to the stress and pressure of making sure that I would be able to get the 150 client-hours necessary to fulfil the requirements of my training. Other times, I tell myself that I needed to stay away from home for as long as possible to allow the changes that were occurring in me to solidify. Ultimately, however, I find that what was keeping me from returning home was a fear of being perceived as a failure. When I first left San Francisco, I made a point to everyone around me that I would be going to Edinburgh to become a qualified therapist. If I were to go back home, even for a short visit, without being able to say that I reached my goal, the feelings of fraudulence and doubt that I was fighting to supress would become a reality. So I continued to delay my visit home until finally in November of 2021, I received my qualifications.

My first visit back home was filled with mixed emotions. I was excited to get to see my friends and family who I left behind, but also feared that too much had changed in us all for the relationships to pick up where they left off. A few days into being home, my parents held a get-together with a selection of close family friends to celebrate Hanukkah. Almost immediately after hugging and greeting people who filled the memories of my youth I realised that, in fact, quite a lot had changed. The next day, I went to get a haircut and explore around the city that I hadn’t seen in multiple years. I had hoped that in doing so, I would be able to return to a version of myself that held a connection to the city and the people within it. Despite trying to make myself appear like the same person who left a few years prior, something in me still felt out of place. I wasn’t the same person as before, and it felt as though others could see it as well.

The previous few years of training had worn me thin. The tides had dragged me underwater countless times, only to be spat back out for momentary respite. I had held a hope that returning home would allow me to feel alive again. Instead, I
began to feel like a stranger in a familiar land. Initially, I had intended that my journey home would be filled with dinners out with friends and rekindling connections that had started to become strained after not tending to them while being away. While I initially told myself that I would be filling every day with some sort of activity, my body refused to move. I was tired, if not outright exhausted. Instead of daily adventures, I found myself staying inside my mother's house, watching from the living-room windows as the rain fell heavily into the soil of the garden in the backyard. Time began to pass quickly, and the sense of rest that I was seeking disappeared before I could even find it.

A week before I was meant to return to Edinburgh, my father asked me if I wanted to go for an impromptu drive along the coast. My father has always had a deep connection to nature and found peace in it, something he has worked hard to share with me. In the years that I was gone, he shared with me that he had begun exploring the towns and hiking trails along the coast south of San Francisco. I was reluctant to join him at first, instead wishing to sit and do nothing, thinking that this would allow me to rest and recover from the turmoil of the previous few years. I searched for every possible reason as to why I should just stay inside, but was only met with a counter-argument that saw through my lacklustre excuses. Eventually, my father was able to convince me into coming with him.

The fourth and final photograph that I have presented above was taken during this excursion with my father. Having spent much of the day driving through the towns along the northern-California coast, we decided to stop and have lunch at a nearby cliffside. After walking down a path that led us to the water, we began to look for a place to sit and enjoy our meal. We deliberated sitting in the tall-grass that lined the path we came on or possibly sitting at the edge of the cliff, letting the spray of the waves crashing against the cliff coat us. In the end, we agreed to sit on the bench I have shown in this photograph.

What followed was a long conversation about how I was feeling returning home, as well as what I was dreaming about for my future. I confessed to my father that the happiness that I had hoped to feel upon coming home wasn’t there. I felt sad being back, as though all the memories that I had built up in the city had disappeared due to the pandemic and the prolonged time away. It wasn’t home anymore. Rather,
it was a place of departure. It was a place that I left behind in order to, as I have discussed in my reflections on my first photograph, start to search for a place that I could create as home in my future.

As our conversation turned towards the future, I admitted that I was unsure about what I wanted or what my dreams truly were. I had spent so much time and energy focusing on reaching this point of rest that any prospect of the future was still obscure. At that time, the idea of the future gave me fear. I knew that I still had a lot of work ahead of me, having to figure out what to do for this thesis and meet the other requirements for completing this doctorate. To actively engage with the concept of the future was to once again engage with the fears and doubts that had plagued me up until that point, and I was unsure if I was ready to do so. With the hours passing by, my father and I decided that it was time to turn back home before the sun set. As we left the bench, I decided that I would capture a picture of it in order to hold close the memory of the only moment of true rest that I felt on my trip back home.

Over the past year-and-a-half since returning to Edinburgh from my trip back to San Francisco, I have regularly gone back to this photograph. Similarly to the third-year photograph, I have yet to write a formal journal entry for it. There have been times where I feel as though the words I wish to write are at the tip of my pen, yet there has always been a resistance to bringing them into reality. Like the other photographs I have shown, it sits hung up above my desk, drawing my mind back to the moment and circumstances that it was taken in. Staring at it now, I am brought back to the conversation I had with my father. While most of that conversation was regarding the past and the changes that have occurred, looking at the photograph now brings my thoughts towards the fantasies and dreams that I hold for the future.

Coming to what is meant to be the end of this fourth and final reflexion of my photographic journal, I am also keenly aware that I am also coming to the end of many other journeys. Not only am I moving towards the final chapters of this thesis, but also towards the end of my time on this doctoral journey. To compound these endings, I have also come to the end of my time in Edinburgh, having made the move down south to London, hoping to again complete my search for a place to come home. This photograph feels more relevant and alive now than ever.
As I take these moments to stop and think about what I wish for my future, I begin to envision a dream fulfilled. After four arduous years, I will be able to search for a life having completed the mission I gave myself when starting my journey. In contrast to how I left San Francisco, I have left Edinburgh knowing that I have completed a stage in my journey. What, then, is the task that I bring forward with me? In truth, I do not know. If I am to explore the feelings that are within me now, there is no fear or doubt. Not because of a foolish notion of over-confidence that I may have brought with me coming to Edinburgh, but because I have proven to myself that I am able to accomplish even the loftiest of goals, should I wish to.

The future that I dream for myself is one of calmness and peace. It is one that no longer feels a need to meet the standards placed upon me by others. Instead, I dream of being able to take moments to recognise where I am at any given moment, adjusting and changing my trajectory as needed. It is a future filled with beautiful connections and community, where I am able to bring all aspects of myself without fear or shame. My name and history will no longer be a weight placed onto me, but instead bolster me and be worn as a badge of pride. Asking for assistance will not be felt as a sign of weakness, but rather as an opportunity to strengthen old connections and foster new ones. Most of all, I know that the future is unknown, and I welcome the opportunity to venture into it.

A few months ago, I had a dream that I was once again sitting on the bench in the photograph above. I was unsure of which direction I came from, though it didn’t feel as though it mattered. My legs weren’t tired or weighed down – they were restless. The environment around me was different than that shown in the photograph. It was a mixture of all the places that I have been while on my journey. I was in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park, as well as atop Edinburgh’s Arthur’s Seat. Behind me was the window to my childhood bedroom, but also the doorway to my current flat. As I turned myself away from my surroundings, I looked forward. What laid before me was a blank screen, taking on all the shades of white, cream, and grey shown in my photographs. The last memory I have of the dream is standing up and beginning to walk in the direction of this empty canvas, embracing the opportunities to paint and colour it as I wish.
The future holds opportunities to be explored, not avoided. It is a path that awaits discovery. One certainty that I hold with this future, however, is that I will have my camera with me to capture the moments that come to transpire. As I undergo the process of developing and printing them, I will continue to hang them and use them as a gateway into the experiences that have come to pass, as well as those that are yet to come.
Chapter Six
Discussions on Reflexivity, Psychoanalysis, and Photography

Throughout writing and editing this thesis, I have questioned where I wish to place the discussion of psychoanalytic and photographic theories. There have been times where I thought it best to open this thesis with this discussion, thus laying out a way for you, my readers, to engage with the various concepts and theories that I have explored up to this point. However, in considering how I wished to present this thesis, I found that doing so would be antithetical to the non-directive forms of psychotherapy that I was trained in, as it would force you to view each discussion in a prescribed way, rather than allowing you to engage with and create your own questions throughout. To counter this, I initially thought it best to place this chapter directly before the photographs that were presented in the chapter before this one, which would then only effect the ways that the photographs were engaged with. In the end, however, I decided to offer an opportunity to experience something that I have alluded to throughout this thesis: an enactment of latency.

There are multiple definitions and expressions of latency, in my conception of it. On one hand, latency refers to something that is shown or experienced but not yet matured to the point that it can be held without damaging it. Perhaps you have asked yourself multiple times whilst reading up to this point, “when will I find out more about x-topic” or “why am I not hearing more about y-concept right now?” A simple, though most likely frustrating, answer is that it wasn’t the right time to do so. Instead, a thought or question has been left to fester, producing a phantom itch with a desire to scratch at it, but unable to find exactly where it has manifested. A second reading of latency that I hold is far more subtle and concealed – it involves not knowing that something has occurred until the very end. Over time, something clandestine emerges that was not expected or planned for, but still existed in perpetuity. This expression of latency does not require waiting in order to eventually find an answer; rather, it requires a suspension of any search for temporal foundations, as any particular moment that would be found would have already been changed by the process of finding it.
This chapter serves as an opportunity to formally, and knowingly, engage with the two types of latency that I have just described. Whereas the writings associated with the photography shown in the previous chapter serve as the production of the reflexive aspects of this latency, the discussions held in the following pages are a producing feature of the latent aspects of this thesis. I begin these discussions by returning to the discussions of reflexivity that were first held in chapter three, using it as a space to explore and further understand how latency comes to influence and effect the other aspects of my reflexivities. In doing so, I will place the final piece of my performative meta-reflexive (Serra Undurraga, 2020a) puzzle into the frame in an effort to show a close-to-full picture of my reflexive process. Though briefer than the two sections which follow it, this section will serve as a launching point for a diffractive (Barad, 2007) examination of latent reflexivity, and in turn the reflexive Unconscious, through the lens of both the psychoanalytic concepts of Freud’s nachträglichkeit and Lacan’s après-coup.

In the second section of this chapter, I will seek to illuminate aspects of the Freudian and Lacanian Unconscious that I presented in the introduction of this thesis. It begins by exploring the beginnings of the Unconscious through Freud’s works, laying out a screen for which the Unconscious’s logic and mechanisms can be understood. It will pay particular attention to Freud’s concepts of nachträglichkeit and latency, utilising texts such as *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud, 1900) and *From The History of an Infantile Neurosis* (Freud, 1918). Through these and other texts, an initial framing of the non-linear temporality that I experience in the Freudian Unconscious, as well as my reflexivities, will be shown.

Following on from Freud, the theories of Jacques Lacan will be used to show the cyclical nature of Unconscious processes as well as define its three registers: the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real. Along with Lacan’s registers, I will venture to return to Freud’s ideas of nachträglichkeit through Lacan’s concept of après-coup, showing how these ideas have developed over time and expand on the process in which the psychoanalytic Unconscious holds events and experiences from our past as they await their development. We will focus heavily on Lacan’s *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 1973) as well as a collection of his essays in *Écrits* (Lacan, 1966), to show the development of Lacan’s ideas and to place them within the context of Freud’s previous works.
The final section of this chapter will see the worlds of the photographer and psychoanalyst collide. Beginning with an engagement with the philosophies of Jacques Derrida (Derrida et al., 2010), this section pays close attention to their understandings of photography and its place within society as a whole. Through these explorations, we will begin to better conceive how photography, time, and the individual are connected in an effort to gain a greater appreciation for the internal process of the photographer. In recognising the photographer as a pseudo practitioner of psychoanalysis, the concepts of latency, dreaming, and the Imaginary will be brought to a focal point, leading to an image of how I experience my photographic and posthuman Unconscious in action, reflexively. These discussions will then open to include the voices of modern photographers, such as Dimitri Mellos, David Bate, and Sharon Sliwinski, among others, in order to understand the use of photographic practice in the modern day. Through their inclusion, an inherent connection between photographic and psychoanalytic theory and practice will be shown, which I will utilise to present how an image in the photographic Unconscious can be found after having been bathed in a myriad of chemicals and given both the time and space needed to be seen.

_A Brief Comment on Latency in Reflexivity_

Throughout this thesis, I have presented ideas that have, hopefully, forced you to ask questions, and have chosen to leave them unanswered in that moment. These questions are then left to grow as time goes on, with each allusion to a possible answer reawakening them for a moment only to be told once again that the answer must wait. There is a chance that, on your journey to this point in this thesis, you have been able to create an answer for these questions yourself. Or, perhaps, more questions have started to form that require exploration and a passing of time in order for them to hold enough weight that there is merit in asking them.

When I look back at my previous discussions on reflexivity in this thesis, I find that each aspect is able to exist both on its own and as a part of a whole: my performative meta-reflexivity. To refresh, the previously discussed components of this meta-reflexivity are: diffraction and performativity (Barad, 2003, 2007; Butler 1997, 2005), yielding to foreignness, and rejection of mastery (Serra Undurraga,
In my experience, each of these components is able to stand on their own and act as an individual reflexivity. Each one is able to provide something that the other does not, and each one is able to be used separately from the others at times when needed. However, in order for them all to create a space of intra-action (Barad, 2003) within both themselves and myself, I combine them through the use of the final component, latency, to create my own version of performative meta-reflexivity (Serra Undurraga, 2020a). As I have already given time and space to discuss these other aspects, I wish now to turn the focus of this section towards defining my use of latency as reflexivity.

With regards to latency as reflexivity, I find myself experiencing two forms, or productions, of reflexivity through my encounters with latency. Returning to the introduction of this chapter, I described two ways in which I encounter and utilise latency within my reflexivity. To summarise them, the first version of latency is one where something – perhaps a photograph or an event in life – occurs and is then held in consciousness, though not brought back due to a desire to allow it to mature to full ripeness. The second occurs in the realms of the psychoanalytic Unconscious, sitting out of mind and sight but the effects of which are still felt. Both of these forms of latency come into use in my work as a photographer and in my personal development as a psychotherapist. As such, by recognising that these other forms of reflexivity hold a dependence to latency, latency itself can be seen as both the predecessor and successor to – or producer and production of – the other forms of reflexivity discussed throughout this thesis.

In many ways, these other aspects of reflexivity require me to have an experience of latency in order to engage with them. For example, when I yield to the foreignness of my reflexive Unconscious, I do so out of a demand that it lies latent. In order for me to bend backwards and into myself, I must relinquish any sense of mastery or control over my knowledge of self, which in turn forces me to intraactively diffract (Barad, 2007) the various concepts, memories, emotions, or notions in relation to myself in order to produce, and in turn be produced by, something new. Whilst it may be tempting to believe that these productions can occur in real time, I do not believe that they can. Instead, I find myself needing to pause and take time to engage in the long preparation, described by Deleuze & Guattari (1987) and St. Pierre (2018). “Thoughts lag behind nature,” write Deleuze & Guattari (1987, p. 3).
Something occurs, but the ability to think and conceptualise it properly has a moment of lag, a moment of latency. I am not able to specify what occurs during this moment of latency, as each moment requires a “lengthy preparation, [with] no method, no rules, no recipes” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 8) in order to process what has occurred in the first instance. Thus, I put forth that I can only truly be reflexive – that is to say, performatively engage with meta-reflexivity – when I experience moments of latency.

With a definition of latency as reflexivity now present, I anticipate a question has arisen: how is this latency, as a unique form of reflexivity, utilised? Though I have just presented them as separate, I believe that attempting to distinguish between them in order to place them at two different ends of a spectrum does a disservice to the concept of latency. In separating the two from each other, a dichotomy of conscious and Unconscious temporality is formed. Temporality – the world of time and the effects that it leaves on all things – does not recognise such distinctions between the conscious and Unconscious. Instead, conscious and Unconscious latencies come together to present an intra-action of self and temporality. To offer an example of this, I will return to the photographic practice that you saw in the previous chapter.

The photography presented in the preceding chapter was created through a performance of both conscious and Unconscious latency. The former can be seen clearly through my formal photographic process. At one moment, I prepared my camera to capture an image – I wound the spring mechanism that controls the mirror within the box of my camera (which is curiously called a single-lens reflex), allowing the shutter at the end of the lens to shut at a specified fraction of a second to make permanent a very brief temporal instance. From there, the photograph laid dormant and hidden within the roll of film as it waited to be developed. It wouldn’t be until a later moment, post-development – or maturation – that the image would be able to present itself and become known in its true form as a photograph. In my conceptions of conscious latency, its key feature is that I am aware of its occurrence. In engaging with this form of latency, I acknowledge the necessity of waiting for the photograph to return from the photography lab and the unease this creates within me. Throughout the period of waiting, fear and doubt creep through me, unsure of whether or not I input the correct aperture and shutter speed to capture the photo.
in the way that I desired. This process occurs multiple times, as each photograph presented goes through these same practical and named steps.

In contrast, Unconscious latency can be found in the writings that I have attached to each photograph. Or rather it is more appropriate to say that the writings are a product of Unconscious latency, as the sentiments that can be found in them are what had eluded me despite my near obsessive fixation on trying to understand what was occurring within myself. While I have attached these sentiments to a particular picture, I do not believe that they belong to it. They were not produced by the photograph, though they do offer a new context to it. Instead, they were produced by something different, something foreign and outside of my ability to grasp or recognise temporally, visually, or symbolically. They were produced by an encounter with the Real. As I have mentioned previously (see chapter four), these encounters with the Real would touch upon something within myself that I could not articulate. I was required to allow these internal occurrences to sit latent within my Unconscious, within myself, whilst I engaged in a long preparation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; St. Pierre, 2018) of self-discovery and personal development in order to be able to recognise that something had occurred without me knowing it. To this day, I do not know when I first started to have these questions or if there was ever a time where they were absent from me. As such, the key feature of Unconscious latency can be recognised in the absence of a knowable and holdable moment of departure or interaction with the Real.

In coming to present the above conceptions of latency as reflexivity, I find myself drawing greatly from the worlds of psychoanalysis and photography. Perhaps this does not come as a surprise, since they are the two areas of this thesis that have been held latent the longest. Consequently, in order to continue to come into an understanding of my use of latency, and in an attempt to answer the questions set forth at the start of this thesis, I wish now to diffract (Barad, 2007) the concept of latency into its two components: psychoanalysis and photography. As it remains the first source to the questions that aim to be answered, I begin with an exploration of latency in psychoanalysis and the psychoanalytic Unconscious.
Psychoanalysis Considered

The world of the psychoanalyst is often found to be a confusing space. It is filled with dreams, phantasies, and an unknown equal in size and significance as the cosmos. Memories, emotions, and glimpses of past lives are placed into constellations with each other, bound together by a faint thread that is imperceivable to our naked eye. Moreover, this thread takes pleasure in sitting at ankle height — taut and awaiting a foot to pull at it as it steps towards a future of personal development filled with knowledge and self-discovery. To come into contact with it sets off a series of traps and enlightenments, triggering a cascade of information of our past and the pasts of those who have shaped the life that we embody. So precarious is this thread that it draws us in and like time itself, it wraps around us. In some moments we are aware of its presence, at others we simply feel a phantom pulling us in uncertain directions without explanation. This familiarly unknown thread is, of course, the psychoanalytic Unconscious.

Though it has undergone many changes to its definition since Freud began conceiving of it in the nineteenth century, the idea of the Unconscious has held true throughout the development of psychoanalysis as a field of thought and practice. While I wish I could devote more space in this thesis to an in-depth discussion of how Freud perceived and defined the Unconscious, this section will not do so. Instead, I will focus on his understandings of the relationship between temporality and the Unconscious, which Freud held as a key property of his Unconscious. From the beginning, Freud viewed the Unconscious as holding its own logic and understanding of time, stating that “processes in the [Unconscious] system are timeless, i.e., are not chronologically ordered, are not altered by the passage of time, [and] indeed bear no relation to time whatsoever” (Freud, 1915, p. 189). Perceptions and structures of time, then, are “bound up with the work of the [conscious] system” (Freud, 1915, p. 189). It would follow, then, that the forms of latency that I described earlier in this chapter would follow by the same rules. Conscious latency recognises two distinct moments in time and the space in between them. Unconscious latency, by virtue of being Unconscious, does not recognise time as occurring linearly, instead giving space to the symptoms of what Freud (2005, p. 37) described as “the return of the repressed.”
Repression, simply put, is a result of the psyche’s resistance to experiencing moments of unpleasure that would otherwise outweigh the pleasure experienced from allowing a stimulus, either internal or external, to be allowed into consciousness (Freud, 1900, p. 36). Freud goes on to describe two stages of repression: primal repression – whereby the representation of a drive is denied access into the conscious – and actual repression, which seeks to repress the remnants of primary repression, thus eliminating their potential for ever finding representation in consciousness (Freud, 1900, p. 37). However, Freud later revises his thoughts on repression being irreversible by presenting the notion of the “preconscious … [which] shares the same qualities as the [conscious] system, [leading to] strict censorship [of repression being] carried out at the point of transition from the [Unconscious] to the [preconscious]” (Freud, 1915, p. 173). This transitional point is recognised by Freud as having a potential for an exchange between these two systems, stating:

Co-operation can occur between a preconscious and an [Unconscious] – even a powerfully repressed – impulse if a situation arises in which the [Unconscious] impulse can work in tandem with one of the ruling impulses. Repression is [then] lifted in this instance and the repressed activity is permitted as a reinforcement of the one intended by the ego. In this one constellation, the [Unconscious] is aligned with the ego without its repression being otherwise modified. (Freud, 1915, p. 195)

It is worth noting, however, that this co-operation is only achievable after a significant passage in time, as “a sharp and final division between the content of the [Unconscious and preconscious] systems does not, as a rule, take place till puberty” (Freud, 1915, p. 195). Once again, Freud shows the necessity for a period of latency to occur in order for a moment of revelation to occur.

Looking back at my reflexive practices shown in the previous chapter, this necessary period of latency can be seen not only in the temporal space held between the photographs being taken, but also my subsequent expansion on the writings attached to them. Though previously falling into the realm of Unconscious latency, recognising their occurrence produces a reflexive yielding to a process in which something has been transported from Unconscious to preconscious to full consciousness. The process for this reflexive revelation is what Freud called nachträglichkeit. Though I have introduced the concept of nachträglichkeit earlier
in this thesis (see chapter three), I believe it is important to return to it now within the newer context of latency.

Freud first presented the concept of *nachträglichkeit* in reference to understanding the mechanics of hysteria symptoms in patients. Before coming to formally use the term *nachträglichkeit* (later translated to deferred action), Freud used the term “retention hysteria” to describe a defensive mechanism that “has ostensibly been forgotten, which is not at the ego’s disposal and which plays no part in association and memory, nevertheless in some fashion lies ready to hand and in correct and proper order. It is only a question of removing the resistances that bar the way to the material” (Freud, 1893/1975a, p.287). As he continued to develop his theory of *nachträglichkeit*, Freud began to remark, using the case study of Emma as an example, that trauma which remains unresolved, is placed into a space of latency (Freud, 1893/1975a, p. 90). The associated affects of this trauma, which are repressed due to the great unpleasure that holding them in consciousness would produce, are then held in the latent preconscious space until an awakened at a later time by a “contemporary stimulus ... [bringing the] traumas with their accompanying affects bit by bit into [the] present-day consciousness” (Freud, 1893/1975a, p. 90). What, then, occurs when the traumas of the past are brought into the present?

For Freud, traumatic memories and experiences that were held in latency resurface as “new knowledge [which] transforms the meaning of memory and all but recreates the past” (Goldin, 2016, p.408). Within this recreation, a “disintegration of the familiar” (Goldin, 2016, p. 410) occurs, leading to a complete questioning of what is known and the formation of something new, both past and present. When applying this aspect of *nachträglichkeit* to the concepts of reflexivity that I have described throughout this thesis, it is clear to see that this act of questioning the past is a fundamental aspect of my reflexivity. Once again, I will return to the photographic practice that I have presented in chapter five as an example.

Accompanying the first two photographs that I presented was a piece of journal writing, written at a time when an external stimulus was felt so strongly that I was gifted feelings that my Freudian Unconscious had attempted to repress. These
feelings were held consciously latent (or in my preconscious, as Freud would say) for me, almost as though they were at the tip of my tongue waiting to be brought into full consciousness. While these words were true to my experience at the time – I still recognise them as true in this present moment as well – it wasn’t until writing the second journal entry commenting on the first that a sense of completion was achieved. Every time I returned to the original photograph and the words associated with it, I felt as though there was more that needed to be said, though it constantly escaped me. The pressure, both internal and external, to produce a piece of writing for this thesis served as such a strong stimulus that something shifted. The sensations of pain that I previously felt in association with the images and their writings was, in truth, pleasurable, as it served to vindicate the struggles that I was experiencing at the time. To sit with this pain was pleasurable. It wasn’t until writing this thesis and engaging in a newer, unbound reflexive practice that I was able to accept what was too painful to hold at that time: that I didn’t feel pain, but joy in loss and struggle. Whereas my previous engagement with these images came from a space of being unable to look away, I now look at them with fondness, cherishing the tribulations and growths that both preceded and followed them.

Though there is a clear connection between Freud’s conceptions of time and latency in nachträglichkeit and the Unconscious with my definitions of reflexivity, I find that there are also points of contention to consider. The first difference that I draw between Freud and myself is his perception of the Unconscious as though it were a machine. From a performative perspective, Freud’s constant use of terms such as “system” and “mechanism” goes to show that for him, the Unconscious functions like a computational programme, following a unique set of logic as though it were written like a programmatic code. As I discussed in chapter three, performativity is never a passive decision, and neither is engaging with the reflexive Unconscious. Though we do not hold mastery over the reflexive Unconscious, neither do we passively yield to it. While I recognise these ideas stem from Freud’s hope that psychoanalysis would be held in equal esteem and adopted by the hard sciences (Freud, 1900), I believe that psychoanalysis’s present-day standing as a (post-)qualitative social science shows that such technological terminologies are not able to be applied to the Unconscious.
A second, and perhaps biggest, difference between Freudian theory and myself is the locality of the Unconscious. For Freud, the Unconscious is located within the psyche, standing alongside consciousness as part of the human (Freud, 1915). While developments in posthuman theory have worked to show levels of overlap between posthumanism and psychoanalysis (Dow & Wright, 2010), I hold that in my readings of Freud, it is difficult to extricate his perception of the Unconscious from the human, which also serves to limit the constant state of “becoming,” immanently, that occurs within the human. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, this state of becoming, found within critical posthumanism (Braidotti, 2019) and post qualitative inquiry (St. Pierre, 2019), is troubled by the premise that Freud’s nachträglichkeit has a sense of finality to it. For Freud, nachträglichkeit generally refers to a singular event: the repression of a primal sexual experience in childhood that is placed into latency until awoken post-puberty when sexuality is no longer an alien or taboo concept (Freud, 1900; Goldin, 2016). While there is a potential, or indeed a need, for multiple remodifications of past events due to present knowledge, there is a point to which the past has fully been integrated into the present in nachträglichkeit (Lacan, 1977, p.53). Thus, there are, in truth, a finite number of nachträglichkeit experiences that can be had, either through psychoanalysis or through reflexive work.

In order to move past Freudian psychoanalysis’s shortcomings in fully aligning psychoanalysis with critical posthumanism, I follow Dow & Wright’s suggestion “that it is the Lacanian orientation that offers the richest potential contribution to a psychoanalytically informed critical posthumanism … [emphasising] a clinically applied Lacan” (2010, p. 308), though with reservations which I will address later on.

As I have mentioned earlier in this thesis, following his expulsion from the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA), Lacan called for a “return to Freud,” (Leader, 1995, p. 34) both in terms of rereading the original texts published by Freud as well as returning to “the essence of Freud’s work” (Evans, 1996, p. 68). Within this return, Lacan began to develop and teach a version of Freudian psychoanalysis that, rather than repressed drives based in the pleasure-principle, the psychoanalytic Unconscious is formed by the logic of language (Evans, 1996, p.
While Lacan continued to present his work as a return to Freudian thought, it is clear that through creating his own understandings of the psychoanalytic Unconscious, his work also serves as a departure from what most perceive to be true classical Freudian psychoanalysis (Evans, 1996). One of the most significant departures from Freud, and the one at the heart of this thesis, is Lacan’s perception of temporality.

Initially building on Freud’s notions of time, Lacan presented an idea of logical time (Lacan, 1966). Logical time, to Lacan, does not follow a sense of chronology – that is to say, it is not formally linear – but instead follows a logical structure predicated on three moments: the instant of seeing, the time for understanding, and the moment of concluding (Lacan, 1966). While it may seem that each of these moments pass from one to the next in a linear fashion, they do not necessarily occur as such. Instead, Lacan presents these structures of logical time as “the intersubjective time that structures human action” (Lacan, 1977, p. 82). This intersubjectivity comes into play for Lacan during moments of identification where two (not necessarily human) subjects come together, each perceiving the other as foreign and Other, thus creating new identifications and creating new knowledge (Ahmad, 2012, p. 45). Logical time, however, is not the only source of new knowledge in Lacan’s work.

In addition to logical time, Lacan put forth two notions of temporality in relation to the psychoanalytic Unconscious: après-coup and anticipation. Though there have been many attempts to translate Freud’s nachträglichkeit into English and other languages, the most commonly held definition of “deferred action” is due to Lacan, who translated it into French as après-coup (Birksted-Breen, 2017, p. 1501). Continuing his development of Freudian thought, Lacan would present après-coup as not just a linear past-to-present-to-past transformation that focuses on the primal sexual scene, but as a method for which to understand the whole of an individual’s history:

[Après-coup refers] to the way that, in the psyche, present events affect past events a posteriori, since the past exists in the psyche only as a set of memories which are constantly [italics my own] being reworked and reinterpreted in the light of present experience. What concerns psychoanalysis is not the real past sequence of events in
themselves, but the way the patient reports them. Thus when Lacan argues that the aim of psychoanalytic treatment is the ‘complete reconstitution of the subject’s history’ (Lacan, 1988a, p. 12), he makes it clear that what he means by the term ‘history’ is not simply a real sequence of past events, but ‘the present synthesis of the past’ (Lacan, 1988a, p. 12). (Evans, 1996, p. 207)

In contrast to Freud’s conception of time, I find that Lacan puts forth that the chronological aspects of time are not, in fact, of significance. Instead, I take from Lacan the idea that “history is not the past” (1988a, p. 12). To relegate history into a space of chronology would mean that it has found an ending. I have purposefully italicised the “constantly” in the above citation in an attempt to show the importance I place into Lacan’s belief that, unlike Freud, this process of reconstitution is everlasting, just as the process of becoming found in the immanent aspect of posthumanism (Braidotti, 2019) and post qualitative inquiry (St. Pierre, 2019) is never final.

As noted earlier in this section, Freud presented a determined end to nachträglichkeit, which is arrived at after sufficiently remodifying previous understandings of the primal scenes. For Lacan, however, the act of après-coup does not have a definitive end, as the task of psychoanalysis is the complete restructuring and resignification of the subject’s history (Evans, 1996). True completion, however, is unattainable. Whereas après-coup serves as a blueprint for how the present goes to affect the past, “anticipation refers to the way the future affects the present” (Evans, 1996, p. 207). Lacan puts forth his idea of anticipation in relation to the formation of the ego during the mirror stage, the time where an infant creates an imagined future self that is whole and complete (Lacan, 1977, 1988b). Moreover, the mirror stage is when, for Lacan, the infant enters into the one of his three orders, or registers: the Imaginary. Before moving to a discussion of Lacan’s three registers, however, I wish to offer a few parting notes with regards to après-coup and temporality.

Whilst many of Lacan’s psychoanalytic theories have been held on in the advancement of the French school of psychoanalysis, most of them have continued to be developed by those who have studied his work. It is worth noting that neither Freud nor Lacan, despite the clear significance that it plays into their overall theory
of psychoanalytic technique, gave much space in their writings to *nachträglichkeit* or *après-coup* (House & Slotnick, 2015; Fink, 2007; Evans, 1996). Jean Laplanche, who was both an analysand and student of Lacan, was one of the first to remark on this dilemma, stating that “the *après-coup* of the history of *Nachträglichkeit* is inseparable from its translational destiny, not only the translation of the word, but the translation of the thought” (Laplanche, 2006, p. 13). In this, Laplanche refers to the unfortunate loss of temporal ambiguity that occurs in the translation of *nachträglichkeit* as deferred action, which focuses only on the quality of latency in Freud’s work (House & Slotnick, 2015). In contrast, Lacan’s concept of *après-coup* has come to be recognised, through the work of Laplanche, as “retrospective remodification,” which serves to reverse the arrow of time found in Freud’s latency (House & Slotnick, 2015). Building upon this recognition, Haydée Faimberg writes that “there is no word in either English or French to express the bi-directional movement implied in the concept of *Nachträglichkeit*. Strachey had to choose one direction only; his choice was deferred action [latency] … Lacan chose the other direction: retroactivity” (2007, p. 1222).

In progressing the work of both Freud and Lacan, Laplanche attempts to reconcile the “one-way temporal logic” (House & Slotnick, 2015, p. 687) that is associated with *nachträglichkeit* and *après-coup*. In doing so, Laplanche follows Lacan’s focus of language being at the core of the psychoanalytic Unconscious, presenting a bi-directional movement of time for *après-coup* (House & Slotnick, 2015). Laplanche’s conception of *après-coup* (House & Slotnick, 2015) can be summarised as follows: (1) an infant is communicated to by an adult but does not have the tools to fully translate (bring into consciousness) this communication. (2) The untranslated parts of this message, which Laplanche calls residues, are repressed and made latent, which go on to form the Unconscious. (3) Later in life, the now grown-up infant, who has been integrated into the world of language, attempts to translate these residues, but still only partially. (4) These partially successful translations retroactively modify the individual’s understanding of their past, (5) while the remaining untranslated residues persist in the Unconscious, renewing the latency-retroaction cycle (a visual representation of this process is shown in figure 1).
It is through this definition of *après-coup*, which combines both the latent and retroactive flows of time, that I find a connection to my concept of latent reflexivity. It requires both the forwards and backwards movement of time, constantly oscillating in order to produce, to become, something new. Laplanche’s reconciliation of *nachträglichkeit* and *après-coup* functions as a bridge between my conscious and Unconscious latency, between the past and present. Moreover, this constantly oscillating bridge works to remedy the finality of both *nachträglichkeit* and *après-coup*, as it recognises the impossibility for a final state (Fardy, 2017, p. 82) that has completed every translation.

In moving to integrate Laplanche’s (House & Slotnick, 2015) notion of *après-coup* and temporality I am keen to point out that, unlike Freud and Lacan, this definition of *après-coup* necessitates an interaction with the Lacanian Real. While some experiences are held within the psychoanalytic or photographic Unconscious and brought into consciousness through attempted translations throughout life, the residual enigmatic messages that are forever beyond translation are lost within Lacan’s register of the Real. Though Lacan did not formally write about his conception of the three orders until 1953, his work has always revolved around
ideas of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary (Evans, 1996, p. 131-132). As he began to structure his work into teachings, Lacan created the concept of the three registers as a “fundamental classification system around which all his theorising turns” (Evans, 1996, p. 132). While each register is considered heterogeneous in Lacan’s work, they are bound together in an independent structure, “in which the severing of any one of the three [registers] causes the other two to become separated also” (Evans, 1996, p. 132). As such, I wish now to turn to an exploration of Lacan’s three registers; I begin, briefly, with the Real, having already introduced it elsewhere in this thesis.

Though his conceptions of it change significantly over time, Lacan’s definition of the Real as something “absolutely without fissure” (Lacan, 1988b, p. 97) points to something that is steadfast in its presence. Standing in opposition to the Symbolic and the Imaginary, Lacan describes the Real as a register that is resistant to and void of, by its very nature, anything that may be found in the Symbolic (Lacan, 1988b, 1966). In his Seminar XI (1973), Lacan puts forth that the Real is the realm of impossibility, resistant to symbolisation and impossible to imagine. Reading Lacan, I perceive the Real as the truest version of the psychoanalytic Unconscious: impossible to attain in any way (Evans, 1996, p. 160). However, I also wish to contend that it is through the very nature of the Real’s impossibility that we are able to recognise it, albeit in a very shapeshifted form. As mentioned in her discussion of post qualitative inquiry, St. Pierre (2019) puts forth that the heart of inquiry is found when one encounters the Real, leading to a thorough examination of what is unable to be known. It would follow, then, that the Real can be conceived as a true atramentous space, a boundary that cannot be looked into as nothing would be shown. Therefore, the Real is the space that holds all lack and thus binds itself to the Symbolic order.

With regards to the three orders of Lacanian psychoanalysis, the Symbolic is often recognised as the order to which Lacan devoted the most time and effort in defining. It should be at no surprise, then, that the Symbolic is regarded by Lacan as the register for which all psychoanalysis is dependent on, as psychoanalysts are described by him as “practitioners of the symbolic function” (Lacan, 1977, p. 72). Whereas the Real is home to the total lack of meaning and signification, the Symbolic
is held in the world of language. “Language and its structure exist prior to the moment at which each subject at a certain point in his mental development makes his entry into it,” writes Lacan (1977, p. 148). Just as language marks and produces the individual upon entry into it, so too does the signifier for the signified.

The signifier, in Lacan’s work, can be seen as a “spoken trace” (Apollon et al., 2002, p. 61) and the foundational block of language. In the same way that Laplanche names residues as the remnants of untranslated messages found in infancy, Lacan presents the signifier as that which remains as a marking of a loss due to language (Apollon et al., 2002, p. 62). Departing from Saussure – from whom Lacan took the terms signifier and signified – Lacan presents the idea that the signified only exists due to being attached to a signifier, (Evans, 1996, p. 186); that is to say, something only is given meaning when it has been given a symbol. While many might perceive the signifier as a stand-in for a word, Lacan distinguishes that the signifier in psychoanalysis can appear in forms both “smaller than words (morphemes and phonemes) or larger than words (phrases and sentences)” (Evans, 1996, p. 187). However, though signifiers imbue meaning onto the signified, they themselves do not inherently hold meaning. Rather, Lacan presents that signifiers are able to link together to form what Lacan (1966) calls the “signifying chain.”

Though it holds the potential for a never-ending addition of signifiers being attached to it, the signifying chain always produces meaning at each movement from signifier to signifier (Fink, 2004). Lacan denotes this movement between signifiers as punctuation. “Before punctuation, there is simply a chain of discourse … the punctuation of the signifying chain is that which creates the illusion of a fixed meaning” (Evans, 1996, p. 157). Lacan describes meaning as “an illusion” due to the fact that language (and by extension, signifiers and signified), is subject to the worlds of metaphor and metonymy. Whereas metaphor represents the opportunity for substitution of one signifier for another, metonymy serves the purpose of linking signifiers together in their signifying chain (Fink, 2004, 2007; Evans 1996; Apollon et al., 2002). These two perpendicular axes of language – metaphor running vertically in its operation of substitution and metonymy horizontally in its linking function – come together to create the point of signification (Evans, 1996). While it would be reasonable to correlate the English understanding of the word
signification to the process of meaning making, Lacan initially differentiated the two, with “signification [being] imaginary and is the province of empty speech; meaning is symbolic and is the province of full speech” (Evans, 1996, p. 185). Lacan would later revise this thought, however, and find meaning to be located at the junction between the Symbolic and the Imaginary. As we now arrive at this junction ourselves, I turn our thoughts towards Lacan’s third and final register: the Imaginary.

When creating his concept of the mirror stage, Lacan (1966, 1977) presented that through the earliest moments of identification – the separation of self from the Other – we enter the realm of the Imaginary. Whereas the orders of the Symbolic and the Real are predominantly focused on the importance of the signifier or its complete absence, respectively, the Imaginary is a register filled with “[images] and imagination, deception and lure” (Evans, 1996, p. 82). Similar to Freud’s ideas of the dream (Freud, 1900), the Imaginary is filled with surface appearances, distortion, and screens that portray that which has yet to be brought into the world of language. Most notably, Lacan describes the Imaginary as a world filled with seductive and disabling powers, which “imprisons the subject in a series of static fixations” (Evans, 1996, p. 83). It is worth noting that in his breaking away from the British and other neo-Freudian schools of psychoanalysis (which have gone to influence and shape the programme that I have been trained through), Lacan thought that these other conceptions of psychoanalysis were too closely invested in the world of the Imaginary, rather than moving beyond it into the Symbolic order (Lacan, 1977, p. 246-247). Again, Lacan presents the Symbolic order as the apex of his psychoanalytic theory, holding a supremacy over the other two orders and especially the Imaginary, going so far as to state that “the imaginary is decipherable only if it is rendered into symbols” (Lacan, 1956, p. 269). Whereas Lacan presents the image and the Imaginary order as a space for captivity – of disability and seduction – I wish to push back against this and present an argument for the importance of engaging with the Imaginary as equal, or perhaps above, the worlds of language and the Symbolic.

As the Imaginary is the world of things that have yet to be given a signifier (as opposed to the Real, which holds that which avoids the signifier altogether), it
would stand to reason that it is also the realm of the photograph. Looking back upon my own work with photography, as I have described several times the states of fixation with a particular photograph, seeking for ways to bring it back into a world of language in order to be articulated and shared with others. This assumes, however, that language is available to be given to all things which, as shown through Laplanche’s (House & Slotnick, 2015) definition of après-coup, is not true. While Lacan presents the image as being that which captivates and disables, I would stress the argument that, as shown in my experiences, it is actually language which is disabling. In fact, Lacan himself creates this contradiction in his idea of the object petit a (object a). Bruce Fink, among other Lacanian interpreters and scholars, presents the object a as that which “most primordially causes one’s desire, what most fundamentally arouses one’s desire” (Fink, 2007, p. 269). In his conceptions of desire, Lacan (1977, p. 275) states that there is a fundamental “incompatibility between desire and speech.” If speech (i.e. language and the act of attaching signifier to signified) is so deeply incompatible with desire and requires an infinite amount of attempts to bring the Imaginary into the Symbolic, then why must it be the constituents of the Imaginary which are at fault?

This matter is further complicated when looking at Lacanian theory through the lens of critical posthumanism and reflexivity. Returning to Dow & Wright’s (2010) argument for Lacanian theory as a posthuman psychoanalytic perspective, it is clear to see that Lacan removes the machinic qualities of Freudian theory from the human. In presenting language, and thus the psychoanalytic Unconscious, as something that exists beyond the simple function of speech and something within the human experience, Lacan creates a blurred account of what is and isn’t human. However, Lacan’s belief that desire, in its relation to lost objects, requires one to constantly search for a way to articulate what has been lost (Fink, 2007; Evans, 1996) stands in contrast with my readings of critical posthumanism. From a posthuman perspective, this lost object can be seen as the very essence of the human, and thus stands opposed to, rather than welcoming of, the distinctions between human and non-human. In this way, Lacan and his theories also fall short of fully meeting a fundamental aspect of the reflexivities that I have presented in this thesis: a yielding to foreignness.
In his aims to place everything that is of “supreme” importance in the Symbolic register, Lacan pushes to make what is foreign – the constituents of the Imaginary order – known. Thus, Lacan fails to meet the point of yielding which, as noted previously by Serra Undurraga (2020a), presents itself as a method of questioning and desubjugating from previously held assumptions. It is fair to note that in presenting the Symbolic as above the Imaginary and the Real, Lacan was desubjugating himself from the assumptions that others held in psychoanalysis, yet it comes at the cost of reaffirming his own beliefs and holding them as unequivocal truths. Returning to the definition of reflection (Hall, 2011) presented in chapter two, Lacan simply holds a mirror up to his psychoanalytic theories and repeats what he sees, without fully interrogating or diffracting (Barad, 2007) his notions in response to the challenges presented to him by the British psychoanalytic schools. Unlike Lacan, it is through my own yielding to foreignness that I come to desubjugate myself from the oppressive forces of language, as I have shown throughout this thesis that the benefits and powers of language have been lost to me throughout not only my experiences as a trainee and qualified psychotherapist, but in my life as a whole. This sentiment is echoed by Sharon Sliwinski, who writes that in dark, subjugating moments, “language is no longer used to disclose and expose, but to obfuscate and hide what is” (2017, p. 322). Whilst my experiences of psychoanalysis began on the couch, my true engagement with psychoanalysis began with a personal identifying alignment with Lacan and his theories. As such, the foreignness that I yield to is one that reflexively questions the assumptions that came with this previous education.

Throughout this section, I have shown the ways that Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis conceive of not only latency, but also the importance – as well as the denial – of the worlds of language and images. From Freud, we recognise the forwards movement of time inherent to latency through nachträglichkeit, which requires the reflexive Unconscious to lie dormant and waiting. With Lacan’s après-coup, the reversal of Freud’s forward arrow of time is shown, requiring a look at the past in order to understand and inform the future. Whilst each of these views has merit and show an important aspect of reflexivity, it is only by combining the two and creating a bi-directional movement of time, as shown through Laplanche’s
conceptions of *après-coup* (House & Slotnick, 2015), that an ever-continuous reflexivity is able to occur.

This new definition of *après-coup* requires an exploration of Lacan’s three orders: the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. Though each order holds incredible merit and insight into the workings and logic of the psychoanalytic Unconscious, Lacan’s focus on the Symbolic and the importance of language by rejecting the powers of the Imaginary leads me to present once more the questions at the heart of this thesis: does a photograph hold the capacity to create a space for reflexivity, or does it rely on the Symbolic to give it meaning? What can we learn about the Unconscious if the Imaginary is recognised as equally powerful as the Symbolic? Does photographic theory and practice align itself to psychoanalytic theory, and if so, how might it foster a space for growing the capacity for reflexivity? With these questions now in mind, I wish to continue my diffractive performance of latency and engagement with the reflexive Unconscious by putting into focus the final aspect of this thesis: photography.

*Photographic Framings of Reflexivity and Psychoanalysis*

In the late years of his life, Freud remarked in his essay *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930/1985) that:

> In the photographic camera [mankind] created an instrument which retains the fleeting visual impressions, just as a gramophone disc retains the equally fleeting auditory ones; both are at bottom materializations of the power he possesses of recollection, his memory … These things that, by his science and technology, man has brought about on this earth … do not only sound like a fairy tale, they are an actual fulfilment of every or of almost every fairy-tale wish. (p. 90)

Freud was never one to shy from offering his critiques or opinions to the changes taking place within the world throughout his life (Fardy, 2017). Though exceptionally known for his works as the father of psychoanalytic theory; devoting much of his early works to creating the foundations for the psychotherapeutic profession as a whole, Freud and his work was constantly influenced by the developments and changes in the world around him (Fardy, 2017). In turn, the spheres of science, religion, politics, and art have all gone on to be influenced by
aspects of his work. It is of no surprise, then, that many of the philosophers and photographers who have helped guide and offer insight into how we experience images and pictures, both still and moving, were greatly influenced by the works of Freud that psychoanalysis continues to be used in order to further develop the discourses in the world of photography. I begin by returning once more to the founding concept of the discussions framed within this chapter, albeit from a new lens: *après-coup* in photographic practice.

While it would be incorrect to reduce *après-coup* to simply be a form of remembering, memory – or the absence of it – still plays a significant role in its retrospective functions. On the other side of time, *après-coup* is more than a delay, as latency requires for something to be obfuscated until it has been developed, under proper circumstances, to be later shown (Kofman, 2017). Photography, then, positions itself as a powerful tool that is able to enact both of these functions of *après-coup*. As shown through Freud’s perception of photography as a tool for recollection, time and memory hold key roles in the power of photographic practice. Freud’s notion of the camera as a device for remembering is brought into the present day by David Bate (2010) who writes that “in domestic culture, photography conventionally has a place as a time machine, a device for remembering” (p. 243). This leads Bate to question how photography impacts the way that we remember things, thus turning to Jacques Derrida to understand how the technological aspects of photography shapes the human perception of memory.

Derrida describes photography as a tool for archiving, whereby

the archive is constituted by the present itself, it is therefore necessary that the present, in its structure, be divisible even while remaining unique, irreplaceable and self-identical. The structure of the present must be divided so that, even as the present is lost, the archive remains and refers to it as to a non-reproducible referent, an irreplaceable place. (Derrida et al., 2010, p. 2-3)

From Derrida, it is clear to see that the photograph holds a purpose of creating a physical trace of what is known, allowing a return, but not a replication, of what was experienced previously. However, in returning to and capturing the present moment, photography becomes performative and productive, since what is captured has undergone several interventions: “not only framing but point of view,
calculation of light, adjustment of the exposure, overexposure, underexposure ... they modify reference itself, introducing multiplicity, divisibility, substitutivity, replaceability” (Derrida et al., 2010, p.7). Therefore, what is produced in the photograph is not only a trace of the past, but a remodification of it.

Just as Laplanche presents the retrospective role of *après-coup* to be a recreation of the past into the present by changing how it is understood, so too are the functions of the photographic process. When looking back at my own photographic work, I feel a strong sense of this recreation and remodification of time and memory. Each time I look back at a photograph, I engage in a bi-temporal relationship, wherein I bring the affects and memories of the captured event into my present space. In return, my present self looks back upon the image, questioning what was previously felt and adjusting these to fit a narrative, both true and false, that I currently hold. There are moments where I am able to do these modifications with purpose and choice and there are times when they occur without my awareness to the fact that something has changed. Thus, photography, and by extension *après-coup*, can be seen as both active and passive. Derrida continues his remarks on photography in stating that “remaking and retracing is at once active and passive ... Activity is at the service of a certain passivity. And yet this passivity is not passive with respect to some given thing ... Activity and passivity touch together or are articulated along a differential border” (Derrida et al., 2010, p. 17). I perceive the border that Derrida talks about to be the line between consciousness and the Unconscious. Though we are unable to see and recognise the activities occurring, and thus experience the changes as passive, the reflexive Unconscious is always at work. As such, it does not require a lengthy extension of logic to see that the photographer, whether actively or passively holding knowledge of psychoanalysis, is in many ways a practitioner of the Unconscious. Before turning to the significant interplay between photography and psychoanalysis, however, I wish to give space to the second aspect of *après-coup*: latency.

Something lies dormant throughout the photographic process, awaiting the proper situation and combination of agitating stimuli in order to be seen. The captured image – that is, the image that is held on a roll of film awaiting development – is latent. Within photographic theory, the latent image refers to the invisible traces of an image left on film after it has been exposed to light (Coe, 1976). This image is
then brought to life as photograph later on through the three-staged process of photo-development: develop, stop, fix. While this definition of the latent image is significant to the physical photographic image, there is another, far more intangible image, that also lies latent within the photograph. Roland Barthes, in his well-known book *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1980), remarks on this photographic process, stating that it is “a trick of vocabulary: we say ‘to develop a photograph’; but what the chemical action develops is undevelopable, an essence (of a wound), what cannot be transformed but only repeated under the instances of insistence…” (p. 49). While Barthes does well to recognise the existence of a wound – or trauma, by another name – he does not develop the idea of what the wound itself is.

As I have described in the introduction of this thesis and in introducing my photography to it, my reflexive photographic practice is built upon the need to fulfil, to the best of my ability, a desire. This desire permeates throughout the photographic process, “culminating in the world of photographic development and its ritualistic bathings, [which] builds up a moment of expectancy that indexes the photographer’s desire to see the image” (Cassar, 2012, p.34). This desire to see, and in turn to share, is commented upon in many analyses of photographers and their images, with many of these discussions revolving around the *role* the photographer takes in their work. Bate comments that “the photographer [is] a type of person, drawn to obsessive actions, repetition, perversion or fetishism: on one side the heroic self of the war photographer … on the other, the obsessive amateur … obsessed with control and beauty” (Bate, 2017, p. 4). Both of these individuals, the professional and amateur, hold a wish in Derrida and Bate’s (2010) view, to engage with the archive not as a thing of the past, but to hold an archive of latent images in order to create “a question of the future … the question of a response, a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow” (Derrida, 1996, p. 36). Thus, the photograph, in its undeveloped state, holds within it the desire of latency, to be brought into reality at a time when the dreamt-of future can be made true.

This aspect of latency, of which desire is paramount, relies on the belief that something *must* appear in the future. Afterall, why would someone subject themselves to the torturous moments of knowing that what they are wishing to produce would never be able to be attained? This painful limbo state is constantly
felt by the photographer who, whilst watching their photographs enter and sit in chemical baths, is left knowing that “the images might be about to appear or disappear” (Cassar, 2012, p. 36). This process of bringing the latent into a tangible form, of awakening the dormant (Kofman, 2017), is the precise nature of desire: it is the process of bringing what lies at the precipice of the psychoanalytic Real back into the Imaginary. This brings rise to a question: how does the photographer, uninitiated in the world of psychoanalysis, share their desire with others? Or perhaps it is better to ask, why do they share it? In the same way that Laplanche presents the need for attempts at interpreting an enigmatic message, the photographer attempts to bring into an image into life by “fixing” the image so that it becomes “fixed” (Cassar, 2012, p. 36). Cassar describes the unfixed photograph as “weak; it fades quickly” (Cassar, 2012, p. 37). The unfixed, un-pictured image of desire is left latent, doomed to become one of Laplanche’s truly enigmatic messages, lost forever to the Real. This is furthered by Freud’s description of trauma, which he described as “those impressions, experienced early and later forgotten” (Freud, 1939, p. 72). If it is the very nature of latency to be fleeting and at risk of being lost and traumatic, why, then, do we allow for things to remain latent?

Retuning to Freud and Laplanche, we can understand that the latency period is necessary as the repressed experiences of childhood would be felt as overwhelming (House & Slotnick, 2015). Time and development are required in order for the affectual substance of the repression to be holdable. As we know, this period of latency often takes years within psychoanalysis, and sometimes is able to be passed from generation to generation in its need for maturation. Cassar likens the photographic process of latency to Freud’s concepts of dreams, stating that “dreams provided Freud with a lead: there is something latent in the manifestations of dreams. In interpreting them, Freud led us to the dream-work. The dream works, giving the unthinkably formless a form” (Cassar, 2012, p. 37). Latency can be seen in the same way in the photographic process, and not only in film photography.

Though analogue forms of photography have hastened their latency periods – what once took days or weeks or hours to develop has shifted to take minutes with polaroid cameras – there is still a moment of latency within digital photographs. Though it is a significant fraction of time that is felt as instantaneous, digital photography still allows for a moment whereby the dream of the image requires
interpretation. The moment of pause, of noticing that something has happened in retrospect, works to present the photographic process as part of the bi-directional temporality that is found in _après-coup_. “In the end,” writes Cassar, “only the developed image will attest that there was something in latency. Only when it is developed, will we see it” (2012, p. 39). It is worth noting, however, that despite someone being able to develop, stop, and fix a photograph _après-coup_, it is not the individual who has brought the latent image to life. Instead, the photograph is brought about by the proper concoction of chemical baths and time, much like the understanding the desire and memory that can be found in a dream is brought about by the psychoanalytic process and not the analyst themselves. Freud describes this phenomenon as displacement, leading to “the possibility … that the dream may have yet another meaning” (Freud, 1900, p. 279). Consequently, with the photographer now aligned (displaced) into the role of the psychoanalyst, the photographic process can be seen as the attached to the psychoanalytic process. This brings back a question posed by Bate (2017), who or what is a photographer? I wish to extend this question further and ask: who or what is a psychoanalyst, too?

If we are to accept Lacan’s understanding of the purpose of psychoanalysis, which is the recreation of an individual’s history (Evans, 1996, p. 207), then it follows that the modalities of doing so would differ for analyst and photographer. The psychoanalyst – Freudian, Lacanian, or otherwise – pays close attention to the words of their analysand. On the other hand, the photographer, in being a performer of the Unconscious process of _après-coup_, is occupied with the world of pictures and images in their raw, signifier-less state. Whether through producing a sense of immortality through a photograph (Derrida et al., 2010) or the working through of repressed memories, both photographer and psychoanalyst once again present a shared goal in their work: preserving history (Bate, 2010, p. 245). Bate presents this idea of the photographer as an historian of the psychoanalytic and photographic Unconscious by connecting Barthes’s idea of the _punctum_, the point of capture in a photograph, to the idea of “involuntary memory”:

> Whereas the _studium_ is akin to voluntary memory (public or cultural associations that can be consciously recalled), the _punctum_ is an involuntary response to a photograph … It is where an image, almost at random, inexplicably makes us react and because of this it also surprises us. We look at it more, but it does not reveal
what we ‘see in it.’ It has an effect upon us involuntarily. If we follow an associative path for the image to our memory it can lead to other memories, even a suppressed memory and, with critical work, an essential repressed memory-trace. (Bate, 2010, p. 254)

Through this notion of Barthe’s punctum, the photographer is now shown as deliberately creating Lacan’s notion of capture, thus forcing the viewer of their picture to focus on a singular point. Once again, the photographer is shown to align themselves with the psychoanalyst in practice by creating a space for interactions with the potentially repressed memories and the Unconscious. This brings me to return to one of the significant departures from and questions of Lacan that I made in the previous section: does a photograph, as an entity of the Imaginary, hold less weight than the Symbolic and its primary constituent, language?

Though it has been presented that the photographer and psychoanalyst both engage with the Unconscious, though from two different registers (Cassar, 2012; Bate, 2010, 2017), I believe that presenting a distinction between the two based on these grounds creates an insufficiency in both fields. The photographer, in their obsession with the creation of the latent image and developed photograph, falls short of recognising the importance that language can offer in understanding the fantastical worlds found in their pictures. The psychoanalyst, in their focus on discovering the line of desire that links together the chain of signifiers in their client, shirks the responsibility in understanding the signified images that fill the fantasies found in their office. It would follow, then, that the true solution to this issue would be a formal coming-together of these two fields of practice: the analyst-photographer. It is worth noting the order that I present this combination, as I believe that the greater onus lies on the psychoanalyst to learn from the photographer, especially when considering the current cultural zeitgeist.

“It is commonplace to claim that we have, at this particular historical moment, come to inhabit a culture of images, a world where the image, rather than the word, has arguably become the dominant cultural building block” (Mellos, 2013, p. 329). We live in a world where images currently rule supreme. Indeed, we would be troubled to find any electronic device, whether a cell-phone or tablet or computer, that does not contain a camera these days. Moreover, every body of text that is presented online through social-media or news sites has a picture attached to it. We
store these images, holding them as a significant part of the story that has just been read, using it as the base tool for recollection (Mellos, 2013; Hayes, 2002). To this point, we are more likely to hear someone say “I remember seeing that” than “I remember hearing that,” showing that even when it comes to language, the image has begun to hold a dominant position.

As discussed throughout this chapter, photographers and psychoanalysts both utilise memory as a fundamental block of their work in preserving and recreating history. While much of my discussion has been based on the latency and retrospective aspects of memory through après-coup, there is another aspect of memory that photography does well to develop: immediacy. In his exploration of psychoanalysis and photography, Dimitri Mellos puts forth that photography holds a “very special kind of recall cue; it is a cue that is also immediately, as opposed to indirectly, connected to the past experience…” (Mellos, 2013, p. 332). We see a picture and are immediately, directly transported back to the moment that it was taken. Mellos uses this idea of immediacy to argue that the act of recollection “is not only aided [by the photograph], but perhaps transcended, short-circuited, [or] bypassed altogether” (Mellos, 2013, p. 333). However, despite its magical powers of time-travel via après-coup, a photograph falls short in holding within it everything that is felt by a moment. Looking back at my work in the previous chapter, it is clear that at all points of engagement – capturing the photo, developing it, looking at it, writing about it, and writing about it some more – something is lost from the photograph.

After all, how could a 120mm-by-120mm square of film possibly contain everything that I was feeling, smelling, or thinking in the exact moment that it was taken? What about everything that came before and after the photograph? Daisy Hayes discusses what occurs in the moment that a photograph is captured by saying that “there is a fleeting fraction of a second in which the significance of an event can be summed up and expressed in strong visual composition” (2002, p. 526). Many photographers call this specific moment the “snapshot.” If the snapshot is meant to hold the soul of the event being captured, then the memory that is recalled when viewing a photograph would be purely of that snapshot. From a psychoanalytic perspective, this snapshot would be seen as nothing more than a screen memory. Freud describes a screen memory as:
A mnemonic image [which] is not the relevant experience itself – in this respect the [repressive] resistance gets its way; what is recorded is another psychical element closely associated with the objectionable one – and in this respect the first principle shows its strength, the principle which endeavors to fix important impressions by establishing reproducible mnemonic images. (Freud, 1899, p. 307)

While Freud puts forth that the distortion created by the psychoanalytic Unconscious is used to create a screen over the snapshot image, I wish to argue that what is truly distorted is that which is lost from the whole image. It is not only the events that occurred on either side of the snapshot, but also the affectual constituents of the photograph that are lost due to the repressive qualities of the Unconscious. In the same way that the lost enigmatic messages of infancy create the psychoanalytic Unconscious for Laplanche, the lost affects and memories attached to a photograph continue to feed it. How, then, might photography and visual images be used in therapeutic spaces to undo the repressive work of the Unconscious?

It is worth noting that in asking this question, I am reversing Lacan’s preposition that the Symbolic and language hold supremacy over the Imaginary and the image. Whereas a story (language) requires an image to make it objectively true, an image is able to exist and tell a story without any words attached to it. Before going into further detail on this reversal, let us spend time now on the role of graphic images in psychoanalytic practice.

While many psychoanalysts would agree with either Freud or Lacan (or some other theorist whom they studied and use to guide their work) that their purpose is to provide a space and facilitate for their client the reworking and reorganisation of their personal histories, clients often present a different goal when entering therapy. Within my own work as a therapist, the most common question and goal presented to me by my clients has been wanting to assign and understand the meaning of specific events in their life. Photography, according to Sally Despenser (2006), presents an opportunity to engage in this quest for meaning. Through the example of several vignettes describing moments that clients brought photographs into sessions with their therapists, Despenser presents that photographs offer an opportunity for clients to create “a new story ... to put a different meaning on the picture” than what was previously held (Despenser, 2006, p. 97). The creation of different meanings leads to a chance to question not only the
story that one holds for themselves, but also question the creator of the photograph and original story as well (Despenser, 2006). Perhaps most notably, the use of photography in therapy presents a chance to engage the lost aspects of the photograph, “giving an opportunity to share feelings and experiences locked away or concealed in front of the camera (and others)” (Despenser, 2006, p. 97). With the physical photograph being able to hold so much power, we can move to accept that graphic images outside of photography should, too.

In exploring the significance and strength of photographs in everyday life, Michael Eigen (2016) presents that pictures have long held the power to link “sensation and thought” (p. 613). Invoking Winnicott (1992), Eigen (2016) follows the idea that there are multiple types of thought, including the visual, which is perceived as hallucinatory due to the extent that it presents sensations that are beyond the capabilities of language. Stefanie Teitelbaum (2016), on the other hand, presents the power of images as holding the power to confuse and reaffirm the presenter’s notion as infallible. Using the example of Freud’s patient, the Wolf-Man, and his famous painting of white wolves in a walnut tree (Freud, 1918), Teitelbaum goes on to describe how Freud “insisted on one relentless interpretation” (2016, p. 641), and in turn attempted to force all of his students and readers to accept this interpretation. It wasn’t until Teitelbaum created an image within her own mind, a dream, that she was able to see the potential for reality that extended beyond what was previously presented to her. Perhaps, then, it would be fair to say that the self-created images, whether photograph or dream or visual thought, hold the power to elicit something within ourselves that was held under repression.

The first image that any person holds in consciousness is the image of their own physical form. This was the magical moment that Lacan described as the mirror stage (Evans, 1996). If taking the impact that images have when brought into therapeutic spaces (Eigen, 2016; Teitelbaum; 2016), especially when viewing the image as an opportunity to create something new within the conception of the self (Despenser, 2006), it becomes possible to say that “images supplemented with a point of view ... have the ability to make a body” (Dachy, 2016, p. 41). I take the supplementation that Dachy speaks of here to be the ability for an image create a whole body; one that no longer suffers from the fragmentation caused by entering into the world of language and the Symbolic. “All images,” Dachy states, “are taken
to veil the impossible … of what is impossible to subjectify once and for all: an *extimacy*” (2016, p. 41). Lacan described extimacy as the exterior presentation of the deepest, most intimate, aspects of the self (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2014). Moreso, the estimate is that which lies within the Real that seeks symbolisation but cannot be brought into language. Furthermore, it can be seen as fulfilling the natural process of photography: of bringing the undeveloped, negative image into its positive form, of moving from darkness into light (Kofman, 2017). Extimacy of the photograph, then, engages in the tension that has been present throughout this thesis: “the tension between showing and speaking” (Dachy, 2016, p. 46). If photographs offer an opportunity to create a sensation of extimacy within us, then they consequently offer the chance to bridge the gap between the verbal and nonverbal, between the sayable and unsayable.

While the unsayable is primarily conceived as existing within speech, it is only to be found in the gaps between what can be said (Rogers, 2006, 2007). Though I agree with Rogers that the unsayable is able to be bookended by speech and thus recognised as existing due to its being framed (Rogers, 2006, 2007), I believe that the essence and heart of the unsayable exists outside of speech. Once again, we see the tensions that Dachy and others describe come up with the unsayable, yet if we recognise that the truly unsayable exists outside of language, we are able to see that “in fact there are some aspects of experience, such as feelings of attachment, empathy, and the subtleties of emotion, that are better expressed nonverbally than verbally” (Pally, 2001, p. 72). As we know, language has the ability to offer great insight into what occurs – its primary use in communication is for description and representation (Barad, 2007). This representational use of language “causes a rupture between what one says and how one feels, the verbalizable self and the experiencing self” (Pally, 2001, p. 73). Some form of connection is lost between people when bringing the verbal into the conversational, while the nonverbal response, when recognised as an action guided by the transferential and counter-transferential experiences of either client or analyst, is able to be seen as an “involuntary nonverbal response … [and] an expression of how human beings normally function with one another” (Pally, 2001, p. 90). The aspects of life that are evoked through nonverbal communication show once more that seeing, rather than speaking, holds a great power (Gerald, 2016). Having now recognised the power of
images, and in turn photographs, I wish to return to the repeal of Lacan’s notion that the Symbolic holds a mastery over the Imaginary.

It is foolish, I believe, to place language above the image. If we are to consider how language has been able to hold a position of dominance over the image, then we would quickly find that it is because language, for all the good it does, also destroys. “Anyone in front of an image knows how annihilating it is to have someone commanding what you should be seeing. Is not an unpleasant quenching experience to be told ‘do you see the mouth, the nose, the face there in that stain on the wall?’” (Dachy, 2016, p. 55) Let us look briefly back to my own photographic for example.

In the writing accompanying each photograph, I take time to detail what is being seen. I tell you what you are looking at, rather than allowing you to come up with a scene for yourself. Regrettably, in doing so, I recognise that I have worked against one of the key tenets of reflexivity that I described earlier: yielding to foreignness. The opportunity for you to yield to the foreignness of your imagination and allow it to take hold and carry you along a river of possibilities was taken away. However, this may not always have been the case. Consider how you first felt when looking at each photograph, before reading any of the attached texts. Did you feel something at first sight? Did it bring back any particular memories for yourself? If you had only seen the photographs, one following the other, would you have been able to understand the trajectory of my growth and development over my years as a trainee and practicing therapist? Did that change when you looked to the next page and found paragraphs of text to describe what I, and in turn you, should have felt? I wish that weren’t the case, though a thesis has to be written in words rather than shown through photographs. Indeed, “prescriptive seeing is just as bad as prescriptive telling and understanding” (Dachy, 2016, p. 55). I wish to offer now another example of the destructive potential that prescriptive seeing holds.

Whilst exploring the effects of prolonged political violence on the psyche, Sharon Sliwinski (2017) presents a unique connection between language and photography. Extrapolating on David Grossman’s comment that through prolonged conflict and turmoil, speech and language becomes “flatter and flatter” (Grossman, 2009, p. 61), Sliwinski questions if photographs, like language, also lose their dimensionality and succumb to darkness (2017, p. 322). Utilising both Freud and
Lacan, Sliwinski (2017) uses the example of the Bang-Bang Club, a group of photojournalists renowned for photographing the moments of South Africa’s transitional moments of apartheid. Through the example of the Bang-Bang Club’s photographic work, Sliwinski (2017) describes how the pictures captured by these journalists were used in subversive ways, taken to tell a story by people in power who sought to prescribe what the photographs were showing, rather than allow for the open discussion of what was being seen. Though the photographs themselves were at times presenting a snapshot of a moment that failed to encapsulate the greater narrative that they were part of, I believe that it was through their prescription that the images became “flat.” By depicting moments of immense violence and despair, the images were forcefully subjected to the same violence that they portrayed: they told a story not of their own, but of what someone decided they should tell. For the consumers of these images and their stories, prolonged political violence, as Sliwinski describes, can “level our imaginary landscapes” (2017, p. 334) and abilities to engage critically with the social discourses around us, just as the violence of prescribed seeing – of being subject to language – leads to the flatness of an image. If an image is to maintain its fullness, its life, then it too must look past the confines of language and be accepted for what it is: a tool for the Unconscious of psychoanalysis to communicate (Benjamin, 2002) that which is “not given directly to sight” (Sliwinski, 2017, p. 333). Once more, the photographic image holds within it the power to show what is hidden and give truth to what language seeks to hide.

To present one final example for my notion that the image is able, and perhaps required, to exist without language, I will turn to an example given by Ignaz Cassar. Though Cassar (2012) discusses the film Ararat (2002) by Atom Egoyan through the lens of latency, I believe the film also serves to show the constant tension between showing an image and telling a story. The film follows a cinematographer who is held by a customs officer needing to verify the contents of the film canisters the cinematographer is transporting. The canisters are marked as exposed, and any further illumination onto them before being developed would render them dead and useless. The images, held latently, contained in each frame would disappear from existing. The cinematographer tells his story to the customs officer and all signs show that he is telling the truth, yet it is only through seeing the rolls of film and the images burned into them that both the officer, and the film
viewer, would know this for certain. The story requires the image for validation. Furthermore, if the story is made to be true, it will lead to the destruction of the images, both physically and metaphorically. Let us imagine, however, if the customs officer simply pulls and views a random frame from the film canisters. The image would still be destroyed; however it would not require the cinematographer to tell a story to make what the officer had seen real. The existence of an image is validated purely by the image and nothing else. Thus, Lacan’s notion that the signified (the image in the Imaginary) requires a signifier (the language of the Symbolic) in order to be made real, is reversed. After all, we can all agree that a picture is worth one thousand words, right?
Chapter Seven
Concluding Thoughts and Implications

It feels strange to have arrived at the end of this thesis, though nothing ever truly ends, does it? Images have been given a voice, words have been shown to at times be insufficient, and reflexivity has been the thread that has tied them all together. Yet I still feel the desire to tell you something more, to show something more for the work that I have done. There are parts of me that hold doubts into what has been written, though I pause at the end of writing and reading each sentence to explore the intra-actions occurring within me. I regularly question what is being brought into the present from my past and how the present version of myself that sees the prospect of a thesis-free future communicates a sense of accomplishment to my younger, questioning self. I told you so doesn't quite work. I showed you so. That's it. That is what I truly wish to express.

Throughout this thesis, I have endeavoured to offer, reticently at times, an answer to many questions. If we were to look back at it now, we would see that with each thought or realisation that has been presented, a new question has been formed. This act itself brings about a new question: is that not the whole point of reflexivity? This question is asked rhetorically, though for the sake of actually answering a question, rather than following the thoughts that preceded it, I will offer a brief answer. I believe that this thesis has shown, time and again, that the point of reflexivity is to always be questioning.

Being reflexive requires that I am constantly in a state of producing and being produced – not only in terms of creating questions, but in creating myself as well (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, 1987,1994; Serra Undurraga, 2020a, 2020b). The answers that I produce for myself are meant to produce new questions, new curiosities and needs for exploration, rather than be taken at face value due to the supposed difficulty of coming to an answer. The true difficulty, then, is coming to the painful realisation that to answer isn’t enough. We need to diffract (Barad, 2007) ourselves and our answers. We need to recognise that we do not hold a masterful position (Foucault, 2000, 2019; Butler, 2005) over their creation and that the source for the answer lies within an entity that is foreign (Serra Undurraga, 2020a) to us.
Most importantly, we need to find a way to performatively (Serra Undurraga, 2020a) sit uncomfortably in the period of latency that occurs between each question. Nonetheless, every gap of latency has its end, and I believe that I have made you, my reader, wait long enough to receive an answer to the questions presented at the start of this thesis.

A Final Answer to a Question(?)

At the start of this thesis, I put forth to you three questions: does a photograph itself hold the capacity to offer a reflexive space on its own, or does it require language to be able to hold itself as a formally reflexive practice? How might photography, as a reflexive practice, assist us as psychotherapy trainees and practitioners in exploring and understanding ourselves and our Unconscious better than we would otherwise? Is photographic theory and practice able to align itself to psychoanalytic theory and practice and how might it assist in developing an individual’s capacity for reflexivity to assist in their personal development? A quick answer for each of these questions would be: yes; a lot; and absolutely. However, to just give these answers for the questions asked would be an unfair service to having asked them in the first place, as well as making you wait so long to receive them. Let us explore, then, how each of these questions has been answered.

I begin with the third question: is photographic theory and practice able to align itself to psychoanalytic theory and practice and how might it assist in developing an individual’s capacity for reflexivity to assist in their personal development? Though presented in unison, I am actually asking two questions here. The first asks for a photographic reading of psychoanalysis and a psychoanalytic reading of photography; the second explores photography-informed reflexivity as a tool for personal development.

Looking back at the previous chapter, it is clear that in both Freud’s and Lacan’s definition of the psychoanalytic process, there is a need for the existence of the photographic process. From Freud, we are able to see that photography serves as prosthetic, posthuman tool for the process of recollection and undoing the repressive natures of the psychoanalytic Unconscious (Bate, 2010, 2017; Dachy,
2016; Mellos, 2013). This is furthered by recognising the inherent aspects of latency presented through photographic practice and the desires held by the photographer in their fantasies of the latent image (Cassar, 2012; Bate 2010, 2017; Dachy, 2016). Within a Freudian perspective, latency, which is seen as the effect of nachträglichkeit, is a necessary phenomenon that occurs in all of us during our earliest days (Freud, 1918, Bistoen et al., 2014; Perelberg, 2005; Goldin, 2016). The enigmatic remnants of our earliest experiences go on to create the foundations of our psychoanalytic Unconscious, which is further fed and developed throughout our lives as we are in constant interaction with it. The Unconscious is an all-encompassing ghost, like the spectral image that lies dormant on an undeveloped roll of film, demanding to be brought out and seen but left unattended out of fear of being shown something that is still beyond our ability to make permanent.

When venturing beyond Freud and into Lacan, we are able to recognise that the photographic process not only requires us to bring the latent past into the present, but also reverse time’s arrow in order to change the past through après-coup (Evans, 1996; Fink, 2004, 2007; Faimberg, 2005; Lacan, 1956, 1966, 1973, 1977, 1988a, 1988b). Yet when we pay true attention to the photographic process, we see that it engages with time and temporality in a deeply more complex manner. Photography, in being able to awaken the latent and remodify the past, enacts a version of après-coup that requires bi-directionality, which we gain through Laplanche’s (2006) reconciliation of both Freud’s and Lacan’s differing conceptions of the same theory (House & Slotnick, 2015).

In following the diffractively reflexive discussion held in the previous chapter, we are also able to see that ways that photographic theory and practice can be informed by the psychoanalytic process. Though there may be a perception that the photographic process ends when photo negatives are made positive, revealing the true nature of their light and colour (Fardy, 2017), psychoanalysis would say otherwise. By engaging with photographs as the living remnants of past experiences, we are able to see that the photograph is another version of Laplanche’s translational remnant (Laplanche, 2006; House & Slotnick, 2015). This remnant holds within it the potential to recognise a loss that is created by and seeking liberation from language and the Symbolic register. If the Imaginary is left to be subverted by the Symbolic, as advocated by Lacan, then it falls prey to being
“flattened” (Grossman, 2009) by the reductive violence of the social plane (Sliwinski, 2017) and prescriptive seeing (Dachy, 2016). However, if engaged with reflexively, the photograph and the Imaginary are given an opportunity to live and produce something that would otherwise be lost.

Looking at the second part of this question, we can see that reflexivity’s charge of always answering a question through another is inherent to Laplanche’s (2006; House & Slotnick, 2015) conception of après-coup. As Laplanche proposes a definition of après-coup that moves both forwards and backwards at the same time, we are constantly engaging with both past and present versions of ourselves, questioning what was known then and using this new knowledge of the past to constantly produce new versions of the self in the present. The unending process of becoming anew aligns itself well with both Barad’s (2003) notions of intra-action and St. Pierre’s (2019) ideas of posthumanism and immanence. The temporal loops of après-coup never formally close as we are always attempting to reinterpret our past experiences and conceptions of the self through the everchanging present, thus renewing the cycle with every new question. With the view of photography as a tool for après-coup in the sense that it constantly keeps the past alive in the present and allowing us to return to recreate the understanding of the past (Goldin, 2016; Despenser, 2006; Teitelbaum, 2016), we are able to see that reflexive photography forces an intra-action between past and present, between the conscious and the Unconscious.

This brings me to explore the answers to the second main question of this thesis: how might photography, as a reflexive practice, assist us as psychotherapy trainees and practitioners in exploring and understanding ourselves and our Unconscious better than we would otherwise? Though there are many overlaps between this question and the previous one, I believe that with the additions of reflexive inquiry as a form of self-exploration and development, we are able to come to recognise new answers and understandings.

As shown in my discussions of the use of photography in therapeutic and analytic spaces, I come to recognise that the very nature of photography is to undo the work of repression. Whether it be memories lost due to the latent proclivities of the Freudian Unconscious or difficult truths regarding our personal histories that
we have declined to accept, repression is a tool for the Unconscious to preserve us from trauma (Freud, 1895/1975a, 1899, 1900, 1905, 1915, 1918, 1939). To counteract the powers of these repressions, several psychoanalysts (Eigen, 2016; Teitelbaum, 2016; Pally, 2001) describe the ways that images, especially photographic images, facilitate change. I particularly look at the work of Sally Despenser (2006), who describes how several therapists experienced their clients bringing photographs into their sessions. Despenser's sentiment that photographs offered clients the chance experience “locked away” or “concealed” (2006, p. 97) aspects of their histories speaks volumes to the power that engaging with an image and photograph holds within therapeutic spaces. When seeing the significant experiences of change and growth that clients are able to make when utilising photographs reflexively, it is fair to say that both trainee and qualified psychotherapists should be able to experience a similar growth in themselves.

In the previous chapter, I used the examples of both Eigen (2016) and Teitelbaum (2016) to describe the power that images hold in comparison to language. However, when looking further at these two examples, as well as my own examples given in chapter five, the way this power is used speaks to something greater than just the therapy room: the personal and professional growth of the therapist. When looking at the critiques I have levied in the second chapter of this thesis, it is clear that I believe personal and professional development for psychotherapists requires more than just a recognition of the potential influences of the Unconscious in the clinical setting (McLeod, 2006; McLeod & McLeod, 2014; Reeves, 2022; Rose, 2011). Instead, in moving from a standard of personal development that accepts reflection as sufficient, reflexive personal development requires that we partake in a performance of questioning why and how we engage in our personal development practices, beginning with a look at who dictates these standards.

Looking further at chapter two, the importance that governing bodies and training programmes place into personal and professional development is made clear. By engaging in these forms of growth, therapists are tasked with showing that they are not only seeking to meeting arbitrary requirements, but also recognise the impact that such practices have in order to provide services at a high ethical standard (BACP, 2023; COSCA, 2014; University of Edinburgh, 2019a, 2019b). I do
not believe that many practitioners take this challenge for continual personal and professional growth for granted. However, I believe that the methods presented as acceptable by governing bodies, such as the BACP or COSCA and their associated training programmes, are often regarded as arbitrary. Whether it be through a specified number of Continuing Professional Development hours and certificates or through mandated personal therapy, the opportunity for unique and personal expressions of personal growth are limited. Furthermore, if the goal of therapy training programmes is to create individual, uniquely disciplined practitioners, should they not also be allowed to express the ways in which they aim to grow and develop themselves uniquely too?

Apologies, I know that was a question serving as an answer to another question. It does, however, lead me to the question that I have described several times as the “heart” of this thesis: does a photograph itself hold the capacity to offer a reflexive space on its own, or does it require language to be able to hold itself as a formally reflexive practice? I call it the heart because, although the previous (or subsequent) questions asked may be seen to hold greater academic weight or significance for this thesis, this first question is one that I have asked of myself for several years. It may serve well in looking back at the title of this thesis for a brief moment: Show to Tell. Showing is a performance of the Imaginary, with telling being of the Symbolic. Let us now see how the photographic image is able to live an independent, reflexive life. To do so, we must recognise the return and departure from Lacan that has taken place in my work.

Though I have brought Lacan into the discussions of psychoanalysis and reflexivity from the beginning, I did so in the same way that he returned to Freud. When moving from away from the discourse surrounding latency and time, a space opened to explore Lacan’s tripartite structure of the psychoanalytic Unconscious: the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. With regards to reflexivity, language – and thus the written and spoken word – has always been held as the favoured producing product. Generations of therapists have engaged in practices for personal development that favour the realm of the Symbolic and language. Written documentation is thought of as flawless. It tells a story that creates an image of what has occurred in the mind. However, reflexivity requires us to acknowledge that language is, at best, full of faults and misinterpretations. At its worst, language holds
the potential to be fully annihilating and a tool for perpetuating immense violence. As Dachy (2016), Mellos (2013), and Sliwinski (2017) show, language takes away the opportunity to experience the full potential of the image. It is prescriptive. It puts something in front of our eyes and says, “read this, and don’t look over there to see it for yourself.” If we are to answer the call of reflexivity, we have to question for ourselves why am I reading this instead of looking over there. We have to stop and ask about the water that we are swimming in. While it is more likely that what we read will only be reaffirmed by seeing it, we also lose the opportunity to make these judgements for ourselves. Imagination, imagery, fantasy – all of these are aspects of life and the Unconscious that get stifled as we are further indoctrinated into the world of the Symbol.

In contrast, the Image does not require language. With the integration of a posthuman (Braidotti, 2013, 2019) and post qualitative perspective (St. Pierre, 2018, 2019), we find that language if often considered inherent to the human. Further, if we are to think without method (Jackson, 2017), we find that the prescriptive qualities inherent to language forces us to follow a set routine. Language has grammar and rules and definitions that have long been engrained into us from the first moments we were placed into it. On the other hand, the image, and in the case of this thesis, the photographic image, requires by its very existence that we ask questions of what we are seeing. It forces us to recognise differences between interpretations and wonder how some could possibly see anything other than what we do. The camera and its constituent producing products are found in the non-human, and they are also found in the human. When considering the estimate (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2014) qualities of the photograph (Dachy, 2016), we see that the image behind the picture brings out something that was trapped within the human experience. It brings the experiences, emotions, dreams and fantasies, and more that were left by the Symbolic to be swallowed whole by the impossible Real, out and places them in a space of limbo. In shifting from the Symbolic to the Imaginary, we begin to engage with a world of experience and knowledge that has long been left unattended (Despenser, 2006; Eigen, 2016; Teitelbaum, 2016). If we recognise that reflexivity, and thus personal development, require us to question and interrogate not only what we know, but how we have come to know it, then the
powers of photography as a reflexive practice begin to grow. As such, photography creates an entity that blurs the lines between human and non-human.

I return to the methodology that I outlined in chapters four and five. In it, I described the process of taking photographs, looking at them, using them to ponder my life, and then writing answers to the questions that were evoked by these photographs. While this remains true for the methodology used for the production of this thesis, I do not believe that it is the true methodology that guides my reflexive practice. Instead, I simply task myself with looking at a photograph and work to recognise the questions or memories or feelings that it estimates from me. I hold them silently and allow them to fill me with sensations and fantasies until I am able to say, “that’s enough, for now.” To this end, I wish to place the answer for the heart-question of this thesis as follows: the photograph does not require language to make it reflexive. The product of reflexivity is not the Symbolic. Nor is it the Imaginary. The true product of reflexivity, I believe, is found in the Real. It is unsayable and unimaginable. It is a force that drives us to continue asking questions and wondering what the past can teach me of the present, the present of the past, and the future of them both.

**Implications for Psychotherapy Training and Beyond**

As I look towards the future of this thesis, I begin to ponder the ways that it can be used to inform and empower the next generations of counsellors and psychotherapists. This empowerment, of course, begins with their first exposures to reflexivity and personal development: the training programme. As discussed at several points in this thesis, psychotherapy training programmes are designed to meet the requirements of the governmental registry body that is associated with them. While it is difficult to expect these institutions to completely rewrite their definitions of reflexivity and personal development to account for the discussions held within this thesis, I do believe that there is space for these discussions to be brought to a greater audience. Let us explore, for a moment, how these institutions and training programmes can continue to develop themselves to meet the requirements of their constituents.
I believe that the first potential for development lies within my suggestion that these institutions expand their current definition of reflexivity. As discussed in chapters two and three of this thesis, the current definition of reflexivity within psychotherapy spaces actually involves being reflective (Hall, 2011), which is more prone to bouncing what we already know back onto us. By progressing their definitions of reflexivity to recognise it as a highly complicated and individualised process, I believe that psychotherapy training programmes will be able to offer their students an opportunity to recognise more than just the image that stares back at them. Instead, what will be seen is a diffractive network of intra-actions (Barad, 2003, 2007) between the various selves that come to make up the individual in their present moment. However, simply allowing for further definitions of reflexivity that centre the individual without allowing for their individualised practices to be accepted falls short of what is required.

With the integration of varying definitions of reflexivity, trainee psychotherapists will be afforded the chance to recognise and define for themselves the ways that they are best able to meet the requirements for personal development. While I champion the clear potential for photography to be used as a reflexive practice in personal development, especially as the image will continue to grow in stature as the primary cultural building block (Mellos, 2013), I also recognise that there will be countless other ways that people find they are able to intra-act with their reflexive Unconscious. Perhaps there are psychotherapists who were raised in a world of music who find the sounds produced by instruments in their hands to in turn produce a new knowledge of themselves as they endeavour to become something new.

In moving away from a singular definition of reflexivity, there are countless potentials for novel ways of expressing an individual’s reflexive journey. Of course, this come with another implication for change within psychotherapy training programmes. Returning again to the second chapter of this thesis, you might recall that a common requirement for many of the writing assignments submitted during my training was a “reflexive engagement and commentary” (University of Edinburgh, 2019a, 2019b). In requiring trainees to present their reflexive self-knowledge at a frequency of every several months, I have to wonder if they are truly being afforded enough time to develop?
If we take into account the necessary periods of latency required for any reflexive performance to occur, then it is critical that sufficient time for this is given. As such, I wish to offer a recommendation for psychotherapy training programmes to remove the arbitrary timelines for “proving” personal development. To use myself as an example: if you were to look at the first two photographs and the writings that accompanied them in chapter five, I believe it difficult to see any explicit signs of personal development that occurred between those temporal moments. The developments were there, of course, though the changes that would come from them were held latently within myself, waiting for the right moment to be estimated. Nonetheless, it would suffice to say that not all products of personal development are able to be recognised through language or images.

The final contribution that I desire for this thesis to offer stems from it being a production of posthuman and post qualitative inquiry. As shown in chapters four and six, there are many significant overlaps between the field of psychotherapy and the onto-epistemological backgrounds for posthumanism and post qualitative inquiry. Giving particular attention to the immanent onto-epistemology (St. Pierre, 2019) that helps ground this thesis, I wish to challenge psychotherapy to recognise that it, similarly to the reflexive Unconscious and the humans connected to it, is always in a state of becoming. Psychotherapy is not one singular thing; it cannot be reduced and summarised in simple terms because it is an ever-evolving field of study that is constantly impacted by both its practitioners and recipients.

As the delineations between academic fields become more blurred and we enter into a world of post-disciplinary discourses (Braidotti, 2018), psychotherapy must recognise that it does not need to follow self-imposed boundaries. Currently, psychotherapy believes itself to exist as the dominant force in a multi-disciplinary field, where art-therapists or photo-therapists are able to alter their psychotherapeutic practices with a supplementary medium. However, when looking beyond traditional qualitative research found in psychotherapy, we are able to see that adjacent academic fields in the humanities are becoming posthuman, post-disciplinary, and post qualitative. Much of the research that went into this thesis involved exploring what is being said of psychotherapy in academic photography journals, were people diffract (Barad, 2007) their inquiries through psychoanalytic theory in order to gain insight into how they might evolve and
continue their process of becoming something that matches the world and culture they exist within. To this end, I hope that this thesis is able to show what personal developments may lie in store for the field of psychotherapy if it engages in a reflexive practice that is not limited to the world of the Symbolic, but also the Real and the Imaginary.

To bring this thesis to a close, I would like to express one final desire: a hope that through the integration of photographic practices into therapeutic spaces, trainee and practicing psychotherapists are able to give a speechless voice to aspects of themselves that have long been rejected by those who favour the signifier over the signified. In liberating ourselves from the world of the Symbolic, of prescribed seeing and saying, we endeavour to reclaim the roundness of our images.

A picture is worth one thousand words, and not a single one of them will ever be able to tell us what we are seeing.
References


Appendix of Photographs
Photograph title: The House on Vermont Street

Equipment: Hasselblad 500 C/M

Film stock: Kodak Portra 400 (Colour film developed in black and white)
Photograph title: The Loneliest Boat in the Sea

Equipment: Hasselblad 500 C/M

Film stock: Ilford HP5 Plus 400 Black & White
Photograph title: The Light From The Darkest Night

Equipment: Hasselblad 500 C/M

Film stock: Ilford Delta 3200 Black & White (ISO pushed to 6400 during development)
Photograph title: Looking Out At Futures Past

Equipment: Hasselblad 500 C/M

Film stock: Kodak TMAX 400 Black & White