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HOMOS IN THE WOODS

Queer Shame and Body Shame in the Context of Trekking
Experiences

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Abstract

In this Doctorate of Psychotherapy and Counselling Dissertation, I offer a variety of different perspectives on queer shame and body shame in the context of trekking experiences. The overall project of this thesis is to offer some glimpses into the ongoing and ever-changing process that surrounds these topics. I draw methodological inspirations from Mason's (2011) conceptualization of Facet Methodology as well as Gale's (2018) conceptualization of Methodogenesis. I approach this with a post-structuralist perspective that follows flashes of insight through various assemblages, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Being inspired by Haraway (2016), I attempt to foster a more-than-human view of the world. I employ a variety of methods for this inquiry, drawing largely on writing-as-inquiry (Wyatt, 2019; St. Pierre, 2008; Richardson, 2008) and autoethnography (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019; Gale, 2018; Wyatt, 2019). Emphasis is also drawn from dialogue and the unfinalizability of subjects (Bakhtin, 1984; Frank, 2004; Willis, 2009; 2013). I draw on themes from queer theorists including Halberstam (2011; 2015), Holman Jones and Harris (2019), and Butler (1997), among many others. The chapters of this thesis each contribute something to understanding queer shame and body shame experiences, and then offer something that we might use to work with that shame productively. I have concluded by emphasizing the entangled nature of our realities, and our interconnectedness. We strive to build lives work living, lives which allow us to live and die well together. The greatest source of strength in precarious times is the making of queer kin. Connecting with our queer families that are more-than-human and stretched across aeon time opens the door of possibility for us to make use of (at least) six different ways of working with queer shame and body shame: Decoding, Multiplicity and Becoming Queer, Daemonizing, Suffering/Resisting/Hoping with, (Re)Storying, and Being Together in Precarity.

Lay Summary

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This thesis explores my personal experiences of body shame and queer shame. I primarily use examples of such experiences from different long-distance walking trips. As a result, nature and my relationship with the environment and the creatures that live in it are an important part of this thesis. I start from this idea that reality is created by us and by the relationships we have with those around us, and that looking at personal experiences is one way of learning about reality. I explore my experiences of body shame and queer shame in order to better understand where those shames come from. It is the aim of this thesis that understanding the source of these shames will help in offering different ways to walk away from shame. Ultimately, I conclude that there are many things we might do to make use of our experiences of body shame and queer shame that allow growth and movement to take place. Included in these possibilities, I suggest, is the importance of celebrating the queer people that have come before us, the queer people around us, and the possibility of a queer future. I also suggest that, in this process of continued growth, it is important that we listen to all the different parts of ourselves, including those that are difficult to listen to. These ideas about queer community and self-understanding can be used to get rid of the oppressive expectations that society has placed upon us that lead us to experience body shame and queer shame.

Declaration of Own Work

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly state otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Date: 29/08/2019

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Introduction

The Puzzle

In this thesis I will engage with and make meaning about my experiences of body shame and queer shame, using various trekking experiences as intense examples of my experiencing of these two shames. Particular focus is given to a 2009 trek along the Colorado Trail, as thinking about that experience was the initial inspiration of this project. I suspect that each of these concepts/happenings are intra-connected and yield interesting engagement with epistemological and ontological issues. Through investigating my own experiences, I offer insight into how body shame and queer shame are produced, and how we might engage with these experiences in growthful ways that challenge everyday heteronormative assumptions about ethical ways of being. That is, how can we live and die well as queer and intra connected Terrans.

The original trek in 2009 took me through the Colorado Rocky Mountains, lasted 37 days, and was largely through what I then thought of as ‘wilderness’ areas. Before and since then I have undertaken many shorter treks in the Rockies as well as other parts of the US, Peru, and Scotland. My inquiry into my experiences engages with my experiences of body shame and queer shame, and how trekking can play a role in both building shame and combating shame. This inquiry into my experience generates knowledge about others’ experiences of body shame and queer shame by understanding the processes that create and maintain those shames, and processes that work against them. As such, I explore in this text other peoples’ experience of queer shame and body shame and the impact of larger social structures on them, especially regarding queer shame and body shame. Further, I have wondered if there are others who trek and experience these shames. Ultimately, this inquiry also sought to find ways of beginning to walk away from shame, integrating those shame experiences into a way of living and dying well. The various chapters in this work

engage with this from different angles, using different material as research material in order to produce research that demonstrates the interconnected nature of this inquiry.

Ontology and Epistemology

In order to properly investigate queer shame and body shame in the context of trekking experiences, it is necessary to develop a suitable onto-epistemological position. This must be an onto-epistemological position that understands the interconnected nature of this inquiry, and the need to develop an understanding of the two shames in question from a multitude of positions. This also is an onto-epistemological position that strives to find different possibilities. I share the intention and need for different research that Springgay and Truman discuss:

“If the intent of inquiry is to create a different world, to ask what kinds of futures are imaginable, then (in)tensions attend to the immersion, tension, friction, anxiety, strain, and quivering unease of doing research differently” (Springgay & Truman, 2017, Pg. 83).

Immersing myself in the tension, whilst uncomfortable and uneasy, has allowed me to keep my focus on understanding the past and present without neglecting the look towards what could be next.

Springgay and Truman are founders of the WalkingLab project that seeks to “rupture commonplace understandings of what it means to move” and to apply critical theories in their researching and doing (Truman, 2019). I position myself as a post-qualitative researcher, engaging with the getting lostness and the messiness of coming-into-knowledge in a variety of lively and unpredictable ways. Reality is constantly shifting and changing in a process of becoming and changing territories (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). It appears to me that reality is in the in-between and relational; relationships between any things, be they human, other animals, or the non-animal such as buildings, rocks, and hills. Accessing this knowledge must be done in a suitable way. Conclusions are not pre-drawn, and the approach is flexible

and follows inspiration. “This liveness or incipient subjectivity of a sense-event remains open, incorporeal, and virtual, and exists in a time that is always past and always about to come, but never happening” (Deleuze & Guattari, in Springgay & Truman, 2016, Pg. 87). This also holds in mind the concept from Frank (2004) and Bakhtin (1884) of unfinalizability, and an ongoing conversation and interaction between humans, other animals, and earth-others (such as the aforementioned buildings, rocks, hills, and more) - even after death or some other end.

“Staying with the trouble requires making oddkin; that is, we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles. We become-with each other or not at all. That kind of material semiotics is always situated, someplace and not noplac, entangled and worldly.” (Haraway, 2016, Pg. 4)

I draw a link between what Haraway discusses and another familiar concept – one from Bakhtin and Frank which describes us as meeting at the borders and becoming through our border experiences. Connection is where knowledge is created; both knowledge about ourselves and the other. Frank argues that we exist only “on the boundary with others” (Frank, 2004, Pg. 46). In the work that follows, ‘others’ extends well beyond the human and includes my interactions with other critters, growing things, soil and rocks, books and all Earth-others. We exist in relation to, as “ongoing presence... infusing all sorts of temporalities and materialities” (Haraway, 2016, Pg. 2). Here, Haraway helps me to acknowledge a need to move away from exclusively anthropocentric traditions, and argue for a community of living and non-living things that impact and are impacted by each other...it’s about seeing a bigger picture, seeing beyond humanity and acknowledging the community that we are immersed in. This is particularly relevant in the present research. During the trekking experiences I have written about, I was impacted by and impacting other people, various earth-others, and the environment. In fact, it is certain that the experiences I have written about would be completely different without those earth-others, and so I have necessarily taken them into consideration when examining queer shame and body shame.

Through selecting an ontological and epistemological approach that attempts to reach beyond the anthropocentric and traditional, I have attempted to combat unhelpful dualisms such as mind/body, rational/irrational, natural/human, doer/done-to, etc. I continue to be engaged with the gradual and ongoing coming-into-knowledge as I research and write, trying not to fall into old and habitual ways of doing research. A repetition and an assumption of the norm is, I argue, largely responsible for the generation of body shame and queer shame. So, I needed research in which I did not begin with something to prove and then do my best to prove that right or wrong. Rather, what I have done is an inquiry that is uncertain and open to being so. An inquiry in which I can follow the insight and get lost and found many times along the way. Following this course allows the inspiration and insight to take me where I would not have initially thought to go, creating new lines of thought and inquiry that challenge not only general understandings of queer shame and body shame, but also my own understanding of my shames. I intend to offer you something creative and new in the research material collection as much as the presentation. Research that follows these ontological and epistemological assumptions of interconnectedness and existing in meeting at the borders lends itself well to a task set out by Donna Haraway; “The task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present.” (Haraway, 2016, Pg. 1).

Time

Time is another important ontological issue in this thesis. I engage with queer others in a variety of times in order to draw conclusions and understandings regarding queer shame and body shame. I bend and flex time like this in multiple chapters. As such, it has become important that I describe this thesis’ relationship to time in this introduction.

The recent anthology of queer writings “We Were Always Here” (Vance & Richardson, 2019) includes a challenge to linear time (called “Chronos” by Deleuze &

Guattari, 1987). The anthology begins with a “Forward: Bending Time” by Garry Mac (McLaughlin, 2019). In this forward, Garry Mac grapples with the creative act of positioning queerness in time - he describes each generation starting new until the Stonewall riot - but then wait - what about earlier authors like Woolf and Wilde? What about the traces of queer lives found in classics? This fragmentary and often obscured nature of “queer time,” he claims, does not need to be traumatic. It can instead be creative. Garry Mac connects us all via “the shared connection between you as reader and the many writers...a glittering empathic echo of the collectivity that is required for any hope of a queer future” (McLaughlin, 2019, vi). Garry Mac is drawing on the theory of ‘Queer Time’ presented by Judith Halberstam (2005b), a central figure in queer theory. Queer time is captured well in Gary Mac’s description of an experience outside of linear time that is about our connections, our empathic echoes, which enter various times, places, and actors.

Each of these queer folks throughout time has their own unique assemblage that constitutes a haecceity. In DeleuzoGuattarian terms, a haecceity is a unique assemblage within time and space. But what these haecceities having in common is that they all move through the same event of becoming-queer. Becoming-queer is a term that I use to denote the ongoing process by which individuals experience themselves as different from heteronormativity and act in ways that resist heteronormativity – whether that action is intentional or not. The *ing* of becoming-queer is of fundamental importance, as

“The verb in the infinitive is in no way indeterminate with respect to time; it expresses the floating, nonpulsed time proper to Aeon, in other words the time of pure event or of becoming, which articulates relative speeds and slownesses independently of the...chronological” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, Pg. 307).

This idea of Becoming-queer can help to further illustrate how moving away from linear or sequential time is essential to my thesis. Becoming-queer is a line of flight that passes through each of these assemblages, and as such each assemblage has something to offer to developing an understanding of my experiences, and the experiences of others.

Connecting becoming-queer out-with linear time defies the ways in which we have been covered over historically, obscured - becoming-queer is not now, it is the future, and it is the past. It occurs at all times - aeon. Gale describes Deleuze and Guattari's concept of aeon as "constantly peeling away - in both [always already passed and eternally yet to come] from the present" (Gale, 2018, Pg. 142). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) specify the aeon is not "indeterminate with respect to time"; it is in fact the "time of the pure event or of becoming" (Pg. 307) – aeon is the time in which becoming-queer occurs, not chronological time.

I relate Deleuze and Guattari's aeon to queer time, as a sort of always happening time that bends and folds in ways that focus on event and on process rather than the hands of a clock or the pages of a calendar. This link between Aeon and Queer Time helps to further solidify the link between Halberstam's Queer Time and Deleuze and Guattari's theory – they use "becoming" as I have used that word here. Combining these theorists helps to build a case for defying linear time in this post-structuralist and queer way. Becoming-queer defies linear time in the same way that Garry Mac's glimmer of hope does - the writings within a queer anthology all share the same hope of a queer future. Similar experiences of body shame are shared by my current self and myself in various past treks, and experiences of queer shame are potentially shared between my experiences, those of William Drummond Stewart, and of my Great-Great-Uncle. The time at which these experiences occurred of course impacts those experiences, however they are linked by the shame experience out with time. The construct and event of shame is what is of interest in each of these experiences. This processual and eventual nature of the various others, in various time periods, is what has led me to the conclusion that including queer others across various chronological times will offer the best illustration of queer shame and body shame in the context of trekking experiences possible.

I have selected a methodology called facet methodology (Mason, 2011) as the basis for my methodological design. It resists existing modes of understanding (epistemology) that we all fall easily into – it instead relies on flashes of insight, prizing innovation and

spontaneity. Since this methodology has these ontological and epistemological reverberations, it is possible to make meaning that is different from what might be expected. In this spirit, my methodology, aligned with the ontology and epistemology, seeks to offer subversive learning. I will describe my methodology and its usefulness further after reviewing the relevant literature.

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Some Shames: A Literature Review

Having laid out the fundamentals of my onto-epistemological position in this thesis, I will now focus on the concepts being examined within the thesis; body shame and queer shame.

Much literature is available on the concept of 'shame,' and as such I dare not suggest that what I offer below is an exhaustive exploration of the relevant literature. This literature review does, however, offer a thorough understanding of shame, body shame, and queer shame, as well as some idea of what work I might contribute to this discussion of various shames. I will begin with a more general exploration of shame, followed by focused explorations of body shame and queer shame. I will then offer some areas in the research presented where my thesis might contribute to furthering our understandings of these topics.

Shame

I compiled a basic picture of shame through the very helpful introduction to *Body Shame: Conceptualisation, Research, and Treatment* (2002) by Paul Gilbert. Gilbert offers a thorough exploration of body shame in his introduction. This is helpful in establishing the basic parameters of what is understood in Western society as shame. The relationality discussed in Gilbert's understanding of shame lends itself well to understanding the complex and interrelated nature of shame, which fits well with my onto-epistemological position. Gilbert explores how shame is a self-conscious emotion, meaning that it is a feeling we develop in relation to what we think others think of us. Shame is the experience we have when we think that others think there is something about us that is inferior, bad, or wrong (Gilbert, 2002, Pg. 5). This might occur because we have intuited this from reactions to us and others, or we have been told directly. As a result, we experience "the interruption and sudden loss of positive affect..." (ibid, Pg. 5) and 'negative' affects (such as anxiety, sadness, or anger). This can then have impacts on the behaviours we express - such as running, hiding, or the desire to 'not be seen.' There might also then be physiological

consequences, such as heightened parasympathetic activity (Gilbert, 2002, Pg. 6), though I will not focus on these aspects.

Gilbert (2002) also outlines shame as being focused on the possession of negative qualities, rather than the lack of desirable qualities. Lindsay-Hartz, De Rivera, and Mascolo (1995) found this in an earlier study by interviewing participants about their perceptions of their own shame. Their participants expressed that they were ashamed not by who they weren't, but rather by being who they did not want to be. The participants of the study highlighted the importance of the difference between these. This concept of oneself as being bad contributes to what Gilbert refers to as "internalised shame" (Gilbert, 2002, Pg. 20). This refers to shame that comes to construct a set of negative beliefs about the self which become the source of shame. Internalised shame is contrasted with external shaming experiences that come from comments or experiences, that is, shameful encounters in real time. Shame is only likely to be internalised if the original source of external shaming comes from a source that is given legitimacy by the 'shamed' party (Gilbert, 2002, Pg. 23). All of this is not to say, from my perspective, that shame is always present in the same manner – rather this attempts to track a process of shame – how shame moves between us and how it is created by us.

The relationality of shame is emphasized in most of the readings I have encountered on this literature review. Basch (1976) describes the shame response as representing "the failure or absence of the smile of contact, a reaction to the loss of feedback from others, indicating social isolation" (as cited in Sedgwick, 2009, Pg. 50). This description makes it clear that being shamed is an experience of ostracization, of being made to feel that one does not belong. Sedgwick (2009) draws our attention to the nature of shame as moving in two directions at once: "toward painful individuation, toward uncontrollable relationality" (Pg. 51). To move both directions at once leaves the subject caught in the middle, in inescapable and perhaps unbearable psychological pain. The experience of shame makes one feel socially isolated, while also reminding and reinforcing for the individual that they are inevitably

caught in looking to others for acceptance, regardless of whether these attempts succeed or fail.

Jonathan Wyatt's book *Therapy, Stand up, and the Gesture of Writing: Towards Creative-Relational Inquiry* (2019) includes extensive discussion of the experience of shame and the therapeutic possibilities for working with shame. He writes specifically from a therapeutic and post-structuralist perspective. One chapter in this work focuses on a comedy routine by Hannah Gadsby (2018), whose recorded act I am familiar with. Gadsby explores the deep pain of shame, pain and a feeling of being 'wrong' that leads to the shamed person never fully flourishing. Wyatt (2019) discusses Gadsby's feeling of not fitting in, not being a part of the 'normal' world. The shame of being out of place, that is. Wyatt also explores the important message that Gadsby shares - that is, that dwelling in shame without processing and moving on (to the degree this is possible) leads to an incomplete and 'tense' life; a life frozen mid-way through.

Shame has also been discussed as an important source of growth, learning, and development. Halperin (2009) writes about how shame is "integral to and residual in the process by which identity is formed" (Pg. 43). Sedgwick (2009), writing in the same volume, reiterates this by saying that shame "is the place where the question of identity arises most originally and most relationally" (Pg. 51). Probyn also explores, in many publications, the possible positive outcomes that shame influences (2000a; 2004; 2005; 2010). In fact, she interestingly points to the possibility that shame could be a part of informing an ethical practice (2010), specifically the ethical practice of writing shame.

Probyn (2010) shares her experience of being unwell whilst writing about shame, and her experience of her health deteriorating through the writing process. Jonathan Wyatt (2019) echoes her in the struggle to even put words on paper, fingers seeming to resist the act of typing out the shameful experiences. The process of writing has been similarly challenging for me; as the project of this thesis is an exploration of my experiences of queer shame and body shame, I have spent a great deal of time reflecting on my experiences of shame, writing about them, and reading about shame. It has gotten more difficult as the

project has progressed, with shame seeming to wear down my defences and self-care strategies over time. I will return to the impact of this writing process and how I have attempted to walk away from shame in my concluding chapter.

This work fills a gap in the understanding of shame, the gap in which few authors have written about shame specifically from a post-structural position. Further, the experiences of shame in a trekking context have been minimally explored to date and offer a unique contribution to the field.

Sally Munt (2007) describes shame as “a very sticky emotion, [and that] when it brushes you it tends to leave a residue to which other emotions are easily attached, namely envy, hate, contempt, apathy, painful self-absorption, humiliation, rage, mortification and disgust...” (Munt, 2007, Pg. 2). With this stickiness, which results from the internalisation of shame, it becomes apparent that shame can take a lifetime of effort to shake off. Jess Anne-Louise Erb (2019) has written about shame surrounding discussion of bodies, rather than shame about one’s own body. She suggests that this is due to the association of vanity and a lack of depth on the one hand, and physical appearance on the other. This is useful for considering what makes shame so difficult to talk about, and thus so sticky and difficult to get rid of. This presented me with the idea of being ashamed for having shame in the context of body shame, but also shameful experiences of any kind. This double shame is shame that is produced about negative affects surrounding shame - for example, feeling ashamed that one is anxious about something shameful. This double shame can present in the form of feeling ashamed about experiencing body shame. The shame of being caught out as vulnerable leads to more hiding and flight from such situations. An everyday example of this is when you are seen blushing and attention is drawn to the blush. There often follows an increase in the blushing and a desire for it to stop. Blushing betrays the interest we wish to hide (Probyn, 2005).

Body Shame

There is a growing body of literature that “links together internal experiences and self-perceptions, social interactions and relationships...” (Gilbert, 2002, Pg. 47) as the basis for producing shame. Internalised shame comes from external messages of shame that are given value by the shamed person, as discussed above. Grosz (1994) has explored the similar ways in which our own body images are formed. Grosz’s careful examination of the production of body image is part of her project towards establishing a corporeal feminism, one that takes the feminine body itself as seriously as our social structures around it. Her examination of body image links the understanding of shame to body shame and bodies that are perceived to be ‘bad’. Much like shame, body image appears to function primarily through others. Consider body images that are perceived to be shameful; what appears to someone as a physical representation of their own shameful experiences, as constructed by society, becomes a shameful or ‘bad’ body. Grosz expresses this as “the transfer of the meaning which other people’s body parts have for them onto the subject’s own body image, resulting in the treatment of the body as an outside object” (1994, Pg. 84). She goes on to say, “The subject’s body image begins...by being confused with others...and their perceptions of themselves and the child.” Ultimately, this mental framework through which we view the body becomes a perceptual homunculus of sorts that appears to be produced through our experiences of our body. It becomes a map of intensities across regions and zones of our bodies. This homunculus is the outcome of and is vulnerable to intensities that are not just physical, but also emotional and that space in between that is neither and both. Perceptions of our bodies and our caregivers’ perceptions of their bodies are hugely influential in building this homunculus. This illuminates the experience of our primary caregivers’ image of their own bodies as shameful, or certain bodies as shameful, becoming internalised with our own forming sense of our body images.

But what makes a certain body type or shape abject? By abject, I refer to Kristeva’s (1982) use of abjection - which I first encountered in Grosz’s text *Volatile Bodies: Towards A Corporeal Feminism* (1994) - to describe as the opposite of “the clean and proper body, the obedient, law-abiding, social body” (Grosz, 1994, Pg. 192). The abject is the body, or the

parts of bodies, that fails to obtain that clean and proper status. The ideal body type within any social setting is determined through group identities, products, expectations, and assumptions of physical performance (Gilbert, 2002) - in short, through the social values established in a given system.

Grosz also works with psychoanalytic theory, particularly themes of the phallus and of castration. On this, she says “the phallus binarizes the differences between the sexes, dividing up a sexual-corporeal continuum into two mutually exclusive categories which in fact belie the multiplicity of bodies and body types” (Grosz, 1994, Pg. 58). Such a limitation produced by a dualistic way of thinking masks the truth - there are as many body types as there are people. In fact, biological sex itself cannot be accurately binarized into ‘male’ and ‘female,’ as there are many chromosomal combinations and genetic expressions that lie out with the myth of male/man and female/woman. Similarly, fully embracing the dichotomy between ‘abject’ on one hand and ‘clean and proper body’ on the other presents the problem of reifying a limiting perspective on bodies. The present work also contributes a resistance to such binarizing perspectives, which is imperative to my onto-epistemological position. In this work, I argue that limiting perspectives on bodies leads to the creation of shame, and that in fact we must focus on the fact that our bodies *are* rather than what they ‘should be.’

There is some interesting literature from the Sports Science perspective that explores men’s feeling of being physically inadequate or not having stereotypical bodies associated with athletic excellence. Coffey (2016) discusses the pressure that young male athletes put on themselves to maintain and constantly work towards ideal masculine bodies. Examples that men strive towards often include the bodies of professional athletes. Drummond (2011, 2005) explores this in multiple studies. In his 2011 study on straight males’ attitudes towards their bodies, he found that young boys are likely to depict ‘healthy men’ by drawing an exaggeratedly muscular, super-hero-esque figure. “It is clear that boys at five to six years of age have a definitive perception of what a man ‘should’ look like” (Drummond, 2011, Pg. 108). Anything else is shameful or abject. He also extends this exploration of body image to gay men (Drummond, 2005) and how gay men are disproportionately impacted by negative

body image. He concludes this study by stating “The expectation of Western males to adopt a bodily physique that is muscular, athletic, and devoid of fat is gathering momentum...” (Drummond, 2005, Pg. 286) Consequently, men face body image concerns. Drummond continues, “evidence from the literature tends to suggest that the male demographic most at risk...is that of young gay men” (ibid, Pg. 287). The doubled shame appears again, in that men have expectations of theirs and other men’s bodies, which can produce body shame. However, being anxious and ashamed does not fit within the socially accepted expressions of masculinity, as it is viewed as an expression of weakness. Therefore, being found out to be ashamed and uncomfortable of one’s body is often viewed by masculinity as shameful.

It is apparent that much more is written about women’s bodies and body shame from a feminist perspective than from other (typically ‘masculine’) perspectives. This literature has been extremely helpful in guiding my explorations of body shame. I see continuing this conversation and adding in men’s bodies, particularly queer men, as a natural extension of that literature. Men’s bodies can also be objectified or abjected, as mine has been, and as such it is essential to unpack the context in which this occurs.

Another work by Probyn (2000b) is an analysis of sporting bodies and shame. Using an example of a gay rugby player in Australia, Probyn says a “beautiful big body is such an object of pride that there is no room for shame” (2000b, Pg. 17). Yet, there may have been some ashamed and shaming reactions to that rugby star posing nude for the cover of a gay magazine. Probyn picks up this pride/shame dichotomy in her book, published the same year, *Carnal Appetites: FoodSexIdentities* (2000a), wondering about “the forces of pride and shame doing battle in a body that knows itself to be disgusting” (Pg. 125). She warns against the solidification of a culture in which we make those who shame others’ bodies feel guilty for their perceptions. She cautions that, while they might be temporarily productive “in the long run they produce cultures where shame is absent, but where disgust, blame and resentment seethe under the surface of a sanitised veneer of acceptance” (Probyn, 2000a, Pg. 128). The process by which this is produced is simple. In creating a new norm in which expressing our shame becomes a shameful thing, we create a system in which shame is still

very much present and very much unspoken and unchallenged. This does not lead us away from body shame, rather it leads us to a place where we cannot engage with shame and develop understandings of ourselves and our cultures. The challenge of the pride and shame dichotomy will return in the section on queer shame.

Probyn (2000b) suggests that sport is an area ripe for research and analysis regarding shame. "Sporting bodies also compete, and remind us of the visceral dynamics of pride, shame, and bodily affect that have been notably missing within much feminist and cultural analysis" (Probyn, 2000b, Pg. 14). In the very specific context of body shame and fat phobia whilst hiking (a sport, even if not typically a competitive one), Stanley (In Press) writes about experiences of having her body policed whilst hiking. This includes both expectations of what differently gendered bodies are allowed to and expected to do, and what fat bodies are allowed to and expected to do. She also discusses the experience of 'performing' hiker - which I have connected to later in this thesis with discussions of *being a trekker* (as opposed to becoming-trekker). This is about what a body can *do* (Probyn, 2000b) rather than how a body appears, though the latter appears to greatly complicate social reactions to what a particular (e.g. fat) body is doing. What one's body is expected and allowed to do has a significant impact on that person, and the impact of those social permissions is explored in the chapters to come.

As is often the case in Western society we have come up with a diagnosis for when one feels particularly disgusted by their body. In the case of body shame, Body Dysmorphia is the topic of much discussion. In its most extreme form, this has been pathologized by the American Psychiatric Association as 'Body Dysmorphic Disorder' (Veale, 2002). This is used to describe a person of "normal appearance," who "yet [believes themselves] to be defective or ugly...with a high rate of depression and suicide" (Veale, 2002, Pg.267). The disorder refers to anyone who has an ongoing preoccupation with their appearance. I am less interested in the medical labelling of this disorder, and more interested in how it is socially produced. This thesis interrogates the origins of body shame and how to move away from it rather than focusing on clinical applications. For some discussion on the potential clinical

treatments for Body Dysmorphic Disorder, see Veale's (2002) chapter on the subject.

Interestingly, a diagnosis of body dysmorphic disorder might be viewed as a social approval for one's feelings – you look fine to the doctor diagnosing you and so they tell you the shame is all in your head. Similarly, feeling ashamed of one's body and then *not* being offered such a diagnosis is a sign that you either *should* feel ashamed or are not ashamed *enough*. Such a dynamic betrays the social construction of what is shameful as well as a very clear scenario of when doubled shame is present. I now turn to how our treatment of body shame might be changed socially. This is a significant contribution that the present thesis makes – the deconstruction of body shame's social production through my own experiences.

Many authors have explored how we might move through and with body shame in order to do something different with our body image. Grosz (1994) offers a critique of men's use of their bodies. Men, according to her, need to open up to receiving flow as well as sending it out, if we are to change the way we view 'sexed bodies' (Grosz, 1994, Pg. 201).

This could look like

“A body that is permeable, that transmits in a circuit, that opens itself up rather than seals itself off, that is prepared to respond as well as to initiate, that does not revile its masculinity...or virilize it...would involve a quite radical rethinking of male sexual morphology” (ibid, Pg. 201).

The updating and adapting of men's sexualities and experience of themselves to create a more open and positive view is an important task to attend to. Drummond (2005) also offers the hope that, whilst gay men are at an increased risk of negative self-image and body image (of experiencing their bodies as abject, that is), they are also in a position to “engage with their bodies and reflect on the ways in which they are being perceived by others” (Pg. 287). Young gay men might use their shameful experience to re-form their understanding of their bodies, a process initiated by the shame and by their painful management of safety and vulnerability. Body shame has the potential to power our way towards a less shameful and more body positive understanding of our bodies. By this I mean that body shame forces the shamed individual into reflection about their body and its social implications, and through this

painful experience, some individuals are enabled to re-form their understanding of their bodies, and bodies in general, in a way that frees them from the original shame. My examination of my own experiences of body shame in this thesis provides an example of this.

Queer Shame

When first looking into queer shame, I thought that I would find lots of narratives and tales about how ashamed and filled with suffering the lives of queer folk are. Whilst that sort of media coverage and those assumptions are certainly easy to find (some examples from film include: *Milk* (2008), *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), *Philadelphia* (1993), *Rent* (2005), *A Single Man* (2009)), I also found a massive array of queer theory that approaches shame differently. This latter literature approaches shame as a potentiality for becoming, as an impetus to form stable identity. The awareness that comes in response to being shamed, being told and shown what one is and is not, leads to a “collective desire to claim a political presence and a legitimate self [so that a] new sense of identity can forge ahead and gain rights and protection” (Munt, 2007, Pg. 4).

Munt (2007) discusses shame in *Queer Attachments: The Cultural Politics of Shame*. Shame suggests a person, group, or society is bestowing that shame on someone (or a group of people). Munt points out that “Histories of violent domination and occupation are found frequently lurking behind these dynamics of shame...” (Munt, 2007, Pg.3). In fact, other queer theorists have highlighted that queer or gay shame has not necessarily been a constant - it has been actively produced. Chauncey (2009), a queer historian, uses an example from a medical report in 1917 in which a medical professional discussed a person whom he described as a “loquacious, foul-mouthed and foul-minded fairy...lost to every sense of shame; believing himself designed by nature to play the very part he is playing in life” (Pg. 280-281). This example demonstrates two important things – firstly, that there was

an actively enforced belief and attempt to make so called 'fairies' feel ashamed; and secondly, that we queers do not always experience the shame that we are 'meant' to.

The origin of the concept of "homosexuality" was developed as a part of this process to label and shame queer folks. It was not until homosexuality entered discourse that its 'normal' counterpart, heterosexuality, also entered these discussions. Eve Sedgwick covers this in impressive detail in her renowned book *The Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). The conceptualization of this normal, heterosexual identity and way of life has been since referred to as Heteronormativity by queer theorists. The term is used to refer to universalised heterosexuality in which binary structures lay out assumed expectations of sex, gender, and sexuality in a conventional manner. "Whereby all human persons are required to identify/be identified as heterosexual or homosexual. The casual logic by which sex is assumed to determine gender and both to determine sexuality" (Carroll, 2012. Pg. 7) and, I would add, the roles and activities that those binary designations demand in keeping with norms around femininity and masculinity.

Halberstam (2005a) cautions us about the use of 'gay shame,' in reference to a conference by the same name. Halberstam reminds us that it is essential that we avoid the trap that white gay men fall into of either projecting their shame elsewhere or aestheticizing it (2005a, Pg. 229) in ways that are always with a cost to queer people of colour, disabled queer people, and queer women. Halberstam offers examples of how this occurs in popular media - one such example results in the creation of a hyper-feminine character who becomes the abject of shame, thus protecting the more normative seeming main character. For aestheticizing, Halberstam offers the example of dramatic artistic expression in the form of a visual and symbolic feast of the beautiful tragedy that befalls shame subjects – a man standing at the bedside of a woman who fought bulls and feared snakes (i.e. phalluses) (Halberstam, 2005a). There are, of course, more responsible ways of owning and managing our own shame as white men.

Halberstam instead suggests that we follow a perspective on gay shame embraced by feminists - "that gay shame can be used, in all its glorious negativity, in ways that are feminist and antiracist...[and] leads us to a place where shame can be transformed into something that is not pride but not simply damage either" (2005a, Pg. 229). For this reason, as well as epistemological reasons discussed in the introduction, I am careful to focus on my own experiences of shame in a way that is neither aesthetic nor projected; I focus instead on the process of the transformational energies of moving through the experience of shame. I will return to these potentially transformative energies at the end of this section.

Munt explores the nature of queer shame as a violation of the expectations of "Western traditions of psychology and psychoanalysis" (2007, Pg. 13). There is an implicit, and sometimes explicit assumption that masculine expectations of self-containment and individuality must be maintained. This means that expressing queer identity violates traditional masculinity and embraces femininity, which is permeable as compared to masculinity. This permeability also means, Munt (ibid) says, that shame and other affects can build up like a 'viral load' and potentially lead to health issues as well as mental health issues. This has the potential to occur with negative effects on queer lives whether we do our best to slip out of the grasp of being shamed or not - the viral load builds up due to our position as abject to society.

As this viral load builds up, "shame can incite a wilful disintegration of collectivity, it can cause fragmentation, splitting and dissolution in all levels of the social body, the community, and within the psyche itself" (Munt, 2007, Pg. 26). This depicts what it is plain to see are some of the potential costs of shame. Munt is not the only theorist who has explored the way shame builds up over time and has a destructive impact on lives. Holman Jones and Harris also write about shame in their 2019 text *Queering Autoethnography*. They write about the experience of being queer or adopted, and the experience of being both queer and adopted; both abject positions.

"For adopted kids and queer kids, shame accrues like the debris washed up on the beach after a thunderstorm - tangled, messy, smelly. We struggle

alone to find 'others like us' and also 'acceptance' - a rolling project that starts with self-acceptance (which itself can take a lifetime) and then moves out to others and other publics. This is no small feat. It can be a full time job, and it can end so unsuccessfully, crushed under the weight and repercussions of this 'coming to consciousness' that many of us do not make it..." (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 120).

This post-structuralist understanding of the process of shame is different from but also in line with the literature discussed about shame in general at the start of this chapter. The accrual of shame that Holman Jones and Harris discuss is not dissimilar from Gilbert's (2002) depiction of the relational development of shame. It is in fact relationships and social interactions that build up over time and create a shameful sense of ourselves, our bodies, and our sexualities. The debris washing up is both what is projected onto us from others and what is left to put back together afterwards.

For queer folks, Holman Jones and Harris (2019) remind their readers that shame is a political issue. The narratives of queer shame rather than queer pride are so frequent and normalised that they have become more acceptable than "proud, fluid, perverse, and politically angry narratives" (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, pg. 101), which others find 'hard to listen to.' This creates an imperative to challenge the socially acceptable and 'tolerable' narrative. Munt (2007) also picks up on this possibility in *Queer Attachments* - we are cautioned that it is essential to fully recognise and mourn shame on the path to moving beyond shame. Similarly, Sedgwick (1993) says "If queer is a politically potent term, which it is, that's because, far from being capable of being detached from the childhood scene of shame, it cleaves to that scene as a near-inexhaustible source of transformational energy" (as cited in Halperin, 2009, Pg.42). In what follows, my intention is that *Homos in The Woods: Queer Shame and Body Shame in the Context of Trekking Experiences* maintains focus on the productive sources of that shame via examination of my experiences. I then move further to uncover ways in which power might be taken away from queer shame and body shame and reallocated as transformational energy.

Finding Gaps

This section will outline the gaps to be filled and the contributions of this thesis. The limited body of research on queer men's experience of their body shame from a post-structuralist perspective offers a gap that this research fills. I have also not found literature that takes a post-structural approach to deconstructing the social production of hating one's own body. To my knowledge, there is not any piece of research that focuses on the context of trekking to explore the processes around queer shame and body shame and the deconstruction of those shames.

I intend that the contribution of this thesis has been a *doing*. Given the above explanations of shame, body shame, and queer shame, I want to examine my experiences around hiking and trekking as an entry point to the transformational powers of shame. This will not evolve in a linear or smooth description of myself beginning as an 'ashamed' subject and ending as a 'out and proud' subject. The process is as meandering and constantly challenging as the process of making one's way through terrain on a trek. Each chapter seeks to offer some perspective on the processing of and/or experiencing of body shame and queer shame. This is a process of transformation that is unfinished and still occurring, and I have depicted the discomfort, confusion, and pain that this entails in the coming pages.

My contribution to the understanding of body shame and queer shame will be an experience near and personal exploration of and with the relevant theories. My engagement with these theories and processes, particularly through the lenses offered, is a unique contribution to the topics in question. This is a lens that is post-structural and focused on the context of trekking experiences in order to engage with and resist the processes of queer shame and body shame.

The Methodological Approach

In my onto-epistemological discussion, you will recall my conclusion that I would need a methodology that recognized and made use of the complex and interconnected nature of shame. I also explored the necessity that this methodology work with queer time in order to connect queer assemblages together to develop a more complete understanding of queer shame and body shame. It is important to also recognize my emphasis on *process*.

Engaging with this processual, eventual, and ever shifting ontology is important and fundamental to my research and my very existence. “It is about bending the rules with respect for the rules, a certain respectful mimicking in order to **twist and queer science to come up with a less formulaic story of itself**” (Lather, 2007, pg. 43, my emphasis). Further, to twist and queer myself, my understanding of myself. Twisting and queering research into a more flexible form has led me to hold methodology lightly. In saying this, I do not mean to miss the importance of methodology. Rather, I draw on Gale’s (2018) offering of an ever-changing methodology, what he calls “a non-methodology perhaps... methodogenesis, in which research doings are always becoming and in which conceptualisation and inventive research process is given precedence over the fixities of set methodological representation and signification” (Pg. 44). This concept of methodogenesis offers an engagement that fits well with Jennifer Mason’s conceptualization of Facet Methodology (Mason, 2011), and together they are both well suited to grapple with the processual nature of queer shame and body shame.

Facet methodology is not about a fixed and definitive approach that is inflexible. It is a changing and malleable process that responds to the research and constantly adjusts to it. Each of my chapters/facets to follow has undergone a multitude of shifts in approach, theories applied, and conclusions drawn. The chapters offer entangled and always in-process glimpses of queer shame and body shame. Combined, these facets seek to help the reader (and the researcher) to “envision a constellation or an association of flashes” (Mason,

2011, Pg. 81) that illuminate my topics. In this research, I have developed seven facet chapters to form this constellation.

The intention of facet methodology is to follow insight and inspiration in the research process. Mason encourages us to think of our research subject/focus as something that is at the centre of a diamond. It is not something that we can extract and hold, due to the nature of the subject; In my case, queer shame and body shame, and what conclusions we might draw about narratives regarding masculinity, nature, queerness, and bodies. This is not something that I can pick up and hold in my hand - because it is itself an “entwinement and contingency,” (Mason, 2011, Pg. 79), something that is based upon connections and relationships rather than a discrete ‘thing.’ It resists knowing and understanding by the very nature of shame and of marginalized groups. Shame is slippery and difficult to grasp. It is always relational and caught up in a web of the social, the personal, and the historical.

Mason suggests that we use this metaphor to think about getting as clear a picture of this entanglement as possible by looking through different ‘facets’ of our diamond. Each mini-method is “as different methodological-substantive planes and surfaces, which are designed to be capable of casting and refracting light in a variety of ways that help to define the overall object of concern” (Mason, 2011, Pg. 77). Each of these mini-methods is a facet used “to create a strategically illuminating set of facets in relation to specific research concerns and questions” (ibid, Pg. 77).

Such a methodology encourages movement and resists stagnation. Before finding facet methodology, I felt bogged down. I felt Unable to move, and I felt as if I was getting nowhere and losing sight of my inspiration. This, I recognized was for a variety of reasons - a primary one being that my reasons for undertaking my original trek were not what I wish they had been. Naturally, this derailed my thought process before finding facet methodology. I was then able to use facet methodology to conceptualize this recognition about my reasons to trek as an insight to follow. My realization of that was a significant personal insight, which became the basis for one of my content chapters (and influenced many others). Following this insight is an example of the chief focus of facet methodology - “Facets are designed with

the aim of producing insights” (Mason, 2011, Pg. 80), with a focus on “how to generate insights that tell us something exciting, challenging, unsettling, pivotal or resonant about the entwined nature of the world” regarding our subject of study (ibid, Pg. 80).

My conceptualization of facet methodology is a post-structuralist one, and the assumptions fit together well. This methodology cuts in the stone to find each different perspective, and with each cut, a new glimpse into experiences of body shame and queer shame. Still, each cut is on the same stone – and so they are all interconnected and each impacts the other. There is no hierarchal order to the stone, it simply is, and each cut is only part of a multiplicity of cuts that makes the stone what it is. This is an inquiry that honours those assumptions of interconnectedness and multiplicity and resists hierarchical understanding.

Since adopting this strategy, I have been able to lean into and follow each of my flashes of insight and see where it goes. This fits well within the onto-epistemological assumption that things are in-progress and not yet known, with knowledge being created along the way. This has been a productive journey that has brought excitement, imagination, intuition, and fresh perspectives to my researching process. Mason encourages me to use methodology and research practices in a playful manner, whereby we try on different approaches and learn from them. This, too, fits my onto-epistemological position in that excitement, imagination, and intuition offer unexpected and novel lines of inquiry that lead to unplanned and even different than planned findings. And yet, whilst we are encouraged to engage deeply with the variety of epistemologies, we are reminded “it is not enough simply to produce and be aware of long lists of ‘layers’...neither is it helpful to retreat into easy dualisms...” (Mason, 2011, Pg. 79). I have lost innocence in terms of the realization that my intentions were different, and I have lost the innocent assumption that research doesn’t change us. This loss of innocence with methods and with epistemologies is linked to my loss of innocence regarding my motivations to trek. But I cannot unlearn what I have learned. Lather (2007) engages with the difficulties experienced in a research process that challenges the process itself and the researcher;

“There is no exit from the lack of innocence in discursive stagings of knowledge. With a deconstructive goal of keeping things in process, keeping the system in play, fighting the tendency for our categories to congeal, my textual practices move toward some place of both/and and neither/nor, where I trouble the very categories I can’t think without” (Lather, 2007, pg. 41).

This sort of reflexive and always moving methodology presents itself, to Lather, as “a risky business that produces what it repeats in order to see this not as loss but as letting something new come” (Lather 2007, pg. 42). This letting something new come is exactly the goal that I have in combining my onto-epistemological position with this methodology.

The methods that I have drawn on frequently have included autoethnography and writing-as-inquiry - in some form, these approaches have influenced each facet. Wyatt (2019) describes writing-as-inquiry as one way to enter a space of potential, a space where “something might happen” (Pg. 21). Wyatt’s observation follows on from St. Pierre (2008) and Richardson (2008), who have also been influential in developing my understanding of writing-as-inquiry (and, of course, to the field as a whole). Writing-as-inquiry is a method that is well suited to challenging dominant ways of knowing. Richardson (ibid) and St Pierre (ibid) write about the willingness to come to writing without knowing where one will go, without knowing what their inquiry will produce. This has certainly been the case in my writing of every facet. As my own experiences, and my responses in relation to the experiences of others, are the primary source of research material in the following chapters, I have drawn on the closely related field of autoethnography as well. In *Queering Autoethnography*, Holman Jones and Harris (2019) offer autoethnography as a way to engage in affective and provoking research that challenges fixity and normative ways of being and researching. Challenging fixity helps with the goal of deconstructing what has produced queer shame and body shame. Provoking “empathic and affective” responses (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 4) is an aim of autoethnography, and a chief aim of the present thesis, as triggering empathic responses helps readers to consider different possibilities from the perspective of another. This vulnerable form of research through the self is offered by Holman Jones and

Harris as “a means for assembling a community invested in disrupting and changing narratives and cultures of apology, shame, or fear” (ibid, Pg. 9). The approach proposed is all about using personal experiences, as I have done, in order to produce something that connects, something that aims to bring the reader into the experience and challenges the world as they have known it. These themes will be discussed more in other chapters.

Assemblages

My engagement with other queer folks in this thesis is widely varied in terms of chronological time. This is in keeping with the ontological understanding of Queer Time and Aeon previously discussed. All the queer folks that I have written about are linked by a process, a becoming. This research reaches at understanding the uniqueness of my experience of queer shame and body shame - an example of a “haecceity” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The variety of different experiences of actors across times experiencing a haecceity can be linked together through their commonalities. In this case, they have common experiences of queer shame and body shame – especially in a trekking context. These experiences can then be used together to gain further understanding to the larger social processes occurring around them and producing those shames. A poem from 1855, a trek from 2009, writings in 2018 and 2019, a great-great Uncle from the early 20th century, and the historical figure of William Drummond Stewart, from the 1830s. Each haecceity that I engage includes becoming-queer as one part of that assemblage.

Overview

The diary interludes are intended to offer readers and myself as the researcher an affective engagement with my experiences on my 2009 trek. I offer excerpts from my trail diary to engage with, and then open dialogue between my 2009 self and current self. While these interludes will be applicable to all the chapters, and particularly so to the chapters they

neighbour with, they are not intended to drive theorizing. Rather, they are an attempt at offering a raw and experience near reading of this thesis. This is in line with the goal to create engaging and affect-laden research that can answer the inquiries we are pursuing – research that provokes empathy and affective responses.

“Writing A Visceral Failure” focuses on an event that occurred during a 2018 trek that was not originally intended to be research material. I engage with an event in which I decided I was going to change the way I trek – I engage with both why I previously trekked as I had and the significance of changing that for my experiences of body shame and queer shame.

In “I Sing the Body Queer,” I engage with my experience of my body and my body shame on the 2009 trek along the Colorado Trail. The melancholic analysis takes the loss of a queer childhood and the absence of a social structure that allowed me to embrace my body and sexuality. These are combined in the service of comprehending becoming-queer as a process with which I engaged during the 2009 trek, and in fact continue to be engaged with.

“The Cannibal” is an exploration of a feeling of terror accompanied by an image of a cannibalistic monster. This chapter attempts to engage with that monster, to (de)monstrate what It might be able to offer towards understanding my experiences of body shame and queer shame – which are ultimately what conjures The Cannibal.

“Queer Kin” presents an encounter with a shirt that was laden with affect that allowed me to begin a dialogue with my concept of Uncle GG. Through the assemblage of shirt-Grandma-Uncle GG-me, I am able to build an understanding of this relationship and how it might connect queer kin regardless of time and place.

William Drummond Stewart (WDS) was a Scottish noble from somewhere in Perthshire. In “Queering the Rockies,” I will engage with WDS about his various experiences in the Rockies to see what similar experiences and forms of resistance were present for him and myself. Ultimately, this will be a project towards (re)storying (Willis 2009; 2013) him as

an important forequeer who can help teach us lessons about how to resist a dominant discourse.

The final chapter of this thesis, "Here (Queer) We Go Again" will examine a walking-as-inquiry with two companions. In it, I will explain why it is necessary to take a walk as a part of this research including trips, slips, and trying to manage our process as it unfolds with us. I will then move to exploring how my companions and I come into assemblage with one another as queer kin (Haraway, 2016), and how the landscape and Ben Nevis become an important part of our assemblage.

Importantly, each facet is part of the attempt to create a piece of research that honours multiple perspectives, provokes affective and empathic responses, and demonstrates the interconnected and relational process of body shame and queer shame. Each different way of exploration is related to the others, and so it is inevitable that there will be hints and fragments of each facet entrenched within the other facets. It would be misleading to suggest that the only facet that involves a glimpse into the impact of the tactile and visceral experience of trekking is *Here (Queer) We Go Again*, and it would be equally misleading to suggest that *The Cannibal* will be the only portion that engages with Psychodynamic Theory. Still, each facet will contribute something specific and unique to the overall project as well - a glimpse into the centre of my inquiry that will catch flashes of the other facets. Using a variety of different perspectives, I am able to draw a picture of the messy, entangled, and lived experience of my body shame and queer shame in the context of trekking experiences. I use these inquiries to paint of picture of the experience in society of queer shame, body shame, and growing up within the normative discourse, and then to explore what can be done to deconstruct these socially produced shame experiences.

Anthropocentrism?

The issue of anthropocentrism was raised in the ontology and epistemology chapter, where I concluded that engaging with earth-others was essential. It is necessary to now explore the

extent to which I have been able to incorporate this into my methodology. In this thesis I will engage primarily with other humans. Yet, I have also sought to describe the knowledge that is produced in relation to others that include mud, mountains, animals making noise in the night, shirts, forequeers (definition to come) in a variety of times and places, and monstrous fantasies. What this thesis does not claim to do in any detail is engage with other-than-human animals. Still, I have kept in mind throughout this inquiry that my understanding of my experience can be impacted by others. Further, I recognize that in my engagement on treks with earth-others I have done this instinctively. While I cannot claim that this thesis is fully 'non-anthropocentric' as my inquiry is into *human* experiences of queer shame and body shame, I have worked towards an understanding of that human shame that recognizes the ability of earth-others to impact the shame process. Fundamental to this is that we, as Terrans, can have relationships out with our own species or even out with Kingdom Animalia altogether. In fact, to ignore the impact that those relationships have had on my experiences of shame would be to limit the scope of my understanding and offer an incomplete examination thereof.

Notes on Structure

When first considering how the chapters and ideas within this thesis might be assembled, I was tempted to utilize a non-structure. I was inspired to do this by Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) invitation in their book *A Thousand Plateaus*, in which they instruct the reader to read in any order that appeals to them, apart from reading the introduction first and conclusion last. Even this instruction I couldn't follow, and my reading group decided to read the conclusion well before we finished the entire book. In keeping with this tradition, Ken Gale (2018), with whom I have engaged in my onto-episto-methodological exploration, suggests a similar post-structural approach to his own recent book, *Madness as Methodology: Bringing Concepts to Life in Contemporary Theorising and Inquiry*. I still wish to convey some of this spirit to the readers of this thesis as the structure then represents the process that it is

describing – interconnected, ongoing, and always in progress with different perspectives available without hierarchy. The chapters each build on one another, but not necessarily in a linear fashion. This non-linear structure also depicts the research process – I followed untimed and unplanned flashes of insight which meant I was working on chapters simultaneously with many stops and starts along the way, and with my work with one chapter changing my work with another (regardless of order). The non-linear ordering is also tempting because it fits within my ontological understanding of aeon time and queer time – the chapters are not linked by their order, but rather by the becomings and processes that move through them.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and later Gale (2018) drawing on them, suggest that the only way that a book should be evaluated is based upon what it *does*. The book must link up to other theories and experiences in a way that allows things to happen, in a way that allows new knowledges to be produced. This is the spirit behind their suggestion to read their works in any order that *works*. I have ultimately drawn the conclusion that the present structure of the thesis is the best that I can offer - there are diary interludes placed strategically in between chapters that are meant to offer an affective experience to the reader. The chapters also seem to move gradually in a direction that begins mired in my confusions and challenges of my own body shame and queer shame, and that ends in a more shame-resistant and (re)storying vein. As deconstructing queer shame and body shame is the primary goal of the thesis, this order is well suited to demonstrating that. So, ultimately, I will invite the reader to follow the structure I have laid out.

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Diary Interludes

When I began to develop ideas around this research project, I was excited about the possibility of using my trek journal that I kept in 2009 as research material. I wasn't sure how I would make use of it, just that it might be a helpful window into the mind of nineteen-year-old Ryan. I made a call home to send my Mom searching for the diary, and after some exploration she found it. I agreed to keep it there and collect it next time I was home for the holidays.

Once I was back in Edinburgh with the diary in my hands, I was thrilled to dive in. Only there was so much missing from the diary. There were very few desires, feelings, or reflections included. It was almost entirely "chatter" about the events of the day, detached from feeling. McFerran and Scott (2013, Pg. 13) offer this concept of chatter in their exploration of adolescent girls' diaries. Their understanding of chatter was that, once the chatter was out of the way, and once the diarist had the capacity for self-reflection, the diarist would move into the more affect laden journaling process. This is not quite what has occurred in my diary/journal entries, as the affect laden and self-reflective writing very seldom emerged. However, I have affected memories to draw upon that tell me there was a great deal of feeling and reflection happening on that trek. It just hadn't been written down.

I was interested in a much more contextualized and personal use of what I had written. Thus began my exploration of how to use these materials – what the methodology of these diary interludes would be. Cucu-Oancea (2012) offers an exploration of the use of personal documents for the social sciences. Amongst a thorough examination of the past, current, and potential uses of diaries and other personal documents in research, Cucu-Oancea offers that personal documents are particularly useful for methods that are "focused on the person and self expression..." (2012, Pg. 21). Alaszewski (2006) offers guidance on getting started with diary research. The present work fits within what Alaszewski refers to as a naturalistic technique, in that it shares the similarity of not having a hypothesis to test, but rather a puzzle to engage with (2006, Pg. 50-51). The goal is to gain insight into a social

process through an individual experience, in this case it is about offering my experiences of queer shame and body shame around trekking as a window into the processes of those shames.

As this thesis is aimed at using my own experience to deconstruct body shame and queer shame, and its application to various social experiences and process (such as queer shame, body shame, and becoming-queer) my own personal documents seem to be the most relevant. I suspect that this will offer a more experience-near (Bondi & Fewell, 2016) image, and feel that this is more respectful of nineteen-year-old Ryan. I want to have a chat with him. Given that so much is not recorded, I am curious about why, what this might suggest, and the best way to capture that missing information. Writing back to nineteen-year-old Ryan offers an additional perspective. Through this, I can also wonder with him about what is not written - both to add the affective details and to offer my reflective process to the reader in order to contextualize body shame and queer shame in this trekking context.

This could be viewed as similar to, though not the same as, what Ken Gale calls Vignetting, which:

“attempts to offer, through engagements with the perpetuities of emergence, a sense of the processual heterogeneities and contingencies that are always present in fleeting moments of transmutation and flux...It is temporary, its capture is momentary, its force is in an instant; connections and associations...through which the everyday is brought to life, shared, connected with, passed on and given further life and vitality through multiple and metonymic intra-connections” (Gale, 2018, Pg.93-94).

I share with Gale this drive to capture the everyday brought to life, and to offer this to the reader in a way that invites engagement and a brief glimpse into my experiences on the trek, and my memories of those experiences. So, while these diary interludes will not be vignettes proper, they draw on those same goals for capturing fleeting moments in flux in order to engage the reader affectively.

These diary interludes will appear in between each chapter of the thesis. I have attempted to position them in such a way that they are relevant to one or both neighbouring chapters. I hope that they will offer a vivid and intimate experience of the contents of each chapter that returns to the empathic and affective understanding of body shame and queer shame discussed in the introductory chapters. The structure of each diary interlude will always be presented in the same three sections in order to step myself as the researcher and the readers through a dialogically created set of impressions and perspectives on the experience I was having. Then, from this, a sense of the queer shame and body shame that was experienced, and its relational and interconnected nature, can be glimpsed. 1) They will begin with a section **in bold** and in quotations. These are direct excerpts from my diary kept while trekking in 2009, and they begin with the day of the trek about which they are written - this is the same way I labelled them in the original diary. 2) Then, *in italics* I will write a response to nineteen-year-old Ryan from my current perspective, in an attempt to relate to and offer understanding to him as well as to re-introduce some of my affect-laden memories that are missing or only hinted at in the original entries. 3) Lastly, there will be a section that offers some framing and reflection on the on-going process and its relevance to the thesis for the reader.

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Diary Interlude: Day 17

“Day 17

Today was long and tiring, but I got where I had to be. There was about 3,500 ft of elevation gain in all, in two parts. But with trying to catch up, I’ll need to keep this fast pace going. Tomorrow is no better - 3 miles, 3,000 ft up at one point! But going over 15 miles a day isn’t supposed to be easy. I do wish I had some company though, it gives a lot more to the fun. Being alone makes doing the trail a lot harder!”

Dear Nineteen-year-old Ryan - This was one of many long and arduous days, huh? It seemed to drag into a time that doesn’t exist. A time that consisted only of muscle strain, carefully paced breathing, where the highlight was stopping for sweeping views and snacks. But even those felt a bit...empty? I hope I’m not putting words in your mouth with that, but it is true to my memory of that experience. Nothing to distract from the breath - in...out...in...out...step right, step left, right, left...on and on and on into infinity. It felt empty without anyone to share those experiences with - the relief of taking off the backpack, rubbing the shoulders and feeling the sun on my back. The day stretched before me and I ached to have someone to share the pain and joy with, to exclaim as I looked out at wooded valleys and majestic bald mountains. No look of concern when I stumbled, no one to echo my comment of the endless uphill segments. Almost nothing to report, because I did so much, walked far over hard terrain...but nothing happened. I yearned to have company again, and looked forward to some simple comforts soon, as I was due for a break from the trail in Buena Vista with my family for the 4th of July. Breakfast of anything but oatmeal, oh sweet anything-but-oatmeal. And someone to talk with.

I don’t think I can write anything to myself that captures that dulled, exhausted, and emptied feeling of just wanting to talk with someone. How when you face challenges alone there are no shared complaints and no shared congratulations. Just more hills and miles to go, and

another day of the same to come. But this test and demand of myself to finish the challenge also satisfied the need to feel independent, accomplished, and enough of a man. The lie - 'I did it alone and it was no big deal, it wasn't so hard.'

Writing a Visceral Failure: Overcoding (Toxic) Masculinities and Some Decoding Forces

This chapter focuses on an event that occurred during a more recent trek, taken in 2018. Manning (2016) discusses research that focuses on 'event' as a moment of knowledge creation. Something happens, and that happening, that event, rather than pieces of data, is the interest of research. I offer an event of decoding from my reflections made following the trek: ***'I am not doing this kind of trek alone again. I am not camping on backpacking trips alone again, and maybe not camping in the boggy highlands again at all.'***

In what follows, I will focus on different challenges to what I refer to as overcoding (and will define shortly), and the different forces that I propose are decoding forces. These decoding forces include: Writing-as-Inquiry, the visceral experience of trekking, and failure. Learning from post-structural ways of thinking, I realized that I could not move forward in this work and in this world without also interacting with what is around me - seeking out other living and non-living companions that have inspired me as I walk and as I write. In this chapter, I will engage with the mud, the other walkers, the various theorists and authors cited above and below.

In April of 2018, I undertook a short trek of 6 days in the Scottish Highlands. This was at first along the West Highland Way, a well-established trail weaving through towns, and off trail crossing a pass to a small valley where I had rented a cabin. When I planned this trek, I had conceptualised it as a holiday and an escape. I wanted to experience trekking as I had not been on a significant trek for several years (not since 2012), to rekindle the ideal of trekking that I had. This was not intended to become research material; however, it became a very formative experience in my research. I did not take extensive notes of any kind during this short trek, as I had not planned to and was not equipped to. I did take a few brief notes made on my phone. I will draw on those writings about my walking experience (Springgay & Truman, 2017) as both material for analysis, and as the analysis itself as I make sense of my experiences on the trail, and as my ongoing process of learning about queer shame and

body shame. You will see the *italicized portions* below to mark the writing generated during the trek.

Exploring the notes I made during the trek and the reflections afterwards, and in fact in my practices of both walking and writing, I began to work with the concept of 'overcoding' from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and the potential of 'decoding' what has been overcoded. Overcoding is a process of "centering, unification, totalization, integration, hierarchization, and finalization" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, Pg.47). Overcoding, is the process by which mainstream society - in this case, particularly expectations regarding gender and bodies - becomes dominant even within an individual's understanding of themselves and the world. It is as if those expectations are adopted by individuals (such as me) as their own identity and their own desires. Often, I will use 'overcoding' when 'overcoded' would make conventional grammatical sense. This is intentional, and I use the '-ing' to signify the always in process and always occurring, always happening nature of overcoding. I will use '-ed,' however, to refer to the subject that is produced by this process. The reverse of overcoding is decoding, which is the process of peeling back those overcoding expectations and setting free the parts of an individual that have been hidden and covered over for the crime of not fitting in. Decoding offers a way of taking off what has been constructed before, which is in line with this thesis's goal of deconstructing the social production of queer shame and body shame. However, decoding is different in that it is more about a peeling back from rather than a taking apart. In this chapter, each approach to decoding is marked by the same 'event' that was my realisation that I was not enjoying this way of trekking and of trekking alone. "An event in writing" will explore the use of writing-as-inquiry as a decoding force, "A visceral event" will explore the use of the visceral and embodied experience of walking as a decoding force, and "A failed event" will explore the constructive use of failure as a decoding force.

An event in writing:

'I am not doing this kind of trek alone again. I am not camping on backpacking trips alone again, and maybe not camping in the boggy highlands again at all.'

Reflecting back on a moment somewhere on the side of a boggy hill not far from Loch Lomond, a hill on which I felt very lonely and as if all this walking effort was meaningless, I wrote: *'I know that I experienced similar moments of emptiness and meaninglessness when walking the Colorado Trail in 2009. As I have begun to tear off the romanticizing narrative that I over-coded my memories and experiences with, I think I began to sub-consciously dread recreating that feeling.'* This writing-as-inquiry and writing about walking challenges the overcoded self that I am breaking down. The self that aspires to a vision of the masculine, self-reliant, gender and sexuality normative trekker and conqueror of the 'natural' world. He walks without falter, needs no companion, and has the perfect figure of a lean and muscular young man, though he is age ambiguous.

Phiona Stanley writes about her experience of hiking alone as a fat woman, and she contrasts the expectations of men and women in the outdoors. She encapsulates this concept of an idealised hiking man succinctly as: "A man-versus-wild-type taming of and survival in/against the forest, and a conscious swallowing of fear in order to behave agentically in pursuit of one's own chosen path" (Stanley, In Press, Pg. 6). An ideal that is performed and enacted, but this overcoding of my authentic selves silences much more than it speaks. "Overcoding is the operation that constitutes the essence of the state, and... the dread of desires that would resist coding" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984, Pg. 230). 'State' here is taken to mean the accepted and approved ways of being that (are supposed to) lead to neat and tidy production, reproduction, and compliance. Overcoding produces transcendent objects (for example, the 'ideal masculine figure') that become supreme, which leads to a feeling of the "dirty little secret" (Pg. 310) when something else is desired by an individual.

The ultimate structure of the state (which points not only to a nation-state, but might also include state-science, state-religion, the state's military, and so on) which queers know all too well produces

“all the cynical tactics of bad conscience...the hypnosis and the reign of images, the torpor they spread; the hatred of life and of all that is free, of all that passes and flows; the universal effusion of the death instinct; depression and guilt used as a means of contagion, the kiss of the vampire: Aren't you ashamed to be happy?” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984, Pg. 308)

All of this represses and restricts any decoding of the selves; it attempts to appropriate any desires and energies in the direction of state-production. To decode this, failure might be needed - I will return to failure later. Donna Haraway (1992) uses the term coding to discuss overdetermined gender, focusing on the “patriarchal nuclear culture [which] all too easily makes women responsible for...commercialism and multi-levelled reinforcement of compulsory heterosexual reproduction” (Pg. 317). While Haraway does not use the term ‘overcoding’ in this description, what she has described as the multi-levelled reinforcement of patriarchy is like what I have described as overcoding. For Haraway, an awareness of heteronormative requirements is always present for those “who cannot adopt the mask of ‘self’ or ‘other’ offered by previously dominant, modern western narratives of identity and politics” (Haraway, 1992, Pg. 299). Unfortunately, this awareness might be tucked away and instead become a source of shame, a rumination of the ‘dirty little secret’ that one can never fulfil the prescribed role. The process of decoding appears to happen gradually to me. I look back and ask: where is my queer self? My questioning and doubting self? Where are the parts that need love, attention, support, and reassurance? How does decoding begin?

Writing-as-inquiry can be used to decode what has been overcoded. Richardson explains that, through a focus on the unfinished and ongoing process of becoming, of the uncertain and unplanned writing, “we have a good chance of deconstructing the underlying academic ideology - that *being* a something is better than *becoming*” (Richardson 2008, 483). Deconstructing places the emphasis on taking apart, on tearing down. This is not the same thing as decoding, which is about setting free the overcoded parts of something. The purpose is to set free rather than to take apart. Others would agree that writing-as-inquiry does much more than deconstruct; it is also a generative and constructive process (Speedy,

2013; Wyatt, 2019). However, in the process of setting free, it may be necessary at times to take apart what existed prior. While Richardson (2000) is writing about academia, this view is not dissimilar from other areas of life where we are expected to be something fixed, certain, and within the prescribed boundaries. Be a husband, be a wife, be a banker, be a doctor, be a soldier - the examples are infinite. Moreover, this is particularly challenging for those of us that locate ourselves outside of heteronormativity - who may not feel comfortable *being* within gender roles and expectations. Those of us who are uncomfortable following the state rules about who to love, who to make love to, and who to build a life of our choosing with. And so, this chance of deconstructing, and possibly decoding through writing-as-inquiry holds true outside of academia as well, as a way to engage with the self and our understanding of our (multiple) selves. If we can engage with and set free these other selves of ours, we might be able to live a life more fully in line with our selves rather than the overcoding expectations of us.

I titled a previous version of this chapter 'What Was I Thinking?' because I had made the assumption that I could keep part of my experience out of my research. That I could even go on a trek whilst researching and writing about trekking and it would not have an impact on my research. I have since called this 'foolish.' I have since come to understand, similarly to St. Pierre, that "we are always already entangled in inquiry, there is no beginning" (St. Pierre in Bridges-Rhoads & Van Cleave, 2017, Pg. 298). I think there were many things I was trying to explore for myself on this trek in April of 2018 including two questions in particular: whether I could tolerate, emotionally, the experience of trekking once again; and whether I was still 'tough enough' to be able to push through this challenge. Upon writing this reflection, I can see that there is little difference between these two things. Both come back to my push for an extreme - it didn't seem enough to go hill walking and enjoy it. I needed to plan a six day trek that made use of the West Highland Way and went off any mapped trails, completely unsupported and alone, and then maybe I would have proven my worth and identity as a 'trekker.' Leading up to the planning of this trek, I started to experience a sort of dread and to have fantasies of a monstrous presence waiting for me on the trail. I have

called this monster 'The Cannibal' and discuss this in detail in the chapter by the same name. The extremes of not trekking or trekking with intensity set up a binary thought process that was self-consuming. All or nothing - the cannibal that will consume me whole or the silent and dissociated sloth. This is a powerful dualism that depends on the assumption that there are "distinct, mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive substances...each of which inhabits its own self-contained space" (Grosz, 1994, Pg. 6). Grosz is focusing on bringing the corporeal body into feminism, her problematising of binary oppositions can be used to understand the fixed identity with limited options that I was experiencing. "The individual is both the site and subject of these discursive struggles for identity and for remaking memory...one's subjectivity is shifting and contradictory - not stable, fixed, and rigid" (Richardson, 2008, Pg. 477). It is an overcoding of identity that enforces a fixed and rigid individuality and does not allow shifts and cannot tolerate contradictions. Fundamental to decoding this was dispelling the options for trekking that only allowed the extremes, options that were binary and left my own self binarized, too.

A reflection about a phone-note made during the 2018 trek:

'I wrote down at one point that this experience was "misery interspersed with occasional moments of 'worth it.'" My feet were wet for 4 days straight. I slept in boggy areas in a tiny tent 3 nights in a row. My feet were blistered and torn up, and I was frequently cold. I was walking alone and feeling alone. Camping out on the edge of towns was not a good feeling - knowing a hotel with meals and a hot shower and soft dry bed was 5-10 minutes away was not pleasant. I wanted to be there so badly! But there I was on the edge of town. Alone and cold.'

Did I forget about this since last time I trekked? Surely, there were such periods of misery in previous treks? Of course, there were, looking back at my 2009 diary and connecting with my honest reflections about the experience. This trek in 2018 helped me to remember them more clearly. But the story, the narrative that I told others and myself was that it was amazing. Which, in many ways, it was! While I have made and continue to try to understand more about myself in that context, and to take from that what we might

understand about body shame and queer shame, that cannot erase the good times. There were breath-taking views and moments of connection with new and familiar people, personal goals achieved and so much more. It is interesting to consider, still, the nature of the narrative I formed around this experience. The narrative was constructed to fit an ideal - the ideal of an independent, masculine nature conqueror who feared nothing. Who is always prepared and who is never scared, cold, and lonely. This narrative I told for my family and for my friends, in order to attain a sense of standing and uniqueness within heteronormative society. This was the story I told about the trek while planning it, when checking in with people during the trek, and when catching up with people after 'successfully' conquering the trek. It was also a narrative I told for myself - a point of pride that could reassure me that my body was enough, that I wasn't 'that kind of queer' who was flamboyant and feminine, soft and needy. The narrative of my 2009 trek overcoded my experience and my memory in order to protect me from my own queer shame and body shame - this narrative was the flight into nature's product - a narrative that protected me against societal expectations and against my own shame. Whilst not fitting into the norm of a straight and lean young man, I had this story to tell that reassured me that I could satisfy the requirements and expectations of that world. Being able to reassure myself and others of my capability in this allowed me to delay confronting my shame of my body and my sexuality. I am not the first to use this flight into nature to protect myself - William Drummond Stewart (WDS) and numerous others did the same. Seeking safety from the expectations of being an aristocrat, a landed Scottish noble, WDS fled into the Colorado Rockies. He did this to appease his father as much as to escape his father (Benemann, 2012). There is much more on this in the chapters 'Queer Kin' and 'Queering the Rockies.'

The decoding and visceral force of walking in 2018 peeled back the narrative. There was only impact, only cold, breath-taking sights, warm fires, and no one beside me.

'...I don't think I'm going to do it again. I only got through it because I knew that I was going to arrive to my cabin at the end of the 4th day. I passed over a rugged pass between two Munros that was all bog and tiny tributaries covered with patches of snow. The wind and rain

were at it that day. I took a wrong turn and back-tracked for about an hour. Nearly every single step was wet. And then I had quite a distance to slog back down to a tiny and hard to reach cabin. The wood fire was divine but would have been more divine with a friend or a lover. The nights would have been less cold. The landscapes featuring snowy Munros, towering giants, shimmering lochs, and herds of highland deer would have been better appreciated with someone at my side. Someone to commiserate with about the damp feet and cold nights, the sore legs and chaffed arses.'

A visceral event:

'I am not doing this kind of trek alone again. I am not camping on backpacking trips alone again, and maybe not camping in the boggy highlands again at all.'

I will hike from lodge to lodge instead, staying in hotels, hostels, bothies, whatever I can find - but not being wet, cold, and alone for days on end.'

'I began the mini-trek with excitement and interest after quickly preparing and setting forth. I was thinking of it as a relaxing holiday, but, as I have already said, it was not relaxing in the slightest. I like the physical challenge when approaching a trek and I don't mind pushing through it. Much of the reward is sitting down at the end of the day with a person or group that has experienced the same thing and feeling a group empathy that is shared sore feet and muscles, witnessing each other's inspection and categorization of cuts, bruises, and sore spots from who-knows where.'

There is a visceral rawness that peels back all the thinking I have done about why I walk, where I have walked, and with whom. All that is left is this: the impact on the soles of my feet, the strain in my muscles, the pressure on my shoulders and collarbones, the ragged and rhythmic breathing, the awe and the misery. Simplicity. I was not trying to be or trying to perform trekker at the moment of my event-data realisation. Following this, I would like better to become-trekker, which carries less of the presumption and self-enforced idea of what it

means to *be* a trekker; my practise of trekking and of becoming-trekker is iterative, growing, developing, changing, and maybe even at times well outside of what I once thought it should mean to be a trekker. It is the moments when I take a wrong turn and make a mistake. In those moments that I fear I am not being a trekker. The mistakes, the missteps, and the need for others challenges the frontier myth that suggests the vast outdoors, in particular the American West is “the last bastion of rugged individualism” (Cronon, 1995). This overcoding identity of the rugged individual must be challenged. For in truth, the desire for company, the tripping, and back tracking is an engagement of becoming-trekker, a pure moment of intense intra-action with the landscape, a cartography.

This moment, or rather this phrase that represents a slow and painful process of learning from my body, with my body (The Bodies Collective, 2019), is a shift. It is the moment when I recognized that a stagnant and stable part of myself needed to shift, that an overcoded part of myself had to be decoded and its composite parts set free. Thus, suggesting that, in fact, the decoding, the change, was already done or in progress. This makes my motivation to take a short trek in 2018 curious - did I on some level know that I needed to initiate or engage with this process of decoding?

‘This is possibly why I decided to take a short trek, before my research trek, that was supposedly ‘non-academic.’ As if I could divide my experiences into academic and non-academic at a whim. That is contrary to my very way of researching. However, I do think that my experience ultimately contributed greatly to my understanding of my previous experience and how I want to approach trekking in the future.’

When I was able to see and hear the all-consuming demands I make on myself, which silence the other voices that want a break, that want company, that are not having fun, then I was able to hear all the needs that they mask. There is a punishment of myself, a beating-into-submission of my own body - a body that I have been taught to hate and try constantly to fit into societal expectations of a male body. Being enough and being too much, in perfect unison - forcing myself to be masculine and perform trekking well enough, to be enough, which drives my body to shed fat and take up less space, addressing the message

of body shame that I am too much. Decoding must necessarily involve setting free the parts of myself that took readily to the overcoding, that desired it in a way - the parts of me that did strive for powerful and totalizing experiences that were constructing my sense of masculinity and trying desperately to meet body expectations. They, too, have something to contribute.

'That being said, I still learned from walking. Well, I suppose I learned everything that I just wrote about and that is significant embodied learning. I have a specific poignant moment that has stuck with me. I was walking along a trail and had learned that the puddles of water were less of a risk than the thick mud - the puddle meant solid ground underneath. I came across two people - I think perhaps a father and daughter. One was helping the other to walk up high and around a puddle, along a route that was landing her leaning on him while sinking into thick mud. I breezed quickly past through the puddle that was only 1-2 inches of water and left no mud on my boots. I thought about how much this reminded me of how people are in relationships and conflict. People will go a long and hard way around a perceived conflict, which ultimately lands them in more difficulties than just going right through the issue and communicating.'

This is a reminder of what Springgay and Truman (2017) suggest for research practice. Practices of walking through nature, paying attention to our sensory and sensual experience and our relationships with the objects and creatures that are part of our mutual experiencing. In fact, as outlined in the excerpt above, I learned from mud on my 2018 trek. A non-living part of my experience was encountered and impacted my vision, my sensation, my thinking and feeling - the mud taught me something. The visceral experience of that moment offered a depth of knowing that was gradually emerging about relating to others and the challenge of it.

'Walking is learning in so many ways, but especially so relationally. The pattern of two or more walkers as they approach terrain together and help and support one another. The ways in which intense situations bring about relationship changes and development in each person. Even in this example of the muddy puddle, I would not have made this meaningful connection between personal experience in a different way that somehow helped

me to understand my struggle more if not for the people I encountered and witnessed. So, even when I was alone, I was learning from other people and the interaction between a triad of two walkers and their environment.'

The more than human world around us offers a complexity and depth that, when we are alert and aware, can help us in our decoding. A relational experience of the landscape and non-human others within it (Willis, 2013) might allow us to view situations from a new perspective - a perspective that is out with the overcoding that we are immersed in.

'Part of my struggle on this hike was the difficulty in finding a rhythm because of the terrain and my general discomfort - the moments I had fun were the moments with breathtaking views, but also the moments where I had developed a rhythm and could carry on through the territory with some certainty. There is significance in slipping and sliding as we find our way, splashing in the mud and sinking into a bog.'

Mud and other non-human elements contributing to my knowledge by intra-acting in simple and tactile ways might be thought of as resisting usual academic knowledge production expectations. "Texture implies a tactility that...can engender specifically everyday or non-contemplative forms of environmental knowledge" (Vergunst, 2008, Pg. 114). I experienced my environment, the mud, the bogs, the steep inclines, and was in communication with it through its texture - which, as told, was an integral part of my inquiry process. "The rhythm of walking took its lead and its tempo from the environment of which it was part" (Pg. 116). The pattern and becoming-trekker while negotiating those surfaces caused a unique effect, a collaborative working with the more-than-human-world that does not conform to hierarchies or social expectations - we all slip in the mud.

A failed event:

'I am not doing this kind of trek alone again. I am not camping on backpacking trips alone again, and maybe not camping in the boggy highlands again at all.'

In this section I will attempt to bring Halberstam's (2011) discussion of 'The Queer Art of Failure' and introduce this through Haraway's (1992) concept of 'diffraction.' I offer that another way of looking at decoding, a diffraction thereof, might be via 'unbecoming' and 'failure' (Halberstam, 2011). Halberstam uses animated films and series as an avenue to explore ways in which these platforms can demonstrate queer ways to defy dominant culture and expectations. For this discussion, this offers a context of queer resistance of dominant (or overcoding) cultural expectations, and an interrogation of those expectations. Halberstam views the queer art of failure as the unique ability of queer folks to produce something unexpected and subversive by declining to succeed in attaining the pre-determined heteronormative goals. Failure and diffraction fit together well - diffraction produces "something other than the sacred image of the same, something inappropriate, unfitting, and so, maybe, inappropriated" (Haraway, 1992, Pg. 300). Diffraction is failing/decoding. To be inappropriated would be to be decoded, not bound by the state. Failure is not different from or alternative to decoding, it is one way of decoding. Being inappropriated might be being decoded, as not being appropriated by, or overcoded by, the state. Whilst it may have seemed harsh at first to conceptualise this short trek as a failure, failure, whilst challenging, is not without benefits. "Failure allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior and manage human development with the goal of delivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods" (Halberstam, 2011, Pg. 3). Essentially, failure (as opposed to try, try, try again) might be viewed as a way out of the masculine expectations that were crushing me during my 2009 trek - and which I was returning to confront in this short 2018 trek.

As means of clarification, I will specify that there are many instances in which trying repeatedly might be seen as a learning process. Whilst this may be growthful in some cases, in other cases I would challenge that it is better to let go of the idealised 'product' being pursued. It might be healthier to view failing as choosing to engage with a process different to that of trying repeatedly to fit overcoding gender expectations that told me to be independent, lean, and dominate nature without complaint. Failure could instead be an

engagement with a process of discovering what is right and true for myself, even if the overcoding expectations might term my choice as a 'failure.'

The thing at which I failed was not the April 2018 trek. In fact, it was in many ways a success - I found my way (after being lost briefly) and avoided death due to the elements, I made it to my booked cabin on the anticipated day and recovered well enough to make it back home to Edinburgh via the train from Crianlarich. The food I brought was adequate. My equipment worked fine, and I was well aware of how to use it. What I might suggest I failed to do was be the fantasy master trekker. "We might read failure...as a refusal of mastery, a critique of the intuitive connections within capitalism between success and profit" (Halberstam, 2011, Pg. 12) In this, Halberstam focuses on a critique of capitalism - whilst capitalism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity are undoubtedly linked in current dominant culture, capitalism is not my focus here. But success and profit - perhaps success and production, are what I will now refuse. By choosing failure, I refuse to ignore my own wellbeing, desire, and ever shifting identity in a never-ending pursuit of producing myself as the fantasy trekker. An un-becoming that might free me up for other becomings, such as the becoming-queer that I discuss in the chapter 'I Sing the Body Queer'.

The narrative of constant improvement and success, of attaining the prescribed goals, produces (codes) history before it occurs, and covers over history (overcodes) after the fact. To be clear, the codes that I am referring to are those that prescribe a heteronormative, reproductive, and gender normative (masculine, in my case) life. More space is needed for refusal of these heteronormative and oppressive histories, "radical histories must contend with a less tidy past," (Halberstam, 2011, Pg. 98-99) a past which acknowledges the oppression that has occurred and continues to occur, without dismissing it or fleeing from the past events. This engagement is done in variety of ways in the present work with both my own history and other queer his/herstories. We need a move towards a history "that passes on legacies of failure and loneliness as the consequences of homophobia and racism and xenophobia" (Halberstam, 2011, Pg. 98-99).

These consequences are the lasting impact that results from these codings and overcodings, which do not tolerate any alternatives to heteronormativity. These consequences are the personal impact of the overcodings “that condition and organize” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984, Pg. 165) such histories. These impacts - both in what is expected and what will not be tolerated in the dominant regime, linger and come into the assemblage that produces queer shame and body shame. In my case, my inability to produce the ideal male body and fulfil social expectations of a heteronormative life, my inability to even desire such a life whilst expected to, led to production of queer shame. Despite this shame, in my adolescence I was still lusting after men and still chubby in a now internalised world that hated me for it. Failure can be liberating when the rules that you are failing were set against you all the while. “While failure certainly comes accompanied by a host of negative affects, such as disappointment, disillusionment, and despair, it also provides the opportunity to use these negative affects to poke holes in the toxic positivity of contemporary life” (Halberstam, 2011, Pg. 3). Failure at attaining and realising this idealistic goal, the goal of becoming the extremely fit and masculine fantasy trekker, has been a process of decoding myself and gaining more freedom through taking a critical view towards the heteronormativity placed upon me. Further, it has allowed me to listen to myself, and hear the pleas of my silenced, overcoded, inner voices asking for a change in the way I trek and the way I view myself.

Above, I have tried to make sense of my experiences of a short 2018 trek in the Scottish Highlands. I have described the state force of overcoding that produces gender and body normative expectations that have impacted me individually. Through exploring a data-event in which I decided to cease trekking in the way I had previously felt I had to, I have proposed some decoding forces. These include writing-as-inquiry, the visceral experience of trekking, and the queer art of failure. I offer each of these as a possible avenue through which to decode and set free repressed parts of myself that seek to be heard - parts that seek something different than what is expected of them. Parts that need tenderness, support, and companionship. Decoding, and perhaps becoming-trekker in a decoded manner, are ongoing processes with which I am still engaged. Hopefully, this process can

lead to different experiences of trekking in the future. I offer a final reflection from my April 2018 trek that captures the experience of being vulnerable and realising that that trek had not been what it could have been.

'Another part of me that didn't ask anyone to come along on this trek is a controlling part of me that exists for many reasons, primarily of promoting my safety. I feel de-skilled and vulnerable when planning and trekking with others, which is a feeling that I naturally avoid. I don't want to allow the experience to be co-created and change from what I had on my mind - but the original idea becomes a mandate that can turn into poison knowingly drunk. This doesn't work in many ways. One in particular comes from my experience when arriving at my cabin - I didn't have cell service but needed a ferry ride across the loch from my hostess. I had to walk back a good 10 minutes across a muddy field in the rain to make a call from the nearby hotel and did so. When on the ferry ride, she asked why I had come up on the wrong side of the loch, didn't I have a map, etc. Of course, I knew that I had done my best and she was satisfied with my answers as there were good explanations for everything. And yet, I felt like a failure and a chastised child. I think that in company that I had made the decisions with, I would have felt less like an island unto myself. I could have had allies and people who had my back along the way and when speaking to her. This same dynamic is true of many other moments on the trek, including having to backtrack and take a different pass when I was coming over to the cabin.' I could have had help and care.

Instead, I was...alone with my shame?

Lonely.

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Diary Interlude: Day 2

“Day 2

Today started out great. From my campsite I quickly descended to the Platte, where I did laundry and got a much-needed supply of water (including the spare bottle). This proved to be a little short when I had ascended and arrived at the Burn. It was hot, shadeless, and god forsaken. There was much uphill in the Burn too, which was comprised of many steep hills. It was a cloudy day (except of course when I was crossing the burn), but it brought only a little rain after I'd made camp for dinner, I had Pad Thai, which was incredible! It was very delicious but took a little longer than expected to soften the noodles. I have a small blister on the outside of my right toe, and on the left of my right heel. I'm sure with proper care they will recover shortly. I had troubles falling asleep last night, and read till about 1, making me realise what an awesome book Wicked is! I've decided to start sleeping later tonight, to avoid similar issues. On the trail I met two bikers I greeted as I set up camp Monday and wished them a safe trip back. (Waterton-Buffalo Creek-Waterton). I also met a man who'd hiked the trail in segments over 7 years (an older man) who was on a trail crew. The crew was rerouting a trail to avoid some nasty ups and downs in the Burn. Unfortunately, it was not yet ready. I am more confident today than before. Will do half push ups and crunches.”

Dear Nineteen-year-old Ryan- So much of this is day to day chatter. In fact, what really jumps out to me about what you wrote is the last sentence. I recall that I had a workout regimen that I had intended to do daily. On day 1 I skipped it, for a reason I cannot recall. It is painful for me to look back and see how much you struggled with the shape of your body, and how little insight you had into what was reasonable and unreasonable expectations and treatments of your body. Certainly, it seems looking back, it should have been enough for

you to walk many miles every day with a heavy pack? Not only that, but here you are feeling guilty about needing to ease into doing a workout after your day long workout! I know the shame you feel when you don't get around to doing the various body-weight exercises and bits of yoga you had prescribed yourself. But just try to remember what your body can do! All the work you have done all day every day. Your body is wonderful and powerful. It has taken you over mountain ranges, forded rivers, held and been held. You can't know this now, but your body will survive and be there with you for more years of your dissatisfaction with it. Through trying to shape your body, you will prove even more that it can do, and prove even more that it is good simply because it is.

I can feel now, just after responding to my younger self, the burning desire to swoop in and comfort him. I really want to let him know that it's ok. That it is ok to accomplish what you can and stop there. You don't have to add extra on that you cannot finish, that which only becomes guilt and shame production.

I Sing the Body Queer

“...The wrestle of wrestlers, two apprentice-boys, quite grown, lusty,
good-natured, native-born, out on the vacant lot at sundown,
after work,
The coats and caps thrown down, the embrace of love and resistance,
The upper-hold and the under-hold, the hair rumpled over and blinding
the eyes...”

From “I Sing the Body Electric” by Walt Whitman, 1855

Walt Whitman’s Poem “I Sing the Body Electric” (1855) celebrates bodies - both masculine and feminine aspects of bodies, seeming to celebrate, and in fact lust after, both forms. I will mention as an aside that I try to avoid such binaries as masculine and feminine, male and female, etc - my focus here is the queer- and homo-erotics, not the gendering. His descriptions of bodies at work, bodies at rest, and bodies at play with one another still thrill over 150 years later. I have chosen to include this short excerpt of that poem as an epigraph because it captures and hides men lusting for other men. This could describe a bonding ritual of wrestling between two apprentice co-workers, and it could just as easily describe a moment of sensual and/or sexual passion in a vacant lot. Passion and love, physically expressed, hiding in plain sight. I want to use this to engage with what it was like for nineteen-year-old me to have a desiring/un(desired) body in a world still very much filled with queer shame. Where masculine bodies and queer shame overlap, Whitman manages to capture exactly the seemingly impossible desire I had - a site of great agony for me. A desire to hide my body in masculine performance, but also to find the erotic excitement.

This facet will focus on my experience of body shame and queer shame during my 2009 trek, but of course in relation to queer others/times. In the summer of 2009, I was nineteen years old. I was just beginning to explore for myself who I was, and what it meant for me to be an adult in this world. Though only a few close friends knew it, I was at that time grappling with ideas of my identity and my place in the world - especially where (if) I would fit into this world as a gay man. Where did that leave me with my family? Would I be accepted by friends and colleagues? Would I be able to find a meaningful relationship with an intimate

partner? These questions appear to be generated from a source of queer shame and body shame, with the idea that I wouldn't be accepted as a presumed possibility. As such, my experience of trekking in 2009 is a potent window into understanding queer shame and body shame.

There were a multitude of reasons that I decided to undertake the Colorado Trail in 2009, many of which will come into this work. There is one such motivation that I have often felt ashamed of. It is difficult for me to admit that one of the greatest reasons for undertaking this trek was my desire to lose weight. I obscured (even from myself) the importance of that motivation before, during, and after the trek with many other motivations. This is an example of the doubled shame I have discussed in the literature review, a feeling of being ashamed that one has shame. I walked with these (in)tensions (Springgay & Truman, 2017) of queer shame and body shame. I left for my trek in the summer with all these questions swirling in my mind, and with a great desire to separate myself from my family and from the expectations that were on me. Expectations like becoming a typical family guy, presenting a masculine identity, being a career driven university student, and losing weight. I remember thinking that it might be good to be on my own in order to think about some of those things. I gave a very half-hearted effort into finding someone who would want to do the full trek with me and finding no one amongst the maybe two people I asked, I decided to embark alone, and have others join me here and there, where they could. I think I wanted to be alone for the trek more than I realized at the time. I wanted it to be my thing, and I wanted to have space and (social) safety to think and grow in my self-understanding. Many parts of me needed to emerge and couldn't do so in assemblage with the same groupings and socializations that were my day to day life. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), an assemblage is the unique event that is at the meeting of all things that create it. An assemblage changes if anything is added or taken away from it - the composite components are exactly what creates its uniqueness. This is one explanation of why, when in connection with things like: my childhood home, my parents, old friendships, my mindset towards my own sexuality and towards sexuality in general, I was not able to shift my feelings about my sexuality or about

my body. For the assemblage resultant from all these co-occurrences to change, things needed to be added or removed.

I left those familiar assemblages behind me, dipping in and out of them as I passed through towns and was joined and left by others. When I returned, I did not fully return to any previous assemblage. You cannot add, change, or remove from a multiplicity without “their elements changing in nature” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, Pg. 35). I became the changed element. Other parts of course changed too, in my absence. It was impossible to return to the same assemblage. I felt out of place and alien. I think this was present before, as well, only it was more apparent to me after having been away for a while. I grew, during that trek, to be more comfortable with being other, with being outside, with being only an occasionally accepted person. Whereas before, as a young man and a teenager before that, I was desperate to feel like I was normal, and to be a part of society in the way that I thought others were. This differentiation allowed for me to begin, later, a journey towards a more queer influenced outlook on society and my place within it.

Mourning and Melancholia

Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands applied Freud’s theory of melancholia to the impossibility of mourning what society does not permit us to in “Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies” (2010). Mourning was considered by Freud to be the normal reaction to loss of a beloved person, concept of a person, or some other beloved thing. In this process, the world seems bleak and lifeless. Melancholia was the term Freud (2004) applied to the disrupted process whereby the lost object is internalized into the person’s psychic structure as a way to prevent the loss. However, the cost of this is that, rather than the world losing life, the person’s internal world, including their ego, becomes impoverished. Impoverished, too, in the sense that there is a fixed-ness of an ego/lost object binary that hides all other possibilities and parts from view - an impoverishment of limited parts. This carries common features of mourning such as sadness and pining for the lost object (to be simplistic), but with added

features of anger and ambivalence that can occur in mourning too. However, in the case of melancholia, the loss has been internalized and the anger and ambivalence are directed at the self. Further, Freud considers this process to occur unconsciously, keeping it firmly out of sight. Mortimer-Sandilands points out that “melancholia is not only a denial of the loss of a beloved object, but also a potentially politicized way of preserving that object in the midst of a culture that fails to recognize its significance” (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2010, Pg. 333). In so doing, she is able to position that which is lost and never allowed to exist in a society that fails to recognize the legitimacy of queer and homosexual ways of being or of such attachments, as the lost object.

This offers further insight on my own melancholy trek, and my state of sadness, of feeling out of place and alien, upon return. I developed this awareness in the backdrop of a culminating adventure for some of my best childhood memories of hiking and scouts. This was further influenced by the increasing size of my world and awareness while in my undergraduate studies, leading me to become more aware of what was lost. I did not have a queer childhood. I was not in a context that allowed, let alone encouraged, exploration with gender and sexuality. I was not in a context that allowed or encouraged me to develop romantic, sensual, or sexual relationships other than the heteronormative. “This is a preemptive loss, a mourning for unlived possibilities” (Butler, 1997, Pg. 139). The potential for seemingly common-place activities such as dating, going to school dances and proms, having relevant sexual education, or even simply being able to speak about my attractions out loud, was absent. This is the object that resists mourning and becomes stuck in a permanent melancholia. Freud refers to a “loss of a more ideal kind” (S. Freud in Mortimer Sandilands, 2010, Pg. 335), highlighting the challenge in recognizing social losses that are a type of loss we are not permitted to mourn; such grief then becomes disenfranchised and difficult to process (Doka, 1999). I had lost a queer childhood and could not mourn this as it was not permitted socially to acknowledge the existence of such a childhood, lost or realized.

A Melancholic Body

There was not only pain for my sexuality. Looking back, it is clear to me how much emotional pain I was experiencing in relation to my body. Particularly shame, an anger at myself that could be conceptualized as a result of melancholic incorporation. As anger at the ideal body was not possible, both because it did not actually exist and because it was the object of desire (both a sexual desire and a desire to possess as my own), “this anger is turned inward and becomes the substance of self-beratement” (Butler, 1997, Pg. 141). As I have written elsewhere, I grew up with the message that my body was not good enough for many years. I was uncomfortable in my own skin and was surrounded by an environment that emphasized and praised weight loss, thinness, and demonstrated a sense of shame and dissatisfaction with bodies. Constant comments from family, friends, and medical professionals about the shape and contours of my body had taken their toll on my mind. I now recognize that, while I was not thin, I was healthy and active. I was involved in the physical activities that I enjoyed such as biking, walking, hiking, and later weight-lifting. I avoided team and social sports for the most part as I did not enjoy competition - and was ashamed of my body in the presence of others. The idealised body for a young man is lean and muscular, quick and dominant - little space is left for other bodies to be celebrated. Queer and gay men are further bombarded with images, stories, and expectations of this ideal for both their own bodies and the bodies of their partners (Savin-Williams, 2016). As a result, a driving factor in much of my life up to that point was weight loss and muscle gain. I had gone through various phases of workout and diet intensity during the (approx.) six years leading up to this trek. However, I had never before undergone a program of such complete intensity with aerobic activity and diet control. On a trek you must make certain mileage every day in order to not fall behind, because to fall behind is, at the best, to have your entire plan unravel; at the worst, it means you run out of food and are at risk for exhaustion and malnourishment. Basically, it greatly behoves the trekker to stay on track with both mileage

and planned consumption. It is a complete package of fitness and diet, whether it is done for health reasons or not.

My great desire to lose weight and my discomfort with my own body shape led to taking great joy in experiencing weight loss and strength gain throughout the trek. I can still vividly remember my discomfort with the way the straps and buckles of my backpack made my body squished and bulging in what I felt were all the wrong ways. I would be walking, alone in the wilderness or with a couple of short-term companions and feeling deep shame about my body. I would be kidding myself if I said I didn't still hate the effect that backpacks, and especially large packs for trekking, have on how I feel and look. But, placing myself in this weight loss plan *did* have the effect that I sought. Weight loss was inevitable with a consistent level of food, limited by practicality, and the enormous energy demands of walking in the Rocky Mountains for weeks on end. I was over 30 pounds lighter by the end of the trek. I am proud of that weight loss to this day.

Body shame is particularly insidious in a culture that tells us that we should be both thin and muscular, but also carefree and non-restrictive with ourselves. This means that, even after losing weight, it was also shameful for me to admit that I had undertaken the trek with that as a major motivation. Further, the mental and emotional importance placed on the trek as a weight loss experience made it more difficult for me to be accepting of myself when I slowly gained the weight back. From a health standpoint, it is my understanding that it would be preferable to gain some weight back after such an experience, in order to allow my body to recover from the trek and find a new equilibrium.

It is particularly important to acknowledge the relationship between my emergent queerness and my body shame. My body shame made it more difficult for me to feel accepted for being queer and by queer folks, and my queerness only exacerbated my body shame. I learned about my sexuality from glimpses online, for the most part - and as such, I primarily only encountered the impossible body standards available there - large and muscular or very thin. I was neither of those things, and this led to a further demonization of my internal image of my body. These expectations around my body led to increased libidinal

energy and attention being shifted to certain areas - my chest, and stomach were notable areas where I carr(y)ied this. Grosz describes Freud's idea of the ego as being "a kind of bodily tracing, a cartography of the erotogenic intensity of the body, and internalized image of the degrees of the intensity of sensations in the child's body" (Grosz, 1994, Pg. 33) So, psychically, my identity "stresses certain points of intensity above all others" (Ibid, Pg. 34). This intensity was first generated by the messages I received about my body and parts of my body - my 'too big' and 'feminine' chest for example. This, combined with images of flat or muscled chests that were my only exposure to a sexuality similar to my own created a disproportionate attention on my chest that is active to this day. A personal Homunculus that represents my bodily ego and is one of the many ways in which experiences are written into our bodies. My desire to embody a different form led me to the 'mythically' created landscape for becoming-masculine.

Flight into Nature

The creation of the national parks was a part of the creation of a certain narrative; they were to be "places in which heterosexual masculinity could be performed and solidified away from the dramatic upheavals of American social and economic transformation, a restoration of the dominant social body through rigorous, health giving recreation" (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson, 2010, Pg.13). Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, in *Queer Ecologies*, describe how this was set in opposition to the increasing effeminization, becoming queer, and becoming gay that was occurring in urban America at that time. A false binary of masculine/nature and feminine/urban was being set up (not for the first time, nor for the last time) (Grosz 1994). This was the example of the ultimate male figure that I inherited from culture, media, and family. "The body and physical strength as signs and sources of physical power" found in 'nature,' in "places where new ideals of whiteness, masculinity, and virility could be explored away from the influence of emancipated women, immigrants, and

degenerate homosexuals,” (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson, 2010, Pg.14 - emphasis added).

I have frequently imagined that there is a sculpted gorgeous body hiding underneath my own, and that when I am losing weight and gaining muscle, I am chipping away at the unsightly chunk of my actual body to reveal that sculpted body underneath. That I will finally look like the models do in my underwear, that I will confidently walk around shirtless, and that my body will be an object of desire. But this set-up has left me always chipping away at my body, both mentally and physically, and never satisfied without achieving a very high ideal. Rather than allowing this imagined idealistic body to die, I have taken it into my psyche and installed it as my goal, even when I think it isn't so. So, I cannot mourn for the body that young Ryan didn't have - and the experiences of feeling carefree and shameless in my skin at pool parties, in gym locker rooms, or later on a club dance floor. This can also be viewed as a melancholic non-mourning of my body. The discrepancy between this socially constructed ideal body and my actual body has left me feeling deeply ashamed and wanting to crawl out of my own skin. No, to tear off my skin - that is my frequent phantasy. The desire to destroy my own body is further discussed in the chapter “The Cannibal.”

This ideal body became a phantasy standard against which to judge myself - that strength and a lean, muscular body was the ideal, that self-sufficiency and a lack of femininity was the way to live. And, quite plainly, not gay, homosexual, and most certainly not queer. Wanting to live out and play into this image of the ideal man is exactly what brought me to my thirty-seven-day trek across the Colorado Rockies. I wanted to solidify the skills, build the body, and not be ‘that kind of queer’ (*Brokeback Mountain*, discussed in Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, 2010, Pg. 1-6).

My body had become a site of complete war in between the acceptability of queer bodies and sexualities and this entrenched heterosexual masculine ideal. Across my skin, my body, the battle of ideals rages on. This is the essence of my body shame as well as my chosen method of wilderness immersion. I “needed an elite and remote recreational space in order to reinvent and reassure [my] masculinity against the (effeminizing, changing) ...city”

(Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson, 2010, Pg. 14). Whilst this was what drove me on my flight into nature, something different occurred through the resultant experience.

I made use of my experience differently, but still drawing on and taking advantage of the masculine nature narrative that I was enacting. It is only with processing time, a slow composting, that since then I have been able to conclude differently. The trek was a coming to terms with my sexuality. An experience when I felt less impinged upon than ever by society and family. I could begin to see myself in a kinder light. And yet, to develop in this way outside of society left me lonely. 'What was the point in being gay,' I would ask myself, 'if I don't have a boyfriend?' The loneliness and isolation were an integral part of the process. Surrounded by nature, which doesn't judge, and left completely alone with myself, I had to choose whether to accept myself or not. I could not blame anyone else for rejecting me when I was alone. The rejection was coming from my ambivalent relationship to my internalized loss - the things I wanted that were the things I was also taught to hate. "The presence of ambivalence in relation to the object makes any such de-linking of libidinal attachment impossible" (Butler, 1997, Pg. 173). I recognize now, though I'm not sure if I did during the 2009 trek, how most of the attacks on my character and appearance came from within. I was alone with myself, and I needed desperately to find out who I was alone with. This is where the idea of analytic third offers help. Melancholy is a part of the creation of the psyche - it allows the ego to develop in opposition to the internalized lost object (Butler, 1997). The details of this process are not the focus here - it is the fixity of ego and other objects within a topography of the psyche that is the issue. There is no flexibility and no ability to turn into the ego itself. For psychodynamic theorists, the analytic third begins to offer a way to gain the distance to observe the relationship between these parts.

Thirthing & Multiplicities

To further examine this, one could view my experience of taking on the expectations of society as a form of projective identification. This is a process which occurs when we are

pressured to take in another's fantasy as if it were our own (Ogden, 1979). In this case I take the source of that projection to be heteronormative society, projecting the expectations I have associated above with heterosexual masculine ideals of body and sexuality. The pressure is experienced by queer bodies and people in many ways – one example is the constant assumption of heteronormative conformation in daily life – ‘do you have a girlfriend?’ ‘It looks like you’ve lost weight!’ and the vast majority of cultural examples in film, music, and visual art. Once taken into the self as a projective identification, the individual views that projection as being an authentic part of themselves, and it is not possible at that time to see that those ideas have their origins in other people's fantasies of how we should be (Ogden, 1979). I began to develop, in the long hours of silence and toil, my analytic third (Ogden, 1994). The development of an analytic third allowed me to shift my view and see the projection for what it was – not a part of myself. “In this state, the dialectical interplay of consciousness and unconsciousness has been altered in ways that resemble a dream state...becoming self-conscious in [a] way” (Ogden, 1994, Pg. 12). Once I developed this self-consciousness, it became possible for me to eject that projection.

I was able to develop a separate part of myself to look at my life and at the society that I was living with, and see more accurately how I wanted to live, and what I would need from others. More than only this, I was able to free and experience many parts, parts that might have been able to view each other, parts that had been repressed by the heteronormative projection. The development of this analytic third is described by psychodynamic theorists and therapists as a triangular space. This space, typically created through a therapist, a client, and those the client is in a relationship with, allows a client to begin to move to different parts of this triangular space and observe how they impact others, how they are impacted by others, and that they are not omnipotent (Winnicott, 1962). The ability to move around this triangle, particularly moving into the therapist's role of observer, is what we describe as the analytic third.

I would suggest that I was in a triangular space with myself, others, and the ecology I was moving through. It became possible to “realise that [my] thoughts and feelings are

simply thoughts and feelings rather than properties of the world itself" (Leiper & Maltby, 2004, Pg. 116). An environment that is exposed to the elements offers a stable object that declines to change in response to thoughts and feelings; it will continue as it is, with cycles of rain, wind, heat, the survival and death of more-than-human counterparts - it was largely unchanged by me. While moving through that environment, rather than one that responded to my requests and feelings, I began to develop that reflective capacity. The emergence of the third was important in allowing me to notice and examine myself - including my losses, and the possibility of mourning.

Through this flexibility, and I suggest ability to introduce movement and flow into the psyche, it is possible to view many internal parts and the relationships between them. It is possible to go from a fixed and limiting view of the self (should such a thing exist) and move towards viewing a "multiplicity," a conceptualisation that sees the self as like the wolf that is formed by the pack and acknowledges that it is not a wolf on its own (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). "An 'I feel.' I feel myself becoming a wolf, one wolf among others, on the edge of the pack" (Pg. 36). Deleuze and Guattari claim that it is in between the mass subject of the crowd and the multiplicities that the unconscious exists - "the assemblage of both of these [is] the providence of the unconscious" (Pg. 40) with one conditioning the other, and the other preparing the way for it. Deleuze and Guattari's idea about making a map to "keep everything in sight at the same time" (Pg. 40) is like the idea of the analytic third's observing role. This allows the more flexible embodiment of multiplicity to occur, allowing each of the parts to be in different relationships with one another. This may thereby allow for multiple outcomes, configurations - new queer possibilities. I am everything at once - feeling shame and pride, loving and hating my body, loving and hating my sexuality. While this may not, and in fact did not, end the ambivalent and self-berating nature of melancholia, it allows for other states to also occur, it allows the hyper fixation and catastrophising to shift. It allows for the viewing of a self that feels desired and is willing to embrace that desire. My multiplicity is one of many multiplicities that makes up the assemblage - and since I have been able to allow more flexibility and movement, one multiplicity is changed and thereby the entire

assemblage is changed. The effect of this multiplicity ripples out to new possibilities, including the ambivalently opposed worlds of shame/undesired and embracing/desired (amongst so many others). So, again, while this does not lead to a complete end to the pains of melancholia, and in fact it precipitates the ongoing potential of it, it relieves some of the fixation on the internalized object.

I had an experience with a group of friends (strangers?) that I trekked with for a short while. It was after passing Silverton, I think. I met a group of about 5 who were all friends from out of state who took the summer off to complete the Colorado trail. I hiked with them all the way to the Animas River, meaning we were grouped up for about 4 days. On the one hand, it was wonderful to have company and kindness, and to experience support for my journey. The simplest things, like someone asking if I was alright after they heard my feet shuffle. Someone offering me a bit of extra sweets they had. A reason to sit and talk around a campfire (campfires are less fulfilling alone, I had learned). However, I became my silent and pensive self, afraid of being exposed and being completely seen by these other people, who were very obviously caring and kind. This is a familiar defence that I use. I was, essentially, an outsider to their group, as they were all close friends for many years. How and where did I fit in? This was a very real playing out of the questions I was asking myself internally at the time. However, as our 4 days together continued, I found that I felt closer to them and more a part of their group. When we parted ways, we shared a very warm farewell, and I have a framed picture of us together that I cherish to this day. I had found a group of people that accepted me (enough) to feel that I could be a part of something that embraced my multiplicity. This photograph is a marker of that very important experience of being accepted by them.

In my trail journal, I was factual in my account of the events: "As I was setting up my tent I met Josh and Emily, two through hikers (youngish), from Loveland. They asked if I'd care if they camped with me, I said that it would be fine. When I came back, four other hikers from Minnesota that knew Josh and Emily arrived and camped by a fire pit in the woods (and

invited me to their fire and smores). They were fun and kind, and we ended up hiking together to Molas Pass. Smores were awesome and the company was even better.”

I know there was more to this, however. Even when I read Josh’s name now, I feel libidinal energy rush through my body. I bite my lip, or I want to bite my lip (I don’t, because I’m in the library). I desired him greatly, though that energy only built and was never acted upon. I suppose it may have also been important to have a desired body along with me, and who accepted at least my company, even if I never tested the acceptance of my eroticisms. An assemblage in which our multiplicities met was imaginable.

Concluding Remarks

My use of Freud alongside Deleuze and Guattari seems to demand some justification.

Deleuze and Guattari are highly sceptical of Freud and Psychoanalysis, *Anti-Oedipus* (1984) being specifically dedicated to challenging and dismantling Psychoanalysis. I delight in their playful but sincere referral to the centralized power relations within the unconscious, and the centralized power relations of psychoanalysis as a field, as “General Freud” (1987, Pg. 18).

However, I argue that even in engaging with Freud and his Psychoanalysis to challenge it, they still make use of Psychoanalytic terminology and concepts in their own conclusions.

New understandings do not necessarily reject everything that comes before; as Wyatt points out “Deleuze and Guattari’s work is challenging of psychoanalysis, yet Guattari continued to practise as a psychoanalyst...throughout his working life” (2019, Pg. 5). I echo Judith Butler in suggesting “what I take to be some productive convergences between Freud’s thinking on ungrieved and ungrievable loss and the predicament of living in a culture which can mourn the loss of homosexual attachment only with great difficulty” (1997, Pg. 138).

The question may have once been ‘how can we ‘cure’ the dis-ease of the homosexual and make them fit in with society - make them behave’ (Weeks, 1977; Eaklor, 2008). Instead, the question becomes: how can Freud’s concept of Melancholia help in the process of becoming-queer? By the suggestion of Mark Seem, in his introduction to Deleuze

and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, I take from "Freud [what] has to do with how things and people and desires actually flow" (1984, Pg. 6) in the service of understanding and embracing that flow. Freud does not take us far enough into understanding these experiences of queer shame and body shame, and Deleuze and Guattari do not take us queer enough. Further, I do not intend to "seek, as psychoanalysis tends to, a single explanatory paradigm" (Grosz, 1994, Pg. 181) - but rather to unveil what such an ideal loss might mean for queer subjects, and what directions we might go in our becoming-queer -- to make a tracing of this process that is still always unfolding - a process in which I am still engaged.

(In)tension is present here as I attempt to describe becoming-queer in an already passed and descriptive manner, focusing on my experience of this trek and my life surrounding that trek. But there is a pull back, reminding me that I am still in the midst of these processes - I have not completely shed off the body shame and queer shame that I describe above - nor am I optimistic enough to think that is an inevitable outcome. What I describe is a snapshot of an always unfolding and sometimes repeating cycle, not a finished and 'cured' self, free from shame and guilt.

Part of what I am discovering here, and arguing for, is that a becoming-queer must take place in the life of any queer person who has been raised in a heteronormative fashion. There are many ways to access a becoming-queer, but I believe that this will immanently include a mourning for what has been lost as a result of heteronormative experiences and expectations up to that point. There is a stuckness that often arises in this mourning that perhaps leads to what Freud referred to as Melancholia. For me, the awareness of what was lost and what could never be regained began to become clear through this trek, which then launched me into a period (or cyclical return to) mourning for that loss in the gradual process of getting it 'unstuck,' a process that is not ended and may never be. Having gained some ability to observe this in-process through the analytic third, the possibility of mourning emerged - along with the possibility of passionate embraces, unashamed and desired. A multiplying of possibilities and becomings both outside and within the heterosexual norms that might be a becoming-queer.

Diary Interlude: Day 4

“Day 4

Today went well, I made my miles by 3:15, and ended up in this beautiful valley with a big stream, and it’s awesome. Last night I heard what I thought was a bear. I got out of the tent (dusk) and wandered around, hearing it in the distance. I had flash light, bear spray, walking pole, and camera. It seemed to leave, but came back 15 minutes later, so I decided to build a small fire to scare it away. It worked, but I wasn’t back in tent ‘til 10:15. Got up at 6:00am, didn’t have enough water for oatmeal, so I had a snack bar. I’d had to use my last water to put out the fire. There was tons of uphill today. 2,000ft I think, and I still did alright. My 3 blisters (I did drain one) didn’t worsen or hurt too bad during the day. So I’d call that an accomplishment. Getting bitten by mosquitoes while I write, and not being very pleased with them. Meet Jason tomorrow morning. Company, yay!”

Dear Nineteen-year-old Ryan - I recall the fear of that evening very well. Hearing a sound that was loud and alien really put you on edge. The nights alone in a dark forest were frightening enough to begin with, and the addition of a ‘monster’ lurking out there demanding action. Of course, no monster could be found after looking, and the monster seems to have been the level of anxiety more than some furry critter. If I recall correctly, it was imagining people lurking outside and in the forest that really frightened you. There is a striking contrast in your experience of places, too - you wrote this from the safe and peaceful valley where you had arranged to meet your uncle the following day. It was picturesque and charming there. The other camp held only the prospect of darkness and isolation - going to bed alone, waking up alone. Your excitement of having someone to share the experience with is palpable in this, too.

What I make of this is the fear of the unknown that haunts the edge of a campsite. Anything could be just a few feet away, masked by darkness. My spine crawls thinking about it even now. The best thing to do was to get out and face it, see what I was really dealing with. Well, I didn't find it and the unknown remained terrifying - in building a fire I not only let the nearby inhabitants of the forest know I was there, but I reduced the unknown. I created light, warmth, and safety. In short, comfort kept my imagined beast at bay in my mind. I now know that it was probably an Elk bugling rather than a bear that created the noise. In any case, it was the unknown stalker my mind that produced the panic.

The Cannibal

**“Remember that monsters have the same root as to demonstrate; monsters signify”
(Haraway, 1992, Pg. 333).**

All Monsters have a story to tell. This chapter is the story of one such monster, a monster of my own whom I call “the Cannibal.” The Cannibal began to emerge, or perhaps more appropriately was uncovered, during my research process. The Cannibal was already there, lurking for quite some time, with Its devouring hunger. In my exploration of Its story, I will draw on Freud’s conceptualization of “the Uncanny” (Freud, 1919) along with Queer Theory around so-called monsters from Stacy Holman Jones and Anne Harris (2019) and Judith Halberstam (2011; 1995).

My flat wasn’t empty. At least, it didn’t feel empty. Something just behind me, close enough to feel the breath on my neck – no, that’s crazy. I live alone, there’s nothing there. Hairs stand on edge. A shiver in my spine. It’s back again. If I look behind me, I’m certain I’ll see a familiar face with bloodshot eyes and dried blood around Its lips, curled back enough to reveal the sharper than human teeth they contain. Shaved hair that’s practical (doesn’t get in the way of a flesh-feast), a lean and lithe body that looks strong but hungry - the body of a predator. I won’t look. I refuse to indulge this fear fantasy. The feeling doesn’t go away, It rejects any logical and sane explanation that should render It nothing more than a passing, childish fantasy. It is awake, and It doesn’t plan on being sent to bed without dinner.

From my research notes:

11/3/18

An unnamed dread. It haunts me. I was talking with a friend tonight about the split off parts of myself. The part of me that is a nature lover that has been neglected for so long, a part that feels very important to me. It was my childhood, to a large extent. It was my joy and my success. I prided myself on what I was able to do, on how knowledgeable I was. This helped me to mitigate my sense of weakness and shame about having my body shape and about

going on a trek in order to change my body shape. I should accept myself for who I am already, right? So, isn't it bad and weak to want to do something so extreme to beat my body into a change? These were my questions at the time (the time of my 2009 trek).

These split parts of myself are battling now. I want to view the mind and body, the full experience, as a single unified embodied experience of here and now. None of this dualistic nonsense. But at the same time, this terror and dread overcome me. What am I so afraid of? Why do I imagine cannibal behaviour? My spine prickles as I write this, and images come to mind. A full body experience of terror that refuses to be pushed away. What does this mean?

I will explore, in turn, what it is that leads me to conceptualize this as 'Uncanny,' the uncanny nature of shame, the birth of my cannibal (monster), the queerness of monsters ((de)monstration), and the exorcism and embracing of that cannibal ((re)monstration).

Uncanny

I have termed this unnamed dread, this spine-chilling sensation of something being just behind me and waiting, with unlimited hunger, as uncanny. I have borrowed this term from Freud (and he from others - see Jentsch, 1906, who seems to have been the first to employ the term) to capture a sensation of something not quite right, something that is hauntingly unfamiliar in a familiar way. I will reference the original German etymology of uncanny, following from Freud. If you are interested in a very thorough exploration of this, see Freud's original paper on the subject (Freud, 1919). The original title of Freud's "The Uncanny" is "Das Unheimliche." Heimliche is taken to mean 'at home' or 'familiar,' with unheimliche following on as 'unfamiliar.' Through exploration of the terms, Freud explains that unheimliche can be understood also as that which is familiar and unfamiliar at the same time, in a haunting fashion. This is precisely the path he follows to determine repressed parts of the self re-emerging as being a source of uncanniness. Freud posits that "this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression"

(Freud, 1919, Pg. 240). This describes the possible origins of my mysterious Cannibal. The Cannibal is something in me that is long established and familiar, something that I have repressed in an attempt to avoid what is unbearable.

What makes the repressed unbearable is that it sets me at war with myself. For Nicholas Royle, who has written extensively about the Uncanny, the uncanny “has to do with a sense of ourselves as double, split, at odds with ourselves” (Royle, 2003, Pg. 6). The uncanny and indecipherable cannibal is a sensation and a mental image produced when I am at odds with myself, when two (or more) parts of myself come into conflict that is unbearable, a sensation of terror is only natural. Queer shame and body shame are, in fact, uncanny experiences for precisely this reason. I will explore this further in the next section.

Halberstam offers a very thorough examination of monsters, monsters which are terrifying and uncanny, categories to which my Cannibal certainly belongs, as queer. Halberstam notes what it is that makes monsters terrifying: “Frankenstein’s monster terrified people because of his appearance, Jekyll and Dorian are monstrous because an exterior hides a corrupt self. In each case the bad double is an inversion or an inner version of the outerself” (Halberstam, 1995, Pg. 74). In one case, we have Frankenstein, whose body is his enemy and the source of his terror at his own form, and the terror of his creator and all others that see him. In the Jekyll and Dorian cases, we have a particularly uncanny presentation - a ‘bad double,’ uncanny as it pits the self against the self. In both cases, the monstrous doubles in these stories represent “the self he will not face, not own, not know” (Solnit, 2013, Pg. 51). Rebecca Solnit, a feminist author and critic, is here referring to Victor Frankenstein’s relationship to his monster. So, we see that, even in cases where there is not a double so glaringly obvious as in the Jekyll/Hyde and the Dorian Gray examples, the double is monster/creator, repressed/conscious. This repressed part that haunts all our gothic horror literature characters is exactly as Freud described the uncanny above. Further, in queer literary studies, Palmer points out that “Royle, developing Freudian thought, associates the uncanny with ‘the experience of the body of oneself as a foreign body” (Palmer, 2012, Pg. 10). Palmer links this with queer people’s experience of their bodies as

foreign to themselves. This occurs for some trans people, through gender dysmorphia, and for others through their body's failure to fulfil heterosexist expectations of gendered bodies. The terror of repressed parts of the self and the terror of the non-normative body both constitute uncanny experiences. I might conclude that the fear that I am having towards the potential for a wilderness experience is actually about my fear about the repressed 'queer' part of me that is excluded and demonized. There is also the demonized and othered body - my body that has been put on diets and exercise programs throughout my life to control its perceived softness and excess. This was first understood from others, and later internalized as if it was my own perception. This uncanny experience emerged as I considered the 2018 trek mentioned in at the start of this chapter, at odds with myself and the 'nature' part of me. The image of myself as a nature lover, extreme trekker, extremely fit, etc is a seemingly undying (undead?) internalization of western male success and triumph over nature.

Shameful Monsters as Uncanny/Unheimliche

Halberstam discusses further the nature of gothic horror and draws our attention again to the body as the source of terror. "Visual codes by the end of the century in gothic fiction came to signify predispositions for crime or sexual aberration" (Halberstam, 1995, Pg. 40). So, the terror and rejection of Frankenstein's monster is not simply caused by this revolting effect on his creator and the others he encounters. It is also because he represents what normative discourse views as an enemy to the established and acceptable ways of being. Holman Jones and Harris (2019) also discuss monsters from the queer perspective and take up the discussion of Frankenstein. They elaborate that "Frankenstein's monster is moving, breathing, seeking embodiment of what (and who) families and society name 'ugly,' 'dangerous,' and 'perverse' - the monstrous qualities that give rise to queer policing and vilification even today" (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 94). The conceptualisation of this monstrous creature conjures shame for queerness and shame of an abject body, an identity

and presence that one expects to be policed - possibly with violence and threats, as in the case of Frankenstein's monster.

This might further explain my claim above that the planning of a trek set my queer and nature loving selves at odds. The cannibal is not produced by one or the other - the cannibal may at times represent the desires, drives, and shamed body associated with my queerness. Alternatively, the cannibal may at times represent my hunger that pushes towards extreme challenges, lengthy excursions, and other punishing tasks. This emerged as a hungry and self-devouring monster because it seeks to completely ingest the queer self and leave only the hyper masculine adventurer, as well as to forcibly consume my own body and leave behind the idealistic expectation of a lean and muscular body. A cannibal, for me, is not only a monster that eats its own kind, but an insatiable one that never ceases to desire to consume entirely.

Shame itself is an uncanny experience. Shame makes what is familiar and of the self into something to be avoided, hated, and repressed. This is particularly so with body shame. If you feel at home with your body, your skin, your corporeality, it is just that - heimliche, at home. But if there is shame attached to your body, you feel alien to and at war with your own flesh, your own being. This is a powerful and crushing unheimliche sensation and experience, set within one's own heimliche, one with which Frankenstein's monster is all too familiar.

Monstering - Birth of a Cannibal

Monster - from the Latin, *Monstrum* (divine omen, portent, sign; object of dread, awful deed, abomination) (Hoad, 1993).

Cixous, a feminist literary critic and theorist offers a critical reading-with Freud's "The Uncanny," and offers with clarity that "the unheimliche presents itself, first of all, only on the fringe of something else" (Cixous, 1976, Pg. 528). This description clearly describes my

experience of my Cannibal's birth. Coming into being not by being focused on (focusing on It, in fact, seems to dispel It), but in relation to focusing on something else - focusing on my debate about what sort of trek to plan. This indirect process uncannily produced Its birth. The planning of the trek summoned the old conflict back into play - the conflict between the queer shame and body shame that I experience and the internalised ideal of a hyper-masculine, muscular dominator of nature. The hyper-masculine, all-consuming drive began to emerge as I began to consider precisely the sort of trek that might satisfy those drives. Originally, I was considering planning a trek that was over a month in length for the summer of 2018, from the Borders of Scotland to Cape Wrath. The planning of a possible trip began with as little as the notion that I might take a trip. As I began to look at the practicalities of planning the trek, I became uncertain about whether it was what I wanted to do, or if I could tolerate another trek. I decided to take a short holiday 'non-research' trek in the Spring of 2018 to test out the Highlands of Scotland and my desire to trek. That trek is explored in detail in the chapter "Writing a Visceral Failure: Overcoding (Toxic) Masculinities and (Some) Decoding Forces." The planning of that short trek is when my Cannibal, or at least my current experience of It, was born.

From my notes, 11/3/18: *'What drives me to seek out these intense solo experiences? What am I trying to prove, and to whom am I trying to prove it? The cannibal, perhaps, who insists that it is all self-consuming experiences or nothing. The part of me that says I have to fully become the definition of a thing or activity in order to be doing it 'well-enough.'*

The Cannibal, with hunger in his eyes and blood splatter on his face, does not stop at first bite. It wants to eat me whole, to consume, consume, consume. Totalizing monsters resist elimination and threaten to never leave us. Halberstam describes Frankenstein's creature as such: "a totalizing monster - one, in other words, who threatens to never be vanquished, one immune to temporary restorations of order and peace" (1995, Pg. 29). Making an enemy of such a monster seems a foolish task - and even facing one headlong, in opposition, conjures up the visceral impossibility of looking directly at Its terrifying form. It

reminds me of the feeling you get when you're sitting in a chair and you feel something behind you. The longer you wait before the furtive glance over your shoulder, the more real the monster becomes, the greater the fear of turning to glance becomes. Rather than fighting this monster, a monster I could only hide from (turning on every light in the flat and watching a comedy, sleeping with the lights on, etc), I decided to focus on my fear. Using the fear as a tool, as a form of inquiry to follow this uncanny affect and find out - what is it that I am so afraid of? My mind began thinking therapeutically, psychodynamically, as a self-protective measure. Is this a split off part of myself? A split off internalized part of someone else? Is it 'good' or 'bad'? The effect that this uncanny experience and emergence of my Cannibal seemed to have was to paralyse me and increase my fear of going on a trek.

From my notes, 11/3/18: *I outlined to my friend all the ways in which I am physically capable. I am strong. I run, even including marathons. I am young and energetic with healthy bones and joints, and a generally stable constitution. So, if I am able to hike and trek, why haven't I? Why has this part of me been neglected and faded to the background? I even grabbed her scarf and shook her - WHY!?! Why then can I not hike, that doesn't make any sense - that I would want to, in part, and be able to, and yet NOT be able to? I do not understand, and I feel very lost and very afraid.* The inability to act, feeling paralysed and suddenly unable to take a trek that I would have previously jumped at, shook me deeply. Having the ability to do so but not following through led to me questioning my own authenticity, my own value. I began to operate on the guess that my Cannibal may be nothing more than what Solnit calls an "Elaborate means to hide yourself" (Solnit, 2013, Pg. 52) - to hide myself from myself. Perhaps, more accurately, to hide my trauma from myself. This fear of engaging with my internal world and allowing it to escape to the external was not a novel experience for me. I was a child of the closet, growing up hiding my queer identity from myself and everyone around me.

Barbour (2016), in an exploration of intergenerational trauma and hauntings, insists that it would be a grave error to search for "the ultimate truth carried within the single individual" (Pg. 101). She agrees with Abraham and Torok's recognition that the idea that the

origin of our trauma is contained entirely within the individual is “the source of so many lies” (Abraham & Torok, 1994, Pg. 189). Solnit reflects on her own role in her family, sharing that she “coped by retreating and maybe [she] did become a mirror, a polished surface that shows nothing of what lies beneath” (Solnit, 2013, Pg. 29). Mirrors, unfortunately, reflect indiscriminately. My quiet and gentle disposition as a child allowed me to be a safe mirroring presence. This left me open to whatever was seen by others (of themselves but projected onto me). The mirror-self then becomes the object which contains other’s projections of themselves that they only ever see in the mirror. Thus, they can disown their projections and leave them in/with me (the mirror), leaving me with the lie that this is my own issue to deal with. This has left me (or the Cannibal?) as a container (Barbour, 2016; Bion, 1963) for unspoken traumas.

Barbour (2016) offers an understanding that the unspeakable is the voice of this unnamed trauma. “The phantom appears in the lives of subsequent generations and like all ghosts, it must tell its story, of injustice, anger and shame” (Barbour, 2016, Pg. 96). I link this back to the trauma of being queer in a homophobic world. The trauma that all queer folk grow up with, knowing that our forequeers and current fellow queers have been looked down upon, spat upon, made into monsters. Not only do I connect to the trauma of my queerness, but also to grappling with mental illness, as foremothers in my family have. My own experience of mental (ill)health has been inextricably linked with my experience of myself as abject within the heteronormative world.

My own body has been viewed as an abject double, a monster to be hidden and controlled. And yet, I do want to pause here to echo Stryker’s (1994) sentiments about language. As Stryker puts it, it is not the speakers of oppressive language in my life that have spoken abjectly about my body and sexuality who have caused damage - it is the language and system itself, which acts through them. Others in my family have also struggled to accept their bodies, and control them with strict diets and exercise regimes, coupled with a constant dismissal of the possibility that there is nothing wrong with their bodies. The learned behaviour of how to treat our bodies is passed down, generation to

generation, until it will perhaps have run its course or been understood and fully expressed. The phantom that appears in my life, as a result of these oppressive forces, is the Cannibal.

Body shame conjuring monsters is particularly apt, as Halberstam reads the history of gothic horror and Frankenstein's monster. "By focusing upon the body as the locus of fear, Shelley's novel suggests that it is people (or at least bodies) who terrify people, not ghosts or gods" (1995, Pg. 28). The body itself is what invokes fear, it is that which has the power to reduce us to a state of terror.

(De)Monstration: The Queer and the Body

Demonstrate - From De- (entirely) + Monstrare (to show, from Monstrum) - meaning to prove entirely (Hoad, 1993). (De)Monsterring the monster, revealing what lies beneath.

(De)Monsterring Queer

The conceptualisation of monsters has been critiqued through the lens of queer theory. This is a project that seeks to both celebrate queer lives, and to understand the constructs that seem to produce us as monstrous in comparison to heteronormative culture. Holman Jones and Harris describe the monstrous "as a construction" (2019, Pg. 92) of a life or an individual that the world at large cannot stand the sight or even thought of. This continues to align with Halberstam's (1995) claims that policing of queer subjectivities, referenced above, is done through judging bodies for what might be perceived as threats to normativity or as a perversion. Holman Jones and Harris, engaging with Halberstam and others, argue that monsters, such as Frankenstein's monster, are examples of what tragedies will occur if gender and body norms are violated. "Leaving or deviating from that path enacts a kind of fatalist break, a queer "self shattering that consigns us to a miserable fate, queer as a death sentence" (Ahmed, 2016, cited in Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 97). This demonstrates one such way in which queer subjects are disciplined through association with monsters. This is in line with Halberstam's claim that "improper gender often brushes up against

unstable sexuality and invokes a homophobic response...[creating] the 'abjected being'" (1995, Pg. 165). That is, creating a monster.

Halberstam beautifully illustrates the development of terror of monsters through the terror of the queer. Taking for example the characters from *Silence of the Lambs*, they demonstrate how monsters "[illustrate] to perfection the spooky and uncanny effect of confusing boundaries, inside and outside, consuming and being consumed, watching and being watched" (1995, Pg. 164). Does this consuming and being consumed remind you of anyone? My Cannibal is peeking through the crack in the closet door at being invoked. Like other cannibals Halberstam writes about, It "specializes in getting under one's skin, into one's thoughts and he makes little of the classic body/mind split as he eats bodies and sucks minds dry" (Halberstam, 1995, Pg. 164). The character of Frankenstein confuses boundaries as well, including Gender boundaries (ibid). He is hungry, and his own queer discomfort in his gendered skin makes him a perfect example of the compulsive insatiability of trying to make one's queerness feel *right*. In a normative audience, it is not only the acts of violence and cruelty that he commits that generate terror - it is also his embodiment of not-right gender and failure to meet gendered body expectations. My Cannibal is a similar sort of monster - only he is a foil of this monster. While in the past (2009) I may have struggled to identify as queer and embody what felt right to me, this is no longer the case. I am now able to and enjoy engaging in non-normative and gender bending styles of dress. I paint my nails and I wear cute earrings, I browse the clothes in charity shops intended to be for both men and women. It is my current lived reality that is non-gender conforming and embracing of my body that is more like monsters and other villains depicted in film and literature. It is fitting that the monster compared to my current lived reality seeks to consume my soft and queer body and produce a hyper masculine subjectivity that never bothers stopping to paint his nails. They will be blood-red anyways. The foil is that of queerness as monstrous in the normative sense of monsters on one hand, and the normative (non-queerness) as monstrous on the other.

(De)Monsterring the Body

I relate this abject being to my own experience of my body and my sexuality. I internalised from an early age that my body was unsatisfactory; I was encouraged to lose weight by monitoring my diet in order to reduce the mass of certain, specific parts of my body. The internalization of this negative perception of my body has led to the experience of my own body as an abject being, a monstrous construction. This has forced me to “not only realise that [my] body is non standard...but also [experience] the pain of having a body fall out of line with idealised beauty norms” (Erb, 2019, Pg. 65). This realisation is shared in Erb’s research into the experience of female counsellors’ bodies in relational settings - the previous quote is adapted from one of her participants, who reflects on the origins and impacts of ‘vile comments’ (ibid, Pg. 65) about her body. The little comments made by those around us remind us that “Bad bodies are easily identifiable and demand expulsion” (Halberstam, 1995, Pg. 41) - or to be forcibly moulded into acceptable ‘normal’ bodies. Once the messages of important relational figures and society at large are internalized, the conversation with the self begins. We have internalised the standards that “[posit] coherent gender as a presumption of humanness” (Judith Butler, in Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 99). This becomes the same set of criteria that we use to “recognize ourselves at the level of feeling, desire and the body, at the moments before the mirror” (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 99). So, the same cruel (intentional or not intentional) messages that we receive become the very thing that forms our thoughts about our bodies. I was taught that my body was a monstrous presence because it differed from the ideal concept of a young man’s/boy’s body. Soft in all the wrong places.

My experience of my body as monstrous is inextricably linked with my experience of my sexuality as a monstrous other. “Extreme beauty and extreme ugliness are thus both linked to sexual perversity and specifically to homosexual proclivities... [and]... disguises for unspeakable crimes” (Halberstam, 1995, Pg. 65). My body was associated by others and by myself as being inherently perverse and as demanding elimination - this perversion was, to me, confirmation of my homosexuality and a deep sense of failure and disgust with myself.

Body monsters and queer monsters are inseparable - viewed as queer because of their bodies, bodies revolting because of their queerness. Monsters are often a target for projection of the disavowed parts of the self, the parts of society or individuals that they refuse to embrace or tolerate. This “projection literally transforms the monster into a screen, a place for the re-inscription of monstrosity” (Halberstam, 1995, Pg. 45). This way, the queer, the perverse, the non-normative are shown to exist outside of the normative selves and systems - the monsters can be pointed to as the problem. This draws our attention away from the monstrous within normative society and allows individuals to avoid the resurfacing of their own repressed monsters. Such a resurfacing would require painstaking self-examination and acceptance that they were the source of the monstrosity all along. This coming to terms with our own monstrosity, it seems obvious to point out, is an uncommon event.

However, the queer monster that film paints, I in ways celebrate. Gothic fiction’s monsters appear to have redeeming qualities. For this, I emphasise Frankenstein’s monster. Frankenstein’s monster escapes the fear and hatred of his creator and goes on a quest to understand who and what he is. In the process, he reads literature, religious texts, and his own maker’s field notes. He learns what he is made up of and what animates him (Palmer, 2012; Halberstam, 1995; Solnit, 2013; Shelley, 1818/1998). He seems to invite us to go on a journey. Susan Stryker addresses Dr. Frankenstein - for her, Victor Frankenstein stands in for contemporary transphobic society - and implores us “heed my words, and you may well discover the seams and sutures in yourself” (Stryker, 1994, Pg. 241). To examine our conceptualization of monsters, their origins and why we fear them, may reveal to us the sutures that sew together our composite parts, like the grave-robbled organs and skin of Frankenstein’s creature. In doing so, queer folks might understand what produces us as monstrous in comparison to normative culture, thus freeing us to clearly state that we are “not your monster” (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 101). We can own and understand what is considered monstrous and thus embrace ourselves and our monsters, eliminating the power that monstrosity (and normativity) attempts to hold over us.

Part of the embracing of the monstrosity is also about what Holman Jones and Harris describe as:

“Letting go of mastery and mourning the loss of something we never had becomes, instead, an invitation to persistently (re)tell the story of a queer self and queer promise of something more creatively gendered or sexed: stories that are proud, resistant, and celebratory” (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 101).

The letting go and mourning comes into play when we realise that social monstrification of queer folks robs us of so much. It robs queer folks of a sense of ownership and comfort in their bodies, of opportunities to begin dating (if one so desires) in the safe and healthy realms that many of our straight counterparts are allowed to, and of imagining a world in which we are celebrated for who we are, inside and outside. This loss, like the constant loss that Frankenstein’s creature experiences when no one he meets will accept him and invite him into their lives, requires mourning. Once the work of this mourning is done, we might be able to move into the next stage - celebrating our strength and resistance, making and re-making kin and diving into life with at least a little less internalized homophobia/transphobia/queerphobia.

Once we can do this, our resilience and pride allow us to turn and look outwards. “The conversation with one’s own reflection is a conversation with the world. Asking the question ‘what’s wrong with me?’ turns outward and becomes ‘what’s wrong with the world?’” (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 99). What is it about the world that requires us to become monstrosities and sources of terror for the crime of being non-normative? This question is explored more in other chapters. I will return now to a bit more depth regarding how we might come to terms with the monsters within us, how we might see our own seams and sutures.

(Re)Monstration - Exorcism and Embracing

Remonstrate - from Re- (expressing intensive force) + Monstrare (to show) - make a forcefully reproachful protest (Hoad, 1993).

My form of reproachful protest will be to take ownership of my Cannibal, to bring my monster home and embrace It rather than destroy It or obscure It from view. My remonstration will be a re-monstering. To begin this, I return to Hélène Cixous's reading of Freud's work on "The Uncanny" (Cixous, 1976). Cixous challenges Freud's argumentation style, his conclusions, and his treatment of other theorists along the way. She is deeply critical of this piece of writing. I agree with Freud that this is a very interesting topic, and with some of his analysis regarding the return of the repressed as an uncanny double - as I have said above.

However, Freud concludes that uncanny sensations are divided into two explanations: one being infantile repressions returned, which focuses on castration anxiety and mentions womb phantasies; or the wish and fulfilment explanation that forces one to reconsider what they once thought to be disproven (Freud, 1919, Pg. 247-248). The first is the more complicated and less frequent and requires awareness that it is occurring to dissolve - which Freud suggests is easily dismissed by recognizing that it is almost always due to unrealistic literary license (Freud, 1919, Pg. 250-251), and the second by simple reality testing that we do almost automatically. Cixous rejects this reduction to the castration complex as working against the grain (Cixous, 1976 – my understanding of this was greatly enhanced by Can's (2011) reading of Cixous). For Cixous, the uncanny is produced relationally and in the in-between. Therefore, she argues, the text of Freud's "The Uncanny" produces an uncanny affect in the reader - by creating a double with himself, a Freud who doubts and a Freud who is filled with uncanny dread. While I lean towards Cixous's analysis, I must admit that my reading of Freud's original work did not produce such an uncanny experience for me. What I take from her analysis is the recognition that Freud's attempts to address the Uncanny will not go as far as I need to with my Cannibal.

The Uncanny double of my Cannibal is an important part of me - having a double allows me to work through the repressed materials that It represents. Preparing for and executing my short trek in 2018 may have been a sort of exorcism. This is a description inspired by Barbour's suggestion that "laying the phantom to rest entails realising and stating its true origins" (2016, Pg. 101). Writing about the gradual release of unspoken and unspeakable intergenerational trauma, Barbour's words seem here to be applicable. Above, I have spoken about coming to an understanding of what the monster is composed of - of anxiety about being found out to be a monster by normative society; of having a body that defies idealised expectations; of the impulsive drive to consume myself and push beyond the limitations of my body in order to eliminate any potential queerness or any soft bit of body. Halberstam explores Frankenstein's monster as being a combination, too: "by his very composition he can never be one thing, never represent only a singular anxiety. [He is formed] out of bits and pieces of life and death" (1995, Pg. 36-37). The anxieties I have named are some of my seams and sutures along which my Cannibal is formed, a composition of many anxieties into one terrifying monster that threatens to consume me. This piecemeal construction of my Cannibal, and of Frankenstein's monster, results from the pressures and oppressions many of us experience in a variety of social manifestations. Thus, drawing attention to the constructed nature of identity across all humans. Monsters, like all things and beings, are produced through a series of complex interactions. The exorcism of the monster is not about destruction, it is about coming to an understanding. We are taught to avoid, flee from, and ultimately vanquish monsters. This is too simple of a reduction for us.

The binary monstrosity/normality construction is just as totalizing as an all good or all bad approach for understanding parts of the self. Naturally, I was initially frightened that coming to terms with the Cannibal would lead to annihilation of a part of myself. In my notes on 11/3/18 I wrote: *I don't want to lose this part of myself. I don't want to lose the part of myself that loves nature and loves hiking and takes treks to the extreme. I want to cherish and live with that part of myself, but there are necessary choices and challenges.* However,

this binary treatment of the self and of the monster is what produces the Cannibal as at odds with me. I am trying to learn to listen to my Cannibal - for It has something to say. Something to say about the shame and pressures that have produced him. When he begins to emerge, I can listen to myself and It.

In my reflections following the short trek in April 2018, I wrote: *I am beginning to allow my more spontaneous experiencing to come to bear in these situations. The part of me that allows me to do something as much or as little as I want to and insists that it's ok for me to do it in the way that appeals to me. There is little sense in doing an intensive recreational activity if it's not mostly enjoyed.* It is after this trek that I was able to recognize that I did not, in fact, wish to or need to do another long solo trek. I was able to integrate the Cannibal into conversation and thus recognize that I could force myself, self-consumingly, to do the trek I am physically capable of - but that I didn't have to. I could adapt and trek differently. This led to a hike up Ben Nevis with two other people, and companionship and affection made for a much more enjoyable, and still plenty intense, experience. This is discussed in detail in the Chapter "Queer We Go Again." Bidding the monster to speak (Barbour, 2016) allows us to do away with the crushing power of silence. Exorcists must learn the name of a demon in order to expel it from the body of the possessed. Learning the name of the Cannibal has been about understanding Its origins and confronting It as a familiar friend. This understanding of the nature and creation of the Cannibal is what makes this process like an exorcism. The result, however, is not as it is in biblical mythology, which returns the demon to hell. After all, monsters are created by us, as Halberstam reflects on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*: "While superficially this novel seems to be about the making of a monster, it is really about the making of a human" (1995, Pg. 38). The understanding of the Cannibal - proper name and origin - is the understanding of the human(s) of which It is an uncanny double.

The use of daemon rather than demon was at first implemented throughout this chapter, inspired only by my preference for the spelling. However, it is actually very important to distinguish between these spellings. In mythology, daemons are guiding spirits

that help one to become. Demons, perhaps influenced by Roman Catholic assimilation of other cultures' spiritualities, are the maleficent creatures we are familiar with in modern occult and horror media. The result of this exorcism is an understanding of the self and an embracing of the monsters within. It is, in fact, an act of helping a demon to become a daemon. It is a daemonization.

My Cannibal made a brief appearance over my recent Spring holiday. My partner and I spent 24 hours or so in Andorra on our way from the South of France to Catalunya. During that single day, I wanted to experience the Pyrenees and not miss out on such an incredible opportunity. Here is the phone note I made whilst walking on 19/4/19: *Cannibal - A brush with the cannibal threatened to consume me in the Pyrenees, and my partner along with it. I felt the constant anxiety to go high enough, far enough to be satiated by my 24 hours in the Pyrenees. Driving us well beyond where my partner was having fun and to where I was feeling ashamed for struggling up the mountain. I just wanted to go right up the mountain to our chosen destination, powering through the snow and ice that we were not expecting and were unprepared for. Now that my Cannibal is a familiar face, when I recognized It, I stopped (mentally, I was still physically driving onwards and upwards at this point) to ask what brought It out. It looked hungrily at me. The blood on Its chin made me realise I was already bleeding - the Cannibal was beginning to consume me as I sought to fulfil my internalised expectations of an idealized masculine conqueror of nature. Upon realising this, I immediately told my partner that we didn't need to get all the way there. We would see where we got and enjoy the experience, turning back whenever we felt it was best. We didn't go to the top but did have a remarkable experience with stunning views and made a great memory. I am learning from you, Cannibal.*

I am beginning to see within myself what Holman Jones and Harris see in the queer community:

"The shame and rage that haunt us have also taught us to practice self-care despite the sociocultural odds, to make chosen families...and to love our

bodies and desires fiercely, even as those beautiful bodies - as we - remain unintelligible to mainstream 'outsiders' (2019, Pg. 105).

Self-caring behaviour is deciding to hike to enjoyment, and to plan hiking and trekking about what will be enjoyable, to take along kin and queer-kin whose company I enjoy, and to celebrate myself - including my bodily self - along the way. The Cannibal has taught me so much about myself, helped me to love It and other repressed parts of myself. I am much better for getting to know It. I have gone from Monster and nameless, uncanny dread and shame to de-monstering. I have then finally come back to myself for a re-monstering that allows me to embrace more of myself. I would highly recommend getting to know the Cannibal within yourself.

Diary Interlude: Day 28

Day 28

Today I woke with the intent of going to Creede from Spring Creek pass, where the book recommends I try. It was a long, hard day, almost entirely above treeline, up and down going to mineral creeks. The most eventful part of the hike was when I was .5 miles from the segment's highpoint, and an electrical storm hit. I was, needless to say, scared shitless. It was pouring rain, hailing, and the thunder shook the mountain. And there I was, in full rain gear, lying down with my hat over my face, just hoping to live. Well, after about 45 minutes, it passed and I charged all the way to Snow Mesa, where I hoped there was no storm. 3-4 miles of flat above treeline is no good in a storm. Well, I made it and got down to the highway, but on the way down I met three Durango-Denver hikers, said hi and moved on. At the pass, I figured which way I should go, and started walking, ready to hold my thumb up to cars. At first I didn't think a car would ever pass, and was in despair. But then a truck driven by a small town woman with a chainsaw and cut logs in the back offered me a ride. She drove me to Creede (her hometown), and helped me to find a room (which was extremely hard, thanks to the woodcarvers convention). I couldn't find a place and she drove me everywhere and called everyone (she knew all the innkeepers), and in a last ditch effort she took me to Antler's Lodge, a nice cabin and motel area along the Rio-Grande. They had no rooms, but another through hiker there, Debbie, said she would split her cabin with me 50-50. I agreed, and we went to the Antler's Monday potluck.

Dear Nineteen-Year-Old Ryan - I remember the intensity of that day in the electrical storm. The combination of terror and exhaustion, by this point in the trek it was really just exhaustion to the core. You longed for a break from the trail, even before this storm hit. It was after the storm that you felt - 'that's it, I absolutely HAVE to have a break.' And what a break it was, too! I remember the idyllic sense of wonder and peace that settled in this tiny

mountain town. A quiet but welcoming main street where you had pizza the next day. The good cheer and generosity at the potluck right after arrival. It felt like something unlikely and perfect out of a novel, that this kind woman gave me a ride in her truck and put so much effort into finding you a place! With the welcome addition of Debbie, the unlikely and unexpected roommate who was happy to chat with you and even share a beer (shhh...you weren't of age yet in the USA, but she didn't mind). I still often think of your time in Creede and dream to go back one day.

What really strikes me about this is the combination of everything going wrong - being on the top of a mountain in a life-threatening storm - and everything working out in an idyllic town. This experience was somewhat of an oasis in the difficult times I had on this trek, and I think that it re-energized me a great deal for the days ahead. Interestingly, when I re-joined the trail is when I met a group of folks that I trekked with for a few days and really felt a part of something and supported. I think the positive and accepting experience of this town may have helped open me to feel able to reach out and socialize without fear of being rejected and isolated. I was starting to find kin.

Queer Kin: Suffering/Resisting/Hoping-With

“Making - and recognizing - kin is perhaps the hardest and most urgent part” (Haraway, 2016, Pg. 102).

About a year ago, while I was home during Christmas 2017, my Grandma asked me to come by her place and try on some shirts and suits that she had picked up last time she was in her hometown in rural Montana. They were clothes that had belonged to her Uncle - my Great Great Uncle. She said that he was always very fashionable and could afford to spend (a little) extra money on nice clothes as he didn't have kids or a family of his own. Once I was there and trying on the clothes, she told me that she suspects that he was gay. I had only met my Great Great Uncle ('Uncle GG' from here on) a couple times, always while in Montana to visit Grandma Great (who baked the most amazing cinnamon rolls in startling quantities).

Grandma had told me that whatever shirts I didn't like or didn't fit, she would send to Goodwill. It became very important to me that that not happen. I told her I would be more than happy to find a place to store them if she didn't want to keep them around. Something stuck with me about those shirts, something I felt driven to protect. I have a few of them in my wardrobe here in Edinburgh - old Pendleton Wool company shirts, a high quality warm and quick drying wool blend that's only drawback is being kind of itchy. The finding of these shirts can be thought of as a 'data-event' that comes affectively alive in ordinary life (Manning, 2016; Berlant, 2008; Stewart, 2007). “Ordinary affects are the varied, surging capacities to affect and to be affected that give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies, and emergences” (Stewart, 2007, Pg. 1-2). This moment, this event, of not just discovering the shirts but also of the affects that surged through me, produced a new sort of connection between Uncle GG and myself. This was further joined by the affect of my Grandmother - for whom it was important that she share her thoughts about her uncle and to relate *with* me in this.

Uncle GG's love for these shirts, and for his style, is stitched into them - patches and mends spot the bright red, yellow, and deep blue shirts. Even though they were not a particularly good fit, I could not turn them down. This was a significant moment. I imagined what it might have been like to be him - in rural farming Montana, born in the early 1900s, and being queer. It reminded me of the Rocky Mountains, not far West of where he lived that I'm sure he visited some if not many times in his life. It reminded me of William Drummond Stewart (WDS), a Scottish nobleman who frolicked in the Rocky Mountains in the 1830s, possibly in order to find freedom to express his queer desires. He is the hero of another chapter, 'Queering the Rockies'.

With

I am aware that I am making a great many assumptions in this chapter about a person I scarcely knew. I am, of course, "thinking with the concept I have of someone" (Gale, 2018, Pg. 105) more so than the history of that person. My idea of my Uncle GG, and a few things about him that I've been told, is what has inspired this writing, and it is to this concept of him that I am writing. Arthur Frank (2004), drawing of the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, insists that the dialogue and mutual impact that we have on others should not come to an end. That those who have departed, whether they have departed by dying or in any other way, may still "speak through [us], not assimilated, but as a new possibility within" (Frank, 2004, Pg. 102). This is in the spirit of unfinalizability in which other actors are continuing to exist and change even after death, through dialogic relationships (Bakhtin, 1984). Dialogue is passed through affect, through objects like those shirts, which contribute to my concept of my Great Great Uncle. In this chapter I will focus on how my dialogic relationship with Uncle GG has impacted me.

It would seem to me that I have entered into a dialogic relationship with Uncle GG through the encounter with his old wardrobe and his niece (my Grandmother). In this attempt to make and recognize kin, as Haraway (2016) urges us to, something in me has changed,

and perhaps something will have changed for Uncle GG, too. I began to wonder and explore; he was certainly kin in the by-blood sense, but was he also queer kin? And the dialogue between us goes on, as I find myself thinking about the concept I have of him that is neither him nor me, but somewhere in-between. Apparently, Uncle GG used to go on long fishing trips. My fantasy is that he found some companionship on these trips, that he was somehow going off into the outdoors, just as WDS did, to live out his passions far away from judging eyes. It reminds me of the same enactment I made, setting out to hike across the Colorado Rockies in search of self-love and some achievement of 'manhood' and independence. On and on it goes, in each generation some of us (queer folk) getting to live authentically, hopefully progressively more of us each time around. In this exploration with Uncle GG, I will draw on queer theorists as well, in order to make sense of the potential for 'queer kin.'

As I wander around the streets of Edinburgh, Scotland where I have now lived for four years of intensive study, I wonder what it would be like for him to know that his descendant has been able to fight to live authentically? That I have found friends and family that embrace my identity - many of them from his same family - and do not have to hide anything. I stride proudly (defiantly, maybe) through the streets holding the hand of a lover, maybe locked arms and skipping (much to my partner's annoyance). Something that might have been an unthinkable possibility or a well-worn daydream for a gay man in his setting. Looking back, I see how history so gladly sucks us into the norm and silences us - how many experiences of queerness have been lost to this totalizing demand to fit within narrow confines? How many lives torn apart and lived unfulfilled? Have we always found ways to navigate and subvert the norm just enough to dig out a tiny space for ourselves? Did you find ways, Uncle GG?

My grandmother's contemplation of Uncle GG's sexuality and the impact it has had on me, and indirectly the influence of my Great-Great-Uncle, demonstrate what others have called 'leakiness' (Gale, 2018). Where we are in fact, by our natures, uncontained and

we seep out and influence one another in complex and nuanced ways - as much as Uncle GG impacted me, I impacted this course of events too. If I was not out to my Grandmother and open, she might have never thought of her Uncle in the same way, and I would not have been able to celebrate his possible queerness in the present day or pay homage to him in this text. Similarly, Frank describes this by stating that “The Boundaries of our selves are more permeable than real...we exist only on the boundary with others” (Frank, 2004, Pg. 46). The impact those Pendleton Wool shirts have had as a facilitator of this exchange of experience and admiration is “better understood in relation, not only to itself but also to the nonhuman” (Gale, 2018, Pg. 105). The finding of these shirts, and the dialogue with my Grandmother (and through her, Uncle GG) took place “on the boundary between [my] own and someone else’s consciousness, on the threshold” (Bakhtin in Frank, 2004, Pg. 46). Further, the relationship that each of these humans, and perhaps the shirts as well, have coming into contact with the Rocky Mountains forms a subversive assemblage within this so-called frontier.

Each of the components of this assemblage (the shirt, the human actors involved, the concept of a frontier, the Rocky Mountains) come together to produce something that each of them individually is not. Thinking with queer theories and subversive assemblage in this way allows us to “re-configure different corporeal imaginaries, both human and nonhuman that are radically immanent and intensive, as an assemblage of forces and flows that open bodies to helices and transconnections” (Springgay & Truman, 2017, Pg. 65). We can reconfigure the way each of these components interacts, and, entering into this assemblage (which inevitably changes the assemblage by adding a component), come to a new understanding of a new (queer) way of relating to the components of this assemblage. Assemblage allows for relationships that are different than those we typically conceive of.

Suffering with

One form of ongoing dialogic impact, a relationship via this assemblage that Frank (2004) illuminates is the possibility of “suffering with” (Pg. 104). I’m not exactly sure what suffering you might have experienced, Uncle GG, or whether you would have described (parts) of your life as suffering. You were certainly born into challenging times for any queer person. On the one hand, new research institutions about sexuality and gender were appearing around the Western world, such as the British Society of Sex Psychology in 1914, the Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin in 1919, and much later the Kinsey Institute is was opened in Indiana in 1947 (Eaklor, 2008). On the other hand, then came the back lash against the Pansy Craze after prohibition ended and bars were restricted from serving ‘homosexuals’, the 1930 prohibition of references to ‘homosexuality’ in Hollywood, the Lavender scare in 1950 when ninety-one ‘homosexuals’ lost their State Department jobs for being security risks, the 1952 labelling of homosexuality as a disease by the American Psychiatric Association (Eaklor, 2008). The list goes on, and the times were tumultuous for queer people. More and more individuals were forming communities and fighting for rights and recognition, but more dangers and backlashes continued. Most of the communities that formed were in larger cities on either coast, not the rural North. It was dangerous to be queer, especially dangerous to dare to do so in public following backlashes in response to communities seen as deviant and morally lax from the 1930s onwards (Bronski, 2011).

I get the sense, somehow, that you don’t need me to be your hero or rescuer. But all the same, I struggle to think you didn’t experience some exclusion and feel alienated during the time and with the culture you were living in. This is exactly the kind of suffering that Frank is describing when he says that “agony is being locked within, unheard” (2004, Pg. 104). While I resist the strong desire to state for the reader and for myself what your suffering was, I find myself wondering about shame. I wonder if Uncle GG experienced shame for being queer, if he was in fact queer. Shame is certainly a powerful, isolating force. Queer shame can lead to exactly this kind of being locked within and unheard - closeted, perhaps. Living in shame would certainly be a form of suffering, an experience which has been all too familiar to me at times. Times of wanting to hide parts of my body, wanting so

badly to have any other body. And just the same with my queerness - wishing with all my might that I might be like everyone else, that I might not feel this shame for my desire. Did you suffer this shame? I want to relate to you, my great great uncle, and understand what, if any, the similarities between our burdens might be. I do not suffer the same as you, and I am not sure if you'd agree with my thinking that you suffered more than me, owing to the less tolerant culture of your time. While Bakhtin (1984), and through him Frank, makes it clear that each individual's suffering is experienced differently, they go on to conclude that a new 'thing' can be created.

Through the seeing of another's suffering, it is possible that one would be able to have this new 'thing' which is "actualize[d] inwardly from [a] unique place outside another's inner life" (Bakhtin in Frank, 2004, Pg. 104). This is to say that, from bearing witness to the suffering of one person, you might create a space of co-suffering between you - a space that is neither fully myself, nor fully Uncle GG, but a space where we might find some recognition of sufferings and feel some sense of consolation. I suggest that this occurs through the process of empathy - a process by which we develop the "capacity to share in the experience of others not just like our own but as our own" (Casement, 1985, Pg. 34), and that this empathy can be further facilitated by "resonance...between what is personal to the therapist and what comes from the patient" (Pg. 95). While you, Uncle GG, are certainly not my patient in therapy, this way of relating may still be relevant - I relate to my idea of you, and the possible sufferings finding resonance between us allow a connected space of suffering-with to be developed.

Finally, a space for consolation is created in which agony, suffering, that is locked within might find consolation through the co-experienced suffering. While this might offer some form of psychic relief for myself and for the memory of Uncle GG, more is at stake here. Frank (1994) offers that the story created between at least two, two being the minimum, is a moral moment in which we "realize that the story is ours to tell: our possibility and our responsibility..." (Pg. 105) is to tell this story together. So, becoming aware of my own sufferings, wondering with Uncle GG about his sufferings, and knowing of the suffering

of so many others, it becomes imperative that consolation space is created and that we then *tell the story* so that through Uncle GG and myself, others might find and create with us this space for consolation.

Resisting with

How might this process of making queer kin, and this process of finding connection through queer assemblages, be viewed as a resistance to the systems that isolate and shame us? I believe that simply recognizing and leaning into assemblage with queer kin - shirt-Uncle GG-me builds a form of resistance. A wilful resistance that can then be called upon to do more things. But what about this can be equated to a resistance? Stacy Holman Jones and Anne Harris describe the process and function of queer monuments in *Queering Autoethnography* (2019). In this section, I will draw upon this idea of queer monuments, and queer monument creation as a collective resistance.

What is it that creates this need to resist? There are many obvious answers about exclusion from society, being subjected to violence, being shamed and isolated. "Queer bodies, experiences and lives have often been omitted or forgotten by history and queer people have long fought to combat erasure and neglect" (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 16). This erasure forces us to resist, to fight back, to be remembered and viewed as deserving of respect and basic rights. Throughout history, we have struggled to simply be, and to create lives that we are comfortable in, lives that do justice to us as queer people. And "we have fought, too, to mourn the loss of individual lives alongside the effort to claim and create livable lives as queer people" (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 16). There are many losses along the way that we must acknowledge if we are to continue creating lives.

This creating life is held in stark contrast to the grief and losses that we continually experience in a precarious situation. "One way to live and die well as mortal critters in the Chthulucene is to join forces to reconstitute refuges, to make possible partial and robust biological-cultural-political-technological recuperation and re-composition, which must

include mourning irreversible losses.” (Haraway, 2016, Pg. 101). Haraway is writing into the extinctions that we as Terrans are facing – however, this same precarity of extinction is like that faced by queer people. As long as there are animals there will be so-called ‘homosexual’ behaviours, so extinction in that sense isn’t the risk I’m discussing here. What we may lose, and at many times have lost, is a system in which we can live and die well as queer folks, and so it is about survival in that sense. Joining forces, as Haraway describes, is imperative because our kin have been stolen from us. We have been lied to, and our past, present, and futurities covered from sight. Queer pasts, particularly in rural and wild areas have been hidden due to the anxiety that powerful, aristocratic, white masculine privilege was being challenged by “deviant sexual types” (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson, 2010, Pg. 13). The reality had to be hidden to produce “the naturalization of (apparently fragile) heterosexuality in the midst of” (Ibid, Pg. 13) challenges to this way of life that we have since been catapulted into - the heteronormative Capitalocene (Haraway, 2016), where the status quo and ability to consume at ever increasing rates is the highest virtue. The reality is that these queers from the past, our family members (queer kin, kin by descent, and the overlap between them) had lives that “included complex networks of sexual activity among men, and it was even the case that some urban men would leave the city in search of them,” (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson, 2010, Pg. 15) as WDS did (Benemann, 2012). By enforcing the ways in which rural and wild areas were allowed to be used, namely as heterosexual and masculine, a long-lasting impact was created that trickled down to me and the rest of the current queer population. This impacted not just those of us going forward in time, but also our connection to our forequeers.

Remembering and grieving for lives never created or lives lost is a fundamental part of this resistance. The shirt has taken up a new purpose, now that it no longer hangs in Uncle GG’s wardrobe, it is “becoming memorial; a holder of memories, not water” (Sarah Ahmed, in Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 17). Sarah Ahmed is talking about a broken pot, as an example, rather than a surviving shirt. However, her message is the same - an object becomes memorial. The shirt does not hold Uncle GG, it holds memories and passes

affect - it stands as a memorial to the life he lived. Perhaps, Uncle GG, it also stands as a memorial to the lives that you could not live? The assemblage of shirt-Grandma-Uncle GG-Me becomes memorial in how it “reanimate[s] ways of relating and sharing affection” (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 17). Something is made that forges a collective remembering, a collective caring-for and standing alongside. But more than that, it becomes a safe haven and a rallying point around which we continue to unite.

Memorialization of this shirt is not the sort of memorial that puts it away and buries it, it is rather something generative. In Stacy Holman Jones and Anne Harris’s terms, “Becoming memorial does not make a harrow for bearing or burying companionship, affinities and loves. Rather, it builds a shelter out of story, memory, and ghost gum branches” (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 17). I have already mentioned the losses and the essential task of grieving for lives never created and lives lost. Though this is essential and can be facilitated, via affect, by the assembly of shirt-Grandma-Uncle GG-me, it does more. It also creates exactly the sort of haven and shared space that is for suffering and consoling. With that, dialogue carries on and ensures that the story is told and does not end there.

This becoming monument becomes wilfully “grounded in the need to shelter and memorialize the fragility of queer lives and connections” (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 24). The tenuous and often difficult to find connections and queer relations are fragile, and yet are also able to form this wilful resistance. The monument, affectively created, has the power to bring together a community of queer folks, regardless of the times they are in - the monument stands for the undeniable and enduring will of queer people to survive, and to strive towards making spaces where they can create lives. “Wilfulness as shelter. Stoniness. Wilfulness is a ‘standing against’ that minoritarian subjects - women, queers, people of color - embrace in their efforts to both survive and to resist” (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 25). Sometimes we are surviving in keeping secret, in choosing when and where to express ourselves carefully - and sometimes we resist overtly, demanding to be respected and

afforded the same right to life as others. This very resistance, at times, constitutes the survival that is possible.

Hoping with

While it brings me hope that we can continue to form assemblages, continue to make queer kin, and resist *with* our queer kin, I am haunted by Donna Haraway's assertion that "There are so many losses already, and there will be many more" (2016, Pg. 101). I do not doubt this, and it reminds us all that our struggle, the struggle to live and die well, is not finished. It is unfinalized and will continue to require active engagement. And sadly, it is made all too clear by the reality of continued violence against queer peoples around the world. This is well evidenced by hate crimes where I reside in Scotland (Equality Network, 2017), laws that require the stoning of homosexuals in Brunei (Tan/BBC, 2019), and countless other very recent examples. With the potential of more losses and our kin living in fear and/or isolation, it becomes imperative that we reach out in whatever ways we can. In ways that are practical or emotional support, or in forming an assemblage with queer others in and out of our time. We might be supporting by our collective suffering with and could benefit from our collective hoping with.

Perhaps the hope that I am seeking is a hope that we are always on the edge of. Pursuing a hope that there are other futures which are yet possible, that we are, as Bakhtin would say, unfinalized. "Dostoevsky would have not depicted the deaths of his heroes, but the crises and turning points in their lives; that is, he would have depicted their lives on the threshold" (Bakhtin, 1984, Pg. 73). In one sense, Uncle GG has been lost - he has passed away. And yet he still evades death in another sense, he is still on the threshold, the in between and overlapping between us that creates both him and me. As I push at hope, that hope might be shared for him, too. I wonder, has anything come to pass for me that you, Uncle GG, only hoped for? Donna Haraway describes us as "attached to ongoing pasts, they [critters and people] bring each other forward in thick presents and still possible futures;

they stay with the trouble in speculative fabulation” (Haraway, 2016, Pg. 133). Everything is still possible, everything that we can imagine and so much more. If it is possible to suffer with, then it is also possible for us to hope with. That in that same space where mutual suffering and consolation happens, there is also space to imagine and scheme something hopeful - a world we would want to live in:

“Open to the unexpected realization of an unlikely hope. It’s not a ‘happy ending’ we need, but a non-ending. That’s why none of the narratives of masculinist, patriarchal apocalypses will do. The system is not closed; the sacred image of the same is not coming. The world is not full” (Haraway, 1992, Pg. 327).

In fact, the world is wide open and ready for change. The ‘sacred image of the same’ refers to the overly celebrated repetition of accepted ways of living that are limited and reproductive. It is creating new generations to continue doing exactly what was done before. Resisting this, unlikely hope of something better is always waiting to spring up at the slightest encouragement.

The everyday and ordinary affects experienced when hearing a story shared by my Grandmother provoked this relating with Uncle GG. It was a story she realised was hers to tell, that she had to tell me because of the unfinalized way in which it was still unfolding for her. The ordinary affects I experienced when trying on, almost as a sacred right, the clothing of a forequ岸 sparked this inquiry. Kathleen Stewart describes the affected way in which these ordinary affects can “morph into a cold dark edge, or give way to something unexpectedly hopeful” (Stewart, 2007, Pg.4). Morphing into an inspiring connection that I have shared, however ephemerally or thinly, with Uncle GG. Following the inspiration to a connection with the cold dark edge - shame and suffering - but also to what was unexpectedly hopeful - the progress made through standing our ground and continuing to create our lives. Berlant, working with affect theory and historical literature, argues that “affect works in the present, and so the ongoing historical present, rather than being matter for retroactive substantialization, stands here as a thing being made, lived through, and

apprehended” (Berlant, 2008, Pg. 848). Continuing to affect and be affected, then, is what fuels us as we continue to create, to live, and to hold on to the hope of a queer life.

We continue on this journey, not in a tireless one-step-after-the-other way. As Stacy Holman Jones and Anne Harris say, “we build, we are a monument to waking up: one morning, one dream, one work at a time” (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 29). I take this encouragement not as an imperative to keep doing every day and to be tireless in order to ‘earn’ the hero mantle. I take this as recognition and celebration of what we are already doing and what we have always done - one work at a time, following one hope at a time. We are a monument of the indomitable will that resists and hopes - and we become that monument together, *with* each other and our communities.

Diary Interlude: Day 11

“Day 11

Today began with apple fritters for breakfast, courtesy of Mom, and I started hiking at Copper at 10.00. I went past Janet’s cabin, and over Searle and Kokomo pass (further than planned). Now I can sleep in tomorrow. Saw a group of people (family?) from Kansas City hiking, and we chatted for a while. The oldest of the young men was buff and had big arm veins - told me to “take it easy!” lots of snow today and the gaiters are already well worth the price. The sleeping bag liner is very comfy, and Jason’s tent is awesome. It is a very gloomy day, threatening to rain all day long, and finally doing it in the evening as I ate. Luckily the tent was already up, and I hung my bear bag and jumped inside. I’ve been reading Dharma Bums, and it is an interesting book so far, I like it. Dad meets me tomorrow, Matt too, I think. Yay! Today while I was postholing I had a close call with postholing between the rocks, and nearly hurting my leg, but I got lucky. Pikas today were cool, and very abundant. But I moved past my 1st camp site because of snow, and now I’ve made camp very much on a hill.”

Dear Nineteen-year-old Ryan - I can still picture that hunky young man - vaguely, and mostly just those arms and the backdrop of Kokomo pass. That was after passing the very large and very lazy Marmots sitting on a rock. They didn’t mind you getting near at all. I can feel the gaze of that guy. It was so exciting to think that you might be desired. Of course, standing there with his family and heading in opposite directions, it could go nowhere else. A brief and flickering ‘what if’ that you yearned to test out. Interesting that you went from getting back on the trail after a wee break and went from the support of my family in the form of food and transport to the harsh and challenging altitude and snow. Then encountering another family supported guy - both of us would not be there without family help, and both of us unable to explore each other further because of our families. So, you did try to “take it easy,” but I really wish you could have taken it easy with him!

Walking through the gloom and overcast alpine landscape felt cold and bleak - a stark contrast to the warmth of summer back in the plains you had left that morning, with abundant food and rest. Though, at this point I think you were still fairly fresh and enjoying the scenery and the progress. We've always liked Kokomo pass. I remember our surprise at the amount of snow still there, and then by the post holing that nearly broke your ankle. This environment keeping you on your toes, making you bend to it and work with it as best as you could. Campsite later than planned and on the side of a hill - beautiful though, and I can still picture it in my mind, eating on the hill as the light faded next to that very orange borrowed tent. You did in fact sleep well there and have a lazy breakfast on the hillside while other hikers passed by on the trail above.

I feel wrapped up in the moment, trying to offer the reader and myself the imaginative and immersive experience that is conjured in my memory when reading my journal entry - but which would certainly not be seen from reading my journal memory by itself. In fact, I struggled to offer consistent you/I/my pronoun use, almost as if 'I' was there as much as nineteen-year-old Ryan. The desire, impossible to fulfil - but the few exchanged glances allowed the possibility of desire to exist in that moment and the hope of fulfilled desires to linger much longer after that. The question of family's role - they took us up to that point, but restricted us from going any further. What can this do for understanding how far heteronormative structures can take us in the process of becoming-queer? Only so far as the dangled carrot, the always not-quite-possible, the perpetual desiring, blood pumping in ears - is that from the elevation or the excitation? An altitudinal erotic encounter.

Queering the Rockies – (Re)Storying a Forequeer

The true challenge here is that I do justice to the person that is William Drummond Stewart (WDS), as he is the hero of this chapter. There is a temptation to reduce him to the list of “stable and objective qualities” (Bakhtin, 1984, Pg. 48) such as his social status, rank, titles, personality traits and so on, in order to have him serve my purposes in this paper. It would be violent to subject WDS to such a monologue about who he is (Willis, 2013). This would be yet another way that he would be used by systems seeking to take advantage of him and other queer folks, and that is a system that I wish to resist participating in. Additionally, although WDS passed away many years ago, in 1871 (Benemann, 2012), upon encountering him I felt so enlivened. He appeared to me as a lively, passionate, and subversive force. A person to whom I felt I was actively relating. And yet, his virtual erasure from history does not allow that story to come through, and I seek to bear witness to it and make possible what Willis (2013; 2009) calls ‘restorying’ - that is, to re-write a story of self. Throughout this process, I will draw on Bakhtin’s ethics of unfinalizability, seeking to engage in a dialogical relationship towards WDS. A dialogical relationship that resists my “rhetorically performed or conventionally literary” utilisation of him “as if [I was] in some higher decision-making position” (Bakhtin, 1984, Pg. 63). I am not the author of WDS’s experiences, or of what meaning they have. I was led to Bakhtin via Arthur Frank (2004), who explores present day health care and how professionals interact with patients. Frank applies Bakhtin’s theories primarily by associating ‘patients’ with Bakhtin’s analysis of the ‘hero’ within Dostoevsky’s writings. The emphasis for Bakhtin is on the unfinalizability of the hero, and upon a dialogic relationship with the hero. In keeping with this ethic, in my work with WDS, I endeavour “to speak with him, not about him” (Frank, 2004, Pg. 46). I want to explore *with* him what the experience of queer shame is like, the liberation he felt in nature, and how we can resist the forces that produce queer shame. It is also my hope that in doing so, I will be able to bear witness to some of WDS’ life and restory him as a forequeer.

I have not, as of yet, been able to find an academic source that references the term 'forequeer.' A thorough search of the web does turn up some queer events that have used the term, so it must be said that I am not the first to use this term. However, I want to propose how this term could be useful in academia – and in this thesis. Forequeer is a way of designating those who have come before us queers in their attempts to live out a life that resists heteronormative expectations. Those who have sought out ways to live and die well, queerly. This might include queer or possibly queer relatives – like Uncle GG from the previous chapter. This also includes forequeers that are connected to us through the commonality of becoming-queer, and the commonality of resisting heteronormativity. My involvement of forequeers, in particular the forequeer that is WDS, in this chapter will largely focus on the glossing over, the overcoding, for such individuals in formal history. This explains both why this term is needed, and what we need to do with it; forequeer is needed to designate those individuals in history for what they are, so that they can be recognized, and so that we can recognize them and our relationship to them. The use of forequeer is also contributes to a project of restorying them into life narratives that acknowledge and honour their queer contributions to queer people and to all Terrans.

As a matter of practicality, I will address how I have practiced this relating with WDS, and why this stands out to me as important for my research despite the fact that WDS was in the Rocky Mountains in the 1830s and not 2009. The historical context is of great importance. From as early as 1563 in Britain, 'sodomy' was made illegal and punishable by death (Weeks, 1977, Pg. 12). In a book on homosexual politics in Britain, Weeks (1977) documents multiple cases in the early Nineteenth century when men were hanged for 'buggery.' In fact, the Navy applied the law with particular aggression, and "...you were more likely to be hanged for buggery than for mutiny or desertion..." (Weeks, 1977, Pg. 13). Across the Atlantic, in America, some folks were run out of towns for male-male sexual relationships, and technically sodomy was punishable to castration in these cases – though it appears enforcement was spotty and influenced by an individual's status (e.g. race and class) (Eaklor, 2008, Pg. 31). In short, it was not safe or acceptable to openly express sexual

interests between the same sexes. It is this environment of navigating norms, expectations, and dangers in his native Britain and his beloved America that WDS stretched the confines of same-sex desire.

I met WDS first through finding a book called *Men in Eden: William Drummond Stewart and Same-Sex Desire in the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade* (Benemann, 2012). Same-sex desire in the Rocky Mountains jumped right out at me during my early literature searches, and I began to read Benemann's account of WDS, and one of WDS's own novels, *Altowan*. My engagement with WDS will be facilitated by these two sources: his writings in *Altowan* and the examination of his life in Benemann's (2012) text. I will often directly address WDS in the spirit of ongoing dialogue. I will also use WDS's own writings to allow him to speak for himself. According to Benemann, WDS's books paint

"A detailed and vivid picture of life in the Rockies in the 1830s. The plot galumphs along awkwardly in the background, but if the reader can put on hold a need for logic and coherence in story telling, the novel offers some literary rewards." (Benemann, 2012, Pg. 39)

Upon reading this last passage I was excited to read what WDS had written, and I'll admit I had a chuckle at Benemann's harsh critique. But more than that, I found myself feeling very protective of the Scottish nobleman. How dare he attack your writing like this! Having now read *Altowan* I can understand where he is coming from, but I still suspect that the reason for the "impenetrable" (Benemann, 2012, Pg. 37) writing is something other than lack of skill. I am almost certain that, even in writing his own novel, WDS was not allowed to fully express himself (much as I have discussed struggling to do in my diary writings) and simply state that he is a queer man who enjoys other men, physically and romantically.

WDS instead wrote two long and meandering novels in which queer characters occasionally appeared and played a role. Benemann does briefly suggest this possibility as well (2012, Pg. 36), but there is much greater emphasis on the lack of skill in writing. As Benemann states, there is chaos and a poorly constructed plot to tie things together. This is because the actual plot is the sub-plot, the mini plots that emerged and flowed throughout

his works. The queer relationships that take place and are ongoingly navigated - relationships across cultures, races, and gender stereotypes in an age when variation was scarcely tolerated - these 'homosexual' and non-heteronormative characters and plot points were, I assert, the actual reason for the writing, and in fact were the only source, perhaps, of joy for WDS both in life and in his writing.

Benemann also describes how there was formerly very little written that accurately portrayed WDS's exploits, particularly those that were queer, before his work began. For example, Marshal Sprague (1967) went out of his way in a chapter written about WDS to explain how WDS might appear to have avoided women and insists that it was only because of difficult early experiences with women. Another biography of WDS was called *Scotsman in Buckskin* (1963) completely ignores the possibility of him being queer and describes a happy marriage – which is completely unsupported by their (or any) sources. Benemann (2012, Pg. 3) does not think this was a cover-up so much as it was simply outside what was thinkable to the authors. The erasure of WDS's queerness alone demonstrates his relevance, that the queer reality of his life was excluded from a history that celebrates the American West as a highly masculine (one might argue that this is to a toxic degree) setting. He was in fact queer, and in going to the Rockies was experiencing and living his queerest life. The extent of cover-up is shocking, because upon reading his first novel, *Altowan* (Volumes 1&2), I found the homoerotic scenes to be blatantly so, including long descriptions of the beauty of his traveling companions and the Native Americans that he encountered. An example even includes his description of a cheery lodge, “of which Roallan occupied one side, a not unpleased spectator of the frolic going on between Altowan, Pinatsi, and the Broadashe on the other” (Stewart 1846/2015, Pg. 105). Roallan, Altowan, and Pinatsi are men, and the Broadashe (named Watoe) is likely a 'Berdache,' which is an identity of some Native Americans who are usually born male but choose to take on the dress and roles traditionally reserved for women (Stewart, 1846/2015; Benemann, 2012). So, we have here a scene described where one man is enjoying watching two men and a non-gender

conforming person 'frolic.' Hardly heteronormative and quite far from subtle, in my reading at least. But this utopia of frolicking folks was not without its clear depictions of shame.

Experiences of Queer Shame

WDS, in your book, if we assume that the hero Altowan represents yourself (as Benemann, 2012, has), then I cannot help but notice the numerous declarations of love from many different gendered people you receive. From men like Pinatsi, Jasper the sailor boy, and numerous others; Watoe the non-binary/trans; and Idalie, a woman. Two examples:

“Oh, Altowan!’ - and it was seldom he addressed him by name - ‘ever since what it was to care for any one, I have loved you, and with no ordinary love...”

- Pinatsi to Altowan (Stewart, 1846/2015, Pg.56);

And:

“Then you have not left a place for me in your heart, between Pinatsi, as a friend, and the fair girl you saved?” - Watoe to Altowan (Pg. 242)

Were you writing into your book a hope for the many passionate loves you had in your time in the Rocky Mountains, those that you longed for whilst back in Scotland? Are these reflections of actual people you had the affection of, or are these what you wished and hoped for? I wonder whether these loves were realised or not, whether you felt ashamed in any way? From what I know, you were essentially sent away by your father for being irresponsible with money and not behaving as an aristocratic man was meant to, keeping the company of known sexual ‘deviants’ (Benemann, 2012).

I feel a personal pull towards your story and find similarities between us. We both sought space in order to come to terms with our queerness and live out our desires.

Interestingly, you did this in coming from Scotland to the Rocky Mountains, and I went from

the Rocky Mountains to Edinburgh, Scotland where I am now writing this. WDS, particularly in your novels, you also express an idealised possibility, particularly idealised by nineteen-year-old Ryan. That is, the possibility of being a masculine and powerful man who could indulge in his fantasies with other men while in the wilderness. You could certainly be considered a masculine ideal – a decorated veteran of the Napoleonic wars, a survivalist in the Rocky Mountains, and a frequent authority figure. And, your altitudinal erotic encounters were realised (Benemann, 2012) in a way that mine were not. As such, you might represent the fantasy of having it all – queer sexuality and normative masculinity. Of course, it was never that simple and you've made it clear that it was not always safe to defy the limitations of society.

The autobiographical character of Altowan is also shown demonstrating concern for the wellbeing of characters who would be punished for violating gender norms. This is demonstrated in the following, when upon witnessing Watoe violently defending his honour, Altowan “concealed his knowledge of it from those whose vengeance would have crushed [Watoe]...This circumstance had chained the broadashe to Altowan, and whether from gratitude for the past or fear for the future...[showed] his attachment and devotion” (Stewart, 1846/2015, Pg. 85). In this example, WDS, you appear protective of this non-conforming person for unexplained reasons. I wonder if you identify with Watoe in some way? Watoe's attachment and devotion to you suggests a form of kinship had grown between you. This is further supported by the previous example of Watoe seeking a place in your heart. This example also seems to demonstrate that you are well aware of the possible risks associated with violating gender norms - that Watoe had not only been required to fight for honour, but also had secrets to hide in order to be safe.

Your awareness of possible dangers in violating these norms - your awareness of what I would call queer shaming - is further demonstrated by the character of Watoe:

“My blood is boiling at my degradation; I have no fear but for your eye, when it is turned coldly on me; I will proclaim myself a man, and go to war. ...- You

have never known tyranny, nor been made a slave to the caprices of the strong” - Watoe to Altowan (Stewart, 1846/2015, Pg. 250).

You seem deeply aware that those who defy gendered expectations might become a target for those who would take advantage of queer folk, and those who would punish them for being queer. You have also expressed the possibility, through Watoe, of embracing a masculine and violent identity in order to protect oneself and to protect one’s (queer) kin - as Watoe is expressing protectiveness towards Altowan. Reflected is your awareness that, despite any good intentions, queer or non-conforming folks will be regarded with mistrust and suspicion. One character expresses a particular mistrust of Watoe: “But I must watch; I do not altogether believe that half boy” (Roallan in reference to Watoe, Stewart, 1846/2018, Pg. 64). Mistrust is abundantly clear in this example, as well as linking that mistrust directly to the gender expression of Watoe in the derogatory use of ‘half boy,’ thereby shaming him for his gender expression and embodiment. Fortunately, readers may be pleased to hear that Roallan is shortly proven wrong when Watoe’s experience with the mountains and plains this tale takes place in - the ability to read them and anticipate danger - illuminates how deeply wrong Roallan was to question Watoe. In fact, Roallan is painted as a thoughtless fool for his behaviour. What broke my heart shortly after is the death of Watoe as he attempted to assist Roallan in surviving the danger that was encountered specifically because he did not heed Watoe’s guidance. WDS, is this what you feel the fate of kind-hearted queer folks is? To be misjudged and die before those who have judged us realise how wrong they were?

Queerness has been framed by white western culture as being bad, grotesque, as a decay of society (Eaklor, 2008; Weeks, 1977; Bronski, 2011). Benemann refers to an 1860s *Vanity Fair* article about ‘counter jumpers,’ store clerks in modernising cities, attacking their femininity and physical shape and appearance, much as I felt mine was repressed and mistreated, leading to a self-hatred. “A man, if he be a man, is always sure of an independence by labour. His resources are inexhaustible. But his pace is out in the free fight of life.” (*Vanity Fair* in Benemann, 2012, pg. 57). This is the ‘tough and independent’ cultural

narrative that I, and I believe you as well, WDS, played into to get our escape out of the reach of normative white western ideals - by subversively playing into them. But then, of course, we had only averted them temporarily.

WDS is relevant to my work in part because his experiences are heavily overcoded and omitted from history. Just as queer thought and queer experiences are expected to be. It is expected that they be subtle or be punished. In order to exist and express, they must find a way to do so covertly, so that only other queers or their friends would notice their expressions.

Experiences of Nature Narratives

WDS seems to have had incredible experiences in the Rocky Mountains, the then 'frontier' of the USA. He depicts a life lived on his own terms, on great loves, fast friends, and unrivalled experiences of danger and success. His novel *Altowan* concludes in the north of England, with much of part II of *Altowan* occurring in cities rather than the wild places that are the setting of the rest of the tale. It is there that the autobiographical character of Altowan recalls, in a moment of conflict, after apparently a significant passage of time, his wild adventures:

“It was the warning of danger and caution used by the wanderers of other climes, and he felt all his thoughts return to those scenes of his early manhood - to the days of merely animal care, and to the difficulties, the dangers, and the triumphs of savage sovereignty. The whole range of his former exploits, with their lofty enterprise and daring execution; the pleasures of peace enhanced by the glories of war; the vast plains, the torrents, the forests, and the mountains, came back as a panorama to his view, and an irresistible longing to return to the scenes of his former exploits took possession of him” (Stewart, 1846/2018, pg. 219).

Altowan dies shortly following this sequence and is never able to return to those former exploits. This is sadly like WDS being stuck in Scotland, save one brief return to the USA (Benemann, 2012), and his life and death far away from the land and experiences of his dreams. WDS lives on in his writing, and in dialogue here with me. He continues to influence me with his tales of living in what he paints, in some ways, as a queer paradise.

Halberstam, in exploring the understanding of queer theory that we might take from animation, describes a moment of reconciliation with the wild: “The wolf signifies the utopian possibility of an elsewhere...” (Halberstam, 2011, Pg. 183). The main character being discussed (Fantastic Mr. Fox) confronts his anxiety of the Wolf, who represents ‘the wild’ “in a way that instructs the humans watching the film to reconcile to wildness, to animatedness, to life and to death” (ibid). While animation and WDS’s novel are quite different genres, they share in common the ability to paint a world different to our own. WDS, your entire novel seems as if it might point to exactly such a utopian elsewhere - a utopia accessed through wilderness and danger. Shahani, another queer theorist, also writes about the possibility that utopia offers us. They write about the novel *Time Out of Joint*, and state that the author “chooses to move backward into history to unpack its implicitly utopian (and queer) possibilities” (Shahani, 2012, Pg. 103). WDS, you also celebrate the queer utopian possibilities of your own history, perhaps delving into writing novels to re-animate (and perhaps also re-imagine?) the utopian queer life you led in the Rocky Mountains.

When queerness presses out from society, society reaches out to draw it back in. The example of the frontier, or of any space outside of a clearly established system, can be described as what Deleuze and Guattari call smooth space (1987). Smooth space describes a milieu where there is a freedom of movement and potentiality. A milieu that is not governed or striated by expectation and hierarchy. Striated space is just the opposite. Striated space describes a milieu in which there are clear rules and laws that prescribe behaviour and ways of being. It is a space with walls and boundaries. I sought escape from striated space in undertaking my trek; I sought queer paradise. Where I could be queer and think queer and still be safe from others. But I was drawn back in, even before I left for my trek. My trek fit

neatly within western US narratives of masculinity (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson, 2010) as a place where white masculinity could be explored. This is a striated space I wandered into, despite seeking smoothness. As I began to attempt a flight from society, it became a narrative of becoming-man, a narrative of becoming-adult. I was tough and gritty and could do anything in nature and walk forever without stopping. While this, on one hand, was not perhaps the ideal I was seeking, it was partially what allowed me to have this experience to begin with. Having this narrative allowed my trek to fit in and be acceptable to my family and others around me. This was adventurous, daring, and crazy in all the right and palatable ways it should be. This narrative is, of course, internalized for me as well - and so I was able to allow myself to take this trek because it fit into such a framework, without feeling too ashamed of my covert queer agenda. I, like WDS, used this fashionable and socially acceptable adventure to be safely away from society, and to become-queer. We both found our way to the Rocky Mountains. Fellow homos in the woods. I feel a strong kinship with you, WDS.

Benemann reflects that it is “strange, that people can find so strong and fascinating a charm in this rude nomadic, and hazardous mode of life as to estrange themselves from home...” (Benemann, 2012, Pg. 74). The first answer that pops to my mind is that if you are already strange (queer) and unaccepted, estrangement is (can be) a relief. Further, home and the strict culture relates back to striated space whilst the afore called ‘nomadic’ way of life is dangerous, risky, and often unpleasant. But it is in smooth space (the liminal space of the American frontier, Benemann, 2012, Pg. 73), thereby increasing its potentiality, intensity, and allowing for many more becomings.

WDS, you seem to have experienced some of this smooth space, as you celebrate the freedom and intensity of frontier life in *Altowan*: “They were a tribe who knew no master, obeyed no law...” (Stewart, 1846/2015, Pg. 51). This is depicted in many daring exploits, close brushes with death, and defending chosen family - queer kin.

The words of your character Watoe, on this deathbed, also reflect a reverence and celebration of this wild life that you so love.

“I could bear,’ said [Watoe], ‘to think of leaving my young fame, and a life of joy, the glorious day, the glad evening, and the dreamy pleasures of the dark; I could look to the bright and distant prairies where I am going, and forget the hunting on the Blackfoot plains - the dance at sun-down and the whispers of the night” (Stewart, 1846/2018, pg.80).

This celebrates the environment and relationship with that environment, including many more-than-human others. It also celebrates the way of life - off seeking dreamy pleasures at dark, of hunting and of glory. The environment that surrounded you in the Rocky Mountains seems to have had a profound influence on you. In fact, you even celebrated it when, back in your castle in Scotland, bringing back paintings of the landscapes and covering your walls in the dreams of returning to the life you loved (Benemann, 2012).

The utopia offered by wild and natural environments continues to be celebrated by you, WDS, with a particular focus on the rendezvous that occurred in the Rocky Mountain fur trade (Benemann, 2012). These rendezvous were opportunities to sell furs caught in the trapping season, and to resupply. More than that, to celebrate, drink, and seek out pleasures after a long season:

“The sound of mirth and wild music, the triumphant shout of drunkenness, the busy hum of that short carnival, where the labor of the adventurous hunter for the bygone season, and even the hope of one to come, are held amply recompensed by the wild extravagances that distinguish the days of jubilee from the season of danger and toil- succeed...Occasionally, through the murky gloom, unlit by any blaze, the dark figure of the lover seeks the promised meeting...” (Stewart, 1846/2018, pg. 95).

This nomadic and challenging life led to its many rewards. For you, WDS, one of the highest and most mentioned rewards appears to be these promised meetings in the dark, the sharing of intimacy and passions with fellow adventurers. These rendezvous with the meeting of lovers are a stark contrast to my few lonely fires during my 2009 trek. While I may have fantasized about having such rendezvous, they were yet to materialize.

Resisting Queer Shame - Love and the Erotic

One way of resisting queer shame, which you, WDS, have demonstrated at length, is engagement in queer love and queer erotics. In many passages already mentioned, you have described your desires and painted scenes of intimacy and passion with men, women, and non-binary folks. Writing and remembering this stands as a defence against the overcoding forces that wrote you to the edge of obscurity in history, and who that denied any claims of queerness in your stories (Benemann, 2012). William Benemann is the first person to write on the subject of your sexuality. But your writing makes it clear that there was passion, there was love, and there were many erotic moments shared. Despite the long delay of time, this is finally being recognized. Opening *Altowan* reveals to the reader the possibility of a queer utopia where all intimacy is possible and natural.

In this wild place and time, you write so many scenes of queer erotics and love. For example: “An affection had sprung up between these two men...and they had sought that shady spot where both were in the habit of bathing - each with the hope of meeting the other” (Stewart, 1846/2018, Pg. 112). Simple moments of passion immortalised or imagined, it makes no difference. It writes into being the possibility that it can happen - for me, for you, for any reader - that we find ourselves in the shady spot, bathing with another man.

This is a resistive and radical act. Particularly considering the era and context in which you had these experiences and wrote them down. Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, Queer Ecologists, write about “the deployment of wilderness in the nineteenth century toward masculine identification...it is clear that bodies have been organized to interact with nature-spaces in a particularly disciplined and heterosexualized manner” (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson, 2010, Pg. 20). To share these scenes of love and erotic encounters flies in the face of that enforced heteronormative expectation of experiences in nature-spaces.

And still you pushed onwards, writing about

“The nights when Roallan and he lay together on the buffalo skins of their lodge...A few excursions taken together, bound them closer still, where the same food was divided between them, the same wants had been satisfied, and danger to one was danger to both, pleasure to one was pleasure to both, and there was no object deserving attention to one that must not necessarily interest the other” (Stewart, 1846/2018, Pg. 155-156).

Writing into your memory and into our memories that nature-spaces can be queer spaces too, and that utopian possibilities exist where queer paradise, free from the disciplinary forces, flourishes.

One of your most touching passages describes the death of Watoe, who while dying expressed that “..the strongest feeling of his heart was his affection for Altowan... ‘there is one to whose ear I would were borne the last tidings of Watoe...’ (Watoe, dying of a bullet wound) (Stewart, 1846/2018, Pg. 80). After hearing the news of Watoe’s death, Altowan secluded himself for a full day of mourning. The mourning of this lost love signals the importance of their relationship - and might it also signal the mourning of a life that you had to leave behind? A life where these passions were possible?

(Re)Storying - Can there Be Healing?

WDS was certainly a powerful agent in his own process of healing. In fact, the act of writing his novel *Altowan* (as well as his other writing) could be a (re)storying. For WDS, this (re)storying of himself “is inextricably tied to the (re)storing of places, and ethics are implicated in both projects” (Willis, 2013, Pg. 13). As previously discussed, Willis explores the ways in which we can (re)story places alongside the more-than-human, including other animals. I regret that I have not focused much in this work on the other animals that WDS encountered on his travels - however, in *Altowan* he has complicated relationships with the buffalo that he hunts, with bears he defends himself against, and with the fur trapping industry on which his real and fictionalised adventures depended. While the book does cover

some of these interactions, it does not do so in a way that allows the animals presented to act as moral agents, which is what Willis (2013) is arguing for in this piece. However, what his narrative does seem to do is engage with an exploration of how things should and could be that is deeply tied to the place of the Rocky Mountains. Throughout the novel, WDS offers an engagement with being in the land and depending on the land alongside his interactions with other humans and lovers. In this novel, WDS (re)stories his life as an adventurer filled with passion who has loved and been loved in queer ways. This may have allowed him to give meaning to his experience (Willis & Schmidt, 2018) in ways that made the day-to-day reality of his life after returning to Scotland more tolerable. This was the story he chose to tell to himself and to others, and may have helped him to experience some healing, despite being separated from his place of healing.

This potential for healing is important to share and engage with. I write it here because, as I have said, WDS's story has been overlooked, ignored, and intentionally swept under the rug by historians. By bearing witness to his (re)storying, I am able to perhaps extend his reach and recognition. While he is (re)storying himself and the place he makes meaning of, I am (re)storying him as a forequeer. Willis (2009) discusses the potential to make a difference in offering alternative narratives to those that are dominant and oppressive. I am proud to have met you, WDS, and I hope that I have been able to do justice to you and bring you back to your much-deserved status as a forequeer.

WDS lives on through his writings and through the way they influence others, myself included. The ongoing dialogue with him might suggest that he can be influenced by this relationship, too. The idea of WDS can change and shift - he can be remembered and celebrated as I have tried to do here, and as Benemann (2012) has attempted in his account of WDS. As I discussed in the chapter "Queer Kin" WDS might be drawn into a shared space where queer utopia lives on. This survival of hope and shared experience of queer love and erotics might act as a soothing balm for all the sufferings of a life denied. Despite all the cases where queer experiences are drawn back into the norm and erased, this writing has lived on and stands as a clear demonstration that nature narratives might be used in

collaboration with queer love and eroticism to resist queer shame and offer some healing and hoping for a queer utopia.

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Diary Interlude: Day 32

Day 32

We all got up around the same time this morning, packed, and left as a group. The order the same as the day before. We went up and down all the way to Stoney Pass (side note reads: here I was given name “Indie” by Josh), where there was a trail angel by the name of ‘wiffer,’ a woman who gave us all what she called a “mama hug.” Then we got candy, etc. Yum! She took group photos for us, and we were off. When we were on our final ascent to the Elk Creek Drainage, the trail was foggy, and me, Ryan, and Chris tried to leave markers for the rest. We reached the top and waited, where we saw 3 forest service people and 2 Llamas. They were out working on signage, so we told them our opinion on what to do with the trail before. We all regrouped and prepared for the descent. We went down some steep switchbacks to a river by a cave, where we pumped water and went a short ways into the cave. So we descended rapidly (Chris taking 8 billion photos on the way) and hit treeline (yay!) Ryan & I went down to find a campsite, Chris with the rest b/c of bad knees from catching baseball in high school. We found a nice one, set up (very close, limited flat space) and started a fire going. We ate, went and saw the falls, and then had marshmallows and smores, super-duper! Then we went to bed, I said goodbye to Ryan and Chris because they were leaving early to get to Silverton post office before it closed for the weekend. I got e-mail from Chris & Josh to trade pictures, etc.

Dear Nineteen-year-old Ryan - A sense of belonging. That's what jumps out to me from your journal entry above. You were even given a trail name by your new pals and were trying to leave signage for other group members. You were a part of this wee family, briefly. You showed a taking care and looking out for those coming after you - both those that you know and those that will try to walk this trail later. The together-ness even stands out with your

comments about your group members' characteristics (like Chris taking a weird number of photos). There is an early morning start, bolstered along by a whole group getting up early together. What did you make of the encounters with "trail angels"? I know that they were such a relief at times - care and concern for your well-being and a treat from civilization, usually. But reading about them in your journal entries, they also sound like strikingly intimate encounters with people you've never met and are unlikely to meet again. Still, the food and care bolstered you along your way. The absolute climax was an evening spent exploring your surroundings with your new-found group and sharing junk food around a warm fire.

So much is immediately changed by being together. My writing seems energized and enlivened when I am with others. In the walking, so much more is happening than when I was on my own. The trail, the surrounding environment becomes completely different when traveling with a new assemblage. The experience of the waterfall, the Elk Creek Drainage, even the landscape of a confusing trail is different with this assemblage than when alone. Those days traveling with this group have much more written in a more excited tone than elsewhere. The looking back while traversing the landscape to check for well-being and engage relationally demonstrates a mattering (Barad, 2007). A mattering, with the double meaning clarified by Barad as being important to, having meaning for, and being made up of matter. Mattering here in the sense that I existed, was acknowledged to exist, and my existence had meaning for myself and my companions.

Here (Queer) We Go Again

After deciding that I would not attempt the lengthy trek from The Borders of Scotland to Cape Wrath (the process of this decision is captured in other chapters, mostly in “Writing a Visceral Failure”), I still felt I needed to follow through with a new research-walk. This was the only walk which was taken with the prior intention that it would contribute directly to this thesis. In September of 2018, myself and two companions agreed to go on a walk together up Ben Nevis, near Fort William, Scotland. We planned to take the train up together, hike Ben Nevis the following day, and then have a night of recuperation in Fort William before returning on the following day.

During the trek, I wrote reflectively at the end of each of the 3 days for 10 minutes. I had my companions complete informed consent documents confirming that each of them knew this was for my research, and that in my writing I might anonymously reference our experiences together. They will be referred to as ‘A’ and ‘B.’ The following writing about our walk together is thus informed by my reflective writings from each of those days, as well as my retrospective reflections. Any excerpts from the original reflective writing *will be italicized to distinguish them from other reflections*. I will engage with the different impact that hiking with a group of queer folks had (as opposed to my previous solo experiences), and where shame (dis)appears in this new assemblage. I will examine this through the following subsections: ‘Why Walk?’, which examines what is different and important about this walking-as-inquiry; ‘Inhabiting,’ which explores that concept and draws on my thoughts about walking as an unfolding process; ‘Becoming Queer Kin’ returns Donna Haraway’s notion of ‘making kin’ (2016) and explores the emergence of this process through our walking together; and lastly, ‘Together in Precarity,’ which explores what was produced by our togetherness and what it might *do*.

Why Walk?

This thesis has been largely inspired by one of my trekking experiences, one which took place in 2009. During that trek, something happened. Rather, a great deal happened and continues to happen around that experience. Flashes of insight around what happened, and how it happened, can be found throughout each chapter of this thesis. Walking and trekking, in its many forms described and discussed in this thesis, has forced something to happen. Jonathan Wyatt (2019), drawing on Hélène Cixous, discusses the 'gesture of writing' - a gesture of love that is "fragile but not futile" (Wyatt, 2019, Pg. 19). The claim in Wyatt's book is that writing matters, that it can make a difference, that it connects, and that entering a space of potentiality such as writing, comedy, or therapy is a place where "something might happen, something might be possible" (ibid, Pg. 21). I draw on this in my own reflective writing process, stepping into that potential space and making a gesture to my readers and my selves. Another potential space where something might happen has, for me, been while walking or trekking. The intensities that come together with walking allow for thoughts, feelings, and development to emerge. This experience of the potential for something to happen whilst walking or trekking encouraged me to take this up as a process of researching, as a process of making meaning. Walking seems to encourage intensity and affect, and did so on our Ben Nevis trip:

Being with others I feel similar anxieties about hiking and safety, but more so than usually; can we be safe? Will I push them too far? Am I responsible for their safety? This was my idea and I am the most experienced.

In this chapter I will follow this affect and intensity laden experience as a learning process. I needed to walk because I wish to engage with the pathways along which experience is forged, rather than attempting to extract information exclusively from memories. While walking, we inhabited the land as we moved through it, as we moved along a path. Through this, a situated and context dependent form of knowing emerges. It is an expert phronesis (Flyvbjerg, 2001), an embodied knowing that becomes rather than being built. We learn through the movements that we undertake - moving through landscape, being sensorially immersed in the land, and the physicality of walking - the tripping and slipping,

the rhythmic strides, and the interaction of body and environment. Jo Lee Vergunst (2008) also explores this process of tripping and slipping as a process of knowledge creation. Springgay and Truman have brought the question of movement and walking-as-inquiry into the realm of auto-ethnography, and they posit that: "The question of movement is at the heart of this endeavor. Not a movement from one point to another, but rather a thinking-in-movement" (Springgay & Truman, 2017, 84). Finding my way as I went has a way of freeing me to move and think my way through various topics and challenges. "The rhythm of walking took its lead and its tempo from the environment of which it was part" (Vergunst, 2008, Pg. 116). This is a form of knowing and researching that has a liveness (Springgay and Truman 2017) and an openness to the co-creation of knowledge by walkers and the place around them. Tim Ingold is a Cultural Anthropologist who has extensively studied ways of walking as an ethnographic approach. He has also studied concepts of space and place and how they relate to movement through an environment. Ingold contends "that lives are led not inside places but through, around, to and from them, from and to places elsewhere" (Ingold, 2009, Pg. 33). I wondered what might be captured by inhabiting the trail and writing reflectively about it after each experience. "Walking-writing is a practice of invention, where the movement of thought is more-than a moment of walking, thinking, or inscribing" (Springgay & Truman, 2017, Pg. 131). This concept of more-than is difficult to capture on paper. There is something, something intangible but significant about our experience. It resists being put down on paper here.

This intangible and nebulous significance begins to form an answer to the question 'Why is a research walk necessary?' When I sit at my desk in Edinburgh nine years after the 2009 trek I have often been writing and reflecting on, I am not within that experience of inhabiting and creating the place that I am writing about. As such, I believe something is lost, this intangible thing that emerges through the walking aspect of my previous treks. As a response, I have considered a variety of different ways that I might attempt to incorporate the visceral and embodied experience of walking. "The actuality of walking itself, the sheer presence of the body in the world. It is the actual underfoot and enveloping conditions that

constitute the experience of the walk” (Vergunst, 2008, Pg. 106). I considered the grandiose task of another month-long trek, a trek that, in theory, was intended to replicate the intensity of the 2009 trek. At first, I felt that I had to undertake such a lengthy trek for my research to be valid and for myself to be valid. I wrote about this in the chapters ‘The Cannibal’ and ‘Writing A Visceral Failure’. Having decided that this was not, in fact, necessary or healthy, I decided to instead take a short trip with companions that incorporated reflective writing. What I will learn is, as of yet, still unknown. This method becomes “a practice of being *inside* a research event” (Springgay & Truman, 2017, Pg. 83). It is important now that I consider what it means to walk-as-inquiry and why it is different than other forms of knowing, and necessary to this project.

Another important motivation to walk again is that I have changed a great deal since my 2009 trekking experience. I am curious how the changes in me might lead to a similar or different experience this time around. While on my original trek, I was in the process of trying to see if I could get my body and my sexuality to behave in the way I wished them to. The way they were socially expected to. This was a time in my life when I asked myself aggressive and self-defeating questions about whether I would ever have a boyfriend, and if I was worthy of such a relationship at all. Self-worth was all tied up with my progress on the trek and on my experience of myself through the homophobic lens that society had given me to work with. Over the last decade, much has changed. Ten years ago, I was wondering if I could be myself, be good enough, be wild enough, be stereotypically fit enough in nature. Now here I was now on Ben Nevis using the mountain to live the life I had dreamed of - or at least to keep working at those dreams: to test out relationships, confront my anxieties, be queer in new and unexpected ways that I would not have imagined before. Nineteen-year-old me would not have dared to do some of the unexpected and untraditional things I now do. For example, I now play with gender norms by piercing my ears and wearing a dramatic tassel earring to academic conferences. Nineteen-year-old Ryan would not have been likely to do something he viewed as so transgressive.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) use the concept 'lines of flight' to describe a direction and intensity of becoming. Lines of flight can be understood as a course of happening, of change and development, which comes into interaction with other lines and forms assemblages (combinations of lines of flight) as it passes through. I will illustrate this concept with an example from my experience. In some ways, this new trek allowed me to expand on my dreams and my ongoing experiences. To trace a line of flight from previous experience to new experience, across the ocean to Scotland, across my own gender expectations to being queer and less conforming to gender. Tracing these flows of intensity through research has also become more possible. The line of flight is not just a line connecting A and B, or previous experience and current experience. This line of flight continues even now and has no end point - it is a process of becoming, in this case my becoming queer, which it traces along. The dreams I once had have not been put to bed, but have morphed, changed, grown - and continue to do so. I find this concept useful because it illustrates the ongoingness of this process, and the resistance to stagnation and identification. I have worked with what I know, and that is my previous experiences, current experiences, and those in between. I have drawn on these to trace this line of flight and view the process of becoming as it unfolds. I can now answer the questions that I posed – I am absolutely worthy of a happy and healthy relationship and am making that happen; I am fit enough exactly as my body is; I can be good enough without always pushing to the extreme; and my relationship with nature and understanding of my connection with nature has grown and changed, too. Where I once looked for certain and final answers to these questions, I now open myself up to the process that is unfolding as I become.

Inhabiting

First day of a three-day hiking experience with A and B. Today we had some struggles that were made better for being together. We met at the train station for the 1100 train to

Glasgow and transferred there. But we were ambitious with our gap between trains there and 3 bad things happened: 1) The Bread Meats Bread bag tore; 2) We missed our train; 3) I bought unnecessary tickets to Anniesland. In the end we had to get a coach ticket to Ft. William, which A was very helpful in figuring out.

How did the walk begin? What is it like to begin? “The first steps we take are tentative, even experimental...As yet unsure of our bearing or direction” (Ingold & Vergunst, 2008, Pg. 3). In fact, our steps were not just experimental, they were clumsy and filled with little errors - the spilling of a food bag, missing our train, and buying tickets we didn’t need. In the end, we navigated these new challenges and made it to Fort William on time. For me, a walk includes not only the particular period of time whilst making our way along a trail - the walk begins as soon as we leave our doors and persists until we make our way back. The walk is occurring where the line meets the unfolding of reality and produces the line just as it traces along it. While the walking-up-a-mountain part of our walk had not yet begun, this was still an example of us figuring things out, learning in movement as the landscape unfolded around us. Landscape is not just in ‘nature’ areas, but includes the urban, like the streets of Glasgow where our little errors occurred. This unfolding landscape is just as meaningful as our later experiences on the trail, which came with similar struggles:

We stumbled and staggered on the way down the rocky terrain, repeating the mantra ‘please don’t break your ankle’ for some, while I caught my breath after seeing or hearing someone slip a foot for a moment.

Tripping, slipping, and making our way across the landscape, the landscape and the company forging our understandings. Ingold and Vergunst argue that, “walking is itself a way of knowing” (2008, Pg. 5). This walking-as-inquiry keeps the walkers, us, at the edge of our line of flight, immersed in our becoming. Ingold later explained that this is not only true of walking, but of all forms of movement (2009). During my trek in 2009, I experienced an intensity of everything that was drawn out by the physicality of walking and *inhabiting* the land. “For inhabitants, things do not exist so much as occur” (Ingold, 2009, Pg. 41). The walk did not happen in a space, but rather it happened as I moved through and created place. “In

his movements, [the inhabitant] threads his way through this world rather than routing across it from point to point” (Ingold, 2009, Pg. 37). Inhabitant knowledge “is forged in movement” (ibid, Pg. 41). Going for a walk is an act of inhabiting the land, an act of inhabiting that is itself a knowledge-producing process.

This use of this term ‘inhabiting’ conjures, for me, concerns about inhabitants and ownership of the land. In exploring whether we belong to the land or the land belongs to us, Olwig (2008), who, like Tim Ingold, has contributed to the development of walking as an ethnographic method, discusses the experience of walking through landscapes. “The walker experiences the material depth of the proximate environment through” the senses in movement, “the touched, smelled and heard [as well as seen] proximate world is thereby woven into the walker’s sensory field, leading him or her to experience the landscape” (Olwig, 2008, Pg. 84). To be immersed and surrounded by landscape, to be inhabiting, is to be in the middle. “The middle can’t be known in advance of research. You have to be ‘in it,’ situated and responsive. You are not there to report on what you find or what you seek, but to activate thought. To agitate it” (Springgay & Truman, 2017, Pg. 87). Intensity was stirred up, agitated, in many ways on our Ben Nevis walk. I offer another example from the day before we were actually on the mountain;

Walking back from the grocery store we were walking rushed and silent with our grocery bags. A led, pushing up the speed. B took the rear. I felt the pressure to balance and manage the speed, difficult from the middle. But it also felt good because we were together and in sync, rushing towards accomplishing our common goal.

I mentioned ‘our common goal’ in the above reflection. It is interesting to think about what this common ‘goal’ or ‘end’ is. In my reflective account, I really think I meant nothing more than ‘grocery shopping.’ But if I open this up to consider the larger question of goals for the whole trip, the question of what our goal was is much more complex. Was our goal to make it to the top of Ben Nevis? To make it back home safely? To enjoy ourselves? To complete a research task? Any and all of these were a part of my motivation - I cannot speak

for the others. There is a circularity, an iterative going out and coming back - as soon as we stepped out the door, were on our way back home - we just took the long way home, inhabiting at the fold as we went. It was different to experience this with other people, to walk with companions. While some affects are soothed, such as the anxiety when travel arrangements fall apart, others still are agitated - for example my anxiety for the wellbeing and enjoyment of the others. Of course, there was much more at work than the three of us humans - the more-than-human world shapes the unfolding, too.

The mountain became something for some of us...

Towering above and around us was Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in the UK. The trail was busy that day, and we gradually picked our way up the hills surrounding Ben Nevis - eventually beginning our ascent into the clouds and mist. I was as lost in the mist as I have begun to feel in this research. And time is running out (near the top). Lost in the mist, lost in my panic. The mist and my panic, indecipherable. Of course, a great deal of the hardest work of summiting a mountain is at the top. There is no option other than going right up the steep side at that point, typically up and through rocky fields, gaining significant elevation in a short period of time. It is cold and harsh, and the wind whips something awful. The mountain, in that way, is not unlike my experience of writing this thesis. So much to do, which must inevitably be brought together at the end. The steep sprint for the top. Of course, once at the top we must trace back down again and make/trace the line of our becoming(s). Ben Nevis became a thesis for me, and Ben Nevis also came to signify my relational anxiety. *I also feel new anxieties – do they like me? Is everyone having a good time? Do they think this is lame?*

These anxieties are not new to me - but they are present when walking with others and not when walking alone. Our impact was left on the Ben, too - hard to spot, and perhaps not lasting. But we left an impact, if even in the smallest way. We shifted rocks, turned pebbles, kicked up dust and perhaps spread seeds in doing so. Inhabiting the land appears to be more than just experiencing the land by moving through it - when you inhabit the land, you become a part of it, and it becomes a part of you. You are a part of this assemblage,

impacting and being impacted by the unfolding at the front of the line, in assemblage with the more-than-human and the human companions.

Becoming Queer Kin

A walking-writing practice brings research material to life. It is a creative and relational inquiry process, at its heart. Ken Gale writes about how the

“continual processual living with the power to affect and be affected is, creatively and paradoxically, both the death of and the means by which data can have life; it is in the intensive multiplicity of space/time entanglements in which becoming in the event is the only sense in which data as a living, animating concept can give life to the inquiries we wish to make of the world”
(Gale, 2018, Pg. 150).

This approach to knowing and bringing liveliness - animation - to inquiry is essential to the inquiry that I have been immersing myself in. Sharing that experience with a small group of people increased the intensity and brought what was perhaps missing into place. That is, affecting and being affected. This passing of affect, of course, needn't be limited to only humans, but includes in its assemblage the myriad others that come into play. Ben Nevis itself, the cloud of mist and fog, the stones underfoot and surrounding us, the coach that brought us up the winding route to Fort William. But I have to insist that something more seems to happen when the number of others involved increases - and having traveling companions assures that this 'something more' happens more often.

We were overall very quiet hikers, going on in a cluster or line, often A and I up ahead and pausing occasionally until B re-joined us. I felt myself trying to manage the emotional tension and keep us moving and also trying to keep the pace reasonable for everyone (physically), but emotional pace had a significant impact all the same.

Each of us had our own process that we were engaged with - our own lines of flight - and they came together in this shared experience in which they were affected by one another,

producing a potent experience of our walk. Dealing with relationship changes, entering new phases of life, and coming to grips with what these mean for each of us was somewhere under the surface. But what seemed to come through even more than that was a bonding between us in which we shared concern and affection for one another.

I had a fantasy that I might be able to undertake a new trek or hike that allowed me to experience something again. I did, but perhaps not what I had expected to. What I experienced most strongly was a coming together, a becoming interdependent that happens during any intense outdoor experience. At the beginning, there was a constant push and pull between us about searching for the right rhythm, which I felt was my responsibility. However, after some time, we fell into a routine, a returning and continuous cycle. We would drift apart to some degree based on our individual paces, with myself and one other grouped and the remaining member of our trio a short way behind. At first, I was anxious about us being spread out. However, I then realized that the pace that we developed was not about a single marching rhythm that we followed consistently. The pace was the checking over the shoulder, the waiting for everyone to come together again, checking to see that we were well fed and had ample water. A caring rhythm in which we became a queer family for the trip. It was not pre-determined that all my walking companions should be queer - but the two people that were interested in joining me were, in fact, queer. This family, these kin, was not queer for the sole reason of its members being queer - it is queer because it is not born of inheritance, because it is chosen and built. This caring rhythm was forged through what Haraway describes as "Sympoiesis - Making-with" (2016, Pg. 5). No one of us was solely responsible for this rhythm, but it was a rhythm through which we became responsible to each other. A rhythm made as much by the wind, rain, rocks, and hills as by the three of us. And then, both before we knew it - and long after we were desperate to finish:

We made it up Ben Nevis! I didn't think we would, but after a day of 'one-foot-in-front-of-the-other' we got there.

I noticed, by the end of our very long and cold day, that all three of us were on high alert for the well-being of our walk-worn companions. The descent was steep, with many

large rocks to trip on and small gravel areas to slip on. Feet shuffled and we all looked to the source of the shuffle, making sure the shuffler was alright. It was a simple gesture, and perhaps an expected one. We made kin as a group of queer walkers that day, looking out for one another's well being physically and emotionally. The mountain came to represent things for each of us. For me, the mountain was my every piling anxiety about whether my new relationship would become the something significant that I hoped it would. Did this person want to be with me? Did they really like me? Simple anxieties that were projected onto nature in a familiar way that is often cited in literature regarding outdoor therapies (Gass, Gillis, & Russell, 2012) - in this case, perhaps another experience of queer kin (Haraway, 2016). Donna Haraway, in her book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* insists on the importance of making kin in order to survive the difficult times we live in - times of late-stage capitalism, political strife, and environmental disaster. She insists that

“The task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present. Our task is to make trouble, stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places” (Haraway, 2016, Pg.1).

This is in the spirit of staying with the trouble, of being immersed in the unfolding challenges rather than hiding from them or ignoring them. Coming to matter to one another and act accordingly, to be willing to affect and be affected by the human and more-than-human that surrounds us, is the key to moving forward and making meaning that is unexpected and new.

We came to matter to one another in new and unique ways in the frame of those 3 days, in a different way than we might have done in our day to day lives.

We had dinner in Edinburgh tonight. A friend joined us 3 for pizza. She was most welcome and knows us all, but it quickly became clear that the 3 of us have inside jokes and ways of relating not shared by her.

Of course, we do matter to one another in our daily lives too - very much so. But the unique assemblage that we become as queer kin created the space of intense affective sharing and meaning -making.

Sharing the picture online was a real high point – us as a group and accomplished together.

Together in Precarity

There is a constant precarity in being queer. There is a precarity to feeling, and knowing, that we must always fight to avoid what Stacy Holman Jones and Anne Harris call “everyday- or micro-annihilations” (2019, Pg. 35). There are consistent reminders of this precarity - the constant votes around the globe about whether we should have rights or not, the loss of rights once gained, the attacks on our families. Just one very recent example is USA’s judgement of some surrogate-born children as not being citizens despite the citizenship of their LGBTQ parents (Hansler for *CNN*, 2019). Holman Jones and Harris insist that this precarity takes its toll. Through Haraway, we have already briefly explored the precarious nature of being in a world in the midst of an environmental crisis, and in walking we also experience precarity. As we ascended Ben Nevis, we entered a cloud and walked through the foggy mist that that brings with it. There was almost no visibility, water from all directions, and harrowing wind.

We had tensions and unexpected issues, the usual fatigue and exhaustion, mist, rain, and very poor visibility at the top.

We just kept going one-foot-in-front-of-the-other. “If nothing else, queer people know about weathering storms” (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 60) - we can keep pushing, keep resisting, with our heads down until something better comes. We didn’t know how near the top we might be. At last, we made it there.

There was more relief than elation at the top, but we did share the pack of birthday cake Oreos that I carried up!

Still, the precarity hadn't passed at the top - it was the summit of the mountain, but not the end of our precarity. We had to get back down intact after that.

A couldn't feel or move his fingers much after the summit, which scared me, and I did my best to help.

The situation could have gone from frightening to severe at a moment's notice. I took his soaked gloves off and wrapped his hands up in my thick, dry scarf. In all of these situations, it is the being together that makes precarity survivable.

Each of us is on the unfolding end of our line of flight, immersed in a walking-as-inquiry. For those three days, our lines of flight came together to form an assemblage - an unexpected but imminent combination that produced something that is unique to that assemblage. Our assemblage includes the landscape we moved on and the more-than-human actors, too. Ben Nevis, the mist and clouds - these were all part of our assemblage. This coming together shows what Haraway has argued - "that is, we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations..." (Haraway, 2016, Pg. 4) if we are to survive the precarious happenings of our time.

This inquiry that is autoethnographic, writing-as-inquiry, and walking-as-inquiry brings us Queers together to demonstrate how it, and activism through it "is a way of building community. A practice, a philosophy, reiterating the links between personal narrative, participatory culture, community organizing and civic engagement" (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 66). Holman Jones and Harris describe here what I have referenced already. The coming together to create queer kin, to find ways of connecting and co-creating (Haraway's Symptoiesis/making-with) is a tool for surviving precarity and perhaps finding our way forward. It is a passionate engagement that is open to affecting and being affected that allows for this to unfold. Holman Jones and Harris encourage us "to find freedom from this current oppression through unity, through community, through emotionally bonded activity." (ibid, Pg. 66). This affect-laden engagement with one another is certainly a powerful and emotionally bonded activity.

Walking was painful. It brought out the exhaustion in us, and the emotional scars. It brought out the self-conscious nervousness. But it also brought out the determination, the care, and the resolve we need in the coming times. It also brought us together through shared pain and mutual support.

This walking-writing research was both creative and relational. It is a practice of engaging in unexpected and uncontrolled ways and seeing what emerges. Jonathan Wyatt writes that this inquiry “is not only about being at your desk in the back room typing...sometimes you need to move, to move differently” (Wyatt, 2019, Pg. 10). This Creative-Relational Inquiry allowed a new and different experience to emerge that would not have done so sat at a desk and typing. I had to not only move, but to move differently. In this case, moving in assemblage with queer others allowed us to become queer kin, it allowed us to matter in new ways, and brought into being an understanding of something for each of us. For me, it allowed an understanding that walking together felt less precarious, and was a fuller experience ripe with becomings and engaged in process. So, while I was the one of us who was utilising our experience as research, writing-as-autoethnographic-inquiry with it, it was truly a ‘we-search’ (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, Pg. 7). As Holman Jones and Harris suggest, we-search with other queer folks allows us to open up ever more possibilities and acknowledge the relationality of our research and knowing practices.

A finding community, a togetherness that is helped into being by the intensity of experience and physical conditions. A togetherness that reclaims the vibrancy of passing through the unique space that we can re-make as peaceful (Haraway, 2016) and safe from the heteronormativity that is overcoding so much of our lives in painful and stagnating ways. Over-coding is the process by which our own experiences, thoughts, and ideals are covered up and replaced by the norms that society, in particular heteronormative society, insists we adhere to. For an in-depth discussion of Over-coding see the chapter “Writing A Visceral Failure.”

With this new togetherness, we were able to bring queer companionship back into assemblage with ‘wild’ places. This was like coming home - coming home to fill the world in

our way, make use of and come into relationship with the Ben, and be used by the Ben as well. This was the opposite of the flight into becoming “natural - masculine, rural, virile” (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson, 2010, Pg. 2). A return to nature, not an attempt at dominating nature. Rather, we had gone into wilderness and found a place and an assemblage in which we might thrive and offer support to and care for our queer kin.

Concluding Thoughts: Where Has the Shame Gone?

I keep asking myself, where is the shame in this chapter? I have scarcely mentioned the shame at all. This leads me to wonder whether this different sort of trekking with a Queer Kin results in something different, something that takes the focus away from shame. Shame is largely produced as a self-conscious emotion (Gilbert, 2002), one that is produced based on our perceptions of what others perceive about us. The assumptions about how we ought to be is built from the norms we receive from society and our significant attachment figures. It can then be further invoked or avoided based on our current social and environmental surroundings. When walking with a group of queer kin, we are liberated from the self-conscious (whether conscious or not) possibility that those around us will not approve of our sexuality.

Nature had been a destination for me previously, a destination that suggested I “could be reasonably confident of [my] dominance,” and by so doing avoid becoming one of “a legion of feminized men who were clearly not of the same manly caliber as the likes of Theodore Roosevelt” (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson, 2010, Pg. 4) - and thus avoid queer shame. It was an attempt to re-enact the imagined masculine narrative that would show my worth as a man - unstoppable, self-sufficient, and above my emotions. This drive is absent from the Ben Nevis trip. Shame may be one of the costs to living precariously, to living on the edge of disaster and always having to fight. Perhaps through an “intense commitment and collaborative work and play with other terrans...” (Haraway, 2016, Pg. 101) we might

find a way forward that does not depend on shame enforcing norms that create precarity where it need not be.

I have tried to lay out here some of the insights to what occurs when walking-as-inquiry allows for an engagement with the more-than human. When we are able to inhabit the land, come into new assemblages that encourage our becomings and allow us to keep with the precarity of walking at the front of a line into the unfolding landscape. If shame might be the cost of precarity, and I have argued that precarity is made manageable and even productive in being-together, then perhaps togetherness and community in unexpected and divergent ways can be a healing salve for shame.

Diary Interlude: Day 34

Day 34 (marked as day 33)

Blank - No further entries

Dear Nineteen-year-old Ryan - Why did you stop writing here? I recall the last few days. Dad joined for the end of the trail - this was important to him, he wanted to be supportive and was proud you were finishing a trail he has always wanted to hike. By this time you were in peak trail shape, though pretty worn down and eager to be finished with this trip. I think all 3 days were over 20 miles, one being nearer to 30. This was difficult for both of us, but particularly so for Dad. But he's tough, and he pushed through. The end of the trail was lovely - we were picked up in Durango and went to eat something incredibly better than simple trail food - pizza, maybe? We explored Durango for the following day as well and then headed back to Denver. All over, chapter closed. You were so tired, a tired that spread to the core. It was wonderful to have company at the end. I wonder if you stopped writing because you were satisfied by the company and engaged in the moment? More likely, I think you were too tired to remember or care at the end of the day and decided to fill it in later. Of course, once free of the trail, you only wanted to rest and not write in a journal about the long harrowing days.

The writing of this thesis has been utterly exhausting, maybe in a similar way to the hiking of that trek. It has seemed to drag on forever, and then still require a sprint at the end. How can I sprint when I can only just barely put one foot in front of the other? The last week I have been writing almost nothing - just like I had stopped writing at the end of the trek. Of course, the walking in the case of the thesis is writing, and so I can't fully stop. But I want to stop, I want to walk away from it and never revisit this exhausting process again. To put up my pen (well, keyboard) for years, just as I put up my hiking boots for years after the trek. Reading and writing about shame, about my own shame especially, is beyond exhausting. Facing down demons until they're daemons, finding myself learning viscerally about myself,

decoding shame where I can, accepting the abject body in order to diminish the social power of that abjection. It has all been just as personal as I thought it would be, but so much longer and more exhausting - harrowing - than I ever imagined.

Conclusion: Walking Away from Shame

It is difficult to know exactly how to end a project of this size and scope; a wide variety of topics have been covered. What I can say for certain is that I am tired of shame, and that carrying it has become ever more exhausting. In this short conclusion, I will attempt to tie together some of the threads that have traversed across various chapter facets in order to offer what these imbricated explorations of shames might be able to offer as a whole. I have concluded the chapters of this thesis with thoughts on how they contribute to the overall understanding of queer shame and body shame. I have also made mention of the various ways in which shame can be dealt with: Decoding, Multiplicity and Becoming Queer, Daemonizing, Suffering/Resisting/Hoping With, (Re)Storying, and Being Together in Precarity.

Decoding

Decoding is a process that I have proposed might be one way of undoing and protecting ourselves from the overcoding processes by which heteronormative society attempts to force us into pre-determined modes of being. This overcoding, for queer folks, can only result in abject and shamed lives. I have suggested three decoding forces, though I think many of the solutions offered in this conclusion might also be conceptualised as decoding. The three explicitly offered are: writing-as-inquiry, being in touch with the visceral experience of moving, and the queer art of failure. Each of these might be viewed as a way to decode what has been overcoded, and thus set free abject parts of the self. This is a process that I am myself still actively engaged in, and a process by which I realized throughout the course of this thesis that I needed to change my way of walking to embrace self-care.

Multiplicity and Becoming-Queer

Becoming queer is a process that I suggest is essential for any of us who have been raised in a heteronormative fashion, and in a heteronormative world. This is an always happening and always unfolding process – much like overcoding is always happening. The two work against each other in opposite directions. The ongoingness of becoming queer must actively resist overcoding forces to build a life worth living. In order to find our way through a process of becoming queer, I suggest that finding ways to mourn our losses is essential. Our losses include forequeers who have died or been killed. Our losses also include the loss of a queer childhood that allows us to grow up unashamed of who we are. In order to engage in this becoming, we also must embrace our multiplicity. Embracing multiplicity allows us to honour parts of ourselves that have become abjected by us or by society. Once we recognize and embrace these parts of ourselves, we are able to live more authentically as queer. By the time we have begun to observe our own situation and mourn for whatever losses have accumulated around us we have already entered into a becoming queer.

Daemonization

I use the term Daemonization, alongside (re)monstering, to refer to the process by which we take something within ourselves that has been formerly conceived of as completely bad and invite it into conversation with us. If we are able to listen to the parts of ourselves that even we experience as abject, huge rewards are made available to us in terms of self-understanding and growth. My example of this was the Cannibal, and It had many lessons for me once I was able to listen. I suggest that some of the learning that might come from this is about how best to take care of ourselves in challenging circumstances. That is to say, simply put, develop robust self-care practices. Further, through our ability to acknowledge our so-called monsters as capable of offering something to us, we might be able to understand what constructed them in the first place. This learning is another benefit to daemonization. Moving an abjected part of demon to daemon allows it to take on the role

that the Ancient Greeks gave to the daemons – they become the spirits that help us along our journey to becoming our best selves.

Suffering/Resisting/Hoping With

Everyday events can help tie us together through affect. Once we are tied together, we have the opportunity to recognize how another can change us, and how we might change them. Through being open to dialogue, queer folk might be able to offer virtual spaces that are neither them nor the other person. In these in between spaces, the process of *with* might be able to occur. This would allow us to share in the suffering of others, resist the forces that attempt to keep us in our places as productive and normalized subjects of society, and then hold on to hope together for a better tomorrow. Through holding on to this hope together, we might make a monument of ourselves that reminds us of our already existing resilience and ability to persevere along the path required to make the changes we wish to see in the world. *With* becomes the way forward that will build communities and a queer life worth living.

(Re)Storying Forequeers

(Re)Storying our forequeers is a venture with multiple benefits. It is a practice that helps us identify where we came from as queer people, and who we have to relate to across generations. This process of restorying might prove to be healing for both us and for the forequeers in question, drawing them into a space where their stories are told with an emphasis on honesty and on the parts of them that may have been too shameful to allow speaking in their times. For us, the healing might be as simple as having someone to relate to. We might also learn moral lessons from our forequeers about how to survive in difficult times. Restorying our forequeers is another practice in making queer kin that provides us with community and more hope for a queer utopia that is still far away and yet-to-come.

We might also find ways through our forequeers to celebrate their erotic encounters unashamedly, and thus perhaps be more able to make use of the shame defying powers of the erotic. This survival of hope and shared experience of queer love and erotics might act as a soothing balm for all the sufferings of a life denied. Despite all the cases where queer experiences are drawn back into the norm and erased, this writing has lived on and stands as a clear demonstration that nature narratives might be used in collaboration with queer love and eroticism to resist queer shame and offer some healing and hoping for a queer utopia.

Being Together in Precarity

Much of the various challenges to queer shame and body shame that I have offered include others in some way. Remembering them and telling their stories, being *with* them, embracing their monstrosity, mourning our own and our community losses, and decoding through experiences that are open to change.

Being with and able to accept queer others is a crucial element in defending us in precarious times such as the one we are currently living in. Our rights in the USA are in flux, as we lose some and gain others; our lives are in danger from violence throughout the world, some of which is even perpetrated by states. Being together in these precarious times offers something soothing and sometimes even healing from the wounds caused by a heteronormative world that expects us to behave ourselves.

Application to Counselling and Psychotherapy

This thesis offers experience near and affect-laden depictions of queer shame and body shame, offered in the context of trekking experiences. Through this, it is my hope that practitioners might be able to gain further understanding and thus attune their empathic response regarding these experiences.

Two chapters engage at length with literature that is specific to counselling and psychotherapy. Mourning and melancholia are discussed at length in “I Sing the Body Queer” and may offer insights regarding those concepts, and particularly regarding understanding how melancholia might work to keep individuals in a shameful place. The Uncanny is discussed at length in “The Cannibal” and offers insights into how we might engage with uncanny experiences to lead us to a greater understanding of ourselves and a more self-caring approach to our shame.

Further, the thesis offers, in each chapter, the exploration of my experiences of body shame and queer shame. From this, I then draw conclusions about how shame is produced and how one might walk away from those shames. These ideas about shame are detailed in the rest of this conclusion and are absolutely meant to be available to work with in pursuit of individual growth or in the counselling room.

Final Comment

There have been consistent themes seen in each chapter or facet of this thesis - themes about our relationships to ourselves and to those around us, including the more-than-human world, themes about queer kin and forequeers, themes of oppressive regimes of norms and the possibility of resistance, themes about dialogue and the unfinalized subjects that we dialogue with. I have made use of a variety of methods along the way that offer a multi-faceted and complex view of body shame and queer shame. The overall project of this thesis has not been to offer sweeping generalizations about the nature of these topics, but rather to offer some glimpses into the ongoing and ever change process that surrounds them. I have been encouraged by this research to learn that there is always a possibility to (re)story ourselves and our queer kin, and I hope that some of the devices drawn from each chapter for working-with shame can be of use to others. I will conclude by emphasizing the entangled nature of our realities, and our interconnectedness. The greatest source of

strength for us in our work towards lives worth living that allow us to live and die well together in precarious times is the making of queer kin. Connecting with our queer families that are more-than-human and stretched across aeon time opens the door of possibility for us to decode; to become-queer; to daemonize our demons; to suffer, resist, and hope with; to (re)story our forequeers; and to be together in precarity.

Addendum: Consent Form

‘Homos in the Woods – Body Shame, Queer Shame, and Flight Into Nature’ Information Sheet¹

Dear Friend,

Here are a few things I need to let you know about, as I intend to write personal reflections about the walking trip we take together for research purposes.

What is the research about?

This study is an introspective look at the impact that the visceral and embodied experience of walking has on me. This specific walk up Ben Nevis hopes to place the embodied and movement parts of walking experience in the context of larger social structures, particularly structures around the nature/human false binary, and heteronormative/queer ways of being and treating others. The larger project that this is a part of uses a variety of research methods and approaches to explore various aspects of how such social structures, in combination with walking and thinking about walking, can be glimpsed through my own experiences.

Who is the researcher?

Ryan Bittinger. You will all know me personally, as friends. I am doing this research as a part of my doctoral thesis for the Professional Doctorate in Psychotherapy at the University of Edinburgh.

What does it have to do with me?

It is essential that I make the effort to ensure that you understand I will be writing personal reflections that may involve you. To further clarify this, I will say that when I write I will make reference to how I am interacting with others in the group and what occurs through our experiences of trekking together. I will also possibly discuss how I and we as a group are interacting with our environment and others we come pass. However, my process and experience will be the focus of my reflective writing. As such, your names and any identifying information will not be included in my final work.

Consent

This study has been submitted to and passed the University of Edinburgh Counselling, Psychotherapy, and Applied Social Sciences Ethics Committee. Your consent to participate in this study must be given freely, and you are welcome to withdraw your participate from this research at any time preceding the walk. This form will end with a signed consent statement. If you have any complaints, please access this form

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/imports/fileManager/WEB%20Complaint%20Form.pdf> to make a formal complaint.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality is important to me personally, and important to the University as well. Your names will not be recorded with any of the data, (A/B/C) may be used when writing to identify different people in a description of a situation or dynamics. No personal stories or information that could lead to your identification by those not on the trip will be used.

¹ This was the original title of the Thesis, I have kept it as it appears since this was the format that the participants signed.

Data use

As previously stated, the data that will be generated is reflective writing by the researcher. This will be used to base an exploration of what the visceral and embodied experience of walking contributes to the experience of trekking in the context of body shame, queer shame, and flight into nature.

Safety

While your safety is important to me and the University, we do not take any responsibility for your safety during this trek. All members are responsible for being physically and mentally prepared for this trip.

If you are comfortable with the above information and wish to continue with the trip, please sign and date below.

If you would like to read the completed thesis, or the chapter based on this trip, please let Ryan know and this will be provided.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact Ryan by email: s1565706@sms.ed.ac.uk or via phone +44 749 0489 936

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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